The Forgotten Piers Plowman: Early Tudor Plowman Texts.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

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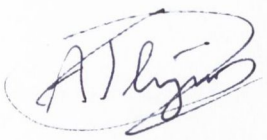
Declaration:

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university, it is entirely the candidate's own work, and that the Library may lend or copy the thesis upon request,



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Summary

Methods: This thesis combines textual analysis with research into the historical, religious and literary context of early Tudor Ploughman texts, looking back to the late fourteenth-century ploughman literature. In chapter one I discuss the text *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* and the concept of gentility in relation to the three social classes. In addition, I examine the enclosure movement in early Tudor literature, mainly focussing on *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentilman and an Husbandman* and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*, placing them in their literary and political context. In chapter two I examine the doctrine of transubstantiation in the early Tudor ploughman texts *The Banckett of Johan the Reve unto Peirs Ploughman,* Luke Shepherd's *John Bon and Mast Parson*, and *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest*, again placing them in their historical and religious framework. In chapter three I examine the relationship between the priest and the ploughman. In chapter four I discuss the figure of the ploughman. In the final chapter I answer the question why the figure of the ploughman was so popular. In the appendix I have transcribed *The Banckett* from its manuscript source.

Major Findings: The character of the ploughman in *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* shows a flexible and fluid nature conforming to the interlude mode, presenting the humanistic idea that nobility is not related to birth but to morality. Initially the Ploughman manages to dominate the discussion, although he submits to the early sixteenth-century idea of hierarchy at the end of the text. The author of *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* wrote intelligently about the matter, despite associating enclosure with religion in the beginning of his text. Although *The Banckett* discusses the issue seriously and seems to defend the Catholic position, I have shown that the author in fact appears to ridicule both parties and, therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint the author's stance on the matter. Nevertheless, most arguments are placed within a thoroughly Catholic framework. For the two Protestant texts, Luke Shepherd's *John Bon and Mast Parson* and *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest,* the Ploughman figure proved an excellent means to ridicule the mass. A simple yet intelligent ploughman could easily show the illogicality of the priest's arguments for the real presence. Both Chaucer's and John Ball's work testifies that the two professions of the priest and ploughman were closely linked in everyday medieval English society. Although Hugh Latimer has often been seen as a

sixteenth-century Piers Plowman, I argue that this cannot be the case, simply because Latimer and Langland defend two opposite denominations. It is likely that both authors draw upon a much older tradition, as the ploughman metaphor can be traced to some of the writings of the early Church Fathers. In the English literary tradition of the hostility between the ploughman and the priest, be the ploughman in the service of Catholic or Protestant orthodoxy, he is always supreme. Throughout the centuries, the ploughman was an authoritative and literate figure in almost every text; most of the ploughman texts speak against scholarly knowledge. The focus in the latter texts has shifted more to simplicity; all ploughmen show an impressive knowledge of the Bible. The issue of poverty was mainly stressed in the earlier period; nevertheless, the ploughmen in both *I Playne Piers* and *The Praier and Complaynte* increase their importance by comparing their poverty with the poverty of Christ. The idea of the aggressive temperament of the ploughman was not so widespread. Although Langland removed all the aggressive features from his ploughman figure, in *The Banckett* we still find an aggressive ploughman. Although the ploughman reacts aggressively because he wants to protect the reader against heretical ideas, this characteristic diminishes the ploughman's credibility and adds to the confusion of the text. Thus, the thesis presents the flexibility and diversity of the figure of the ploughman.

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I have been very fortunate in the loving support of my parents throughout the years. They both encouraged me to continue my studies abroad and helped me in any way they could when necessary.

There are two men in particular who helped me to finish this project. My uncle, Dr. Albert Bosma, better known in our family as 'Oom Appie', has been an example for me in successfully obtaining a university degree and completing a Ph.D. During my university years, my uncle was very helpful in stimulating me to fulfil my childhood dreams and I owe him tremendously. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Peter Ros, who lovingly supported and encouraged me throughout the different stages of most of my university career, even though this meant that we had to live four years apart from each other. Nevertheless, he has always been there for me and I cannot thank him enough for that. It is to these two men that my thesis is dedicated.

Table of Contents:

The Forgotten Piers Plowman: Early Tudor Ploughman Texts

Introduction

On the basis of the large number of printed ploughman texts,[1] it is clear that the figure of the ploughman was exceedingly popular in the early sixteenth century. Some of these texts were written much earlier but were printed in this period. However, there were quite a number of texts that were written during the early Tudor period. This popularity saw its climax in the first printed version of Langland's *Piers Plowman* by Robert Crowley in 1550. It was so successful that he printed three versions: *The Vision of Pierce Plowman, now Fyrste imprinted* (STC 19906), *The Vision of Pierce Plowman, nowe the Seconde Tyme imprinted* (STC 19907, STC 19907a; the first of these two prints is actually the third printed version). Owen Rogers produced a reprint of Crowley's version in 1561: *The Vision of Pierce Plowman, newlye imprinted after the Authours Olde Copy. Whereunto is also annexed the Crede of Pierce Plowman* (STC 19908). These early sixteenth-century texts are all united with one another in the sense that they all contain a ploughman figure. In some of them, the ploughman figure is actually named Piers, after his predecessor of the late fourteenth century. The early works of the ploughman tradition, like *Pierce the Plowman's Crede*, show clear resemblances to *Piers Plowman*. However, the early Tudor ploughman texts seem to stand somewhat farther away from Langland's work. Indeed, Hudson concludes that '*Piers Plowman* in the two and a half centuries after its composition was more honoured in the name than in the reading'.[2]

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1 Of *Pierce the Plowman's Crede* (c. 1395) three manuscripts and two printed versions (1553, STC 19904, 1561, STC 19908) have survived from the sixteenth century; *The Plowman's Tale* was printed for the first time c. 1532-3 (STC 5099.5), again in c. 1548 (STC 5100) and it was included in Thynne's and subsequent editions of Chaucer's *Works* (1542, STC 5068-81); *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman*, which was written sometime during the period 1350-1450, was printed twice in 1531 (STC 20036) and 1532 (STC 20036.5); *God Spede the Plough* was written in the early sixteenth century; *A Lytell Geste How the Plowman Lerned His Pater Noster* was printed by Wynkyn de Worde around 1510 (STC 20034); *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* was printed in 1525 (STC 20723); *A Proper Dialogue Between A Gentleman and a Husbandman* was printed twice, namely in 1529 (STC 1462.3) and in 1530 (STC 1462.5); *The Banckett of Johan the Reeve unto Piers Plowman* was written around 1532, but was never printed; *I Playne Piers which Cannot Flatter*, which was written around 1546-47, was first printed in 1550 (STC19903a); the so-called Marprlate Tract , *O read me, for I am of Great Antiquitie*, was reprinted in 1589 (STC 19903a.5); Hugh Latimer's *Sermon on the Plough* was delivered and printed in 1548 (STC 15291); Luke Shepherd saw his *John Bon and Mast Parson* printed in 1547 or 1548 (STC 3258.5); *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest* was printed twice in 1550 (STC 19903, 19903.5) and finally *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation unto the Lordes* was printed around 1550 (STC 19905).

2 A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*' in *The Companion to Piers Plowman,* ed. B. Alford, (London, 1988), p. 263.

Whereas the early poems belonging to the Piers Ploughman tradition have received a lot of scholarly attention, the early Tudor ploughman texts are very much neglected. With a few exceptions, they have not been properly analysed in their own right; neither have they been put together as a group and compared with one another. This thesis intends to fill that gap. Since there are quite a number of ploughman-related texts written and published in the sixteenth century, this thesis will deal with the early Tudor ploughman texts until the early 1550s only. One reason for doing so is because, for these texts, it is less obvious that they were inspired by Langland's poem, since Crowley had not yet published his printed version. Furthermore, in the second half of the century authors tended to focus more on the genre of pastoral and this meant that the ploughman was being replaced by the shepherd. We can see this, for example, in Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, where a figure named Piers is indeed a shepherd. Crowley's printed versions will not be part of the thesis either, as his work has received a lot of scholarly attention up to now.

Scholars disagree on the degree of influence of Langland on these early sixteenth-century texts. Although the first printed version did not appear until 1550, a large number of manuscripts containing *Piers Plowman* have survived: there are 18 manuscripts of the A-text, 18 of the B-text and 30 manuscripts of the C-text.[3] Although the B-text seems to be neglected after c. 1450, the A-text was still being copied in the sixteenth century.[4] This discussion concerning Langland's influence will be looked at in more detail in the final chapter; nevertheless, it is important to note here that although it is debatable whether the whole poem influenced these texts, Langland's figure of the ploughman most certainly did. Although the focus of this thesis will be primarily on the early Tudor ploughman texts rather then on *Piers Plowman* itself, it is necessary to start with a brief discussion of Langland's Piers, as the figure of Piers Plowman depicted in Langland's poem casts a long shadow on later literature, including the early sixteenth-century texts.

A lot of scholarship has already been produced on Langland's ploughman figure. Critics have been much divided on the meaning of Piers Plowman. As Woolf says, 'the startling point about the figure of Piers Plowman is that it cannot be said clearly and indisputably what it is that he symbolises'.[5] Overstreet, the author of the most recent study

[3] This count includes compilation manuscripts consisting of A and C texts or A and B texts. An overview of all the manuscripts is given in W. Langland, *William Langland. Piers Plowman. A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C, and Z Versions*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London, New York, 1995), pp. x-xii.
[4] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 253.
[5] R. Woolf, 'Some Non-Medieval Qualities of *Piers Plowman*', *Essays in Criticism* 12 (1962), p. 86.

solely on the figure of Piers, argues that there are roughly three traditions in secondary literature on Piers Plowman. The first originated in Troyer's and Burdach's studies; they both 'distill from Piers's roles the common denominator of his humanity'.[6] Critics like Donaldson, Frank and Bloomfield have accepted this kind of argument, according to Overstreet. The second tradition has its founder in Coghill, who 'finds in Piers the successive embodiments of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, the Active, Contemplative and Pontifical lives'.[7] 'The third approach is that of Robertson and Huppé, who would equate Piers with a concept common in allegorical exegesis of the Bible, ... specifically *status praelatorum*'.[8] Critics who have used a similar approach to this are Vasta and Clemente Davlin, who find in Piers the mystical Bride of Christ and the whole Christ respectively.[9] All critics seem to agree, though, on seeing Piers undergo some form of transformation or spiritual growth from one representation to the other. This development is usually seen from Piers' perspective. However, I would like to add a new approach, which sees Piers through some of the other characters' eyes, instead of in isolation. Vasta, I believe, started this tradition, claiming that 'the way Piers is seen and understood is determined by the degree of spiritual progress *reached by other souls*'.[10] Aers developed this approach and formulated it very clearly:

> Piers is much more a focal point for a range of perceptions and notions seen through the character's visions. We can think of his actions in the capacity suggested by the quotation from Paul's letter to the Corinthians: he becomes to the perceivers the means by which they hope to be guided to salvation, and the particular qualities Piers figures and embodies at any point are indissolubly linked to the knower's mode of perception at that stage, in that context. He appears and acts towards all men as the saving agent appropriate to their own perception, tending to embody what Langland takes to be the best insight available at particular stages and contexts in the poem. In this way he also shows us the stage dreamer and reader have reached in the poem's search.[11]

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[6] S. A. Overstreet, 'Langland's Elusive Plowman', *Traditio* 45 (1989-90), 257-341, at p. 257.
[7] S. A. Overstreet, p. 258.
[8] S. A. Overstreet, p. 258.
[9] S. A. Overstreet, p. 258.
[10] Quoted in M. Jennings, '*Piers Plowman* and Holy Church', *Viator* 9 (1978), 367-74, at p. 368; italics mine.
[11] D. Aers, *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory*, (London, 1975), p. 79.

I firmly agree with this approach. However, I believe that it should be combined with Ames' view[12] that 'Piers does not stumble along the path of learning like the dreamer. He is always enlightened by the knowledge of God. … While Piers always seems to know the whole doctrine, *his revelation of it is limited by history*'.[13] Piers is an 'all-knowing-figure', who has complete knowledge about salvation, redemption and of Biblical history throughout the poem. We, the readers, see Piers through Will's eyes and perception. However, Piers is subject to the line of Biblical history that Will is following. The poem follows the Biblical time-scheme starting from the Old Testament leading to the New. 'As Christianity reshaped and developed this philosophy, the Old Testament was regarded more and more as a spiritual foreshadowing of the New; the historical facts were never disregarded, but tremendous stress was laid on the mystical correspondences which could be discovered from a comparison of Old and New'.[14] This is also the case in *Piers Plowman*. Several passus can be viewed as 'foreshadowing' later passus of the poem. Piers stands above all this in terms of knowledge as he should be understood 'in terms of the highest spiritual authority… He is in closest, most intimate connection with Christ and the Holy Spirit';[15] although, contrary to Salter and most other critics, I would like to argue that this is not only the case from, say passus xv with the famous line 'Piers the Plowman – *Petrus, id est, Christus*', but throughout the poem. Right from the beginning when Piers enters the poem, Piers has the knowledge of both Old Testament and New Testament values and he recognises the relevance of Jesus' death for the salvation of mankind. This can briefly be illustrated by Piers' instructions to the pilgrims of how to find Truth. These instructions have sometimes been overlooked or simply been dismissed as 'naïve'. On the contrary, Piers knows where Truth lives; in fact, he knows Truth 'as kyndely as clerc doth hise bokes' (B.v.538).[16] This line already makes it clear to the reader that we are not dealing with a simple and devout ploughman; we are dealing with someone who *knows* Truth (i.e. God) *naturally*. Not through books, as a clerk or a priest would know him or by *nurture*, but by *nature* as his Conscience and his native or natural intelligence have directed him to Truth. Piers' knowledge of God comes from within himself. It is clear that Piers has

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[12] Although I do not agree with some of her specific explanations, I agree with this general one.
[13] R. M. Ames, *The Fulfillment of the Scriptures: Abraham, Moses and Piers*, (Evanston, Ill., 1970), p. 51 and 91; italics mine.
[14] E. Salter, Piers Plowman. *An Introduction*, (Oxford, 1969), p. 66.
[15] E. Salter, p. 84.
[16] All quotations of the *Piers Plowman*, B-text are taken from W. Langland, *The vision of* Piers Plowman, 2nd ed., ed. A. V. C. Schmidt, (London, 1995), unless stated otherwise.

a close relationship with Truth as he served Truth for forty years by faithfully ploughing his field and by other farm duties:

> And diden me suren hym siththen sikerly to serven hym for evere,
> Bothe to sowen and to sette the while I swynke myghte.
> I have ben his folwere al this fourty winter –
> Bothe ysowen his seed and suwed hise beestes,
> Withinne and withouten waited his profit.
> I dyke and I delve, I do that he hoteth.
> Som tyme I sowe and som tyme I thresshe,
> In taillours craft, in tynkeris craft, what Truth kan devyse,
> I weve and I wynde and do what Truth hoteth.
> For though I seye it myself, I serve hym to paye;
> I have myn hire of hym wel and outherwhiles moore.
> He is the presteste paiere that povere men knoweth:
> He withhalt noon hewe his hire that he ne hath it at even.
> (B.v.540-52)

Piers is here portrayed as a typical ploughman conducting typical ploughman duties.[17] He does whatever Truth expects him to do. And Truth pays him for this accordingly. This implies that Piers is Truth's servant and that the commitment has lasted for a long time. This is made explicit later in the poem when Piers claims that 'I am his olde hyne' (B.vi.131). Will encounters a literal ploughman who literally ploughs, as Piers later asks the pilgrims to help him plough his half-acre or perform other useful tasks while he does this.

When we look at Piers' spiritual situation at this stage of the poem, we can see that Piers already possesses the knowledge that leads to salvation. Piers knows, right from the beginning when he enters the poem, the teachings of both the Old and the New Testament. He is not hindered by ignorance. He knows the Bible history which is yet to come in the poem; he already knows about Christ's Harrowing of Hell and His Resurrection and the relevance of that for mankind in general and Will and the field full of folk in particular.

The description of the way to Truth shows that for Piers the way to salvation is through grace. His directions are full of references to Christ and grace: Grace is the gatekeeper (B.v.595) to Truth's dwelling (604-606). It is through the figure of Grace that they can enter the castle where they will find Truth, because Grace is the only one who can unlock the 'wicket gate' that was shut through the sin of Eve. Pride could cause the

[17] For a fuller description of the duties of a ploughman in the Middle Ages see chapter 3, pp. 99-100.

pilgrims to lose God's love. However, they can obtain it again, and there is the emphasis on grace: 'And gete it ayein thorugh grace, ac thorugh no gifte ellis' (617). Piers highlights the difficulty in entering any one of the smaller gates guarded by seven sisters who serve Truth. Again grace can lead them inside: 'It is ful hard, by myn heed, any of yow alle / to geten ingong at any gate but grace be the moore!' (628-9). Some of the pilgrims are discouraged by this message and they decide to go their own way. Again Piers tries to convince them to take this road and he tells them of the maiden Mercy:

> Mercy is a maiden there, hath might over hem alle;
> And she is sib to alle synfulle, and hire sone also,
> And thorugh the help of hem two – hope thow noon other –
> Thow might gete grace there – so thow go bityme.
> (B.v.635-8)

This is the clearest reference to Mary and her son Jesus since Holy Church's speech on the Incarnation. Piers explains that through them, the pilgrims might obtain grace in order to come to God.

It is evident that grace is the most important part of Piers' message to the pilgrims, Will and the reader. Obviously, it is the most important lesson they need to learn. They need to experience the message of Christ. Even so, it shows that at this early stage of the poem, Piers already has a clear knowledge of the concept of grace and its relation to Jesus Christ, his death and the teachings of the New Testament. It is Will (and the reader) that needs to undertake the journey to discover the meaning of grace and the sacrifice of Christ for mankind. During Will's process of understanding, the figure of Piers seems to develop more and more. Therefore, Piers is subject to the Biblical time-scheme in his teachings to Will, as Will needs to grow in understanding and knowledge before he can fully grasp the full message of Christ. Will and the reader, and, consequently, we, perceive him in different ways, as we progress in understanding. Therefore, it is clear that Langland depicted his ploughman as an all-knowing figure throughout the whole poem and this is how I would like to interpret him. It is not Piers who changes, but Will's perception of him.

However, the primary aim of my thesis is to undertake in-depth analyses of the above mentioned neglected early Tudor ploughman texts, and not so much the interpretation of Langland's *Piers Plowman*. The nature of *Piers Plowman*'s influence on later texts is much debated and issues related to Langland will be addressed as the thesis develops. My viewpoint in looking at the sixteenth-century texts will, therefore, not

necessarily be in comparison to Langland's work, but I will rather approach these texts from within their own historical and religious framework. This is the main focus of the first two chapters. The texts reflect the turbulent changes, both religious and socio-economic, of their own time. The ploughman defends both the Protestant faith and the Catholic faith; in one text he scorns the clergy for being so wealthy, calling for the dissolution of monasteries; and in another text he wishes that the dissolution never happened; and he criticizes the movement of enclosure that pressed the ploughmen hard at that time. The last two chapters focus more on the character of the ploughman and his relations with the priest. It is noticeable that a large number of these texts show an interesting and varied relationship between the ploughman and the priest. Also, the ploughman himself seems to have many faces: he is humble; he feels himself unworthy of giving advice; yet at the same time he can be bold and confrontational, showing a lot of passion and sometimes even aggression.

The first chapter opens with an overview of the status and importance of the ploughman in English society. It focuses on socio-economic ploughman texts and is divided into two sections: the first section deals with the ploughman's status in the early sixteenth century, whereas the second section concentrates on the threat of enclosure. For the status of the ploughman in relation to the other estates, I will look at the text *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, written about 1525 by either John Heywood or John Rastell. The text is an interlude wherein a Merchant, Knight and Ploughman all claim to be the noblest of them all. The second part deals with the matter of enclosure, which threatened the existence of the ploughman. The texts that will be discussed are *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentilman and an Husbandman eche Complaynynge to other their Miserable Calamite through the Ambicion of the Clergye* and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation unto the Lordes, Knightes, and Burgoysses of the Parlyamenthouse*. Since there were a great number of writers who expressed opinions on this subject, these texts are set in their historical context. First, an overview is given of relevant legislation concerning enclosure, to get a better understanding of the concept and its impact during the early sixteenth century. In addition, some of the writings of authors like Thomas More and Hugh Latimer will also be considered briefly. Thomas Smith's *Discourse of the CommonWeal of this Realm of England*, which was written in 1549, will be discussed in more detail, as this text functions as a good comparison with *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*'s ideas on how to deal with this movement. In fact, there are several relevant parallels to be made between these two texts.

Whereas *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* focuses on real economic problems related to enclosure, in *A Proper Dyaloge* the two main speakers, a gentleman and a husbandman, complain about the clergy's worldly possessions that have threatened their existence. The chapter closes with an overview of how the ploughman has developed in these socio-economic texts.

The second chapter will deal with the delicate subject of the Lord's Supper, which was not only a heavily debated topic among Protestants and Catholics, but also among the Protestants themselves. It opens with a brief discussion of the Church's stance on transubstantiation in the early Tudor period. There are three ploughman texts that deal with this subject: *The Banckett of Iohan the Reve unto Piers Ploughman, Laurens Laborer, Thomlyn Tailer and Hobb of the Hille with others*,[18] Luke Shepherd's *John Bon and Mast Parson*, and *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest*. *The Banckett* is the most interesting of the three and treats the subject at length. In this text we find a group of lower-class people gathering at a dinner party at which they discuss the matter of the Eucharist. There are two opposing parties, Catholic and Protestant, and the ploughman seems to defend the Catholic point of view. The author was obviously very learned, as there are numerous (accurate) quotations from the Vulgate Bible, which are translated into English. Furthermore, the speakers quote several passages from relevant Church Fathers to support their opinions. When analysing the text, I place it in its historical framework by comparing some of the arguments to contemporary English and European writings on the subject of that time. In the other two, shorter, texts the Protestant ploughman engages in a discussion with a priest about the subject and in both cases attempts to outsmart the priest.

The third chapter deals with the relationship between the clergy and the ploughman. The opening of the chapter demonstrates that the ploughman and/or lower rustic was known for his close bond to God, whereas the clerks, despite all their religious training, were less sure of their connection to God. The chapter shows that the relationship between these two characters or professions is a very complex one and can take many forms. It is divided into three sections, each part looking at a different aspect of the ploughman's link with the clergyman. The first section focuses on their relationship as two brothers, with

[18] As this text is available in manuscript form only and has never been printed or edited, I have prepared a transcription of the text, which the reader can find in the appendix.

Chaucer's *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* as its main example. Whereas the religious connection between the two characters has received much scholarly attention – several scholars stress the sincere devotion of the two as possible hints of Lollardy[19] – the social connection between them has been seriously overlooked. The writings of John Ball concerning the Peasants' Revolt connect the religious and social issues surrounding both ploughman and parson.

The second part treats the ploughman metaphor for preaching. One of the reasons why Langland's poem was so controversial is because he has Piers Plowman perform the duties of the priest. At the end of the poem, the reader encounters an allegorical ploughing scene in which Piers' plough team consists of the four evangelists and the field is mankind's soul. Ploughing becomes a metaphor for preaching. Approximately one and a half centuries later, Hugh Latimer uses the same ploughing metaphor and critics have argued that he based his *Sermon on the Plough* on Langland's work. This section shows that the two characters merged into one by means of this ploughing metaphor.

The final part of this chapter focuses on the hostility between the ploughman and the priest. In several of these early Tudor ploughman texts it is apparent that there is a certain level of rivalry between the two of them. One of the famous scenes in Langland's poem, namely, the tearing of the Pardon, displays an argument between Piers and a priest about the meaning of this pardon. Both characters think little of the other's level of intellect, as the priest ironically advises Piers to preach about the theme of fools and Piers calls the priest a 'lewed lorel' (B.vii.135-37). Although *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe* is a monologue by the ploughman-narrator, he makes interesting comments about the nature of the relationship between the two professions. The other texts that are discussed are *A Lytell Geste How the Plowman Lerned his Pater Noster*, *John Bon and Mast Parson*, and *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest*. Each text has its own approach in portraying the relationship between the two characters.

The fourth chapter deals solely with the persona of the ploughman in all texts. Rather than discussing all texts chronologically, I examine the dominant characteristics of the ploughman figure in four separate sections by looking at his level of intelligence and

[19] This will be explained ande developed in more detail in this chapter.

authority, his ignorance and lack of literacy, his temper, and his poverty or wealth. The older ploughman texts of the late fourteenth century will be considered also.

The final chapter attempts to place the sixteenth-century ploughman texts alongside Langland's *Piers Plowman*. As stated at the beginning of this introduction, scholars have attempted to find a relationship between them and here I will present the reader with a close overview of the scholarship concerning this matter. The main question is, however, not so much the degree of influence of Langland's poem on these early Tudor texts, but rather why the ploughman figure was so popular in this period. This chapter provides the reader with a theory how what I would like to call the 'Ploughman Archetype' disseminated through time so that the early Tudors saw the ploughman figure as an excellent means to express their ideas.

Chapter One: The Ploughman and Social Issues

In an anonymous translation of Aelfric's *Colloquy* from Latin into Old English, we find evidence that the ploughman is deemed the most important labourer among secular occupations. The text serves as a textbook for pupils. It is set up in a question and answer form in which the teacher asks the questions and several pupils tell about their occupations:

> 7 hþilc þe heþuht betþux þoruldcræftas heoldan ealdordom?
> Eorþtilþ, forþam se yrþlinh us ealle fett.
> (219-20)[20]

In Anglo-Saxon times, the ploughman was already considered the most important occupation because he provided food for all people. 'In the cultivation of land, contemporaries regarded the labours of the husbandman as a continuous war upon nature to preserve the land from reverting to scrub and woodland. They believed that most, if not all, land in the kingdom had once consisted of forest, and that by the efforts of man it had been transformed into pasture and corn land. This version of past history meant that the creation of corn land was the supreme end of the farmer's work. *The arable farmer was always held superior to the pasture farmer*'.[21]

In the Middle Ages there were two ways in which the peasantry were divided.[22] The first division concerns freedom. There were peasants who were free and from their lands they were able to sustain their own family and take care of 'outside demands' such as tithes, taxes, etc. Those who were not free had to labour for their income and food. The independent ploughmen were 'both more numerous and more productive than the servant ploughmen'.[23] This division became less important towards the end of the Middle Ages. The second division is in terms of possessions, and it concerns the ownership of a *plough team*. Owning a plough team indicated wealth and superior status in relation to the other peasants. This division remained fundamental throughout the Middle Ages. By the end of the thirteenth century, peasant society 'was peculiarly vulnerable to the natural and man-

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[20] *Aelfric's Colloquy*, ed. G. N. Garmonsway, rev. ed., (Exeter, 1978).
[21] *The Agrarian History of England and Wales. Vol. IV. 1500-1640*, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967), p. 163; italics mine.
[22] This paragraph is a summary of the first pages of the following article: R. H. Hilton, 'Reasons for Inequality among Medieval Peasants' in his *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism. Essays in Medieval Social History*, (London, 1985), 139-51.
[23] C. Dyer, '*Piers Plowman* and Plowmen: A Historical Perspective'. *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994), 155-76, at p. 166.

made disasters of famine, plague and war'[24] and these disasters were the root of many disturbances in medieval English society. The group consisting of 'smallholding labourers who had their own independent households, diminishes proportionately during the century, especially after 1348. These were the people who pushed up wages and were generally regarded as an insolent and demanding group'.[25] The legislation of the Statute of Labourers shows that there was much unrest among the peasantry even before 1381.[26] The Ordinance of Labourers of 1349 tried to regulate the wages of labourers due to the shortage of labour after the plague. The opening of the Ordinance shows that there was an especial lack of ploughmen around that time, which shows the importance of this profession:

> Because a great Part of the People, and especially Workmen and Servants, late died of the Pestilence, many seeing the Necessity of Masters, and great scarcity of Servants, will not serve unless they may receive excessive Wages, and some rather willing to beg in Idleness, than by Labour to get their Living; We, considering the grievous Incommodities, which of the lack especially of Ploughmen and such labourers may hereafter come, have upon deliberation and treaty with the Prelates and the Nobles, and Learned Men assisting Us, of their mutual counsel Ordained: ...[27]

This ordinance became a statute in 1351, in which it is stated that the servants and labourers had no regard to the ordinance and still demanded excessive wages. Furthermore, the Statute of 1351 ruled that labourers could not be employed by the day, only by the year or 'other usual terms'. The Statute of Labourers, together with the extreme taxation of the time formed the fuel for the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. According to Dyer, many of the peasant rebels of the Peasants' Revolt were ploughmen, some employed, but most of them independent.[28] These circumstances gave the peasantry, and the ploughmen in particular, a negative image, both before and after the Peasants' Revolt.

The ploughman in early Tudor society was, at least in theory, still admired. John Fitzherbert, in his *Boke of Husbandry*, first printed in 1523, states that 'the mooste generall lyuynge that husbandes can haue, is by plowynge and sowyng of theyr cornes, and rerynge

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[24] R. H. Hilton, 'Reasons for Inequality', p. 147.
[25] R. H. Hilton, 'Reasons for Inequality', p. 149.
[26] See also R. H. Hilton, *The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England,* (London, 1983), p. 27.
[27] *The Statutes at Large, of England and of Great Britain: from Magna Carta to the Union of the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland*, 20 vols., (London,1811), vol. I, p. 307.
[28] C. Dyer, p. 171.

or bredynge of theyr cattel, and not the one withoute the other. Than is the ploughe the most necessaryest instrumente that an husbande can occupy'.[29] Fitzherbert's main concern was to educate 'a yonge gentylman that entendeth to thryve' and he begins his work with a series of chapters on ploughs and ploughing. This is similar to Virgil's *Georgics*. Although the agricultural state of Italy at Virgil's time of writing was mainly pastoral,[30] which also became the situation during the early sixteenth century, Virgil chose to depict his farmer as the old-fashioned yeoman who must work the land himself. Book I mainly deals with ploughing and how to maintain the land. There is little that refers to pastoral farming. What we find in Virgil's *Georgics* is the portrayal of labour as an ideal. The ploughman is at the heart of this ideal, as ploughing is the main labour of the farmer. Interestingly, Virgil connects the dignity of labour with religion. According to Virgil, 'the great Father' or Zeus, intended husbandry to be hard work:

> pater ipsi colendi
> haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem
> movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda,
> nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno.
> (I.121-4)[31]

Nevertheless, Virgil makes it clear that the gods reward hard work (I.94-6) and if the farmer ploughs his land well, 'the glory the divine country gives is to be yours in worthy measure' (I.168).[32] This is contrary to Genesis, where God turned husbandry into hard work as a punishment for Adam's disobedience.[33]

Two short poems, one from around 1450 and one from around 1500, show that the ploughman was both well admired but also disrespected and exploited. *I-blessed Be Cristes Sonde*,[34] a short poem from the mid-fifteenth century, exalts and praises the life and work of the ploughman. The poem opens with

> The merthe of alle this londe

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[29] J. Fitzherbert, *Boke of Husbandry. English Dialect Society,* ed. W. W. Skeat, (London, 1882), p. 2.
[30] L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil. A Critical Survey,* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 50. This edition of the text also provides a translation.
[31] 'The great Father himself has willed that the path of husbandry should not be smooth, and he first made art awake the fields, sharpening men's wits by care, nor letting his realm slumber in heavy lethargy'.
[32] te digna manet divini gloria ruris.
[33] See chapter 3, pp. 112-113.
[34] *I-blessed Be Cristes Sonde*, in *Medieval English Political Writings,* ed. J. M. Dean, TEAMS, (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1996): p. 257-8. This poem is often mistakenly called *God Speed the Plough*, which is however the title of a short poem written approximately 50 years later and quite different in tone. This poem is discussed on the next page.

Maketh the gode husbonde,
With erynge of his plowe.

The poem makes clear that in all seasons, the husbandman and his plough are ever at work, despite bad circumstances like foul weather. Therefore, the poem prays for the blessing of the ploughman's work: 'God spede the plowe all way!' (21). It ends with asking for God's blessing for those people who pray for the ploughman. It is very positive in tone and the author treats the ploughman with respect. At the same time, the ploughman felt abused and mistreated. This is very clear in the early sixteenth-century poem *God Spede the Plough*.[35] In this poem, the narrator walks in the countryside, admiring all the farmers who are ploughing their fields. He says to one of them: 'I pray to God, spede wele the plough' (8).[36] The ploughman, out of despair, raises his hands to the sky and proclaims that this prayer is very necessary:

For all the yere we labour with the lande,
With many a comberous clot of claye,
To mayntayn this worlde yf that we maye,
By downe and by dale and many a slough.
(11-14)

Subsequently the ploughman lists all sorts of people from the upper and middle classes who all come knocking on his door for food but give nothing in return. The parson, the clerk, the 'kyngis purviours', the lords, bailiffs and beadles, all the friars, the summoner, students, lawyers, priests, etc., they all claim and demand a share of the ploughman's harvest in form of taxes, tithes and food. Although neither the ploughman nor the narrator reveals his opinion about this matter, it is clear from the long list of people in the poem, that the ploughman is exploited and treated with disrespect. He gets nothing in return for his hard labour. 'The husbandmen are normative in that they represent the oppressed and overtaxed elements of society'.[37] The only thing the narrator can reply after the ploughman's long testimony is that he will receive his heavenly reward:

God give them grace such life to lede
That in their conscience maye be mery inough,

[35] This poem borrows twelve stanzas from Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*.
[36] *God Spede the Plough*, in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. J. M. Dean, TEAMS, (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1996), p. 254-6.
[37] J. M. Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings*, p. 245.

And heven blisse to be their mede,
And ever I praye, "God spede the plough".
(93-6)

These last words imply that the ploughman has to conform to his fate and can only hope for a better afterlife. These two poems reveal the ambiguity of the ploughman's status that was current in the early Tudor period, though both narrators treat the ploughman with sympathy.

In the sixteenth century, 'the enclosure movement was making great headway all over the country'.[38] Due to labour shortage and the high price of wages, it became economically more attractive to change demesne farms from arable to pastoral. This process of 'enclosure' began in the fourteenth century. Initially, this process did not lead to problems since the population of England had diminished significantly due to the plague. Therefore, land was still abundantly available. However, this situation began to change at the end of the fifteenth century when the population started to increase in such numbers that it affected the agricultural common-field system. This system was based on arable and pasture land that was used in common and where many peasants shared their rights. In the lower parts of England 'the pasture served the arable: it fed the animals which ploughed the fields and fertilized the crop'.[39] In the higher regions of England, the land was mainly used for pasture and enclosure did not lead to many problems. The common-field system known in the lower regions of England, however, came under threat due to the process of enclosure.[40] The common-field system was ideal for a society farming for subsistence. During the sixteenth century, however, more and more farmers became aware of the possibility of making profits by selling their products on the market. Enclosure was one way of improving productivity. When enclosure led to permanent conversion from arable to pastoral, this mainly affected wageworkers and smallholders.[41] This process caused a lot of tension between the arable husbandmen and pastoral farmers:

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[38] *The Agrarian History,* p. 6
[39] *The Agrarian History,* p. 6
[40] The Government did realize that the problem was mostly a local one and not nationwide: 'the inquiries of 1517, 1548 and 1607 all concentrated mainly on the Midlands'. The Midlands were in particular vulnerable because the soil was well suited for both pasture and arable. P. Ramsey, *Tudor Economic Problems,* (London, 1972), pp. 28-9, 31.
[41] *The Agrarian History,* p. 210.

> The price revolution, which made a slow start in the first three decades of the century, had now gathered such speed in the forties [1540s] that it was racking the foundations of the economy. The sins of the government were at once laid at the door of the pasture farmer, and particularly the sheepmaster. He was charged with the responsibility for everything, for the poverty of the poor, the high price of food, and even the high price of wool. … the remedy for this imbalance seemed to Somerset's advisers to lie in curbing the activities of the sheepmasters, and this, as Sir Thomas Smith defines it, lay in making "the profit of the plough to be as good, rate for rate, as the profit of the graziers and sheepmasters".[42]

'This displacement of population as a result of the conversion of open field arable to pasture was an aspect of agrarian change which attracted a great deal of attention in the sixteenth century, from the government, from parliament, and from those moralists and others, such as Sir Thomas More and Bishop Hugh Latimer, who claim to speak for the poorer members of rural society'.[43] Enclosure struck hard at the lowest class of society during the end of the fifteenth century until around 1517 and at the end of the sixteenth century.[44] Nevertheless, the highest peak in enclosure literature and also in government involvement was during the mid-sixteenth century.

The purpose of this chapter is mainly to examine two ploughman texts that deal with this delicate issue: *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentilman and an Husbandman eche complaynynge to other their Miserable Calamite through the Ambicion of the Clergye* (1529 and 1530), and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation unto the Lordes, Knightes, and Burgoysses of the Parlyamenthouse* (c.1550). In connection to these two texts, a short survey of enclosure history and other relevant enclosure literature will be discussed as well. However, I will first examine the text *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte: A Dyaloge betwene the Marchaunt the Knyght and the Plowman dysputyng who is a Verey Gentylman and who is a Noble man and how Men shuld come to Auctoryte* (1525). As the title indicates, this text

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[42] *The Agrarian History,* p. 221. See below for a fuller discussion of T. Smith's *Discourse of the CommonWeal of this Realm of England* (1549), p. 37 ff.
[43] C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700.* Vol. 1: *People, Land and Towns.* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 75.
[44] P. Ramsey, pp. 26-7.

deals with the question which of the three estates, Knight, Merchant, or Ploughman, can claim to be the better gentleman.

Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte

In medieval times, the reasons for the king to bestow nobility could be based on three grounds: virtue, learning, or wealth, the first ground being the highest. Virtue was generally recognised as performing deeds that are of benefit to the country. In the Renaissance, more emphasis was placed on personal worth in acquiring and maintaining nobility, rather than acquiring it by birth, which was generally seen as the traditional and aristocratic method of obtaining nobility. However, already in the Middle Ages, writers like Boethius, Chaucer, Boccaccio, Dante and others spoke against achieving nobility by birth in favour of nobility by virtue. In the *Franklin's Tale*, for instance, it is shown that a clerk can practise 'gentilesse' just as the squire and knight can. However, the people that belonged to the 'Thomas More circle' went a step further than this. They 'put a new emphasis upon the ability of the poor boy from common stock to rise to true nobility through character and education'.[45] This way of thinking disrupted the traditional order of society of three estates in which each estate knew its place. Of these three estates it was the estate of the knight which claimed the title of nobility. However, in the Middle Ages we already see that this class system is threatened by the rise of other classes, like the merchants and the clerks, who also try to claim nobility through newly acquired wealth and intelligence.

The early Tudor interlude *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* (c. 1525)[46] is placed in the midst of this discussion of which estate can claim nobility and on what merits. The text is shaped in the form of a dialogue between three representatives of three secular estates: the knight, the merchant and the ploughman. The absence of the clergy in the play is not necessarily noteworthy, as they did not form part of the secular discussion of who can claim nobility. The fact that they take no part in the play does not mean that religious issues are non-existent. In a recent article, Janette Dillon shows that the play's 'language and subject matter emerge out of the religious turmoil of the 1520s. In particular, the brief interface between English and Latin that surfaces in the dialogue between the Knight and

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[45] P. Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle. A Program of Ideas and their Impact on Secular Drama*, (Urbana, 1959), p. 63.

[46] Critics have not reached consensus about the author of the work. Some argue in favour of Heywood, others for Rastell, who was definitely the printer of the work in 1532. This discussion is not relevant for my analysis of the play.

the Ploughman must be understood against the debate concerning the translation of the Bible'.[47] Nevertheless, the dominant theme of the work is social and this is what I would like to concentrate on in my discussion of the text.

The text proposes to answer three questions: who is a fine gentleman, who is a nobleman, and how men should come to authority. Moreover, it is compiled in the manner of an interlude with many jests in order to entertain the audience. The work was intended for upper-class people, the people who would consider themselves noblemen or gentlemen: 'Ye soferayns all, dyscrete and excellent, / Before whom thys dialog shewyd hath be' (1097-8).[48] Initially, the dialogue opens between the Merchant and the Knight; the Ploughman seems to be absent, although later in the text, the Ploughman claims to have overheard the first discussion. The Merchant claims to be a nobleman based on 'gret welth and prosperyte' (1). The Knight steps in and claims his title to nobility because of ancestry and points out that the merchant descends merely from a poor blacksmith. He informs the Merchant that he is a gentleman and owns land worth five hundred marks, of which the Merchant probably does not even own one percent. The Merchant shrewdly answers that he could buy all that land and pay in cash. Both speakers, when claiming gentility, rely on their ancestors' achievements; they rely on the past. The Knight does this on the basis that his ancestors have been great landowners, lords, and knights, and that they have served as captains in wars, whereas the Merchant boasts about his long line of artificers who have worked for the benefit and comfort of others. Both speakers claim the most intelligence as a basis for gentility, again from the standpoint of their ancestors. The Ploughman intervenes and claims to be better than both of them. At this point, the language becomes more foul and violent. This is very much characteristic of early Tudor interludes. These plays combine a humanist style with the popular style of the morality plays, focusing on both educating and entertaining the audience. We can see this especially in examples in which the play suddenly switches between mode: from eloquent speeches on serious philosophical ideas humanistic drama can suddenly change into low-humoristic scenes or vice versa. We see this for example in Heywood's *The Foure PP*'s, *A Play of Love* and *Johan Johan*,[49] and

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[47] J. Dillon, 'The Ploughman's Voice: Language and Class in *Of Gentleness and Nobility*,' in *English Literature and the Other Languages,* ed. M. Buning and T. Hoenselaars, (Amsterdam, 1999): p. 14.

[48] *Authorship and Sources of Gentleness and Nobility. A Study in Early Tudor Drama. Together with a Text of the Play Based on the Black-Letter Original,* ed. K. W. Cameron, (North Carolina, 1941). All quotations are taken from this edition.

[49] K. Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism. English Drama in the Sixteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1999); p. 45-46.

it is also the case here. The sudden shift from the Knight's speech on his noble parentage to the Ploughman's 'bybbyll babbyll' and 'clytter clatter' (175) can be seen as 'an experience of character that must be understood in theatrical terms'.[50] 'The technique of sharply penetrating their pretensions through comic contrast is evident in this exchange'.[51] The Ploughman almost engages in a fight with both the Knight and the Merchant. The Merchant brings them back to 'reason'. The Ploughman indicates that both of their arguments are meaningless, 'not worth a fly' (209), because they are based on the merits of their ancestors, not on their current deeds. Here we find the influence of the Thomas More Circle to which both John Heywood and William Rastell belong, as stated above.[52]

At this point, the Merchant and the Knight come up with traditional answers to how they serve the Commonwealth by their professions and both argue that this is sufficient basis to claim nobility. However, the Ploughman proves them wrong by pointing out that the highest form of nobility is God himself. Here the Ploughman comes forward with his theory of 'self-sufficiency': the one who is in least need of others has the most right to nobility. Both Knight and Merchant have to agree with this and clearly, the Ploughman has the upper hand in the debate at this point. He extends his way of reasoning that the Ploughman by his profession is, therefore, the most noble, as the other estates are dependent on his products, whereas he is self-sufficient. The Merchant weakly opposes this argument by remarking that by means of this reasoning all animals are more noble than mankind. The Ploughman skilfully points out that mankind, 'by reason of hys soule intyllectyue / He subdewyth all other bestes alyue' (377-8). Again the Merchant has to admit defeat and confesses that this is a 'verey good and pregnant reason' (396), but continues that the Ploughman has digressed from the original subject. The Ploughman is unwilling to continue with the former argument due to business elsewhere and so they all agree to postpone the debate, after which the first part ends.

It is clear that in the first part of the play the Ploughman dominates the debate. Several times both the Knight and the Merchant have to agree with the Ploughman's way of reasoning. Moreover, while both the Knight and the Merchant look for material reasons why they are the noblest: wealth; ancestry; land ownership, the Ploughman is the only one

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[50] K. Cartwright, p. 46.
[51] R. C. Johnson, *John Heywood*, (New York, 1970); p. 123.
[52] R. C. Johnson, p. 123.

who comes forward with the highest form of nobility: God Himself. This suggests the Ploughman's intellectual superiority over the other two.

In the second part, the three speakers try to answer the question which of them is the better gentleman. The Ploughman argues that their arguments dealing with possessions are faulty. At this point, the Ploughman comes up with the first possible origin of gentility and nobility, which was also the most generally held belief:[53] 'For when Adam dolf and Eue span, / who was then a gentylman?' (485-6). This saying, which had already been used during the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 as proof for equality, finds its basis in Genesis. God created Adam and Eve and there were no class distinctions. Cain and Abel were the traditional source for class distinctions, with Cain representing the churls and Abel representing the higher class. During Noah's flood this was 'washed away' only to come to the surface again due to Noah's son, Cham. Cham showed disrespect towards his father when he encountered his father asleep naked and his father punished him for this.[54] Nevertheless, the peasantry have always called upon Adam and Eve as everybody's ancestors. Therefore, the Ploughman believes that the Knight's argument for ancestry is invalid, especially considering that one cannot inherit one's father's gentility. Those who show noble deeds but come from a 'vicious' family are more to be praised than those who come from a good family and also show gentility. The Knight refuses to agree with this and again focuses on 'noble blood', whereupon the Ploughman points out that both beggar and knight have the same coloured blood, share the same sicknesses, etc. He insists that only 'vertew and good condycyons, / Is that which makyth the very gentylman' (531-2).

This leads the Knight to come forward with a second possible origin for nobility or gentility, which is connected to theories related to the origins of kingdoms. The Knight argues that in the past, when the population began to rise and 'grete stryf and debate dyd aryse' regarding property of land and goods etc., wise people like the Knight created laws to order society. 'The people perseyuyng than theyr goodnes, / Theyr gret wyt, dyscressyon, and gentylnes, / Were content to gyfe them part of the proffet / Comyng of theyr landes which they dyd get' (585-8). Later this profit changed into rent and, thus, possessions and inheritance were based on good deeds. This theory is close to what Kelso names 'the theory of triumphant virtue': 'Inequality begins with the consent of the people.

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[53] R. Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth-Century*, (Gloucester, Mass., 1964), p. 33.
[54] See Genesis 9:19-27.

The objection to this theory was that if nobility began as a reward of virtue voluntarily given, there was no accounting for the endless, recorded succession of rulers and powerful ones who gained their place by breaking all the laws of the decalogue. Some nobility would seem to have been the reward of vice'.[55] It is, therefore, no surprise that the Ploughman objects to this theory and he substitutes it with a second theory of the origins of kingdoms in relation to nobility, namely the theory of 'triumphant force', 'which was founded upon violence and oppression':[56] 'all possessions began furst of tyranny / ... possessions began by extorcyon' (598, 606). This theory was more commonly held.[57] Nevertheless, the Knight still pleads on behalf of inheritance, claiming that landlords will never invest in their lands if they are not sure of keeping them in the family; to which the Ploughman replies that this 'investment' occurs to the disadvantage of the poor commons.

The Knight fails to come up with an adequate reply and, therefore, asks what the Ploughman thinks of merchants in order to divert the attention from his own class. The Ploughman points out that there are good merchants who are of benefit to the Commonwealth and bad, greedy merchants who only benefit themselves, upon which the Merchant readily answers: 'Be not plowmen and other that dryfe the cart / And such rusticall felows as thou art / Fals shrews and lyfe as vycyously, also, / As gentylmen of landes and marchauntes do?' (677-80), which the Knight heartily supports. The Ploughman does not deny this but argues that knights and merchants are more vicious than ploughmen. The Knight despairingly replies 'Bi goggis swet bodi thou art a stark knaue, / Noblemen and gentylmen so to depraue' (707-708).

It is at this point that the tone of the play changes significantly. Unexpectedly the Ploughman reacts violently:

> What, thou proud horeson fole, whom dost thou knaue?
> I trow thou woldist a good blowe or two haue
> Wyth a good whypstoke to tech the curtesy
> (709-11)

Again we see here the sudden shift in styles which was so characteristic of Tudor interludes. The Knight challenges the Ploughman and they will end up fighting if the Merchant does not intervene. The Ploughman excuses himself by saying:

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[55] R. Kelso, p. 34.
[56] R. Kelso, p. 34.
[57] R. Kelso, p. 34.

It is cause to make them mery.
To walke such a proude foole is but sport and game.
...
what better pastime her canst thou haue
Then to here one to call another knaue
And see such a proud foole walkyd with a whyp?
(718-19; 725-7)

For the second time the Merchant tries to intervene and instructs the Ploughman to abide by sound reasoning. The Ploughman responds:

Nay, I wyll trye it howsoeuer he wyll;
Be it with wordys or dedes, I wyll answere hym styll.
For, be God, yf he wyll not be content
To be conclude hym one way or that I goo,
Or I shall proue it on hys pate; that shall I doo.
(731-6)

The Knight calls the Ploughman mad and accuses him of speaking with 'lyttyll wyt' and the Knight is right. At this point, the Ploughman loses all the credibility which he has previously successfully managed to gain. The Ploughman does not lose his authority because of the sound reasoning by the Knight and/or Merchant, but because of his own unexpected behaviour. He loses credibility not only from the Knight and the Merchant, who several times have had to agree with the Ploughman's arguments, but also from the upper-class audience. The Ploughman's defence that he acts this way because the play was meant to be an interlude is very interesting in relation to the audience. Early Tudor interludes were performed in great banquet halls of noble households or large manors, and outside the festival seasons the professional actors were allowed to roam the countryside to perform their plays. Thus, although on the one hand 'the staging of humanist drama was often courtly', using a debate format, other plays turned 'to experimental or popular stages like that used for Mankind as a means of reaching out for more general audiences'.[58] The Ploughman presents much of the slapstick humour which the audience would expect in an

[58] P. 969. Medieval drama by bevington.

interlude, which, in this play, would appeal in particular to a more courtly audience.[59] The Philosopher, who, at the end of the play opens his speech with addressing the gentry, 'Ye soferayns all, dyscrete and excellent, / Before whom thys dialog shewyd hath be' (ll. 1101-2), supports the idea that the intended audience of the author was higher class.[60] Such an audience would expect the ploughman to be mocked and the knight to be honoured.

It seems to me that, in order to keep the audience captivated the author presented the Ploughman figure to provide the play's humour. The Ploughman's actions are very much consistent with comic characteristics of the Tudor interlude. Interludes were meant to teach the audience to reject vice and to receive wise counsel. Possible classical sources of the interlude, like Lucian's dialogues treat 'serious matters *sub specie lusus* (in the guise of a game)'.[61] The Ploughman certainly lives up to that. Dillon is correct when observing that 'when the Ploughman enters, the pace changes. He comes in 'with a short whyp in ys hand' and radically changes the rhythm of utterance and exchange with a newly colloquial and abusive discourse'.[62] Both Knight and Merchant attempt to exclude the Ploughman from the debate: 'It is for the full yll besemyng / To perturb any gentylmen's talking' (182-3) the Merchant says to him, referring to both the Knight and himself. Knight, Merchant and audience do not expect the Ploughman to be capable of debating intelligently the matter of nobility, let alone claim nobility successfully himself. The first 30 lines after the entrance of the Ploughman seem to confirm these audience expectations of an interlude. However, as soon as the play progresses, the Ploughman shows himself to be capable of countering the Knight's and Merchant's arguments with better reasoning and both Knight and Merchant have to agree with the Ploughman's arguments. This conforms to the humanist approach to early Tudor drama: by means of the humour, the audience is educated and entertained at the same time. The sudden 'interlude' within the play where the Ploughman suddenly changes character by daring the Knight to a second fight, would have come as a relief to the upper-class audience.

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[59] 'Sometimes a courteous apology for the lack of due respect suggests a courtly audience... Much of the amusement in *Gentleness and Nobility*, where the rude Ploughman denounces aristocrats, refuses to grant them more true gentility than to himself, and scorns to envy them, depends on the play's being performed before an aristocratic audience' (T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude. Stage, Costume and Acting*, London, 1967, p. 23). In addition, Robert Carl Johnson states when summarising some of Cameron's findings that '*Gentleness* contains rare humor, keenly enjoyable to the court circle' (R. C. Johnson, p. 120).

[60] In his glossary, Axton translates the word 'soferayns' with 'gentry' (*Three Rastell Plays*. Four Elements, Calisto and Melebea, Gentleness and Nobility, Cambridge, 1979; p. 168).

[61] G. Walker, *Writing under Tyranny. English Literature and the Henrician Reformation,* (Oxford, 2005), p. 111.

[62] J. Dillon, p. 15.

The Ploughman fully believes that his arguments regarding inheritance were sufficient:

> For myn oppynyon I haue well prouyd it,
> By substancyall reason and argument,
> That enherytaunce is not conuenyent
> And shewyd better reasons than thou canst doo.
> (752-5)

The Knight is still not convinced and the argument concerning inheritance is continued. At a certain point, the Knight feels the need to back up his argument by means of quoting the Bible and he refers to God giving land to Abraham and his bloodline. He first quotes the Latin text and afterwards translates it into English. One reason why he translates the Latin is perhaps for the benefit of the Ploughman, whom the Knight assumes is poorly educated or not educated at all. The Ploughman's answer probably comes as a surprise to both Knight and audience:

> Thou answerest me now euen lyke a fole
> As some of these fonde clarkes that go to scole.
> When one putteth to them a subtyll questyn
> Of phylozophy to be prouyde by reason,
> Whan they haue all theyr wyttes and reason spende
> And can not tell how theyr parte to defende,
> Than they wyll aledge some auctoryte
> Of the lawes or elles of deuynite,
> Whiche in no wyse men may denye.
> (827-35)

Here the Ploughman reproves the Knight for failure in arguing his point. Only those who fail to prove their point resort to the authority of the law or of divinity that is hard to refute. While the Knight believes he is strengthening his point by quoting the Bible, the Ploughman is hardly impressed and sees this as a weakness. The Knight obviously has run out of arguments. Moreover, the Ploughman points out that these authorities can be unreliable:

> And yet ye knowe well that of phylozophy

The pryncyples oft contraryant be
Unto the very groundes of deuynite.
For the phylozophers agre herevnto
Quod mundus fuit semper ab eterno,
And deuynys quod in principio omnium
Creauit Deus terram et celum.
(836-42)

Often authorities can differ on the same point and the Ploughman provides the Knight with an example regarding the creation of heaven and earth. The Ploughman baffles the Knight by quoting Latin and he does not bother to translate, since both Knight and audience should be able to comprehend. The Ploughman is against scholastic learning; he rather relies on natural reason:

But thou dydest promise openly euen now
Onely by natural reason to proue how
That enherytaunce ought for to be had.
(843-5)

Here the Ploughman has regained full control of the debate. Again, he has proved himself to be superior to the Knight by showing that he equally masters the Latin language and, moreover, points out that authorities do not always have to be reliable. By urging the Knight to use 'natural reason', the Ploughman implies that the Knight is inferior on this point to the Ploughman and he has exposed the Knight's weakness. The Ploughman has successfully countered what initially looked like a strong defence by the Knight and turned the debate in his favour. Unfortunately, we do not get a reply from the Knight, but the Merchant intervenes and points out that they have digressed too much and suggests coming back to the question of who can prove himself to be the most gentleman.

Indeed, the digression about inheritance, although linked to the question of nobility, takes up a substantial part of the play. The discussion about inheritance takes place mainly between the Knight and the Ploughman. Bevington is correct when remarking that the debate is not three sided as it might seem at first. The Knight and Merchant soon join forces against peasant daring. This realignment pits lower-class poverty against all upper-class

privilege'.[63] This is especially the case during the 'digression' regarding inheritance, in which the Merchant hardly takes part. Here 'land user turns on landowner, responding violently to the oldest of economic rivalries'.[64] Indeed, when one examines the speeches of the Knight and Ploughman more closely, we see that the issue regarding inheritance focuses mainly upon the old feudal system concerning landowner and land user. The Ploughman fears the consequences of inheritance regarding land possessions:

> Yf any land lyke them that lyueth nye them,
> Of theyr pore neghbors they wyll destroy them,
> Or by extort meanys they wyll them compel
> The land for half the worth to them to sell;
> And when they lacke money, they wyl alwey
> Euer borow and neuer wylllyng to pay.
> And when they shall dye, ye see thexperience:
> Few of them haue remors of consyens
> To make any maner restytucyon
> Of any land so wrongfully gotton.
> (649-58)

The Ploughman experiences the negative aspects of enclosing.[65] The Ploughman knows from practice that landowners think of themselves first, rather than of the Commonwealth. At this point, the Knight has no reply and diverts the attention by focusing on merchants. However, later in the play he explains why he believes that the traditional system is of benefit to the commonwealth. The landowners can educate their children:

> Some put to the scole to lerne connynge
> To instruct the people in virtuous lyuynge;
> Some made to be actyfe in marcyall dedes,
> Able to defend the land when need is.
> (761-4)

The Ploughman realises that, in theory, this can work, as long as the landowners are and remain virtuous:

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[63] D. Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics. A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), p. 78.
[64] D. Bevington, p. 77.
[65] This topic will be dealt with in detail in the second part of this chapter.

And suche people of vertuouse condycyons,
And no nother, shuld be chosyn gouernours;
And thei shuld haue landes to maintain their honours
Terme of theyr lyuys – as long as they take payn
For the commynwelth; thys is good playn.
(776-80)

In theory, the Ploughman can live with the traditional system, as long as the landowners and rulers live virtuously. However, the Ploughman realises that, in practice, this is hard to attain:

Oft tymes they shuld rule that haue lyttyl wyt,
Or disposyd to be proud and couetous,
Or to lyfe after theyr lustis voluptuous,
Which yf such men had auctoryte,
Many thynges, no dowte, mysorderyd shuld be.
(808-12)

These remarks by the Ploughman are dangerously radical, as he not only rebels against the position of the landowner, but implicitly also against the position of the king. Such a standpoint was little heard of in early Tudor society, where the emphasis was on obedience to the king, even when the king was sinful:

> If the king should require of thee an unjust request, yet art thou bound to pay it and not to resist and rebel… the king indeed is in peril of his soul for asking of an unjust request; and God will in His due time reckon with him for it: but thou must not take upon thee to judge him… And know this, that whensoever there is any unjust exaction laid upon thee it is a plague and punishment for thy sin.[66]

However, during the Ploughman's last speech he subdues his radicalism and conforms to this 'theory of obligation and submission':

But let them alone tyll God wyll send
A tyme tyll our gouernours may intend
Of all enormytes the reformacyon,
And bring in theyr handis the rod of coreccyon,

[66] A. Fletcher, and D. MacCulloch. *Tudor Rebellions*, fifth edn., (Harlow, 2004), p. 9-10. This passage was written by Hugh Latimer. Unfortunately, this book does not give references.

And the reformyng of iniuryes them self see,
And wyll say precisely, 'Thus it shall be;'
For exortacyons, techyng and prechyng,
Gestyng and raylyng they mend no thing,
For the amendment of the world is not in me.
...
I wyll let the world wagg and home wyll I goo
And dryf the plowgh as I was wont to do
(996-1004; 1010-11)

The Ploughman believes that he does not have any influence upon the world and therefore, he leaves the reformation in the hands of God, returning to his duties of the plough. At the end of his speech, he conforms to the traditional system of the estates.

The characters continue with the question of who is the better gentleman, which the Merchant focusses on again after the digression on inheritance. The Knight, perhaps worn out from his discussion with the Ploughman, believes that all speakers have already made their point. The Ploughman, however, is not quite finished. He continues with his previous argument that nobility comes from gentle conditions. He explains to the Knight and Merchant that this consists of conforming to the seven virtues and leaving behind the seven deadly sins. Both Knight and Merchant have to agree with this. The Ploughman continues that both Knight and Merchant are guilty of these seven deadly sins, whereas he himself is 'content alwey / Wyth a pore cotage and symple aray' (904-905). He is not guilty of committing any of the seven deadly sins, not even anger: 'I .. can suffer to be callyed knaue and not angry. / Somtyme I call hym knaue again in hast, / And when I haue sayd, my anger is past' (906-909). This of course conflicts with the two outbursts we have seen previously in the play, where the Ploughman threatens violence. The audience would pick up the inconsistency and view this ironically, which make the Ploughman lose his credibility again. The Ploughman continues to accuse the other two of being guilty of lust. The Merchant objects powerfully and accuses the Ploughman of being even worse. The next few lines have sometimes been interpreted as insulting to the Ploughman's wife:[67] 'Nay, by cokkys body, I use no sych lyfe, / For I am content with blak Maud my wife. / Trow ye that I care for these nise proude primmys, / These paintyd popagays that hold vp

[67] K. W. Cameron, p. 36.

their chynnes' (925-8). This is not necessarily the case as the last line indicates that the Ploughman rejects artificial beauty. The Knight's defence is that vanity, rich clothes and appearance are part of true nobility. The Ploughman maintains that he does not delight in vanity and that he prefers to abide by gentle conditions. Finally the Knight makes a good point: 'nede compellyth the therto, … Thou art a gentylman agaynt thy wyll full sore' (955, 967). At this point, the Merchant ends the debate and both Knight and Merchant do not see the point in continuing the debate with the Ploughman. They cannot be convinced by his arguments; at the end of the play, they still do not value his opinion. The three of them have failed to come to an agreed standpoint. The Ploughman is left alone and he realises the futility of convincing the other two speakers:

> Wee see well now by playne experience
> When a man is set in a wyllfull credens
> All to fortefye hys owne opynyon,
> If God hymselfe than wold with hym reason,
> In effect it shall no more auayle
> Than with a whyp to dryfe a snayle.
> Therfore no remedy is that I can see,
> For yuell men that be in auctoryte.
> (988-95)

Evil people will never be convinced of taking the right path. His message will never come across to the Knight and the Merchant, nor to the upper-class audience. When the Ploughman has left the stage, the Knight and Merchant come back and confirm the observation just made by the Ploughman. They are both glad that they are alone and fall back to their traditional way of thinking about gentleness and nobility. Both speakers are in complete agreement with one another: 'And let churllys bable and say what they wyll, / It hath ben so euer and wyll be so styll' (1091-2).

However, when all speakers have left the stage, the Philosopher enters to round off the debate. He favours the Ploughman's opinion concerning virtue and gentle conditions, which can exist among both the poor commons and the higher classes. He corrects the Ploughman regarding self-sufficiency and claims that goodness is the cause of God's nobility. In addition, the Philosopher too is against scholastic learning and prefers the use of natural reason (1131). Natural reason can cause a man to rise in nobility and here the

Philosopher agrees with the beliefs of the Thomas More circle.[68] Where the Ploughman did not believe in his own power to reform and, therefore, went back to his plough, the Philosopher suggests several ways of reform to better society. He pleads for better laws to restrain those that do not abide by virtue. Moreover, people in ruling positions should be removed after a set period. If they prove to be bad rulers, they should be punished for their deeds. The Philosopher, too, does not believe in inheritance and, thus, supports the Ploughman's radical theory. These words are more convincingly spoken by the Philosopher than by the Ploughman. An upper-class audience would never have accepted such propositions of reform from a Ploughman. Therefore, for the author to get his message across, it was necessary for the Ploughman to conform to the traditional system and return to his plough. A Philosopher has more authority to address these kinds of radical reforms. The author then, very much conform humanist drama, delivers his message thourhg the comic persona of the Ploughman. In that sense the character of the Ploughman changes from the moral leader of the debate to a rambling and violent churl. This double nature adds to the diversity of the ploughman figure.

Enclosure literature

The culture of enclosing is a process that started in the fourteenth century, but it is not until the late fifteenth century that it became a problem. It was not enclosing in itself that created problems, but more particularly, when enclosure from arable land to pasture land occurred and had a negative effect on the economical position on the lower class, it could create huge tensions and problems locally. In the following section, whenever the word enclosure is mentioned, it refers to this specific form.

During the fourth year of the reign of King Henry VII, we find the first act that deals with this matter and this act remains the basis of legislation against enclosure in the early sixteenth century. This act 'concernyng pulling downe of townes' states that

> grete ynconvenyens be and daylay encrease by deslocacyon pullyngs downe and destruccyon of howses and townes wythyn this realme, and layeng to pasture londs whych customably have bene manured and occupyed wyth tyllage and husbondry whereby ydlenes doth encrease ...[69]

[68] See above, p. 17.
[69] *The Statutes at Large,* vol. II, p. 127.

In this act, it is recognised that the change of land usage from arable to pasture is one of the main sources of the disappearance of towns. The act acknowledges that husbandry is the higher form of agriculture: 'husbondry whych ys the gretest comodyte of thys realme for sustenance of man'.[70] Husbandry still has the status of being the most important commodity for England. Parliament tried to reverse the process of enclosing by ordering that all lands that were recently made into pasture had to revert to arable land. This act was repeated during King Henry VIII's reign in 1514-1515 with the purpose of lasting for one year. Apparently, the enclosing process proved to be a bigger problem, for in the following year, the act was ordered to be maintained forever. However, these measures still proved to be unfruitful:

> For as moche as dyvers and sundry persones of the Kynges Subjectes of this Realme. to whome God of hys goodnes hath disposed greate plentie and abundance of movable substance, nowe of late within fewe yeres have dayly studyed practised and invented ways and meanes how they might accumulate and gather together into few handes aswell great multitude of fermes as great plentie of catall and in especiall shepe, puttyng suche londs as they can gett to pasture and not to tyllage...[71]
>
> And as it is thought by the Kynges most humble and lovyng subjects that one of the gretest occasions that moveth and provoketh those gredy and covetous people so to accumulate and kepe in theire handes suche greate porcions and parties of the groundes and landis of this Realme frome the occupyng of the poure husbondmen, and so to use it in pasture and not in tyllage, is only the greate profette that commyth of shepe which now be commyn to a few persons handes of this Realme... [72]

In 1517, Cardinal Wolsey ordered a commission to inquire into enclosure in the Realm. 'As a result of this commission, proceedings were at once taken in Chancery against the offenders, and many entered into recognisance to restore decayed tenements and reconvert pasture into arable land'.[73] According to Pollard, 'this step has been attributed with some probability to the influence of Thomas More'.[74] Thomas More was an influential person at

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[70] *The Statutes at Large*, vol. II, p. 127.
[71] *The Statutes at Large*, vol. II, p. 451.
[72] *The Statutes at Large*, vol. II, p. 451.
[73] A. F. Pollard, *England under Protector Somerset. An Essay*, (London, 1900), p. 208.
[74] A. F. Pollard, p. 207-208.

the court at that time and his *Utopia*, which was available in 1516, may have influenced Wolsey. Thomas More, in the voice of Rafeal Hythloday in his *Utopia*, condemns the sheep holders: 'your sheep that commonly are so meek and eat so little; now, as I hear, they have become so greedy and fierce that they devour human beings themselves. ... For they leave no land free for the plough: they enclose every acre for pasture; they destroy houses and abolish towns, keeping the churches – but only for sheep-barns'.[75] In this passage of *Utopia*, Hythloday refers to More and Peter Giles and their conversation with John Morton, who was Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal and Lord Chancellor of England (around 1497). The two of them discuss the causes of the rise of the number of thefts. Hythloday sees enclosure as one of the main causes: 'There is no need for farm labour, in which they have been trained, when there is no land left to be planted. One herdsman or shepherd can look after a flock of beasts large enough to stock an area that used to require many hands to make it grow crops'.[76]

In 1518, Wolsey issued a decree 'for the pulling down and laying abroad' of all enclosures made since 1485. Similar proclamations were issued in 1526. The Government's policy was not to make enclosure impossible, but to make it more risky and costly.[77] However, after Wolsey's fall, King Henry became more preoccupied with other matters and agrarian affairs were neglected.[78] Moreover, it seems that the government's actions might have taken effect. Enclosure did not happen on such wide scale until the end of the sixteenth century. It seems that the rise in wool export was achieved by 'more intensive exploitation of the existing pastoral acreage'.[79]

The next parliamentary involvement is from 1533-34. The parliament decided to take more rigorous steps by allowing farmers to hold no more than 2000 sheep and no more than two farms with a penalty of 3 s. 4 d. per sheep. This act was quickly followed by another in 1535-1536 stating that on the King's land this act was met, but however not on

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[75] T. More, *Utopia,* ed. G. M. Logan and R. M. Adams, rev. edn. (Cambridge, 2002), p. 18. The complaint about churches being turned into sheep stables was commonplace in enclosure literature. See for instance the ballad 'Nowe a Dayes' (c. 1520):

> The townes go down, the land decayes;
> Off cornefeyldes, playne layes;
> Gret men makithe now a dayes
> A shepecott in the church.

In *Tudor Economic Documents*, ed. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, (London, 1951), vol. III, p. 18-20.

[76] T. More, *Utopia*; p. 19.

[77] J. D. Gould, *The Great Debasement. Currency and the Economy in Mid-Tudor England*, (Oxford, 1970), p. 150.

[78] A. F. Pollard, p. 208.

[79] J. D. Gould, p. 152.

other lords' land. In order to speed up the process concerning those lands that had yet not reverted to tillage, 'the King shall have the Moiety of the Profits of Lands converted from Tillage to Pasture since 4 Henry VII until a proper House is built, and the Land returned to Tillage'.[80] This Act was restricted to only certain areas of England. In addition, during the dissolution of the monasteries it was stated that the new owners of the land must keep as much land to tillage as it was previously when it was kept by the monasteries within twenty years before the statute.

During the beginning of King Edward's reign there seems to be more rigorous involvement with enclosure related problems. Somerset was personally involved with the shaping of proclamations and acts against enclosure. Historians have shown that he sincerely wanted to improve the position of the poor commons:

> Somerset's real concern to protect the commons from exploitation is proved by the private Act of Parliament he promoted to give security to copyholders on his own estates, and by his repeated action against his own financial interests in reversing enclosures and other administrative measures which had aroused local protests in several different places. He also established a court of requests in his own house to give justice to the poor. The idea that the government supported the commons in redressing their own grievances, that the 'Good Duke' was on their side, encouraged them to take action into their own hands: the apparently muted outcome of the great stirs around Northaw in 1548 would not have gone unnoticed.[81]

It has been shown that during this period there was no noteworthy rise in the number of enclosures.[82] On the contrary, during this period enclosure activity was very low. Moreover, during the years 1546-48, the harvests were abundant and this testifies against the argument that the enclosures were a danger to food productivity.[83] It is, therefore, peculiar to note a significant rise in enclosure literature and government involvement during this period. According to Bush, one of the reasons why Somerset and his government were so much involved with agrarian reform was that they 'regarded the

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[80] *The Statutes at Large*, vol. II, p. 553.
[81] A. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, p. 76. See also A. Jones, '"Commotion Time": The English Risings of 1549' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Warwick University, 2003), p. 97, 251, 285; and E. Shagan, 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions: New Sources and New Perspectives', *English Historical Review*, 114 (1999), 34-63, at 276.
[82] P. Ramsey, pp. 26-7.
[83] G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation. England under 1509-1558*, (London, 1984), p. 323.

protection of tillage as an answer both to dearth and to depopulation'.[84] The war with Scotland and France and coin debasement were the main causes for the inflation and the economic problems. However, the government 'attributed the damage inflicted by war to sheep-farming. It made sheep the scapegoat for the economic problems of the time'.[85] In 1548, a Parliamentary bill was made against the monopoly of farms. Again the cause of the decay of the towns was sought among pasture holders: 'complaint is now made against the destruction of country towns and villages, dearth and the decay of people generally, chiefly caused by neglect by the nobility of their duties and their becoming graziers and sheepmasters, having pulled down many townships'.[86] The first enclosure committee was arranged in 1548 and was mainly an enquiring commission concerning the problems of enclosure. However, at the same time, there occurred many risings throughout the country, which were mainly socio-economically based, with many enclosure rioters. On May 22 of the same year, a Proclamation was made against these enclosure rioters:

> The king warned offenders against enclosure statutes to make redress or be punished; some have taken the law into their own hands, destroying pales, hedges and ditches. He now forbids all riots or unlawful assemblies.[87]

Clearly, there was much unrest among the people regarding the problems of enclosure. Somerset wrote to the marquess of Dorset and the earl of Huntingdon: 'In most parts lewd men have attempted to assemble, seeking redress of enclosures, have in some places, by seditious priests and other evil people, sought restitution of the old bloody laws, and some fall to spoil. Have the enclosure proclamation published by the sheriff, to withstand evil rumours. Be ready with the Leicestershire gentlemen to repress any attempts in the beginning'.[88] The commission itself was partly blamed for the risings as, in some cases, the speeches had a stirring character.[89]

After a general pardon for the enclosure rioters and after the risings were controlled, a second commission was set up for the execution of all previous acts. This commission went much further than the first and its goal was to 'redress and reform'.[90] In 1549, a list of

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[84] M. L. Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset*, (London, 1975), p. 41.
[85] M. L. Bush, p. 41.
[86] *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Edward VI 1447-1553*, ed. C.S. Knighton, rev. edn. (London, 1992), p. 70.
[87] *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 104.
[88] *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 110.
[89] A. Fletcher, and D. MacCulloch, p. 66.
[90] M. L. Bush, p. 47.

instructions was printed for the benefit of the commissioners. That there was still a great deal of anxiety among the people can be seen in a letter (10 July 1549) from Thomas Darcy and John Gates (two commissioners) to William Cecil: 'Because we cannot deal with matters presented to us, we fear that the people think we delay, and they may be more enraged'.[91] Historians have revealed that there was a widespread crisis involving twenty-seven counties during the summer of 1549.[92] In Norfolk this anxiety resulted in the so-called 'Kett's rebellion', one of the more large-scale rebellions during the Tudor period. It was primarily an agrarian rebellion. Although the rebels destroyed many hedges on gentlemen's land, from their demands and complaints one can deduce that the two main concerns were rack-renting and the loss of common rights, which is significant in relation to the higher efficiency of land use, not so much enclosure itself.[93]

It is interesting to note that both moralists like Thomas More and the government considered the problems of enclosure not purely a socio-economic matter, but a religious matter as well. Hythloday claims that 'one reason is that after so much new pasture-land was enclosed, rot killed a countless number of sheep – as though God were punishing greed by sending on the beasts a murrain that rightly should have fallen on the owners!'.[94] In the government's announcement of the first enclosure inquiry in 1548 it is more explicitly stated: 'as well by natural reason as also as it may be justly thought by the due punishment of God for such uncharitableness, great rots and murrains, both of sheep and bullocks, hath lately been sent of God and seen in this realm'.[95]

In this period, there were a great number of writings that dealt with the issue. The so-called 'commonwealth party', of which Hugh Latimer seemed to be part, were very active in their writings and advice to Somerset. The likelihood is that Somerset read or learned of the contents of most of these writings.[96] The commonwealth party was not an organization, but a group of writers that shared a common theory or way of thinking. This theory can be expressed by the words of John Hales, who also belonged to this group: 'It may not be lawful for every man to use his own as him listeth, but every man must use that he hath to

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[91] *Calendar of State Papers,* p. 126.
[92] See A. Jones.
[93] P. Ramsey, pp. 40-1.
[94] T. More, *Utopia,* p. 19.
[95] *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols., ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, (New Haven, London, 1964-69), vol. I, *The Early Tudors: 1485-1553*, p. 428.
[96] M. L. Bush, p. 71.

the most benefit of his country'.[97] In his sermons, Hugh Latimer, at this time preaching on behalf of the court at St. Paul's Cross, London, addresses the issue as well. In his *Sermon on the Plough* delivered in 1547, he tells the people that there are two types of ploughing and both types are in danger of enclosure: 'the one is an inclosing to let or hinder the bodily ploughing, and the other to let or hinder the holiday-ploughing, the church-ploughing. The bodily ploughing is taken in and inclosed through singular commodity. For what man will let go, or diminish his private commodity for a commonwealth? And who will sustain any damage for the respect of a public commodity?'[98] In his first sermon before King Edward VI, delivered in March 1549, which deals primarily with aspects relating to the king, he claims that enclosure is one of the worst offences against the king's honour: 'Furthermore, if the king's honour, as much as men say, standeth in the great multitude of people; then these graziers, inclosers, and rentrearers, are hinderers of the king's honour. For where as have been a great many householders and inhabitants, there is now but a shepherd and his dog: so they hinder the king's honour most of all'.[99] Nevertheless, Latimer believes that his preaching against this evil is in vain: 'But let the preacher preach till his tongue be worn to the stumps, nothing is amended. We have good statutes made for the commonwealth, as touching commoners and inclosers; many meetings and sessions, but in the end of the matter there cometh nothing forth'.[100] Furthermore, it seems from this quotation that Latimer deems even the government's actions to be in vain.

In the last sermon of these series Latimer gets to the root of the matter by seeking the blame for these problems in covetousness. According to his logic, 'covetousness is the root of all evil: rebellion is an evil: ergo, covetousness is the root of rebellion'.[101] Here Latimer is referring to the summer peasant risings, which were both a reaction to current religious affairs and to the government's poor dealings with the effects of enclosure. It is in this sermon that Latimer outspokenly defends the poor ploughman. He refers to an act of Parliament made during the reign of King Henry III, which allowed the landlords to enclose land from their tenants and from the commons provided they left sufficient land for them to live on. Latimer reasons that since that Act was made, the landlords were now again

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[97] Quoted in A. Chester, *Hugh Latimer. Apostle to the English,* (Philadelphia, 1954), p. 172.
[98] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, ed. A. Pollard. (Manchester, 2000), p. 39. For a fuller discussion of this sermon, see chapter 3, p. 111 ff.
[99] H. Latimer, *Sermons and Remains by Hugh Latimer,* ed. G. E. Corrie, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1844), vol. I, p. 100.
[100] H. Latimer, *Sermons and Remains,* vol. I, p. 101.
[101] H. Latimer, *Sermons and Remains,* vol. I, p. 247.

enclosing even more land, which could only result in an insufficient amount of land left for the poor people at this time. Latimer makes a plea to the landlords and he bids them to spare the ploughman:

> They in Christ are equal with you. Peers of the realm must needs be. *The poorest ploughman is in Christ equal with the greatest prince that is*. Let them, therefore, have sufficient to maintain them, and to find their necessaries. A plough-land must have sheep; yea, they must have sheep to dung their ground for bearing of corn... They must have swine for their food, to make their veneries or bacon of... They must have other cattle: as horses to draw their plough; and kine for their milk and cheese, which they must live upon and pay their rents. These cattle must have pasture, which pasture they cannot have, if the land be taken in, and inclosed from them. Therefore, for God's love, restore their sufficient unto them, and search no more what is the cause of rebellion. [102]

Another writer who upholds a similar theory concerning the Commonwealth is Thomas Smith. Smith was one of the most educated academics at that time and was King Edward's Principal Secretary when he wrote the *Discourse of the CommonWeal of this Realm of England* (1549).[103] During his Secretaryship, he was much concerned with the country's financial and economic affairs, especially in 1549.[104] He had temporarily fallen out of favour with Somerset, who had rejected Smith's suggestions for handling England's economic problems.[105] During this period of enforced exile, he wrote his work. Smith never meant the book to be published as he states in his preface, and it was meant for the eyes of one person only (Dewar suggests this man was Cecil). According to Dewar, 'no other book is more revealing on the matter of the economic and social problems of the age and contemporary attitudes to them. Nowhere else do we find such an understanding of the social and economic pressures which were to plague the country throughout these decades. It is only in the *Discourse* that the direct relationship between debased coinage and high prices and rising wages and consequent social disintegration is drawn with conviction, clarity, and authoritative insight'.[106] Smith deals with the economic problems in a professional way: 'I thought it best to take that way in the discourse of this matter, which is

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[102] H. Latimer, *Sermons and Remains,* vol. I, p. 249, italics mine.
[103] T. Smith, *A Discourse of the Commonweal of This Realm of England*, ed. M. Dewar, (Charlottesville, 1969), pp. xx-xxi. All quotations are taken from this source.
[104] T. Smith, p. xxiii; M. Dewar, *Sir Thomas Smith: A Tudor Intellectual in Office*, (London, 1964), p. 49.
[105] M. Dewar, pp. 50-2.
[106] M. Dewar, p. 53.

first in recounting the common and universal grieves that men complain on nowadays. Secondly in bolting out the very causes and occasions of the same, and thirdly and finally in devising remedies for all the same'.[107] His text is set up as three dialogues among five people that represent different classes of society. In this way, 'reasons be made to and fro as well for the matter intended as against it'.[108] The five speakers are the knight and the doctor in civil law, who are the two primary speakers, and the husbandman, the merchant and the capper. The doctor presents the answers and solutions, judges the speeches of the other characters in this dialogue and very likely represents Thomas Smith's own ideas.[109] The text does not relate the economic problems to religion as was the case for the Government, Latimer and More. It is a response to the measures taken by the Government against enclosure and seeks to find the true causes of the economic problems the commonwealth finds itself in.

In the first dialogue, the classes complain about their depressing situation and the two main complaints relate to enclosures and the high costs of goods, land and rent. In the second dialogue they attempt to seek the cause of the 'dearth'[110] and the doctor allows each class to give its opinion. The husbandman blames the knight for his problems and vice versa. However, the doctor points out to them that neither of them can remedy the matter, as the real cause lies not in the gentlemen raising the rent of the lands or the husbandmen raising the price of their goods, but in the debasement of coins. Nevertheless, the capper brings the focus back to enclosures:

> Marry, these enclosures and great pastures are a great cause of the same whereby men do turn the arable land, being a living for divers poor men beforetime, now to one man's hand. And where both corn of all sorts and also cattle of all kind were reared beforetimes, now there is nothing but only sheep. And instead of a hundred or two hundred persons that had their livings thereon, now be there but three or four shepherds and the master only that have a living thereof.[111]

The Doctor admits that it is one of the causes, though not the primary cause, of the dearth of this time. He argues that 'if that kind of enclosure do as much increase in twenty years to come as it has done twenty years past, it comes to the great desolation and weakening of

[107] T. Smith, p. 13.
[108] T. Smith, p. 13.
[109] T. Smith, p. xxii.
[110] Dearth in this text does not mean scarcity of goods but the high prices of goods.
[111] T. Smith, p. 49.

the King's strength of this realm which is more to be feared than dearth. And I think it to be the most occasion, of anything you spoke yet, of these wild and unhappy uproars among us'.[112] However, where previous texts did not distinguish between types of enclosures that can be unharmfull and even profitable, although we have seen that the Government tailored their enclosure acts to specific regions of England, this text *does* make that distinction. This is where the theory of the commonwealth Party comes to the fore. The Knight addresses this issue and the Doctor explains:

> I mean not of all enclosures, nor yet all commons, but only of such enclosures as turn common arable fields into pastures, and violent enclosures of commons without just recompense of them that have right to common therein. For if land were severally enclosed to the intent to continue husbandry thereon and every man that had right to common had for his portion a piece of the same to himself enclosed, I think no harm but rather good should come thereof, if every man did agree thereto... But this feat of enclosing is so that where it is profitable to one man it is prejudicial to many.[113]

According to the Doctor and to the Commonwealth theory, enclosures can only be condoned when they do not conflict with other people's needs. The remedy the doctor proposes for this problem is 'to make the profit of the plow to be as good, rate for rate, as the profit of the grazier and sheepmaster is'.[114] The way to do this is either to lower the price of wool by raising customs tax over export wool and/or by restraining the amount of wool to be passed over the sea just like corn was restrained at that time; or by raising the price of corn to the same level as wool, which is the measure the Doctor prefers. The husbandman is persuaded by the Doctor. However, the capper is not, as he argues that everybody relies on corn and, therefore, everybody will be ill affected by a rise in the price

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[112] T. Smith, p. 49.

[113] T. Smith, p. 50, 52. The Government also recognised this distinction, as we can see from John Hales' instructions to commissioners what the word enclosure means: John Hales was the person closest to Somerset and involved in the legislation regarding enclosure. He writes in 1548: 'but first, to declare unto you what is meant by this word *inclosures*. It is not taken where a man doth enclose and hedge in his own proper ground, where no man hath commons. For such inclosure is very beneficial to the commonwealth; it is a cause of great encrease of wood: but it is meant thereby, when any man hath taken away and enclosed any other mens' commons, or hath pulled down houses of husbandry, and converted the lands from tillage to pasture. This is the meaning of the word, and so we pray you to remember it'. Quoted in P. Ramsey, p. 21. At the end of the century, 'there was a wider recognition of the possible benefits of the process, and a greater flexibility in legislation. The act of 1597 allowed conversion of arable to pasture on an estate, provided that an equivalent area of grass were ploughed up. It was thus recognized that in some areas, at least, convertible husbandry called for the temporary replacement of tillage by grass'. P. Ramsey, p. 181.

[114] T. Smith, p. 54.

of corn. Nevertheless, the Doctor defends his remedies by the theory of the Commonwealth:

> We must understand also that all things that should be done in a Commonweal be not to be forced, or to be constrained by the straight penalties of the law, but some so and some other by allurement and rewards rather. For what law can compel men to be industrious in travail and labor of his body or studious to learn any science or knowledge of the mind? To these things men may be well provoked, encouraged, and allured as if they that be industrious and painful be rewarded well for their pains and be suffered to take gains and wealth as reward of their labors.[115]

We see here that Smith too, like Latimer, does not fully believe in the power of Parliament who can force its subjects to obey the law.

At the same time, the Doctor believes in enhancing England's own products rather than relying on imported goods: 'it were better for us to pay more to our own people for these wares than less to strangers, for how little gains soever goes over it is lost to us clear, but how much soever the gains is that go from one of us to another it is all saved within the realm'.[116] The Doctor argues that importing goods puts native artisans out of work and, therefore, there should be a high custom on import goods. The Knight raises doubts by saying that this could compromise England's export, but the Doctor assures him that England imports merely luxury goods and exports necessary goods. Nevertheless, modern economic historians have argued that the Doctor's reasoning is not very sensible. 'The English Merchant had to take what he could get on the foreign market and sell on the home market; equally foreigners could not buy our cloth if we did not take their goods in exchange. … To argue like the Doctor was to ignore hard economic realities'.[117] Now that this 'sub-cause' and the remedies have been discussed, the Doctor returns to discussing what he believes to be the main cause of the economic problems: 'the debasing or rather corrupting of our coin and treasure, whereby we have devised a way for strangers not only to buy our gold and silver for brass and to exhaust this realm of treasure but also to buy our chief commodities in manner for naught. Yet it was thought this should have been a mean not only to bring our treasure home but to bring much of theirs; but the experience has so

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[115] T. Smith, pp. 58-9.
[116] T. Smith, p. 66.
[117] P. Ramsey, p. 53. This argument was also put forward by Roger Bodenham in a paper prepared for Burghley in 1571, where he pointed out that 'foreigners could hardly buy our products if we did not buy theirs'. See P. Ramsey, p. 182.

plainly declared the contrary'.[118] The remainder of the dialogue explains how the debasement of the coin comes about and how the debasement has influenced trade with foreign countries. 'Do you not see that our coin is discredited already, especially among strangers. … since our coin has been debased and altered, strangers have counterfeited our coin and found the means to have great masses of that transported hither, and here uttered it, as well for our gold and silver as for our chief commodity; which thing I report me unto you what inconvenience it may bring the King's Highness and this realm unto if it be suffered in brief time'.[119] The debasement of the coin is one of the chief causes of the high prices: 'for we must buy dear all things brought from beyond the seas and therefore we must sell again as dear our things or else we make ill bargains for ourselves'.[120] Gould, researching the period of the 'Great Debasement' has tentatively argued the same thing as the Doctor: 'It has been generally assumed that the debasement, in stimulating the volume of exports, also generated a fall in the average price of cloth in terms of foreign currency. Similarly, it is assumed that the fall in the exchanges increased the domestic price of imported goods. The debasement, then, is supposed to have had an adverse effect on England's terms of trade. This is indeed likely, but the actual course of either cloth or import prices have not been charted'.[121] This reflects Smith's insight into the economic problems at the time.

The third dialogue proposes to offer remedies for the debasement of the coin. This dialogue is dominated by long speeches by the Doctor with the Knight asking the most questions. The Capper and Merchant fulfil minor roles with the Husbandman not speaking at all. In the first half, the reader gets a summary of the preceding dialogues and the Doctor conveniently sums up how the economy is ill affected by the debasement: 'I think this alteration of the coin to be the first original cause; that strangers first sell their wares dearer to us and that makes all farmers and tenants that rear any commodity again to sell the same dearer, the dearth thereof makes the gentleman to sell their rents and to take farms to their hands for their better provision and consequently to enclose more ground'.[122] The Doctor's solution to the problem is to restore the coin to the 'old rate, goodness and value'.[123] The

[118] T. Smith, p. 69.
[119] T. Smith, pp. 77-8.
[120] T. Smith, p. 79.
[121] J. D. Gould, pp. 155-6.
[122] T. Smith, pp. 101-102.
[123] T. Smith, p. 102.

remainder of the dialogue discusses consequences of this and closes with a long monologue by the Doctor concerning the Church and how it should be reformed.

Pyers Plowmans Exhortation unto the Lordes, Knightes, and Burgoysses of the Parlyamenthouse was written only slightly later than the *Discourse* (c.1550); perhaps even at the same time. There are several striking similarities, but also some relevant differences. *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* has a similar structure to the *Discourse*: It establishes the grievances of the people, continues with an attempt to seek the main causes and closes with possible remedies. *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* powerfully speaks against the evils of enclosure: 'a fewe riche men haue ingrossed vp so many fermes and shepe pastures, and haue decayed so many whole townes, that thousandes of the poore comens can not get so muche as one ferme, nor scant any litell house to put their head in' (A.ii recto).[124] One of the main differences between the two texts is that *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* explicitly relates the matter to Christian values. *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* uses a religious note to introduce its topic and at the same time establishes the grievances of the ploughman. Enclosure measures are against Christian values: 'It is not agreable with the gospel that a fewe parsons shall lyue in so great aboundaunce of wealth, and suffer so many their christen brothers to lyue in extreme pouertie' (A.ii recto). He realises that the defenders of enclosure support their claim with passages from Scripture. The ploughman responds to this by saying that

> And are not they muche madder, when finding one or two textes in the scripture which semes to take awaye propriety of goodes, and do not regarde how their opinion agreeth with the eight commaundement, which sayth: thou shalt not steale, and with the tenth, which inhibiteth vs to couet our neyghbours house, or our neighbours wife, his seruaunt, his mayd, his oxe, his asse or any thing that is our neighbours. And if their shulde be no proprietie, I pray you to what purpose shall these wordes sound which shalbe spoken by Christ at the daye of iugement. Whan I was hungry ye gaue me meate, and whan I was athrust ye gaue me drinke etc. Or wherfore doth Christ in the vi chap. of mat. wil vs, when we giue our almes to giue it secretly, if I shuld here reken vp al the places in scripture which make directly against this fond opinion, I might be accompted more then halfe mad to bestowe so much time in a matter so manifest (A.iii verso)

[124] All quotations are taken from *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation unto the Lordes, Knightes, and Burgoysses of the Parlyamenthouse,* EEBO, which is a copy of the text from the Bodleian Library.

Now that the author has settled the other parties' religious justification for their enclosure practices as false, the author goes on to address the causes of the poverty of the commons. Where both Latimer and the Tudor Government sought the cause in religious terms and blamed it on people's covetousness, this author seeks the cause not in overpopulation, as Bush has suggested,[125] but in the dissolution of the monasteries, which has led to a surplus in the labour force.

This point is a novelty of the ploughman text; the *Discourse* hardly mentions the dissolution of the monasteries. It is not only destructive for the economy that all the clergy need to look for labour, but also that these clergy, although spending their time in idleness, are not able to look after their brothers: 'For when the forsayd Abbays did stand, that Husbandman whych had two or thre Sonnes, wold for the mooste parte, finde one of them at Scoole for a yere or two vntill he might read the masse boke, and then make him eyther a monke, chanon frier or chauntripriest, which many times also shuld helpe his other brethern to some parte of their liuinge, but nowe there is no such refuge: all must be put to labour' (A.iv verso – A.v recto). Moreover, now that these clergymen are no longer restricted to their vow of chastity, it is likely there will be an increase of children. On top of this, because of the growth of the labour force, the wages will go down and the cost of living will go up. 'And thus shall the moost parte of the Realme be in pouertie, one not able to helpe an other' (A.vi recto). Additionally, the land previously owned by the abbeys is now in the hands of large landholders and, thus, fewer farms are left and less labour is needed, the ploughman argues. Because of their covetousness and because it is easier to oversee, they convert their arable lands into pasture, leaving even less land to an increasing labour force, a possible effect which has perhaps been too much played down by modern historians.[126] It is interesting to note that an earlier ploughman text, written before the dissolution of the monasteries, also blames the clergy for the economic problems. In *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentilman and an Husbandman* (1529-30), the gentleman's solution to this problem is that the clergy should put themselves to labour: 'I wolde they shuld laye their prayenge a syde / And geue theym selfes to labour bodely' (390-1).[127]

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[125] M. L. Bush, p. 71.
[126] J. D. Gould, p. 152.
[127] See below for a fuller discussion of this text, p. 47. All quotations are taken from *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentillman and an Husbandman*, ed. D. H. Parker, (Toronto, 1996).

Bush claims that *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* 'was in a higher category than most of the comment'.[128] This is because it is one of the few enclosure texts that manage to isolate real and actual economic problems that the author believes the country suffers from, rather than looking for a scapegoat or for religious causes. Furthermore, the ploughman-author gives practical solutions to the problem. The ploughman makes two suggestions about how to create more labour: 'by the conuerting into pastour or Arable waiste and desolate grounndes, nowe being ouerflowen wyth water or ouergrowen wyth Brome, fearne whinnes or fyrres, and by the restrayninge of the forsayde Shepemasters and ingrossers of fermes, that they doo not hereafter conuert so muche grounde vnto Shepepastours, and then to suffer all maner of corne to be yerelye transported ouer the seas as well as anye other kynde of marchaundise' (A.viii recto – verso). The first measure is to claim waste and desolate ground that is now under water or overgrown with weeds and trees and to convert this land to either arable or pasture. This suggestion is a novelty of the work, a very practical one that would give immediate positive results. In fact, during the reign of the Tudors no new important land was brought under the plough. 'The addition of half a million acres of arable land came first with the Stuarts. The Tudor age saw only slow accretions, such as the Lincolnshire coast'.[129] This solution, as straightforward as it may seem, has not been presented in many enclosure texts. When more land has come available, Parliament should restrict the amount of arable land that is converted into pasture and encourage arable farming by allowing free export of corn. The second measure is to promote the manufacture of goods, which the Realm imports from other countries and by charging import tax. We have seen that Smith promoted this same measure in his *Discourse*.[130] The ploughman author recommends that the import tax should be spent on the King's wars, thus, relieving the people from high taxes that the King would need for the expenditure of his wars. At the same time, the tax on certain export goods should be reduced so that this export is promoted, thus, creating more labour in England.

Contrary to what Bush claims,[131] *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* does mention the debasement of the coin. Perhaps the text does not see it as the main cause of the economic problems like the Doctor in the *Discourse*, but it does get mentioned:

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[128] M. L. Bush, p. 71.
[129] P. Ramsey, p. 44.
[130] See above, p. 40.
[131] Who believes that one of the important failures of *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* is that it neglects the debasement of the coin; p.71.

> And for asmuch as they haue nowe much gaynes beyonde the seas, and his realme not a litell therby in domaged, in that they do counterfayte our new coyned siluer beyond the seas and send it hither. If therfore good prouision and narrowe search be made that none of the sayde counterfayted money be connuayed hither, then shulde all the forsayde summes of money which shall come yerelye frome beyond the seas for the foresayd ouerplus in wares, be brought into this royalme in such gold and siluer as the kinges maiesty may take advauntage by the coynage. (B.iii recto – verso)

In principle then, we can see that the *Discourse* and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* share the same way of thinking of how to deal with the enclosure problems. Although the emphasis on certain aspects may be different between the two authors, both propose the same solutions in promoting the sale of corn and the production of goods within England rather than importing them from abroad and both authors recognise the dangers of coin debasement.

In contrast to Hugh Latimer and to a certain extent Thomas Smith, the ploughman author of *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* believes that the commonwealth's only hope lies in the hands of the parliament. He believes that parliament has not only the *power* but also the *duty* to reform the country:

> Therfore you of the parliamenthouse must do vnto them as the louing parentes do vnto their chyldren when they constrayne them to drinke wormesedes or such other bitter medecines for the preseruation of their lyues, although the chylderen, for the bitternes of the medycyne, be neuer so lothe to receyue it. (B.ii recto)

The ploughman recognises that some of his measures are hard to digest for certain layers of the society; therefore, it is the duty of the parliament to act as parents raising their unwilling children. The ploughman proposes that the parliament should place these measures into Acts. The results would be threefold:

> by these meanes the sayde great number of people whiche before were wont to liue in Idelnes, shall not onely gayne their owne liuynges but also they shall both cause great summes of money to be yerely brought in this realme for such corne as shal encrease by their labour vppon tyllage. And furthermore cause greate summes of money to be kept within this realme which was wont here tofore to be

> exchaunged into other Royalmes for suche lynen cloth and suche other thinges. (B.ii recto – verso)

The *Discourse* has been praised for its detailed knowledge of the English economy and insight into how to restore it. Since we know that Thomas Smith was the author of the *Discourse*, the detailed knowledge is easily explained due to his profession at Somerset's court. Although *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* is much shorter than the *Discourse* (and it must be said that the *Discourse* uses a lot of repetition throughout the text), one wonders about the profession of the author of *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*. However, one of the important differences between the two texts is that the *Discourse* is clearly set within the theory of the commonwealth party. This is not the case for *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*. In fact, the author states at the beginning:

> I wold not that those ydell membres of this realme, whiche for the mayntenaunce of their ydelnes wold haue al thinges in commen, shuld think that I do now harpe of that string: farre be such madnes fro me, for that confusion wold vtterly extinguish all industry vnto all maner of good artes and qualities, and reduce vs vnto a bestly trade of life. (A.ii verso)

The author supports his claim by stating that Aristotle in his *Politics* never pleaded for such a society (A.iii recto). It is probably due to *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* being a text looking at the economic problems from the standpoint of the ploughman or husbandman, rather than looking at it from the standpoint of all five classes of the commonwealth as the *Discourse* does. It is, therefore, likely that the author should not be sought among the commonwealth party.

In *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentilman and an Husbandman*, written earlier than the previous texts we have discussed so far, the two speakers blame the clergy for the enclosure problems; the source of their complaint is 'clerical possession of temporal goods, especially land and land claims'.[132] The text itself is very peculiar. It was published twice in a short period of time, the first edition in 1529 and the second in 1530, both printed in Antwerp. 'It is a hybrid text, made up in its first version of an original dialogue and a borrowed Lollard tract of the late fourteenth century attacking clerical possessions, and in its final version of a dialogue plus the Lollard tract just mentioned and a second prose piece

[132] *A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentillman and an Husbandman*, ed. D. H. Parker, (Toronto, 1996), p. 4.

written probably in the early fifteenth century and arguing for the Bible in the vernacular'.[133] For the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus mainly on the sixteenth-century dialogue between the Gentleman and the Husbandman.

Both Gentleman and Husbandman complain about their poor economic state and blame the clergy for this. The Gentleman complains in a long opening monologue that his ancestors still had plenty of land but were tricked into giving land to the clergy in return for prayers for their soul when they will be in purgatory, leaving too little land for the Gentleman to sustain himself and his family. The Husbandman agrees with the Gentleman and it is clear from their replies that this text is firmly placed in sixteenth-century early Protestantism:

> Husbondman:
> But is their prayer not more avaylynge
> To the deade soules / than to the lyuynge
> So it is not worthe a rotten aye.
> Gentillman:
> To the soules departed it is not profitable
> For whye / thos that are in case dampnable
> No assistence of prayour can attayne.
> And as for purgatory ther is none.
> (253-60)

Here we see that both Husbandman and Gentleman follow the early Protestant view that denies the existence of purgatory and, hence, show the uselessness of praying for the souls of the dead. The doctrine of purgatory was an important subject in the early sixteenth century as works by Fish (*A Supplicacyon for the Beggers*, 1529), More (*The Supplycacyon of Soulys*, 1529), Rastell (*A New Boke of Purgatory*, 1530), and Frith (*Disputacion of Purgatorye*, 1531) testify.[134] The Husbandman continues with his complaint by claiming that since the clergy obtained 'worldly dominacion' his economic state has weakened. The Husbandman clearly shares the Wycliffite view that the government ought to deprive the Clergy of their wordly powers and possessions: 'The temporalte ought theym to depryue / Of their worldly dominacyon' (457-8). Both the Gentleman and Husbandman praise society

[133] *A Proper Dyaloge*, p. 3.
[134] J. Scattergood, 'Simon Fish, A *Supplication for the Beggars* and Protestant Polemics', *Antwerp, Dissident Typographical Centre. The Role of Antwerp Printers in the Religious Conflicts in England (16th century)*, (Antwerp, 1994), pp. 76-7.

the way it was before the clergy possessed too much land: the Gentleman was able to sustain himself and his family and provide the poor some relief and the Husbandman was content with his place in the three estates, enjoying low rent and providing food for the other two estates. They both claim that the clergy's hunger for worldly possessions has disrupted society. They both see it as the main cause for the enclosure problems:

Husbandman:
But nowe their ambicious suttlete
Makyth one fearme of two or thre
Ye some tyme they bringe .vi. to one.
Which to gentillmen they let in farmage
Or elles to ryche marchauntes for avauntage
To the vndoynge of husbandemen echone....
(326-31)
Gentillman:
Neuerthelesse concernynge oure excuse
Why we gentillmen fearmes occupye.
The prinicipall occasion is onely this
That oure partrimony geuen awaye is
Vnto the wolffes of the clergye.
By whos oppression we are so beggeryd
That necessite hath vs compellyd
With fearmes soche shyft to make.
For as ye husbandemen can well vnderstande
Touchinge expences and charges of the lande
They disdayne any parte with vs to take.
(346-56)

The writer of *A Proper Dyaloge* seems to believe that a dissolution of the religious houses would provide an answer to their problems. It has been established that the effect of the dissolution was not negative in terms of enclosure. It did not stimulate an extra wave of the movement, though it is clear that the monasteries were guilty of enclosure as well.[135]

Where the knight and husbandman in *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* stood opposite each other and blamed each other for their own economic problems, in *A Proper Dyaloge*

[135] P. Ramsey, pp. 27-8.

the Gentleman and Husbandman are more united and form an 'alliance' against the clergy. 'The yoking is altogether appropriate, since the work is demonstrating that the entire socio-economic hierarchy has been adversely affected by the clergy's greed. Whatever differences exist between them, the gentleman and husbandman are surely joined by a common complaint: both have lost their respective stations, positions, and relative economic security as a result of the appropriation of 'lordships' by the clergy'.[136] The Husbandman proposes that they together make some sort of petition, which they can present to the Parliament in order to let the truth be known about the clergy. This, however, is opposed by the Gentleman who refers to the parliament's negative response to Simon Fish's *A Supplicacyon for the Beggers*. In this work, which was written for King Henry VIII, Fish also argues for disendowment of the Church and in particular that the orders should be more under the control of the Government. Fish wrote this work in such a style that it approximates to a parliamentary exhortation.[137] Thomas More wrote a lengthy and negative response to this work entitled *The Supplycacyon of Soulys*. The Gentleman lists several occasions in which the clergy successfully countered threats whether it came from 'gentillman lorde or kynge' (530). He mentions King John (also mentioned by Simon Fish in his *Supplicacyon for the Beggers* and John Bale's *King Johan* (ca. 1534)), John Oldcastle and Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. The Husbandman, therefore, proposes to attack the clergy with support from the Bible. His reference to chapter 23 of Luke, where Christ forbade secular ambition, and to the writings of St. Paul, who commands Christians not to eat, drink and clothe themselves superfluously, shows his in-depth knowledge of the Bible. Earlier in the text the Husbandman advocated the English translation of the Bible, claiming that the only reason why the clergy is against this is because they fear contradiction and revelation of their false interpretations of the Bible, which they made to their benefit (409-19). The Gentleman points out that the clergy will proclaim them heretics, as the Bible in English is still forbidden. He carries on by listing the church measures of the past against heretics: the burning of books and the burning of the heretics themselves. He continues by describing how the clergy deals with 'thes heretikes Lutheranes. / Whom they saye is a secte new fangled' (646-7). At this point the Husbandman cries out that this is a flat lie and has the opportunity to smoothly insert a

[136] *A Proper Dyaloge*, p. 6. Hugh Latimer preaches vehemently against the 'lording' of the clergy in his *Sermon on the Plough*. See chapter three, p. 118.
[137] J. Scattergood, 'Simon Fish', p. 76.

reading of a late fourteenth-century Lollard text dealing with clerical possession, thus proving that the ideas of the so called Lutherans are far from 'new fangled'.

The attempt to 'authorize' reformist ideas by claiming that these ideas had been around for decades and, therefore, not heretical was widespread.[138] 'Quite apart from the possibility of active proselytizing by the sixteenth-century inheritors of the old Lollard school, it was likely that the new reformers would be interested in the views of their protesting predecessors, both for the chance of adding vernacular arguments to their own armoury, and to show that they themselves were not the founders of a new tradition'.[139]

Two examples of this from the literature examined in this dissertation are *The Plowman's Tale* and *Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman vnto Christe*.[140] The *Plowman's Tale,* an early fifteenth-century Lollard text with early sixteenth-century interpolations,[141] was only allowed by Parliament to be added to a printed edition of works by Chaucer in 1542, when it was pointed out that Chaucer was an orthodox writer.[142] The *Praier and Complaynte*, with its claim that it was 'written not longe after the yere of oure Lorde A thousande and thre hundred' (3-6),[143] contains a preface[144] devoted to this issue: 'Now good reader that thou maist se playnly that it ys no new thinge but an olde practyse of oure prelates lerned of their fathers the byschops pharases and prestes of the olde law to defame the doctrine of Christe with the name of new lerninge and the teachers therof with

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[138] See also the article A. Hudson, 'No Newe Thyng: The Printing of Medieval Texts in the Early Reformation Period,' in her *Lollards and their Books,* (London, 1985), pp. 226-48.

[139] M. Aston, 'Lollardy and the Reformation: Survival or Revival', *History* 49 (1964), 149-70, at p. 150.

[140] See also the article by S. A. Kelen, 'Plowing the Past: 'Piers Protestant' and the Authority of Medieval Literary History', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 13 (1999), 101-36.

[141] But see chapter four, p.154. This *Plowman's Tale* should not be confused with a fifteenth-century *Ploughman's Tale* originally written by Thomas Hoccleve and to which a *Prologue* was added. In this *Prologue* the reader receives no details about the ploughman himself; therefore this text will not be dealt with in this thesis. For the text of the *Ploughman's Tale* see *The Ploughman's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions,* ed. J. M. Bowers, TEAMS, (Kalamazoo, 1992), pp. 23-32.

[142] However, see G. Walker, *Writing under Tyranny*, p. 65-9, where he argues that the evidence on which this story is based (namely, Thynne's son testimony that Cardinal Wolsey had blocked the publication of *The Plowman's Tale* in the 1532 edition) is rather unlikely and where he argues that Thynne did not include *The Plowman's Tale* in the 1532 edition because he did not believe the tale to be authentic. 'Certainly it is not reasonable to assume that Thynne and Tuke's choice of texts was driven by a radical religious agenda, and that they added any proto-protestant tale of potentially authentic Chaucerian provenance to their edition as as soon as their resources of the political climate permitted. ... What the printing history of the 1532 and 1542 *Chaucer* suggests is that Thynne and Tuke were actually very circumspect in accepting into the poet's canon texts that did not suit their political agenda, and where they did print works which they knew were not by Chaucer, they signalled the fact in their editions, whether by labelling them as the work of other writers, or positioning them outside the confines of the *Works* in the prefatory material' (which is the case for *The Plowman's Tale*), p. 69.

[143] *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman vnto Christe*, ed. D. H. Parker, (Toronto, 1997). All quotations are from this source.

[144] Possibly a later addition by Tyndale.

the name of new masters' (99-104). Additionally, in *The Banckett of Iohan the Reve unto Piers Ploughman, Laurens laborer, Thomlyn tailer and Hobb of the hille with others* (c. 1532), a text that attempts to defend the Catholic point of view on the matter of the Holy Supper, one of the characters who attempts to put forth Protestant ideas is significantly called Nicholas Newfangill.[145] With the Lollard text, the Husbandman in *A Proper Dyaloge* hopes to show that

> Loo nowe by this treatyse may ye well se
> That aforetymes against the spiritualte
> Men dyd invey shewinge their vyces.
> Also here after this actour dothe tell
> What great Ieoparde it is and perell
> For prestes to be in secular offices.
> Ye and to lordes which against right
> Suffre theym therein or therto excyte
> Prouynge it by their oune doctours and lawes.
> (1045-52)

The text persuades the gentleman into thinking that it might convince the noblemen of the parliament:

> Yf soche auncyent thynges myght come to lyght
> That noble men hadde ones of theym a syght
> The world yet wolde chaunge perauenture.
> For here agaynst the clergye can not bercke
> Sayenge as they do thys is a newe wercke
> Of heretykes contryued lately.
> And by thys treatyse it apperyth playne
> That before oure dayes men dyd compleyne
> Agaynst clerkes ambycyon so stately.
> (1156-64)

With this Lollard text the Husbandman believes the 'trouth to be knowen openly' (1291) and this is how the dialogue comes to an end.

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[145] See chapter two, p. 66.

In these early Tudor Ploughman texts that focus on social concerns, we see that the ploughman is more passive in the early texts and more active in the later texts. In *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* we have seen that the ploughman, although radical in his belief at first, does not see the use in opposing his current social position. Although he has the upper hand in the debate, he realises at the end of the play that he cannot get his message across and, thus, change his situation for the better. We saw that he went back to his plough and he abided by the 'rules of society'. Nevertheless, the Ploughman brought forward the humanist perception of nobility: its relation to morality and not to birth. At the same time, the Ploughman is presented as a comical figure, conforming to the flexible nature of the early Tudor interlude in which sudden shifts in mode occur very often. We see then that the Ploughman figure is very diverse in this play, ranging from an intelligent speaker touching upon radical issues, to a low-humour villainous churl who in the end abides by the set social order. The Husbandman and Gentleman in *A Proper Dyaloge* do not believe in their power to change things either. Here the Husbandman has found a companion in his battle against the clergy. Nevertheless, they neither have the courage to alter their position in society by way of arguments alone. Their fear is of being accused of Lollardy or heretical ideas. Therefore, they find it necessary to look for authoritative texts from the past that proclaim the same message of clerical disendowment. In Smith's *Discourse*, we have seen the proposal of important social measures for reform. These measures were mainly made by means of a Doctor; the ploughman played a part, but was only a minor figure in the text. This text was not meant for publication, but for private eyes only. It was written during the 'reign' of the Duke of Somerset and Smith was out of favour with him when he wrote the tract. Smith mentions in his preface that 'it is dangerous to meddle in the King's matters'.[146]

It is, therefore, surprising that in *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* we find a highly intellectually developed Ploughman who does believe in his power to change society. He explicitly writes down his views upon social reform for the Government or 'Parlyamenthouse' to carry out. The author of this text believed in the credibility of the Ploughman's capabilities and influence at the highest level. This text was written shortly after the *Discourse* and the suggested date for it is c. 1550. At this time, the Earl of Warwick was in power. His policy was to 'deliberately reverse his predecessor's practices

[146] T. Smith, p. 13.

and undo what were regarded as the evil effects of Somerset's regime... By 1550 Smith's opinion that inflation must be cured by reversing the disastrous experiment in debasement had become common property'.[147] Perhaps at this time it was less dangerous for the Ploughman author of *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* to express his views on social reform directly to the Government. On the other hand, the fact that the author remains anonymous might suggest otherwise. I believe, though, that *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* was written during the reign of Somerset, or at least the piece was encouraged by Somerset's way of dealing with the enclosure issue. We have already seen that Somerset stood favourably among the commons.[148] Indeed, during the unrest of 1548-49, Somerset 'divided gentleman against gentleman, allowing the commons to decide who they thought was suitable to be in commission for the king, recognising the ability of the ordinary people outside the charmed circle of the gentry to make moral and political decisions. ... This leader of English high politics paid an extraordinarily degree of respect to the concerns of the world of low politics, or at least that section of low politics which shared his own evangelical enthusiasm'.[149] Additionally, the enclosure rebellions of 1549 revealed a breach in trust between the commons and the local authorities. The local gentry were often the subject of scorn and humiliation and there was an increasing social tension. In Norwich, the scene of Kett's rebellion,[150] six per cent of the population owned sixty per cent of the land and goods.[151] The author of *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* clearly writes against these wealthy landowners:

> And for the moost parte, the wicked and the couetous parsons shalbe the greatest possessours of goods, whose propertye is alwayes to gather, and neuer to distribute, redy in taking, but slacke in geuing. When so many shalbe thus fallen into such extreame pouerte, what may then follow, it greueth me to declare. (A.vi recto)[152]

The author's work is a plea to the central authorities to undertake actions against them and from the opening of the text, it is clear that the author *does* trust this central authority, including the 'right worthy protectour', which could refer to the Duke of Somerset:

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[147] G. R. Elton, p. 353, 355.
[148] See above, page 33.
[149] A. Fletcher, and D. MacCulloch, p. 78.
[150] See above, page 35.
[151] A. Fletcher, and D. MacCulloch, p. 80-1.
[152] And see also the quotation above, pp. 42-43.

> It behoueth vs ernestly to pray vnto God, that lykewyse as he hath geuen vnto the king of this realme, a feruent 3ele to set furth his truth, and strengthened him with a right worthy protectour and moost prudent counsellours for the setting furth of the same, euen so that he will vouchsafe to sende our sayde kyng lyke 3eale and strength to make, set furth, and cause to be kepte such good polytike lawes and statutes as this Realme may be therby replenyshed wyth iustice, equitie and wealth, that in all regions wheras it shalbe reported how that we of thys realme haue expelled all vayne tradicions of men, and receyued the true religion of Christ, that there also it may be sayd howe that we haue therto receyued the fruteful blessing of God, promysed vnto the followers of his woorde. (A.i verso)

It should be clear from the above that the ploughman was an excellent figure to make these kinds of suggestions. *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* manages to use the kind of tone that would appeal to Somerset: in the light of the above the figure of the ploughman was exactly the kind of spokesman on behalf of 'low politics' that Somerset would appeal to. It is abundantly clear that this Ploughman has undergone a considerable development compared to the radical and outspoken but in the end *submissive* Ploughman of *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*.

Chapter Two: The Ploughman and the doctrine of the Eucharist

In the early sixteenth century, the doctrine of the Eucharist was a controversial topic, both between Catholics and Protestants and among Protestants themselves. The Eucharist was, and still is, central to the mass and it became one of the main differences between the Catholic faith and what later became Protestantism. Already in the late fourteenth century, one of the ways to detect a Lollard was to question the person on the doctrine of the Eucharist. Wyclif only became a real threat to the Church when he denied the concept of transubstantiation. This had been standard doctrine since the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215:

> In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed *(transsubstantiatio)* by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us.[153]

Early sixteenth-century English reformers were influenced by the European Reformers, the three most important of the latter being Luther, Oecolampadius and Zwingli. Luther, although not the first in Church history, developed the idea of consubstantiation: the idea that the consecrated host contains both the substance of bread and wine and the substance of the body and blood of Christ. Luther, although denying transubstantiation, still maintained a Real Presence. Oecolampadius and Zwingli, arguing that the body and blood of Christ cannot be both bodily present in the consecrated host and in heaven, reached the conclusion that the body and blood of Christ are present only spiritually in the consecrated host. This division among the European Protestants became a major issue among the English Protestants as well. Both Protestant views were considered heretical in early sixteenth-century England.

Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation met with wide opposition among the English Catholics. In 1521, Henry VIII himself wrote a tract, *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, to refute his ideas. The more educated theologian John Fisher wrote a more detailed refutation of Luther's main ideas, for example, justification by faith alone. In 1526-7, Fisher wrote a

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[153]'Lateran IV: Select Canons, 1215', *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, ed. Paul Halsall, Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/lat4-select.html>, 29 June, 2006.

tract against Oecolampadius' sacramentarian view on the Eucharist, entitled *De Veritate Corporis et Sanguinis Christi in Eucharistia*, but when Fisher got caught up in writing about Henry's divorce, he refrained from writing polemical works against the Protestants. These polemical works against the Protestants were still written in Latin. This changed when the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, requested Thomas More to write in the English language. More produced several lengthy works against both European and mainly English Protestants. These books were sanctioned by the King. Henry himself, however, occasionally flirted with Protestant writers. He sought ways to endorse his divorce by the Church. The reformer Robert Barnes, for instance, functioned as an intermediary between the European reformers and the King. John Frith also stood in the King's favour for a while. However, as soon as the divorce matter was over and Henry pronounced himself as the Supreme Head of the Church, Henry stood by his Catholic doctrines, especially the doctrine of the Eucharist.

Thomas Cromwell tried his best to reform official Church doctrine by means of the Ten Articles in 1536. In general, this was a conservative document, following for the most part traditional doctrine for the three main sacraments: baptism, the Eucharist and penance. However, the other four sacraments were not mentioned and some articles show a hint of Lutheran teaching. This document can be seen as a *via media* and it shows how far Henry VIII was willing to go.[154] The doctrine on the Eucharist remains fairly traditional:

> As touching the sacrament of the altar ... they ought and must constantly believe, that under the form and figure of bread and wine, which we there presently do see and perceive by outward senses, is verily, substantially, and really contained and comprehended the very selfsame body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ.[155]

However, this description allows room for interpretation. It does not fully exclude consubstantiation, nor does it explicitly state the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Act of the Six Articles of 1539 ended this ambiguity:

> First, that in the most blessed sacrament of the altar, by the strength and efficacy of Christ's mighty word (it being spoken by the priest), is present really, under the form of bread and wine, the natural body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, conceived of the Virgin Mary; and that after the consecration there remaineth no

[154] G. R. Elton, p. 257.
[155] P. Servini, *History at Source. The English Reformation,* (London, 1997), p. 12.

> substance of bread and wine, nor any other substance, but the substance of Christ, God and man.[156]

This act is much more precise in its phrasing and leaves no doubt about the doctrine of transubstantiation. 'The statute was, as Henry demanded, a penal act: denial of transubstantiation became heresy punishable by burning'.[157] This statute remained official Church doctrine for the remainder of King Henry's reign. Nevertheless, the statute did not put an end to the existence of reformers among the clergy, although it was a major blow for Cromwell and other Church reformers.[158] However, during Edward VI's reign, Protestantism made its way to England, first slowly under the guidance of the Duke of Somerset, later much more rapidly under the guidance of the more radical reformer the Duke of Northumberland. When we compare the Book of Common Prayer of 1549 to that of 1552, both written mainly by Thomas Cranmer, we clearly see the movement towards Protestantism:

> 1549 edition
>
> ...the Priest... shall put upon him... a white alb plain, with vestment or Cope... The Priest standing humbly afore the middle of the Altar...
>
> And when he delivereth the Sacrament of the body of Christ, he shall say to everyone these words: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.
>
> And the Minister delivering the Sacrament of the blood... shall say: The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life...
>
> For avoiding of all matters and occasion of dissension, it is meet that the bread prepared for the Communion be made... unleavened and round, as it was afore...
>
> 1552 edition
>
> ...the minister... shall use neither alb, vestment nor cope... he shall have and wear a surplice only...
>
> And the Priest standing at the north side of the Table...

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[156] *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, ed. C. Lindberg, (Oxford, 2000), pp. 223-4.
[157] G. R. Elton, p. 287.
[158] Hugh Latimer, the author of the *Sermon on the Plough*, for instance, resigned his see of Worcester. G. R. Elton, p. 287.

> And when he delivereth the bread, he shall say: Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.
> And the Minister that delivereth the cup, shall say: Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee and be thankful...
> And to take away the superstition... it shall suffice that the bread be such as is usual to be eaten at Table... and if any of the bread or wine remain, the Curate shall have it to his own use...[159]

The communion has been stripped of all ceremonial and holy practices: the priest does not wear his traditional garments and the altar has been replaced by a table. The Eucharist itself is no longer referred to as the body and blood of Christ, but is merely bread and wine which function as a remembrance of Christ's suffering. Instead of obtaining everlasting life for body and soul, the congregation should only be thankful for what Christ has done. This, briefly, was the official stance of the Church in the period we are focussing on.

When we look at the early Tudor ploughman texts, there are three among them that solely deal with the doctrine of the Eucharist. These are: *The Banckett of Iohan the Reve unto Piers Ploughman, Laurens laborer, Thomlyn tailer and Hobb of the hille with others* (c. 1532), Luke Shepherd's *John Bon and Mast Parson* (1548), *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest* (c.1550). *The Banckett* is a gathering of lower-class people who debate the issue of the doctrine of the Eucharist over dinner. At a first glance it seems that the author is set to defend the Catholic position through, among others, the voice of Piers Ploughman. The latter two texts are obvious Protestant texts; both stem from the period where such radical Protestant writing was condoned. Both texts are dialogues between a Catholic priest and a Protestant ploughman. Where in *A Godly Dyalogue* the priest is convinced by the ploughman of his 'errors', in *John Bon* the parson and John Bon each go their own ways holding on to their own beliefs. Where the two latter texts rely on parody and satire and the purposes of these two texts are very likely to entertain, *The Banckett* is an elaborate and detailed account of the debate on the doctrine of the Eucharist that was taking place in early sixteenth-century Europe, making use of scriptural and patristic evidence in order to prove the real presence. Nevertheless, the text contains several interesting and ambiguous features and therefore I propose to start with a detailed discussion of this text. The chapter will continue examining

[159] P. Servini, pp. 58-59.

the two later Protestant texts and it will incorporate references from the other ploughman texts to the doctrine of transubstantiation. In this way, I hope to be able to provide a better understanding of the handling of this delicate subject in early Tudor ploughman texts.

The Banckett of Iohan the Reve unto Piers Ploughman, Laurens laborer, Thomlyn tailer and Hobb of the hille with others.

The Banckett is for the most part a dialogue between Hob of the Hill and one of the three 'heretics': Jack Jolie, Doctor Dawcook or Nicholas Newfangil. Or perhaps to be more precise, the most part consists of a monologue by Hob of the Hill. Since this text is rather unknown and neglected,[160] I propose to give a summary before I embark on my discussion of the text.

The prose text opens with a short summary of its contents:

> Relacion maide by Hobb of the Hill vnto sir Johan the pariche prest vpon a communicacion, betwene Jacke Jolie servyngman of thone partie, and Johan the Reve, Peirs Plowghman, Laurence Laborer, Thomlyn Tailyor, and Hobb of the Hill of thother partie. Whann the said sir Johan wold maike none annswer vnto he knewe the olde vecar mynde, the wiche saide vecar wrote lyeng in his bedd veray seeke, and delyuerde hys mynde in wrytyng vnto his pariche preste. And the said prest delyuerd the same booke to Hobb of the Hill, counsellyng hym to leaue it wherebye he myght be more able to maike better answere to suche light fellows if he chaunced to here any suche communicacion in tyme to come. (fol. 2r)[161]

The text is divided into three parts. During the first part Jack Jolie enters the house and questions Johan the Reeve's, Piers Ploughman's, Laurence Laborer's and Thomlyn Tailor's beliefs in the mass. This is the start of the debate between, at first, Jack Jolie and the others. Initially, Hob of the Hill, the servant of Johan the Reeve, does not enter the debate until Johan explicitly asks him to because of Hob's ability to read English and his knowledge of the New Testament. When Jack Jolie is still not convinced, Johan the Reeve asks the others

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[160] The text exists in one manuscript only: MS BL Harley 207. It has never been edited and not many people know the text. Most scholars who refer to the text admit that they were not able to access it and rely on the information that Anne Hudson gave in her article 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*'. The purpose of this article was to check the validity of certain texts that 'belong' to the so-called *Piers Plowman* tradition. Hudson, therefore, compared these texts with the contents of *Piers Plowman*. This, in itself, is of course a valuable undertaking. However, the consequence was that a full analysis of the text outside the context of the *Piers Plowman* tradition was not made and to my knowledge, up to now, has never been made. The reader can find a transcription of the text in the appendix.

[161] All quotations from this text are taken from my transcription, which can be found in the appendix.

to come again in a month's time, in order to be better prepared to counter Jack Jolie's arguments. Johan the Reeve takes Hob to an old, sick vicar who gives Hob an English book containing biblical and patristic references concerning the Eucharist of the past fifteen hundred years. In the second part, the second dinner party is held and Jack Jolie appears to have brought along a friend, Nicholas Newfangill. Jack Jolie refers to a sermon of Doctour Dawcoke to whom the others have listened. Hob of the Hill sets out to refute Doctour Dawcoke's ideas by quoting relevant bible passages and continues with a long monologue rehearsing patristic evidence. During the final part, the reader learns of three specific arguments by which Doctour Dawcoke denies the doctrine of the Eucharist. These three arguments are of course contested by Hob of the Hill who now relies on his own reasoning. Nevertheless, at the end of the text both parties remain in their own beliefs:

> Than doctor Dawcoke, after ye common course of heretikes, when he cowthe by no ways defend his argument nor wolde not leave itt, but in a fume said he trusted to se itt other wais shortlie and in like maner said Jacke Jolie and Nicoles Newfangill. But Johan the Reve, Peres Ploughman, Laurens Laborer, and Thomlyn Taylor be sought almyghtie Gode that the trewe faithe of Criste myght be perceued and to contynew to hys honor and glorie worlde without end. Amen. (fol. 29r)

The first striking feature of this text is probably that *lower-class people* discuss the complicated matter of the Eucharist at the dinner table. The 'Catholic' party consist of rustics, apart from Thomlyn Tailyor: Johan the Reeve, Piers Ploughman, Laurence Labourer and Hob of the Hill. It is clear that their names refer to their occupations. It is interesting to note that their professions are similar to the ones Langland describes as being more firmly rooted in the Christian faith than theologians are:

> Arn none rather yravysshed fro the righte bileve
> Than are thise konnynge clerkes that knowe manye bokes,
> Ne none sonner ysaved, ne sadder of bileve
> *Than plowmen and pastours and povere commune laborers,*
> *Souteres and shepherdes – swiche lewed juttes*
> Percen with a *Paternoster* the paleys of hevene
> And passen purgatorie penauncelees at hir hennes partyng
> Into the blisse of paradis for hir pure bileve,
> That inparfitly here knewe and ek lyvede.
> (B.x.457-65; italics mine)

Piers Plowman, Laurence Labourer, Thomlyn Tailyor and the shepherd Hob of the Hill fit very nicely in the lines quoted above in italics. Chaudhuri tentatively suggests that this was perhaps done consciously.[162] Apart from this allusion to Langland's poem and the dinner scenes in both Langland and *The Banckett* , there are also some parallels between the two ploughmen in both texts. In chapter five, I will further discuss these similarities,[163] but when taken together, I believe it is very well possible that *The Banckett* 's author may have deliberately taken these elements from Langland's poem.

Johan the Reeve is clearly the highest in 'rank': he is the master of the house and orders all the others about. Twice he intervenes during the debate when Piers Ploughman finds it difficult to hold his temper:

> Than Peirs Ploughman waxed woundrus angrie and called Jacke Jolie 'fals heritike'. Than my master desired them bothe to be content in his house and to reason the matter gentlie and thei warre bothe contente so to doo. (fol. 2v)
>
> Than saide Peirs Plougheman: 'Neighbure Johan, I mervell that ye can suffer any knave to raill so blasfemuslie vpon that blessed bodie of Criste. For as I am a trew man, and but that I am in your presans and in your house, I shulde haue broken this pott vpon his head'. Than said Johan the Reve: 'Neighbure Peirs, I praie you be content and suffer thom to speke there fantises, with wiche is no harme but to thom selues'. (fol. 10v-11r)

Johan the Reeve is a man of reason and he makes sure all the parties are well prepared. When he realises that Jack Jolie is not easily convinced of the traditional faith, he arranges that everybody will gather in his house in a month's time to discuss the matter further. In the meantime, both parties will be able to prepare themselves to continue the debate. It is Johan the Reeve who selects Hob of the Hill to be the spokesman of their faith.

He selects Hob of the Hill, because, as we have seen above, he is able to read in English and he studies the New Testament often. Hob of the Hill is the lowest in rank of the company: he is the servant of Johan the Reeve and is referred to as 'boi'. He serves his master's guests at the table and, during the day, he guards his sheep. It is interesting to note that the lowest in rank is probably the most literate of them all and the most capable to deal with complex and controversial religious matters like the Eucharist. He is chosen to counter

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[162] S. Chaudhuri, *Renaissance Pastoral and its English Developments*, (Oxford, 1989), p. 121.
[163] See pp. 182 and chapter four, pp. 158-160.

the 'heretical' ideas. The fact that the author of this work deliberately chooses Hob the Hill as the spokesman of the 'Catholic' faith seems dubious. The fact that he reads the Bible in English can be, depending on the date of the text, somewhat problematic. If we uphold the date given by the manuscript, namely 1532, this could suggest that he reads the new translation by Tyndale, which was printed in 1526. Tyndale's New Testament was highly influential and widely available, despite the authorities' attempt to stop its spread. Six editions are said to have been issued between 1526 and 1530; and the zeal of the authorities for its destruction was fairly matched by the zeal of the reforming party for its circulation.[164] A full English Bible, sanctioned by the King, the so-called 'Matthew-Roger Bible', only became officially available in 1537 due to Cromwell's efforts.[165] This Bible was written by a fictitious Thomas Matthew, but was actually compiled by Tyndale's friend John Rogers, who finished his work. Ironically, this Bible contained much of Tyndale's and Joye's translations and was a thoroughly Protestant book.[166] In 1539, this Bible was replaced by the Great Bible, a Bible prepared by Coverdale. The title page 'shows the King handing the Word of God to his archbishop and his viceregent who reappear lower down to pass the precious gift to clergy and laity respectively'.[167] In 1546 it was formally forbidden to anyone to read Tyndale's New Testament:

> that from henceforth no man, woman, or other person, of what estate, condition, or degree soever he or they be, shall after the last day of August next ensuing, receive, take, have, or keep in his possession, the text of the New Testament of Tyndale's or Coverdale's translation in English, nor any other than is permitted by the act of Parliament.[168]

The idea that Hob of the Hill, a lower-class rustic, could freely obtain and read Tyndale's New Testament in English, is of course very striking to say the least. This would suggest that a major cultural and religious change has already taken place around the 1530s; the rustics of England had to wait until the reign of Edward VI before they were even allowed to read the Bible in English unsupervised. If, however, the text was written at a later date, namely after the publication of the English Bible sanctioned by Henry VIII, the Bible Hob

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[164] F. G. Kenyon, 'English Versions' in *Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols, ed. J. Hastings. (New York, 1898-1904), vol. V, pp. 242-3.
[165] G. R. Elton, pp. 274-5; 277-8.
[166] W. A. Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535*, (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 306-7.
[167] G. R. Elton, pp. 277-8.
[168] P. Servini, p. 15.

is reading might refer to the so called 'Matthew-Roger Bible' of 1537 or to the Great Bible of 1539. During Henry VIII's reign it was possible to read the Bible in English, but this Bible was confined to the Church with huge chains. In this case, Hob would be reading an approved Bible, although it does not explain how he got private access to it. Nevertheless, it strengthens the idea that the author was in favour of the translation of the Bible in English so that less educated people like Hob of the Hill could have access to it. It implies that our author is not as traditionally Catholic as he wants the reader to believe. He may be attacking certain heretical ideas in relation to the Eucharist, but on this point, he clearly agreed with the reformers.

Additionally, the book Hob of the Hill receives from the sick vicar, 'a boke wherin, how that blessed sacrament haithe bene vsed sens the firste institucion, both with the appostelles and holie doctors and learned fathers for the space of xvth hundredth yeares', is written in English, rather than in Latin. That a Catholic vicar would pass on such a book to a lower rustic is implausible. It is difficult to say whether such a book existed in the English language in the 1530s. There are two possible explanations for the book. On the one hand, it could refer to the so-called '*florilegia*'. In the early Church history, these books were very popular. They were 'collections of extracts from the Fathers on topics of current interest'.[169] Initially they were mainly in Greek. Unfortunately, I do not know whether such *florilegia* existed in English on this topic in the early sixteenth century.

Another explanation, perhaps more plausible, is that this book is an English version of a *catena*. Both Catholics and Protestants went through the writings of the Church Fathers to gather 'catenas or armories of excerpts. Zwingli, Melanchton, and Oecolampadius as well as More had constructed such catenas'.[170] These catenas were solely on the Eucharist and they aided the writer when composing his polemical work. This sometimes led to a lesser understanding of the patristic writings, as passages were placed outside their context. One wonders whether this book really existed and whether the writer of *The Banckett* actually made use of such a book when writing the text. Nevertheless, the fact that Hob of

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[169] A. Louth, 'Postpatristic Byzantine Theologians'. *The Medieval Theologians. An Introduction to Theology in the Medieval Period*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford, 2001), pp. 37-54, at p. 37.

[170] *Answer to a Poisoned Book,* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More. Vol.11.,* ed. S. M. Foley and C. H. Miller, (New Haven, London, 1985), p. lxi. 'One manuscript catena of patristic passages on the Eucharist, compiled in England in the late sixteenth century grew to mammoth proportions, 1680 folio pages'; p. lxi. We also know that More borrowed his catena from Fisher. Apparently this was a common way of scholars to write their polemical works. See also W. P. Haaugaard, 'Renaissance Patristic Scholarship and Theology in Sixteenth-Century England', *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 10 (1979), 37-60, at p. 54 and R. C. Marius, 'Thomas More and the Early Church Fathers', *Traditio* 24 (1968), 385-96.

the Hill receives such a book shows his intellectual capacity. It is, however, peculiar that the lowest class rustic gets his hands on such a book and is able to deal with such difficult and controversial material.

The contents of the book are very significant and fit the profile of the Catholic polemical writer. It was important for the Catholics to prove that the Church was consistent and united on its stance on the doctrine of the Eucharist throughout its history. Both the polemical writers John Fisher and Thomas More stressed this in their works as a defence against the heretical ideas of the Reformers. John Fisher for instance devotes one book of his *De Veritate* proving this: 'setting out to demonstrate that the real presence was the constant teaching of the Church, he divided Church history into five periods of three hundred years, and adduced a cloud of witnesses to the doctrine from each one'.[171] The Catholics argued that since during the history of the Church, the real presence has never been contested successfully and denial of it has never been successfully proved, the Catholic view must be correct and the Reformers' view must be heresy. Hob's book similarly lists consistent and united patristic evidence on the real presence of a period of 'xvth hundredth yeares' (fol. 10r), thus proving that this view must be correct.

The reasons why Hob has been chosen as the main defender of orthodox ideas become even more dubious when we look at possible meanings of his name. First, according to the OED, Hob stands for 'a familiar or rustic variation of the Christian name *Robert* or *Robin*. Hence formerly a generic name for: A rustic, a clown'. Hob is a popular name for a rustic, thus, it is a very appropriate name. We can see this, for example, in one of the songs which were known during Kett's Rebellion in 1549:[172]

> The countrie gruffes, Hob, Dick and Hick
> with clubs and clowted shoone
> shall fill up Dussindale with blood
> of slaughtered bodies soon.[173]

Hob here is shown as a low peasant ready to slaughter his enemy on the 'batlle-field'. According to this 'ancient prophecy' Hob's name is related to agression and violence and these lines served as a stimulus for the rebels to continue in their rebellion. The name also

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[171] R. Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher*, (Cambridge, 1991), p.140.
[172] See also chapter one, p. 35 and 53.
[173] A. Fletcher, and D. MacCulloch, p. 73. This was taken from Nicholas Sotherton's narrative who wrote about this rebellion. He wrote that Kett became desperate and 'trusted uppon faynid prophecies which were phantastically devised'; p. 73.

refers to a 'clown', which would imply that the character Hob should not be taken too seriously.

Hob is short for Robert and this name designates a robber, a vagabond or a lowly person.[174] This is in agreement with Langland's reference to Roberd the Robbere:

> Roberd the robbere on *Reddite* loked,
> And for ther was noght wherwith, he wepte swithe soore.
> (B.v.462-3)

Roberd the robbere is the last character of the confession of the deadly sins. He cannot repay what he owes, as the only means for paying back is through his skills as a thief. However, he beseeches Christ for mercy as Christ gave mercy to his colleague Dysmas when hanging on the cross. As he received mercy, Roberd reasons that he can obtain mercy as well. Will responds that he does not know what happened to this person. Hobbe the Robbere is also mentioned in the letters of John Ball: 'Iohon Schep ... biddeth Peres Ploughman go to his werk, and chastise wel Hobbe the Robbere'.[175] John Ball has Hobbe the Robbere function as the representative of their enemy; it deals with the rebels' preoccupation with the wealth of church, but also with the wealth of the lords. In this sense, again, Hob is associated with violence and aggression, but this time at the other side of the coin. Here, Hob or Robert is the target rather than the aggressor.

Furthermore, the Christian name Robin may be associated with the figure Robin Hood; a famous outlaw in Middle English literature and his stories were still read in the early Tudor period. Robin Hood is of course known for stealing from the rich in order to give to the poor. Although this is a more positive connotation in comparison to Hob the Robber, it, nevertheless, indicates that Hob refers to an outlaw and that he stands and functions outside society. Also, the name Robin can refer to 'Robin Goodfellow or Puck', which stands for 'a hobgoblin, sprite, elf'; this clearly has supernatural connotations.[176] Furthermore, the phrase 'to play hob' means 'to play devil'.[177] This strengthens the supernatural connection. Perhaps this could explain why Hob has such in-depth Biblical knowledge.

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[174] *Middle English Dictionary*, 13 vols., ed. H. Kurath, et al, (Ann Arbor, 1952-2001).
[175] R. B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, 2nd edn. (London, Basingstoke, 1983), p. 381.
[176] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <www.oed.com>.
[177] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <www.oed.com>.

Thomlyn Tailyor and Laurence Labourer are of no great importance in the text. They each speak only once in the entire debate. Their names do not seem to have specific connotations. Piers Ploughman though, is a very interesting character.[178] As we have already seen, he is a passionate character, easily provoked by offensive remarks by Jack Jolie and Nicholas Newfangill.[179] He easily gives in to his aggressive nature towards his opponents. He is convinced of the other party's false beliefs. Although he tries to counter their arguments with passages of the scripture, which shows that he has knowledge of the scripture, quoting it in Latin and giving an English translation - we will see that some of his arguments are very effective - he often does not know how to deal with them, causing him to lose his temper. Nevertheless, in the first quarter of the text, he is one of the main characters who tries to counter Jack Jolie's beliefs.

The names of the other party, the 'heretics' Jack Jolie, Nicholas Newfangill and Doctour Dawcoke, are noteworthy, because they imply a lack of credibility and integrity. Initially, the reader is put on the wrong foot. Jack Jolie is the first heretic to appear on the scene and, at first, the reader is inclined to interpret his last name as referring to his profession as a sailor. However, this interpretation is shattered as soon as Nicholas Newfangill comes along in the second part. At this point, the reader is immediately aware of the figurative meanings of the heretics' surnames. In the Oxford English Dictionary we can see that the figurative meaning of 'jolie' is 'overweeningly self-confident; flushed with success or prosperity; full of presumptuous pride; defiantly bold, arrogant, overbearing' and that 'the term *jolly fellow* was often thus used in the sixteenth century, sometimes with allusion to' this figurative meaning just quoted.[180] The word Newfangill means 'a new thing or fashion; a novelty; an innovation, a new feature' and refers to the reformers' 'new theology', despite the reformers' attempt to show that their ideas were not new at all, but based on the theology of the first Christians and the early Church Fathers.[181] The word 'dawcoke' refers to a Jackdaw and the figurative meaning of the word daw was: 'a. A silly fellow, simpleton, noodle, fool; b. A lazy person, sluggard'.[182] In fact, in the early sixteenth

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[178] For a fuller description, see chapter four on the persona of the ploughman.

[179] See p. 61.

[180] The OED quotes the following early sixteenth-century passages: '1534 MORE *Treat. on Passion* Wks. 1303/2 Here shall you see Iudas play the ioylye marchaunt I trowe. 1546 GARDINER *Declar. Art. Joye* 42b, Is not he a ioylye worke~man that wolde deuise to haue god done, otherwyse then he hath?'

[181] In fact, some authors went to great length to show that their ideas were consistent with late fourteenth-century authors. See also chapter one, pp. 50-51.

[182] The OED quotes the following early sixteenth-century passage: '1556 J. Heywood *Spider & F.* xcii, Where dawcocks in doctrine have dominacioun'.

century, people kept jackdaws as pets and taught them to repeat their words foolishly. Furthermore, we find in Skelton's *Ware the Hauke* another example of a 'Doctor Dawcocke', who is similarly portrayed:

> Maister sophista,
> Ye simplex silogista,
> Ye develysh dogmatista...
> Doctor Dawcocke?
> (ll. 535-5; 265)[183]

It is obvious that these names have been chosen to ridicule the reformers' side. However, we have seen that the name Hob of the Hill and also the aggressive Piers Plowman contribute to a more negative image of the Catholic side. The author deliberately chose to compromise both sides. In order to get a better understanding of why he may have done so, we need to take an in-depth look at the development of the argument on transubstantiation.

In contrast to the other two texts that will be discussed later in the chapter, this text treats the debate about the doctrine of the Eucharist in depth. The argument starts almost immediately when Jack Jolie enters and accuses the party of being blind to believe that the body and blood of Christ are in form of bread and wine when ministered at the altar. We are told that he defends his position by referring to 'many sayenges as of Martyn Luther, Oecolampadius, Caralstad, Johan Ffrith, Melangton, with many dyuerse other' (fol. 2v). Unfortunately, we are not told what these sayings are. Johan the Reeve responds by quoting Matthew 26:26-28, where we can find the actual words spoken by Jesus when he gave the bread and wine to his disciples at the Last Supper. Jack Jolie accuses them of blindly following whatever some popish curate says to them and comes up with the sixteenth-century's much used argument that if Jesus is in heaven, how can he be bodily present at the altar?:

> and knaw that the bodie of Criste and his bloude can not be presente in this worlde in forme of breade and wyne. Ffirste, remember the articles of your faithe or beleue: say not yow he assended to heawen and sitts of the reght hand of gode the father? Here maie ye knowe if he be in heawen he is not of the altar, for he cann not be in two places at one tyme. (fol. 3v-4r)

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[183] J. Skelton, *John Skelton. The Complete English Poems*, ed. J. Scattergood, (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 69. 'Master sophist, you simpleminded logician, you devilish philosopher', J. Skelton, p. 404.

The tactic is very clear: by pointing out certain parts of scripture where it says Jesus is in heaven, a fact that the other party cannot deny, reason dictates that he cannot be bodily present in the Eucharist. This is very similar to Zwingli's and Oecolampadius's beliefs. Zwingli was one of the first people to bring up this argument in the sixteenth century. In fact, his opinion divided the early European Protestants, despite the attempt to resolve the dispute between Luther and Zwingli at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. 'To disprove both Catholic transubstantiation and Lutheran 'real presence' he [Zwingli] used the argument that, since the Ascension, Christ's body had been in heaven'.[184] 'Both [Zwingli and Oecolampadius] deny the corporal presence, and hold that Christ's body is at the right hand of God in heaven'.[185] The ideas and writings of Zwingli and Oecolampadius became known in the English language through the activities of John Frith and George Joye. In his little treatise on the sacrament of the altar[186] and in his work against More,[187] Frith based his ideas on the writings of Oecolampadius, especially on his famous book called *De genuine verborum domini, Hoc est corpus meum, uixta vetustissimos authores, expositione liber* (1525).[188] Joye's *The Souper of the Lorde* (1533) was initially a summary of Zwingli's *On the Lord's Supper* (1526) in which John 6:29-59 played a key role. When Joye got a hold on More's *Letter Against Frith* (1532),[189] he added a defence of Frith against More. Thus, the Swiss reformers' sacramentarian views upon the Eucharist were spread in England through the English language.

Piers Ploughman is the one trying to disprove this sacramentarian argument. He starts by saying that all parts of scripture are true: the part where it is said that Jesus ascended to Heaven and also the part where Jesus says: 'This is my body'. He continues by saying that *God is almighty* and he, therefore, can be in different places at the same time, just as many people can hear the sound of a bell at the same time.[190] He ends his argument

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[184] A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, (London, 1989), p. 86.
[185] A. Barclay, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper: a Study in the Eucharistic Teaching of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin,* (Glasgow, 1927), p. 64.
[186] Written in 1532 but published in 1548 under the title *A Christen Sentence and True Iudgement of the Most Honorable Sacrament of Christes Body and Bloude,* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, vol. 7*, ed. Frank Manley, *et al.* (New Haven; London, 1990).
[187] *A Boke made by Ion Frith Prisoner in the Tower of London, Answeringe vnto M. Mores Lettur* (1533), in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, vol.7.*
[188] W. A. Clebsch, pp. 125-6.
[189] *A Briefe Letter against Frith on the Sacrament of the Altar,* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, vol.7.*
[190] More has a similar metaphor. He compares the Eucharist with one face in appearing in twenty pieces of broken glass; see *Letter against Frith*, p. 248. Frith used the well-known metaphor of the bridegroom giving a ring to his bride as a token of his love for when he is away. See *A Christen Sentence*, pp. 431-2.

by quoting Mark 14:22-24[191] and declaring that 'Thes woordes I thynke sufficient to certifie euery trew Cristiane. But the nature of heretikes wolde neuer abide the heryng of the trewthe' (fol. 5v). Piers' response to the real presence is in conformity with the writings of Fisher and More. More, in his *Letter against Frith* who argues that Christ cannot be in more places that one, says:

> And I proue therefore that god can make hys body be bothe in many places at onys, and in all places at onys / by that that he is almighty, and therefore can do all thynge. And nowe muste thys yong man tell vs eyther that thys is nothynge, or els denye that god can do all thynge. And than muste he lymyte goddes power howe farre he wyll giue god leue to stretch it.[192]

The argument that God is almighty is sufficient for Christians to believe in the mystical presence of Christ in the host. To deny the real presence was to diminish God's powers. This was the stock argument of the Catholic writers. According to Piers, humanity cannot fathom the mysteries and powers of God and, therefore, they should not question this. It is written in the Bible that it is Christ's body and blood, of which Piers gives several examples, and one ought to believe what is written in the Bible. Piers Ploughman's main argument then is that it is all a matter of belief and faith. More, too, when referring to Frith's need to seek allegories because he cannot believe the literal sense, says: 'he shold beleue the leter and make his reason obedient vnto fayth'.[193]

In a way, Piers has a similar stance towards this matter as the Ploughman in the *Crede*. At a first glance, the Ploughman's ideas on transubstantiation in the *Crede* might seem orthodox:

> And in the sacrament also that sothfast God on is,
> Fulliche his fleche and his blod, that for vs dethe tholede.
> (817-8)

This, however, is not quite the case. 'The ploughman's stance on transubstantiation on the Eucharistic elements is the stock Lollard response to shrewd fraternal criticism of Wyclif's heresy: nobody ever raised the question until the friars came along and, though Christ's

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[191] Jesus toke breade, and blissyng it gaue ut to them, and saide, this is my bodie, and takeng the cuppe gyueng thankes, gaue to them and thei dranke all of it and he said to them. This is my bloode of a newe testament the wiche is shedde for many (fol. 5v).
[192] *Letter against Frith*, p. 251. See also the *Answer to a Poisoned Book,* p. 65.
[193] *Letter against Frith*, p. 243.

teaching is naturally beyond doubt, the subject is beyond human comprehension'.[194] The *Crede* argues that one should leave the issue alone:

> And though this flaterynge freres wyln for her pride,
> Disputen of this deyte as dotards schulden,
> The more the matere is moved the masedere hy worthen.
> Lat the losels alone and leue thou the trewthe,
> For Christ seyde it is so, so mot it need worthe;
> Therfore studye thou nought theron, ne stere thi wittes,
> It is his blessed body, so bad he vs beleuen.
> (819-25)

This is a similar approach as in the Lollard *Plowman's Tale*:

> Hys fleshe and blode through Hys mystrye
> Is there, in the forme of brede.
> Nowe it is there, it nedeth not stryve
> Whether it be subgette or accydent;
> But as Christ was, when He was on lyve,
> So is He there verament.
> (1219-24)

Wawn has shown that 'Lollards were condemned precisely for saying that it did not matter how Christ's real presence entered the sacramental elements'.[195] When one compares the ideas of *The Banckett's* Ploughman with his late fourteenth-century predecessors, it is clear that they share the same attitude towards the Eucharist. Although *The Banckett* Ploughman does not state it as explicitly as the ploughmen in the *Crede* and the *Plowman's Tale*, he also advocates that the Bible passage concerning the Eucharist should not be questioned. However, where the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Lollards preferred to leave the matter alone, as they chose not to interfere with the exact terminology, the early sixteenth-century Catholics used the same argument with the defence that God is almighty and, therefore, one should leave the matter alone. The idea that God is almighty is a significant difference from early Lollardy.

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[194] D. A. Lawton, 'Lollardy and the 'Piers Plowman' Tradition', *Modern Language Review* 76 (1981): 780-793, at p. 782.
[195] D. A. Lawton, p. 782.

Jack Jolie scorns Piers by replying that 'consideryng ye haue no better teachyng, I thinke youe not grea[t]lie to faute in that ye beleue that Criste dide giffe his bodie and bloode to his disciples' (fol. 5v). Jack Jolie realises that uneducated people will indeed not question the details of the Holy Sacrament. According to him, Piers cannot help being mistaken because of his uneducated status. However, we have seen that Jack Jolie is mistaken about the rustic's intellectualism. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two is far from friendly.

The argument of Christ occupying many or just one place is used in *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest* as well. In fact, it is the main argument Pyers uses to prove to the priest that Christ cannot be bodily present in the host, occupying the latter half of the text. In this short text, Pyers is asking the priest questions about whether or not certain things are true, carefully asking the right questions in the right order so that the priest has to admit in the end that Christ cannot be present in the host. Pyers has the priest admit that Christ is both God and man, only to begin with trying to establish that the divine part of Christ is either present or not present in the host. The priest explains that 'God occupyeth no place',[196] which Pyers is ready to believe. Therefore, Pyers' conclusion is that God 'may be in all places where the Sacrament is consecrated accordynge to the institucion of Chryste'. However, Pyers continues with the human part of Christ, first establishing that a human body can only occupy one place, which the priest admits:

> Pyers
> How many places occupied the same bodye at oone tyme
> Preest
> But one place at ones
> (Avi.v)

Pyers continues by verifying that Christ's human body is the same body that was given birth to by the virgin Mary, that he suffered on the cross, was buried, was resurrected and ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of God, which the priest of course readily admits. At this point, Pyers is ready to set up the trap for the priest:

> Pyers

[196] I was not able to find the priest's defense in the writings of Fisher or More who prefer to use the explanation that God is almighty in order to explain the real presence. All quotations are from the text as presented in the database Early English Books Online.

Now master parson, where is that body now

Prest

It is in heuen

Pyers

Now tell me, I praye the dyd that body euer come downe frome heauen sence it ascended vp into heauen

Prest

No verily it neuer descended or came doune sence

Pyers

Ergo to you master parson then is not the same body that our lady bare mynystred at the Aulter but onelye a remembraunce of the same

(Avii.v)

Pyers cunningly adds that the remark that 'it appereth not onelie by my layingout also by yours' (Avii.v). The priest has nowhere to go and can only admit that 'For soth, it were a straunge matter to reason vppon before the laye people' (Avii.v-Aviii.r). Pyers praises him that at last the priest came 'to the ryght way'.

Returning to *The Banckett*, Jack Jolie continues by arguing that priests are not able to give all the people the same host, as priests are not equal to God. This is also a frequently-used argument in the debate on the doctrine of the Eucharist.[197] Piers opposes this argument by saying that Christ made his disciples priests and ordered them to use the same law as the law of nature, the law of Moses and the law of the New Testament, pointing out that Jack himself obviously does not adhere to any of these laws. Laurence Labourer steps in and, quoting Luke 22:19-20, adds the more convincing argument that Christ himself 'not onelie gaue his owne fleshe and bloode to his disciples, but also he commannded theme to do the same' (fol. 6v). Recognising that this argument effectively

[197] Compare Joye's *The Souper of the Lorde*: 'And now, thoughe we nether se nor taste that miracle, yet we heare it, se it, rede it, and so vnderstonde that it was once a miracle done of cryste: when he restored the syght to the blynde, heled the lame, clensed the leprose, reared the deade: all was seen, herde, and so comprehended vnder our most suerest sensis: that his very enimes were compelled to confesse them for miracles, But our miracle makers, that make dayly so ofte and so many, are so farre from this clere poynt: that their miracles in this mater, be not, nor neuer shalbe contayned nor comprehended vnder any of our 5 wyttes, but thei rather delude and deceyue bothe sight, taste, felinge, hering, and smellinge: ye our faith and vnderstanding to. Beware therfore of these mischeuous miracle makers for their owne glorye and profit: and will kyll the to, if thou beleueste not their lyes. ... Beware beware I saye of Anticryste: whose comynge sayd Paule .1. thess .2, shalbe aftirthe workinge of Satan with an almighty powr, with false sygnes and wonders lyinge miracles, and with al deceite of vnrightyousnes'. In *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More. Vol.11*, ed. S. M. Foley and C. H. Miller (New Haven, London: 1985), p. 335. See also A. Hudson, 'The Mouse in the Pyx: Popular Heresy and the Eucharist', *Trivium* 26 (1991), 40-53, at p. 44, for several Lollard examples.

ought to convince Jack Jolie, Johan the Reeve laughs and points out that three evangelists clearly prove him wrong. However, Jack Jolie has not given up and answers that there were four evangelists, not three. He is of course right in saying this, however, it is not clear what his point is, since he is not quoting a passage from John to prove the other three evangelists wrong. In fact, he does not quote anything at all, which strikes us as odd. Piers Ploughman remarks again that heretics always deny the truth and asks Thomlyn Tailyor to give his opinion about this. Thomlyn too, believes that Jack Jolie is a heretic and declares that for a true Christian the least of only one of the three previous authors would have been enough. However, he is also able to quote the Bible and quotes John 6:56-58; 53[198] to prove Jack Jolie wrong. Johan the Reeve steps in again to sum it all up: 'Now master Jolie, I am well assured that shame will not suffer you to speake one woorde more agaynste the blessed sacrament of the alter, seyng that all the ffower euangelistes, and moste playnlie Saynt Johan whome ye alledge for your defense, doth wrote so plane agaynste you' (fol. 8r).

But Jack Jolie would not be Jack Jolie if he was not fully convinced yet. He acknowledges that the Biblical quotations his opponents cited are not false; the problem is that they take them as literal. He explains by quoting 2 Corinthians 3:7 that 'the letter killes but the spirite gifes life' (fol. 8r). Piers Ploughman points out that all heretics use this passage as a last defence when all other arguments have failed. In fact, this is one of the key issues of the Eucharist controversy. The sacramentarians argued that Christ's words 'This is my body' should be taken allegorically and not literally. The Catholics of course argued that, foremost, it should be taken literally. Piers accuses Jack Jolie and all heretics that they 'wraiste the scripture oute of joyntes and frame' (fol. 8r-8v), a complaint that is made several times in this text. Piers' accusation that the heretics interpreted passages out of context was a common complaint against the heretics. John Fisher actually managed to find several errors made by Oecolampadius.[199] Piers Ploughman continues by quoting a different text by John which clearly says that 'thes ar writyne that ye might beleue' (fol. 8v). Again, we see that it is Piers Ploughman who makes the point about belief. On such a difficult matter as the doctrine of the Eucharist, the Bible ought not to be questioned by a true Christian; he simply has to believe it is true. Apparently, Johan the Reeve, being a man

[198] John 6 is probably the most debated scripture passage in the Eucharist controversy. Both parties quoted parts of it to prove their opinions. The *Banckett* avoids a lengthy discussion of this ambiguous text.

[199] R. Rex, pp. 137-8: 'Fisher's charge of citation out of context was born out most notably in Oecolampadius's selection of a passage from Ambrose's sermons on the Psalms without so much as a hint that it followed immediately upon one of the most realist of all patristic comments on the sacraments'.

of reason, does not find this argument very convincing. It is at this point that he mentions Hob of the Hill, who up until now has been quietly serving the guests. Hob of the Hill daily reads the New Testament and, therefore, in the eyes of Johan the Reeve, he is considered to have more expertise in the matter. Hob of the Hill points Jack Jolie to 1 Corinthians 27-30,[200] warning him that if he eats the sacrament unworthily, sickness, weakness and even death can be the consequence. Therefore, if St. John did not consider taking the words of the sacrament literally, he would not warn the Corinthians about the consequences of eating the sacrament unworthily. As is to be expected, Jack Jolie is still not convinced and tells them that in the near future 'ye shall haue prechers that shall bring you into the righte waye, so that ye shall crie oute of all popishe knawes that haithe ledd you so farre oute of the trew knowledge, so many years' (fol. 9v). Johan the Reeve recognises the futility of continuing the argument at this point and decides to end it now, in order to continue it better prepared a month later. This is agreed upon by the others.

What we have seen in the first section of the text is a collaborative attempt by all the characters to refute Jack Jolie's arguments. It has become evident that Johan the Reeve functions as some kind of 'discussion leader': he maintains order and, after a set of arguments, concludes that Jack Jolie has been proved wrong, only to find Jack Jolie coming up with a different argument. Piers Ploughman is the main defender of the Catholic faith, occasionally asking either Laurence Labourer or Thomlyn Tailyor to add their views. Although the contribution of the latter two in terms of quantity is not very large, the quality of their argument is, however, very high. It is significant that Johan the Reeve twice reaches the conclusion that Jack Jolie has been proved wrong right after both Laurence Labourer's point and Thomlyn Tailyor's point. The fact that Johan the Reeve decides to pull out his 'secret weapon' in the form of Hob of the Hill to make the last convincing argument, points us in the direction that Johan the Reeve has a judgemental role. In fact, the arguments put forth by Laurence Labourer, Thomlyn Tailyor and Hob of the Hill are much stronger than the arguments presented by Piers Ploughman, who seems to be primarily driven by emotions rather than by intellect. Furthermore, we have seen that Piers emphasises faith and belief, rather than reasoning, although he supports his argument by several passages from the Bible. However, through the person of Johan the Reeve, the

[200] who so euer shall eate this breade and drink this cuppe vnworthelie shalbe giltie of the bodie and bloode of the Lorde. Therefore, lett a man proue hym selfe, and so eate of that breade and drynke of that cuppe. Ffor sothe, who so eates and drynkes vnworthelie, eates and drynkes iudgement to them selues, making no differens of the Lordes bodie (fol. 9r).

author wants us to believe that the purpose of this text is to refute the reformers' ideas by means of reason. It is also noteworthy that the heretics never reply to the arguments made by the Catholics. They either fall silent or address a new topic. Their point of view is clearly underdeveloped, which we would expect from a Catholic text.

During the month-long interval, Hob of the Hill turns to Johan, a priest, for 'councell' on how to reply to Jack Jolie's arguments. The priest admits that he does not have the answers,[201] and suggests they go to the vicar, who lies sick in bed, but will give them such counsel 'that shalbe to the greate rebuke of all heretikes' (fol. 10r). The vicar, who also knows that Hob can read English very well, lends Hob a book about the history of the holy sacrament in the writings of the apostles and the church fathers.[202] Hob of the Hill reads this book every day, while guarding Johan the Reeve's sheep. When it is time to gather at Johan the Reeve's house again, it turns out that Jack Jolie has brought along Nicholas Newfangill, who is 'muche more besie in his matters than Jack Jolie was' (fol. 10v). Nicholas Newfangill opens the debate by asking what the others thought about today's homily. Piers responds that it was very good, but a bit too long and tedious. Nicholas Newfangill sees the opportunity to mock Piers: 'The lenghe is not the cawse, but by cause there is no mencion maid of your jac in the boxe, wiche ye call your Gode' (fol. 10.v); which in turn sets off Piers. Johan the Reeve intervenes, as usual. Jack Jolie interrupts and asks them about a preacher 'that tolde you the trewthe' (fol. 11r), which they supposedly have heard. Johan the Reeve admits that they have listened to 'one Dawcoke that bablide of many things so folischelie that few gaue any credens or regarde to his woordes' (fol. 11r). And again Johan the Reeve appoints Hob of the Hill to contest the arguments of this Dawcoke. It seems at this point that the argument starts all over again.

Dawcoke's first argument that Hob of the Hill sets out to refute is that he 'proued the bodie of Criste is not reallie informe of bread, and proved the same both bie holie scripture and also by holie auncient doctours of the catholike churche' (fol. 11r-11v). The difference with the first half is that we now encounter the ideas of the Church fathers next to the already quoted apostles. Hob of the Hill declares that Dawcoke's point is clearly disproved by scripture and church fathers, and not only Dawcoke's argument, but also the ideas of 'Luther, Oecolampadius, Buysher, Joy, Baill, Turner, Ffirth,[203] wich was all

[201] See above p. 63.
[202] See above, p. 63.
[203] Martin Bucer, John Oecolampadius of Basel, George Joye, John Bale, William Turner, William Frith

condempned herritikes by the catholike churches for the same' (fol. 11v). By mentioning these names of both European and English reformers, it is clear that the author's purpose is to silence the Protestant movement in relation to the doctrine of the Eucharist. Nicholas continues that Dawcoke put forth that the sacrament is really only bread as Paul called it.[204] Hob of the Hill explains, that just as where Aaron's rod was changed into a serpent but still called a rod, so it is the same with the bread and wine (fol. 11v).[205] Paul may have referred to the sacrament as bread; nevertheless, he believed it to be the very body of Christ.[206] Hob of the Hill repeats the same argument he made earlier about eating the bread unworthily. Hob of the Hill continues by referring to Dawcoke's argument that the sacrament was 'onelie a remembrance, a figure, a signe, a pledge or a token of the bodie and bloode of Criste' (fol. 13r), claiming that several church fathers argued this as well. Here we come to the heart of the writings of early sixteenth-century reformers like Zwingli and Oecolampadius. They too argued that the sacrament was a sign and remembrance of Christ's suffering, not the real body and blood of Christ. They used the arguments of early church fathers to prove their point. In fact, Hob of the Hill has to admit that some early church fathers indeed said this, and he has a difficult time in contesting this argument. Dawcoke refers to four church fathers: Augustine, Jerome, Prospere and Tertullian and he quotes relevant passages from all but Prospere. They were known for their argument that the bread is a sign of the body of Christ. In fact, reformers of the sixteenth century like Frith and Lambert used three of these authors as proof: 'He [Lambert] proceeds to draw upon Tertullian, Augustine and Jerome in support of the view that the bread represents and signifies Christ's body; that the words of the sacrament are to be understood spiritually and not carnally, figuratively and literally'.[207] Zwingli too was one of the major Protestants who argued that the word *est* in 'hoc est corpus meum' really should be interpreted as *significat*

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[204] 1 Corinthians 11:26, although the manuscript refers to 2 Corinthians 11, but there is no mention of it in that chapter. See for instance Joye's *Souper of the Lorde*: 'And also of Paule, sayng 1. co. 11. So oft as ye shal ete this brede, lo this heretike calleth it brede euen aftyr the wordis of the popis consecracion' (p. 327). See also the long passage in which Joye explains 1 Corintians 11, where Joye stresses several times that Paul called Christ's body and blood bread and wine (pp. 329-32).

[205] See also More's *Answer to a Poisoned Book*: 'And therefore Theophilactus calleth it brede, bycause it was brede / as in the scripture the serpent in to which Aarons rodde was turned is called a rodde styll, whyle it was no rodde but a serpent. For there is it thus writen. "The rodde of Aron dyd deuour the roddes of the magycianis." And as the scripture calleth the serpent there a rodd: so calleth it the sacrament brede'; p. 53.

[206] More in his *Answer to a Poisoned Book*, responding to Joye: 'whan there heretikes proue that the blessed sacrament is called bred, they proue nothing against vs. For they that call it brede declare yet that in dede it is not brede but the body of Chryste', p. 54.

[207] C. W. Dugmore, *The Mass and the English Reformers*, (London, 1958), p. 180.

and he too uses, among others, these three Church Fathers.[208] Tertullian's ideas started a whole tradition that saw the sacrament as a symbol: 'in this realm of mystic symbolism it becomes more natural to speak of the consecrated elements as a figura or similitudo of Christ's actual body'.[209] Augustine developed his ideas and called the Eucharist a 'sacramentum memoriae'.[210] Augustine represented this tradition of interpreting the Eucharist as a sign of Christ's body and this, until the Fourth Lateran Council made the doctrine of transubstantiation official in 1215, coexisted with the tradition represented by Ambrose, who was the first to suggest the 'idea of sacramental change after consecration, that is to say, a conversion of the nature of the elements'.[211] It is not a coincidence that the sixteenth-century European reformers were so keen on both Tertullian's and Augustine's writings. Hob of the Hill quotes passages from these authors where they refer to the sacrament as a sign. He therefore has to admit that

> no dowte itt is veray trewe that the sacrament is a figure, an example, a(n) signe, a token, of the bodie of Criste for euer, a sacrament is a figure, an example, and secrete token of one holie thyng. Ewen so is the blessede sacrament called a signe, a figure of the bodie of Criste. Ffor the blessede bodie and bloode in forme of breade and wyne lifted vp ouer the preste heade att messe is a token or remembraunce. How that the same bodie in tyme of Cristes passion did hange vpon the crosse in the aire for our redemption, and also vnde the shappe or forme of wyne and lifted vp att the sacryng of the messe is a token, calling vs to remembraunce how that blessed bloode was shede on hie vpon the crosse for the redemptione of our synnes. And, thus, the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste in fforme of breade and wyne is a signe, figure a token, or exemplar of the deathe of Criste. And in this consideracon the holie fathers, sometime, and but veray seldome thei did call itt a signe, a figure, or a token, and where as nether of the holie fathers saying that ye hope before alleged, ye declare your selfe to knaw ye thought of the said holie fathers better then there selues. Ffor where as thei call the holie sacrament a remembrance, a token, a figure, or a signe, wiche may so be and the bodie and bloode of Criste as also is declarede here before. (fol. 13v-14r)

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[208] A. Barclay, p. 57. See also Joye's the *Souper of the Lorde*: 'Est is taken for significat: that is to saye, This is that, is as miche to saye, as this signifyethe that. … Meruel not therefore thoughe Est lyke wyse in thys sentence: Hoc est corpus meum. Be taken for significant, as miche to saye, as this signifyeth my bodye', p. 325. Joye's work is for the most part a translation of Zwingli's *De Vera et Falsa Religione Commentarius*.
[209] C. W. Dugmore, p. 4.
[210] C. W. Dugmore, p. 8.
[211] C. W. Dugmore, p. 6.

It is clear that Dawcoke's argument is hard to refute. Hob of the Hill does not deny that these church fathers sometimes called the sacrament a sign, but he quickly continues saying that this only happened a few times and the church fathers did truly believe that the sacrament really is the body and blood of Christ. This response is very similar to More's response in his *Letter against Frith*: 'for I take the blessed sacrament to be lefte with vs for a very token and a memoryll, of Chryst in dede. But I saye that whole substaunce of the same token and memoreall, is hys owne blessed body / where as thys man wolde make it onely brede'.[212] Neither writers denies that the sacrament can function as a token, sign or remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. However, at the same time it is the body and blood of Christ. Hob of the Hill is obviously aware of the ambiguous passages in both Augustine and Tertullian and refers to the sacrament interpreted as a sign as an 'anoiouse argumente'. Hob of the Hill continues by quoting other passages from Tertullian, Augustine and Jerome where their words can be interpreted to indicate that they do believe in the corporal presence in the Eucharist. He accuses heretics who take certain passages out of its context:

> no herrytikes can wraiste it out of frame. Therefore, when any of thes holie and auncient fathers namede aither remembrance, figure, token or signe, yet thei faithfullie beleued that it was the veray bodie and bloode of Criste. And where as ye putt to there sayeng this woorde, but euery man may well persaue that ye falslie writhe both the holie scripture and the catholicke auncient doctors, to mayntayne your arronyous oppynyons, to disceyue poore innoccent creatures that wants knaweledge, to persaue your craftie herysey.[213] (fol. 16v-17r)

Hob continues quoting Gregory in order to show 'the foure principall dactours of ye church did belewe the veray bodie and bloode of Criste to be reallie in breade and wyne' (fol. 17r-17v). He continues with quotations from more 'auncient wryters': Ignatius, Origen, Cyprian, Theophylactus, Haymo and finally Chrisostome. He points out that they

> wiche warre no newfangill fellows, but moste auncient writers and best learned men and greatest laborers in theachyng and declaryng the trew faithe of Criste sens

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[212] *Letter against Frith*, p. 237. 'Thys man' refers to Frith. However, it must be said that More retracted this opinion in one of his last works which he wrote in the tower before his execution. See his *Treatise how to receive the Blessed Body*, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol.13, ed. G. E. Haupt, (New Haven; London, 1976), p. 196.

[213] This in fact happened. John Fisher showed that Oecolampadius deliberately quoted certain passages out of context in order to support his theories. See above, p. 73 and footnote 43.

> the appostles tyme, with many other yonger holie catholicke doctours and all gonerall counsells manyfestlie declaryng that the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste ar dailie offerede and resaued bothe bodelie and spiruallie in forme and licknes of breade and wyne and no substance of bread and wyne remanyng after the consecracion. (fol. 19r-19v)

By pointing out that these ancient doctors were no 'newfangill fellows', Hob of the Hill tries to confirm the idea that the heretics' faith is a new faith that has no foundation whatsoever on beliefs from the ancient and respected church fathers. In addition, he shows that throughout history, the Church has been united on this issue. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Hob of the Hill, who is supposed to defend the Catholic belief, uses the same approach to defend his position as the Protestants did. During that period it was the Catholics who accused the Protestants of newfangled ideas, not the other way around. Is this another trick of the author to hide his true identity?[214] Jack Jolie's question sounds very pitiful when he asks Hob whether Doctor Dawcoke could prove this wrong and Hob answers that this simply is impossible. Here the second section of the text ends.

The second section of the text is mainly dominated by Hob of the Hill's monologue in which he quotes relevant passages from early church fathers in order to refute ideas Dawcoke apparently presented during a sermon witnessed by Hob. We have seen that the section began with Nicholas Newfangill provoking Piers Ploughman, who of course looses his temper once again. Johan the Reeve again intervenes and appoints Hob of the Hill as the spokesperson. Johan the Reeve prefers a well-contested discussion to a fistfight. At this point, the other characters are pushed into the background and we do not hear from them at all. In fact, the discussion is more properly called a monologue as Hob of the Hill rebuts arguments made by Doctor Dawcoke in a sermon which he had witnessed a few days earlier. Doctor Dawcoke does not seem to be present and, conveniently, cannot reply to Hob of the Hill's arguments. Hob of the Hill's monologue turns into a long list of quotations from the church fathers proving the real presence in the Eucharist. In this way Hob of the Hill claims authority for his opinions. By showing that the ancient Church Fathers were united in their stance on the Real presence, it, therefore, must be true. The Catholic point of view is firmly based on a lengthy history and is, therefore, not 'new fangilled' as Dawcoke's religion is.

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[214] See also pp. 84-5.

The third section is more or less similar to this. Again, Hob of the Hill contests three specific arguments made by Doctor Dawcoke in his sermon. However, this time Hob of the Hill does not rely that much on the writings of the church fathers, rather he attempts to refute them by his own reasoning. Hob confirms to Jack Jolie that Dawcoke made three last points which were 'so plesant vnto a crystyne mans eare, as if a stynkynge carryon vnto a fastynge mans nose' (fol. 19v). The first argument made by Doctor Dawcoke is the argument that God made man and not the other way around. Hob of the Hill's answer is very clear: Christians do not believe that the priest is the active force behind the transubstantiation, or indeed any of the effects of the sacraments, but God is: 'So the preste is no more but the mynyster and Gode the woorker' (fol. 20r). This argument was also very well known. More states in his *Answer to a Poisoned Book*: 'And therefore (as dyuerse holy doctors say) whan the preste minystreth vs this mete, let vs not thinke that it is he that gyueth it vs / not the preste I saye whome we se, but the sone of man Chryst hym self, whose own fleshe not the preste there geueth vs, but as Chrystes mynystre delyuereth vs. But the very geuer therof is our blessed sauyour hym selfe'.[215]

The second argument deals with the issue that God cannot be 'mynyshed' by either being burnt in a fire, eaten by rats and mice or become mouldy (fol. 20r-20v). This argument refers to the two substances of the Eucharist: the substance of the body and blood of Christ and the substance of the bread. Again, this was a common argument for the Protestants and Lollards to deny the Real Presence.[216] Here we have reached the core of the debate on the doctrine of the Eucharist: Catholic doctrine that prescribes transubstantiation, which means that the substance of bread and wine are no longer present after consecration and only the substance of the body and blood of Christ remain; Luther who believes that after consecration both substances remain (consubstantiation); and more radical Protestantism presented by for example Zwingli who believes that only the substance of bread remains. Hob of the Hill argues that certain qualities of bread, like colour, taste and weight, are present without the substances of bread being present. Although God has ordained that the qualities in the host can be burnt, eaten, broken or become mouldy, the substances of bread are not present, and the body and blood of Christ itself cannot be broken, burnt or become mouldy. These outer qualities of bread do not affect the substance of the body and blood of Christ and as long as these outer qualities remain, the body and

[215] p. 29.
[216] See A. Hudson, 'The Mouse in the Pyx', p. 43, for the issue of mice eating the Eucharist.

blood of Christ remains. However, when these outer qualities are altered by means of fire, digestion, mould or other means, the body and blood of Christ disappear:

> Ffor so longe as the qualities and accendetall properteis of breade dothe remane in the hoste consecrate, so longe the veray blissed bodie of Criste dothe remane with theme in what places so euer thei be, whether it be in the mowthe or mawe of beaste or man or any other places comelie or not comelie. And so sone as as the qualiteis and accedentall properteis of breade be altered by digestyng, birnyng mowlyng or any other maner than the bodie of Criste levethe those qualiteis so altered frome there nature, what marvell thoughe the provydences of Gode do suffer suche dishonor and vncomelie vsage to the qualiteis and accedentall properties of breade in the hoste consecrate, wherein is the glorified bodie of Criste also.[217] (fol. 21r-21v)

Here Hob of the Hill conforms to the traditional teachings of transubstantiation where it is believed that only the accidents of the bread remain together with Christ. He continues by pointing out that the real body of Christ suffered on the cross as well; his body was both dishonoured by the Jews and by Judas who received Christ's body. Judas' mouth was, according to Hob, a more vile place than the mouths of rats and mice. He gives two examples of people who were inspired by true faith: the thief on the cross and Joseph of Arimathea, who took the body off the cross and put it in the grave. Here for the first time Hob of the Hill presents the opposition between faith and reason; something Piers Ploughman already made clear at the beginning of the text. Joseph and Nicodemus would not have taken the body of Christ off the cross and given it an honourable burial if they had given in to reason: reason would have persuaded them not to interfere with a person who was so dishonoured and condemned. But their faith told them that this body was the son of God. Now, likewise

> when the infideles, herretikes, and fals Cristyanes gyvyng more respecte to there blynd and folishe reasons than to perfite faithe, when thei heare any passions, as burnyng, mowlyng, eatyng with mouse or other beaste may chaunce to the

[217] 'The question of digestion was related to the function of eating through which the eucharist was consumed; the degradations of eating, breaking, digestion, and excretion could not be allowed to work on the holy substance, not even in appearance, and this question was often raised in criticism of the eucharist [the author is here focusing on the thirteenth century]. In Roland Bandinelli's section 'De sacramento altaris', a tale was told of a person who attempted to live on nothing but the host. The author explains that such a person was, in fact, consuming his own body from inside, digesting himself, and after fourteen days, died. So it was not the Eucharist which was being digested and excreted by him'. M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi. The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture,* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 37.

> outwarde qualiteis of breade in the hoste consecrate, thei will saye blasfemouslie that the bodie of Criste is not in the hoste. And to sett furthe there abhomynable heresie and mys beleue, thei will name that blessed sacrament with dyuerse names of dishonor and more vile vsaige and euer the Jewis did or said in the tyme of Cristes passione. But euery trewe Cristiane that regairded faithe more then reasone, as euery trew Crystiane oughte to do when thei heare or see any suche burning, mowlyng, or eatyng with beastes chaunce vnto the vtter qualites of breade in the blessed hoste consecrate, trew faithe will compell them to iudge no less but the veray bodie of Criste, Gode and man to be in the same hoste, so longe as the qualiteis and accedentall properteis of breade doithe remane in it vnchangegide. (fol. 22r-22v)

It appears that the key issue about the doctrine of the Eucharist is *faith*. True Christians do not reason about it as the infidels did and as heretics and false Christians still do; they simply believe that the consecrated host is the body and blood of Christ.

The third and last argument that Doctor Dawcoke presents deals with the intentions that lie behind the form of the Eucharist: the consecrated host cannot be the body of Christ simply because human beings would be revolted to eat pure flesh and would resist eating it. It 'sholde haue hyndered the blissyng and rewarde promysed vs for our faithe' (fol. 24v). Therefore, 'for the moste profett, wealthe, comforthe, and saluacion of man' (fol. 23v), God ordained that it should be in the form of bread. For this reason, Dawcoke maintains that the body and blood of Christ can only be eaten in a spiritual and not corporal state. Thomas Aquinas argues that the host does not appear in form of flesh, but in a deceptive form of bread, which only strengthens the faith of the receiver:

> It is obvious to our senses that, after the consecration, all the accidents of bread and wine remain. Divine providence very wisely arranged for this. First of all, people have not the custom of eating human flesh and drinking human blood; indeed, the thought revolts them. And so the flesh and blood of Christ are given to us to be taken under the appearances of things in common human use, namely bread and wine. Secondly, lest this sacrament should be an object of contempt of unbelievers, if we were to eat our Lord under human appearance. Thirdly, in taking the body and blood of our Lord in their invisible presence, we increase the merit of faith.[218]

[218] *Summa Theologiae*, 3a.75.5 Taken from http://home.newadvent.org.

Although both Aquinas and Dawcoke recognise the revolting idea of eating pure flesh and drinking pure blood, they reach opposite conclusions. Hob of the Hill explains that the church fathers declared that there are three ways of receiving the sacrament:

> ffirst is sacramentall onelie, and that is when it is corporallie and vnworthelie resaued and by this resauyng, the resauer is nether incorporated vnto Criste spirituallie nor partetaiker of the meritts of his blessede passion, but to judgement and condempnacion as was Judas. The second resanyng is onelie spirituallie, and that is by godlie and devoute remembraunces of Cristes passion with aperfite faithe, and by that resavyng the resauer is maid parte taker of the merits of Cristes passion and also maid members of the spirituall or misticall bodie. The thirde resavyng is bothe spirituallie and sacramentallie, and that is when the resauer eathe bodilie the blessede consecrate hoste, wich is the veray bodie of Criste, with a trewe faithe that he doithe resaue in to his mouthe and bodie the same selfe blessed bodie that was borne of the blessed virgyne Marie and suffered deathe vpon the crosse and dewlie being penitent for ther synnes paste. And also beyng in full purpose to leawe syne, and to gyue thankes vnto almyghtie Gode for so greate kyndnes and excellent charite schewed vnto synners, leavyng his blessed bodie and bloode emong vs dailie to be offered and eaten where by euery one that worthelie eates that blessede bodie, and drynkes his bloode worthelie bothe spirituallie and sacramentallie ar communed and maid one with the naturall bodie and bones of our saueyour Criste and wirkes in the worthie resauor eternall life bothe of bodie and saull. (fol. 25v-26r)

The idea of eating the sacrament either spiritually or sacramentally can be traced to Augustine, whom Hob quotes, but not the part that shows the origins of this passage. Augustine in his works differentiates between the visible sacrament and the virtue of the sacrament. In his tractates on the Gospel of John he explains the difference: 'this is what belongs to the virtue of the sacrament, not to the visible sacrament; he that eateth within, not without; who eateth in his heart, not who presses with his teeth'.[219] The virtue of the sacrament can only be eaten spiritually, the visible sacrament only corporally or sacramentally. Pyers Plowman in *A Godly Dyalogue* refers to Augustine in this matter as well: 'not that body whyche was seen on the crosse was eaten at ye aulter that is to saye it is eaten and it is not eaten. After this manner is it eaten when it is ministred accordynge to

[219] Tractate 26.12. Taken from http://home.newadvent.org.

the institucyon of Chryst spirituaily that is stedfastlye to beleue that we are redeemed and saued by the merites of Chrystes passion wher of this sacrament is only a remembraunce and is not eaten carnalle or fleshlye as ye papists do roare and cry'. Cranmer, whose stance on the doctrine of the Eucharist is not easy to determine, stated the same:

> There is a spiritual eating only, when Christ by a true faith is eaten without the sacrament; also there is another eating both spiritual and sacramental, when the visible sacrament is eaten with the mouth and Christ Himself is eaten with a true faith; and the third eating is sacramentally only, when the sacrament is eaten and not Christ Himself. After the first two manner of ways godly men do eat, who feed and live by Christ; the third manner of ways the wicked do eat; and therefore, as St. Augustine saith 'they neither eat Christ's flesh nor drink his blood, although everyday they eat the sacrament thereof, to the condemnation of their presumption.[220]

The difference between the Protestants and the Catholics is that the former believed that spiritual eating is sufficient for the believer and the latter insisted on both sacramental and spiritual eating. In both cases, the eating of the sacrament is dependent on the faith of the receiver. This is the real argument of Hob. The real presence cannot be explained by reason, it can only be acknowledged through faith. And Hob of the Hill repeats this message: 'Therefore, it is necessarij for euery Cristiane to profere faithe abowe reasone moste especially in the myraculous warkes of Criste' (fol. 26v).[221]

At the end of the text, Hob uses the same argument concerning faith that Piers used at the beginning. This argument is almost impossible to refute, because you simply cannot reason with faith. It is therefore not surprise that Dawcoke stubbornly remains true to his own faith: 'Than doctor Dawcoke, after ye common course of heretikes, when he cowthe by no ways defend his argument nor wolde not leave itt, but in a fume said he trusted to se itt other wais shortlie' (fol. 29r).[222] Nicholas Newfangill and Jack Jolie also abide by their beliefs and so of course do Johan the Reeve, Piers Ploughman, Laurens Labourer, and Thomlyn Tailyor. There is no clear-cut victory for either side. No one has 'won' the debate. Hob's last argument regarding faith is in conformity with other Catholic polemical writers,

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[220] P. E. Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers*, (London, 1965), p. 212. Cranmer is quoting from the same tract.

[221] This is very close to More's statement to 'make his reason obedient vnto fayth'; see above, p. 69.

[222] The fact that Doctor Dawcoke replies to Hob of the Hill implies that he was present. This is inconsistent with the text. A slip by the author?

like Thomas More. In fact, most of the texts' arguments follow Fisher's and More's battle against the reformers. Apart from the fact that lower-class people discuss such highly controversial issues and that lower-class people read English catenas on the Eucharist, the text is firmly set in the tradition of early sixteenth-century Catholic polemical writings. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that Dawcoke's remark, which Jack Jolie made several times in the text as well, that in the future there would be people who would 'prove' the Catholic traditional interpretation wrong, has become true. Indeed, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, England became a Protestant nation and in 1571, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England said the following about the Lord's Supper:

> The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather it is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death... Transubstantiation ... cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthrows the nature of a sacrament, and has given occasion to many superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper is faith. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.[223]

The final question concerning this text is then: what was the author's stance on transubstantiation? This question is relatively difficult to answer. The problem lies in identifying the religion of the author. Is he a Catholic writer trying to ridicule the Protestant faith or the other way around? The problem is of course that, when you look at the possible meanings of the names of both parties, it becomes clear that both parties are ridiculed. If the author was a Catholic writer trying to attack the Protestant position on transubstantiation, he was not very convincing. Having a character named Hob doing most of the defending is very dubious. Above, I have set out all the possible negative connotations of the name. Furthermore, he is the youngest and lowest-class rustic, yet also the most experienced one in terms of Biblical knowledge. However, an audience would have immediately recognised all the negative connotations of the name and would not have taken such a speaker seriously. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Hob presents his arguments in a very clear manner, conforming to Catholic literature at that time. Another possibility is that the author

[223] C. Lindberg, p. 234.

was Protestant trying to deride the Catholics. One reason why he presented his Protestant characters as lacking credibility could be that in this way their 'victory' is more significant. Nevertheless, the author has presented his case very clumsily. Bearing in mind that we only have one manuscript copy of this text and no printed versions, it was probably not clear to the readers of that time either. In view of all the quotations from the Vulgate and writings of the church fathers, the author was probably some kind of cleric. He may have intended his text to be read among a small circle of friends only, rather than aiming at a wide readership.

The first page of *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest* shows that there were 'great controuerses and varyaunces' (Aii.r) concerning the Lord's Supper. This text is meant to put that right. Just like Jack Jolie in *The Banckett*, Pyers Plowman comes to a house where a dinner gathering is held for a group of neighbours. These neighbours are lower-class people, just like in *The Banckett*. We are merely told the occupation of these people and only that, of the four priests that are present, one attempts to impress the 'symple people' that the Sacrament 'was the very body and bloud of Chryste. Alleagynge further that great daunger yt was to receyue yet vnwerthely. Etc.' (Aiii.r). This 'Etc' already denotes the text's attitude towards Catholic doctrine: it is not worthy to be rehearsed fully. Pyers steps in and the reader is told that he is 'encouraged by the secret motyon of the holy goost (hauyng this sentence of Christ before hys eyes, that he that forsaketh me before the world hym wyl I forsake before mi father whyche is in heauen, begynneth with the sayde presst)' (Aiii.r-Aiii.v). It is clear from the start that Pyers' belief is the correct belief and the priest(s) ought to be corrected from their false (Catholic) beliefs. Like a proper reformer, Pyers bases his arguments upon the writings of Augustine and the priest shamefully has to admit that 'I haue not greatly occupyed mi selfe in redyng of hys workes' (Aiv.r). Pyers accuses the priest that not only does he not busy himself with the writings of Augustine, he neglects the Bible as well. We have already seen how Pyers refers to Augustine's teachings concerning the 'virtue of the sacrament' and how Pyers outwits the priest regarding the issue of Christ occupying only one place.[224] After convincing the priest that the Eucharist cannot contain the body and blood of Christ

[224] See above, pp. 71-2.

corporally, Pyers points out that this message should be spread to the simple people in order to warn them against false 'pharyses'.

Whereas *A Godly Dyalogue* is still a reasonable attempt to outwit the priests on the issue of the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, Luke Shepherd in his *John Bon and Mast Parson* is mainly set to ridicule the Catholic treatment of the sacrament. 'In 1548 between 20 and 30 such books against the Mass were published, many of them filled with blasphemous and profane abuse'.[225] Apparently, the printers John Daye and William Seres got into considerable trouble for publishing this text. The lord Mayor of London, Sir John Gresham, seriously harassed them and because of the intervention of Edward Underhill, – a pensioner at the court of Edward VI, who gave the mayor a copy accompanying the message that 'there is many of them at court' – the mayor changed his mind and concluded that 'it was both pithy and merry'.[226] King comments that this 'suggests that Shepherd's polemics established a standard of Reformation wit that could appeal to both elite and popular readers'.[227]

On the front page, there is a picture of a procession of priests bearing the Host at Corpus Christi. Not so long ago, the presence of Christ at the altar had been a way of procuring peace in society. 'The consecrated host, for example, was carried on Corpus Christi day in a resplendent procession through numerous English towns which were racked by internal faction, in the hope that universal and orderly participation in a civic ceremony in honour of the Body of Christ would bring unity and order to the social body'.[228] This was clearly no longer the case when Luke Shepherd wrote his piece. Beneath the picture is written:

> Alas poor fools, so sore ye be lade,
> No marvel is it, though your shoulders ache:
> For ye bear a great god which ye yourselves made.
> Make of it, what ye will, it is a Wafer Cake;
> And between two irons, printed it is and bake.
> And look, where idolatry is, Christ will not be there,
> Wherefore, lay down your burden, An idol, ye do bear,

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[225] C. W. Dugmore, p. 117.
[226] J. N. King, 'John Day', in *The Beginnings of English Protestantism,* ed. P. Marshall and A. Ryrie. (Cambridge, 2002), p. 191.
[227] J. N. King, 'John Day', p. 191.
[228] C. Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England 1400-1530*, rev. edn., (London, 1996), p. 64.

Alas, poor fools. (p. 159)[229]

Already we see the purpose of this Protestant text: to ridicule the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist and, thus, to entertain the audience at the court.

The short text consists of a dialogue between a ploughman and a priest. The ploughman, John Bon, is ploughing in the field, eager to finish his work before noon. The parson praises him for his eagerness as tomorrow is Corpus Christi day, and people should have finished their labours on time the day before. John pretends to be confused about this 'saint day': 'What Saint is Copsi Cursty, a man, or a woman?' (p. 161). Already John shows his contempt for this holy feast by deliberately turning the words into a blasphemous and meaningless phrase. The parson does not notice this, but informs John that it refers to a man, Jesus Christ, and tells him of the procession to be held in honour of Him tomorrow. John questions this: how can a man fit within such a little glass? The parson immediately accuses him of being influenced by this 'new gear' (p. 162), a clear reference to Protestantism. John denies belonging to 'that faction'. He excuses himself by hiding behind his plainness: 'A plain man, ye may see, will speak as cometh to mind: / Ye must hold us excused, for ploughmen be but blind' (p. 162). On the contrary, he pretends to want to learn sincerely about Corpus Christi, as he has never heard of it before in his life.[230] This implies a serious neglect by master parson: the parson was the one responsible for teaching the people the rudiments of Catholic belief. Initially, the parson refuses to believe this. However, he assures John that the Church has determined a long time ago that the Corpus Christi was a man: 'it is both the sacrament and very Christ himself' (p. 162). It is noteworthy that the parson declares that this has been determined by the church; he does not give Biblical proof for this, nor does he refer to the writings of the Church Fathers. It is not Christ's words that provide the insight, but rather the Church. Despite this reassurance, John insists that this cannot be so: 'Then make ye Christ an elf' (p. 163). The parson explains that one cannot see Christ's manhood in the host. Here the ploughman can set out his trap: 'ye tell me it is even very He: / And if it be not His manhood, His godhead it must be' (p. 163). The parson of course takes the bait and declares that the host is neither. John can only conclude that it must be 'but a cake' (p. 163). Just as in *A Godly Dyalogue* where

[229] L. Shepherd, *John Bon and Mast Parson,* in *An English Garner, vol. 5, Tudor tracts, 1532-1588*, gen. ed. T. Seccombe; with an introduction by A. F. Pollard, rev. edn. (Westminster, 1903), pp. 159-69. This edition does not make use of line numbers. All quotations are taken from this source.
[230] He is older than 50 years.

the ploughman has outwitted the priest, here the ploughman catches the priest on his own words. Although the parson cries out that John is guilty of heresy, he has to admit that John is merely repeating his own words: 'I meant not so … I was but a little overseen' (p. 164). The parson accuses John of being insincere. Nevertheless, John manages to convince the parson to relate the entire procedure of tomorrow's service. However, the parson's narrative is ridiculed by John who addresses his reply to each stage of the service to the audience. A short extract will suffice:

Parson:

We shall first have *Matins*. Is it not a godly hearing?

John:

Fie! yes. Methink 'tis a shameful gay cheering,
For oftentimes, on my prayers, when I take no great keep,
Ye sing so arrantly well, ye make me fall asleep!

Parson:

Then we have Procession, and Christ about we bear.

John:

That is a poison holy thing, for God Himself is there.

Parson:

Then come we in, and ready us dress,
For solemnly to go to *Mess*.

John:

Is not here a mischievous thing!
The Mess is vengeance holy, for all their saying!
(p. 165)

Luke Shepherd has of course deliberately put the climax of the interlude during the parson's narrative concerning the procedure of the Holy Mass on Corpus Christi. This section, which continues for some length in the same manner, extensively mocks the feast of Corpus Christi. It must have been a hilarious scene to watch for the audience: a devoted parson who seriously recounts the events of the service, whilst the ploughman effectively undermines every bit of it. At the end, when the parson comes to the consecration of the host, then John really excels in his own sarcasm:

The devil ye do! I trow this is pestilence business!
Ye are much bound to God for such a spittle holiness!

A gallows gay gift! With five words alone,
To make both God and Man; and yet we see none!
Ye talk so unreasonably well, it maketh my heart yearn,
As eld a fellow as I am, I see well I may learn.

Parson:

Yea, John! and then, with words holy and good,
Even, by and by, we turn the wine to blood.

John:

Lo! Will ye se? Lo! who would have thought it?
That ye could so soon from wine to blood ha brought it?
And yet, except your mouth be better tasted than mine,
I cannot feel it other but that it should be wine.
And yet I wot ne'er a cause there may be, why
Perchance, ye ha drunk blood oftner than ever did I.
(p. 167)

Although John is clearly being very sarcastic, the parson still takes him very seriously: 'Truly, John, it is blood, though it be wine in taste'. The parson still continues with his message about the Eucharist, not realising he is being slaughtered in front of the audience. John continues with making both Sacrament and priest preposterous. He compares the act of transubstantiation with painting his black ox white and still calling the ox black. People who would believe in that would be fools, he argues. The parson is alarmed by John's level of heresy and warns him not to speak openly about such things. Again John insists that this is not his intention and persuades the parson to continue with his narrative of the service. The parson finishes by saying that the host, Christ's body, is the same as the person Mary conceived. The parson is clearly very naïve when he makes his final speech:

But now the blessed *Mess* is hated in every border,
And railed on, and reviled, with words most blasphemous:
But I trust it will be better with the help of *Catechismus*.
For though it came forth but even that other day,
Yet hath it turned many to their old way:
And where they hated *Messe*, and had it in disdain,
There have they *Messe*, and *Matins* in Latin tongue again.
(p. 168)

This parson is obviously living in a make-believe world. For some reason he cannot see the reality that Protestantism is gaining a strong foothold among the people, even when it is happening right underneath his own nose. He still believes that Catholicism can make its way back. At such a high level of naivety, John loses his demeanour and reveals to the parson his true nature:

> By my troth! Master Parson, I like full well your talk!
> But mass me no more *messings*! The right way will I walk.
> For, though I have no learning, yet I know cheese from chalk,
> And each can perceive your juggling, as crafty as ye walk!
> But leave your devilish *Mass*, and the *Communion* to you take!
> And then will Christ be with you; even for His promise sake!
> (p. 168)

John is a Protestant who walks the famous 'right way'; a path well trodden by his Lollard predecessors. The author's purpose is clear: by presenting an unlearned lower-class rustic who can easily outsmart and ridicule the parson and his belief in the Eucharist, this doctrine becomes utterly ludicrous for the entire society. One does not have to be educated to realise that the transubstantiation is unreal. This is a very different approach when compared to *A Godly Dyalogue*, where the Ploughman knows his Latin, knows his Augustine even better than the priest and in such a way convinces the priest by sound reasoning. We have seen that the other priests feel threatened by the high level of sound reasoning by the lower rustic. John the Ploughman is far from educated but comes to the same conclusion as Pyers. *John Bon and Mast Parson* shows that only naïve people like the parson still believe in transubstantiation. The parson is baffled by John's confession: 'what, art thou such a one, and kept it so close!' (p. 169). The parson clearly has no insight in current affairs and in the people around him. This of course adds to the interlude. When he finally realises that John is Protestant, he does not act upon this at all: 'Farewell, John Bon! God bring thee in better mind!' (p. 169). His '*catechismus*' to John regarding transubstantiation clearly has failed. John stays polite: 'I thank you, sir! For that you seem very kind' (p. 169). But he remains a true Protestant: 'But pray not so for me! For I am well enough' (p. 169). John does not need priestly intercession; he knows that his belief in Christ is enough. The play ends with his cries to his plough horses.

All three authors were clearly very much aware of the Eucharistic controversy when writing their texts. The latter two Protestant texts were printed during a favourable climate and when Protestantism had gained a stronghold in England. During the late 1540s and early 1550s, in-depth treatment of the topic was no longer necessary. On the contrary, ridiculing the mass proved far more productive. The *Banckett*, either written in 1532 or the late 1530s, was clearly much closer to the Eucharistic controversy of the 1520s and early 1530s. The text is very much in conformity with Catholic polemical writings. When one sees the author as Catholic, perhaps the reason why the author chose rustics as his main protagonists discussing such a topic might reveal that he believes that the debate should be moved from intellectuals and theologians to the common people. Alternatively, by means of presenting Biblical and patristic evidence of the Real Presence by means of lower-class rustics, the author tried to bridge the gap between those intellectuals and the common people. The English writings of the reformers were highly popular. Perhaps the author thought that a Catholic defence of the real presence would be more convincing by means of a Piers Ploughman or a Hob of the Hill. Furthermore, the king executed both John Fisher and Thomas More in the early 1530s. Their texts had become problematic for the Catholics in their battle against the Protestants. However, we can deduce from the total number of manuscripts and copies of the text, namely only one manuscript, that the text was not very popular. Considering that we do not even have a printed version, the text probably did not reach very far. For the two Protestant texts, the Ploughman figure proved useful in their attempt to ridicule the mass. A simple yet intelligent ploughman could easily show the illogicality of the priests' arguments for the Real Presence. In fact, the ploughman clearly outsmarted these priests in this matter. This chapter thus clearly shows that the ploughman figure was considered a valuable tool to spread views on the Eucharist.

Chapter Three: The Relationship between the Priest and the Ploughman

Owst in his book *Preaching in Medieval England* opens his first chapter with the question: 'Who can lawfully preach?'[231] He explains that the answer might not be that simple, but that it mainly concerns the clergy who take care of souls. Unfortunately, the medieval preacher did not always fulfil his duty properly and there are numerous examples of anti-clerical literature that scorn the incompetent priest. In fact, it has been claimed by several authors, orthodox and Lollard alike, that it is easier for an ignorant layman, in particular the ploughman, to please God than it is for a learned clergyman. Gower in his Prologue to his *Confessio Amantis* writes:

> It were betre to dike and delve
> And stande upon the righte feith,
> Than knowe al that the bible seith
> And erre as somne clerkes do.
> (346-349)

Thomas à Kempis in his *Imitation of Christ* says:

> Certainly the meke ploweman that servith God is much bettere then the proude philosopher that, taking noon hede of his owne lyvynge, considereth the course of heven.

In several Wycliffite texts there appear sayings such as:

> A simple paternoster of a ploughman that is in charite is betre than a thousand massis of covetous prelates and veyn religious.[232]
> What lif that pleseth more to God is better prayer to God; as lif of a trewe plowman or ellis of a trewe heerde is betere preyere to God than prayer of any order that God loveth less.[233]

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[231] G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England. An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350-1450*, (Cambridge, 1926), p. 1.
[232] *The English Works of Wyclif hitherto unprinted*, ed. F. D. Matthew, (London, 1880), p. 274
[233] *The English Works of Wyclif*, p. 321.

> And as anentis masse or preieris, christene men shulden wel wite that good liif of a plowman is as myche worth to the soule as preier of this frere, alif it profite samwhat.[234]
>
> For if a lord or a laborer loue betere god than thes veyn religious and proude and lecherous possessioners, the lewid manys preiere is betere than alle here criynge and knackinge.[235]

In *The Recluse* appears:

> Seint Austin seith that we clerkes lerne for to go to the pyne of helle and lewed folk lerne to go to the joye of hevene.[236]

William Langland in the B-Text says:

> The doughtieste doctour and devinour of the Trinitee,
> Was Austyn the olde, and heighest of the foure,
> Seide thus in a sermon – I seigh it written ones –
> '*Ecce ipsi idiote rapiunt celum ubi nos sapientes in inferno mergimur*' –
> And is to mene to Englissh men, moore ne lesse,
> Arn none rather yravysshed fro the righte bileve
> Than are thise konnynge clerkes that knowe manye bokes,
> Ne none sonner ysaved, ne sadder of bileve
> Than plowmen and pastours and povere commune laborers,
> Souteres and shepherdes – swiche lewed juttes
> Percen with a *Paternoster* the paleys of hevene
> And passen purgatorie penauncelees at hir hennes partyng
> Into the blisse of paradis for hir pure bileve,
> That inparfitly here knewe and ek lyvede.
> (x.452-65)

When Margery Baxter attempted to convert a Carmelite friar to Lollardy:

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[234] *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, 2 vols, ed. T. Arnold, (Oxford, 1869) vol. II, p. 213.
[235] *The English Works of Wyclif*, p. 117.
[236] *The Recluse*, ed. J. Pahlsson (Lund, 1911), p. 97.

> She told him to stop begging and to take up the plough, for the life of the ploughman was more pleasing to God than that of the friar.[237]

The ploughman in *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe* says:

> But kepinge of thyne hestes: and than a lewed man maye serue God as well as a man of religion. And so Lorde oure hope ys / that thou wilt as sone yhere a plowmans prayer / and he kepe thyne hestes / as thou wilt do a mans of religion: though that the plowman ne maye nat haue so much syluer for his preyer as men of religion. For they kunnen not so wel preysen her preyers as these other chapmen: But Lorde oure hope ys that oure preyer be neuer the worse though it be not so well sold as other mens preyers.
> (590-8)[238]

The reasoning behind this is that the poor layman would not be hindered by too much theological knowledge. From these quotations, we can see that the simple and devout ploughman became the symbol for this assumption, in particular for the Lollards.

However, despite the objection to layman's *preaching*, certain clergymen did condone layman's *teaching*. According to John Watton the layman is allowed to teach his fellow man:

> A grete differens es be twene prechynge and techynge. Prechynge es in a place where es clepynge to gedyr, or foluynge of pepyl in holy dayes, in chyrches or othe certeyn places and tymes ordeyned ther to. And it longeth to hem that been ordeyned ther to, the whyche have iurediccion and auctorite, and to noon othyr. Techynge es that eche body may enforme and teche hys brothyr in every place and in conable tyme, es he seeth that it be spedful: ffor this es a godly almes ded to which every man es bounde that hath cunnynge.[239]

This occurred on a large scale among the Lollards, though it was undertaken in secret. *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* is one Lollard example in which the ploughman, a simple and poor layman, is teaching the narrator how to recite the Creed in English.

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[237] N. P. Tanner, *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-1431*, (London, 1977), p. 48.
[238] All quotations are from *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe,* ed. D. H. Parker, (Toronto, 1997).
[239] Quoted in G. R. Owst, p. 4.

In many ploughman texts there seems to be a special connection between the ploughman and the priest. In this chapter, I will trace this relationship between the two, starting in the late fourteenth-century with Chaucer and John Ball. They chose to depict the parson and the ploughman as two brothers. From Chaucer's and John Ball's presentation of the ploughman and the parson we realise that there were close connections between the two in the late fourteenth-century in both religious and social matters. I will continue with an examination of the ploughing-for-preaching metaphor that exists in Langland's work and is used extensively by Hugh Latimer. At the end of his poem Langland has Piers Ploughman take upon himself the duties of a priest. In the allegorical ploughing scene Langland comes close to using the ploughing metaphor for preaching. Latimer in his *Sermon on the Plough* makes extensive use of this metaphor. By means of this metaphor the ploughman and the priest become one and the same. Despite the obvious connection between Hugh Latimer and *Piers Plowman*, I will show that both writers very likely drew upon the same tradition set forth by the Bible and the commentaries of the Church Fathers. The last section deals with the hostility between the ploughman and the priest, beginning with the Pardon scene in passus vii of *Piers Plowman*, rounding off with the analyses of several early sixteenth-century cases. In medieval literature, there is a convention that prefers the ignorant ploughman to the educated priest. However, in some cases the ploughman is far from ignorant and seems to be able to converse on the same level as the clergy. Already in *Piers Plowman* the priest seems to be threatened by the religious knowledge of the ploughman. This tradition continues in many of the early sixteenth-century ploughman texts. In the early sixteenth century, there was a plea for the translation of the Bible into English so that the layman could read the Bible by himself. This idea was of course enormously threatening for the clergy. Although in some cases the ploughman is presented as ignorant, we will see that he is able to debate religious issues with clergymen and in some cases even convinces the clergy of their mistakes.

The Ploughman and Parson as Brothers

Several scholars have argued that Chaucer might have been influenced by Langland when writing the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. Helen Cooper argues specifically that Chaucer was inspired by the A text of *Piers Plowman*. 'Langland's prologue is not only an analogue for Chaucer's estates enumeration: it also suggests how such an opening could be

used to generate a story collection'.[240] Apart from this, several characters in Chaucer's prologue could be based on Langland's characters. This applies to the ploughman. The description of Chaucer's ploughman is the following:

> With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,
> That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;
> A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
> Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
> God loved he best with al his hoole herte
> At alle tymes, thogh hym gamed or smerte,
> And thanne his neighebore right as hymselve.
> He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
> For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
> Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
> His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,
> Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
> In a tabard he rood upon a mere.[241]
> (529-541)

Critics have viewed Chaucer's ploughman in two opposite ways. Either he is beyond criticism and he represents the ideal,[242] or he should be viewed as 'too good to be true',[243] a portrait that is so unrealistic that it has to be satiric.[244] Indeed, Chaucer's ploughman is a type; he is 'hardly physically tangible'.[245] He is such a static figure, that it is difficult to compare him with Langland's ploughman, who speaks, instructs, teaches, acts: he engages with other characters. Chaucer's ploughman never really comes alive, as we do not have a 'Plowman's Tale', at least not one written by Chaucer. However, Chaucer's ploughman seems to possess the same qualities as Piers and in terms of work they are almost identical. The ploughman's main virtue here is 'parfit charitee', which is the greatest of the three theological virtues. It plays an important role in *Piers Plowman* when Anima and Piers

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[240] H. Cooper, 'Langland's and Chaucer's Prologues', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 1 (1987), 71-81, at p. 77.
[241] G. Chaucer, *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L. D. Benson, (Oxford, 1988). All quotations from Chaucer's works are from this source.
[242] J. Horrell, 'Chaucer's Symbolic Plowman', *Speculum* 14 (1934), 82-92.
[243] B. White, 'Poet and Peasant', in *The Reign of Richard II. Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay and C. M. Barron, (London, 1971), 58-74, at p. 67.
[244] G. Stillwell, 'Chaucer's Plowman and the Contemporary English Peasant', *English Literary History* 6 (1939), 285-90.
[245] P. Hardwick, 'Chaucer: the Poet as Ploughman', *The Chaucer Review* 33 (1998), 146-56, at p. 148.

himself instruct Will about the virtue of Charity and its close link with the Trinity and Christ in particular in passus fifteen.[246] In fact, it is one of the two essential themes throughout the poem. Chaucer's ploughman follows Christ's synopsis of the Old Testament Commandments: to love God and your neighbour as yourself. He is very much a ploughman according to New Testament values. Chaucer's ploughman works in the name of Christ for every poor man, just like Piers does: 'And ben His pilgrym atte plow for povere mennes sake' (B.vi.102).[247] However, he is also very much a social figure. His duties consist of ordinary ploughman duties and they are similar to Piers' duties.[248] These duties are typical of medieval ploughman duties which amount to more than simply ploughing. We can see this from two late-thirteenth-century agrarian manuals, which list these duties. First, the *Seneschaucy*, a treatise on estate management:

> The plough-keepers ought to be men of understanding who know how to sow, how to mend and repair broken ploughs and harrows, and how to cultivate and crop the land well.
>
> The ploughmen ought to know how to couple and lead the oxen without striking or hurting them, they ought to feed them well and keep the fodder safe so that it is not stolen or taken away. They ought to keep the beasts safely in the meadows and in the several pastures and impound any other cattle found there.
>
> Ploughmen and plough-keepers ought to dig, make enclosures, and thresh, they ought to remove the earth or dig trenches to dry the land and drain off the water. They ought not to flay any ox before an inspection and investigation has established the cause of its death. They ought not to carry fire into the byres, neither for lighting nor for warming themselves, and no candle ought to be lit unless it be in a lantern, and that only in great need and danger.[249]

The *Fleta*, another late thirteenth-century estate managing document, adds the following to the duties of the ploughman:

> The plough-driver's art consisteth herein, that he drive the yoked oxen evenly, neither smiting nor pricking nor grieving them. Such should not be melancholy or wrathful, but cheerful, jocund and full of song, that by their melody and song the

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[246] See also chapter four p. 139.
[247] See also H. Cooper, 'Langland's and Chaucer's Prologues', p. 76.
[248] See introduction, p. 5.
[249] *Seneschaucy*, in *Walter of Henley and other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, ed. D. Oschinsky, (Oxford, 1971), p. 283.

> oxen may in a manner rejoice in their labour. Such a ploughman should bring the fodder with his own hands, and love his oxen and sleep with them by night, tickling and combing and rubbing them with straw; keeping them well in all respects, and guarding their forage or provender from theft … If he find other beasts in their pasture, he must impound them. He and the hands, when plough-time is over, must dike and delve, thresh, fence, clean the watercourses, and do other such-like profitable works.[250]

The fact that the duties of Chaucer's ploughman resemble the duties of Langland's ploughman is, therefore, in itself not too significant. Both authors show an awareness of what the common duties of the medieval ploughman were.

Chaucer's ploughman is very much part of his community; he is willing to work for free to help out his neighbours. In fact, in records the word 'neighbour' often occurred, as well as the word 'community', since open field farming very much relied on the cooperation between neighbours: 'one man's injury was everybody's, even the lord's'.[251] The ploughman is punctual in paying his tithes both on his own labour and his possessions. This shows that the ploughman is not extremely poor. This reminds us of Langland's Piers Plowman who also pays his tithes promptly: 'For of my corn and my catel he craved the tithe. / I paide it hym prestly, for peril of my soule' (B.vi.92-3). This dual exemplarity in the religious sphere and in the social sphere is reflected in the family relationship between the Parson and the Ploughman.

Chaucer chose to depict the Parson and the Ploughman as brothers. Most critics explain the relationship in Christian terms. Both are portrayed as exemplars of humble Christian good living. However, further on in the *Canterbury Tales*, the Parson's orthodoxy is questioned when the Host accuses the Parson of being a Lollard: 'I smelle a Lollere in the wynd' (II. 1173) and he encourages the Parson to tell a story. The Shipman intervenes: 'Nay, by my fader soule, that schal he nat!' / Seyde the Shipman, 'Heer schal he nat preche; / He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche.' (II. 1178-80). 'In this exchange between the Host and the Shipman, the term 'lollere' is so clearly defined in relation to preaching that we can be sure that Chaucer knew what he was about in using it. While this use certainly does not establish the Parson as a Lollard, it should suggest that Chaucer wanted his reader

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[250] Quoted in J. Horrell, p. 85.
[251] R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: the West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth-Century*, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 150.

to think of the Parson in relation to Lollardy'.[252] The ground for this assumption lies mainly with the portrait of the Parson. It has been argued that the Parson represents the Lollard 'poor priest'.[253] Wilks explains that 'Wyclif's poor priests were university men: they needed to be highly trained in order to teach. But they were to be classed as simple men'.[254] The opening lines of the description of the Parson show that he is such a poor priest:

> A good man was ther of religioun,
> And was a povre Persoun of a Toun,
> But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
> He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
> (I. 478-80)

According to Aston, there are 'numerous (and not only hostile) descriptions – among which it seems wholly probable that Chaucer's poor parson should be placed – that tell how the Lollards went on foot about their work, poorly clad, unshod, staff in hand'.[255] Moreover, the Parson's education is directly linked to his use of the Bible: 'That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche' (481). In fact, the Parson's teaching of the *Gospel* is stressed three times in his portrait.[256] One of the main features of Lollardy was the insistence of teaching the pure words of the Bible without glosses, fables or other tales to the laity and that this laity should have access to a vernacular Bible. McCormack gives more evidence that suggests that the Parson is a poor priest and she concludes that, although there are some critics who argue against the possibility of the Parson being a Lollard, 'it seems plausible that Chaucer's audience would have found it impossible to avoid reading this portrait in the context of Lollard writings. … It thus seems as though Chaucer wanted his audience to read shades of Lollardy into his depiction of the Parson: the Shipman's accusation, in the *Epilogue to the Man of Law's Tale*, that the Parson is a Lollard, is obviously a further tactic used by Chaucer to plant suspicion in the mind of his audience'.[257] Smith argues that the

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[252] K. Little, 'Chaucer's Parson and the Specter of Wycliffism', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001), 225-53, at pp. 225-6.
[253] D. V. Ives, 'A Man of Religion', *Modern Language Review* 27 (1932), 144-8.
[254] M. Wilks, 'Wyclif and the Great Persecution' in his *Propecy and Eschatology*, (Oxford, 1994), 39-64, at p. 54.
[255] M. Aston, 'Lollardy and Sedition, 1381-1431', *Past and Present* 17 (1960), 1-44, at p. 13. 'But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder, / In siknesse nor in mischief to visite / The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite, / Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.' I. 492-5.
[256] The other two instances are ll. 498 and 527-8.
[257] F. M. McCormack, 'Geoffrey Chaucer and the Culture of Dissent: The Wycliffite Context and Subtext of the *Parson's Tale*'. (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Trinity College, Dublin, 2003), p. 8.

family relationship between the Parson and the Ploughman confirms the connection between the Parson and Lollardy: 'Both men exhibit the spiritual qualities that all the reformers sought to teach'.[258] When we relate the Ploughman to the portrait of his brother, it is not inconceivable that Chaucer's audience would link the Ploughman with the Lollards as well. Especially when we recall that the Ploughman is referred to as a '*trewe* swynkere'; the word 'trewe' has famous Lollard connotations. It shows that there was a connection, even though perhaps small, between the figure of the ploughman and Lollardy already during Langland's time, a little while before the author of *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* made this connection explicit.

The social connection between the Parson and the Ploughman has been overlooked. According to Hardwick, 'they are linked not by the nature of their work, but by a spiritual ideal – a bond which is made all the more explicit by the device of their brotherhood, rendering them literally of the same body. This blood relationship, deriving as it does from nature rather than social circumstance, is, therefore, all the more striking.'[259] However, the family relationship explained in social terms is of significant importance when looking at the figure of the ploughman as Chaucer portrays him.

According to Ault, the Parson was one of the more important members of the farming community.[260]

> His holding, the glebe, was equal to that of a rich peasant... His arable acres, the 'church furlongs', lay intermingled with those of the laity. Their tithes were stored in his barns; their mortuaries were added to his own beasts and pastured with the village flocks and herds. Many a parson acquired added lands of his own and engaged in the cattle trade. His voice in communal affairs owed something, too, to the fact that he was the ghostly father of his fellow villagers. In village meetings the parson's assent or dissent must have been crucial. The intervention of the lord of the manor alone could have been more decisive.[261]

Also, according to Bennett 'the priest strove with the serf to win a living from the products of the earth. He was priest first, but agriculturist after; or he might even be primarily an

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[258] E. M. G. Smith, 'And Was a Povre Persoun of a Toun', in *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in* The Canterbury Tales, ed. L. C. Lambdin and R. T. Lambdin. (Westport, Conn, London, 1996), 256-62, at p. 258.
[259] P. Hardwick, p. 147.
[260] W. O. Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England. A Study of Village By-Laws,* (London, 1972), p. 58.
[261] W. O. Ault, p. 59.

agriculturist. His beasts fed side by side with those of his parishioners on the commons'.[262] This statement is supported by a document that shows that the vicars of Vale of Evesham churches were supposed to leave to their successors, among other things: 'a plough with all its accoutrements'.[263] In fact, Hilton claims that these poor parsons were 'like other wage-earners, subject to the provisions of the Statute of Labourers'.[264] Hilton shows that the rector or the vicar was a landowner whose land was usually 'equivalent in area to the rich peasant holding of one or two yard lands'. However, Hilton warns us not to put the vicar or rector at the same social level as the rich peasant. Nevertheless, the social position of the parson – who was generally the person physically present in the community as the vicar or rector usually relied on the parson to conduct their duties – was 'probably nearer to that of the majority of the parishioners than was that of the well-to-do rectors. It was from this group that priests who were mixed up in social rebellions probably came'.[265] The parson, then, played an important part in the life of the ordinary peasant and, in particular, the ploughman and, in terms of work, it is clear that they were closely related.

When we look at an important addition Langland wrote into the C-text, we see a contrasting opinion. It concerns the opening of passus 5 and this passage is known as the '*apologia pro vita sua'*, which is by most critics considered autobiographical. Reason questions Will about his profession and why he does not labour with his hands. Will replies that he is 'to wayke to worche with sykel or with sythe / And to long, lef me, lowe to stoupe, / To wurche as a werkeman eny while to duyren.' (C.v.23-5). Reason questions him on how he earns his living and he accuses him for living a 'lollarne lyf' (31). Will defends himself by arguing that his clerkly life sustains him:

> And yf y be labour sholde lyuen and lyflode deseruen,
> That laboure þat y lerned beste þerwith lyuen y sholde.
> *In eadem vocacione in qua vocati estis.*
> 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 seuene psalmes.

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[262] H. S. Bennett, *Life on the English Manor. A Study of Peasant Conditions. 1150-1400*, (Cambridge, 1969), p. 31.
[263] R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society,* p. 104.
[264] R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free. Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381*, (London, 1973), p. 209.
[265] R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society*, p. 62-3.

(C.v.42-7)[266]

Will or William Langland is doing what he does best: he is a clerk of low orders who prays for the souls of the living and the dead. Langland scorned this kind of profession in the Prologue and also Chaucer's Parson is against praying for money (507). However, Will assures Reason that he only asks for the bare necessities (52). In addition, Will argues that clerks are not meant to work with their hands or practise another profession:

> Me sholde constrayne no clerc to no knaues werkes,
> For by þe lawe of *Levyticy* þat oure lord ordeynede,
> Clerkes ycrouned, of kynde vnderstondynge,
> Sholde nother swynke ne swete ne swerien at enquestes
> Ne fyhte in no vawarde ne his foe greue. …
> Hit bycometh for clerkes Crist for to serue
> And knaues vncrounede to carte and to worche.
> For sholde no clerke be crouned but yf he come were
> Of frankeleynes and fre men and of folke ywedded.
> Bondemen and bastardus and beggares children,
> Thyse bylongeth to labory, and lordes kyn to serue
> God and good men, as here degre asketh,
> Somme to synge masses or sitten and wryten,
> Redon and resceyuen þat resoun ouhte to spene.
> (C.v.54-8; 61-9)

Kerby-Fulton argues that this addition, together with other additions to the B-text, were made as a reaction to misinterpretations by other people of his poem – the most famous is of course John Ball, who uses the poem's main phrase 'to do well and better' to stir other people to rise against the authorities.[267] Also, as Simpson pointed out, there are several passages in Langland's text that are close to the positions banned by the Blackfriars' Council of 1382,[268] of which the belief that friars ought to work manually for their food is one.[269] According to Kerby-Fulton, this passage 'signals Langland's new awareness of his

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[266] All quotations from the C-text are from W. Langland, Piers Plowman, *by William Langland: an Edition of the C-Text*, ed. Derek Pearsall, (Exeter, 1994).

[267] K. Kerby-Fulton, 'Langland and the Bibliographic Ego' in *Written Work. Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. S. Justice and K. Kerby Fulton, (Philadelphia, 1997), 67-143, at pp. 87-8.

[268] J. Simpson, 'The Constraints of Satire in *Piers Plowman* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*', in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition,* ed. H. Philips, (Cambridge, 1990), 11-30, at p. 15.

[269] The passages in the B text that deal with this are xx.234-421 and xx.384-85. Unfortunately, Langland did not rewrite the last two passus of the B text.

dangerous political position...; it is a response to the political situation the author of *Piers Plowman* found himself in after 1381'.[270]

The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 connects the two explanations (religious and social) of the family link between the Parson and the Ploughman. 'The lower clergy was conspicuous in the leadership of the rising'.[271] Hilton gives several reasons why especially the lower clergy were so involved in the rising and identified themselves with the peasant rebels.[272] First, as already mentioned, they too were subject to the provisions of the Statute of Labourers. Second,

> they were more literate and more likely to be familiar with general concepts about the rights of men and the duties of governments than the custom-dominated laity. The better they knew the Bible and the writings of the fathers of the church, the more explosive the mixture of social and religious radicalism was likely to be. ... The socially rebellious clergy, familiar with such sermons [sermons in denunciation of the rich] as much through reading sermon manuals as through listening at the pulpit, only had to select from the rich store of invective and scriptural citation such quotations as seemed to fit in with their own observations of the social scene.[273]

Hilton quotes the famous sermon text that Walsingham attributed to John Ball: 'Whan Adam dalf and Eve span, wo was thanne a gentilman'. This sentence justified the rebellion against the upper class on biblical grounds.[274] Another reason why the lower clergy sympathised with the peasant rebels is a simple one: just like the Parson and the Ploughman in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, they came from the same social class and from the same families. But lastly, and most importantly, Hilton argues that another explanation can be found in the heresy that rose at the same time when the social unrest was at its peak: Wyclif and the Lollards. 'Perhaps the now discarded idea of a close link between Lollardy and the rising of 1381 was not after all so mistaken, provided that we regard Lollardy as something wider simply than the following of Wycliffe'.[275] Although Wyclif denounced the Peasants' Revolt and although he did not stir the peasantry to rise against their lords and against the church, it has been argued that his writings could be interpreted that way.

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[270] K. Kerby-Fulton, pp. 87-8.
[271] R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, p. 207.
[272] R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free,* pp. 209-13.
[273] R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free.* p. 210, 211.
[274] See also chapter one, p. 19.
[275] R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free,* p. 213.

'When Wyclif asserts that 'it is lawful for the laity to withhold and take away the goods of the church from ecclesiastical superiors', 'laity' means 'king and lords', for these were the audience that mattered most to him. But his strategy of displaying the rural poor as his audience and clientele meant that inevitably they overheard his teaching, and could mistake the 'laity' in question to be themselves'.[276] However, the debate whether the Lollards were really involved in the Peasants' Revolt does not concern us here; what does concern us is *the late fourteenth-century conception that they were involved.* There is an abundant amount of evidence that this was the case. The evidence centres on the chroniclers who claim that John Ball was a disciple of John Wyclif himself. Thomas Walsingham reports: 'He taught, moreover, the perverse doctrines of the perfidious John Wycliffe, and the insane opinions that he held, with many more that it would take long to recite'.[277] Henry Knighton testifies that:

> 'He [John Wyclif] had as his precursor John Balle, just as Christ's precursor was John the Baptist. Balle prepared the way for Wycliffe's opinions and, as is said, disturbed many with his own doctrines, ... Now on his appearance Master John Wycliffe had John Balle to prepare the way for his pernicious findings. The latter was the real breaker of the unity of the church, the author of discord between the laity and clergy, the indefatigable sower of illicit doctrines and the disturber of the Christian church'.[278]

The connection between Lollardy and the Peasants' Revolt is the clearest in the following account found in the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*:

> One matter is omitted above which is worthy of note, namely that so serious and extensive was the division and dissension within England produced by John Wycliffe and his accomplices that orthodox men feared that their preaching would provoke yet another insurrection against the lords and the church in the future. They believed this more especially because of a beloved follower of Wycliffe, a priest named John Balle, who was imprisoned by Simon, archbishop of Canterbury, and William, bishop of London, on account of the heresies that he preached. ...
>
> When Balle realised that he was doomed, he called to him William, bishop of London and let of Canterbury, as well as lords Walter Lee, knight, and John

[276] S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, (Berkeley; London, 1994), p. 89.
[277] Quoted in R. B. Dobson, p. 374.
[278] Quoted in R. B. Dobson, p. 376.

> Profete, notary; and he confessed publicly to them that for two years he had been a disciple of Wycliffe and had learned from the latter the heresies which he had taught; from Wycliffe had arisen the heresy concerning the sacrament of the altar and Balle had openly preached this and other matters taught by him. Balle also declared that there was a certain company of the sect and doctrines of Wycliffe which conspired like a secret fraternity and arranged to travel around the whole of England preaching the beliefs taught by Wycliffe: in this way it was planned that all England would consent at the same time to his perverse doctrine. Balle named to them Wycliffe himself as the principal author, and also mentioned Nicholas Hereford, John Aston and Lawrence Bedenam, Masters of Arts. Balle added that if they had not encountered resistance to their plans, they would have destroyed the entire kingdom within two years.[279]

It is not likely that this 'confession' of John Ball ever existed. However, documents like these testify that at the end of the fourteenth century there was a common belief that the Lollards and the Peasants' Revolt were essentially connected.

The figure of John Ball leads us to his famous letters that invoke Piers Plowman. Critics have wondered why John Ball's letter and Jakke Carter's letter[280] urge the ploughman to stay at home and go to work: 'and biddeth Peres Ploughman go to his werk, and chastise wel Hobbe the Robbere', 'Lat Peres the Plowman my brother[281] duelle at home and dyght us corne'.[282] Justice argues that

> in ordering Piers to 'duelle at home and dyght ... corne', Carter's letter rejects pilgrimage ('duelle at home') and commends labor (dyght ... corne) as a model for community and authority. The rebel letters invert the relation: the folk govern Piers and by telling him to 'duelle at home', declare that pilgrimage is an unnecessary term of thought. The 'truth' Langland's pilgrims seek is something the rebels need not leave home to get, because it is something they already have.[283]

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[279] Quoted in R. B. Dobson, p. 377, 378. According to Dobson, this passage may have been written as early as the mid-1390s (p. 373).
[280] Which is very likely to be written by John Ball himself.
[281] If the writer is John Ball, it is another reference to a parson and a ploughman being brothers.
[282] Quoted in R. B. Dobson, p. 381, 382. The first quote comes from John Ball's letter to the Essex commons and the second comes from Jakke Carter's letter.
[283] S. Justice, pp. 123-4.

Justice draws this conclusion on the basis that Piers Plowman leaves home to go on pilgrimage and later stays home and gives up ploughing.[284] However, it can be argued that the ploughing episode *was* the pilgrimage and it consists of *staying at home*.[285] In fact, Truth fully approves of this:[286]

> Treuthe herde telle herof, and to Piers sente
> To taken his teme and tilien the erthe, …
> And bad hym holde hym at home and erien hise leyes
> (B.vii.1-2, 5)

Truth orders Piers to stay at home and plough his fallow lands. It is practically the same order that John Ball and Jakke Carter give Peres in their letters. The letter by Jakke Carter uses the metaphor of preparing food for the rebellion. Peres Ploughman is asked to stay at home to prepare the corn, which, in turn, will be used by Jakke Carter to prepare food and drink for the rebels so that they may not fail. If John Ball had such a detailed knowledge of the poem that he had this particular line in mind, it is as if he implies Truth's or God's approval for the rebellion through the figure of Peres. Peres Ploughman's labour, to prepare food for the rebels, is at the centre of the rebels being able to achieve their goal: to 'chaistise wel Hobbe the Robbere'. 'The targets of the rising, the opponents of Piers and

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[284] S. Justice, p. 121.

[285] The pilgrimage that Piers is supposed to lead cannot be a real and earthly pilgrimage as represented by the false pilgrim. Instead, it is an inner or spiritual pilgrimage as Saint Truth is located in the heart, as Piers told the pilgrims. However, one could argue, as has been argued before, that the ploughing of the half-acre is the pilgrimage itself: 'Piers' ploughing turns out to be the continuation of, and a definition of, the most real kind of pilgrimage, which in fact involves staying at home and fulfilling the demands of Truth. The pilgrimage Piers leads turns out not to be through an allegorical country, but rather in the literal world of human relations around work and the production of food'. J. Simpson, Piers Plowman. *An Introduction to the B-Text*, (London, 1990), p. 69. The following passage is a suggestion of ploughing being a metaphor of pilgrimage:

> And I shal apparaille me, quod Perkyn, in pilgrymes wise
> And wende with yow I wile til we fynde Truth.
> He caste on his clothes, yclouted and hole,
> Hise cokeres and hise coffes for cold of hise nailes,
> And heng his hoper at his hals in stede of a scryppe.
> (B.vi.57-61)

Piers puts on pilgrim clothes that are clearly his working clothes. They are one and the same. It is true that immediately afterwards he says that after the ploughing he will go on pilgrimage with them; however, a little later Piers again makes the connection between ploughing and pilgrimage:

> I wol worshipe therwith Truthe by my lyve,
> And ben His pilgrym atte plow for povere mennes sake.
> My plowpote shal be my pikstaf and picche atwo the rotes,
> And helpe my cultour to kerve and clense the furwes.
> (B.vi.101-104)

It is evident that ploughing is used here as a metaphor for going on pilgrimage. 'Langland has subverted the model of his narrative by creating a new meaning for 'pilgrimage', directly opposed to the normal sense of the word, which involves leaving home'. J. Simpson, Piers Plowman. *An Introduction to the B-Text,* p. 71.

[286] Justice believes that Piers goes against Truth's orders because he believes Piers leaves home to go on pilgrimage; p. 121.

the rebels, are generalised into the collective figure of the thief ('Hobbe the Robbere')'.[287] In *Piers Plowman*, there is an ungratifying sense that 'Roberd the robbere' got away with his actions: 'What bifel of this feloun I kan noght faire shewe' (B.v.472). John Ball and his rebels, with the implicit help of Peres Ploughman, will make sure that this will not be the case during the rebellion. Contrary to Langland, who used agricultural metaphors to express religious ideas, here the letters of John Ball use agricultural metaphors to express social ideas. What the works of Chaucer and John Ball show is that already in the early 1380s there were close ties between ploughmen, parsons, Lollards, and social rebels. These close ties are exemplified in the family relationship between the ploughman and the parson. By portraying them as brothers, both Chaucer and John Ball change the relationship from ordinary to a much more close-knit relationship. The two form a close unit because of it.

Ploughing as a Metaphor for Preaching

The metaphor that substitutes ploughing for preaching unifies the ploughman and the priest even more. In fact, the preacher and the ploughman become one. Hugh Latimer, in his *Sermons on the Plough* which were delivered at St. Paul's Cross, 1548, – originally a sequence of four sermons of which the last one has survived – explains the allegory in the opening of his sermon:

> I told you in my first sermon, honourable audience, that I purposed to declare unto you two things. The one, what seed should be sown in God's field, in God's plough land; and the other, who should be the sowers: that is to say, what doctrine is to be taught in Christ's church and congregation, and what men should be the teachers and preachers of it. … And now I shall tell you who be the ploughers: for God's word is a seed to be sown in God's field, that is, the faithful congregation, and the preacher is the sower…. For preaching of the gospel is one of God's plough-works, and the preacher is one of God's ploughmen.[288]

In this allegory the preacher is compared to a ploughman; the field is Christ's church; and the seed is God's word. Latimer apologises for his choice in simile and explains why the two professions are so similar:

> And well may the preacher and the ploughman be likened together: first, for their labour of all seasons of the year; for there is no time of the year in which the

[287] S. Justice, p. 92.
[288] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, pp. 32-3.

> ploughman hath not some special work to do: as in my country in Leicestershire, the ploughman hath a time to set forth, and to assay his plough, and other times for other necessary works to be done. And then they also maybe likened together for the diversity of works and variety of offices that they have to do. For as the ploughman first setteth forth his plough, and then tilleth his land, and breaketh it in furrows, and sometime ridgeth it up again; and at another time harroweth it and clotteth it, and sometime dungeth it and hedgeth it, diggeth it and weedeth it, purgeth and maketh it clean: so the prelate, the preacher, hath many diverse offices to do. He hath first a busy work to bring his parishioners to a right faith, as Paul calleth it, and not a swerving faith; but to a faith that embraceth Christ, and trusteth to his merits; a lively faith, a justifying faith; a faith that maketh a man righteous, without respect of works: as ye have it very well declared and set forth in the Homily. He hath then a busy work, I say, to bring his flock to a right faith, and then to confirm them in the same faith: now casting them down with the law, and with threatenings of God for sin; now ridging them up again with the gospel, and with the promises of God's favour: now weeding them, by telling them their faults, and making them forsake sin; now clotting them, by breaking their stony hearts, and by making them supplehearted, and making them to have hearts of flesh; that is, soft hearts, and apt for doctrine to enter in: now teaching to know God rightly, and to know their duty to God and their neighbours: now exhorting them, when they know their duty, that they do it, and be diligent in it; so that they have a continual work to do. Great is their business, and therefore great should be their hire.[289]

Latimer juxtaposes the ploughman's labours with the preacher's labours, which he believes serves as proof that the simile is fitting. More than 150 years earlier, William Langland made this metaphor renowned. In the final stages of the poem, Piers Plowman becomes Grace's 'procuratour' and 'reve'. 'My prowor and my plowman Piers shal ben on erthe' (B.xix.262) and the following second allegorical ploughing scene is probably one of the poem's best known scenes. Grace provides Piers with four oxen and four horses that represent the four evangelists and the four Church Fathers. With this team he ploughs the field and he harrows Holy Scripture by means of the Old and New Testaments' harrows. The field here is not the Church, but it is man's soul and in this soul Piers sows the seeds of the Cardinal virtues. The fruits of mankind will be gathered in a great house or barn and

[289] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 34-5.

this barn forms Holy Church. Furthermore, Piers receives typical priest-like powers from Christ: 'Thus hath Piers power, be his pardon paied, / To bynde and unbynde bothe here and ellis, / And assoille men of alle synnes save of dette one' (B.xix.189-91). These are classic priestly powers in the Catholic Church and here we can really see that the ploughman and the priest are one for Langland.

We can see that these two allegorical pictures by Langland and Latimer correspond closely with another. Both authors turn the ploughman into a caretaker of man's soul, a preacher who ploughs the Gospel to the congregation, to Christ's church. Preaching and ploughing are intrinsically linked and have become one. Langland's hero Piers Plowman became almost instantly famous and his fame stretched to the writings of early Tudor literature. The link between Hugh Latimer's *Sermon on the Plough* and Langland's hero is, therefore, easily made. One critic even goes as far as stating that 'Latimer merges his own identity with that of Piers. Like Piers, Latimer is prepared to lead his fellow countrymen on a pilgrimage of Truth'.[290] Another critic comments: 'Latimer leads his audience to a realization that he shares Piers' attributes and speaks with his authority. Piers becomes the guise in which the homilist addresses his countrymen as the prophet of the New Jerusalem'.[291] Indeed, it is very tempting to see Hugh Latimer as a second Piers Plowman, especially considering that Latimer refers to himself as a ploughman: 'The first part I have told you in the three sermons past, in which I have assayed to set forth my plough, to prove what I could do'.[292]

However, I will show that Latimer cannot be a second Piers, simply because they represent two different denominations. Furthermore, it is likely that both authors drew upon the same tradition that is based on biblical texts and explanations by the Church Fathers. I will first examine the origins of the ploughing metaphor in the Bible and in the writings of the Church Fathers. When these origins are established, I will examine Latimer's use of the metaphor. This will lead to the conclusion that Latimer and Piers Plowman undertake two entirely different types of ploughing.

Agricultural imagery in the Bible and in texts by the church fathers is plentiful. Most of these images concern planting, sowing, gardens, etc. Barney shows in his analyses of biblical agricultural imagery that, for instance, the notion of God as planter or the

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[290] R. R. Kelly, 'Hugh Latimer as Piers Plowman', *Studies in English Literature* 17 (1977), 13-26, at p. 24.
[291] S. El-Gabalawy, 'The Burden of Proof in Hugh Latimer's Sermons', *Renaissance and Reformation* 1 (1977), 103-18, at p. 116.
[292] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 32.

comparison between man and a plant or a tree, is commonplace.[293] Adam, being the first peasant, is of interest since he brought hard work and suffering into the world:

> Ad Adam vero dixit quia audisti vocem uxoris tuae et comedisti de ligno ex quo praeceperam tibi ne comederes maledicta terra in opere tuo in laboribus comedes eam cunctis diebus vitae tuae (18) spinas et tribulos germinabit tibi et comedes herbas terrae (19) in sudore vultus tui vesceris pane donec revertaris in terram de qua sumptus es quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.[294]

Most church fathers interpret Genesis 3:17-19 allegorically. Origen, for instance, 'explains that, since Adam means 'man', ... the curses spoken against Adam and Eve apply to all men and women. Thus the words spoken in Genesis 3:17-19 mean that the whole earth is cursed; every man who had 'died in Adam' eats of it in grief all the days of his life, and it will bring forth thorns and thistles all the days of the life of the man who, in Adam, was cast out of paradise.'[295] Augustine related this passage to language and understanding of the Gospel. Because of Adam's sin and God's punishment, mankind needed to work hard in order to understand God's message. Augustine claims that:

> Hoc ipsum enim quod in hac vita quisque natus, difficultatem inveniendae veritatis habet ex corruptibili corpore ... ipsi sunt labores et tristitiae quas habet homo ex terra; et spinae ac tribuli sunt punctiones tortuosarum quaestionum, aut cogitationes de provisione hujus vitae: quae plerumque, nisi exstirpentur et de agro Dei projiciantur, suffocant verbum, ne fructificet in homine, sicut Dominus in Evangelio dicit (Marc. IV, 18, 19). ...
>
> quod omnibus diebus vitae nostrae passuri sumus, id est hujus vitae quae transitura est. Et hoc illi dictum est, qui coluerit agrum suum, quia ista patitur donec revertatur in terram, ex qua sumptus est, id est, donec finiat vitam istam. Qui enim coluerit agrum istum interius, et ad panem suum quamvis cum labore pervenerit, potest usque ad finem vitae hujus hunc laborem pati: post hanc autem vitam non est necesse ut patiatur. Sed qui forte agrum non coluerit, et spinis eum opprimi

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[293] S. A. Barney, 'The Plowshare of the Tongue: The Progress of a Symbol from the Bible to *Piers Plowman*', *Medieval Studies* 35 (1973), 261-93.

[294] And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work: with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.

[295] C. P. Bammel, 'Tradition and Exegesis in Early Christian Writers', in *The Language and Logic of the Bible: the Earlier Middle Ages,* ed. G. R. Evans, (Cambridge, 1984), 62-93, at p. 80.

permiserit, habet in hac vita maledictionem terrae suae in omnibus operibus suis, et post hanc vitam habebit, vel ignem purgationis vel poenam aeternam.[296]

'Augustine speaks of every one's Adamic duty to cultivate God's word in the 'field' of his own soul and thereby earn his spiritual 'bread''.[297] This involves suffering and hard work, so that, in the afterlife, mankind does not have to suffer. The more one suffers on earth, the less will one suffer in the afterlife. Augustine links hard labour and suffering to God's grace.[298] Here we already see some of the allegory that Latimer uses; the only difference being that here man is charged to plough and maintain his own field.

Stephen A. Barney has analysed the metaphor of ploughing as preaching and it appears that this metaphor has existed since the fifth century in St. Euger's writings: 'Boves, apostoli, qui suscepto jugo Christi, Evangelii vomere mundum exaraverunt'.[299] Barney has shown that Gregory was one of the first who used this metaphor extensively. Whereever Gregory comes across the word 'ox' or 'oxen' in the Bible, he almost always interprets them as preachers.[300] For instance when he discusses Job 6:5 (numquid rugiet onager cum habuerit herbam aut mugiet bos cum ante praesepe plenum steterit),[301] he says: 'Vel quos bovis significatio exprimit, nisi hos quos intra sanctam Ecclesiam ad praedicationis officium suscepti ordinis jugum premit?'[302] However, although ploughing is used here as a metaphor for preaching, neither Euger nor Gregory refer to the preacher as

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[296] Augustine of Hippo. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.20.30 PL 34, cols. 0211-0212. 'Anyone born in this life has difficulty in discovering the truth because of the corruptible body ... These are the labours and sorrows which man has from the earth. The thorns and thistles are prickings of tortuous questions or thoughts concerned with providing for this life. Unless these are uprooted and cast forth from the field of God, they generally choke off the word, so that it does not bear fruit in man, as the Lord says in the Gospel.
... For all the days of our life we are going to suffer, that is, of this life which is going to pass away. These words are spoken to one who cultivates his field, because he suffers these things until he returns to the earth from which he was taken, that is, until he comes to the end of his life. For one who cultivates this field interiorly and gains his bread, albeit with toil, can suffer this toil up to the end of this life, but after this life he need not suffer. One who did not cultivate his field and allowed it to be overcome with thorns has in this life the curse of his earth in all his works, and after this life he will have either the fire of purgation or eternal punishment'. Transl. from *New Advent*, <http://home.newadvent.org>.

[297] E. Jager, *The Tempter's Voice. Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature*, (London, 1993), p. 59.

[298] Langland was inspired by such an interpretation when writing the first ploughing scene in passus vi.

[299] *Liber Formularum Spiritualis Intelligentiae,* PL 50, col. 0752D. 'Oxen, apostles, who having taken up the yoke of Christ, plow up the world with the plowshare of the Gospel'. Transl. in S. A. Barney, p. 270.

[300] This is the case at least in his work *Moralia in Job.*

[301] Will the wild ass bray when he hath grass? Or will the ox low when he standeth before a full manger?

[302] Book 7.14. PL 75, cols. 0509-1162. 'Or whom does the designation of 'the ox' set forth, saving those, whom within the bounds of the Holy Church, the yoke of Orders taken upon them constrains to the ministry of preaching?' Transl. from *Morals on the Book of Job*, transl. with notes by James Bliss, *Oxford Library of the Fathers* vols. 18, 21, 23, 31 (London, 1844, 1845, 1847, 1850).

the ploughman, but rather as the ox. The link between the ox and the preacher probably comes from the Bible passage written by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

> scriptum est enim in lege Mosi non alligabis os bovi trituranti numquid de bubus cura est Deo an propter nos utique dicit nam propter nos scripta sunt quoniam debet in spe qui arat arare et qui triturat in spe fructus percipiendi.[303]

Augustine, when writing about figurative and proper signs, made it explicit in his work *De Doctrina Christiana* that in this passage by Paul, the ox is the figurative sign of preachers of the Gospel: 'sicut dicimus bovem, ... quem significavit Scriptura, interpretante Apostolo, dicens, Bovem triturantem non infrenabis'.[304] In fact, just like Gregory, Augustine commonly explains the oxen in this Bible passage as apostles or preachers of the Gospels.[305] Furthermore, the 'ox' is the 'helper' of St. Luke in gospel pictures. The difficulty with this is, however, that the ox merely provides the force to draw the plough; it is the ploughman who has the skill and knowledge to steer his team in the right direction. In fact, in the Middle Ages ploughing was seen as an elaborate skill that you needed training for. We can see this in the division among the ploughmen themselves: you have the driver, who drove the animals, and the holder, who was in charge of the plough. The holder had more status than the driver, as we can see from the following:

> we find the following groups in the key sumptuary law of 1363:
> ... people of the estate of servants in husbandry, that is carters, ploughmen [ploughholders], ploughdrivers, oxherds, cowherds, shepherds, swineherds, dairymen, threshers, etc.[306]

> The Beauchamp manor of Elmley Castle:
> Here the dairymaid was getting in 1366-7 a cash wage of 5*s*. a year, the same as the male ploughdriver, swineherd, and oxherd, but less than the plough-holder, carters, and shepherds (6*s*.).[307]

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[303] 1 Corinthians 9:9-10: For it is written in the law of Moses: Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or doth he say this indeed for our sakes? For these things are written for our sakes: that he that plougheth, should plough in hope and he that thrasheth, in hope to receive fruit.

[304] Book 2.10. PL 34, col. 0042. 'But then further by that ox understand a preacher of the Gospel, as Scripture signifies, according to the apostle's explanation, when it says: 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn'. Transl. from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: a Select Library of the Christian Church. First Series, vol. 2,; Augustine: City of God and Christian Doctrine*, (Peabody, Mass., 1995), p. 539.

[305] See for instance *Expositions on the Psalms*, Ps. 66.18 and Ps. 104.18 and *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, Tractate 10.7.

[306] R. H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Midlle Ages*, (Oxford, 1975), p. 25.

Unfortunately, Barney does not provide the reader with passages from the Church Fathers where they explicitly connect the preacher to the ploughman rather than to the ox. There are a few references where the preacher or apostle is compared to a farmer, but not explicitly to a ploughman. Nevertheless, this tradition does exist. Gregory explains the metaphor of ploughing as preaching in connection to St. Paul who was 'bound to plough':

> Loris quoque Dei non tantum a feritate restringitur, sed quod magis sit mirabile, ad arandum ligatur, ut non solum homines crudelitatis cornu non impetat, sed eorum etiam refectioni serviens, aratrum praedicationis trahat. Ipse quippe de evangelizantibus quasi de arantibus dicit: *Debet enim in spe qui arat arare; et qui triturat, in spe fructus percipiendi* (I Cor. 9: 10).[308]

The same quotation from Corinthians is used to draw the connection between Paul and ploughing instead of the oxen and ploughing. Here we get closer to Langland and Latimer's use of the metaphor. Paul, although not specifically addressed as a ploughman, is, nevertheless, bound to draw the plough: he is bound to preach the Gospel to the first Christian communities. St. John Chrysostom also refers to St. Paul who is 'ploughing' and actually refers to him as a ploughman: 'Paul went about the world, cutting away the thorns of ungodliness, sowing broadcast the seeds of godliness, like an excellent ploughman handling the ploughshare of doctrine'.[309] Piers performs similar duties to those of Paul. Some critics find the so-called 'sudden disappearance' of Piers at the end of the poem difficult to explain. But in fact, together with Grace, Piers is 'to the plow' 'As wide as the world is ... to tilie the truthe / And the lond of bileve, the lawe of Holy Chirche' (B.xix.338; 336-7). Piers, and also Latimer, are second Pauls, they follow in the footsteps of the early apostles. In order to complete the allegory, the 'plough' itself is used by several church Fathers as a metaphor for God's word. Here are some examples by Augustine, Cassian and Aquinas:

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[307] R. H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry,* p. 103.

[308] Gregory the Great. *Morals on the Book of Job.* Book 31.31. PL 75, cols. 0591B-C. But he [Paul] is not only restrained from violence by the bands of God, but, what is more wonderful, is bound to plough; so as not only not to attack men with the horn of cruelty, but, ministering also to their support, to draw the plough of preaching. For he himself speaks of those who are preaching the Gospel, as if they were ploughing: For he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth, in hope of partaking the fruit. Transl. from Gregory the Great, *Morals on Job.*

[309] John Crysostom. *Second Homily on Eutropius (After His Captivity)*, chapter 14. Transl. from *New Advent*, <http://home.newadvent.org>.

> Ille autem colit nos tanquam agricola agrum. Quod ergo nos ille colit, meliores nos reddit; quia et agricola agrum colendo facit meliorem: et ipsum fructum in nobis quaerit, ut eum colamus. Cultura ipsius est in nos, quod non cessat verbo suo exstirpare semina mala de cordibus notris, aperire cor nostrum tanquam aratro sermonis, plantare semina praeceptorum, exspectare fructum pietatis.[310]
>
> Et ita per singulas horas atque momenta terram cordis nostri Evangelico aratro, hoc est, jugi Dominicae crucis recordatione sulcantes, vel noxiarum ex nobis ferarum cubilia, vel virulentorum serpentium exterminare latibula, atque extrudere poterimus..[311]
>
> The husbandman that laboreth must first partake of the fruits, which a gloss explains thus, that is to say, the preacher, who in the field of the Church tills the hearts of his hearers with the plough of God's word.[312]

In Cassian's particular case, it refers not to the whole Gospel, but specifically to the Cross. The allegory of the plough is now complete. Mankind's heart or soul needs to be cultivated by means of the 'plough' or the Gospel. The ploughmen who cultivate the field by preaching God's word were initially the apostles, and later the clergymen who are the successors of the apostles.

Hugh Latimer uses the following Bible passages as his source for the ploughing metaphor: Luke 8:5 'Exivit qui seminat seminare semen suum' which he himself freely translated as 'He that soweth, the husbandman, the ploughman, went forth to sow his seed' and Luke 9:62 'Nemo admota aratro manu, et a tergo respiciens, aptus est regno Dei': No man that putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is apt for the kingdom of God'. The traditional explanation by the Church Fathers of Luke 9:62 is that once a person became a Christian, he should not look back to his former state. Clement of Alexandria explains it as follows: 'And let him who has once received the Gospel, even in the very

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[310] Augustine of Hippo. *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament. Sermon XXXVII*, PL 38, cols. 0530-0531. 'The culture He exerciseth on us is, that He ceaseth not to root out by His Word the evil seeds from our hearts, to open our heart, as it were, by the plough of His Word, to plant the seed of His precepts, to wait for the fruit of piety'. Transl. from *New Advent*, <http://home.newadvent.org>.

[311] John Cassian, *Collationum Xxiv Collectio in Tres Partes Divisa.* Collatio Prima, *Quae Est Prima Abbatis Moysis*. Chapter XXII. *PL* Col. 0520A. And so daily and hourly turning up the ground of our heart with the gospel plough, i.e., the constant recollection of the Lord's cross, we shall manage to stamp out or extirpate from our hearts the lairs of noxious beasts and the lurking places of poisonous serpents. Transl. from *New Advent*, <http://home.newadvent.org>.

[312] Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*. 2.2.187.4. Transl. from *New Advent*, http://home.newadvent.org.

hour in which he has come to the knowledge of salvation, "not turn back, like Lot's wife", as is said; and let him not go back either to his former life, which adheres to the things of sense, or to heresies. For they form the character, not knowing the true God.... "For no man who looks back and puts his hand to the plough, is fit for the kingdom of God.".[313] Cyprian comments that 'we should not return again to the devil and to the world'.[314] And elsewhere: 'Let each one, acknowledging his own sins, even now put off the conversation of the old man'.[315] Jerome used this Bible passage as a warning in his letters to several people who have just become Christian.[316] And Cassian warns his readers as well: 'Beware that you remember nothing of your kinsfolk or of your former affections, and that you are not called back to the cares and anxieties of this world, and (as our Lord says) putting your hand to the plough and looking back be found unfit for the kingdom of heaven'.[317] The Franciscan Rule uses Luke 9:62 to illustrate that the new friar is not allowed to leave the Order once entered. And John Fitzherbert in his *Boke of Husbandry*, took the passage more literally:

> The spirytuall constructyon of this texte, remytte to the doctours of dyuynitie, and to the greate clarkes; but to reduce and brynge the same texte to my purpose, I take it thus. There is noo man, puttynge his hande to the plough, lokyng backewarde, is worthy to haue that thynge that he oughte to haue. For if he goo to the ploughe, and loke backewarde, he seeth not whether the plough go in rydge or rayne, make a balke, or go ouerthwarte. And if it do so, there wyll be lytell corne. And so if a man attende not his husbandrye, but goo to sporte or playe, tauerne or ale-house, or slepynge at home, and such other ydle warkes, he is not than worthy to haue any corne. And therfore, Fac quod venisti, Do that thou comest fore, and thou shalte fynde that thou sekest fore, etc.[318]

We shall see that Latimer used this Bible passage to illustrate that once a person was converted to Protestantism, he should not look back to his former Catholic life.

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[313] *The Stromata*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Vol. 2; Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (entire)*, (Peabody, Mass., 1995), p. 550.

[314] *The Treatises*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Vol. 5,; Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, appendix*, (Peabody, Mass., 1995), p. 500.

[315] *Epistle VII*, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Vol. 5,* p. 287.

[316] See *Letter CXLV*, *CXXV* and *CXVIII*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: a Select Library of the Christian Church. Second Series. Vol. 6; Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, (Peabody, Mass., 1999).

[317] *The Institutes*, Chapter XXXVI, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: a Select Library of the Christian Church. Second series. Vol. 11; Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, (Peabody, Mass., 1999), p. 231.

[318] J. Fitzherbert, pp. 16-17.

Latimer explains these passages as: 'let no preacher be negligent in doing his office';[319] they form the main subject for his sermon. He juxtaposes the good and the bad preacher; the first of course referring to the Protestant faith, the second to the Catholic. For both types of preachers the ploughing metaphor for preaching is used, as ploughing is a simile for the work of God:

> By this, then, it appeareth that a prelate, or any that hath cure of soul, must diligently and substantially work and labour. Therefore saith Paul to Timothy, Qui episcopatum desiderat, hic bonum opus desiderat: "He that desireth to have the office of a bishop, or a prelate, that man desireth a good work." Then if it be a good work, it is work; ye can make but a work of it. It is God's work, God's plough, and that plough God would have still going. Such then as loiter and live idly, are not good prelates, or ministers. And of such as do not preach and teach, nor do their duties, God saith by his prophet Jeremy, Maledictus qui facit opus Dei fraudulenter; "Cursed be the man that doth the work of God fraudulently, guilefully or deceitfully".[320]

Latimer scorns the prelates who busy themselves with secular issues, especially those who have taken up professions at the court: 'And ye that be prelates, look well to your office, for right prelating is busy labouring, and not lording. Therefore preach and teach, and let your plough be doing. Ye lords, I say, that live like loiterers, look well to your office; the plough is your office and charge. If you live idle and loiter, you do not your duty, you follow not your vocation: let your plough therefore be going, and not cease, that the ground may bring forth fruit'.[321] Latimer is very traditional in the sense that he longs for the medieval division of society into three orders: the lords/knights, the clergy and the labourers/ploughmen. He accuses the clergy of loitering and lording and warns them to remain within their estate. It is not fitting for the clerical estate to busy themselves with lording. It is one of the worst offences of the clergy, as their main objective, ploughing or preaching, is affected for the worse by it. It was Latimer's strong belief that without preaching, salvation for the Christian commonwealth could not be obtained. In the *Fourth Sermon before King Edward*, which Latimer delivered a year later than the *Sermon on the Plough*, he says the following about his own preaching: 'whether it be unfruitful or no, I cannot tell; it lieth not in me to

[319] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 32.
[320] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 35.
[321] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 38.

make it fruitful: and if God work not in your hearts, my preaching can do you but little good. I am God's instrument but for a time; it is He that must give the increase: and yet preaching is necessary; for take away preaching, and take away salvation'.[322] It is, therefore, no wonder that Latimer vigorously attacks those prelates who neglect their preaching duties for other worldly matters. He argues that ploughmen do not busy themselves with lording and if they did, the people would starve. Likewise, the people starve spiritually when the prelates conduct themselves as lords: 'And thus if the ploughmen of the country were as negligent in their office as prelates be, we should not long live, for lack of sustenance. And as it is necessary for to have this ploughing for the sustentation of the body, so must we have also the other for the satisfaction of the soul, or else we cannot live long ghostly'.[323] Without the good preacher ploughing his field, the people will be doomed in the afterlife. As we have seen before, for the reformers, religious and economical matters were often intertwined and this is also the case for Latimer.[324] He explains that there are two types of ploughing: bodily ploughing that feeds the body of man, undertaken by the ploughmen, and spiritual ploughing that feeds the soul of man, undertaken by the prelates. Both types of ploughing are necessary for man but unfortunately, both are in danger through enclosing, which threatens the prosperity of the Christian 'commonwealth'. Especially the prelates are guilty of thinking only of their 'private commodity':[325]

> They are so troubled with lordly living, they be so placed in palaces, crouched in courts, ruffling in their rents, dancing in their dominions, burdened with ambassages, pampering of their paunches, like a monk that maketh his jubilee; munching in their mangers, and moiling in their gay manors and mansions, and so troubled with loitering in their lordships, that they cannot attend it. They are otherwise occupied, some in king's matters, some are ambassadors, some of the privy council, some to furnish the court, some are lords of the parliament, some are presidents, and comptrollers of mints.[326]

Latimer argues, therefore, that each man should remain in his estate and be true to his calling. Although in another Edwardian sermon he claims that the 'the poorest ploughman

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[322] Qtd. in A. Chester, p. 194.
[323] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 39.
[324] See chapter one, pp. 35-7.
[325] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 39.
[326] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 40.

is in Christ equall with the greatest Prince that is',[327] Latimer still believes in the traditional medieval system of three orders. 'Paradoxically, his use of the ploughman conflates a radical religious agenda with an essentially conservative socio-economic vision. But while Latimer argues for the active propagation of a new religion, his social doctrine depends upon an ideal vision – grounded in late feudal theory – of a common-field manorial estate. His ploughman is placed at the base of a strictly hierarchical social and economic structure, organised around the imperatives of a traditional Christian morality'.[328]

For the prelates, though, the worst is yet to come. Latimer claims that the most diligent ploughman in all England is the devil: 'the diligentest preacher in all the realm; he is ever at his plough'.[329] When describing the works of the devil, he describes the Catholic practices the Reformers fought against during King Henry VIII's reign:

> Where the devil is resident, and hath his plough going, there away with books, and up with candles; away with bibles, and up with beads; away with the light of the gospel, and up with the light of candles, yea, at noon-days. Where the devil is resident, that he may prevail, up with all superstition and idolatry; censing, painting of images, candles, palms, ashes, holy water, and new service of men's inventing; as though man could invent a better way to honour God with than God himself hath appointed. Down with Christ's cross, up with purgatory pickpurse, up with him, the popish purgatory, I mean. Away with clothing the naked, the poor and impotent; up with decking of images, and gay garnishing of stocks and stones: up with man's traditions and his laws, down with God's traditions and his most holy word. Down with the old honour due to God, and up with the new god's honour. Let all things be done in Latin: there must be nothing but Latin, not so much as Memento, homo, quod cinis es, et in cinerem reverteris: "Remember, man, that thou art ashes, and into ashes thou shalt return:" which be the words that the minister speaketh unto the ignorant people, when he giveth them ashes upon Ash-Wednesday; but it must be spoken in Latin: God's word may in no wise be translated into English.[330]

Allan Chester notes that 'the *Sermon on the Ploughers* was preached in the interests of the Injunctions of 1547'.[331] The Injunctions dealt mainly with the so-called 'abuses' of the

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[327] For the context of this quotation, see chapter one, p. 37.
[328] A. McRae, *God Speed the Plough. The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 31.
[329] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 43.
[330] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, pp. 43-4.
[331] A. Chester, p. 164.

Church like images, candles, relics, pilgrimage, etc., and with the reading of the Bible in Latin instead of English. They caused a lot of uproar among the people who were still very used to these practices and very reluctant to change. Latimer's sermons were one means to gain sympathy for these Injunctions. As we can see from the former quotation, he attacks these Catholic practices, declaring them the work of the devil. The Holy Mass, with its belief in transubstantiation, is also attacked. Nevertheless, he admits that he too in the past followed the works of the devil: 'Truly I know him too well, and have obeyed him a little too much in condescending to some follies; and I know him as other men do, yea, that he is ever occupied, and ever busy in following his plough'.[332] Now that he himself has become a good ploughman, he means to warn the people and the negligent prelates through his sermons to beware of 'devilish Catholic ploughing'.

As I already mentioned,[333] critics have portrayed Latimer as another Piers Plowman, as both lead the people on a Pilgrimage of Truth. However, Latimer's Truth is very far removed from Piers' or Langland's Truth. It is true that Langland too attacks the corrupt clergymen and scorns them for their false practices. Langland chose Piers Plowman as his hero to build Holy Church; a bold move, to have a layman in charge of the Church. Especially from the apocryphal ending of the poem, where the reader finds Holy Church under heavy siege by Pride and the Anti-Christ but also attacked from within via a corrupt friar, we can infer that Langland wanted to reform the Church. However, the crucial difference with Latimer is that Langland wanted to reform the Church from within. He was no Lollard or early Protestant as some sixteenth-century readers wanted him to be. In fact, in Piers' Holy Church there are still many of the Catholic practices that Latimer was so desperate to dispose of. During most of his lifetime, Langland did not know an English translation of the Bible: he significantly writes the two parts of Holy Scripture in Latin: *Vetus Testamentum et Novum* (B.xix.276). Piers is given a cart 'Cristendom' denoting Baptism, with which he collect the fruits of the field (333). Two horses, 'Contricion and Confession' draw this cart (334). 'Preesthod' is made overseer (335). When Pride is about to attack, the people 'repenteden and refusede synne' (372) and each in their own way help 'a quantite holynesse to wexe: / Some thorugh bedes biddynge and some thorugh pilgrymage / And othere pryvé penaunces, and somme thorugh penyes delynge' (378-80). Conscience bids the people to join in Holy Communion (387-92). Furthermore, Piers

[332] H. Latimer, *The Sermons*, p. 44.
[333] See above, p. 111.

receives a Pardon: the distribution of these were generally considered prone to corruption. The authors' ideas about the pardon are a good example of how they are miles apart from each other in their way of reforming the Church. As I said, Langland wanted to reform the Church from within, freeing it from its corruption, with the idea that an ideal *Catholic* Church will remain. In Langland's society, the pardon has led to much corruption in the Church, turning it into a way of buying off years in purgatory, instead of true, genuine contrition and penance of one's sins. Langland, therefore, comes up with a pardon that fits very nicely in his allegory. His pardon is a spiritual pardon, it is a pardon for which people have to '*rede quod debes*', *pay what you owe*, and Piers is left in charge to review it. This of course is meant spiritually: if a person had sinned against his neighbour, he should rectify his behaviour towards that neighbour, instead of giving money to a pardoner. For Latimer, however, the pardon has to be abolished all together. Even Langland's spiritual pardon would not suffice. Because Latimer was a man of practicalities and not of ideals, if he puts this into practice, it would soon lead to corruption again. In Langland's world, Piers is in charge of the pardons and we can rely on him to do a good job. However, in Latimer's world it is still the priest who will be the judge of whether a person has paid what he owed. And it will only be a matter of time for the ideal system of Langland to fall apart again. Therefore, Latimer goes one step further than Langland and preaches on behalf of the abolition of such 'Catholic abuses'. From these examples it is clear that Piers' Church is still essentially a Catholic Church. For this reason then, Latimer simply cannot be a second Piers Plowman. Their values and ideas of the Church significantly oppose each other. Latimer's ploughing is a Protestant ploughing; and he would interpret Piers' ploughing as ploughing of the Devil. Nevertheless, both authors make use of the same ploughing metaphor and were probably inspired by the Bible and the writings of the church fathers, both authors, being clergymen, having had training in those writings.

During the Protestant reign of Edward VI, Latimer was finally at liberty to plough. He died as a Protestant martyr during Queen Mary's reign and was burned in Oxford. Nevertheless, his later editor, Augustine Bernher, in his dedication to the Duchess of Suffolk of the 1562 collection of sermons, still remembered him for his ploughing:

> Now when he was thus delivered [from the Tower in 1547], did he give himself up to the pleasures of the world, to delicateness or idleness? No, assuredly; but even then most of all he began to set forth his plough, and to till the ground of the Lord,

> and to sow the corn of God's word, behaving himself as a faithful messenger of God.[334]

And so does John Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs*:

> Then commyng vp to London for remedy, he was molested and troubled of the Bishops, wherby he was againe in no litle daunger, and at length was cast into þe Tower, where he continually remained prisoner, till the time that blessed K. Edward entred his crowne, by meanes whereof the golden mouth of this preacher, long shut vp before, was now opened againe. And so he beginnyng a fresh to set forth his plough again, continued all the time of the said king, laboryng in the lords haruest most fruitfully, dischargyng his talent,[335]

Hostility between the Ploughman and the Priest

In many of the ploughman texts, hostility between the ploughman and the priest is evident. This does not necessarily originate from Langland's *Piers Plowman* B-text passus vii where Piers and a priest argue about the meaning of the pardon given to Piers by Truth. We have seen above that there was a tradition that the unlearned ploughman could reach God or heaven more easily than the learned priest could. This tradition existed before *Piers Plowman*, as the quotations from Thomas à Kempis and *The Recluse* testify. Nevertheless, the pardon scene in passus vii of *Piers Plowman* clearly shows how a priest feels threatened and intimidated by a ploughman whom he does not expect to possess superior knowledge of the Bible.

At the opening of passus vii, Piers receives a pardon from Truth:

> Treuthe herde telle herof, and to Piers sente
> To taken his teme and tilien the erthe,
> And purchaced hym a pardoun *a pena et a culpa*
> For hym and for hise heires for everemoore after;
> (B.vii.1-4)

This pardon is for those people who helped Piers in the ploughing of the half acre, which occurred in the passus before. The pilgrims, after a meagre attempt to confess their sins and

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[334] A. Chester, p. 187.
[335] J. Foxe, *Book of Martyrs Variorum Edition Online,* 1576 edition, p. 1634, <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/foxe>

do penance, decided to go on pilgrimage to Truth. Piers helps them to find their way and gives a lengthy description of the road to Truth, but in return asks for help with ploughing his half acre. A careful reading of the text suggests that this ploughing becomes the pilgrimage. Unfortunately, just as the seven deadly sins of the field full of folk cannot fully repent their sins, the field full of folk cannot labour harmoniously under the guidance of Piers. Piers needs the assistance of Hunger to keep the wasters in check. In fact, the previous passus ends on a very depressing note, predicting plague, famine, scarcity and death for those who do not labour truthfully. The only remedy is 'but if God of his goodnesse graunte us a trewe' (B.vi.329). The only thing the field full of folk can rely on is God's goodness or mercy. This indeed seems to happen at the opening of the next passus: Truth sends a pardon.

Woolf has shown what a medieval audience would expect when receiving a pardon: it is a 'promise of forgiveness and a symbol of the Redemption'.[336] A pardon for the field full of folk, who prove to be in dire need of redemption and grace, is their only hope. After a lengthy description of the orders of society who will receive such a pardon, the pardon turns out to be the threat of the Last Judgement taken from the Athanasian Creed: '*Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam; / Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum*' (vii.110a-b).[337] The pardon is very much set in the justice system of the Old Law: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. The pardon is *incomplete* as it yet does not contain the element of grace that is brought about by Jesus Christ.[338] Christ has not entered the poem at this stage; the field full of folk is still subject to the Old Law. We should also recall Piers' directions to Truth where Piers explained that, when mankind is corrupted by sin, the only way to regain God's love is through His grace. Good works are no longer sufficient at that stage; in fact, they may endanger you when they are accompanied by pride:

> Ac be war thane of Wrathe-thee, that wikked sherewe:

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[336] R. Woolf, 'The Tearing of the Pardon'. Piers Plowman. *Critical Approaches*, ed. S.S. Hussey, (London, 1969), pp. 50-75, at p. 69. See also A. J. Minnis, ''Piers' Protean Pardon: The Letter and Spirit of Langland's Theology of Indulgences', in *Studies in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Texts in Honour of John Scattergood: 'The Key of all Good Remembrance'*, ed. A. M. D'Arcy and A. J. Fletcher (Dublin, 2005), 218-40.

[337] A lengthy treatment of the meaning of the tearing of the pardon and the history in interpretation among *Piers Plowman* scholars is not important here. I will restrict myself to giving my own interpretation. The main focus here is on the quarrel between the priest and Piers. Transl.: And those who have done well shall go to eternal life, but those who (have done) evil (will go) into eternal fire.

[338] James Simpson argues that the lack of grace is the main explanation for the tearing of the pardon: 'I will be arguing that when the 'pardon' comes it shocks Piers by the strictness of its justice and by the complete lack of mercy'. In J. Simpson, *Piers Plowman,* p. 76.

For he hath envye to hym that in thyn herte sitteth,
And poketh forth pride to preise thiselven.
The boldnesse of thi bienfetes maketh thee blynd thanne
And so worstow dryven out as dew, and the dore closed,
Keyed and cliketted to kepe thee withouten
Happily an hundred wynter er thow eft entre!
Thus myght thow lesen his love, te lete wel by thiselve,
'And gete it ayein thorugh grace, ac thorugh no gifte ellis'.
(B.v.609-17)

Piers stresses here that good works will not get you very far. It is clear that, for Piers, the way to Truth is through grace. The insistence of the text of the pardon on good works for salvation and the absolute lack of grace explains the 'pure tene' that Piers feels when he tears the pardon in two.

The priest interferes with an arrogant air of authority:

'Piers', quod a preest thoo, 'thi pardon moste I rede;
For I shal construe ech clause and kenne it thee on Englissh'.
(B.vii.105-106)

These lines show that the priest does not think much of Piers' intellect. He believes Piers needs assistance in reading and translating the Latin pardon. As soon as he reads the actual words of the pardon, the 40th verse of the Athanasian Creed, he exclaims that there is no pardon. To which Piers famously reacts by tearing the pardon and he says: '*Si ambulavero in medio umbre mortis / Non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es*'.[339] These are the same words Ymaginatif uses later in the poem when he explains to Will which basic elements (baptism, faith, good works) are needed when you want to be saved. The words denote a total trust in God. In Ymaginatif's context the Bible text is used to show the importance of faith or belief: 'And wher it worth or worth noght, the bileve is gret of truthe, / And an hope hangynge therinne to have a mede for his truthe; / … The glose graunteth upon that vers a greet mede to truthe' (B.xii.288-92). The context here is that pagans who are righteous can expect to be rewarded for that. In Piers' case, I believe, it means the same: Piers does not fear eternal damnation because he knows he can rely on the grace of the Lord. Therefore,

[339] (For) though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils: for thou art with me.

he knows he has to tear up the pardon; he does not need such a pardon. Piers realises that now the time has come to

> 'cessen of my sowyng', quod Piers, 'and swynke not so harde,
> Ne aboute my bely joye so bisy be na moore;
> Of preieres and of penaunce my plough shal ben herafter,'
> (B.vii.118-20)

Instead of physical labour, he prefers a more spiritual life now, just as he prefers spiritual food to actual food. Piers progresses from the good and Christian active life to a contemplative life. In doing so, Piers quotes the New Testament book Matthew: '*Ne soliciti sitis*' (6:25; also in Luke 12:12; l. 127). Here Christ teaches the apostles to rely on God provides for them just as he provides the birds with food. Christ teaches the apostles to live in poverty and rely on God providing for them. This is the kind of life Piers chooses. Although the priest seems thoroughly impressed by Piers' Biblical knowledge, he patronises him by saying 'Thow art lettred a litel – who lerned thee on boke?' (B.vii.132). Piers answers that he learned through self-denial and by means of his conscience, something the priest obviously lacks: ''Were thow a preest, Piers', quod he, 'thow myghtest preche where thow woldest / As divinour in divinite, with *Dixit insipiens* to thi theme' (B.vii.135-6). The priest is mocking Piers' Biblical knowledge and interpretation by suggesting he is a fool, emphasising his laymanship and, therefore, his lack of authority to expound the Bible. Piers is not impressed and subsequently scorns the priest's knowledge of the Bible. Their quarrelling awakes the dreamer and ends the scene.

This squabble between Piers and the priest shows that the priest is not only impressed and surprised by Piers' knowledge of the Bible and of Latin, but also that he feels threatened and intimidated by Piers. Piers is clearly intellectually superior to the priest and the priest realises this and attempts to diminish Piers' superiority by means of humiliation and contempt. It is abundantly clear that the priest is the loser in the confrontation with Piers.

Pierce the Ploughman's Crede is another text in which the priesthood is attacked. Although there is no direct confrontation between a ploughman and a priest, the fact that the narrator does not know his Creed tells the reader something about his local priest. 'Writers like Mirk stipulate that the parish priest should teach the rudiments of belief – the paternoster and creed twice or thrice a year. Why the narrator has not benefited from this

sort of instruction is never revealed: perhaps the reader is meant to assume that it was never properly given, or alternatively that the narrator never attended to it and is now trying to make up for his earlier neglect. But this issue is not raised in the poem, which assumes that the individual Christian is responsible for seeking out his own instructor'.[340] This passage may be read as undermining the image of the priesthood.

In *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe* – a text written in the early fifteenth century and published for the first time in 1531 with a sixteenth-century preface – the ploughman-narrator several times alludes to the inferior relationship between the 'lewed man' and the priesthood. Although the preface wants the reader to believe that this text was written in the early 1300s, the text is clearly a Lollard production. The ploughman-narrator attacks the clergy of all levels, in particular the pope. Although he is clearly a learned ploughman with an in-depth knowledge of the Bible, he associates himself with the poor 'lewed' people. He contrasts this group with the rich clergyman and priesthood. Several times he compares the 'lewed' man with the priest and concludes that the first is equally good or even better at preaching than the priest is. When the ploughman is discussing the delicate issue of the Eucharist, he states:

> And lorde thine disciples ne ordeyned not prestes principallich to make thy body in sacramente but for to tech the puple. And good husbande men that well gouern her householdes / both wiues and children and her meynye / they ordened to be prestes to techen other men the law of Christ both in worde in dede and they lyvedeyn as trew Christen men every daye they eten Christes body and dronken hys blode to the sustenaunce of lyvynge of here soules.
> (667-75)

Here the ploughman-narrator tries to compare contemporary religion with the religion of the apostles. Thus, the author tries to argue that his learning is no 'newe learning' but clearly linked to early Christianity. He claims that the apostles did not appoint priests to take care of the sacrament of the altar, but ordinary husbandmen. Further on he says that, in his society, when 'a lewed man wold tech thy people trewth of thy wordes as he ys yholde by thy commaundemente of charite he shalbe forboden and yput in prison yf he do it' (819-22), whereas the priests teach the people the wrong faith and are praised for it. Furthermore,

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[340] J. Scattergood, '*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*: Lollardy and Texts', repr. in *The Lost Tradition, Essays on Middle English Alliterative Poetry*, (Dublin, 2000), p. 160.

later in the text where the ploughman argues that Christ's law is 'turned ypso downe' (862), he states:

> Lorde what dome ys it to cursen a lewed man yif he smyte a prest / and not cursen a prest that smiteth a lewed man and leseth his charite? …
> Lorde what dome ys it to slene an vnkunninge lewed man for hys synne / and suffren a prest other a clerke that doth the same synne scapen a lyve? Lorde the synne of the prest or of the clerke ys a gretter trespas then it ys of a lewed vnkunnynge man and gretter ensample of wickednesse to the commune puple.
> (875-7; 886-91)

In this way, the ploughman not only demonstrates the inequality in treatment between the unlearned man and the priest, but also the greater responsibility for the priest/clerk to behave in a sinless way than for the 'lewed' man. Priests serve as examples for the common people and unfortunately, they let go of their responsibilities.

This attack on the priesthood takes place throughout the text, but especially in the beginning. The ploughman-narrator compares the contemporary situation and customs of the church with the early Christians at the time of Christ and the apostles. The ploughman argues that Christ forgave the sins of Peter and Mary Magdalene without having them confess to a priest. Thus, the ploughman begins his frontal attack on the idea of auricular confession:

> Ne no prest may make the soule clene of her synne / but Christ that ys prest after Melchysedekes ordre …
> Ne god ordened not that his prestes schulde sette men a penaunce for her synne after the quantyte of the synne / but this ys mans ordinaunce …
> A nother myschefe ys that the puple ys ybrought in to this belefe / that one preste hath a gretter power to assoylen a man of hys synne and clennere then an other prest hath.
> (459-61; 463-5; 473-5)

In a similar way, the ploughman systematically attacks the priesthood and Catholic doctrines and practices decreed and maintained by the priests throughout the text.

The author of the sixteenth-century preface also tries to show the analogy between the sixteenth-century conviction that Protestantism was a newfangled belief of the simple people and the contemporaries of Christ who saw Him as an unlettered poor man:

> And that Christ and his disciples were men nother of authorite nor reputacion / but laye men / ydiotes fyschers / carpenters and other of the rascall sorte. So that it was not possible that ever God wold open that vnto soch a rude sorte / which the religiouse phareses / the holy byschops / the vertuous prestes / the auncient doctours / the gret lerned lawyers and the wise and sage elders knew not. But it must nedes be that Christe and al his disciples were heretiques scismatiques and disceauers of the people and well worthy to be put to some shamefull deth for it / to the example of all other.
> (40-50)

By providing an ancient text supposedly from the thirteenth century, this (fifteenth-century) Lollard text is one way of showing that the ideas and beliefs of the sixteenth-century author are not 'newfangled' at all. For the preface-author, it is very fitting that a ploughman figure, who is supposed to be unlearned, is the narrator of this Lollard text attacking the clergy and Catholic rituals. Although there is no tension between a priest and ploughman in the text itself – there is no conversation between a ploughman and a priest as the ploughman addresses his prayer to God – this text shows that this tension clearly existed. It is of course highly ironic that the simple ploughman is obviously lettered enough to refute Catholic practices and expose corruption among the clergy by means of Biblical evidence.

In *A Lytell Geste How the Plowman Lerned his Pater Noster* we find an example of the unlearned ploughman, but this ploughman is no threat at all to the parson. In fact, here the ploughman is absolutely no match for the cunning parson who tricks the ploughman into learning the *paternoster*. The parson sends 40 poor people to the ploughman to whom the ploughman must give a portion of wheat. Each person has a different name which the ploughman needs to recite to the parson and if recited correctly, the parson will pay the ploughman double the amount the wheat is worth. The 40 names together form the Latin *paternoster* and when the ploughman correctly recites the *paternoster* to the parson, the parson refuses to pay him the money:

> Thoughe thou dyde thy corne to poore men gyue
> Thou mayst me blysse whyle thou doost lyue
> For by these may ye paye cryste his rente
> And serue the lorde omnipotente[341]

[341] All quotations are taken from the text provided by the database Early English Books Online.

The ploughman is of course outraged and summons the parson before a court official. They are very much amused by the story and rebuke the ploughman for being such a fool:

> He sayd plowman it is shame to the
> To accuse this gentylman before me
> He bade hym go home fole as he was
> And aske god mercy for his trespass

The ploughman returns home and complains to his wife that he will never trust a priest again. Bowers claims that *A Lytell Geste* needs 'to be understood in terms of a traditional priest-ploughman confrontation traceable to the Pardon Scene of *Piers Plowman*'.[342] However, I believe that the tradition of a priest-ploughman confrontation is essentially a confrontation in which the ploughman's knowledge becomes a threat to the priest. In *A Lytell Geste* it is rather the opposite. The ploughman is put in his place and is obviously intellectually no match for the priest. This text was printed in 1510 by Wynkyn de Worde and it claims to be a translation from a French fabliau:[343] in French literature, and also German, the ploughman and/or peasant was usually portrayed as a fool, who acted boorishly and merely served as entertainment to the audience. It is rather to this tradition that the text belongs. Duffy believes that the poem should be placed among educational popular literature for the laity of the rudiments on Catholic belief.[344] The ploughman, then, forms an integral element in this pamphlet which aims to teach the laity the *paternoster*, albeit in negative and humoristic terms. According to Kelen, 'the *Geste* preserves a negative stereotype of the plowman no longer current in England, and its sixteenth-century readers would presumably have noticed the *Geste*'s satire as iconographically eccentric'.[345]

A later sixteenth-century ploughman text also relies on the seemingly ignorant ploughman. In chapter two, I discussed Luke Shepherd's *John Bon and Mast Parson* in relation to the Eucharist. The ploughman, John Bon, deliberately presents himself as an ignorant ploughman. Intentionally, he plays with the Latin feast name *Corpus Christi*,

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[342] J. M. Bowers, '*Piers Plowman* and the Police: Notes toward a History of the Wycliffite Langland', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 9 (1995), 1-50, at p. 7.
[343] Duffy traced the origins of the poem to a story by St. Bernardino of Sienna. The text was adapted to English humour. *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-1580*, (New Haven; London, 1992), p. 84.
[344] E. Duffy, p. 84.
[345] S. A. Kelen, p. 111.

turning it into Copsi Cursty and Cropsy Cursty. He excuses himself of his ignorance by hiding behind his lack of education: 'A plain man, ye may see, will speak as cometh to mind: / Ye must hold us excused, for ploughmen be but blind' (p. 162). He assures the priest that 'to learn I am glad', continuing with his ridiculous questions regarding the host. The Priest exclaims that he 'had leaver with a Doctor of Divinity to reason / Than with a stubble cur, that eateth beans and pease' (p. 163). Despite the priest's sigh that he has to deal with such an ignorant churl, John Bon outwits him, as he catches the priest with his own words:

> … ye spake as ill as I.
> I speak but as I heard you say, I wot not what ye thought.
> Ye said 'It was not God, nor man,' and made it worse than nought.
> (p. 164)

Thus, the ploughman cunningly places the heresy in the mouth of the priest by pretending complete ignorance. The priest is quick to proclaim that this was not what he meant, to which John Bon replies:

> A, sir! Ye sing another song!
> I dare not reason with you long.
> I see well, now, ye have a knack
> To say a thing, and then go back.
> (p. 164)

The balance of power between them has shifted suddenly. Where the priest previously felt intellectually superior and deemed John Bon not a worthy discussion partner, suddenly John Bon outsmarts the parson and puts him in the defensive. Now John Bon sees the parson as an unworthy discussion partner. Again, the parson has to defend himself by saying 'I was but a little overseen' (p. 164). However, at this point the parson does not trust the ploughman anymore and perceives that John Bon is playing him for a fool: 'But thou meantest not good faith, I ween, / In all this talk that was us between' (p. 164). John assures him that this is not the case and the priest is persuaded to speak about the proceedings of the *Corpus Christi* mass. Now comes the apogee of the work in which the priest earnestly goes through the mass, while John Bon takes the audience aside and ridicules every word the priest says:

> Parson:

Then have we the *Canon*, that is holiest.

John:

A spiteful gay thing, of all that ever I wist.

Parson:

Then have we the *Memento*, even before the sacring.

John:

Ye are morenly well learned! I see by your reck'ning

That ye will not forget such an elvish thing. [346]

(p. 166)

As soon as the parson reaches the part of consecration, John Bon's tone becomes utterly sarcastic. The parson, however, still does not catch on and truly believes the ploughman is in earnest.[347] Only when the parson has finished his story about the mass and naively believes that England will become Catholic again and honour the Eucharist and mass, does the ploughman reveal his true nature: he is a true Protestant and does not believe one word the priest has been saying. It is of course not surprising that parson reacts very lamely and exits with a prayer for John. It shows that the Catholic position on the Eucharist has no longer precedence in England.

The relationship between the priest and ploughman in *John Bon and Mast Parson* is very different from that in *Piers Plowman*. Although in both texts, the ploughman leaves the quarrel as superior to the priest, in *Piers Plowman* Piers baffles the priest by his actual knowledge of Latin and the Bible, whereas John Bon outsmarts the parson by feigning complete ignorance. Both priests behave extremely arrogantly towards the ploughman, but where it is clear that the priest feels threatened by Piers' knowledge, this is not so much the case in *John Bon and Mast Parson*. In fact, the reader gets the impression that John Bon does not seem to possess much knowledge; he simply does not believe in transubstantiation. He disbelieves not because of scriptural or patristic evidence, but simply because it sounds fantastical:

For, though I have no learning, yet I know cheese from chalk,

And each can perceive your juggling, as crafty as ye walk!

(p. 168)

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[346] See for a short extract, chapter two, pp. 89-90.

[347] See chapter two, p. 91.

Yet, I have shown that *despite* his lack of learning, he manages to put the priest on the defensive. Where in *A Lytell Geste* the ignorance of the ploughman is used to ridicule the ploughman and the (Catholic) priest is favoured, fifty years later, in *John Bon and Mast Parson* the ignorance of the ploughman is successfully used to ridicule the priest and Catholic belief.

A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyion Betwene Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest is another direct confrontation between a priest and a ploughman. The title page contains the following passage from 1 Corinthians 1:28-29: 'God hath chosen the weake thinges of the worlde to confounde thynges whyche are myghtye, yea thynges of no reputacyon for to bring to nought thynges of reputacion, that no flesh shuld presume in his sight' (Aii.r). It gives the ploughman, a representative of the poor and lowly educated people, justification to teach the priests – who generally occupy a much higher status in society and in religious knowledge – about the truth concerning the Eucharist. This Biblical passage immediately sets the tone for the text and makes the balance of power between the priest and ploughman abundantly clear. At the beginning, the different intentions given by the author of the priest and ploughman when speaking about the Eucharist are very revealing about the two characters:

> At ye which dynner were .iiii. Prests amongest whome was moche resoning concerning the Sacrament of the Aultre, to be shorte one amongest these .iiii. (to make the symple people beleue that he was better learned then all hys fellowes) sayde and declared ther that the sacrament was the very body and bloud of Chryste. Alleagynge further that great daunger yt was to receyue yet vnwerthely. Etc. Where vppon Pyeers plowman, encouraged hym selfe, yea was rathere boldened and encouraged by the secret motyon of the holy goost (hauyng this sentence of Christ before hys eyes, that he that forsaketh me before the world hym wyl I forsake before mi father whyche is in heauen, begynneth with the sayde preest) after thys manner followynge. (Aiii.r-Aiii.v)

The priest speaks out of arrogance and presumed superiority towards the simple people; the ploughman speaks with the help and encouragement of the Holy Ghost. The priest neglects his duty towards the people and, thus, has forsaken Christ, whereas the ploughman realises that his duty is to speak up against the priest. It is immediately plain that the priest spreads the wrong faith and the ploughman has the blessing of Christ.

Throughout the text, the ploughman is portrayed as simple; nevertheless, he is clearly more learned than the priest:

> Prest
>
> S. Austen sayth no such thing I trow how be it to saye truthe I haue not greatly occupyed mi selfe in redyng of hys workes
>
> Pyers
>
> Swere not master parson for I beleue you well ynough. I thyncke you comber but lytel your braynes eyther with S. Austens wryntinges or yet with the holy and sacred Bible. (Aiv.r-Aiv.v)

Pyers is not afraid to focus on the priest's shortcomings. It is a frontal attack on the priest's intellectualism and by making this attack, the ploughman declares himself intellectually superior to the priest. The priest does not react to this, but merely asks about the specific passage of Augustine to which Pyers is referring. Pyers patronises him by replying: 'Learne to vnderstand these fewe wordes' (Aiv.v), before he quotes Augustine's passage in Latin and gives the translation. Thus, he gives actual proof of his intellectual superiority, also implying that the priest cannot understand Latin. In chapter two, we have already seen how Pyers outsmarts the priest about Christ occupying only one place.[348] We have seen that Pyers cleverly forces the priest to answer certain questions in such a way that the priest argues that Christ cannot be bodily present in the consecrated host. At the end of the text, the priest is convinced by Pyers' Protestant (Sacramentarian) interpretation of the Eucharist. The other three priests, who were also present during the discussion, clearly feel threatened by Pyers' reasoning as they fear that 'If these hobbes and rusticals be suffred to be thus busy in readynge of Englysh heresy and to dispute after sperytual men we shal be fayne to learne some other occupacion or els we are lyke to haue but a colde broth'. Apparently, they are less convinced by Pyers' arguments and consider them as heresies; nevertheless, they recognise the potential danger of rustics being able not only to dispute religious topics intelligently with them, but also to outsmart them on their own turf.

We see then, that in *A Godly Dyalogue* the balance of power is in favour of the ploughman. From start to finish, the ploughman has the upper hand. Just as in *Piers Plowman*, the ploughman is both morally and intellectually superior to the priest. However, this is the only text in which the priest is convinced by the ploughman's (Protestant) ideas.

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[348] See chapter two, pp. 71-2.

John Bon and Mast Parson shows that the difficult relationship between the two does not always depend on the intellectual superiority of the ploughman. The parson's humiliation is even bigger because of John Bon's ignorance and lack of knowledge. *A Lytell Geste* is the only text in which the priest is both morally and intellectually superior to the ploughman. Here the ignorance of the ploughman goes in the priest's favour and adds to the humiliation of the ploughman. In the last three texts where we find a direct confrontation between a priest and a ploughman, we see that the relationship between the two has come full circle. Where in Langland Piers Plowman is superior to the priest in both Catholic clerical knowledge and critical argumentation, we have seen that in *John Bon* the clerical knowledge was no longer necessary, but the ploughman was still superior in critical argumentation. In *A Godly Dyalogue* the ploughman possesses both characteristics, but here the ploughman is defending the Protestant faith. In the English literary tradition of religious ploughman texts, be the ploughman in the service of Catholic or Protestant orthodoxy, the ploughman is always supreme.

This chapter has shown that the relationship between the priest and the ploughman is highly complex and very diverse. Late fourteenth-century literature shows that the two were very closely related. The portraits of both Chaucer and Langland and the letters of John Ball show that they were linked both socially and religiously. Chaucer and John Ball emphasised this by turning the two into brothers. Throughout the Middle Ages, his simplicity and lay status contributed to the virtue of the ploughman. This lack of religious knowledge was already a threat to the clergy in relation to salvation. It was believed that God favoured the simple and devout ploughman more than the often learned but sinful priest. Langland started a new tradition in which the ploughman rivalled and threatened the priest on an intellectual level as well. This tradition, which started with the quarrel between Piers and the priest over the text of Truth's pardon, continued in the early sixteenth century with the text *A Godly Dyalogue*. Here Pyers is both morally and intellectually superior to the priest. The older tradition of the simple and devout ploughman lives on in *John Bon and Mast Parson*. This shows that both traditions of the relationship between the ploughman and the priest still existed in the early sixteenth-century ploughman texts and that both were still available for use in polemical writings. As I made clear, the contrasting relationship between the two in *A Lytell Geste* should be considered outside these two traditions.

Despite this tense relationship, Latimer still found it expedient to make use of ploughing as a preaching metaphor, which Langland had used before him. That this was still possible and also plausible is because the belief of the priest had changed. Where in previous literature the negligent and ridiculed priest had always been Catholic and the ploughman either reformed Catholic or Protestant, Latimer's priest had become Protestant. Therefore, the negative relationship between the two did not pose problems for Latimer when he tried to unite these two characters. Moreover, we have seen that he explains that there are two kinds of ploughing: devilish and Catholic ploughing and virtuous and Protestant ploughing. The large number of texts that portray the difficult relationship between the ploughman and the priest does not diminish the enormous power of Latimer's application of the ploughing metaphor for preaching.

Chapter Four: The Persona of the Ploughman

This chapter will focus solely on the persona of the ploughman. Instead of giving a chronological survey of the ploughman from Langland to the sixteenth century, I will discuss the character thematically. There are several characteristics of the ploughman that can be found in these texts. In most texts, he is a literate and an authoritative figure, with a good knowledge of the Bible in both the vernacular and Latin. In a few cases, he is represented rather as illiterate and ignorant. In most cases, this is done deliberately and it serves the purpose of the text. Another characteristic of him is his passion and hot temper; in a few texts he is angry and a bit of a hothead. Again, we will see, however, that his temper often serves the purpose of the text. On the other hand, he is also exemplified as a simple and virtuous labourer. Another important element of the ploughman is his poverty. In several texts, especially *Piers the Ploughman's Crede*, his poverty is magnified.

This introduction already shows that the character of the ploughman was not homogeneous. Far from it, it was very diverse and different aspects were used that suited the author's argument. Thus, this chapter makes clear the multifaceted nature of the ploughman.

Literate, Authoritative, yet Simple

Most scholars see the ploughman as an educated man with authority. This has mainly to do with Langland's creation in *Piers Plowman.* In this poem we find the first instance of a literate ploughman with a good knowledge of the Bible and Latin. In the introduction I have shown that Piers is far from a simple and devout ploughman; on the contrary, he is an all-knowing-figure, who knows Truth intimately and knows the road to salvation. We have seen that Piers has a close relationship with Truth, as he has served Truth for forty years by faithfully ploughing his field and conducting other farm duties, and we have already seen that Piers' duties are very typical for the medieval ploughman.[349] Furthermore, we have seen that he knows Truth from within and knows exactly where Truth dwells: in the heart of the people. He, therefore, is the only one capable of leading the pilgrims to Truth. Thus, it is no wonder that he is the overseer of the ploughing of the half-acre. Piers oversees his workers to determine who works well enough to be hired again when it is harvest time. He

[349] See chapter three, pp. 99-100.

discovers that some people do not work. This reminds us of Walter of Henley's warning in his work called *Husbandry* that servants ought to be checked whether 'they doe welle and if they doe not well that they bee reproved and corrected'.[350] Piers here is a similar 'overseer', since he too checks whether they work hard enough and he too attempts to correct the people who do not work. He also directs the different social classes to what kind of work they should do. It is especially noteworthy that Piers instructs the knight to protect the people. The knight, but also the other people, seems ready to follow Piers' instructions. This proves that the balance of power in relation to the other social classes is clearly in Piers' favour. In addition, he also seems to be able to control Hunger, which he uses to chastise the wasters in society. This clearly shows Piers' superiority and authority towards the other pilgrims and social classes. Because of his personal relationship with Truth, he stands above all others.

From the account of the road to Truth, we find out more about his knowledge of the Bible. For Piers, the way to salvation is through both good works and grace. We can interpret this as a mixture of the Old and New Testament: 'quia lex per Mosen data est gratia et veritas per Iesum Cristum facta est'[351] – the Ten Commandments referring to Moses and the Old Testament, and the concept of Grace and its close link with Jesus to the New Testament. This is exactly the road to Truth that Piers explains to the pilgrims. In addition, several times in the text Piers quotes certain Bible passages in Latin to explain his actions. Piers' knowledge of the Latin Bible is also stressed in his quarrel with a priest over the text of Truth's pardon at the end of passus vii. We have already seen that the priest feels threatened by Piers' knowledge.[352] Piers informs the priest about his education: 'Abstynence the Abbesse … myn a.b.c. me taughte, / And Conscience cam afterward and kenned me muche moore' (B.vii.133-4). Self-denial and his conscience have allowed Piers to gain insight in religious matters and the affairs of Truth. Piers has a very well developed conscience which guides him in his life. Twice Piers has mentioned him in relation to his knowledge about Truth. Conscience vouches for Piers when Clergie relates Piers'

[350] W. of Henley, *Husbandry*, in *Walter of Henley and other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, ed. D. Oschinsky, (Oxford, 1971), p. 317. This text dates to the second half of the thirteenth century. The translation is from the early sixteenth century by William Lambarde, see p. 142.
[351] John 1:17. 'For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth came by Jesus Christ'.
[352] See chapter three, pp. 125-6.

explanation of Dowel:[353] 'He wol noght ayein Holy Writ speken, I dar wel undertake' (B.xiii.132). This, again, implies an intimate knowledge of the Bible.

We also get a good impression of Piers' superiority and authority through the words of Anima spoken to Will. In passus xv, Anima is teaching Will about the importance of Charity. Will is eager to know Charity and Anima explains how to get to know him:

> 'By Crist! I wolde that I knewe hym', quod I, 'no creature levere!'
> 'Withouten help of Piers the Plowman,' quod he, 'his persone sestow nevere.'
> 'Where clerkes knowen hym,' quod I, 'that kepen Holi Kirke?'
> 'Clerkes have no knowyng,' quod he, 'but by werkes and by wordes.
> Ac Piers the Plowman parceyveth moore depper
> What is the wille, and wherfore that many wight suffreth:
> *Et vidit Deus cogitaciones eurom. …*
> Therfore by colour ne by clergie knowe shaltow hym nevere,
> Neither thorugh wordes ne werkes, but thorugh wil oone,
> And that knoweth no clerk ne creature on erthe
> But Piers the Plowman – *Petrus, id est, Christus*.'
> (B.xv.195-200a, 209-12)

Piers has a much deeper understanding of man's will and why man suffers. It is as if he can see their thoughts, just as Christ can in Luke 11:17, the verse quoted in the text. Piers has Christ-like characteristics as displayed in his ability to see man's thoughts. 'Piers is simply posited alongside God as one who is capable of perception beyond external signs and words, which suggests, though does not elaborate, a parallelism between Piers and Christ.

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353 'I am unhardy', quod he, 'to any wight to preven it.
For oon Piers the Plowman hath impugned us alle,
And set alle sciences at a sop save love one;
And no text ne taketh to mayntene his cause
But *Dilige Deum* and *Domine quis habitabit* …
And seith that Dowel and Dobet arn two infinites,
Whiche infinites with a feith fynden out Dobest,
Which shal save mannes soule – thus seith Piers the Plowman.'
(B.xiii.123-130)
Clergie explains that Piers has challenged them all by claiming that university knowledge can be taken for granted, as only two Bible passages will suffice: Dilige Deum (Love God) and Domine quis habitabit (Lord, who dwells in thy tabernacle? … He who walks without sin and does justice). The two infinites stand for the Old and New Testament. *Dilige Deum* comes from Matthew 22:37 and it proclaims the most important message of the New Testament: love. Likewise the second Bible passage comes from Psalm 14:1, and it expresses the keyword for the Old Testament: justice. With the knowledge of the Old and New Testament and their most important message justice and love together with faith, one can find Dobest or Christ who 'shal save mannes soule'. According to Clergie, this is what Piers' message is all about. This passage of Piers Plowman also shows Piers' knowledge and good understanding of the Bible.

Will must know Piers in order to know charity, because Piers himself knows the will; … Piers is likened to Christ here through his capacity to perceive the 'wille''.[354] This explains the inward knowledge of Truth that Piers showed he possessed when he introduced himself to the other pilgrims. Furthermore, the Latin phrase in line 212 also denotes the close relationship between Piers and Christ, as the name Petrus refers not only to the apostle, but is also the Latin form of the name Piers.

This passage also 'clearly alludes to, and rewrites, the lines with which Piers had introduced himself in the poem much earlier'[355] in which Piers claims to know Truth 'as kyndely as clerc doth hise bokes' (B.v.538). 'Piers had claimed to know Truth intimately while clerks only knew books; here he knows charity and the human will intimately while clerks only know the outward, and deceptive manifestations'.[356] This shows that scholarly knowledge can only bring you to a certain point, it will not give you insight in affairs that really matter to God and to people. We recall Holy Church's directions to save one's soul and explaination to Will what Truth stands for: 'It is a kynde knowynge that kenneth in thyn herte / For to loven thi Lord levere than thiselve' (B.i.142-3). It is, then, not scholarly knowledge that is exalted, but knowledge one gains from within. Piers is the embodiment of these words and this is what gives Piers the ultimate supremacy over the other characters.

Piers is not only the teacher of the pilgrims, teaching them the path to Truth, or of Will, the dreamer, teaching him the nature and essence of Charity. Langland also depicts him as Christ's teacher:

> And Piers the Plowman parceyved plener tyme,
> And lered hym [Christ] lechecraft, his lif for to save,
> That though he were wounded with his enemy, to warisshen hymselve;
> And dide hym assaie his surgerie on hem that sike were,
> Til he was parfit praktisour, if any peril fille.
> (B.xvi.103-107)

In this and the preceding passage, we hear about Jesus growing up as a human being. We see that Piers uses omniscient powers to prepare Christ for the battle with the devil that lies

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[354] J. Simpson, 'Et Vident Deus Cogitaciones Eorum': A Parallel Instance and Possible Source for Langland's Use of a Biblical Formula at *Piers Plowman* B.xv, 200a', *Notes-and-Queries* 33 (231; 1986), 9-13, at p. 12.
[355] M. Godden, *The Making of* Piers Plowman, (London, 1990), p. 121.
[356] M. Godden, p. 121.

ahead. In addition, he instructs Jesus how to heal the sick, both physically, by means of miracles, and spiritually, by means of his death on the Cross. Thus, Piers teaches Christ his divinity.[357]

In the last section of the poem, the roles between Piers and Christ become blurred until they are reversed in the jousting scene and in the allegorical ploughman scene. Will is not able to distinguish between Christ and Piers, when he sees Christ hanging on the cross:

> and sodeynly me mette
> That Piers the Plowman was peynted al blody,
> And com in with a cros bifore the comune peple,
> And right lik in alle lymes to Oure Lord Jesu.
> And thanne called I Conscience to kenne me the sothe:
> 'Is this Jesus the justere,' quod I, 'that Jewes dide to dethe?
> Or is it Piers the Plowman!'
> (B.xix.5-11)

Will mistakes Piers for Christ, thinking it is Piers that hangs on the cross, instead of Christ. However, it has already been made apparent that Christ is not Piers, but that he is wearing Piers' coat of arms:

> This Jesus of his gentries wol juste in Piers armes,
> In his helm and in his haubergeon, *humana natura*.
> That Crist be noght biknowe here for *consummatus Deus*,
> In Piers paltok the Plowman this prikiere shal ryde;
> For no dynt shal hym dere as *in deitate Patris*.
> (B.xviii.22-6)

Jesus, the name that denotes his human nature, will take upon him Piers' jacket in order to reflect that human nature. We remember Piers wearing pilgrims' clothes consisting of ordinary ploughman clothes.[358] Christ is not wearing the armour of a knight and Piers' armour should not be seen as that of a knight's armour, but Christ is wearing the ordinary working clothes of a ploughman. Jesus' human nature is expressed by Piers' ploughman clothing and this is the reason why Will can hardly distinguish between the two. Christ, the name that refers to his Godly nature, is hidden underneath these ploughman clothes. Piers

[357] See also A. V. C. Schmidt, *William Langland* Piers Plowman. *A New Translation of the B-Text*, (Oxford, 1992), p. 332.
[358] B.vi.57-61. See chapter three, p. 108, n. 277.

no longer needs to teach Christ his divinity, Christ uses Piers to reflect his humanity instead. This does not necessarily diminish Piers' authority and superiority. On the contrary, because Piers Plowman represents Christ's humanity, he gains even more authority.

In addition, Christ gives Piers certain powers and a pardon:

> And yaf Piers power, and pardon he grauntede:
> To alle maner men, mercy and foryifnesse;
> To hym, myghte men to assoille of alle manere synnes,
> In covenaunt that thei come and kneweliche to paye
> To Piers pardon the Plowman – *Redde quod debes*.
> Thus hath Piers power, be his pardon paied,
> To bynde and unbynde bothe here and ellis,
> And assoille men of alle synnes save of dette one.
> (B.xix.184-91)

Here Piers is given two kind of powers: not only he has the power to 'To bynde and unbynde bothe here and ellis', which is the same power Christ gave Peter: 'et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum et quodcumque ligaveris super terra merit ligatum in caelis et quodcumque solveris super terra merit solutum in caelis'.[359] Piers also has the power to 'assoille men of alle synnes save of dette one', which is the power of the priesthood. Christ also sends the Holy Ghost who carries the name Grace, and Grace makes Piers his

> … procurator and reve,
> And registrer to receyve *Redde quod debes*.
> My prowor and my *plowman* Piers shal be on erthe,
> And for to tilie truthe a teeme shal he have.
> (B.xix.260-3; italics mine)

Although during most of this passus Piers resembles the apostle Peter of the New Testament, Grace here makes it explicit that Piers is still a *ploughman*. Moreover, Piers has climbed in social rank: where the reader first met Piers as Truth's 'hyne', now Grace gives him the office of 'reve'. The reeve was the chief of the peasants and he was in charge of the

[359] Matthew 16:19. 'And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven'.

manorial labours.[360] Here, when Will witnesses Piers' final appearance, Piers is responsible for the second ploughing. This time it does not involve literal ploughing but allegorical ploughing. Where initially Piers was in charge of the making of a new society based on material needs, now Piers is in command of a society looking after its spiritual needs. Piers is in charge of those who may receive the pardon and those who may not. Piers decides about the people's wellbeing in the after life. This turns Piers into the ultimate earthly authority, while his occupation as a ploughman is stressed. This ploughman's authority became renowned in later literature.

Another late fourteenth-century example of an authoritative ploughman with superior knowledge, which was directly inspired by Langland's poem, is *Pierce the Plowman's Crede*. The *Crede* is probably influenced by the opening of passus viii, where the dreamer, being awake, meets two friars and enquires about the dwelling place of DoWell.[361] The narrator of the *Crede* is at loss, because he does not know his Creed. He, therefore, visits friars of several orders whom he asks to teach him the Creed. However, these friars are only willing to do so if the narrator pays them for it, either with money of with gifts for the order. Furthermore, they criticise the other orders the narrator has spoken to. After four unsuccessful attempts, he comes across a poor ploughman who is ploughing his field. The poor ploughman is the only one able and willing to teach the narrator his creed without selfish motives.

The ploughman in the *Crede* is a teacher; he teaches the narrator something specific from the liturgy, something for which the parish priest was usually responsible. Although it was not strictly forbidden for laymen to teach religious matters, Pierce takes upon himself the responsibilities of the clergy. Before Pierce teaches the narrator the creed, he starts criticising the four orders of friars. In fact, much of the remainder of the poem is a criticism of the friars. During this criticism, he compares the friars to wolves in sheep's clothing, quoting Matthew 7:15 in Latin, thus showing his knowledge of the Latin Bible. Nevertheless, just like Piers in *Piers Plowman*, this ploughman does not believe in scholarly knowledge either:

> Swiche a gome godes wordes grysliche gloseth;
> Y trowe, he toucheth nought the text but taketh it for a tale.
> God forbad to his folke and fullyche defended

[360] H. S. Bennett, p. 173.
[361] See also C. Von Nolcken, '*Piers Plowman*, the Wycliffites and *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 2 (1988), 71-102, at p. 91.

They schulden nought stodyen biforn ne sturen her wittes,
But sodenlie the same word with her mowth schewe
That weren yeuen hem of God thorugh gost of him-selue.
(585-90)

Although the *Crede* seems to share the same opinions with Langland on this matter, the author of the *Crede* comes from a very different milieu. 'Though the narrator is, so far as one can tell, orthodox in his religious attitudes, the ploughman is a Lollard, and this colours both his attitudes to the friars and his version of the Creed'.[362] The clearest indications of the ploughman's Lollardy are of course the references to Wyclif and Walter Brut.[363] The issue of texts, books and intellectualism was one that divided even the Lollards themselves.[364] It is an important, yet not obvious, element of the poem. 'The position which is being defined in this poem is essentially an anti-intellectual and anti-academic one. The useless and misleading paraphernalia of accumulated information, interpretation, and opinion associated with scholastic traditions of learning, in which friars were experts, is rejected, along with other texts more or less distracting. The Bible and a book of devotions which served as an elementary schoolbook – the primer – from which one might learn literacy and the elements of the faith are, it seems, all that the right-thinking Christian needs'.[365] Neither narrator nor ploughman boast of intellectual knowledge. The narrator is only lettered a little: he knows his ABC, he has learned the Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria and now wants to learn his Creed. He specifically states that his teacher does not necessarily have to be a cleric. Rather, he needs to have a strong and earnest faith in God:

Therfor lerne the byleue leuest me were,
And if any werldly wight wille me couthe,
Other lewed or lered that lyueth therafter,
And fulliche folweth the feyth and feyneth non other;
(16-19; italics mine)

Although the prologue states that both learned and unlearned people are capable of failing to live according to God's law (25-7), the text criticises mainly learned men. The

[362] J. Scattergood, '*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*', p. 161.
[363] For these and more Lollard issues, see the following articles: D. A. Lawton, 'Lollardy and the 'Piers Plowman' Tradition', C. Van Nolcken, and J. Scattergood, '*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*'.
[364] J. Scattergood, '*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*', p. 163.
[365] J. Scattergood, '*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*', p. 174.

ploughman only seems to be slightly more lettered and also scorns the friars' so-called knowledge because they fail to do their spiritual duties towards their flock. At the end of the poem, the ploughman emphasises again that knowledge comes with the aid of the Holy Spirit and claims that this is how he is able to teach the narrator his Creed:

> It mot ben a man of also mek an herte,
> That myghte with his good lijf that Holly Gost fongen;
> And thanne nedeth him nought neuer for to studyen,
> He mighte no maistre ben kald, for Christ it defended,
> Ne puten no pylion on his piled pate;
> But prechen in parfite lijf and no pride vsen.
> But all that euer I haue seyd soth it me semeth,
> And all that euer I haue writen is soth, as I trowe,
> (830-7)

The ploughman stresses that he too is a 'lewed man' who can 'in som poynt erren' (840-1), thus projecting himself on the 'heyghe weie' (450) that the narrator wants to be taught. The *Crede* 'is written from the fundamentalist, *sola scriptura*, anti-intellectual wing, which sought truth in radical simplification and a deliberate narrowing of focus. The base of the movement was literary – wisdom came from books – but that base was narrowly circumscribed'.[366] This ploughman does perhaps not match the intellectualism of Langland's Piers Plowman; however, both the *Crede*-author and Langland abandon scholarly knowledge and prefer knowledge inspired from within and by the Holy Ghost. It is clear that Pierce belongs to the literate and authoritative ploughman-group. Pierce is superior to all other characters in the poem; he stands far above the friars who only think of their material needs instead of the narrator's spiritual wellbeing. Pierce speaks with an authoritative voice and a clear objective: 'Certen for sowle hele y saie the this wordes' (680), as Pierce has seen too many cases in which ordinary people were influenced by the manipulative practices of the greedy friars. His purpose (and the author's) in this anti-fraternal satire is 'for amending of thise men' (838). This stands in stark contrast with the covetous friars who cannot and will not even teach the narrator such a basic thing as the Creed for free.

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[366] J. Scattergood, '*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*', p. 177-8. For a more detailed analysis of this theme of the poem, see the whole article.

In the fifteenth-century text *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe*, we come across a learned ploughman who associates himself with the simple people and lets the reader believe he is 'lewed' as well. Nevertheless, even at the opening of the text, we find that the ploughman is very lettered and has an in-depth knowledge of the Bible. His 'prologue' consists of many references to the Old Testament, in particular to Isaiah. He also quotes several passages from Matthew, Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Hebrews, Jeremiah. The purpose of this is explained later: 'And all this testamente and this doinge ne was but a shadewe and a fygure of a new testamente that was geuen in by Christ' (300-302). He quotes the Bible in Middle English; nowhere in the text is there an indication that he reads the Bible in Latin. Nevertheless, throughout the text the ploughman demonstrates a thorough understanding of the Bible, not only of the Old Testament, but also of the New Testament, as quotations from and references to John, Timothy, several quotations from Matthew, Thessalonians, James, Luke, Mark and many other books of the Bible testify. Moreover, the ploughman is aware of the significance of the Old Testament's prefiguration to the New Testament. His Biblical knowledge is quite elaborate.

Taking this into account, it is very peculiar that he associates himself with the 'lewed' people. In the 'prologue', he says:

> And god of hys endeles mercy geue vs grace and connynge trulich to tellen which ys Christes law in helpinge of mennes sowles / for we beth lewde men / and synneful men / and vnconnynge and yf he woll be owre helpe and owre succoure / we shullen well perfourme owre purpose. And yblessed be owre Lorde god that hydeth his wisdome from wise men and fro redy men / and teacheth it to small children / as Christ teacheth in the gospell.
> (194-202)

In this passage, the ploughman clearly relates himself to 'lewed' and 'vnconnynge' people, something he states at several points in the text.[367] Furthermore, he claims that Christ favours unlearnedness. In fact, the ploughman gives the 'lewed' men a significant role in the battle against the sinful clergy who lust for women: 'And therefore lorde / yif it be thy wille helpe thyne vnkunnynge and lewed seruantes that wolen by her power and her kunnynge helpe to destroye synne' (691-3). The reason why he hides behind his status of

[367] Several times he uses the phrase 'we lewed men'; see ll. 433, 581, 1247, 1575, 1667.

the 'lewed' ploughman is of course because he contrasts the 'lewed' and virtuous people who follow Christ's law with the learned Catholic clergy who follow their own law. Therefore, he cannot present himself as possessing great knowledge of the Bible, at least any Latin knowledge of the Bible, as the term 'lewed' can also simply indicate that the ploughman has no Latin. Furthermore, we have seen in the previous chapter that both the sixteenth-century preface-author and the ploughman-narrator make use of the analogy between the Pharisees who claimed that Christ was unlearned and was proclaiming a new faith, with their contemporary Church who claimed that the Lollards and the sixteenth-century reformers are unlearned and are proclaiming a new faith.[368] Hence, it is very logical that the ploughman portrays himself as 'lewed', although it is abundantly clear from the text that he is not.

The ploughman in *The Banckett* also shows in-depth knowledge of the Latin Bible. We find him quoting relevant passages on the Eucharist from Mark, Paul (Corinthians, Acts), and Matthew in Latin and translating them into English. Moreover, he provides a substantial contribution to the discussion against Jack Jolie. The ploughman, for instance, brings forth the argument that the effect of the holy sacrament comes not from the priest who utters the words of consecration, but from the Holy Trinity; thus refuting Jack's argument that the priest cannot 'make' God, as he is not equal to Him. Piers Ploughman also defends the argument that God is almighty and can be in many places at once and he illustrates this with the example of a bell that can be heard by many people at the same time. From these examples, we can see that Piers is an intelligent ploughman, capable of refuting heretical arguments with his knowledge of the Bible and by using his common sense. The ploughman shows a thorough understanding of the Eucharist controversy that was current in the early sixteenth century.[369]

In *A Godly Dyalogue*, the simplicity of the ploughman is exalted. We have seen that the text contains a quotation from Corinthians on the opening page: 'God hath chosen the weake thinges of the worlde to confounde thynges whyche are myghtye yea thynges of no reputacyon for to bring to nought thynges of reputacion, that no flesh shuld presume in his sight' (Aii.r).[370] We have already noted that this quotation gives the ploughman the

[368] See pp. 127-8.
[369] See also chapter two.
[370] 1 Cor. 1:27.

justification to teach the priests about the matter of transubstantiation.[371] This quotation shows that simplicity or 'weakness' in terms of knowledge can be a virtue.

In this text, we can find the opposition between simplicity and learnedness. We have seen that the priest deliberately shows a superiority in knowledge towards the simple folk, as this is made clear by the author: 'to make the symple people beleue that he was better learned then all hys fellowes' (Aiii.r). Nevertheless, the priest has to admit to Pyers that he has no sufficient knowledge of the works of Augustine, where the ploughman clearly does. At the end of the discussion, after Pyers has cleverly outsmarted the priest, the priest has to admit that the doctrine he has proclaimed to the lay people is rather 'a straunge matter' (Avii.v). In the previous chapter, we have seen that the ploughman has the balance of power clearly in his favour; despite his simplicity, he is clearly intellectually superior to the priest. Or, as 1 Corinthians 1:27 tries to say, *because of his simplicity*, the ploughman is intellectually superior. In this text, simplicity has become a prerequisite for intelligence.

In *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* we find a similar approach. In chapter one, we have already seen that the author, disguised as a ploughman, gives his opinion of how to improve the country's economic situation in relation to the enclosure problems. We have seen that the ploughman speaker conveys a good understanding of the economic problems of the time. In fact, he is one of the few people who addresses the matter solidly. From my analyses of the text in that chapter, it has become clear that the ploughman is very intellectual and there is no need to rehearse the matter. What I would like to stress here is the ploughman's emphasis on his simplicity. Half way through his text, the ploughman speaker apologises for boldly advising the king and the parliament in these economic matters:

> Hitherto I haue declared certeyne causes why it is requisite that more work shuld be deuised: desiringe you my lordes with the knightes and burgoisses of the parlyamenthouse that ye will accepte this my rude boldnes in good parte, and not to impute it to arrogancy for that I enterprise amongest men of so high wisdome, to reason in matters of so great importaunce. For lyke as the moost expert mariners, in a great tempestuous wether, wil not disdayne somtime to be admonisshed by an inferioure Parson, by cause that some thinges may then come to the remembraunce of some one man, who at that time an other thynketh not vppon, euen so the moost

[371] See chapter 3, p. 132.

> wyse Councellours and Maiestrates, in the commen affayres of the Realme, wyl somtime vouchesafe to heare the deuise of a simple Subiect. (Avii.v)
>
> Therfore, after pardon obteyned for my bold enterpryse and for my rude language. I intende (vnder the correction of other better experienced) to shewe my simple opinion by what meanes all the forsayd nombre of people maye haue plentie of woorke. (Aviii.r)

Further on in the text he excuses himself for his 'rude' language: 'Nor I maruayle not though some of you the lordes, knightes, and burgoyses of the parlyamenthouse be not at the first syght parswaded vnto all these my sayinges. For I being altogether ignoraunt of the arte of rhetorycke, haue not conningly set furth this matter but onely layde before you the naked trueth in rude wordes, which onely bare truth if you substancially wyll ponder' (Bii.r). This ploughman also stresses his simplicity; nevertheless, his message contains the truth and therefore, needs to be heard. As in *A Godly Dyalogue*, the reader realises that underneath this simplicity lies a very intelligent ploughman.

In *I Playne Piers which can not flatter* we again come across an intelligent ploughman who, at times, pretends to be simple and unlearned. The title-page states: 'I playne Piers which can not flatter / a plowe man men me call / My speche is fowlle, yet marke the matter / howe thynges may hap to fall'. In this passage, the ploughman-narrator admits that he does not speak elegantly, but he does not lie either. He has important matters to rehearse and he does not beat about the bush. This is a similar approach to what we have just seen in *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*: both ploughmen emphasize that, although they may be plain speakers, their message is of utmost importance. In the beginning of *I Playne Piers*, the reader becomes aware that the ploughman is literate:

> a boke therfore I toke in hande, my selfe somthynge to ease, wherin I wrote of sundry ryte, as my hart doth iuge & thynke. Aboute thre yeres paste when I Piers scripture myghte reade, and render and reporte to my wyffe and to my barnes, it semed then a goodly lyffe a household then to kepe and feade, both with broth and bacon, and bread of the Byble, to tel forth Christes trade, and trade of oure Chrystenyng. (Av.v-Avi.r)

He has written his story so that he can spread the Christian message and he has been reading and studying the Bible for several years now. Furthermore, the ploughman-narrator tells us that, because of his wisdom, he is held in much esteem: 'my wyfe for my wysdom

dyd counte me her hed, my chylder theyr father, my seruauntes theyr syre, then al did obbaye me in the feare of the lorde' (Avi.r). It is clear from this that he holds a superior position in relation to his family members and servants because of his Biblical knowledge. He is the centre of learning for his entire household and he is aware of that. His Biblical knowledge is clearly extensive, as throughout the text he quotes from several Bible books: in the opening of the text, he relates to the story of Creation, Moses and Noah and the flood, but he also refers to the writings of Mark, Paul, John, Luke, Mathew, and Peter; and to the Old Testament books of Ezekiel and Daniel.

Nevertheless, just as the ploughmen in *A Godly Dyalogue* and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*, he seems to feign ignorance:

> Oh God in whome my hope only restythe, thou wylt not condempne vs, I trowe thoughe we do not vnderstand al thy secrettes muche lesse ought we to dye because we can not vnderstande al mennes sottletes, what yf I cannot vnderstand the secreat mysteries of Daniell, what yf I can not vnderstande howe Antichrist shalbe dystroyed withoute handes, what of the graftynge agayne of the Iewes: of dystruction of Gog and Magog. (Bvi.r)

However, it is not ignorance that he professes here, but humility towards the mysteries of the power of God. Furthermore, he goes on saying that he does not understand the mystery of transubstantiation; or to be more precise, the Catholic interpretation of it; as he realises that neither the prophets, nor the apostles nor Christ intended it in the way explained by the Catholic Church. Thus, he criticises Catholic practices and scorns the clergy for claiming the power to condemn the people, because the ploughman-narrator realises that only Christ will judge and save: 'therfore we nothynge doubte to haue god on our side, and yf god be on our side, who can be against'.[372] The ploughman, then, shows humility to the word of God, but ignorance towards the man-made inventions and explanations. Of course, the ploughman's objective is to criticise the Catholic Church and advocate Protestant belief. His main purpose is to defend the right to read the Bible:

> Seyinge then that we poore plowmen are not, so vtterly dysspysed of you, as we are in thys worlde, for the whiche cause, I haue vttered so mani wordes for to show playne, be we neuer so pore yf we labour to knowe God he wyll offer him selfe to vs, and take vs as hys owne, howe can we suffer still to be shut from knowledge of

[372] Romans 8:31.

> him, whome, in so many outwarde sacramentes & in outwarde man we do professe seyng that to knowe him is euer lastynge lyfe, and to be ignorant of him is iuste cause of dampnacion. And seynge that no man can worke wythoute the instrument of his occupacyon, nether is he anye man of scyence, that knowethe not the rules belongynge thereunto, why or by what reasone can you take frome the poore Christen man hys instrument, his rules, yea his buckeler against the fryrye dartes of hys enemy, his sworde to fyghte against all spirituall powers, his lyfe, his hope, his fode comfort & al to gether, why shal christ this heauenly doctor and techer whyche can farme heuen be refused and earthly teachers obtained. (Bviii.r-Bviii.v)

In 1538, the second set of Royal Injunctions approved of the English Bible as a 'layman's book'; however, in 1543, the Act for the Advancement of True Religion brought to an end the commoners' right to read the Bible in English.[373] It is likely that this text was written as a reaction to this act.[374] The ploughman is defending the poor man's right to read the Bible, as this is the only way to gain knowledge about God. Moreover, to know God is to obtain everlasting life. Furthermore, he defends the poor man's right to teach Christ's law, as Christ needs earthly teachers to spread his Word. The ploughman is thus defending his former practices (teaching his household the Bible) which he had to abandon because of the Catholic Church. In addition, he claims that Christ intended poor men to be able to spread his Word as well. Nowadays, only the lords and bishops are allowed to read and explain the Bible; however, these men are often as 'unlearned' as the poor people are, the ploughman argues. This can be seen in the multiple changes in official doctrine that have occurred during the recent years, as the ploughman explains:

> And that is wel perceyued when at one perlyament we haue but thre sacramentes, and in an other we have vii. Some tyme must the worde of god be good for al men, some time but for ryche men, some tyme all bokes and prechinges are permitted, whiche are not agaynste the manyfest worde of god, and now no man nor woman or other person, I skarcely vnderstand what it meanethe, for God created but man and woman as reasonable creatures (I know not who made the thyrde parson) but if wil haue any maner of boke of the christen relygyon, it must come from beyonde the seas. (Ci.r-Ci.v)

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[373] J. N. King, *English Reformation Literature. The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition,* (Princeton (N.J.); Guildford, 1982), p. 53-6.

[374] There are many historical references that can be traced to the latter half of the 1530s and the early 1540s. See *I Playne Piers which Cannot Flatter,* in Marie-Claire Uhart, Ph.D. Diss. 'The Early Reception of Piers Plowman', University of Leicester, 1986, p. 227.

The ploughman is extremely ironic in this passage. Although Uhart argues that passages like these express 'the bewilderment of a zealous but not very learned Protestant who was trying to understand the rapid changes in ritual and doctrine that were taking place in the later years of the reign of Henry VIII,'[375] I believe it shows that the ploughman was very much aware of all these changes and he uses this as a way to effectively ridicule the lords' and bishops' power to decide about Church doctrine. If they cannot even agree on Church doctrine, how on earth can they explain it to the poor people? The people should abandon man-made rites, like transubstantiation and confession, invented by the Catholic Church. Furthermore, throughout the text, the simplicity of the English Bible is stressed in contrast with the difficult Latin Bible and its glosses:

> It restethe to proue at laste, wolde God we myght here what they do say, in our englishe tonge they coulde not playe, but some of vs sholde espye, this causeth them to cloke what thei can, that they maye closly lye, yf it be good geare, why shuld they feare, that I poore Pears and other shulde vnderstande, this they kepe in hande, and it hyde in huther mother, we haue soules to saue, and heauen do craue, throughe the blod of the lambe vnspotted, whom here we eate in forme of bred, by faith that neuer fayled. (Eviii.v)

Especially in times like these, the need for the poor people to have access to the Bible is more pertinent. This is especially necessary, because the Catholic clergy prove to be incompetent, as they can hide behind their Latin tongue. The ploughman states that the poor never understand what the clergy is saying and, thus, they can end up worshipping a false god. The ploughman even goes so far as to suggest that if this situation continues, the poor people can unite and revolt (Fii.r).

The ploughman sketches a society in which the word of God is no longer accessible:

> The tyrante of moste power, the wicked syteth gloriouslye in the seate of iudgement, and all the instrumentes of virtue semethe to him fylthy folysshenes, the myserable and carefull vsurer encreasethe infinite ryches, but the honest harted lyued slenderly and poorely wythout all glorye. The matrones all grauitie and honestie layd apart shalbe dyssoluted in whoreysshe wantounes, yet shall the

[375] *I Playne Piers which Cannot Flatter,* in Marie-Claire Uhart, Ph.D. Diss. 'The Early Reception of Piers Plowman', University of Leicester, 1986, p. 230.

> woman with conterfaite chastytie cause to persecute Ioseph the Iuste, what nedethe many wordes, the lawe is gone from the prestes, Iustyce from the greate sort of princes, cownsell frome the elders, faith from the people, naturall loue frome the parentes, all reuerence from the subiectes, all loue and charitye from the prelates, honesty frome the youth, lernynge from the clargy, knowledge from the masters, dyligence from the scollers, from the cytyzens concorde, feare from seruantes, trewe dealyng from marchauntes, corrage fro the nobles, chastytie from virgens, loue from the maried, paciens from the pope. O the vnfaythful state of mortal men, and this all because we are wythout the knowledge of God, all is full of mysery, behold now yf that haue wisdom and knowledge faith & and Godly vertues, (who are verye rare to fynde and fewe in nomber) were taken away what coulde remayne but clowed darkenes, the darke image of deathe and dedly blyndness. (Dvi.r-Dvi.v)

This is the society that will remain if the English people do not have access to the Word of God. This is the grim future that the ploughman foresees, if nothing is done about it. This is what England will result in when there is no true knowledge of the Bible. With this work, the ploughman is trying to prevent this from happening and, therefore, he is the advocate of the right to read the Bible in plain language for all people. The English need people like the ploughman who fulfil a crucial role in spreading the Christian message; otherwise, the whole society will be disrupted as described above.

It is clear that we are not dealing with an ignorant ploughman here; on the contrary, the ploughman-narrator cleverly criticises the clergy and the nobles who refuse to allow the poor people to read the Bible in their own tongue. He defends the right to study the Bible and spread the Word of God, as he was accustomed to do a few years ago. Although he may be plain and simple, plainness can be the centre of the proper functioning of society.

Ignorant and Illiterate

A good example of an ignorant and illiterate ploughman is the ploughman that occurs in the *Plowman's Tale*. The date of this poem is uncertain, since there seem to be several additions and interpolations. Dating the entire poem is, therefore, somewhat problematic. Since I focus only on that part of the poem which includes the ploughman, I will only address this section in terms of dating. In the early 1970s, Wawn attempted to untangle the poem. He concludes that most of the poem dates from the early fifteenth century, but he argues that the opening lines, which include the ploughman, date from the early sixteenth

century. He bases his argument on the occurrence of sixteenth-century vocabulary, on the assumption that the 'Prologue' to the *Plowman's Tale* was specifically designed so that this Lollard work could be inserted in Thynne's printed edition of Chaucer's work, and also because the author of *I Playne Piers* appears to refer to a version of a *Plowman's Tale* without the Prologue.[376] However, in a recent article, Walker has suggested that this is not the case. The evidence of sixteenth-century vocabulary (the word 'reproche') is too slim as the Prologue also contains specific vocabulary that pre-dates 1475. Moreover, the idea that the evidence that the *I Playne Piers*-author refers to a *Plowman's Tale* without the Prologue, does not necessarily make the Prologue early sixteenth century. In addition, Walker notes that there is nothing in the Prologue that is specifically early Tudor: 'indeed, the tone and content of the Prologue are very similar to the attitudes adopted and the allegations made by the Pelican in the Narratio, suggesting that the former could have been written at any time between the completion of the original poem and the first printing of the full text in 1532-3'.[377] It is, therefore, very risky to treat the ploughman of *The Plowman's Tale* as early Tudor. Nevertheless, the ploughman in this text is very interesting. The *Plowman's Prologue* opens with the ploughman taking care of his plough and his beasts. He decides to go on pilgrimage and enters an inn to eat some food, presumably, the same inn Harry Bailly, the host of the *Canterbury Tales*, was in charge of. This is where he meets the other pilgrims.

The host's description of the ploughman already gives an indication that the ploughman is a person of lower-class:

> Our Hoste behelde wele all about,
> And sawe this man was sun ybrent.
> He knewe well by his senged snout,
> And by his clothes that were to-rent,
> He was a man wont to walke about,
> He nas nat alway in cloystre ypent;
> He coulde not religiousliche lout,

[376] See A. N. Wawn, 'The Genesis of *The Plowman's Tale*,' *Yearbook of English Studies*, 2 (1972), 21-40, esp. 35-36, and also his 'Chaucer, *The Plowman's Tale* and Reformation Propaganda: The Testimonies of Thomas Godfray and *I Playne Piers*,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 56 (1973), 174-92. In this second article, Wawn argues that, since *I Playne Piers* borrows lines from the *Plowman's Tale* but does not attribute them to Chaucer, the author must have had access to a *Plowman's Tale* without the prologue.

[377] G. Walker, 'The Textual Archaeology of *The Plowman's Tale*', in *Studies in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Texts in Honour of John Scattergood: 'The Key of all Good Remembrance'*, ed. A. M. D'Arcy and A. J. Fletcher (Dublin, 2005), 375-401, at pp. 381-2.

And therfore was he fully shent.

(17-24)[378]

This description also suggests that the host does not deem the ploughman to be of much worth. The tan indicates that the ploughman labours outside and has no time for studying. The fact that the ploughman seems ashamed of himself because of his lack of religious awareness, indicates that he lacks authority. The last line could also be interpreted to mean that the host is ashamed of the ploughman, which also shows that the host feels superior to the ploughman. In either case, the ploughman is portrayed as ignorant and inferior. This is confirmed by the host's cry of disbelief when the ploughman reveals that he preaches against the sloth and covetousness of the clergymen: ''What, man!' quod our Host, 'canst thou preche?'' (45). The ploughman also confirms this picture. He admits that he is just a 'hyne', a farmer's servant. This echoes Langland's Piers Plowman who is Truth's 'hyne' (B.vi.131). However, for Piers, this gives status so that he can warn Truth about the wasters. For this ploughman, the word 'hyne' only confirms his low status. The ploughman is accustomed to taking orders and working for his food, and he refers to himself as 'leude' (27-8, 32). The tale he will tell is not a tale he came up with himself: 'I herde ons teache / A prest in pulpit a good preachynge' (47-8), which implies that he cannot preach himself. He merely copied the sermon of another. This also justifies the impression that we are dealing with an ignorant and illiterate ploughman.[379]

A different example of the ignorant ploughman is the early Tudor text *John Bon and Mast Parson*. We have already seen that the ploughman John Bon outwits the parson.[380] Throughout the text, John emphasises, and feigns, his ignorance. We see this in his comical corruption of the words *Corpus Christi* into *Copsi Cursty* and *Cropsy Cursty*. We can tell from his answers to the parson that John deliberately takes the concept of the Eucharist literally: 'How can it come to pass? / Because ye may Him bear within so small a glass' (p. 162). We have seen that he hides behind his ignorance: 'A plain man, ye may see, will speak as cometh to mind: / Ye must hold us excused, for ploughmen be but blind' (p. 162). Despite his feigned ignorance, he is willing to learn, he assures the parson: 'but to

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[378] *The Plowman's Tale*, in *Six Ecclesiastical Satires*, ed. J. Dean, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, 1991), pp. 51-114. All quotations are from this edition.

[379] This Prologue is inconsistent with Chaucer's description of the ploughman in his *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. For an overview, see G. Walker, 'The Textual Archaeology', p. 379-80.

[380] See chapter three, p. 131.

learn I am glad' (p. 163). Moreover, he manages to shift the balance of power to his side when he pushes the parson onto the defensive. We have seen that the parson had to take back his own words. During the scene in which the parson narrates the procedure of the holy mass during *Corpus Christi*, the ploughman mocks his intelligence: 'Ye are morenly well learned! I see by your reck'ning / That ye will not forget such an elvish thing' (p. 166) … 'Ye talk so unreasonably well, it maketh my heart yearn, / As eld a fellow as I am, I see well I may learn' (p. 167). He even suggests that he wants to 'study where the wine should become' (p. 167), to which the parson hastily replies that he had better not do that, as this could result in 'woe'. Throughout this poem then, the ploughman deliberately emphasises his ignorance in relation to the *Corpus Christi*. This so-called ignorance is in contrast with the so-called learnedness of the parson. He possesses all the knowledge and he even lets slip the remark that he prefers reasoning with a Doctor of Divinity rather than with such a rustic.

This contrast is of course deliberate, as the climax of the text reveals that no (Catholic) knowledge can change John Bon's opinion about the Eucharist, as he turns out to be a Protestant who is set to ridicule the Catholic parson. The Protestant message of the text is that the concept of the Eucharist is very plain and for every unlearned rustic to grasp: 'For, though I have no learning, yet I know cheese from chalk, / And each can perceive your juggling, as crafty as ye walk!' (p. 168). Despite the ploughman's ignorance and simplicity, the message of Christ can still be easily understood.

In *The Banckett of Johan the Reve unto Piers Ploughman*, the ploughman is accused of ignorance by his opponents. Jack Jolie, during his discussion with Piers and the other rustics present in Johan the Reeve's house, belittles him by saying: 'Goodman Peires, consideryng ye haue no better teachyng, I thinke youe not grea[t]lie to faute in that ye beleue that Criste dide giffe his bodie and bloode to his disciples' (fol. 5v). Although the text does not give any indication about the level of intelligence of Jack Jolie, it is clear that he sees himself as superior in knowledge compared to Piers Ploughman. More specifically, he assumes the ploughman to have had little teaching. Jack Jolie's statement is quite ironic considering that it follows Piers' lengthy and thorough refutation of his previous argument of Christ not being able to occupy more than one place. The reader has just read Piers' exposition containing abundant evidence from the Bible and his own common sense. Jack Jolie's attack on Piers' lack of teaching, therefore, is far from convincing.

A very negative example of the ignorant ploughman can be found in *A Lytell Geste How the Plowman Lerned his Pater Noster*. We have seen in the previous chapter[381] that the ploughman does not know his *paternoster* and he is tricked by the local priest to learn the paternoster and give away his harvest to all the poor people. The ploughman is intellectually speaking no match for the priest. In fact, the ploughman is furious when he finds out he has been 'deceived' and he vows never to trust a clergyman again. Duffy warns that 'we certainly should not take it as an indicator of the general educational level of wealthy plowmen, but its effect does depend on the audience's sense of the general plausibility of the situation, as well as the enormity of the plowman's ignorance'.[382] This means that, although early sixteenth-century readers might be accustomed to a ploughman figure as a virtuous and intellectual labourer, they could still recognise and be educated through such a negative portrayal of the ploughman. In a way, then, the ignorance of this ploughman serves the purpose of the text.

The Temper of the Ploughman

The somewhat feisty temper of the ploughman that surfaces in several ploughman texts has its source in Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Two scenes in particular, in which Piers clearly loses his temper, stand out. In both scenes the famous phrase, 'for pure tene' is used.

The first is the 'Tearing of the Pardon Scene' already discussed above. In this scene, Piers, 'for pure tene' (B.vii.115), tears up the pardon after the priest's exclamation that it is not a real pardon. The reason why he tears up the pardon is not given; the only hint we have is that he tore it to pieces out of sheer anger. The second scene deals with the shaking of the Tree of Charity. Here Piers shakes the tree and the fruit falls down, with the intention to give some of its fruit to Will. However, the devil intervenes and snatches the fruit away with him to Hell. Again, Piers 'for pure tene' (B.xvi.86) grabs one of the three 'pils' that supports the tree and he throws it at the devil in order to prevent him from stealing the fruit.

From these two scenes, we can see that when Piers is provoked, he reacts impulsively and gives in to his negative emotions. However, the actions that follow immediately upon his anger lead to significant turns in the poem. In passus vii, the act of tearing the pardon leads to a different kind of life: the life of contemplation, penance and prayer. The next passus begins with a different section of the poem; Will begins his search

[381] See pp. 129-130.
[382] E. Duffy, p. 85.

for (the meaning of) Dowel. In passus xvi, Piers' act of throwing a stick at the devil initiates the Annunciation. From this point forward, Will enters the New Testament world with the life of Jesus Christ. Piers' seemingly impulsive acts committed out of sheer anger are, therefore, carefully directed by Langland. His anger serves the plot of the poem.

In *The Banckett* we also find an angry and somewhat aggressive ploughman. In this text, the ploughman is also provoked by his opponents, and initially, his temper does not significantly seem to contribute to the plot of the text as in *Piers Plowman.* At several instances, the reader notices that Peirs is quite a 'hothead'.

When Jack Jolie enters Johan the Reeve's house he immediately denies the holiness of the Eucharist, supported by many arguments by Luther and others. Peirs 'waxed woundrus angrie and called jacke jolie fals heritike'. Langland's 'For pure tene' has now been replaced with 'woundrus angrie' (fol. 2v). Already we see that Peirs is provoked easily. We have seen in chapter two that Johan the Reeve acts as a mediator between Peirs and Jack. At the end of the first discussion, Johan the Reeve gives all speakers time to prepare their arguments for a second discussion. He hopes to see Jack Jolie as a changed man then, but Peirs remarks: 'I truste to here of his hanging or burning or that' (fol. 9v). Again, later during the second discussion Peirs is easily provoked by Jack Jolie's friend Nicholas Newfangill when he refers to the Eucharist as 'jac in the boxe': 'Neighbure Johan, I mervell that ye can suffer any knave to raill so blasfemuslie vpon that blessed bodie of Criste. For as I am a trew man, and but that I am in your presans and in your house, I shulde haue broken this pott vpon his head' (fol. 10v). It is clear from these examples that, just like Langland's Piers Plowman, Peirs is easily provoked and has a difficult time restraining his anger. However, where the anger of Langland's Piers results in several actions relevant to the plot, the anger of *The Banckett*'s Peirs results in foul language and backbiting.

Nevertheless, his viciousness towards the Protestants does serve a purpose. At the beginning of the text, Peirs explains why he reacts in such a way:

> What thynke ye suche [suche] light bown fellows regarde aither gode or his holie woorde, that we may persaue bie there lyuynge and dailie vsaige. Ffor without any occasion, thei will bie ware of abhommablie blasphemye, plucke euery member of Criste frome other and yett that can not certifie there maliciouse appetite, but bie the helpe of false heretikes wrythyng and wraistyng of holie scripture owt of right frame at euery jonte, as the dewill there maister and leder puttes in there hereticall

> brane, to the intent that all godlie honer dew to that blessed sacrament, wiche is no lesse then the veraie bodie and bloude of Criste, wiche suffered death and was shede for all trewe Crystyn people. There, neighbure Johan, it is necessarij bothe for you and me and euery good man, to instructe our children servants and pore neighburs with suche godlie lessons as we here redde in the churche and to warne thame sore to gyue no credonce to any suche new fangill knawes. (fol. 3r-3v)

Just as Pierce Ploughman in the *Crede* was concerned about the 'sowle hele' of the narrator and indirectly of the readers[383] and wanted to protect them from the influence of greedy friars, likewise Peirs wants to protect the simple folk against the blasphemous ideas of Jack Jolie and other heretics. This explains his passionate and angry reactions to the words of Jack Jolie and Nicholas Newfangill.

However, critics have argued that as soon as Langland became aware of how some of his readers interpreted his poem, he decided to change his text significantly in relation to Piers Plowman' s aggression. In the C-text we no longer find an angry Piers who tears up the pardon. In the second scene where Piers throws a prop at the devil, he is simply replaced by another character, namely *Liberum Arbitrium*. According to Pearsall, Langland added and significantly changed sections of the C-text in order to distinguish himself from the Lollards. These passages 'may reflect Langland's growing awareness in the 1380s that the Lollards had moved in directions in which he was not prepared to follow them, and his urgent desire to dissociate his poem from the kind of popular misuse it had suffered at the hands of the ideological leaders of the Peasants' Revolt, men who themselves were subsequently branded by the establishment as Lollard heretics'.[384] Furthermore, Justice argues that Langland changed his B version in order to ensure that his voice would not blend with the voices of the rebels, 'that the context into which it issued could harden it into ideology'.[385] It is clear, then, that Langland removed the aggression from Piers Plowman's character. Apparently, this trait was still known in the early sixteenth century, as we still find this particular characteristic of the ploughman figure in *The Banckett*. In the other early Tudor ploughman texts it was not used at all, since it diminishes the authority of an intelligent figure, which we have seen happening to Langland's Piers Plowman in the

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[383] Please see below, p. 161.
[384] W. Langland, Piers Plowman, *by William Langland: an Edition of the C-Text*, ed. D. Pearsall (Exeter, 1994), p.15-16. See also S. Justice, 1994.
[385] S. Justice, p. 233.

late fourteenth century. Clearly, it was not Langland's intention that his creation should become associated with social and religious rebellion and reform. The question remains then why the author of *The Banckett* chose to depict his ploughman figure as aggressive. Although Piers does give some effective arguments, his force is diminished by his aggressiveness. Because of this characteristic, he becomes less convincing. In chapter two, we have already seen that the intentions of the author are a bit unclear. If the author was a Protestant, as I suggested in that chapter, Piers's aggressiveness is then deliberate.

Pierce Ploughman also lets himself go in the *Crede*. I have noted above that Pierce takes his time in scoffing at the greedy friars when the narrator asks him to teach him the Creed. In fact, it takes the ploughman much of the poem to criticise the friars and then finally he teaches the narrator the Creed. It is easy to deduce from this that the poet's main theme is not just the simple layman being able to teach the Creed where the friars refused. The whole poem is set up to satirize the four orders. The ploughman is 'guilty' of this too. His first response is to criticise the four orders. At first, he is encouraged by the narrator when he asks the ploughman to tell him more about their way of life, and this gives him his opportunity.

Lampe argues that 'Peres' presentation is not merely slanderous and self-serving. 'Though he attacks the friars, it is not simply to praise himself. Instead he speaks with the tones of a reformer'.[386] Where the friars slandered the other orders to prove themselves worthier, Pierce is not concerned with praising himself at the cost of others. Nevertheless, his disapproval of the four orders is so extreme that the narrator is surprised by it. Half way through his speech, the narrator interrupts him and reproaches him for it:

> 'Sur', y seide my-self, 'thou semest to blamen.
> Why dispisest thou thus thise sely pore freres
> None other men so mychel, monkes ne preistes,
> Chanons ne Charthous that in chirche serueth?
> It semeth that thise sely men han somewhat the greved
> Other with word or with werke and therfore thou wilnest
> To schenden other schamen hem with thi sharpe speche,
> And harmen holliche and her hous greuen.'
> (671-8)

[386] D. Lampe, 'The Satiric Strategy of *Peres the Ploughmans Crede*' in *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century,* ed. B. S. Levy and P. E. Szarmach, (Kent, 1981), 69-80, at p. 76.

The ploughman's reply is not altogether convincing when he claims he utters these sharp words for the narrator's 'sowle hele'. The ploughman has seen too many people who, influenced by the friars, leave their charity and their love for God to live more worldly lives. This provokes the ploughman to indulge in even more anti-fraternal satire. The poet evidently wants to clear the ploughman from the same behaviour for which he criticised the friars. The way this is done is not convincing when we consider that the narrator has already shown that he is capable of seeing through the friars' deceit. The narrator is definitely not one of those people who are influenced negatively by the friars' behaviour. He has rejected all their alternative solutions. This man is extremely dedicated to learning the Creed and he has not given in to the temptation to give money to the friars and be done with it. The narrator, in fact, is very much aware of the friars' improper behaviour as his responses to the friars testify: 'Thanne saide y to my-self, "Here semeth litel trewthe: / First to blamen his brother and bacbyten him foule"'.[387] The narrator is clearly able to recognise the pride, covetousness and the 'falshede of this folk' (419). He is not in need of 'sowle hele'; at least, not the kind the ploughman presents. It is likely that the poet wanted to heal the soul of the sinful friars and/or the late fourteenth-century reader that might be influenced by similar sinful friars. In case they did not get the message during the first half of the poem, the ploughman offers his part of the anti-fraternal satire. In fact, he admits at the end of the poem that most of his writings were dedicated to amend the friars: 'And for amending of thise men is most that I write' (838).[388] The very last words are an address to the friars: that God might save all faithful friars and amend those who are not so faithful so 'that thei maie wynnen the lif that euer schal lesten!' (850).[389] The last lines are not about the narrator who, hopefully, is now able to recite his Creed when he confesses to the priest. It is clear that the main subject is about the friars; all other subjects are secondary to this and are used to support the main subject. We see then that the ploughman's loss of temper again serves the purpose of the text.

In *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* discussed in chapter one, we also find an aggressive ploughman. Twice the ploughman almost engages in a fight with the knight if the merchant

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[387]Ll. 138-9; also see ll. 266, 335-8, 418-19, which denote the narrator's awareness of the friars' improper behaviour.

[388] It is not just the ploughman 'speaking' here. In these lines and the following there is a blending of the voices of both the ploughman and the poet. See also, H. Barr, ed. *The Piers Plowman Tradition*, (London, 1993), p. 245-6 and below.

[389] Cf. the ending of *Piers Plowman*: 'And that freres hadde a fyndyng, that for need flateren / And countrepledeth me, Conscience.' (B.XX.384-5). Conscience has a dfferent solution to end the friars' corruption. They should have a sufficient income so that there is no more need.

had not been there to intervene.[390] However, I argued in that chapter that this behaviour of the ploughman is consistent with his character as part of an early Tudor interlude. Humanist drama combined humour with education. The Ploughman is responsible of most of the play's humour. Thus, through the figure of the Ploughman the author attempted both to entertain and educate his audience.

Rich or Poor

Pierce the Ploughman's Crede probably contains the most vivid description of a poor ploughman. When the narrator seems to be at loss because no friar was willing or able to teach him the creed, he comes across the poor ploughman:

> I seigh a sely man me my opon the plow hongen.
> His cote was of a cloute that cary was y-called,
> His hod was full of holes and his heer oute,[391]
> With his knopped schon clouted full thykke;
> His ton toteden out as he the londe threddede,
> His hosen ouerhongen his hokschynes on eueriche a side,
> Al beslombred in fen as he the plow folwede;
> Twey myteynes, as mete, maad all of cloutes;
> The fyngers weren for-werd and ful of fen honged.
> This whit waselede in the fen almost to the ancle,
> Foure rotheren hym by-forn that feble were worthen;
> Men myghte reken ich a ryb so reufull they weren.
> His wijf walked him with with a longe gode,
> In a cutted cote cutted full heyghe,
> Wrapped in a wynwe schete to weren hire fro weders,
> Barfote on the bare ijs that the blod folwede.
> And at the londes ende laye a litell crom-bolle,
> And thereon lay a litell childe lapped in cloutes,
> And tweyne of tweie yeres olde opon a-nother syde,
> And alle they songen o songe that sorwe was to heren;
> They crieden alle o cry a carefull note.
> (421–41)

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[390] See, p. 19, 21.

[391] Compare the line with 'His here was growen thorowe oute his hat', from Skelton's *The Bowge of Courte*, in *John Skelton. The Complete English Poems*, l. 350. See also Whiting H 22, in B. J. Whiting and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

The picture of the extremely poor ploughman who cannot provide proper clothing for himself and his family has become notorious. Most critics do not take this description of the ploughman as historical, considering that this detailed description of the ploughman's poverty is meant as a contrast to the friars' wealth and comfort. The descriptions of all four orders contain many references to the wealth that they were not supposed to have. For example, the lengthy description of the Dominicans instances their house with its pillars, of which 'The pris of a plough-lond of penyes so rounde / To aparaile that pyler were pure lytel' (169-70), and the Dominican's clothing made of thick, clean wool. Throughout the poem, the reader finds common anti-fraternal tropes dealing with the wealth and prosperity of the four orders which are meant to be poor and/or beg for a living. This, of course stands in stark contrast to the description of extremely poor ploughman. He cannot provide proper clothing for himself and his family, but, nevertheless, he offers food to the narrator. The beasts that pull the plough also show the state of poverty the family are in, especially considering that the ploughman had a responsibility to make sure that his animals were well fed.[392] The fact that they are not could indicate that economic circumstances were extremely bad. Unfortunately, we know nothing about these circumstances. That the ploughman's wife is the driver is not exceptional in medieval times: Ruth Mohl tells us of 'a case recorded in 1420 where the daughter was the driver'.[393] Furthermore, in a short poem from the first half of the early sixteenth century in Trinity College Dublin, MS 490, we find a woman grieving and she intends to stop ploughing:

> I wyll no mor go to the plowe
> I wyll go learne some other thynge
> my mother knowythe it well inowghe
> that I had rather play then spynne.[394]

According to Barr, the *Crede*'s ploughman is more poorly clothed than Langland's ploughman. However, from the few lines on Piers' clothing, they seem to be quite alike. The material of the clothes the *Crede*'s ploughman wears is cary, a coarse material, which

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[392] 'The ploughmen ought to know how to couple and lead the oxen without striking or hurting them, they ought to feed them well and keep the fodder safe so that it is not stolen or taken away. They ought to keep the beasts safely in the meadows and in the several pastures and impound any other cattle found there'. From the late thirteenth-century *Seneschaucy*, which is a treatise on estate management. W. of Henley, p. 283.

[393] R. Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, (New York, repr. 1962), p. 101.

[394] Quoted from J. Scattergood, 'Two Unrecorded Poems from Trinity College Dublin MS 490'. *Review of English Studies* 149 (1987), 46-9, at p. 48-9. The female narrator mourns the loss of her husband in this poem, although there is clearly an overtly sexual ambiguity about the text.

is less expensive than linen and, therefore, indicates his poverty. Although his hat is full of holes, his shoes are patched (though not sufficiently, as the toes still peep out) and so are his mittens. Piers' clothes are patched too, although they are whole: 'He caste on hise clothes, yclouthed and hole, / Hise cokeres and hise coffes for cold of hise nailes' (B.vi.59-60). They both wear mittens and, according to Jones, the phrase 'as mete' means 'suitable' and it refers to peasants wearing mittens as suitable to their class in contrast to gloves which would be worn by the upper class.[395] Unfortunately, these two lines are all Langland gives the reader and we cannot make much of it. On the contrast, the *Crede*'s description of the ploughman's clothing is much more vivid and detailed, which gives the reader a clear sense of his poverty. Where the ploughman's poverty has a clear purpose in the *Crede*, for Langland it was not a matter that needed to be stressed.

Chaucer's portrait of the ploughman has several indications that his appearance is in compliance to his low social rank. He wears a 'tabard' which is a humble piece of clothing and rides a mare, which was socially unacceptable.[396] He performs typical ploughman duties and is not afraid to work with dung. However, where the *Crede*'s picture and to a certain extent, Langland's picture, give an idea of the ploughman's poverty, Chaucer does not give any details about patched clothing or economically difficult working circumstances. The description of the ploughman in the *Plowman's Tale*, which was based on Chaucer's ploughman, is more detailed. Here too, the ploughman wears the tabard, but the Host observes that his clothes were 'to-rent'. His face also shows the signs of poverty and hunger: 'Men might have sene through both his chekes, / And every wang-toth and where it sat' (15-16). The ploughman explains that the local clergy exploit the ploughmen:

> They make us thralles at her lust,
> And sayne, we mowe nat els be saved;
> They have the corne and we the dust,
> Who speaketh ther-agayn, they say he raved.
> (41-4)

Altogether, the reader gets the impression that this ploughman works very hard, yet is very poor.

Although the ploughman-narrator in *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe* is not described, he does describe the working people he associates himself

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[395] G. F. Jones, 'Twey Mytenes, as Mete', *Modern Langauge Notes* 67 (1952), 512-16, at p. 512-14.
[396] H. Cooper, The Canterbury Tales. *Oxford Guides to Chaucer*, 2nd edn., (Oxford, 1996), p.53.

with. We have already seen that he relates himself to the 'lewed' people. What can be added to this, is the emphasis on their poverty. Much is made of the opposition between the rich and the poor:

> O Lorde these rych men seggen that they done moch for thy loue. For many pore laborers ben yfounde by hem / that schulden fare febelich ne were not they and her redinesse for soth me thinketh that pore laborers geueth to these rych men more then they geuen hem ageyn warde. For the pore man mote gone to hys laboure in colde and in hete / in wete and drye / and spende his flesch and hys bloude in the rych mennes workes apon gods grounde to fynde the rych man in ese / and in lykynge / and in good fare of mete and of drinke and of clothinge. Here ys a gret gifte of the pore man. For he geueth his own body. But what geueth the rych man hym ageynwarde? Sertes febele mete / and febele drinke / and feble clothinge. (1313-25)

The ploughman aptly describes the poverty of the labourers contrasting them with the greed of the rich people they work for. Furthermore, the ploughman here draws the parallel between the poor labourers and Christ: both give their body for the benefit of the people; both give their 'flesch and bloude' so that others may live. The ploughman-narrator puts his own kind at a par with Christ. He develops this idea further when he notes that Christ himself was poor as well:

> And lorde I trowe for thou were a pore man men token litell regarde to the and to thy techinge. But Lorde thou come to geue vs a new testamente of loue and therfore it was semelych that thou came in porenesse to proue who wolde loue thee and kepen thyne hestes. For yif thou haddist ycome in forme of a rych man and of a lorde / men wolde rather for thy drede then for thy loue / haue ykepte thyne hestes. And so lorde now thou mighte well ysee which louen thee as they schulde in kepynge thyne hestes. For who that loueth thee in thy porenesse and in thy lowenesse / nedes he mote loue the in thy lordschupe and thy highenesse. (1330-40)

Thus, it is clear that the poor workers, the ploughman's kind, are much closer to Christ because of their poverty. In addition, because they are poor, they are valued 'highly'. Wyclif addressed the rural poor in his writings concerning clerical endowment, although he meant that the king and the lords should be responsible for disendowing the Church. In

these writings, he defends the poor as 'the cherished poor of Christ'.[397] Again, it is clear that the narrator is fittingly a ploughman: his profession is comparable to Christ and even has Christ-like features in that the ploughman is poor and gives his 'flesch and bloude' for the other classes.

The image of the poor Christ in relation to the poor ploughman can also be found in the early sixteenth-century text *I Playne Piers which can not flatter*:

> But comfort ye ye plowmen, fyshers, tylers, and coblers Christe our Kynge was a poore man, as Zachery before prophysyed … And he blessed the poore man so they be poore in spirite, saynge that theyrs is all redy the kyngdome of highe heuen, and wo be vnto the ryche for they haue their comfort in this world. (Avii.r)
>
> … what go you [the upper class] about to extynguishe the name of Christ, because he is poore, lyke as you haue banyshed al the pore members from the pastors and foode of theyr soules. (Biv.r)
>
> …they [(arch)bishops, etc] be so roted in riches, that Christes pouertye is forgotten, serued wyth so many messe, that poore Christ is no meate, poore people out of the dore they shutte … (Evi.r)

In these passages, we can see that Christ's poverty is emphasised in order to make the link between Christ and poor people. Throughout the text, the ploughman-narrator refers to himself as 'poore Pyers', or 'we poore plowmen'. This ploughman, then, associates himself with the poor people, in particular with the poor ploughman. In relation to the image of the 'poor Christ', the poor ploughman gains a lot of authority.

The only example of an extremely rich ploughman can be found in *A Lytell Geste How the Plowman Lerned his Pater Noster*. We have seen that the ploughman is outsmarted by the local parson when the parson teaches him the *paternoster*.[398] The ploughman is here portrayed as extremely wealthy and greedy, putting his own material needs before his spiritual well-being. Nor does he care about the poverty of the people around him. Where in the *Crede*, the ploughman's poverty and spirituality served as a contrast to the friars' greed and materiality, in this text it is the other way around. The ploughman's wealth hinders his spiritual welfare. In fact, when he finds out he has been 'betrayed' he does not learn from his mistakes. On the contrary, he vows he will never trust

[397] S. Justice, p. 84.
[398] See chapter three, pp. 128-129.

a clergyman again and sticks to his previous covetous way of life. He shows no spiritual growth whatsoever; this text aims to ridicule the rich ploughman to the utmost.

The picture of the greedy ploughman was commonplace in the fourteenth century. Gower writes very negatively when addressing the peasantry and the ploughman in particular. *Mirour de l'Omme* is a medieval estates satire. Gower is very brief in his section on the labourer. Mostly, he complains about the peasantry exploiting the economic situation of the late fourteenth century: 'They perform little labor, but they expect to get high wages without deserving them – three times as much as their labor is worth'.[399] He complains that 'custom and old usages have now been turned upside down'[400] by peasants wanting even higher wages than their lords and eating and drinking the same food as their lords. This complaint can also be found in a statute of 1363, which, although it was repealed the next year, regulated the apparel of the lower estates because of 'the Outragious and Excessive Apparel of divers People, against their Estate and Degree, to the great Destruction and Impoverishment of all the land'.[401] The apparel for the ploughmen was the following:

> That Carters, Ploughmen, Drivers of the Plough, Oxherds, Cowherds, Shepherds, Deyars and all other Keepers of Beasts, Threshers of Corn, and all manner of People of the Estate of a Groom, attending to Husbandry and all other People, that have not Forty Shillings of Goods, nor of Clattels shall not take nor wear no Manner of Cloth, but Blanket, and Russet Wool of Twelve-pence; and shall wear the Girdles of Linen according to their Estate; and that they come to eat and drink in the Manner as pertaineth to them, and not excessively.[402]

'The natural human wish to be in control of one's own extended skin, an emerging personal individualism, social emulation or aspiration, all of which manifested themselves in dress, alarmed the authorities into seeking to defend certain social differentials which were built into the normative view of medieval society'.[403] Gower would have probably agreed with the act.

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[399] J. Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*. Trans. W. Burton, (East Lansing, 1992), p. 347, ll. 26425ff.
[400] J. Gower, p. 347, ll. 26461.
[401] *The Statutes at Large,* vol. I, p. 380.
[402] *The Statutes at Large*, vol. I, p. 381.
[403] J. Scattergood, 'Fashion and Morality in the Later Middle Ages', in his *Reading the Past. Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Literature,* (Dublin, 1996), 240-57, at pp. 244-5.

His second major work, *Vox Clamantis*, is much more extensive on the labourer. It consists of seven books of which the first was written after the Peasants' Revolt. In this work, Gower deals with the three estates as well and where they have gone wrong. In comparison with the first two estates, the third estate is again treated very briefly. However, in comparison to *Mirour de l'Omme*, in book V, he is much harsher in his description of the peasant and in particularly, the 'servant of the plow'. Again, Gower is very much concerned with the peasants working for higher wages than they, according to Gower, deserve:

> So if God's peasant pays attention to the plowshare as it goes along, and if he thus carries on the work of the fertile field will bear and the grape will stand abundant in their due seasons. Now, however, scarcely a farmer wishes to do such work; instead, he wickedly loafs everywhere.[404]

Here Gower is referring to Luke 9:62: 'ait ad illum Iesus nemo mittens manum suam in aratrum et aspiciens retro aptus est regno Dei'.[405] In this passage, the metaphor of ploughing without looking back is used as exemplifying continued and constant devotedness to Jesus only. Gower is saying that currently the peasants are not following Jesus' commands, but they are following their own material gain. We must note that Gower does believe that the peasants are capable of fulfilling their duties properly. He expresses this explicitly.[406] However, in his days

> an evil disposition is widespread among the common people, and I suspect that the servants of the plow are often responsible for it. For they are sluggish, they are scarce, and they are grasping. For the very little they do they demand the highest pay.[407]

Gower believes that the servant ploughmen are mainly responsible for the rise in labour wages and essentially the servant ploughmen are the cause of the negative image the peasantry had even before the Peasants' Revolt. Gower instructs the peasant to 'put his limbs to work, as is proper for him to do. Just as a barren field uncultivated by the plowshare fails the granaries and brings home no crop in autumn, so does the worthless

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[404] Book V, ll. 568-74.
[405] Jesus said to him: 'No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God'.
[406] 'Yet a short time ago one performed more service than three do now, as those maintain who are well acquainted with the facts.' (Book V, l. 581)
[407] Book V, ll. 575-9.

churl, the more he is cherished by your love, fail you and bring on your ruin'.[408] One should treat the ploughmen as they deserve: as servants with no rights at all. It shows that Gower was aware of the tense atmosphere among the peasantry and the other two orders of society. He feels the Peasants' Revolt looming. Langland has similar complaints about these kind of labourers in the B-Text, which was also written before the Peasants' Revolt:

> Laborers that have no land to lyve on but hire handes
> Deyned noght to dyne aday nyght-olde wortes
> May no peny ale hem paie, ne no pece of bacoun,
> But if it be fressh flessh outher fissh fryed outher ybake –
> And that *chaud* and *plus chaud*, for chillynge of his mawe.
> And but if he be heighliche hyred, ellis wole he chide –
> And that he was werkmen wroght warie the tyme.
> Ayeins Catons counseil comseth he to jangle:
> *Paupertatis onus pacienter ferre memento.*
> He greveth hym ageyn God and gruccheth ageyn Reson,
> And thanne corseth he the Kyng and al his Counseil after
> Swiche lawes to loke, laborers to greve.
> Ac whiles Hunger was hir maister, ther wolde noon of hem chide,
> Ne stryven ayeins his statut, so sterneliche he loked!
> (B.vi.306-18)

Langland here describes the same servant labourers Gower detested. Here too, landless labourers who make their living from wages prefer to live according to kingly standards that would have been considered inappropriate at the time. They seem to have forgotten their social status that regarded them as poor. They even have the nerve to complain about the current laws that tried to control their excessive demands concerning their wages. In passus vi, Piers tried to control the wasters by sending Hunger to get them to work again. Langland seems to suggest here that Hunger might control them, but in the fourteenth century, it was famine, among other things, that contributed to the situation in which landless labourers demanded higher wages due to labour shortage. Therefore, it is not really Hunger's 'statut' the labourers strive against, but the Statute of Labourers. Both Langland and Gower write with the knowledge of the Statute of Labourers, which sought to regulate wages after the plague.

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[408] Book V, ll. 616-20. Here Gower plays with the word 'cultus' meaning both 'cultivated' and 'cherished'.

Several points have become apparent from my overview. First, throughout the centuries, the ploughman was an authoritative and literate figure in almost every text discussed above. From Langland to the mid-sixteenth century, the ploughman possesses an impressive knowledge of the Bible, in most cases both in Latin and the vernacular, although in the early sixteenth century knowledge of the Latin Bible was considered of less importance than knowledge of the vernacular Bible. Of course, in the early sixteenth century there was an increasing call for the Bible to be translated into the vernacular. Erasmus wrote in his preface to his Greek New Testament: 'I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Holy Scriptures, translated into the common tongue, should be read by the unlearned … I wish that the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plough, that the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and that the traveller might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them'.[409] This was realised by William Tyndale when he finished his English translation of the Bible. Tyndale once said to a learned man, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost!'.[410] When we come to the text *I Playne Piers*, we see hostility towards the Latin Bible and the Latin mass. Furthermore, most of the ploughman texts speak against scholarly knowledge. This is the case in Langland and for the *Crede*-author, but also for the sixteenth-century authors of *A Godly Dyalogue*, *I Playne Piers* and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*. Although the focus in the latter texts has shifted more to simplicity, all ploughmen show an impressive knowledge of the Bible. Langland and the *Crede*-author explicitly mention that they prefer natural knowledge or knowledge inspired by the Holy Ghost. The sixteenth-century texts make much of the contrast between Catholic scholarly knowledge of the clergy and the simplicity of the Protestant common people. Therefore, these ploughmen cannot present themselves as learned ploughmen; instead they emphasize their simplicity in order to improve their credibility. Apparently, it was still not common for the reader to expect a learned ploughman, despite the popularity of Langland's creation. Therefore, these authors chose to place the ploughman's intelligence beneath the surface. In this way it would be easier for the ploughman-speaker to criticise the Catholic clergy. The supposedly learned priest looks even more foolish when a seemingly unlearned ploughman manages to outsmart him. In addition, simplicity becomes the prerequisite for the right type

[409] Quoted in F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible. A History of Translations*, (London, 1961), p. 29.
[410] D. Daniell, *William Tyndale. A Biography*, (New Haven, London, 1994), p. 1.

of knowledge – Protestant knowledge, which focuses on the plain text, rather than on elaborate explanations and glosses. Nevertheless, it is clear to the reader that he/she is not dealing with a simple unintelligent ploughman. Furthermore, even in some texts where the ploughman is clearly illiterate, the ploughman is still able to outsmart the Catholic priest, as we have seen in *John Bon and Mast Parson*. Although the ploughman remains literate throughout the centuries and maintains his knowledge of the Bible, simplicity has become the keyword in sixteenth-century ploughman texts, which was not so much the case in the fourteenth century.

The issue of poverty was mainly stressed in the earlier period. The most vivid image of the poor ploughman comes from the *Crede* and Chaucer and Langland also give a few details about the appearance of the ploughman. The sixteenth-century texts do not provide the reader with such details. In most texts, the appearance of the ploughman is not an important matter. However, we have seen that two texts focus on the similarities between the poor people the ploughman speaker identifies himself with and the image of the poor Christ. Both ploughmen in *I Playne Piers* and *The Praier and Complaynte* increase their importance by comparing their poverty with the poverty of Christ. The latter text is the only text in which the ploughman possesses Christ-like features, just as Langland's Piers Plowman did – albeit not as extensive. It is not difficult to imagine that a poor ploughman would evoke more sympathy and, therefore, more authority. The wealthy ploughman was, through his history, infected with the image of greed. Therefore, it is no wonder that the early sixteenth-century ploughman texts did not focus so much on the issue of poverty and wealth. The negative image of the wealthy ploughman existed, apart from the *A Lytell Geste*, only in the fourteenth century and can be attributed to effects of the Statute of Labourers and the economic situation. We have already concluded that *A Lytell Geste* falls outside the English ploughman tradition as we have it in the sixteenth century.[411]

The aggressive temperament of the ploughman was not as widespread. We have seen that Langland clearly created a ploughman who, at times, could not control himself and acted out of sheer anger. These actions served the plot and purpose of the text. The ploughman in the *Crede*, although perhaps not really aggressive, also seems to lose track of the main issue: teaching the narrator the creed. However, the ploughman's expositions about the greedy friars serve to warn the reader. The only other really aggressive

[411] See chapter three, pp. 129-130.

ploughman can be found the sixteenth-century text *The Banckett.* Initially, the reader might be distracted from the ploughman's hostile remarks towards the Protestants; however, we have seen that the ploughman reacts in this way because he wants to protect the reader against their heretical ideas. Considering that the other texts did not make use of a passionate and moody character might indicate that this feature of the ploughman diminishes his credibility and authority. It is significant that Langland, for instance, has changed Piers' actions when writing the C-text. The passages in which Piers for 'pure tene' tears the pardon and throws the prop to the devil are either deleted (the 'tearing of the pardon' scene) or given to a different character (*Liberum Arbitrium* throws the prop rather than Piers). Evidently, Langland felt that Piers' violent actions stood in the way of the correct interpretation of the text and he felt the need to change these passages. The fact that *The Banckett* only survived in one manuscript and not even in print, could suggest that the text was not very popular or well known. This could be because the temper of the ploughman was not as convincing to the audience as in the other very popular ploughman texts. The aggressive ploughman was obviously not a success.

Chapter Five: Conclusion: The Ploughman Archetype

The last fifteen years have seen an increased interest in the Plowman tradition and mainly in the ploughman texts of the early sixteenth century. Several scholars have tried to settle the question whether these texts are based on Langland's *Piers Plowman*. They have tried to look for connections between these texts and *Piers Plowman* in relation to content, the figure of the ploughman, style, language, idiom, expression, theme, etc. Up to now, the answers to that question have been varied. The four main scholars who are involved in this debate are Anne Hudson and James Simpson, who claim that these texts have nothing to do with Langland's work; and Barbara Johnson and John Bowers who do see possible connections. The reason why I embark on this overview now, is that none of these scholars truly engages in an in-depth analysis of these works. They merely compare them to Langland. This thesis has shown that this approach does injustice to the texts themselves. Nevertheless, the question whether the Tudor texts are related to Langland remains a valid one. This concluding chapter will first give the overview mentioned above, to which I will add my findings. However, we will see that the real question is why the ploughman figure was so popular in the early sixteenth-century. As the reader will see below, none of these scholars gives a full answer to that question. In this final chapter, I will provide possible solutions.

Anne Hudson discusses the legacy of *Piers Plowman* throughout the centuries, starting with the writings of John Ball.[412] She briefly outlines the scholarship on possible influences on *Piers Plowman*, the connection between Lollardy and *Piers Plowman* and the influence of *Piers Plowman* on later works, which she discusses one by one. She believes that where an influence upon certain Wyclifite texts is possible due to similar phraseology and themes, it is more likely that these writers were 'drawing upon a common tradition'.[413] For the *Praier and Complaynte* and the *Plowman's Tale*, she states that neither of them make any 'direct allusion' to Piers Plowman.[414] She raises several important questions, which she, however, does not fully answer:

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[412] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*'.
[413] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 254.
[414] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 257.

> The problem is … to make a fair assessment of the extent to which the spokesman, particularly by the sixteenth-century, had become a commonplace: were the authors, or the later revisers of these two works [*Praier and Complaynte* and *Plowman's Tale*] consciously reviving a figure which they and their audiences would have associated with Langland's poem? Or had the ploughman become a proverbial model of the upright, honest labourer, and, at least in Lollard circles, of the plain man with somewhat radical notions about the church and its role in society? In the latter case, any reminiscence of *Piers Plowman* could be unintentional.[415]

She believes this is particularly the case for *A Lytel Geste*[416] and we have seen that this text differs considerably from the other early sixteenth-century ploughman texts. There are, however, three texts that specifically mention the name Piers in their titles (*I playne Piers*, *A Godly Dyalogue* and *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation*). Hudson argues that, although there are some points that these texts have in common with Langland (similar topics, literary parallels), she doubts whether the authors had any real knowledge of Langland's poem.[417] She continues with a brief description of Crowley's editions, who connected Langland to Wyclif. Also, several later sixteenth-century works related to *Piers Plowman* are mentioned (*Newes from the North*, *A Myrroure for Magistrates*). She concludes that these sixteenth-century writers probably had no clear knowledge of the poem *Piers Plowman* itself and that it is just the name that became popular, not the content.[418]

However, in the nineteen-nineties two critics came forward with a much more positive view on the degree of reception of *Piers Plowman* in sixteenth-century literature. Barbara Johnson and John Bowers both agree that the ploughman texts had been strongly influenced by *Piers Plowman* through Wycliffite literature. Both authors look at the reception of Langland's work in cultural terms, whereas Hudson approaches the subject from a literary point of view. This idea is strengthened by evidence that early sixteenth-century reformers saw strong connections between Langland and Wyclif. Furthermore, Johnson and Bowers note that *Piers Plowman*, though seen as orthodox by modern critics, contains several elements that would find strong sympathy among the Lollards (clerical disendowment, anti-clericalism, anti-fraternalism, emphasis on individual and personal

[415] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 258.
[416] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 258.
[417] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 259.
[418] A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 263.

spiritual pilgrimage without clerical mediation, etc.). It is clear that *Piers Plowman* was very much welcomed by the Lollards. Moreover, Johnson and Bowers claim that '*Piers Plowman* came to be associated with the revolutionary religious views of Wyclif and his Lollard followers as well as with the political views of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381'.[419] Due to this reputation, *Piers Plowman* 'was forced to lead much the same shadow existence as the main Wycliffite tradition',[420] which explains why there are relatively few ploughman texts that date from the fifteenth century and this also explains why Caxton did not print the Bible or *Piers Plowman.*[421] Both authors then, see clear links between the early sixteenth-century texts, *Piers Plowman* and Lollard / early Protestant ideas. In fact, Johnson claims that the early sixteenth-century readers saw *Piers Plowman* as a Protestant text.[422] She believes that the existence of the early Tudor Protestant ploughman texts testify that they read '*Piers Plowman* from a Wycliffite perspective'. This, however, is, in my opinion, not enough proof that these early Tudor ploughman authors had in-depth knowledge of *Piers Plowman.* This can only be proved by literary echoes of Langland's work, and Hudson has shown that there are none. Johnson's arguments and conclusions are then based upon this assumption that these early Tudor writers knew the poem in detail. Bowers does not specifically comment much on the figure of the ploughman. Johnson argues that there was no sense of loss for the figure of the ploughman during his development: 'Piers the Plowman in Langland's poem represented the ideal Christian who knew the way to truth. The earliest apocrypha use the image of the plowman as ideal Christian but combined it with strong anticlericalism and align the figure with Lollard issues, invoking the authority of *Piers Plowman* itself. The reformers in the sixteenth century saw in the plowman an antique figure who could lend authority to their claims.'[423] According to Johnson, this can be seen in, for instance, the *Praier and Complaynte*, which attempts to show that their so-called 'new learning' actually had its roots in the past.[424] In addition, these texts show the connection between the ploughman figure and the Lollards' concern for the translation of

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[419] B. Johnson, *Reading* Piers Plowman *and* The Pilgrim's Progress. *Reception and the Protestant Reader,* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1992), p. 71.
[420] J. M. Bowers, p. 33.
[421] J. M. Bowers, p. 36.
[422] B. Johnson, p. 64.
[423] B. Johnson, p. 87.
[424] B. Johnson, p. 79.

the Bible into English. Finally, in the text *I Playne Piers*, the ploughman has turned into an extreme radical protestant, calling for revolt.[425]

The latest critic who has studied the *Piers Plowman* tradition is James Simpson.[426] In this article, Simpson examines the doctrine on grace and how this developed in early Tudor literature. Wyatt shows that God's grace is the only way to reach salvation for the sinner.[427] Humans cannot interfere; the decision upon meriting grace lies in the hands of God only. This way of thinking was transferred to the authority of the King. In the early Tudor period, the power of the King was not questioned either. Simpson argues that *Piers Plowman* is 'prophetic, looking forward as it does to Reformation theology. Even as it prophesies such a spirituality, however, it also recoils from it: *Piers Plowman* both foresees and forestalls the Reformation, by offering a reformation of its own in which grace is distributed in a wholly decentralised way'.[428] When seen in this light, Simpson argues that 'none of the works that claims inspiration from *Piers Plowman*, let alone any prior 'plowman' material from the 1530s, makes any serious engagement with Langland's poem. My own view is that *Piers Plowman* ceased to exert any real pressure on later literature because changes internal to the structure of theology and politics rendered the poem, despite the evident desire of later writers to deploy it, effectively unreachable'.[429] Simpson compares the sixteenth-century ploughman texts with *Piers Plowman* in relation to the involvement of grace in labour and politics. 'As in English evangelical theological writings of this period, these tracts suggest no connection whatsoever between labour and penitential payment to God. … Whereas *Piers Plowman* imagines, and indeed exhorts, a labour structure being generated from the bottom up, the organization of work in these later tracts is projected as wholly in the decision and initiative of the king or parliament.'[430] Because of the nature of his approach to the early Tudor ploughman texts, it is not necessary to discuss them in great detail. Nevertheless, despite Simpson's conclusion, the ploughman figure was extremely popular at the time and Simpson fails to address the question why this is so.

The answer to that question depends on how you see Langland's poem. If you read the poem as an orthodox one trying to change the Catholic church from within but holding

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[425] B. Johnson, p. 86.
[426] J. Simpson, 'Grace Abounding: Evangelical Centralization and the End of *Piers Plowman*', in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 14 (2000), 49-73.
[427] J. Simpson, 'Grace Abounding' , pp. 49-50
[428] J. Simpson, 'Grace Abounding', pp. 53-4.
[429] J. Simpson, 'Grace Abounding', p. 55.
[430] J. Simpson, 'Grace Abounding', pp. 68-9.

on to true Catholic values and customs, the answer must be that the early Tudor texts do not have much in common with Langland's text. However, if you read *Piers Plowman* as a Lollard text, you can see several comparisons. Although it is impossible to give the 'correct' interpretation of Langland's poem, overall critics tend to agree that Langland was not a Lollard. They also agree, however, that there are certain connections between the ideas of the Lollards and Langland's poem. Scholars have concluded that this is because the Lollards probably drew comfort from Langland's poem, and not the other way around. Where the Lollards went much further on several issues (transubstantiation, auricular confession, etc), Langland remained faithful to the doctrine of the Catholic church. We have seen this especially in my analysis of Latimer's and Langland's use of the ploughing metaphor; Latimer simply was not a second Langland, because he approached the use of the metaphor from an entirely different religious perspective. When it comes to pure content, I have to agree with Hudson and Simpson, that the early Tudor texts do not resemble Langland's poem in great detail. On the contrary, you will not find a second Christ-like figure as Piers Plowman was, or a spiritual pilgrimage of a group of people to find the meaning of Truth and the way to salvation.

Where Langland focussed on describing both the corruption of his society and his ideal society (especially related to religious matters and the Catholic Church), the early Tudor authors focus on very specific issues that were important in their time. It is not a coincidence that the ploughman texts cover mainly two major themes: namely, enclosure and transubstantiation. These were two major issues in the early sixteenth century and we have seen that the ploughman figure suited these topics very well. However, this still does not explain why the ploughman figure was still so popular in the early sixteenth century. If it is likely that these authors did not know Langland's poem in-depth, why was the figure of the ploughman still so significant? One has to agree with Johnson and Bowers that several ideas were commonplace for both Langland and the early Tudors. The answer, then, has to lie somewhere in the middle: although these authors did not *know Piers Plowman* in depth, they certainly *knew of Piers Plowman.*[431] There was what I propose to call a certain

[431] Kelen has attempted to give an answer to this question as well: 'The solution to this puzzle lies in Piers's double iconic status by the sixteenth century; Piers appears as a voice of satire or protest in the works of Langland's late fourteenth-century followers, but sixteenth-century authors also use him as a voice of antiquity – and thus authority. This expansion of Piers's symbolic function explains his longevity as a character: Piers's antiquity made him valuable to sixteenth-century authors, even those who had not read Langland's poem', S. A. Kelen, p. 102. I fully agree with this. Kelen aptly shows that for the sixteenth-century printed *Crede, The Praier and Complaynt, I Playne Piers* and Crowley's printed editions of *Piers*

"Ploughman Archetype" that survived until the Tudor period. This Ploughman Archetype is based on how Langland's poem was received in the late fourteenth century. Reception theorists perceive the interpretation of a text by means of the reader's response to the text.[432] No longer is the text or the author the main focus of attention, but the relation between the reader and the text. It is relevant that the intentions of the author are no longer important; neither is his historical and cultural background. On the contrary, it is the reader's historical and cultural background that should come to the fore. This approach to *Piers Plowman* is crucial in understanding its early reception. It is clear that this early reception of the poem is closely connected with Lollardy and with the Peasants' Revolt.

In chapter three, we have seen that Langland's poem was quickly connected with Lollardy, through the Lollard poem *Pierce the Plowman's Crede*. This poem was written in the late fourteenth century and is regarded as one of the most closely related texts to Langland's poem. We have seen that Langland consciously changed his poem in order to diminish the temper of the ploughman, perhaps because of the early reception of the poem by the Lollards and the social rebels. The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 is the other factor that influenced the early reception of Langland's poem. We have seen that the revolt connected the priest and the ploughman. Furthermore, fourteenth-century chroniclers saw a clear connection between the revolt and Lollardy, as they thought that John Ball was a disciple of John Wyclif.[433] Moreover, the Cistercian Dieulacres Abbey Chronicle mentions 'Per Plowman' as one of the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt alongside 'Iohannis B' and 'Iak Strawe'.[434] From this it is abundantly clear that the poem *Piers Plowman*, Lollardy and the Peasants' Revolt, were perceived to be intrinsically interconnected by the early readers,[435] despite the efforts of Langland to distance himself.

The belief in a connection between the poem and Lollardy was still very much alive in the early sixteenth century. This can be seen, for instance, in the fact that *Pierce the*

Plowman all evoke the antiquity of the text. The other ploughman texts discussed in this thesis do make this claim, perhaps because those authors did not find it necessary to make that antiquity explicit, or because they did not see the need to claim authority simply because the figure of the ploughman already contained this sufficiently. If this is the case, why then did Crowley, at a time when England was under a Protestant regime, still see the need to make this claim? Furthermore, it must be said that the authors of the text discussed by Kelen claim antiquity of the texts themselves, not as much of the figure of the ploughman. Therefore, I prefer to put the emphasis on the ploughman's association with religious and social reform.

[432] J. L. Machor, and P. Goldstein, ed. *Reception Study. From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, (New York and London, 2001), p. 1. Reception theory originated in Germany through the work of Hans-Robert Jauss and was most influential in the 70s and 80s.

[433] See chapter three, p. 105-107.

[434] J. M. Bowers, p. 5.

[435] See also the first 7 pages of the article by M. Aston, 'Lollardy and Sedition 1381-1431'.

Plowman's Crede was printed together with *Piers Plowman* by Owen Rogers in 1561. Moreover, the two sixteenth-century manuscript copies of the *Crede* both contain *Piers Plowman*; in the manuscript dating from the first half of the sixteenth century, the *Crede* forms an introduction to *Piers Plowman.*[436] In another manuscript of *Piers Plowman*, Cambridge University Library MS Ll.4.14, appears the Lollard-influenced poem *Mum and the Sothsegger* (*Richard the Redeless*). This text, which immediately follows *Piers Plowman*, is laid out in such a way that it was interpreted as a continuation of *Piers Plowman.*[437] In addition, Langland, Wyclif and *Piers Plowman* were seen as closely related. John Bale, the sixteenth-century Protestant writer of plays and numerous polemical works, in his first bibliography *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae Scriptorum Summarium* (published in 1548) attributed the text 'Petrum Agricolam' to 'Ioannes Wicleus'.[438] Robert Crowley, the first printer of *Piers Plowman*, was closely connected to Bale; and probably because of his influence,[439] Crowley saw Langland as an early Protestant who must have been inspired by John Wyclif:

> In whose tyme it pleased God to open the eyes of many to se hys truth, geuing them boldenes of herte, to open their mouthes and crye oute agaynste the worckes of darckenes, as did Iohn wicklefe, who also in those dayes translated the holye Bible into the Englishe tonge, and this writer who in reportynge certaine visions and dreames, that he fayned him selfe to haue dreamed: doeth moste christianlye enstruct the weake, and sharply rebuke the obstinate blynde. (✶2^{r})[440]

Despite the corrections of Bale, who turned 'Roberte Langlande' into the author of *Piers Plowman*, in London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687, we still find a late sixteenth-century to early seventeenth-century annotator who thought that 'the author Robert Langland' was 'a cheife disciple of John Wickliffs'.[441]

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[436] H. Barr, p. 8. This concerns British Library, MS Bibl. Reg.18.B.XVII (first half of 16th C) and MS Trinity College Cambridge R.3.15 (second half of 16th C).
[437] D. C. Benson, and L. Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts of* Piers Plowman*: The B-Version,* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 47. The text is similarly laid out, decorated and annotated. This is a fifteenth-century manuscript, but this also indicates that *Piers Plowman* was connected to Lollard material.
[438] J. N. King, *English Reformation Literature,* p. 71.
[439] R. C. Hailey, 'Giving Light to the Reader: Robert Crowley's Editions of *Piers Plowman* (1550)', (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 2001), p. 20-4.
[440] Quoted in R. C. Hailey, p. 12.
[441] G. Kane, Piers Plowman. *The Evidence for Authorship,* p. 43, n. 3.

It is clear that, even in the sixteenth-century, people believed there to be a close connection between *Piers Plowman*, Wyclif and Lollardy. Although some modern critics argued that Langland's text was unobtainable, Hailey has shown that this was not the case:

> But a check of Robert Steele's valuable "list of all English books prohibited by name during Henry VIII's reign" shows that *Piers Plowman* is not among them (214-15). There are, however, two works with explicit references to plowmen that were banned in the 1530s: *A proper dyalogue, betwene a gentillman and a husbandman* (1530; STC 1462.3 and 1462.5; Steele lists this work as "Dialogue between gentleman & plowman) and *The praier and complaint of the ploweman vnto Christe* (1531; STC 20036). And in 1546 the sweeping Proclamation of 8 July "forbad all works of Frith, Tyndale, Wycliffe, Joy, Roy, Basile [Becon], Bale, Barnes, Coverdale, Turner, and Tracy and Tyndal or Coverdale's New Testment" (Steele 214).[442]

Moreover, considering the numerous sixteenth-century annotations in *Piers Plowman* manuscripts and the fact that the text was still copied in the sixteenth century[443] and proof of sixteenth-century ownership,[444] it is clear that the text was still available to people at that time. We have seen that both ploughman-texts mentioned above reproduced reprints of 'ancient' Lollard tracts, in order to prove that their ideas were not newfangled. Whereas these two texts were illegal, there is no proof that Langland's text was prohibited, despite the associations with Wyclif.

Although there is no clear proof that the Peasants' Revolt was still linked with *Piers Plowman* in the early sixteenth century, the ploughman was, however, still linked with social and economic unrest at that time, simply because of his profession. Nevertheless, John Ball's famous sermon lines 'when Adam dolf and Eue span, / who was then a gentylman?', which refers to the equality of the people, were still popular at that time, considering this quotation from *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*.[445] Furthermore, the Jack Cade episode in Shakespeare's play *Henry VI* shows that ideologies of several social rebellions

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[442] R. C. Hailey, p. 7.

[443] See, for instance, Bodleian Library MS Digby 145 (S.C. 1746), which was copied by Sir Adrian Fortescue in 1531-32. See also T. Turville-Petre, 'Sir Adrian Fortescue and his Copy of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 14 (2000), 29-48.

[444] See, for instance, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 581 (S.C. 987), where we find the name Raffe Coppynger (d. 1551) on fol 93a. He wrote the following memorandum: 'Memorandum þat I haue lent to Nicholas brigham the pers ploughman which I borrowed of Mr Le of Addyngton', W. Langland, Piers Plowman. *The B Version*, revised edition, ed. G. Kane and E. T. Donaldson (London, 1988), p. 10.

[445] See chapter one, p. 19 and further. The lines quoted are from *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, ll. 485-6.

were mixed up; Shakespeare uses ideas from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (again, the ideas of John Ball on equality), Kett's rebellion and Jack Cade's rebellion.[446] There were many rebellions and riots in the early sixteenth century, concerning both religious and social matters. For Somerset and his government both religion and social matters became intertwined.[447] We have seen in the first chapter that enclosure and religious issues were often connected.[448] The following quotation from one of Latimer's sermons, where he refers to two types of enclosing, testifies to this: 'the one is an inclosing to let or hinder the bodily ploughing, and the other to let or hinder the holiday-ploughing, the church-ploughing.'[449] And we have seen that *Pyers Plowmans Exhortation* also connects the two. It is clear that in the early sixteenth century, just as in the late fourteenth century, social reform and religious issues went hand in hand. The ploughman figure, then, still symbolises both religious and social reform.

One possible connection between the ploughman texts and Langland's *Piers Plowman* is the use of dialogues in most of these works. In early sixteenth-century literature authors often chose the dialogue form to present their ideas. 'The dialogue form has been pressed into the service of pamphleteering'.[450] There are several possible influences: the German influence, or Humanistic influence via Erasmus.[451] However, it is interesting and relevant to note that scribes of eight manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*'s B version referred to the text as a 'dialogus' in their explicits. These scribes then interpreted the text as a dialogue.[452] The clearest example, and closest example to *Piers Plowman*, is *The Banckett of Iohan the Reve unto Piers Ploughman.* This text opens with a dinner party between Johan the Reeve and some of his neighbours when Jack Jolie enters and joins them. From there on the dialogue continues with the debate on transubstantiation. The opening setting resembles the dinner party at Conscience's manor-house in passus xiii of *Piers Plowman.* Will is invited by Conscience to speak to Clergie and it turns out that Patience and a Doctour of Divinity are there as well. They discuss the meaning of Dowell, Dobet and Dobest and it is clear that the Doctour of Divinity is ridiculed for his lack of

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[446] M. Hattaway, ed, *The Second Part of King Henry VI* by William Shakespeare, (Cambridge, 1991), p. 29-34.
[447] A. Fletcher, and D. MacCulloch, p. 78.
[448] See p. 34-6; 42-3.
[449] H. Latimer. *The Sermons,* p. 39. For a fuller discussion of this sermon, see chapter three, p. 109 ff. See also chapter one for the full quotation, p. 37.
[450] J. M. Berdan, *Early Tudor Poetry. 1485-1547*, (Hamden (Conn.), 1961), p. 399.
[451] See J. M. Berdan, p. 399-400.
[452] See also D. C. Benson, and L. Blanchfield, p. 12.

learning and his inability to follow the religious guidelines he himself teaches. As in Platonic dialogue, Will leaves with Conscience and Patience and the matter is left unresolved. This is also the case with *The Banckett*. As mentioned in chapter three, the ending is quite unsatisfactory as both parties retained their own view on transubstantiation and leave without convincing one another. We can find the same dinner setting in *A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyon between Pyers Plowman and a Popysh Preest*. Here the dinner party is also arranged for the neighbours who are mostly rustics and lower-class people (although they do not play a role, but they are the audience of the four priests). Also present are four priests and they discuss the matter of transubstantiation just when Pyers Plowman walks in. However, this text does end with the priest being convinced by the ideas of the Protestant Piers.[453]

In chapters two and four we have seen further arguments which enforce a closer connection between *The Banckett* and *Piers Plowman*. In chapter two, we have seen that the characters' professions are the same as the professions which Langland praises in context of their religious proximity to God in contrast to religious clerics. In chapter four we have seen that *The Banckett* is the only text that stresses the aggressive side of the ploughman figure. We have seen that Langland initially created an aggressive ploughman in two relevant key passages, but he rewrote these passages removing the violence altogether. *The Banckett*-author, however, depicts his ploughman figure as behaving violently and aggressively towards the Protestant figure Jack Jolie. If we take these three points together (the dinner party, the professions and the aggressive Piers), one could tentatively conclude that *The Banckett*-author may have directly drawn this from Langland's poem. As the ploughman figure in this text is rather distinct from the other early Tudor ploughman texts, he could only have retrieved this from Langland's poem.

When looking at the early sixteenth-century reception of *Piers Plowman*, I propose to take a closer look at reception theory. Jauss was influenced by Russian formalists and I would like to turn to one of them, namely, Boris Tomaŝevskij. Although he does not directly speak about reception theory that can be applied to medieval literature, there are several interesting features of his theory that can be applied to the case of the early Tudors.

Tomaŝevskij has looked at the relationship between biography and literature. He claims that from the eighteenth century the biography of the author became relevant for the

[453] See chapter two, p. 72.

reader. The author created some kind of legend that formed his biography with which the reader had a creative interaction: 'The legends are a premise which the author himself took into account during the creative process'.[454] According to Tomaŝevskij, 'the biographical commentary to a literary work often consists of the curriculum vitae, the genealogy, of the characters mentioned in the work. However, in referring to a given character, the author did not assume that the reader knew the curriculum vitae of that character. However, he did assume that the reader knew the character's anecdotal representation, consisting of actual and invented material, created in the reader's milieu'.[455] This theory, with some modifications, can be crucial in the understanding of the reception of Langland's *Piers Plowman* in the early sixteenth century.

Langland himself did not, of course, actively create a biographical legend around his own authorship for the reader, but late fourteenth-century circumstances did; namely Lollardy and the Peasants' Revolt. Furthermore, the authorship of Langland was yet not fully known in the early sixteenth century. Indeed, according to Kane, there was some sort of search for the author's name in the 1540s and 1550s, considering John Bale's idea that the author's name was Robert Langland, which spread through some of the manuscripts.[456] Moreover, authoritative evidence of William Langland being the author of *Piers Plowman* comes mainly from a note in the Trinity College, Dublin MS 212, which reads that Stacey de Rokayle was the father of William Langland, who wrote the poem.[457] Therefore, we cannot apply Tomaŝevskij's theory to Langland, the author. However, when we look at the character Piers Plowman, I do believe this is possible. The early sixteenth-century readers and authors of the ploughman texts knew Piers Plowman's 'anecdotal representation, consisting of actual and inventing material': the Ploughman Archetype that was established in the late fourteenth century. For the early sixteenth-century readers the ploughman figure represented both religious (Lollardy) and social (Peasants' Revolt) reform. Tomaŝevskij's theory of biography and reception is then related to Piers Plowman and the reader, rather then Langland and the reader. Rather than asking how the poet's biography operates in the reader's consciousness,[458] it is important to ask how Piers Plowman's biography operates in the reader's consciousness. Although the early Tudor ploughman text authors may not have

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[454] B. Tomaŝevskij, 'Literature and Biography', transl. in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska (Cambridge, 1971), 47-55, at p. 52.
[455] B. Tomaŝevskij, p. 52.
[456] G. Kane, Piers Plowman. *The Evidence for Authorship*, p. 40, 45.
[457] G. Kane, Piers Plowman. *The Evidence for Authorship*, p. 26, 35.
[458] B. Tomaŝevskij, p. 47.

consciously borrowed Langland's figure of the ploughman, Piers's biography that originated from the poem, consisting of actual (his characteristics as a figure) and invented material (his association with religious and social reform) – which together form the Ploughman Archetype – was something I believe they had clear access to. Although Langland tries to prevent it, it had already become 'ideology'. The early sixteenth-century reader came across the Ploughman Archetype or legend through cultural dissemination and through the circulation of the manuscripts. For the authors of the early Tudor Ploughman texts it is, therefore, not inconceivable that they knew of this ploughman's association with religious and social reform. On the contrary, I believe that this association had become common knowledge, both for the educated writers and the less educated reader. The ploughman's association with religious and social reform was ideal because of the ploughman's nature or characteristics that were mainly derived from Langland's poem. We have seen in the last chapter that the ploughman was an educated ploughman, with a clear knowledge of the Bible, often both in Latin and English; if the ploughman was not very educated he was very smart and used his wit to overcome his opponent's arguments (often the priest). Because of his trade, the ploughman was obviously linked with social issues: his status could be low enough for him to understand the ordinary peasants' needs and high enough to enable him to comment on current social-economic affairs. It is, therefore, no surprise that the early Tudor ploughman authors translated the link between the ploughman with both religious and social reform to the main important concerns of their time, their own 'milieu': enclosure and transubstantiation. Enclosure was a matter that confronted the ploughman directly and for the issue of transubstantiation the ploughman was the ideal figure to enter into a dialogue with the priest, considering the ploughman's history in Langland's poem (Piers's argument with the priest over the pardon and his other confrontations with figures of religious authority – the Doctour of Divinity). What may have come as a surprise is the vast diversity of the figure of the ploughman. This does not only apply to theme and subject of texts and different genres of texts, but also to the diverse and flexible nature of the ploughman figure himself. The ploughman, because of his clear associations with religious and social reform and because of his characteristics as an eloquent and educated speaker and his fluidity, was the ideal spokesman to represent their own ideas on these matters.

Appendix:

Transcription of

The Banckett of Johan the Reve vnto Peirs Ploughman, Laurens Laborer, Thomlyn Tailyor and Hobb of the Hill with Others.

Introduction

This early sixteenth-century text is preserved in only one paper manuscript, quarto, British Library, Harley 207. To my knowledge, it has never been printed; there are no other manuscript versions; and neither is there a modern edition available.[459] The manuscript contains no other texts. The title page mentions the date 1532, which, according to the hand, may be accurate, although Hudson believes this date may be 'too early for credibility'.[460] However, it is written in a very clear Tudor secretary hand, in an old fashioned manner, which is consistent with the date. The script combines, for instance, the two compartment 'a' with a single-lobed 'a' and a 'd' with an angular bow. Furthermore, as I have shown in chapter two, the text fits very nicely into the debate concerning transubstantiation, which saw many texts published in the late 1520s and early 1530s. The manuscript contains 42 folios, of which folios 2r to 29r preserves the text. The remaining folios are blank and some are flyleaves from a different manuscript containing accounting records.

The transcription was made from a microfilm of the manuscript. I have added modern punctuation to improve readability and contractions have been silently expanded; otherwise, I have aimed to give plain text. I have emended several obvious scribal errors and given the manuscript reading in a footnote. In a few cases it was difficult to make sense of a reading. In these cases I followed the original and give suggestions in a footnote. In most cases I have been able to trace Biblical sources. The text also quotes from the writings by the Church Fathers; I have checked the Latin quotations against the originals available in *Patrologia Latina* and have added emendations in brackets. Unfortunately, I have not

[459] There is a short extract (fol. 2r-v) in J. W. Hales, and F.J. Furnivall, eds. *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, (London, 1867-68), vol 2, p. lxi-lxii.
[460] A. Hudson, 'The legacy of *Piers Plowman*', p. 260.

been successful in all cases, especially when the author gives only the translations of his sources.

Apart from the occasional scribbles in the margins, there are several useful annotations. Mostly they refer to the sources mentioned in the text. In some cases, the annotations refer to the structure of the text, indicating the arguments given by Doctour Dawcoke and the answers by Hob of the Hill in the third part of the text. Also, there are a few pointing hands in the margins indicating relevant arguments concerning transubstantiation in the third part of the text. Here there are also a few notae.

Folio 29r contains a curious piece of text, written in the same hand, but it seems to stand apart from the main text. It appears to be a Protestant riddle concerning the existing number of sacraments. Although, strictly, it does not belong to the main text, I have included it.

Transcription

Fol. 2r

Relacion maide by Hobb of the Hill vnto sir Johan the pariche prest vpon a communicacion, betwene Jacke Jolie servyngman of thone partie, and Johan the Reve, Peirs Plowghman, Laurence Laborer, Thomlyn Tailyor, and Hobb of the Hill of thother partie. Whann the said sir Johan wold maike none annswer vnto he knewe the olde vecar mynde, the wiche saide vecar wrote lyeng in his bedd veray seeke, and delyuerde hys mynde in wrytyng vnto his pariche preste. And the said prest delyuerd the same booke to Hobb of the Hill, counsellyng hym to leaue it wherebye he myght be more able to maike better answere to suche light fellows if he chaunced to here any suche communicacion in tyme to come. Hobb of the Hill said vnto sir John: 'Good morow sir Johan', and he answered, 'Good morrowe Hobb'. Hobb said, 'sir Johan, I am veray glade of our metyng, ffor I am desirouse of your counsell in a weightie matter'. Sir Johan said, 'Marie, ye shall haue the beste councell that is in me. What is your matter?' 'Bie my faithe, sir, yesterdaie my master

fol. 2v

and Johan the Reve maid afeaste, and Peirs Plowghman, Laurence Laborer and Thomlyn Tailyor was at dyner at our house, and I serued them at dyner. And or halfe dyner was

done, comme in a servyng man called Jack Jolie, rentgetherar vnto my ladie, ffor my master Johan the reve was reconer this yeare. And when Jacke Jolie was satt downe he demannded whether we had any messe or no, and my master saide we hadde and trustede to haue. Than saide Jacke Jolie, that we war blynded for wannt of teaching, for it is plaine ydolatre to beleue that the bodie and bloude of Criste ar in forme of breade and wyne, ministrede in the alter. And for his purpose he aleged many sayenges as of Martyn Luther, Oecolampadius, Caralstad, Johan Ffrith, Melangton, with many dyuerse other. Than Peirs Ploughman waxed woundrus angrie and called Jacke Jolie 'fals heritike'. Than my master desired them bothe to be content in his house and to reason the matter gentlie and thei warre bothe contente so to doo. Than my

fol. 3r

my master Johan the Reive said that he taisted verelie that the blessed bodie and bloude of Criste was dailie offered vnpon the alter in forme of breade and wyne, and after the consecracion no substance of bread and wyne did remaine but onelie the veray bodie and bloode of Criste. Ffor it reade in the gospell vpon Palme Sonday, Matheu xxvi [26-28] *accepit iesus panem et benedixit ac fregit deditque discipulis suis et ait accipite et commedite hoc est corpus meum et accipiens calicem gratias egit et dedit illis dicens bibite ex hoc omnes hic est enim sanguis meus novi testamenti qui pro multis effunditur in remissionem peccatorum.* This is to saye: Jesus toke breade and blessed it and brake it and gaue it to his disciples and saide: 'Taike ye and eate. This is my bodie' and gaue to them sayeng, 'drynke ye all of this; trewlie this is my blood of the New Testament, the wiche for many shalbe shede in remission of synnes'. Therefore, if the gospell of Saynt Matheu be trewe, the veray bodie of Criste and his bloude is in the forme of breade and wyne. But Peires Ploughman was not fullie content but said vnto my master: 'What thynke ye suche [suche] light bown fellows regarde aither gode or

fol. 3v

his holie woorde, that we may persaue bie there lyuynge and dailie vsaige. Ffor without any occasion, thei will bie ware of abhommablie blasphemye, plucke euery member of Criste frome other and yett that can not certifie there maliciouse appetite, but bie the helpe of false heretikes wrythyng and wraistyng of holie scripture owt of right frame at euery jonte, as the dewill there maister and leder puttes in there hereticall brane, to the intent that all godlie

honer dew to that blessed sacrament, wiche is no lesse then the veraie bodie and bloude of Criste, wiche suffered death and was shede for all trewe Crystyn people. There, neighbure Johan, it is necessarij bothe for you and me and euery good man, to instructe our children servants and pore neighburs with suche godlie lessons as we here redde in the churche and to warne thame sore to gyue no credonce to any suche new fangill knawes'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'Masters, I suppose ye haue some papishe curaite that doithe blyndlie instructe you. But I shall make you by holie scripture well to persaue and knaw that the bodie of Criste and his bloude can not be presente in this worlde in forme of

fol. 4r

breade and wyne. Ffirste, remember the articles of your faithe or beleue: say not yow he assended to heawen and sitts of the reght hand of gode the father? Here maie ye knowe if he be in heawen he is not of the altar, for he cann not be in two places at one tyme'. Than said Pers Ploghman: 'wee dowte not that article to be wera trewe; ffor Saynt Marc writithe in the xvj chapiture: *et dominus quidem jesu postquam locutus est eis adsumptus est in caelum et sedit a dextris dei* [Mark 16:19]. That is to saie: and forsothe, the lorde Jhesus, after he had spoken to thome, he was receued into heawen and sitts on the right hande of gode. And diuerse other pairtes of scripture dothe affirme the same, wiche we faithfullie doe beleue the hoole scripture, for itt is all of like trewthe. Therefore, euery trew Cristene creature dothe beleue also that parte of scripture that Criste spake hym selfe, 'this is my bodie'. And if we shulde truste your reasone, that the bodie of Criste glorified myght not be in diuerse places at one tyme, than we shulde

fol. 4v

graunte as ye doe, that Gode is not almyghtie, wiche is argument againste all holie scripture bothe the Olde Testament, and the New Testament, and agaynste all reasone oppenlie declaryng the power of Gode to be almyghtie. And also in this argument ye muste graunte that diuerse creatures may do that Gode may not: at the sownd of a bell[461] or of other instruments wiche is in the eare of many people at one tyme. Alas, that euer any resonable creature shulde be blynded with so folishe argument, or thynke that Gode may not worke his pleasure at all tymes and in all places, or thynke that the scripture be trewer in any one

[461] Manuscript reads 'abell'.

place than in an other. And if ye stande in your folishe argument, ye graunt Saynt Paule to be a lier. Ffor he wrote in his firste epistill to the Corinthians xv: *novissime autem omnium [tamquam abortivo] visus est et mihi* [1 Cor. 15:8]. Paule sawe Criste wiche neuer lefte heawen senc the ascencion and Saynt Paule graunteth that he saw Criste in earthe: *ananias dicit saule frater dominus misit me [iesus] qui apparuit tibi in via* [Acts 9:17]. Therefore, I dowte not but Criste may be where and what tyme and in

fol. 5r

what forme his pleasure is. Therefore, I truste that Sainte Mark saith trewlie and falslie do ye lye. Therefore, neighboure Jolie, like as ye haue declarede the wordes of Cristes writyng bie the holie evangelist Saint Matheu, wherebie euery trew Cristiane maie know that Criste turned the breade and wyne into his blessede fleshe and bloode and for farther declaracion of the same, that euery poore innocent and meane witted creature maie be somethinge better strenghed againste the foolishe and dewillishe heretikes reasons, intendyng vtterlie to distroie all godlie honer dewe to the blissed sacrament of the alter to there vttermoste perill and daunger of euerlastyng dampnacion; not onelie to them selues, but also to all other that doithe beleue there sayengs. I once chaunced to be at the markethe vpon tewisday in passion weeke, and in the churche was the gospells of Saynt Marke the xiiii chapiture reade: *accepit iesus panem et benedicens fregit et dedit eis et ait sumite hoc est corpus meum et accepto calice gratias agens dedit eis et biberunt ex eo [illo] omnes et ait illis hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti qui pro multis effundetur* [Mark 14:22-24]. That is to saie: Jesus

fol. 5v

toke breade and blissyng it gaue ut to them, and saide, 'this is my bodie', and takeng the cuppe gyueng thankes, gaue to them and thei dranke all of it and he said to them, 'this is my bloode of a Newe Testament the wiche is shedde for many'. Thes woordes I thynke sufficient to certifie euery trew Cristiane. But the nature of heretikes wolde neuer abide the heryng of the trewthe'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'Goodman Peires, consideryng ye haue no better teachyng, I thinke youe not grea[t]lie to faute in that ye beleue that Criste dide giffe his bodie and bloode to his disciples. The letter of Saynt Matheu, and Saynte Marke ar so plane, yett I thynke ye do not well to beleue that euery preste may gyue you the same. Ffor in so doyeng ye graunte that euery pylled [pellyng] preste is equall with Gode'. Than said

Peirse Plougheman: 'In thos woordes ye clerelie declare your selfe what maner of man ye ar, and that is to saye no ffavorer of Godes mynyster or his lawes; ffor our saueyour Criste said to his disciples, wiche he maide all prestes, 'wo so euer dispices you, dispices me' [Luke 10:16]. And firste all that euer lyued vnder the law of nature, and in the favor of Gode, and vnder the lawe gyuen to moises, and fynallie vnder the lawe of the gospell, did reuerentlie vse the prestes

fol. 6r

of the same lawe, wiche ye do reviell with the woordes that ye canne thynke, wherein ye declare your selfe, to lyve vnder none of theos lawes, and where ye a scribe the hoole consecracion of the bodie and bloode of Criste to the preste, wiche is butt one lie the mynyster of that blissed sacramente, and all other to speke the woordes, and to do the thynge therevnto assigned bie Criste, in wiche woordes spoken and thynges doenge, the blissed trinite dothe work vertew and effecte of all the sacramentes. There fore, ye maie so trewlie saie, there is none one Cristiane creature in the worlde as to say the bodie and bloode of Criste is nott in forme of breade, and wyne, wiche warre to follishe aither to thynke or saie'. Then said Laurens Laborer: 'Masters, if ye please to heare, I shall shewe my mynde. Ffor suche[462] labours as neade compelleth me to do, I can not be so meate to resaue my maker vpon easter daye as manye be, but my custome is to resaive the blissed sacrament vpon wednyday in the passione weeke. And Saynt Luke writeth the gospell that day the xxiii chapture saying: *et accepto pane gratias egit et fregit et dedit eis dicens hoc est corpus*

fol. 6v

meum quod pro vobis tradetur. similiter et calicem postquam cenauit dicens hic est calix noui testamenti in sanguine meo qui pro multas effim detur [Luke 22:19-20]. That is to saye: that Criste toke breade, did gyue thankes, and brake, and gaue to them sayeng 'this is my bodie, that is gyuen for you, do this in remembrance of me'. Like wise the cuppe after he haithe sayenge, 'this is the cuppe of a New Testament with my bloode the wiche is shede for you'. Here may wee profitelie knawe that Criste not onelie gaue his owne fleshe and bloode to his disciples, but also he commanneded theme to do the same. Than my

[462] Suche in margin

master Johan Reve lewghe hartelie, and said: 'Master Jolie, it is highe tyme for you to leue your folishe argumentes seynge that poore Laurence Laborer harth gyuen you suche a sub dowtles two suche ar worthe a greate falle. Ffor here is thre of the blissede euangelistes, Mattheu, Marke and Luke, cleare agaynste you. Therefore, there is no good Cristiane will gyue any credens to your folishe, and dewillyshe woordes'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'Masters, ye thynke that ye haue auantage but trewlie not so large as ye thynke, for ye knawe, thai warr foure euangelistes and emonge

fol. 7r

all the disciples, Saynt Johan the euangeliste was moste especiall beloued aboue all the other disciples. And if the matter be so cleare as ye taike it, no dowte but he wolde haue sett itt furthe in cleare writyng, sayng it is a thyng so farre abowe the reasone of man'. Than saide Peirs Ploughman: 'Neighboure Johan, I told you before that heriesee was neuer content with trewthe. Ffor vndowtted euery Crystiane will beleue euery woorde writtyn by any of Cristes disciples, and here is thre of his blessed euangelistes clearelie agaynste hym. Yett for so muche as our neighboure Thomlyn Tailyor wirkes in many woorshippfull mens places and heres the commonyng of all sortes, I wolde we knewe hys mynd in this'. Than said Thomlyn Tailyor: 'If it will please you to here me, treuth it is, I thynke Jacke Jolie is a veraie heretike, and I knawe he falslie lies of Saynt Johan. Ffor as ye all knowe, few of our science or none goothe to the churche in the passion weeke and more petie itt is seyng suche godelie lessons arr than vsede. Ffor as I thynke the leaste of the thre that ye haue reheresede

fol. 7v

warre sufficient to certifie all Cristiane people. And further in the feaste of Corpus Cristie, Sainte Johan writethe the gospell in his sext chapitur: *dixit jesus discipulis suis et turbit iudeorum. caro [enim] mea vere est cibus et sanguis meus vere est potus qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in illo et qui manducat me [et] ipse vivit propter me hic est panis qui de caelo descendit nisi manducaveritis carnem filii hominis et biberitis eius sanguinem non habebitis vitam in vobis* [john 6:56-58, 53]. That is to saye: Jhesus said to his disciples and to the companie of the Jewes, 'my fleshe is veray meate and my bloode is veraie wyne. Who so euer eates my flesche, and drynkes my bloode abides in me, and I in hym,' and further, 'who that eates me, he lyuyth for me', and

also 'this is breade that descendide frome heawen', and yet further in the same chapiture, 'axcept ye eate the fleshe of the sonne of man, and drinke his bloode, ye shall not haue life in you', wiche saying I thynke is sufficient to declare the blissede bodie and bloode of Criste to be reallie

fol. 8r

in forme of breade and wyne so to be resaued of all Cristiane people'. Then said Johan the Reve: 'Now master Jolie, I am well assured that shame will not suffer you to speake one woorde more agaynste the blessed sacrament of the alter, seyng that all the ffower euangelistes, and moste playnlie Saynt Johan whome ye alledge for your defenc, doth wrote so plane agaynste you'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'No, dowptles not so plane against me as ye thynke, ffor I haue reade all the sayenges that ye all haith alleged of the ffoure euangelistes and grauntes them to be veraie trewe, but I knawe that ye taike them litterall, to your greate peril. Ffor Saynt Paull writith in the second epistle to the Corrinthians and the thirde chapiture, *littera occidit spiritus autem vivificat* [2 Cor. 3:7]. That is to saye: the letter killes but the spirite gifes life'. Then said Peirs Plowghman: 'Well master Jolie, now I persaue ye ar at laste of all the hereticalls shiftes. Ffor that text of the blessed Saynt Paul the apostle, is the laste defence that all heretikes cane fynde, and vnder coler of that text thei wraiste the scripture oute of joyntes

fol. 8v

and frame and yitt if it be right taken it is the moste agaynste them of all other and agaynste all heryse. Ffor if itt shull be taken as ye saye, than nothing **mi**ghte to be beleued that is wrytyne, where bie we more cleare denye all the articles of our faithe and all other woordes of Gode wich no Christen herte can thynke to be trew. For Saynt Johan writithe in his xx chapiture: *h[a]ec autem scripta sunt ut credatis* [John 20:31]. That is to saye, thes ar writyne that ye might beleue'. Than said Johan ye Reve: 'I haue here aboie that kepes my shepe, and he reades Englishe werray well. And I caws hym often tymes to reade the New Testament wherin he haith greate pleasure, and taikes itt, to the feilde, and readis dailie thereof. Therafter we will here if he can saie any thing in this matter' and called hym sayeng, 'Hob of the Hill, what canste thou say in this matter?' Than said Hobe of Hill: 'By my trewths I can say veray littil, but I thynke it a matter nothing dowtefull. Ffor vpon shire thursday when I resaued

fol. 9r

that blessed sacrament I harde what Saynt Paull wrote in the epistle reade that daie to the Corinthians the xi chapiture: *quicumque manducaverit panem hic [vel] et biberit calicem domini indigne reus erit corporis et sanguinis domini probet autem se ipsum homo et sic de pane illo edat et de calice bibat qui enim manducat et bibit indigne iudicium sibi manducat et bibit non diiudicans corpus domini ideo inter vos multi infirmi et inbecilles et dormiunt multi* [1 Cor. 11:27-30]. That is to say, who so euer shall eate this breade and drink this cuppe vnworthelie shalbe giltie of the bodie and bloode of the Lorde. Therefore, lett a man proue hym selfe, and so eate of that breade and drynke of that cuppe. Ffor sothe, who so eates and drynkes vnworthelie, eates and drynkes iudgement to them selues, making no differens of the Lordes bodie; therefore, ma emongste you ar secke and waike and many diethe. Here euery man may persaue how highlie Saynt Paull dothe esteme that blisse sacrament of the bodie and bloode of Criste and what greate daungers the Corrinthians for vnwor

fol. 9v

thelie resauyng the same, as seaknes, waiknes and deathe, wiche warre to sore judgement for the vnworthelie eating of a morsall breade, and drynkyng of a suppe of wyne, if it warre no better as ye say itt is. Therefore, if Saynte Paulle knewe the trewthe, as without doupte he dide, ye muste nede graunte your selues to be a lier'. Than saide Jacke Jolie: 'My masters, I am sorie that ar so sore blyndid that ye can not persaue the trewthe when it is tolde you. But I dowte not or I euer here agane, ye shall haue prechers that shall bring you into the righte waye, so that ye shall crie oute of all popishe knawes that haithe ledd you so farre oute of the trew knowledge, so many years'. Than said Johan the Reve: 'Master Jolie, when thynke ye to be here agane?' Than said Jack Jolie: 'Euene this same daie monthe'. Than said Johan the Reve: 'Neighburs, I will desire you all to be here agane that daie. For I truste we shalhere master Jolie be chaunged in to a new man or that daye come'. Then said Peirs Ploughman: 'Master Jolie, I truste to here of his hanging or burning or that'. And so

fol. 10r

thei all departede. There fore, sir John, I pray you, lett me haue your councell what to saye when Johan Jolie commes agayne'. Than said sir Johan: 'By my trewthe, Hob, I neuer

loked vpon my booke for so highe matters, but said my matens, messe and ewensong, and to minister the sacraments I loked for no further. But we will goo to master vecar that liethe in his bedde secke, and tell hym all thes newes, and I dowte not but he will gyue the suche counsell that shalbe to the greate rebuke of all heretikes'. And so thei went to the olde vecar, bothe sir Johan and Hobb of the Hill, and tolde hym all as is before writyn. Than said the olde vecar: 'Oure Lorde in heawen suceure vs, what tyme is this that euery knave darre presume to wraste the woordes of Gode so farre oute of frame, and correction hadd for them. But Hobe, I knawe thou can read Englishe well. I shall lene the a boke wherin how that blessed sacrament haithe bene vsed sens the firste institucion, both with the appostelles and other holie doctours and learned fathers for the space of xvth hundredth yeares'.

fol. 10v

So he delyuered me the booke and when I went vnto my shepe, I dailie rede vpon it vnto that tyme that I had itt without boke, than the daie appointed heare before. All that was before to gether mett at my master Johan the Reve house. And Jacke Jolye brought with hym one called Nicolas Newfangill, muche more besie in his matters than Jacke Jolie was. Ffor all the firste woorde he brushed out and said: 'Masters, how liked you the omelie this daie?' Than said Peres Ploughman: 'It is veray gode and clarke like, but to some persons that ar febull and weake itt is veray tedius, by cause the matters is longe'. Than said Nicoles Newfangill: 'The lenghe is not the cawse, but by cause there is no mencion maid of your jac in the boxe, wiche ye call your Gode'. Than saide Peirs Plougheman: 'Neighbure Johan, I mervell that ye can suffer any knave to raill so blasfemuslie vpon that blessed bodie of Criste. For as I am a trew man, and but that I am in your presans and in your house, I shulde haue broken this pott vpon his head'.

fol. 11r

Than said Johan the Reve: 'Neighbure Peirs, I praie you be content and suffer thom to speke there fantises, with wiche is no harme but to thom selues'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'Masters, I haue mervell that ye ar so ignorant for I knowe that senc I was here, ye hadd a preacher that tolde you the trewthe'. Than said Johan the Reve: 'Trewlie, here was one Dawcoke that bablide of many things so folischelie that few gaue any credens or regarde to his woordes. But it chauncede that Hobb my sheparde harde hym bothe preache an

reasoned his woordes as after none. Therefore, if ye will here any of his blynd arguments, Hobbe of the Hill my sheperd can declare them vnto you'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'Hobb, I praie the, tell vs what the doctor said'. Hobb said: 'I can declare you the moste parte of his sermonde, but I thinke it neades not to tell you, for I suppose ye ar a disciple of his. Therefore, if ye will propone his arguments, I shall awnser so well as I can bie the grace of Gode'. Than said Jacke Jolie that the doctor proued the bodie of

fol. 11v

Criste is not reallie informe of bread, and proved the same both bie holie scripture and also by holie auncient doctours of the catholike churche. Than sayde Hobb of the Hill: 'Vndouted he said so muche and more, wiche he was not able to prove. For bothe the scripture, and all doctours was cleare agaynste hym. And in that was Luther, Oecolampadius, Buysher, Joy, Baill, Turner, Ffirth,[463] wich was all condempned herritikes by the catholike churches for the same'. Then said Nicholes Newfangill: 'Said not the doctor that wich ye do woorshippe as Gode is but veray breade?' Hobb said: 'Ye, so he saide, and alleged Saynt Paull in the second epistle to the Corrinthians, the xi chapiture, where it is written, as ofte as ye shall eate of this breade, and drynke of this cuppe.[464] The answer to that was this: where as Saynt Paull did vse the cewrse of the holie scripture in suche thynges as was myraculouseli chaunged – as the rodde of Aaron chaunged in to a serpent, and yet called a rodde, and watter changed into wyne and yet called in scripture watter with dyuerse otherlike – yet itt may be persaued well, that Saynt Paull toke itt to be no les butt the breade and wyn

fol. 12r

that he so named to be chaunged in to the veray bodie and bloode of Criste, or ells he wolde neuer haue writyn 'who so euer shall eate of this breade and drynke of this cuppe of the lorde vnworthelie shalbe giltie of the bodie and bloode of the lorde', with other greate thretenyngs, as seckenes, febilnes and deathe, wiche warre to sore iudgement of so mercifull a Lorde. Ffor vnwoorthelie eating of a morsell of breade, and suppe of wyne, and also if it be not the weray bodie, and bloode of Criste, Cristes woordes writyn in the gospel of Saynt Luke, the xxiii chapiture [22:32], and Saynt Mathei, the xvi chapiture [23:18]; the

[463] Martin Bucer, John Oecolampadius of Basel, George Joye, John Bale, William Turner, William Frith
[464] This is 1 Corinthians 11:26, not 2.

one writeth that Criste said to Peter I haue praied for the that thie faith shall not faill. And the other wryteth that the gaites of hell shall not prevail agaynste the. Therefore, if Saynt Peter faithe warre that the bodie of Criste and his blood ar not in fforme of brode and wyne, Criste bracke promise with hym. Ffor that faithe hais failed and the gaites of hell prevaled agaynst it euer sens the appostells tyme, as Saynt Paull declarethe. But if Saynt Peter faithe warre that the bodie

fol. 12v

and bloode Criste be dailie offerede vpon the altar in fforme of bread and wyne – as the vniuersall church haithe beleved euer sens the appostells tyme – than Criste haithe fulfilled his promes to Saynt Peter. And what Christen harte can thynke that Gode wolde [have] sufferede suche a detestable enormite so longe to contyneu emong his electe people and derelie beloued spowse wiche he bowght so derelie, as to woorshippe a peise of breade as Gode, and it warre not Gode in deade, ffor abowe all other vices idolatie is moste odible in the seight of Gode. By wiche anwswere euery trewe Crisiane may well persaue that the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste is dailie offered vpon the altar in fforme of breade and wyne; so hais all the counsells generall of the hole religione of Criste consecrated and condempmed the contrarie oppynyon. Than your master doctor Dawcoke sawe he cowthe haue none aduauntages by the scripture: it was proved so cleare agaynste hym. Than he said itt was a holie thing and to be muche regareded emong Crystyne people, but not to be beleued the

fol. 13r

veray bodie and bloode of Criste, but onelie a remembrance, a figure, a signe, a pledge or a token of the bodie and bloode of Criste. And he alleged dyuers ancient doctours for the same wrytyng there saying clare contrarie there meaning, as did openlie appere by the same doctours saying[465] more playnlie in an other place. Ffirste Saynt Austeyne against *Adamantum Manicheus,* the xii chapiture wrote, that woordes, our Lorde dowted not to saye 'this is my bodie' when he gaue them the signe of his bodie. And also Saynt Jerome than wrote vpon Saynt Matheu, the xxj chapiture: he did present the verite of his bodie. And Saynt Ambrose that wrote in his booke of the sacraments: he that distodes frome

[465] 'in an other place' is crossed out here.

Criste that same eates nott his fleshe nether drynkes his bloode, al thowghe he taikes the sacrament of so worthie a thing vnto his iudgement and perdicion. Also Prospere haith the same woordes on his bookes of sentences. Also Tertuliane in his booke agaynste Marcion (5.40) saithe: Criste professyeng that he hade a great desire to eate his pascall lambe

fol. 13v

with his disciples, and the breade that he toke, and gaue it to them he maid it his bodie saying, 'this is my bodie'. That it is to saye, saithe Turtuliane, the signe of my bodie. The answere to all that sayings of the auncient and holie fathers and doctours, no dowte itt is veray trewe that the sacrament is a figure, an example, a(n) signe, a token, of the bodie of Criste for euer, a sacrament is a figure, an example, and secrete token of one holie thyng. Ewen so is the blessede sacrament called a signe, a figure of the bodie of Criste. Ffor the blessede bodie and bloode in forme of breade and wyne lifted vp ouer the preste heade att messe is a token or remembraunce. How that the same bodie in tyme of Cristes passion did hange vpon the crosse in the aire for our redemption, and also vnde the shappe or forme of wyne and lifted vp att the sacryng of the messe is a token, calling vs to remembraunce how that blessed bloode was shede on hie vpon the crosse for the redemptione of our synnes. And, thus, the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste in fforme of

fol. 14r

breade and wyne is a signe, figure a token, or exemplar of the deathe of Criste. And in this consideracon the holie fathers, sometime, and but veray seldome thei did call itt a signe, a figure, or a token, and where as nether of the holie fathers saying that ye hope before alleged, ye declare your selfe to knaw ye thought of the said holie fathers better then there selues. Ffor where as thei call the holie sacrament a remembrance, a token, a figure, or a signe, wiche may so be and the bodie and bloode of Criste as also is declarede here before, yet [will not] shame will not lett you to say far you awn presu[m]ption that it is but a remembraunce a token a figure or signe. Yet finde ye neuer in scripture nor any other catholike docture in wrytyng of that same blessed sacrament this woorde, but saying of your awn maliciouse puttyng to, ffor mayntanyng of your anoiouse argumente and for further declaracion that euery man may well persaue that ye allege the holie fathers sayengs cleare contrarie there meaning or intent. Saynt Austen, father, the mercie of our Lorde, deliuer vs frome

fol. 14v

thes thinges, and ye graunte and gyue vnto vs hym selfe, wiche saide 'I am the lyuelie breade wiche come frome heawen', but lett euery man examyne hym selfe according to the precepte of the apposteles. And so lett hym eate of that breade and drynke of that cuppe. Ffor he that eats and drynkes that bodie and bloode vnworthelie, eats and drynkes vnto his awn judgement makyng no differens of one lordes bodie. Ffor when we shall resaue hym, we owght to haue recourse vnto confessione and penaunce and to discus enviouslie our actes. And if we fynd deadelie synne in vs, we owghte spedelie to make haiste to weshe them away by penaunce, lest we like Judas thature[466] hidynge the dewill within vs and do periche. All thes woordes Saynt Austeyne wrote, A*d Juliam Comitem*, with many mo sayenges that euery man may persaue that he beleued the veray bodie and blood of Criste to be reallie in forme of bread

fol. 15r

and wyne and so to be resaued of euery Cristiane and beleued. Also Saynt Augustyne[467] vpon thes woordes *adorate scabellum pedum eius psalmo lxxxxviii quid habemus adorare et quid vobit iubat adorare timeo adorare*[468] *terram, ne dampnet me qui fecit celum et terram; [rursus timeo non] non timeo adorare scabellum pedum eius [domini mei], quia psalmus [mihi] dicit, adorate scabellum pedum eius. Qu[a]ero quod [quia] sit scabellum pedum domini [ejus]; scriptura mihi dicit: terra scabellum pedum meorum. fluctuans conuerto me ad christum, quia ipsum quaero Isay lxvi et hic [hic et] invenio quomodo sine impietate adoretur scabellum pedum eius [terra, sine impietate adoretur]. suscepit enim de terra terram; quia caro de terra est, et de carne maria carnem suscepit [accepit]. et quia in ipsa carne hic ambulauit, et ipsam carnem nobis manducandam [ad salutem] dedit; nemo*

[466] The manuscript reads here the word 'thature' but this does not make sense. Perhaps the scribe was distracted by the word 'them' right above it and wrote 'thature' when he meant to write 'trature' referring to the traitor Judas. The word 'trature' also appears on fol 21v, line 3.

[467] I was not able to find Augustine's *Ad Juliam Comitem*, but the text quoted here resembles his *Ennarrationes in Psalmos 98, Sermo ad Plebem.*

[468] 'adorare' is written in the margin.

autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit[469]*: inventum est quemadmodum adoretur [tale] scabellum pedum domini, et non [solum non]*[470] *peccemus adorando*[471]. That is to saye: what haue we to worshippe, the foote stole of the lorde.[472]

fol. 15v

What doithe he command vs to woorshippe, I dreade to worshippe the earthe that he dampe me not that maid heawen and earthe. I dowte not to woorshippe the foote stoole of the Lorde by cause the psalme saithe to me: than shalle woorshippe the foote stoole of the Lorde. The scripture doith teache me, Ysaie: the earthe is my foote stoole. In this danger the footestoole of our Lorde may be woorshopede, for he toke earthe vpun earthe, by cause fleshe is of the earthe, and he toke fleshe of the fleshe of Marie and that he walked here in that fleshe, and gaue that fleshe to vs to eate. Trewlie, no man eats of that fleshe, but that he owght to prepare or to be meite. It is fownde by that maner of waye how the footestoolle of Gode may be woorshapede. And not onelie we synne not in woorshopyng, but we synne in not woorshopyng. That well persaued ar a sufficient declaracion that Saynt Augustyne beleuede faithfullie that ye bodie and bloode of Criste was in forme of breade and wyne, and to be woorshopede and eaten of vs.

fol. 16r

Jerominus, *Ad Hedibiam ait, nos [autem] audiamus panem quem fregit dominus, deditque discipulis suis esse corpus [domini] saluatoris*. That is to saye: lett vs heare that the breade wiche our Lorde braeck and gaue to his disciples is the bodie of our saueyour. Also Saynt Jerome in his comentares vpon the epistle of Saynt Paull, *ad titu*, sais: worknes, paciens, soberness, softenes, hospitalite, and also benignite shulde chefelie be in a bischoppe, and to excel abowe the laite; I wene so shulde pure chastite, and prestlie schamefastenes be in hym, that he shulde not onelie absteyne hym selfe frome vncleane deades but also his mynde, wiche shulde consecraite the bodie of Criste. Heare doithe playnlie appere Saynt Jerome declareth playne that the bodie and bloode of Criste is reallie in forme of breade and

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[469] Originally, the manuscript contained a different (illegible) word here, but a different hand corrected this to adoraverit, which is the correct word.

[470] There is a space in the manuscript here. Since there are several errors in this Latin quotation, it may be that the scribe was not able to read his exemplar.

[471] The scribe finishes mid sentence here. Added above is the remainder of the sentence: 'sed peccamus non adorando'.

[472] These last two pages were copied twice. And they have the same folio number (15). This is probably a mistake of the British Library when they were photographing it.

wyne. Saynt Ambrose, in the ffirste epistle of Saynt Paull, the xi chapiture to the Corrintians: ffor by cause we ar redemed with the deathe of our lorde, we bear in remembrance the same thing in eating

fol. 16v

and drynkyng the fleshe and the bloode wich he offerede vp for vs. Turtuliane in his booke of the resurrection of the bodie saithe[473]: now lett vs se and beholde the forme and bewtie of a Cristiane man. What and how greate prerogatyue our freall and filthye fleshe haithe with Gode all thoughe no salle can haue healthe or saluacion excepte that whills it is in fleshe it beleue or resaue the faithe. The fleshe is so necessarij a thing of our saluacon. Where the sowll and the fleshe is knytt to Gode, it is the fleshe as maketh that the saulle may be so knytte; ffor the fleshe is so washed that the saulle may be purified; the fleshe is anoynted that the saull maye be confirmed; the fleshe is signed, that the saull may be strenghed; the fleshe is schadowed with lyeng on handes, that the sall may be illumynede with the holie goste; the fleshe eates the bodie and bloode of Criste, that the salle may be fede with Criste Jesu. This saying of Turtuliane is so plane that no herrytikes can

fol. 17r

[474]wraiste it out of frame. Therefore, when any of thes holie and auncient fathers namede aither remembrance, figure, token or signe, yet thei faithfullie beleued that it was the veray bodie and bloode of Criste. And where as ye putt to there sayeng this woorde, but euery man may well persaue that ye falslie writhe both the holie scripture and the catholicke auncient doctors, to mayntayne your arronyous oppynyons, to disceyue poore innoccent creatures that wants knaweledge, to persaue your craftie herysey. And if ye thynke that ye haue allegede to your greate confusian ye schall here mo. Ffor Saynt Gregorie in dialoges the firste booke and lviij haue writith in this sorte: we ought to contempe this present woorlde by cawes, we may persaue that it waistethe, and to offer dailie sacrifices of teares and to offer dailie to gode hostes of his fleshe and his bloode. Ffor this is the singuler and speciall oblacion that savethe the sall frome deathe eternall. Heare may welbe persaued that the foure principall dactours of ye church did belewe the veray bodie and bloode of Criste to be

[473] In chapter 8.
[474] something written above on the page.

fol. 17v

reallie in breade and wyne. And all the generall counsell haith graunted the same, and condempned the contrarie oppynyon. And forther declaracion we will allege mo auncient wryters nyghe vnto the appostles tyme. Ffirste Ignasious the gloriouse marter, and disciple of Saynt John the euangeliste, and the third bishoppe of Antioche after Saynt Peter, saith in his epistle wryty[n] to the Ephecians: I will not eate the corruptible meate, I desire not the voluptouse not of this worlde, but I desire the breade of gode, the breade celistiall, the breade of life wiche is the fleshe of Jesu Criste, the sonne of the lyuyng gode, borne of the seede of Dauid, and Abraham in the latter tyme, and I desire the drynke wich is his bloode. Therefore, he exortes the Ephecians in this wise: maike you haste vnto the sacrament of the altar the glori of Gode, for when that is ofte frequented, than ar the powers of sathan expellede. Origen, vpon the booke of numbers saithe: the

fol. 18r

Jewes warre fedd with angelicall manna, the signe of Cristes bodie, but the churche hais his veray bodie in the sacrament of the altar. The blisse marter Saynt Cipriane, vpon the Lordes suppe saithe: *panis iste communis in carnem et sanguinem mutatus, procurat vitam et incrementum corporibus*. That is to saye: this comon breade chaunged in to fleshe and bloode procures life, and increase to the bodie.

Lyke as Adam by eatyng of the forboden fruite of the tre haithe procurede and mynystrede deathe vnto all his posterite, eawen so it was veray congruent that bie the eatyng of the fruite of one other tre, life myght be procurede and mynystrede agayne vnto the posterite of Adam. Certainlie there is none other fruete that mynystrethe and restorethe life agayne vnto the posterite of Adam, but onelie the fruete that hange vpon the tree of the crosse wiche is Jesus Criste, the blessede fruete of the wombe immaculate of Marie. This fruete muste be eaten corporallie, ffor Adam did eate corporallie the fruete that browghte deathe to vs,

fol. 18v

so of congruent we muste eate corporallie this fruete that renderithe and restorethe a gayne life eternall bothe of bodie and sall. As the fleshe of Criste, wiche he resaued of the virginall wombe, is his veray bodie plane for our saluacon, eawen so the breade, wiche Criste gaue to his disiples, and to all that be electe to euerlastyng life, the wiche the preste

dailie do consecrate in the churche by the myght and power of the diuinite, the wiche diuinite fillith the same bread is the veray bodie of Criste. Nether ar the bodie that he toke in the wombe of the virgyne and this breade two bodies, but thei maike but one bodie of Criste. Theophilactus saithe vpon Saynt John gospel, the vj chapitur: vnto our infirmite and the custome of our nature the wiche deliteth in bread as in the convenient and accostomede foide and abhorrethe rawe flesche and bloode as a token of notable rawnesse and vnaccustomede vnto our maner of fedyng. Therefore, this necessari foide to our sall of his blessede fleshe and blood Criste haith wottsaiffe[475] to giffe vnto vs not in there awn likenes and forme, but in the forme

fol. 19r

and likenes of our cotidiane foide of breade and wyne. Crisostome super johanus sexto ait, Cristus fecit vt maiori caritate nos distingitur vt suis nos ostendit desiderium no so tantum videri permittens desiderantibus, sed et tangi et manducari, et dentes carni fui infigi. That is to say: Criste haithe done to bynd vs with the more charite to and to declare his desire towardis vs, haste not onelie suffered hym selfe to be sene of suche as haithe desired to see hym, but also to be towched and eaten, and the teathe to be thriste in his fleshe. Heare is proved by Saint Austeyn, Saynt Jerome, Saynt Ambrose Saynt Gregorie, Tertuliane, Ignaciouse, Oregene, Cipriane, Haymo, Theophelactus and Crisostome, wiche warre no newfangill fellows, but moste auncient writers and best learned men and greatest laborers in theachyng and declaryng the trew faithe of Criste sens the appostles tyme, with many other yonger holie catholicke doctours and all gonerall counsells manyfestlie declaryng that the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste ar dailie offerede and

fol. 19v

resaued bothe bodelie and spiruallie in forme and licknes of breade and wyne and no substance of bread and wyne remanyng after the consecracion'. Than said Jacke Jolie: 'Maide maister doctor no euydent profe contrarye to thes sayngs?' Than said Hob of the Hill: 'No of trewthe, ffor it was a thyng impossible. Ffor when he harde bothe holie scripture and all catholicke writers so evedentlie prowe his argument fals, than he beganne

[475] vouchsafe

two or three reasons so plesant vnto a crystyne mans eare, as if a stynkynge carryon vnto a fastynge mans nose.

Ffirste he said that he had redd that Gode maid man, but he neuer fande that that man myght make Gode and that we beleued that that the preste maide vpon a pece of breade. In these woordes ye declare your selfe faslie to lie, ffor there is no Cristen creature that beleuethe, that the preste makith Gode of thei haue any reasone. But the Cristiane beleue is that the woordes of Gode spoken by the preste and other thynges done accordyng to

fol. 20r

to the trew ordinances of Gode not onelie in this blessede sacrament of the altar, but also in all the other sacraments. The diuyne power doithe wirke the trewe effecte of the sacrament dewlie mynystrede hawyng auctorite to mynyster as in baptisme: the preste speakes the woordes there to ordened and weshes the bodie with watter, but Gode chaunges the hathen into a Cristen one. Also in the sacrament of pennans the preste speakes the woordes of absolucion, but Gode forgyues the synnes. In like maner in the blessed sacrament of the alter, the preste speakes the woordes there to ordenede by Criste in his laste supper, but Gode doithe chaunge the breade and wyne in his fleshe and bloode. So the preste is no more but the mynyster and Gode the woorker'. Than said maister Dawcoke: 'I haue rede that Gode can nott be mynyshed and it haith bene sene

fol. 20v

that your Gode hais bene eaten withe ratts and myce, brynt with fire, corrupt withe mowlyng and wermyne'. 'Thes woordes ar so trewe as your other woordes was before, ffor thoughe it haithe pleasede Gode the qualite or other accedontall properteis of breade and wyne, as colore, taiste, weight, with suche other qualiteis or properteis to be subsistant by them selfe without any staye, or ayde of any substances of breade by the singular power of Gode in the hooste consecrated, and to the said qualites and accedentall propertes gyueth power to all naturall operacions and passions, myraculouslie, as thoughe the substans of breade warre there. And Gode haithe so ordened that the said qualites in the consecrate hoste may be broken, brynt, mowled, eaten as veray breade maye, and yitt is not there the substance of breade, nether is the braikyng, birnyng or mowlyng in the bodie of Criste.

fol. 21r

Ffor that is inpassible and glorified and can suffer no suche passions. And if suche passions be dishonor and vncomelie vnto that moste holie sacrament wiche haith chaunced to the vtter qualities and accedentalls properties of breade by infidels, Jewishe heritikes, negligent mynysters, yett suche passions cowthe be no more hynderance to the bodie of Criste in beyng present emonge the qualiteis and accendentall properteis of breade, than if it warre eaten in any other wiele places or vyolentlie troden in the myer. Ffor so longe as the qualities and accendetall properteis of breade dothe remane in the hoste consecrate, so longe the veray blissed bodie of Criste dothe remane with theme in what places so euer thei be, whether it be in the mowthe or mawe of beaste or man or any other places comelie or not comelie. And so sone as as the qualiteis and accedentall properteis of breade be altered by digestyng, birnyng mowlyng or any other maner than the bodie of Criste levethe those qualiteis so altered frome there nature, what marvell thoughe the provydences of Gode do suffer suche dishonor and vncomelie vsage to the qualiteis and accedentall properteis

fol. 21v

of breade in the hoste consecrate, wherein is the glorified bodie of Criste also. Ffor the same Criste sufferede the same bodie to lie in the mouthe and stomacke of the moste viall trature Judas and to be rent and thirled with scowreges, nailes and spere and his blessed bloode plentuouslie shede with moste payne and dishonor that the wreched Jewis cowthe devise. And thoughe that blessed bodie did giffe it selfe to be laid in the mouthe and bodie of Judas, wiche was more vile place then the mouthe or bellie of mouse, ratte or other beeste, and also to suffer suche eiuell torments with the faithless iueis, yett itt was no less than the bodie of Criste bothe Gode and man, and at that same tyme estemede, and worshopede as bothe Gode and man with suche as warre faithfull as the centurions that sawe the execution done and the earth quakes in tyme of the passione. Thoughe he saw that the bodie suffer all such paynes and at laste die, yett his trewe faithe caused hym to saye, 'veralie this was the sonne of Gode'. And like man trewe faithe moved the theife that hang of the right hande to saye, 'Lorde haue mynde vpon

fol. 22r

me when thou shalte come into thie kyngdome'. And also trew faithe cawsed a nobill man of the court called Josephe of Aramathie boldlie to aske the bodie of Jesu. And the said Josephe and one Nicodeme, a greate rewler emong the jewis, toke down that blessed bodie

frome the crosse and honorablie buried it. Wherebie euery resonable creature may well knowe if any of them hadd leanede more to there reasons than to there faithe, seyng hym so dishonored and at the laste die, thei wold neuer haue done suche godlie honor to a condempned creature. Ffor other thyng did not appere by reasone or corporall sences, but onelie by there faithe thei knewe the Godehade, in like maner, when the infideles, herretikes, and fals Cristyanes gyvyng more respecte to there blynd and folishe reasons than to perfite faithe, when thei heare any passions, as burnyng, mowlyng, eatyng with mouse or other beaste may chaunce to the outwarde qualiteis of breade in the hoste consecrate, thei will saye blasfemouslie that the bodie of Criste is not in the hoste. And to sett furthe there abhomynable heresie and mys

fol. 22v

beleue, thei will name that blessed sacrament with dyuerse names of dishonor and more vile vsaige and euer the Jewis did or said in the tyme of Cristes passione. But euery trewe Cristiane that regairded faithe more then reasone, as euery trew Crystiane oughte to do when thei heare or see any suche burning, mowlyng, or eatyng with beastes chaunce vnto the vtter qualites of breade in the blessed hoste consecrate, trew faithe will compell them to iudge no less but the veray bodie of Criste, Gode and man to be in the same hoste, so longe as the qualiteis and accedentall properteis of breade dotihe remane in it vnchangegide; as did the centurion Josephe, Nicodeme, the theiffe, with many other faithfull men and women wiche sawe that blissed bodie our saueyour suffer so greate paynes and vile vsage and corporall death at the laste. Wiche was farther abowe our blynde reasone to thynke that Criste, wiche was bothe Gode and man, woolde suffer so greate paynes and dishonore in his blissed bodie, wiche was than passible and myght

fol. 23r

suffer payne, than is it to thynke that the highe providens of Gode wold suffer suche passions as birnyng, mowlyng, or eatyng with beastes to chaunce to the outwarde qualiteis and accedentall properteis of breade in the hoste consecraite, wich can suffer no payne thoughe all suche passions and all other dishonor that can be thoughte by infideles, herretikes or false Crystiane or negligens mynysters chaunce to the outewarde qualites and accedentall properteis of breade in the blessed hoste consecrate, wich is the veray same selfe bodie that suffered so greate payne and deathe vpon the crosse. Therefore, all suche

that gyvethe more respecte to there faithe than to there reason, as did the centurione Josephe and Nicomede, shall well persaue the blessed bodie of Criste both Gode and man, wiche was borne of of the virgyn Marie and suffered deathe vpon the crosse, to be reallie in forme of breade in that hoste consecrate and there dailie offerede and bothe spirituallie and corpporallie recevede as bothe holie scripture and all catholike doctours playnlie doith declare'. Then said doctor

fol. 23v

Dawcoke: 'It will neuer certifie my reasone that the bodie of Criste can be in forme or likenes of breade. Ffor I can prove well that the warkes off Gode, was for the moste profett, wealthe, comforthe, and saluacion of man. Therefore, if he hadd chaungede the breade that he gaue to his disciples at his laste supper in to his awn bodie, as ye saye he did, I thynke he wolde haue chaungede the qualiteis and liknes of breade in to the qualities and likenes of his bodie, ffor it had beyne muche more for the wealthe, comforthe and saluacion of man. Ffor if man myght see them so chaungede he wolde neuer dowte, and seyng it is a thyng ferr vnresonable or witt can thynke it can be so'. 'The same argument ye may make in all artecles of Cristes faithe and in all miraculous warkes of Criste wiche warr to muche to deny emonge Crystians. But seyng that ye can not be certified nether with holie scriptures, no catholike doctours, I will shew you my reasone. I thynke it more for the wealthe, comforthe and saluacon of man, that in the blessede hoste consecrate, wiche is the veray bodie of Criste, the qualiteis and accedentall proper

fol. 24r

teis sholde remane in there awn likenes and kynde, seyng that Criste saide, 'excepte ye eate the fleshe of the sonne of man and drynke his bloode ye shall haue no life in you', wiche wolde haue beyne paynfull to doo, if the qualiteis of breade shulde haue bene chaunged in to rawe fleshe and bloode. Ffor mans naturalle senses euer abhorrethe, and though it to muche crueltie the eatyng of mans raw fleshe and drynkyng his bloode. And for so muche that Criste for the greate loue that he bears vnto his churche, he wolde haue his fleshe eaten and his bloode dronken dailie for a perpetuall remembrance of his greate kyndnes and deathe. Therefore, he haithe changede his awn bodie and bloode in to the likenes and taiste of breade and wyne – the moste comon and plesaunt foide that we can resaue withoute abhorre or crueltie – and also if he hadde chaungede the qualities and likenes of brede in to

the qualiteis or likenes of his bodie glorified wiche inpassible, than it cowthe not haue bene brokyne that euery Cristane myght haue eaten itt, and the waikness of our wrechede bodies schulde not haue beyne able to haue eaten that glorified bodie

fol. 24v

nor to haue beholdene it. And if it hadde beyne so manyste[476] to our corporall sight, it sholde haue hyndered the blissyng and rewarde promysed vs for our faithe, by our saueyour Criste that saide: 'Blessede be thei, that haith not sene and beleued' and also Saynt Gregorie saithe: he shall not haue the rewarde of faithe to whome mans reasone gevethe experiences. Therefore, it may well be persaued with euery trewe Cristiane it is more profitable and comfortable to haue the bodie of Criste in forme of breade than in any other forme'. Than said doctor Dawcoke: 'If the bodie and bloode of Criste shulde be eatten and dronken bodilie, I graunte it is better to be in forme and likenes of breade and wyne than in any other likenes. But I can neuer beleue that the bodie and blode of Criste can be eaten and dronken corporallie, but spirituallie'. 'Now ye retaine to your firste argument, ffor that is the laste shefte ye haue to dissaue poore vnlearned creatures. We

fol. 25r

knowe by our corporall senses that in the communion we resaue one thyng corporallie, wiche euery trewe Cristiane beleuethe to be bothe Gode and man, his fleshe and bloode, and if ye cowthe proue that the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste warre not eaten but onelie spiritually, than ye myght prove that Gode was a lier when he bracke the breade and gaue to his disciples sayeng, 'this is my bodie', wiche thei all resaued worthelie to there saluacion, excepte Judas that resaued it vnworthelie to his vttermoste dampnacion. Ffor Crisostome writes in this sorte vpon the treason of Judas, speake Judas whome didiste thou sell for xxxti [thirty] pens, this is the bloode whome thou didiste bargain with the phoreseis. O the mercie of Criste, o the madnes of Judas, Criste offered hym the bodie wiche he had solde, that he myghte haue remission of synnes. This is plane that Judas resaued the bodie of Criste, and not a peice of breade for who wolde thynke that the pharaseis wold gyue xxxti [thirty] pens for a peic of breade, or that he myght haue remission of synnes. Ffor Criste

[476] Is this a scribal error for 'manyfeste'?

fol. 25v

offered to hym that same thyng wich he hadde solde, wiche thyng he refrayned onelie corporally to hys dampnacion. Ffor iff he had resaued it both spirituallie an corporallie as the other appostells did, he myght haue had remission of all his synnes by the worthie receuyng there of, wiche is not a peice of breade to gyue, if it be neuer so worthelie resauede. The awncient and holie fathers declared the maners of resavyng of the blessed sacrament of the altar: ffirst is sacramentall onelie, and that is when it is corporallie and vnworthelie resaued and by this resauyng, the resauer is nether incorporated vnto Criste spirituallie nor partetaiker of the meritts of his blessede passion, but to judgement and condempnacion as was Judas. The second resanyng is onelie spirituallie, and that is by godlie and devoute remembraunces of Cristes passion with aperfite faithe, and by that resavyng the resauer is maid parte taker of the merits of Cristes passion and also maid members of the spirituall or misticall bodie. The thirde resavyng is bothe spirituallie and sacramentallie,

fol. 26r

and that is when the resauer eathe bodilie the blessede consecrate hoste, wich is the veray bodie of Criste, with a trewe faithe that he doithe resaue in to his mouthe and bodie the same selfe blessed bodie that was borne of the blessed virgyne Marie and suffered deathe vpon the crosse and dewlie being penitent for ther synnes paste. And also beyng in full purpose to leawe syne, and to gyue thankes vnto almyghtie Gode for so greate kyndnes and excellent charite schewed vnto synners, leavyng his blessed bodie and bloode emong vs dailie to be offered and eaten where by euery one that worthelie eates that blessede bodie, and drynkes his bloode worthelie bothe spirituallie and sacramentallie ar communed and maid one with the naturall bodie and bones of our saueyour Criste and wirkes in the worthie resauor eternall life bothe of bodie and saull. Saynt Austeyne saithe in the persone of Criste, thou schall not chaunce me in to the, like meate of the fleshe, but thou shalbe chaunged in to me. And trewlie the bodilie resauyng of the blessede bodie and bloode of Criste is not newlie fantassed, for here is neuere one doctor

fol. 26v

declaryng the same but suche as immediatelie followed the appostells and parte of yor awn disciples and the laste of them died vij hundrethe yeares paste. Therefore, who so euer haith any Crystiane faithe, that is to beleue that Gode is almyghtie and haith done and dailie dois great wondres farre abowe the capacite of mannes witt and also by his awne woordes leste his bodie here to be eaten, wiche Saint Paull and all other catholik doctors playnlie doith affirme the same, and diuerse heretikes in tymes paste haithe beyne condempned for the contrarie oppynyon. Therefore, it is necessarij for euery Cristiane to profere faithe abowe reasone moste especially in the myraculous warkes of Criste and so doyng and havyng Cristes woordes to witt not the same and the appostle with ye actes of the appostles as the auncient holie doctours doithe vnderstande thame playnelie, testifi euery the same wich is sufficient testimonie to euery trewe Cristiane, if all the heretikes

fol. 27r

in the worlde shulde say the contrarie and alloge neuer so highe reasons. Ffor holie scripture or catholike doctours thei haue none to allage if the be trewlie vnderstanded and reghte expaunded, for[477] where thei allege any text of scripture or of auncient writer for there purpose, it is aither wrastede out of the reght jontes by there awn exposicions or ells the playnes whereby the trewthe myghte clearlie appere is lefte oute to dissaue Crystyne people that wants learning. Yett if euery Cristiane wolde remember the lesson of our saueyour Criste wrytyn by Saynt Matheu in ye vij chapiture: be warre of fals propheses that comes to you in the clothyng of shepe, for sothe thei ar within ravishyng woolfes. By the froites of them ye shall knowe them and in caves be thei prevalie and haue there vpper hand in this worlde. For a shorte tyme yett thynke neuer that faithe shalbe distroiede for Gode, assured Saynt Peter by a sure promys that his faithe shulde neuer

fol. 27v

faill. And some heretikes will wraste that text, and saye itt was spoken but to Saynt Peter onelie, as one shude saye, Saynt Peter shulde neuer err onse of the faithe. But euery man may well persaue that it was not onelie spoken to Saynt Peter, for he playnelie denyed that euer he knewe Criste. And not onelie with a Saynt denye as thoughe same sparke of faithe

[477] Before this word is crossed out the phrase 'for where the allege'.

hadd remaned, but with greate othes that he neuer know hym, wiche is the greatest example to synners if there offences be neuer so greate – not to dispare but to repent as Saynt Peter did. Therefore, who so euer doith consider faithfullie the many folde and greate myraculous woordes of Gode so farr abowe nature and reasone of man that all men may well persaue that the bodie and bloode of Criste may be in forme of breade and wyne and who that faithfullie doith consider the figure of the

fol. 28r

Olde Testament, as ffirste the breade and wyne that the highe preste Melchisedche offered, and manna that was gyvene to the children of Israell and the pascall lambe wiche was but darke shadewes of the cleare oblacione that Criste leafte, ye may saue persaue that ye bodie and bloode of Criste is in forme of brede and wyne. Or ells it muste neade be that Moyses was of a greater auctorite withe Gode the father than was his onelie sonne Jesu Criste. Ffor if Criste leafte no better oblacion but onelie baire breade and wyne for a figure or token of his bodie and bloode, the oblacion that Moyses leafte at ye commandement of Gode was farr abowe a litill peice of breade and wyne. Therefore, all that beleuyth in Criste may well knawe that it is chaunged in to a more preciouse nature then syngill breade and wyne, if the dignyteis of Criste and Moyses, and if the oblacion lefte by them be iustlie weade, it is sone persauede the oblacion that Criste leafte to be chaunged

fol. 28v

in to a more preciouse thyng thane breade or wyne. And other chaunge was neuer writyn of breade and wyne, but onelie in his blessed bodie and bloode. And fynallie if the promys of Criste, wiche neuer bracke promys be faithfullie considered, ffirst sayeng to Saynte Peter that his faithe shuld neuer faill and to all the hoole churche sayeng, 'I shalbe with you to the end of the worlde', who can thynke Criste beyng Criste beyng with his churche wold suffer a peice of breade to be woorshaped as Gode. And if the faithe of Saynt Peter had neuer failede, so abhomynable idolatre wolde neuer contonewed xv hundreth yearses and more. Wherebie euery man may well persaue that aither Criste was not trewe in his promys, wiche is to paynfull for any trew Cristiane to here, or ells the blessed bodie and bloode of Criste is reallie in forme of breade and wyne and so dailie offerede and resauede both spirituallie and corporallie, wiche all catholike writers sens the asconcion to this day with one assent doith graunte and declares to

fol. 29r

beleue the same by these wrytyng many festlie. And other heretikes wiche haithe seperated them selues frome the catholike churche by thoos fals herytikes where thei write vpon this matter, thei haue so many and dyuerse oppynyons that if thei werre beleued, there shuld be so many faithles as there ar wryters, wiche euery trew Cristiane may well persaue is the providens of for the mayntenans of our trewe catholike faithe'. Than doctor Dawcoke, after ye common course of heretikes, when he cowthe by no ways defend his argument nor wolde not leave itt, but in a fume said he trusted to se itt other wais shortlie and in like maner said Jacke Jolie and Nicoles Newfangill. But Johan the Reve, Peres Ploughman, Laurens Laborer, and Thomlyn Taylor be sought almyghtie Gode that the trewe faithe of Criste myght be perceued and to contynew to hys honor and glorie worlde without end. Amen.

fol. 29v

what is a sacrament

it is a token of the promysse of Gode, instituted of Gode, but itt cosistethe in the element and the woorde, so the intent that the memorie of the thyng promysed may remane.

how many sacraments be there.

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