

THE NATURE
OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
WILLIAM LANGLAND'S FIERS FLOWMAN
AND
THE WYCLIFFITE SECT

By

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ABSTRACT

Piers Plowman and the Wycliffite sect both developed out of the spiritual upheaval sweeping fourteenth-century England. They display many similar interests, such as concerns with socio-economic problems, the responsibilities and choices of the individual, and the uses and abuses of wealth and language. Although such similarities exist, analysis of the treatment of these concerns shows that Langland and the Wycliffites do not share a common point of view, even when the concern is of a very general nature. The one exception is the subject of kingship, in which the treatment of Langland's ideals come close to concepts developed by Wyclif.

There is tangible evidence that the Lollards were influenced by Piers Plowman and that they interpreted the text as sympathetic to their sect. On the other hand, there is less evidence that Langland was aware of Lollardy's existence. Certain changes from the B-text to the C-text, especially the character of Rechelesnesse, suggest that Langland did know of Lollardy; but, in spite of an early critical view that put Langland within the Wycliffite dissenting tradition, Langland's attitude toward Lollardy is never readily discernible. Nevertheless, analysis of Langland's attitude toward things "Lollard" in character shows that his reaction to the Wycliffite sect would be conservative and negative. In sum, the comparison of Wycliffite material and Piers Plowman demonstrates the context in which Lollardy and Piers Plowman should be related -- a common interest in controversy and spiritual reform, but with insurmountable differences in outlook. It also demonstrates how

two groups with contemporary yet very different points of view tried to resolve the major religious, social and economic troubles of late fourteenth-century England.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: The Parameters of Lollardy	7
CHAPTER TWO: William Langland	43
CHAPTER THREE: Shared Concerns	59
CHAPTER FOUR: Social Theory, The Individual, Wealth and Language in <u>Piers Flowman</u> and Wycliffite Literature	81
CHAPTER FIVE: <u>Piers Flowman</u> and Its Contemporaries	140
CHAPTER SIX: Authorial Attitudes Toward Lollardy in <u>Piers Flowman</u>	158
CONCLUSION	190
Notes to Chapter One	201
Notes to Chapter Two	208
Notes to Chapter Three	212
Notes to Chapter Four	214
Notes to Chapter Five	221
Notes to Chapter Six	224
BIBLIOGRAPHY	227

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Apology</u>	<u>An Apology for Lollard Doctrines</u>
<u>EW</u>	<u>The English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted</u>
<u>EW</u>	<u>English Wycliffite Writings</u>
<u>PFC</u>	<u>Pierce the Ploughman's Crede</u>
<u>SEW</u>	<u>Select English Works of John Wyclif</u>

Such striif in wordis is of no profit, ne proueth not that Gaddis word is any
weie fals. English Wycliffite Writings

Heu michi, quod sterilem duxi vitam iuuenilem! Piers Plowman

INTRODUCTION

In combining academic vitality with popular appeal, the Wycliffite movement produced a heresy that was seen as particularly threatening in late fourteenth-century England. One of the most important contemporary literary documents, Piers Plowman, similarly combined academic discussion with popular appeal in its dissatisfaction with the institutional Church and its urgent plea for individual spiritual renewal. Such general parallels invite a more detailed comparison between the controversial beliefs of the Wycliffites and the views of Langland, a man who through his poetry involved himself in all the major controversies of his day. Obviously Langland and Wycliffite authors display many similar concerns. By comparing their treatment of these concerns it may be possible to delineate the context in which both Langland and Lollardy should be understood.

Critical work in this area is generally inadequate. Only one intensive study exists, an unpublished doctoral dissertation by William Palmer written in 1957. This is of limited value today because of recent developments in both Piers Plowman scholarship and Wycliffite scholarship. Other studies are limited by a variety of shortcomings. Sometimes, Langland is assumed to be either heterodox or orthodox. More often, Lollardy is not properly understood. Other limitations are caused by too little detail being supplied to support a judgement, or by equivocal and inconclusive arguments. Pamela Gradon's "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent" is the most useful piece of recent scholarship on

the subject, but it has limitations. Gradon restricts her scope to Wyclif's influence on Langland and only considers Wycliffite material to confirm established points. This restriction is especially significant, since it separates Wyclif from his followers and thus answers no more than half of the question. Derek Pearsall and Russell Peck are recent Piers Plowman scholars who have addressed Langland in respect to specifically Wycliffite thought to significant degrees, but their discussions are limited by their respective primary foci, Pearsall's edition of the C-text of Piers Plowman and Peck's treatment of the historical and literary background of the Peasants' Revolt in general.

Attempts to discuss Lollardy in the light of Piers Plowman are even fewer and farther between. David Fowler's argument in The Bible in Middle English Literature that the A-Text of Piers Plowman is radical and influenced the rebels of 1381 has no provable connection with Lollard dissent. To be sure, there were rumours that the rebel leader John Ball was a disciple of Wyclif, and there were accusations that Wyclif and his followers instigated the rebellion, but there was no actual proof. There were many after-the-fact analyses of why the Peasants' Revolt occurred; but, one fact is clear, that Ball was spreading his dissenting ideas long before Wyclif even began to formulate his heterodox concepts. The study that comes closest to examining Lollard literature in relation to Langland's work is D. A. Lawton's "Lollardy and the Piers Plowman Tradition." Lawton does not actually trace the relationship between Piers Plowman and Lollardy, except to note the Lollard indebtedness to Langland. Rather, he concentrates on the Lollard nature of works inspired by Piers Plowman, especially Pierce the Ploughman's Crede and Mum and the Sothsegger with briefer reference to other

Lollard texts. Thus there remains an obvious need to consider the nature of the relationship between Wyclif, the Wycliffite sect and William Langland's Piers Plowman.

I do not pretend that this study offers an innovative interpretation of Piers Plowman. Such was never my intention. Its purpose is twofold: first, to determine how valid are the assessments of Piers Plowman set forth by early Protestants like Bale and Crowley and later defended by W. W. Skeat and Ladislav Cejp that present Langland as a Wycliffite sympathiser; second, and more important, to compare and contrast two contemporary, yet very different, modes of thought and expression. These two goals will be attained by an examination of the available historical evidence, by a detailed comparison of specific themes, by a consideration of the readership of Piers Plowman, and by an analysis of the internal evidence in Piers Plowman for Langland's attitude toward Lollardy. In short, the study is designed to put both Langland and Lollardy into a better historical perspective.

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction to the Wycliffite sect, outlining its beliefs, membership, and literature, in order to lay the groundwork for the comparison of Langland's thought with Wycliffite thought which follows in subsequent chapters. Special attention will be given to the problems involved in dealing with Lollardy as a historical movement and with Lollard material. Chapter two is a consideration of biographical, geographical, and historical evidence about both Langland and the Lollards, which will assess the likelihood of mutual awareness and possible influence. The third chapter uses examples from the Prologue to Piers Plowman to outline briefly the common concerns found in Wycliffite works and

Langland's vision. The relative merits of two basic approaches to the method of comparison, i.e., the comparison of doctrinal similarities as opposed to the comparison of thematic similarities, will also be discussed. The fourth chapter provides detailed analysis of three major themes in Piers Plowman and Wycliffite literature. The discussion of these themes will show the extent to which Langland and Wycliffite authors do not share a common point of view. The first theme constitutes social theory, responsibility for social failure, and kingship. The second theme concerns the individual's place in society. Relevant here are the views of Langland and the Lollards on the active and contemplative lives as well as their definitions of the ideal priest, and Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. A third theme constitutes the use and the misuse of wealth and language; here, the opinions of Langland and the Wycliffites on lawyers, friars and minstrels will receive special attention. The fifth chapter discusses Piers Plowman in relation to its contemporary audience. The possibility that Lollards could and did read this work and interpret it favourably is examined. The study concludes with a final chapter discussing Langland's own attitudes toward Lollardy on the basis of his interpretation of the Eucharist, his views on image-worship and relic-worship, and his views on the disendowment of church temporalities; it will also consider Langland's contribution to the controversy over evangelical poverty in the B-text, and will comment on the changes between the B and the C-texts, dealing especially with the significance of the words "lollares" and "russet," and the purpose behind the expanded role of the character of Rechelesnesse.

Two final points should be noted here.

First, I am using the C-text as my base text for Piers Plowman.

The reason for this preference over the B-text is straightforward. The C-text is more closely contemporary with the Lollard sect and thus better represents Langland's ultimate opinions with regard to Wycliffite thought. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, all references to Piers Plowman will be to the C-text edited by Derek Pearsall.

The second point regards the use of Wycliffite vernacular material. While some reference is made to Wyclif's Latin works, which references I have translated for the reader, the majority of examples of Wycliffite thought come from the English writings of his followers. It is arguable that my use of such materials is invalid, since there is little reliable evidence for dating the vernacular writings, and thus no guarantee that the English tracts express concerns contemporary with Langland. Such a line of reasoning would allow only for a comparison of Wyclif's Latin writings and Piers Plowman. The exclusive use of Wyclif's Latin works, however, creates the false impression that Langland could have gained a knowledge of radical ideas in the 1370s and 1380s from Wyclif alone and from no other source. Yet there is a remarkable continuity throughout Lollard history of the same major concerns and there is also an equally remarkable continuity in both thought and expression between Wyclif's Latin and the vernacular writings of his followers. Hence, there is no reason to invalidate automatically the use of the vernacular material. Moreover there is additional reason for the inclusion of the vernacular material, since it is likely that Langland would have been uneasy with Wyclif's professional scholastic jargon and methodology. The vernacular presentations, whether written or oral, would have been easier for a non-theologian to understand; and it is very possible also that they would have been more accessible to a person outside

Oxford. I feel justified, therefore, in using the English works to show the extent and nature of the relationship between the followers of Wyclif and the author of Piers Plowman.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PARAMETERS OF LOLLARDY

Lollardy was an identifiable heretical sect that existed for approximately one hundred and fifty years, from around 1380 well into the Reformation years in England. It was a diverse sect, whose origins in the scholasticism of Wyclif's mediaeval Oxford, and whose ultimate strength among the artisan classes, caused its form and direction to change throughout its history. Although surviving records show that it was remarkably enduring and organized even in the harshest periods of repression, the Lollard movement could not avoid losing intellectual vigour in its middle and later stages, once it had lost the support of the universities. It also became associated with political subversion from its very beginnings — an association that would have disastrous consequences. None the less, the movement's writers were certainly productive. A large corpus of Lollard literature is extant, ranging from sermon cycles and preachers' handbooks to numerous tracts and treatises and poems on various Wycliffite concerns.¹

There are several difficulties in dealing with this Lollard material. The greatest is the problem of definition. Only a few select points are common to all Lollard works. Both the content and the tone of individual Wycliffite texts vary greatly. Moreover, the manuscripts and authors present singular difficulties of their own. Although a large body of Lollard material is extant today, much more has been lost; the existing manuscripts can be obscure and hard to understand, due in part to an idiosyncratic style. While the authorship of many Latin works can be safely ascribed to Wyclif, such is not the case with the

English material. With few exceptions, the authors of Lollard works are unknown, most ascriptions of the vernacular texts being purely conjectural. As historians have become aware relatively recently, this is especially true of ascriptions to Wyclif.² The new awareness is readily discernible in differences in the titles between the two major nineteenth-century editions of Wycliffite texts, Thomas Arnold's Select English Works of Wyclif and F. D. Matthew's English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted, and the recent editions by Anne Hudson, English Wycliffite Writings and English Wycliffite Sermons. Whereas Arnold and Matthew name Wyclif as the author of these texts in their titles, Hudson gathers them under the collective description of Wycliffite. Distinctions must be made between the extreme and moderate degrees of Lollardy. One also must remember that not all later Lollard concerns were of crucial importance to the early movement and vice versa. Lollard doctrines must be put in the context of popular piety in late mediaeval society and this is of particular importance when assessing the doctrinal leanings of individuals and literary works. It was -- and still is -- not always easy for the authorities to distinguish the heretics from the orthodox.

Although orthodox writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries identified the Wycliffite beliefs on the Eucharist as the heart of the Lollard movement, their views on the Bible actually hold this central position. The Lollards' special reverence for Holy Scripture as the ultimate source of all authority was the basis for those other beliefs that enabled them to criticize the institutional Church. Repeated insistence that church doctors should ground their theories and practices in the Bible or else abandon them as lies of the fiend prove that, without recourse to the direct authority of the Bible, the Lollard

movement could not have existed. Wyclif's epithet, doctor evangelicus, was a well-deserved one, since he insisted that every aspect of the Church's existence must have some basis in the Gospel.

The Eucharistic heresy is a case in point. For Wyclif this was the turning point in his career where he crossed over from venerabilis doctor to execrabilis seductor. The cost was severe. He lost his career as a scholar, the support of the friars, and the availability of Oxford as a receptive sounding board for his ideas. The Eucharistic heresy became one of the immediate signs of Lollardy for which the authorities looked. But it was not a self-engendered doctrine. For Wyclif, the Eucharistic controversy resulted from a clash between the two main philosophies of mediaeval scholastic thought: Nominalism and Realism.³ Doctrinaire thinking about the Eucharist was Nominalist in Wyclif's day, and the clash between it and Wyclif's Realism contributed in large measure to Wyclif's eventual breach with the Church.⁴ Although the accepted Nominalist explanations of transubstantiation constituted philosophical absurdity according to Wyclif's Realism, nevertheless, Wyclif's early writings show that he accorded to the Church doctrine a reluctant acceptance based on faith.⁵ His continued dissatisfaction with the various explanations of transubstantiation eventually caused him to question the doctrine, but it was not until he decided that transubstantiation as defined by Nominalism had no scriptural basis that he broke from orthodoxy. In the Triologus, after detailed semantic, scriptural and experiential proofs that the bread remains bread after consecration, Wyclif discusses how the error of accidents without substance arose in the Church. The reason for Wyclif's objection immediately becomes clear. The doctrine of accidents without substance is one of many

heresies "quod discredunt evangelio, et leges papales ac dicta apocrypha plus acceptant,"⁶ that is, 'which do not believe the Gospel and place more trust in papal laws and apocryphal sayings'. He then proceeds to outline his own beliefs in three conclusions as follows:

prima est haec; si virtute istorum verborum sacramentalium sit accidens sine subjecto in sacramento altaris, illud accidens est ipsummet sacramentum. Patet ex hoc, quod sacramentum illud secundum confessionem concordem istorum haereticorum non est substantia; ideo non superest quid verba ista destruerent et in sacramento relinquerent, nisi tale accidens. Secunda conclusio fuit ista; inter omnes haereses, quae unquam pullularunt in ecclesia sancta Dei, non fuit nefandior, quam haeresis ponens accidens sine subjecto esse hoc venerabile sacramentum. Patet ex hoc, quod ista via, quantum in se est, haereticat praecipua verba Christi, et haeresim super majorem partem ecclesiae introducit. Tertia conclusio est ista; hoc sacramentum ex fide evangelii est naturaliter verus panis, et sacramentaliter ac veraciter corpus Christi. Patet ex evangelio supradicto. [263]

First conclusion: if, by the virtue of those sacramental words, an accident is matter without substance in the Eucharist, then that accident is itself the sacrament. It is plain to see from this that the sacrament, according to the concurrent opinion of those heretics, is not a substance, so that the sacramental words leave nothing remaining in the sacrament except for this sort of accident. Second conclusion: among all the heresies which have ever grown in God's Holy Church, there was not one more execrable than the heresy asserting accidents without substance to be this venerable sacrament. From this it is plain to see that this way of thinking, in itself, decries as heretical Christ's own words of authority and introduces this heresy into the greater part of the Church. Third conclusion: The Eucharist, according to the testimony of the Gospel, is naturally true bread and both sacramentally and truly the body of Christ. This is clear from the aforementioned Gospel passage.

Wyclif's statement is not a denial of Real Presence.⁷ Christ is present sacramentaliter, but He is equally present veraciter. The statement is a rejection of the accepted explanations of transubstantiation which demand that

the bread's accidents remain behind after the bread's substance is destroyed. This heresy contradicts Scripture, and therefore imperils the Church. Indeed, J. I. Catto points out that Wyclif's intention in attacking Nominalist transubstantiation is to preserve the Eucharist's integrity from popular misuse.⁸ Wyclif, however, never fully explains how his own theory works in practice. That the act of transubstantiation does not destroy the substance of the bread, yet still incorporates Christ's presence in a real sense into the bread, is a trust based on the literal truth of the Gospel. Without the Bible's evidence, Wyclif could never have made the original break with the Church.

For the Lollards, explaining the Eucharist is even more difficult. Lacking the scholastic genius of their master, they could not hope to work through the theological subtleties to clarify their doctrine. Some Wycliffite texts, such as The Plowman's Tale, encourage the faithful to accept the real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist without further speculation.⁹ Most Lollards, however, gradually came to see the Eucharist as only a figure of Christ's presence and in no sense an actual physical incorporation.¹⁰ Generally, the Lollards made no intellectual effort to explain the Eucharist, possibly because of a strong anti-learning sentiment in many Lollard tracts which would inhibit such attempts. Instead, although they cannot explain how their doctrine worked, the Lollards believe that they know exactly what defines the Eucharist: "cristen men schulden beleve þat þe sacrament on þe auter is verrely Cristis body sacramentli and spirituali, and mo oþer maneres þan any erþely man can telle among vs."¹¹ They also believe with even more dogged insistence that they know what does not define the Eucharist: it is not "an accident wip-outen suget or nau3t."¹² The Eucharistic heresy is the most prominent and well-known of Lollard doctrines.

Nevertheless, it is also the most abstruse of Lollard doctrines, and one upon which little expansion is possible. Their position is based on what they believe to be the unchangeable, indisputable literal truth of God's Word. They have little use for the musings of theologians, which they characterise thus: "such striif in wordis is of no profit, ne proveþ not þat Goddis word is ony weie fals." (EWW 115)

The New Testament account of the early Christian Church becomes for the Lollards the only acceptable pattern for the fourteenth-century Church to emulate. If something is mentioned in the New Testament, it is grounded in Scripture. If it is not mentioned, it is a ploy of the Antichrist designed to corrupt the Church; for Christ in his wisdom and benevolence has ordained everything necessary for His Church to exist in the most perfect state. By 'the Church' is meant the militant Church on earth. The Lollards accept the concept of the Tripartite Church: the victorious Church in heaven, the sleeping Church in purgatory, and the militant Church in time upon Earth. They follow St. Augustine in dividing the earthly, visible Church into two groups: the true "quek gostly kirk þat is þe congregacioun of cristen men,"¹³ and the false "weiward collegie and synagoge of Sathanas."¹⁴ The true Church follows the example of the early Apostolic community as interpreted by mediaeval minds. All are to give rightful obedience and service. Servants are to work hard, obey lords, listen to the Word of God, and support the poor with freely given alms. Lords are to protect priests, uphold the Word of God, and give alms to the deserving poor. Priests, who hold the highest estate, are to preach the Word of God and live a virtuous life according to Christ's example of poverty as a model to which others should aspire. They are also to administer sacraments and live

on freely given alms, distributing any superfluous wealth to the needy. They must own no property and possess no earthly wealth, since they are dead to the world. This scheme obviously represents an idealized feudal society.¹⁵

Aspects of Church life which are not grounded in the authority of the Gospel make that Church and those who uphold it part of the Church of Antichrist, "the synagogue of Sathanas." There are different degrees of wrong in these unscriptural aspects. Some are unlawful and most corrosive; some are unnecessary to salvation; others are simply useless. The useless category includes indulgences, curses of popes and bishops, papal bulls and pardons, letters of fraternity, pilgrimages and church music. These are seen as money-making schemes which distract Christians from their true responsibilities, and which lead to the cancers of idolatry and simony.

Other Church practices are thought by the Lollards to be acceptable and even helpful if used properly, but they do not possess the special redeeming powers imputed to them and were not necessary to salvation. This list includes canon law, which is superfluous since Christ's law is sufficient; church buildings, which are not needed, since Christ's presence does not depend on objects made by man; images, which are idolatrous if not used solely to educate the viewer; special prayers with indulgences written by men, as opposed to the Pater Noster and Ave Maria sanctioned by God; oaths, which are blasphemous if profane or idly made; binding religious vows and special practices such as fasting and celibacy, which are self-styled 'improvements' upon the perfection of Christ's order. These improvements, furthermore, lead more people into sin, since the evil example set by religious who fail in their spiritual commitment encourage the laity also to be recalcitrant in sin. The sins of the laity

redound upon the sinning religious. The reception of the sacraments, too, is not absolutely essential to salvation, though they can be helpful to the individual. All of these practices are artifices established by the institutional Church to consolidate its position as sole path to salvation, a position Lollards feel to be self-important and false. Moreover, these customs permit the corruption of simony, the buying and selling of religious offices.

Certain practices are viewed as strictly condemned by God's law and hence are the most pernicious. Five are of utmost importance: the temporal endowment of the Church, the special powers and privileges of the papacy, the foundation of "new sects," the doctrine of transubstantiation and mandatory annual auricular confession. For the Lollards, Pope Sylvester's acceptance of the Donation of Constantine marks the beginning of all evil in the Church. They describe the event thus:

Seint Siluester þe Pope þre hundreþ þere after þat ihesus crist
died on þe Roode ... was þe first Man þat resceyued londes &
Rentes. And þan seide a voice abouen þat hij alle herden þat
weren in þe chirche of Rome whan þe Pope Siluester was at his
seruise. Now is venym pult in holy chirche & þerfore ich wot wel
þat god ordeyned it neuere.¹⁸

The Donation is seen as changing the Church from the pure, apostolic way of life to greed and lust for "worldly worschipe and stynkyng drit." (EW 22) From this moment onwards, the physical Church is earthbound and brings in new laws and new traditions contrary to Christ's order such as the privilege of granting sanctuary, the power of imprisoning individuals, excommunication and tithes. The Wycliffite believe these novelties help to strengthen the Church's grasp for more power, more wealth and more prestige. They are dangerous innovations, because

they explicitly contravene God's intent, and because the right to grant sanctuary and the power to imprison not only are open to abuse, but, more important, are encroachments upon the authority and power of the King. The Church's 'right' to grant sanctuary and to imprison debilitates the law. Imprisonment on the order of the Church, moreover, is an uncharitable use of force contrary to the Church's mandate of mercy. Excommunication, too, is uncharitable and also presumptuous, since only God can exclude someone from His Church. The practice of tithing, as opposed to almsgiving, is a practice of the Old Law overturned in the New Testament by Christ's precedent and the example of the Apostles. The Lollards accuse the Church of concealing its own corruption by the suppression of true preaching and individual study of the Bible. Instead, the Church hides behind entertaining "fablis, cronyklis and lesyngis" (EW 18) provided for the ignorant. Obscure glosses to the Bible and canon law are also invented to support the present condition of the Church. Misguided commoners and lords chronically worsen the situation by amortizing, tithing, and granting "perpetual alms," an act which futilely tries to extend the donor's works of charity beyond the grave by willing land and money for the use of religious foundations. The 'poison of endowment' is the source of all evil in the Church.

The papacies succeeding that of Sylvester are viewed as further corrupted by more temporal endowments. As head of the Church on Earth, the figure of the Pope is often singled out in Wycliffite texts as the root of the problem. The Pope is "anticrist heere in erpe, for he is a3enus crist bope in lif and in lore." (EW 462) He is also "þe porter of helles 3ates," (EW 342) and "a synful ydiot," (EW 48) He is definitely not infallible, or unable to sin, or confirmed in his office by holiness, or

guaranteed entry into heaven. Rome (or Avignon) is "þe hed of error and propre nest of anticrist." (EW 446) Judging from the inveterate hostility with which the Lollards inveigh against the pope, one might think they deny the very concept of the papacy. This would be incorrect. The Wycliffites accept the theoretical basis of the papacy but object to the historical reality of the fourteenth-century papacy. The Flowman's Tale aptly demonstrates the ambivalent Lollard attitude toward the papacy. To the Griffon's accusation that the Pelican despises the pope, the Pelican replies,

If pope or cardinall live good lyve,
As Crist commaunded in his gospell,
Ayenes that woll I not stryve;
But, me thinketh, they live not well.
For if the pope lived as god bede,
Pryde and hyghnesse he shuld dispuse
Richesse, covetyse, and crowne on hede,
Mekenesse and povert he shulde use.¹⁷

If the pope truly follows Christ and St. Peter in humility and poverty and holiness of life, "he is worþily pope (but), if he contrairie hem most of al oper he is most anticrist" (EWW 21) because "þer is no pope ne Cristis vicar, but an holy man." (Apology 58) Yet the Lollards believe such perfection impossible in the temporal head of a powerful and wealthy Church, and the etymology they give the Latin papa, 'pope', shows this: "þis name is newe founden, and it bitokenip wundirful; for summe þenken it greet wundir þat worldly glory and hoolynesse shulden be knyttid in o persone." (EW 471) The irony of the definition is clear. For the Lollards, the Pope epitomizes all that is wrong with the Church, the contradiction of spirituality and worldliness. The corruption of the papacy is aped by the descending ranks of the Church hierarchy.

The papacy, by means of Biblical glosses and canon law, allows the foundation of "new sects" and "veyn religious": monks, canons, "caesarean clergy" and friars.¹⁸ These are to the Lollards yet more self-styled improvements upon the perfection of Christ's order and give the Church the false appearance of a special society exclusive to clerics in which lords and commons hold no share. Such a view distorts the Church from its true form of the community of all good Christians. Monks are viewed as useless parasites upon the community, shut up within the walls of their heavily endowed monasteries and unwilling to share even their books with the outside world. Canons are pictured as glorifying their minsters at the expense of the parish church. They thus remove the Church further from common men. The caesarean clergy, those clerics who elect to serve Caesar instead of Christ by accepting administrative positions from the government or lords, ignore their spiritual duties and misappropriate power, wealth and prestige from the temporal arm. The Lollards heap abuse upon such, calling them such things as "þe develis jogelours," "blynde bosardis," "malicious foxes and ravyschyng woves," "mold-warpis in wrotynge of worldly worschipe," "dumb houndis" unable to bark and warn those in their charge of the Devil's trickery, and "anticristis martiris" who had died to Christ and were alive in the World.

By far the greatest danger, however, and the target of the most abuse from the Wycliffites, is the most recent of the four new sects: the friars, "Caynis breþren,"¹⁹ (EW) "þe ranes pat ran fro Anticristis nose,"²⁰ whom Jack Upland reviles as

þe fellist folk pat ever Anticrist foond. þe flateringe freris
of al þe fyve ordris, falsli founden in oure feip and first

schulen be distried, þes ben cockers in coventis and coveitous in
 markettis, marrers of matrymonye and Caymes castel-makers,
 Pharesies fagynges þe folk and profetis fals, unsikir soudiouris
 sette al bifore, vayne men and voide in Ante cristis
 vowarde.²¹

The Wycliffite antipathy toward friars, of course, is only a small part of a much larger anti-fraternal tradition. The special relationship of friars with the pope and their freedom of movement mark friars for the Lollards as the special limbs of Antichrist free to do their master's bidding. They pose the greatest immediate threat to the Christian community because, in some ways, they exert the greatest influence in the fourteenth century. As scholars, they are famed for their works in philosophy, theology and Biblical exegesis. The Wycliffites generally find fraternal Biblical interpretations irritating and often charge that friars falsely gloss Scripture to support their own distorted views. The friars, for example, pervert the sense of Scripture in claiming that Christ instituted mendicancy by asking for a drink of water from the Samaritan woman and they then proceed to use this incident to justify all their begging. This gloss, the Lollards argue, slanders Christ, since He did not act out of need or greed, but out of mercy. He offered the woman an opportunity to attain grace. He gave far more than he received. Friars, in contrast, beg out of material greed and give nothing worthwhile in return. The fraternal interpretation of John 4:5-42 is only a device to conceal their fault.²² (SEW III 415-416)

Worse yet from the Lollard point of view is the close contact friars have with lords and commons. Many are private confessors to important lords and ladies. They do not need licenses to preach, and they raise popular preaching to an art form. They do not choose their sermon-matter from the Bible,

as the Lollards prefer. Instead, they tell entertaining "cronyclis wip poyses and dremyngis and manye opir helpes talis" (EWV 118) to win greater profit from a gullible audience. The Wycliffites accuse friars of stealing children by enticing them to join their orders with gifts and promises, then refusing to allow them to leave if afterwards they should find it unsuitable. Worst of all is their perversion of the sacrament of Penance in which friars grant easy absolution for a gift of money and draw their customers from parishioners eager to avoid the harsher penances imposed by responsible parish priests. Letters of fraternity and other invented tricks such as special prayers are 'sold' as absolute guarantees to enable those who can afford them to enter heaven without living a good life. Moreover, friars are seen as lazy. That so many able-bodied men ("strong beggars" in Lollard terminology from Wyclif's Latin mendicantes validi) should shirk physical labour and, instead, choose to live off extorted alms is anathema to the Lollards. The friars use the wealth such misbegotten alms bring them, not to aid the poor as their own rules bind them to do, but to build useless "waast housis" and "Caymes castels" of the sort the author of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede vilifies in great detail. After an unsuccessful attempt to have the Minorite friars teach him his Creed, the narrator of the poem journeys to a Dominican friary with the same purpose. He is appalled by what he sees:

Y 3emedede vpon pat house and 3erne peron lokede,
 Whou3 þe pileres weren ypeynt and pulched ful clene,
 And queynteli i-coruen wip curiouse knottes,
 Wip wyndowed well y-wrou3t wide vp o-lofte.
 And þanne y entrid in and even-forþ went,
 And all was walled þat wone þou3 it wid were,
 Wip posternes in pryuytie to pasen when hem liste;
 Orche ardes and erberes euesed well clene,

And a curious cros craftly entayled,
 Wip tabernacles y-ti3t to toten all abouten.
 þe pris of a plou3-land of penyes so rounde
 To aparaile þat pyler were pure lytel.²³

The Wycliffites condemn the friaries for several reasons. They are a waste of material and wealth. The cost of one "curious cros" exceeds the "pris of a plou3-land of penyes." The huge friary, large enough to contain orchards and gardens, is completely walled off, for the friars do not share their wealth. The author also criticizes the donors of the friars' revenues: rich merchants, lords and ladies who buy useless letters of fraternity instead of aiding the poor. The narrator goes on to say:

þanne y munte for þe mynstre to knowen,
 And a-waytede a woon wonderlie well y-beld,
 Wip arches on everiche half and belliche y-corven,
 Wip crochetes on corners wip knottes of golde,
 Wyde wyndowes y-wrou3t y-written full pikke,
 Schynen wip schapen scheldes to schewen aboute,
 Wip merkes of marchauntes y-medled bytwene,
 Mo þan twenty and two twyes y-noumbred,
 þer is none heraud þat hap halt swich a rolle,
 Ri3t as a vageman hap rekned hem newe.
 Tombes opon tabernacles tyld opon lofte,
 Housed in hirnes harde set abouten,
 Of armede alabaustre clad for þe nones,
 Made vpon marbel in many maner wyse,
 Knyghtes in her conisantes clad for þe nones,
 All it semed seyntes y-sacred opon erpe;
 And lovely ladies y-wrou3t leyen by her sydes
 In many gay garmentis þat weren gold-beten -
 þou3 þe tax of ten 3er were trewly 3-gadered,
 Nolde it nou3t maken þat hous half, as y trowe.
 (PFC 172-191)

Again, the narrator emphasizes the cost of the friary. The extravagant tombs of knights and ladies and the heraldic devices of wealthy merchants equal the tax revenues of twenty years. Such a vast amount of wealth would have been better

spent by the rich if they had given to the poor. Friars, however, have no concern for those who cannot afford their fraternal attentions and so the poor are conspicuously absent from the friary. Not only do the friars misuse the money they are given in building such huge friaries, but they spend it without reason:

þanne kam I to þat cloister and gaped abouten
 Whou3 it was pilered and peynt and portred well clene,
 All y-hyled wip leed lowe to þe stones,
 And y-paued wip peynt til iche poynte after oper;
 Wip kundites of clene tyn closed all aboute,
 Wip lauoures of latun lovelyche y-greithed.
 I trowe þe gaynage of þe ground in a gret schire
 Nolde aparaile þat place oo poynt til other ende,
 þanne was þe chaptire-hous wrou3t as a greet chirche,
 Corven and covered and queyntliche entayled;
 Wip semlich selure y-set on lofte;
 As a Parlement-hous y-peynted aboute. (PFC 192-203)

The decoration is beautiful, but needless, senseless and particularly pretentious. The friary's chapter house is as lavishly wrought as a great cathedral. The friars' arrogance, moreover, is not reserved only for imitating higher ecclesiastical offices. They extend their pretension to imitating secular lords as well:

þenne ferd y into fraytour and fond þere an oper,
 An halle for an hey3 kinge an housholde to holden,
 Wip brode bordes aboute y-benched wel clene,
 Wip wyndowes of glas wrou3t as a Chirche,
 þanne walkede y ferrer and went all abouten,
 And sei3 halles full hy3e and houses full noble,
 Chambers wip chymneyes and chapells gaie;
 And kychens for a hy3e kinge in castells to holden,
 And her dortour y-di3te wip dores ful stronge;
 Fermery and fraitur with fele mo houses,
 And all strong ston wall sterne upon hei3e,
 Wip gaie garites and grete and iche hole y-glased;
 And opere houses y-nowe to herberwe þo queene.

(PPC 204-216)

The refectory and kitchens are fit for "an hey3 kinge." Other houses equal the needs of a queen. The wording suggests that the friars have completely abandoned their religious vocation in favour of pretending to be lords. Such wrongful imitation of another's estate is sinful. The final outrage, however, is that the friars' greed is not satisfied by usurping the alms that the rich should give to the poor, but even feeds upon the poor themselves. The narrator concludes,

And 3et pi3e bilderes wilne beggen a baggful of wheate
 Of a pure pore man þat maie oneþe paie
 Half his rente in a 3er and half þen behynde!
 (PPC 217-219)

Although they have no need to do so, the friars still beg alms from those who cannot afford to give. With no charity for poor or rich, the friars are an enormous economic burden upon society.

The Wycliffites charge that the new sects change the true form of the Church by emphasizing her role as a sacramental institution at the expense of her duties as evangelist, thus exacerbating the difference between the clergy and laity. The administration of the sacraments becomes the first priority of the clergy, not the preaching of God's Word. This, in turn, falsely elevates the Church hierarchy in importance, since the route to salvation seems to lie only through the Church, her sacraments, and her officials. All the sacraments are thus perverted, but the Eucharist and Penance in particular. Nominalist transubstantiation -- the worship of accidents -- is idolatrous, and the Wycliffites delight in pointing out that it is a newfangled doctrine brought in by the special pets of Antichrist, the friars. It is also presumptuous in

positing that man can create God. Auricular confession, too, is newfangled and presumptuous, for it entrusts the power of absolution to man, not to God, and thus gives man command over God, as God is forced to absolve whomever the priest absolves. The Lollards believe instead that absolution comes only from God, and that true contrition of heart is all that is needed. Such a form of confession avoids potential scandal and prevents simony in the form of 'sin payments'. The established Church has twisted the sacrament of confession into yet another yearly profit-making scheme.

In the Lollard's view, the church hierarchy is a group of self-important, self-glorifying, cruel, vindictive, greedy, covetous, proud, jealous, wasteful, presumptuous, tyrannical, malicious, quick to take offence, thieving, hypocritical spiritual murderers and sodomites. To use a favourite Lollard expression, ecclesiastics are "blynde lederis ledynge þe blynde peple" (EW 153) into Hell. The only solution, the Lollards feel, is disendowment. Removing their temporal wealth would force the new sects to disband and would restore the papacy to its pre-Sylvestrian purity and the Church to her true function as preacher of the Word. It would strengthen also the economy of the land (an important consideration in an economy distressed by the costly expenses of the Hundred Years War) by returning the wealth to the king and lords. Divestiture would have the additional bonus of easing the burden of taxation upon the commons. It is the duty of the king and lords to carry out this reform.

Since the Church cannot guarantee salvation through her sacraments and other practices, in the Lollard view the individual becomes responsible for his own salvation. But, at the same time, the individual is already fore-ordained to bliss or hellfire. One is either of the

predestinati -- elect and part of Christ's Church -- or the presciti -- foreknown and part of Antichrist's Church. The distinction is important, as Wyclif demonstrates: "et sic sunt aliqui praedestinati, hoc est post laborem ordinati ad gloriam, aliqui praesciti, hoc est post vitam miseram ad poenam perpetuam ordinati,"²⁴ that is, 'and thus there are some who are predestinate, which means after their labour they are ordained to glory, and there are others who are foreknown, which means after their wretched lives they are ordained to eternal pain'. This belief in predestination, inherited from the tradition of St. Augustine and Bradwardine, certainly seems to contradict the Lollards' belief in free will and personal responsibility for salvation.²⁵ Opponents point out that preaching and obeying the commandments are useless if the damned are damned and the elect elect. The dilemma is resolved by seeing that fate and free will co-exist. Fate is God's eternal point of view; free will is man's limited point of view. A man may be predestinatus or prescitus, but it is impossible for him to know here on earth which he is. It is equally impossible to distinguish what others are. Thus Church practices such as the election of a pope by cardinals or the simple ordination of priests are presumptuous and dangerous in the Lollard view, since presciti may just as easily be chosen by men as predestinati. The sense of unknowing allows free will. The only reliable guide is how well an individual's life matches Christ's example. While it is impossible to know that one is saved, it is nevertheless expected of one to hope for salvation.²⁶

As for those fools who still maintain fate and free will cannot exist together, "who knowep þe mesure of goddis mercy, to whom herynge of goddis word schal þus profite?" (EW 111) Willing listening leads to Heaven; willful deafness

leads to Hell.

The Wycliffites lay the greatest responsibility on priests, since they have charge of their flocks' souls. Priests are bound first of all to preach, so that their parishioners know God's law. Then they are to give virtuous example, administer the sacraments, and pray. If they fail in these, or fail to obey Christ in putting the duty of preaching above the others, the sins of their charges redound to them. Nevertheless, the ordinary individual also has personal responsibility for his own salvation. It is his duty to listen to the Word of God as it is preached and to lead a good life according to the Word. It is also his duty to check up on his priest's life, since he must obey only someone who himself obeys Christ. It is essential therefore that the common man study the Bible in order to know God's law better and a vernacular Bible becomes an absolute necessity. It is not accidental that the possession of a vernacular Bible came to be a proof of heresy and that the greatest work of Lollard scholarship is the later Wycliffite translation of the Vulgate.

This is not to say that the Lollards reject other authorities or even the Latin Vulgate. The Vulgate is never superseded. In fact, all the available evidence points to the two Wycliffite translations having no revered status among the scholarly Lollards themselves. The vernacular Bible is for personal use and study by those who cannot read Latin. Of all the copious quotations from the Bible in the many Lollard tracts and sermons, none can be linked either to the early or the later Wycliffite translations. Individual authors appear to have translated passages as needed from the Vulgate, or Breviary, or Missal, or some other patristic source. In contrast, material from several Lollard works is directly traceable to the Lollard preachers' handbooks,

the Floretum and the Rosarium.²⁷

Latin quotations and even entire Latin works, moreover, appear in the Lollard corpus. The Wycliffite fondness for citing St. Augustine and other respected Church authorities, such as St. Gregory, Cyprian, St. Bernard, Peraldus, the Decretum, St. Jerome, pseudo-Chrysostom, Grosseteste, the near contemporary Fitzralph and a host of others, as well as their numerous adaptations of orthodox works, including Archbishop Thoresby's Lay Folk's Catechism, Richard Rolle's English Psalter, and the Prick of Conscience, prove very clearly that the traditional authorities are accorded great respect. It is true that they use these authorities for their own Lollard ends, but they use them in the same way as orthodox writers, to support their claims. The catholicus sensitivus is useful and good for guidance, with the provision that its ideas accord with Scripture. Wyclif says even of the revered St. Augustine, "locus a testimonio Augustini non est infallibilis, cum Augustinus sit errabilis,"²⁸ that is, 'a gloss based on the authority of Augustine is not infallible, because Augustine was capable of error'. It is simply illogical from the Lollard point of view to put the infallible Word of God and the words of fallible men on equal terms of authority.

The last major Wycliffite doctrine to be outlined here is that of dominion by grace, first expounded by Wyclif in his De civili dominio (1377), which is an elaboration of Giles of Rome's De potestate ecclesiastica (1300) and Fitzralph's (d. 1360) De pauperie salvatoris. Simply expressed, dominion by grace is the belief that the state of mortal sin precludes any individual from rightful lordship in any form, and that the state of grace gives natural lordship in everything. The Rosarium defines natural

lordship as: "lordeschep ordeyned of God, fonded in pure titel of ry3twissenenes, sufferyng togeder of evenhede many lordes, but sufferyng not alienacion, þe ri3twisnes ykepte; and in sich lordeschep everych ri3twis man is lorde overal þing." (Rosarium 63) Mortal sin, on the other hand, is a forfeiture before God, the high feudal lord from whom all lordship comes. Wyclif and his followers realize to varying degrees the potential for political subversion in such a doctrine, and they generally are careful to maintain that it cannot be used to refuse payment of taxes or legal obedience to bad lords. Such a position is well grounded in Scripture in Christ's obedience to an unjust civil authority and in St. Paul's and St. Peter's instructions for Christian slaves to obey their pagan masters. In practice, disobedience to authority is limited by the inability to distinguish on earth those in a state of grace from those in a state of mortal sin, the predestinati from the presciti. Again, the only touchstone by which an individual may determine how far and in what he should obey someone is how well that person follows Christ. A deep understanding of the Bible, gained by personal study, is needed again in order to know who is for and who is against Christ.

Dominion by grace applies in practice only to the clergy. The Church, after all, holds temporal dominion unlawfully. If a priest is immoral or acts in any way against the dictates of the Bible, he loses spiritual dominion. He is no longer a true priest in the Wycliffite view, and his parishioners gain no benefit from his celebrations of the Mass, from receiving sacraments he administers, or from any of his prayers.²⁹ Indeed, the most important implication the theory of dominion holds for lords and commons is that they need to inquire into the life of their priest to make sure that they do not consent to

the priest's sin out of ignorance and thus sin themselves. An unworthy priest is to be ignored and shunned, despite his empty threats of excommunication and the false judgements of clerical courts. Most of all, he is not to receive succour from lords or commons. While taxes cannot be lawfully withheld from bad lords, tithes must be withheld from bad priests. Supporting someone who is against Christ makes the supporter also an enemy of Christ. Again, only Scripture can instruct an individual in the right way.

There are many degrees of Wycliffite belief, ranging from very moderate to extremist views, and, because of this wide range, it used to be critically fashionable to distinguish between Wycliffites and Lollards. The Wycliffites were the scholarly disciples of Wyclif at Oxford. As their master, they were highly skilled in scholastic philosophy, theology and debate. They also died out very quickly under Archbishop Courtenay's vigilant suppression of Wyclif's heretical teachings at Oxford. The Lollards, on the other hand, were simple members of the popular movement with little education and a tendency to extremism. They were semi-literate at best and quite incapable of comprehending the subtleties of Wyclif's thought, the result being a perversion and dilution of true Wycliffite thought. While this did happen in the later stages of the Lollard movement, after years of determined harassment by Church and State authorities and after all political support had dissipated, for the early movement the distinction between 'Wycliffite' and 'Lollard' is an artificial one.

The distinction has no basis in contemporary use, for the terms 'Lollard' and 'Wycliffite' are used interchangeably. Henry Crumpe first uses "Lollard" in 1382, two years before Wyclif's death, and he uses it referring to Wyclif's Oxford disciples.³⁰ Friar Daw calls Jack Upland both "lollarde"

and "Wyclifane."³¹ An orthodox sermonist tells of "a lollard at Oxanfort but awhile agon pat for-sak al his errorrs and al his misleuyng and turnyd a3en to þe leuyng of oþer good cristen men."³² 'Lollard' is even used to describe friars!³³ Certainly, the distinction falters entirely when one attempts to divide the mass of anonymous literature into 'Wycliffite' as opposed to 'Lollard' literature.

The artificial distinction between Wycliffite and Lollard supposedly puts Wyclif in relationship to his academic and popular followers. Wyclif, according to the distinction, had no contact or involvement with his popular followers. Although this view has some merit, it creates an erroneous impression because it implies that there was no relationship at all between Lollardy and Wyclif. There is no doubt that every orthodox ecclesiastic saw Wyclif as directly responsible for instigating the Lollard movement. Friar Daw points to "Wyclif pat wicked worme" (Friar Daw l 71) as the fully cognizant source of the heresy. The mediaeval historians Thomas Walsingham, Henry Knighton, Adam Usk and the author of the Fasciculi Zizaniorium all hold Wyclif and the popular preaching of his adherents responsible for the increase of unrest in the country. Wyclif's followers themselves draw the connection between the scholar and the sect. Punning on the word 'lollard', the Wycliffite Piers of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede reminds the reader of how the friars persecuted Wyclif when they "overall lollede him wiþ heretykes werkes." (PPC 532) Wyclif himself may not have organized bands of poor priests, but he is always seen by his contemporaries as personally responsible for the Lollard movement.

There is justification for such a view. Not only is every

concern Wyclif raised continued to some degree in the vernacular texts, but terminology and entire phrases can be directly linked to the wording of Wyclif's Latin writings, such as "Caymes castles" for caymitica castella, "four new sects" for quattor sectae novellae, and "accident without suget" for accidens sine subjecto. The same continuity is true of proofs offered in Lollard tracts. Several of Wyclif's Latin writings exist in English adaptations, so many that early editors erroneously assumed that he was responsible for both versions, preparing one for those who could read Latin and one for those who could read only English. All of this implies direct knowledge of Wyclif's work. Wyclif may have had no personal involvement with followers outside the scholarly confines of Oxford, but that does not prevent any of his followers from having firsthand knowledge of Wyclif's writings. All the evidence today suggests that the Lollard movement was far more organized and intellectually active than previously supposed. Anne Hudson has shown the superiority of Lollard manuscripts and the extraordinarily meticulous editorial detail involved in the production of their sermon-cycles.³⁴ The later version of the Bible itself is not the product of incompetent scholarship. Many Lollards were involved in book production and related occupations. They were hardly semi-literate bumpkins. The seemingly hysterical fears of the authorities about the "pestifere doctrine velud lollio," 'the pestilential, weedy doctrine,'³⁵ of Wyclif, and their constant attempts to prove this doctrine false and foolish long into the fifteenth century were not as baseless as once thought.

The term "Lollard" itself is an insult. It is derived from the Dutch "lollen" meaning to mumble piously, but its English definition becomes

confused with that of "loller" – idler, vagabond. The educated man could also derive "Lollard" from the Latin lolia, 'weed,' in accordance with the patristic equation of tares with heresy.³⁶ A more sinister association, too, might be seen in Mum and the Sothsegger, where the narrator notes,

For furst folowid freres Lollardz names,
And sith hath be shewed þe same on paym-self,
That þaire lesingz have lad paym to lolle by þis necke;
At Tibourne for traizon y-twyght up þay were.³⁷

Friars, who were the first to abuse Lollards with this name, are themselves worthy to be hanged. Although the De haeretico comburendo Act was not legislated until 1401, the ecclesiastical authorities had threatened the death penalty against the Wycliffites as early as the mid 1380's. The word "Lollard," with its suggestion of "lolle", 'hang', might reflect this threat. The expression was used as a insult to discredit opinions spoken "ut Lolardi,"³⁸

Just as the Puritans much later disliked the ridiculing term 'Puritan' and preferred to be known as "the godly", the early Lollards disliked the term of ridicule applied to their sect -- 'Lollard' -- and preferred to be known as "pore cristen men," "trewe men" and the like.³⁹ It was not until later that they came to favour 'Lollard' as a badge of distinction.⁴⁰ For the early movement it was an insult, and Harry Bailly's snide remark, "I smell a loller in the wind,"⁴¹ in The Canterbury Tales would sting an early Wycliffite deeply. In his defence of Lollard character, Sir John Clanvowe also demonstrates the derogatory meanings commonly associated with the word:

swich folke þat wolden faynen lyven meekeliche in þis world and ben out offe swich forseid riot, noise, and stryf, and lyven symplely, and usen to eten and drynken in mesure, and to cloopen hem meekely, and suffren paciently wroonges þat oopere folke doon and seyn to hem, and hoolden hem apayed with lytel good of þis world and desiren noo greet name of þis world, ne no pris ther of, swiche folke þe world scoorneþ and hooldep hem lolleris and loselis, foolis and schameful wrecches.⁴² But sikerly, God holdeþ hem moost wise and most worsshipful.

Clanvowe is not writing against the pejorative use of the term 'Lollard'. If that were the case, one would need to believe also that he is writing against the pejorative use of "loselis," "foolis," and "schameful wrecches." Instead, Clanvowe is using "lollare" ironically in order to show the injustice and unfairness of applying any term of ridicule to the followers of Wyclif.

Hardworking men and women of upstanding character (ie. the followers of Wyclif) are insulted by their neighbours as being nothing better than wastrels, fools, wretches, and 'lolleris'. If the word "lolleris" does indeed here mean Lollards, its parallel insults -- "loselis," "foolis" and "schameful wrecches" -- certainly explain why the followers of Wyclif viewed the term 'Lollard' askance. This contemporary sensitivity, coupled with the other factors previously discussed, should prevent modern scholars from separating the Wycliffite movement from the Lollard sect.

There are many problems in dealing with Lollard material. One of these is distinguishing between what is and what is not a Wycliffite text. This task is made difficult by the sect's unsolidified form. There are moderate Lollards and there are extreme Lollards. Positions certainly hardened in the face of official repression, but one still must decide which position is more representative of the sect as a whole. For instance, the sacrament of

confirmation is often attacked by the Wycliffites as lacking scriptural foundation. The Lollard Hawisia Moone in 1430 dismisses it, along with all the other sacraments, as of no avail. (EW 34) But other Lollards still feel the sacraments, including confirmation, to be of value if worthily given and received.⁴³ The adaptor of The Lay Folks' Catechism even makes the surprising allowance that confirmation "owys noon to do but þe byschop alone."⁴⁴ The same quandary occurs when one attempts to determine the Lollard attitude toward images. Some are extreme iconoclasts, feeling all religious images to be idolatrous; others accept the educative value of images in churches, finding only those images to be blasphemous that slander Christ and his saints by falsely picturing them as rich and worldly. Which of these positions can be said to present the 'true' Lollard view?

The dates and authorship of Lollard texts also add to the confusion. These difficulties date back as far as the Reformation interest in the sect, when dates were often assigned to works without justification. Most damaging of all was the tendency then as now to name Wyclif, or Hereford, or Purvey, as the author of a work, again often with little or no justification. The result is a confusion, still haunting Wycliffite studies today, with regard to what Lollards thought on a particular subject at a given time. Out of the confusion two trends are discernible within the sect. First is the general movement away from largely theological questions to pragmatic concerns. Second is a tendency towards increasingly extreme viewpoints expressed by the sect. It is also evident that five major subjects are common throughout Lollard history: the supremacy of Scripture, the necessity of disendowment, the nature of the Eucharist, anti-fraternalism and anti-papal polemic.

The issue is further exacerbated by the Wycliffite manuscripts themselves. The paucity of extant Lollard material in Britain is proof of how effective were the measures the authorities took against such writings. There must have been Lollard documents now lost or destroyed that could have supplied internal details about what the sect believed and how it was organized. Too often only hostile sources remain to comment upon a crucial aspect of the movement. Moreover, the texts that do survive present problems on account of their allusive style. The tracts and sermons were not meant for the uninitiated. They assume that the reader already understands the doctrines. It apparently took a year of study at Lollard conventiculae to learn properly the range of Wycliffite thought — a strong argument against the accusation that the movement was illiterate and ignorant.⁴⁵ Only after this year of study could the initiate reap the benefits of the supportive material. To gain an understanding of the sect and its beliefs today, however, one must work backward by piecing together the doctrines from the supportive material.

This task is hampered by the Lollards' habit of stating their views in the most controversial manner possible. Wyclif's strange sounding seventh conclusion that 'God ought to obey the Devil', condemned at the Earthquake Council in 1382, is such an example.⁴⁶ Sometimes the meaning behind this self-generated controversy is obvious. For example, the statement in An Apology for Lollard Doctrines that "Crist was cursed" (24) may sound obscure, but the explanation is readily apparent. There are three different types of cursings: where one curses one's self in the evilness of one's life; where one is cursed by God as a reproof to one's sins; and where one is cursed unjustly by man. Only the last applies to Christ. But for other statements the

explanations are not so obvious. Declarations such as "The pope is the son of Antichrist" are too often accepted by modern scholars at the face value of fiery rhetoric, ignoring the qualification that this is true only if the pope is "contrarius Crist." (SEW III 458) One Lollard tract includes a warning that the controversial statements expressed are neither literally true nor false, in a seeming attempt to confuse suspicious authorities. (EW 20) Today they confuse scholars.

The issue is clouded further by deep inconsistencies between the Lollard movement's beliefs and actions. Although their practices were claimed to be the only true pattern for the Church, far too many Lollards recanted upon their apprehension by the authorities when the threat of death at the stake was still nothing more than a threat. As Trevelyan phrased it, the Lollards seemed to "lack the spirit of martyrdom."⁴⁷ Even more puzzling is the Oldcastle rebellion of 1415, since one of the major points Lollards make is that war is immoral. Killing a Christian in war is an act of murder, and much breath was expounded denouncing Bishop Despenser's Crusade in Flanders (1382-1383) as Church-sanctioned murder. In spite of this pacificism, Oldcastle led an armed rebellion against the King, the very source Lollards hoped would implement their religious and social reforms. Even if one accepts McFarlane's assertion⁴⁸ that few of the rebels were actually Lollards and that most were plainly opportunists, the whole episode does not match the lofty ideals the tracts and sermons espouse.

Orthodox sources are not very helpful in supplying a legal definition of Lollardy, since it was not until 1407 that possession of a vernacular Bible without previous permission became proof positive of heretical beliefs. The De haeretico comburendo Act had been passed in 1401, but a judgement of

heresy could come only after an examination by ecclesiastical authorities, and the heretic could not be executed unless he had already once recanted and then relapsed back into apostasy. Everyone had the right to a second opportunity. Earlier, a Lollard priest was usually first arrested for preaching illegally without a license, then examined for known suspicious beliefs, then imprisoned indefinitely unless a recantation followed. The effectiveness of the procedure depended upon the vigilance of the individual bishop and the non-interference of the temporal arm. Many Lollard priests acted with impunity under the protection of a knight patron. In 1388, for example, the Lollard chaplain John Woodward was protected from prosecution by Bishop Buckingham through the intervention of a chamber knight of Richard II, Sir Thomas Latimer.⁴⁹

Records of Lollard trials are helpful in supplying titles of confiscated heretical books, provided that the titles are identifiable, but even then, problems remain. Anne Hudson has illustrated the case of Dives and Pauper, written between 1405 and 1410, a work critical of some Church practices, but theologically sound.⁵⁰ One copy owned by a secular priest was confiscated on suspicion of heresy in 1431. A second copy, however, was procured between 1420 and 1440 by the ultra-orthodox abbot Whethamstede of St. Albans for his monastery. The classification of works seems to have depended upon their owners. Dives and Pauper and similar works must have been seen as acceptable in safe monastic circles, but considered subversive in the hands of secular persons or radical priests already apt to agree with criticisms of the Church. There is always, as well, the possibility that an otherwise orthodox work existed in a Lollard adaptation which could account for its inclusion among confiscated books. This sort of adaptation was made in the case of several

works, including Rolle's English Psalter, Clement of Llanthony's Harmony, Thoresby's Lay Folk's Catechism, the Elucidarium, the Ancrene Riwe and the Prick of Conscience.

The issue becomes even more confusing if one tries to decide who was and was not a Lollard. Henry VI owned a Wycliffite translation of the Bible (minus the Prologue and Glosses) and so by one legal definition was a Lollard himself, but ownership of a vernacular Bible depended on other factors, just as did the ownership of other books. It was acceptable for lords and orthodox clergy, subversive for commoners and unlicensed popular preachers. Even ownership of a Wycliffite Bible in itself was no guarantee of Lollard sympathy, unless the Bible included the rare Prologue and Glosses, which explicitly outline heretical beliefs. Henry VI might have owned a copy of the Wycliffite Bible, but his determined efforts to destroy Lollardy prove he was not sympathetic to the sect. The translation alone bears no trace of its heretical origins.

Other factors frustrate efforts to distinguish Lollards from non-Lollards. Eccentricity of any kind could lead to accusations of heresy. Although the life and writings of Margery Kempe cannot be described as Lollard by any stretch of the imagination, she was several times accused of being a Lollard heretic and, fortunately for her, always exonerated.⁵¹ Various writers shared political and social concerns with the Lollards. John Gower, for instance, pointed to the Donation of Constantine as the source of ecclesiastical corruption, as did the Lollards, and also he railed against the prevalence of corruption in the Church. He, too, looked to the State to remedy the situation and pictured the contemporary scene as shrouded in apocalyptic gloom. But the man can hardly be described as a Lollard sympathiser who wrote:

Now were it good that thou forthi,
 Which thurgh baptesme proprely
 Art unto Cristes feith professed,
 Be war that thou be noght oppressed
 With Anticristes lollardie.
 For as the Jwes prophecie
 Was set of god for advantage,
 Riht so this newe tapinage
 Of lollardie goth aboute
 To sette Cristes feith in doute.
 The seintz that weren ous tofore,
 Be whom the feith was ferst upbore,
 That holi cherche stod relieved,
 Thei oghten betre be believed
 Than these, which that men knowe
 Noght holy, thogh thei feigne and blowe
 Here lollardie in mennes Ere.⁵²

Lollardy is only one branch of a general trend toward popular piety and social complaint in the fourteenth century.

The issue is further complicated by Wyclif's connection with John of Gaunt. It is now recognized that the early Lollard movement had considerable support at court. To what extent Gaunt and his circle afforded support and to what degree they believed in Lollard doctrine remain obscure, although becoming more clear.⁵³ Gaunt and Wyclif had been political allies in the mid 1370's, and it is probable that the lenient treatment Wyclif received from the ecclesiastical authorities after 1382 was due to the continued influence of his patron. It is indeed ironic that the man whose progeny proved so determined to stamp out Lollardy should have been the one to have protected the heresiarch himself.

One final problem is the possible use of Lollard texts by non-Lollards. In editing a Lollard sermon-cycle Anne Hudson has discovered Lollard sermon material being incorporated into other sermons.⁵⁴ Did these sermonists recognize the heretical origins of their source material? Did they sympathize

with the movement or aspects of the movement? Or did they simply make use of available organized material, editing out controversial parts in the same manner as the Lollards added their own views to orthodox works? These questions are virtually impossible to answer with any finality. Considering the unsolidified nature of the sect's beliefs, it is most likely that many people were sympathetic to various of the movement's ideals, but were unwilling or not sufficiently informed to commit themselves fully to the whole range of Wycliffite belief. One sermon-cycle, for example, simply cuts out unwanted heretical views while retaining others, an indication that the reviser did not accept all Lollard tenets.⁵⁵

Another illustration of this problem is the relationship of Jack Upland and Upland's Rejoinder. Jack Upland is without doubt a Lollard work. It contains all the common Lollard concerns in a series of challenges aimed at the friars by the poor labourer Jack Upland. Upland's Rejoinder is an answer to Friar Daw's Reply, which is the voice of orthodoxy responding to Jack Upland's challenge. Upland's Rejoinder is a much more learned work than Jack Upland. It includes Latin quotations, and its Jack Upland can parry Friar Daw with Biblical exegesis and argument. It carries on the attack against the friars with zest. Yet is it Lollard? Near the end of the poem, written in the margins of the manuscript, are three interpolations: one on the friars' exploitation of the poor; the second on special prayers and simony; the third on the Eucharist. These three interpolations all have the strident tone and the phrasing of Lollardy, and it is generally recognized that the interpolator was a Wycliffite adding his movement's sentiments to a sympathetic work. The author of Upland's Rejoinder, however, is more ambiguous. He must have known he was

supporting a Lollard text in attacking Friars Daw's Reply. Even if he had never read Jack Upland, Friar Daw's retort "Wermode, Iak, moost verrelī was Wiclif 3our maistir" (l 150) would have told him enough. He therefore must have been at least sympathetic to the movement. But was he only a sympathizer liable to recant if pressed, as opposed to the bona fide Lollard interpolator?

The final, perhaps unanswerable, question is whether or not a valid distinction can be drawn between a Lollard and a Lollard sympathiser.

One last consideration which must be kept in mind is that Wyclif and the Lollards were not original thinkers. Every single one of their doctrines and preoccupations had already been voiced by another source. Wyclif principally derived his theory of dominion by grace and his anti-fraternal views from Fitzralph. His exegetical approach to the Bible he derived from Fitzralph and Nicholas of Lyra. From Bradwardine and Augustine he developed his theory of predestination, and from Grosseteste he derived his anti-papal views, attacks upon Church abuses and insistence upon preaching. Even Wyclif's teachings on the Eucharist had an acknowledged forerunner in Berengarius. Wyclif took many of these views to further extremes and sometimes in different directions than his predecessors. His followers often changed Wyclif's emphases and hardened his theories into less subtle, more vitriolic expressions. Nevertheless, Wyclif's and the Lollards' ideas were originally derived from established mediaeval theological literature. The originality of Wyclif and his followers rests upon the collection of their points and the unique combination of popular heresy with academic vitality. Wyclif and the Wycliffites would not have viewed themselves as revolutionaries so much as radicals. They believed the Church had been spoiled by the poison of endowment and by the novelties of the four new sects,

and they wished to return Church and State to a pristine feudal world where lords ruled, priests preached and commoners laboured. Many works appear to share Lollard feelings because they share this same idealized mediaeval worldview.

Fortunately, there are some aids to help discriminate between Lollard and non-Lollard material. Certain content proves to be a reliable indicator of Lollardy. Any work that expresses aberrant positions on the Eucharist likely will be a Lollard work. Likewise, any work that condemns the practice of annual auricular confession will be likely part of the Wycliffite corpus. Any work that defends or approves of Wyclif and his popular preachers will at least be Lollard in sympathy, if not actually Lollard. Aside from these doctrinal matters, however, there is a characteristic style common to Wycliffite writings that suggests Lollard authorship. Wycliffite sermons and tracts sound very similar to one another, not only because of the repetitive material and controversial manner of expression, but because they make use of the same set phrases and words over and over again. "Strong beggars" and "fals glosers" build "caymes castels" and "wast housis" with money won by "special prayers" and "fablis, cronycklis and lesyngis." The "emperours prelates" and the other "veyn religious" and "bastard braunchis" of the "new sects" infected by the "sourdow of þe Pharisees" put their "synful mannus tradicioun" and "rotun ritis" above "Goddis lawe," twisting Christ's Church from "þe congregacioun of cristen men" to the "synagogue of Sathanas" founded by Antichrist. The pope is a "fend of Antichrist" who permits the Eucharist to be perverted into an "accident without subjecte." Insults such as "blynde bosardis," "doumbe houndis," "ravesychyne wolves" and "wrotynge moldwarpis" appear with monotonous regularity. The list of repetitive formulas is so long and so regular in use that, for all intents and

purposes, it constitutes a sectarian vocabulary.⁵⁶ The need to learn this specialized vocabulary was probably one reason it took a year of study at a conventicle to become a Wycliffite. Today, although its idiosyncratic definitions may blur the meaning of a passage for us, the inclusion of this sectarian vocabulary, largely inherited from Wyclif himself, can help to identify a work as Lollard.

In conclusion, it must be seen that it is impossible to establish one definitive outline of Wycliffite thought and practice. Lollardy was a large, amorphous movement and there were many different kinds of Lollards, ranging from the moderates who saw themselves as part of the established Church to the extremists of the lunatic fringe who denied the established Church altogether. The definition of what writings were Lollard is subjective, often depending upon the status of the individual concerned as well as the context in which a particular work was being read. Many works exist in a grey zone, used by Wycliffite and orthodox alike. There is an even more fundamental source of confusion for one attempting to describe the difference between Wycliffite and orthodox thought; that is, Wyclif and the Lollards were very mediaeval in outlook, and they were not original thinkers. Their ideal vision of the Church and society was the Apostolic community of the New Testament. Yet, this was the ideal of most mediaeval writers, and Langland will prove to be no exception. The next stage in my argument is an examination of biographical, geographical and historical evidence to determine the degree of likelihood that Langland and members of the Wycliffite sect were aware of each other.

CHAPTER TWO: WILLIAM LANGLAND

The early Protestant historians, in their desire to find historical precedent for their reforms, laid claim to Wyclif, his followers, and Langland. All three were cited as proof of a strong tradition of religious dissent in England. Langland's dissatisfaction with the Church linked him, in these historians' eyes, to the Wycliffite movement, and John Bale for one confidently described Langland as "ex primis Ioannis Uuicleui discipulis unum,"¹ that is, 'one of John Wyclif's first followers'. An anonymous late sixteenth-century or early seventeenth-century hand noted in the margin of a Piers Plowman manuscript, "The author Robert Langland a cheife disciple of John Wickliffs."² Editors of early editions of Piers Plowman continued to discuss the possible indebtedness of Langland to the Lollard sect. In the introduction to his variorum edition of Piers Plowman, W. W. Skeat selected excerpts from these earlier editorial comments.³ Dr. Whitaker and Thomas Wright believed that no connection existed between Langland and Wyclif. Dean Milman, however, argued that, even though their religious views were different, they held similar negative views of wealth within the Church. In contrast, G. P. Marsh felt that Wyclif and Langland are inseparable, since they were supportive of one another's efforts at reform. The strongest nineteenth-century advocate of a connection between Langland and Wyclif was Skeat himself. He characterised Langland as follows: "though not quite a Wycliffite, his sympathies were mostly with that party."⁴

The twentieth century has seen great strides in Piers Plowman and Wycliffite studies. Nevertheless, the nature of the relationship between Langland and the Wycliffites is still troublesome, largely because it is usually approached from the narrow perspective of Wyclif's influence on Langland. In the early 1930s Konrad Burdach identified Piers as a Lollard priest.⁵ Pamela Gradon follows Burdach in seeing "the Wycliffite concept of the saved layman" behind the confrontation over the pardon between Piers and the priest.⁶ Gradon warns that the similarity does not mean indebtedness or sympathy to Lollardy. In fact, in her most recent article on the subject, she argues that the evidence for Wyclif's influence upon Langland is too inconclusive for any judgement.⁷ Willi Erzgraber continues in the tradition of Dean Milman, and he argues that Langland and Wyclif can be compared for their criticism of religious abuses and their ideal of the poor priest, but that their attitudes toward the mediaeval church in general are different.⁸ Derek Pearsall also follows this line of thought when he puts Langland within "part of a broader spiritual movement that was sweeping the fourteenth century, and of which the mystics and the Lollards are equally part."⁹ Pearsall separates Langland and the Lollards in terms of doctrine and ideology; yet, he allows for the possibility of influence and, in fact, points out several areas where influence likely occurred. Likewise Russell Peck identifies "an intimacy between Wycliffite reform and a larger penitential movement which focuses attention on the vernacular and the individual soul's social conscience in a direct relationship with God."¹⁰ This penitential movement includes Langland. David Aers establishes the context of Langland's political thought by comparing it to Wyclif's theories,¹¹ Janet Coleman does the same for Langland's theology

by comparing it, among others, to Wyclif's theories.¹² David Fowler also notes the question. Although he does not discuss the subject himself in any detail, he gives a short survey of early and modern opinion.¹³

The only recent Piers Plowman scholar who argues that Langland had Wycliffite sympathies is Ladislav Cejp. Cejp believes Wyclif is favourably alluded to in a number of anagrams.¹⁴ He also argues vigorously that William Langland is more radical than is generally assumed.¹⁵ A fair summary of Cejp's beliefs is the following statement,

the text <Piers Plowman> contains many opinions which agree with the views expressed in the works of the famous precursor of Reformation ... The number of these coincidences is high enough, but the qualitative correlation surpasses in its importance the quantity. The poem and Wycliffe agree on such important matters as the views on pilgrimages, on friars, papal bulls, on the worldly occupation of the clergy, idolatry, confessions to friars, simony, indulgences, crusades, etc. There is no sufficient reason for refusing Langland's positive attitude to Wycliffe's doctrines in the above quoted points.¹⁶

Cejp's stance is unusual in that he both claims a Lollard cast to Piers Plowman and examines the issue to any length at all. The general trend is to note the contemporary nature of Langland and Lollardy, and then to move on. Hence, recent discussion of the subject has been usually, and inadequately, in the form of notes.

Discussions of Langland's influence on the Lollards are divided into those by critics who believe that Langland was a radical thinker, and those by critics who see only the literary influence of Piers Plowman on some Wycliffite poems. Only David Fowler and Ladislav Cejp argue that Langland was an active participant in dissent, and Fowler restricts his argument to the radical influence of the A-text on the peasant rebels of 1381.¹⁷ This is far too

early for Piers Plowman to have had a specific influence on Wycliffite dissent, especially since there is no real evidence, only rumour, that associates the Lollards with the Rebellion. The inadvertent influence of Piers Plowman on Wycliffite literature is treated in a few literary studies, most notably that of D. A. Lawton.¹⁸

In spite of critical hesitation to come out for or against a connection between Lollardy and Piers Plowman, it is still a common practice to cite passages which deal with the same subjects from Piers Plowman and Lollard works, as if there were some proven link between them. In fact, in recent years Morton Bloomfield and Anna Baldwin both have suggested other areas in which Wyclif may possibly have influenced Langland.¹⁹ Unfortunately, neither has pursued his or her suggestion. M. R. Paul has attempted to prove a connection between Wyclif and Langland's handling of the figure of Mahomet.²⁰ Yet, still the question of Langland's indebtedness to Wyclif and his followers remains unresolved.

The anonymity of mediaeval authors is a great hindrance when one attempts to discuss an author in relation to his text or to outside influences. There simply is too little upon which to base an examination. In the case of William Langland, even his name is not known for a certainty. It is possible, however, to reconstruct from internal and external evidence the sort of man Langland likely was, and on that basis to decide whether he might have been receptive or hostile to Wycliffite views. Such evidence about the character of the author must then be followed by geographical evidence to demonstrate that Langland and Lollardy could have been exposed to one another. Finally, the dates of Langland's versions of Piers Plowman and the dates of the Wycliffite sect

must be compared in order to see first if it were possible that Wycliffite thought could have affected one or more of the recensions of the poem and second if Piers Plowman could have influenced Lollard thought.

One of the immediate problems editors and scholars of Piers Plowman face is the question of the poem's authorship. The poem exists in three different versions, conveniently labeled the A, B and C-texts. Although Skeat claimed early on that all three versions were written by one man, the question of whether the three versions are the product of single or multiple authorship has remained a tendentious one. Now, however, after George Kane's thorough study of the available internal and external evidence in Piers Plowman: The Evidence for Authorship, single authorship can be accepted, if not as an absolute certainty then at least as highly probable.²¹ Single authorship is no longer merely a convenient assumption, but a hypothesis with a factual basis. Hence, I have assumed in this study that Piers Plowman was the product of one individual.

Even with single authorship accepted as a reasonable hypothesis, practically no biographical facts are known about the alleged author, William Langland. We may know approximately the year of his death, if the "Iohan but"²² mentioned in the so called Passus XII at the end of the A-text is the John But who died in 1387.²³ We might know his name from the external evidence that attributes the poem to his pen, and from his 'signature' within the B-text, "I have lyued in londe, quod I, My name is longe wille."²⁴ William Langland, then, may have been the author's name, so long as 'Will Langland' is not an allegorized form of the author's name or a pseudonym. It is as much convenience as anything that leads us to accept William

Langland as the name of the author of Piers Plowman.

The autobiographical hints within Piers Plowman help to delineate the author. Will the Dreamer describes his education as follows!

When y 3ong was, many 3er hennes,
 My fader and my frendes foende me to scole,
 Tyl y wyste witterly what holy writ menede
 And what is beste for the body, as the boek telleth,
 And sykerost for þe soule, by so y wol conteneue,
 And foend y nere, in fayth, sath my frendes deyede,
 Lyf þat me lykede but in this longe clothes.
 And yf y be labour sholde lyuen and lyflode deseruen,
 That labour þat y lerned beste þerwith lyuen sholde.
In eadem vocacione in qua vocati estis.²⁵

Will is a partially educated cleric who is very self-conscious of his vocation. When Reason charges him with idleness and beggary, (C, V, 27-30) Will defends himself by saying that he has no training in any other vocation and by pointing out that he does labour!

And so y leue yn London and opelond bothe;
 The lomes þat y labore with and lyflode deserue
 Is pater-noster and my prymer, placebo and dirige,
 And my sauter som tyme and my sevene psalmes.
 This y segge for here soules of suche as me helpeth,
 And tho þat fynden me my fode fouchen-saf, y trowe,
 To be welcome when y come, oþer-while in a monthe,
 Now with hym, now with here; on this wyse y begge
 Withoute bagge or botel but my wombe one. (C, V, 44-52)

Will is a travelling cleric in minor orders. He defends himself from Resoun's charge of social parasitism by arguing that he does not beg excessively from those who help him in exchange for his clerical services and that his visits are not too frequent, and his gains limited only to the reasonable sustenance of his body.

It is always dangerous to identify a narrator with an author; yet, when allowance is made for poetic license on Langland's part in this and other 'autobiographical' passages, a fairly coherent portrait of the man becomes clear. He possessed some education. Langland was very well acquainted with the Bible, the Psalms in particular.²⁶ He also knew the Missal well.²⁷ The Breviary and all except the standard glosses, however, he knew much less well.²⁸ He knew some theology.²⁹ The Latin quotations from the Church Fathers, and the Latin vernacular tags he employs probably came from the numerous handbooks and manuals that collated such information into convenient sources.³⁰ Langland also had some legal background.³¹ In short, he was a man who had a partial knowledge of many subjects, yet lacked specialized knowledge. In all likelihood he had had a partial university education, or its near equivalent at a studium generale of a cathedral or order.³² Even so, certainly he was not on a par with Wyclif.

The education described above is similar to that of many of Wyclif's followers; men such as William Swinburn on the one extreme, and John Aston, Philip Repington, Nicholas Hereford, John Purvey, Walter Brute and William Thorpe on the other. These men, too, had some university training. They, too, were secular priests (with the exception of Walter Brute) and drew upon the same generalized compilations of information as did Langland. Although little can be ascribed with any reliability to the pen of any of these men, they, or men like them, were responsible for the bulk of Wycliffite literature. It is noteworthy that many Wycliffite writings show the same use of general and contemporary proverbs and sayings as Langland.

There are also similarities between Langland and the Wycliffite preachers in their respective social classes. Thorpe and Purvey were typical of

the sort of cleric who was attracted to the Lollard movement. They were educated, but poor, unbeneficed, and unlicensed secular priests. Swinburne lacked even this modicum of social respectability. He was a thoroughly popular preacher with little clerical training or approbation. Walter Brute, on the other hand, was an exceptionally well-educated layman. Langland was somewhere between the two extremes of education. The knowledge he displays suggests he was at best only partly trained as a cleric. E. Talbot Donaldson visualizes Langland as an itinerant handy man performing odd jobs for the community in his capacity as a cleric.³³ At any rate, Langland probably belonged to the clerical class most receptive to Lollard ideas: the literate grass roots of the Church's secular hierarchy, angered by the special privileges flaunted by the regulars, frustrated by lack of advancement, prone to personal austerity in lifestyle, and keenly aware of how inadequately the distant Church bureaucracy met the spiritual needs of the average person. When Harry Bailly smells a "loller" in Chaucer's sober-minded Parson, he is using such a quintessential model. Perhaps the only thing which can be said about Langland's social position without any chance of contradiction is that, whoever he was, the chance of his being a friar is extremely unlikely. The antifraternal strain in Piers Plowman is as loud and as vehement as in the bitterest of Wycliffite tracts.

Even if Langland did belong to the social stratum which tended to find Lollardy attractive, it might not have been possible for Langland to have known of the sect. A common geographical ground between Lollardy and Langland must be shown to exist. Langland was a writer who belonged both to the provinces of the West Midlands situated about the Malvern Hills and to the city of London. The dual nature of Langland's life can be seen in the wide scope of his vision's

portrayal of English society, from the pomp and majesty of the trial of Lady Meed at the King's court, to the wretched poverty of maintaining life upon Piers Plowman's half acre. The poem also demonstrates its dual nature in its verse-form, the alliterative line of the North West, a poetic form which is foreign to the tastes of a "southren man,"³⁴ It also follows the circular, interwoven structure of the alliterative poem. At the same time, Langland changes the whole nature of the alliterative poem in two ways to make it accessible to a larger audience. Piers Plowman does not generally exploit the potential of the alliterative line for sensuous language and graphic descriptions of scene and landscape as does Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Langland also avoids using the unusual northern dialect words and special vocabulary that make many alliterative poems so difficult to read. Even though the lack of such vocabulary may indicate that Langland did not know the northern dialect words, still, the result is Langland's much leaner alliterative style and this style makes his poem far more accessible to a "southren man" than the works of the Gawain-poet and also more representative of England as a whole. Piers Plowman is a product both of the provinces and of London. Its scope, themes and verse-form prove this.

It is much more difficult to establish the geographical centers of the Lollard movement. Because it was largely an underground sect that tried to avoid notice by the authorities, and because our knowledge further depends upon the willingness and ability of individual bishops to locate and destroy sources of heresy, our knowledge of where Lollardy flourished is scant. Records show that the Lollard sect was centered in urban areas, as is to be expected in a movement whose membership largely came from the artisan class. Ironically, Lutterworth, the home of Wyclif in his last years, never seems to have played any

part in the sect. Yet, Wyclif's followers were not idle. Royal commissions were established in 1388 and 1389 to investigate and suppress Wyclif's teachings at York, Nottingham, Worcester, Leicester, Salisbury and Lincoln.³⁵ The dioceses of Worcester and Hereford were introduced to the Lollard message by Nicholas Hereford,³⁶ Aston spread the movement's beliefs along the marches of South Wales.³⁷ Through the efforts of John Purvey, Bristol and the western counties were exposed to Lollard teachings.³⁸ Swinderby established Leicester as an important Lollard center by 1382,³⁹ and he then permanently avoided capture by the authorities by disappearing into Wales.⁴⁰ Under the mayoralty of John Fox, Northampton became a long-standing refuge for Lollard preachers.⁴¹ The counties of Essex, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (excluding Oxford itself) also attracted the attention of the authorities for exhibiting Lollard tendencies.⁴² As is to be expected in England's greatest urban center, London also had its Lollards, although they seem to have maintained a much lower profile than their provincial brothers.⁴³

It is therefore geographically possible that Langland could have been influenced by the Lollard movement. Both had strong provincial ties. Both had especially strong ties with the western counties. Finally, both Langland and Lollards dwelled in London. It is most unlikely that Langland and every Wycliffite could have remained ignorant of one another's existence.

Another aspect that must be considered is the compatibility of the respective dates of the Lollard movement and the three versions of Piers Plowman. They must correspond for there to be any chance that Langland responded to Lollardy. It should be emphasized that dating the texts of Piers

Flowman is not a case of assigning specific years to the date of composition. Rather, it is a case of assigning probable years within which Langland completed a version. Langland spent almost thirty years writing Piers Plowman in an ongoing process of revision and addition. The dates within which Langland wrote and revised his life's work can be established by three points. The first is an allusion to the "south-weste wynde on a Saturday at evene." (A, V, 14; B, V, 14; C, V, 116) The damage caused by this wind was so great that the storm received special notice by contemporary historians. The wind is recorded as occurring on Saturday, January 15, 1362. Thus 1362 is usually quoted as a convenient point from which to start dating Piers Plowman. Although Skeat proposed 1392 as the most likely date for the completion of the C-text, based on internal allusions to the unpopularity of Richard II, two external bits of evidence suggest that 1392 is far too late and that a date in the mid 1380's is more suitable. The first of these bits of evidence is the reference in the 'extra' Passus XII of the A-text to John But, seemingly Langland's executor, who himself died in 1387.⁴⁴ The second bit of evidence is that Thomas Usk, executed March 4, 1388, borrowed lines which occur only in the C-text for his own Testament of Love.⁴⁵ None of this evidence should be accepted without question. Passus XII of the A-text is of suspicious origin and assigning a date of 1385/87 to Piers Plowman based upon the availability of the C-text for Thomas Usk assumes that Usk could not have had recourse to an authorial C-text manuscript before its completion, a dangerous assumption given that both Langland and Usk were Londoners. Nevertheless, the existence of two independent external bits of evidence pointing to the same approximate date very strongly suggests that 1387 was the last possible date for

Langland to have revised his poem.

The A, B and C-texts of Piers Plowman are individually dated by the internal allusions that appear for the first time in a version. The A-text is the result of the 1360's. J. A. W. Bennett has argued from allusions in the A-text, other than the one to the memorable southwest wind, for a date between 1367 and 1370.⁴⁶ The B-text can be no earlier than 1370, based on its allusion to the mayoralty of John Chichester. (B, XIII, 268-270) Langland was still working on the B version, however, in the late 1370's, since the Parliament of Rats in the Prologue refers to the Good Parliament of 1376, and the later Passus contain several possible allusions to the Great Papal Schism of 1379 and the bloodshed that resulted from the struggles of the two popes. The dates of the B-text, then, are probably between 1376 and 1379. The C-text is hardest to date by internal allusions, since the discontent it expresses over the reign of Richard II was common to both the 1380's and the 1390's. Yet, since Piers Plowman appears to have been completed by 1387, the dating is not as difficult as it may seem. As well, some changes the C-text makes to the B-text suggest a date after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Piers Plowman is not seen arguing with the priest over the Pardon in the C-text. His role in the poem is reduced from the role of that Piers Plowman whom John Ball and his fellow insurgents invoked. Langland, like Wyclif, most likely wasted no time in making it clear that he was not sympathetic with the murderous rebels. The C-text, then, can be dated between 1382 and 1387.⁴⁷

The dates of the Wycliffite movement are not compatible with all three versions of Piers Plowman. It is quite possible, of course, that all three versions of Piers Plowman could have influenced a Lollard readership,

provided that Lollards had access to the literary work. But the potential influence Lollardy might have had on Piers Plowman is much more restricted. The A-text is far too early for Lollardy to have exerted any influence on Piers Plowman. Even Wyclif would have been unknown outside of Oxford in 1370, although there is always the possibility that Langland in some capacity went to Oxford and met and heard Wyclif in person. In spite of this possibility, it would be a brave scholar indeed who today argued that Langland learned directly from Wyclif, especially given the ridiculing treatment accorded the nineteenth-century critic Wood who suggested a similar relationship between Wyclif and Chaucer.⁴⁸ There is no evidence to argue for or against a personal connection between Langland and Wyclif. Hence, the possibility must be consigned to the realm of interesting speculation. The possibility does serve as a reminder, however, that the untraceable spoken word was critical to the growth of Lollardy.

The C-text was written during the fledgling years of the Lollard sect, when it was just becoming apparent that Lollardy would not be tolerated by the Church authorities. These were also the same years that Lollardy officially became heretical, and was first accused of political subversion in its supposed responsibility for the Peasants' Revolt. While these factors might have warned some that Lollardy was headed for disaster, the years of the C-text were also those when the sect established urban strongholds outside Oxford through the efforts of the Oxford scholars like Repington, Hereford and Aston, and through the charismatic preaching of hedge-priests like William Swinderby.

The B-text occupies a critical position. Like the A-text, it appears at first glance to have been written too early to have been influenced by Wyclif and his followers. On closer consideration, however, it may be seen that

the composition dates of the B-text of Piers Plowman coincide with the formative years of the Wycliffite movement, before it was impugned with the taints of heresy and political sedition. With the exceptions of Wyclif's teachings on the Eucharist and his vitriolic attacks upon the mendicant orders, both of which began in 1379, the great majority of Wycliffite doctrines were already formed, or were being formed, in the years Langland wrote the second version of his poem. Wyclif was sanctioning State appropriation of Church endowments in times of need as early as 1372. Likewise, the split of the visible Church into the predestinate saved and the foreknown damned was envisioned by Wyclif early in his career. Emphasis upon the authority of Scripture and the necessity of preaching the Scripture occurs in his earliest works and culminates in the De veritate scripturae sacrae of 1377. The theme of preaching is so insistent in Wyclif's work that it led to the belief by historians that Wyclif actually instituted bands of itinerant 'poor priests' to carry his teachings across the country. While this is probably an exaggeration, Wyclif's teachings in the 1370's were not simply confined to Oxford. He gained popular preachers from admirers at Oxford and some of these already would have been active by the late 1370's. Swinderby first comes to the historian's notice in 1379. In fact, Wyclif's first references to itinerant preachers spreading his views occur in his writings as early as 1372/73.⁴⁹ If Langland did become acquainted with radical teachings in the 1370's and 1380's, he did not necessarily gain them firsthand from Wyclif.

Wyclif himself preached in London in 1376, and it is always possible (though unproveable) that Langland was in the audience.⁵⁰ As a Londoner, Langland could not have failed to know of the near riot in February of 1377 that

ensued after Gaunt's forcible intervention on Wyclif's behalf during his trial by the then Bishop Courtenay.⁵¹ Wyclif's teachings were found wanting by Pope Gregory XI as early as 1377, although they were not condemned until 1382. His works, moreover, were not prohibited until 1388, and he himself was not officially declared a heresiarch until 1414, nor was he disinterred from his grave until 1428.

The nature of the Lollard sect was determined in the mid to late 1370's. With the inclusion of the Eucharistic heresy, Lollard doctrine became complete, and from this point Lollardy began the slow yet inexorable transition from a university based academic movement to a popular sect. The B-text of Piers Plowman was written in the years Lollardy was taking shape, but before the Wycliffite tendencies to extremism became obvious and before the movement was smeared by accusations not only of heresy, but of political subversion as well. Also, the full weight of ecclesiastical animosity was not felt until after the industrious William Courtenay became archbishop in 1381, replacing the murdered Simon Sudbury.

It was, therefore, geographically and historically possible that Langland and the Wycliffites knew of and were influenced by one another. One must turn to the texts of Piers Plowman themselves to judge what kind of relationship Lollardy might have had with Langland and what kind of influence the enormously popular Piers Plowman might have had on the Wycliffites. This task involves identifying material held in common between the two. It is acknowledged that all three versions of Piers Plowman could have been available to influence Lollard readers; but, for an analysis of possible Wycliffite influence on Piers Plowman, the greatest attention must be given to the B and C-texts,

since these two versions are the closest in date to the Wycliffite sect. Unless a view is radically changed from the A-text, a view that was influenced by Wycliffite thought will likely occur first in the B-text. The C-text will give evidence of Langland's final intent in response to the turbulent events of the early 1380's. It is expected that the C-text will show either an increase or a decrease in ideas similar to those held by the Lollards, and either new-found hostility toward "lollars" or sympathy toward "pore cristen men." Regardless of whichever response Langland chose, a study that compares the concerns and ideas of Langland and writers of the Wycliffite sect will help to delineate the relationship between Piers Plowman and Lollardy.

CHAPTER THREE: SHARED CONCERNS

Upon first reading Piers Plowman, the reader is struck by its concern with political, social and religious issues. Practically no aspect of English mediaeval life passes without comment. When one compares Langland's concerns with those of the Wycliffites, the overlap on very specific topics is considerable. The Prologue to the B-text alone raises sixteen concerns held in common with the Lollards. In the order of their appearance, they are true and false types of contemplatives; the misuse of language; the social irresponsibility of wasters and false beggars; the misuse of pilgrimages; false preachers; the use of gospel glosses to rationalize one's actions; friars and the corruption of the sacrament of confession; corrupt pardoners; the misuse of papal bulls and seals; the misdirection of charity from the poor to those who do not deserve it; the employment of caesarean clergy by kings and lords; the fault of the caesarean clergy in neglecting their spiritual duties; the presumption of cardinals in electing a pope; the relationship of kings and dominion; the witness of Holy Writ; the faults of the legal profession. When one includes the attack on relics in the C-text Prologue, the total number of shared concerns is seventeen, a substantial number given the relative brevity of the Prologue. A short consideration of each issue will serve to introduce how similar, and yet different, Langland's and Lollard ideas could be.

When Langland complains of "heremytes on an heep," he is raising a concern dear to the Wycliffites. Both agree generally that the contemplative

life is superior in theory to the active and they agree that it is likely to attract

Grete lobies and longe pat lope were to swynke
 Cloped hem in copes to ben knowen from opere;
 Shopen hem heremytes hire ese to haue.
 (B, Prologue, 55-57)

Lollard sources, likewise, picture false contemplatives as self-indulgent and lazy. Despite this seeming similarity, it will be shown later in this thesis that there is a vast difference between Langland's attitude and the Wycliffites' attitude toward the monastic orders.

Related to the problem of the false contemplative are the problem of improper pilgrimages and the social dilemma of how to deal with wasteful, slothful individuals. The Wycliffites object to pilgrimages for three main reasons. It is idolatrous to go and worship "dede stones and rotun stakkis." (EWW 88) It is also a waste of time and a waste of money. True pilgrims on earth visit the sick and poor, alleviating their distress with freely given alms. They do not squander their resources on expensive, unproductive, frivolous entertainment. While Langland does not view pilgrimages as idolatrous, he concurs on their wastefulness. Too often

Pilgrymes and Palmeres pli3ten hem togidere
 For to seken Seint Iame and Seintes at Rome;
 Wenten forþ in hire wey wip many wise tales,
 And hadden leue to lyen al hire lif after.
 I sei3 somme pat seiden þei hadde ysou3t Seintes!
 To ech a tale pat þei tolde hire tonge was tempred to lye
 Moore þan to seye soop, it semed bi hire speche.
 (B, Prologue, 46-52)

Moreover, pilgrims' "wenches" could follow them. Going on a pilgrimage was an

expensive excuse to see exotic lands, to shirk work, to tell idle tales upon one's return, and to live in uninterrupted lechery. A Lollard tract elaborates upon such sentiments, describing how

comunely sicke pilgrimadis ben mayntenynge of lecherie, of gloterie, of drunkenesse, of extorsions, of wrongis, and worldly vanytes. For men þat may not haunt hore lecherye at home as þei wolden, for drede of lordis, of maystris, and for clamour of neȝeboris, þei casten many dayes byfore and gederen what þei may, sore pynnyng hemsilf to spare it, to go out of þe cuntrey in pilgrimage to fer ymagis, and lyuen in þe goinge in lecherye, in gloterie, in drunkenesse, and mayntenen falsnesse of osteleris, of kokis, of tauerners, and veynly spenden hore good and leue þe trewe labour þat þei shulden do at home in help of hemsilf and hore neȝeboris, bostyng of her gloterie whan þei comen home, þat þei neuer drank but wyn in al þe iourney. (EW 86-87)

The author of the tract goes on to give two reasons why men go on pilgrimage. It is either a desire to see strange places, as in Langland's account, or, since a pilgrimage is often imposed as a penance, an easy way to be absolved of serious sins. Thus, pilgrimage becomes part of the overall perversion of Penance. While this connection with Penance is not explicitly made by Langland, he does juxtapose in the Prologue the false contemplatives on pilgrimage and the friars, whose perversion of the sacrament of Penance will subvert the entire Christian community throughout the course of the poem.

One of Langland's major concerns in Piers Plowman is the proper use of language. In the Prologue, he introduces this theme in the perversion of Confession in particular, and the perversion of speech and writing in general. Langland breaks down the perversion of Confession into three parts in the Prologue: friars, pardoners, and papal bulls and seals. Friars he accuses of being "chapmen" of charity who sell their wares to lords. (B, Prologue, 64)

Pardoners, too, "blered" the spiritual "ei3en" of their victims with papal bulls and 'holy' artifacts from which the people can buy pardon. (B, Prologue, 74) The resultant blindness deludes the people into believing that absolution can be found outside of the sacrament. Moderate Lollards, who accept the validity of the sacraments, echo Langland's sentiments. Confession must not be bought and sold. Such a practice is a form of simony and achieves nothing, except to confirm and comfort the people in their sins and ensure the damnation of the feigned absolver. (EW 181) Simony in confession weakens society by numbing any sense of social responsibility. True confession depends upon genuine contrition and "confessioun of hert done to þe hi3e prest Crist." (EWW 21) "Schrifte of moupe" can aid in this process, but it is not essential.

Another concern with the misuse of language and wealth raised in the Prologue is false preaching. Friars and pardoners further harm the Church, as Langland and the Wycliffites see it, by preaching for the wrong reasons. Friars preach "for profit of the wombe." (B, Prologue, 59) The pardoner's mercenary efforts at preaching blind the people. Language is misused to win profit, not to spread the Word of God. Langland and the Wycliffites are in accord when they attack self-serving preaching as another source of corruption in the Church.

The corruption of language is not limited to clerical offices, however. While Langland and Wycliffites agree language is further debased by friars who "Glosed þe gospel as hem good liked," (B, Prologue 60) they both recognize that other social groups misuse language as well. Minstrels and lawyers also corrupt language. In the B-text, Langland's opinion of minstrels is ambivalent. He introduces them in this way:

And somme murpes to make as mynstralles konne,
 And geten gold with hire glee giltlees, I leeuē.
 Ac Iaperes and Iangeleres, Iudas children,
 Fonden hem fantasies and fooles hem makeþ,
 And han wit at wille to werken if hem liste.
 That Poul prechep of hem I dar nat preue it here;
Qui loquitur turpiloquium is luciferes hyne.

(B, Prologue, 33-39)

In the B-text, some minstrels are innocent; other minstrels are lazy and foolish.

By the C-text, Langland's position has hardened against minstrels, and the revised passage now reads:

And summe murthes to make as mynstrels conneth,
 Wolleth neyther swynke ne swete, bote sweren grete othes,
 Fyndeth out foule fantasyes and foles hem maketh
 And hath wytt at wille to worche yf þei wolde.
 That Poule prechede of hem preue hit y myhte;
Qui turpiloquium loquitur is Luciferes knaue.

(C, Prologue, 36-40)

Unlike the B-text, the hostility toward minstrels in the C-text Prologue is straightforward. Minstrels are lazy and coarse. There is no other view.

The Wycliffite view of minstrels is similar to the position adopted by Langland in the C-text. Lollards continually contrast those who speak of God's law and are despised and those who "kan best pleie a pagyn of þe devyl, syngye songis of lecherie, of bataillis and of lesyngis, and crie as a wood man" and therefore are "holden most merie ... and schal have most þank of pore and riche." (EW 206) Langland, in turn, makes the theme of true and false minstrels a central concern of Piers Plowman, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Langland and the Wycliffites mark lawyers as of special concern.

The Wycliffites compare lawyers, civil and canon, to false confessors and dishonest merchants in their capability to destroy the social fabric. (EW 180-186) Through lawyers, Langland introduces in the Prologue the social problem of Meed:

Sergeant³, it semed þat serueden at þe barre,
 Pleteden for penyes and pounded þe lawe
 Ac no³t for loue of oure lord vnlose hire lippes ones.
 Thow my³tast bettre meete myst on Maluerne hilles
 Than gete a mom of hire mouþ til moneie be shewed.
 (B, Prologue, 212-216)

This kind of law practice, since its operation is dependent upon the financial status of defendant and accuser, is opposed to the spirit of charity and justice, or, in other words, opposed to Christ. Langland and the Wycliffites agree upon the serious social problems generated by the legal profession. The role of lawyers will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Another issue upon which the two accord is that of caesarean clergy. The "emperoures prelates" belong to one of the Wycliffites' four new sects. They transgress God's law by, first, accepting temporal powers and possessions, and, second, by ignoring their spiritual duties in favour of their secular employment. Langland repeats these charges:

Somme seruen þe king and his siluer tellen,
 In Cheker and in Chauncelrie chalangen hise dettes
 Of wardes and of wardemotes, weyues and streyves.
 And somme seruen as seruaunt³ lordes and ladies,
 And in stede of Stywardes sitten and demen.
 Hire messe & hire matyns and many of hire houres
 Arn doon vndeououtliche. (B, Prologue, 92-98)

By usurping positions that properly belong to members of the temporal arm,

caesarean clerics must, by necessity, perform their clerical duties with less than adequate care.

Accepting secular employment, however, is only one means by which a cleric can avoid his spiritual duties. Residing in London as a chantry priest or as an absentee parson also enables the irresponsible priest to escape parish work. Langland lists the duties of these tonsured priests as "þei sholden shryuen hire parisspens,/ Prechen and praye for hem, and þe pouere fede." (B, Prologue, 89-90) This list, embedded within a section of Langland's attack on irresponsible priests, exactly describes the moderate Lollards' ideal of the poor priest. Even the differences in order can be ascribed to the needs of Langland's alliterative line. Langland and the Wycliffites, therefore, hold a common view of priestly responsibility.

The method of papal election is another issue raised in the Prologue that was of great concern to the Wycliffites. Langland's wording is interesting here, since he uses a vocabulary also employed by the Lollards. After sharing a pun with the Wycliffites on the difference between cardinal virtues and cardinals of the Church, Langland says,

Ac of þe Cardinals at court þat kau3te of þat name,
 And power presumed in hem a pope to make
 To han þe power þat Peter hadde - impugnen I nelle-
 For in loue and in lettrure þe eleccion bilongep;
 Forþi I kan & kan nau3t of court speke moore.
 (B, Prologue, 107-110)

The derogatory nature of "kaughte" and "presumed" suggests that, like the Wycliffites, Langland disapproves of cardinals in general and of the election of popes by cardinals in particular. Langland, however, backs away from the

Lollards' extreme stance. He refuses to judge the matter, trusting that "love" and "lettrure" are the guiding forces that lead to the election of a pope.

The final point of contact is the political viewpoints expressed by the Lollards and by Langland in the B-text Prologue. Wyclif and the Lollards are absolute monarchists. They wish to place temporal power solely in the hands of the king and they also place the responsibility for good government and the proper administration of justice solely in his hands. Langland's apparent opinion in the B-text Prologue, however, is contrary to that of the Lollards. His king is led by "kny3thod," and the "Might of þe communes made hym to regne." (B, Prologue, 113) Moreover, it is the king and "the Commune" who, with Kynde Wit, "Shopen lawe and leaute" in the land. (B, Prologue, 122) The lunatic gives unqualified consent to the king's power and authority and the goliard rebukes the angel's restrictions on royal enforcement. Langland places as much responsibility on the people, who allow the king to do as he pleases, as he places upon the king himself.

Langland revised parts of the Prologue in the C-text. An attack on relics by Conscience is added, another subject of major concern to the Lollards.¹ More interesting are the changes he made to the politics of the C-text Prologue. Knighthood still leads the king, but the king now rules by "Myght of the men," (C, Prologue, 140) instead of the Commons. Knighthood also takes over the Commons' role of helping to organize society. The Commons also are given no voice in accepting the king's laws. Instead, Kynde Wit takes over the lunatic's speech and he prays for the king's welfare and "rightful ruylynge." (C, Prologue, 150) Then Conscience, replacing the angel, reminds the king to temper law with mercy. There is no equivalent to the goliard.

There has been considerable disagreement among scholars over Langland's political leanings.² To take two recent examples, Anna Baldwin contends that the three versions of Piers Plowman show Langland developing a political theory. Langland in the A-text had his king rule by divine right. He changed his views in the B-text to a government in which the king ruled by the consent of Parliament. He changed his position again in the C-text to an absolutist stand. Commenting upon the changes in the C-text Prologue, she writes,

it is true that medieval writers on kingship, whatever their political colours, were apt to mouth conventionally absolutist sentiments before they got down to their real opinions. The C-text revision of the Prologue, however, seems too precise and too comprehensive to be merely an introduction. It must therefore be concluded that this important statement of Langland's political theory is purposely closer to the absolutist ideas developed by the civil lawyers, or by theologians like Wycliffe,³ than to the traditions and practices of his own country.

Against the view that Langland developed a political theory, Derek Pearsall asserts that Langland's political opinions never wavered from absolutism. The change in the C-text Prologue

does not suggest that L(angland) moved away in C from a 'more democratic' interpretation of the constitutional process in B. The fable that follows <the Parliament of Rats> and much else make it clear that L(angland) never entertained any such interpretation, though he stresses the obligations as well as the rights of kingship. But he may have wished, in C, to remove even the possibility of misinterpretation; the use of Piers Plowman as a rallying call at the time of the Peasants' Revolt may have given him further encouragement to make the change.⁴

The nature of Langland's political inclinations deserves further investigation, and will be discussed more fully below.

From this quick survey of material from the Prologue of the B and C-texts, it is clear that Langland and the Wycliffites shared many concerns, but to stress the similarities can be misleading, and this is precisely the error made in the work of Ladislav Cejp and M. R. Paull. Cejp points out the quantity of coincidences, but he does not discuss their quality. Instead he assumes it. In fact, an analysis of the individual coincidences reveals that there is often little real relationship. Paull, likewise, assumes that Wyclif must have been Langland's source for his treatment of Mahomet because of the similarity in theme between them; but Mahomet as symbolic of the English false clergy, his connection with the friars, his equation with Antichrist, and the venom of material possessions are topics found also in orthodox writings. It is a grave mistake to assume that any point Wyclif or his followers raise must be unique to a dissenting point of view. Langland raises some concerns in the Prologue of vital importance to the Lollards, yet he hardly glances at them in the rest of the poem. The Lollards' preoccupation with the evils of the Church hierarchy, for example, is mostly ignored by Langland, except at the very beginning and near the very end of his poem. There are, as well, points of lasting concern to both parties, such as the contemplative life, upon which Langland and the Lollards ultimately will be seen to disagree. Langland also raises some concerns in the Prologue to which he returns throughout the poem, such as the social duties of the commons. Some of these issues Wycliffite authors barely consider. Perhaps the most significant evidence for not labelling Langland a Lollard are the completely orthodox statements in Piers Plowman on the Eucharist and the absence of an explicit equation of Antichrist with the pope, although the equation can be inferred at Passus XXII 58-64.

Before examining Piers Plowman more closely on those points which do parallel Lollard sympathies, it would be worthwhile to consider exactly what the Lollard preoccupations were at the time Langland was writing his poem. Dating Wycliffite texts is notoriously difficult, since the authors are usually unknown, one often is left with only the internal evidence of topical allusions to date the text. One work which can be reliably dated slightly later than the C-text of Piers Plowman is The Twelve Conclusions (1395). (EWW 24-28) It briefly outlines nearly all aspects of Wycliffite dissatisfaction with Church practice and belief. It attacks the secularized Church. It condemns the ordained clergy, "private" religious (monks, canons and friars), and the caesarean clergy. The Church's treatment of the Eucharist, pilgrimages and images is idolatrous. Images, moreover, are wasteful curiosities. Church blessings which use material substances are sorcerous. Almsgiving and praying for the dead encourage simony. Aural confession leads to pride and greed in priests. Vows of celibacy conceal immoral behaviour. Murder is against God's will, and indulgences that excuse murder for any reason are outrageous and sinful.

The Twelve Conclusions is a list outlining major Lollard beliefs for others. Individuals of the sect are rarely so encompassing in their statements. Two Lollard works by two different authors can be reasonably assigned to approximately the years Langland wrote Piers Plowman. A record of a Lollard trial of the 1390's will give us another perspective on Wycliffite belief roughly contemporary with Langland. They will be considered here to show the variety of individual Lollards' concerns. To balance the consideration, an orthodox source, also contemporary with Piers Plowman's composition, will be

taken into account as well. The Chronicon Angliae is a chronicle that was kept by the monastery at St. Albans. Its scope includes the years 1377 to 1387 and it summarizes the nature of the new heretical sect as follows:

Congregavit sibi plures discipulos pravitatis ... huius errores in populo ventilantes et publice in sermonibus praedicantes. Inter alis dicunt et asserunt quod Eucharistia in altari post sacramentum non est verum Corpus Christi, sed eius figura. Item quod ecclesia Romana non est caput omnium ecclesiarum plus quam una alia ecclesia; nec major potestas per Christum data fuit Petro, quam cuilibet alteri apostolo. Item quod papa Romanus non habet majorem potestatem in clavibus ecclesiae, quam quicumque alius in ordine sacerdotii constitutus. Item idem J. Wyclif ponit istam conclusionem: quod si dominus temporalis noverit ecclesiam deliquentem, tenetur sub poena dampnationis eius temporalia auferre. Item quod Evangelium sufficit ad regulandum in vita ista quemlibet Christianum; et quod quaelibet aliae regulae sanctorum, sub quarum observantis degunt diversi religiosi, non plus perfectionis addunt Evangelio, quam addit albedo parieti. Item quod nec papa nec aliquis alius praelatus deberet habere carceres ad puniendum deliquentes; sed quilibet, deliquens posset libere, quocumque vellet, transire, et facere quod sibi placeret.

Wyclif gathered to himself many disciples of depravity who aired his errors among the people, publicly preaching. Among other things they say and assert that the Eucharist on the altar after consecration is not the true body of Christ, but a figure. Likewise, that the Roman church is not the head of all churches more so than any other church; nor that Peter received more authority from Christ than any other disciple. Also that the Roman pope has no more authority in the Church than anyone else ordained in holy orders. Wyclif also argued this conclusion: if a temporal lord learns a church is corrupt, he is bound under pain of damnation to remove its temporalities. Also that the Gospel suffices to rule every Christian in his life, and that the other rules devised by the saints for the different religious orders added nothing of value to the Gospel other than a coat of whitewash. Finally, that neither the pope nor any other prelate ought to imprison criminals and punish them, but, rather, a criminal should go free, travel wherever he wants, and do as he pleases.

This list is familiar. The chronicler takes exception to Wyclif's poor priests, his views on the Eucharist, his opinion that Rome and the papacy are not supreme

powers within the Church, his belief that it is the duty of the temporal lord to reform the Church, his belief that the rule of the Gospel is sufficient to rule the Christian, and that the regulations devised by saints for religious orders are artificial and superfluous, and, finally, his objection to the imprisonment of individuals by the Church. Had it included Wyclif's position on Confession, his attack on caesarean clergy, his belief in predestination, his belief that war between Christian nations is immoral, and the more strictly Wycliffite objections to images, pilgrimages and oaths, the orthodox account would have described the Lollard movement in near entirety.

Examination of the two Lollard texts reveals surprises. The first is a Latin tract, the Opus Arduum, a commentary on the Apocalypse.⁶ Its mention of the Earthquake council and the Flanders crusade of Bishop Despenser in the past tense help to date it between 1387 and 1390. Anne Hudson posits that it was written by Nicholas Hereford shortly before he recanted. It is a learned tract, citing a wide variety of authorities from Augustine to Fitzralph. Its content, being a commentary on the Apocalypse, is quite restricted. It only briefly considers the Eucharist, images and pilgrimages. The author was primarily interested in the twin issues of ecclesiastical endowment and Church government.

The other Lollard work is likewise selective in its considerations. The Two Ways, written by the Lollard knight John Clanvowe in 1391, is not concerned with doctrinal issues. It completely ignores the doctrines, the organization, and the conflicts over the authority of the Church and her ministers. Instead, it outlines the two different paths to salvation or damnation. Its Lollard nature can be seen in its puritanical attitudes toward the rich excesses of the court, in its condemnation of war between Christian

nations, and in its distinction between God's "fools" and the "good felawes" of the Fiend. [72] Clanvowe also stresses the importance of Scriptural law, instead of canon or civil law. He defines the narrow road to salvation as "þe kepyng of Goddes commaundemantz." [96]

An even more surprising survey of Wycliffite thought of the 1380's and 1390's is the record of heretical beliefs of the Lollards of Northampton arrested by Bishop Buckingham in 1392 and 1393. Like the Twelve Conclusions and the excerpts from the Chronicon Angliae, Lollard heresies are listed here, but the list is markedly different. The articles outlining the beliefs of the Northampton Lollards list the following points of error; that priests in mortal sin have no power to perform the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist; that images and crucifixes are idolatrous; that pilgrimages are wrong; that there have been no saints after 1000 AD, and that Thomas a Beckett and other modern 'saints' have no right to that title; that payment for church services and alms to friars are unlawful; that only a holy man can be a pope; that St. Sylvester's acceptance of the donation of Constantine gave the Church the dowry of simony; that papal indulgences are not efficacious; that material churches are not necessary; that priests do not need to be ordained; that chaplains do not need to say matins and other prayers, and that they only need to confess to God before celebrating the Mass; that a Mass heard in mortal sin is damnable; that an unconfessed mortal sin, even if committed unknowingly or forgotten, is damnable; and that innocents would go to a place between to await the Last Judgement. Regarding these points A. K. McHardy points out, "the articles made no mention of transubstantiation, tithes or excommunication; and far from regarding confession as useless the Northampton group evidently considered it essential."⁷

As shown by these examples, very few Lollard documents discuss all Wycliffite concerns. Much depends upon the author, his interests and personal beliefs. To a certain extent, Lollardy is a matter of tone and attitude. Thus, no matter how central a concern may be to the movement in theory, it is not necessary to discover that concern in a work, even one as long and as complex as Piers Plowman, for one to believe that that work sympathises with the Lollard sect in whole or in part.

When initially broaching the subject of the relationship between Lollardy and Piers Plowman, one can discover promising areas. W. W. Skeat, for example, suggests that the reference to the "castel of Corf" in C, IV, 140 is an allusion to the imprisonment of the mayor of London, John Northampton, on the testimony of the Lollard turncoat Thomas Usk.⁸ Likewise, P. L. Heyworth points out that the image of the blind buzzard as one who fails to read and apply the lessons of Scripture to oneself is common to both Piers Plowman and one of the Lollard interpolations of Upland's Rejoinder.⁹ Upon closer inspection, however, both of these suggestions fail to be very useful. Skeat's speculation suggests only that Langland knew of John Northampton's imprisonment. It does not suggest that either John Northampton or Langland was Lollard in sympathy. Heyworth's proposal that the Lollard interpolator deliberately invokes the same buzzard image as Langland is weak on two points. First, the saying "blind bosard" is a proverbial phrase.¹⁰ Second, it is an extremely common Lollard expression, which, if one still hopes to argue the case, would leave one either suggesting that the sect as a whole derived the saying from Piers Plowman, or that Langland derived it from the Lollards. That both of these hypothetical suggestions are untenable is proven by a similar case. Both

Langland and the Wycliffites use the phrase "dumb houndis" referring to unworthy priests. [B, X, 293 and cf. C, IX, 260-261] Again, a connection looks promising; but, again, the phrase is common to writers of the period, and the phrase itself is derived from Isaiah 56: 10. It is most likely that, in the case of both "dourbe houndis" and "blind bosard," Langland and the Wycliffites were simply making use of stock phrases.¹¹

Although Skeat's and Heyworth's suggestions have been discarded, there are three more specific instances which offer more serious hope of a provable connection between Langland and the Wycliffite sect. Morton Bloomfield notes that Langland and Wyclif raise the same question of why Christians are called Christians and not Jesuans. He also notes that Langland and the Wycliffites both refer to God's faithful as "foolys" of this world.¹² The similarity in style and content allows for Wyclif's influence on Langland. Perhaps most tantalizing of all is Anna Baldwin's suggestion, not pursued, that Langland's description of the army of Antichrist in the final passus might be directly inspired by a passage in Wyclif's De officio regis.¹³ Although no direct link has been proven between Langland and Wyclif, there is still area for investigation.

Two basic methods are available to us. One can either examine the specific similarities, either doctrinal or otherwise, or one can examine the thematic similarities between Piers Plowman and Wycliffite literature. An examination of the doctrinal issues would seem to be the most likely course to discover the nature of the relationship between Lollardy and Piers Plowman. Unfortunately, such a method tends to lead one in circular arguments. Pamela Gradon, for example, is repeatedly forced to qualify her statements, as in the

following observation: "the lewed vicory's indictment of that worldly prudence which involves the popes in warfare is indeed in keeping with the thought of Wyclif but was not without parallels elsewhere in medieval thought."¹⁴

The problem with the comparison-by-doctrine method is threefold. First, and foremost, is the unavoidable fact that Wyclif was not an original thinker. The Wycliffites were even less so. Theirs were not the only voices calling for disendowment. They certainly were not unique as anti-clericalists or anti-mendicants. Langland could have found similar thoughts and arguments from several other British and continental sources. To compound the problem, Fitzralph and Bradwardine, two of Wyclif's most important contemporary authorities, were the most frequently quoted British authors from the past two generations for all scholars.¹⁵ There is simply too much overlap to be certain that Langland based his thoughts on Wyclif and not on someone else without the tangible evidence of an actual quotation from Wyclif.

The problem of where Langland received the inspiration for his ideas contributes to the second reason why examination by doctrinal points would fail. Langland easily could have gained a partial knowledge of various patristic and contemporary writers from the numerous handbooks of the period. These handbooks, however, were repetitive in content. What specific books he used are unknown, and likely to remain so.

The availability of Wyclif's Latin works to Langland is another part of the same problem. The manuscript history of Wyclif's writings in England is very sketchy. They were banned in 1382, but were still available in the 1390's and the early 1400's when Czech scholars took them home to Bohemia. Today, most of his works survive in manuscript form in Continental libraries. In

Langland's particular case, however, the question might better be phrased as whether or not he could have understood Wyclif. L. J. Daly describes Wyclif's medium as: "late medieval Latin channeled into the complicated terminology of fourteenth-century scholasticism. Wyclif was not the last of the schoolmen, but he is admittedly one of the most difficult."¹⁶ Daly later adds, "there is no doubt that most of his (Wyclif's) technical language and theological apparatus would be unintelligible to the non-university man."¹⁷ Langland apparently possessed some university education and was interested in theological questions. Yet Wyclif was a professional scholastic theologian writing for other professional scholastic theologians. Langland's understanding of a Wyclif uninterpreted by either sympathetic or unsympathetic commentators must have been limited. Yet as early as 1384 there existed just such favourable interpretations of Wyclif for ordinary preachers.¹⁸

Langland also might have found the idiosyncratic style of the Wycliffite vernacular material difficult to understand, but an even more pressing problem with the vernacular material is its availability. Although Wyclif's and Hereford's Latin works had been ordered seized in 1382, it was not until 1388 that vernacular texts were included in similar seizure orders.¹⁹ This implies either that the authorities did not regard the vernacular material as important, or that the vernacular material was not available or was not extensive in the early 1380's. Since the authorities brought in legislation against the itinerant preachers in 1382, it is unlikely that either side would have long underestimated the effect of vernacular literature. The 1380's were the first years of Lollard book production. Still, the itinerant preachers were, in all likelihood, more important at this stage in the spread of the sect's beliefs.

Gauging the availability and tone of itinerant preachers, however, is far less easy than calculating the availability and tone of written material.

The third reason doctrinal points will not give conclusive evidence of Langland's relationship to the Lollard sect is that Langland generally avoids making outright statements on accepted Church doctrines. He expresses nothing other than reverence for the Eucharist. He avoids the issue of papal powers. The best chance for discovering doctrinal aberrations in Langland lies in his statements on the sacrament of Penance.²⁰ Here, however, Langland offers several inconsistent positions. Even though some of them are quite close to Lollard opinions, others are quite at variance. One is left with the task of deciding which statement represents Langland's 'true' position. Langland's technique of defining and redefining nearly every aspect of his poem, however, makes this task truly formidable. One would have to judge the validity of not only the statement, but also the voice which speaks it. Such a dilemma only opens a whole new area of critical appraisal for one to contend with. Another limitation of focussing on doctrinal points is that it restricts any discussion to just Wyclif's influence on Langland. Obviously, Wycliffite doctrine is derived from Wyclif and there is little likelihood the theologian and scholar Wyclif would have been influenced by Langland. It is impossible to know for certain the sources Langland used, and especially whether he could have had access to Wyclif's work or that of the Lollards', since Langland actually makes few doctrinal statements in Fiers Plowman and those made are inconsistent. Hence, an examination of Langland's doctrinal positions will not enable us to give a satisfactory answer to the question of Langland's relationship with Lollardy.

Examining the treatment of specific non-doctrinal material also will prove to be unsatisfactory. The problems are essentially the same. Langland just as easily, if not more so, could have gained his material from handbooks and other non-Lollard sources as from Wycliffite works. All three shared a common heritage and stock topoi. To take an example, Langland shares with the Lollards the sentiment that the Donation of Constantine poisoned the Church. Compare their descriptions of the scene. Langland writes,

Whan Constantyn of his cortesy holy kirke dowed
 With londes and ledes, lordschipes and rentes,
 An angel men herde an hye at Rome crye:
 "Dos ecclesie this day hath ydronke venym
 And þat haen Petres power aren apoisened alle."
 [C, XVII, 220-224]

The Lollards, in turn, relate that

(Sylvester) was þe first Man þat resceyued londes & Rentes.
 And þam seide a voice abouen þat hij alle herden þat weren in
 þe chirche of Rome whan þe Pope Silvester was at his seruise.
 Now is venym pult in holy chirche & þerfore ich wot wel þat god
 ordeyned it nevere.²¹

The similarity is evident. Langland and the author of the Lollard version of the Ancrene Riwe both describe the Donation of Constantine in terms of a poisoning. There is an important difference, however. Langland emphasizes Constantine's role, while the Lollards, true to their anti-papal rhetoric, stress Sylvester's responsibility. A negative description of the Donation itself, however, is a commonplace. John Gower, for instance, describes the event in much the same language as the other two. He writes,

This Emperour, which tale hath founde,

Withinne Rome anon let founde
 Two cherches whiche he dede make
 For Peter and for Poules sake,
 Of whom he hadde avisioun;
 And yaf therto possessioun
 Of lordeschipe and of worlides good.
 Bot how so that his will was good
 Toward the Pope and his Franchise,
 Yit hath it proved other wise,
 To se the worchinge of the dede:
 For in Cronique this I rede;
 Anon as he hath mad the yifte,
 A vois was herd on hih the lifte,
 Of which al Rome was adrad,
 And seith: 'To day is venym schad
 In holi cherche of temporal,
 Which medleth with the spiritual.'
 (Confessio Amantis II, 3475-3492)

Gower, too, invokes the traditional story of the angel's voice pronouncing the Church's doom at the Donation of Constantine. Langland's version is closer to Gower's than to the Lollards'. Langland and Gower emphasize Constantine's role; the Wycliffites emphasize Sylvester's role. The difference lies in the authors' overall attitudes toward the papacy, and not in their treatment of the Donation of Constantine itself. The use of the topos, however, in all three is the same, a lament over a Church corrupted by the poison of temporalities. This comparison reinforces a fact which must always be kept in mind: that Wycliffism was only one voice among several involved in the religious controversies of the fourteenth century; it was not an isolated voice of dissatisfaction. On controversial topics such as the temporal endowment of the Church, the ideal of spiritual poverty, the proper role of the priest, and the relationship of Church and State — all subjects of intimate concern to Langland — no hard line can be drawn separating the sources and beliefs of the Lollards from the sources and beliefs of the orthodox thinker.²²

Another method one can opt to use in attempting to find evidence of interdependency is an examination of the common themes found in Piers Plowman and in Wycliffite literature. This method has the advantage of dealing, not with specific points, but, rather, with general patterns of thinking. It does not attempt to show that Langland deliberately borrowed something specific from Wyclif or his followers or vice versa, but that the two had either very similar or very different ways of approaching a subject. It may not afford the promise of conclusiveness as an examination of specific points might do. It can, however, suggest whether or not such a formidable investigation would be worthwhile to pursue. This chapter has shown the great extent to which Langland and the Lollards shared common material and concerns. The next chapter will be devoted to a comparison of three important themes in Piers Plowman and Lollard literature to see if there is any specific similarity in the arguments and points of view Langland and Wycliffite authors use. These themes are the theme of social theory and government, the theme of the life of the individual, and the theme of the use and misuse of resources, in particular wealth and language.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL THEORY, THE INDIVIDUAL, WEALTH AND LANGUAGE IN PIERS FLOWMAN AND WYCLIFFITE LITERATURE

The number of concerns that Piers Plowman and Wycliffite literature share is considerable. Many of these concerns are clearly of vital importance to the visions of both, and they return to them again and again throughout their works. One recurring theme involves a vision of the ideal society, explanations of why society fails, propositions to reform society, and the privileges and responsibilities of the governing power in society, the king. A second important theme concerns the individual's response to the world; the relationship between the contemplative and active lives, and the definitions of the ideal priest and ideal Christian behaviour form specific parts of this theme. A third major theme is the use and misuse of resources. Both the Lollards and Langland are particularly concerned with improper uses of wealth and language; and special concern is voiced over lawyers, friars, and minstrels in these respects. An analysis of these three important themes -- social theory and government, and the individual's relationship to the world, and the use and misuse of wealth and language -- will demonstrate to what degree Langland and the Wycliffites thought alike.

Before the ideas of Langland and the Wycliffites are examined, some consideration of how they compare as writers is useful to set their presentations in a literary context. Piers Plowman draws on a number of literary forms -- dream vision, beast fable, debate, sermon, allegory, and satire. Although there is no individual Wycliffite work that plays on such a

variety of literary genres, Lollard literature includes sermons, dream visions, allegories, debates, satire, and polemic among its corpus. Langland and Wycliffite authors are clearly versatile in the forms they choose to present their ideas. Langland is, however, primarily a satirist working within a complex allegorical dream vision framework and the Lollards are best known today as sermonists and polemicists.

The division between satire and polemic is sometimes nebulous. They use many of the same literary tools, such as humour, irony, mockery, exaggeration and sarcasm. Langland and Wycliffites differ as authors in terms of how they use these tools, humour being an excellent example. Langland's vision is full of humour, from the scatology of Gluttony's antics in the tavern, to the intellectual thrust and parry between Conscience and Lady Meed, to the description of Lady Meed's encourage, to the author projecting himself as a naive narrator. The final tone of Piers Plowman is far from humourous, but the presence of humour lightens the artist's touch and makes the overwhelmingly dark vision more bearable to read. The use of humour in Wycliffite texts is quite different. While humour is not unknown in Lollard (and Wyclif's) works, it is rare and generally of a very dry quality. Lords will "pipe with an ivy leaf" (EW 372) before clerics return endowed lands, and Satan writes a congratulatory letter to clerics, thanking them for their busy efforts on his behalf. (EW 89-93) Even the more literary Wycliffite efforts do not exist to entertain, but to bolster morale and sustain belief within Lollard circles, and humour has only a very small role to play. Hence, the general tone of Wycliffite texts is one of unceasing, earnest certainty.

The monotony of tone and the extremely repetitious subject matter

make Wycliffite literature appear heavyhanded, dull and boring to the modern reader, especially in comparison to Langland. An artistic comparison is skewed, however. Although Langland the satirist and the Lollard polemicists aim together to expose abuse, they have different attitudes on the possibility of reform. The Wycliffite polemicist asserts one answer as the only solution to England's political, social and religious ills. There are the inevitable disagreements among different Wycliffite groups over details and emphases; even so, an individual Lollard text does not allow for alternative solutions. It asserts one single answer. Langland, on the other hand, is suggestive and he never definitively outlines his position on any topic, as the vast amount of contradictory critical opinion on Piers Plowman attests. Instead, Langland poses one position, backs away, reverses, counters, rejects, repeats. His approach is one of constant shifting, as Langland is only searching for solutions to the problems he sees around him and he gives unqualified assent to no one solution. The constant shifting gives Piers Plowman an interpretive complexity that the Wycliffite texts, with their unilateral and assertive approach, do not have and which their writers never wanted them to have. Polemic gains its power from its assertiveness and the Lollards are superb polemicists. Langland, in turn, is a superb satirist. If Langland's description of fourteenth-century England is more interesting to read, it is due in no small measure to his allowing the reader more freedom of interpretation.

On social theory, the Lollards and Langland mouth similar sentiments. Society is divided into three estates: commons, clergy and knighthood. Langland is more generous in that he allows for the legal profession in his scheme. Each estate has its own particular duties within the social

fabric. The commons are to work and provide for the whole; the clergy are to preach, teach and pray for the benefit of the whole; knights are to protect and govern the whole, keeping the other estates in conformity to the law. In practice, the Wycliffites and Langland recognize that society fails to match this ideal. Yet, their emphases in describing why this happens and their solutions to social problems are illuminatingly different. Comparative analysis will show one of the most significant differences between Wycliffite and Langland's thought.

The most remarkable aspect of Lollard tracts that deal with social problems is that they virtually ignore the commons and their duties. This is all the more remarkable, since the sect's strongest foundation was in this estate and one might expect them to have been more interested in its particular social responsibilities. When they do consider the estate of commons, they emphasize the need for obedience and service, as seen in the following remark: "Servauntis schullen trewely and gladly serve to here lordis or maistris and not be fals ne idel ne grucchyng ne hevy in here servyce doing, but holde hem paied of þe staat of servauntis." (EW 227) An unwillingness to obey the dictates of their station afflicts the estate of commons. In their self-interested and lazy ways, however, the commons only imitate the evil example set by the other estates. The tract Servants and Lords is unusual for a Lollard document because it discusses in detail the faults of the commons. Most often, the role of the commons is virtually ignored.

The extent to which the Lollards exempt the commons from responsibility for social failure is evidenced in the short Lollard tract "Of Poor Preaching Priests." (EW 275-280) Out of eighteen desired reforms which the Lollards claim would strengthen the kingdom, seven of them apply to

lords in important ways. Thirteen major reforms would affect the clergy. Apart from relief from excessive taxation, the commons as a whole would be changed only by such relatively innocuous reforms as the end to useless and profane oaths, and the banning of markets and fairs on Sundays and holy days. The Lollard author focuses with single-minded concentration on the duty of lords and the failure of clergy. The same lopsided treatment holds true in the remainder of Wycliffite texts that deal with social problems. They stress the failed duty of lords to protect the poor when the poor are oppressed by wicked stewards. They stress the failed duty of lords to pay their servants properly for services rendered. But lords fail chiefly in not controlling the clergy. They allow the caesarean clergy to exist by employing the services of clergymen in their day to day civil administration. Lords also do not exercise their prerogative to reform the clergy. The ultimate blame, nevertheless, the Lollards place emphatically upon the clergy. Clerics refuse to be rebuked for their sins. They refuse to give up their privileges and endowments. They refuse to acknowledge that preaching is their prime duty. They refuse to admit that they are subject to correction by the temporal arm, and claim superiority instead. They claim that lords and commons must aid them in oppressing those who truly obey God's will and preach. They oppress lords and commons by hiding from them the Word of God. They encourage lords to oppress the poor by making absolution in confession such an easy thing. They pervert all the offices and sacraments of the Church into simony and heresy. In the final analysis, the Lollards see commons and lords chiefly as victims of clerical selfishness, arrogance and greed. Lords and commons fail in their estates because they lack spiritual direction from the clerical estate. It is the duty of the king and his lords to remedy the

situation.

The solution to the evils of society is therefore to reform the religious estate. If the clergy were to perform their offices and administer the sacraments properly, if they were to set a holy example of evangelical poverty, if they were clearly to explain the Word and Law of God, lords and commons would naturally obey and society would function as God intended. Reform, moreover, is simple: disendowment. Disendowment is preferably to be voluntary on the part of the clergy, but, if not, the Wycliffites promote a political solution. The king and lords are advised that

it may be understoode of his processe þat wipdrawinge of þes lordeschipis from þe clergi, and restorynge of hem to þe statis þat god hæþ assignyd hem to, schuld not be callid robbery of holy chirche, as oure clerkis sayen, but raper ri3twisse restitucioun of goode wrongfully and þevely wipholde. (EW 389)

The king is to right the wrong by forcibly removing temporal endowments from the Church, and restoring them to their proper owners. The endowment of the Church has led to the impoverishment of the State. An end to church temporalities would end corruption in clerical circles, and, by extension, in society as a whole. State and Church would then be returned to the Apostolic ideal.

Langland's vision of society is very different from the outlook developed by the Lollards. Langland does not attach blame to any one estate. He does reprimand bishops for failing in their responsibility to correct faulty priests, (C, IX, 255-281) but his overall vision is that of individual moral, not social, failure. Society fails because individuals fail, not because worldly elements corrupt one of society's estates. This emphasis on the individual's social role in Langland is one major difference between Piers Plowman and

Wycliffite literature.

There are two basic human communities in Piers Plowman: the 'field full of folk' presented in the Prologue and in Passus V through IX, and the Church as Unity seen in Passus XXI and XXII. In each community the same human flaw recurs. The Prologue introduces society as "alle manere men, þe mene and þe pore,/ Worchyng and wandryng as þis world ascuth." (C, Prologue, 20-21) What the world demands of people is ambiguous. The next lines divide the community into those who labour honestly, and those who waste, cheat and live as social parasites. Clearly, what the world asks is defined differently by different people. By the end of the Prologue, however, the dominant interpretation becomes evident and the picture ends in a whirl of activities devoted to the pleasures of the flesh:

Cokes and here knaues cryede, 'hote pyes, hote!
Goode gees and grys! ga we dyne, ga we!
Tauerners til hem tolde þe same!
'Whit wyn of Oseye and wyn of Gascoyne,
Of þe Reule and of þe Rochele the roost to defye.'
(C, Prologue, 227-231)

For many people, what the world asks is interpreted as self-indulgence and selfish attention to physical pleasure.

This self-centredness manifests itself in various forms. One of these is the unwillingness to labour. Although Reason bids "wastoures to worche and wyne here sustinaunce/ Thorw som trewe trauail and no tyme spille," (C, V, 126-127) and although Piers Plowman equitably divides labour among the people, nevertheless, some individuals do not care about the common good and help to plough Piers's half-acre with nothing but a "hey trollilolly!" (C, VIII, 123)

None the less, they expect to be fed. That such laziness is in the individual's self-interest is seen in the numbers of "faytours" who plead incapacity for work; but, under the threat of starvation,

Tho were faytours afered and flowen into Peres bernes
 And flapton on with flales fro morwen til euen,
 That Hunger was nat hardy on hem for to loke,
 For a potte ful of potage þat Peres wyf made
 An heep of eremytes henten hem spades,
 Sputeden and spradden donge in dispit of Hunger.
 They coruen here copes and courtepies hem made
 And wenten as werkemen to wedynge and to mowyng
 Al for drede of here deth, such duntles 3af Hunger.
 Blynde and broke-legged he botened a thousand
 And lame men he lechede with longes of bestes.
 Prestes and oþer peple towarde Peres they drowe
 And freres of alle þe fyue ordres, alle for fere of Hunger.
 (C, VIII, 179-191)

These individuals are not unable to work; they merely do not wish to. Instead, they desire an easier life living off the labour of others. Under constraint, they are forced to fulfill their roles in society.

Another manifestation of individual social irresponsibility is seen at the end of Passus XXI. Here, in spite of Conscience's counsel that the community work and share together, representative figures from each estate finally refuse to submit to Conscience. The brewer refuses to engage in what, to him, seems useless "hacky[ing] aftur holinesse." (C, XXI, 401) He is much more interested in potential profit. The brewer's objection to being ruled is, perhaps, the most forgivable. After him, the ignorant parish vicar blames the depredations of the pope and cardinals for the deafness of the people to Conscience's message. Although the vicar can shrewdly observe the faults of popes and cardinals in far off Rome and Avignon, he cannot apply such criticism

to himself. He does not consider himself partially responsible for the people's deafness.¹ Likewise, the lord excuses himself from his responsibility of ensuring his reeve's honesty by sloughing off the task to someone else, and the king, finally, claims that he cannot be subject to such a commonwealth since he is

heed of lawe
 And 3e ben bote membres and y aboue alle.
 And ... y am 3oure alere heued y am 3oure alere hele.
 (C, XXI, 469-471)

The king goes on to claim that such a position gives him the right to do as he pleases. Clearly, the Barn of Unity is divided within itself. In each case, the individual seeks to exonerate himself from his social responsibility. The brewer's exclamation, "y wol nat be yruled,/ By Iesu!" (C, XXI, 396-397) is telling, for the brewer and those like him have no intention of submitting to temporal or spiritual authority. They will not be ruled by Conscience the king or Jesus.

To Langland, overt attention to the pleasures of this world is selfish. He also pictures such attention as self-deceptive. Fortune and her minions whisk Will away to the "land of longyng," (C, XI, 170) where he lives in sexual bliss until he loses his wealth and youth. At that time Fortune promptly abandons him. Lyf, as well, lives a heedless life flattered by fortune and comforted by sexual activity at "Reuel, a ryche place and a murye." (C, XXII, 181) Even the reminders of approaching death, old age and sickness, are fled from in favour of pleasure. That self-satisfaction will divide and destroy Unity is hinted at as early as the Confession of the Seven Deadly Sins in Passus VI and

VII. Their confessions are too automatic and too mechanical to be honest. The sins are too distracted and too ignorant, even during confession, for much likelihood that the act will have any positive effect. There is no sense of a willingness to change. Above all, they lack true contrition and have no desire to pay restitution. These individual failures focus their lives on themselves, and not on God. In the end, the lack of true contrition dooms the entire Christian community of Unity.

Just as Langland's vision of society is more complex than that of the Lollards, so, too, are his solutions for society's redemption. He does consider political action. It is the duty of the knight in *Passus VIII* to enforce the law and to protect Piers from the threats of Wastour and the boastful Bretoner. Langland does not view coercion positively, however, and Wastour simply replies to the knight's warning,

'I was not woned to worche, ... and now wol y nat bygynne!
 And leet lyhte of þe lawe and lasse of the knyhte
 And sette Peres at a pes to playne hym whare he wolde.
 (C, VIII, 164-166)

Political efforts at reform are desperately connected to the ability of the temporal arm to act, and to the willingness of the individual to obey.

Langland's view of other forms of coercion is similar. Hunger, Death, and Elde are effective threats that force people to obey over the short term, but they are far from ideal, and in the long term they leave no lasting impression. Hunger has no sooner been lulled to sleep than

tho wolde Wastor nat worche bote wandren aboute,
 Ne no beggare eten bred þat benes ynne were,
 Bote of cler-matyn and coket and of clene whete,
 Ne noon halpenny ale in none wyse drynke

Bote of the beste and of þe brouneste þat brewestares sullen.
 Laborers þat han no lond to lyue on but here handes
 Deynede noȝt to dyne a-day of nyhte-olde wortes;
 May no peny-ale hem pay ne no pece of bacoun
 But hit be fresh flesch or fisch, yfried or ybake,
 And þat chaut or pluchaut for chillyng of his mawe.
 (C, VIII, 325-334)

The field full of folk learns no lesson from the devastation of Hunger, and so the people quickly revert to finicky, wasteful and physical ways of life.

Langland's hopes lie in personal reform, instead of political action or coercion.

Personal reform is not an easy task because the individual must reform himself. On the purely practical level, reform entails measure, temperance and patience. In other words the individual must learn to rule himself and patiently find a mean between the demands of Need and the superfluity of worldly goods. As Holy Church teaches early in the poem,

Mesure is medecyne, thogh ȝow mucche ȝerne;
 Al is nat good to þe gost þat þe gost ascuth,
 Ne liflode to þe lycame þat lef is þe soule.
 (C, I, 33-35)

The individual must care for his body and not weaken it and his soul by under or overindulgence. Bodily temperance, however, is only a very minute achievement in a character's reformation. More important is the spiritual pilgrimage every human is urged to undertake. Piers Plowman is a poem of spiritual quests, for Truth, for Dowel, Dobet and Dobest and for Piers Plowman. By the end of the poem, the reader is no closer to his goal. At best the reader may be able to define better what is being sought. The poem ends with Conscience setting out on yet another quest to find Piers Plowman. Spiritual renewal, then, must have no end, but be a continuous and active search for God and salvation.

The differences between the societal views of Langland and the Wycliffites are very simple and fundamental. The individual is not held responsible for social failure in Lollard texts as individuals do not cause social collapse, corrupted estates do. The Lollards stress the corruption of the clerical estate and call for the political intervention of disendowment to cure society. Langland's vision is less optimistic. He blames individuals from all strata of society for their selfish unwillingness to accept responsibility and to pay their debt to the community. Langland's self-centered society is far harder to reform, and the apocalyptic ending of Piers Plowman reflects this realization. The Christian community of Unity ends in chaos, not in the triumphant restoration of the Apostolic ideal. Each individual must reform himself by constantly seeking God. Only after individuals follow God and learn to rule themselves, will there be any hope of social betterment. Langland's solution for society's ills can be summarized by the Latin tag he employs: "Redde quod debes" -- pay what you owe. (C, XXI, 187, 193, 259, 390; C, XXII, 308; cf. C, VI, 316) The verb and the emphasis are singular. Langland emphatically insists upon personal restitution to God and mankind.

Any discussion of feudal society would be incomplete without a consideration of its governing head. The concept of the king and his relationships to the people he governs and to other governing powers were hotly debated topics in and long before the fourteenth century. Political theory ranged from the extreme clericalism of Giles of Rome to the near Erastian position of Marsilio of Padua. The issue does not escape analysis by Wyclif, who devotes the De officio regis to the separate consideration of the question. Political theory often appears elsewhere in his work. The issue is

not the sole province of the theologian. The Lollards follow Wyclif both in exalting the authority of the king and in giving him the responsibility of reforming society. Langland, too, examines the functions, relationships and powers of the king through the various monarchs in Piers Plowman.

Wyclif describes the rule of the ideal king thus:

Si autem rex cum satrapis suis regat se humiliter, perfecte commissus divino regimini; si secundo honorat clerum suum dans eis stipendium secundum doctrinam legis domini; et si tercio degenerantes a suo ordine detestatur et punit, severius, tunc stabit hoc regnum tectum stabilius spiritu dei duce.²

If a king and his knights rule themselves humbly, and perfectly committed to divine authority, and, second, if the king honours his clergy by giving to them material rewards in accordance with God's law, and, third, if he execrates the evil clergy within their ranks and punishes them severely, then this 'roof of the realm' (the clerical estate) will stand, protected for the prince by the spirit of God.

Wyclif's ideal is clear. He desires a king who first rules himself according to the divine will, and then rules his kingdom accordingly. The lopsided nature of Wycliffite social criticism is evident even here. Wyclif calls only for the king and his court to act honourably and discipline the clergy. These actions will presumably stabilize the kingdom. Aside from the obedience owed to the king, Wyclif does not consider in this ideal portrait the relationship of the king and commons. The author of the vernacular tract Servants and Lords pictures the ideal king as Job does: the king should be the father of his children, protector of the weak, confounder of the wicked, rewarder of the good. Again, the king's personal integrity is stressed. He must rule "clopid wip ri3twisnesse and ri3tful dom as wip a diademe." (EW 231) If Wycliffite proposals for reform need a superhuman king to enact them, it is due in part to

the constant demand by the Lollards that the king be above reproach in all aspects of his life and rule. The author of Servants and Lords drily remarks that, so long as kings think friars are "goode felawis," kings and friars will love the World, and not God. (EW 233)

Langland's definition of the effective king can be found in Passus II to IV in the figure of the king who mediates between Conscience and Lady Meed. The similarity to Wycliffite thought here is substantial. This king protects Pees from the depredations of Wrong encouraged by Lady Meed. In spite of the machinations of friars and lawyers, he comes to a just settlement of Meed's fate. In the A and B texts, he realizes, with Conscience's help, the difference between immoderate desire for gain and "mesurable hire." (A, III, 217-237; B, III, 231-258) In the C-text, the king learns from Conscience the distinction between "mede and mercede." (C, III, 290) "Mercede" is straightforward payment for services rendered; "meed," however, can be either good or evil, depending upon the worthiness of the giver and the worthiness of the receiver. The king, of course, should be the rewarder of the good and confounder of the wicked. Above all, this king finally realizes he must rule himself to be able to rule others, and to this purpose he appoints Resoun and Conscience as his closest advisors. He commands that

Forthy, Resoun, redyly thou shalt nat ryden hennes
But be my cheef chaunceller in cheker and in parlement
And Conscience in alle my courtes be a kynges iustice.
(C, IV, 184-186)

Even so, this king is capable of making bad decisions. At first, he decides to make use of Lady Meed, not fully understanding her essential duality. His

greatest mistake is his attempt to marry together Conscience and Lady Meed. This king is good because he is willing to listen to Conscience and Reason, and because he is willing to change for the better. Langland quite clearly is saying that an absolutely perfect king, though desirable, is impossible in an imperfect world. The Wycliffite programme for society's renewal would fail in Langland's view, not only because of the personal inadequacies of individual subjects, but, unfortunately, because the kingly source of that renewal could never be as perfect as the Lollards themselves knew he would have to be.

The king's relationship to the law is an important concern shared by the Lollards and Langland. Wyclif conceives of the king as the fountainhead of law which necessarily makes the king himself above the law. It is his duty to enforce the law, but, as its source, he cannot be compelled to obey it. Such an exaltation of the king's position is one probable reason Wyclif gained royal patronage. Langland, too, grants the royal office absolute command of the law, and thus, logically, a status above the law. As he points out in the B-text,

Thanne can al the commune crye in vers of Latyn
To the Kynges counseil - construe whoso wolde -
'Precepta Regis sunt nobis vincula legis!'
(B, Prologue, 143-145)

There may be a strong element of sycophancy in the Commons' easy subjection to the king's authority in this passage, but still Langland believes that a strong, unfettered king is a necessity. Attempts to curb royal authority by the Good Parliament of 1376 are parodied in the Parliament of Rats in the Prologue. The king must maintain strict control, lest the destructive nature of society's rats devour the kingdom's resources. The mouse explains,

For many mannys malt we muys wolde distruye
 And þe route of ratones of reste men awake
 Ne were þe cat of þe court and 3onge kitones toward;
 For hadde 3e ratones 3oure reik, 3e couthe nat reule
 3ow-suluen. (C, Prologue, 213-216)

Since individuals are reluctant to rule themselves, law and order can only be maintained within the kingdom through the rule of a strong and capable king. Hence, Langland quotes the Latin paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 10:16, Ve terre vbi puer est Rex - woe to the land where a boy is the king. (C, Prologue, 206) The destructive, chaotic forces in society encounter little resistance when the royal political will is weak.

There are recognizable dangers in placing the king above the law. An immature boy king is one risk. Another danger is a self-serving king. If the king is above the law, the way is open for him to abuse his position in its name. The king who justifies himself in Passus XXI claims,

yf me lakketh to lyue by, þe lawe wol þat y take hit
 Ther y may hastilokest hit haue, for y am heed of lawe
 And 3e ben bote membres and y aboue alle,
 And sethe y am 3oure alere heued y am 3oure alere hele
 And holy churche cheef helpe and cheventeyn of þe comune
 And what y take of 3ow two y take hit at þe techynge
 Of Spiritus iusticie, for y iuge 3ow alle.
 So y may boldely be hoseled for y borwe neuere
 Ne craue of my comune bote as my kynde asketh.
 (C, XXI, 468-476)

Although this king mentions his duties toward the estates of the clergy and commons, he stresses the privileges of his position more. He will take whatever he craves. The likelihood of tyranny in such a king is very great. Langland and Wyclif both recognize the possibility of kingly willfulness and offer similar

checks against it. It has already been seen how Wyclif and his followers pictured the ideal king as a self-disciplined, perfect figure obedient to divine rule. On earth, the king is absolute; but he is still human, and therefore subject to God's law. In the De officio regis, Wyclif names Conscience and Truth as the king's advisors. Through them, Wyclif warns the king against self-interested use of the law because such actions contravene God's will. The king, therefore, is kept in check on two levels: the moral obligation to follow his own laws as an example to his kingdom of self-discipline, and the necessity binding all humans to obey God. Langland voices similar sentiments. Conscience reminds the king in the Prologue that he must temper strict justice with mercy, or else receive the same treatment when he is judged by God. In Passus XXI, after the king makes his claim for the uninhibited use of privilege, Conscience assents to his demands, but stresses in turn the king's responsibilities. Conscience replies to the king's demands thus:

In condicioun ... pat pou be comune defende
 And rewle thy rewme in resoun riht wel and in treuthe,
 Than have thou al thyn askyng as thy lawe asketh.
Omnia sunt tua ad defendendum sed non ad deprehendum.
 (C, XXI, 477-479)

The Latin gerundives make the tone one of necessity. The king must not make use of the law for his personal gain only. As in Wyclif, the king is thus morally obligated to fulfill his responsibilities. He is also restricted by reason and truth in what privilege can grant him.

Wyclif places no other obstacles in the king's path. So long as he rules himself and his kingdom well, nothing can thwart the king's power and authority. Wyclif assumes the obedience of the other estates. If, for some

reason, the commons do not obey the king, it is not his fault, but the fault of the clerical estate for refusing to grant the king obedience. The clergy's bad example provokes the commons into disobedience. Although he is sympathetic to their situation, Wyclif harshly condemns the peasant rebels of 1381 in De blasphemia.³ The rebels acted wrongly in degree, in kind, and in manner. Forcible disendowment is not their prerogative, but the king's. Nevertheless, Wyclif still draws the ultimate conclusion that the clergy is responsible for the revolt by straining the nation's resources to the point of such social unrest. Had the clergy submitted to some measure of reform by the king, the revolt would never have occurred. Aside from the moral obligation to rule himself and his duty to rule the kingdom responsibly, Wyclif's king faces no obstructions to the exercise of his royal authority. Wycliffite discussions of kingship are no different in their granting of unrestricted application of royal power.

Langland's vision is less optimistic. He places several constrictions, which are beyond the king's control, upon the practical application of the king's power. The king is limited by his personal ability to rule. Boy kings are weak rulers since they lack the needed strength and maturity. The king is also restricted by the need to have the love, or at least the co-operation, of his subjects. Upon the king's renunciation of Lady Meed,

Quod Conscience to þe kyng, 'Withoute þe comune helpe
Hit is ful hard, by myn heued, herto to bryngen hit
And alle þoure lege lordes to lede thus euene.'
(C, IV, 176-178)

Without the willingness of the individual to be ruled, the king is effectively hamstrung. Waster simply ignores the knight who attempts to enforce the law.

Waster, like the brewer of Passus XXI, will not be ruled, and so the result is social chaos despite the efforts of even a good king. Langland's kings must deal with problems Wyclif's kings do not.

On the concept of kingship, nevertheless, there is substantial similarity between the thoughts of Wyclif and his followers and the thoughts of Langland. They all present absolute rulers, above, yet contained by, the law. They all grant the king enormous privilege. They require the king to rule by conscience, reason and truth. They warn the king that he, too, is subject to God. The differences between their visions lie not so much in any difference in their concepts of the royal office, as in their larger world visions. Wyclif is a political theoretician. He does not write about practical situations from practical experience, but, rather, from the theoretical point of view of the ideal. It is an ideal, moreover, that always leads back to the apostolic community of the early Church. In addition, Wyclif and his followers feel that the lost ideal is not irretrievable. Reform would restore society. Faith in the power and possibility of reform gives Wycliffism its essentially optimistic nature.

Langland, on the other hand, is not a social optimist. His vision is of a world heading toward doom. The Lollards look beyond the coming of the papal Antichrists to the restoration of the Kingdom; Langland, apart from a few cryptic prophecies of renewal, sees his world progress from ability and promise to ineffectiveness and doom. There is a general pattern of decline evident in the kings presented in Fiers Flowman. The Prologue presents a king of absolute authority and power. He is absolutely capable of enforcing the law and the commons are willing to obey. The section on Lady Meed has a successful king

balancing the conflicting forces within his court. From here on, however, the picture darkens. Piers Plowman discovers that not all members of society are willing to share the burden of labour or are willing to obey the law. Political action fails. Only extreme measures, again beyond the royal power, can force men to obey. Finally, in Passus XXI the cycle comes full circle. The king here demands the unrestrained rein of his privilege, not his right to enforce the law and Conscience must remind him that his privileges are contingent upon his fulfillment of duty.

In summary, both Langland in the C-text and Wyclif exalt the concept of the king to an absolute level. As creators of the law, kings are essentially dual in nature. Since they create the law, they are above its demands. Yet, at the same time, they are morally obliged to obey it. Wyclif, the theoretician and idealist, leaves the relationship between the law and the king at that, however politically unpragmatic it may be. Langland, more realistically, puts the king within the context of his vision of society as a whole. A king may be the "alere heued" and "alere hele" of society as the king in Passus XXI claims, but without a body to support him a king would be nothing.

There is a fifth king figure in Piers Plowman. In Passus XXI, Grace advises the people, "crouneth Conscience kyng." (C, XXI, 256) Conscience is a different sort of king than the other four. Those kings rule other individuals. They are external monarchs. Conscience, as his name suggests, is an internal king who guards the moral integrity of the individual. His subjects are Contrition, Pees and the like, not 'real' people. Hence, he need not be equated with the pope or the Church hierarchy. Instead, Conscience is the faculty that enables every individual to rule himself. Unity is more than the

concept of Christendom. Unity involves every Christian on an individual basis. Conscience as king sounds very like Wyclif's concept of dominion by grace, wherein each individual who lives in a state of grace thereby gains natural lordship over everything. The Rosarium defines the state of grace as "lordeschep ordeyned of God, fonde in pure titel of ry3twisenes, sufferyng togeder of evenhede many lordes, but sufferyng not alienacion, þe ry3twisnes ykepte; and in sich lordeschep everych ri3twis man is lorde overal þing. (63)

Such reasoning in both Langland and Wyclif hearkens back to the concept of the Golden Age when all things were held in common. It also looks forward to the kingdom of heaven. The Pearl-poet uses similar reasoning to explain how the child Margery can be of equal status with the Virgin Mary in Paradise. The interesting difference between the Pearl-poet and both Wyclif and Langland is that Wyclif and Langland make such equality possible here on earth. Langland seems to be utilizing something like Wyclif's theory of dominion by grace when he allows each individual to be his own king through the faculty of Conscience. One must keep in mind, however, that Wyclif himself derived the concept of dominion by grace from Fitzralph. Langland, therefore, could have done the same, independent of a knowledge of Wyclif's work.

A longstanding tradition of the Middle Ages is the recognition of two basic modes of living, the contemplative life and the active life. In a topos which extends at least as far back as Aristotle, the contemplative life of quiet prayer, study and reflection is generally acknowledged to be superior to the active life of the pursuit of worldly business.⁴

Langland's attitude toward monasticism is on the whole sympathetic, as Morton Bloomfield points out,⁵ The Wycliffite attitude toward the contemplative

life, on the other hand, is not what one might suspect.⁶

Langland's definition of the active life is seen in the figures of Haukyn in the B-text and Activa Vita in the C-text. The positive nature of the active life is evidenced in Haukyn's willingness to repent and try harder and in Activa Vita's claim to be Piers Plowman's apprentice. The true active life is the leading of a good Christian life; but the active life has a negative nature as well. Haukyn and Activa Vita have unhealthy attractions to worldly affairs. Haukyn's coat is befouled by sin immediately after he cleanses it in Confession. Parts of his description are transposed in the C-text to the description of Furnele proude-herte, the personification of the vice of Pride. The forerunner of Activa Vita in the C-text is the husband Actif, who excuses himself from Piers's pilgrimage to Truth by putting the sexual desires of his wife, whom he describes as "wel wantowen of maneres," (C, VII, 300) over the rigours of the spiritual journey. Activa Vita, in turn, needs to be instructed by Patience on the virtue of "parfit pacience" (C, XV, 274) and on the beneficial odium of poverty patiently borne. Many of Activa Vita's statements are abruptly interjected and he is described as speaking "al angryliche and arguinge as hit werre." (C, XVI, 114) Neither Haukyn nor Activa Vita is actually sinful in himself, however. An active life does not need to be an evil one.

Langland's definition of the contemplative life is that of renunciation of worldly pleasures. Contemplatif in Passus VII of the C-text is the only prospective pilgrim who accepts Piers' guidance to Seynt Truthe. He will gladly endure care, hunger and want. The contemplative life at its finest is paralleled in Passus XVIII by the perfection of virginity in the celibate religious. To a lesser degree, the chaste state of widowhood also offers a

parallel. In the final analysis, Langland holds that the contemplative life is

more lykynde to oure lorde then lyue as kynde asketh
 And folewe þat the flesche wole and fruyt forth brynge,
 That Activa lyf lettred men in here langage hit calleth.
 (C, XVIII, 78-80)

Langland's placement of the contemplative life in superiority to the active is not mere lip service to tradition. There are indications enough throughout the text to show that he does regard contemplation as superior. To be sure, Langland attacks mercilessly "heremytes on a heep" and other false contemplatives, and he also criticizes those monks and nuns who flout the duties of their degree and who flaunt the privileges instead. He also threatens them with a prophecy of forcible disendowment if they do not reform themselves. However, Langland does not satirize representatives of the monastic life as he does representatives of the fraternal (the two friars at the beginning of Will's search for Dowel; the gluttonous Doctor of Theology; Sire Penetrans domos) and the priestly (the priest who argues with Piers over the pardon; Sloth the priest) lives. Instead, Langland often heaps praise upon the monastic life. The cloister and the school are the only places Langland sees as heaven upon earth, capable of giving "eny ese to þe soule." (C, V, 152) Monastic life should be one of stern discipline; university life, itself organized on monastic principles, ideally fosters "loue and louhnesse and lykyng to lerne." (C, V, 155) Later, Langland emphasizes the rigorous discipline of monasteries, but, notably, not of nunneries. During Wrath's confession in Passus VI, he gloats that he can easily stir up discord among nuns with scurrilous gossip. He admits, however, that

Amonges monkes y myhte be, ac mony tyme y spare,
 For there aren many felle frekes myne aferes to aspye,
 That is, priour and suppriour and oure pater abbas,
 And yf y telle eny tales they taken hem togyderes
 And doen me faste Fridayes to bred and to water.
 Sut am y chalenged in oure chapitre-hous as y a child were
 And balayshed on þe bare ers and no brech bytwene,
 Y have no luste, lef me, to longe amonges monkes,
 For y ete more fysch then flesche there, and feble ale
 drynke. (C, VI, 151-159)

While monks are not immune to Wrath, the superior discipline of their order places great checks upon its proliferation. The final example of monastic exaltation comes in the discussion of where Charity can be found. *Liberum Arbitrium* allows that it can be found in nearly any individual, in a labourer, in a king, and even, once, in a friar. Nevertheless,

Ac in riche robes rathest he walketh,
 Ycalled and ycrymyled and his crowne yshaue.
 (C, XVI, 350-351)

Charity is to be found most often among monks. The idealization of the monastic life is too extensive for the belief that this is lip service to hold true. Langland subscribes to the traditional view that, while the active life is not inherently sinful, the contemplative life is inherently superior to it, and contemplation finds its fullest expression in a cloistered environment away from worldly distractions. This is not to say, however, that Langland equates monastic contemplation with *Dobest*. The definitions of *Dowel*, *Dobet* and *Dobest* are a different matter.

When the Wycliffite definitions of the active life and the contemplative life are compared to Langland's, one might expect there to be a very great difference, for the Lollards have no use for the cloistered orders. Monasteries

are "dennes of þeves and nestis of serpentis and homely housis of quyc devels." (EW 477) Langland's apocalyptic threat of monastic reformation would not appeal to Lollards, unless such reformation entails the total dissolution of monasticism. It is very surprising, therefore, to read such seemingly orthodox sentiments as the following:

it is seid comunli, þat þes two wymmen ben two lyves, actif and contemplatif; þe first is Martha, and þe toper Marie. And actif liif axiþ in mesure bisynesse aboute worldli þingis; and al3if þis liif be good, þe toper liif is moche better contemplatif liif stondiþ in oo þing, þat is, God, and hap no bisynes aboute þingis of þis world so men þat ben contemplatif bisie hem not aboute worldli goodis, but þei trusten and hopen in God þat alle þes þingis shall falle to hem But men supposen over þis, þat Crist approveþ here þree lyves. þe first is good, as children lyven whanne þei be cristened. þe secound lif is betre; and þis is clepid actif liif whanne men travailen for worldli goodis and kepen hem in ri3twisnesse. And þis is hard, but it is possible; and al3atis 3if covetise be left; for Crist techiþ bi Matheu þat men shulden not be besie aboute her fode and hilyng, but bisynesse shulde be for Hevene, þat shulde be eende of mennis traveile. And exces of þe goodis lettþ ofte tymes þis eende. þe pridde liif is þe beste, as Crist seiþ þat may not lye. And þis is sumwhat here in erþe but fulli in þe blisse of Hevene. (SEW I 383-384)

The sermonist goes on to prove the superiority of the contemplative life on three grounds: Christ explicitly says it was the best; childhood innocence and the active life are transitory, while the contemplative life is eternal; and the first two lives are merely the means to the third, as eating is the means for man to live. To have any meaning, childhood innocence and the active life must progress to the contemplative life. In his discussion of the relative merits of the vocations of Martha and Mary, the Wycliffite author offers a quite traditional interpretation of the usual Biblical locus. Martha's choice of proper worldly service untainted by covetousness is good, but Mary's choice of a life

wholly centered upon listening to God's Word is better.

The difference between this Lollard statement and Langland's orthodox position is subtle. Langland allows the contemplative life full expression here on earth in the form of monastic seclusion. The Lollard, however, reserves the full expression of contemplation to life in the bliss of heaven. Contemplation on earth is only "somewhat" akin to pure contemplation. The consequences of such thinking are considerable. At one stroke it destroys monastic claims to perfection, and so the cloistered life becomes open to the Lollard criticism that it is a perversion of Christ's intent. The Lollards repeatedly insist "Crist hap ordeyned hise preestis bope to teche and preche his gospel, and not for to preie þus, and to be hid in sich closettis." (SEW II 217) The strongest objection the Lollards hold against monks and regular canons is that their rule prevents them from fulfilling the primary function for which Christ had ordained them -- preaching. Life in the cloister effectively hides, if it does not extinguish, the light of Christian faith Christ bids his followers openly display.

Deep hostility toward monks and canons might lead one to suspect that the Lollards come to view the active life as superior by default; yet this is not what happens. Instead, contemplation is redefined in order not to contradict Christ's explicit praise of it. "Babelynge of lippis" in "solitarie preiere" (EW 189; 190) becomes dead, regularized, false contemplation. True contemplation is "preiere of holy lif, þat eche man dop as longe as he dwellip in charite." (EW 190) To the Lollards, the contemplative way of life belongs not to the false four new sects, but to the priesthood and the laity.

Priests are in a special position. They are urged to abandon the ways of the four new sects in favour of "holy lif in keynge goddis hestis and trewe prechyng of þe gospel." (EW 189) Christ expressly tells his followers to preach. This 'active life' of spreading the Gospel is to be preferred to the silent, useless life of the cloister. The priest, nevertheless, also must comply with the Lollard conditions for the true contemplative life. To be a true priest, his life must be an exemplary one of holiness and charity. In the end, even for priests, who by definition must engage in a special kind of active life, the contemplative life is still superior, both on earth and in heaven.

There have been numerous attempts to prove that Langland and the Wycliffites both intend the best life to be the Third Life, sometimes referred to as the mixed, or apostolic, or prelatial life, that combines the fruits of contemplation with the life of action.⁷ The mixed life is a tradition that dates back to St. Augustine. While such a definition aptly may suit the Lollard concept of true contemplation, which is a life of charity, and the character of *Piers Plowman*, in neither instance is the mixed life an acceptable explanation. Insisting that Langland would have believed in a mixed Third Life presupposes a conformity of thought on this subject that did not exist in the Middle Ages. Not all religious treatises include the mixed third life. Richard Rolle is a notable example of a popular English religious writer who omits the Third Life.⁸ Wyclif is another. He rejects "the mixed life, by whatever name, as a description of his clerical vanguard. The mixed suggested a compromise with the world as well as a concession to human frailty.... Worst of all, a fusion of the two lives was the self-attributed characteristic of the

mendicants."⁹ Those treatises that do include a mixed category do not always place it as third and best. The Cloud of Unknowing, for instance, puts the combination of action and contemplation second, as better than action but inferior to contemplation.¹⁰ The Lollard author whose discussion of the merits of the lives of Martha and Mary we read earlier does indeed break down manner of life into three parts, but he categorises them as childhood innocence, the active life and the contemplative life, not the active, contemplative and mixed lives. The closest Wycliffite writers come to praise of the mixed life is a general respect for the title of bishop.¹¹ Langland, in turn, never mentions the mixed life, even when he gives himself ample opportunity to do so. At C, XVIII, 81 Will specifically states that there are "but tweyne lyues" and then asks Liberum Arbitrium to explain why the Tree of Charity therefore bears three kinds of fruit.¹² In his explanation, Liberum Arbitrium does not contradict Will's belief in just two lives, and so there are evidently three parts of life, marriage, widowhood and virginity, but only two lives, action and contemplation.

Another reason that the mixed life is not a viable option in Piers Plowman is that the terms activa vita and contemplativa vita are precise technical terms. Yet, as T. P. Dunning and Derek Pearsall both have observed, Langland does not use these terms in their precise technical senses.¹³ The justification for extending Langland's definition of the best life to a life that Langland never mentions and that is the extension of the technically defined first and second life is thus gone. Efforts to make out the existence of a third life in Langland rest upon a critical desire to equate Dowel, Dobet and Dobest with, respectively, the active, contemplative and mixed lives, or the unitive,

purgative and illuminative stages of mysticism. But there is no textual authority for such an equation, and there are several triads in Piers Plowman besides Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. Given that Langland only recognizes two lives, it is better to regard the definitions of the active and contemplative lives and the definitions of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest as separate matters.

Aside from the mutual agreement that the contemplative life of prayer is superior to the active life of righteous behaviour, there is virtually no common ground between Langland and the Lollards on the subject of the preferred way of life. It is true that all the false hermits whom Langland condemns, such as the "heremytes on an heep" and the professionals who set up their operations near lucrative busy highways, the Wycliffites also condemn. They go farther, however, and include in their condemnation the monastic orders. To the Lollards, the contemplative life is a holy life, not a life restricted to the observance of rules devised by men. Langland, on the other hand, sees contemplation as essentially monastic, either cloistered or anchoritic.

Those who support the position that Langland had Lollard sympathies often point to the ideal figure of Piers Plowman as proof. The character of Piers, the hardworking labourer, is seen as one with the Lollards' supposed belief in the superiority of the active life. The problems with such an interpretation of the Lollard position have already been discussed. More to the point, this critical line of thought ultimately identifies Piers as a Lollard poor priest.¹⁴ Pamela Gradon rightly objects that the exclusive identification of Piers with the Lollards' ideal of the priesthood is an unnecessary limitation upon the understanding of Piers's character.¹⁵ Piers is a transcendental figure. He is labourer, preacher, guide, confessor,

king, mediator, charity, Christ, St. Peter, and apostolic ideal all in one. Piers Plowman simply cannot be reduced to any one role.

To reject altogether the concept of Piers the poor priest is equally incorrect. There are many facets to his character that are recognizable as 'Lollard'. The will he makes is short and direct, and it could be patterned upon the simple form of the so-called Lollard wills.¹⁶ As well, Piers is a perfect example of a preacher who puts his own preachings into practice before he expects his flock to follow. He is also a lay preacher, not an ordained priest, as the priest who objects to Truth's pardon points out. Although lay preachers among the Lollards were never the rule, there is sufficient precedent among early Lollard preachers, such as William Smith of Leicester, to allow a reader to see a connection between Piers's lay status and Lollardy. In the B-text, moreover, Piers retorts to the priest who impugnes Truth's pardon, "Lewed lore! ... litel lokestow on þe bible; / On Salomons sawes selden 3ow biholdest." (B, VII, 142-143) Piers's retort would be warmly received by Lollard Bible readers. The association of Piers with Christ and St. Peter would also be compatible with Lollard thinking, as ideal combinations of the active life of preaching and the Wycliffite-defined contemplative life of prayer. Piers, as well, does not need to be identified with the mediaeval papacy, since, after establishing the apostolic order upon the Earth, he leaves the poem to plough new fields. The forces of Antichrist successfully attack after the Church removes itself from Piers's established apostolic order, first by the acceptance of temporalities (C, XXII, 58-60) and later by the corruption of the fraternal orders. (C, XXII, 273-295) There is nothing in Piers's character as the ideal pastor and nothing in his actions that a Lollard reader would find objectionable.

The same is true of an orthodox reader. There is nothing objectionable in the portrait of Piers Plowman from the conventional point of view. The character of Piers Plowman is an unreliable basis upon which to decide the ultimate religious leanings of William Langland. The difficulty in telling the orthodox and Lollard points of view apart is the result of the Wycliffites' selective rejection of Church thought and practices. Orthodox and Wycliffite beliefs are widely divergent upon what the Lollards view as the negative aspects of the visible Church. Tithes, image-worship and the four new sects are examples of these. However, the Lollards express sentiments startlingly close to orthodox thought upon what they think of as positive in the visible Church. Pilgrimages to saints' shrines made without true intent are decried for their waste of time and money; yet, the concept of the pilgrimage as a spiritual journey is a part of Lollard thought. (Rosarium 81) Likewise, the definition of the ideal pastor, such as Piers Plowman, who cares deeply for the spiritual and physical well-being of his parish, is common to the heretic and the orthodox alike. One cannot judge Langland's sympathies simply upon the basis of the figure of Piers Plowman.

A similar confusing situation is the definitions of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. Langland continually defines and redefines what the three are, and it is best to see his final 'definition' as a composite of all offered definitions, rather than the chronologically last one offered. From the orthodox point of view, the definitions are perfectly acceptable, although the orthodox clergyman may have worried about the equation of Dobest with kingship and the threatened reform of the Church by the secular arm. (C, X, 100-105) From the Wycliffite point of view, again the definitions are generally acceptable.

Because of Wycliffite antipathy toward the Church hierarchy, a Lollard would disagree most with the description of Dobest wielding a bishop's crook. (C, X, 92) Of course, later definitions would offset the early associations of kingship and bishopric.

The Lollards actually define Dowel, Dobet and Dobest in terms very similar to those expressed by Langland. A Wycliffite polemicist explains why at John 21: 15-17 Christ instructs the Apostles three times to 'feed my sheep' in these words, "first fede bi ensauple of good lif, þe secunde tyme bi trewe techynge of þe gospel, and þe thridde tyme bi wilful suffrynge of deip, to make men stable in þe gospel and in hope of blisse." (EW 55) In discussing the meaning of the three types of fertile ground in the Parable of the Sower, another Lollard explains,

pes pree degrees of þis growing tellen pree profitis of men. Sum ben chast to þer spouse Crist, as virgyns and oper good men; and pes holden þe ten comandementis for love of þe Trinite. ðe secounde fruyt, of the sixþe greyn, tellip trewe doctours of þe Chirche; for þei holden Goddis hestis in hem silf, and doublen hem in þe puple. ðe þridde seed, of a hundrid greyn, bitokenep þe hi3este charite, whanne a man suffrip deep for to susteyne Goddis lawe and puttip well his owene liif for þe profit of þe Chirche. And looke we to what greyn Goddis word growip in us. (SEW II 34-35)

The Lollard definitions of Dowel as a good life of faith and obedience, Dobet as understanding and preaching, and Dobest as martyrdom are not subversive in themselves, but their Lollard applications are. Dowel becomes obedience to God's law, not the artificial interpretations of His law and the new laws devised by men. Dobet refers not to the learned friars and caesarean clergy, but to the itinerant poor priests and Bible readers. Dobest, most of all, is persecution and martyrdom for Wycliffite beliefs. Lollardy often lies not in the

conventional definitions but in the definitions' applications and interpretations. This difference is seen in Wycliffite thought on the contemplative life and on Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. Often, the Lollard sect survived through its chameleon-like ability to appear to conform with conventional thought and custom. In practice, this camouflage achieved two things. On the one hand, it sometimes enabled sect members to escape detection by the authorities. On the other hand, the inclusion of seemingly ordinary ideas was one method of introducing to the sect potential new members who were shy of Lollardy's reputation for heresy and sedition. After a new member was firmly converted, the full explosive potential of Lollard thought could be revealed to him. One's task in analyzing Piers Plowman for its relation to the Wycliffite sect might very well be to discover whether or not a Lollard reading is possible.

Another major concern of both the Wycliffites and Langland is the use and misuse of resources by mankind. Two related manifestations of the problem recur in Piers Plowman and Wycliffite literature: the use and misuse of wealth, and the use and misuse of language. In both instances, the misuse of a resource becomes the willful perversion of a gift from God. A discussion of this common theme will give another indication of how similar, and yet different, are the thinking patterns of Langland and Wycliffite authors.

The Lollard definition of the proper use of wealth is clear-cut and insistent. Wealth is to be used for the reasonable maintenance of the body and any excess of wealth is to be given to those in need, to "pore men and nedy pat ben bedered and mowe not helpe hem self." (EW 186) These are the poor, sick, crippled, widows, prisoners, the very old and the very young. Since

priests are bound by Christ's example to a life of poverty, they, too, are to be supported by voluntarily given alms. Yet this support is not compulsory on the part of the giver and the practice of rigid exaction of tithes is condemned by the Lollards, since it encourages simony and contradicts Christ's own example of evangelical poverty. A priest should labour out of "pauful traveilinge," (SEW I 282) and not out of a desire to become rich and display wealth. The giver has the right to withhold tithes and alms from unworthy religious.

Langland's attitude toward the proper use of wealth is likewise clear-cut. He, too, calls for only the reasonable maintenance of the body through worldly possessions, because

Al is nat good to þe gost þat þe gott ascuth,
Ne liflode to þe lycame þat lef is þe soule.
(C, I, 34-35)

Since what the body craves is too often harmful to the soul, the body must be maintained with moderation. After the reasonable demands of the body for food, fuel and shelter have been satisfied, the individual is morally obligated to assist the truly needy. Piers, in spite of his own pressing poverty, is willing to clothe and feed those who cannot help themselves. He claims,

'But yf he be blynde or broke-legged or bolted with yren -
Suche poore,' quod Peres, 'shal parte with my godes,
Bothe of my corn and of my cloth to kepe hem fram defaute,
And ankerus and eremytes þat eten but at nones
And freres þat flateren nat and pore folk syke,
What! y and myn wolle fynde hem what hem nedeth.'
(C, VIII, 143-148)

According to both Langland and the Wycliffites then, the proper uses of worldly goods are restricted to temperate attention to the physical needs of the body,

and the extension of charity to those who need and deserve it. Langland and the Wycliffites differ regarding those to whom they would extend charity. They agree upon people who are physically unable to work -- the sick, crippled, old, young, and imprisoned. They disagree upon the types of religious who should be supported. The Lollards, who had no use at all for the fraternal and monastic orders, would give voluntary alms only to poor priests, who first fulfill their spiritual duties by preaching and living God's law. Langland would support priests with tithes; but he would also support worthy friars and contemplatives who lack any other means of survival. Here, the difference between Langland and the Lollards is not caused by their attitudes toward wealth itself, but by their respective established attitudes on other issues, particularly the different modes of religious life.

These pre-set attitudes also influence their respective thoughts on the misuse of worldly goods. The fancy "caymes castels," "wast housis," and "dennes of peves" built by friars, monks and canons are deplored by the Lollards, since the resources of the land are squandered to build them. They also criticize them because such buildings use up financial resources that could be used for the upkeep of the parish community. Underlying this financial resentment, however, is the deeper opposition to the four new sects for theoretical reasons. Langland, on the other hand, accepts as valid the non-priestly religious ways of life, on the provision that their followers obey the spirit and the law of their rules.

Although such fundamental differences between Langland's attitude and Wycliffite attitudes influence the overall opposite directions they will take on issues, there are still particular manifestations of the misuse of wealth

agreed upon by the Lollards and Langland. Any Lollard would concur wholeheartedly with Langland's sentiments about the corruptive influence of wealth within the Church. Reason, after praising the austere monastic life, admits,

Ac mony day, men telleth, bothe monkes and chanons
 Haen ryde out of aray, here reule euele yholde,
 Ledares of lawedays and londes ypurchase
 And pryked aboute on palfrayes fram places to maneres,
 An hep of houndes at here ers as he a lord were,
 And but if his knawe knele þat shal his coppe holde
 He loketh al lourynge and lordeyne hym calleth.
 Lytel hadde lordes a-do to 3eue lond fro her heyres
 To religious þat haen no reuthe thow it ryne on here
 auters. (C, V, 156-164)

Langland's image of rain falling upon the parish altar is an interesting one because it is an image shared with the Lollards. In the tract Fifty Errors and Heresies of the Friars, for example, money that should be spent upon the upkeep of the parish is given foolishly to friars for the purpose of building friaries. Such squandering of financial resources is folly,

Ffor by þis new housinge of freris, þof hit rayne on þe auter of þo
 parische chirche, þo blynde puple is so disseyved þat þei wil raper
 gif to waste housis of freris þen to parische chirchis, or to comyn
 weyes, þof men catel and beestis ben perischid þerinne. (SEW
 III 380)

Langland uses humour to attack worldly monks. The exaggerated image of a monk riding with a pack of hounds at his ass and abusing his manservant with sour looks is as funny as it is critical of human folly. The Lollard use of the same image is also exaggerated, but this image is abusive both of the greedy friars and the ignorant people who contribute to their own ruin. In both cases, the

image of rain falling on the parish altar underlines the corruptive influence of wealth in the Church. Because of wealth, prelates no longer look to their spiritual duties as they should. Instead, they are now concerned with pretending to be lords. Friars reduce the resources of the parish to the point where it can no longer function. The misuse of wealth means the physical and spiritual ruination of the land.

Langland and Wycliffite writers also worry that Church endowment weakens the authority and power of lords. One Lollard author darkly warns that "if þe clergy gete þis swerde [temporal lordship] oenys fully in þer power, þe secular party may go pipe wip an ivy lefe for eny lordschippis pat þe clerkis wille 3even hem a3en." (EW 372) The practice of amortization is attacked by both, since it enables the Church to encroach steadily upon the assets of the lords. After lecturing Will upon the evilness of amassing more wealth than sufficiency needs, *Liberum Arbitrium* comments,

Yf lewede men knewe this Latyn, a litel they wolden auysen hem
 Ar they amorteysed eny more for monkes or for chanons.
 Allas! lordes and ladyes, lewede consayle haue 3e
 To feffe suche and fede pat founded ben to þe fulle
 With þat 3oure bernes and 3oure bloed by goed lawe may
 claime! (C, XVII, 53-57)

Again, any Lollard reader would wholeheartedly agree.

One of the most revealing areas for indicating differences between Langland's and the Wycliffittes' concerns is the use and misuse of language. Language is of vital interest to both. For the Lollards, it is a case of upholding the truth and sanctity of God's Word. Their emphasis upon the self-sufficient, literal truth of the Bible, and their belief in the ability of

all Christians to understand the Bible without clerical interpretation, but with guidance from the Holy Spirit, are distinguishing features of the sect. The Lollard emphasis upon the priest's primary duty of preaching similarly shows the Wycliffite preoccupation with language.

Langland is no less concerned with language and much of Piers Plowman is decidedly involved with the spoken word.¹⁸ Holy Church explains the meaning of the field full of folk to Will. Conscience and Lady Meed debate the propriety of material reward. Reason preaches a sermon to the people. The Deadly Sins confess aloud. Piers Plowman lectures the people upon their social responsibilities. The Four Daughters of God argue over the salvation of mankind. Various other characters discourse upon numerous subjects. In the C-text, Rechelesnesse, Imaginatif, Patience and Liberum Arbitrium all deliver lengthy speeches. In short, Piers Plowman is often little more than a series of lectures, sermons, conversations, arguments, debates, explanations and discourses. Astonishingly little of the poem involves physical action, as opposed to linguistic action. As well, Will's quest for Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest is largely linguistic. Although Will journeys from place to place inquiring after the whereabouts of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, the real search consists of the repeated definitions and redefinitions of the natures of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest.

Langland shares with the Lollard sect a deep respect for the Bible. He quotes from it often, especially the Psalms, and harshly criticizes those clerics who are ignorant of it. The gluttonous Master of Divinity, for example, cannot digest the plain, but wholesome, fare of Scripture and Church Fathers, and he must be given instead "mete of more cost, mortrewes and potages." (C, XV, 47) These expensive dishes are a metaphor for the complicated glosses

such masters of divinity devise to explain away Scripture.¹⁹ Part of one definition of *Dobet's* nature, moreover, is that of having "ronne into religioun and ... rendred þe bible." (C, X, 88) The Middle English Dictionary cites this passage to define 'render' as 'translate'. Even so, "rendred" cannot be an allusion to the Wycliffite translations since the earliest date for the Early Version of the Lollard Bible is approximately 1384. It appeared historically too late to be identified as Langland's direct allusion even in the C-text. Instead, the passage again emphasizes the need for clerical familiarity with Scripture.

Respect for Scripture is not tantamount to being a Lollard. An examination of the position of Scripture in Piers Plowman is thus necessary to see if Langland intended a Lollard interpretation of the Bible's rightful place. First, however, it would be best to make clear the Lollard position. Despite K. B. McFarlane's assertion that Wyclif denied the need for Biblical exegesis,²⁰ the attitude of Wyclif and his followers is not one of belief in scriptura sola.²¹ Their attitude is described more accurately as a belief in scriptura suprema. Wyclif quotes patristic and contemporary sources to support his theories, just as every other mediaeval theologian does. The Triologus alone cites as supportive evidence twenty-three different authorities apart from the Bible, ranging alphabetically from Anselm to Possidonius. No theologian can be described as upholding the concept of scriptura sola in a literal sense when he employs such outside sources. The Wycliffites, too, cannot be described accurately as believing in scriptura sola, since Wyclif's followers both use patristic and contemporary authorities and themselves engage in interpreting Scripture. Anne Hudson has shown that one Wycliffite scholar's sources include St. Augustine, Gregory the Great, St. Jerome, pseudo-Chrysostom, Peraldus,

Grosseteste, Odo of Cheriton and Rupert of Deutz,²²

A glance at the sermons edited by Anne Hudson demonstrates the folly of believing that the Lollards had a simple and literal (in our modern sense of the word) approach to the Bible. Properly executed, exegesis is the written counterpart to preaching, their common aim being the elucidation of God's divine Word. For all except the most extreme Wycliffites exegesis is an important, even necessary, use of language. Instead of seeing Scripture as the sole authority, Wyclif and his followers view Holy Writ in the rather more traditional light as the ultimate authority. The distinction between the Bible as ultimate authority as opposed to the sole authority allows the inclusion of the Church Fathers and later commentators as authorities whose opinions are especially important. Patristic commentaries should be read as truth, on the provision that what they say accords with the divine Truth of God's Word. But, if the exegesis contradicts the obvious sense of Scripture, then the human exegesis is in error and must be ignored. Human truth can always be fallible; God's divine Truth is, by definition, infallible. Exegesis must always be subordinate to the supremacy of Scripture. Once again, the Lollard approach to a topic is found not in the traditional framework of the issue, but in its interpretation.

Langland also uses the traditional framework. In Passus XX, the Bible is the ultimate witness to the historical life of Christ, to his divine nature, and to the spiritual truth of the redemption promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New through Christ's death, harrowing of Hell and resurrection. In the next Passus,

Grace gaf Peres a teme, foure grete oxen:
 That oen was Luc, a large beste and a lou-chered,
 And Marc, and Mathewe the thridde, myhty bestes bouthe,
 And ioyned til hem oen Iohan, most gentil of all,
 The pris neet of Peres plough, passynge alle opere.
 (C, XXI, 262-266)

Langland, like the Wycliffites, makes the Bible the ultimate foundation of all Christian thought and he also accepts the validity of patristic exegesis. He describes exegesis as harrowing the field of man's soul, which the Bible has ploughed, in preparation for the planting of the cardinal virtues.

And sethe Grace of his goednesse gaef Peres foure stottes,
 All þat his oxes erede they to harwen aftur.
 Oen hihte Austyn and Ambrosie anoper,
 Gregory the grete clerk and Ieroem þe gode.
 Thise foure, the fayth to teche, folowede Peres teme
 And harwed in an hand-while al holy scripture
 With two aythes þat they hadde, an oelde and a newe,
Id est vetus testamentum et novum. (C, XXI, 267-273)

Langland's attitude toward the role of Biblical exegesis is opposite to the subordination to which the Lollards assigned it. Harrowing is the breaking up and smoothing of lumpy chunks of ploughed ground. Without harrowing, planting would be difficult and the harvest poor. Biblical exegesis, then, smooths out the difficulties presented by the Bible. In other words, the Bible cannot be understood by ordinary Christians without guided interpretation by clerical exegetes. That this strictly orthodox view of exegesis is Langland's attitude is made absolutely clear earlier in the poem. Studie sends Will to Clergy and Scripture, husband and wife. Clergy is definitely the dominant partner. Studie describes him as,

Clergie ... þat knoweth

All kynne kunnynges and comsynges of Dowel,
 Of Dobet, of Dobest, for doctour he is knowe,
 And ouer Skripture þe skilfole and screueynes were
 trewe. (C, XI, 94-97)

Thus Biblical studies is an important pursuit only in textual matters when the accuracy of the human scribe is in question. The meaning of the Bible itself is inextricably tied to enlightened interpretation by Clergy. In Piers Plowman, direct knowledge of the Bible by lay Christians is neither forbidden nor necessary. Langland's opinion, therefore, is contrary to Lollard thought which insists upon the layman's knowledge of Scripture and condemns Church control over Scripture as one of the means whereby Antichrist laboured to destroy Holy Writ. (EW 254-263)

Although they take opposite stances on the question of the Bible's literal importance, the attention Langland and the Lollards attach to language gives them many points of contact. It is a subject of vital concern to both, the reason for this mutual concern being the same. They are acutely aware of the description of Christ at the beginning of the Gospel of St. John as the Verbum -- the Word:²³

In principio erat Verbum
 Et Verbum erat apud Deum,
 Et Deus erat Verbum.²⁴

In the bigynnyng was the word
 and the word was at god
 and god was the word.²⁵

Since human language is a mirror of the divine Word, it is the best method for the Christian to find and praise God. Hence, Will searches for Dowel, Dobet and Dobest through language instead of action and the Wycliffites insist upon the priestly duty of preaching. The supreme uses of language are preaching and

exegesis, as they bring to light the divine Word. To these the Wycliffites would add the reading of Scripture. Because language itself is an essential part of God's divine nature, the perversion of language is extremely serious and both the Lollards and Langland describe it as a form of spiritual sodomy -- the wasteful misuse of the seed of God's Word. The Lollards make the parallel to Sodom and Gomorrah explicit. They argue, for example, that

siþ goddis word, bi whiche men schulden gostly be gendrid goddis
sones, is betere þan bodely seed of man bi whiche þe body of man
schulde be gendred, & þes prelatis mysusen þis bettre seed, þanne þei
don more synne þan diden þe sodomytis þat wasted mennus seed; for
euer þe betre þat a þing is þe worse & þe more abhominable is þe
mysusyng þer-of. & þe grete doctour lyncolne robert grosted
groundip þis pleynly þat siche prelatis þat leuen to preche þus
cristis gospel ben more abhominable and enemys of god & his peple þan
weren þe cursed men of sodom & gomor. ²⁶ (EW 56)

This passage is characteristically Lollard, in that it concentrates upon the abuses of the clergy to the exclusion of the other estates. Nevertheless, it amply demonstrates the Wycliffite concept that the perversion of language is worse than even sodomy because it is the perversion of a spiritual gift.

Langland does not literally connect the perversion of language with sodomy. He does, however, speak of it in terms which imply sexual deviancy, and thus sodomy in a larger sense of the word. The obvious examples are found in the descriptions of the vice of Lechery, who confesses to listening to "mery tales / Of putrie and of paramours," (C, VI, 185-186) and who later attacks the Barn of Unity with "priue speche and paynted words" and "vntidy tales." (C, XXII, 115; 119) A more complicated instance of the sex/language motif can be found in the B-text, where Wit offers this definition of Dobest:

He doop best þat withdraweþ hym by daye and by ny3te
 To spille any speche or any space of tyme:
Qui offendit in vno, in omnibus est reus.
 Tynynge of tyme, trupe woot þe soþe,
 Is moost yhated vpon erþe of hem þat ben in heuene;
 And sippe to spille speche þat spire is of grace
 And goddes gleman and a game of heuene.
 Wolde neuere þe feipful fader his fiþele were vntempred,
 Ne his gleman a gedelyng, a goere to tauernes.
 (B, IX, 97-104)

Langland then goes on to consider the corruption of the institution of marriage. Aside from the Freudian image of an untempered fiddle, the sexual connotations of the passage rest on three things. First is the association of wasted time and speech with taverns, a place where Gluttony, for one, admits he "fedde me with ale / Out of resoun, among rybaudes, here rybaudrye to here." (C, VI, 434-435) Taverns are infamous in Piers Plowman as centers of vice and linguistic corruption.

The second connotation is the word "spille". 'Spille' could have several meanings: to ruin, spoil, waste, destroy, die. In this particular passage, it literally means to waste time and speech idly -- in a metaphorical sense a form of sodomy in itself. 'Spille' has, however, a further connotation of sexual misuse based upon the incident in Genesis: "Ille sciens non sibi nasci filios, introiens ad uxorem fratris sui, semen fundebat in terram, ne liberi fratris nomine nascerentur. Et idcirco percussit eum Dominus, quod rem detestabilem faceret."²⁷ The Early Lollard version of the Bible translates the passage as: "He wytynge sones to be born not to hym, goynge to the wif of his brother, shede the seed into the erthe, lest fre children weren born in name of the brother; and therfor the Lord smote hym, therthur3 that a cursid thing he dide." The Lollard scholars of both the Early and Later versions

translate fundebat as 'shed'; it could, however, easily be translated as 'spilt', since the Latin basically means to pour a fluid.

"Spille", admittedly, is used about speech elsewhere in Middle English simply in the sense of waste. In Chaucer's translation of The Romaunt of the Rose, Reason "spilt her speche in veyn," (4786) and later has her sermon "spilte" by Love. (5136) In Gower's Confessio Amantis, "He spilleth many a word in wast/ That schal with such a poeple trete." (I, 1192-1193) However, the very nature of "spille" carries with it in Middle English a strong note of moral disapproval, often with sexual implications. It is used to describe offenses against moral laws in general and rape in particular.²⁸ It can also be used to connote sexual activity, as in Chaucer's "Miller's Tale," where Nicholas says he will 'spille' himself unless Alisoun satiates his desires. (3278) When Langland next considers how the institution of marriage has been corrupted, he reinforces, by association, a third time the sexual nature of "spille" in the previous passage. Langland thus agrees with the Lollards that the misuse of language is parallel to the misuse of sexuality.

Language can be abused in several ways. Lollard hostility toward profane and idle oaths was well known in the fourteenth century. Harry Bailly, for example, immediately labels the Parson a Lollard after the Parson rebukes him for swearing. ("Man of Law's Tale" 1170-1173) Langland, too, rebukes ribald speech. Dame Studie in the B-text complains that

Ac mynstralcie and murpe amonges men is noupe
 Lecherie, losengerye and losels tales;
 Glotonye and grete opes, þise arn games nowadaies.

(B, X, 49-51)

Once again, language and sexuality are abused together. The combination of vulgar talk and indecent behaviour receives condemnation from Langland and Lollard alike.

The Lollards have some particular concerns regarding the Church's use of language. Papal bulls, indulgences, pardons, special prayers and letters of fraternity all waste language, since they do not possess the saving grace they claim to have. Excommunication is an uncharitable and presumptuous curse. Church music and song render unintelligible the intended spiritual lesson. Likewise, scriptural glosses can obscure the true meaning of the Bible. Preaching licences, the suppression of vernacular Bibles, and summonses to appear before the bishop prevent the spread of God's Word. A priest's duty above all demands he use language correctly. He is to preach God's Word. Anything that prevents him from fulfilling this duty, or that detracts from its importance, abuses God's intent for language.

On Langland's part, he agrees that the offices of the pardoner and summoner are easily corrupted. Excommunication, too, is looked on with disfavour, if invoked for personal gain. The self-serving glossing of Scripture is likewise criticized. Langland also apparently questions the saving efficacy of indulgences and masses for the dead. The Pardon sent from Truth stresses the need for good deeds. In meditating upon the scene, Will accepts the papal claim to grant pardons; nevertheless, he concludes that on Judgement Day,

A pouhe-ful of pardon there, ne provinciales lettres,
Thow we be founden in the fraternite of alle fyue ordres
And have indulgences doublefold, but Dowel vs helpe

Y sette nat by pardon a pese ne nat a pye-hele!
(C, IX, 344-347)

Doing well is far superior to the written assurances of fallible men.

Langland unmistakably separates himself from Lollard dissent on the subject of preaching. Although he agrees that preaching is an important duty of a priest, and he agrees that it is far better to preach clearly than to cloud the issue by glossing Scripture, nevertheless, Langland also insists that preachers be properly licenced by the proper authorities. In the B-text, Piers states "Ac Robert Renaboute shal ri3t no3t haue of myne, / Ne Postles, but þei preche konne and haue power of þe bisshop." (B, VI, 148-149) By allowing support only to licenced preachers Piers effectively quashes the independent, itinerant, poor priest.

While language is prone to be abused by every individual, three particular social groups are identified by the Wycliffites and Langland as especially implicated in its corruption. Lawyers, friars and minstrels, whose professions intimately involve using language, are accused of abusing it the worst of all. Lawyers are of two types: civil and canon.²⁹ The canon lawyers receive the least sympathy. An Apology for Lollard Doctrines, for example, cites eighteen areas in which canon law ignores the dictates of God's law and foments discord among Christians, the areas focussing mainly upon the Church's refusal to submit to civil jurisdiction. (73-80) Langland agrees with the Lollards that canon lawyers tend to be more corrupt than their civil counterparts. Simony is largely responsible for the legal sanction of Lady Meed's marriage to Falshede. Moreover, when Theologie insists that the case be brought to Westminster to be decided by the King, Syuyle quite readily assents,

"ac Symonye ne wolde / Til he hadde seluer for the seel and signes of notaries." (C, II, 155-156) The procedures of canon law are pictured as even slower and more ponderously bureaucratic than civil procedure.

Lawyers are accused of misusing language by speaking on behalf of evil causes. Lawsuits are undertaken to win profit, not out of a desire to see justice prevail. The poor thus are cheated out of their rights, since they cannot afford the costs of litigation. Lawyers twist the law from its original intention of protecting the weak into a tool of oppression, and Langland voices his anger at such injustice in passages such as this:

Wysdom and wit now is nat worth a carse
 Bote hit be cardet with coueytise, as clotheres kember here wole.
 Ho can caste and contreue to disseyue þe rightfole
 And lette with a loue-day treuthe, and bigile,
 That coueite can and caste thus ar cleped into þe consayle.
Qui sapiunt nugas et crimina lege vocantur;
Qui recte sapiunt, lex iubet ire foras.
 He is reuerensed and yrobed þat can robbe þe peple
 Thorw fallas and fals questes and thorw fikel speche.
 (C, XI, 14-22)

The Wycliffites echo Langland's accusations that the legal profession promotes deliberately persuasive hypocrites, instead of honest speakers. One Lollard author describes with venom the world's vision of the ideal lawyer as follows: "he þat can cracke a litil latyn in constories of heþene mennus lawe and worldly prestis lawe and can helpe to ancie a pore man bi knackis or chapitris, is holden a noble clerk and redy and wys." (EW 156) Both the Wycliffites and Langland, therefore, picture lawyers as misusing language to maintain wrong.

Beneath this apparent agreement, however, there is again a fundamental difference. The source of Langland's disillusionment with the legal

profession is not the same as the source of the Wycliffite hostility. For Langland, the legal profession is not inherently corrupt and law exists for the good of the community. When the proper course of law is thwarted, the entire community suffers. Pees is victimized by Wrong; the poor are oppressed by the rich; the king is tricked out of escheat revenues. Langland traces the perversion of law back to the problem of the misuse of wealth through Lady Meed. The dire influences of reward and material gain entice lawyers into misusing their oratorical skills. Nevertheless, lawyers are not sinful by nature, as can be seen by the manner in which Truth's pardon deals with lawyers:

Menne of lawe hadde lest pat loth were to plede
 But they pre manibus were payd for pledynge at þe barre.
 Ac he þat speneth his speche and speketh for þe pore
 That innocent and nedy is and no man harm wolde,
 That conforteth suche in eny case and coueyteth nat here 3iftes
 And for þe loue of oure lord lawe for hem declareth
 Shal haue grace of a good ende and greet ioye aftur.
 (C, IX, 44-50)

If lawyers use language correctly and freely undertake lawsuits on behalf of the poor, they will be saved. In contrast, Wycliffite opinion is unwaveringly hostile toward the legal profession. This hostility is traceable to one source: the fixed belief that God's law as expounded in Scripture is totally sufficient for the rule of the human race. Civil and Canon law are inadequate substitutes for God's law; by definition, they are imperfect, fallible and corrupted. Civil law is slightly more excusable, because it was devised before God's law was entirely known, and because Christ himself willingly submitted to it. On the other hand, Christ never submitted to the ecclesiastical laws of the Scribes and Pharisees. In the final analysis, Langland points to the influence of Meed in

the law's misuse of language. Wycliffite writers agree that lawyers misuse language out of greed, but, essentially, they see the written codes of law themselves as the source of linguistic abuse. In Lollard eyes, far from protecting the community, human laws hurt it by displacing God's Word with man's. Once again, a fundamental difference in reasoning belies the apparent agreement between Wycliffite and Langlandian thought and, once again, the fundamental difference rests upon attitudes already fixed by other concerns.

Friars form the second group of language abusers. Antifraternalism is not restricted to Langland, Wyclif and his followers. It is a commonplace in the fourteenth century to criticize the fraternal orders.³⁰ Indeed, it would be more noteworthy if any of them had supported the mendicants. As it stands, nothing original is added to antifraternal literature by Langland, Wyclif or the Wycliffites. They complain that friars gloss Scripture in whatever manner they please. They complain that friars fail to preach as they should. They complain that friars sow discord in the parish by creating a rift between the parish priest and his flock. They complain that friars are a threat to the stability of the state. They complain that friars corrupt the sacrament of Confession. They complain that friars receive alms that would be better spent elsewhere. They also express admiration for the founders of the fraternal orders, especially St. Francis. Langland and the Wycliffite writers are remarkable for antifraternalism only because of the amount of attention they give to the subject, and the vehemence of the language in which they express their objections.

The Lollards object to the friars' failure to preach properly. They object also to the friars' corruption of the sacraments of Communion and

Confession. Since the friars' theories contradict the sense of Scripture, they misuse language when they promote their theories on transubstantiation. They pervert language in Confession, first by insisting upon annual oral shriving, and second by failing to administer the sacrament properly. Penances imposed are too lax and too often monetary to achieve any spiritual effect. With regard to Confession, the Lollards believe that the corruption of language and the corruption of wealth are inextricably intertwined.

Langland is orthodox upon the subject of the Eucharist. The few remarks he makes are strictly in line with orthodox thought. No matter what else Langland might have found agreeable in Lollard thought, he does not appear to have been sympathetic to their Eucharistic 'heresy'. On the subject of Penance, however, he agrees with the Lollards that the friars' perversion of Penance is dangerous. He does not object to mandatory oral confession, although he does, at one point, suggest that absolution depends upon contrition of heart and not the formula of the sacrament. The sacrament's proper administration concerns Langland throughout Piers Plowman. A friar offers to absolve Lady Meed "for a seem whete." (C, III, 42) In turn, she offers to make him her confessor, if he promises to impose only easy penances upon lecherous lords and ladies. At the very end of the poem, the friar Sire Penetrans Damos causes the destruction of the Christian community by paralyzing Contricion with flattery, letters of fraternity, glosses, and monetary payments. Three of the four devices involve the abuse of language. The other device involves the misuse of wealth. Langland's vision is twofold. First, as the Lollards, he sees the fraternal misuse of language as a device that strikes at the very heart of a Christian's sense of sin and, thereby, his ability to repent and gain salvation. Unlike the

Lollards, Langland sees the individual's capacity for repentance as the only means by which society as a whole can be reformed. The perversion of Confession, then, is potentially even more serious to Langland than to the Wycliffites.

Second, as the Lollards, Langland connects the misuse of language with the misuse of wealth. But, again, Langland's reasoning is different from that of the Lollards. They see the friars as acting out of greed; he sees them as acting out of need. Friars abuse language out of economic necessity. They must flatter, cheat and gloss because they lack any other means to support themselves.

A common antifraternalism makes Wycliffite authors and Langland apparently similar in their thinking. Once again, however, the similarity is only superficial. The ultimate difference between Langland and Wycliffite writers on the issue of friars and language derives from their respective ingrained attitudes toward the mendicant orders. Whereas Langland accepts the validity of the fraternal orders, Lollard authors absolutely reject it. Langland's bitter tone sounds in the end less like implacable Lollard hostility aggravated by persecution than like a deep sense of anger at the waste of the spiritual potential mendicancy first promised.

Minstrels form the final social group identified by Langland and the Wycliffites as especially apt to misuse language. Langland turns his attention increasingly to the issues raised by minstrels in the three versions of Piers Plowman.³¹ By the C-text revision, he had divided minstrels into two distinct groups: 'God's minstrels' who plead for gold and 'Lucifer's knaves' who, like Judas, ask for silver.³² As is the case with the friars and lawyers, Langland joins the linguistic concerns minstrels raise to the socio-economic problems they also create. Minstrels occupy a nebulous position in mediaeval society because

their social function is not clearly delineated. Since they are not manual labourers, they have to be supported. This fact encourages both monetary and linguistic abuse. Like the friars, minstrels have to pander to the tastes of their audience in order to survive. Consequently, 'Lucifer's knaves' are supported, and 'God's minstrels' ignored. Activa Vita, who calls himself a "mynstral," (C, XV, 194) complains that,

Wolde y lye and do men lawhe thenne lacchen y scholde
Or mantel or mone amonges lordes munstrals.
(C, XV, 203-204)

Activa Vita then proceeds to list the expected talents of a minstrel: play the tabor, trumpet, fiddle, harp, bagpipe and psaltery, fart, play tricks, tell jokes, juggle, dance, sing to the giterne. Some of these skills are more vulgar than others, although this is undoubtedly a modern perception. What is truly important to realize is that these forms of entertainment are all worldly in nature. Hence Activa Vita's choice is clear: spiritual truth and unemployment, or falsehood and worldly preferment.

The right sort of entertainer, Langland calls "merye-mouthed men, munstrals of neuene, / And godes boys, bourdyors, as the book telleth." (C, IX, 126-127) In spite of words like "munstrals" and "bourdyors," it is apparent that Langland does not mean professional minstrels.³³ Rather, he means those whose words have a profound and lasting effect. Instead of wasting one's resources in keeping a professional minstrel, Repentaunce advises,

Muche more me thynketh riche men ouhte
Haue beggares byfore hem þe whiche ben goddes munstrals,
As he sayth hymself, seynt Ion bereth witness:
Qui vos spernit me spernit.

Forthy y rede 3ow ryche, reueles when 3e maketh,
 For to solace 3oure soules suche munstrals to haue!
 The pore for a foul sage sittyng at thy table,
 With a lered man to lere the what oure lord suffrede
 For to saue thy soule from Satan thyn enemye
 And fithle the withoute flaterynge of god Friday þe geste,
 And a blynd man for a bordor or a bedredene womman
 To crye a largesse tofore oure lord, 3oure good loos to shewe.
 Thise thre manere munstrals maketh a man to lauhe
 And in his deth-deyng they don hym greet confort
 That by his lyue lened hem and louede hem to here.
 (C, VII, 99-112)

God's minstrels are the poor, the scholarly, the handicapped and the sick.³⁴ By aiding these, the donor gains valuable instruction and words of thanks. The instruction and words of praise, in turn, help the benefactor reach heaven.

On the other hand, the Devil's minstrels give their supporters no spiritual benefit, either in instruction or in worthwhile words of thanks. Langland identifies such minstrels as "foel sages, flateres and lyares." (C, VII, 83) These characters are not necessarily professional entertainers. Some characters, like the "goliardeis, a gloton of wordes," (B, Prologue, 139) may be professional entertainers by trade, but most are ordinary men and women who use language for the wrong effect. Idlers, for example, sing "hey trollilolly!" instead of helping to plough the half-acre. (C, VIII 123) Other people go to taverns,

And there to iangele and to iape and iuge here emcristene
 And fastyng-dayes to frete before noone & drynke
 With spiserye, speke ydelnesse, in vayne speke and spene.
 (C, II, 99-101)

The nature of the Devil's minstrels is clearly indicated in the Confession of the

Seven Deadly Sins, where each one of the sins admits to abusing language. Pride tells outrageous tall tales and swears they are truth. (C, VI, 27-29) Envy curses, chides, challenges and through his "fikel and fals tonge" generally foments strife. (C, VI, 18; 72) Wrath creates discord by spreading malicious gossip, "ioutes of iangelynge." (C, VI, 133) Lechery listens to "mery tales / Of putrie and of paramours," (C, VI, 185-186) Covetousness helps to increase his profit with "false wordes," "gyle and glosynge." (C, VI, 258-259) Gluttony enters the tavern with "grete othes." (C, VI, 361) He later admits to spending fast days in taverns, drinking with "rybaudes, here rybaudrye to here." (C, VI, 435)

Langland reserves his most stinging criticism for the portrait of Sloth, the vice he most closely identifies with the perversion of language. Sloth confesses,

Y can nat parfitly my pater-noster as þe prest hit syngeth.
 Y can rymes of Robyn Hode and of Randolf erle of Chestre,
 Ac of oure lord ne of oure lady þe leste þat euere was makd.
 Y haue voued voues fourty and for3eten hem a-morwen.
 (C, VII, 10-13)

Sloth is utterly careless of the words he speaks and hears. He cannot say the most basic of prayers, the pater noster. Neither can he relate stories concerning the Holy Family. He has memorized, none the less, secular tales of no spiritual value, and he makes and breaks promises without conscience. Langland pictures Sloth as a vice totally unwilling to listen to reason. Sloth further admits,

Y am occupied vch a day, haliday and opere,
 With ydele tales at þe ale and oper-while in chirches.

Goddes payne and his passioun is puyre selde in my thouhte....
 Y hadde leuere here an harlotrye or a lesyng to lauhen of
 Or to lacke men or to likene hem in vnlikyng manere
 Than al pat euere Mark made, Matheu, Iohn or Lucas.
 (C, VII, 18-24)

Sloth listens only to worldly sounds. He is completely ignorant of Christ as the Verbum, and so he is as spiritually deaf and mute as he is blind.

One of Sloth's personae in his confession is that of a cleric. He claims to have been a priest and parson for over thirty years, although he cannot read a saint's life nor "construe Catoun ne clergialiche reden." (C, VII, 34)

Langland's satiric partial portrayal of Sloth as a story-loving cleric who is willfully ignorant of Scripture and exegesis is noteworthy, since it recalls the vitriolic Lollard objection to clerics who shun the Bible in favour of telling their "fablis, cronyklis and lesyngis." The Lollards are unwaveringly hostile to forms of language which attempt to displace the Bible in importance. The Wycliffite Treatise Upon the Playng of Miracle Plays, for example, condemns any form of entertainment that does not have the Bible literally at its center as a waste of time and money. The Bible is the best possible educator. Substitutes for it, therefore, are ill-conceived. There is a large difference in the end between Langland's vision of acceptable entertainment and Lollard views. The approved Lollard canon of tales rests strictly upon the Bible. Langland allows saints' lives and classical anecdotes, which the Lollards often called slanderous, if true at all. As usual, the Lollard view is narrower.

Wycliffite writers never make a split between God's minstrels and Lucifer's knaves as explicitly as Langland does. The split is there, nevertheless, in their views on predestination, and in their rhetoric, which pits

the honest, poor priests against the deceiving tellers of "fablis, cronyklis and lesyngis." Langland and Wycliffite authors also share the concern that the Devil's minstrels are accepted and admired at the expense of God's minstrels, whom the world shuns and despises. Langland's *Studie* complains,

Harlotes for here harlotrye aren holpe ar nedý pore;
 And þat is no riht ne resoun, for rather me sholde
 Heþe hym þat hath nauhte then tho that haen no nede.
 Ac he þat hath holy writ ay in his mouth
 And can telle of Treuthe and of þe twelue aposteles
 Or of þe passioun of Crist or of purgatorie þe peynes,
 Litel is he loued or leet her-fore among lordes at festes.
 (C, XI, 28-34)

Lollard criticism sounds very similar, although more strident in tone. The honest poor priest who truly speaks God's Word is ignored, in favour of the sort

þat kan best pleie a pagyn of þe devyl, syngeye songis of lecherie,
 of batailis and of lesynges, and crie as a wood man and dispise
 goddis maieste and swere bi herte, bonys and alle membris of crist is
 holden most merie mon and schal have most þank of pore and riche; and
 þis is clepid worschipe of þe grete solempnyte of cristismasse.
 (EW 206)

Langland and Lollards do agree that the wrong sort of entertainer gains the attention and wealth of the audience.

Langland and the Wycliffites share similar points of view on language. Both see language as an extension of the divine Christ. Both applaud the proper use of language in spreading God's Word. Both abhor language wasted in idle and profane speech. Both concentrate upon the abuse of language by lawyers, friars and minstrels. Nevertheless, the two are ultimately separated by pre-conceived notions on the one hand, and by differing definitions on the other. Langland and the Wycliffites separate over the role of human law and over the

validity of monks, canons and friars because of their respective positions on the Bible. In addition, Langland might not have been willing to allow heretical poor priests as part of his definition of God's minstrels, any more than the Lollards would likely accept saint's lives as part of properly used language. If Langland and the Wycliffite movement had any effect on one another in a positive sense, it was despite the fundamental differences between them.

The Wycliffites' habit of selectively rejecting fourteenth-century Church thought and practice makes a positive connection between Piers Plowman and Lollard readers possible, in spite of the great differences between Langland's and Wycliffite thought. Langland's response to the radical tenets of Lollardy, however, seems far from positive. His emphasis upon the individual's social duty, his rejection of the lopsided Lollard tendency to find fault exclusively with the Church hierarchy for social problems, and his acceptance of the forms, traditions and practices of the Church and State in the fourteenth century all make it very unlikely that Langland had Lollard sympathies. Even at a very general level of comparison, the differences significantly outweigh the similarities. The one major exception is found in the striking parallels between Langland, Wyclif and the Wycliffites on the subject of kingship, its nature, privileges and responsibilities. All three are absolutists. The king is given absolute authority, and a status above the law to enable him to reign. The king is kept in check by a moral responsibility to rule himself and his kingdom well. In Piers Plowman, this need for self-discipline in a king is extended through the figure of Conscience the king to every Christian. The parallels in regard to kingship are unusual, first, since the resemblance is to Wyclif more than to his followers, and, second, since

the similarity is substantial and sustained. Most often, an apparent similarity is later revealed to be only superficial. Nevertheless, the surface similarities between Langland's poem and Wycliffite literature are many and great. The Wycliffites and Langland share a large amount of material in their individual concerns with the problems of feudal society, the different merits and places of the active life and contemplative life, the role of the priest, antifraternalism, the use and misuse of wealth and language. Often, Langland sympathises with Lollard interests, but not with their singular slant upon controversial issues.

It is still undeniable that the overlap which exists between Piers Plowman and Wycliffite writings is great; but such an overlap between contemporaries is hardly surprising. This brings us to two final questions regarding their relationship. How did the followers of Wyclif and the author of Piers Plowman view each other? Is there any evidence that they even knew one another existed? These questions will be answered in the final two chapters. Clearly there are similarities between Lollardy and Langland's vision. Some light may be cast on the question of interdependence by determining the response of Langland's contemporaries, and so an examination of the readership of Piers Plowman is in order.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONTEMPORARY READERSHIP OF PIERS FLOWMAN

It has never been seriously questioned that Piers Plowman's contemporary audience was largely orthodox. The scholarship of J. A. Burrow, Anne Middleton, and Robert Wood has been instrumental in reconstructing the audience of Langland's work.¹ All the evidence available to Burrow, Middleton and Wood points to Langland's readership as solidly orthodox and conservative. Yet, there are also indications that Piers Plowman appealed to Lollard readers as well, and I intend in this chapter to discuss this probable dual readership of Langland's work, and how the pre-conceived biases of orthodox and Wycliffite readers influenced how they would interpret Piers Plowman. A short study of Wycliffite works influenced by Piers Plowman will demonstrate what especially appealed to the Lollards in Langland's work, and in what directions they took the poem. A consideration of the effect of the Peasants' Revolt upon both Langland and the Wycliffites will serve as a final demonstration of how crucial was the reader's interpretative role.

If one were to judge the readership of Piers Plowman on the basis of manuscript evidence alone, only a very selective audience could be said to have read Piers Plowman. Of the more than fifty surviving manuscripts, the identifiable owners are almost invariably from the clerical milieu. Quite often, copies of Piers Plowman are found in miscellanies among other religious writings. Certainly, then, a large proportion of its contemporary readership was clerical.

The manuscript evidence does not give the complete picture of who

read Piers Plowman. Other forms of evidence reveal that Langland's audience is not restricted to the clergy. Two main types of such evidence exist: wills, and the letters written by the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt. Manuscripts of Piers Plowman are known to have been willed to beneficiaries in two cases. The first is that of Walter de Bruge, a wealthy canon of York Minster, who willed his copy in 1396 to one "Dominus Iohannes Wermynghon."² The second instance is that of William Palmere, rector of St. Alphage, Cripplegate in London, who died in 1400, leaving his manuscript of Langland's poem to one Agnes Eggesfeld.³ In both instances, the original owner of the manuscript was a clergyman, confirming the overall trend of clerical possession. However, both clerics may have willed their possession to a member of the laity. Unfortunately, nothing more is known about 'lord' John Wermynghon. 'Dominus' could be a reflection of clerical or lay employment. Agnes Eggesfeld, on the other hand, was definitely a laywoman. Therefore, the evidence of wills shows that copies of Piers Plowman were owned by clergy and laity alike.

The letters written by the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt are also useful in determining who formed part of Langland's contemporary readership. John Ball's letter is particularly informative.⁴ The use of the name 'Peres Ploughman' in these letters as a rallying cry suggests that some form of Langland's poem was known to the rebel leaders. C. S. Lewis suggests that 'Peres Ploughman' is a stock peasant name.⁵ Even so, in the case of the fiery popular preacher John Ball, his personal familiarity with Piers Plowman seems beyond doubt. In his phrase "Do wel and betre," Ball likely alludes to the search for Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. But what does this prove? Critics generally hasten to point out that it proves only that John Ball was familiar with Langland's poem. It does

not, they insist, prove that Ball's peasant followers were familiar with Piers Plowman, although one might pause to consider why Ball would make an allusion which he did not expect his followers to recognize. Nevertheless, John Ball's letter actually proves only that Piers Plowman appealed to all types of the English clergy.

The available evidence thus demonstrates that Piers Plowman appealed in particular to clerical readers, conservative and radical alike. It suggests that lay readers also formed part of Langland's audience. While the peasant rebels might not have known of the poem, educated laymen, possibly such as John Wermynghton, and even women who were presumably interested in books, such as Agnes Eggesfeld, actually possessed manuscripts of the poem. This is the limit of the scope of the historical evidence, but it is not the limit of Langland's potential readership. John Ball's orthodoxy is certainly questionable. It is therefore reasonable to question the orthodoxy of other clerical and non-clerical readers of Piers Plowman. Indeed, it is David Fowler's opinion that the readership of the A-text was decidedly radical and popular. Ignoring the manuscript evidence that places the A-text firmly within a right-wing conservative environment, Fowler describes the A-text's ideas as "explosive," "anti-intellectual," "anti-clerical," and of "aid and comfort to those desirous of revolutionary action against the social order."⁶ Although Fowler's argument is weakened significantly by his failure to consider the known ownership of Piers Plowman manuscripts, it does demonstrate the folly of assuming that Piers Plowman was read only by orthodox clergymen.

It is safe to assume that Lollard priests read Langland's immensely popular poem. If the radical priest John Ball could have read Langland's work

and found it appealing, without doubt a Lollard priest also could have done so. In fact, William Palmere, the rector of St Alphage, may have been a Lollard sympathizer. His will is very similar in its simple form to the typical Lollard will. Another suspicious fact is that he willed his manuscript to a woman, a very unusual action for an orthodox clergyman, unless she were a relative. It would not have been so unusual for a priest with Lollard sympathies, however, since women were prominent in the sect. Robert Wood denies any connection between William Palmere and Lollardy, mostly on the grounds of inconclusive evidence. The possibility, however, demonstrates once again how very nebulous the line could be between a Lollard and an orthodox priest.

Whether lay members of the Lollard sect formed part of Langland's audience is more difficult to determine. The social status of the ordinary lay members of the Wycliffite sect in its late form has been definitively analyzed by John Fines.⁷ Fines discovered that Lollards tended to be older, and that women played important roles in the sect. Of the seventy-four people accused of heresy in Coventry and Lichfield in 1511, the average age was forty-two. One third were women of prominence in the movement. Fines also discovered that Lollards generally were artisans. He listed the occupations and numbers of the accused as: one baker, one bedder, two cappers, one carpet-maker, six cobblers, one cooper, two carriers, two cutlers, one fuller, one girdler, one glover, two hosiers, one mercer, one merchant, three painters, one physician, two pursers, one servant, two shearmen, two skinners, one smith, one spicer, two tailors, three weavers and three wiredrawers. There were no unskilled labourers. There were also very few with occupations better than that of skilled craftsmen. Late Lollardy was adhered to by the self-educated men and women of the artisan class.

This artisan following, with prominent women, is also characteristic of the earlier forms of the sect. Thomas Hoccleve, writing around 1415, describes disparagingly Lollards arguing theology and interpreting the Bible as follows:

But now a dayes a baillif or reeve
 Or man of craft wole in it dote or rave,
 Somme wommen eek, thogh hir wit be thynne,
 Wole argumentes make in holy writ,
 Lewed calates sittith down and spynne
 And kakeie of sumwhat elles.⁸

Hoccleve pictures Lollards in 1415 as skilled labourers and women, basically the same social groups identified by Fines as practising Lollardy in 1511. The Wycliffites themselves attest to the generally low social station of their sect's members. The Plowman's Tale exaggerates the social differences between the powerful Church hierarchy and

The other syde [which was] poore and pale,
 And peple put al out of prees;
 And seme caytifs sore a-cale,
 And ever in oon without encrees,
 I-cleped lollers and londlees.
 (Plowman's Tale I 69-73)

When the academic roots of the Wycliffite sect were attacked by ecclesiastical and political action beginning in the 1380's, the movement remained literate, but its members came increasingly from the lower classes.

It is rather misleading to emphasize the ordinary lay members of the sect, since in the early movement, there were Wycliffites of considerable social and academic importance. The Lollard knights, such as John Clanvowe and John Oldcastle, played crucial roles in the early sect by harbouring Lollard

preachers and, most likely, by financing and protecting the production of Wycliffite texts. The early academics, such as Nicholas Hereford and Peter Payne a generation later, gave the sect intellectual respectability and continuity. These were the men who produced the tracts, sermons, and literature of the movement. These were the men whom Langland influenced. Lollards of social and academic importance remained prominent well into the 1400's, until the failure of the Oldcastle rebellion in 1415 and Peter Payne's self-exile to Bohemia in 1417. Even as late as 1425, academic Lollardy is still evident.⁹ Nevertheless, as potential members of Piers Plowman's contemporary readership, all types of Lollard, cleric, academic, nobleman, gentleman or educated craftsman, qualify.

There is evidence, moreover, that some Lollards, at least, were aware of Langland's work. The Wycliffite sect generated written material to reinforce its followers' beliefs and to bolster their morale. The Lollard versions of popular orthodox works are part of this system. There are also original doctrinal works, such as the sermons, the Prologue and Glosses to the Later translation of the Bible, The Lanterne of Light and An Apology for Lollard Doctrines, that outline Wycliffite beliefs. Alongside this didactic literature, however, the Wycliffites also produced material of a more literary nature. Three such works were directly inspired by Langland's Piers Plowman. These are Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, Jack Upland and The Plowman's Tale. Each one of these is an independent work and does not need the reader's knowledge of Langland's poem to support it. Nevertheless, Piers Plowman must have been known in Wycliffite circles for it to have inspired a Lollard literary tradition.¹⁰

Since the manuscript evidence does not support the contention that Piers Plowman was read outside of clerical circles, it is useful to

consider how mediaeval literature was transmitted to audiences, particular attention being given to Lollard practices. Apart from orally-composed literature, there were three basic methods of transmission for written texts. The first method is the distribution of manuscripts to be used in private or collective libraries. This form of transmission presupposes literacy on the part of the users. Since the Church controlled the educational institutions and, therefore, to a large degree the acquisition of literacy, it is not surprising that many manuscripts had clerical owners. As far as the Lollards were concerned, however, since the movement stressed so heavily the individual's need to read and study the Bible, it might be expected of them that they would have made a particular effort to become literate.

One must remember also that, in the Middle Ages, a person did not need to be lettered in order to be acquainted with written material. The mystic Margery Kempe, for example, 'wrote' a book, although she herself was illiterate.¹¹ Just as one did not need to be literate in order to 'write', one did not need to be literate in order to 'read'. Literature could be transmitted to audiences by one lettered individual reading aloud to illiterate listeners. In the case of the Wycliffites, this form of shared transmission was particularly important. The literate members of the sect were held in special esteem by the rest, and also were particularly feared by the authorities. Moreover, group readings were organized. Such Lollard conventicles were a regular feature of the sect, and were another source of fear for the authorities. The authorities recognized that the free exchange of ideas in such an uncontrolled forum could only further the cause of heresy and concentrated efforts were made to discover and halt the shared reading of material considered to be suspicious. Another Wycliffite

practice was the memorization and recitation of passages. Some Lollards were very skilled at this practice. One Alice Colyns, for example, was well-known for her ability to memorize and recite passages from Scripture. She was often summoned to perform before her peers.¹² It can be clearly seen, therefore, that the distribution of manuscripts does not necessarily equate with the distribution of a literary work. Ultimately, especially in an urban environment, Piers Plowman, in one form or another, could have been 'read' by anyone with an inclination to do so.

The belief that most fourteenth and fifteenth-century readers viewed Piers Plowman as orthodox is unquestionable. It simply would not have become the enormously popular work it was, if it had been generally looked upon as heretical. Most Lollard works, outside of the two Biblical translations and sermon cycles, survive in only a few manuscripts. Many survive in only one. Piers Plowman, on the other hand, survives in over fifty. This external evidence of orthodox acceptability is further supported by the poem's absence from surviving records that list confiscated heretical books. In fact, one manuscript of the A-text, Harley MS. 3954, belongs to a specifically anti-Lollard environment, as can be seen by its companion pieces: John Audelay's Merita Misse, John Lydgate's Virtutes Missarum, and The Seven Sacraments.¹³ Likewise, one manuscript of the C-Text version of Piers Plowman belongs to an anti-Wycliffite environment. It has the anti-Lollard polemic "Defend Us From All Lollardy" among its companion pieces.¹⁴ Certainly, the great majority of Piers Plowman's audience regarded it as orthodox.

Internal evidence demonstrates why the poem was held to be orthodox. There is simply nothing heretical in its content. Langland avoids

doctrinal statements on the difficult question of transubstantiation. His overall positions on Confession and the veneration of the Cross, likewise, are unobjectionable from an orthodox viewpoint. Moreover, Langland refutes the belief adopted by the Lollards that an unworthy priest loses his spiritual power. (C, XIV, 64-65) Instead, Piers Plowman stresses the reverence of clergy, even of those who are not impeccable. The orthodox reader, therefore, would interpret Piers Plowman as critical of the human folly within the Church's institutions, but not as critical of the Church itself. This distinction keeps the poem safe from the dangers of heresy. The orthodox reader can also put Langland's work in the larger context of mystical and devotional literature. Piers Plowman is not an anomaly, but part of a long and catholic tradition.

Ecclesiastical authorities were not always tolerant of criticism, however. It was one thing for an orthodox cleric to read and agree with criticism aimed at the clergy. It was something else again when a suspected dissident agreed with such criticism. For example, Dives and Pauper and The Prick of Conscience are both doctrinally orthodox. Nevertheless, their criticisms of Church practices caused both to be confiscated as heretical material when their readers were considered suspect. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that something similar might have happened to Piers Plowman with its even harsher criticism. In later years, ecclesiastical authorities were far less tolerant of criticism, and far more likely to accuse a work of heresy if it discussed questions of theology in the vernacular, or if it was critical of the clergy and Church practices. Reginald Pecock was an inveterate critic of the Lollards, but he himself was later accused of heresy and his works condemned, largely on the grounds that he had disseminated tracts on theological questions

in the vernacular.¹⁵ In 1464, even Chaucer's Canterbury Tales was confiscated as a heretical text.¹⁶ Since other orthodox works were found to be tainted by heresy, and especially since Piers Plowman was the inspiration for several Lollard works, it is curious that no surviving historical record includes Piers Plowman as a confiscated text. Perhaps this absence suggests that the ecclesiastical authorities were always able to recognize the orthodox nature of Langland's vision, despite the influence it had on Wycliffite literature.

A contemporary reader's task in interpreting Piers Plowman as a Lollard document would have been far more difficult than treating it as orthodox. The fundamental differences discussed in the last chapter between Wycliffite thought and Langland's thought would have presented problems for such a reader. The Lollards, none the less, were highly adept at interpreting what they read as they wished. Lollard versions of orthodox works are as much slanted interpretations as they are adaptations. One striking example of a Wycliffite interpretation that is contrary to the designs of the original author is the Lollard adaptation of the popular Ancrene Riwe. The Wycliffite version redefines contemplation and the contemplative life in terms acceptable to Wycliffite thought. The Bible is also interpreted by Lollards in a fashion willfully opposite to orthodox thought. Similarly, any problems that Piers Plowman may present a Lollard reader could likewise have been readily dealt with.

The absence of a Wycliffite version of such a popular religious work as Piers Plowman in itself suggests that the Wycliffites felt there was no need to rewrite it. Piers Plowman, if not seen as actually Lollard, must have been seen at least as sympathetic to the cause for it to have influenced

Wycliffite writers in its original form. The manifold surface similarities between Lollard concerns and Langland's concerns would have encouraged such a view. The common, vehement antifraternality alone would have convinced a Lollard reader that Langland was a kindred spirit. Langland's critical tone regarding the Church and his satirical portraits of clergy also would have contributed to such a favourable view.

Another factor that would encourage the Lollard reader is the absence of any undeniable condemnation of the Wycliffites in Fiers Plowman. Unlike contemporary orthodox writers, who were already heaping abuse upon Wyclif and his followers by the early 1380s, Langland is remarkably noncommittal in the C-text and a Lollard could read the poem without feeling personally attacked. What an orthodox reader would interpret as confirming his view that Lollards were heretics, a Lollard reader could interpret as criticism not applicable to himself or his sect. For example, Dame Studie denounces idle theological speculation when she complains,

Nowe is þe manere at þe mete, when munstrals ben stille,
 The lewed aȝen þe lered þe holy lore to dispute,
 And tellen of þe trinite how two slowe þe thridde
 And brynge forth ballede resonen, taken Bernard to witnesse,
 And putten forth presumpcioun to preue þe sothe,
 Thus they dreule at the deyes, the deite to knowe,
 And gnawen god with gorge when here gottes fullen.
 (C, XI, 35-41)

The orthodox reader, such as Hoccleve a generation later, would agree with Dame Studie, and likely would read such a passage as condemning ignorant lay interpretations of Scripture. Langland's "lewed" speakers in this case could be identified as the baillies, reeves, men of craft, women and "lewed calates" of

Hoccleve's poem.

The Lollard reader, however, would also agree with Dame Studie. It is sinful to pervert Scripture with idle tales and outrageous reasoning. From a Lollard's point of view, Dame Studie's comments are not directed against the Wycliffite sect, since a Lollard would never consider himself guilty of indulging in the activities she condemns. No Lollard would recognize himself as perverting Scripture, or as telling idle tales. Therefore, Dame Studie's condemnation, from a Wycliffite point of view, does not apply to the Wycliffite sect. If anything, a Lollard reader would likely interpret Dame Studie's remarks as an attack upon the stilted theological interpretations imposed upon Scripture by "lewed" friars.

The repeated pejorative descriptions of "lollares" and the "lollarne lyf" in the C-text (C, V, 3, 27-32; IX, 98-104, 139-161, 188-196, 207-218, 240-245) would pose a more serious dilemma for a Lollard reader of Langland's final version, since it is easy to read 'Lollard' for "lollare". One example of Langland's usage must suffice here: good "lunatyk lollares"

bereth none bagges ne boteles vnder clokes,
 The whiche is lollarne lyf and lewede ermytes,
 pat loken loughliche to lache men almesse,
 In hope to sitte at euen by þe hote coles,
 Vnlouke his legges abrood or ligge at his ese,
 Reste hym and roste him and his rug turne,
 Drynke druie and depe and drawe hym thenne to bedde,
 And whenne hym lyketh and luste, his leue is to ryse,
 And when he is rysen, rometh out and ri3t wel aspyeth
 Where he may rathest haue a repaest or a ronde of bacoun,
 Suluer or sode mete and sum tyme bothe,
 Loef oper half-loef other a lompe of chese;
 And caryeth hit hoem to his cote and cast hym to lyuene
 In idelnesse and in ese and by otheres trauayle,
 And what freke on this folde fiscuth aboute
 With a bagge at his bak a begyneld wyse,
 And can eny craft in caes he wolde hit vse,
 Thorw which craft a couthe come to bred and to ale

And ouer-more to an hater to hele with his bonis,
 And lyueth lyke a lollare, goddes lawe hym dampneth.
 (C, IX, 139-158)

Whatever Langland's intention is in using this term is not relevant to our discussion here, because the reader's interpretation is separate from the author's intention. The orthodox reader would not hesitate to equate "lollares" and the "lollarne lyf" with Lollardy, and it would seem that this equation should be inescapable as well for a Lollard reader. Yet the interpretative self-protection possible in reading Dame Studie's remarks could save the Lollard again here. The insult 'Lollard' was not a tag with which the early Wycliffites identified. As Anne Hudson demonstrates, it was considerably later before the Wycliffites came to look upon 'Lollard' as a badge of distinction.¹⁷ Hence, early Wycliffite readers of the C-text would not be inclined to see themselves in Langland's passages.

Later Lollards, too, were capable of protecting themselves, because they themselves used 'Lollard' to ridicule their enemies. For example, the author of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede reminds his reader how the friars attacked Wyclif; they "overall lollede him wip heretykes werkes." (PPC 532) Here it is the friars who are 'lollards'. Mum and the Sothsegger, which David Lawton argues is the work of a Lollard sympathiser,¹⁸ also turns 'Lollard' against the friars:

For furst folowid freres Lollardz names,
 And sith hath be shewed þe same on paym-self,
 That paire lesingz have lad paym to lolle by þie necke;
 At Tibourne for traizon y-twyght up þay were,
 (Mum and the Sothsegger, M, 417-420)

Therefore, it is clear that the Wycliffite reader would not be compelled to identify with "lollares" and the "lollarne lyf" which they would most likely interpret to mean idlers and wastefulness in general and friars in particular. If an identification with "lollares" did occur, it would have been with the "lunatyk lollares" (C, IX, 105-127 and cf. C, IX, 134-137) of whom Piers approves, the double pejorative being ironic and positive. There is no outright condemnation of Wyclif and his followers in Piers Plowman that would force the Wycliffite reader to see himself as the object of criticism and scorn.

On the contrary, the Wycliffites read support for their movement in Piers Plowman. It is not possible to prove that one version of Piers Plowman influenced the Lollards exclusively, although David Fowler argues that it was the A-text that appealed to popular, radical elements, and that the B and C-texts appealed to conservative and intellectual readers.¹⁹ Fowler may be correct in claiming that the A-text alone influenced the peasant rebels of 1381, but this is hardly the same as proving that only the A-text influenced Lollard readers. A consideration of Wycliffite literature will show that Lollards were attracted to Langland's poem, and that they interpreted it favourably, and were influenced by it. Three such works are of crucial concern: Jack Upland, The Plowman's Tale and Pierce the Ploughman's Crede. The least literary of the three is Jack Upland. Its direct connection with Langland is the borrowed phrase "freres of alle þe fyve ordres," a numbering which exists only in the C-text and Jack Upland. (C, VIII, 191; C, IX, 345; C, XV, 81; Jack Upland 57) Apart from demonstrating that even the 'most conservative' form of Piers Plowman was read by at least one Wycliffite, this phrase shows one attraction Piers Plowman would have for a Lollard audience: antifraternalism. Jack Upland is hardly more than a long list

of grievances aimed at the friars. Pierce the Ploughman's Crede follows in the same anti-mendicant tradition. While antifraternality is the norm in fourteenth-century English literature, the obsessive and strident tone of Lollard antifraternality is matched in English by Langland alone.

Jack Upland also shows that Piers Plowman influenced the way in which the Lollards present their social criticism. Piers Plowman and Jack Upland are provincial, 'upland' complaints. Will pictures himself as both an urban and a provincial resident. He lived in "London and opeland." (C, V, 44) His vision, moreover, opens among the Malvern Hills of Worcestershire. Jack Upland, as his name suggests, is also an upland social critic and similar provincial voices of dissent can be heard in the two other Lollard texts, The Plowman's Tale and Pierce the Ploughman's Crede. In these two works the narrators speak critically of the Church from rural experience. Will, Jack Upland, the Plowman, the narrator of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede and the Lollard Piers all speak as representatives of provincial England. The primary difference between Piers Plowman and the other works is that the Lollards reserve their diatribes for the Church alone, especially the friars, whereas Langland does not. This literary connection between Langland and Wycliffite literature is not exclusive to any particular version of Piers Plowman. Nor should we discount influences from other examples of social complaint, such as Winner and Wastour. None the less, it is clear that Langland's poem exerted a powerful influence upon the type of literature the Lollards produced.

The Plowman's Tale is an allegorical debate between a Phoenix and a Griffon put into a loose story-telling format. The prologue to The Plowman's Tale does not concern us here, for it is a Reformation addition to the poem and may

have been responsible for the erroneous attribution of this work to Chaucer.²⁰ The figure of the Plowman, desperately impoverished, yet neutral in his discontent, is borrowed from Langland. This borrowing shows what else, apart from its antifraternalism and critical attitude toward the Church, the Lollards find attractive in Piers Plowman, namely the figure of Piers himself, and this is no where more evident than in the most obvious derivation from Piers Plowman: Pierce the Ploughman's Crede. This poem is an antifraternal satire that elaborates upon Will's encounter with the two friars at the beginning of his quest for Dowel. Not until he finds Piers Plowman at work in his fields does the narrator find someone who is able to teach to him his Creed. Here, the Lollard interpretation of Piers emphasizes five aspects of his character: his poverty, his lay status, his critical attitude toward the fraternal orders, his unlearned wisdom, and his willingness to teach. The Lollard vision of Piers Plowman is of an ordinary man, who is not at all connected with the Church establishment. Piers is transformed into the exemplary Lollard dissenter.

The influence of the figure of Piers may not be restricted simply to the literary works derived from Langland. In Wycliffite sermons and tracts the image of the plowman is a common one, and, just as in the Lollard version of Piers, the image is set usually in opposition to images of ecclesiastical authority. For example, according to one tract, "a symple pater noster of a ploughman þat his in charite is betre þan a þousand massis of coveitouse prelates and veyn religious." (EW 274) Another tract compares the merits of the lives of simple men and friars as: "lif of a trewe plowman or ellis of a trewe heerde is betre prayere to god þen prayere of any ordre þat god loveþ lesse, blabere þei nevere so meche wip lippis." (EW 321) Yet another tract

states, "good lif of a plowman is as myche worthe to þe soule as preier of þis frere." (SEW II 213) There is no absolute proof that these images of plowmen were inspired by Langland's vision, but they do demonstrate that the Wycliffites would inevitably read Langland's *Piers* as a fierce critic of the institutional Church, contrary to it in manner of life and belief.

Langland's poem certainly influenced the Lollards in a positive sense. It gave them a literary model to follow, and moral support for their ideas. In return, this underground Lollard readership did nothing to affect *Piers Plowman* immediately. Over time, however, a receptive heretical readership could taint by association an otherwise acceptable work, and writings such as *Dives and Pauper* and *The Prick of Conscience* fell victim to this trend. *Piers Plowman*, with its astringent criticisms of an increasingly sensitive Church, would have been a ripe candidate for such a slide into unacceptability. *Piers Plowman* in this distorted sense, at the very least, would have become more 'Lollard' over the years, until, finally, it became a Protestant document, and its author a devotee of Wyclif. For its contemporary orthodox audience, however, *Piers Plowman* was an immensely popular work. Its unfortunate connection with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 would have injured its reputation more than some possible Lollard association.

The 1381 Peasants' Revolt is an excellent demonstration of how important an individual's wishes are in shaping a response to a situation or a literary work. Both Langland and Wyclif were implicated in the rebellion, Langland through the use of the figure of *Piers Plowman* as a rallying cry by the rebels, and Wyclif by the spurious confession of John Ball, that "for two years he had been a disciple of Wycliffe and had learned from the latter the heresies

which he had taught,"²¹ Langland and Wyclif both reacted swiftly to the Revolt, clarifying their positions and condemning the rebels. The official responses to the two, however, were vastly different. Orthodox readers quickly forgot and forgave the taint of sedition in Langland's poem because they wanted to. Wyclif and Lollardy's supposed connection with subversion, however, became irrevocably fixed in the orthodox mind. The authorities wanted to believe the Wycliffites guilty of heresy and sedition and so they readily believed in the connection that was imputed between the founder of the heretical sect and the instigator of the murderous rebels. The desires and biases of the individual, orthodox and heterodox alike, determined in advance what form a reaction or an interpretation would take. Orthodox readers would inevitably read Piers Plowman as orthodox; Lollard readers would inevitably read it as Lollard. Hence, the final area for us to investigate in the discussion of the relationship between Lollardy and Piers Plowman is what attitude Langland himself came to adopt towards the Wycliffite movement.

CHAPTER SIX: AUTHORIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LOLLARDY IN PIERS FLOWMAN

The three recensions of Piers Plowman show Langland struggling to come to terms with some of the most contentious issues of his time. When we examine the apparent attitudes of mediaeval authors, we must remember that they need to be interpreted with particular caution because of mediaeval literary decorum. Certain things were expected to be in a literary document, and to be handled in a particular fashion, and so it is a mistake to accept traditional pronouncements as true indications of an author's intentions, and, instead, one must examine any statement in the context of the complete work before the author's real attitudes can become clear. The A-text is a short exploration of a society in crisis, the reasons for its decay, and the solutions needed to redeem it. The B-text is an extensive reworking of the A-text. The search for social redemption becomes more explicitly an individual endeavour. The B-text is poetic. Its abrupt transitions and psychological landscapes make it strange and difficult to understand. Appropriately, Charles Muscatine uses the term "surrealistic" of the B-text.¹ In comparison, the C-text is a far more prosaic production which covers the same basic material as the B-text with much revision. The C-text's transitions are less abrupt, and the shifts in scene and speaker clearer, although it is overall a less poetic treatment. The most recent editor of the C-text, Derek Pearsall, admits "it is quite possible to show that in vividness, picturesque concretion and 'poetic' quality [C] is often inferior C may be less exciting, but it makes better sense."²

It would be absurd to suggest that all the revisions in the B and C-texts were induced by Langland's growing awareness of Lollardy. The middle to late fourteenth century was an especially turbulent age. On the other hand, it would be equally absurd to assume that the man who grappled with the most serious questions of his generation made no response at all to the strongest threat to orthodoxy the English Church had ever faced. I shall examine in this chapter the evidence given by the three versions of Piers Plowman for Langland's own attitude toward Lollardy.

Such an analysis is difficult, because the dates of the two earlier versions are not particularly compatible with the dates of the Lollard movement. The A-text is far too early for any Wycliffite influence to have occurred, although the possibility that Wyclif influenced the formation of the A-text cannot be summarily dismissed. The B-text was written in the same years Lollardy was developing its beliefs, again too early for clear-cut attitudes to have been formed. The evidence of the C-text, whose dates are compatible with the Wycliffite movement, presents its own particular problems. It is not a systematic revision of the A and B-texts, starting at the beginning and working through to the conclusion. Instead, Langland appears to have reworked sections with which he was dissatisfied. Some sections are heavily revised; others are hardly touched. Moreover, the C-text may be incomplete, the last two Passus being unchanged from the B to the C-texts. This may indicate that Langland felt no need to revise the end of his poem. It also may indicate, however, that Langland did not have the opportunity to rewrite the conclusion. There are several unpolished lines in the C-text that support the hypothesis that Langland did not completely finish his third version.

The results can be confusing for those looking for clear-cut evidence of Langland's attitude toward the Wycliffite movement, since the evidence the random additions and deletions give can be equivocal. For instance, Piers's stipulation in the B-text that preachers be properly licensed by the authorities is gone in the C-text. This change is favourable to Lollardy. On the other hand, the C-text makes it clearer that a priest's personal spiritual state does not affect his power to administer the sacraments efficaciously. This change is unfavourable to Lollardy. It would be time-consuming and futile to attempt to resolve these equivocal statements. Instead, one should concentrate on examining specific issues that were closely identified with Lollardy, or issues discussed in larger sections of the poem in its three versions, a technique which would give a more contextual indication of what Langland's own beliefs were with respect to topics that were often 'Lollard' in nature. These 'Lollard' topics are the Eucharist; image and relic-worship; disendowment of church temporalities and evangelical poverty; the significance of the words "lollar" and "russet"; and the subject of salvation, especially as represented by the character of Rechelesnesse in the C-text.

The immediate subject one would turn to in an effort to discover Wycliffite sympathies is the interpretation of the Eucharist, because it is a major concern of the Lollards, and the Wycliffite stance is one which a person cannot espouse without being a Wycliffite. Hence, aberrant beliefs on the Eucharist are an infallible sign of Lollardy. Langland includes the Eucharist a few times in his vision. There is an oblique reference to the Eucharist in an allusion at C, XVII, 120-121 to the hymn Pange, lingua gloriosi sung on

Corpus Christi.³ The first definite reference to the Eucharist is at
 B, XII, 85-91:

For goddes body my3t no3t ben of breed wipouten clergie,
 The which body is bope boote to þe ri3tfulle
 And deeth and dampnacion to hem þat deyep yuele,
 As cristes caractes confortede, and bope coupable shewed
 The womman þat þe Iewes iugged þat Iesus þou3te to saue!
Nolite iudicare & non iudicabimini
 Ri3t so goddes body, breþeren, but it be worpili taken,
 Dampneb vs at þe day oñ dome as dide þe caractes þe Iewes.

In the second instance, the Good Samaritan explains to Will the needs of the
 injured man,

Ne no medicyne vnder mone the man to hele brynge,
 Noþer Faith ne fyn Hope, so festred aren his woundes.
 Withoute þe bloed of a barn he beth nat ysaued,
 The whiche barn mote nedes be born of a mayde,
 And with þe bloed of þat barn enbaumed and ybaptised.
 And thowh he stande and steppe, ri3t stronge worth he neuere
 Til he haue eten al þat barn and his bloed dronken.
 (C, XIX, 82-88)

In the third instance, after Will awakens to the ringing of the bells on Easter
 morning,

Thus y wakede and wrot what y hadde ydremed
 And dihte me derely and dede me to kyrke
 To here holly þe masse and to be hoseled aftur.
 In myddes of þe masse, tho men 3ede to offrynge,
 Y ful eftesones aslepe and sodeynliche me mette
 That Peres þe plouhman was peynted al bloody
 And cam in with a cros bifore þe comune peple
 And riht lyke in alle lymes to oure lord Iesu.
 (C, XXI, 1-8)

In a discussion of authorial attitudes toward Lollardy in Piers Plowman,

these passages are useless. Langland does not enter into a theological discussion or explanation of the Eucharist. He avoids the risks demanded by the complicated theology of transubstantiation. Instead, he perhaps affirms it through a cloudy allusion to a hymn that does affirm transubstantiation. The longer passages do not argue for or against transubstantiation. The first passage affirms the priest's sacramental role in the Eucharist and the saving grace of the sacrament. Neither of these positions is incompatible with moderate Wycliffite belief. Elsewhere he metaphorically illustrates the Eucharist in the body and blood of the child, that must be eaten for salvation, and in the dramatic appearance of the bloodied Piers as Christ at the moment of consecration during the Mass. As far as it goes, Langland's presentation of the Eucharist is perfectly orthodox and would seem to confirm immediately the case for his orthodoxy and consequent hostility toward Lollardy. This, however, is not a reliable sign. First, there is no doctrinal statement. Second, while the presence of aberrant beliefs on the Eucharist can be a sure sign of Lollardy, the absence of such beliefs does not necessarily ensure one's overall orthodoxy. For instance, the Lollards of Northampton (1393) did not include the Eucharistic heresy among their erroneous beliefs.⁴ There are a number of Wycliffite documents that omit any discussion of the Eucharist. While it is possible to explain such omission in the written texts as deliberate attempts to disguise Lollard views, it is harder to understand that any official investigation into a Wycliffite cell would fail to ascertain the slightest aberration in a group's position on the Eucharist. Anne Hudson's research suggests, nevertheless, that difficult questions of theology, such as the Eucharist and predestination, sometimes were avoided by examiners.⁵ The absence of Wycliffite views on

the Eucharist does not guarantee that a writer or a suspect heretic was free of heterodoxy. Langland's attitude toward Lollardy, therefore, cannot be judged solely from his presentation of the Eucharist.

Another recurring controversy in which the Lollards expressed interest is the validity of image and relic-worship. There are special problems involved here, since it is one of the few religious issues with which Wyclif was not very concerned, although he does consider it peripherally. The Lollards, therefore, have comparatively little guidance on how to respond to images, and this lack of guidance is evident in the especial confusion of Lollard thought on images. The general Lollard attitude is hostile, so regularly so that one question certain to be asked a suspect Lollard concerned image-worship, but this hostility has a wide range. Wyclif is a moderate iconomach. He accepts the educative value of images properly wrought and used as the books of the unlearned.⁶ The Wycliffite handbook The Rosarium distinguishes three types of image: "evenhede," [Christ is image of the Father] "folowyng," [man is formed in God's image] and "representyng." Only the last type can be idolatrous, and then only if such an image is worshipped. In spite of this potential for error, still The Rosarium instructs that "ymagery of seyntis bene nou3t to be dispised, bot honestly to be kepte to mannes vse. We ow no3t for to serve to þam, ne for to putte in þam hope of helpe." (Rosarium 100) The Rosarium rejects images as objects of worship and as charms against sickness; it accepts images as useful material for religious instruction.⁷ William Smith, on the other hand, is an example of an extreme iconoclast. He axed and burned a statue of St. Catherine sometime between 1382 and 1389.⁸ The reason for Lollard hostility is twofold.

First, religious images are held to be idolatrous, a deliberate contravention of Scripture. Second, Wycliffites see image and relic-worship as economic injustice, profiting only the rich prelates and depriving the truly needy of alms. It is far better to give to the sick, poor and handicapped than to "dede stones and rotun stokkis." (EWW 88)

Controversy over images, however, is hardly an exclusive Lollard concern, for it is an old controversy and extends back nearly to the first years of the Church. The fourteenth century saw renewed interest generally in the controversy. In 1372, it was debated at Oxford with an iconomachal slant by William Woodford.⁹ The Wycliffites, then, were not the only fourteenth-century English who viewed images with concern.

Langland's position on images and relics is ambiguous. On the one hand, he encourages devotion to the Cross. Will instructs his wife and daughter to

Arise, and go reuerense godes resureccioun,
And crepe to þe croes on knees and kusse it for a iewel
And rihtfollokest a relyk, noon richore on erthe,
(C, XX, 473-475)

A Wycliffite might find such advice particularly distasteful since it involves the veneration of the Cross.¹⁰ Yet, before one assumes that Langland was opposed to the Lollard view of images, there is the addition to the C-text Prologue, where Conscience harangues the clergy, accusing them that,

Ydolatrie 3e soffren in sondrye places manye
And boxes ben yset forth ybounde with yren
To vndertake þe tol of vntrewe sacrefice,
In menyng of myracles muche wex hangeth there;
Al þe world wot wel hit myghte nou3t be trewe,

And for it profiteþ 3ow into pursward 3e prelates soffren
 That lewed men in mysbileue lyuen and dyen.
 (C, Prologue, 94-102)

Langland's accusations here, that prelates purposefully encourage idolatry and that relics serve only to enrich religious coffers while impoverishing the spirituality of the uneducated, are quite in keeping with Wycliffite thought. It would be a mistake, however, to see these sentiments as indications of either influence by or sympathy for the Wycliffite sect. Langland is deeply concerned with socio-economic abuses, of which images and relics are part. In this respect, Conscience's accusations are a logical extension of concerns already expressed by Langland in the A and B-texts. He did not need a Lollard impetus to add a section on images and relics. Furthermore, while Langland recognizes that the irresponsible use of relics leads to idolatry, the veneration he expresses for the Cross demonstrates that he is certainly not an image-hater, much less an image-breaker. Langland believes that images could lead to deeper devotion if they were properly used. This is a traditional view shared by moderate Lollards like the compiler of the Rosarium and Wyclif, and so it cannot be taken as proof of Langland's attitude to the Wycliffite sect.

The problems associated with the discussion of images and relics demonstrate the major obstacle to determining Langland's attitudes toward Wycliffism by examining even large issues. Langland, Wyclif and the Lollards did not think and write in isolation. There are few issues raised by any of the three that were not already main points of controversy in the fourteenth century. The debate on the places of poverty and endowment in the Church, for example, is another important concern to both Langland and the Wycliffites. The issue,

however, was first raised by the Spiritual Franciscans a hundred years previously and continued to be a divisive point within the Church fabric. A consideration of Langland's thoughts on this issue is, and is not, helpful with reference to Lollardy. On the negative side, Langland's opinions on poverty do not form an actual response to the Wycliffite sect, and, therefore, do not give reliable evidence. On the positive side, however, they do give us an indication of how Langland probably would have responded to Lollard positions on the same issue, and, therefore, they offer valid insights into his overall response to the sect. Hence, we must keep both the limitations and advantages of the technique in mind.

The issue of disendowment was often pointed to by Protestant reformers as proof of Wyclif's and Langland's posthumous approval of their actions. Wyclif became the 'Morning Star of the Reformation'¹¹ and his followers, such as Sir John Oldcastle, became martyrs. Henry VIII drew upon Wyclif's condemned tracts in 1530 to substantiate his own views.¹² Langland was put in the same early reforming tradition as the Lollards. Robert Crowley, for example, published three editions of Piers Plowman in 1550, the same year as he published extensive Wycliffite material.¹³ Since disendowment figures so prominently in Lollard thought, and since it also has an important place in Piers Plowman, it is only fitting that any discussion of poverty with the Church begin with a consideration of disendowment in the writings of Wyclif and his followers and in Langland's poem.

Disendowment achieves such a prominent place in Lollard thought because it is seen as the only way the Church can be restored to its pristine, Apostolic condition. Wealth, in any form, in any degree, is corruptive, being especially corruptive within the fabric of the Church. The only solution is to

remove wealth from the Church. It would be a gross exaggeration to claim that the Wycliffites do not allow priests any material possessions whatsoever, for the Church is granted temporal goods "in a resonable mesure," according to one Wycliffite text. (EWV 22) Ecclesiastical disendowment to the Lollards means the elimination of most of the Church's material wealth, which is to be returned to lords, and the removal of financial control over its remaining assets. Without control, the Church cannot accumulate more possessions than necessary, nor can it waste what possessions are allowed it. The situation is so serious that if the Church refuses to reform itself, the State is morally bound to disendow it forcibly. Disendowment would then force the Church to reform.

In Langland's opinion, the Lollard view is unreasonable, since the utter disendowment of the Church would create the same unstable conditions for all clergy that now force the friars to debase their calling, and, as Piers remarks in the B-text: "it is an vnresonable Religion pat hap ri3t no3t of certein." (B, VI, 151) The Church must be certain of economic stability in order to survive, for, while wealth is a corruptive force, the total absence of wealth is equally corruptive. Langland deplores the extremes. Mendicancy is corrupted by the need to depend wholly on others' goodwill. Overabundant monastic endowments lead to the perversion of austere monasticism. That overabundant endowments must and will be amended is envisioned in the famous 'prophecy' of the Reformation. Resoun warns the monastic orders:

Ac þer shal come a kyng and confesse ȝow alle
 And bete ȝow, as þe bible telleth, for brekyng of ȝoure reule
 And amende ȝowe monkes, bothe moniales and chanons,
 And potte ȝowe to ȝoure penaunce, Ad pristinum statum ire,
 And barones and here barnes blame ȝow and repreve.
Hii in curribus et hii in equis; ipsi obliqati sunt et ceciderunt

For þe abbot of Engelonde and the abbesse his nese
 Shal haue a knok vpon here crownes and incurable þe wounde,
Contriuit dominus baculum impiorum, virgam dominancium, plaga insanabili,
 (C, V, 168-172a; 176-177a)

Such sentiments are compatible with Wycliffite wishes and Henry VIII's self-appointed role. Robert Crowley saw in these lines a prophecy of the dissolution of the monasteries.¹⁴ Skeat, more than three hundred years after Crowley, also read it as a prediction, one that was "so curiously fulfilled in the time of Henry the Eighth."¹⁵ The modern historian and literary critic must question whether such is Langland's intent in this passage for two reasons. First, the passage is millennial in tone, if anything, and should not be read literally. Second, a 'protestant' interpretation ignores the lines that come in the middle of the passage:

Freres in here faytour shal fynde þat tyme
 Bred withouten beggyng to lyue by euere aftur
 And Constantyn shal be here cook and couerour of here churches.
 (C, V, 173-175)

Far from advocating the Lollard program of disendowment or Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries, Langland proposes the redistribution of wealth within the Church. If the overabundance of wealth causes monks and canons to fail in their spiritual duties, then their income must be curtailed. If the lack of regular income causes the friars to flatter and betray their spiritual office, then they must be endowed. Conscience's final resolve is not to abolish the mendicant orders that destroy Unity, but to seek out Piers Plowman so that friars might be granted "a fyndyng," and therefore no longer be forced by need to debase their calling. (C, XXII, 383-384) This "fyndyng" will come not from the

pope as T. P. Dunning believes,¹⁶ but, as the 'prophecy' tells us, from the king -- "Constantyn." In the respect that Langland believes the reformation of the friars to be a royal duty, Langland agrees with Wyclif and the Wycliffites, but his intention is not the same. Langland wants the financial reformation, not the abolishment of the fraternal orders. As the representative of the temporal arm, the king initially distributes wealth within the Church; control over this wealth remains, in Piers Plowman, a clerical responsibility, except in the most dire circumstances when the king intervenes and redistributes the wealth again within the Church, and not, as in Wycliffite and Henrician thought, largely within the State.

Langland's position on the issue of poverty and endowment is moderate. He recognizes the threat wealth poses for the Church, but he rejects the extreme position advocated by the Spiritual Franciscans and adopted by the Lollards that only absolute evangelical poverty -- the total renunciation of control over material wealth in any and all forms -- constitutes the true spirit of Christian poverty within the Church. Instead of mandatory physical poverty, Langland stresses the need for poverty of spirit and the need for the measured use of material goods by all individuals. Langland deeply sympathizes with the Spiritual Franciscans' concern that wealth corrodes the effectiveness of Penance by too often reducing it to a financial transaction. Rejecting all wealth, however, is not a feasible alternative, since it encourages equally serious abuses. Langland sees the solution as personal integrity. Each cleric simply must refuse to accept alms from evil sources. *Liberum Arbitrium* explains,

men of holy churche
Sholde reseue riht nauht but þat riht wolde

And refuse reuerences and raueners offrynges.
 Thenne wolde lordes and ladyes be loth for to agulte
 And to take of here tenautes more then treuthe wolde,
 And marchauntz merciable wolde be and men of lawe bothe,
 Wolde religious refuse rauenours almesses.

(C, XVI, 41-47)

Integrity and discretion on the part of the clergy with respect to those from whom they accept alms would eliminate the problem of the abuse of Confession. It would also avoid such drastic measures as the total rejection of control over wealth within the Church.

Langland rejects absolute poverty on three grounds. First, it is an extreme position and, as we have seen previously with Langland's position on the need for the endowment of the Church, Langland is generally suspicious about extremes in any form. Second, it is pragmatically unrealistic. Langland admires the ideal of the priest who embraces a life of absolute poverty and Patience favourably compares such a man to a bride married for love, instead of one

pat is married by brocage,
 As by assente of sondry persones and suluer to bote,
 More for coueytise of catel then kynde loue of þe mariage.
 So hit fareth by vch a persone þat possession forsaketh
 And potte hym to be pacient and pouerte weddeth,
 The whiche is syb to Crist sulue and semblable bothe.

(C, XVI, 108-113)

Nevertheless, this desirable ideal would prove hopelessly altruistic if imposed upon all clerics. Some degree of financial stability is needed to avoid the problems excessive wealth and excessive poverty create.

Langland also rejects a universal vow of absolute evangelical poverty, because to insist upon it is uncharitable. Need, for instance, advises Conscience to deal with the friars thus:

And for thei aren pore, parauntur, for patrimonye hem failleth,
 Thei wol flatere, to fare wel, folk þat ben riche.
 And sethen thei chosen chele and cheytyftee
 Late hem chewe as thei chose and charge hem with no cure!
 For lomere he lyeth þat lyflode moet begge
 Then he þat laboreth for lyflode and leneth hit beggares.
 And senne freres forsok the felicitye of erthe
 Lat hem be as beggares or lyue by angeles fode!
 (C, XXII, 236-241)

Need advocates a literal application of the friars' vow of poverty. His sentiments show that enforced absolute poverty would do little to encourage charity in others. Instead, it would develop spitefulness and smugness.

In the place of enforced absolute poverty, Langland looks for temperance and patience. Temperance, as a way of self-discipline, is a definite good. It removes the onus of responsibility from society and institutions and places it properly upon each individual. Because it is an individual response to the world, it is preferable to socially enforced vows of poverty. Characters as various as Holy Church and Need praise temperance as an important virtue. Yet Morton Bloomfield is wrong when he argues temperance is the virtue Langland emphasizes above all others.¹⁷ Temperance in Piers Plowman is limited in spiritual value since it can be imposed upon the individual; poverty has the power to make people temperate by necessity. In turn, as Patience explains in Passus XVI, such imposed temperance only makes the individual less vulnerable to sin by giving the individual less opportunity to sin. Indulging the deadly sins to the full requires wealth. This is the reason the poor man finds it easier to enter heaven than the rich man. Poverty is thus an "odibile bonum" — 'a hateful good'. (C, XVI, 116) Temperance externally imposed by poverty is not a very satisfactory circumstance, because, if

temperance is forced by an external situation, it is uncomfortably close to coercion. Langland's belief that coercion is never an adequate replacement for individual willingness to reform is clearly seen in the dubious reforms wrought by Hunger in Passus VIII, and Elde and Kynde in Passus XXII. Temperance alone is insufficient.

The missing factor is patience. Patience transforms coercion into a willing endurance. The ideal priest must not only wed poverty, but "potte hym to be pacient" as well. (C, XVI, 112) Patience gives the individual humility and a true sense of one's place in the world, and it is this realization that brings the individual closer to salvation, and not the simple endurance of physical want. To this end Langland does not remind the reader that temperantes vincunt, but that "pacientes vincunt," (C, XV, 138, 157a, 254) Temperance without patience is mean-spirited and hollow. This lack of spiritual insight in Need later on reduces his praise of the life of poverty and need to uncharitable grumblings.

Therefore, it is clear that Langland's response toward the Lollard stance on evangelical poverty would be negative. The position adopted by the Wycliffites would seem too extreme, too unrealistic, and too uncharitable to Langland. In his view, their insistence upon literal poverty in priests actually would inhibit Christian growth by placing the demands of simple temperate living over those of patience. Indeed, he probably would have responded to the Lollards in the same manner Conscience responds to Need's uncharitable advice regarding the friars: "Conscience of this consail tho comesed for to lawhe." (C, XXII, 242) Conscience laughs at Need's counsel, then simply ignores it. Conscience does not criticize Need, because he realizes that Need's arguments are not

necessarily wrong, and that Need does raise some valid points about fraternal abuses. None the less, Need's vision and the Lollards' vision of the role of poverty is overly literal and incomplete from Conscience's and Langland's point of view. The Christian is expected to do better.

Since the debate on poverty is not a direct reply to the Wycliffite sect, but represents Langland's own thoughts on a quite old and controversial subject, it cannot be seen as conclusive evidence that Langland's attitude toward Lollardy is orthodox and negative. To gain such an insight one needs evidence to examine that is more strictly connected to the Lollard movement. The best chance to find such material lies in an examination of the changes between the B and the C-texts. In these, Langland is clarifying and refining his positions on a wide variety of subjects, among them, probably, the new Wycliffite heresy.

Unfortunately, Langland is never explicit enough for an immediately obvious assessment. Perhaps if he had lived to write a D-text, his tone would have turned as openly hostile or as openly laudatory toward the Lollard sect as the voices of his orthodox and heterodox contemporaries. Although Langland's attitude toward Lollardy is not explicit even in the C-text, nevertheless, two heavily rewritten passages in that text demonstrate that he is indeed building on the negative attitude which the debate on poverty in the B-text hints he would develop. These passages involve the temporary characterization of Will as a "lollar" and the contribution of Rechelesnesse to the debate on learning and salvation. Both are major new additions in the C-text of Piers Plowman.

If one were looking for an obviously negative portrait of Lollardy in Piers Plowman, the temporary characterization of Will as a "Lollard" in Passus V and Passus X of the C-text, along with the condemnation of the "lollares lyf"

in Passus V and Passus IX, would apparently more than suffice. Will describes himself as "yclothed as a lollare" (C, V, 3) and later on "yrobed in russet," (C, X, 1) Both of these phrases have reference peculiarly to Lollardy. D. W. Robertson and Bernard Huppé have pointed out that Will's clothing is a metaphor of his current spiritual state.¹⁸ In Piers Plowman, when Will dons these supposedly Lollard clothes his spiritual state is limited severely in its understanding. He is associated both times with false contemplatives and false beggars. By implication, then, Langland equates Lollardy with false religion, inadequate spirituality and social parasitism.

The logic seems foolproof, but the equation should not be accepted without consideration. The entire connection of Will's metaphorical dress with Lollardy rests upon two words, "lollar" and "russet." Before assuming that these passages condemn Lollardy, one must question the exact meaning of "lollar" in Langland's context. Did Langland actually intend "lollar" to mean Lollard? The point is debatable. A recent commentator, Pamela Gradon, thinks the connection improbable.¹⁹ Gradon believes "lollars" to mean wandering begging religious, and "lunatyk lollares" to mean itinerant prophets, the gyrovagi. Dr. Whitaker also affirms that Langland made no such connection with the sect, and that "lollar" means only vagrant.²⁰

Yet there is critical precedent for claiming that Langland did intend "lollar" to mean Lollard. W. W. Skeat feels obliged to explain the use of "lollar" in the C-text as follows: "But it might also be said, that he tries to shew that the term loller might be applied with more fitness to others than the followers of Wyclif."²¹ In this quotation Skeat is noting his objection to Dr. Whitaker's strict definition of "lollar" as vagrant. It is

clear then that Skeat draws some connection between Langland's word "lollar" and the insult 'Lollard'. Skeat believes that Langland intends to show that the Wycliffites were unfairly abused by being called Lollards. A more recent commentator, D. A. Lawton, believes that Langland was deliberately punning on the multiple meanings of "lollare", including among them 'Lollard', but that no one definition takes precedence over the others.²² The late fourteenth-century associations of "russet" must also be questioned.

The "lollarne lyf" is three times described by Langland in the C-text. The first is in Passus V, when Resoun analyzes Will as

an ydel man 3ow semest,
 A spendour pat spene mot or a spille-tyme,
 Or beggest thy bylyue aboute at men hacches
 Or faytest vpon Frydayes or feste-dayes in churches,
 The whiche is lollarne lyf pat lytel is preyed
 There ryhtfulnesse rewardeth ryht as men deserueth.
 (C, V, 27-32)

The second instance occurs in Passus IX, where "lollares" are excluded from Truth's pardon. Piers notes,

Ac beggares with bagges, þe whiche brewhous ben
 here churches,
 But they be blynde or tobroke or elles be syke,
 Thouh he falle for defaute pat fayteth for his lyflode,
 Reche 3e neuere, 3e riche, thouh suche lollares sterue.
 For alle pat haen here hele and here ye-syhte
 And lymes to labory with, and lollares lyf vsen,
 Lyuen a3en goddes lawe and þe lore of holi church.
 (C, IX, 98-104)

Neither of these two descriptions is complimentary. In neither instance, however, is the meaning exactly clear as to what the "lollares lyf" entails. In both cases the begging is unnecessary, and the beggar distinctly unwilling to

labour honestly. Yet, aberrations in religious practice are also involved: failure to observe the sanctity of ember and feast days by begging, and failure to attend church. (See also C, IX, 240-243.) The third description, however, makes it clear that the emphasis upon laziness and selfishness is Langland's main intent. Piers distinguishes between "lunatyk lollares and lebares aboute," (C, IX, 107 and cf. IX, 137) who are incapable of work, and "lollares," who are quite capable of working if they pleased. The former

bereth none bagges ne boteles vnder clokes,
 The whiche is lollarne lyf and lewede ermytes,
 pat loken loughliche to lache men almesse,
 In hope to sitte at even by þe hote coles,
 Vnlouke his legges abroad or ligge at his ese,
 Ræste hym and roste him and his rug turne,
 Drynke druie and depe and drawe hym thenne to bedde,
 And whenne hym lyketh and luste, his leue is to ryse,
 And when he is rysen, rometh out and ri3t wel aspyeth
 Where he may rathest haue a repaest or a ronde of bacoun,
 Suluer or sode mete and sum tyme bothe,
 Loef oper half-loef other a lompe of chese;
 And caryeth hit hoem to his cote and cast hym to lyuene
 In idelnesse and in ese and by otheres trauayle.
 (C, IX, 139-152)

Piers goes on to exclude from Truth's pardon vagrants, beggars who beg needlessly, and "lollares pat lyuen in sleuthe." (C, IX, 159) This passage shows very clearly that the "lollarne lyf" is not a matter of an aberrant religious practice or belief, but a matter of a self-serving life of ease through begging disguised by the appearance of piety. Langland usually mentions "lollares" together with "lewede ermytes" and other false religious who beg for their living. As for the meaning of "lunatyk lollares and lebares aboute," they are not the gyrovagi Gradon suggests. Langland equates them at C, IX, 137 with "Goddess munstrales" whom he, at C, VII, 99-112 and throughout Passus IX, identifies as the three

types of deserving poor: the sick, the handicapped, and the scholarly. The question remains, however, whether or not Langland intends his various descriptions to portray or include Lollards.

The issue is not clarified by examining contemporary descriptions of Lollards. If one accepts Thorpe's account as accurate, one instance of an orthodox thinker praising the character of a heterodox thinker is Archbishop Arundel's famous admission that "Maister John Wickliffe was holden of full mainie men, the greatest clearke that they knewe then living; and therewith hee was named a passing rulie man and an innocent in his living."²³ More often, partisan feelings slant the portrayals. The Lollard Knight John Clanvowe, for example, idealizes Lollards as

swiche folke pat wolden fayne lyven meekeliche in pis world and ben out offe swich forseid riot, noise, & stryf, and lyven symplely, and usen to eten and drynken in mesure, and to cloopen hem meekly and suffren patiently wroonges pat oopere folke doon & seyn to hem, and hoolden hem apayed with lytel good of pis world & desiren noo greet name of pis world, ne no pris ther of, swiche folke pe world scoornep & hooldep hem lolleris & loselis, foolis and schameful wrecches. (Two Ways 70)

Such a portrayal of humble, hardworking men and women hardly matches Langland's concept of the self-centered "lollarne lyf," although they both play upon the meaning of 'lollar'. Yet, compare Langland's description to the orthodox view of the Wycliffite sect members. An orthodox sermonist complains of

this lollardes and tis fals ypocrites that be now-aday we se now so miche folk and specialiche pes lollardes, pay go barfot, pei go openhed, 3e, thei wassche sopyliche her clothes withowtyn with teres of hir e3en, pat miche op pe peple is fowle blynded and deseyvyd bi hem. For pei wene pat tei have plente inow with-in hem op pe water of holi leuyng. And truliche it is

nopyng so. For þer was a lollard at Oxanfort but awhile agon þat for-sak al his errours and al his misleuyng and turnyd aȝen to þe leuyng of oper good cristen men, and tan a told certeyn rytes and doyng of hem, ȝe, so cursed and so oreble to her þat, e good feyth, ich am greuyse for to telle hem ... þei þe go to-ragged and to-rent and schewe out-ward, it is nopyng in her herte; for mor prowder men, more enuyus men, þan þei be with-inne, be þer none in þis world. þes do nopyng after þe doctrine and te lore of Crist.²⁴

The orthodox writer does not pun on the meaning of 'lollar', as does Langland, nor does he picture Lollards as lazy; he does, however, emphasize with Langland that "lollares" only appear to be holy. Nevertheless, one must remember that it is definite that the orthodox sermonist, writing not long after 1390, specifically meant Wycliffites; it is not definite that Langland, writing in the 1380's, did.

We succeed no better if we attempt to compare Langland's 'lollares' with the Lollards of the 1380's. Few Wycliffites, even in the first years of the sect when persecution was least likely, openly advertised their heretical beliefs. Lollardy was almost always an underground movement, the sect's survival depending upon inconspicuousness. Most members played double lives, keeping up the appearance of orthodoxy by full participation in the ordinary life of the parish, yet harbouring heretical beliefs in the privacy and safety of home. Neither the idealized Lollard account nor the hostile orthodox account accurately describes the average historical Lollard. We are, therefore, left once again with Langland's portrait, the meaning of which is at the discretion of the reader. The authorial intent is not clear. Langland might have meant Lollards in particular, or simply hypocritical, lazy beggars who disguise their fault under the mask of contemplation and religion.

The confusion largely derives from uncertainty over the definition of the term 'lollar'. It does not help the scholar that the first citations of 'lollar' recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary and the Middle English Dictionary are from Fiers Flowman. Nor does it help that the same references are used to exemplify both Lollard and wastrel alike. The word's etymology is a blur of the English word 'loll', meaning to hang loosely and lazily, and a Dutch word 'lollaert', meaning mumbler. 'Lollaert' had been in use on the Continent since the turn of the century, and its Continental use is significant to Langland's intent in using 'lollar'. 'Lollaert' was originally applied to members of the Cellite/Alexian fraternity, a fraternity that specialized in the care and burial of the sick and poor. The term, however, very quickly took on derogatory connotations. A 'lollaert' had great pretensions to piety and humility. He appeared holy. His religious beliefs, as well, were eccentric, if not heretical. Interestingly, it was an abusive term put upon semi-monastic orders in general and Franciscan friars in particular.²⁵

Henry Crumpe in 1382 is the first known Englishman to have used an English form of "lollaert" deliberately to describe English Lollards.²⁶ It was a natural linkage to make. Borrowing an abusive Continental term that had long described Continental heretics now to describe a new breed of insular heretics was a logical step. Its applicability hinged upon two common factors: the orthodox charges that the Wycliffites only made a show of piety, and that their beliefs were eccentric and heretical. Crumpe was the first to mean Wycliffite by Lollard. A more generalized use for 'lollar' was still quite possible, referring only to pretentious and hypocritical eccentrics.

Langland's own etymology of 'lollar' supports such a contention.

After describing the unsuccessful antics of false hermits, Piers goes on to say of them that

at the laste they asypde [those]
 That faytede in frere clothinge hadde fatte chekes.
 Forthy lefte they here labour, thise lewed knaues,
 And clothed hem in copes, clerkes as hit were,
 Or oen of som ordre or elles a profete ...
 Kyndeliche, by Crist, ben suche ycald 'lollares',
 As by þe Engelisch of oure eldres, of olde mennes techynge.
 He þat lolleth is lame or his leg out of ioynþe
 Or ymaymed in som membre, for to meschief hit souneth.
 Riht so soþly such manere ermytes
 Lollen a3en þe byleue and þe lawe of holy church.
 (C, IX, 207-218)

Langland's etymology need not be accepted as historically correct, as mediaeval writers used etymology too opportunistically for one author's derivation to be accepted without further substantiation. What is important about Langland's derivation is that it shows both the insular and Continental etymological strands of 'lollar'. Those who turn to such a way of life are lazy and are useless members of society who hang upon the resources of the whole. Their piety, moreover, is false, and intended only for show. As such, their religion is misleading and hollow.

What is revealing about this passage is that there is nothing especially Wycliffite about the description. There is no mention of any uniquely Wycliffite heresy. Langland's context, rather, suggests that 'lollares' are false contemplatives and friars. When one remembers that these same groups were the targets of the original Continental 'lollaert', it suggests that Langland originally intended his 'lollares' to refer to these traditional groups.

The dates of Piers Plowman militate further against 'lollares' referring to

Wycliffites. The word appears once in the B-text, in the phrase "he [charity] lyueþ no3t in lolleris ne in londleperis heremytes / Ne at Ancres pere a box hangeþ; alle swiche þei faiten." (B, XV, 213-214) Here, again, "lolleris" are associated with false contemplatives and beggars. If one accepts that Henry Crumpe was the first to mean Wycliffite by "lollard", then Langland's meaning in the B-text and likely in the C-text must have been more Continental in sense. It is still possible, however, that he included "Wycliffite" as part of its meaning. The C-text greatly expands upon those whom Truth's pardon includes and excludes and it very meticulously distinguishes the true beggars from the false "lollares". The C-text, moreover, is contemporary with Crumpe's remarks, and so the reference to the other Lollard connection, russet, therefore, deserves to be investigated.

By the late 1380's the colour russet had become peculiarly associated with Lollardy, russet being the colour worn most often by the Lollard poor priests.²⁷ Thus, when Will pictures himself "yrobbed in russet," (C, X, 1) it is once again tempting to read the passage as a link between Will and Lollardy. Unfortunately, the ambiguities seen in the meaning of "lollar" occur in the meaning of russet also. The expression "yrobbed in russet" appears in all three texts. Even more than for the term "lollar," an intended reference to Wycliffites is contradicted by the dates. It is also contradicted by the fact that russet had several other associations in the fourteenth century, foremost being an association with hermits.²⁸ Russet was their chosen colour also. Will's clothing at this stage, therefore, reflects Langland's continuing concern with true and false contemplatives.

More interesting is a connection between russet and the friars. In the

Triologus, Wyclif notes of the friars "quidam enim russeto signante laborem eorum desuper sunt vestiti ... et intrinsecus ad denotandum laborem suum in ecclesia russetis vestimentis vestiuntur," (337) that is, 'indeed, they dress in russet, the symbol of labour, ... as intrinsic to showing their work within the Church, they are garbed in russet vestments'. The author of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede echoes Wyclif when he says "þei usen russet also somme of þis freres, / þat bitokenep trawaile & trewþe opon erþe." (PPC 719-720) Pamela Gradon points out that russet is a symbol of honest labour.²⁹ It is a symbol that both the Lollards and the friars played upon.

Yet the significance of Will's robe of russet goes beyond the symbolic implications noticed by Gradon. There is evidence that russet was associated with one particular order of friars, the Franciscans, also known as the Grey Friars because of their grey habit. Russet in the mediaeval sense is not necessarily the modern reddish brown. It can mean a coarse grey cloth.³⁰ It is particularly significant, therefore, that, immediately upon describing himself as "yrobbed in russet," Will encounters two "Maystres of þe Menores," (C, X, 9) or two Franciscan 'Grey' friars. It is possible that Will's inadequate spiritual state is being paralleled through the colour of his dress with the inadequate spiritual state of the two friars and, thus, that a Lollard comparison, on Langland's part, was never intended.³¹

Therefore, with regard to Langland's position on the Wycliffites, the evidence of "lollar" and russet is inconclusive. Both terms have very strong associations with the Lollard movement by the late 1380's. The dates of the B and C versions, however, as well as the ambiguities already defined simply do not allow an equation with Lollardy. In fact, given that both "lollar" in its

Continental usage and russet were connected with the fraternal orders in general and with the Franciscans in particular, very possibly Langland originally meant both unfavourable metaphors as part of his overall antifraternalism. They would also complement Langland's concern throughout Piers Plowman with the special problems beggars and false contemplatives pose to the community. At most, Langland had no objection to a reader equating lollars and Lollards. The last opportunity to identify direct evidence of Langland's feelings lies in the debate on learning and salvation.

The debate on salvation poses the same basic problem seen earlier in the debate on poverty. It was a hotly controversial issue in the fourteenth century. The Wycliffites derived their belief in predestination from Wyclif, who himself followed Bradwardine in a general revival of Augustinian thought. Thus, Langland's sentiments on the subject were not necessarily a direct response to Wycliffite positions. He might only have been contributing to the debate in general.

The debate on salvation is more promising, however, because, unlike the debate on poverty that is largely untouched from the B-text to the C-text, the debate on salvation is heavily revised in the latter. This suggests that in the C-text Langland is responding to current trends on the issue in the late 1370's and 1380's. Again, this is not necessarily to say that Langland is responding specifically to Wyclif or to the Lollards, although he must be doing so in part since they were largely responsible for renewed controversy on the subject in England. Despite the lack of hard evidence, there are indications that on the question of salvation Langland likely is replying directly to the Lollards. Langland invokes the much-used Wycliffite technical terms

predestinati and presciti. Most importantly, there is the figure of Rechelesnesse whose role and importance are greatly expanded from a briefly-seen interrupter in the B-text to a major spokesman in the C-text. A case can be made for seeing Rechelesnesse as expounding Langland's interpretation of the Lollard point of view.

Part of the identification depends upon Rechelesnesse's physical appearance. He "stod forth in ragged clothes." (C, XI, 196) "Ragged clothes" might have a Lollard stigma for an orthodox reader, because such a manner of dress was often taken to be a sign of false piety.³² One orthodox sermonist, for example, complains of "poyswunmongeres," Lollards "wrappet in holines, magnam sanctitatem."³³ The orthodox sermonist quoted earlier describes Lollards as "to-ragged and to-rent."³⁴ Lollards were well-known for their habit of dressing poorly as an outward sign of their supposed piety. On the other hand, Rechelesnesse's connection with the Wycliffite sect extends beyond his clothing. There are also doctrinal similarities. Rechelesnesse expounds upon the Wycliffite ideal of the poor priest. He abuses Clergy, his comments forming part of Langland's discussion of the right of the laity to criticize faulty religious. He also believes in predestination and uses the Wycliffite terms predestinati and presciti. Finally, he exhibits the ironic Lollard tendency to discredit learning as inessential to salvation. Because of these circumstantial parallels in dress and belief, Rechelesnesse can be tentatively identified as a Lollard. Rechelesnesse, therefore, offers the clearest evidence available for Langland's attitude toward the Wycliffite sect. Certainly he is proof that Langland by the time he wrote the C-text was aware of Lollardy's existence.³⁵

It is important to realize that 'recklessness' is not a wholly unadmirable trait in mediaeval terms. As with many qualities, its nature is essentially dual.³⁶ The positive side to the character of Rechelesnesse is seen in his utter carelessness with regard to worldly affairs. He is one answer to the question posed at the very beginning of Piers Plowman: how should the individual respond to the world. Rechelesnesse praises the life of poverty, and his description of priestly poverty is a Wycliffite-sounding forerunner of Patience's similar thoughts on the same subject. Rechelesnesse concludes,

So pore and pacient parfitest lyf is of alle;
 Vch a parfit prest to pouerte sholde drawe.
 For spera in deo speketh of prestis pat han no spendyng
 That yf thay trauaile treulyche and trist in god almyhty
 Hem sholde neuere lacke lyflode noþer lynnyn ne wollene.
 The tytle 3e take 3oure ordres by telleth 3e ben avaunsed
 And nedeth nat to nyme siluer for masses pat 3e synge.
 (C, XIII, 98-104)

Many of Rechelesnesse's statements are gross exaggerations and use dubious logic, as Derek Pearsall points out.³⁷ The positive Rechelesnesse should not be seen as a perfect figure and voice of authority, but, rather, as a positive stage in Will's spiritual development. Rechelesnesse's emphasis upon poverty as the proper state of being eventually turns into Patience's insistence that this poverty be willingly endured. Patience, in turn, gives way to Liberum Arbitrium who speaks of charity. This progression from being to enduring to choosing and doing parallels Will's quest for Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, and later on his encounters with Faith, Hope and Charity. Rechelesnesse, then, can be a stepping-stone to charity and Dobest. The danger lies in refusing to accept that

Rechelesnesse is only a limited, temporary stage and that the Christian must develop beyond it.

In addition, there is an insidious aspect of Rechelesnesse's character. The negative side to recklessness is a carelessness about spiritual effort, or a presumptuous sloth of the will. The negative Rechelesnesse rejects the demanding terms for salvation put forward by Clergy and Scripture. Instead, he puts his faith in simple predestination on the grounds that

For Clergie saith þat he seyh in þe seynt euaungelie
 That y man ymaed was and my nam y-entred
 In þe legende of lyf longe ar y were.
 Predestinaet thei prechen, prechours þat this sheweth,
 Or prescient imparfit, pult out of grace,
 Vnwritten for som wikkednesse, as holy writ sheweth.
Nemo ascendit ad celum nisi qui de celo descendit.
 And y leve hit wel, by oure lord, and on no lettrure
 bettere. (C, XI, 205-211)

Rechelesnesse's literal interpretation of the Latin text proves to him that spiritual effort is unnecessary, since the outcome has been predetermined. Rechelesnesse goes on to prove that learning is not essential to salvation. As examples of learned men who were nevertheless damned, he points to Solomon and to the workmen who built Noah's ark, glossed by Rechelesnesse as clerics who work upon the Church. Rechelesnesse then points to examples of the sinful and ignorant who were saved: the thief on the cross, Mary Magdalene and St. Paul before his conversion. Personal spiritual effort, therefore, is not necessary according to the negative Rechelesnesse, since saving grace will come to those for whom it is preordained regardless of their efforts. The negative Rechelesnesse is an excuse to do as little as possible, instead of as much as possible. Langland views such spiritual sloth as extremely dangerous and he has

Rechelesnesse ultimately betray the foolhardiness of his simplistic predestination, first, by having Rechelesnesse encourage Will to go off with Fortune, since there is plenty of time to be saved if that is one's destiny, and, second, by having Rechelesnesse abuse Clergy.

Langland's answer to the negative Rechelesnesse is made by Imaginatif, who explains in Passus XIV that bliss in heaven is relative to the merit of one's life upon Earth. Learning and a saintly life earn the individual greater reward in heaven. Greater responsibility, rightly handled, must logically bring greater reward. The thief on the cross is saved, but his bliss in heaven is not comparable to the bliss of the saints and martyrs. Imaginatif thus transforms Rechelesnesse's passive reception of predestinate grace into an active seeking out of grace available to all. He sums up thus:

And god is ay gracious to alle pat gredeth to hym
 And wol no wikkede man be lost, bote if he wol hymselfe.
Nolo mortem peccatoris. (C, XIV, 133-134a)

Grace will come to those who ask for it. The onus for personal salvation or damnation once again falls upon the individual. Predestination, one cornerstone of Wycliffite belief, is rejected.

Rechelesnesse, therefore, has a dual nature. On the bad side, Rechelesnesse is a species of sloth and presumption. His vision of Christianity is weak and passive, and his trust in predestination is a self-justifying excuse to do nothing. On the good side, Rechelesnesse is a step toward charity. Although still fundamentally passive in outlook, the good Rechelesnesse prepares Will for Patience by teaching him to ignore the desires and wants of this world.

In some respects, Langland's attitude toward Lollardy, insofar as

he understood the sect, might be summed up in his attitude toward the ambivalent figure of Rechelesnesse. He would have found much to admire in the sect: its idealism, its emphasis upon priestly poverty and responsibility, and its basic desire to rejuvenate the spirituality of the people. He would agree with the spirit, if not the actualities, of many Lollard criticisms of the Church. He would be disturbed, nevertheless, by the movement's emphasis upon literal interpretation and application. He also would be deeply concerned that their doctrine of predestination is a convenient substitution for true spirituality. In all fairness to the Wycliffites, however, if one believes that Langland presents Rechelesnesse as embodying the Wycliffite position on predestination, then one must also admit that Langland made no real effort to understand the subtleties of Wycliffite belief. Predestination to the Lollards is never the slothful and presumptuous carelessness of Rechelesnesse. Lollard tracts and sermons constantly exhort their readers to live properly, as if they hoped they were predestinate, not as if they knew they were. A blind belief in automatic salvation they left to the popes. Lollards, if anything, tend to be puritanical rather than reckless. None the less, Langland would see in the sect's theoretical basis what to him would be a personally distressing trend toward literalism, a trend demonstrated by both *Need* and *Rechelesnesse*. Ultimately, Langland's rejection of this narrowminded trend would be enough to cause him to reject the Wycliffite sect.

The combined evidence is tentative, but overwhelming. Langland's attitude toward the teachings of the Wycliffites, as shown by the nature of his revisions and additions in the B and C-texts, was bound to be conservative and negative. He refused to be drawn into the Eucharistic controversy. He believed

in the value of images and relics. He saw as impractical and dangerous the withdrawal of Church control over material wealth. He rejected what he thought of as the Lollards' literal interpretation of predestination, viewing it as an excuse for slothful spirituality. Langland's actual response to the Wycliffite sect itself is still obscure, since he never directly condemns Wyclif or the Lollards. There are indications that Langland deliberately responds to the Lollard threat; but, with the exception of the ambivalent figure of Rechelesnesse in the C-text, Langland never gives an open and shut demonstration of how he reacts to the Wycliffites' challenge of ecclesiastical authority. His anti- or pro-Lollard sentiments are left largely to the reader to deduce. In the end, regarding Langland's personal views on Lollardy, it is clear from the study of the B and C-texts that the most which can be said with any confidence is that Langland probably would not have disapproved of an equation between the Lollards and his own parasitical "lollares," if not in historical practice, then, at least, in essence.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis one thing has been clear — the Wycliffite sect was woefully misunderstood by its orthodox contemporaries. Wyclif was a theoretician whose ideas were extreme, but he always remained within the pale of orthodoxy in his own view. He might have been exiled from Oxford, but he died the parish priest of Lutterworth. It was not until the Council of Constance in 1414, thirty years after his death, that Wyclif officially became a heresiarch, and not until 1428 that he suffered the heretic's fate. Early Wycliffites had no wish to become heretics. Their dissatisfaction with the Church was not unique. Nor were many of their concerns different from those of their orthodox contemporaries. Theirs was only one critical voice, albeit an extreme one, out of many. Yet the Lollards were treated very differently from their critical contemporaries. They were persecuted and harassed almost from the very beginning. Encouraged by official repression, they took Wyclif's extreme views to their logical conclusions, and eventually denied the organized Church completely. Nevertheless, this was an unwilling step. The original Wycliffite dream was to restore Church and State from within. It was the Church that pushed the Lollards outside the pale of orthodoxy into heresy and sedition, from which such restoration was impossible.

Langland, on the other hand, always remained within the pale of orthodoxy. He was equally critical of the Church, but he avoided doctrinal speculation and abhorred extremism in any and all forms. Their common

dissatisfaction with the Church, none the less, makes it possible that Langland and the Wycliffites found support in one another's views. In addition, while it is hardly likely that an obscure minor cleric like Langland, even though he was a major literary figure, influenced Wyclif (England's foremost theologian at the time), it is not impossible that Wyclif might have influenced Langland.

Besides a shared dissatisfaction with the Church, other factors make Langland, Wyclif and the Lollards appear to share similar beliefs. One of these is a common mediaeval cosmic view in that all three saw human perfection as impossible, all three looked to the past for their models of the good human community, all three chose the early Christian Church as this ideal model, and all three were feudal in their outlook, envisioning relationships between man and man and God and man in terms of lord and servant.

Even at such a basic level of comparison, there are prominent differences between Wycliffite thought and Langland's. The Apostolic ideal for Wyclif and the Lollards is an attainable one. Disendowment would return the Church to its pre-Sylvestrian apostolic purity. The purified Church, presumably, would restore the State. Langland, on the other hand, shows the rapid corruption of the historical ideal founded by Piers in Passus XXI. It is an ideal, moreover, that is irretrievable. The pattern of Piers Plowman is one of social decline and disintegration. Disendowment will not succeed here, because individual social failure, and not estate social failure, corrupts the community. This emphasis upon the individual's social responsibility in Langland further separates him from Wyclif and his followers. The Wycliffites repeatedly deliberate upon the responsibilities and failures of the lords and the clergy, the culpability of the ecclesiastical estate being particularly emphasized. On

the other hand, the shortcomings of the commons are usually neglected by Wycliffite authors. In contrast, Langland criticizes the individuals within each estate. Everyone, not just the clergy, is held to be responsible for the collapse of the Christian community.

Despite these differences, investigating the relationship between the Wycliffite sect and Langland is revealing for what it tells us about late fourteenth-century perceptions of social and religious concerns. In terms of their ability to generate controversy, Wyclif and the Lollards were very successful. Indeed, Lollardy's impact upon Piers Plowman might very well be measurable by the number of issues a conservative like Langland felt necessary to include and expand upon in the B and the C-texts. It is extremely unlikely that Langland could have remained ignorant of the Wycliffites, or that he would not have formed some opinion of them, although often this seems to have been the case. While there is tangible evidence that the Wycliffites knew of William Langland and admired his work, there is no similar hard and fast evidence that Langland was aware of the Lollards. The figure of Rechelesnesse in the C-text is the only textual evidence supporting the theory that Langland consciously knew of the Wycliffites and was responding to them. Rechelesnesse can be identified as a Lollard by his dress, and by his beliefs on predestination (especially his use of specific Wycliffite terms), priestly poverty, learning, and his claim that it is right to criticize the clergy. This is still not an exact identification, and never should be, since it would limit unnecessarily Langland's concept of Rechelesnesse. But, just as in the B-text Lady Meed can be identified with Alice Ferrers through the circumstantial evidence of her appearance and behaviour, Rechelesnesse can be identified with Lollardy on the basis of the compatibility

of the dates involved and the parallels between his dress and thoughts and the imputed dress and thoughts of the Wycliffites. In addition to the character of Rechelesnesse, the large overlap of ideas and concerns between Langland and the Lollards gives us a substantial amount of material with which to work.

Here, Piers Plowman presents many difficulties. It exists in three versions, and its authorship can be troublesome. Although single authorship of Piers Plowman has been assumed in this thesis, the lack of reliable biographical detail on William Langland really is unhelpful. At best, the evidence may tell us that Langland belonged to the class of clergy that found Lollardy to be the most attractive, and that 1387 is the latest date possible for the C-text, since that may have been the year Langland died. Beyond these details, however, is supposition. The dates of the various versions of Piers Plowman also present a problem, especially when one tries to relate them to the dates of the Wycliffite sect. The final result is that, when one attempts to consider together both Langland and the Wycliffite sect, there is a great potential for error.

The unintentional or inevitable overlap of ideas and motifs between the Wycliffites and Langland is in itself significant for demonstrating a communality of concern in late fourteenth-century England. Subjects of Wycliffite doctrine are extremely consistent; the tone and extremity of positions on these subjects, however, are not. Langland, for his part, makes few doctrinal statements. His position on the Eucharist, the immediate subject to which one would turn in hope of proving Langland a Lollard, seems completely orthodox. Yet his presentation of the Eucharist is either allusive or metaphorical and Langland never makes a doctrinal statement on the subject. His positions on Confession

offer much more promise, but Langland's statements on Confession are equivocal. Some are close to Wycliffite positions; others are not. It is easy to discover similarities between the C-text of Piers Plowman and Wycliffite literature, as they are many and occur throughout the poem. Both are vehemently antifraternal. Both are vitally concerned with false contemplatives and the social burdens they cause. Both believe that wealth is a powerful corruptive force within the Church. Both express reverence for the Bible, and look upon the misuse of language as a most serious perversion of God's intent. Both are vitally concerned with personal salvation. Both are absolute monarchists in practice. Many more minor shared concerns also exist.

Despite the number of similarities, however, caution must be exercised about making firm judgements. The sheer number of instances can be misleading without a consideration of how often any one concern is emphasized. Langland explores many issues the Lollards usually neglect, for example, the social failure of the commons. The Wycliffites, also, repeatedly raise issues barely glanced at by Langland, for example, the corruption of the papacy. This suggests that the shared concerns throughout both Piers Plowman and Lollard literature are fewer than would actually appear, and that their relationship is not inevitably close.

In all this, however, while it may be easy to point out similarities between Langland and the Wycliffites, it is very rarely possible to pursue these similarities to any depth. The reason for this is twofold. First, the Lollards are not always different from their orthodox contemporaries. Piers Plowman, for example, may appear to be a Lollard poor priest, but this is largely because the ideal of what a priest should be is held in common by the Wycliffites and the

orthodox. Second, Langland and the Lollards often only appear on the surface to be saying much the same things. A deeper analysis shows that the two often reach similar conclusions on the basis of vastly different arguments. Interpretations of issues are widely divergent. For instance, both praise contemplation as the best of the two lives, but, on what contemplation means, the two completely disagree. Langland reveres the traditional interpretation of the contemplative life, monasticism. The Lollards, on the other hand, despise monasticism. Langland, in fact, accepts as valid three of the Wycliffites' four false and corruptive "new sects", monks, canons, and friars. Only the caesarean clergy, who were not a religious order, are excluded from Langland's approval. The same division in interpretation is evident in other shared concerns. Wealth to both Langland and the Wycliffites is corruptive. The Lollards reject the endowment of the Church; Langland, in contrast, accepts endowment as necessary, but stresses that it must be accepted only from good sources and prudently managed. Langland puts personal reform ahead of political reform. Political reform is too coercive and, therefore, ultimately futile. The Lollards, on the other hand, promote a political solution. To them, political coercion, far from being futile, is the only method by which the temporal arm might purify the ecclesiastical. Despite this emphasis upon the political strength of the State, the Lollards despise the human codes of secular and ecclesiastical law as displacements of God's law, which is seen as sufficient to rule mankind. Langland, on the other hand, while he too voices anger over the abuses of the legal system, sees human law as essentially beneficial. It serves to protect individuals and maintain the community.

Two important differences ultimately separate Langland from the

Wycliffites. The first is Langland's belief that the Christian community is corrupted by individuals within all three estates, and his consequent insistence upon everyman's personal responsibility. The Lollards, in contrast, believe corruption invariably wells out of the ecclesiastical estate alone. The other estates are also corrupt, but this is because they follow the evil example of their religious leaders. According to the Lollards the blame and responsibility, whether in the acceptance of the Donation of Constantine or in the lack of spirituality in the fourteenth century, belong to the clergy.

The second difference between Langland and the Wycliffites is their approach toward the Bible. The Lollards revere the Bible, and look upon it as the only source of all acceptable Christian practices. It is not the sole authority, since the Church Fathers and later commentators still are safeguards against misinterpretation. The Bible is, rather, the supreme and ultimate authority open and available, indeed necessary, for all to read and understand. Langland also reveres Scripture, but he is much more conservative regarding who needs to read it, and less literal-minded about its interpretation. Scripture is the ultimate witness to the life of Christ, but it still needs to be interpreted by professionals. It is not the Lollards' open book. Neither is an understanding of it crucial to one's salvation. Scripture is subordinate to Clergy. The Lollards' radical approach toward the Bible's authority made them fundamentalists and literalists. Langland's conservative approach to the Bible made him suspicious of both fundamentalism and literalism. Coupled with his refusal to find fault exclusively with the clerical estate, and his emphasis upon individual responsibility, Langland's attitude toward the Bible leads him to points of view vastly different on most issues from those of the Wycliffites.

Two significant conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. The first is that the greatest amount of correlation between Langland and Wycliffite thought occurs on a subject more closely related to Wyclif the scholar than to his followers. This is the concept of kingship and dominion by grace. With regard to kingship, both Wyclif and Langland in the C-text portray an absolute monarch whose responsibilities as king are established by his moral obligations to rule himself well and to set a worthy example for his kingdom to follow, and by his own feudal obligation to God. There are differences. Wyclif the political theoretician gives his king absolute power. There is nothing to hinder his enforcement of the law. Langland's vision is less optimistic. His kings not only are limited in effectiveness by their ability and willingness to govern well, but also are limited in effectiveness by a lack of willingness on the people's part to be governed. The overall view, however, of both Langland (in the C-text, at least) and Wyclif is of an absolute king. The second subject concerns dominion by grace, whereby each individual who lives in a state of grace gains natural lordship over everything. Wyclif uses this concept as a means to demonstrate the split between the predestinati and the presciti. Langland invokes something similar in the figure of Conscience, the faculty by which all humans can become lords of creation here on earth. What is especially remarkable about the similarities between Langland and Wyclif on the subjects of kingship and dominion by grace is that, in both cases, the subject was first debated by Wyclif before he formulated his heretical teachings. Langland appears willing to follow England's master theologian in areas untouched by heterodoxy. If Langland was influenced by Wyclif the theologian, the influence did not extend beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy. Langland is completely orthodox in his

thinking. The connection with Wyclif has further implications for Langland as well. Langland seems to have had some university education. If he attended Oxford, he could have known of Wyclif, and might even have gained his thoughts on kingship and dominion directly from him.

To the question, "Was Langland a Wycliffite?," the answer is "no". The evidence is tentative, but overwhelming. There are simply too many fundamental differences between Langland's and the Lollards' points of view. Where there are significant parallels, the subject inevitably is part of general mediaeval thought or simply is not of a heretical nature. Even so, the answer needs some qualification. Piers Plowman by the standards of the fourteenth century is acceptably orthodox. By the standards of the fifteenth century, however, its criticisms of the Church and its discussion of theological questions in the vernacular of the Church could make it suspicious. If works such as Dives and Pauper and even Chaucer's Canterbury Tales could be accused of Lollardy under certain circumstances, certainly Langland's Piers Plowman could be also. It is also possible that one could read Langland as a Lollard sympathizer, if that is how one wished to read him. Many obviously did so, as Langland's vision inspired several pieces of Lollard literature. It is only in this distorted sense, however, that Piers Plowman can be seen as sympathetic to Lollardy. The vast popular appeal of Piers Plowman testifies that most readers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries alike read it as orthodox.

As a man of his times, Langland undoubtedly would have been influenced by the Wycliffite sect. In Langland's case Lollardy had largely a negative effect. The changes between the B and the C-texts, particularly the bad aspect of Rechelesnesse, demonstrate Langland's increasingly negative attitude

toward what he perceived the Wycliffite sect to represent: literalism and fundamentalism, and self-righteous condemnation of the clergy alone. He would have found some things to admire in the sect: its idealism, its emphasis upon preaching and priestly responsibility, its commitment to spiritual renewal. In the end, nevertheless, his response toward the threat against orthodoxy which Wyclif and his followers posed was one that was both conservative and negative.

What then can be said by way of a final assessment of a possible relationship between the author of Piers Plowman and the followers of Wyclif? For Langland, it is not a case of direct influence or sympathy. Langland was not a Wycliffite. He only became a 'Lollard' by accident, through the misinterpretations of readers, including Protestant historians and Marxist literary critics who wanted him to be one. Langland's relationship with the Wycliffite sect is one of argument and opposition. Langland counters Wycliffite thought sometimes by general discussion and sometimes, in the C-text, by deliberate debate. On the other hand, Piers Plowman exerted direct and positive influence on the Lollards. Langland certainly did not persuade them of the folly of their beliefs. On the contrary, Piers Plowman inspired Wycliffite authors to the point where it perhaps became natural for later critics and historians to assume that Langland too must have been Lollard.

If Langland and members of the Wycliffite sect have anything in common, it is the extent to which they were actively involved in the controversies of their day. Far from being unrepresentative of fourteenth-century English thought, the Wycliffites form an integral part of it. Theirs was an unprecedented intellectual challenge to the ecclesiastical status quo, a challenge to which Langland among others replied. Indeed, it is this concern

with controversy that puts Langland and the Wycliffite authors in perspective. Piers Plowman and Lollardy both developed out of the religious, social and economic upheavals sweeping mid-to-late fourteenth-century England. This contemporary context can be seen clearly in the large number of issues with which they both struggle to come to terms. In the end, although each possesses an overwhelming desire to expose the corruption and abuses of their society as well as a commitment to resolve these problems, nevertheless they approach these subjects from completely different points of view and propose for these problems radically different solutions.

Notes to Chapter One

¹It is the judgement of Anne Hudson, one of the foremost scholars of Wycliffite studies today, that there is no justification for distinguishing between Lollard and Wycliffite, and that the terms are freely interchangeable. I follow her example throughout the thesis. Cf. Anne Hudson, "Wycliffite Prose," Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres ed. Anthony Stockwell and Garfield Edwards (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1984) 250; Anne Hudson, Lollards and their Books, (London: Hambledon, 1985), ix-x; Anne Hudson, "Wyclif and the English Language," Wyclif in his Times ed. A. Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 85-86.

²A fairly complete list of the surviving works in Latin and English by Wyclif and his followers is in, Ernest W. Talbert and S. Harrison Thomson, "Wyclif and his Followers," A Manual of the Writings in Middle English II ed. J. Burke Severs, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences (Hamden: Archon, 1970) 360-380; 519-533. Important modifications and additions to this list are made by Anne Hudson in, Lollards and their Books 249-252. Ascriptions to Wyclif in the vernacular works are dealt with recently by Anne Hudson in "Wycliffite Prose" 249 and "Wyclif and the English Language" 89-90, by Michael Wilks in, "Misleading Manuscripts: Wyclif and the Non-Wycliffite Bible," Studies in Church History 11 (1975), 160, and by Peggy Ann Knapp in "John Wyclif as Bible Translator: The Texts for the English Sermons," Speculum 46 (1971): 713-720, and The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons (The Hague: Mouton, 1977) 5-8. Hudson and Wilks reject Wyclif's authorship of vernacular works; Knapp supports it. Margaret Aston suggests that the vernacular tract "De Blasphemia, Contra Fratres" is one English text that might well be Wyclif's own. See her "'Caimes Castles': Poverty, Politics and Disendowment," The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century ed. R.B. Dobson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984) 58-59. Aston also treats the importance of Wyclif's initiation of vernacular discussions, both written and oral, of the Eucharist in "Wyclif and the Vernacular," From Ockham to Wyclif ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 281-330. Aston concludes, "it must be granted as more than hypothesis, that Wyclif contributes to the vernacular breaching of arcana eucharistie. We may remain in doubt as to what precisely he said in English. We can be sure of the importance of his vernacular initiative." [328] David Fowler contends that Wyclif was involved in the translation of the Early Version of the Wycliffite Bible, along with Nicholas Hereford, William Middleworth and, most notably, John Trevisa. See, David Fowler, The Bible in Early English Literature (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1976) 154-158. Of Trevisa's involvement, Fowler warns, "to force Trevisa into the category of enemy or devotee is to subject him to a post-Reformation distortion." [157] Ascriptions to Wyclif in the Latin works are discussed by

Williel Thomson, The Latin Writings of John Wyclif (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983). Of all of Wyclif's followers, John Purvey has the greatest number of manuscripts attributed to him. See, Margaret Deanesly, The Lollard Bible (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1920) 290-294 401-437, 439-445. Conrad Lindberg's comments are typical of scholars who support Purvey's authorship of the Later Version of the Bible, "whether the rest of LV is by Purvey or someone else is an open question, but so far no more likely candidate than Purvey has been suggested." "A Note on the Vocabulary of the Middle English Bible," Studia Neophilologica, 57 (1985): 129-131. A perceptive article that traces the history of attributions to John Purvey and doubts the authenticity of Purvey's authorship of any surviving Wycliffite text is Anne Hudson's "John Purvey: A Reconsideration of the Evidence for his Life and Writings," Viator, 12 (1981): 355-380. See also, Hudson, "The Debate on Bible Translation, Oxford 1401," English Historical Review, 90 (1975): 1-18.

³On the differences between Nominalism and Realism and the clash between them, the best study is Gordon Leff's William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis Of Scholastic Discourse (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1975). On Wyclif's philosophy, see Leff, Medieval Thought from St. Augustine to Ockham (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1958) 104. Leff, John Wyclif: The Path to Dissent (London: Oxford UP, 1966) 148. See especially Paul Spade's introduction to Wyclif's De universalibus edited by I. Mueller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) vol. II, vii-xlvii. See also, Anthony Kenny, "The Realism of the De Universalibus," Wyclif in his Times, ed. A. Kenny, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 17-29. Kenny, "Realism and Determinism in the Early Wyclif," From Ockham to Wyclif ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 165-177. The reader should be aware that, with the recent editing for the first time of medieval philosophical texts, our current understanding of medieval philosophy is being rapidly outdated.

⁴M.D. Lambert, Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) 221-222.

⁵Leff, The Path to Dissent 175.

⁶John Wyclif, Triologus ed. G. Lechler (Oxford, 1869) 262.

⁷For an explanation see Gordon Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages II (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1967) 549-557. For Wyclif's views on the Eucharist see, Gordon Leff, "Wyclif and Hus: A Doctrinal Comparison," Wyclif and his Times ed. A. Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 117-118. Gordon Leff, "The Place of Metaphysics in Wyclif's Theology," From Ockham to Wyclif ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 217-232. C.W. Dugmore, The Mass and the English Reformers (London: MacMillan, 1958) 52-55. For a contrary point of view see Maurice Keen's "Wyclif, the Bible, and Transubstantiation," Wyclif in his Times 1-16.

⁸J.I. Catto, "John Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist," The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley, eds. K. Walsh and D. Wood, *Studies in Church History Subsidia* 4 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 281-282.

⁹Real Presence is the theory that Christ is actually present in the Eucharist, and not just symbolically represented. There are three basic explanations of Real Presence: transubstantiation, a theory largely unchanged since its inception in the Roman Church, which asserts that the entire substance or basic reality of the bread and wine is transformed into the body and blood of Christ while the outward appearances of the bread and wine are unchanged; the theory of consubstantiation, which maintains that the glorified body and blood of Christ are present 'in, with and under' the consecrated bread and wine; the theory of impanation, which affirms the presence of the substance of Christ's body and blood along with the bread and wine in a kind of hypostatic union. It must be remembered, however, that consubstantiation and impanation are theories which were first argued in the Reformation years. Wyclif would not have thought of himself as arguing for anything but an improved theory of transubstantiation.

¹⁰Margaret Aston, Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion (London: Hambledon Press, 1984) 91-92.

¹¹Anne Hudson ed., English Wycliffite Writings (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978) 20.

¹²F.D. Matthew ed., The English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted Early English Text Society, Original Series 74 (London, 1880) 358.

¹³An Apology for Lollard Doctrines ed. James H. Todd, Camden Society, Old Series 20 (London, 1842) 50.

¹⁴Thomas Arnold ed., Select English Works of John Wyclif (Oxford, 1871) Vol III, 291.

¹⁵John Stacey, John Wyclif and Reform (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964) 62-63.

¹⁶The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe ed. A. Zettersten, Early English Text Society, Original Series 274 (London: Oxford UP, 1976) 68-69. Eric Colledge's article on this text of the Ancrene Riwe is perceptive. See "The Recluse A Lollard Interpolated Version of the Ancren Riwe," Review of English Studies 15 (1939): 1-15, 129-145. The Wycliffites, like most mediaeval writers including Langland, believed that the Donation of Constantine was an authentic historical document. Its genuineness was first questioned in the fifteenth century, although the controversy over its

validity raged until the close of the eighteenth century.

¹⁷"The Flowman's Tale," Chaucerian and Other Pieces
Vol VII, ed. W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897) ll. 1225-1232.

¹⁸The phrase "four new sects" is a regular feature of Lollard vocabulary. It is a convenient shorthand for referring to monks, canons, caesarean clergy and friars. It will thus be used throughout this study.

¹⁹Wyclif and his followers used the acrostic CAIM, formed from the first letters of the four major fraternal orders, to associate the friars with the first murderer, Cain. See Wyclif's Triologus, 362: "Alii autem videntes habenas mendacii sic laxatas fingunt, quod in Caym fuerunt istae sectae quattor inchoatae, et sic vox fratris sui Abel, ad figurandum horum fratrum malitiam, de terra clamavit ad Dominum. Et in testimonium istorum, quattor literae hujus nominis Caim inchoant hos quattor ordines, secundum ordinem temporis, quo finguntur a fratribus incepisse, ita quod C. Carmelitas, A. Augustinenses, J. Jacobitas et M. Minores significat, secundum ordinem temporis quem mendaciter sibi fingunt. Sed aggregando suas nequitias videtur mihi, quod licet originaliter in Caim inceperant, tamen post solutionem Sathanæ et per ejus cautelam sub figura sanctitatis isti hypocritae sunt excussi," that is, 'prophets picture the reins for these liars as so loose, because the origins of these four sects are in Caym. So the voice of his brother Abel cried out from the earth to the Lord, as a figure of these friars' malice. By their own admission the four letters of the name Caym are the first letters of the four orders. When those liars refer to themselves, these are the supposed origins of the fraternal orders: C. stands for Carmelites, A. for Augustinians, J. for Jacobites, and M. for the Minorites. But it seems to me, after their evil deeds are gathered together, that their origin is in Caim. Nevertheless, now that Satan is set free, under his protection these hypocrites go forth in the guise of sanctity'. For a vernacular Wycliffite use of the acrostic, an excellent example is "The Orders of Cain," Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries ed. R.H. Robbins (New York: Columbia UP, 1959) 157-162. Wyclif may have invented the acrostic. See, Margaret Aston, "Caim's Castles" 47.

²⁰Upland's Rejoinder ed. P. L. Heyworth (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968) 106. Heyworth derives "ranes" from the Latin rana -- frog, adding that the sense is likely 'mucus'. (166 note 158) He also refers the reader to Rev. 16: 13.

²¹Jack Upland ed. P.L. Heyworth (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968) 57-58.

²²It would be too sweeping a judgement to say that Wyclif and the Wycliffites despise all friars and fraternal exegesis. Rather, the Lollard position on friars is much the same as their position on the papacy: neither is inherently evil. Many of Wyclif's favourite authorities are friars, Nicholas of Lyra for example. Wyclif and his followers express admiration for St. Francis and St. Dominic, although they are severely critical of their

founding fraternal orders. Wyclif describes St. Francis's motivation, for example, in these words: "inceptit suum ordinem ex devotione caeca, deficiente prudentia serpentina," that is 'he founded his order out of ignorant devotion and with a failing, twisted sense of judgement'. Triologus 361. It would be fair to say that Wyclif and the Lollards admired certain individual friars, but rejected the premise of the fraternal orders on principle.

²³ Pierce the Ploughman's Crede ed. W.W. Skeat, Early English Text Society, Original Series 30 (London, 1867) ll. 160-171.

²⁴ Wyclif, Triologus 122.

²⁵ For an analysis of Bradwardine's position on predestination, see H. Obermann, Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine: A Fourteenth-Century Augustinian (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1957) 95-122. For an analysis of Bradwardine's influence upon Wyclif, see Obermann 198-204; 230-233.

²⁶ Cf. SEW II 426: "if þo pope asked me wheþer I were ordeyned to be saved or predestynate, I wolde sey þat I hoped so, but I wolde not swere hit, ne ferme hit wipouten condicioun, þof he grettly punyscht me."

²⁷ Christina von Nolcken ed., The Middle English Translation of the 'Rosarium Theologie' Middle English Texts 10 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979) 35-37.

²⁸ John Wyclif, De veritate sacrae scripturae Wyclif Society (London: Trubner & Co., 1905-1907) I 35.

²⁹ This aspect of dominion by grace is similar to a belief of the Donatists. There is no evidence, however, that Wyclif and his followers were influenced by the Donatist heresy. It is likely a case of two different religious groups with similar ideals developing similar doctrines. Anne Hudson notes a possible connection between one Lollard's beliefs and the Free Spirit heresy. See "A Lollard Mass," Journal of Theological Studies n.s. 23 (1972): 410.

³⁰ H.B. Workman, John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926) 281.

³¹ Friar Daw's Reply ed. P.L. Heyworth (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968) I. 374.

³² D.M. Grisdale ed., Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10, Leeds School of English Language Texts and Monographs 5 (Leeds: Titus Wilson of Kendal, 1939) 66.

³³ Anne Hudson, introduction, English Wycliffite Sermons Vol I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 138-149; 189-191.

³⁴ Adam Usk, Chronicon Adae de Usk 1377-1421 2nd edition ed. and trans. E. M. Thompson (London: Henry Frowde, 1904) 3.

³⁵ On the general abusive use of "Lollard" in the late fourteenth century, see Russell Peck, "Social Conscience and the Poets," Social Unrest in the Late Middle Ages ed. Francis X. Newman, Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies 39 (Binghamton, New York, 1986) 120.

³⁶ Margaret Aston, "'Caimes Castles'" 46.

³⁷ Mum and the Sothsegger ed. Mabel Day and Robert Steele, Early English Text Society, Original Series 199 (London: Humphrey Milford, 1936) Fragment M, ll. 417-420. Lollards are also threatened with hanging in "The Plowman's Tale" l 1236.

³⁸ Opus Arduum, MS. Brno University Mk 28 Fols. 136^v, 153, 157^v, 161^v, 179, 181^v. Quoted by Anne Hudson in, "A Neglected Wycliffite Text," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 29 (1978): 259.

³⁹ For the derogatory associations of 'Puritan' see Patrick Collinson's "A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 31 (1980): 483-489. Some of Wyclif's terms for the poor priests include sacerdotes pauperes, sacerdotes simplices, sacerdotes fideles, virii apostolici, and virii evangelici.

⁴⁰ Anne Hudson, "Interview with Anne Hudson," with S. Halasey, Comitatus 13 (1982): 9; Anne Hudson, "Wycliffite Prose" 250.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Man of Law's Tale," The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer 2nd edition ed. F. N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966) l. 1173.

⁴² John Clanvowe, "The Two Ways" The Works of Sir John Clanvowe ed. V.J. Scattergood (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1975) 70.

⁴³ The Lanterne of Light ed. Lilian Swinburn, Early English Text Society, Original Series 151 (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1917) 58.

⁴⁴ Archbishop Thoresby, The Lay Folks' Catechism eds. T. Simmons and H. Nolloth, Early English Text Society, Original Series 118 (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1901) 65. Thoresby's original reads "nane has power to do bot bisshop allane." 64.

⁴⁵ Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy," History 62 (1977): 352.

⁴⁶ Workman, II 268; Hudson, "Wyclif and the English Language" 86.

⁴⁷ G.M. Trevelyan, England in the Age of Wycliffe (London: Longman's, Green & Co., 1912) 319.

⁴⁸ K.B. McFarlane, John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Non-Conformity (London: English Universities Press, 1952) 177.

⁴⁹ A.K. McHardy, "Bishop Buckingham and the Lollards of Lincoln Diocese," Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972) 135-136.

⁵⁰ Anne Hudson, "The Examination of Lollards," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 46 (1973): 145-159.

⁵¹ See Margery Kempe's account in The Book of Margery Kempe ed. Sanford Brown Meech, Early English Text Society, Original Series 212 (London: Oxford UP, 1961) 28-29, 111-112, 135. For discussion, see Clarissa Atkinson, Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe (London: Cornell UP, 1983) 105-112.

⁵² John Gower, Confessio Amantis ed. G.M. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901) Book V ll. 1803-1819.

⁵³ For more on this point see the points of view exemplified by Joseph Dahmus and David Jeffrey. Joseph Dahmus describes John of Gaunt as unswervingly orthodox. See The Prosecution of John Wyclif (New Haven, 1952) 15, 114, 133-134; "John Wyclif and the English Government," Speculum 35 (1960), 66-67. For another point of view see the discussion by David Lyle Jeffrey in "Chaucer and Wyclif: Biblical Hermeneutic and Literary Theory in the Fourteenth Century," University of Ottawa Quarterly 53 (1983), 371-374.

⁵⁴ Anne Hudson, introduction, EWS 98-123. Helen Spencer furthers research on this subject. See, "The Fortunes of a Lollard Sermon-Cycle in the Later Fifteenth Century," Mediaeval Studies 48 (1986): 352-396.

⁵⁵ Anne Hudson, "The Expurgation of a Lollard Sermon-Cycle," Journal of Theological Studies 22 (1971): 451-465.

⁵⁶ Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?," So Many People Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English Presented to Angus McIntosh, ed. M. Benskin and M.L. Samuels (Edinburgh, 1981) 15-30.

Notes to Chapter Two

- ¹Scriptorum illustrium mainis Brytannie ... Catalogus (Basel, 1557-1559 ii, 673). The complete passage can be found in Vincent Di Marco, Piers Plowman: A Reference Guide (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982) 6.
- ²George Kane, Piers Plowman: The Evidence for Authorship (London: Athlone Press, 1965) 43 n.
- ³W. W. Skeat, introduction, Piers Plowman in Three Parallel Texts, by William Langland, (Oxford, 1886) II xxxviii-liii.
- ⁴Skeat, note, Piers Plowman II, xlii.
- ⁵Konrad Burdach, Der Dichter des Ackermann aus Bohmen U. Seine Zeit III, 2 (Berlin, 1926-1932) 306 note.
- ⁶Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London: Methuen, 1971) 107.
- ⁷Pamela Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent," Proceedings of the British Academy 66 (1980): 179-205.
- ⁸Willi Erzgraber, William Langlands "Piers Plowman" (Eine Interpretation des C-Textes). (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1957).
- ⁹Derek Pearsall, introduction, Piers Plowman C-text, by William Langland (London: Edward Arnold, 1981) 15.
- ¹⁰Peck 129.
- ¹¹David Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) chapter three.
- ¹²Janet Coleman, Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400 (New York: Columbia UP, 1981) 232-261.
- ¹³David Fowler, The Bible in Middle English Literature (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984) 312-313. Fowler's personal inclination seems to be in favour of Wycliffite influence. For example, he comments "we are indebted to commentators from behind the Iron Curtain for continuing to affirm the Wycliffite cast of the poem against mounting opposition in the West." [312]

¹⁴Ladislav Cejp, "Zum Problem der Anagramme in Langland's Piers the Flowman," Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik 2 (1954): 444-453.

¹⁵Ladislav Cejp, Metody Stredoveke Alegorie a Langlanduv Petr Orac (The Methods of Medieval Allegory and Langland's Piers the Flowman ed. Jiri Levy, Aeta Universitatis Palckiane domucensis, Facultas Philosophia 8 Philologica 5 (Statni Pedagogicke Nakladalelsvi v Praze) 1961.

¹⁶Ladislav Cejp, An Introduction to the Study of Langland's 'Piers the Flowman' (Palackeho Universita v Olomouci, 1956) 53. See also 38, 54-55, 72.

¹⁷Fowler, The Bible in Middle English Literature 226-270.

¹⁸D. A. Lawton, "Lollardy and the 'Piers Flowman' Tradition" Modern Language Review 76 (1981): 780-793.

¹⁹Morton Bloomfield, "The Allegories of Dobest (Piers Flowman B XIX-XX)" Medium Aevum 50 (1981): notes 14 and 22. Anna Baldwin, The Theme of Government in Piers Flowman (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981) 18.

²⁰Michael R. Paull, "Mahomet and the Conversion of the Heathen in Piers Flowman" English Language Notes 10 (1972): 1-8.

²¹Kane 72.

²²Single authorship has not been unanimously accepted by Piers Flowman scholars. A theory of single authorship was strongly proposed by J.M. Manly in the influential Cambridge History of English Literature (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1907-1933 15 vols) II 1-48. Among Manly's followers have been Mabel Day, "The Alliteration of the Versions of Piers Flowman in Its Bearing on Their Authorship," Modern Language Review 17 (1922): 403ff; T. P. Dunning, Piers Flowman: An Interpretation of the A-text (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1937); David C. Fowler, Piers Flowman: Literary Relations of the A and B Texts (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961). David Fowler is the staunchest opponent of the single authorship theory today. See The Bible in Middle English Literature 227; 305. An excellent survey of the authorship controversy up to 1938 is given by Morton Bloomfield in "The Present State of Piers Flowman Studies" Speculum 14 (1939): 215-222.

²³William Langland, Piers Flowman A-text ed. George Kane (London: Athlone Press, 1960) XII 106. (Henceforth all references to the A-text of Piers Flowman are to this edition.)

- ²⁴Edith Rickert, "John But, Messenger and Maker," Modern Philology 2 (1913-1914): 107-116.
- ²⁵William Langland, Piers Plowman B-text ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone Press, 1975) XV 152. (Henceforth all references to the B-text of Piers Plowman are to this edition.)
- ²⁶William Langland, Piers Plowman C-text ed. Derek Pearsall, York Medieval Texts second series (London: Edward Arnold, 1981) V 35-43. (Henceforth all references to the C-text of Piers Plowman are to this edition; henceforth all references to Piers Plowman are cited in the text and abbreviated to text, passus and line numbers.)
- ²⁷Morton Bloomfield, Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1961) 37.
- ²⁸Robert Adams, "Langland and the Liturgy Revisited," Studies in Philology 73 (1976): 280.
- ²⁹Adams 280.
- ³⁰Derek Pearsall, introduction 19.
- ³¹Greta Hort, Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938) 53-55.
- ³²Pearsall, introduction 19.
- ³³Bloomfield, Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse 97.
- ³⁴E. Talbot Donaldson, Piers Plowman: The C-text and Its Poet (New Haven: Yale UP, 1949) 218.
- ³⁵Gordon Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages Vol II. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1967) 587.
- ³⁶K. B. McFarlane, John Wyclif and the Beginnings of English Non-conformity (London: English UP, 1952) 136.
- ³⁷McFarlane 136.
- ³⁸McFarlane 137.
- ³⁹McFarlane 112.

⁴⁰McFarlane 144.

⁴¹McFarlane 151.

⁴²M.D. Lambert, Medieval Heresy 240.

⁴³Lambert 240.

⁴⁴Rickert 107-116.

⁴⁵Pearsall, introduction [9].

⁴⁶J. A. W. Bennett, "The Date of the A-text of Piers Plowman," Publications of the Modern Language Association 58 (1943): 566-572.

⁴⁷David Fowler dates the three texts of Piers Plowman very differently than J. A. W. Bennett. Fowler views the A-text as completed by 1362, the B-text in 1383, and the C-text as no earlier than 1387, possibly even as late as the 1390's. Fowler bases his late dating of the B-text on the grounds of what he perceives to be internal references to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, especially the murder of Simon Sudbury, allusions to the condemnation of Wyclif's teachings at the Blackfriars Council in May of 1382, the repression of Wyclif's Oxford followers by Courtenay in the summer and fall of 1382, and Bishop Despenser's Crusade in Flanders in the early summer of 1383. Fowler explains in some detail the references to the Peasants' Revolt. He does not explain the other allusions, nor does he explain his dating of the C-text. See David Fowler, Bible in Middle English Literature 227; 270; 288-294. A later date for the B and C-texts of Piers Plowman, of course, only increases the probability of Langland's awareness of Lollardy.

⁴⁸Workman I 194.

⁴⁹Michael Wilks, "Reformatio regni: Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movements," Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972) 120.

⁵⁰Workman I 282.

⁵¹On Courtenay's dealings with Wyclif see Joseph Dahmus, William Courtenay: Archbishop of Canterbury, 1381-1396 (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1966) 31-63, and The Prosecution of John Wyclif 7-73.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹Margaret Aston, Lollards and Reformers 135-192.

²A cogent discussion of Langland's apparent political beliefs in the B and C-texts is that of E. Talbot Donaldson in Piers Plowman: The C-Text and its Poet 85-120. Donaldson provides short extracts from various sources to demonstrate the diversity of opinion. See, 85 notes 1 and 2.

³Baldwin 18.

⁴Derek Pearsall, note, Piers Plowman C-text 37, note 140.

⁵Chronicon Angliae ed. E. M. Thompson, Rolls Series 64; Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages (London, 1874) 395-396.

⁶Anne Hudson, "A Neglected Wycliffite Text" Journal of Ecclesiastical History 29 (1978): 257-279.

⁷A. K. McHardy 142.

⁸W. W. Skeat, introduction, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer Supplementary volume VII Chaucerian and Other Pieces, (Oxford, 1897) xxiii.

⁹P. L. Heyworth, "Jack Upland, a Lollard Interpolator and Piers Plowman B, X 249f.," Medium Aevum 36 (1967): 246.

¹⁰Bartlett Jere Whiting, Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Sayings From English Writings Mainly Before 1500 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1968) B638.

¹¹For a further examination of the expression "dourbe houndis" in Piers Plowman, Wycliffite texts and the works of the Dominican friar John Bromyard, see the article by A. Kellogg, "Langland and the 'Canes Muti'" Essays in Literary History 16 Presented to J. M. French, ed. R. Kirk and C. F. Main (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965): 25-35.

¹²Morton Bloomfield, "The Allegories of Dobest (Piers Plowman B XIX-XX)" notes 14 and 22.

- ¹³Baldwin 79.
- ¹⁴Pamela Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent" 191.
- ¹⁵Katherine Walsh, Richard Fitzralph in Oxford, Avignon and Armagh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) 465.
- ¹⁶L. J. Daly, The Political Theory of John Wyclif (Chicago: Loyola UP, 1962) lx.
- ¹⁷Daly 147.
- ¹⁸Anne Hudson, Lollards and their Books (Oxford: Hambleton, 1985) 3-5. For detailed discussion of Lollard preacher's handbooks see, Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought" Journal of Theological Studies ns 23 (1972): 65-81; Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Compilation in England and Bohemia" Journal of Theological Studies ns 25 (1974): 129-140; Christina von Nolcken, A Middle English Translation of the 'Rosarium Theologie' (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979) 9-51; Christina von Nolcken, "Some Alphabetical Compendia and How Preachers Used Them in Fourteenth-Century England" Viator 12 (1981): 271-288.
- ¹⁹Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy" History 62 (1977): 361.
- ²⁰For a discussion of Langland's view of Penance in relation to Wyclif's thought see Pamela Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent" 192-193.
- ²¹The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe 68-69.
- ²²For more on this point see further Simon Forde's "Theological Sources Cited by Two Canons of Repton: Philip Repyngdon and John Eyton," From Ockham to Wyclif ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 419-428.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹I am well aware that my interpretation of the "lewed" vicar is contrary to established scholarly opinion, of which three examples will need to suffice. Derek Pearsall views the vicar's opinions as, "though bluntly expressed, are not to be despised; he is the latest in a line of figures ... who have questioned the relation between the Church's teaching and the Church's practice, between cardinal virtues and cardinals' virtue." [note, 358 n.409] D. W. Robertson and Bernard Huppé in, Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition Princeton Studies in English 31, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1951) 225-227, assert that the vicar exposes the corruption and the vices hidden in hypocritical rationalization. They also find a pun at B, XIX, 484 on "fer" and "faire", which implies that the vicar's homeward journey is toward New Jerusalem. Ladislav Cejp identifies the vicar with Wyclif. [Introduction 38] He finds, for example, a syllabic anagram in the line "The vyker hadde fer home and faire toke his leue." Vyker...leue = Wycliffe. Cejp's theory is not as outlandish as it may sound when one remembers that the name 'Wyclif' had thirty different medieval spellings. These assessments of the vicar are correct insofar as they note the vicar's perceptive criticisms of the Church's hierarchy; they are erroneous, however, in making him out to be a blameless, perfect figure of authority. The vicar is "lewede," and this adjective is significant to the way he should be read. "Lewede" in Piers Plowman means useless (about things) or ignorant (about people) rather than illiterate or uneducated, and it is a word that Langland uses often and always in a negative sense. [For examples, see C, I, 185; C, IX, 140, 209; C, XVII, 55, 87] While pejorative nouns like "munstrals," "foles," "boys," and even "lunatyk lollares" are used ironically in Piers Plowman, Langland does not use pejorative adjectives by themselves to make a passage ironic. Either the "lewede vicar" is the one and only instance of "lewede" being used without negative force in Piers Plowman, or Langland intends the reader to be wary of the "lewede vicar." In fact, the vicar is an extremely dangerous spiritual advisor, as can be seen in Imaginatif's speech at C, XIV, 114-125:

For yf þe clerke be connyng he knoweth what is synne
 And how contricion withoute confessioun conforteth þe soule,
 And we seen in þe sauter, in psalmes oen or tweyne,
 How contricioun is comended for hit cacheth away synne:
Beati quorum remisse sunt iniquitates
 And þat conforteth vch a clerk and keuereth fro wanhope,
 In whiche floed þe fende fondeth man hardest,
 There þe lewede lyth stille and loketh aftur lente
 And hath no contricion ar he come to shrifte, and thenne can he lytel telle,
 But as his loresman hym lereth byleueth and troweth,
 And þat is aftur his person other his parsche preest, and parauntur bothe lewede
 To lere lewede men, as Luk bereth witnesse:
Dum cecus ducit cecum, etc.

Fol muchel wo was hym marked þat wade shal with þe lewede!
 It must be noted that Lady Meed also favours "lewed" clerks. [C, III, 30-37]
 Since vicars are the immediate source of knowledge and spiritual advice for a parish, a lewd vicar is a far graver threat to the spiritual health of England than the pope or cardinals in Rome and Avignon. As Lady Meed, Rechelesnesse and Nede, the lewd vicar is an ambivalent figure in *Piers Plowman*. His criticisms are valid, but, at the same time, misdirected. He is another example of a human who is unwilling to rule himself, and the reader must respond to him with caution.

²John Wyclif, De officio regis Wyclif Society
 (London, 1887) 59.

³John Wyclif, De blasphemia ed. Michael H. Dziewicki
 (London, 1893) 190-197, 267.

⁴A sound introduction to the active and contemplative lives can be found in P. T. Camelot and I. Mennessier, "The Active Life and the Contemplative Life," The Virtues and States of Life ed. A. M. Henry, trans. R. J. Olson and G. T. Lennon, Theology Library 4 (Chicago, 1957) 645-683.

⁵Bloomfield, Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse 43.
 Langland's criticisms of monasteries are certainly tame compared to his attack upon friars and the Wycliffite attack upon monasteries. Peter Taitt notes that favourable allusions to monks outnumber unfavourable allusions by a ratio of 2:1. See, Incubus and Ideal: Ecclesiastical Figures in Chaucer and Langland (Salzburg: Universitat Salzburg, 1975) 136. Langland's praise for the monastic life, however, has not always been seen in a positive light. R.E. Kaske, in "Langland and the Paradiscus Claustralis," Modern Language Notes 72 (1957): 481-483, sees it as little more than a traditional tag. Elisabeth Orsten, in "'Heaven on Earth': Langland's Vision of Life Within the Cloister," American Benedictine Review 21 (1970): 526-534, finds it naive, even maudlin.

⁶A discussion of the Wycliffite attitude toward the contemplative life can be found in Frank Towne's "Wyclif and Chaucer on the Contemplative Life," Essays Critical and Historical dedicated to Lily B. Campbell (New York: Russell and Russell, 1950) 3-14.

⁷On the supposed superiority of the active life in Lollard thought, see Trevelyan 156. The advocates of a Mixed life in *Piers Plowman* are many, although rarely in agreement over particulars. Among the most influential have been: Henry W. Wells, "The Construction of *Piers Plowman*," PMLA 44 (1929): 123-140. Nevill K. Coghill, "The Character of *Piers Plowman* Considered from the B-Text," Medium Aevum 2 (1933): 108-135. R.W. Chambers, Man's Unconquerable Mind London: Jonathan Cape, 1939. E. Talbot Donaldson, Piers Plowman: The C-Text and Its Poet, Robertson-Huppé Scriptural Tradition. John J. Lawlor revised this theory somewhat by corresponding Dowel, Dobet and Dobest with the purgative, illuminative and unitive stages of mysticism. See, "The Imaginative Unity of *Piers Plowman*,"

Review of English Studies ns 8 (1957): 113-126. There have also been critics who argue against a Mixed life. S.S. Hussey, in "Langland, Hilton and the Three Lives," Review of English Studies ns 7 (1956): 132-150, has found the equation of Dobest with the mixed life of only limited value. R.W. Frank Jr., in Piers Plowman and the Scheme of Salvation (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957), esp. 34-44, argues against any inclusion of the Mixed life in Langland's vision. More recent commentators on Dowel, Dobet and Dobest tend to agree with Frank. A. C. Spearing relates the threefold division to Langland's "technique of preaching." Criticism and Medieval Poetry 2nd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1972) 118. Mary Carruthers, The Search for St. Truth: A Study of Meaning in Piers Plowman (Evanston, 1973) 6-10, 21, believes that attempts to relate Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest to ways of life or sections of the poem are based on wrong assumptions. Janet Coleman also rejects the equation of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest with the three lives. 241-243.

⁸See for instance Rolle's The Fire of Love translated from the Incendium Amoris into Middle English by Richard Misyn in 1435 and edited by Ralph Harvey for the Early English Text Society os 106, (London: 1889) and reprinted Millwood: Kraus Reprint Co, 1979. Rolle praises bishops such as St. Cuthbert who gave up his bishopric for the life of contemplation. He then asks, "Slike men perfore if pai for more mede to have þus done, who of gude mynde will be hardy Any state in holy kyrk solitary lyfe to sett before?" [30] Later on, Rolle confronts the question of superiority directly: "Of sum truly it is doutyd qwhilk lyfe is more medful And bettir, contemplatife or actiue. Not to fewe it semys þat actife is meefullar, for many dedis & prechingis þat it vsis. Bot þies ar vnknawand, for vertew of contemplatife þai knaw not. 3itt many actife þer ar bettir þen sum contemplatyfe; bot best contemplatif ar hear þen þe best actife. perfore we say; lyfe contemplatif parly is þe better, þe swettar, & þe worthiar, & more meefull als enens verray meed, þat is ioy of god vn-wroght, for he byrnyngly lufis god; and more grace is askyd, of contemplatife lyfe reght be led, þen Actyfe. Resun of feruent lufe in lyfe contemplatife þen in actyue is, for contemplatyue in rest ar of mynde & body, & perfore before all deedly swetnes of endles lufe þa tast. Actif truly in labyr & vtward rynnyng sarifis god, & in inward rest taris bot lityll, wharfore þa may not be delityd bot seldum & schortly; contemplatife sothely als wer besily lufe with halsyngis of þer lemman. Sum for soth gaynsettand, says; Actife lyfe is more fruytfull, for warkis of mercy it doys, it prechys, & slike ober dedis wyrkis; Qwarfore more meritory it is. I say nay, for slyke warkis langis to accidentale reward, þat is, ioy of þinge wrought þer is treuly in trew contemplatif men a ful swete heet & plenteusnes of godis lufe, of þe whilk abyding, in-to þame is send a ioyfull sownd with myrth vntrowed; And þis in actife men in þis lyfe ar neuer fun, for only to heuynly þingis þai take not hede þat so in Ihesu þa myght be worthi to ioy. & perfore worpily actife lyfe is put be-hynd, & contemplatyf in þis present & in lyfe to cum worpily is preferryd He, perfore, actife life þat sarifis wele, to contemplatif lyfe he is besy to go vp. Qwho truly with gift of heuynly contemplacion in maner forsayd is raysd, to Actif cum not down, bot if parauntyr he be compellyd, gouerans to take of cristin - þat seldum or neuer I trow has happynd." [48-49] Rolle does not distinguish between the active life of true labour and the episcopal life of preaching and Church government. Contemplation is superior to either species of the Active life. As a recluse and mystic, of

course, Rolle's opinion cannot be taken to be unbiased.

⁹Thomas Renna, "Wyclif's Attacks on the Monks," From Ockham to Wyclif ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 5 (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987) 277-278.

¹⁰The Cloud of Unknowing, ed. Abbot Justin McCann (London: Burns & Oates, 1964) 53-54. The second part is, "contemplatyue liif & actyue liif couplid to-geders in goostly sibreden & maad sisters at þe ensample of Martha & Marye. þus hi3e may an actyue come to contemplacion, & no hi3er; bot 3if it be ful seeldom & by a specyall grace. þus lowe may a contemplatiif com towardes actyue liif, & no lower; bot 3if be ful seeldom & in grete nede."

¹¹Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" 22-23.

¹²An answer to Will's question can be found in The Cloud of Unknowing: "What menep þis: 'Marye hap chosen the best'? Where-so-euer þe best is set or nemnyd, it askep bifore it peese two þinges: a good & a beter; so þat it be þe best, & þe þryd in noumbre. Bot whiche ben pees þre good þinges, of þe whiche Marye chees þe best? þre lyues ben þey not, for Holi Chirche makip no mynde bot of two -- actyue liif & contemplatyue liif; þe whiche two lyues ben priuely vnderstonden in þe story of þis Gospel by pees two sisters, Martha & Marye - by Martha actyue by Marye contemplatyue. Wip-outen one of peese two lyues may no man be saaf; & where no no ben bot two, may no man chese þe best. Bot þof al þer be bot two lyues, neuerþeles 3it in peese two lyues ben þre partyes, ich one betir þe oþer þe first partye is good, þe secounde is betir, bot þe brid is alþer beste. 3is is þe beste partye of Marye. & herfore it is pleynly to wite þat oure Lorde seide not: 'Marye hap chosen þe best liif'; for þer ben no more lyues bot two, & of two may no man chese þe best. Bot of pees two liues 'Marye hap chosen,' he seyde, 'þe best partye, þe which schal neuer be take from hir." [52-54]

¹³T. P. Dunning, "Action and Contemplation in Piers Plowman," Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches ed. S. S. Hussey (London, 1969) 213-225; Derek Pearsall, notes, 182 note 78-98; 255 note 194; 296 note 81.

¹⁴K. Burdach III, 2, 306 note.

¹⁵Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent," 197-199.

¹⁶For a short discussion that refutes any Lollard association, see Robert A. Wood, "A Fourteenth-Century London Owner of Piers Plowman," Medium Aevum 53 (1984): 84-85.

¹⁷For another Lollard triad, see, "Tractatus de Regibus," Four English Political Tracts of the Later Middle Ages Camden Society, 4th series 18 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977) 17. The triad of doing well, better and best is a traditional motif in medieval literature. See also,

for example, The Cloud of Unknowing 52-54, and The Ancrene Wisse ed. J.R.R. Tolkien Early English Text Society ns 249 (London: Oxford UP, 1962) 177-178. The narrator of The Ancrene Riwe explains that "þreo manere men of godes icorene liuieþ on eorþe. þe ane mahe beon to gode pilgrimes ieuenet. þe oþre to deade. þe þridde to ihongede wiþ hare gode wil o iesuse rode. þe forme beoþ gode. þe oþre beoþ betere. þe þridde best of alle." It is noteworthy that, like Langland, the one Wycliffite sermonist, and the author of The Cloud of Unknowing, the author of the Ancrene Wisse recognises only the active and contemplative lives. Later on, he uses the traditional exemplum of Martha and Mary to distinguish between them. [211-212] Nevertheless, Langland, the Lollards and the author of the Ancrene Wisse also use terminology that suggests the existence of a third life. The three degrees were often likened to states of human life: marriage (coniugatorum, or active), widowhood (uiduarum, or contemplative), and virginity (virginum, or mixed). [Hugh of St. Victor, Miscellanea, VI, XXV, P.L. 177. 825, quoted by Robertson-Huppé 200 note 21] This is the pattern Langland follows in Liberum Arbitrium's explanation of the three kinds of fruit on the Tree of Charity. [C, XVIII, 84-94] Yet, according to Robertson-Huppé, [13] the third degree was also likened to martyrdom. [Robertson-Huppé do not give a patristic source for this assertion.] This is the sense the other Wycliffite sermonist (possibly the same man) and the author of the Ancrene Wisse follow. For the Lollard, the three degrees are like: marriage to Christ through obedience of the Commandments, learning and preaching God's Law, and martyrdom. For the author of the Ancrene Wisse, the three degrees are: being a pilgrim, being dead to the world, and martyrdom. In each case two of the three descriptions are part of the traditional triad Langland demonstrates. The confusion between two lives and three lives might suggest an attempt by all three to accommodate two contrary traditions, or it might suggest that all three saw doing well, better and best as very closely related to the two traditional lives, but not identical.

¹⁸The fullest exploration of language in Piers Plowman is that of Mary Carruthers, The Search for St. Truth. Carruthers is concerned with the inadequacy of language to express coherent, unambiguous meaning. She argues, "this analysis of words as ambiguous tools of thought, capable not only of revealing a true cognition but also of generating a corruption of understanding, is the basic concern of the poem." [4] Carruthers sees language in Piers Plowman as inherently corruptible. No matter how clearly a speaker might explain something, someone inevitably misunderstands. A disjunction between sign and signifier, speaker and listener, text and reader is fundamental to Carruthers's understanding of the poem.

¹⁹Jill Mann has pointed out an association between the gluttony of food and drink and the gluttony of words as oral perversions. See, "Eating and Drinking in Piers Plowman," Essays and Studies ns 32, (1979), 34-38.

²⁰McFarlane 99.

- ²¹Gordon Leff, "Wyclif and Hus: A Doctrinal Comparison," Wyclif in his Times 110-111. Beryl Smalley has described the Bible as Wyclif's "refuge against anarchy". "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 27 (1964), 73-89.
- ²²Anne Hudson, "A Wycliffite Scholar of the Early Fifteenth Century," The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley, ed. Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History Subsidia 4 (Oxford, 1985) 301-315.
- ²³For Langland, see Carruthers 16-19. For the Wycliffites, see Janel Mueller, The Native Tongue and the Word: Developments in English Prose Style 1380-1580 (Chicago: Loyola, 1984) 42-55. On this point in general in the Middle Ages, see Marcia Colish, The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge rev. ed. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983) 3. Colish's book is an excellent introduction to language theory in the Middle Ages. She concentrates on Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas and Dante as representative thinkers of their times.
- ²⁴Biblia Vulgata, John 1:1.
- ²⁵The Holy Bible ... in the Earliest Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers John 1:1.
- ²⁶For further examples cf. EW 26, 251, 442; SEW III 317, 319, 399.
- ²⁷Biblia Vulgata, Gen. 38: 9-10.
- ²⁸Cf. the references for "Spille," under 3b, 3c and 5b The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 ed.
- ²⁹Lawyers were frequent targets of abuse in mediaeval literature. Cf. Chaucer, "General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales" ll 309-330; Gower, Mirour de l'Omme ed. G. M. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901) ll 24181-24816.
- ³⁰A brief history and a convenient collection of excerpts from representative antifraternal literature can be found in Chaucer: Sources and Backgrounds ed. Robert P. Miller (New York: Oxford UP, 1977) 237-268. Important critical work on the anti-fraternal tradition in Piers Plowman has been done by Robertson and Huppé 7-11, 26, 236-237, 240; R. W. Frank 106-107; Morton Bloomfield, Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse 45-46, 71-72, 148-149; Peter Taitt 84-101; Penn Szittya, "The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English Literature," Speculum, 52 (1977), 287-313; Penn Szittya, The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 247-287; David Aers 48-51.
- ³¹E. Talbot Donaldson compares the treatment of minstrels in the

A, B, and C-texts, and discusses minstrel imagery. See, Piers Plowman: The C-Text and its Poet 136-153. Robertson and Huppé use how characters speak as criteria to help divide the characters in Piers Plowman into the ranks of true and false minstrels. They argue convincingly that minstrelsy is an important motif throughout Langland's vision. See, Scriptural Tradition 22-25, 236.

³²The positive aspect of receiving gold as payment is noted by Robertson and Huppé in Scriptural Tradition 22 and 25. Langland is not entirely consistent, however, in its use when his alliterative line demands it. For example, see C, Prologue, 74-75:

Thus 3e gyue 3oure gold glotons to helpe
And leneth hit lorelles pat lecherye haunten.

³³Donaldson realised the metaphorical nature of "Godes munstrals" but he is mistaken in seeing only scholars as capable of articulation. The benefactor is 'entertained' by the spoken thanks of the poor and disabled. Donaldson 143-144.

³⁴There is a parallel here between Langland's three types of poor (poor scholars, the blind, the bedridden) and what the Carmelite Thomas Netter mockingly called Wyclif's 'Trinity of the Poor'. [See Margaret Aston, "Caimes Castles" 65, 70 n. 22, 78 n. 89 n. 91, 79 n. 105] Wyclif lists "pauperes caecos, pauperes claudos, pauperes debiles," that is 'poor blind, poor lame, poor infirm.' [Triologus 305, 343, 354] Wyclif and Langland recognise three categories of poor who must be supported with alms, of which two are identical -- the blind and the infirm. Rather than an instance of borrowing or influence, it is instead likely that Wyclif and Langland have a common Biblical source: Luke 14:13-21. Wyclif contrasts the deserving poor with "mendicantes validos," that is, 'strong beggars' (ie. friars). For a Wycliffite reading of Luke 14:13-21 see, EWS 227-231. The Wycliffite sermonist interprets the three categories literally and allegorically. The blind are those who will be enlightened; the infirm are the poor in spirit; the lame are those that "haltyth now hy3e in vertues and now lowe in synnes." [230]

Notes to Chapter Five

¹J. A. W. Burrow, "The Audience of Piers Plowman," Anglia 75 (1957): 373-384; Anne Middleton, "The Audience and Public of Piers Plowman," Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background ed. D. A. Lawton (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1982) 101-123; Robert Wood, "A Fourteenth-Century London Owner of Piers Plowman" Medium Aevum 53 (1984): 83-90.

²Burrow 374.

³Wood 85.

⁴The text of John Ball's letter appears in, Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose, ed. Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921) 160-161.

⁵C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford UP, 1936) 159 note 1.

⁶Fowler, The Bible in Middle English Literature 296.

⁷John Fines, "Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1511-1512," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 14 (1963): 160-174. Late Lollardy is also examined by John Thomson in The Later Lollards 1414-1520 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), and by A. G. Dickens in his Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558 (London: Hambleton, 1982), and by Derek Plumb in "The Social and Economic Spread of Rural Lollardy: A Reappraisal," Voluntary Religion ed. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 23 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 111-129.

⁸Thomas Hoccleve, "Remonstrance Against Oldcastle," Selections from Hoccleve, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) ll. 143-148.

⁹Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Sedition 1381-1431," Past and Present 17 (1960): 24. For a study of the erudition of one particular fifteenth-century Wycliffite scholar see Anne Hudson, "Wycliffite Scholar" 301-315. A more general study of early academic Wycliffism is Anne Hudson's "Wycliffism in Oxford 1381-1411," Wyclif in his Times, ed. A. Kenny, (Oxford 1986), 67-84.

¹⁰D. A. Lawton, "Lollardy and the 'Piers Plowman' Tradition," Modern Language Review 76 (1981): 793. Other studies of Lollard literature inspired by Piers Plowman are David Lampe's "The Satiric Strategy

of 'Peres the Ploughman's Crede'," The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century, ed. B. Levy and P. Szarmach, (Kent 1981) 69-80; Peck, "Social Conscience and the Poets" 129-139. Ritchie D. Kendall's The Drama of Dissent: The Radical Poetics of Nonconformity, 1380-1590 (Chapel Hill, 1986), 50-89; Penn Szitty's The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature 195-211, 216-220, 228-229. Lawton examines the Lollard nature of some works inspired by Fiers Flowman; Lampe discusses Pierce the Ploughman's Crede as satire; Peck the Wycliffite literature of protest; Kendall the dramatic confrontational quality of Lollard writing; Szitty the antifraternal content of Lollard work.

¹¹Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy," History 62 (1977): 349.

¹²Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy" 355.

¹³George Kane, introduction, Fiers Flowman: The A Version, by William Langland, (London: Athlone Press, 1960), 8 note 1. The text of Merita Misse and excerpts from Virtutes Missarum can be found, respectively, in The Poems of John Audelay, ed. E. K. Whiting, EETS OS 184 (London: Oxford UP, 193; reprinted New York: Kraus Reprint, 1971) 65-79, and The Lay Folk's Mass Book, ed. Thomas Simmons, EETS OS 71 (London, 1879; reprinted 1968) 367-368, 371.

¹⁴Russell Hope Robbins, Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries 331; Robbins, "Dissent in Middle English Literature! The Spirit of (Thirteen) Seventy-six," Medievalia et Humanistica ns 9 (1979): 36.

¹⁵W. C. Greet ed., introduction, The Reule of Cristen Religioun, by Reginald Pecock, Early English Text Society original series 171 (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford UP, 1927) xvii.

¹⁶The confiscation is recorded in Lincoln Register Chedworth fo. 62^v. For an account, see Margaret Deanesly, The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1920) 363. Margaret Aston suggests that this confiscation of the Canterbury Tales might actually be a reference to the Lollard Flowman's Tale, which was generally attributed to Chaucer by the sixteenth century. Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy," 365. But see also Anne Hudson's "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" 266-269, and Janet Coleman's Medieval Readers and Writers 211 for discussion of the implications of Arundel's 1407 Constitutions for any vernacular religious work. A detailed discussion of the effect of Arundel's Constitutions on vernacular religious literature is Helen Spencer's "The Fortunes of a Lollard Sermon-Cycle in the Later Fifteenth Century," Mediaeval Studies 48 (1986): 352-396.

¹⁷Hudson, "Wycliffite Prose" 250.

¹⁸Lawton 781, 788-792; Mum and the Sothseqger Frag.
M ll. 417-420.

¹⁹Fowler, The Bible in Middle English Literature 269.

²⁰Andrew N. Wawn, "The Genesis of the Plowman's Tale," Yearbook of English Studies 2 (1972): 21-40. Wawn, "Chaucer, The Plowman's Tale, and Reformation Propaganda: The Testimonies of Thomas Godfray and I Playne Piers," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester 56 (1973-1974): 174-192.

²¹Fasciculi Zizaniorum, quoted by R. B. Dobson ed. in his edition of material on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (New York: MacMillan St. Martin's Press 1970) 378. The historian Thomas Walsingham accuses Ball that he "docuit et perversa dogmata perfidi Johannis Wiclyf et opinionones quas tenuit, et insanias falsas, et plura quae longam foret recitare," that is, 'he taught and preached aloud for a long time the perverse doctrines of the perfidious John Wyclif, and his own suppositions, and senseless falsities, and many other things besides'. Thomas Walsingham, Historia Anglicana ed. Henry Thomas Riley, Rolls Series 28 (London, 1864) II, 32.

Notes to Chapter Six

¹Charles Muscatine, Poetry and Crisis in the Age of Chaucer (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972) 88.

²Fearsall, introduction, 11.

³Fearsall, note, notes 120, 121.

⁴A. K. McHardy, "Bishop Buckingham and the Lollards of Lincoln Diocese" 142.

⁵Anne Hudson, "The Examination of Lollards" Bulletin: Institute of Historical Research 56 (1973): 152.

⁶See Aston, Lollards and Reformers 137-143 for discussion of Wyclif's views on images.

⁷Wycliffite positions on images have been discussed by Aston, Lollards and Reformers 143-192; Hudson, notes, EWV 179-181; Von Nolcken, notes, Rosarium 124-127.

⁸Aston, Lollards and Reformers 167.

⁹Aston, Lollards and Reformers 158.

¹⁰Aston, Lollards and Reformers 177.

¹¹Wyclif was used with caution by Anglican reformers. 'Wyclif's' English works were prohibited by royal decree as late as 8 July, 1546, and Catholic writers were quick to point out the discrepancies between Wyclif's teachings and Anglican reforms. See Anthony Kenny, "The Accursed Memory: The Counter-Reformation Reputation of John Wyclif," Wyclif in his Times ed. A. Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 160, 162-166. Two other invaluable studies of Wyclif's post-medieval reputation are, Margaret Aston's "John Wyclif's Reformation Reputation" Past and Present 30 (1965): 23-51, and Vaclav Mudroch's The Wyclif Tradition ed. A. C. Reeves (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1979). The Lollard view of Wyclif is discussed by Christina von Nolcken in "Another Kind of Saint: A Lollard Perception of John Wyclif," From Ockham to Wyclif ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 429-443.

¹²Margaret Aston, "John Wyclif's Reformation Reputation" 47-48.

- ¹³ Anne Hudson, "No Newe Thyng": The Printing of Medieval Texts in the early Reformation Period," Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday ed. Douglas Grey and E. G. Stanley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 173. For more information on the use of Wycliffite texts in the Reformation years see, Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and the Reformation: Survival or Revival?" History 49 (1964): 149-170.
- ¹⁴ On Crowley's treatment of Piers Plowman, see J. N. King, "Crowley's Editions of Piers Plowman: A Tudor Apocalypse," Modern Philology 73 (1975-76): 342-352, and J. R. Thorne and Marie-Claire Uhart's "Robert Crowley's Piers Plowman," Medieval Aevum 55 (1986): 248-254.
- ¹⁵ Skeat, textual notes, Piers Plowman in Three Parallel Texts II 69.
- ¹⁶ T. P. Dunning, "The Structure of the B-Text of Piers Plowman," Style and Symbolism in Piers Plowman: A Modern Critical Anthology ed. Robert J. Blanch (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1969) 100.
- ¹⁷ Morton Bloomfield, Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse 135-142.
- ¹⁸ Robertson-Huppé 168-169, 217, 240-241, 245.
- ¹⁹ Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent" 195-197.
- ²⁰ Dr. Whitaker, introduction to Piers Plowman in Three Parallel Texts, ed. W.W. Skeat xlii.
- ²¹ Skeat, note, Piers Plowman in Three Parallel Texts II, xlii.
- ²² Lawton 793.
- ²³ "The Examination of Master William Thorpe," Fifteenth-Century Prose and Verse, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (New York: Cooper Square, 1964) 120.
- ²⁴ D. M. Grisdale ed., Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10, 65-66.
- ²⁵ "Lollard," The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 ed. See also Ernest McDonnell, The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture (New Brunswick, 1954) 246-247, 266-267, 368-369, 513, 519-520, 557.
- ²⁶ Workman II 281; Hudson, "Wyclif and the English Language" 86.

- 12-13. ²⁷Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Sediton 1381-1431"
- ²⁸Pearsall, note, 178 note 2.
- ²⁹Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent" 204.
- ³⁰R. H. Robbins, note, Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (New York: Columbia UP, 1959) 339 note 23, and cf. C XVI 298.
- ³¹Will's connection with the friars is also noted by Penn Szittyá. See, Szittyá, The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature 265-267.
- ³²G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1926) 135-140.
- ³³Bodley MS 649, quoted by Roy M. Haines, "'Wilde wittes and wilfulness': John Swetstock's attack on those 'poyswunmongeres', the Lollards," Popular Belief and Practice Studies in Church History 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972) 152.
- ³⁴Three Middle English Sermons 66.
- ³⁵Derek Pearsall notes the possible connection between Rechelesnesse and Lollardy. See, Introduction 16; notes, 203 note 196, 215 note 98, 226 notes 79 and 99.
- ³⁶E. Talbot Donaldson was one of the first to notice the duality of Rechelesnesse's nature. Donaldson, in an effort to overcome the traditional negative interpretation of Rechelesnesse, emphasizes his positive aspects. [170-175] Morton Bloomfield has furthered this positive view of part of Rechelesnesse's character. [Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse 142]
- ³⁷Pearsall, note, 224 note 44.

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