

“Study in the book of the crucifix”

An assessment of the incorporation of medieval mystical ideas in Queen Katherine Parr’s early modern Protestant devotional work *Lamentation of a Sinner* (1545)



Helen Florijn

2100630

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Protestant Theological University

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. L.A. Nelstrop

Assessor: Prof. Dr. P.M. Wisse

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Somewhere in a book there's a phrase waiting for us to make sense of our existence.

Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)

The sentence above has never felt so relevant to me than it did in recent months. During this period of research, I found a single phrase waiting that demanded interpretation and appreciation: “the book of the crucifix” in Katherine Parr’s *Lamentation of a Sinner*. As this study will demonstrate, this metaphor gradually unfolded during my research, revealing a layered image that became more visible over time. For Parr, this phrase made sense of her existence. In a different but related way, it has come to articulate what gives meaning to my own existence as a theologian and Christian.

I want to express my gratitude to my supervisor Louise, who generously dedicated her time and expertise to this project. Your encouragement to think beyond established scholarly boundaries - and to take a hunch seriously, at least long enough to examine it - has been a constant source of inspiration. I am also deeply grateful to my partner and family who have supported me unconditionally throughout the duration of my studies. In particular, I want to thank my brother John, who introduced me to medieval mysticism several years ago. Your enthusiasm for medieval devotional texts proved extremely contagious.

Finally, and above all, I am grateful to Christ, in whom the meaning of the crucifix - and of this study - ultimately resides.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:1, NIV)

Illustration on the front page: Book of Hours, Use of Sarum (*British Library Archive, Harley 2985, f.71v*). The faded body of Christ is no ordinary damage. The “damage” illustrates the devotee also “read” Christ’s body with skin-on-skin contact, likely by kissing or rubbing the page.

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Introduction and Positionality

The movie *Firebrand*, released in 2024, dramatizes the final marriage of Henry VIII to Katherine Parr (1543-1547), a union that has received less attention in popular culture than Henry's earlier marriages, particularly that to Anne Boleyn. Henry VIII remains a person of historic interest at a popular level - numerous books and movies continue to be produced. There are several reasons why this might be – his break with the head of Roman Catholic Church, which opened in the door for the furtherance of Protestant theology in England, and/or his six marriages, all but one of which (that to Katherine Parr) ended in either divorce or death, or perhaps a bit of both.

Fireband recounts how the marriage between the king and Parr almost ended similarly to those to Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard – with his wife's beheading. During their marriage, Parr and Henry frequently engaged in theological discussions. This didn't escape the notice of the king's conservative religious advisors, who conspired against Parr by comparing her to women like Anne Askew, in that they deemed her increasingly Protestant Reformed inclinations dangerous and heretical. Their hope was that Henry would persecute and condemn Parr, but in this they were unsuccessful. Parr appealed to her subordinate status as a woman, convincing the king that she argued with him to distract him from his sickness and that she wished to benefit from his insights. Henry was satisfied with Parr's appeal.¹ *Fireband* relates this near miss to Parr's religious convictions, painting a picture of early sixteenth-century England as one of rising tensions between conservatives who held to traditional Catholic teachings and "rebels" who advocated for Protestant reform. It portrays Parr as caught in the middle through her conversion from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism. The film makes clear – through its account of the execution of Protestant preacher Anne Askew – that theology was a matter of life and death in this period. Viewers are likely given the impression that Parr's freedom of expression was gagged by her husband, while she was still something of a cunning zealot pushing for reform. While the movie is far from historically accurate on all fronts, *Firebrand* urges us to consider Parr's religious convictions and the important influence they exerted on the future Queen Elizabeth I, and what would later formally become the Church of England, as this is often overlooked in both public and theological spheres.²

¹ Janel Mueller, *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 22-24.

² Mueller, *Complete Works*, 1-2; William P. Haugaard, "Katherine Parr: The Religious Convictions of a Renaissance Queen", in *Renaissance Quarterly* 22, no. 4, 1969, 346; or Janel Mueller, "A Tudor Queen Finds Voice: Katherine Parr's *Lamentation of a Sinner*," in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550–1700*, vol. 1, ed. Elaine B. Beilin (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), 76.

Scholarly interest in Parr as the first English woman to publish under her own name increased from the 1960s onward.³ Parr produced four works which retained their popularity amongst her contemporaries.⁴ Her first work, *Psalms or Prayers* (1544), initially published anonymously, is an English translation of the Latin work of John Fisher, *Psalmi seu precationes ex Psalmis Davidicis* (1525), to which she added her own prayers.⁵ Her second work, *Prayers or Medytacions* (1545), published under her own name and, as with her subsequent works, specifying her rank as England's Queen, is a compilation of the third book of Thomas à Kempis's *De imitatione Christi*.⁶ Her third work, *Lamentacion of a Synner* [henceforth *Lamentation*], published under her own name, was written in the context of the plot against Parr and seems to form part of her reconciliation with Henry, but was only published after his death in 1547.⁷ Her last original work is her personal prayer book, which she composed during her lifetime but kept private.⁸ Additionally, in 1544 Parr commissioned a project to translate and publish the first five books of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*.⁹ In chronological order Parr's writings reveal the process of her development as an author. In the first stage of her writing, she translated an existing work. In the second stage she depended on another author's work, and in the last stage she wrote her original work, *Lamentation*, revealing her own religious and spiritual views. Her own theology and the influences it harbors are what this thesis focuses on as I will explain and wish to illustrate with the picture below.



³ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 1; Mueller, "A Tudor", 75; Frank Howson, "Queen Kateryn Parr's *Lamentacion of a Synner* and the Formularies," in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550–1700*, vol. 1, ed. Elaine B. Beilin (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), 155.

⁴ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 13; Haugaard, 346.

⁵ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 12–14.

⁶ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 18.

⁷ Janel Mueller, "Complications of Intertextuality: John Fisher, Katherine Parr, and 'The Book of the Crucifix'" in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550–1700*, vol. 1, ed. Elaine B. Beilin (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), 140.

⁸ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 18–19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

This picture is an image of the theatrical release poster of the movie *Firebrand*. The aging king (Jude Law) is holding his hand over Parr's (Alicia Vikander) mouth. This image portrays the situation that historical women often faced when they chose to speak their minds, as with the plot against Parr. It is also an image of how female authors are often treated in history. According to Laura Kathryn Jurgens, in the records of history before the 1960's "women were not absent from history" but "history was mainly written by men and about men", resulting in history that is oriented around male experience.¹⁰

How does Jurgens's statement relate to female devotional writers like Parr? In John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563) Parr's efforts for the Protestant Reformation are mentioned, but there is no record of her writings. Between Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and the 1960's, Parr was largely overlooked. In the 1960's, James McConica directed attention towards Parr. He emphasized Parr's role as a supporter of Protestant reform and as an influence on the education of the king's children. Janel Mueller appreciates McConica's efforts, but sees this approach as tending to frame Parr as an auxiliary to male reformers. Mueller has since argued for a shift in focus towards Parr's own voice, particularly as articulated in *Lamentation*. Mueller urges a move beyond Parr's supporting role in the Protestant Reformation and her translation of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*, or merely "salut[ing]" her as an "exemplar of female piety" in the Tudor royal tradition.¹¹ This thesis builds on Mueller's call by examining Parr's devotional theology on its own terms, contributing to broader scholarship on women's devotional writing and challenging the marginalization of female theological authors in historical narratives.

Although we have come a long way since the 1960's, when I started studying Theology at another university there were no historical women in the curriculum. Women were only visible - albeit positively - in the context of their supporting roles to the agenda of (male) Reformers. Although aware of the complications women faced in history with regards to their gender, I was not convinced women did not write theology across so many ages of Church History, so when I came across Parr, I was intrigued by the way she incorporates different images and theological concepts in a devotional work. With my research I hope to build on the work started by scholars like Mueller, removing history's hand from Parr's mouth further.

Another reason I am fascinated by Parr is her initial Catholic background and her conversion to Protestantism, with the implications this has on her theology in *Lamentation* (and a focus of my thesis) and by definition how we view early Protestant devotional works in general. It is not clear when Parr, who received a sound Catholic humanist education,

¹⁰ Laura Kathryn Jurgens, "Women in Luther's Life and Theology: Scholarship in Recent Years," *Religions* 11, no. 2 (January 2020): 68, 2.

¹¹ Mueller, "A Tudor", 76-77.

converted to Protestantism.¹² The general consensus is that this took place gradually during her marriage to Henry, under the influence of Thomas Cramer.¹³ At the time of her marriage to Henry both conservative Catholics and Protestants seem to have welcomed her eagerly. This implies Parr's perceived neutrality in the religious domain.¹⁴ Yet her works show a shift towards Protestantism.¹⁵ She had fully converted by the time she wrote *Lamentation*. *Lamentation* is a devotional piece that clearly draws on the theological emphasises in Reformation theology. While developing a theology of humility, Parr stresses justification by faith alone. She contrasts the Passion and God's grace with human depravity, arguing that God alone is worthy of praise and veneration, while promoting egalitarianism concerning an individual's personal relationship with God. Parr connects these themes to the importance of reading the Bible in the vernacular. Parr contrasts these teachings with those of the Roman Catholic Church, which she describes as "crooked and perverse".¹⁶

At the same time, theological concepts and images are preserved that are more typical of medieval Catholic spirituality. Her central image is "book of the crucifix", which falls into this Catholic category (or at least this is what I argue). Scholars view this metaphor as the summary of *Lamentation*'s theological views. According to Mueller, Parr's metaphor "book of the crucifix" lies at the heart of her theology and is the "key metaphor" in *Lamentation*.¹⁷ According to Frank Howson it is the central part of Parr's meditations.¹⁸ It is a metaphor this thesis analyzes in detail since I argue that it directs attention to ways in which medieval mystical traditions – characterized by Passion devotion – persist in *Lamentation*. Surprisingly, this has not been considered previously, perhaps because most early modern scholars are eager to place *Lamentation* completely within Protestant thought. Previous in-depth research on *Lamentation* has led to the consensus that the work aligns fully with Protestant ideas and concepts as Chapter 1 demonstrates.

However, in *Lamentation*, Parr's theology of humility is constructed using images like "the book of the crucifix". This metaphor cannot be easily explained drawing on the Reformation's theological concepts alone. Questions were raised for me concerning the relationship between this and scholarly perceptions of early-Reformation theology. I felt that Parr's case and her "book of the crucifix" presented an excellent opportunity to analyze traces of medieval spirituality that remain post-Reformation and interrogate whether these coincide or are in tension with early Reformation theology and ideology. It raises questions

¹² Mueller, *Complete Works*,

¹³ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 14-18; Jennifer Clement, *Reading Humility in Early Modern England*. (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), 87.

¹⁴ Howson, 155.

¹⁵ Clement, 83, 89. The author draws on Janel Mueller's previously made suggestions.

¹⁶ Katherine Parr, *The Lamentation of a Sinner*, trans. and ed. Janel Mueller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 449.

¹⁷ Mueller, "A Tudor", 97; Mueller, "Complications", 144.

¹⁸ Howson, 167.

about how we should view early-Reformation devotional works in which these traces are found. There is a tendency to draw a line between medieval mysticism and early modern spirituality. It is often assumed that interest in mysticism, typically associated within the Catholic medieval period, ceased during the early Protestant Reformation. Already in 1960's Heiko Oberman pointed to the separation between medieval theology and the Reformation as problematic, also when it comes to mysticism.¹⁹ More recent research is also bringing this into question, showing that ideas stemming from the medieval mystical tradition continued, at least initially. Sara Poor et al argue that expressions of divine union in both the medieval and early modern periods are "closely intertwined with the mechanisms and politics of reform".²⁰ They suggest that rather than vanishing, mystical ideas and images were reappropriated during the Reformation.²¹ Poor coined the phrase "ongoing transformation" for this phenomenon.²² This research sets out to consider "the book of the crucifix" as one such mystical borrowing in *Lamentation*, while also aiming to situate Parr's discussions of Passion-orientated union within the Reformed agenda that she also clearly promotes. By analyzing Parr's metaphor next to medieval sources that deal with Passion devotion both in religious praxis and mystic devotional writing, I have found that dissolving the gap between the medieval and early modern period greatly contributes to understanding this metaphor, which Parr scholars have had difficulty with explaining in terms of Protestant traces and early modern characteristics in *Lamentation*.

This raises an important question on which this thesis will focus: how should we understand Parr's "theology of humility" (summarized in her image of the book of the crucified), which contains traces of pre-Reformation and early Reformation traditions, especially when this is composed in the context of early sixteenth-century England in which both Catholic and Protestant "heretics" were being severely persecuted and even executed.²³

¹⁹ Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought*, trans. Paul L. Nyhus (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2002; originally published 1967 by The Lutterworth Press).

²⁰ Sara S. Poor & Nigel Smith, *Mysticism and Reform 1400-1750*. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 4.

²¹ Poor, 5-8.

²² Poor, 5.

²³ According to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, during the reign of Henry VIII at least 63 executions on account of heresy took place between 1530 and 1546.

Research Questions

At the centre of the thesis is the following research question, which is subdivided into two subsidiary questions, which serve as the focus of its chapters:

How does the metaphor “the book of the crucifix” in Parr’s Lamentation of a Sinner (1545), demonstrate that she incorporates mystical ideas into her overall Protestant theological stance in this text, and what light might this shed on our understanding of the overlap between Roman Catholicism and Protestant/Reformation theology in the early modern period?

Subsidiary Question 1: *What kind of theological text is Parr’s Lamentation and how does Parr incorporate diverse theological sources?*

Subsidiary Question 2: *To what extent does Parr owe a debt to the medieval mystical tradition in her use of her metaphor of the crucifix as a book?*

In responding to these questions, we will be better able to assess what kind of theological text Parr’s *Lamentation* is, and so how we should understand the theology of humility that she propagates.

Methodology and Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter 1, I use a textual, historical, and comparative approach to analyze Parr’s *Lamentation*, focusing on its major themes on which the book metaphor depends. Parr’s theology is first contextualized within Reformation thought and English humanism through a literary review of academic discourse on Parr, making extensive use of the literature by Parr-scholar Janel Mueller. Where greater nuance is required (for example, from the perspective of medieval mysticism), I add to the existing discourse or challenge prevailing theories. A close reading of *Lamentation*, using Mueller’s modern edition and translation, forms the core of this chapter wherein attention is given to Parr’s negotiation between her experiential theology and doctrinal exposition. Special attention is given to theories of humility by Christopher Bellitto and Jennifer Clement, which enable me to situate Parr’s book metaphor in sixteenth-century religious and social contexts and trace continuities with medieval and early modern thought on the subject.

In Chapter 2, the close reading and textual analysis of *Lamentation* is continued, focusing specifically on the passages where the crucifix metaphor is employed. Delving into medieval scholarship not previously applied to Parr’s metaphor, I show the value of an historical examination of medieval thought, books and manuscripts that contain

representations of Christ's (crucified) body in its elucidation. The majority of this chapter is a comparison of Parr's use of the crucifix metaphor with that of other devotional writers, most notably John Fisher. The comparison allows an appreciation of both the uniqueness of Parr's metaphor and its connection to medieval and early modern Passion devotion and related practices. The comparative framework in this chapter enables me to identify continuity and discontinuity between *Lamentation* and other sources, particularly across the fifteenth century and the sixteenth century, and between Catholic and Protestant theologies.

Chapter I: *The Lamentation of a Sinner* as a theological text and humility as a uniting motive in theological texts

Introduction

The title description of *Lamentation* reveals the author as “the most virtuous lady Queen Katherine”. It states that the piece is published by the “instant desire” of lady Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk and Parr’s brother lord William Parr, Marquess of Northampton.²⁴ The Duchess of Suffolk was a close friend of Parr’s, fueled by both women’s advancing sympathies towards the Protestant Religion.²⁵ English statesman William Cecil wrote a prefatory letter for *Lamentation*, praising its content.²⁶

Janel Mueller characterizes Parr’s self-examination in *Lamentation* as “extreme self-condemnation”.²⁷ Mueller identifies a few influences on Parr underpinning this form of self-examination. She draws comparisons with Queen Marguerite de Navarre’s *Miroir de l’âme pécheresse* (1531), which was known to Parr since her stepdaughter, Princess Elizabeth, who was later Queen of England from 1558 until 1603, translated it for her in 1545 as a New Year’s gift.²⁸ According to Mueller, *Lamentation* and *Miroir* both share “expressions of self-denigration and emotional lability”.²⁹ Both queens openly humiliate themselves. However, according to Mueller, the moment De Navarre gives *Miroir* a mystical turn by using mystical images the texts diverge (a point this thesis will question). The texts do, as Mueller notes, diverge in style and setting. While *Lamentation* is rooted in England’s context and Parr’s personal history, *Miroir* is not set in a specific context.³⁰ Mueller traces the motive for Parr’s self-denigration back to the Reformed bishop Hugh Latimer, who Parr knew through the Henrician court.³¹ Like Latimer, Parr combines introspection with social commentary in a provocative manner. Mueller argues that Latimer’s homiletical strategy of disparaging himself, followed by the reprehension of others, is also visible in *Lamentation*.³² Yet Latimer’s “sharp assertions of his pastoral authority” find no analogue in Parr due to social and gender differences.³³ Rather than a negative, Mueller argues that while Parr borrows themes and vocabulary from male authors who she knew, she holds onto her own experiences and

²⁴ Parr, 443.

²⁵ Janel Mueller, “Katherine Parr and Her Circle,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 235. Lady Katherine and Katherine Parr were also connected through the chaplain Parkhurst, who served both women as chaplain. (Mueller, “Katherine Parr”, 230.)

²⁶ Parr, 445.

²⁷ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 426.

²⁸ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 429.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 429-430.

³¹ Mueller, “A Tudor”, 91.

³² Mueller, *Complete Works*, 437-438.

³³ *Ibid.*, 438-439.

opinions.³⁴ According to Mueller, this is visible in Parr's treatment of Erasmus's *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (1501), which she was known to own. *Lamentation* reflects an Erasmian influence in its emphasis on moral formation and the internalization of Scripture's message. However, Parr decisively rejects Erasmus's Aristotelian model of virtue as a cultivated habit of the will informed by moral knowledge. She thus departs from Erasmus's pedagogical emphasis on moral formation through the imitation of Christ, locating the source of virtue in divine grace bestowed through justification rather than ethical emulation.³⁵ This is one example of how her Protestant faith shaped her borrowings (a facet of her thinking that we will also encounter when we consider her mystical borrowings in *Lamentation*). My discussion of *Lamentation*'s themes illustrate that Parr does not just copy ideas, she reappropriates them in such a manner that they do not undermine her Protestant faith.

Lamentation's serialistic structure makes the text unpredictable. After Parr builds up to the topic of salvation distinct themes recur and intensify in intervals. According to Mueller, Parr resembles William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man* in this regard, and in drawing on the teachings of Paul.³⁶ Prayers form part of the arguments Parr makes, usually to close an interval. The prayers are addressed to God but could also be intended to guide the reader or accompany them, as they resemble the Collect. Mueller argues that these prayers are an example of Cranmer's liturgical influence.³⁷ This is also visible in Parr's descriptions of justifying faith. The vocabulary and doublings in *Lamentation* resemble Cranmer's "Homily of Salvation".³⁸ Howson also points to Cranmer as a major influence on Parr's argument of justification by faith and the importance of Scripture to the point that she seems to carefully diverge from the beliefs of Henry VIII expressed in his corrections to the *Bishop's Book* (1537), which was primarily authored by Cranmer.³⁹ Parr frequently uses antithetical speech to describe the contrast between God and humans, Christ and the world and makes frequent use of similitudes in *Lamentation*. I have structured the content into themes that she works with. For each theme I comment on the work of Parr scholars. The thematic discussion in *Lamentation* serves to elucidate Parr's construction of the image of the crucified as a book as the key metaphor in *Lamentation*'s theology. Her book metaphor encompasses them in a concise manner, supposing knowledge of *Lamentation* in its entirety.

³⁴ Ibid., 430.

³⁵ Mueller, "A Tudor", 78-79.

³⁶ Ibid., 85.

³⁷ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 437.

³⁸ Mueller, "A Tudor", 89-90.

³⁹ Howson, 159.

Christ Crucified

In *Lamentation*, Parr introduces Christ crucified as a book to be read by the believer. In this chapter's introduction, I explained the importance of Parr's metaphor of "the book of the crucifix". Although she works through several topics first, the metaphor lingers beneath the surface, even when not explicitly stated. Parr's style of writing causes a dynamic relationship between her book metaphor and the rest of *Lamentation*. Both her image of the crucified as a book and the theological content of *Lamentation* point to one another.

According to Parr, only in the "light" of Christ crucified can one truly see and discern our wickedness. This Book acts like a mirror, allowing the reader to perceive how foolish the world is and how sinfulness crucified Christ. They see Christ's wisdom in despising the world. The reader observes that in this book God wrote all things that are necessary for salvation.⁴⁰ Her reflection on "the book of the crucifix" helped her realize that she is unable to help herself but is dependent on God. She finds comfort as the book also shows Christ's victory on the cross.⁴¹ Pragmatically, if Christ crucified is not fixed into the heart, good works cannot be acceptable in God's sight.⁴² Parr's descriptions of Christ crucified are visual. She uses words like "sweat", "tears", "blood"/"bloodshed", "stripes", and "sharp" to paint a picture of Christ dying on the cross.⁴³ She also discloses that this is a "spiritual book" and "to behold Christ crucified, in spirit, is the best meditation that can be".⁴⁴ According to Mueller, Parr establishes a metaphoric relationship between the elements of the book and the crucifix. Mueller sees Parr focusing on the significance of Christ's Passion instead of on the material image of the crucifix, spiritualizing Parr's use of the metaphor.⁴⁵ Howson, like Mueller, considers Parr's use of the metaphor phenomenologically since Parr mentions several times that she is opposed to the veneration of man-made images.⁴⁶ However, Howson equates a more literal interpretation of the metaphor with the images that played a role in worship since Parr does not connect the metaphor to her disdain for the veneration of images and nowhere states that the metaphor does not involve the imagination of Christ crucified. In fact, her description of what one sees when one looks at Christ as a book, both spiritualizes the metaphor and is visual. This accords better with Haugaard's reading, who interprets the metaphor more literally. He argues that Parr's use of it reveals that she did not reject the traditional physical image of Christ crucified in order to prompt inward meditation (a point to which I will return).⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Parr, 460-461.

⁴¹ Ibid., 461, 466-467.

⁴² Ibid., 466-467.

⁴³ Ibid., 461.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 461, 466.

⁴⁵ Mueller, "Complications of Intertextuality", 140.

⁴⁶ Howson, "Queen Kateryn", 169.

⁴⁷ Haugaard, "Katherine Parr", 358.

Mueller argues that it is difficult to find the source of inspiration for Parr's use of the metaphor. It is evident for Mueller that the metaphor is not original to Parr.⁴⁸ (I will argue that this difficulty can be explained by the specific focus of Parr scholars on the sixteenth century.) Mueller identified two likely influences on Parr's "book of the crucifix". Erasmus's *Enchiridion* comes close to Parr in thought. Erasmus calls the Passion "A Christian man's book", but not specifically Christ crucified. Erasmus is focused on Christ's death as the saving act of divine love. Like Erasmus, Parr focuses on experiential knowledge of Christ that is universally attainable.⁴⁹ Mueller also points to another possible source of influence: John Fisher's (1469-1535) sermon for the Good Friday service. Fisher was the confessor of Margaret Beaufort, grandmother of Henry VIII.⁵⁰ He was a staunch defender of the Roman Catholic faith, being executed under Henry VIII for refusing to support his headship of the church. A year before Erasmus's *De Libero Arbitrio*, Fisher refuted Martin Luther's argument of justification by faith, stating in his *Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio* (1523) that justification is maintained by faith, but is not by faith alone.⁵¹ Fisher's Good Friday sermon comes closer to Parr's "book of the crucifix" than any other piece Mueller knows.⁵² Fisher describes the "book of the crucifix" literally as will become evident in the next chapter. Fisher invokes the example of Francis of Assisi to inspire his parishioners to read who Christ is and who they are. If Parr draws on Fisher, she does not copy this example of Francis but does similarly use the function of reflection. Fisher, who also knew *Enchiridion*, emphasized that Christ crucified as a book can be read by anyone, such that these two sources possibly overlap prior to Parr's use of them. As this image is arguably the key to Parr's theology and there is scholarly disagreement about the extent to which Parr shifts beyond Catholic usage, it will form a central aspect of my investigation of Parr's possible debt to mysticism.

What might initially seem to count against this image as a point of connection is that, according to Mueller, Parr uses the metaphor to substantiate her ideas about justification by faith and vernacular Bible-reading.⁵³ Fisher, on the other hand, a traditionalist Catholic, uses the metaphor as an image that can be literally imagined by the believer in meditation. Fisher stays clear of any discussion of the vernacular Bible. According to Mueller, he works with the metaphor as an alternative to reading Scripture for parishioners who cannot read the Latin

⁴⁸ Mueller, "Complications", 141.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 142, 148-149.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Gibson, "Katherine Parr, Princess Elizabeth, and the Crucified Christ," in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550–1700*, vol. 1, ed. Elaine B. Beilin (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), 140.

⁵¹ Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 80-130.

⁵² Mueller, "Complications", 142.

⁵³ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 430-431.

Bible. This appropriation is not present in *Lamentation*. Although Mueller claims that Parr equates the metaphor with Scripture, for Parr nothing can replace reading Scripture.⁵⁴

Howson suggests an alternative source. Howson argues that the origin of the metaphor is likely the explanation of the second commandment in *The King's Book* (1543), which contains Henry VIII's theological views. Here, the "book of the rood" is "The image of our Saviour, as an open book hangeth on the cross in the rood."⁵⁵ This metaphor aims to evoke the image of the Passion and the virtues of Christ. This creates a desire to embrace Christ's sacrifice and abandon sin. Like Parr's "book of the crucifix", the contents of the "book of the rood" must be studied and looked upon. Howson suggests that the authors of *The King's Book* aimed to have all statues, except the crucifix, removed from churches as idolatrous. Cranmer instructed against the veneration of images, but viewed them as acceptable when used to turn believers to God. Howson argues that Parr does not diverge from the king, who was more conservative regarding worship images, suggesting her rejection of images other than the crucifix is based on the superstition involved in image worship.⁵⁶

Parr's book metaphor has proven difficult to explain for Parr scholars who are focused on literary pieces within the sixteenth century. Mueller does briefly mention the medieval focus on the Passion and related images in relation to Fisher but does not take this into consideration in her conclusions about the origins of Parr's metaphor.⁵⁷ However, this metaphor is not original to this demarcated period, nor to Fisher. Fisher's description of Christ resembles the image in writings of mystical authors. When we turn to medieval scholarship, we find scholars such as Laura K. Skinnelbach who argues that the image of Christ crucified as a book circulated during the Middle Ages and is derived from a specific practice (although she does not relate this to Parr). In the next chapter, I argue it is not unlikely that the metaphor still circulated during the first part of the sixteenth century and that Parr's use of the book of the crucifix has roots in medieval mysticism. This particular image helps me substantiate that scholarship of the early Reformation period in England needs nuance.

There is currently a clear demarcation between Catholic and Protestant theology in the scholarship, with elements of Catholic mysticism thought to creep back in later Pietism.⁵⁸ Parr's use of this image suggests a more complex situation. The reason that this has not come to light despite intense investigation of this image seems to be over periodization and

⁵⁴ Mueller, "Complications", 142-147.

⁵⁵ Howson, 168.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵⁷ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 430.

⁵⁸ For example: Samuel Clayton Smith, "Through the Eye of a Needle": The Role of Pietistic and Mystical Thought among the Anglican Elite in the Eighteenth-Century Lowcountry South (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1999).

that female writers, like Parr, have been overlooked as spiritual innovators. Parr is often reduced to her Protestantism rather than seen through the dynamism that she brings to Protestant theology, a point discussed below. This is not to say that Parr's thinking is not shaped by Protestant ideas, as the themes below indicate, but to stress that she crafted what she took in ways that makes her a surprising forerunner of ideas that will later be championed when recommended by male Protestant authors. When we examine key themes in Parr's *Lamentation* we find her unafraid to appropriate materials from both Catholic and Protestant sources, having confidence that she can use all this material to further the Protestant faith as she understands it. I work through several key themes, starting with ignorance, and work my way, via justification, to the motif of humility that is central to her thought and summarised in her image of the crucifix as a book (the focus of chapter 2). To fully understand this image and its borrowings, we need first to consider the major theological ideas that inform *Lamentation*, along with their sources.

Ignorance

In contrast to God's goodness, Parr views her former life and associated behavior as sinful and miserable.⁵⁹ Parr goes to great lengths to record her sinfulness, elaborating on her former desires. She explains that God had called her many times only to find her hiding. This hiding Parr connects to "ignorance". The theme of ignorance is pulled through the work and changes in nuance but is always antithetical to the wisdom of Christ.⁶⁰ Ignorance is first introduced as "a blind guide" that has led Parr for many years. In this instance Parr's former ignorance is characterized by the teachings of the "bishop of Rome" (the Pope).⁶¹ According to Mueller the combination of the self-denigration and the allegory of the blind guide echoes Latimer's style.⁶²

Throughout *Lamentation*, Parr uses ignorance and blindness as a word pair without always explicitly referring to Roman Catholic teachings. For Parr, ignorance is a characteristic of a person unturned by God's grace. Throughout her text, Parr addresses her former state by expressing a disjunction between her external behavior and her inner spiritual state, highlighting the misleading impression this division caused. Mueller coins the term "outward and inward selves" for this.⁶³ Unlike her former state, in her present state, these selves are merged and reoriented. Clement traces the theme of ignorance back to both the topic of humility and early Protestant theology. She argues that humility is essential

⁵⁹ Parr, 447.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 451.

⁶¹ The nomenclature "bishop of Rome" became standard after Henry's split from Rome. See: Mueller, "Complications", 143.

⁶² Mueller, "A Tudor", 93.

⁶³ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 428.

for Protestants because it enables a correct interpretation of Scripture. Humility is set against ignorance: ignorance cannot be an excuse for lack of careful self-examination instigated by humility and Scripture.⁶⁴

Parr likewise contrasts ignorance to proper understanding of Scripture. She argues that some people praise ignorance and claim knowledge of Scripture instigates schisms and arrogance.⁶⁵ Parr however praises the dissemination of the vernacular Bible to the “simple and ignorant” so they can establish a personal relationship with God.⁶⁶ Scripture is the opposite of “subtle crafty persuasions of philosophy and sophistry”.⁶⁷ Later in this chapter, I demonstrate that this statement relates to Parr’s resentment towards the Roman Catholic Church.

Ignorance is also related to the world and worldly pleasures and pursuits. Parr testifies her eyes were opened to her ignorance enabling her to see Christ as the truth though “supernatural eyes of faith” which made all earthly and worldly things bitter and wicked.⁶⁸ We will now examine what exactly “opened” Parr’s “eyes” to truth.

Grace, Faith and Good Works

According to Parr, salvation can only be acquired through God’s grace as humans cannot save themselves due to their wicked nature.⁶⁹ In this regard, humility is to stand before God in lowliness and confess one’s sins whilst giving thanks for God’s mercy. Parr paints her own picture, as a beggar who cannot save herself but can only be led by God out of the “maze of death” that is life on earth without salvation and sanctification.⁷⁰ To Parr, the Holy Spirit is vital in this process. Without the Spirit a person cannot recognize Christ as Saviour.⁷¹ In Parr’s pneumatology the Holy Spirit is the bridge-builder between God, Christ and humanity. The sacraments are not the only places through which the action of Spirit occurs. Surprisingly, this aspect has not been discussed by Parr-scholars, who have categorized other aspects of Parr’s theology within Protestant Reformation characteristics.

Parr’s pneumatology closely parallels that of the Lutheran Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) in his *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1530), a text known to have been available at Henry VIII’s Westminster library.⁷² A full discussion of this is beyond the scope of the thesis but in Simeon Zahl’s analysis of the pneumatology in Melancthon’s *Apology* of

⁶⁴ Clement, 8.

⁶⁵ Parr, 476.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 477.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 476.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 453-454, 471.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 453-454.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 454.

⁷² James P. Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 7 (London, 2000), no. H2.

the *Confessio Augustana*, he argues that Melanchthon presents the Spirit as affectively operative during salvation and sanctification with regards to the individual's self-assessment and spiritual transformation. The Spirit awakens existential awareness of sin, grants justifying faith, and reshapes human desires in accordance with God's law and the incentive to love.⁷³ Parr echoes this framework. She identifies the Spirit as the agent who enables recognition of Christ as Saviour, exposes the self's "wickedness", and redirects desire through deeper understanding of Christ's example - an understanding possible only through the Spirit.⁷⁴ This transformation is visible in the development of love in the believer and their wish to keep God's law.⁷⁵ Zahl argues that the "fundamental issue" in the relationship between faith and experience in the Protestant doctrine of justification is understanding that the Spirit causes the faith which justifies and that through faith the Spirit is received.⁷⁶ Like Melanchthon, Parr also emphasizes the Spirit's consoling work: faith is experiential and counteracts guilt, while the Spirit offers assurance in moments of fear, particularly concerning death and divine judgment.⁷⁷ Parr's descriptions of the Spirit as "Advocate"/"Mediator"⁷⁸ between the believer and God, comforter, and source of hope renders her pneumatology similar to Melanchthon's Protestant account.

To Parr, faith is the only thing of importance in salvation and the foundation of all that is good, as good deeds originate as faith enables the believer to make judgments.⁷⁹ For Parr, justification by faith entails God's forgiveness by the erasure of the debts that humans have towards God in their sinfulness. It also entails deliverance of all things earthly, like sin and evil, through Christ's victory on the cross. According to Parr, her state before God altered after experiencing justification by faith. She compares the change to a "new garment" (another image with a long heritage both in scripture and medieval mysticism). The notion that the justified are able to discern what is good and wise is probably connected to her argument that by faith one learns to know God.

Throughout *Lamentation*, Parr iterates that justification is an act of God towards humans. However, in the text there is a tension between faith as passive reception and faith as active trust. On the one hand, it is inextricably linked to the inspiration of the Spirit, but, on the other, it is an active act of repentance that requires the believer's own volition. For Parr, God acted first in sending Christ to redeem humans; only through accepting Christ's passion is one saved and redeemed.⁸⁰ Through elaborations on light-darkness/shadows, Parr

⁷³ Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 123–141.

⁷⁴ Parr, 454-455.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 457, 464, 467, 471, 478, 480. Note the wordplay between "love" and "charity".

⁷⁶ Zahl, 125.

⁷⁷ Zahl, 125-127; Parr, 463.

⁷⁸ Parr, 454-455.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 456-457.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 465.

elucidates how God initiates the process of salvation since humans cannot discern true right from wrong by nature.

This also accords with what Parr writes about election. Her argument of justification by faith does not depend on election, but is a basic ingredient on several occasions. Parr states that God elected some and reprov'd others.⁸¹ According to Mueller, Parr connects the doctrine of double predestination with the “antinomian rationales” offered by the German Anabaptists. She also traces the thought of double predestination back to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, both of whom viewed this doctrine as Biblical.⁸² Only in one instance in *Lamentation* there is reason to speculate that Parr was in favor of double predestination. However, nowhere does Parr state that God elects people for damnation, just that some are reprov'd. In Parr's theology, people are not necessarily reprov'd because they are elected for damnation but because they refuse to be dependent on God for their salvation and instead follow what Parr views as false doctrine. At the same time, Parr does cast the image of “the elect” in a positive light. The elect are those who take part in Christ's victory on the cross, in God's protection through salvation, and ultimately in heaven.⁸³ The idea that “the elect” will partake in Christ's glory did not cease in theology in the period between Aquinas and the protestant Reformation. The often-overlooked mystic Richard Rolle (c. 1300-1349) writes about “the elect” in his *Incendium Amoris* (*The Fire of Love*). During the fifteenth century Rolle's *Incendium* was translated into Middle English.⁸⁴ Ralph Hanna argues that the little attention Rolle has received from scholars does not match Rolle's legacy during the centuries after his death since Rolle's writings circulated widely.⁸⁵ In *Incendium* Cap. 36 Rolle argues that “the elect” (“*predestinatus*”) who are fulfilled with love, will go to the kingdom of heaven and receive a seat, which Christ has ordained for them.⁸⁶ Note also the parallel with Parr who writes that the elect will not perish in death, and are part of a godly battle forsaking all that the ungodly pursue.⁸⁷ Whether or not Parr agreed on some level with the doctrine of double predestination, on the topic of election she has a lot in common with Rolle.

After the initiation of faith by God, the believer's active response is required. This entails an active turning to God and the imitation of Christ in life and death, forsaking all previous inclinations and behaving “charitable”.⁸⁸ A distinction Parr makes is between works

⁸¹ Ibid., 474.

⁸² Mueller, *Complete Works*, 474-475n111.

⁸³ Parr, 463-465, 474.

⁸⁴ Louise Nelstrop, *On Deification and Sacred Eloquence* (2019; repr., London: Routledge, 2019), 80.

⁸⁵ Nelstrop, 78.

⁸⁶ Richard Rolle, *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. M. Deanesly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1917), 248. Love in this instance is love dwelling in the believer and the incentive to act lovingly.

⁸⁷ Rolle, 252. Parr, Parr argues that believers in Christ shall not perish, but become triumphant like Christ. Christ “make[s] strong the elect of God in Christian warfare”.

⁸⁸ Parr, 460, 466, 483.

with an earthly and spiritual focus. As mentioned earlier, earthly things are carnal and ephemeral whereas the spiritual is beneficial for the soul everlasting.⁸⁹ However, this does not mean that external behaviour is irrelevant. Parr often refers to the state of the cold heart that is unturned by God's grace, comparing it to stone. The Spirit desires to possess our heart, aiming to work through it.⁹⁰ Internally, the heart discerns right from wrong, which is crucial with regards to behaviour. Parr proposes one criterion: the focus of the heart. Only works and words driven by a heart that is focused on God are acceptable.

Moreover, Parr follows Pauline criteria in *Lamentation* for what Christian life should be depending on rank and gender.⁹¹ According to Mueller, Parr resembles Tyndale in her concern over a Christian attitude and daily social life that is initially optimistic.⁹² Yet Mueller also argues that Parr mimics Cranmer in "thought and style"⁹³ in her focus on justifying faith. In Cranmer's "Homily of Salvation" faith justifies, but the obligation to perform good works remains. Mueller locates Cranmer's argument about justification by faith between the two extremes of antinomianism and work-religion.⁹⁴ Parr also resembles Cranmer in emphasising the spiritual equality of all people, in contrast to gender hierarchies common in her time.⁹⁵ Like Mueller, Howson traces Parr's experience of justification by faith to Cranmer. For Howson, the similarities in both thought and wording between Cranmer's "The Homily of Good Works" and *Lamentation* are too acute not to suspect that Parr was acquainted with the specifics of its content. Parr could have read the sermon or been instructed by Cranmer personally over the content. Cranmer also transferred images and ideas from Augustine to Parr. This transfer becomes visible in the image of the sinner as a "wild horse", which is mentioned both in "Homily of Good Works" and *Lamentation*.⁹⁶

Howson argues that both Cranmer and Parr also owe a debt to Henry VIII. The traditionalist king insisted on good works as an addition to justification by faith, commenting that mankind is saved "chiefly" by the merits of Christ's passion. Howson argues that Henry's influence on Parr is visible when she uses the word "probably"⁹⁷ to describe how the true faithful are granted faith by God.⁹⁸ Howson recognizes Parr's wording in this instance in *Lamentation* diverges from Cranmer's, who took a more rigid stance on justification by faith. Parr is slightly more ambivalent in her wording, making it difficult to place her firmly either within Lutheranism or Calvinism. Here Howson takes a different stance than Mueller and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 470-476.

⁹⁰ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 447, 451, 457, 471.

⁹¹ Parr, 481.

⁹² Mueller, *Complete Works*, 434.

⁹³ Ibid., 435.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 435-437.

⁹⁵ Mueller, "Katherine Parr", 228.

⁹⁶ Howson, 172-173.

⁹⁷ Parr, 459.

⁹⁸ Howson, 178-179.

Clement, who framed *Lamentation* within Reformation theology with regards to justification by faith. According to Clement, who cites Mueller, Parr's focus on justification by faith sees her embracing a Lutheran theology of Christian salvation by faith.⁹⁹ Howson however argues that Parr is not as committed to the doctrine of justification by faith alone as Cranmer throughout his years at court. Using the word "probably" she positions herself in the more traditional corner of Henry. Howson agrees that this contradicts other sections in *Lamentation* that, as Mueller argues, fit within the spectrum of Protestant Reformation theology. These contradictions must be accepted.¹⁰⁰ Howson states that Parr believes in the faith she describes because of her experiences. However, her refusal to be dogmatic allows for the possibility of different interpretations.¹⁰¹

Indeed, Parr never explicitly states that she completely abandoned her traditional humanistic upbringing. Instead, she focuses on the change in herself regarding desires and faith. Haugaard argues that Parr's break with Erasmianism becomes evident the moment faith is elevated to a primary position in her argument about justification.¹⁰² It is not clear whether Parr was aware of the disputations between Luther and Erasmus, but it is not unlikely that she understood the differences between Erasmianism and Lutheranism with regards to justification and made a deliberate choice for the latter. In her phrasing she is extremely careful not to push her argument about justification too far, iterating that she is unlearned and does not wish to engage in dogmatism.

At the same time, Parr draws a dividing line through the Church. On the one side are Christians that view God and the world through a similar lens to Parr. On the other side, are Christians that claim to know Christ as Saviour, but turn to intellectual learning. Intellectual scholasticism differs from the experiential knowing that Parr advocates (a point discussed in relation to her image of the crucifix as a book in Chapter 2).

Scripture

Parr makes extensive use of Scripture in her *Lamentation*. She refers to Biblical texts implicitly and explicitly either by reappropriating Biblical phrases or referring to a text directly. Her use of Scripture supports her positive appraisal of reading the vernacular Bible and using Scripture as a starting point in life and faith. Parr opposes Scripture to manmade doctrine. Nowhere does she reject all doctrine, but seems to condemn men who stray from a

⁹⁹ Clement, 85.

¹⁰⁰ Howson, 167.

¹⁰¹ Howson, 178-179. Note the influence of Erasmus's and Luther's theology on Parr. Erasmus (*De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio*) and Luther (*De Servo Arbitrio*) discuss individual free will and the consequences for salvation. In *Lamentation* this tension between the free and bound will is present, in what Howson argues are contradictions, on the subject of salvation.

¹⁰² Haugaard, 357.

humbling faith and create doctrines that contrast with Scripture.¹⁰³ Again, Parr includes her worldview in her exploration of Scripture by positioning Scripture against the world.¹⁰⁴ In her argument against the Pope and certain aspects of Roman Catholic teachings she hints that Roman Catholic doctrines are manmade and not in accordance with Scripture. Rather than abandoning all doctrine, she is primarily concerned with the vernacular Bible and the completeness of Scripture. Howson argues that Parr does not question the validity of all distinctive Church ceremonies, but nothing equals salvation by God's grace. If she had agreed with Henry's view on the number of sacraments, she would have viewed the sacraments as expressions of Scripture instead (as she does) of understanding them as "objects of scriptural expression".¹⁰⁵ This is also in accordance with Cranmer. Both Cranmer and Parr regarded engagement with Scripture as an essential and inescapable element of salvation, a view that underpins their active promotion of an English Bible and the dissemination of Erasmus's *Paraphrases* to a broader readership.¹⁰⁶

Parr mentions that counter arguments to the vernacular Scripture are circulating. She claims there is fear that reading the vernacular Bible can lead to heresy. While she does not deny this directly, she holds human wickedness causes heresy,¹⁰⁷ and feels Scripture should be read by everyone. Mueller also notes these egalitarian tendencies in early English Protestantism fueled by scripturalism.¹⁰⁸ Implicitly relating to the Roman Catholic Church, Parr claims that figures of spiritual authority teach as true and necessary things not actually stated in Scripture ("unwritten verities").¹⁰⁹ For Parr, such additions are unnecessary and often heretical. Parr explicitly reinforces her promotion of vernacular Bible-reading regarding the inability of some to understand Latin.¹¹⁰ She makes a backward movement by replacing the argument that reading Scripture can lead to heresy with her claim that those with authority, who can read Latin, add heretical ideas to Scripture. Howson contrasts Parr's argument with Henry's attempt to alter the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. Cranmer went against the king, insisting that Scripture cannot be altered or added to. Howson argues that Henry's attempt strongly contrasts with Parr's scripturalism.¹¹¹ If Parr knew details about discussions by the king and Cranmer before the text of the *Bishop's Book* became final, like Howson suggests, she purposefully diverged from Henry's view.

¹⁰³ Parr, 470.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 476.

¹⁰⁵ Howson, 161.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰⁷ Parr, 477-479.

¹⁰⁸ Mueller, "A Tudor", 101.

¹⁰⁹ Parr, 477.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 477-479.

¹¹¹ Howson, 162.

The Pope and the Roman Catholic Church

Besides many implicit references to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, Parr also comments directly on it and on the Pope, the false doctrine she feels he embodies, and the hypocrisy she sees in clergymen. Yet in some areas, she is more aligned with the Roman Catholic opinions. This becomes visible in her traditional views on priesthood, for example, as she assumes that the clergy consists of unmarried males.¹¹²

Early in *Lamentation*, Parr hints at her views on the papal system in general by arguing that the Spirit is the only intermediary between God and her.¹¹³ It becomes clear that Parr strongly disagrees with the idea of access to God intermediated by clergy. Her theology is built on the presupposition that all people can have a personal and direct relationship with God. The distinction Parr makes between her former and present life, and her inward and outward self is crucial for understanding her resentment towards Catholic clergy, in particular the Pope. In her previous life, marked by outward holiness but inward wickedness, she claims to have been a follower of the “riffraff” of the Pope that he “hath planted in his tyranny and kingdom”.¹¹⁴ For Parr, this hypocrisy is characteristic of the “bishop of Rome and his members”.¹¹⁵

For Haugaard, Parr’s comments on the Pope accord with the Reformation spirit. He argues that Erasmus, Luther or Calvin scorned the same abuses.¹¹⁶ Likewise, Howson holds Cranmer and Parr to employ similar patterns when describing the process of salvation and sanctification. The first stage starts with the rejection of the Pope’s authority regarding the teachings of faith. The second stage is the embrace of justification by faith. The third stage is the recognition of Scripture as crucial to salvation.¹¹⁷ In addition, I have noticed that Parr’s treatment of the Pope’s authority also echoes Cranmer’s court-ordered English version of the *Litany* (1544), which includes the following invocation against the Pope: “*From all sedition, and privy conspiracy; from the tyranny of the bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities; from all false doctrine, and heresy; from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandment, Good Lord, deliver us.*”¹¹⁸ By combining the Pope and false “doctrine”, “heresy” and “contempt of thy Word and Commandment” a connection is made between the head of the Roman Catholic Church and false doctrine. Her clear rejection of the authority of the Pope can also be read as a rejection of Catholic theology to some extent, although Henry himself never abandoned his Catholic beliefs completely.

¹¹² Parr, 480-481.

¹¹³ Ibid., 455.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 450.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 478.

¹¹⁶ Haugaard, 356.

¹¹⁷ Howson, “Queen Kateryn”, 158-159.

¹¹⁸ Tallis, Thomas. *The Litany*. Edited transcription (PDF). Early English Church Music (EECM) Resources. Accessed [18-12-2025].
<http://www.eecm.ac.uk/eeccmresources/twotudorlitanies/tallislitany/Tallis%20litany%20AJ.pdf>

As mentioned before, this tension between the figure of the Pope and Catholic theology is present in Parr. Clement suggests that Parr “is most anxious” to abandon her previous corrupt Roman Catholic self. She argues that for Parr, Christ himself is at stake, for when she belonged to the Catholic Church she rejected the essence of Christ. She found redemption in embracing Protestantism.¹¹⁹ In *Lamentation*, the Pope plays a significant part in religious deception as he is the embodiment of corruption. Parr compares the Pope to the King of Egypt in Exodus. Her comparison of both Henry VIII and the Pope with biblical figures is not original. In his preface to the English Bible in 1535, Coverdale similarly compares Henry to Moses, who saved his people out of the “cruel hands of our spiritual Pharoah”.¹²⁰ Nicholas Udall compares the king to David slaying Goliath and King Hezekiah, who destroyed false idols.¹²¹ Cranmer compares his king to Josiah, as an example of a monarch who changes the course of history in favor of reforms.¹²² Haugaard, however, suggests that Parr uses the image of Moses and the King of Egypt out of tact, invoking the king’s authority.¹²³ Clement instead argues that with this image Parr legitimized *Lamentation* by implying that Henry would have approved of it, although Parr’s authority in fact lies in her conversion story rather than her royal position.¹²⁴ Indeed, Parr speaks from a position of authority as a believer, turned by God’s grace. However, she does remind her readers of her royal position by invoking the example of the king’s break with Rome, and identifying him as her husband.

Parr argues that the Pope is worse than the King of Egypt as he persecutes more Christians through his promotion of ideas that conflict with the Gospel, which means he is leading souls into damnation.¹²⁵ Parr spiritualizes Henry’s break with Rome, making him the Moses in her story. According to Clement, Parr rewrote the king’s break with Rome “as a principled stand against tyranny and abuse of power”.¹²⁶ However, the spiritual decline that Parr supposes of the Catholic Church was not the most important factor in Henry’s decision. Parr seems to be more in accordance with the critique of Luther, which ultimately led to his own break with Rome.

World versus Christ

As stated previously, Parr’s view of the world is intermingled with her view on ignorance. Building up to her resentment of the world and worldly pleasures, Parr criticizes “carnal and

¹¹⁹ Clement, 85.

¹²⁰ Haugaard, 357.

¹²¹ Mueller, “Katherine Parr”, 232.

¹²² Haugaard, 357.

¹²³ Ibid., 357.

¹²⁴ Clement, 89.

¹²⁵ Parr, 468.

¹²⁶ Clement, 89.

human” reasoning as the opposite of experiential knowledge.¹²⁷ Before her conversion she strayed from truth by imitating the world. In Parr’s theology the world is a place of sin, carnality, and horrors. The coming of Christ into the world cannot be separated from Parr’s disdain for the world. According to Parr, Christ was sent into the wicked world to enable salvation.¹²⁸ Christ is contra-positioned against the world repeatedly. For example: whereas the world is vain, Christ is meek and kind.¹²⁹ Parr maintains the metaphor of light/Christ and blindness/world throughout *Lamentation*. The world is God’s enemy, so the wisdom of the world is also adverse to God.¹³⁰ According to Parr, God forbids humans to love the world that she equates with shadows. Causally, shadows probably refer to human doctrine.¹³¹ In Christ’s Incarnation and crucifixion believers perceive the world’s depravity.¹³² This aspect can be related to the imitation of Christ as Parr argues the need to follow Christ against worldly, carnal pleasures.¹³³ Christ crucified contrasts with the carnality of worldly knowledge.¹³⁴ Even though Christ conquered all evil, the world remains a place of sin. The eyes of the regenerated Christian can truly see that the righteousness of the world is actually wickedness.¹³⁵ This thought is the foundation to Parr’s deliberate dichotomy between spirit/spiritual and flesh/carnal and Christ and the world.¹³⁶ In light of the rejection of the world, the regenerated Christian transforms in the sense that desires (flesh) are completely redirected (by spirit). It can be argued that in Parr the self is consumed by this transformation, resulting in the merging of the inward and outward selves in union with Christ. In this merging, although having a living body, the flesh is now at best an instrument of the spirit, instead of the other way around.

According to Mueller, the traces of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Le Miroir* are visible in this transformation of the self. In both texts self-possession and composure is dissolved through intense devotional fluctuation that leaves each Queen subject to the emergence of a “new self” under God’s direction and divine love.¹³⁷ Clement concurs with the notion of the “two selves” and emphasizes the role of Christian transformation in Parr’s spirituality. She traces this dynamic to Augustine, arguing that he established a narrative pattern subsequently adapted by writers for centuries. This pattern charts the movement from the former to a renewed self, with an intermediary stage between them. The former self is

¹²⁷ Parr, 452.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 451-455.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 452.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 464.

¹³¹ Ibid., 448, 458.

¹³² Ibid., 460.

¹³³ Ibid., 471.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 460, 471.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 464.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 471.

¹³⁷ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 429-430.

depicted as weak and sinful yet granted “glimpses” of truth through grace. The self then struggles to align its will with that truth before ultimately submitting to God’s will. Once transformed, it can look, endowing prior experience with newfound meaning. Clement argues that this narrative structure divides the self into two antagonistic parts that are locked in an internalized spiritual conflict, wherein each contends for dominance. The new self attempts to “kill” the former, which is untouched by grace.¹³⁸ Clement argues the self is required to re-evaluate their entire life, focusing on errors. In this respect, Christ’s most important virtue to follow is his humility.¹³⁹ Indeed, this process is visible in Parr and humility is an important motif in *Lamentation*, as I will discuss.

In *Lamentation* Parr stresses her reoriented will. Her present self desires strongly to live in accordance with what she experiences as God’s truth, Clement also pays attention to the empowerment this transformed self brings. The transition from oneself to the new self justifies speaking from a place of authority.¹⁴⁰ From this angle, writing *Lamentation* is Parr’s duty, as it is God’s will.¹⁴¹ Clement draws parallels with the strong distinction between “then” and “now” in Augustine’s *Confessions*.¹⁴² Parr’s testimony similarly relies on this distinction, which is also present in Parr’s argument about ignorance. It seems to tie together the theme of ignorance with Christ versus the world, which underlines the contrast between the two selves.

Christ is an example to aid “God’s children” to be strong and for them to find comfort in God’s victory because Christ redeems them.¹⁴³ Yet Parr feels unable to fully emulate Christ’s model of humility, deeming this a failure.¹⁴⁴ Clement locates this thought in Thomas À Kempis’s *De Imitatione Christi*.¹⁴⁵ She does not explicate further but it is an interesting observation as Parr scholars have previously only drawn parallels between *Imitatione* and Parr’s earlier work *Prayers or Meditations*. We can arguably see À Kempis’s influence extending further than this relation.

In Book I of the *Imitatione*, À Kempis urges believers to fix their gaze on the image of the crucified - a theme echoed, in a more restrained form, in Parr’s book metaphor. Book I contrasts divine love and grace with worldly concerns and dogmatic disputation, a tension likewise visible in Parr’s critique of ignorance. The *Imitatione* repeatedly expresses suspicion towards worldly affairs and affirms human incapacity for good apart from God (I.12.6), a point Parr similarly underscores in her discussion of grace and good works. Book II stresses

¹³⁸ Clement, 83.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 83-90.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 90.

¹⁴² Ibid., 86.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 461-463.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 452-453.

¹⁴⁵ Clement, 83.

the disparity between human preoccupation with external things and God's attention to the heart (II.6.21-22), a contraposition also present in *Lamentation*, where Parr insists that only God perceives her inward state. These parallels suggest that Parr's treatment of the divided self and spiritual transformation participates in a broader tradition. In Book IV, Á Kempis repeatedly returns to the theme of nearness to Christ, insisting that union with him requires the abandonment of the self. Parr seems to adapt this motif in her distinction between the former self and the renewed self. Coupled with this is, as already argued, that Parr's view on election bears resemblance to that of the mystic Rolle, whose spirituality circulated widely during the fifteenth century. The idea of *contemptus mundi* is already visible in his *Incendium*, where he positions "God's lovers" against lovers of the world, but becomes even more visible in his later work *Contra Amatores Mundi* (*Against the Lovers of the World*), suggesting further her debt to a prior Catholic tradition. Thus, we potentially see a very complex set of borrowings at play in Parr's *Lamentations*, which shows her capacity and lack of fear to modify and incorporate Catholic and Protestant sources of different flavours into her own Protestant thinking. While we should not expect a woman in this period to write in a systematic way, the way in which Parr carefully appropriates such sources shows a remarkable confidence in her ability to use them in accord with her own position.

Humility

As previously stated, in my thesis Katherine Parr's theology in *Lamentation* is assessed through the lens of the crucifix as a book. To be able to do so, as well as the themes discussed above, we must also have a clearer picture of how humility functions in her text, what humility is for her and how her use of it relates to its functions in historical theological texts. More than in the other themes so far discussed, this exploration will take us back into the Medieval Period, helping to set the scene for her image of the crucifixion as a book, and the centrality of this image as a hook on which all the themes discussed so far hang. Unlike other themes, humility does not so much hang on the image of the crucified as a book as provide the soil out of which it grows.

Jennifer Clement's *Reading Humility* provides an initial framework for understanding humility in *Lamentation*, situating Parr within sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century discourses of humility. Yet, because this thesis focuses on continuities and discontinuities of belief across medieval and early modern contexts in relation to Parr's image of the crucified Christ as a book, a broader historical perspective is required. Christopher M. Bellitto's *Humility: The Secret History of a Lost Virtue* therefore expands the scope of this inquiry by offering a diachronic account of humility's theological and cultural functions. I begin with Clement's analysis before extending the discussion via Bellitto.

Renaissance Humility

Clement argues that humility was a central virtue for early modern religious writers, functioning as both a spiritual ideal and a social strategy that enabled authors to publish in a hierarchical society.¹⁴⁶ In this period humility was the virtue on which faith depended as an expression of dependence on God.¹⁴⁷ According to Clement, early modern humility extends beyond the definition of modesty or meekness, and signifies the soul's dependence on God which contrasts divine perfection with human weakness. Humility is the counterpart to pride and the key to contemplating on the self.¹⁴⁸ Clement refers to Paster Gail Kern Paster who argues that the humble body is often "female or feminized" in the Renaissance context, while masculinity is the ideal and equated with strength and control. Clement notes that this thinking takes on a particular form in female writers like Parr and Queen Elizabeth I. Both challenge and reinforce the social, political and religious hierarchies in their writing. Since the female or feminized body is considered more capable of humility, according to Clement this means that the female is more Christlike (thus attaining authority) while at the same time the praxis of female writing is viewed as unconventional (diminishing authority). She argues that humility in the early modern period is "paradoxical" in this regard. The situation of female authors like Parr is made more complex for those of high status because humility expresses a low status spiritually. All were expected to behave humbly because all humans are equal in relation to God's perfection. Parr and Elizabeth both transcend and reinforce gender hierarchies in their theology in these respects.¹⁴⁹ Clement stresses that humility was vital for both Catholics and Protestants, regardless of their denominational differences.¹⁵⁰ Clement connects the Protestant commitment to *sola scriptura* to the continuing influence of medieval traditions of humility. She does not elaborate explicitly on this although she hints at its veracity in her discussion of Parr and the influence of Thomas Á Kempis on her thought.¹⁵¹

According to Clement, Parr's *Lamentation* adopts an Augustinian conversion narrative where humility is concerned, thus dividing the selves into "two antagonistic parts". This enables the narrator to speak with authority about conversion and re-evaluate the meaning of life since they have submitted to God's will; resulting in a narrative of "humble confession".¹⁵² According to Clement, Parr casts conversion as a humbling encounter with divine truth. Humility, for Parr, entails imitating Christ's submission and suffering, visible in his renunciation of worldly status, to the point of radical confirmatoy of life to Christ's

¹⁴⁶ Clement, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 3-5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 5-6, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

¹⁵² Ibid., 83-88.

example.¹⁵³ Practicing this, Clement calls “performative humility”, evident both in Parr’s theological reflections and her politically-charged gendered submission to Henry during the plot against her.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, according to Clement, Parr does not conform to the gender limitations of her time in *Lamentation*. Although she iterates that women are subordinate to men and should therefore serve in silence, she uses her female voice to proclaim God’s grace unto the nation.¹⁵⁵

In line with Clement, I hold that the “split” between the former and present selves in Parr represents her shift to Protestantism. The former self is undeniably Catholic, and the present self undeniably Protestant. This becomes clear in *Lamentation* in the pattern of her reflections on her conversion, which connects this former sin-ridden self to the Roman Catholic Church. She critiques Catholic reliance on classical virtues for salvation, arguing instead that divine grace precedes and enables virtuous living. This grace, revealed through self-examination and “truth”, grounds her understanding of humility. She does not explicitly connect the virtues of her present self to Protestantism, but in her elaborations on the present self she does follow the Reformers agenda, as discussed in the first part of this chapter. It is grace as found in Protestantism, and only to be attributed to God, that is the root of Parr’s humble imitation of Christ’s virtues; a converted Christian’s purpose is radical alignment of self with Christ.

Summarizing, according to Clement, Parr’s humility is connected to interpretations of truth, a lifestyle that is a replication of the example of Christ. I would also add the component of social standing to the tensions in Parr’s “performative humility” in *Lamentation*. As queen, Parr was one of the most wealthy and influential women of her time. Yet, she publicly humiliates herself and rejects wealth and social status aiming for a more homogenous Christianity in the Church based on spiritual equality. There is, however, more to be said about Parr’s humility and to understand this a broader understanding of humility, that reaches back in the Middle Ages, is needed.

A Virtue: Humility in History

Bellitto’s research focuses on humility through the ages and its value in modern society. He introduces humility as an “intellectual virtue” whereby one can discern the opportunities and limitations surrounding knowledge and control. Humility grounds a person in the world. Contrary to humility is a focus on what benefits the individual most in terms of control. For Bellitto, humility is the starting point in a process encompassing other virtues. Historically humility moves along consistent lines. Firstly, humility is a virtue that enables the individual

¹⁵³ Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 88-90.

to assess the self and the world. Secondly, in interpersonal contact humility can take on the meaning of degradation and humiliation.¹⁵⁶ Through Bellitto's research it becomes clear that although humility is found explicitly in religious traditions, it is not exclusive to religion. Bellitto also deals with humility in the Bible. The tension he discerns is reflected in *Lamentation*. Bellitto argues that on the one hand humility in the Bible can be interpreted as a tool for self-assessment but on the other can be seen as a tool to lower one's self. Both Bellitto's initial definition of humility and his interpretation of biblical humility serve as a tool to interpret *Lamentation*.

In the first part of this chapter, I argued that in *Lamentation* we see Parr assessing the self and the world. This is often substantiated by Bible passages or texts. Following Bellitto's paradigm, this can be viewed as humility, which functions for her as a tool to assess the self and the world. It becomes clear that the virtues of her present self and the shift between her selves are not of her own merit but instigated by God's mercy bestowed on her. Mueller's description of *Lamentation* as an "extreme self-condemnation" summarizes Parr's use of humility as a tool to lower the self.¹⁵⁷ Parr places herself under God's control completely, using servile terms, and describes her original self and natural inclinations in negative terms. For example, in the following sentence we see Parr both assessing the self in relation to God and lowering herself.

*If I should look upon my sins, and not upon Thy mercy, I should despair for in myself I find nothing to save me, but a dunghill of wickedness to condemn me.*¹⁵⁸

Clement connects Parr's past inclination to ignorance to humility.¹⁵⁹ Bellitto illustrates that humility can also attain the meaning of degradation. Indeed, in Parr this degradation can also be interpreted in the context of God-human contact. Before God, Parr is a "dunghill of wickedness" incapable of salvation.

Bellitto demonstrates that, historically, humility always deals with the tension of self-assessment in the world and self-abasement. In his survey of humility in multiple religious authors during the Middle Ages he finds that humility is portrayed as a protagonist. Often humility fights against corruption, not in the least against personal sins. Humility operates as the virtue that enables the individual to read and criticize the self and the world and helps other virtues to grow in the individual.¹⁶⁰ Bellitto draws attention to later dealings with this kind of humility. During the Enlightenment thinkers like Hume interpreted medieval

¹⁵⁶ Christopher M. Bellitto, *Humility* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023), 1-9.

¹⁵⁷ Mueller, 426.

¹⁵⁸ Parr, 454.

¹⁵⁹ Clement, 83-90.

¹⁶⁰ Bellitto, ch. 3.

humility as self-restriction.¹⁶¹ At the same time, Bellitto presents authors who still advocate humility in a more traditional sense. For them, humility enables the individual to assess the self and the world and discern what is beneficial to the individual and in interpersonal contact. Bellitto demonstrates that humility is a spectrum. On one end, humility is a necessary tool that guides the individual through the world. On the other hand, humility acquires the meaning of humiliation and degradation.

Humility during the Middle Ages

Bellitto argues that humility was a central moral and theological virtue in the medieval period. In the visions and writings of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), humility emerges as the organizing force of her moral life. In her play *Ordo Virtutum*, humility is portrayed as the “Queen of virtues”. Humility is the virtue that enables the others to function.¹⁶² The dangers of the world are also visible in Hildegard's thought. In her play, one of the things that withholds from humans a heavenly fate is the allure of the world.¹⁶³ The power of humility as a virtue, capable of pulling humans away from the world, is also present in Parr in her contrast between the world and the urge to follow the wisdom of Jesus Christ, which is ultimately visible in his humility. Bellitto also ascribed to Augustine and Gregory the Great significant influence on medieval thinking on humility. Humility for them, as for Hildegard, is both the origin and guardian of all other virtues. Gregory emphasized humility as the imitation of Christ's self-emptying and as the key to moral formation. According to Bellitto, in the medieval period, humility was strongly linked to monastic life, with Benedict of Nursia (480-547) institutionalizing it as a practice of self-restraint and obedience.¹⁶⁴ Amma Theodora (sixth century) and Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) offer further examples of humility across the period beyond male monasticism. Theodora's humility is empowering as it enables her to repel demonic forces, while Catherine viewed humility as a tool for self-knowledge and charity. However, Catherine's performative humility takes the form of extreme fasting practices, which reveals the tension between humility as a virtue and its potential to become harmful.¹⁶⁵ The humility of Francis of Assisi (d.1226) mirrors that of Catherine through its emphasis on poverty and obedience. Like Hildegard, Francis regarded humility as the leading virtue.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Parr connects humility to self-restraint, but never in a physical way. To Parr, this connection is instead marked by self-contempt.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 110-113.

¹⁶² Ibid., 41-44.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 45-52.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 64-65, 68.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 65-70.

A major intellectual shift occurred during the High Middle Ages, when the rise of scholasticism and the emergence of universities transformed the practice of humility from morality-orientated to epistemologically-orientated. Developing notions of humility now took place largely outside monasteries and convents. In the context of scholasticism some intellectuals worried about the supposed possibility of intellectual inquiry without limitations. This notion of inquiry without boundaries seems to explain Parr's hostile attitude towards scholasticism, which she mocks in *Lamentation* more than once and equates with pride. Parr's interpretation of scholasticism is that it leads to trusting in one's intellectual abilities, leaving little to no room for God. This strain of thought in Parr results in a stark division between knowledge that is gained by human reasoning and knowledge gained by encountering the Divine through meditation. There is no nuance present in Parr regarding scholasticism, reflecting later medieval thinking which is highly suspicious of intellectual endeavour where God is concerned. An example is found early in Rolle's fourteenth-century *Incendium*, which circulated widely across Europe in the period. Bellitto nuances this issue within scholasticism by outlining the role of humility on intellectual endeavors as proposed by some intellectuals. He notes that just prior to the scholastic period, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), albeit a monastic writer, introduced the concept of "learned ignorance". This concept highlighted the necessity of intellectual humility in the pursuit of divine knowledge. Scholars such as Albertus Magnus (1200-1280) and Thomas Aquinas (d.1274) integrated humility within scholastic learning. They positioned humility as an epistemic virtue that enables the individual to recognize the limits of human reason. During the late-medieval period, following in the footsteps of Bernard, Albertus and Aquinas were both cornerstones of personal piety within the Dominican Order, and influential in their attitudes towards intellectual inquiry.¹⁶⁷ According to Bellitto this expanded meaning of humility marks the beginning of a transition from medieval to early modern thought. That all these ideas come together in Parr is the subject of the next chapter, which focuses on her image of the crucified as a book.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I discussed major motifs in *Lamentation*. I have also begun to suggest that Parr is unafraid to draw on both medieval Catholic and early modern Protestant thinkers in her self-proclaimed Protestant theology. While scholars have noted these overlaps to some extent, they have dismissed connections between Parr and ideas that can be broadly situated within medieval mystical traditions and devotion. To move beyond research that views Parr exclusively within the context of the Protestant Reformation will enrich our understanding of Parr, and highlight that a divide between the Middle Ages and the sixteenth

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 77-94.

century is not beneficial when dealing with the topic of personal devotion. In this chapter I worked with the theories of Clement and Bellitto. These theories illustrate that thinking on humility transcends modern academic boundaries, that although it carries a spectrum of meanings and emphases, it only rarely shows significant changes in meaning in the period between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. This can be illustrated in the case of Parr through her image of the crucified as a book (the topic of chapter 2), an image which allows us to demonstrate that Parr is also indebted to medieval devotion and while situating it within a Protestant framework does not cease to employ it in ways that seem more familiar to late-medieval devotion than the Protestant context into which she is most often placed.

Chapter II: The “Book of the Crucifix”: Parr's Debt to Late Medieval Devotion and Mysticism

Introduction

This chapter deals with the Passion-oriented union that is expressed in *Lamentation*'s key metaphor of “the book of the crucifix”. Previous Parr scholars have tried to understand the metaphor by considering how Parr’s contemporaries dealt with the subject of Christ crucified. Their research demonstrates the difficulty of explaining the origin of the metaphor in this way. Indeed, to explain the metaphor we should not focus on sources from the early sixteenth century, but earlier centuries. I will illustrate that the theme of Christ crucified and comparison to a book or manuscript was oft-present theme in medieval mystic texts and related literature. In *Lamentation*, Parr uses the book metaphor to depict Christ's crucified body as a text that reveals human sinfulness. Once read and embraced, his body offers redemption. Parr urges her readers to read the Passion as a book. In the first Chapter I pointed out that academics are divided over the literalness of this metaphor. Looking at medieval sources helps determine whether Parr is in continuity or discontinuity with medieval mystics when it comes to literalness and so helps better to elicit her meaning.

Grounded in the theme of humility which underpins *Lamentation*, the metaphor of Christ crucified as a book is vital in understanding Parr's spirituality. Indeed, it is a summation of her understanding of humility. As noted in the previous chapter, Clement argues that humility in early modern religious texts reflects a person's connection to God. The individual acknowledges human sinfulness and the perfection of God. Bellitto defines humility through the centuries as both a virtue that offers a way to assess oneself and the world and an ability to discern the limitations and opportunities of knowledge and control. Medieval humility is defined by Bellitto as a response against pride and a tool for the individual to understand itself. Humility itself becomes a habit that is marked by obedience and patience to God.¹⁶⁸ Parr's use of the book metaphor expresses these processes as described by Bellitto and Clement. Christ crucified as a book provides Parr with a compass to understand herself and the world around her, which means she realizes that she is unable to save her own soul and is dependent on Christ, who is sent to redeem sinners. She points to the dangers of the faulty wisdom of the world that revolves around pride. These insights depend on a personal spiritual connection to God in the “reading” process. Parr performatively describes her obedience when she describes herself as a beggar kneeling before God in lowliness, confessing her sins.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Bellitto, 66-69.

¹⁶⁹ Parr, 453-454.

The idea of reading Christ's Passion as a book stems directly from the medieval period. By the Later Middle Ages there was a practice, especially among women, of owning personal books of devotion containing instructions on meditation and prayer. Many of these books depict Christ's Passion in vivid images. This is true of gospel harmonies, like the highly popular anonymous Franciscan *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (*Meditations on the Life of Christ*) or Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* (*Clock of Wisdom*) and of Books of Hours, that is, prayerbooks containing standard prayers built around the eight canonical hours, and often owned by educated women. There were also manuscripts, such as MS Egerton 1821. Skinnebach argues such manuscripts were considered the actual Body of Christ by the medieval believer.¹⁷⁰ Next to this practice there is also evidence that the meditation process associated with these devotional books circulated more widely. Rolle writes about Christ as a book to be studied through meditation.¹⁷¹ In this chapter, first the practice Christ's-body-as-a-book will be carefully examined to the extent it is relevant in this study. I will then turn to the metaphor of the crucified as a book, considering how this earlier meditative practice can illuminate our understanding of Parr's metaphor, notwithstanding the fact that she remains staunchly Protestant.

The Material Practice of Christ as a Book

Skinnebach argues that the Passion of Christ is essential to medieval devotion. Both individuals and congregations immersed themselves in the Passion through various practices. According to Skinnebach, Passion devotion in the Later Middle Ages developed into a dense cluster of visual, material, and textual practices in which the body of Christ crucified functioned simultaneously as image, object, and book. Medieval devotion increasingly concentrated on the physical details of the Passion, rendered with exceeding intensity in manuscripts and prayer books. Christ's wounds, flowing blood, and instruments of torture filled the leaves. These devotional books operated as "hypermedia", presenting the *imago*, *logos*, and *corpus* of Christ through image, text and material form. Engaging with such books enabled the devotee to actively participate in Christ's life and Passion through reading, seeing, and feeling, thus the practice involved the full range of internal and even physical senses.¹⁷² Skinnebach argues that in this process of spiritual meditation a relationship between the book and the owner was established, which she labels "hagiosensory and hagiokinetic reciprocity" in that both the entire book and the full body of the devotee participates.¹⁷³ According to Skinnebach, Christ's body was literally being read.

¹⁷⁰ Laura Katrine Skinnebach, "The Lacerated Body of the Book: Bloody Animation of the Passion in a Fifteenth-Century Devotional Book," *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1102, 2, 7.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1.

The reader did not only reenact Christ's birth and bloody death but also experienced a glimpse of the resurrection and eternal life in which Christ preceded them.¹⁷⁴ The whole body and mind were engaged in the visual and material process of meditation that helped towards divine encounters.

A central feature of this devotional culture was the body-book analogy. Skinnebach relates it to the *Logos* concept. The book corpus was connected to the body of Christ founded on the theological idea that God is the *verbum* and Christ the Word that became flesh,¹⁷⁵ a belief, that Sarah Noonan argues, "permeated all levels of society".¹⁷⁶ Skinnebach argues that medieval theology conceived Christ's wounded flesh as a literal manuscript: his skin was parchment, his bruises and wounds the black and red ink, and his suffering a scribal act.¹⁷⁷ There are even examples of pages completely covered in drops of blood-red paint, such as MS Egerton 1821, a manuscript from the fifteenth century (figure 1-5). Images like these testify to Christ's humiliation and pain, but as Skinnebach argues, also "professed his ultimate triumph".¹⁷⁸ The body-pages were often accompanied with written prayer instructions and dedications to saints.¹⁷⁹

It was not uncommon that the practitioner had skin on skin contact with the pages of the books as there is evidence they were licked, kissed and touched.¹⁸⁰ Figures 1-5 shows folios from MS Egerton 1821. Figure 1 is a picture of pages in this manuscript that are covered in black with red spots, on the left side the engagement of the devotee is visible. The ink is scratched, rubbed, and licked away. Figures 2-4 show blood-red pages with images of Christ's Passion accompanied with instructions. Figure 4 shows a Carthusian monk kneeling before Christ. The manuscript (fig.1-4) demonstrates the brutality of Christ's Passion. The devotee immersed in this spiritual meditation becomes quite literally immersed in blood. In the *Charter of Christ*, which was copied and distributed widely during the fourteenth and fifteenth century, the ink was even considered the spittle of the Jews.¹⁸¹ The parchment of the book is Christ's skin and the letters were written with his blood, sometimes the nails of crucifixion are the quill.

According to Caroline Walker Bynum, the medieval comprehension of blood surpassed the meaning of pain and humiliation. In medieval thought blood was considered multivalent: it signified life, sacrifice, nourishment, accusation, and redemption simultaneously. Blood was connected to extreme physical humiliation but also signified

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁶ Sarah Noonan, *Bodies of Parchment: Representing the Passion and Reading Manuscripts in Late Medieval England* (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2010), 6.

¹⁷⁷ Skinnebach, 6-8.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 6.

salvation and eternal life. Blood demonstrated the reconciliatory aspects of Christ's passion; an answer to the guilt the devotee might experience through engagement with his death, thus blood carried the power of life within it. In the eyes of fifteenth-century believers, this life itself was identified as Christ.¹⁸² Bynum's argument demonstrates, with regards to MS Egerton 1821, that meditations on Christ's blood both indicted the devotee and offered consolation, resulting in an affective transformation that aligned sorrow with love and guilt with hope. As for the vividness of the images, we also have to take into consideration that in a period where not everyone was able to read the Bible, such images made the narrative of the Passion more accessible. MS Egerton 1821 promotes images as "books of the laity", an idea derived from Gregory the Great.¹⁸³



Fig. 1 MS Egerton 1821 (ff.1v-2, British Library)



Fig. 2 MS Egerton 1821 (f.8v, British Library)

¹⁸² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

¹⁸³ Skinnebach, 6.



Fig. 3 MS Egerton 1821 (f.9, British Library)



Fig. 4 MS Egerton 1821 (f.9v, British Library)

Figure 5 shows a folio of the manuscript with Christ being breastfed by his mother, surrounded by verses from the Rosary. The Virgin played a pivotal role in this devotional framework. According to Skinnebach, the reader prepares for the blood and flesh of Christ by first drinking the “milk-word” from the Virgin’s breast. Just as Christ’s wounds were read as text, the faithful could touch, gaze at, and meditate on Mary’s presence.¹⁸⁴ The life of Christ became the complete spiritual life of the devotee. In relation to the *Logos*-concept, Mary is not just Christ’s mother, but also the vessel through which believers encounter the Word made flesh. In devotional books, such as MS Egerton 1821, Mary serves as the book’s cover. She is the “container” of the Book Christ.¹⁸⁵ Nurturing from Mary’s breast prepares the reader for the Eucharistic encounter with Christ’s Passion as a book.

¹⁸⁴ Skinnebach, 12.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 12-16.



Fig. 5 MS Egerton 1821 (f. 2v, British Library)

According to Noonan, the trope of relating Christ's body to a written or illustrated document became incredibly popular in the late fifteenth century. She relates the popularity to an increase in book circulation.¹⁸⁶ How written metaphors of Christ crucified as a book "work", other than possibly relating to a well-known practice, is less clear. This begs the question of the relationship between metaphors such as Parr's and the practice described above. She examines how late-medieval Passion poetry negotiates the relationship between text and image by presenting written words as possessing visual, image-like qualities. Aside from Gregory the Great's description of images as books for the laity, there is the alternative tradition, rooted in Priscian, of understanding written letters themselves as images, visually representing sound and thought. Against this background, writing on the Passion, can dissolve the boundaries between text and image. Noonan gives the example of *The ABC of Christ's Passion*, a document that relates the letters of the alphabet to the wounds and suffering of Christ's body during the Passion, and John Lydgate's Passion poems to demonstrate that late-medieval audiences may have understood texts themselves as visually charged devotional objects that mediated Christ's suffering through their materiality.¹⁸⁷ Both the *ABC* and Lydgate work with the crucifix metaphor, albeit in the form of imagistic poetry. These works belong to a different genre than Parr's *Lamentations*, but offer

¹⁸⁶ Noonan, 6.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 101-107.

background into how invoking the crucifix as a book might resonate in readers. While Noonan focuses only on the medieval period and therefore Catholic spirituality, my analysis of the metaphor will demonstrate that the medieval book metaphor survived the turn of the medieval period, so it is not unreasonable to suppose that thought of the relationship between text and image still circulated, especially since Books of Hours remained popular.

Noonan argues that even in devotional works without pictures that contained the book metaphor, a mentally-construed image of the crucified Christ is evoked.¹⁸⁸ The instruction to “behold”, a verb that Parr also uses to direct the attention of her reader to the crucifix, would immediately draw attention to “an internal meditative landscape”.¹⁸⁹ It is important to note that in the early modern period, crucifix images continued to play a significant part in culture.¹⁹⁰ Already at the start of the Church of England there were tensions on the subject of the crucifix, expressed in iconoclastic raids. Cranmer and Henry were not in agreement on whether crucifixes should be allowed in churches. However, the king prevailed and crucifixes were officially still in place in their central position in English parish churches until at least the end of his reign. Generally, the role of the crucifix in worship was not diminished although other images were abolished. Margaret Aston points to the “book of the rood” in the *The King's Book* (previously discussed in Chapter 1). According to Aston, this image was in “itself a defence of holy images” and a promotion of the crucifix as “books for the unlearned”.¹⁹¹ Another public source of the Passion narrative are the Religious plays, in particular the Digby plays, that we know were still performed in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁹² This means that all members of society were able to familiarize themselves with images of Christ's life and Passion.

Noonan connects Books of Hours to the practice of considering devotional books as the body of Christ. In the later Middle Ages, mostly members of “upper society” owned a Book of Hours.¹⁹³ Although men were known to own them, most were owned by women. Besides serving as a guide in prayer and meditation, women sometimes added prayers and typically used them to register family events.¹⁹⁴ In the early sixteenth century the specific type of images that I previously associated with documents such as the MS Egerton 1821 did not disappear. The prayerbooks of Catherine of Aragon, first wife of Henry VIII and Anne

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 110.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 105-106, 123.

¹⁹¹ Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 724-732.

¹⁹² Donald C. Baker and John L. Murphy, *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and e Museo 160* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1982). (In particular: ix-lx.)

¹⁹³ Noonan, 105-106.

¹⁹⁴ Virginia Reinburg, “‘For the Use of Women’: Women and Books of Hours,” *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4 (2009), 235–40.

Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII contain similar images. It is not unlikely that Katherine Parr also owned such a book although its existence cannot be traced. We do know that the Parr family owned a Book of Hours that the young Katherine wrote inscriptions in. The book came into the possession of her uncle after her father's death.¹⁹⁵ Figure 6 depicts a page from the prayerbook of Anne Boleyn. The image of the suffering Christ is like those in MS Egerton 1821, depicting Christ's bloodshed vividly. When Parr speaks of beholding Christ crucified, it is very likely her readers would immediately envisage such images. With this in mind, we will now turn to Parr's metaphor of the crucified as a book, considering how knowledge of this tradition can help us to nuance previous thinking on what is recognized as her guiding image in *Lamentation*.



Fig. 6 Anne Boleyn's Book of Hours (Kings 9, f.231v, British Library)

Parr, Fisher, and tradition: Writing about Christ and the Crucifix as a Book

Mueller has identified Fisher's Good Friday sermon as the most likely source of influence for Parr's metaphor. Joel Gallagher addresses the possible dates of the sermon and Parr possible knowledge of it. The sermon could have been given by Fisher somewhere between 1519 and 1521, given similarities to Fisher's *Two Fruitful Sermons* (1520 and 1521).¹⁹⁶ However, Mueller suggests that the sermon was delivered between 1531 and 1534 and that Parr either had access to the manuscript prior to *Lamentation* (1547) or heard the sermon.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 37-38.

¹⁹⁶ Joel R. Gallagher, "The Scotist Soteriology of John Fisher in His Good Friday Sermon on Christ's Passion," *Franciscan Studies* 78 (2020): 175.

¹⁹⁷ Gallagher, 175; Mueller, "Complications", 142-143.

The sermon was published in English in 1578 and in Latin in 1597.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, Parr could not have accessed the printed version prior to writing *Lamentation*. However, there is evidence that George Day, who was Parr's almoner, possessed Fisher's unprinted and unpublished works. It is speculated that he shared them with Parr.¹⁹⁹ Gallagher points to another possibility. He argues that although the sermon was delivered on Good Friday in an unknown year, it might have been, or at least in part, delivered on more than one occasion by Fisher or others.²⁰⁰ We know Fisher's sermons circulated widely in the sixteenth century because citations are found in multiple works by various authors.²⁰¹ We also know that Parr was thoroughly acquainted with other works by Fisher, as seen in *Psalms or Prayers*.²⁰² Although it cannot be proven beyond doubt that Parr had access to Fisher's sermon, there is another aspect that needs to be taken into account. This is the aspect of phrasing. Mueller points out that Parr's "book of the crucifix" looks like a direct reference to Fisher.²⁰³ Fisher writes: "This book to our purpose may be taken unto us, the Crucifix, (...) A man may easily say and think with himself (beholding in his heart the Image of the Crucifix), who are you and who am I." "Who are you and who am I?" is a quote Fisher ascribes to Francis. Indeed, I have found multiple sources where either Christ, his body, or the Cross is described as a book in relation to the Passion, but I have not found an exact match to Parr's description of the crucifix as a book outside Fisher.

Parr's choice of words in the phrase "book of the crucifix" is a significant factor in understanding her use of the metaphor. Thomas Patrick Mulvey points out that Parr deliberately uses "crucifix" rather than "cross". A crucifix is a cross with Jesus hanging on it, rather than the empty cross favoured by Protestants.²⁰⁴ Mulvey writes: "Words are important. If she had meant cross, she could have said cross. Time and again she did not. She consistently said crucifix."²⁰⁵ Her choice of the word "crucifix" fills a gap that might be intentional in *Lamentation*. By gap I mean that Parr does not express the visual suffering of Christ's body on the Cross with the same intensity as the earlier and contemporary Catholic authors do (and in this I include her flesh-book analogy of Christ). Parr's flesh-book analogy never becomes fully literal. However, by using "crucifix", Parr invokes the same mental image of Christ on the cross as a humiliated and battered in relation to a book that can be

¹⁹⁸ Gallagher, 175.

¹⁹⁹ Gallagher, 175. See also: Thomas Patrick Mulvey, *The Spiritual Reformation in Elizabethan Books of Public and Private Devotion* (PhD diss., Boston University, 2015), 215-217.

²⁰⁰ Gallagher, 175.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 176.

²⁰² Mueller, *Complete Works*, 12-14.

²⁰³ Mueller, "Complications", 142.

²⁰⁴ Aston, 707-882.

²⁰⁵ Mulvey, 258.

“read”. This is further enforced by her insistence that one needs to “behold Christ crucified”.²⁰⁶

Cecilia Hatt provides further context to Fisher’s Good Friday sermon. There is no Eucharist on this holy day, so the service uniquely has a meditative rather than sacrificial character. Traditionally, Passion meditation should enable the lay person to sympathize with the suffering Christ and involve him/herself deeply in it, culminating in repentance and spiritual elevation. According to Hatt, this is the inheritance of Francis and Bernard.²⁰⁷ As the Gospel is read or recited in Latin, it is the task of the preacher to make the Passion narrative available to those who do not understand Latin.²⁰⁸ Hatt argues that Fisher’s sermon is influenced by Bonaventure’s *Vitis Mystica*, Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*, and the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*. The *Meditationes* is a work that has long been attributed to Bonaventure (and Hatt is somewhat unclear as to its attribution), but contemporary consensus is that the work is not original to Bonaventure, although it echoes the affective devotion that he promulgated. As I noted above this was an extremely popular and highly influential book.²⁰⁹ It was also in Henry VIII’s Westminster library during his marriage to Parr.²¹⁰ According to Hatt, Fisher’s emphasis on the paradox of Christ’s suffering and his emphasis on “marvelling”, signal the importance of both an intellectual and emotional response to the Passion.²¹¹ Hatt suggests that the motifs Fisher borrowed from medieval mystics and the *Meditationes*, would have been known to members of his congregation as “these works, and others like them, were widely quoted and the images known”.²¹² Fisher’s paradox, to which Hatt draws attention, is that the events on the Cross were excruciating to Christ, but delightful for the repentant individual. Hatt points out that the crucifix was always present in the church to be gazed upon, as were other artforms that portray events of the life of Christ.²¹³ The context of the sermon might explain why Fisher uses the word “crucifix” in relation to the book metaphor and not “cross” or “body of Christ”. Indeed, as I have argued already, the latter terms are more commonly found in meditations on the Passion. Traditionally during the Good Friday liturgy there was the practice of the veneration of the cross, a tradition that goes back to the fourth century.²¹⁴ Fisher’s use of the word “crucifix”

²⁰⁶ Appendix 1.

²⁰⁷ Cecilia A. Hatt, ed., *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester: Sermons and Other Writings, 1520–1535* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 289-291.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 289-291.

²⁰⁹ Hatt, 292-293. Some scholars believe Johannes de Caulibus to be the author of this work, but this is not universally accepted. Other scholars attribute the work to an anonymous author. See: Sarah McNamer, “Further Evidence for the Date of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi*,” *Franciscan Studies* 50 (1990): 235–61.

²¹⁰ Carley, *The Libraries*, no. H2.

²¹¹ Hatt, 292.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 293.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 293.

²¹⁴ Christopher Sweeney, *Grief and the Cross: Popular Devotion and Passion Piety from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (PhD diss., Fordham University, 2009), 112-113.

may also be a deliberate ploy to focus his parishioners eyes on the crucifix hanging in the church, so as to draw them closer into the praxis of the veneration that is to come and so help them to engage more fully in the contents of his sermon.

The following survey of the possible background(s) of Fisher's use of the book metaphor points to a broader medieval tradition of writing about Christ's Passion in terms of a book and what this means for the Divine encounter. Hatt stresses that the many borrowed motifs of Fisher make it difficult to pinpoint the exact sources on which Fisher relied.²¹⁵ I will argue that Fisher was likely influenced both by the images he uses and theological themes drawn from various sources, mystical and scholastic. Focusing on the relevance for understanding Parr's use of the crucifix metaphor in *Lamentation*, I will first examine the influences underpinning Fisher's book metaphor. I will argue that even though it cannot be stated with absolute surety that Parr drew on the Catholic Fisher, either deliberately or otherwise, she can at least partially be placed in the same traditions as Fisher. I will also focus on where Parr diverges from Fisher and other sources underpinning her use of the crucifix metaphor and her spiritual elaborations on it. This survey will reveal that this image and its accompanying thinking as used by Fisher and Parr can be traced back to a pool of ideas that circulated during the medieval and early modern period, mostly in England. Finally, having done this, I will place this metaphor back within Parr's Protestant theology, considering how this study further nuances our understanding of the way that Parr makes use of sources from various traditions, including the mystical. In Appendix 1, Parr's version of the book of the crucifix can be found and Appendix 2 contains Fisher's version.

The "book of the crucifix": a textual analysis of Fisher's and Parr's metaphor in comparison to other sources

Fisher starts his sermon with Ezekiel 2:9-3:3. He tells the story of how the book "spread before" the prophet was "swéete as honye" and how in the book was written "*Lamentationes, Carmen, et vae*" / "Lamentation, songe, and woe".²¹⁶ This phrase from Ezekiel 2:9²¹⁷ serves as the backbone of the sermon in which relation Fisher contemplates on the Crucifix, Christ's Passion on the Cross, as a book. Fisher connects Ezekiel's book to the Crucifix which he identifies as the same book: "This booke to our purpose may bée taken vnto vs, the Crucifixe, the which doubtlesse is a merueylous booke..." The book of the crucifix is divided by Fisher into the three parts, *Lamentationes, Carmen, et vae*, of Ezekiel 2:9. Fisher then invokes the example of Francis, who benefited from the "lesson" of the crucifix book. Fisher

²¹⁵ Hatt, 294.

²¹⁶ John E. B. Mayor, ed., *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. Part I* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1876), published for the Early English Text Society, 388.

²¹⁷ *Vulgate*. In the Hebrew Bible: Ezekiel 2:10.

explains the Passion narrative in terms of bookmaking on multiple occasions via his book of the crucifix, as can be seen in Appendix 2 of this thesis.

According to Hatt, Fisher's crucifix metaphor draws on "two main distinguishable sources": the *Vulgate's* version of Colossians 2:14 and the *Fasciculus Morum*.²¹⁸ The *Vulgate* reads "handwriting" in Colossians 2:14 instead of "record". Hatt argues that this inspired Fisher's metaphor. As Fisher frequently cites the *Vulgate* in his Good Friday sermon, Hatt's argument has validity. The *Fasciculus Morum* (hereafter *FM*), a fourteenth-century preacher's handbook, was known to Fisher.²¹⁹ Hatt sufficiently proves that Fisher uses ideas from *FM* in his Good Friday sermon on other instances.²²⁰ However, although the passage she quotes from the handbook in relation to Fisher's crucifix metaphor may possibly have inspired him, I will demonstrate that it certainly does not come as close to Fisher's phrasing in comparison to other sources. Hatt argues that Fisher was inspired by a passage in *FM* where it is stated that Eve "wrote out a contract" with the devil "when she stretched out her hand for the apple".²²¹ Hatt also argues that Fisher is inspired by an idea that circulates in other mystical texts. Fisher uses the word "parchment" to describe how Christ's body was stretched onto the cross and into the form of a book. According to Hatt, Fisher draws on an idea by Augustine that is later adapted by Bonaventure and Ludolph of Saxony. Augustine compares the stretching to a drumskin ("And because he who is crucified is spread out on the tree; to make drum, the flesh - that is the skin - is stretched on the wood.")²²² However, Fisher nowhere compares the stretching to a drumskin and is consistent in his comparison of Christ's skin to parchment, which is a significant difference. Parchment relates to bookmaking and a drum skin is the top of a drum. The drumskin metaphor does not transfer easily to the book metaphor, as the application and purpose of a book and a drum are very different. Again, maybe Fisher was inspired by this idea since both drumskin and parchment is animal skin stretched on a frame before use for a specific purpose, but Fisher's different phrasing to describe the stretching of Christ's body and skin suggests a relationship to sources that are closer to the words he employs to develop his image, and his use of the word "parchment" indicates a relationship with bookmaking and manuscripts. Hatt does however illustrate that the comparison of the stretching of Christ's body with how animal skins are stretched for a purpose is a motif that can be found separately from Christ's body as a book image in medieval texts on Passion devotion.²²³

²¹⁸ Hatt, 295.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 294.

²²⁰ Ibid., 324-349.

²²¹ Ibid., 295.

²²² Ibid., 330.

²²³ Hatt, 330.

The reference to Christ's skin as parchment is not found in Parr, but she is familiar with the image of Christ being stretched as she uses this image in her other works. Absence of reference to "parchment" in Parr's book metaphor could be due to print culture. Although when Fisher was born (1469), print culture was relatively new (1476) by the time Parr wrote *Lamentation*, printed books were increasingly mainstream.²²⁴ In the printing process no parchment is used and letters are typically printed on paper. This could explain the absence of terms surrounding medieval illuminated manuscripts in Parr's *Lamentation* present in Fisher's metaphor. However, another reason for this absence might be purposeful. During Fisher's time, print culture would have been widely known, still he uses the image of Christ's skin stretched like parchment. Fisher was a traditional Catholic who utilized his sermons to educate his congregation in traditional Passion devotion by invoking traditional images for appropriation. Parr on the other hand is not particularly concerned with detailed preservation of traditional images from the Catholic tradition. She appropriates the book metaphor to the extent it is required to illustrate the necessity of beholding Christ crucified for her Protestant faith.

Fisher views Christ's body set on the cross as parchment being stretched and dried in the sun like in the traditional book making process.²²⁵ In this passage Fisher's comes very close to a passage in the *FM*, where it is stated that: "[Christ] stretched out his blessed body, as a parchment-maker can be seen to spread a hide in the sun. In this way Christ, when his hands and feet were nailed to the cross, offered his body like a charter to be written on."²²⁶

Ludolph of Saxony and Bonaventure do describe Christ being stretched, but do not mention Christ's body as a book. Ludolph reads: "...and naked, he was cruelly fastened to the wood of the cross which had been fixed in the ground, savagely stretched and pulled most tightly like a skin is stretched here and there".²²⁷ Bonaventure writes that Christ's body is pierced, and stretched in such a way that "they may easily count all my bones".²²⁸ In the Digby *Burial of Christ*, there is also reference to Christ's crucified body as a book made from stretched parchment and written in blood. Mawdleyne (Magdalene) says to Joseph: "Cum hithere, Ioseph, beholde & looke, How many bludy letters ben wreten in this pis buke, Small margente her is." To which Joseph replies: "Ye, this parchement is stritchit owt of syse."²²⁹ Indeed, the idea that Christ's body is stretched in an unnatural way is also present in Fisher's "Never any parchment skin was more straightly stretched by strength upon the

²²⁴ Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume 3, 1400–1557* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-30.

²²⁵ Appendix 2: "After they stretched...upon the cross."

²²⁶ Siegfried Wenzel, ed., *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 212-213.

²²⁷ Hatt, 330.

²²⁸ Ibid., 330.

²²⁹ Mary Caroline Spalding, *The Middle English Charters of Christ* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1914), x.

frames...” Fisher’s reference to holes beneath in the cross relates to Christ being stretched to meet the pre-made holes in the cross, a detail prominently featured for dramatic purposes in mystery plays that were common in this time period.²³⁰

The graphic image of Christ being stretched on the cross is not present in Parr’s book image, but I have found evidence that Parr was aware of it. In her *Psalms or Prayers* (1544), there is a passage that is very similar.²³¹ Parr included the image in her *Personal Prayerbook* (1544-1548). Mueller argues that the prayerbook is a composition of traditionalist and Reformed sources that Parr reworks, calling it “syncretic”.²³² The passage in *Psalms or Prayers* that is a translation of Fisher’s passage in his Latin Psalms can be found in Appendix 4. This passage ties Fisher closer to Ludolph’s and Bonaventure’s vivid description of Christ’s body being brutally stretched to the point that his bones can be discerned from the flesh, but is incredibly similar to a passage in the *FM*.²³³ In the Good Friday sermon Fisher uses different words but is obviously drawing on his earlier work in his description, reworking the description into a book metaphor. The passage aligns with a passage relating to his crucifix metaphor that will not be discussed separately in this thesis because there is no equivalent in Parr’s *Lamentation*.²³⁴ Both texts (Fisher’s and Parr’s) describe Christ’s body affectively. In Parr’s prayerbook the thought corresponds with the passage from *Psalms or Prayers* and evidence of influence can be found in her description of stretching that impacts Christ’s sinews, but she doesn’t decorate the image as highly, resulting in a less visual and affective image. She writes: “Thou wert drawn and stretched and through-pierced into Thy heart.”²³⁵ Thy sinews and veins were broken, and Thy skin and flesh was torn. Thy hands and and feet nailed to the cross, Thou sheddest all Thy blood, and yielded up Thy ghost.”²³⁶ She felt drawn to this image of Christ on the cross at some point and it is possible that this is the image she has in mind when she describes Christ on the cross in her book metaphor.²³⁷

Hatt proposed multiple sources that come close to Fisher’s book image, my analysis will bring Hatt’s suggestions into question. The version of the book image that I have found that comes closest to Fisher’s in thought, and on some occasions in phrasing, appears in the *Meditations on Christ Crucified* by the Benedictine monk of Farne, believed to be composed by John Whiterig (d.1371).²³⁸ Actually, in some places Parr’s version also is close to the

²³⁰ Hatt, 330.

²³¹ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 197, 235.

²³² *Ibid.*, 510.

²³³ Wenzel, 212-213.

²³⁴ Appendix 2: “And many letters...as the great.”

²³⁵ Note the agreement with the MS Egerton 1821 on figure 3.

²³⁶ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 518.

²³⁷ Appendix 1: “We may see...shall be deprived”; “There was never...much the greater.”

²³⁸ Christiana Whitehead, “Delimiting Sanctity in Two Meditations from Farne Island: The *Exortacio ad Contemplacionem* and the *Meditaciones* of the Monk of Farne, 1210–1370,” in *The Afterlife of St*

monk of Farne's version in thought. Whiterig's version in chapter 53 can be found in Appendix 3.

Whiterig is an oft-overlooked mystic Christiana Whitehead argues that this could be due to his Latinity. Scholars have focused on mystics who wrote in the vernacular.²³⁹ The Durham Benedictine community on Farne Island (Inner Farne) guarded the legacy of Cuthbert (634-687). Whiterig's *Meditations* is embedded in the Cuthbertine tradition that is marked by ascetic ideals.²⁴⁰ Whitehead draws comparison with Whiterig to Rolle. For example: both authors combine desert asceticism with lyric affectivity and share an interest in Passion meditation and the topic of the degrees of love.²⁴¹ Whiterig's engagement with the topic of love has Bernardine features.²⁴² Whiterig's crucifix book image is part of *Ad crucifixum* which is the first and largest *meditacione*.²⁴³ *Ad crucifixum* first approaches Christ through Old Testament typology and then continues in Passion meditation. Whiterig draws extensively on Bernard in his focus on metaphorical and intimate physical contact with Christ.²⁴⁴ Whitehead states that Whiterig also owes a debt to Anselm and uses the same "meditational mode" that is "rhetorical, emotive, and performative".²⁴⁵ In relation to the book metaphor, Whitehead argues that Whiterig's emphasis on the visualization of the crucified body derives from Augustinian and vernacular precedents.²⁴⁶ In *Ad crucifixum*, Whitehead encounters a writer who seeks to "reconcile his university background with his vocation of contemplation".²⁴⁷ Interestingly, this seems to be Parr's aim as well. She did not receive academic education but was thoroughly educated in theology. In *Lamentation*, Parr emerges as a highly learned woman who deploys her theological knowledge to articulate her arguments yet simultaneously accords experiential knowledge a distinctly higher authority. This produces an especially compelling dynamic as she frequently corroborates her experiential insights with knowledge derived from theological inquiry. I will now turn to the book metaphor, comparing Whiterig's image to that of Fisher and Parr.

Whiterig starts his instruction stating that Christ's body as a book is to be studied to "know Christ" and therefore "know your Saviour". Parr similarly starts her introduction to the book of the crucifix with the incentive "to learn to know truly your sins is to study in the book

Cuthbert: Place, Texts and Ascetic Tradition, 690–1500, 139–172 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 145.

²³⁹ Christiana Whitehead, "The *Meditaciones* of the Monk of Farne," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2011*, ed. E. A. Jones, 125–140 (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2013), (Exeter Symposium 8), 125.

²⁴⁰ Whitehead, "Delimiting", 134-136.

²⁴¹ Whitehead, "The *Meditaciones*", 137. The author gives more examples and divergences.

²⁴² Whitehead, "Delimiting", 153.

²⁴³ Whitehead, "The *Meditaciones*", 125.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁴⁶ Whitehead, "Delimiting", 149.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

of the crucifix” and claims with looking into the book she saw “perfectly” her own wrongdoings and Christ as her: “Saviour” and “Redeemer”, who was there for her to “know” and “take”. This thought is certainly present in Fisher’s version, but he elaborates on this aspect throughout the sermon.²⁴⁸ Parr’s “We may see also, in Christ upon the cross, how great the pains of hell and how blessed the joys of heaven be...” looks somewhat similar in intention to Whiterig’s “The words of this book are Christ’s actions, as well as his suffering and passion...” Fisher has a similar intention in mind but is more descriptive in this respect. All aspects of Christ’s suffering are extensively described in his metaphor.²⁴⁹ Whiterig’s analogy regarding Christ’s wounds is not present in Parr’s *Lamentation* but is in Fisher’s Good Friday sermon. Both Fisher and Whiterig mention five wounds that are letters in the book. In Fisher they are the capital letters and in the Whiterig they are “five vowels”. This suggests either that Fisher knew of Whiterig’s work or that the image was more broadly known.

The five wounds of Christ are of importance in manuscripts representing Christ’s body.²⁵⁰ For example: in the *ABC of Christ’s Passion* the motif of five wounds is also found.²⁵¹ The motif also occurs in Books of Hours. Fisher’s and Whiterig’s mention of it further pull the descriptions of meditating on Christ’s body as a book to the Christ’s-body-as-a-book practice. A practice Skinnebach explained. Although Whiterig does not use the words “book of the crucifix”, he means Christ’s crucified body (“His body, hanging on the cross, is a book”). The distinction between Christ as a book and the crucifix as a book will become increasingly important later in this chapter. Whiterig also mentions “the lamentations” in his book metaphor, possibly drawing from Ezekiel 2:9, which Fisher also utilizes. Whiterig describes confronting the book’s content with terms like “reproaches, outrages, insults and humiliations”, paralleling Ezekiel’s “*Lamentationes. Carmen, et vae*” on which Fisher’s sermon is based. Whiterig’s mention of the book being “sweet” and “bitter” likely refers to Revelations 10:8-11, where the book contrasts with its bitterness in the stomach. Both Revelations and Ezekiel mention the contents of the book as being “sweet like honey”, but Revelations adds the “bitterness” to the belly, which is in Whiterig’s discussion but not in Fisher’s, who only speaks of the sweetness. Parr does not reference the metaphorical taste of the book, but she does discuss lamentation in relation to it, writing: “I never (...) lamented for my sins truly, until the time God inspired me with His grace, that I looked in this book.” This could explain the title of her book: “*Lamentation of a Sinner*”. Whiterig’s metaphor of bitterness as a sorrowful memory is echoed in Parr’s reflections on her past sins, which she laments, crying as she meditates on Christ’s suffering. This emotional response is common

²⁴⁸ Mostly in *Carmen*.

²⁴⁹ Appendix 2.

²⁵⁰ Skinnebach, 2-14.

²⁵¹ Noonan, 112-114.

among medieval and early modern women, such as Margery Kempe (1371-1438) and Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509), who also cried during Passion meditations.²⁵²

Whiterig argues that without the knowledge of the book, there is no salvation possible. Parr resembles this sentiment in her: "Then this crucifix is the book...written therein, all truth profitable and necessary for our salvation." In other places in *Lamentation* Parr insists that, like Whiterig, all learning is fruitless without "true" knowledge of Christ. In the last part of Fisher's sermon (woe), Fisher argues that if the contents of Christ's Passion are not embraced by the individual, they remain unsaved. Parr calls it a "sharp" and "painful" thing to be deprived of Christ in relation to damnation. All three authors agree that the contents of the book as Christ's humiliated body on the cross are the only thing to ultimately assure salvation.

Furthermore, there is a part in Fisher's version that bears striking similarities with the last part of Whiterig's book metaphor. Whiterig writes of "many who know all sorts of things" like "the nature of beings, the movements of the stars, the extent of periods of time, the measurements of places". He then contrasts this type of knowledge, which does not contribute to one's salvation, to knowledge of the crucified Christ. In the beginning of Fisher's introduction of the book of the crucifix to the congregation, he speaks of philosophers who "came to so great knowledge" by observing the "wonderfull things, and effects in this world" like "marvellous earthquakes, thunders, lightings, snow, rain and frosts, stars, the eclipse of the sun and the moon and such". Hatt believes this part in Fisher to be inspired by Erasmus's *Paraclesis*, but as she pointed out, Fisher diverges from Erasmus significantly in meaning. According to Hatt, Erasmus's "philosophie naturall" points to his belief that the pagan philosophers did have an understanding of the nature of goodness and the human soul on some level.²⁵³ Hatt argues that Fisher, in contrast to Erasmus, argues that the knowledge of the philosophers is limited to physical sciences.²⁵⁴ However, this image is not unique to Erasmus and Fisher could have found the image in other texts easily. Fisher makes the same argument here as Whiterig does. Fisher, like Whiterig, contrasts natural philosophy, after a detailed account of natural effects, to knowledge of Christ.²⁵⁵ Fisher then illustrates further that the "philosophy of Christian people" is the knowledge of Christ crucified. The idea of contrasting knowledge gained by philosophy and scholastic theology with knowledge acquired through meditation is a popular trope for medieval writers that gravitate towards mysticism. For example: in the prologue on his *Incendium*, Rolle writes that the unlearned are more inclined to learn to love God than philosophers (meaning

²⁵² Noonan, 199-200; Gibson, 210.

²⁵³ Hatt, 325.

²⁵⁴ Hatt, 325.

²⁵⁵ Appendix 2: "But there is...of Christian people."

academic theologians).²⁵⁶ Such wisdom is only understood within a context of loving God,²⁵⁷ which also finds parallel in Parr.²⁵⁸ In this regard, Richard FitzRalph (1299-1360), Chancellor of Oxford University, characterized intellectual debates with the “croaking of frogs and toads in swamps”.²⁵⁹

As argued in Chapter 1, Parr has a very reserved attitude towards philosophic learning. Fisher and Whiterig are not that adverse towards philosophy but view it as subordinate to the lessons of the crucifix book. To Parr, knowledge of Christ is the only sort of knowledge worth considering. This is an element of Parr’s humility that echoes Bellitto research into the Middle Ages. In this period, humility is a tool to assess the world and oneself. For Parr, knowledge of Christ is the only thing she views as truly beneficial in terms of making sense of the world around her and to understand the transformation she experiences in herself with regards to her conversion. Mueller also suspects Erasmus’s influence on both Fisher and Parr in this regard. She argues that Parr, influenced by Protestantism, refuses to compare Christian faith to a form of philosophy. However, according to Mueller, Parr does refer to the same topic of Christian faith versus knowledge that is acquired outside Divine encounter.²⁶⁰ Indeed, as illustrated above and to a fuller extent in Chapter 1, throughout *Lamentation*, Parr likewise states there are two types of knowledge.

Fisher’s book metaphor, and in some instances Parr’s, is very close to Whiterig’s. However, it is hard to establish a definite connection between Fisher and Whiterig. The inventory of Fisher’s library demonstrates his interest in mystical theology but does not indicate that Fisher owned a copy of Whiterig’s *Meditations*.²⁶¹ However, according to Richard Rex it was common for Fisher to borrow books from friends and his citations are often drawn from compilations.²⁶² Fisher could have come across Whiterig’s *Meditations* in this way. What further complicates establishing connections between Whiterig and Fisher or other authors, is that Whiterig and his *Meditations* and thus its influence is under researched.²⁶³

I will now move on to other aspects in Fisher’s and Parr’s book metaphors that have not been covered in the scholarship elsewhere but also show marked similarities to other medieval sources beyond Whiterig.

²⁵⁶ Rolle, 147.

²⁵⁷ Rolle, 147.

²⁵⁸ Parr, 476.

²⁵⁹ Thomas A. Fudge, “Divine Ideas and the Liberal Arts: Jerome of Prague’s Rejoinder to the ‘Croaking of Frogs and Toads in Medieval Swamps,’” *Mediaevistik* 38, no. 1 (2025), 76.

²⁶⁰ Mueller, “Complications”, 148.

²⁶¹ Rex, 193-203.

²⁶² Ibid., 192.

²⁶³ Whitehead, “The *Meditaciones*”, 2011.

A textual analysis of other aspects in Fisher's and Parr's book metaphor

Fisher's description of the spreading of Christ on the cross²⁶⁴ like a book bears resemblance to two passages in *The Myrroure or Glasse of Christes Passion* (1533) by John Fewterer (d.1536). A work that is a translation of Ulrich Pinder's *Speculum Passionis Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi* (1507).²⁶⁵ Pinder's *Speculum* is largely made up of copies of fragments from other devotional works.²⁶⁶ Fisher corresponded with Fewterer, who was a Bridgettine monk at Syon Abbey (Isleworth), and so Fisher could have been aware of the content of Fewterer's work and his aim to make traditional Passion piety more accessible to a wider audience.²⁶⁷ Fewterer's *Myrroure* reads: "(...) his deare beloued sonne to be nayled fast vnto the crosse and spred abroad on the same, as a booke open wherin we myght rede and lerne howe to do penance."²⁶⁸ And a little further: "For Christe is as a booke layd open on the pulpyt of the crosse, (...)"²⁶⁹ Fisher's "when the book is opened and spread" and "the blessed body of Christ was spread upon the cross" is close to Fewterer's description and results in a similar image. Also, Fisher's version makes no mention of a pulpit, whereas in the version of the Benedictine monk Petrus Berchorius (1290–1362) a "pulpit" is mentioned: "Christus enim est quidam liber scriptus in pelle virginea" ("For Christ is a certain book written on (the) Virgin's skin" and "super pulpito politus in crucifixion" ("placed on top of the pulpit in the crucifixion").²⁷⁰ Fisher does however seem to have the same intention with his "It was set up in the sky to the intent that all the world might look upon this book." Parr's version reads: "We may see also, in Christ upon the cross, how great the pains of hell and how blessed the joys of heaven be..." Berchorius, Fewterer, Fisher, and Parr share the same motif of beholding Christ on the cross from a close distance by looking up. Noonan argues that the verb "beholding", found in both Fisher and Parr, "consciously echoes the wording included in many [medieval] devotional works that, in order to encourage a more affective engagement with the scene of Christ's Passion".²⁷¹

In Fewterer's version there is a direct mention of studying the book by reading in it, learning from it, and "do[ing] penance". This incentive, which is connected to the book image, is common in sources where the metaphor can be found. Rolle (d.1349) writes: "Now, sweet Jesus, grant me to read upon thy book, and somewhat to understand the sweetness

²⁶⁴ Appendix 1, "First, I say...upon the cross."

²⁶⁵ Carol Wyvill, *John Fewterer's Myrroure or Glasse of Christes Passion: A Partial Edition with Commentary* (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2011), ii.

²⁶⁶ Wyvill, xlviii.

²⁶⁷ Mulvey, 82.

²⁶⁸ Wyvill, 6.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 36.

²⁷⁰ Petrus Berchorius, *Dictionarii sev Repertorii Moralis, Pars Secunda* (Venice: Hieronymus Scotus, 1574), 401.

²⁷¹ Noonan, 109.

of that writing, and to have liking in studious abiding of that reading”.²⁷² Parr calls upon her reader to “study in the book of the crucifix” and to “look further in this book”. Fisher uses multiple verbs to connect the metaphor to a mode of action, like “taken unto us”, “beholding”, “meditate”, and he also mentions studying the book on two occasions. First, he writes that it: “(...) may suffice for the studie of a true christian man, all the days of his life”,²⁷³ and that those: “(...) with an earnest study resorteth often to look vppon this book”.²⁷⁴ According to Hatt, the idea of studying the Passion in Fisher comes from Erasmus’s *Paraclesis*.²⁷⁵ Maybe Fisher was inspired by Erasmus’s *Paraclesis*, who doesn’t use the book metaphor, but he could easily have read the idea of studying the Passion elsewhere as this connection is commonplace. Fisher does use an image from *Paraclesis* when he mentions a labourer in the field in relation to meditation, but he repurposes the image. Erasmus uses the image to exhort how vernacular Bible-reading is relevant to all layers of society; he expects labourers to recite passages.²⁷⁶ Fisher uses the image to illustrate that meditation on the mental image of Christ crucified is necessary to “every person both ryche and poore”, steering clear of the issue of vernacular Bible-reading.²⁷⁷ *Lamentation*’s, “all sorts of people” echoes Erasmus and Fisher.²⁷⁸ Parr states that everyone must “look at their own vocation, and ordain the same according to Christ’s doctrine”.²⁷⁹ According to Mueller, Parr’s “Christ’s doctrine” is the Bible, echoing Erasmus’s incentive for vernacular Bible-reading.²⁸⁰ However, “Christ’s doctrine” is not equated with Scripture in *Lamentation*. Parr gives a definition of Christ’s doctrine on two distinct occasions. Christ’s doctrine is the teachings of Christ to be “sincere, pure, and true godliness” and the opposite of “all hypocrisy and feigned holiness”.²⁸¹ Christ’s doctrine is professed with “a sincere, pure, and zealous mind”.²⁸² Parr’s own explanation does not substantiate Mueller’s claim that “Christ’s doctrine” is another word for the Bible. It is more likely that “Christ’s doctrine” in Parr points at Christ’s teachings and example. Like Fisher, Parr probably borrowed the idea to express egalitarianism from Erasmus but she repurposed it.

Fisher intensifies the book of the crucifix further by stating that the book itself is the son of God, which places this metaphor within the tradition discussed above. The book, being God’s son, was “written within and without” by the Holy Spirit.²⁸³ According to Hatt,

²⁷² Skinnebach, 6-7.

²⁷³ Hatt, 297.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 306.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 297.

²⁷⁶ Mueller, “Complications”, 148-149.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 148-149.

²⁷⁸ Parr, 482.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 148-149.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 470.

²⁸² Ibid., 474.

²⁸³ Appendix 1: “This book was...was written within.”

Fisher thought of Revelations 5:1.²⁸⁴ This verse in the *Vulgate* mentions a scroll was written “within and without” (*librum scriptum intus et foris*).²⁸⁵ Hatt argues that it relates to the *Logos* concept that Skinnebach also commented on in relation to the Christ’s-body-as-a-book practice.²⁸⁶ The incarnation, God as the Word that became flesh in Jesus Christ, which the parchment represents, is written “within” Mary’s womb, according to Fisher.²⁸⁷

This idea also draws on the medieval practice of Christ’s body like a book. Like Noonan argued; texts relating to the body of Christ as a book in late medieval England illustrate the “cultural belief in Christ as the Incarnate Word, a belief that permeated all levels of society.”²⁸⁸ This belief relates closely to the first chapter of the Gospel of John in which God is described as the Word, introducing Christ. Fisher also quotes John 1.²⁸⁹ Skinnebach argues that in this practice Mary was perceived both as “the container” and “the deliverer” of the Christ book.²⁹⁰ This is an interpretation of the Annunciation in the Gospel of Luke: 1:26-35 and Mary giving birth to baby Jesus as described in the Gospels. Note also the resemblance to Berchorius’s “written on (the) Virgin’s skin”. Fisher’s “The holy Ghost was the pen of almighty God the father” also resembles Berchorius’s statement that Christ as a book in Mary’s womb is written “with the fingers of the Holy Spirit” (*digitis spiritus sancti*).²⁹¹ The combination of Mary’s pregnancy and the Holy Spirit as the author could refer to the Annunciation in Luke 1:35 where the angel Gabriel states that “The Holy Spirit will come on” Mary who wondered how her pregnancy could come into being. Early on in the Christian tradition there is the dominant idea that Mary became pregnant through the intervention of the Holy Spirit.²⁹² Fisher’s and Berchorius’s image of the Spirit “writing” the book that is Jesus Christ as he grows inside Mary seems to directly relate to Luke 1:35. In Berchorius’s case, this is congruent with his description of Christ as a book, rather than the crucifix. In Fisher’s case, he writes that the book is written inside Mary, which does not seem completely congruent with respect to his description of the crucifix as a book. It raises the question whether the crucifix is meant to be the complete book in Fisher’s account or is more likely a part of the book in a more general sense. Fisher does not elaborate on this aspect in his sermon but argues many times that the book to be read is Christ’s crucified body.

²⁸⁴ Hatt, 324.

²⁸⁵ *Vulgate’s Revelations 5:1: Constantin von Tischendorf, Codex Amiatinus: Novum Testamentum Latine interprete Hieronymo ex celeberrimo Codice Amiatino* (Leipzig: Avenarius et Mendelssohn, 1854), 400.

²⁸⁶ Hatt, 297.

²⁸⁷ Early on in Christianity the relationship between *Logos* and Mary’s pregnancy with Jesus Christ has been developed in Christian doctrine. See: Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, ed., *A History of Christian Doctrine*, ed. Benjamin Drewery (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1978), 89, 102, 122-133.

²⁸⁸ Noonan, 6.

²⁸⁹ Appendix 2.

²⁹⁰ Skinnebach, 7.

²⁹¹ Berchorius, 401.

²⁹² Fandy Tanujaya, “Natus Ex Maria Virgine: A Case for Biblical Necessity and Biblical Fittingness of the Virgin Birth,” *Journal Amanat Agung* (2014): 321–358.

In Parr's version the crucifix is meant as the entire book. Parr mentions the role of the Holy Spirit in the meditation on Christ crucified, but differently from the other authors. Parr's distinction between the "reading" and "writing" Christ crucified as a book with regards to the Holy Spirit is porous. She writes in the context of her elaborations on Christ crucified as a book, drawing on Romans 7:

*The true Christian, by Christ, is disburdened: from the servitude of the law, having the law of grace (graven by the Spirit) inhabiting his heart, and from sin that reigned in him, from the power of the infernal spirits, from damnation, and from every evil; and is made a son of God, a brother of Christ, heir of heaven, and lord of the world. So that in Christ, and by Christ, he possesseth all good things.*²⁹³

Parr's claim that the Spirit will "graven" the "law of grace" into the believer's heart evokes the same craftsmanship imagery found in Fisher and Berchorius (d.1362), who describe the Spirit writing the book of Christ crucified with a "pen" or "fingers". By using the verb "graven", Parr aligns the Spirit's work with engraving and carving - processes associated with crafting (with a mallet and chisels) both crucifix and book covers (with a burin) - thereby suggesting that the Spirit impresses grace into the heart as indelibly as an artisan marks material. For Fisher and Berchorius, the Spirit "writes" the book of Christ crucified in the womb, in Parr the Spirit engraves "the law of grace" on the heart. For Parr, the "law of grace" functions similarly to her book metaphor: both are sites of *metanoia*.

Gallagher argues that Fisher's metaphor also works with the concept of *metanoia* as the spiritual conversion that establishes a transformative change in the heart of the believer.²⁹⁴ In Parr, the "law of grace" and the "book of the crucifix" are both encompassing the effects of spiritual transformation based on meditation on Christ's Passion in the conviction that salvation cannot be earned by works. Mueller points to the influence of Luther's theology in his *Lectures of Romans* on Parr's phrasing of "law of grace" versus the "law of servitude".²⁹⁵ Indeed, as Parr is eager to place herself within the Protestant tradition, the emphasis on the distinction between "servitude of the law" and "law of grace" aligns with Reformers' emphasis on this subject. However, Parr's combination of the book metaphor and the law in a positive sense, certainly cannot be attributed to early modern Protestantism exclusively. For example: in his book metaphor Whiterig (d.1371)²⁹⁶ prays that he wishes that "the law of the Lord be ever in my mouth, that I may know what is acceptable in thy sight".

²⁹³ Appendix 1.

²⁹⁴ Gallagher, 187.

²⁹⁵ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 456n52.

²⁹⁶ Appendix 3.

Drawing on Psalm 19:14a,²⁹⁷ and Ezekiel 2-3, Whiterig connects intimate knowledge of Christ with knowing God's law. He uses Psalm 19 and Ezekiel 2-3 to depict the crucifix book as "sweet as honey". The metaphorical taste of the book in Whiterig also corresponds with keeping God's law in the mouth. The connection of knowing the law of God intimately and the ability and desire to discern between right and wrong, is also present in Parr. Parr's "law of grace" is engraved by the Spirit in such a way that it inhabits the heart, thereby referencing intimate knowledge of God's will. Since the book metaphor is closely linked to Christ as the "Word", it is likely that Parr and Whiterig are also alluding to John 1, where Christ is identified as "the one who Moses wrote about in the law".²⁹⁸ In Parr's case this connection is particularly strong. Alongside Romans 7, the "law of grace" evokes John 1:16: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ", which underpins the central argument of *Lamentation* and its key themes.²⁹⁹

In Parr's pneumatology the Spirit is personally present with the individual in the "reading" process. She writes: "Therefore let us endeavor ourselves to study this book, that we, being lightened with the Spirit of God, may give Him thanks for so great a benefit." I already argued that Parr's pneumatology in *Lamentation* comprehends the Spirit as the "bridge-builder" between God and humanity. Resembling Melancton, the Spirit in Parr helps distinguish between godly and worldly things, affirming a personal relationship with God, providing consolation.

Before Parr makes her statement regarding the Spirit, she writes that the book is complete. I already remarked on the similarities between Parr and Whiterig regarding the relationship between Christ crucified as a book and salvation. Parr's "God hath included all things" and "compendiously written therein, all truth" does not reflect Fisher's "written within and without" exactly, although it may refer to the same idea in part. Fisher and Parr both view the book of the crucifix as a complete narrative of salvation. Everything the reader needs to know is written in the book.

As argued before, it is likely that Fisher has the idea of the scroll in Revelations 5 in mind when speaking of "within and without". In what follows in Revelations the scroll is opened in various stages. Separate from its precise content, which is not literally present in Fisher and Parr, the idea is that it encompasses all relevant knowledge. Parr's "included all things" and "all truth" propagates the same idea although the relationship to the idea of the scroll from Revelations is less lucid in Parr than in Fisher. According to Mueller, Fisher's image of Christ crucified as a book is a substitute for Scripture. In Fisher's context vernacular Bible-reading was only allowed with the Bishop's approval.³⁰⁰ Mueller argues that

²⁹⁷ Psalm 19 of the *NIV*-Bible corresponds with Chapter 18 of *Psalmi* in the *Vulgate*.

²⁹⁸ John 1:44 (*NIV*).

²⁹⁹ Translation: *NIV*.

³⁰⁰ Mueller, "Complications", 143-144.

although Erasmus states in his *Paraclesis* that vernacular Bible-reading is beneficial for all, Fisher instead states that studying the book of the crucifix is beneficial for all.³⁰¹ In Parr's context, by the time she wrote *Lamentation* vernacular Bible-reading was encouraged. Mueller argues that through her use of the metaphor, Parr promotes Bible-reading by the laity. Mueller argues that Parr's book image is not a substitute, but a metaphor for Scripture.³⁰² However, in *Lamentation*, Parr moves between the idea of Christ as the incarnate "Word of God" and the idea of Scripture as the written "Word of God" depending on context, but never allows them to overlap in such a way that they acquire the exact same meaning. Christ is the living "Word of God" (*Logos*), while Scripture is a written record that reveals God's will and points to Christ.³⁰³ Note the different approach and interpretation of "Word of God" in the margin that is not in accordance with Parr's nuance on the subject.³⁰⁴ The author of the marginalia slightly diverges with Parr's text in this regard, making connections Parr doesn't herself in *Lamentation*. Here I diverge from Mueller, who argues the marginalia are not likely by Parr's own hand, but in her approach treats them as such.³⁰⁵ I previously argued that words matter in the case of Parr's use of this metaphor. In this respect it means that it would make more sense if she had written about Christ as a book instead of the crucifix, that is, if she meant to equate Christ crucified with Scripture.

In this regard we can note that Fisher views the book of the crucifix as a substitute and not an equation for Scripture. For Fisher, embracing the contents of the book of the crucifix is sufficient as all required knowledge lies therein. Parr does not go that far since for her nothing can replace vernacular Bible-reading. Yet, without recanting her argument about the necessity of vernacular Bible-reading, she argues that embracing the knowledge of the book of the crucifix is what ultimately saves the individual. In doing so, she, not unlike Fisher, puts more weight on embracing Christ crucified than on the ability to read the Bible with regards to salvation. Whitehead's interpretation of Whiterig's book metaphor (d.1371) might provide a solution to Parr's another aspect of her book image. Whitehead argues that Whiterig gives the crucifix book "the depth of exegetical attention normally reserved for the Bible".³⁰⁶ As in Whiterig, the figure of the crucified Christ in *Lamentation* is not equated with Scripture itself yet is presented as warranting the same mode of engagement - one characterized by careful, affective investigation. Furthermore, I illustrated in Chapter 1 that Scripture does point to the essence of Christ's crucifix in *Lamentation* but can be falsely interpreted, as she is of the opinion that some members of the clergy who are able to read

³⁰¹ Ibid., 148.

³⁰² Ibid., 147.

³⁰³ For example: Parr, 467-468, 475-476, 480-482.

³⁰⁴ Parr, 470.

³⁰⁵ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 431, 432n15.

³⁰⁶ Whitehead, "Delimiting", 150.

Scripture are still false teachers. Parr contrapositions false interpretations of Scripture to the knowledge of Christ crucified on multiple occasions in *Lamentation*. To illustrate my argument that words do matter, I draw attention to the example of Christ as a book metaphor of mystic Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1096-1141).

In *De arca Noe*, Hugh of St. Victor identifies Christ with the “book” of Scripture rather than with the crucifix itself, writing: “For the whole Divine Scripture is one Book, and that one Book is Christ, for the whole Divine Scripture speaks of Christ and is fulfilled in Christ. Our purpose in reading Scripture is that, by gaining knowledge of what He did and said and commended, we may be enabled to do what He told us and receive what He has promised.”³⁰⁷ This literal identification of Christ as a book with Scripture diverges from the book metaphors found in Fisher and Parr, who interpret the “book” as Christ crucified. Nevertheless, important thematic parallels remain like Hugh, both Fisher and Parr stress that Christ fulfills God’s promises as revealed in Scripture. God promises salvation in Christ’s Incarnation and crucifixion in Scripture. The focus on gaining knowledge in Hugh’s version is also present in Parr and Fisher who both emphasize studying the crucifix book and hold a higher knowledge to result from this exercise. This knowledge urges the individual to emulate Christ in his humility and suffering. A mild version of this motif is present in Hugh’s “...what He did and said and commended, we may be enabled to do what He told us...” Up until now, Hugh’s version of the book metaphor is the only one that does not explicitly state that the book is Christ’s crucified body on the cross. Hugh’s different appropriation of the crucifix book may reflect his earlier, high-medieval context, preceding the late-medieval English practice in which, as Noonan demonstrates, the metaphor of Christ’s crucified as a book came to full fruition. Although Noonan does draw attention that already in the early medieval period books were promoted for their potential to reach the affective layers of the mind.³⁰⁸ Another aspect that has to be taken into consideration is that the Saxon Hugh’s non-English background may further explain his divergence from the predominantly English mystical tradition (with the exception of the French Berchorius) in which the crucifix book motif becomes most pronounced.

The Hermeneutics of Parr’s Book Metaphor

A detailed account of all the theological implications of Parr’s book metaphor and thus *Lamentation*’s content, outside my elaborations in Chapter 1, moves beyond the scope of my thesis. What follows here is a brief account of the aspects in Parr’s book metaphor

³⁰⁷ Hugh of Saint-Victor. *Selected Spiritual Writings*. Translated by a Religious of C.S.M.V. With an introduction by Aelred Squire, O.P. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962, 85.

³⁰⁸ Noonan, 267.

considered in my textual analysis. This account also serves as indicative of the need for further Parr research.

Gallagher analyzed Fisher's Good Friday sermon, arguing Fisher presents a soteriology that is deeply influenced by Aquinas, Scotus, Abelard, and the Church Fathers.³⁰⁹ Gallagher also found similarities between Fisher and Luther. Following Aquinas, Fisher affirms that Christ's Passion redeems humanity through merit, satisfaction, and sacrifice, and he employs imagery of victory over sin and the devil. Unlike Aquinas, Fisher emphasizes personal sin rather than original sin as the primary cause of Christ's suffering and frames the Passion as a direct, personal act for every individual.³¹⁰ Although not mentioned by Gallagher, Parr follows Fisher in this regard in her book metaphor. According to Parr, reflecting on her sins, she "wickedly offended" God and did God "injury".³¹¹ Gallagher points at another aspect in Fisher's Passion devotion, the aspect of partnership. This is a complicated theme with regards to *Lamentation*. According to Gallagher, while Fisher preached that Christ cancelled sin on the cross, he argues that sinners must be crucified with Christ which allows the complete erasure of the debt towards God. Luther on the other hand, argued that all sins were destroyed in Christ's Passion and faith in Christ and the destruction are required.³¹² Gallagher points to the different interpretations of justification that divided theologians in the sixteenth century.³¹³ In *Lamentation*, Fisher's idea of suffering is combined with an incentive to emulate Christ in his suffering.³¹⁴ However, ultimately, Parr's view is more aligned with that of Luther. She argues that Christ delivered the believer completely, quoting Christ: "Consummatum est."³¹⁵ In *Lamentation*, there is no greater love than that shown in the example of Christ. According to Gallagher, Fisher is influenced by Abelard and Scotus, when he stresses the inspirational and transformative power of Christ's love in the Passion.³¹⁶ The idea of both Christ's love expressed in his Passion and love kindled in the believer by the Passion, is present *Lamentation*: God showed his "charity to us, with such flames of love".³¹⁷ In Parr, the response of the believer to grace is a loving mind and acting accordingly. This closely relates to Parr's pneumatology that I argued bears resemblance to that of Melancthon.

The heart in *Lamentation* is marked by both internal and external activity. Parr's use of similitude (e.g., blind, cold as stone) often references the state of the heart that is

³⁰⁹ Gallagher, 186-187.

³¹⁰ Gallagher, 179.

³¹¹ Appendix 1, "Then I began...Saviour and Redeemer".

³¹² Gallagher, 181-183.

³¹³ Gallagher, 182.

³¹⁴ For example: Mueller, *Complete Works*, 466.

³¹⁵ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 466. See also: Appendix 1: "Now, therefore, we...other to come."

³¹⁶ Gallagher, 183-187.

³¹⁷ Appendix 1.

untuned by God's grace.³¹⁸ The heart also has the ability to discern right from wrong and to desire and contemplate. Mueller places Parr's representation in *Lamentation* of the heart in Protestant theology. Quoting Lewalski, she argues that in Protestant representations the heart is acted upon by God and not located within.³¹⁹ However, looking at Parr's use of the heart in her book metaphor, this does not ring true. The heart is "engraved" with the "law of grace" by the Spirit. The "law of grace" is an image very close to the metaphor itself and embodies *metanoia*. Yet elsewhere the Spirit acts within the heart aiding ethical decisions to the point of being cerebral. The source of this element is Christ himself. This gives cause to draw comparison to the medieval interest in the heart as an organ of both thought and affectivity.³²⁰ Noonan demonstrates that the motif of Christ's Passion written in the heart of devotees is a trope in medieval literature.³²¹ Furthermore, mystics like Johannes Tauler (d.1361) and Richard Rolle (d.1349) are often depicted with "IHC" (Jhesu) on their chest. This symbolizes Christ is engraved in their heart, a depiction of their devotion to Christ.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that Parr's metaphor of the "book of the crucifix" bridges late-medieval devotional culture and emerging Protestant Reformation theology. Key elements of the metaphor - such as the spiritual meditation on Christ crucified whereby divine knowledge is acquired, *metanoia*, and the egalitarian and salvific nature of Christ crucified as a book - persist in Parr's metaphor. This suggests more continuity between late-medieval and early-modern devotional practices than previously recognized. While Mueller notes that Fisher's metaphor reflects a medieval image, thereby implying that it became obscure in the sixteenth century, evidence from the Books of Hours and writers like Fewterer, Fisher, and Parr demonstrate that Christ crucified as a "book" continued to resonate with early-modern believers in a culture where such iconography was still a mainstream way to make the Passion available to members of society. Parr inherits this Catholic tradition, where Christ crucified was understood as a book to be "read" through affective meditation, but reshapes it within a Protestant context. Unlike Catholic writers, Parr avoids graphic depictions of Christ's suffering, although imagining the Passion is an important part of Parr's narrative (e.g., "behold"). Parr's focus on the theological significance of the crucifix enables her to use the metaphor in a way that it reflects Protestant ideals (that are not new in Protestantism, but refashioned), such as justification by faith, the role of Spirit, and vernacular Bible reading.

³¹⁸ Mueller, *Complete Works*, 447, 451, 457, 471.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 433.

³²⁰ As seen in the works of Richard Rolle. See also: Leslie Lockett, "The Hydraulic Model of the Mind in Old English Narrative," in *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions*, 54–109 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

³²¹ Noonan, ii, 9, 28-38, 49-56, 78, 127-130, 226.

However, she still maintains the centrality of the Passion for self-knowledge and repentance, implicitly tying herself to Bernardine and Franciscan traditions. Parr's reappropriation of the metaphor demonstrates her conviction that regardless of her hostile attitude towards Roman Catholic belief systems, some medieval mystical ideas are compatible with her Protestant faith. Parr's book metaphor is a threshold image: it carries the memory of the medieval Christ's-body-as-book devotion while reorienting it towards Protestant faith, thus revealing continuity as well as change in the early modern English spirituality.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I have demonstrated that Katherine Parr draws extensively on sources from the Protestant Reformation, and to a lesser extent from early-modern English humanism. At the same time, I have argued that she also engages with ideas rooted in medieval Catholic sources, considering them compatible with her Protestant faith. Parr's treatment of humility exemplifies this approach. While her development of a theology of humility cannot be separated from her self-identification as a Protestant, the book metaphor - as an image of her humility - highlights her selective appropriation of medieval Catholic theology and devotional practices. In *Lamentation*, the themes summarized in the book metaphor guide Parr through a life of faith.

In Chapter 2, I connected the late-medieval Christ's-body-as-a-book practice to the textual formulation in which Christ's crucified body is compared to a book that can be "read". The book metaphor, employed by other medieval and early modern writers - Fisher in particular - offers an opportunity for understanding where Parr takes a Protestant turn and where she maintains continuity with Catholic traditions. In *Lamentation*, the formulation "book of the crucifix" expresses that Parr integrates mystical ideas into her Protestant theological framework with care and nuance. She shows that early modern Reformation writers did not consider all ideas rooted in Roman Catholicism as incompatible with their faith. Elements of medieval Passion devotion were retained and reshaped within a Reformation context. While distinctly Protestant in emphasizing justification by faith, vernacular Bible reading, and the role of the Spirit, *Lamentation* also reflects continuity with late-medieval devotional traditions, especially Passion devotion. However, Parr diverges from Catholic authors in one crucial aspect. Although, the mental image of Christ crucified remains, as visible in her phrasing, it never becomes an image of such detailed visual violence depicted in a book like MS Egerton 1821 or described by an author like Fisher. Parr maintains the notion of "reading" Christ's Passion and contemplating the meaning of Christ's sacrifice through self-examination but the Christ's crucified body is never described or depicted vividly and is not treated as an object of devotion. In this regard Mueller is not completely wrong when she argues that Parr's book metaphor is focused on theology instead of the physicality of the Passion but she underestimates the inheritance Parr works with in relation to the hermeneutics of the book metaphor in general. A more holistic understanding of theology does more justice to Parr and the tradition of the book metaphor, that is in itself deeply holistic, as a bridge between the medieval and early modern. Medieval mystical theology continues to echo in Parr's metaphor which means that it doesn't have to be completely the same. Like I argued in the first chapter, Parr does not just copy these ideas (like she did with

her first two works) but she creates her own theology of experiential humility which is her unique contribution to Protestantism.

Previous discourse on Parr has not taken into account that the separation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a modern construct. This distinction is not particularly helpful when locating Parr's sources of influence. Instead, scholars have implicitly assumed that Parr's Protestantism cannot coincide with mystical Catholic theology, reinforcing an argument made by Oberman and Poor that there is a rigid tendency to overlook the continuation of medieval mystical ideas in early modern Reformation writers. My research demonstrates that early modern devotion was a space of negotiation and adaptation, particularly regarding Passion devotion. Nonetheless, further research is needed to explore women as spiritual innovators who bridge the divide between Catholic and Protestant theology. Another limitation of this thesis is that space prohibits further exploration of medieval mystical influence on Parr's *Lamentation* outside the textual formulation of the book metaphor. Given what this thesis has uncovered, this would likely prove fruitful.

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Appendix 1: Katherine Parr's "Book of the Crucifix"

Let us therefore, now, I pray you, by faith, behold and consider the great goodness of God, in sending His Son to suffer death for our redemption when we were His mortal enemies; and after what sort and manner He sent Him. First it is to be considered, yea, to be undoubtedly with a perfect faith believed, that God sent Him to us freely: for He did give Him, and sold Him not. A more noble and rich gift He could not have given. He sent not a servant, or a friend, but His only Son, so dearly beloved: not in delights, riches, and honors, but in crosses, poverties, and slanders; not as a lord, but as a servant. Yea, in most vile and painful passions, to wash us: not with water, but with His own precious blood; not from mirre, but from the puddle and filth of our iniquities. He hath given Him, not to make us poor, but to enrich us with His divine virtues, merits, and graces: yea, and in Him He hath given us all good things, and, finally, Himself, and that with such great charity as cannot be expressed. Was it not a most high and abundant charity of God, to send Christ to shed His blood, to lose honor, life, and all, for His enemies? Even in the time when we had done Him most injury, He first showed His charity to us, with such flames of love, that greater could not be showed. God in Christ hath opened unto us (although we be weak and blind of ourselves) that we may behold, in this miserable state, the great wisdom, goodness, and truth, with all the other godly perfections, which be in Christ. Therefore, inwardly to behold Christ crucified upon the cross is the best and godliest meditation that can be. We may see also, in Christ crucified, the beauty of the soul, better than in all the books of the world. For who that, with lively faith, seeth and feeleth in spirit that Christ, the Son of God, is dead for the satisfying and the purifying of the soul, shall see that his soul is appointed for the very tabernacle and mansion of the inestimable and incomprehensible majesty and honor of God. We see also, in Christ crucified, how vain and foolish the world is; and how that Christ, being most wise, despised the same. We may see also how blind it is; because the same knoweth not Christ, but persecuted Him. We may see also how unkind the world is, by the killing of Christ, in the time He did show it most favor. How hard and obstinate was it, that would not be mollified with so many tears, such sweat, and so much bloodshed of the Son of God, suffering with so great and high charity? Therefore, he is now very blind that seeth not how vain, foolish, false, ingrate, cruel, hard, wicked and evil the world is.

We may also, in Christ crucified, weigh our sins as in a divine balance: how grievous and how weighty they be, seeing they have crucified Christ; for they would never have been counterpoised, but with the great and precious weight of the blood of the Son of God. And therefore God, of His high goodness, determined that His blessed Son should rather suffer bloodshed than our sins should have condemned us. We shall never know our own misery and wretchedness, but with the light of Christ crucified. Then we shall see our own cruelty, when we feel His mercy; our own unrighteousness and iniquity, when we see His righteousness and holiness. Therefore, to learn to know truly our own sins is to study in the book of the crucifix, by continual conversation in faith; and to have perfect and plentiful charity is to learn first, by faith, the charity that is in God, towards us. We may see also, in Christ upon the cross, how great the pains of hell and how blessed the joys of heaven be; and what a sharp, painful thing it shall be to them that, from that sweet, happy and glorious joy, Christ, shall be deprived. Then this crucifix is the book, wherein God hath included all things, and hath most compendiously written therein, all truth profitable and necessary for our salvation. Therefore let us endeavor ourselves to study this book, that we, being lightened with the Spirit of God, may give Him thanks for so great a benefit. If we look further in this book, we shall see Christ's great victory upon the cross: which was so noble and mighty, that there never was, neither shall be such. If victory and glory of worldly princes

were great, because they did overcome great hosts of men, how much more was Christ's greater? Which vanquished not only the prince of the world, but all the enemies of God: triumphing over persecution, injuries, villainies, slanders, yea, death, the world, sin, and the devil; and brought to confusion, all carnal prudence. The princes of the world never did fight without the strength of the world. Christ, contrarily, went to war, even against all the strength of the world. He would fight, as David did with Goliath, unarmed of all human wisdom and policy, and without all worldly power and strength. Nevertheless, He was fully replenished and armed with the whole armor of the Spirit. And in this one battle, he overcame, forever, all His enemies. There was never so glorious a spoil, neither a more rich and noble, than Christ was upon the cross: which delivered all His elect from such a sharp, miserable captivity. He had, in this battle, many stripes, yea, and lost His life; but His victory was so much the greater. Therefore, when I look upon the Son of God with a supernatural faith and light, so unarmed, naked, given up, and alone; with humility, patience, liberality, modesty, gentleness, and with other His divine virtues; beating down to the ground all God's enemies, and making the soul of man so fair and beautiful: I am forced to say that His victory and triumph was marvelous. And therefore Christ deserted to have this noble title: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

But if we will particularly unfold and see His great victories, let us first behold how He overcame sin with His innocency, and confounded pride with His humility, quenched all worldly love with His charity, appeased the wrath of His Father with His meekness, turned hatred into love with His so many benefits and godly zeal. Christ hath not only overcome sin, but rather He hath killed the same: inasmuch as He hath satisfied for it Himself, with the most holy sacrifice and oblation of His precious body, in suffering most bitter and cruel death. Also, after another sort: that is, He giveth to all those that love Him, so much spirit, grease, virtue, and strength, that they may resist, impugn, and overcome sin, and not consent, neither to suffer it to reign in them. He hath also vanquished sin, because He hath taken away the force of the same: that is, He hath cancelled the law, which was, in evil men, the occasion of sin. Therefore sin hath no power against them, that are with the Holy Ghost united to Christ; in them there is nothing worthy of damnation. And although the dregs of Adam to remain, that is, our concupiscences, which indeed be sins: nevertheless they be not imputed for sins, if we be truly planted in Christ. It is true that Christ might have taken away all our immoderate affections, but He hath left them for the greater glory of His Father, and for His own greater triumph. As for an example: When a prince, fighting with his enemies which sometime had the sovereignty over his people, and subduing them, may kill them if he will, yet persevereth and saveth them. And whereas they were lords over his people, he maketh them after to serve, whom they before had ruled. Now, in such a case, the prince doth show himself a greater conqueror, in that he hath made them, which were rulers, to obey; and the subjects to be lords over them, to whom they served, than if he had utterly destroyed them upon the conquest. For, now, he leaveth continual victory to them whom he redeemed: whereas, otherwise, the occasion of victory was taken away, where none were left to be the subjects. Even so, in like case, Christ hath left in us these concupiscences to the intent they should serve us to the exercise of our sin. And it may be plainly seen that, whereas first they were such impediments to us, that we could not move ourselves towards God: now by Christ we have so much strength that, notwithstanding the force of them, we may assuredly walk to heaven. And although the children of God sometime do fall by frailty into some sin, yet that falling maketh them to humble themselves, and to knowledge the goodness of God, and to come to Him for refuge and help.

Likewise Christ, with His death, hath overcome the prince of evils with all his host, and hath destroyed them all. For as Paul saith: This is verified, that Christ should break the serpent's head, prophesied by God. And although the devil tempt us, yet if by faith we be planted in Christ, we shall not perish; but rather, by his temptation, take great force and might. So it is evident that the triumph, victory, and glory of Christ is the greater, having in such sort subdued the devil that, tory, and glory of Christ is the greater, having in such sort subdued the devil that, whereas he was prince and lord of the world, holding all creatures in captivity, now Christ unseth him as an instrument to punish the wicked, and to exercise and make strong the elect of God in Christian warfare. Christ likewise hath overcome death in a more glorious manner (if it be possible), because He hath not taken it away. But leaving universally all subject to the same, He hath given so much virtue and spirit, that whereas afore we passed thereto with great fear, now we be bold, through the Spirit, for the sure hope of resurrection, that we receive it with joy. It is now no more bitter, but sweet; no more feared, but desired. It is no death, but life. And, also, it hath pleased God that the infirmities and adversities do remain to the sight of the world; but the children of God are, by Christ, made so strong, righteous, whole and sound, that the troubles of the world be comforts of the spirit; the passions of the flesh are medicines of the soul. For all manner things worketh to their commodity and profit; for they in spirit feel that God, their Father, doth govern them, and disposeth all things for their benefit: therefore, they feel themselves sure. In persecution, they are quiet and peaceful; in time of trouble they are without weariness, fears, anxieties, suspicions, miseries; and finally, all the good and evil of the world worketh to their commodity.

Moreover, they see that the triumph of Christ hath been so great, that not only He hath subdued and vanquished all our enemies and the power of them, but He hath overthrown and vanquished them after such a sort, that all things serve to our health. He might and could have taken them all away, but where, then should have been our victory, palm, and crown? For we daily have fights in the flesh, and, by the succor of grace, have continual victories over sin: whereby we have cause to glorify God that, by His Son, hath weakened our enemy the devil and, by His Spirit, giveth us strength to vanquish his offsprings. So do we knowledge daily the great triumph of our Saviour, and rejoice in our own sights: the which we can nowise impute to any wisdom of this world, seeing sin to increase by it. And where worldly wisdom most governeth, there most sin ruleth: For as the world is enemy to God, so also the wisdom thereof is adverse to God. And therefore Christ hath declared and discovered the same for foolishness. And although He could have taken away all worldly wisdom, yet He hath left it for His greater glory, and triumph of His chosen vessels. For before, whereas it was our ruler against God, now, by Christ, we are served of it for God, as of a slave in worldly things; albeit, in supernatural things, the same is not to be understand. And, further, if any time men would impugn and gainsay us with the wisdom of the world, yet we have, by Christ, so much supernatural light of the truth, that we make a mock of all those that repugn the truth. Christ, also, upon the cross, hath triumphed over the world. First, because He hath discovered the same to be naught: that whereas it was covered with the veil of hypocrisy and the vesture of moral virtues, Christ hath showed that, in God's sight, the righteousness of the world is wickedness; and He hath yielded witness that the works of men, not regenerated by Him in faith, are evil. And so Christ hath judged and condemned the world for naught. Furthermore, He hath given, to all His, so much light and spirit, that they know it, and dispraise the same: yea, and tread it under their feet, with all vain honors, dignities, and pleasures, not taking the fair promises, neither the offers, which it doth present. Nay, they rather make a scorn of them. And, as for the threatenings

and force of the world, they nothing fear. Now, therefore, we may see how great the victory and triumph of Christ is, who hath delivered all those the Father gave Him from the power of the devil, cancelling, upon the cross, the writing of our debts. For He hath delivered us from the condemnation of sin, from the bondage of the law, from the fear of death, from the danger of the world, and from all evils in his life, and in the other to come. And He hath enriched us, made us noble and most highly happy, after such a glorious and triumphant way, as cannot with tongue be expressed. And therefore we are forced to say: His triumph is marvelous. It is also seen and known, that Christ is the true Messiah, for He hath delivered man from all evils; and by Him, man hath all goodness, so that He is the true Messiah. Therefore all other helpers be but vain and counterfeited saviors, seeing that, by this our Messiah, Christ wholly and only, we be delivered from all evils and, by Him, we have all goodness.

And, that this is true, it is evident and clear, because the very true Christian is a Christian by Christ. And the true Christian feeleth inwardly, by Christ, so much goodness of God, that even troublous life and death be sweet unto him, and miseries happy. The true Christian, by Christ, is disburdened: from the servitude of the law, having the law of grace (graven by the Spirit) inhabiting his heart, and from sin that reigned in him, from the power of the infernal spirits, from damnation, and from every evil; and is made a son of God, a brother of Christ, he possesseth all good things. But, let us know, that Christ yet fighteth in spirit in His elect vessels, and shall fight even to the day of judgment. At which day shall the great enemy, death, be wholly destroyed, and shall be no more. Then shall the children of God rejoice on him, saying: O death, where is thy victory and sting? There shall be, then, no more trouble nor sin, nay, rather none evil: but heaven for the good, and hell for the wicked. Then shall wholly be discovered the victory and triumph of Christ: who (after Paul) shall present unto His Father the kingdom, together with His chose, saved by Him. It was no little favor towards His children, that Christ was chosen of God to save us, His elect, so highly, by the way of the cross. Paul calleth it a grace, and a most singular grace. We may well thing that He, having been to the world so valiant a captain of God, was full of light, grace, virtue, and spirit. Therefore He might justly say: "Consummatum est." We, seeing then that the triumph and victory of our captain Christ is so marvelous, glorious, and noble, to the which war we be appointed: let us force ourselves to follow Him, with bearing of our cross, that we may have fellowship with Him in His kingdom.

Truly, it may be most justly verified that to behold Christ crucified, in spirit, is the best meditation that can be. I certainly never knew my own miseries and wretchedness so well, by book, admonition, or learning, as I have done by looking into the spiritual book of the crucifix. I lament much I have passed so many years not regarding that divine book, but I judged and thought myself to be well instructed in the same: whereas now I am of this opinion, that if God would suffer me to live here a thousand years, and (I) should study continually in the same divine book, I should not be filled with the contemplation thereof. Neither hold I myself contented, but always have a great desire to learn and study more therein. I never knew my own wickedness, neither lamented for my sins truly, until the time God inspired me with His grace, that I looked in this book. Then I began to see perfectly, that mine own power and strength could not help me, and that I was in the Lord's hand: (even as the clay is in the potter's hand. Then I began to cry, and say: Alas, Lord, that ever I have so wickedly offended Thee, being to me from the beginning so gracious and so good a Father, and most specially, now hast declared and showed Thy goodness unto me when, in the time I have done Thee most injury, to call me, and also to make me know and take Thee for my Saviour and Redeemer. Such be the wonderful works of God, to call sinners to repentance,

and to make them to take Christ, His well-beloved Son, for their Saviour. This is the gift of God, and of all Christians to be required and desired. For, except this great benefit of Christ crucified be felt, and fixed surely in man's heart, there can be no good work done, acceptable before God. For in Christ is all fullness of the Godhead, and in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Even He is the water of life, whereof whosoever shall drink, shall nevermore thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. Saint Paul saith there is no damnation to them that are in Christ, which walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Moreover, he saith: "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, seeing we are reconciled, we shall be preserved by His death." It is no little or small benefit we have received by Christ, if we consider what He hath done for us, as I have perfectly declared heretofore.

Wherefore I pray the Lord that his great benefit of Christ crucified may be steadfastly fixed and printed in all Christian hearts, that they may be true lovers of God, and work as children, for love, and not as servants, compelled with threatening or provoked with hire. The sincere and pure lovers of God do embrace Christ with such fervency or spirit, that they rejoice in hope, be bold in danger, suffer in adversity, continue in prayer, bless their persecutors; further, they be not wise in their own opinion, neither high-minded in their prosperity, neither abashed in their adversity, but humble and gentle, always, to all men. For they know by their faith they are all members all of one body, and that they have possessed, all, one God, one faith, one baptism, one joy, and one salvation. If these pure and sincere lovers of God were thick sown, there should not be so much contention and strife growing on the fields or our religion, as there is. Well, I shall pray to the Lord to take all contention and strife away, and that the sowers of sedition may have mind to cease their labor, or to sow it amongst the stones; and to have gracious virtues, where they may both root and bring forth fruit: with sending also a godly unity and concord amongst all Christians, that we may serve the Lord in true holiness of life.³²²

³²² This passage is taken from Katherine Parr's *Lamentation of a Sinner*. Katherine Parr, *The Lamentation of a Sinner*, trans. and ed. Janel Mueller, in *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 459-467.

Appendix 2: John Fisher's "Book of the Crucifix"

*The prophet Ezechiel tells that he saw a book spread before him, the which was written both within and without. And there was written also in it, Lamentations, Carmen, et vae, that is to say, lamentation, songs, and woe. This was a wonderful book, and much to be marveled upon. Much comfortable knowledge and sweetness this prophet got by this book, (as he said in the Chapter next ensuing factum est in ore meo sicut mell dulce, this book was in my mouth as sweete as honey. This book to our purpose may be taken unto us, the Crucifix, the which doubtless is a marvelous book, as we shall see hereafter. (...)*³²³

*This holy Saint Frances so profited in this lesson, that it caused in his heart such a fervent love, such a devotion, such an affection to Christ, that the capital wounded in which he beheld in the hands and feet, and side of Christ, were by miracle imprinted in his own hands and feet. This thing the B. or R. Innocent³²⁴ and his cardinal did see, and had very proof thereof. The meditation and imagination to this book was so earnest, and so continuing, that the token of the five wounds of Christ, were imprinted and ingraved in this holy Saints body. But to this high fruit (as I said) few or none besides him does attain. It is a singular gift of the almighty God, and not common to be looked for of other persons. Nevertheless, who that wants to exercise this lesson, though he does not come to this hight point of perfection, he shall nevertheless greatly profit in to same, and come to great knowledge both of Christ and of himself. A man may easily say and think with himself (beholding in his heart the Image of the Crucifix), who are you and who am I. Thus every person both rich and poor, may think, not only in the church here, but in every other place, and in his business where about he goes. (...)*³²⁵

But you marvell perhaps why I call the crucifix a book? (...)

A book has borders, leaves, lines and writings both small and great. First, I say that a book has two borders: the two borders of this book is the two parts of the cross, for when the book is opened and spread, the leaves are covered upon the borders. And so the blessed body of Christ was spread upon the cross. The leaves of this book are the arms, the hands, legs, and feet, with the other members of this most precious and blessed body. Never any parchment skin was more straightly stretched by strength upon the frames then was this blessed body upon the cross. These lorrells³²⁶ that crucified him, drew by violence his moisty precious arms, with ropes unto either branch of the cross, that the muscles burst apart, and

³²³ Fisher elaborates about acquiring knowledge through spectating the forces of nature. There is philosophy that deals with the things the eyes can perceive in these forces of nature, but there is a "higher Philosophie": the philosophy of Christian people centering around the Passion.

³²⁴ Cecilia Hatt transcribes "B. or R." as "the Bishop of Rome". See: Hatt, *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, 301.

Mueller draws on Hatt's translation and holds the scribal abbreviation "B. or. R. Innocent" to be "Bishop of Rome" in her "Complications of Intertextuality: John Fisher, Katherine Parr, and 'The Book of the Crucifix'". Mueller points out that Fisher probably used the abbreviation because after Henry VIII's split from Rome the term 'Pope' to describe the Head of the Roman Catholic Church was abolished. According to Mueller, this could mean Fisher's Good Friday sermon should be dated after 1537. See: Mueller, "Complications of Intertextuality", 142-143.

As Fisher's sermon reads 'or' and not 'of' (See: Mayor, *The English Works of John Fisher*, 391.)

There is another possibility. If we are not dealing with an error, "B. or R." could also be an amalgamation of two abbreviations, hence the "or". Regarding the Roman Catholic clergy, "B." could be the abbreviation deriving from "Beatus" and "R." from "Reverendissimo". Both titles are found used to describe the Pope. "Innocent" must relate to Pope Innocent III because Fisher writes about Francis of Assisi showing his stigmata.

³²⁵ Fisher continues to ponder situations where men and women of every status may contemplate the Crucifix in their daily life. They will see how great God is and how "wretched" they are.

³²⁶ **Iorrells:** vagabonds, persons of ill repute

so nailed his hands with spiky nails of iron, unto the cross. After they stretched his feet likewise unto an other hole beneath in the cross, and there nailed them with the third nail through both his feet. And so they reared up his body in the sky against the sun, even as a parchment skin is set forth before the heat of the sun for to dry. It was set up in the sky to the intend that all the world might look upon this book. This book was written within and without. First within was written but one word: nevertheless this one word comprises in it, as said Saint Paul, the whole treasure of all cunning and wisdom pertaining unto God. *In quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae dei*, in whom are all the treasure of the wisdom of God. Of this word Saint John speaks, saying, *In principio erat verbum*, the word was in the beginning before all creatures, this word is the second person in the godhead, the son of God which by the holy Ghost was written in the inward side of this parchment. For the Godhead of Christ was couered and hidden under the likeness of man. The holy Ghost was the pen of almighty God the father, He set his most mighty word unto the body of Christ, within the womb of the Virgin Mary, and so this book was written within. (...)

Furthermore, when a book is spread, you see that in the leaves are many lines drawn. And many letters, some red, some black, and some blue, so in this book, (the most blessed body of Christ) was drawn many lines, for it was all to scourged with whips, so that everywhere the print of the cords of the scourges, was left behind, and that in every place, from the neck downward unto the soles of his feet, so that there was no margent left in all this book, there was no void place, but everywhere it was either drawn with lines, or else written with letters, for these scourges filled not only his most precious body with lines drawn everywhere, but also left many small letters, some black, some blue, some red. For the blood by the violence of the scourges sprung out in every place. And because no part of this book should be unwritten, his head also was pierced with sharp thorns. (...) ³²⁷

Besides these small letters, yet was there also great capital letters preciousely illuminated with roset colour: roset is a red colour like unto the colour of a rose, which colour that most precious blood which issued out of his hands and feet, does represent unto us, with this most precious blood was illuminiated the five great capitall letters in this wonderful book. I mean by these capital letters the great wounds of his body, in his hands and in his feet, and in his side. These five great wounds were engraved with sharp and violent pennis, that is to say, the sharp nails, and the spear. And they do represent unto us the five capital letters of this book. Thus then you may perceive what be the borders of this book, and what to be the leaves, how it is written within, and without, how it is lined and leathered, and what be the letters, as well the small as the great. ³²⁸

³²⁷ Fisher repeats that the letters were made out of various colours.

³²⁸ This passage is my personal Middle English transliteration of parts of John Fisher's Good Friday sermon that are relevant for this thesis, taken from: John E. B. Mayor, ed., *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. Part I* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1876), published for the Early English Text Society. The complete sermon is available in this edition.

Appendix 3: John Whiterig's/The Monk of Farne's "Christ's Body as a Book"

Ch. 53

Study then, O man, to know Christ: get to know your Saviour. His body, hanging on the cross, is a book, open for your perusal. The words of this book are Christ's actions, as well as his suffering and passion, for everything that he did serves for our instruction. His wounds are the letters or characters, the five chief wounds being the five vowels and the others the consonants of your book. Learn how to read the lamentations and alas! too, the reproaches, outrages, insults and humiliations which are written therein.

However much else you may know, if you do not know this. I count all your learning for naught, because without knowledge of this book, both general and particular, it is impossible for you to be saved. So eat this book which in your mouth and understanding shall be sweet, but which shall make your belly bitter, that is to say your memory, because he that increases knowledge increases sorrow too, and hardships gives understanding to the hearing of one who through his compassion which Christ crucified fills up in his flesh the sufferings which are wanting.

There are many who know all sorts of things, such as the natures of beings, the movements of the stars, the extent of periods of time, the measurements of places, and so forth, but because they are ignorant of this one thing, Jesus Christ and him crucified, those other things profit them nothing unto their eternal salvation. May this book never depart from my hands, O Lord, but let the law of the Lord be ever in my mouth, that I may know what is acceptable in thy sight.³²⁹

³²⁹ This passage is taken from John Whiterig, *The Monk of Farne: The Meditations of a Fourteenth-Century Monk*, ed. Hugh Farmer (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), 76-77.

Appendix 4: Christ's stretched body on the cross in Parr's *Psalms or Prayers*

*...how all His body was drawn and stretched forth on the cross. Look upon all the parts of His body...crowned with sharp thorns, and the blood running down upon His godly visage. Behold His tender body, how it is scourged. His naked brest is stricken and beaten; His bloody side is thrasted through. His heart panteth; His sinews be stretched forth. (...) His inward parts wax dry and stark. His arms both, blue and wan, be stiff. His bones be plucked one from another. His beautiful legs be feeble and weak; and streams of blood issuing out of His body run down apace upon his feet.*³³⁰

³³⁰ This passage is taken from Katherine Parr's *Psalms or Prayers*.

Katherine Parr, *Psalms or Prayers*, translated by Janel Mueller in: Katherine Parr, *The Lamentation of a Sinner*, trans. and ed. Janel Mueller, in *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 235.