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'Where of is mad al mankynde' : an edition of and introduction to the twenty-four poems in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102

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‘WHERE OF IS MAD AL MANKYNDE’
An Edition of and Introduction to the Twenty-Four Poems
in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van
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The man be say that he yeth affate done god
of conseil of double entendement and yede
of rymitye and pencye late and cinguly
fit by false assent and zong to ymo judgement
In enen here take ze lede Marche be good amfement
Agan knowe thy self lone god & yede of yede god
and knowe thy oelme of hat omye poble haft gon
namme/ nocht for the lone of ten or the cime of yinge
not a comone in yendunce/walko vnto they had
yffamme of yede. o. take in enen here of yitken ffamoy
& benyannuce man knowe thy self lone god & yede
The man ymo comone of houe or lordshipe or
rite/ the poble is gode & not comone tholl they be
seget to com. yede/ Some the poble in vnto
In the remaniments that go. here and ze wole
lone in chapted knowe thy self lone god & yede of yede
man hat that hath vnto these woldes gode both
not his alle is gode he oelth hnt and land & ooe
& yme & blis/ God wole hane yebuyng yede of
men and cloth the leste oye of yly geting thy
holdyng thy spending myo. Agan knowe thy self
lone god & yede **T** man of his ollen hath no thing
man is gode and al god cent/ God wole hane yebuyng
of ylyt & ylong hold it is bent/ man not moe thyn
alle god lent and bokkes thyn not houe ful need
and ynt thy soule is gode yent/ vnto that wole
in lone & yede of yede **S**ome god for helle yede of yede
ganne & al yro fime ze lone god for heneu mee yme
from thyn heit fio fleschly delis/ For woldly lye
ze yofthly myo and foole e yand may not oye of yede
begynnyng to be yede of yede thy self lone god & yede
And ze wold wite thyn molke ze leyde hat man
yynfureth his soule to cancel out hym be let of god
to he yede abletly hym self may to hane yede of yede

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102, fol. 98r (l.1-52)

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Dr. Margaret Laing recently confessed that the founding father of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English*, the renowned Angus McIntosh, at the prospect of that truly daunting project coined the phrase 'hopeful hubris'. This was my sentiment exactly when I started out on my own enterprise of re-editing the twenty-four anonymous late-medieval poems in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102, more than a hundred years after Dr. Joseph Kail published his, the first edition.

As an incurable – and old-fashioned – romanticist, I have built my analysis of the Digby Poems around the figure of a medieval monk-cum-clerk whom over the years I have learned to appreciate as a man of many parts, and in some respects as a kindred spirit, in whom exultation and gloom, high beliefs and hard pragmatism had an equal share. I took on the project also in the hope of producing a study that would not only give satisfaction to myself, from whatever ambition, but would also open another attractive window for the interested reader upon the thinking, practices and conditions in late-medieval English society.

If these ambitions have in some measure been realized, it is only fitting that I acknowledge the debt of gratitude that I owe to my supervisor, Professor Rolf Bremmer of Leiden University. As long ago as 1998 he gave me the first scent of the Digby Poems as the subject for a graduation paper that in subsequent years developed into the present study.

An equal share of grateful thanks are due to my wife for sacrificing so much time otherwise enjoyed in relaxed retirement. I hope I will be given time to catch up on hours lost in past years.

I further want to thank Professor Michael Benskin, who took special time out to examine, and pronounce an opinion on, the scribal hand of the manuscript text *in situ* in the Bodleian Library. I also wish to express my appreciation for Dr. Margaret Laing's advice on how best to tackle the problem of identifying the scribal dialect. Deep-felt thanks, finally, are due to Dr. Sándor Chardonens, who helped me organize the glossary, and formatted the lay-out of the text, to Femke Prinsen for an inspired cover design, and to Rosanne Hebing for her contribution to the glossarial format.

Sometimes the unthinkable becomes reality. At about the same time when I wrote my edition of the Digby Poems, Dr. Helen Barr of the University of Oxford prepared her own study. When my text had to go into print, Dr. Barr's edition was not yet available, so regrettably I can merely acknowledge its announced existence. I have no doubt that in due course a comparison of the two editions will produce profitable new insights, certainly on my part, and hopefully on the part of the interested reader.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>adj.</i>	adjective
<i>adv.</i>	adverb
<i>art.</i>	article
beg.	beginning
<i>comp.</i>	comparative
<i>conj.</i>	conjunction
<i>def.</i>	definite
<i>dem.</i>	demonstrative
ed(s).	editor(s)
EETS	Early English Text Society
es	extra series
fol(s).	folio(s)
<i>gen.</i>	genitive
<i>ger.</i>	gerund
<i>IMEV</i>	Brown & Robbins, <i>The Index of Middle English Verse</i>
<i>imp.</i>	imperative
<i>impers.</i>	impersonal
<i>indef.</i>	indefinite
<i>inf.</i>	infinitive
<i>interj.</i>	interjection
Kail	Kail, <i>Twenty-Six Political and other Poems</i>
<i>LALME</i>	McIntosh <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i>
l(l).	line(s)
LP	Linguistic Profile
ME	Middle English
<i>MED</i>	Kurath <i>et al.</i> , <i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
MnE	Modern English
MS	manuscript
<i>MWME</i>	Hartung <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500</i>
<i>n.</i>	noun
<i>NIMEV</i>	Boffey & Edwards, <i>A New Index of Middle English Verse</i>
<i>num.</i>	numeral
<i>OED</i>	Murray <i>et al.</i> , <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
os	original series
p(p).	page(s)
<i>pers.</i>	personal
<i>pl.</i>	plural

<i>poss.</i>	possessive
<i>ppl.</i>	participle
<i>prep.</i>	preposition
<i>pres.</i>	present
<i>pron.</i>	pronoun
<i>pt.</i>	past
<i>refl.</i>	reflexive
<i>repr.</i>	reprinted
<i>sg.</i>	singular
<i>St.</i>	Stanza
<i>sup.</i>	superlative
<i>transl.</i>	translator
<i>v.</i>	verb

Whiting Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings mainly before 1500*

wk. weak

For full bibliographic details see the bibliography

All biblical quotations have been taken from the Authorized King James Version

INTRODUCTION

Where of is mad al mankynde represents a new edition of the collection of twenty-four Poems contained, among other pieces, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102. The scope of the first full edition (Kail, 1904) was limited, leaving room for a broader examination of context and background, as well as for an opportunity for a different treatment of the text, to suit my particular purpose. Kail's analysis of the Poems was solely devoted to a discussion of the allusions to parliamentary business and certain political events which Kail had detected in some of the poems. As to the treatment of the manuscript text itself, Kail did not formulate his editorial policy, but judging from the printed text, his sole aim was to produce a faithful 'diplomatic' transcription of the manuscript text. With the present study I intend to broaden the scope, both in the analyses of the various aspects of the Poems and in the treatment of the text itself, opening one further window upon the social scene of late-medieval England as it is presented in a collection of poems written by a knowledgeable, keenly interested contemporary observer, who found himself near the centre of power. Within these broad parameters, this edition seeks to be of interest to not just specialists in the field of Anglistics, but also beyond to meet the explicative requirements of a wider medievalist readership.

In addition to Kail's complete edition of the Poems, transcripts and comments have over the years appeared in anthologies and individual studies. Furnivall (1897) preceded Kail with an edition of poem XVI from the manuscript text, without adding comments or notes. Poems III, XII and XVI appeared in full in the anthology of late-medieval historical poems of Robbins (1959, pp. xxviii, xxix [introduction], 39–53 [text], 268–73 [notes]), who took their reading from Kail. Poem III was again published in full in Dean's anthology of political writings (1996, pp. 153–58, 176–78), transcribed anew from the manuscript and checked against the texts in Kail and Robbins. Kennedy (2000, pp. 152–55) edited poem XVI in an alliterative format as part of an essay on fourteen-line alliterative stanzas.¹

Longer or shorter excerpts from the Poems are to be found in a number of publications dealing with specific themes. I mention the most important here. Poem XXIII is discussed and extensively quoted by McGarry (1936) in the context of a dissertation on the Eucharist in Middle English homiletic and devotional verse. Robbins (1960, p. 197) quotes from poems XIV, XVII and XXI in

¹ See further section 3.3.1.

exemplification of his essay on Middle English poems of protest. Peck's excerpt and comments (1986, p. 125) on poem I served their purpose in a paper on 'Social Conscience and the Poets' in fourteenth-century England. Coleman (1981, pp. 95–108) draws extensively on the first five of the Poems in her discussion of complaint and estates poetry as part of the literature of social unrest. Nuttall (2007, pp. 128–30) uses poem XIII to discuss the respective tasks falling to King, Commons and the commons in general in the Lancastrian period. Largely the same poems from which Coleman and Nuttall quote, that is to say poems I to IV, XII and XIII, figure in Barr (1993, pp. 31, 32, 371–73), where she treats of Henry V's dealings with France in *The Crowned King*. Scattergood (1971), finally, quoted liberally from no fewer than thirteen out of the twenty-four Poems in illustration of his exposition of late-medieval poetry dealing with political subjects. I shall have occasion to refer to all these thematic commentaries in section 3.4, where the political, social and religious aspects of the Poems are discussed.

Bibliographical details of the Poems are to be found in the *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* (1970–2005).² As the Appendix shows, the *Manual* covers only eighteen of the twenty-four Poems. Admittedly, the themes of the six poems not discussed would none of them have fitted into any of the categories covered by the *Manual*,³ but one might regard this as a shortcoming on the part of its general editors, rather than of the writer of the Poems. Appendix 3 also shows that poem I is discussed under three different headings: as dealing with contemporary conditions (*MWME* 5, chapter XIII, vol. 5), as a verse tract on self-knowledge (in chapter XX, 'Works of religious and philosophical instruction', vol. 7), and as a secular monitory piece (in chapter XXII, vol. 9). Morey (1999, pp. 168–70, 298–300) offers biographical as well as explanatory guidance in respect of the two biblical paraphrases in the Poems. Poem XXI is a paraphrase of the Nine Beatitudes, poem XXIV of the Complaint of Job. The latter is based on a prose version in the Wheatley Manuscript (45r–51r)⁴. For another biblical verse paraphrase in Digby 102 (Maidstone's *Penitential Psalms*), see the description of the manuscript in section 2.1. All twenty-four Poems are comprehensively and individually indexed in *NIMEV*, as also the other three pieces in Digby 102.

The manuscript is mentioned in two catalogues. The one is in Macray (1883, p. 116), with full title descriptions, the other, without a description of any kind, in Madan & Craster (1922, p. 73). To the best of my knowledge, no other major catalogues mention Digby 102. The reasons which the compilers give for the omission vary: it is not dated or datable, or it (apparently) did not remain in the library to which it belongs, or the major university libraries were beyond the scope of the compiler. A

² See Appendix 3.

³ Three of them (the poems X, XVII and XIX) belong to the 'Complaint or Appeal of God to Man' tradition. Poem XVIII is a religious monitory piece, and poems XI and XXII are general devotional poems without a specific focus.

⁴ See Day (1921, pp. 59–64). For other verse renderings of the complaint of Job, see Kail (pp. 120–49).

physical description of the manuscript is to be found in an edition of the C-version of *Piers Plowman* (Russell & Kane, 1997). An incomplete text of the C-version precedes the Poems in Digby 102.⁵

At the heart of the present edition is the text of the twenty-four Poems, provided with marginal glosses and footnotes, each single poem being preceded by a summary and followed by explanatory notes. It is an arrangement that follows logically from the editorial policy I have adopted, as set out and accounted for in section 2.5. Other sections are devoted to such ‘technical’ aspects as a description of the manuscript (section 2.1), and of the scribal hand (section 2.2). In section 2.3 the dialect in which the text was written is discussed in some detail, with the application of techniques that were not available to Kail in the early 1900s. Section 2.4 deals with the dating of the Poems, an important subject that required careful consideration, since it involved an argued questioning of Kail’s conclusions on the matter. A detailed discussion in section 3.1 of the identity of the author of the Poems seemed in order as well, seeing that Kail made rather definite pronouncements also on this subject. And finally, generous room was made in section 3.1 for an analysis not only of the political, but also of the religious, moral, ethical and didactic themes raised throughout the Poems. Earlier commentators, beginning with Kail, often over-emphasized the political aspects of the Poems, which made it inevitable for me to restore the balance somewhat by also giving thought to their religious and moral content. The unbalance in the thematic appreciation of the Poems is reflected in the various labels attached to the Poems, presenting a somewhat motley picture. The concise table of contents on the leaf affixed to the back cover of Digby 102⁶ dubs the Poems ‘Theological’, ignoring the frequent political issues raised in a number of the Poems. Macray (1883, col. 116) took a broader view, describing the collection as ‘a series of poems chiefly religious, but also partly political.’ Kail in 1904, on the other hand, wholly disregarded the religious and moral content of the majority of the Poems and termed the collection ‘political’ in the title of his edition, *Twenty-Six Political and Other Poems* (the two ‘other’ poems being taken from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322). Robbins (1959) included three of the Digby poems in a collection of *Historical Poems*, not ‘political poems’, perhaps out of the same sentiment as expressed by Kane (1986, p. 83), who observed about political writers of the age that ‘even the most extreme of them had no concept of politics as we understand the term.’ In 1975, Robbins listed his bibliographical selection of nine Digby poems under the much broader heading ‘Poems dealing with contemporary conditions’; appropriately so, since this particular selection covers not only political-historical and religious topics, but also touches upon the interrelationships between the ‘social parties’: king and parliament, king and court, lord and tenant, clergy and parish, judge and litigant. Dean (1996), finally, classed poem III among the *Political Writings* of his anthology. In view of the above, it seems to me that the title of this

⁵ See section 2.1 with a physical description of Digby 102.

⁶ For a description and probable date, see section 2.1.

edition: *Where of is mad al mankynde* (taken from XV.1) summarizes the broad spectrum of themes in the Poems more aptly than the preciser but inevitably narrower epithets used in other studies.

DESCRIPTION AND CONTENTS OF MS DIGBY 102

2.1 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUSCRIPT

The Poems are preserved in a single manuscript in the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford as Digby 102,¹ in which they occupy fols. 98r–127v. The description of the manuscript here given is based on Russell & Kane (1997, p. 16) and autopsy.² The Poems are preceded by an incomplete C-text of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (fols. 1r–97v), starting in the middle of Passus II, l. 159. Immediately following the Poems, on fols. 128r–135v, is a metrical paraphrase by Richard Maidstone of the seven Penitential Psalms, under the rubric *Septem psalmi penitentiales*. Maidstone, a Carmelite friar and confessor to John of Gaunt, wrote his English paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms in the late 1380s. Judging from the fact that no fewer than twenty-one manuscripts of the text are still extant,³ the Maidstone Psalms must have enjoyed a wide readership, boosted undoubtedly by the penitential revival of the times among the laity, and the inclusion of the Penitential Psalms in vernacular primers. Editions have appeared of seven of the twenty-one Maidstone Psalms manuscripts, but not of the version in Digby 102.⁴

The closing text, on fols. 136r–139r, is an anonymous Debate of the Body and the Soul, in English verse, but with the Latin title '*Disputacio inter corpus et animam*'. The Digby version of this poem appeared for the first time in print in Linow (1889, pp. 67–105), together with three other versions. Linow decided against a critical edition (pp. 21–22) because of the numerous mutual anomalies and

¹ Madan & Craster (1922, no. 1073).

² The description given by Russell & Kane is inaccurate in places. The codicological collation omits one quire (5⁸ instead of 6⁸), and mistakes the two last leaves of quire 20 for fly leaves. In the list of folios bearing quire numbers, '68a' against quire 12 should read '68a' (the number 12 being quite clear), and '107a' should read '106a'. The list of folios bearing catchwords omits fol. 91b. The number of 'English poems on political and religious themes' [i.e. the Poems] is given as 23 rather than 24, presumably as a result of the omission of no. 1508 (for poem XIX) from the *IMEV* listing of the Poems in Brown & Robbins (1943). The size of the text frame is given as 150 x 100 mm and the number of lines per page as 35 throughout the manuscript, both presumably meant as averages, rather than actual figures.

³ See *NIMEV*, p. 132, no. 1961.

⁴ For full bibliographical particulars about manuscripts and editions see Muir (1970, pp. 388, 540–41) and Morey (1999, pp. 177–80). Two frequently referenced editions are of London, British Library, MS Additional 39574 ('The Wheatley Manuscript'), fols. 15v–45r (See Day, 1921, pp. xii–xiii, 1959), and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A 389, fols. 13r–20v (see Edden, 1990, pp. 47–137).

deficiencies in the five extant manuscript texts. As far as I am aware, no attempt at a critical edition has been made since.

All texts are written on vellum leaves measuring 220 x 155 mm. At the front are two blank vellum flyleaves, one originally a paste down, the other a free flyleaf. The text quires are preceded by two original blank vellum leaves. A paste-down paper leaf affixed to the inner surface of the back board has a concise table of contents in a cursive hand, probably written in, or soon after 1632, when the codex received its Digby binding (see below). The text reads:

Ploughmans visions
 Theologicall Tracts
 The 7 Penitential Psalm's in Lat. and Engl. with some short meditations
 Disputation betw. Soul and Body

The manuscript collation is as follows: ii + two + [1,2] 3–6⁸ 7⁴(lacks 4) 8–14⁸ 15⁸(lacks 7) 16–20⁸ 21⁴ + ii. The text frames measure 150 x 90 mm as far as fol. 121v, and 155 x 95 mm from 122r onwards. The number of lines on a page varies between 30 and 40. All quires are regularly numbered, from 3 to 21. It is safe to assume that the missing quires 1 and 2 accommodated the missing portion of the *Piers Plowman* text.⁵ There is no trace of quire or leaf signatures (used to facilitate the internal arrangement of a quire), possibly as the result of cropping. The catchwords,⁶ on the other hand, appear regularly, except at the last quire (15) of the *Piers Plowman* text and at quire 21 at the end of the codex. The absence of a catchword at the end of the last quire of a text is one indication that the end of a 'production unit', or 'booklet' had been reached.⁷ Another significant feature signalling the end of a production unit is the *caesura*: a blank leaf at the end of the last quire, often cut away.⁸ Both quires (15 and 21) lack a catchword and both end with two blank leaves. One of the two final leaves of quire 15 has been cut away. On the basis of this evidence it is reasonable to assume that originally there were two production units, one unit containing the *Piers Plowman* text, while the other unit comprised the texts of the Poems, the Penitential Psalms and the *Disputacio* text. These two production units were then

⁵ Russell & Kane (1997, p. 16 n. 117) estimated that the two quires could not have been eights (i.e. containing eight leaves), and that a four and a six were most likely.

⁶ The first word[s] of a new quire on the last folio of the preceding quire to ensure that quires are arranged in their proper order before binding.

⁷ The term 'production unit' was introduced by Kwakkel (2002a, p. 4) for 'a group of quires that formed a material unity at the time of production', and 'were copied in one go by either one or more scribes'.

⁸ The absence of a catchword and the existence of blank leaves (often cut away) at the end of the last quire of a text, are two of the features identifying a 'booklet' (roughly the equivalent of a 'production unit') as listed by Hanna (1996, p. 30).

bound together to form what Kwakkel terms a ‘usage unit’.⁹ It is plausible that the two production units were meant to form a usage unit right from the start. For one thing, the *mise-en-page* of the two units bears close similarity, as do the penwork and the treatment of the capitals. For another, the *Piers Plowman* text and the Poems are executed in one hand (see section 2.3), and both poetic texts were written across the page like prose.¹⁰ Prior to binding, all quires of the two production units were consecutively numbered, presumably to make sure that the two units were bound in their proper order. The first two quires must have got lost, since the first quire in the manuscript’s present state bears the number 3. The resulting truncated codex was foliated at some later time, possibly when it received its present binding in or shortly after 1634. The case for Digby 102 as a usage unit has also been argued on grounds of textual coherence. Coleman (1981, p. 98) qualifies Digby 102 as a deliberate religious-political compilation. Bergström-Allen (2002, p. 6) sees Digby 102 as ‘a mixture of religious texts’ and a ‘miscellany of entirely “devotional” materials.’ The same point is argued by Edden (1990, p. 12). Still, textual coherence alone does not answer the question at what point of time these texts were bound together to form the present codex. The physical analysis of Digby 102 described above demonstrates that it forms not only a composite, but also that it was probably meant to be a usage unit right from the start.

The codex shows no objective evidence of the time of its origin, but it was almost certainly written somewhere around 1425. The script is typical of the early years of the fifteenth century, as will be demonstrated in section 2.2, while the last of the twenty-four Poems must have been composed not earlier than 1422 and not later than 1427, as will be argued in section 2.3.

The manuscript is bound in brown calf, the upper and lower boards bearing an embossed gold-stamped oval device with the legend

INSIGNIA+KENELMI+DIGBY+EQUITIS+AVRATIO

Kenelm Digby’s name and motto also appear in writing at the top of fol. 1r. There are no other indications of ownership. The manuscript is one of a collection of 233 volumes, five rolls, and a bound catalogue of the collection, which Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) received by bequest in 1632 from Thomas Allen, his teacher and benefactor at Gloucester Hall (now Worcester College), and which

⁹ Kwakkel (2002a, pp. 5–6; 2002b, pp. 14–15).

¹⁰ Kwakkel in his study of a collection of Middle Dutch manuscripts points out that several of the codices analysed contain production units meant to be compiled from the start, and identifies the signalling features of this procedure (2002a, p. 4; manuscript examples: pp. 264, 275).

Archbishop Laud persuaded him to donate to the University of Oxford in 1634.¹¹ The manuscript is now in a poor state. The lower board is detached, the back is missing and the sewing is breaking down. The two hinged clasps are missing as well, with only their brass board fixtures remaining.

2.2 EXECUTION OF THE TEXT

Just as the three other texts in the manuscript, the Poems are written in long lines like prose, which was not uncommon for stanzaic verse. Some scribes still followed the practice established in the early Middle Ages of writing the stanzas of a hymn like prose. The hymn stanzas were sung to the same recurring melody, and since the melodies were familiar, the text could be written out like prose.¹²

The Poems, including the marginalia, are written in a single hand. The basic script is Anglicana, with influences of Secretary. The hand shows all the distinctive letter forms of Anglicana: the two-compartment *a*, with a large upper lobe extending above the level of the other linear letters; *d* with a looped ascender; a two-compartment figure 8 form of *g*, long forked *r*, *w* like two looped *l*'s, and circular *e*.¹³ There is an overlay of some Secretary traits, however: angular broken strokes and cusped 'horns' on the heads, lending some of the angularity or 'prickly' appearance of the Secretary form to what was basically still Anglicana script. This variety of Anglicana is typical of the early years of the fifteenth century.¹⁴ Parkes (1969, p. xvi) remarks about the Anglicana, as it had developed around the turn of the fifteenth century, that it 'settled down into the kind of handwriting which could be used not only for writing documents but also as a cheap book hand', a qualification that Digby 102 satisfies.

Punctuation is largely limited to division marks between verse lines and between stanzas. The verse line division is a black *punctus elevatus*, to use Parkes' terminology,¹⁵ on which subsequently the rubricator alternately placed a red *punctus elevatus* and a red *virgula suspensiva* (*l*). The alternation has

¹¹ See Madan & Craster (1922, p. 69), Craster (1952, p. 97) and Rogers (1991, p. 91). The three sources cited give different, at any rate confusing, figures as to the number of manuscripts which Digby donated to the University of Oxford.

¹² See Parkes (1992, pp. 98–99). He only gives instances from Continental texts (p. 148 n. 20), and mentions the *Piers Plowman* text in Digby 102, like the Poems written across the page as prose (pp. 104, 150 n. 67, 200–201 [plate 23]), but to make a different point. He argues that the treatment of alliterative verse in England was influenced by the (binary structure) of psalm verses, 'affording a familiar and authoritative precedent for the treatment of such vernacular verse, using layout and punctuation to signal its structure'. Unfortunately, Parkes makes no mention of such influence on other verse forms.

¹³ See Parkes (1969, pp. xiv–xv) and Petti (1977, p. 14).

¹⁴ See Parkes (1969, p. xxii, pl. 2 (ii) and Petti (1977, p. 15, pl. 9).

¹⁵ See Parkes (1992, pp. 42–43, 306–307).

nothing to do with rhyme or syntax,¹⁶ as III.(21) shows. Line 3 is missing, but the alternation continues just the same till what is properly line 5. Putting a *virgula* at the end of that line, the rubricator apparently realized that he was out of step and would end the stanza with a *punctus elevatus* instead of a *virgula*, as in the previous twenty stanzas. So he changed step: in line 6 he followed up with another *virgula*.

Initials were used to mark the beginning of each new poem, with to the right the rubricated title, inserted inside the text block and arranged over one or two lines, according to the length of the title. The initials are two or three lines high, with the exception of the capital ⟨I⟩'s at the beginning of poems II and XXIII, which are seven lines high and placed in the margin instead of inside the text block. All initials were executed in blue with red penwork and ornamenting frills ascending and descending the left margin and, depending on the position on the page, along the top or bottom margin.

The stanzas are separated by a black double *virgula* (//), as a direction for the rubricator to insert a pilcrow or paraph (¶),¹⁷ in alternatively red and blue. Occasionally, the rubricator missed out on a //, as for instance between XIII.(1) and (2), (18) and (19), and between XXIV.(8) and (9). In XVI the rubricator mixed up the paraph colours at stanzas 8 (blue instead of red) and 9 (red instead of blue), which threw the alternation out of kilter, and Kennedy into confusion (2000, p. 134 n. 24).¹⁸ Figures are placed between dots, as for instance in the title of XVI. The frills at the end of some of the titles, clearly inserted as space allowed, must be interpreted as space-fillers, in the face of Parkes' warning that they can be misidentified with a variant of the '7'-shaped *positura*, or end-of-section mark.¹⁹

The colours must have been added in several stages. On fols. 119v and 120r (halfway quire 18) the titles in red of two poems are missing,²⁰ as well as the red verse line division marks (not the red pilcrows, as Kail says [p. vii]). Also missing, to complicate matters, is the major initial (in red *and* blue) marking the new poem on fol. 119v, whereas fol. 120r has an initial capital with its colours complete. Kail's conclusion that fols. 119 and 120 were turned over together, therefore needs qualification. It is what

¹⁶ Where Kennedy (2000, p. 134 n. 24) remarks with respect to the line endings in XVI that 'there seems to be no rationale to the choice of one of these (i.e. *virgule* and *punctus elevatus*) over the other', she might have added 'except that they were deliberately meant to alternate'.

¹⁷ See Parkes (1992, pp. 43–44, 305, 307).

¹⁸ The rubricator's mix-up at stanzas 8 and 9 led Kennedy (*ibid.*) to refer to the blue stanza paraphs in XVI as 'inconsequential' and (apparently) the red paraphs as 'rhetorical punctuation'.

¹⁹ See Parkes (1992, p. 43).

²⁰ Interestingly, Macray (1883, col. 117) did not notice the absence of these two titles. Hence he lists twenty-two, instead of twenty-four Poems in his catalogue. Kail in his edition gave these two Poems titles of his own devising: 'God's Appeal to Man' (XIX) and 'How Man's Flesh Complained to God against Christ' (XX). Nuttall (2007, pp. 128, 129), apparently unfamiliar with the original manuscript text, assumes that Kail assigned titles to all twenty-four Poems.

may have happened only if the poem titles and division marks were done jointly in one ‘red only’ operation, whilst the major initials and the pilcrows were done jointly in a separate ‘red and blue’ colouring process. Fols. 119 and 120 in that case could indeed have been turned over together in the course of the ‘red only’ operation, whilst in the ‘red and blue’ run the rubricator missed the initial capital on fol. 119 altogether, because the scribe hardly, if at all, indented the margin to make room for the initial, as in all other instances.

New verse lines begin with a small capital.

2.3 THE DATING OF THE POEMS

About the date or dates of origin of the twenty-four Poems in Digby 102 nothing can be said with absolute certainty. No dates are given in the Poems themselves, and the mention of one or two historically verifiable events merely provides a *terminus ad quem*, demonstrating that the relevant poems were necessarily written after the occurrence of these events. Kail made a bold effort to put a date to the Poems on the basis of internal historical evidence. He came to the conclusion that the Poems ‘contain allusions to parliamentary transactions and to other affairs, by means of which we are able to fix their dates’ (p. x). It is perhaps useful here, after a hundred years, to put Kail’s analysis to the test.

In six out of the twenty-four Poems,²¹ Kail traced passages which he ascribed to parliamentary business transacted in 1399, 1401, 1404, 1406, 1410 and 1414, as documented in the Rolls of Parliament covering these years (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, 1832).²² Between the years 1399–1414 four more parliaments were convened (in 1402, 1407, 1411, and 1413), with respect to which Kail was apparently unable to detect any references. At any rate, they went without comment in Kail’s analysis. In the last eleven Poems, XIV to XXIV, Kail did not trace any parliamentary business either, but he was able to identify four Poems²³ which he associated with non-parliamentary political and religious events, which occurred in 1407, 1413, 1417, 1419 and 1421.²⁴ Thus, in Kail’s analysis, fourteen Poems would appear to contain no allusions at all to any concrete events, political or otherwise.²⁵

²¹ Poems I, III, IV, VIII, IX, XIII.

²² Vol. III, pp. 433–34, 442, 444, 456–57, 459–60, 468, 470, 525, 527–28, 591, 594, 623–24, 626–27, 644–45; vol. IV, pp. 21–24, 29.

²³ Poems XII, XIV, XVI, XVIII.

²⁴ Kingsford (1913, p. 233) observed that the political poems in the Digby 102 collection were ‘written with only a general reference to events of the time’, and that Kail was in fact ‘reading too much’ into these pieces. Nevertheless, without further argument, Kingsford, with Kail, puts the Digby poems down to the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

²⁵ Poems II, V, VI, VII, X, XI, XV, XVII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV.

The passages which Kail identified as referring to parliamentary business are in themselves not conclusive. The subject matter is always of a rather general nature, dealing with popular *topoi* of which one finds numerous instances in political and religious prose texts and verse of the time.²⁶ The themes touched upon in the Poems contain warnings against tyranny, slanderers, flatterers, corrupt judges, and greedy and dissolute clergy; admonitions to keep the peace; condemnation of people who clip money, use false weights and pass unjust sentences. These are all of them topics that appear time and again in Middle English complaint literature. What does lend credibility to Kail's hypothesis that these topical subjects in the Poems allude to petitions of the Commons in parliament is the fact that in the Poems these topics appear in the same order, and at roughly the same intervals as the parliamentary debates in which they are supposed to have taken place.²⁷ Similarly, the four poems which contain the non-parliamentary occurrences signalled by Kail also follow the order in which they actually occurred over time, and dovetail nicely with the timetable of the parliamentary themes. Of the fourteen 'undatable' poems in Kail's scheme, eight are interspersed between the 'datable' poems, while the remaining six are found in a solid cluster at the close of the series.

If the time-scheme thus established is accepted as valid, we may broadly distinguish three periods in which the Poems were written. The first fifteen years covered the years 1400 to 1414, during which the writer's main interest lay with Parliament and its affairs. Then followed a slightly overlapping period, from 1413 to about 1421, when his parliamentary interests had come to a halt, but when he was still acutely interested in political affairs both at home and abroad. The religious and devotional issues which in his earlier period had roused the author's occasional interest came to occupy him completely in the third period. As I will argue in section 3.1.2, the turning point was 1421 when he withdrew from worldly occupations to lead a contemplative life. This period may have covered the years 1421 to 1428, if we assume that the writer continued the year-on-year rhythm of the preceding poems. Such periodicity is, however, no more than conjectural, since none of the poems XIX to XXIV provide the slightest clue connecting them to any dateable event.

²⁶ Examples of religious 'abuse' poetry are the anonymous *Piers the Plowman's Crede* (Dean ed., 1991, pp. 1–49) concerning the regular clergy, and *The Plowman's Tale*, also anonymous, about the secular clergy (Dean ed., 1991, pp. 51–114). Popular political and social 'abuse' themes are for instance found interspersed throughout Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* (Blyth, 1999) and in the anonymous *Mum and the Sothsegger* (Dean ed., 2000). See also Peter (1956, pp. 41–103) on the nature and themes of moral complaint in Medieval England, and Scattergood (1971, pp. 299–349) on verse complaints in the wake of changes in social values, quoting liberally from the Digby Poems.

²⁷ See the 'Table of Dates' in Appendix 1. Robbins (1975, p. 1417) approaches the timing problem along the same lines, albeit on scantier evidence; he also arrives at the conclusion that there is 'strong evidence for Kail's identification' of some topical subjects in the Poems with specific parliamentary deliberations.

2.4 THE DIALECT OF THE POEMS

In section 2.3 I concluded that, in confirmation of Kail's reasoning (pp. x–xxii), the Poems must have been written in the course of the first quarter of the fifteenth century. At that point in time the diversity in written Middle English since the days of the Conquest was still very much in evidence. In which particular dialect the author wrote the Poems we have no means of knowing. The text that we have at our disposal in Digby 102 provides clues as to the provenance of the copyist (or the place where he received his training as a scribe), or of the exemplar from which he transcribed the text, rather than the provenance of the author. Kail (pp. ix–x) thought it 'probable that the writer lived in the western or in the south-western midland'.²⁸ Robbins (1975, p. 1416) sought the basic dialect in the East Midlands, 'perhaps round Derbyshire'. Neither of the two commentators added supporting arguments for their opinions. With *LALME*, the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (McIntosh *et al.*, 1986), we now have at our disposal the tool by which to arrive systematically at a reliable dialect allocation that was not yet available to Kail and Robbins. At the heart of *LALME* is a large collection of manuscripts of known regional provenance. The scribal usage of each manuscript is typified in a so-called 'linguistic profile' (LP), consisting of the scribal forms of a standard set of linguistically discriminant items: the so-called 'questionnaire'. Each scribal form in the manuscript LP is plotted on a so-called 'dot map'. Each dot map thus records the distribution and frequency of all occurrences of a particular scribal form or set of forms. Grey dots mark the locality of all LPs, black dots mark the actual occurrences. *LALME* provides the editor of any late Middle English text not incorporated in the *LALME* sample of anchor texts with the tools to assess its regional origin. In principle he may adopt the same procedure as outlined above: construct an LP of his text, identify in *LALME* the dot maps of the LP items concerned, select the dot maps showing cohesive and clear-cut occurrence clusters, and ideally find the area of common occurrence of the selected forms.

I accordingly started the approximation of the dialect domain of the Poems with the construction of a linguistic profile of the text – in other words, the construction of a selective index of the dialectally significant scribal forms of the text. I did not for this purpose use the main 'questionnaire' of *LALME*, building an LP 'from scratch'. Instead, I grafted the LP of the Poems onto that of the *Piers Plowman* text immediately preceding the Poems in Digby 102, and already localized as one of the *LALME* anchor texts.²⁹ Appendix 2 lists the scribal features of the *Piers Plowman* text as shown in the *LALME* LP, and

²⁸ Kail presumably meant 'the copyist' rather than 'the writer'.

²⁹ 'Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 102. MS in one hand. ff. 1–97: *Piers Plowman* C-version. LP 7770. Grid 387 243. Worcs.' (*LALME*, vol. 1, p. 147). In a discussion of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts elsewhere in *LALME*, the editors describe the area of provenance of the C-versions (among them the

in parallel the scribal features of the same items as found in the Poems. The resulting composite LP allows of a ready comparison of the scribal features of the Poems with the dialect of a text that (a) had already been localized in *LALME*, (b) immediately precedes the Poems text in Digby 102, and, most importantly, (c) had been copied in a hand that is indistinguishable from that of the scribe who copied the Poems text.³⁰ I arrived at this conclusion on the basis of a character-by-character inspection *in situ* of the two texts. Prof. Michael Benskin, who kindly agreed to inspect the manuscript, considered, whilst not carrying out a detailed morphological analysis, that there was nothing to suggest that more than one scribe was involved: ‘continuity rather than discontinuity is what impressed me’.³¹ His conclusion is in line with Kwakkel’s observation, where he discusses paleographic identifications, that ‘the *aspect* of a scribal hand, the impression the script makes, is usually unique for a specific copyist’.³² Russell & Kane’s unequivocal statement (see note 30 above) that they found ‘an unmistakable change of scribe at fol. 128a’ (i.e. where the Poems end), by implication confirms my conclusion that the two scripts are paleographically indistinguishable. However, the absence of absolute proof that the text of the Poems was copied by the scribe whose provenance had already been established in *LALME* as that of the Malvern area required independent dialectological justification in a comparison of the scribal features of the *Piers Plowman* text and the text of the Poems.

The next phase in the process of approximating the dialect domain of the Poems involved the elimination from its LP all insufficiently attested forms as unreliable for diagnostic purposes. Eliminated for that reason were *eni* (2x), *beth* (1x), *lasse* (4x) and *wes* (1x), although they temptingly feature very prominently in the South-west Midlands, the linguistic domain of *Piers Plowman*. Strictly speaking, *wes* (III.142) was not a candidate for inclusion for another reason, as the form appears only for rhyming purposes (*wes-pes*), where *pes* is inevitable as part of the consistently recurring stanzaic refrain. Elsewhere in the Poems only the form *was* appears. *Arn*, although decidedly lacking sufficient attestation, was

Digby 102 text) as ‘concentrated in the south-west Midlands (especially South Worcestershire and South-east Herefordshire, i.e. the Malvern Hills)’ (*LALME*, vol. 1, p. 24).

³⁰ With respect to the scribal hand, the *LALME* description in the previous note is slightly confusing. It suggests that the whole of Digby 102 is in one hand, which is not the case, since, in the words of Russell & Kane (1997, p. 16), there is ‘an unmistakable change of scribe at fol. 128a’, that is to say commencing with the text of the Penitential Psalms. Alternatively, the *LALME* description may mean to say that only fols. 1–97 with the *Piers Plowman* text are in one hand. Russell & Kane (1997, p. 16) leave a shade of doubt about *Piers Plowman* being written by one scribe, as they found that within that text the script of fols. 36a–70b ‘differs strikingly in being much smaller than that of the passages surrounding it’, observing at the same time that the smaller script is ‘of the same character’. Possibly, the confusing note in *LALME* may have deceived Bergström-Allen (2002, p. 6), when he states that the whole of Digby 102 (‘a diverse mix of texts’) was ‘written by one hand’.

³¹ Private e-mail correspondence, December 2002.

³² Kwakkel (2002a, p. 7).

eliminated for a different reason. *Arn* is typical for Norfolk, hardly in evidence anywhere else (dot map 120), and as an isolated occurrence in the Poems it qualifies as a relict form. Incidentally, *ham* and *knawen* should also be labelled as exotic relicts, being exclusively Northern and occurring only once in XXIV.210 and 212, respectively. From the list of sufficiently attested scribal forms I then eliminated all forms whose distribution pattern in the dot maps lacked a diagnostically significant focal area. What resulted was a limited set of forms, each of which showed a cohesive, thickly dotted geographical cluster within an otherwise evenly scattered distribution pattern.³³ The most significant are *ech(e)* (dot map 86), *mony* (91), *moch(el)* (103), *wole* (164), *wolde* [*sg.*] (170), *from* (176), *panne* (190), *nou3t* (288), *worche-* (315), *whennehwhanne* (343), *noper* (479), *bren(-)* (970), *3ate(s)* (1000), *hauen* (1011). As it turned out, the thickly dotted focal areas in each of the relevant maps form a geographic ‘fit’³⁴ around the Malverns in South-west Worcestershire. The ample attestation of the forms in the text, together with the significant geographic co-occurrence of the clusters, justify the conclusion that the scribal dialect of the Poems originated in the Malvern area on the South-western border of Worcestershire. It should be mentioned at this point that the Malverns constitute the area that Kail in 1904 pronounced as the probable area of provenance of the text of the Poems. Another conclusion to be drawn from the delimitation process described above is that Derbyshire cannot possibly serve as the dialect’s home land, as Robbins presumed. The decisive factor here is the domain of *ech(e)*. This form is thoroughly attested in the Poems, with 75 occurrences spread throughout the twenty-four pieces, without any variant spellings. The dialect locality of *ech(e)* is sharply limited to the area South of a virtually straight line from the Wash in the East, passing just North of the Worcestershire Malverns into Herefordshire in the west. The clear-cut demarcation boundary of *ech(e)* on the dot map, together with the high occurrence frequency and even spread in the text, gives sufficient stability to the conclusion that Derbyshire as the area of origin of the Poems is well ‘beyond the pale’. Further evidence derives from the fact that no fewer than seven scribal forms of the LP of the Poems are not found at all in the Derbyshire area: *eche* (each), *3ut* (yet), *thow* (though), *ey3en* (eyes), *owe* (own), *moche* (much) and *di3e* (die), while another five forms in the Poems are of only rare to very rare occurrence in Derbyshire: *eny* (any), *pan* (than), *pou3* (though), *er* (before) and *deye* (die).

³³ Drawing the lines bounding the core domains of forms in the dot maps, to some extent had to be a matter of judgement, depending on the patterning of the dots in each particular map. Due care was taken to see to it that the core domains were so assigned only if they did not show unattested dots.

³⁴ See *LALME* (vol. 1, pp. 10–12) for a description of the ‘fit’-technique. In essence it is a method of establishing the area of common occurrence of a number of linguistic forms by registering them, each on top of the other, on an overlay of tracing paper. Benskin (1991, pp. 9–26) describes the technique in much greater detail.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the above observations. One: it has been established beyond reasonable paleographical doubt that the texts of *Piers Plowman* and the Poems in Digby 102 are executed in the same scribal hand. And two: it has also been demonstrated on dialectological grounds that the two texts belong to the same geographical area, the Malverns. Yet, as the composite LP in Appendix 1 shows, the scribal features of the two texts are not in every respect identical. Here two explanations, concurrent rather than alternatively, offer themselves. In the first place, allowance must be made for a considerable degree of variation within the scribe's own dialect. 'Within a single scribal dialect, for any given item, two or more forms may occur as functional equivalents'.³⁵ Secondly, a medieval scribe was not at all bound to leave the language of his exemplar unchanged like a modern copyist. A scribe might convert his text consistently into his own dialect, replacing the forms of his exemplar by his own preferred usage. Or he might faithfully copy his text *literatim*, making no changes to the usage of his exemplar, irrespective of his own preference. Or, a third possibility, a scribe might partially copy faithfully from his exemplar and partially follow his own usage.³⁶ In the present instance, if the scribe was a 'translator' who was wont to copy his exemplar consistently into his own dialect, the composite LP of the *Piers Plowman* and the Poems texts would not have shown any mutually exclusive variant forms. As an alternative, the LP at first sight presents a plausible case for a *literatim* scribe who worked from two different exemplars wholly disregarding his own usage. However, in that case the spelling variants as shown in the LP of the Poems should have been consistent throughout the twenty-four Poems. As it is, he copied poem XXIV with ten anomalous variants, spelled uniquely different from the spelling of the same forms in any of the other poems. All scribal variants appear to be fairly evenly spread over the twenty-four pieces, with the exception of eight, which occur exclusively in poem XXIV, and two which feature exclusively in the other twenty-three. The relevant form variants are: *from* (vs *fro* and *fram* [1x] in all other pieces), *a3eyn* (vs *a3en*, *a3ens* and *agaynes*), *sen*, *strengthe* (vs *strengþe* and *strengþ*), *wher* (vs *where*), *bot* (vs *but* and *bote*), *ey3en* (vs *ey3e* and *eyen*), *tylle* (vs *tyl*). Conversely, *when* and *whan* are wholly absent in XXIV, where *whenne* and *whanne* are dominant. The two Northern forms *ham* and *knawen*, also exclusive for poem XXIV, do not count, being mere relicts (see above). If the scribe was a true mirror-copyist, a rare phenomenon in itself, the abrupt change in spelling after poem XXIII would suggest that he transcribed poem XXIV, as the only piece from a set of twenty-four, from a different exemplar, which in its turn was also transcribed by a mirror-copyist. Such a concurrence of exceptions is of course possible, but highly unlikely. The most plausible conclusion seems to be that the scribe was a 'mixer', who partially copied faithfully from his exemplar and partly followed his own

³⁵ Benskin & Laing (1981, p. 75).

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 56, and Laing (2004, p. 52). Laing dubs the three types of copyist the 'Literatim', the 'Translator', and the 'Mixer'.

spelling notions. The forms that are identical in *Piers Plowman* and the Poems would then stem from the scribe's own usage, whereas the mutually exclusive forms originate from the respective exemplars of the *Piers Plowman* and the Poems texts. For instance, as can be seen in the composite LP, the scribe used the form *lyue* in his copy of *Piers Plowman* and in his copy of the Poems, in addition to *libbe* in *Piers Plowman* and *leue* in the Poems. In other words, the exemplars of the two texts had a mutually exclusive form for 'to live'. These two variants faithfully reappear in the scribe's respective copies, in addition to the scribe's own variant in both copies, whilst all three variant forms: *lyue*, *libbe*, *leue*, fit into the same dialect continuum of South-west Worcestershire. Other combinative patterns of variant forms can similarly be traced to the respective exemplars or to the scribe's own usage. For instance, as the composite LP in Appendix 2 shows, 'yet' appears as both *3ut* and *3it* in the Poems, but only as *3ut* in *Piers Plowman*. The inference here is that the unique variant *3it* in the Poems text stems from its exemplar, while *3ut* in the Poems and in *Piers Plowman* follows the scribe's own usage, whether or not this variant happened to coincide with that of the exemplar. By the same token, a single identical form in both texts, for instance *here* for 'her', was either a consistently faithful copy of the same single form in both exemplars, or the result of the scribe's own usage, whether the exemplar(s) had the same or a different variant form.

The assignation of variant forms either to the scribe's own usage, or to the respective exemplars of the *Piers Plowman* and the Poems texts, as just discussed, is also relevant in considering the possible existence in the Poems of traces of yet another linguistic variant, known as Chancery English.³⁷ If the author of the Poems was a Chancery clerk, as argued in section 3.1.2, traces of so-called Chancery English may possibly be found in the preserved text of the Poems. For such an analysis to be valid, two conditions must be satisfied. First, the exemplar of the preserved text must be a holograph. If the exemplar was itself a scribal copy, the problem would become practically unmanageable. As it happens, there is a direct link between the Malvern area, where the Poems text was copied, and Westminster, where the author worked and lived. In section 3.1.2 it is argued that the author of the Poems *worked* as a Westminster Chancery clerk, but *lived* as a Benedictine inmate within the precincts of Westminster Abbey, which counted the priory of Great Malvern among its subservient cells. This circumstance makes it at least conceivable for us to assume that the scribe of the Poems copied the text straight from the authorial holograph. The second condition for a valid analysis is that the preserved text must contain variant forms definitely assignable to the authorial exemplar. The underscored forms in the LP of the Poems in Appendix 2 all represent such variants, and are thus available for comparison with any

³⁷ See Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006, pp. 274–75, 286–87) for a discussion of the Chancery variety of English as a formative factor in the development of standard English in the course of the fifteenth century.

contemporary text showing the variety of English used by Chancery clerks. The Poems were written between 1400 and 1428 at the latest,³⁸ and might therefore be conveniently compared with the earliest form of Chancery English, Henry V's 151 so-called Signet Letters, which were written between 1417 and 1422.³⁹ A factor impeding ready comparison, however, is that the quite early variety of Chancery English in the Signet Letters still showed considerable regional variation. This has been demonstrated in an, admittedly limited, case study of the representation of the three forms of the third person plural pronoun: 'they', 'them' and 'their', in the Signet Letters.⁴⁰ These three items were shown to be represented with respectively seven, five and six variant forms. The one variant in the Poems that allows of comparison: *pei*, is thus only one of seven variant forms of 'they' in the Letters, which hardly qualifies as significant to ascertain beyond doubt the presence of early Chancery English in the Poems. A comprehensive comparative analysis of the two texts required for this purpose, however, is beyond the editorial scope of the present study.

2.5 EDITORIAL POLICY

2.5.1 THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The Digby Poems are preserved in only one copy. This fact relieves us from the stemmatic difficulties attending the editing of texts preserved in multiple copies, 'the commonest situation with Middle English material and the one in which editorial problems are most likely to arise' (Hudson, 1977, p. 39). Unique survival still does not relieve us from the problem of deciding how a medieval text, unique or otherwise, should be presented to the modern reader. The issue needs the prior consideration of the question what purpose or purposes such an edition should serve. Most modern editions of Middle English texts seek the virtually impossible of serving several masters at once: the paleographer, the philologist, the linguist and the literary historicist.⁴¹ Serving a multiplicity of masters inevitably leads to compromises, usually referred to as 'editorial'.

³⁸ See section 2.3 on the dating of the Poems.

³⁹ Fisher *et al.* (1984).

⁴⁰ Heikkonen (1996). It should be noted that there is a difference of scholarly opinion as to the driving force(s) behind the development of standard English. Where Heikkonen signals that 'Henry V is claimed to have had a strong influence on the development of this standard variety [of Chancery English] by his adoption of English as the language of his transactions', Horobin & Smith (2002), in their discussion of the written standardization of Middle English (pp. 34-36) state that 'the standardization of spelling seems to have been a by-product of the general elaboration of English, and not the result of a centrally controlled codification', in other words 'a communicatively driven response to the set of functions which English developed during the course of the fifteenth century.'

⁴¹ See Gerritsen (1963, pp. 274-75) and Hudson (1977, p. 38).

As I have set out in my introduction to the present edition, my purpose with the present edition of the Poems is to open one more window upon the social scene in late-medieval England, as it presented itself to an educated, keenly interested contemporary observer. This is an equally impossible ambition, according to modern deconstructionist theory:

Historical being is always deferred: it is not a presence but an *effect* of presence created by textuality. There is no *hors texte*, and in trying to restore the historical real we enter into a labyrinthine world that not only forecloses access to history in its original form but calls into question its very existence as an object of knowledge. Writing absorbs the social context into a textuality that is wholly alienated from the real.⁴²

Labyrinthine the deconstructed world is indeed. In a vicious circle it leads inescapably back to what it denies as an ‘object of knowledge’: the text, as the unique means of taking cognizance of the author’s interpretation of his social environment. Writing, in its post-Saussurian sense of merely constituting an arbitrary system of linguistic signs, may carry nothing else but a ‘socially construable meaning rather than an image of reality’, where ‘meaning is produced by the internal relation of signs to one another, rather than by reference to extralinguistic phenomena’.⁴³ Yet, it is the only backtracking route available to us. Fortunately, philological theorists concur with this line of thinking. The New Historicists among them recognize that ‘all texts occupy determinate social spaces, both as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations’. And so ‘we should ... seek to locate texts within specific social sites that themselves disclose political, economic and social pressures that condition a culture’s discourse at any given moment’.⁴⁴

If the Digby Poems can thus be seen as a social document, they may legitimately be transcribed for the sole purpose of producing a text that is accessible to the modern reader as exactly that: a social document. If, as has been pointed out authoritatively before, it is in practice irreconcilable with semiological-linguistic requirements for a transcript to say exactly what it says in the manuscript,⁴⁵ there is thus no need to justify infringements upon the base text as ‘compromises’, nor as the arbitrary outcome of ‘editorial practice’. They are the logical consequences of the main purpose of this edition, that is to present a social document.

⁴² Patterson (1987, p. 59). See also Spiegel (1990, pp. 59–86).

⁴³ Spiegel (1990, p. 61).

⁴⁴ Spiegel (1990, pp. 77 and 85, respectively).

⁴⁵ Gerritsen (1963, p. 274).

2.5.2 PUNCTUATION

Editorial infringement upon a medieval text is most forcefully felt where modern punctuation is used. This is especially true if the base text has no punctuation whatsoever, as is the case in the Poems (apart from the marks between verse lines and stanzas). Norman Blake, among others, argues persuasively in favour of abstaining from the use of modern punctuation.⁴⁶ His main point is that ‘the modern editor’s approach is ... to imply that there is only one possible meaning and his punctuation strives to make that meaning obvious to his readers.’ Medieval writers, on the other hand, ‘would have allowed their audiences to understand what they had composed in rather diverse ways.’ However, where a medieval reader would grasp these diverse meanings, a modern reader, when faced with the unusual syntactical structures that constraints of versification forced upon the poet, will grasp a meaning only after laborious analysis. In view of my editorial purpose as stated above, I have taken this analyzing task upon myself, expressing the result by means of syntactical, modern punctuation.

In my edition, deviations from Kail’s usage of punctuation are frequent, but do not cause differences in meaning. A striking difference is that Kail systematically marked the characteristic metrical caesura of the Middle English iambic tetrameter⁴⁷ with a comma, which makes the style seem jerky. Even though the caesura typically corresponds to a syntactic break, it does not automatically warrant a comma. German punctuation usage may have played a role,⁴⁸ but occasionally it would seem that if Kail had not placed a comma, it would have benefited the natural flow of the verse line. For instance, in XIV.(1), the caesural commas in the first four lines are defensible, but would not be missed when left out in the remaining ones. Below are Kail’s and my versions:

The herrere degre, þe more wys ;	The herrere degre, þe more wys;
Þe gretter worschip, þe noblere fame ;	Þe gretter worschip, þe noblere fame.
Þe herrere degre, þe more nys ;	Þe herrere degre, þe more nys;
Þe gretter foly, þe more blame.	Þe gretter foly, þe more blame.
After foly, folweþ þe shame ;	After foly folweþ þe shame.
Repreued of frendis, and scorned of fo,	Repreued of frendis and scorned of fo,
After þy dede, ressayue þy name.	After þy dede ressayue þy name.
Eche man be war, er hym be wo.	Eche man be war er hym be wo. (XIV.(1))

In XIII.73–74, to give another example, the comma in l. 74 in Kail’s edition is awkward: ‘Who skorneþ hem þat telleþ hem wit, / Is rebelle to God, þat repreueþ reson’, where ‘þat repreueþ reson’ is a subject clause to be linked up with ‘who’, rather than a relative clause to be linked up to ‘God’.

⁴⁶ Blake (1977, pp. 66–74).

⁴⁷ See section 3.3.1 for a discussion of the metrical structure of the Poems.

⁴⁸ Josef Kail presumably hailed from Austria. See Kail (1889), signed ‘J. Kail, Wien’.

The manuscript marks between the verse lines have not been reproduced in my edition, nor have the stanzaic pilcrows of the manuscript, which have been replaced by stanza numbers. Unlike in the manuscript, in the present edition the poems are numbered.

2.5.3 SPELLING

Abbreviations and contractions have been silently expanded. Underlining or italicizing them would not have served my stated editorial purpose (see above).

As usual in late-medieval texts, final *-e* offers a special case. The scribe of the Poems indiscriminately either writes out final *-e* or adds a downstroke or horizontal line to the final consonant(s). The downstroke or flourish appears on *d*, a straight line over *l*, *p* and *n*, and through *h* (*h̄*), a wavy line through *ll* (*ll̄*). To expand or not to expand? Kail avoided the choice in his edition by scrupulously printing all the relevant symbols. The choice is indeed not an easy one.⁴⁹ By the fifteenth century, final *-e* had largely ceased to be pronounced. In verse texts, however, it lingered on for reasons of rhythm, metre or rhyme. Not unexpectedly, in verse in its written form scribes were ambivalent in their use of final *-e*, and the scribe of the Poems was no exception. In addition to being ambivalent, he exhibits the same spelling inconsistency in the use of final *-e* that makes him write without qualms *she biddep*, *she biddes* and *she biddis* in three consecutive lines (XXIV.51–53). A few examples may serve to illustrate the point.

In poem XXIV (a Complaint of Job) the name of the Lord appears thirty-two times. Twenty-one times it is written without, and eleven times with a flourished *d*. Rhyme, rhythm nor metre give detectable occasion to such variation. The rhyme scheme of XXI.(4) makes the scribal flourish on the *d* of line-end *bond* (l. 32) either meaningless or merely inconsistent (*bond*: *stond*, *hond*, *lond*). Clearly meaningless, anyway as a mark indicating final *-e*, is the stroke through *ll* in *elles* in VII.79. A reverse case can be found in XVIII.(19), where crossed *ll* in line-end *generall* must be deliberate, to make the word fit the stanzaic rhyme scheme – albeit with single *l* only – (*generale*: *specyale*, *spirituale*, *temperale*). There does seem to be some sort of rationale behind the use of a final *-e* mark in the case of *will*, which has a crossed *ll* only and consistently as an auxiliary, and never has a crossed *ll* as a full verb or as a substantive. No consistency can be found, however, in the use of that other word of extremely frequent occurrence, and appearing in four different forms: *al*, *all*, *alle* and *all* with crossed *ll*. They are indiscriminately used as pronoun, adjective, and noun, both in the singular and in the plural.

⁴⁹ Arntz (1981, pp. xli–xliii), in a discussion of the editorial treatment of abbreviated final *-e*, convincingly demonstrates that the practice varies widely and is resolved differently for individual manuscripts. See also Nijenhuis (1990, pp. 75–76).

The conclusion must be that in the manuscript final *-e* is either written out or marked with a symbol or omitted, without any discernable consistency. Since other spelling variations are transcribed in this edition as they appear in the manuscript, final *-e*, too, is transcribed as in the manuscript, the different symbols being uniformly represented as *e* following the marked letter.

The ampersand is rendered as *and*. Initial *ff* has been transcribed as *F*. Kail starts off with reproducing double *f*, but he begins to falter in poem X, and from poem XII onwards transcribes as *F*. The yogh (*3*) has been retained, as has the scribal use of *u*, *v* and *y* (but the superscribed dot which in the manuscript invariably appears over the *y* has not been reproduced).

Verse lines always open with a small capital ('versal'), as in the manuscript. The large, rubricated capitals at the beginning of each poem appear in this edition as ordinary capitals. Word-initial capitals appearing (rather indiscriminately) elsewhere in the text have been retained. The names of the persons of the Trinity have been capitalized in this edition.

Word division has not been modernized, because the scribal practice does not make the text unreadable. Kail hyphenates (*to-morwe*, *a-nother*) but is not always consistent, e.g. *hym-self* in III.113, but *hym selue* in XII.97.

Marginal annotations such as *nota* and *veritas* have likewise been reproduced in the margin.

2.5.4 EMENDATIONS AND ADDITIONS

Emendations and additions in my edition have been placed within square brackets, and are explained in the Textual Notes.

2.5.5 GLOSSARIAL DEFINITIONS

The marginal glosses alongside the text of the Poems, as well as the definitions in the glossary at the back of this edition, are largely based on the *MED*. One obvious reason for consulting the *MED* was to spot-check a definition illustrated by one of the 1596 *MED* quotations from the Poems. A limited number of these quotations are double-counts, and even one or two triple-counts, because serving to illustrate more than one word from the same quotation. In some isolated instances such overlap has led to a difference in interpretation, duly pointed out in the Notes following the relevant poem.

LITERARY AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

3.1 AUTHORSHIP

3.1.1 ONE AUTHOR?

Prior to a discussion of authorship, we need to answer the question whether the twenty-four Poems, handed down to us as a cohesive collection (see section 2.1), were indeed all written by one author. Kail concluded that the Poems are ‘most probably by the same author,’ because all or nearly all of them are occasional poems, bear the same religious character and ‘democratic tendency’, and were written in a style and language which ‘show no such difference as would compel us to ascribe the several poems to more than one author’ (pp. vii–ix). A few notes to this analysis seem in order here. The occasional character of the Poems is arguable with respect to only ten of the twenty-four Poems, no fewer than fourteen bearing no relation whatsoever to any datable or occasional event (see section 2.3). As to the consistently religious, social and political character of the Poems, at least they do bear witness of ‘a consistent attitude; deeply moral, church-supporting, gentry-favoring, monarchy-loving,’ in Robbins’ characterization.¹ The style and language of the Poems indeed provide corroborative evidence for a single author. Kail’s brief and only comment quoted above is altogether too circumspect. The consistency and coherence of versification and imagery (see section 3.3) bear the unmistakable mark of one author. But perhaps the most compelling evidence for assuming single authorship is to be found in the unvaried repetition throughout the Poems of one or two specific themes. For instance, variations on ‘wise’ (*wys/wyse/wysdom/wis/wis/wise/wisdom*) appear more than seventy times in twenty-one of the poems, from I to XXIV. Another phrase, expressing a favourite religious notion, is the author’s repeated emphasis on man’s free will:

3e haue fre wille, chese 3oure chaunce (III.167)

He haþ fre wille: lese or wyne (VII.108)

I lent þe fre wil and þou3t (X.19)

In oure fre wille þe choys it lys (XI.61)

Pou hast fre wille, knowest euylle and good (XVII.151)

I lente þe knoweleche and fre wille (XIX.64)

¹ Robbins (1959, p. xxviii).

The author's preoccupation with morality and religion reaches almost obsessive heights on the theme of the inevitable consequences, good or bad, of man's deeds. With the following list of the relevant verses I take the risk of tedium in order to explicate the almost unvaried language in which this theme over the years found expression in a range of poems extending from poems I to XXIV, as only one writer would produce:

- Whether he be worthi heuene or helle / To resceyue, after his seruyce (I.140)
 After thy dede resceyue thy name (II.20)
 Men wol the deme after thy dede (II.22)
 Who is fals and who is trewe: / After þey lyue, alle folk wole say (IV.56)
 After desert þe name haþ prys (IV.162)
 After þy dede resceyue thy name (VI.58)
 After þe dede þe doom is dy3t (VII.103)
 After 3oure werkis ressayue þy mede (VIII.87)
 After 3oure werkis wayte aftur 3oure mede (IX.151)
 For to be demed after his dede (XIII.8)
 To worschip or shame, after þe dede (XIII.80)
 After þy dede ressayue þy name (XIV.7)
 After þey lyue men deme so (XIV.22)
 Alle þou3tes in Goddis doom are di3t, / And dedes, after þat þe be (XVIII.71–72)
 As þou deserued fong þy fee (XIX.24)
 After þy dede þe doom is dy3t (XIX.103)
 Deme euel and good after here dede (XXII.60)
 Dampne me no3t after my dede (XXIV.118)
 Deme me no3t after my dede (XXIV.243)
 After warke þat þey vsed, / I shal hem deme or saue (XXIV.407–408)
 As thay deseruyd echon haue (XXIV.410)

It will be noted that the last four verses all find a place in the *Lessouns of the Dirige*, Job's Complaint to God because of his undeserved misery, the exact opposite of what the author of the Poems kept repeating in the preceding sixteen lines of the list. It may well have been the author's bafflement about God inexplicably allowing Satan to inflict the direst punishments on a wholly undeserving true believer, as the poet supposedly thought himself to be, that gave occasion to this particular poem.

The consistent style and the recurrence of favourite phrases and notions justify the conclusion that the Poems were the work of one author. The question is then: who was the author? He is anonymous and has left no positive evidence in his poems of his possible identity. There is only the text of the Poems themselves to provide us with clues about the identity of the person who wrote them. Kail ascribed the Poems to 'a priest, most probably an abbot or a prior', who 'as such ... occupied a seat in

parliament and voted with the Commons' (p. ix).² Apparently, Kail based his identification on three arguments: (1) in some of his poems the author speaks like a clergyman addressing the faithful, or as the master of a monastery admonishing his fellow monks; (2) he showed a 'lively interest in the cause of the Commons'; and (3) he demonstrated a 'rather detailed knowledge of the proceedings in parliament' (p. ix). The third argument in its turn is based on Kail's assumption that passages in six out of the twenty-four Poems allude to business transacted in parliament. As I concluded in section 2.3 this assumption seems almost certainly valid.³

3.1.2 IDENTITY OF THE AUTHOR

There can hardly be any doubt that the three arguments which Kail put forward to identify the poet point in the right direction, that is to say: to a member of the clergy very near to, and quite knowledgeable about, the Commons and its business. Yet, Kail's conclusion that he was an abbot or prior who sat with the Commons cannot be true, because the higher clergy at no time sat with the Commons, but with the lords.⁴ Accepting the validity of Kail's profile of the author, what alternatives for Kail's conclusion present themselves? The nearest alternatives are either that the poet did indeed sit with the Commons, but as a member of the lower clergy, or that he was actually an abbot or a prior, but as such occupied a seat with the lords. Let us consider each possibility in turn.

Could the writer of the Poems have been a member of the lower clergy in the Commons? Pollard observed that:

as late as 1332 clerical proctors [i.e. deputies elected to represent the diocesan clergy, cathedral chapters and collegiate churches of the respective church provinces] put in an appearance in

² Robbins' comment on this ascription (1959, p. xxviii) is that 'the proposal is ... at least tenable'. Scattergood (1971, pp. 17–18) cites Kail's argumentation and conclusion without comment.

³ In that case it may be inferred that out of the ten parliaments held between October 1399 and November 1414 the writer of the Poems attended at least six parliaments in person, perhaps even all ten if he was returned to all of them but either was not present at four, or attended without making mention of their business in a poem. Of parliamentary business after 1414 there is no mention at all in the Poems. Again, either the poet was not returned to or did not attend any of the ten parliaments held between 1415 and 1427, the year of the last poem if we assume a frequency of one a year.

⁴ See Brown (1989, pp. 156–76, esp. p. 174). With the exception of Dodd (2006, p. 318n.), Kail's assumption that the author was an abbot or prior with a seat in the Commons was accepted by all commentators and bibliographers (see Chapter 1), albeit in one or two instances with a note of caution. Incidentally, Dodd does not put forward any argument for his own suggestion that 'perhaps he [i.e. the author of the Poems] came from the localities (possibly a minor cleric).'

parliament; but they deliberated apart, and in time their appearance in parliament ceased altogether.⁵

This observation would seem to lead to the conclusion that half a century later a member of the lower clergy could not possibly occupy a seat in the Commons. Indeed, the lower clergy, as a body, met in separate, although as yet simultaneous, convocations [i.e. provincial church synods], and after 1340 technically under the jurisdiction of the archbishops of Canterbury and York.⁶ Yet, as McHardy pointed out, proctors of the lower clergy after 1340 continued to be appointed for parliament. And even though ‘it is true that the number of appointments for any one parliament never reaches double figures ... there is no evidence of a tailing off of attendance at the end of the century’.⁷ McHardy’s study makes it clear that, although ‘the lower clergy made no impression on the parliamentary scene’, there is ample evidence for the appointment of proctors.⁸ McHardy adds that the lower clergy took their parliamentary duties more seriously than so far assumed,⁹ but this assertion seems somewhat optimistic. Appointment to parliament and actual presence in parliament were by no means the same thing. Actual attendance of knights and burgesses and of the lords temporal and spiritual was recognised as a serious problem, as will be discussed below, and there is no reason to assume that the situation was any better where the lower clergy were concerned. On the contrary, practically the only parliamentary issue of interest to the clergy was the king’s demands for taxation, and by the fifteenth century such matters were considered and decided in clerical convocation.¹⁰ If we add the requirement that a representative of the lower clergy, to qualify at all as our poet, must have attended in person at least six virtually consecutive parliaments, the conclusion seems justified that we have to look elsewhere.

Let us consider the other alternative: could the author of the Poems have been an abbot or prior, as Kail assumed, but sitting with the lords? A severely restricted and regularized number of abbots and priors, the residue of a longer list for earlier parliaments, was still summoned to parliament, as lords spiritual.¹¹ The first question that comes to mind is whether these secular and regular magnates could

⁵ Pollard (1926, p. 109). Lowry (1933, p. 454) confirms that the constitutional practice of clerical proctors attending parliament gradually died out in the thirty years after 1340.

⁶ The king continued to summon the lower clergy under the *premunientes* clause in each bishop’s royal writ, but after 1340 obedience to the clause was no longer enforced by the crown (McHardy, 1973, p. 97).

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 100.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 106. McHardy’s view is supported by Denton (1981, p. 100).

⁹ McHardy (1973, p. 107).

¹⁰ See Clarke (1936, pp. 125–53).

¹¹ By the 1370s the number of lords spiritual had been regularized to comprise ‘all the twenty-one ... archbishops and bishops, and an almost standard list of heads of religious houses, normally twenty-five abbots ... the prior of Coventry and the prior of the Hospitallers’ (Brown, 1981, p. 113).

have any knowledge at all of the business dealt with in the Commons, a prerequisite, as we have seen above, for one of the spiritual lords to qualify as the author of the Poems. This is a valid question, because the lords convened in separate locations, with the exception of the joint opening session; moreover, their business was different from that of the Commons.¹² The answer is: yes, they could. Petitions from the Commons came up for discussion and reply in the lords, and on occasion there were joint sessions of representatives from the Commons and from the lords.¹³ Enough opportunities, in any case, for the prelates to become acquainted with the business dealt with in the Commons.

The next question to be asked is whether any of the abbots or priors summoned to parliament actually attended in person at least six out of ten sessions over a period of fifteen years. The historians are agreed that actual attendance of the lords spiritual left much to be desired, with only a few abbots and priors attending, and those quite often seeking to evade attendance.¹⁴ The successive kings in the fourteenth and the early part of the fifteenth centuries had great difficulty in persuading the magnates and prelates not to excuse themselves from attending the parliamentary sessions to which they were summoned, except if acquitted because of pressing military or religious emergencies.¹⁵ Roskell presents a wealth of detailed documentary evidence attesting to the lack of attendance of the lords in parliament, especially on the part of the lords spiritual.¹⁶ The conclusion seems justified that the chances of finding the author of the Poems in this assembly are, again, very remote.

We are left, then, with the lay members of parliament: the lords temporal, and in the Commons: the knights of the shire and the burgesses. Kail does not consider any of these categories, because they do not conform to his profile of the writer of the Poems as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, the author's preoccupation throughout the Poems with matters of church and faith does not immediately point to a lay magnate. Moreover, the same evidence that Roskell presents with respect to the frequent absence of the lords spiritual (see above) applies to the lay lords. The situation as regards

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 111–12, 123–24.

¹³ Brown (*Ibid.* pp. 124–25) points out that 'petitions ... sent up from the Commons were read before the lords and advice was offered to the king on how they should be answered ... Over a period of weeks separate sessions, joint sessions and sessions with an intercommuning group of lords were held.'

¹⁴ Brown (1981, p. 116), and Pollard (1926, p. 64).

¹⁵ Roskell (1956, pp. 153–204).

¹⁶ 'There have actually survived the letters of excusation of more than half of the abbots in the case of each of no fewer than forty parliaments in the course of the fourteenth century ... The surviving letters of excusation for the successive parliaments of 1391, 1393, 1394, 1395, and January 1397 (by which time twenty-seven abbots and priors were being regularly summoned) number respectively 16, 19, 19, 17, and 16. An examination of the record of the heads of individual monasteries ... suggests that in the vast majority of cases it was really exceptional for an abbot to attend parliament in person' (Roskell, 1956, p. 174).

election, re-election and personal attendance of the county gentry and the burgesses in the Commons is slightly more promising. As we have seen, for the writer of the Poems to have been a lay member of parliament, he should have been (re-)elected to at least six parliaments between 1399 and 1414. Statistics compiled for the years immediately preceding the period under review show that five or more re-elections did occur, but not frequently. Lewis (1933) analysed the twenty-six parliaments held between 1376 and 1397. Out of a total of seventy-four knights (two from each of the thirty-seven shires), the number of members returned six times typically varied between one and five, one year peaking with six. The number of county members returned ten times – the required frequency to fit the author’s profile, as we have seen earlier on –, varied between nil (most often) and two. For the representatives from the boroughs the corresponding numbers are lower. The number of burgesses returned for the sixth time typically varied between nil and three, with an occasional peak of five or six, out of a total of about sixty borough representatives returned. The number of burgesses returned ten times typically varied between nil (most often) and two.¹⁷

The numbers dramatically go down even further when taking into account actual presence, rather than official (re-)election. In his *Evolution of Parliament*, Pollard demonstrated that actual attendance of the Commons in parliament remained at a lamentably low level until the middle of the fourteenth century, mainly because of the tendency of the boroughs to abstain themselves.¹⁸ Therefore, if we were to seek our poet in the Commons, he could conceivably be found among the very few county representatives who were regularly present, but almost certainly not among the city and borough members. However, in terms of statistical chance, the option is only barely conceivable. What pleads even further against the notion of the author being a knight is the subject matter and tone of voice of a number of the Poems themselves. The traditional complaints and appeals of God to man in poems X, XVII and XIX, the criticisms of the secular clergy in poem XIV and of the regular clergy in poem XVIII, the versifications of biblical passages in poems XXI and XXIV, and the thoroughly theological poem XXIII, all point to a clerical rather than a secular background.¹⁹

The above analysis shows that the writer of the Poems was almost certainly not a member of parliament. Yet, the internal evidence keeps pointing in the direction of Westminster. The poet must have been familiar with the proceedings of at least six out of ten parliaments spread over a period of fifteen years. He demonstrates a lively interest in specific political issues, at home and abroad. Whilst

¹⁷ Lewis (1933). But occasionally a commoner was returned even more frequently. In the parliament of January 1395, one borough representative was returned (although not necessarily present!) for the eighteenth time, an absolute record in the statistics available to us.

¹⁸ See Pollard (1926, pp. 319–21).

¹⁹ The religious aspects of the Poems are discussed as part of their cultural background in section 3.4, in particular in sections 3.4.1.3 and 3.4.2.

his sympathies lay with the Commons rather than with the lords, he found himself near the centre of power, the place where he thought it expedient to address not only the king, but also a 'kyngis chaunceller', a 'kyngis counselere', 'lordis' and those 'that ouer puple han gouernaunce'.²⁰ At the same time, the Poems give evidence of the writer's strong religious bent. He commented critically on the morals of both the secular and the regular clergy. The tenets of the Christian belief and the theological dogmas underlying the sacraments of the Church had no secrets for him.

With this profile in mind we are in fact looking at a man closely involved with the parliamentary business of the Commons without being a parliamentarian himself; a man near the centre of power without being part of it; a devout and strongly motivated member of the clergy. The figure best fitting this picture is that of a clerk in the royal Chancery, most of whom were clerics. One of the manifold duties of this vast administrative machinery of medieval royal government was to issue summons to parliament, and to receive on behalf of the king all private and common parliamentary petitions.²¹ In Chancery our author was not only knowledgeable about parliamentary affairs, but as much about political affairs at home and abroad. The conclusion that the poet was a Chancery clerk finds concurrence with Giancarlo's remark in his study of the relationship between the English parliament and English literature in late medieval times, that 'to be a poet in this period was, by and large, to be a clerk and to have had clerkly-clerical training. All of these poets [i.e. those referring extensively to parliamentary matters] moved in the clerical and bureaucratic circles that were a distinctive feature of the London-Westminster environment'.²² And Barr (1993, p. 17) suggests that the author of *Richard the Redeless* (and by implication also the author of its continuation *Mum and the Sothsegger*), because principally concerned with contemporary affairs, could have been a parliamentary clerk.

Chancery clerks were either laymen or clerics. I have argued above that the author was in all likelihood a cleric. There are indications that make it probable that he was a regular cleric, more precisely a Benedictine monk. First, he devoted a whole poem (XVIII) to an elaborate set of conventual rules, in which echoes can be heard of the Provincial Capitulary of 1422 concerning the behaviour of Benedictine monks, about which complaints had been made to King Henry V in 1421.²³ Second, the place where the author of poem XVIII was most likely to have become familiar with this particular Capitulary was evidently a Benedictine monastery, and the nearest, the Benedictine Westminster Abbey, was next door to the royal palace of Westminster and its Chancery offices. Third, in the early part of the fifteenth century the Chancery personnel, besides career clerks and secular clerics, still counted

²⁰ A social positioning which also Robbins makes explicit (1959, p. xxviii, and 1975, p. 1417).

²¹ For a comprehensive description of the governance of late medieval England, see Brown (1989), especially p. 2 (clerks as clerics) and pp. 44–52 (the workings of Chancery).

²² Giancarlo (2007, p. 10).

²³ See Kail (p. xxii).

clerics who had taken major or minor orders, albeit in rapidly diminishing numbers.²⁴ The Register of ‘the Brethren of the Convent’ of Westminster (Pearce, 1916) only shows the names of the monks who held conventual offices, so within the precincts of Westminster Abbey. But those of the monks who held no such office and, as a result, remain anonymous, account for more than half of the total number. It is therefore conceivable that among them were monks employed as clerks in the nearby Chancery offices. The brisk demand for scribes that the elaborate government machinery engendered could be readily satisfied from the nearby Abbey. In any case, our particular monk will not have encountered much difficulty in obtaining permission from his abbot, the powerful William Colchester. Colchester occupied a prominent seat in the Upper House, and was closely engaged in the national and international affairs of the king, who in his turn was patron of the Abbey church.²⁵ Engaging in secular business was not frowned upon among the Benedictines, in any case. They enjoyed a ‘remarkable degree of identification with the secular life of their times,’ in particular the monks of Westminster Abbey, whose ‘position was to some extent unique,’ and whose ‘royal associations affected the life of its monks’.²⁶ The intrusive influence of the worldly affairs of the Palace of Westminster upon the monastic life in Westminster Abbey is best illustrated by the fact that the sessions of the Commons in Parliament in those days took place regularly within the precincts of the Abbey, either in the chapter house or in the refectory.²⁷ That the vow of *stabilitas loci* was not strictly enforced, moreover, appears from a remark by the compilers of the Register of Monks, who also tried to ‘trace them (i.e. the obedientaries) in occupation of offices elsewhere’.²⁸ For instance, the Register makes mention of the monk John Stokes, who ‘was absent from the Convent from about 1421 to 1436’.²⁹ There was also the monk Roger Cretton, who from 1399 till 1413 held, among other offices, the office of ‘Warden of Q. Alianore’s and of Richard II’s manors’,³⁰ which must have made him an *outridere* like Chaucer’s ‘monk out of his cloystre’ in the *Canterbury Tales*.³¹ Cretton’s office, incidentally, is illustrative of the Abbey’s close links with the king and his court. To mention one other example, our poet’s confrere of greater renown, John Lydgate, a Benedictine of Bury St. Edmunds, in 1426 spent time in France, and during the six following years in and around London, on all occasions writing numerous commissioned poems for

²⁴ See Brown (1989, p. 60).

²⁵ See Harvey (2008).

²⁶ See Harvey (1993, pp. 1 and 5 respectively).

²⁷ See Brown (1989), p. 212). When the Commons had their sessions in the Palace, they met in the Painted Chamber.

²⁸ See Pearce (1916, p. 21).

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 31.

³¹ See Benson (1988, l. 181).

aristocratic patrons, including the king.³² Interestingly, the Benedictine priory of Great Malvern in Worcestershire was subservient to Westminster Abbey.³³ It is a tempting thought that the holograph(s) of the Poems found their way to the scriptorium of Malvern Priory, there to be transcribed by a local resident in the local dialect of the Malvern area (see section 2.4).

The profile of a Westminster monk working within the royal palace of Westminster, if correct, will have changed abruptly in the year 1421. In that year, Henry V, having received complaints about serious misbehaviour within the Benedictine Order, summoned a great assembly in the Chapter House of Westminster. Sixty Benedictine abbots and priors and more than three hundred monks were present, among them undoubtedly their host, the Westminster abbot Colchester, and quite probably his subordinate, our poet. The king peremptorily demanded that they reform themselves.³⁴ It is not inconceivable that this criticism should have resulted in the author quitting Chancery, either on his own initiative, or so instructed by his abbot, if only because the latter wished to demonstrate his loyalty to the king. A strong indication in support of this thought is the tenor of the last seven poems. In poem XVIII the writer forcefully admonishes his fellow monks on the same points of criticism as censured in the meeting of the previous year. In this poem he immediately puts a (self-)accusing finger on the sore spot of the Benedictines' worldly occupations:

The goode lyueres in spiritualte,
 Þe worldly lyueres hem doþ hate;
 Wiþ occupacioun of temperalte
 Dryueþ relegeon out at þe 3ate,
 For besynesse of vanyte,
 Vaynglory and hy3e astate.
 Þat þus chaungen here degre,
 Pey come to heuene neuere or late. (XVIII.9–16)

From poem XVIII forward, all remaining poems (XIX–XXIV) testify to a way of thinking that differs dramatically from the earlier poems: contemplative and deeply pious, as I will discuss within the context of the audience of the Poems in section 3.2.

The writer of the Poems: a Benedictine monk, resident in Westminster Abbey – a *royal peculiar* under the direct jurisdiction of the monarch –, with a powerful peer in the lords as his superior, and as a Chancery clerk, must have found his duties and allegiances many-sided: to the crown, to the

³² See Pearsall (1997, pp. 18–32).

³³ See Willis-Bund & Page (1971, pp. 136–37).

³⁴ See Kail (p. xxii), who refers to Goodwin (1704, p. 303), who refers to the *Chronica Maiora*, covering the years 1377–1420, of Thomas Walsingham, chronicler at the royal Abbey of St. Albans (for an English translation, see Prest & Clerk, 2005, pp. 440–41).

Commons, to the lords and not least to himself as a devout clergyman.³⁵ The sometimes strikingly divergent themes and moods in the Poems testify to these divided loyalties.

Having refashioned the identity of the author of the Poems, we may conclude that Kail was off target with his profile of the poet, but only slightly so. He saw the poet as ‘a priest, most probably an abbot or prior’, who ‘as such occupied a seat in parliament, and voted with the Commons’. It is demonstrably more likely that the writer of the Poems was neither an abbot nor a prior but a Benedictine monk, not a member of parliament but a royal Chancery clerk.

3.2 AUDIENCE

A cursory glance through the twenty-four Poems will be sufficient to make it clear that their author was a thoroughly didactic writer who on almost every page had a message to convey: of advice, complaint, instruction, criticism or exhortation. Sometimes their recipients, the poet’s audience, are specifically addressed; more often, they are only generally designated, or merely implied.³⁶ The king, for instance, is personally addressed: *To kepe þe crowne God graunte 3ow grace* (XII.49). Or a specific critical question is addressed to a monk:

A questyon of 3ow y craue –
 Resoun assoyleþ it by skille –
 Who may here soules saue
 To were an abyte, wole or nelle. (XVIII.49–52)

Self-willed fools are indirectly addressed with a home truth:

Pat freek may wel be holden a fool
 Pat wayueþ wit, and worcheþ by wille. (XVI.99–100)

Self-willed hypocrites are similarly indirectly addressed:

Many callen conscience fleschly willis,
 And nelen non opere conseil craue. (IV.105–106)

³⁵ As Denton (1981, p. 89) observed: ‘The clerks working in parliament ... were ... themselves either prelates, ecclesiastical dignitaries or members of the lower clergy. This simple factor is an indication of the two-sided nature of the duties and responsibilities of the clergymen who served the crown.’

³⁶ See Wogan-Browne *et al.* (1999, pp. 109–16) on ‘Addressing and Positioning the Audience’.

If not directly or indirectly spoken to, the audience is at any rate implied. The readers are implicitly invited to agree with the author's opinions and beliefs: *To wete 3if parlement be wys, / Be comoun profit wel it preues* (III.97–98).

All the time, it should be noted, the author addressed his audience in the vernacular; the Poems contain not a word of Latin.³⁷ As a trained cleric, our author was well versed in Latin³⁸ and may have been tempted to intersperse his verses with Latin phrases like many a contemporary poet, to attach an aura of authority to his verse.³⁹ As a 'man with a message' he may have felt that the didactic nature of his verse needed the vernacular for 'the education of [his] audience in matters of current theological, political and ethical interest'.⁴⁰ Latin was a severely limiting choice of language, meant to reach only the clergy, lawyers and scholars. By opting for the vernacular, our poet apparently sought to achieve the much wider audience of clergy, nobility and commons.⁴¹ These categories are at the same time the readers that will have appealed to the poet as a man not only with a moral mission, but also with a patriotic message. In many a poem, as I shall argue later on, he proved himself a man closely concerned with the *comoun profit* (III.99), who wanted nothing more than that the estates of the realm *in pes þey kepe alle þis contree* (XII.21). The writer may therefore have penned his verse in English also to promulgate his national sentiments, since in his day and age 'English could ... be claimed as the language of the nation, a powerful patriotic bond uniting commons, aristocracy, and crown against enemies from abroad'.⁴²

About the readers themselves little is made explicitly known in the Poems, apart from the few instances of directly addressed persons. We can only be certain that the readership was not homogeneous. It would be difficult, for instance, to identify the audience of the deeply devout poem XVII (*God, how may y, man, bygyne / Wiþ myn herte to loue þe* [73–74]) with the audience of these hawkish lines:

On of two 3e mot chese,
On lond or see, o[n] shippes bord,
Wiþ fi3t 3e wynne, wiþ trete 3e lese.

³⁷ With the one exception of the original Latin incipits of the Office for the Dead in poem XXIV.

³⁸ Poem XXIII, for instance, is an English version of the Latin *Lauda Sion*, one of the four Sequences of the Mass on the Feast of Corpus Christi of St. Thomas Aquinas (McGarry, 1936, p. 258). Another example is poem XXIV, founded on an English prose version of the Lessons, but also heavily leaning on the text of a Latin primer (Day, 1921, p. xix).

³⁹ See Davidson (2003, p. 473) on mixed-language speech serving to convey spiritual or social authority.

⁴⁰ Coleman (1981, p. 15).

⁴¹ See, for instance, Walther (2000, pp. 9–15), and Somerset (1998, p. 5).

⁴² Wogan-Browne *et al.* (1999, p. 339).

3oure enemys han þat eure in hord,
 Pat þey wynne wiþ word
 3oure townes and castels in lengþe and brede.
 And þat 3e wynne, 3e wynne wiþ sword,
 Perfore wiþ swerd do 3oure dede. (XIII.153–60)

These two contrastive examples are in fact illustrative of a dividing-line which separates the thematic issues in poems I through XVII from those in the poems XVIII to XXIV. The themes in the first group are without exception of a political, social and moral character, whilst those in the second group are without exception of a deeply religious, devotional and pious nature. This dividing-line has so far escaped the attention of literary analysts. It will be clear that a thematic analysis of twenty-four unrelated pieces, written over a period of at least twenty years,⁴³ each a complete, rounded and independent poem, is certain to produce a variety of themes. For instance, Robbins discusses three Digby poems under the heading of ‘poems of protest’, venting political criticism in the prudent guise of religious criticism against the ‘sins of the age’.⁴⁴ Elsewhere Robbins prints three other Digby poems under the denominator of ‘historical poems’, heavily centred as they are upon the state of the realm, and the role therein of king and parliament.⁴⁵ Dodd quotes verses from two Digby poems in illustration of his essay on the changing role of parliament in ‘shaping and articulating public opinion’.⁴⁶ Peck ranges five, again different, Digby poems under the ‘political-cum-penitential’ theme, where he discusses the appeal made by late medieval poets on the individual conscience.⁴⁷ Coleman discusses five Digby poems as examples of ‘complaint verse’, partly overlapping the themes of Robbins and Peck.⁴⁸ Scattergood (1971) discusses ‘political and social’ verse in late medieval England using about thirty quotes from eight Digby poems. It so happens that all these issues are of a political, social or moral nature, and that they all appear left of the dividing-line, that is to say among the poems I to XVII. Not only the instances just listed, in fact all publications dealing with English historical literature in general, with parliament, with estates literature, with ‘advice-for-princes’ literature, with complaint verse, poems of protest, or moral poems – they all have recourse to only the first seventeen of the Poems for their examples and quotations. This is no coincidence, but the result of the fact that from poem XVIII onwards the poems have lost all

⁴³ See section 2.3.

⁴⁴ Robbins (1960, p. 198).

⁴⁵ Robbins (1959, pp. xxviii–xxix, 39–53).

⁴⁶ Dodd (2006, p. 299, 317–18).

⁴⁷ Peck (1986, p. 138) ranges the Poems with *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger* as poems in the ‘Langlandian tradition’ of ‘advice to rulers, attacks on simony, discussions of conscience and the importance of Truth.’ Barr (1993, p. 6) holds that ‘the poems in the [Langlandian] tradition respond to *Piers* primarily as a social document.’

⁴⁸ Coleman (1981, p. 64).

allusion to matters of political or social import, but become – and with increasing intensity – wholly religious poems, thematically varying from the devotional and pious to the dogmatic and biblical. They are apparently not the themes that command attention from literary critics, with the sole exception of McGarry's treatment of poem XXIII.⁴⁹

The verse lines quoted above from poems XIII and XVII illustrate the dividing-line between two distinct groups of poems, each with their own discrete issues. But they equally serve to illustrate a similar dividing-line running through the social environment of the author, where to all intents and purposes we may expect to find the author's intended audience, the people with whom he associated and among whom his themes were most likely to arouse interest, whom he will have tried to convince, persuade, or even reform. From the profile that we have been able to draw of the poet,⁵⁰ we may distinguish two wholly separate 'spheres of life', and hence two separate audiences. As a royal clerk in Chancery, of whatever rank, he was part of a vast mechanism which controlled the realm's governance, and included all Westminster personnel, from the lowest junior clerk to the most exalted department heads, lawyers and judges of the three great administrative offices, the king's Council, the royal law courts, the king's household, as well as every parliamentary official and the members of parliament themselves.⁵¹ As a Benedictine monk, he moved in the circle of his fellow monks within the precincts of Westminster Abbey and, possibly, of its cells elsewhere in the country, of which with certainty the Great Malvern priory was one. Thus, left of the dividing-line is the author's secular life as a royal clerk, to the right is his religious life as a dedicated monk.

As I have argued in section 2.3, the events of 1421 will have caused our poet to give up his clerkship in the Westminster government offices, to live wholly by the vows of his order in Westminster Abbey. Through that watershed year of 1421 runs the line that splits the author's themes in a secular and a religious part, splits the twenty-four Poems into a secular and a religious group, and splits the poet's audience into a secular and a religious sphere. This observation leads to the tentative conclusion that until 1421 the audience of the first seventeen poems, with their political, social and moral themes, is to be found among the poet's politically, socially and morally aware associates around king and parliament. After 1421, the last seven poems, with their deeply religious, pious and devotional themes, are directed, first of all, at the brethren of the Benedictine monastery. As to the actual readers of the Poems among these two audiences, it seems reasonable to assume, if only as a matter of practical

⁴⁹ McGarry (1936, pp. 258–63).

⁵⁰ See section 3.1.2.

⁵¹ See Brown (1989) on the workings of government in late-medieval England, especially pp. 43–60 on the Westminster Offices.

convenience, that the poems will have circulated among a rather fixed group of individuals, rather than among an ever changing group according as the poetic themes varied.

3.3 THE STYLE

3.3.1 VERSIFICATION

The very first thing that strikes us about the versification of the twenty-four Poems is the author's consistency, considering that the Poems were written not as one simultaneous and coherent creation, but as occasional poetry penned with a frequency of roughly one poem a year on a variety of themes, as discussed in section 2.3. The consistency is apparent in the author's management of the formal elements of the poetic skeleton: the stanzaic grouping, the rhyme and the rhythm of his verse. All but two of the twenty-four pieces are composed of eight-line stanzas, rhyming *abab bcbc* up to poem XIV, *abab abab* from poem XV onwards. The two exceptions, the poems X and XVI, are fourteen-liners rhyming *abab abab ccdddc*. These two exceptions I shall have occasion to discuss further on. Consistency is also apparent in the poet's use of the refrain. Each of the first fourteen poems has a stanzaic varied refrain. In poem I, for instance, the last line of each stanza has a variation on the phrase *knowe thy self, loue God and drede*. Or in poem IX where every stanza ends with a variation on the theme *wip God of pes 3e trete*. Consistency is, finally, also apparent in the rhythmic pulse. Pervasive in all poems but one (XVI) is the iambic tetrameter, or four-beat octosyllabic line, the most common type of metre since the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The iambic tetrameter line in the Poems, as in all syllable-counting verse in English, almost invariably plays upon the basic pattern of alternating linguistic stresses coinciding perfectly with alternating strong positions of the metre.⁵² Following are some examples of the scarce verse lines wholly conforming to the metrical template:

Another, richer than he is (I.147)

A word þat God hym seluen ches (III.54)

Who secheþ wel, he may assay (IV.158)

In the vast majority of cases, however, the syllable composition is profoundly affected by phonological processes that are not necessarily reflected in the orthography of the Poems. The most common and notorious by far is the pronunciation of unstressed final or medial *-e*, which in verse could be dropped,

⁵² For a compact and tightly organized overview of the linguistic and metrical properties of Middle English, see Minkova (2007).

elided, syncopated or kept according to the requirements of the metre, as will be found in almost every line. A few examples will suffice:

His 3erde of loue on summe is lent (I.83)

But take and gedre al þat þou may (VI.4)

3oure Enemy ordynaunce þey di3t (XIII.138)

Apart from such accommodations in the phonological structure of the verse line, some metrical conventions serve to satisfy the four-beat rhythm. One is the *extra* unstressed syllable at the end of the line, which is in fact irrelevant for the metrical syllable count, merely signifying a feminine rhyme. The most casual glance through the Poems makes it clear that feminine rhyme is overwhelmingly predominant, and that it is nowhere metrically significant, as in the following fragment:

Wiþ soulis bri3t in God 3e glade
As shynyng angels out of synne,
In worschip of hym þat 3ow made,
To knowe 3oure seluen now bygynne. (IX.9–12)

Counting out line-end *-e*, the octosyllabic line is still intact, with four unstressed syllables neatly coinciding with four weak metrical positions, four stressed syllables with four strong positions. The other metrical convention, and again a common feature in the Poems, is the so-called headless line, whereby an unstressed line-initial syllable is left out, resulting in a verse line of seven syllables instead of eight. For instance:

Burnysche bry3t 3oure soules blake (IX.2)
Goddis loue fayleþ nou3t (XVII.126)
Flesch, þy synnes mochil is (XX.193)

Note the optional feminine rhyme in IX.2, and the syllabic final *-e* of *loue* in XVII.126. The line-initial and line-end adjustments just described not only served their purpose in the process of matching the linguistic and metrical exigencies of the line, but at the same time contributed to the necessary rhythmic variation, avoiding the monotony of mechanical metrical regularity. Another such rhythmic device which the poet had at his disposal was trochaic substitution of the first iambic foot, as in VII.84: *How þou it wan, held, and spent.*

With this last line we are entering the realm of scholarly controversy. If the verse line follows the standard template of the iambic tetrameter, with the conventionally accepted adaptation of the line-initial trochaic inversion, it necessarily follows that the syntactic break between *wan* and *held*, in the editorial text marked with a comma, is prosodically needed as a so-called metrical pause, in order to fill out the number of syllables from seven to eight, thus to arrive at a total of four feet. The metrical pause is seen by some theorists, the ‘timers’, as a temporal pulse in the spoken performance of the verse line, as opposed to the ‘stressers’, who adhere to the strict tradition of metrical stress.⁵³ This is not the place to take sides in the controversy, but with the example from the Poems just quoted, the ‘timers’ do seem to have a convincing case. The metrical pause, to quote one other example, is also found in VII.88: *So quyte þat wel, lerne to di3e*. Here again the comma is editorial, but aptly represents the metrical pause and effectively builds ‘tension’ into the rhythm of the verse line. A combination of the variations to the iambic tetrameter line discussed above is found in X.57: *Man, hast þou au3t in mynde*, a headless line, with a metrical pause after *man*, and a line-end extrametrical unstressed syllable. In some places the poet broke the regular four-beat rhythm with a five-beat iambic pentameter:

I mad þe wys and fayre, angels pere,
 Pou makest þe fool, and foul fendis fere. (X.107–108)

It should be noted that, whereas l.107 show complete regularity, the next line satisfies the prosodic and metrical fit of the iambic pentameter only if it is recognized that *in speech* medial unstressed *-e* in *makest* could be syncopated, and *foul* pronounced with final *-e*, although not represented in the orthography. Both phenomena are true prosodic features, the latter – pronunciation of an unstressed final *-e* not textually represented – is in fact the reverse of the one discussed earlier, of final unstressed *-e* being orthographically represented but not pronounced. Beside the iambic pentameter to break the overall tetrametric regularity, the occasional trimeter is found as well, as for instance in XIII.85: *Shamefully falsed to shende*, with syncopation of *e* in both *shamefully* and *falsed*, and loss of line-end *-e*. As always, we are here of course concerned with the phonology of the syllables.

Apart from metrical adaptations to build rhythmical tension into a verse line, other linguistic variations, to note enjambment and alliteration, served the author’s purpose as well. Enjambment – deferring the completion of a syntactic unit from one line to the following – effectively shifts the phrasal tension, as in IV.78–80:

⁵³ For a discussion of the rift between ‘timers’ and ‘stressers’, see Cable (1991, pp. 115, 136).

Glosers shuld not go so gay,
 Ne not so hardy for to meue
 Suche wordes as they say.

and in V.9–10:

Who so wist what tresoure
 He hap þat worcheþ by wit.

Enjambment is generally used as a deliberate way of infusing some dynamic tension into the metric regularity of a poem by occasionally varying end-stopped lines with run-on lines. As the above examples show – and they are illustrative for other instances – enjambment in the Poems appears to have been induced simply by the more prosaic need to complete a particular syntactic unit of thought beyond the bounds of one verse line. This may be one reason why enjambment is of rather infrequent occurrence in the Poems. Another reason may be that the interplay between syntax and verse structure required for successful enjambment slowed down its incidence in the Poems.

Alliteration, on the other hand, is abundantly in evidence everywhere in the Poems. The author often had recourse to commonplace set phrases that must have come readily to hand, for instance in poem V: *rebell and ryse* (l. 36), *robbe and reue* (l. 38), or in poem XII: *word of wynd* (l. 51), *to lette þe lawe* (l. 60), *lyf and leme to saue and spille* (l. 106).⁵⁴ As a stylistic device to reinforce the meaning, he used alliteration more deftly. For instance, in poem IV: *Falshed wolde trouþes tunge teyʒe* (l. 113), with its strongly suggestive initial stops. And the sweep of the sower's hand is heard in l. 129: *Summe men sowe here seed in skornes*. In XI.76, the combined alliteration and assonance in *As shynnyng sune in Goddis syʒt* lends the line its intended brightness. In XX.113-14: *For my soule, Ihesu suffred wo, / Bounden and beten wiþ scourges ynowe*, formal alliteration is cleverly mixed with stylistic alliteration: three *s*-sounds arranged in the formal *xx/x* scheme, reminiscent of traditional alliterative metre,⁵⁵ are interrupted by the evocative plosive *b*'s.

⁵⁴ See for the respective instances *MED* s.v. *risen* (v.) sub 9.(a); *robben* (v.) sub 2.(c); *wind* (n.) sub 4.(c); *letten* (v.) sub 2.(c), 3.(c), 4 and 11.(b); *lim* (n.(1)) sub 3; *spillen* (v.) sub 1.(b) and 2.(b).

⁵⁵ In the definition of Abrams (1993), Old English alliterative metre 'is the principal organizing device of the verse line; each line is divided into two half-lines of two strong stresses by a decisive pause or *caesura*, and at least one, and usually both, of the two stressed syllables in the first half-line alliterate with the first stressed syllable of the second half-line.' For a detailed discussion of the late-medieval alliterative revival, its characteristics and varieties of style, see for instance Turville-Petre (1977) and Kennedy (2000). For a lucid exposé of the constituent structure of Middle English alliterative verse, see Minkova (2007, pp. 176–81).

It may have become evident from the above examples that the author felt perfectly at ease with alliteration as a poetic device, so much so that in places he seems simply to let himself go in quite unexpected bursts of hyper-alliteration. In poem V, for instance, the first two lines of the first three stanzas are packed with alliteration, all on the one consonant *w*: *Man, be war of wikkid counsaile, / He wol the lede in wayes slidre* (1–2); *Whoso wist what tresoure / He hap þat worcheþ by wit* (9–10); *Whoso wyste what wille harmes, / Þat willefully fro wyt wendes* (17–18). After stanza 3 this form of stanzaic patterning abruptly stops. Indeed, no trace of alliteration is to be found in all of the next six stanzas of poem V, except two set phrases (*rebell and ryse, robbe and reue*) in stanza 5. Poem XIV is another example of a spasmodic use of alliteration. Wholly absent in the first thirteen stanzas, alliteration suddenly appears bunched in the last stanza: *frele frendis* (l. 105), *þe soule it schendis* (l. 107), *Richesse, rauenerere of worldis wele* (l. 108), *recheles as a roo* (l. 110), *Er 3oure synnes 3oure soules apele* (l. 111). It is difficult not to see an element of arbitrariness in such clusters of hyper-alliteration.

As noted earlier, the poems X and XVI are the two exceptions to the overall regularity of the format which the author adopted for the bulk of his poetic production. The two poems differ from the other twenty-two in both stanza form and rhyme scheme. The stanzas have fourteen lines, instead of eight, and the rhyme scheme of both is *abab abab cdddc*, in which the last six lines or sestet – the *cdddc* tag – serves as a ‘wheel’ to the eight lines of the octave.⁵⁶ Kennedy (2000, pp. 143–44) at one point suggests that the 14-line form, with its 8 + 6 structure, is somehow connected with the similarly structured Italian sonnet form, but then disowns her own suggestion on the ground that the English poets never adopted the Italian rhyme scheme in the octave. My suggestion is that both poems are hybrids. Their basic metrical template is that of the twenty-two other poems: the iambic tetrameter, whilst their line-count and rhyme scheme is that of 14-line alliterative verse, a rare variety of the much more common 13-line form.⁵⁷ The poems X and XVI differ from each other in one respect: where all fifteen 14-line stanzas of poem X are composed throughout in the iambic tetrameter mode, in poem XVI this format applies in only six out of the total of nine stanzas, whilst in the other three – stanzas 1, 5 and 9 – the octave is composed in alliterative strong-stress long lines. This fact turns these three stanzas from hybrids into perfect examples of the alliterative revival of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, which produced such outstanding alliterative poems as *Piers Plowman*, *Winnere and Wastoure*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Alliterative verse in general comes in various styles: unrhymed, rhymed or a combination of both, and as solid text or in a stanzaic grouping of some kind. The three alliterative

⁵⁶ The ‘bob and wheel’ is a metrical device functioning as a refrain and consisting of a very short line (the ‘bob’) followed by four or five short lines (the ‘wheel’), the last line of which usually rhyming with the ‘bob’. It is famously used in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

⁵⁷ See Kennedy (2000, pp. 127–28).

stanzas in poem XVI are examples of rhymed, stanzaic alliterative verse.⁵⁸ It should be noted that the characteristic alliterative pattern in the long lines of the octave is not consistently kept up, several lines in each of the three stanzas containing no alliteration whatsoever.⁵⁹ This inconsistency in the basic matrix is one reason why I doubt Kennedy's opinion that the symmetrical grouping of the three alliterative (A) and six non-alliterative (N) stanzas (A-N-N-N-A-N-N-N-A) in poem XVI is the result of deliberate, 'well-wrought prosody'. What adds to my doubt is the arbitrariness of the fortuitous bursts of hyper-alliteration elsewhere in the Poems, as noted above.

The instances of alliterative verse in poem XVI suggest that the author may have been of provincial extraction, either from the South-west Midlands or the North. The earliest examples of the alliterative revival, among them the most famous of them all, *Piers Plowman*, are from the South-west Midlands, whilst in later years alliterative verse became popular in the North-west Midlands and the Northern provinces.⁶⁰ A Northern origin is also suggested by the Northern forms *ham* and *knawen* in poem XXIV, signalled and discussed in section 2.3. I have, however, dismissed these factors as valid for the idea that the author of the Poems had his roots in these provinces. For one thing, the poet's use of formal alliterative verse is only incidental, and may have been inspired by contemporary authors who moved in the same circles as our poet,⁶¹ and who have left evidence of sustained use of alliterative verse.⁶² The other reason is that the two Northern forms are relicts which may just as well be evidence of the dialect of a copyist as of the author himself.

3.3.2 IMAGERY

The figurative language in the Poems is largely confined to the use of similes, of the well-known kind, and nowhere elaborated. In poem III we find a fair number of them; in l. 62, for instance, the poet warns that malice, once it gets out of hand, '*brenneþ ... as fyre in gres*'. In l. 121 the world is '*like a fals lemman*', in l. 145 '*like a chery fayre*'. In poem V.4–6 '*goode men ... / Ri3t as hay þey mon widre, / As blades of gres his seed doþ spille*', if bad counsel is not recognized as such. In poem VIII the writer urges those who exercise authority '*As li3t of lanterne to lede þe way*' (l. 62).

⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion of alliterative fourteen-line stanza forms see Kennedy (2000). Among the poems she analyses is poem XVI.

⁵⁹ Viz. XVI.15, 16, 59, 61, 64, 116, 118.

⁶⁰ See Turville-Petre (1977, pp. 29–36).

⁶¹ See section 3.1.2.

⁶² Instances are the four contemporary, alliterative poems in Barr (1993). Minkova (2007, p. 177) mentions 'London associations' as one source of inspiration for the composition of alliterative verse.

The metaphors similarly are most of them stock phrases, like ‘*Pe whete fro þe chaf 3e try3e*’ (III.47),⁶³ or ‘*To fli3e to (too) hy3e treste not þy wyng*’ (XIV.47).⁶⁴ In IX.178 the author assures the reader that he has told him ‘*What is salue to 3oure sore*’. There is the occasional somewhat higher flight of fancy, as for instance in IX.22–23, where ‘*Synne, to bay (bark at) many a folde (sheepfold), / On soules helle boundes slete (attack)*’. The play on ‘folde’ as a sheepfold as well as God’s congregation is one of the rare instances of punning. Usually, as in the following instance, the *pointe* is obvious, or is pointedly made obvious.

3if a clerk haue þurgh hap
 Cure of soules or bischopriche,
 He hat not bischop, he hat a by shap:
 Make opere after his werkis like.
 To kepe his shep fro helle tike,
 In folde go, amonge hem blete;
 Saf and sounde brynge hem y lyk,
 Bytwen God and hem to trete. (IX.153–60)

The *by shap* in l. 155 is both a ‘shepherd’ and a ‘near-in-shape’, as the two following lines carefully explain. As a shepherd it is the *byschap*’s task *to kepe his shep fro helle tike* (l. 157), but he also moulds his fellow creatures after his own *shap* (l. 156). In the following passage *clymbyng* is both literal climbing and social climbing:

Pe wyseman his sone forbed
 Masoun craft and alle clymbyng,
 And shipman craft, for perile of dede,
 And preuey in counseil be ney3 no kyng.
 For his mysrulyng þou my3t hyng,
 Pat shep my3te grese under þy to. (XIV.41–46)

Again the pun is carefully explained. The literal climbing is made explicit in *masoun craft* (l. 42) and *shipman craft* (l. 43), the social climbing by referring to the dizzying heights near the king himself (l. 44), where – with a rare touch of perhaps unconscious humour – ‘*þou my3t hyng*’ (l. 45).

There is nothing complicated either about the poet’s use of personification, confined as it is to the familiar virtues and vices. In most instances the author makes use of personification without much elaboration, as in poem XIII.30: *And clope falsed in troupe wede*, but in a few places there is expansion

⁶³ See *MED* s.v. *whete* (n.) sub 1.(c) for more instances.

⁶⁴ The implied reference is to the mythical tale of Icarus, who went too high on home-made wings. He fell to the earth because the sun melted the wax of his wings.

of a kind. For instance, the first two stanzas of poem III explain the tasks of *troupe* in terms of his relationship to *ry3t* and *iustice*. In poem XII, stanzas 9 and 10 picture *troupe*, assisted by *wreche*, in his conflict with *falsed* and *treson*. And in poem XIII the whole of stanza 13 is devoted to a description of *troupe* being gagged and locked away by *falsed*.

Proverbial phrases occur in almost all of the Poems. Obviously, the author found them useful as a poetic tool, but he must also have considered them contextually effective. The proverbial phrases are most frequent in the earlier poems, which carry a politically and morally engaged message which is absent in the later ones, with their clearly religious overtones.⁶⁵

The overall impression of the author's poetical gifts is that at best they were modest. He was first and foremost a 'man with a message', who put the vehicle of verse to the all-important end of getting across his views on the major political, religious and social issues of the day, and conveying to the reader (or his audience) his personal moral convictions and Christian beliefs. Yet we would do him an injustice by denying him all poetical skills. Apart from being a quite capable versifier, as demonstrated above, the writer had his flashes of poetic inspiration. For instance in the following passage, the metaphor of a boat becalmed as a description of the end of man's life is wholly convincing:

What may thy richesse þe auayle,
Whan þou art to deþe dryue.
Thy wynd is layd, þou mayst no sayle,
Pou3 þou lete out bonet and ryue. (VII.25–28)

The opening lines of poem IX have the effect of a clarion call:

This holy tyme make 3ow clene,
Burnysche bry3t 3oure soules blake.

In the second verse line, note the clever use of the formal caesural alliterative xx/x scheme to maximize the contrast between the first and the second half of the verse. The first stanza of poem XI is an emotional outburst of joy, almost like a hymn. In a wholly effective metaphor God is presented as a triumphant warrior who has liberated man from sin, slaking the shackles of evil:

Glade in God, þis solempne fest
Now, Alleluya, is vnloken.
Penkeþ how God, lest and mest,
On oure enemys haþ vs wroken,
Pat hadde vs in cheynes stoken,

⁶⁵ For a discussion of this dichotomy in the Poems, see sections 2.3, 3.1.2 and 3.4.2.4.

Wrappid in synnes many on.
 Þe fendis are flowen, þe cheynes are broken,
 And God and man are wel at on. (XI.1–8)

It is a pity that inspired passages like the above are the exception, whilst indifferent verse is the rule. For instance, hard on the heels of the poetic lines of VII.25–28, quoted above, follows a resounding platitude:

Loke to vertues þou þe 3yue,
 Er tombe be held to þe li3e;
 For he þat gostly wel doþ lyue,
 He lerneþ wysely for to di3e. (VII.29–32)

In section 2.3 I argued that the Poems cover roughly three phases in the life of the writer: his parliamentary years, the post-parliamentary years of active political engagement, and the years of withdrawal and contemplation. The poems XVII and onwards may be assumed to have been written in this last period. It is interesting to note that in these last eight poems all traces of poetic imagery have disappeared, perhaps in the wake of the waning of the writer's worldly interests.

3.4 CULTURAL BACKGROUND

This section explores the social, moral and religious thinking of the author, as it emerges from his Poems, against the background of contemporary English society in the early part of the fifteenth century. The object of our exploration consists of twenty-four thematically highly diverse poems which have only their author in common, and which were written over a period of more than twenty years. Not only are the themes diverse from one poem to another, but quite often they also differ within the scope of one poem. The Poems thus form a kaleidoscope of subjects, presenting without any detectable premeditated order fragmented glimpses of the poet's views on the political, social and ecclesiastical organization of his country, on the one hand, and, on the other, his reflections on the moral and religious attitudes of his fellow man, both as a social being and in his relation to God. These fragmented glimpses have served in thematic literary studies to illustrate discussions of one specific genre: political poetry; complaint verse; poems of protest and lament; devotional, penitential, homiletic and didactic poetry – each label naturally covering only the relevant fragments from the Poems.⁶⁶ For an overall picture of the Poems' cultural background, the above thematic labels therefore need to be placed in a wider perspective. As will have been noticed, the themes listed fall naturally into two broad categories:

⁶⁶ See also chapter 1 and section 3.2.

those which refer to the social community, and those which deal with the individual as part of that community. Following up this natural grouping, I propose, first, to consider the working of the social classes or estates which together constituted England's medieval society, the ideal as well as their flawed reality,⁶⁷ and, second, the mental and spiritual make-up of the individuals participating in that society. I hope thus to provide useful guiding lines along which the larger patterns in the Poems may be traced.

3.4.1 THE BODY POLITIC

3.4.1.1 *The Concept*

'In an ideal community every member of every class or "estate" fulfilled his duties and respected other's rights. Individually they obeyed God and their king, together they achieved unity and harmony'.⁶⁸ This is the picture, in the words of Baldwin, that every medieval writer would recognize as the prerequisite for a smoothly running social machinery. The well-being of the realm depended on the triptych of good government, adherence to the divinely ordained laws, and social harmony as its indispensable ingredients, as our poet himself repeatedly urged: *That ouer puple hast gouernaunce ... Make vnyte ther was distaunce* (I.10,13), *Gouerne the puple in vnyte, / In the comaundements that God bede* (I.21–22),⁶⁹ and again:

What bryngeþ a kyngdom al aboue:
Wys counseil, and good gouernaunce.
Eche lord wil other loue,
And rule wel labourers sustynaunce. (III.153–56)

In modern parlance, the ideal medieval state was a hierarchical, top-down command structure, governed by divine law and demanding responsibility and performance from its composite parts, on the one hand, and a bottom-up consensus structure among the parts, based on deference, loyalty and faith. The interdependence of, and necessary cooperation between, the parts that together constitute the body politic readily evoke comparison with the parts of the human body and their function. Indeed, by medieval times it was a figure much used in prose and verse,⁷⁰ as also by the author of the Poems in *The*

⁶⁷ Where I draw parallels between the realm's constituent elements and as they are reflected in the Poems, there will inevitably be a degree of overlap with Kail's direct parallels between concrete historical events and the relevant passages in the Poems (pp. x–xxii).

⁶⁸ Baldwin (1981, p. 5).

⁶⁹ See also III.130 and VIII.63.

⁷⁰ The history of the body as metaphor finds its origin in the Christian concept of the Church as the body of Christ, as Yeager points out (1999, p. 146). The biblical metaphor (see I Cor. 12:12–28) subsequently assumed the secular dimension of the human body as a metaphor of the body politic (see Yeager, 1999, pp. 148–49, where he refers to the *locus classicus* in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* [c.

descryuyng of mannes membres (poem XV). This piece compares in great detail the composite elements of the commonwealth with the limbs of the human body. Ideally, the parts of the body as well as the composite elements of a community work in perfect harmony for the common good. Thus, the head is compared with the king; the breast represents the clergy; shoulders, backbone, arms and hands stand for the lords of the land, the knights and the squires; etcetera, down to the feet, which are the *trewe tylyers of landes*.⁷¹ The classes of society listed in this analogy as the composite parts of the larger whole of the realm, form in the literature of the age the characteristic pattern known as estates literature. The detailed list of social classes that we find in poem XV is rather exceptional. The standard pattern is the familiar tripartite division of *bellatores*, *oratores* and *laboratores*, generally known as ‘the three estates’ of the nobility, the clergy and the commons, led by the king as their unifying force. The original concept of this ideal type of social organization fades back into remote history, but it was only in medieval times that it acquired the Christian connotation that the three-estates order of things was divinely ordained.⁷² In the words of Wyclif: *And so þes þree statis ben, or schulde be, sufficient in goddis chirche; or ellis men mosten say þat god is and was fawty in ordenance of boþe his lawis*.⁷³ In fact, there is no explicit biblical grounding of the divine origin of the estates, other than St. Paul’s prescription to ‘let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called’ (I Cor. 7:20), actually taken more as a call to *bere(n) þe ordre as it wes* (III.142) than anything else. The view that it was the duty of the peasants to labour for the common weal, of the clergy to praise God and pray for His blessing, and of the nobility to protect both, was not only not divinely ordained, but at no time conformed to reality either. Admittedly, for a very long time this straight three-estates view approximated contemporary conditions, but by the early fifteenth century it was fast losing all semblance to actuality.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the author of the Poems, true to his conservative mind-set, stuck to what had virtually become fiction as the guiding principle for his day and age, although he did recognize newly emerging intermediate classes, as in the following fragment.⁷⁵

Old speche is spoken 3ore:
What is a kyngdom tresory:

1159], which describes in minute detail the body of the commonwealth in terms of the limbs and internal organs of the human body).

⁷¹ For other instances of this familiar analogy, see Mohl (1933, p. 119).

⁷² See Keen (1990, p. 2), and Mohl (1933, pp. 277–83), on the supposedly divine origin of the estates.

⁷³ Robbins (1979, p. 30) quoting Wyclif from *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted* (F. D. Matthew ed., 1880).

⁷⁴ See Keen (1990, pp. 4–5).

⁷⁵ See Thomson (1983, pp. 7–137) on the economic and social framework of England in the later Middle Ages, in particular pp. 125–37 on social mobility.

Bestayle, corn stuffed in store,
 Riche comouns, and wyse clergy;
 Marchaundes, squyers, chiualry
 That wol be redy at a res,
 And cheualrous kyng in wittes hy3e,
 To lede in were, and gouerne in pes. (III.65–72)

Bestayle and *corn* metonymically represent the peasantry. Together with the *clergy* and the nobility, represented by the *squiers* and *chiualry*, they form the classic tripartite division. Relatively new on the social scene were the increasingly prosperous urban middle class of the *riche comouns*, and the merchant class, the *marchaundes*, a growing political and financial force in late medieval society. The unifying and protective force above the estates is the *chevalrous kyng*. In a later poem, the estates, harmoniously unified under their sovereign, are compared with the jewels in the king's crown:

What doþ a kynges crowne signyfye,
 Whan stones and floures on sercle is bent?
 Lordis, comons and clergye
 To ben alle at on assent.
 To kepe þat crowne take good tent,
 In wode, in feld, in dale and downe.
 Þe leste lyge man, wiþ body and rent,
 He is a parcel of þe crowne. (XII.9–16)

In the above metaphor, the merchant class as the comparative newcomer has lost its place again. As in the previous fragment, the *comons*, that is to say the middle-class citizens, are ranged with the *lordis* and the *clergy*, whilst the rural populace, the *leste lyge man*, is mentioned as an afterthought. It is useful to keep this ranking of the social classes in mind when reading the poet's eulogy on the glories of the estates of the realm. It shows him to be not only 'estates-conscious', but also thoroughly 'class-conscious' in the modern sense of the word. The 'commons' in estates parlance comprise the lower as well as the middle classes of society. The poet sharply distinguishes the two categories in his pieces. For all his praise of the *trewe tylyers of landes* with the accolade that *alle þe world on hem standes* (XV.61–64) in the poet's idealized allegoric comparison between the realm's estates and the parts of the body, he still compares them with the very lowest parts: the feet. The lower classes, in the Poems often referred to as *puple*, *folk*, *labourers* or just *the plough*, must be kept in their ordained place: *God made lordis gouernoures / To gouerne puple in vnite* (III.129–30). Robbins argues that what he calls 'the establishment', the ruling classes of nobility and clergy, used the God-given social structure, this recipe for stability, as a whip to keep the working class in order.⁷⁶ Indeed, with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 still fresh in mind, what

⁷⁶ See Robbins (1979, pp. 28–30).

the ruling classes dreaded most was social instability, especially in view of Henry IV's shaky hereditary claims to the throne, after the indictment and deposition of Richard II, who, although despotically minded, at least had impeccable antecedents. A rise of the common mass of landless tenants against the 'powers that be' was to be avoided at all costs, because

... 3if comouns rise,
Pan is a kyngdom most in drede.
For whanne vengeaunce a comouns lede,
Pei do gret harm er þey asses. (III.27–30)

In this fragment the *comouns* are associated with the peasant rebels of the 1381 rising. The poet's middle class *como(u)ns*, on the other hand, are given full honours. They are alluded to as the backbone of society, in good fortune or ill: *A kyngdom in comouns lys, / Alle profytes, and alle myscheues* (III.99–100). Their interests must at all times be safeguarded: *To stonde wiþ comons in here ry3t, / Is hy3est poynt of charite* (XIII.33–34), because *Comouns is the fayrest flour / Pat euere God sette on erþely crown* (XII.143–44). Down-to-earth economic interest, too, demanded that the middle classes should be treated with respect, an advice that applied to the lord of the manor: *3oure tenauntes playntes 3e mot here, / For þey kepen (maintain) alle 3oure tresour (fortune)* (XIII.43–44), but equally to the king himself:

... a kyng wiþoute rent
My3t li3tly trussen his tresour.
For comons mayntene lordis honour,
Holy chirche, and religyone. (XII.139–42)

Incidentally, the author nowhere used *como(u)ns* with the meaning 'Commons in parliament'. Although he alludes to parliamentary business in seven of his poems,⁷⁷ only in two places, in III.97–98 and in the first two stanzas of poem XIII, he actually mentions *parlement*, and there in the broad sense of the gathering of commons and lords in parliament (the terms House of Commons and House of Lords were not yet in use⁷⁸).

The supreme unifying force, according to the poet, to hold the estates together and mold them into a harmonious whole, was of course the king: *De heued y likne to a kyng, / For he is lord souereyn of al* (XV.9–10). Like his estates, the king was ordained by God himself, 'for practical purposes as the vicegerent of God':⁷⁹ *God 3eueþ his doom to alle kynges þat be; / As a God, in erþe a kyng haþ my3t*

⁷⁷ See section 2.4.

⁷⁸ See Brown (1981, p. 112).

⁷⁹ See Ullmann (1961, pp. 117–37) on 'Theocratic Kingship'; Brown (1989, pp. 5–6) on the divine element in kingship; and Goldsworthy (1999, pp. 22–38) on the development of the relative legal

(XII.89–90), holding full power of life and death: *Eche a kyng haþ Goddis power / Of lyf and leme to saue and spille* (XII.105–106). By his coronation oath the king was held to preserve the law ‘with equal and right justice and discretion’,⁸⁰ according to his power, as aptly worded by our author:

Eche kyng is sworn to gouernaunce,
To gouerne Goddis puple in ri3t.
Eche kyng bereþ swerde of Goddis vengeaunce,
To felle Goddis foon in fi3t. (III.137–40)

The writer used three whole poems (III, XII and XIII) to expound his views, directly and indirectly, on what he saw as the God-given duties of the one person who *in Goddis stede* is appointed to *do euene lawe ... in euene assise* (III.11–13), namely the king, the personification of justice. ‘Lawe’ should be taken both as secular law and divine law. The crucial question was: ‘Who is that *gubernator* that can shape and issue the law as an enforceable rule of action?’⁸¹ Here we touch upon the age-old antithesis between the descending or theocratic philosophy, according to which the king rules by divine grace, holding delegated power handed down by God, on the one hand, and the ascending, populist or feudal thesis, which holds that governmental, law-creating power is concentrated in the people, whom the king merely represents.⁸² In England, since King John had acceded to the demands of his barons at Runnymede early in the thirteenth century, the feudal function of the king at the expense of the theocratic function had gradually gained preponderance. In 1399, Richard II’s attempts to turn back the clock and reinstitute absolute, theocratic kingship had ended in total failure, and Henry IV on the rebound had promised to go strictly by the book, that is to say, to assure himself at all times of the consent and cooperation of parliament and his royal Council.⁸³ Yet, the old doctrine of the king as God’s vice-regent, as ‘the vicar of God, because the king’s power *solius Dei est*,’⁸⁴ was still firmly ingrained in the minds of his subjects, not least in the minds of the conservatively inclined middle-class writers of socially and politically engaged poetry.⁸⁵ With the Digby poet it was not different. Directly addressing Henry V, he straightforwardly told his king that *God made 3ow governour, / In Goddys ry3t*

positions of king and parliament.

⁸⁰ See Brown (1989, pp. 12–13), citing the text of the coronation oath as it was used since Edward II’s coronation in 1308 until 1689.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 20.

⁸² For an instructive exposé of the descending and ascending principles of government, see *ibid.* pp. 150 *et passim*, or Ullmann (1968, pp. 149 *et passim*).

⁸³ Powell (1989, p. 35). On the development during the middle ages of the relationship between the king and the law, see *ibid.* pp. 29–38.

⁸⁴ Ullmann (1961, p. 176).

⁸⁵ See Embree (1985, p. 125).

to *deme þe dede* (XIII.47–48), in other words: to pass judgment on the people's conduct according to God's law. Consequently, the king does not make the law, he maintains it. Henry is told in so many words: ... *in 3ow þe helpe* (means) *it lys / Þe puple in Goddis lawe to hede* (rule) (XIII.165–66). The poet even goes one step further, proclaiming God as the people's real sovereign also in earthly matters: *God for his frendis math ordynaunce, / And governeth hem in werre and pes* (III.159–60). And consequently *eche kyngdom hongeth in Goddis balaunce* (III.165). Still, the writer was not blind to the realities of contemporary political life. His outlook may have been conservative, to the extent that an *honest knyght* in his view was one *that bereth the ordre as it wes* (III.142–43), he knew full well that *a kyngdom in comouns lys* (III.99), because *comouns is þe fayrest flour / Þat euere God sette on erþely crown* (XII.143–44). The crown, here as elsewhere in the Poems, is not used as a metonymy for the person of the king, nor for royalty as a political institution, but metaphorically for the realm and its constituent parts. The unbroken circle, studded with precious stones and flowers, symbolizes the unity of the realm:

What doþ a kynge's crowne signyfye,
 Whan stones and floures on sercle is bent?
 Lordis, comons and clergie
 To ben alle at on assent.
 To kepe þat crowne take good tent,
 In wode, in feld, in dale and downe.
 Þe leste lyge man, wiþ body and rent,
 He is a parcel of þe crowne. (XII.9–16)

Kantorowicz, quoting this stanza, remarks: 'There can be no doubt that in the later Middle Ages the idea was current that in the Crown the whole body politic was present – from king to lords and commons and down to the least liege-man'.⁸⁶ Anyone who *pykep þe stones out of þe crowne* is guilty of criminal misconduct (XII.63–64), because

3if sercle, and floures, and riche stones
 Were eche a pece fro oþer flet,
 Were þe crowne broken ones,
 Hit were ful hard a3en to knet. (XII.41–44)

The king was, of course, unable to prevent such a calamity on his own. He needed advice and assistance. Advice he obtained from his parliaments and Great Councils, and in discussions in his Household and

⁸⁶ Kantorowicz (1957, p. 363) on 'The Crown as Fiction' (*ibid.* pp. 336–83), a thorough discussion of the 'tangle of intersecting, overlapping, and contradictory strands of political thought, all of which somehow converge in the notion of the Crown (p. 381).

his Council. Assistance came primarily from the Council.⁸⁷ In poem XIV the king's Chancellor and his Council are urged to *kepe þe crowne hool in stat* so that *no stones þerof abate* (decline [in quality]) (ll. 9–12). Prudent counsel is highly praised, anyway, throughout the Poems as indispensable to the common weal. The king *wol be lad by wys counsaile* (III.82), because it is *wys counseil* that *bryngeþ a kyngdom al aboue* (III.153–54), whereas the Duke of Burgundy, according to the poet, completely ignored his advisers. Addressing his Flemish liegemen on behalf of the Duke, the poet sneered: *To wynne wrongly wele* (wealth), *wod þey gan wede* (went wildly mad), / *But werkis of wys men were cast vnder stoles* (XVI.3–4). The results were predictable: *Whan wyse men fro hym fle, / Þen God his grace wole fro hem drawe* (XVI.91–92). The king's other mainstay, apart from *wys counseil*, was parliament, at least in theory. After Richard II's autocratic reign (1377–1399), Henry IV in an amazing turnaround promised upon his succession not only to be advised, but indeed to be governed by the people of his realm. Wilkinson observes that 'Henry came as near, perhaps, as it was possible for that generation to come, towards the expression of the sovereignty of the king in parliament'.⁸⁸

3.4.1.2 *The Flawed Reality*

The ideal state of affairs pictured in what we have defined as the estates philosophy has always been just that: an ideal, which original sin for ever prevents man from achieving. This is the underlying theme to which the literary genre labels of 'lament', 'complaint', and 'protest' have been attached. They give in effect expression to the poet's feelings about, in Mohl's terminology, 'the defections of the estates',⁸⁹ in other words: the inevitable failure of the constituent estates of the realm to attain, let alone maintain, the desired perfect harmony of the community. The warnings against potential and real threats to the social order and the consequent functioning of the realm are frequently heard in the Poems. There is no lack of lament, complaint and protest with regard to the shortcomings of each of the estates. The lords are not *wyse men*, but – bad judges of a crisis – *medle in foly degree* (III.37,39). Out of touch with their tenants, *Lordis wet neuere what comouns greues / Til here rentis bigynne to ses* (dry up) (III.101–102). Far worse, the greedy lord, satiated as he is, still robs the peasant of house and land:

⁸⁷ See Brown (1989, p. 30).

⁸⁸ Wilkinson (1949, p. 505). Wilkinson's essay provides an instructive overview of the evolutionary stages from autocratic kingship to constitutional monarchy.

⁸⁹ See Mohl (1933, p. 9), where she defines the formal characteristics of estates literature: 'the three-fold division, the insistence on the shortcomings of each group, the obligation of maintaining the structure, and the need of amendment according to specific proposals.' See also pp. 341–66 on the defections of the estates of the world.

Than cursed is he þat ful is fylde,
 Wiþ wrong take pore mennys thrift,
 Pat makeþ pore men be [spilde],
 For synguler profyt is sotylle theft; (XXI.57–60)⁹⁰

The lords control the country's wealth, but at the same time they are its slaves: *Þe grettere lordschipe of worldis wele, / Þe more in þraldom hit doþ hem bynde* (IX.27–28). They are hated for wastefully running up debts far beyond their income, causing *Stryf wiþ comons, threp* (contention) *and thro* (wrangling) (XIV.75–78). The commons are wild and violent. Once they are out for vengeance *Þei do gret harm er þey asses* (stop) (III.29–30), robbing and killing and burning down (III.116–17), bringing God's wrath upon their heads, because they *Rebelle and ryse a3en his lawe and robbe and reue, coffres to fylle* (V.36,38).

The abuses amongst the clergy are the subject of an entire poem (VIII), the poet inveighing against the worldly and dissolute life of bishops and priests alike. They take tithes but refuse to teach the people (l.20), *take pore mennys wele, / And helpe not þe soule to hele* (ll. 68–69). They are chasing worldly goods, riches and high positions, rather than do their ordained work in *folkis cherche* (ll. 25–27), living a life of ease and comfort, presumptuously relying on God's mercy (ll. 41–48). In XIII, the clergy are being reproached for gluttony and sloth, instead of taking care of body and soul, vigorously championing God's case:

Ofte wiþ ful wombe relegous slepe,
 Whan kny3tes han hunger, and moche in drede.
 Þe beter in clene lyf þey au3t hem kepe,
 As Goddis kny3t to don here dede. (XIII.149–52)

In poem XIV, the Church as institution comes under attack. It tolerates simony, indeed is *wiþ him* (i.e. simony) *enchaunted* (ll. 81–82), and thus *rebelle to Goddis sawe* (commandments), whilst *To kepe his comaundement þey say no* (ll. 93–94).

The merchant class is criticized only in passing. The merchants debase the currency by clipping money, and they tamper with weights and measures, serious offences for which *þey haue þe curs* (excommunication) (IX.49–52). In the same poem, the author also issues a stern warning to another social class: the judiciary. Judges and magistrates are admonished not to bully the poor:

Auyse 3ow þat leden lawe:
 For drede of lordschipe or for mede
 Holde no pore men in awe,

⁹⁰ Quoted by Robbins as an example of 'the complaints and protests against the wicked age,' (1960, p. 195), and of the poet's 'outspoken ... defence of the poor' (Robbins, 1959, p. xxviii).

To storble here ry3t or lette here nede.
 Hit bryngeþ þe soule in gret drede
 A3ens Goddis lawe to plete. (IX.57–62)

Those who *haldeþ questes or assise* must *lette* (hinder) *not lawe fro ri3t gyse* (custom) (ll. 65,67).
 Corruption is again shown to be the root of evil within the judiciary:

For to amende þat was mys,
 Perfore is ordeyned eche Iustice.
 Lat eche man haue þat shulde ben his,
 And turne not lawe for couetyse. (XIV.57–60)⁹¹

If the judiciary continues to fail in their duty to apply the law *in ri3t assise* the consequences will be calamitous, because *Pan is a kyngdom most in drede* (III.25,28). That these warnings, chastisements and admonitions were not mere theory is made clear in poem XIII: *In Engeland, as all men wyten, / Lawe as best (cattle) is solde and bou3t* (ll. 27–28).

Not only does the law meet with criticism, but this other stabilizing force in the realm, parliament, does not meet with unreserved praise either. The poet concedes that *For to amende þat was mysse, / Perfore is ordayned a parlement* (XIII.3–4). But in poem III he primly remarks that *To wete 3if parlement be wys, / Pe comon profit wel it preues* (ll. 97–98). And in poem XIII he critically observes that *In doom (administration of justice) of parlement ofte is fauour (partiality), / Pat afterward it harmeþ grete* (ll. 9–10). Dodd takes the opposite view, and sees the last two quotations as a quite positive assessment of the role of parliament.⁹² The contrast is partly due to a difference of textual interpretation. Contrary to what in III.97–98 Dodd takes to express the poet's high regard of parliament as 'the sole and absolute guarantor of the public interest', scepticism about this very assurance is what the passage in question in my interpretation expresses: to know whether parliament is acting wisely, let it [first] provide solid proof that it is serving the common weal. And contrary to what Dodd in XIII.9–10 assumes to constitute a positive 'challenge facing the M.P.s', the lines evidently carry a downright negative meaning, irrespective of whether *fauour* is taken to mean 'the pursuit of profit and personal gain' or, as in my reading, 'partiality'. And thirdly, Dodd's interpretation that the *comouns* of the Poems – highly praised indeed – stand for the Commons in Parliament, contradicts his own statement – with which I heartily concur⁹³ – that 'the poet almost certainly means the common people when he uses the term "comouns" in his verse.'

⁹¹ See also I.156, III.25–26 and XIII.27–28.

⁹² See Dodd (2006, pp. 317–18).

⁹³ See also Robbins (1960, p. 198).

The flawed reality of the body politic did not only show in the imperfections and abuses *within* each of the established estates, the ideal picture was also flawed, and much more so, because of the disharmonies *among* the estates. In the first place, there were the frequent conspiracies and open rebellions against the king and his realm, involving secular magnates and church prelates alike. Henry IV had to repel raids out of Wales and Scotland, and, what is more, quell rebellions in England itself. Henry V had to deal with a conspiracy of some of the highest nobles in the land, as well as with the Lollard uprising by his erstwhile favourite, Sir John Oldcastle.⁹⁴ Kail heard distant echoes of some of these plots and rebellions in the Poems.⁹⁵ Stanza 10 in poem I, for instance, according to Kail, seems to allude to a failed plot early in Henry IV's reign by some of Richard II's former friends:

Gif a kyngdom falle a chaunce
 That al the rewme myght greue,
 A3en that make an ordinaunce
 To kepe 3ow euere fro suche myscheue.
 And chastise hem that matere meue;
 Make othere take ensauple treuth to hede. (I.73–78)

The plotters were duly 'chastened'; they were executed by the king's order.⁹⁶ Stanza 15 in poem III is seen by Keen to refer to an armed Welsh revolt in mid-1400, the insurgents profiting from civil commotions in England itself:⁹⁷

What kyngdom werreþ hym self wiþ ynne,
 Distroyeþ hym self, and no mo.
 Wiþoute here enemys bygynne
 On eche a syde assayle hem so. (III.113–16)

Stanza 5 of poem XII, to mention one more example, according to Kail (p. xvii), refers to the Scots threatening to stir up rebellion within England, which might invite the French to begin hostilities overseas:

3if we among oure self debate,
 Pan endeþ floure of chyualrie.

⁹⁴ See Keen (1973, pp. 302–25) for the political aspects of the troubles of the two Henry's; and Heath (1988, pp. 223–51, 274–79), who highlights the role of the clergy during these disturbances. Strohm offers a critical reassessment of the troubles, in particular of the Oldcastle rebellion (1998, pp. 63–100), mentioning in passing XII.93–96.

⁹⁵ Kail (pp. xi–xiii, xvi, xx).

⁹⁶ Keen (1973, pp. 304–305).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 306.

Alle oþere londis þat doþ vs hate,
 Oure feblenes wole aspye.
 On euery syde þey wole in hye. (XII.33–37)

Besides the conspiracies and rebellions against the king and his realm, there were the widespread and protracted troubles which accompanied the Lollard movement, that extraordinary phenomenon equally involving the clergy, the commons, the lords and the king himself. The troubles evolved from John Wyclif's provocative views of the official teachings of the Church. Wyclif's doctrines rested basically on two tenets. The one denied that the Church was the sole and indispensable intermediary between the laity and God. The other denied the Church the right to possess any worldly possessions. From these two fundamental principles developed his other doctrines: on the Eucharist, on oral confession and absolution, on images and pilgrimages, on the Church as the congregation of the faithful, on 'private religions' (monks, friars, canons and the papal curia). Wyclif vigorously condemned the chronic abuses within the Church: its temporal wealth and power, simony, clerical endowments, the priests failing in their primary duties: preaching the Gospel and the cure of souls.⁹⁸ Over a period of forty years this counter-movement grew to become quite popular, and as a result constituted a serious threat to the authority of the Church. Lollardism not only challenged the Church's hold over the people in spiritual matters, it also came to present a disturbing factor in the country's social order as a whole. In the absence of effective sanctions, except excommunication, which the Lollards did not recognize anyway, the Church needed, and obtained, legal secular support from king and parliament, who in combination sanctioned a great many repressive measures. Also, the Lollards were allegedly involved in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, and although this was actually not the case, the rumour far into the next century clung to the image of Lollardism as a disruptive force in society. The parliamentary Statute *De Heretico Comburendo* (On the Burning of Heretics) of 1401 was the result of a concerted action by the ecclesiastical leadership and King Henry IV, the latter driven by the fear of the Lollards upsetting the stability of his kingship, a fear that was actually vindicated by the Lollard uprising of 1413 led by Sir John Oldcastle.⁹⁹

Wyclif's doctrines, and the waves of enthusiasm they caused among his followers and throughout the institutions of the Church, can hardly have failed to make themselves felt, directly or indirectly, in the poems of a socially and morally engaged man. The poet criticizes in no uncertain terms a litany of abuses committed by the clergy, aiming his arrows in particular at the clergy's insistence on collecting

⁹⁸ See Hudson (1988, pp. 278–389), for a comprehensive discussion of the Wycliffite ideology and its theological, ecclesiastical and political ramifications.

⁹⁹ See Strohm's illuminating analysis of the causes leading up to the passing of the 1401 Statute (1998, pp. 32–62).

tithes and other offerings, whilst neglecting their basic duties, and without regard of the deserving poor: *Wipouten desert take pore mennys wele, / And helpe not þe soule to hele* (VIII.68–69).¹⁰⁰ Again, in the same poem the author attacks negligent parish priests, *Who takeþ cure ... take tye and nyl not teche* (ll. 17, 20), accept worldly possessions: *Worldis good nes not holichirche* (l. 25), give themselves up to a luxurious life: *Richesse and worschep y 3ow forbede* (l. 26), and seek lucrative livings whilst neglecting their parish:

Who ressayueþ benefys for richesse and ese,
To haue his lyuyng in sykernes,
Raþere þan serue God to plese,
He ressayueþ hit o mys. (VIII.33–36)

The higher clergy are busily acquiring temporal wealth rather than debating serious theological issues: *Mayntene no debate / for synguler profyt of temperalte* (ll. 59–60). In another poem the author inveighs against the absentee parish priests, who desert their flock for a liberally endowed church office elsewhere:

A symple prest wole synge his masse
While his lyuyng is but smal.
As summe encrese, serue God þe lasse,
Wiþ benefices ten my3te lyue wiþal,
And fynde þere noþer household ne halle,
Ne serue þe parische, but take hem fro. (XIV.25–30)¹⁰¹

God's vengeance is called on the Church for practising simony, the selling of lucrative church offices, and on secular lawlessness, which leaves usury, moral depravity and nepotism with impunity:

Whanne holichirche suffreþ symonye,
And is wiþ hym enchaunted,
And lawe of land suffreþ vsurye,
Vnkyndely synne, and shameles haunted,
And vicious folk auaunsed and dawnted,
(...)
In þat kyngdom God haþ vengeaunce graunted. (XIV.81–87)

All these expressions of disgust with the malpractices of the times within the Church were also voiced by Wyclif and his followers. There was nothing heretical about such protests. They were the poet's

¹⁰⁰ See Hudson (1988, pp. 334–46), in particular pp. 342–43 on the admissibility of tithe levying by the clergy.

¹⁰¹ Kail (p. xvi) traced the criticisms in poem IV to a parliamentary debate in 1406, and those in poem XIV to a petition of Oxford dons presented to Henry V in 1418 (*ibid.* pp. xx–xxi).

attempts to help remedy church abuses, just adding his voice to the chorus of similarly minded contemporary prose and verse authors, whose writings ‘often engage respectfully and seriously with the institutional critique initiated by Wyclif, while seeking to reinforce the centrality of the priesthood’.¹⁰² This latter aim was certainly in the mind of the author when he wrote, and nowhere more pithily: *Fro 3ow to God let þe prest be mene* (mediator) (IX.3). Further in poem IX he formulates in no uncertain words the Church’s insistence on oral confession and absolution: *3e mot hit* (i.e. your sins) *shewe, wiþ herte sorwe, / To a prest, and weel 3ow shryue* (ll. 33–34), with the additional requirements in ll. 42, 83 and 95 that the confession should be made in person and in full. To all these notions Wyclif was diametrically opposed: not the Church, but God alone can forgive the truly contrite offender.¹⁰³ The poet, in thus subscribing to one of the Church’s principal theological tenets, designed to cement its indispensable role as intermediary between man and God and as dispenser of God’s grace, makes himself known as a faithful, orthodox follower of the mother Church, without any disruptive heterodox notions whatsoever. The poet’s orthodoxy, if there was any doubt left, is triumphantly, *wiþ song and ympnes*, confirmed in his poem on the nature of the Eucharist (XXIII).¹⁰⁴ Where Wyclif was utterly opposed to the dogma of transubstantiation – Christ’s true presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist – the poet faithfully reiterated in great detail the significance, nature and implications of the Church’s central dogma:

Lore is 3ouen to cristen men,
 Into flesch passeþ þe bred,
 As holychirche doþ vs kenne,
 Þe wyn to blod, þat is so red. (XXIII.41–44)¹⁰⁵

The poet’s doctrinal stance with respect to the Church’s temporal wealth and power, the sacrament of confession, and especially the Eucharist, stamp him as ‘one of those many authors who toe the orthodox line’.¹⁰⁶ Our poet nowhere explicitly labels any of these ‘Lollard’ notions as such, but I can only subscribe to Cole’s view, that in ‘the defensive posture of [the author’s] “Of the Sacrament of the

¹⁰² Gillespie (2007, p. 417).

¹⁰³ See Hudson (1978, pp. 19, 144).

¹⁰⁴ The same approach is taken in *The Fyve Wyttes*, where after criticism the author hastens to profess his orthodox views of the Eucharist (Bremmer, 1987, pp. xxix–xxxiii).

¹⁰⁵ See Hudson (1978, pp. 17–18, 141–44; 1988, pp. 281–90) on Wyclif’s interpretation of the Eucharist. Also McGarry (1936, pp. 258–63), who discusses poem XXIII against the background of her dissertation on the Eucharist in Middle English homiletic and devotional verse.

¹⁰⁶ Cole (2008, p. 134). Hudson (1978) provides an illuminating overview of all Wycliffite doctrinal issues in a selection of Wycliffite writings.

Altar” we see one of the ‘vernacular religious writers [who] sought to affirm their own orthodoxy by defending the unity of Christ’s body against Wycliffian and Wycliffite accusations’.¹⁰⁷

Summing up, the picture painted of the social ideal and its flawed reality is one by an author whose main concern was with *gouvernance ... that bereþ þe ordre as it wes*, using his poems to shore up the established position of the estates of the realm, emphasizing their blessings, warning against possible destabilizing tendencies, and criticising actual shortcomings, secular as well as clerical.

3.4.2 MAN

3.4.2.1 *Man’s Flawed Nature*

The one broad theme of the Poems discussed so far was its concern with, and about, the social order within contemporary English society. The second theme demanding our attention is the poet’s perhaps even greater concern: the inadequacy of human conduct. Greater, because it is the moral conduct of the individual both in his relation with other participants in society, and in his relation with God. As a morally responsible social being, man is ultimately the prime mover of the functioning, and malfunctioning, of the social order.¹⁰⁸ At the same time he is morally responsible towards God, on whom he is wholly dependent for his spiritual well-being.

To medieval man, moral conduct was by definition Christian conduct. His was a life that from the cradle to the grave was immersed in and governed by God’s laws as they were taught by the Church, as well as by the king’s laws, which were supposed to be divinely ordained. The two sets of laws echo the Bible’s precept for human conduct in the Great Command: ‘love the Lord above all and your neighbour as yourself’.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the religious messages and moral injunctions as they find expression throughout the Poems may be distinguished as relating to man’s attitude towards God, on the one hand, and his attitude in relation with his fellow man, on the other. Preliminary to his addresses on the individual’s specific moral attitudes, the author wished to make clear that at the root of the Great Command, as the reason why they were necessary in the first place, was original sin and its necessary

¹⁰⁷ Cole (2008, pp. 140, 246 n. 37). Cole remarks on p. 246 that poem XXIII does not distinguish between the sacramental and the spiritual body of Christ, the former being received by any individual, pure or wicked, the latter only by pure and good individuals (p. 138). The implication is that the writer of poem XXIII was a ‘sacramentalist’, a matter-of-fact stickler for form, rather than a ‘spiritualist’. However, in the poem the latter, spiritual view, if not made explicit, receives due emphasis, which, as Cole remarks ‘always prevails in sacramental theology’ (p. 138). Only those, the poet says, who believe with their heart, commune with the true body of Christ and thereby reach salvation: *Pou seest not fleschly þou takest þenne; / Þy byleue of herte makeþ þe fast fro ded* (ll. 45–46), and in stanza 10 the wicked communicant *resceueþ a dedly knyf*, whilst *Þe good resceyueþ endeles lyf* (ll. 77–78).

¹⁰⁸ See Kane (1986, p. 91).

¹⁰⁹ Matt. 21:37–39.

corollaries.¹¹⁰ Original sin was the cause of the contrariness of the soul, with the perspective of everlasting life, and the body, fleshly man, oriented wholly on this earthly life:

Mannys soule is sotyl and queynt,
 Shal neuere ende þou3 he dede gynne.
 The flesch is fals[e], frele and feynt;
 Þe world alone wolde wynne, (VII.1–4)

In the untitled poem XX the body (sinful nature) tries by fair means or foul to entice the soul away from Christ.¹¹¹ Man's fleshly frailty, another corollary of original sin, is formulated in the following simile:

The worldē is like a chery fayre,
 Ofte chaungeþ all his þynges. (III.145–46)

The corruptibility of the flesh, a necessary consequence of human frailty and signifying his moral corruption, finds its following rather graphic expression in a disgusted description of the conception:

Of fylthy seed þou were wrou3t,
 And wan in at þe wyket of synne.
 Foulere fylþe knowe y nou3t
 Þan þou were fed þy moder wiþ ynne;
 In a sake ful of filþe þou was out brou3t,
 In wrecchednes horyble, and stynkyng skynne. (XXII.3–8)

At the other end of man's span of life loomed his inevitable death, fearsome and repulsive, not seen 'as a gateway into a new life,' but as a source of deep apprehension:

I sayde to stynke and rotenesse:
 My fader and moder arn 3e;
 And to wormes y sayde þysse:
 My systren and my brethern both be 3e.
 And erthe claymeþ me for hysse, (XXIV.267–71)

The Complaint of Job, the theme of poem XXIV, proved a rich source of similar passages, expressing medieval man's ambivalent disgust of, and fascination with, death and decay:

¹¹⁰ For my discussion of the poet's treatment of moral sin I have relied heavily on John Peter's study of (the moral themes of) complaint in medieval England (Peter, 1956, pp. 40–80).

¹¹¹ Following the Poems, Digby 102 contains another Debate of the Body and the Soul by a different, equally anonymous, author (see the description of the manuscript in section 2.1).

Roten y schal be, wasted to no3t;
 As clothes þat moþþes on hem fede,
 So shal my flesch with wormes so3t. (XXIV.158–60)

Particularly upsetting was the fear of being left with a burden of unabsolved sins, when death struck without warning:

Man, þou wost wel þou shalt dy3e;
 What dep, ne where, þou nost whenne.
 And synnes wolde þy soule ny3e (VIII.97–99)

Such were the fundamental deficiencies and fears which formed the permanent backcloth against which man was acting out his role in society.

3.4.2.2 *Jeopardizing Social Harmony*

I have mentioned in the previous section that, generally speaking, for medieval man the Bible's Great Command basically served as his reference mark in his search for God's love, and in performing his Christian duties as a participant in society. In respect of this latter command, the author, being the polemicist that he was, uncompromisingly attacked any specific moral abuses that carried a socially disruptive risk: corruption (*mede*), disloyalty (*glosers, flaterers, wikkid counseil*), and greed (*synguler[e] profyt*). First on his list was *mede*: corrupt, and corrupting, reward, whether in money or in the shape of power and influence. *Mede* corrupted the soul of the individual, as well as posing an ever-present threat to the proper functioning of society. The poet recognized corruption for what it was: honey-sweet at the first taste, but deadly poisonous all the same: ... *mede wiþ poyson sotlyly* (treacherously) *is maynt* (mixed) (XIII.63). The courtier in Poem II gathers riches and esteem in return for systematically and indiscriminately flattering his master. Although vigorously defending his behaviour in a satiric dialogue with a simple and honest warrior knight, the courtier is really corrupting his soul (and his master's into the bargain).¹¹² There are, in fact, only few people who *don here deure* (duties) *dewely, and take no mede* (XVI.113). On the contrary, *fleschly man* is even prepared hypocritically to perform for money the 'seven works of mercy' (XVII.38). The corrupting rot of *mede* does not only eat into the individual soul, but

¹¹² Coleman (1981, pp. 95–98) discusses poem II as an example of the literature of complaint against royal advisers. It should be noted that Coleman assigns ll. 67–72 of the dialogue to the warrior knight as a critical comment on his own unromantic calling. A more straightforward and logical interpretation assigns this stanza to the courtier, accusing the knight of hypocritically glorifying war, whilst actually seeking *profyt* and *pilage*, in other words: *mede*, nothing different from the courtier's own ambitions. This interpretation also makes for a naturally alternating dialogue, rather than putting three consecutive stanzas into the mouth of the warrior.

into the very structure of society.¹¹³ Corrupt judges are prepared to bend the law for money (IX.57–58). The law itself, *as all men wyten, ... as best (cattle) is solde and bou3t* (XIII.27–28). Officials of the Church, the institute *par excellence* to warn against corruption, are being paid to make light of certain abuses (IV.137–38). Elsewhere, I have discussed the thematic caesura in the Poems after poem XVI.¹¹⁴ In this connection it is noticeable that up to poem XVI *mede* retains its unfavourable meaning of ‘corrupt reward’, whereas in the subsequent contemplative and religiously inspired poems, *mede* acquires a neutral, even meritorious connotation.

Another ruinous force tending to disrupt the cohesion between the realm’s estates were the *glosers*, the *flaterers*, and the *false counselors*, in short, all those who cajoled and flattered their masters with self-interested advice into taking the wrong decisions. As indeed they did in XIII.134–35: *When gloser and flaterer on tapetis trede / For wynnyng þey counseled to cowardys*. A similar performance by their counterparts in Flanders is noted in XVI.5–6: *Glosers counseled lordis for to take mede, / To maken hem (themselves) riche, and here lordis pore foles* (fools). Typically, *þe glosers skulked away* afterwards (l. 8)! Even more than against merely irresponsible *glosers*, the poet warns against advisers with downright malicious intent: *be war of wikkid caunsaille* (V.1), and of *counsail of double entendement* (I.2). Conversely, he repeatedly urges to *take counseil that is wys* (I.60).¹¹⁵ The mortal sin of greed – in terms of the Poems: *synguler profyt*, the selfish seeking of personal gain – is another of the morally corrupting factors: *Syngulerte is sotyl (vile) þefte; / Þey calle hit custom troupe to blende* (XIII.81–82). Poem XXI, the verse paraphrase of the ‘Beatitudes’, contrasts the *blessed ... / Pat hungren and thursten ry3twisnes* with the cursed, who:

Wiþ wrong take pore mennys thrift
 Pat makeþ pore men be [spilde],
 For synguler profyt is sotylle theft. (XXI.58–60)

The craving for temporal possessions not only damaged man’s own soul, but also the social order, harming the proper functioning of the estates: *Make opere folk þe worse to lyue, / For synguler profyt þou wolde haue* (XIV.52–53), and *for ... singulere to wynne, / Þey were rebelle, to ryse craft a3en craft* (XVI.59–60). The three social and moral vices just discussed: corruption, flattering and greed, form a truly vicious circle of cause and effect, which one finds faithfully reflected in the poet’s verse:

My flateryng, glosyng, not me harmes.
 I gete loue and moche richesse, (II.49–50)

¹¹³ See Baldwin (1981, pp. 24–38) on the social implications of ‘meed’.

¹¹⁴ See sections 2.4, 3.1.2 and 3.2.

¹¹⁵ See also II.78, III.82, 154, IV.239, VII.21.

The flattering of the courtier in poem II makes him beloved and, in addition, quite rich. Similarly: *Glosers counseled lordis for to take mede, / To maken hem (themselves) riche* (XVI.5–6), and again: *Gloseres that wiþ lordis bene, / Þey thryue faste ...* (IV.145–46). Among his manifold weaknesses it is this unholy threesome of moral vices that caused the greatest harm to man's social environment, that is to say: his fellow men, and hence the social structures, the estates.

3.4.2.3 *In Need of Spiritual Reform*

The poet's moral concerns did not stop at signalling the social abuses. As a *conditio sine qua non* for restoration the author emphasized the need for spiritual reform of the individuals who together constituted the body politic of the realm. As mentioned in section 3.4.2.1, religion and social issues in medieval times were often quite inseparable; social harmony between the institutions of the realm depended on the spiritual harmony between man and God, to whom he was personally accountable:

God, lete þis kyngdom neuere be lorn
 Among oure self in no distance.
 (...)
 God, 3eue vs space of repe[n]tance,
 Good lyf, and deuocioun. (XII.145–50)

The stages of spiritual healing, ritualized in the Church's sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, were clear: the sinner needed to be repentant, with a true purpose of amendment, confess his sins, receive absolution and perform the prescribed penance. Thus shriven, the penitent could, with a clear conscience and rejoicing in his salvation, meet his God in the Eucharist. The poet in his verse gave due expression to these stages, but his call for repentance sounded loudest and most frequent. A few illustrative examples will suffice: *Serue god for helle drede, / fle fro synne and al vis* (I.41–42); *Repentaunce mot mercy by3e / While þy dede is in þy powere* (VII.118–19); *Holde wel þy penaunce; / Repentaunce, for3ete þat nou3t* (IX.187–88). At the same time the poet holds out the prospect of salvation: *... repentaunce may grace gete* (IX.6); *On mannys syde repentaunce doþ rise, / And on goddis syde mercy is* (XI.43–44). This momentous occasion of reconciliation between God and man in the author's mind calls for poetic diction: *repentaunce and mercy kys/kesse* (XI.47, XXIV.63). However, repentance, to be valid, must be demonstrated in acts of amendment, and the poet is not lacking in hortatory verse to imprint on the mind that that there can be no salvation without works: *After warke þat þey used, / I (i.e. God) shal hem deme or saue* (XXIV.407–408).¹¹⁶ *Warke*, in the poet's theology, means good stewardship of everything

¹¹⁶ See the numerous other examples in the Poems on the theme 'you get what you deserve' in the beginning of section 3.1.1, where the question of one or more authors is discussed. See also James 2: 14–18 on man's salvation through his works or his faith.

God on his earth has made available, but on loan. Ultimately, man must render an account of his stewardship to God, and repay the loan with interest. It is one of the author's stock of favourite subjects,¹¹⁷ recurring time and again, starting with his very first poem:

Eche man wot that hath wyt,
 These worldes goodes bethe not his.
 Alle is Godes, he oweth hit,
 And land and see, and pyne and blis.
 God wole haue rekenyng y wys, (I.25–29)

As in the parable of the talents, man will be rewarded for his stewardship, according to his deserts: his soul will go to heaven, or be cast into outer darkness. God requires a detailed reckoning of all man's deeds, whether good or bad:

Man of his owen nou3ten haue;
 Al is Goddis, and he it lent.
 Perof God wole rekenyng craue,
 How þou it wan, held, and spent;
 Py leste þou3t, and what it ment;
 Troupe, and lesyng þou dede li3e;
 And 3et þy soule is Goddis rent:
 So quyte þat wel, lerne to di3e. (VII.81–88)

The parable, and the poet's interpretation of it, makes it quite clear that it is man's own free will to do good or bad: *Pou hast fre wille, knowest euylle and good* (XVII.151), and consequently: whether he is saved or damned in the eyes of God.¹¹⁸ Personal responsibility of the individual for his salvation also finds expression in the poet's appeals to man's individual conscience, which will tell him whether he is worthy of heaven or of hell: *Mannes conscience wil hym telle, / ... / Whether he be worthi heuene or helle* (I.137, 139). Hence the writer's urgent call in the same poem: *Man, knowe thy self, loue god and drede* as a refrain to every stanza, repeated in VII.8 and in the title of poem XXII: *Knowe thy self and thy god*.¹¹⁹ The poet's insistence that man should be guided by his own conscience in making his moral choices seems to echo Wyclif's tenet that man does not need the sacramental intermediary of the priest for his

¹¹⁷ The theme is the familiar parable of the talents in Matt. 25:14–30. See further III.129–32, IX.129–33, XII.109–10.

¹¹⁸ See in section 3.1.1 the list of quotations in the Poems on the concept of free will.

¹¹⁹ Peck (1986, pp. 124–25) refers to poem I in his discussion of man's individual conscience as a feature of contemporary penitential poetry.

salvation,¹²⁰ and that he is personally responsible for making his peace with God.¹²¹ However, as pointed out by Peck (1986, p. 118), Wyclif's emphasis on the individual conscience and personal choice was in this respect hardly discernable from the other, much broader, and thoroughly orthodox penitential movement. This movement, which had its origin early in the fourteenth century, was equally being directed toward man's personal conscience. It had other traits in common with Wyclif, for that matter, such as its critical awareness of the abuses within the Church, and its reputed encouragement of vernacular meditational literature.¹²² Thus, the preoccupation of our author with free will, individual conscience, and personal moral choice, had nothing to do with Wycliffite or Lollard tendencies, faithfully orthodox follower of the mother Church that he was, as I have demonstrated above, but had everything to do with his own penitential urge to remedy what was wrong in state and church by reforming its subjects. In order to achieve this ultimate aim, the poet, with unflagging perseverance, went to great lengths: cajoling, warning, even threatening his audience with hell and damnation to make them change their ways. Instances throughout the Poems abound, but it would merely invite tedium to garner what would indeed be a rich harvest of evidence of the poet's powers of persuasion. I confine myself to poem I. In stanza 21 feuding parties are persuasively advised to be sensible and settle their old grievances amicably amongst themselves, because nursing animosities will only lead to the shedding of innocent blood:

3if a man do another mys,
 Neighbores shuld hem auyse,
 The trespasour amende and kys,
 Do bothe parties euene assise.
 Old horded hate maketh wratthe to rise,
 And ofte gilteles blod to blede.
 Fle fro fooles and folwe wise.
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede. (I.161–68)

In stanza 4 the poet uses sterner language when issuing a warning that a man will not enjoy heavenly bliss without charity and fair dealing. God demands a reckoning for even the smallest misdoing:

The man withoute charitee
 May neuere wynne heuen blisse.

¹²⁰ See Hudson (1988, pp. 294–301).

¹²¹ This parallel of the poet's insistence on free will and personal choice with Wyclif's views is possibly what Kail (p. ix) had in mind when he wrote, without corroborative reference, that 'the poems are not quite free from the ideas of the Reformation'.

¹²² See Peck (1986, pp. 113–29), on the moral and political implications of Wyclif's insistence on individual conscience and personal choice for the established Church and the monarch's authority.

As thou wolde men dede for the,
 Do thou so liche eche man haue hisse.
 For all that euere is goten mysse
 Mot be rekened, a drope 3e shede. (I.113–18)

And if nothing works, dire threats become necessary: *The bowe of Goddis wrath is bent / On hem that deth not that God bede* (I.69–70). Therefore: *Haue heuene or helle, chese* (choose) *of two* (I.111), or take the consequences. A misgotten heaven on earth must be paid for with the horrors of hell:

False men bye helle ful dere.
 That taken with wrong are Goddis theues;
 They han here heuene in this world here.
 After in helle, huge myscheues. (I.121–24)

Yet, there is also, throughout the Poems, a positive note of unquestioning reliance on God's providence:

Make God 3oure ful frend;
 Do þe comaundement þat he bede.
 Pou3 alle þe world a3en 3ow wend,
 Be God 3oure frend, 3e thar not drede.
 For þere as God his frendis lede,
 He saueþ hem boþe on lond and sees. (III.105–10)

In brief: *God dop batayle, and not 3e* (IX.143, XIII.111), and as the Omnipotent he *can skatre þe grete pres* (large[st] army) (III.157). The powers that be may plot and scheme, but ultimately *þe Fader of heuene is gouernoure* (V.11). So – and here we are back with the stern preacher – we are wise to bow to his will: *To stryue wiþ God we may not wynne, / Boþe body and soule he can bete* (IX.13–14). We had better *Holde couenant to God, and be kynde* (obedient) (IX.31), because *Hit bryngeþ þe soule in gret drede, / A3ens Goddis lawe to plete* (argue) (IX.61–62). For God is also an avenging God. The sinners who do not repent and yet expect to be forgiven had better think again, because *Pat synnen in ouerhope, in helle mon ly3e* (VIII.47). It is, incidentally, interesting to note that the question whether the sinner is justified *sola fide* (Rom. 3:27) or through works (James 2:14) was as much a moot point to the poet as it was in the days of Martin Luther. In one and the same poem (IX) the reader is urged *For synne þat wolde þy soule þrete*, to *Aske mercy, and seche gras* ([God's] grace) (ll. 46–47), whilst he has also sternly warned that *After* (according to) *3oure werkis wayte* (expect) *aftur* (afterwards) *3oure mede* (l. 151).

3.4.2.4 *In Search of God*

As discussed above, the Church's sacrament of Penance channelled the process of spiritual reform along the path of repentance, confession and penance. We have seen that the poet, in his own way, furthered this process with vigour, time and again calling the sinner to order and submission. From the very first poem these calls were invariably intermingled with the writer's protests against the abuses in church and state, as described in the first part of this chapter. Spiritual reform was the necessary basis for social harmony. This interplay between secular and moral passages comes virtually to an end in poem XVII. The author's calls for repentance remain as loud and frequent as ever,¹²³ but the secular element is barely present any longer. What begins to be heard in poem XVII, and continues to be heard in the later poems, is a devotional element: *God, how may y, man, bygynne / Wiþ myn herte to loue þe* (ll. 73–74)? *Loue* is mentioned in this poem no fewer than seventy times (thirty-six times as a noun, twenty-four times as a verb), ending with a eulogy on *trewe loue*:

Pere is an herbe þat hatteþ ‘trewe loue’,
 And by name it haþ no pere,
 Is lykned to Ihesus, y may proue:
 His handes and feet þe leues were,
 His herte was wiþ a spere þurgh shoue,
 Mannys loue was hym so dere.
 What soule is syk, lay þat herbe aboue,
 Hit makeþ hool al yfere. (XVII.185–92)

‘Love thy neighbour’, as heard in the poet's moral injunctions in the first sixteen poems, is replaced by ‘love God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’ The poet's concerns no longer focus on re-establishing social harmony, but on reconciling the soul with God:

3if þou wilt þy soule saue.
 Lete soule be lord, and go byfore,
 And make þy body þy soule knaue. (XIX.78–80)

It will be remembered that, according to the reconstructed time-frame for the Poems,¹²⁴ poem XVII was written in 1421, the year of the crisis within the Benedictine order in England, an event which, as I have argued, heralded the poet's withdrawal from secular affairs, to turn to the affairs of the soul and its eternal salvation as his sole preoccupation in the later poems. The struggle for the soul is between God

¹²³ See ll. 75–76, 84, 51–52, 59–60, 161–62.

¹²⁴ See sections 2.4, 3.1.2 and 3.2.

and carnal man. In Poem XIX, wholly within the ‘Complaint of God to Man’ tradition,¹²⁵ God asks man:

... why turmentest þou me so.
 Euere þy synnes don encresce,
 And þy vices waxen moo,
 And þy vertues wanen lesse. (XIX.41–44)

God assures us that *For loue I hadde to mankynde* (l. 7), he was even prepared to pay for man’s soul with the death of his son Jesus: *Nas neuere bargayn derrere bou3t* (l. 12). In poem XX, the counterpart of poem XIX, God’s antagonists in the struggle for the soul, man’s *fleschly lustes*, try to keep the soul from uniting with Christ, her true lover.¹²⁶ It is, therefore, essential that carnal man should *Repente ... synne, and mercy craue* (XIX.74). God is ready to absolve and save man from purgatory: *For my grace is euere redy*; in return he must *In good werkis wysely wake* (XX.204, 209). The two sides of the medal are exemplified in poem XXI, the versification of the Beatitudes,¹²⁷ where the promise of salvation is held out to those who practise the eight virtues listed. However, the poet regularly interrupts the joyful procession of promised blessings with threats of damnation for those who do not practise the virtues asked in consideration: *Goddis curs he dop wynne* (l. 107). Here, as in the other six closing poems, he demonstrates the same irrepressible homiletic nature as in his earlier poems. One cannot experience the joy of the blessed without prior repentance, confession and due penance. Poem XVIII echoes the reprimands meted out to the Benedictines in the episcopal capitulary of 1422, issued as a result of the heavy charges laid against the Benedictine chapter by Henry V in 1421.¹²⁸ Poem XIX is full of warnings: to *amende þy mysse* (l. 28), to *Leue and forbere þy synne* (l. 52), to *Mayntene not wrong* (l. 97). Poem XX has more of the same: *Flesch, þy synnes mochil is / ... / Knowleche* (confess), *repente, and mende þy mys* (ll. 193,195). Following the curses in between the Beatitudes of poem XXI, poem XXII follows up with more threats. Those *Who breke þo hestes* (commandments) */ ... / in helle for to brenne, / in endeles pyne, dep shal hem fede* (ll. 37, 63–64). So *do penaunce* by keeping the *ten comaundementis*, practising the *seuen werkis of mercy*, bewailing the *seuene synnes*, and directing your *fjue wittes* (ll. 65–69).

In poems XVIII through XXII we have traced the poet’s unceasing calls to man to repent his sins, and to do penance by mending his ways, with the prospect of the salvation of his eternal soul. The last two poems are in a way the culmination of the injunctions and promises of the preceding five. In poem XXIV penance is no longer urged, but at last actually done. In poem XXIII salvation is no longer a

¹²⁵ See Furnivall (1866, pp. 190–232), and Brown (1939, pp. 151–77).

¹²⁶ See the summary preceding the text of poem XX.

¹²⁷ Matt. 5:3–12. See also the summary preceding the text of poem XXI.

¹²⁸ See section 2.4.

distant prospect, but can at last be enjoyed when shriven man, cleansed of his sins, meets his God in bread and wine in the Eucharist. Poem XXIV is formally a versification of nine lessons from the book Job as contained in the Church's Office for the Dead.¹²⁹ The author has in fact turned the poem into one sustained confession of sin, and prayer to be cleansed. It is shot through with numerous passages expressing a deeply contrite sentiment, as in the following lines:

Deme me no3t after my dede,
 Lorde, I byseche þe,
 I haue don in þy si3t, and tok non hede;
 Perfore I praye þy mageste,
 God, my wikkednesse away þou lede,
 Myn vnry3t away wasche 3e.
 Non more. Lord, at my nede,
 Of alle my synnes cense 3e me. (XXIV.243–50)

Absolved, the poet gives emotional thanks, which constitutes at the same time his personal Creed:

I byleue þat soth y say,
 Myn a3eynbyere lyuynges isse.
 I shal rysen of þe erthe my laste day,
 Bylapped in my flesch and skyn ywisse;
 Byholde with myn ey3en twey,
 Se God, my sauour, in blisse;
 Non other ey3en bote þes, withouten nay;
 Þe hope in my bosom yput vp isse. (XXIV.299–306)

The emotional style of the poet's religious expression in this stanza is reminiscent of the style of the mystical writers of the period. The urge to become one with God, to *Byholde with myn ey3en twey, / Se God, my sauour, in blisse* (ll. 303–304), evokes thoughts of the mystical experience of the *unio mystica* with God. However, the poet's vision is of heavenly bliss forthcoming, not experienced. Also, the almost palpable devotional ardour reaches these heights only in poem XXIII, that is to say in the context of the Eucharist, where the penitent and shriven sinner, through God's unmerited grace, is allowed to meet God in bread and wine. Nowhere else in the Poems, and in no other context, is there any trace of mysticism, but rather the style and tone of voice of a morally conscious, but practically minded Christian. Poem XXIII can be read as an antidote against the Eucharistic theology of Wyclif and his followers, who denied the doctrine of the transubstantiation of bread and wine to become really, 'in

¹²⁹ See the summary preceding the text of poem XXIV.

substance', the body and blood of Christ.¹³⁰ Orthodox in his beliefs as the poet may be, there are certainly Lollard overtones where he says that *Pere as gadryng of goode men ys, / Is holychyrche of flesch and bones*¹³¹ (rather than the institutional Church), as also where he says that *prestes are lanterne*.¹³² The main point here, as argued above, is that in poem XXIII the sacrament of the Eucharist is actually being performed, rather than held out as a conditional promise. Deeply theological as large parts of the author's exposition in poem XXIII may sound, he finds moving words to grasp the essential significance of the Eucharist, the repentant sinner meeting his God over bread and wine, ultimately to gain eternal life and see his God face to face:

Lete þy mercy passe ryȝt,
 And forȝeue vs oure mysdede.
 Þy face wiȝ loue to seen in syȝt,
 In lond of lyf þou vs lede.
 Among þy seyntes in heuene on hyȝt,
 At þat feste of lif, God, vs fede.
 Sopfast bred, God of myȝt,
 Ihesus, herde, þou vs hede. (XXIII.105–12)

Where in this section we started out 'in search of God', the poet in this stanza points the way. In groping our way towards God, the Eucharist is the place *Þy face wiȝ loue to seen in syȝt*.

¹³⁰ On Wyclif's stance with respect to the orthodox dogma of the Eucharist, see section 3.4.2.1.

¹³¹ Cf. *The folkis cherche* in VIII.27. See also Gillespie (2007, p. 418), and Hudson (1988, pp. 314–27).

¹³² Cf. *To lanterne ȝe ben likned riȝt* (XXI.153). See the Lollard treatise 'The Lanterne of Light' in Dean (1996, pp. 40, 75–90).

I
LOUE GOD AND DREDE

SUMMARY

The overall theme of this poem is how people in a position of authority, from the king down to the local lord of the manor, ought to exercise their powers in a morally responsible manner, and why.

The author authoritatively, if rather at random, offers a wide range of advice on what is, and what is not admissible in exercising monarchic, judicial, manorial and communal power: beware of aggressive, hostile, covetous or inexperienced counsellors; apply the law wisely and impartially; do not favour the privileged to the detriment of the community; maintain unity; punish troublemakers; do not treat the poor with arrogance but with respect; treat others as you wish to be treated yourself; do not add to your fortune at the cost of the poor; hear both sides in court; keep the legal system free from corruption; settle disputes amicably.

These pieces of advice are variously motivated. For one thing because they serve the personal interests of those in power: peaceful subjects, order within the realm, keeping the poor happy. Fear is another, and more powerful motive. Man is answerable for his behaviour to God, who owns it all and demands a reckoning. His judgement may condemn the unrepentant to eternal doom in hell. Man receives according to his deserts from a righteous, but at the same time merciful God.

TEXT

(1)

Eche man be war, that bereth astate,
Of counseil of double entendement,
3 Of tyrauntrye, and preuey hate,
And synguler profit by fals assent,
And 3ong to 3yue Iugement.
6 In Euenhede Lawe 3e lede.
Worche be good auisement.
Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

*beware; high office
with ambiguous intent
intimidation; secret
personal; connivance
inexperienced people
firmness/impartiality; [should] guide you
Act; prudently
fear [Him]*

(2)

- 9 Drede God and knowe thy selue,
That ouer puple hast gouernaunce.
Noght for the loue of ten or twelue¹
- 12 Brynge not a Comone in greuance. *[whole] community; distress*
Make vnyte ther was distaunce. *discord*
Weye o lawe in euenhede *Dispense; one*
- 15 Bytween fauour and vengeaunce.²
Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(3)

- Eche mannys gouernours³
- 18 Of hous or lordshipe or cite: *In [a]; the household of a lord*
The puple is Godes, and not 3oures, *[Remember that]*
Thow they be soget to 3oure degre. *Even though; [social] position*
- 21 Gouverne the puple in vnyte,
In the comaundements that God bede, *demands*
And 3e wole lyue in charite. *will; God's grace*
- 24 Knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(4)

- Eche man wot that hath wyt, *good sense*
These worldes goodes bethe not his. *are*
- 27 Alle is Godes, he oweth hit, *owns*
And land and see, and pyne and blis.
- God wole haue rekenyng y wys, *an accounting; certainly*
- 30 Of men and cloth, the leste shrede, *smallest; thread*
Thy getyng, thy holding, thy spendyng mys. *misspending*
Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(5)

- 33 Man of his owen hath no thyng;
Man is Goddis, and al God sent. *has bestowed [on him]*
God wole haue rekenyng
- 36 Of ryht and wrong, how it is went. *has happened*
Man, not nys thyn, alle God lent, *nothing is; on loan*
And borwed thyng mot home ful nede. *be returned*
- 39 And 3ut thy soule is Goddis rent;
Quyte that wele in loue and drede.⁴ *also; God's property rented to you*

¹ *Do not, to please only a few people*² *Ll. 14–15: Apply one law in impartial balance / Between mercy and vengeance*³ *The masters of all the people*⁴ *Pay what is due without fail, in awe and with fear*

(6)

Serue God for helle drede,
 42 Fle fro synne and al vys.
 And 3e loue God for heuen mede,
 3yue hym thyn hert, fro fleschly delys.
 45 For worldly wys is gostly nys,
 And fooles erande may not spede.
 In begynnyng to be wys:
 48 Knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

vice
If; reward
[away] from; pleasures
spiritually; foolish
cannot; be successful
As a start

(7)

And 3e wole wyte, thus mowe 3e lere:
 What man pursueth his soule to saue,
 51 3if hym be lef of God to here,
 He ableth hym self mercy to haue.
 Richesse and hele maketh wylde men raue,
 54 That to vertues take non hede.
 Er thy soule be fendes knaue,
 Knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

If; know; as follows

If; desires; hear
enables
profit; behave foolishly
pay no heed
Before; the devil's slave

(8)

57 That man that wole be gouerned by wyt,
 Fle fro foly, and worldis delys.
 Loke his charge how it is knyt,
 60 And take counseil that is wys.
 Folwe mesure in euene syse,
 Lete no falshed blome ne sede.
 63 And lawe be kept, no folk nyl ryse.
 Than seruest God in loue and drede.

Consider; responsibility; what it includes

moderation; [an] impartial manner
blossom (v.); sow seed
If; will not
Then

(9)

Whanne a fool stereth a barge,
 66 Hym self and al the folke is shent.
 There as conscience is large,
 By wrath or mede the doom is went.
 69 The bowe of Goddis wrath is bent
 On hem that deth not that God bede.
 War wordes of dowble entendement,
 72 Knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

steers
brought to ruin
Where; lax
Because of; [sound] judgement; gone

commands
Beware of

(10)

Gif a kyngdom falle a chaunce
 That al the rewme myght greue,
 75 A3en that make an ordinaunce,

something happens to
realm; injure
Against; decree

- To kepe 3ow euere fro suche myscheue. *for ever; misfortune*
 And chastise hem that matere meue; *stir up trouble*
- 78 Make othere take ensauple treuth to hede.⁵
 Who so is wys, his werkys preue. *will prove [it]*
 Loue God, and 3e thar not drede. *need*
- (11)
- 81 Goddis bowe of wratthe on vs was bent;
 There we thenke al to lyte.⁶ *About that; little*
 His 3erde of loue on summe is lent, *rod; falls on*
- 84 With swerde of vengeance he summe doth smyte.
 The brydelle with teeth thay byte⁷ *smites*
 That of God taken non hede. *Such people*
- 87 Or fendys alle 3oure werkys wryte,
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede. *Before; enemies; report*
- (12)
- Why pore men don riche reuerence, *hold in respect*
- 90 Two skylles y fynde therfore:
 To tyrauntes don hem greuaunce,⁸ *reasons*
 To rewe and a3en restore. *injury*
regret; make amends
- 93 Goode men for loue they worshipe more,
 That don hem good, and help at nede;
 For God seeth thurgh euery bore.⁹ *hole*
- 96 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.
- (13)
- Eche man wot that bereth estate, *bears authority*
 Why they hit resceyue, and to what wyse. *by what means*
- 99 Worship for drede is preue hate;¹⁰
 Suche worship of frendes men schold refuyse.
 In loue and drede worshipe the wyse.
- 102 Be suget to resoun in lengthe and brede,¹¹ *obey; breadth*

⁵ *Make [sure that] others take [this] as a warning to heed the truth*

⁶ *We think all too little about that*

⁷ *Those who champ the bit [like a restless horse]*

⁸ *Ll. 91–94: They respect violent persons, who have done them an injury, / [So that] they (i.e. the violent persons) will take pity and make amends. / Good men they respect out of love, / Who treat them kindly and help [them] in [times of] need*

⁹ *For God sees everything*

¹⁰ *Respect out of fear is secret(ly) hatred*

¹¹ *Let reason prevail in all respects*

For God seeth thurgh eche mysse. *wrongdoing*
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(14)

105 As long as man doth wrong,
 He maketh God his ful foo; *enemy*
 The more he dwelleth theryn long,
 108 To his soule he encreseth woo.
 Er he fele het, y rede say hoo, *Before; heat; advise; stop*
 Er his soule glowe as glede. *live coal*
 111 Haue heuene or helle, chese of two. *Obtain/receive; choose*
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(15)

The man withoute charitee
 114 May neuere wynne heuen blisse. *Can*
 As thou wolde men dede for the, *wish; did*
 Do thou so liche eche man haue hisse.¹² *like; his [due]*
 117 For all that euere is goten mysse¹³ *at any time; sinfully*
 Mot be rekened, a drope 3e shede, *accounted for;[even] a [single] drop that you spill*
 Thes worldis good and thou mon kysse. *if; part from*
 120 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(16)

False men bye helle ful dere. *pay; dearly*
 That taken with wrong are Goddis theues; *Who have*
 123 They han here heuene in this world here.
 After in helle, huge myscheues. *Hereafter; suffering*
 What they byleue here werkys preues. *believe; deeds; prove*
 126 Arn heretikes, and out of the Crede. *They (i.e. the false men) are; faithless*
 Why God doth loue, why God doth greues; *loves; injures*
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

(17)

129 Man, synne not in ouerhope; *presuming there is hope for you*
 Thou wynnest not Goddis mercie with fight. *by striving [for it]*
 Hit wolde brynge the in wanhope,
 132 To wene no mercy thou hauen myght. *expect; may*
 Alle thyng is nombrede in Goddis sight, *taken account of; eyes*
 The leste tryp that euere 3e trede. *smallest journey; undertake*

¹² Do likewise yourself, so that everybody may have his due

¹³ Ll. 117–19: You will have to account for everything you acquired wrongfully, / [And for] the tiniest single fragment you wasted / [At the end of your life] when you must part from your worldly possessions

135 His mercy is medled with his right.
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

goes hand in hand; justice

(18)

Mannes conscience wil hym telle,
 138 Riche and pore, fool and wyse,
 Whether he be worthi heuene or helle
 To resceyue, after his seruyce.
 141 Eche man auyse hym that is wys,
 Pore and prynce, styf on stede,
 Or vyces ouer vertues rys.
 144 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

*after [he has performed]; task
 take thought
 Pauper; mighty; noble horse
 Before; get the better of*

(19)

Who that takeþ fro pore to eke with his,
 For that wrong is worthy wo.
 147 Another, richer than he is,
 Of the same shal serue hym so.
 That 3eueth to that li3e or go,
 150 Mete or drynke, herborwe or wede,
 God sendes y now to tho
 That louen God and Hym wolen drede.

*to increase his [own fortune]
 deserves; pain [of hell]*

*Will do the same to him
 Who; [those]; who; lie; walk
 shelter; clothing
 enough; those*

(20)

153 He is a fool that doth answeere
 To a man er tale be told.
 But after the dede deme there.
 156 Lete not lawe be faouered ne sold,¹⁴
 Suche maken fals men be bold,
 And false men myghte stroye a thede.
 159 Er charitee in hert wexe cold,
 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede.

*answers [in court]
 before; [his] account [of the case]
 on the basis of; pass judgement; thereon*

*brazen
 destroy a whole people
 grows*

(21)

3if a man do another mys,
 162 Neighbores shuld hem auyse,
 The trespasour amende and kys,
 Do bothe parties euene assise.
 165 Old horded hate maketh wratthe to rise,
 And ofte gilteles blod to blede.
 Fle fro fooles and folwe wise.
 168 Man, knowe thy self, loue God and drede. Amen

*harm (n.)
 advise
 malefactor; [should] make amends; kiss
 fair; judgement
 nursed; causes
 be shed*

¹⁴ *Do not show partiality or accept bribes in applying the law*

NOTES

title Robbins (1975, p. 1419) has ‘Love God and redress abuses’. Also in *MWME*, Louis (1993, p. 2983) uses as title ‘Eche man be war that bereth a state’. A biblical source of the antithetical ‘love God and fear Him’ is found in e.g. Ecclus. 2:15–17.

8 See Prov. 1:7, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction’.

11–12 *for þe loue of ten or twelue*] The same turn of phrase occurs in XII.99.

12 *Comone*] *MED* s.v. *communes* (*n.*) does not give this spelling.

29 *y wys*] The spelling is unusual, instead of normal *ywys* or *y-wys*.

33 St. (5): The same thoughts on man’s stewardship of, and accountability for God’s gifts to him are expressed in VII (11) and VIII (1).

45 See 1 Cor. 3:19, ‘For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God’.

47–48 See the note to l. 8.

69 Variation on Ps. 11:2, ‘The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow’. Proverbial. See Whiting, B 480, ‘To bend one’s bow’.

80 *thar*] 3sg. pres. of *thurven*.

83 See Prov. 13:24, ‘He that spareth his rod (=yard) hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes’.

84 *swerde of vengeaunce*] The reference is to Rom. 13:4, ‘for he (i.e. ‘the power’ = the king or the worldly authorities) beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil’. The same phrase occurs in III.39 (with the king’s vicariate of God mentioned explicitly), and in V.39.

85 See *OED* s.v. *bite* (*v.*) sub 16.

95 Proverbial. See Whiting, G 232, ‘God sees through every bore (*hole*)’; cf. l. 103.

98 *to ... wyse*] not in *MED* s.v. *wise* (*n.*(2.)).

102 For its inverse *in brede ne lengthe*, see Whiting, B 527, ‘In brede nor length’.

110 See Whiting, G 152, ‘To glow like (a, any, the) gleed’.

119 *kysse*] *MED* s.v. *kysen* (*v.*) does not give the meaning inferred here: ‘to kiss goodbye, to part from’.

127 The implied meaning is: do not bother yourself with the question why God is at the same time a merciful and a jealous God (see also Ex. 34:6, 7 and Deut. 5:9, 10).

129 St. (17): similarly worded in VII (13) and XX (26).

135 The same thought reappears in XX.197–98, *I nel deme þe in ry3twisnes, / But medle þerwiþ mercy and grace*.

145 *te*] Kail *to*, but *MED* has the variant spelling *te* before vowels.

164 Moderation and fairness in the administration of justice is expressed in similar words in III.12–13, *Do euene lawe to ffolle and wyse, / Set mesure in euene assise*, and in IX.65,67, *That haldeþ questes or assise ... / Lette no lawe fro ri3t gyse*. The opposite, satirical sentiment is found in VI.29, *3eue no doom in ri3t assyse*.

168 *Amen*] Struck through in red, as at the end of XIII. In both instances, the mark is doubtful as a deletion mark, as no scribal error is discernable, although erasion may have been purposed for another reason. Alternatively, the red line may signify an attention mark. Kail here omits *Amen* altogether. In

XIII he adds a note: '*Amen* is struck through in red ink; but whether it is meant to be erased or not is doubtful'.

II

MEDE AND MUCHE THANK

reward; gratitude

SUMMARY

The poem relates the debate between a courtier and a military man, overheard by an 'I' figure. The scene is set in a typical *locus amoenus*, an idyll of harmonious love and harmony as counterpoint to the unfolding argument. The courtier admits that he is a lazy flatterer, whose only role in life is to please his master, for which he is richly rewarded, also to the benefit of his dependants. The soldier's life overseas is harsh and miserable. His satisfaction is bloodshed, plunder, and a mere 'thank you very much'. Who will feed you when you are old?

The soldier maintains that doing honest work well is reward in itself and makes him self-reliant, whereas the courtly flatterer becomes cowardly and weak-willed doing nothing. Moreover, he acquires riches not his due, which is as shameful as depriving the bee from its honey.

The courtier has the last word: the soldier is not as disinterested as it seems; he satisfies 'an urgent need' in himself, why else be ready to die of hunger and cold? Which proves that the soldier does in fact serve for a reward, just as the courtier.

TEXT

(1)

In blossemed buske I bode boote,
In ryche array, with ryches rank,
3 Faire floures vnder foote,
Sauour to myn herte sank.
I sawe two buyrnes on a bank;
6 To here talkyng I tok hede.¹
That on preysede moche thank,
That other helde al with mede.

*grove; lingered; in the open
profuse; splendour*

*[A sense of] delight
men; hillside*

*praised
wholly believed in*

¹ *I took an interest in/paid attention to their discussion/conversation*

(2)

- 9 That on a trauallyng man had ben,
 He was but in mene array. *simple*
 That other clothed in gawdy gren, *yellowish*
 12 Blasande bri3t, embrowdid gay. *Dazzlingly*
 “Loo, felow, chese y may *Surely; I am in a position*
 To ryde on palfray or on stede. *war horse*
 15 Shewe forth moche thonk, y the pray; *Produce evidence of*
 Loo, here y shewe sumwhat of mede.”

(3)

- “Syre, y see thou hast richesse;
 18 How thou hit get, whiche is thy fame, *of what nature*
 In corage and prowesse?
 After thy dede resceyue thy name, *according to; reputation*
 21 Other in worshipec or in shame. *Either; honour*
 Men wol the deme after thy dede, *judge (v.)*
 Thy fer trauallyng or cochour at hame. *far; travels; [as] a stay-at-home*
 24 How serued thou to haue that mede.”

(4)

- “I plesse my lorde at bed and bord,
 Pou3 y do but strype a stre,² *when [he is] in bed and at table*
 27 And florische fayre my lordis word, *[nothing] but strip a straw*
 And fede hem forth with nay and 3ee. *embellish*
 Whan trauallyng men fare euele on see, *lead him on; no; yes*
 30 In fight, in preson, in storme and drede, *endure suffering*
 With moche thonk than mery 3e be,
 And y wole make me mery with mede.” *be happy*

(5)

- 33 “Flatteryng is the fendis scoles.³
 3oure awen werkys preueth 3ow nys. *deeds; foolish*
 3e skorne lordes, and make hem 3oure foles, *deceive; [appear] fools*
 36 To playe and lawhe at 3oure delys. *laugh*
 Do for a lorde; and he be wys, *Work; if*
 Trewe trauallyng shal not lese his dede.⁴
 39 To vertuous lord al worship lys.⁵
 The trewe seruant is worthy hys mede.”

² *Although I perform only trivial/easy tasks*

³ *Flattery is where the devil makes school*

⁴ *Diligent labour will not lose [any of] its effect*

⁵ *[It] will earn a fair master great respect*

(6)

“Say, felowe, what doth the greue
 42 My glosyng, flatoryng, play and daunce?
 Shulde my souerayn aske the leue
 Whom hym list to auauance?
 45 Thou getest the thonke with spere and launce,
 Therwith thou might the clothe and fede.
 I, gloser, wil stonde to my chaunce,
 48 And mayntene my men al with mede.

how; makes you angry
smooth talk; merriment
master; permission
pleases; to favour

may [perhaps]
flatterer; take my chances

(7)

My flatoryng, glosyng, not me harmes.
 I gete loue and moche richesse,
 51 When wel faryng men of armes
 In fight, in presoun and distresse.
 When thou art old and feble, y gesse,
 54 Who wole the fynde fode or wede.
 Lete moche think than thy mete dresse,
 And y wole make me mery with mede.”

receive
While; the welfare [of]
[You get] in; hardship

provide you with; clothing
serve your food
enjoy myself

(8)

57 “I likne a gloser in eche weder
 To folwe the wynd, as doth the fane.
 3e begeten hony to gedere;
 60 To stroy3e that cometh the drane.
 Me thenkeþ þere wit is wane
 To stroy3e the hony and foule hit shede.
 63 Gloser hath brought faytour lane
 To halle and chambre, to lordes for mede.”

compare; whatever the weather
weathervane
accumulate
waste (v.); drone
common sense; lacking
stupidly; waste (v.)
an imposter’s gift

(9)

“Thy wikked speche come fro ferre.⁶
 66 Euel thou spekest, worse dost mene.
 Thou woldest euere more were werre,
 For profyt and pilage thou myght glene,
 69 Cristen blod destroyed clene,
 And townes brent on a glede.⁷
 Thy conscience is ful lene,
 72 Thou noldest not come ther but for mede.”

from afar

[that there] were war
plunder (n.); could get out of it
spilled; completely

inadequate

⁶ Behind your wicked words there is an even more wicked meaning

⁷ ... to cinders, or (proverbially): [like a spark] from a live coal

(10)

- “In wikked lyuer no good counsayle,
Is coward of kynde ny3t and day.
75 Good lyuere dar fende and assayle,
And hardy in dede brou3t to bay.
I wolde thou were brou3t to assay
78 At nede a wys counseil to rede.
Were thou as hardy as thou art gay,
3e were wel worthy to haue good mede.”
- a man who lives a wicked life; sound judgement
by nature
fight; attack
difficult; combat
caused; attempt
In; speak
fearless/strong; lighthearted/carefree
deserve*

(11)

- 81 “Thenketh the not it doth the good,
Whan thou out of thy bed dost swerue,
3e clothe 3ow, and do on 3oure hod,
84 At tyme of day thy mete dost kerue?
Why dost thou thy seluen serue?
I trowe thou do it for gret nede;
87 For hunger and cold elles myghtest thou sterue.
This preueth thou seruest al for mede.”
- get out
put; hood
At [the appointed]
are ... self-serving
suspect; out of dire necessity
otherwise; die
only*

NOTES

title Utley (1972, p. 714) renders the title as ‘Mede and much thank: a dialogue between a soldier and a courtier’.

13 *felow*] used in condescending address to a social inferior. Cf. *sire* (l. 17), used by the soldier addressing the courtier.

25 *MED* equivocates as to the interpretation of this line. It quotes the line under four entries: s.v. *at* (*prep.*) sub 6a.(a) the MnE contextual equivalent is given as ‘at’; s.v. *bed* (*n.*(1)) sub 2b.(b) and *bord* (*n.*) sub 5.(d), *at* is given the meaning of ‘in’, i.e. ‘in bed and at table, in all conjugal duties and relationships; in all the affairs of married life’; s.v. *plesen* (*v.*) sub 1.(b) the contextual meanings assigned to this verb have either sexual overtones (‘satisfy’, ‘gratify’) or moral connotations (‘flatter’, ‘cajole’). Since the speaker in ll. 26–28 describes his activities as merely humouring his lord, agreeing to whatever he says, the most plausible meaning of l. 25 is: ‘I flatter my master at his bedside and at his table’.

28 A similar expression occurs in IV.91: *And graunte to purpos nay and 3ee*.

33 The line has a strongly proverbial, but as such unsubstantiated, flavour. An echo of it is heard in a famous parliamentary address of 1576, advocating free speech, without which Parliament ‘is none but a very school of flattery ... and so fit a place to serve the devil and his angels in.’

40 See Luke 10:7 and 1 Tim. 5:18, ‘For the labourer is worthy of his hire/reward’.

57–64 The courtly flatterer is compared with the unproductive drone of the beehive, who merely consumes the honey gathered by the worker bees. See also Coleman (1981, p. 97).

63 *lane*] Northern form, definitely authorial because in rhyme position.

73–76 The same sentiment – wicked men are cowards, good men are brave – is expressed in III (10).

75 Echoed in III.84.

III TREUTH, RESTE AND PES

SUMMARY

The theme of the poem is firmly embedded in the advice-to-princes tradition. In the interest of moral integrity, and in spite of possible slanderers, the writer publicly lectures king and counsellors on issues of responsible governance, and against the abuse of justice and of the law.

Biased and corrupt administration of justice is not only immoral, but leads to social unrest and, ultimately, rebellion. Also, at the lower levels of administration, frequent and controlled changes lead to heated public outbursts. What is needed for a prosperous community are the joint efforts of God-fearing and industrious members of the traditional estates: commons, clergy and nobility. Ideally they are led by a king wise enough to allow himself to be advised by a sensible, purposeful Council, while parliament is there to look after the interests of the commons. The writer urgently repeats that internal strife can only lead to rioting inside the borders and to opportunistic attack from outside.

Ultimately, however, it is God who makes or breaks all human endeavour. He is man's chief overlord, from king and pope down to the humblest beggar. He is both inheritor and recorder of everybody's assets and achievements. For those in high places who govern wisely and sociably, he is a protecting friend. But the choice for good or bad is theirs, they have a free will.

TEXT

(1)

For drede ofte my lippes y steke	<i>close (v.)</i>
For false reportours, that trouhte mys famed.	<i>talebearers; gave a false report of</i>
3 But Charitee chargeth me to speke;	<i>Yet; neighbourly love; requires</i>
Pou3 troupe be dred, he nys not ashamed.	<i>terrified; is not</i>
Troupe secheþ non hernes ther los is lamed;	<i>hiding-places; reputation; injured</i>
6 Troupe is worschiped at euery des.	<i>honoured; table</i>
In that kyngdom ther troupe is blamed,	<i>criticized/found fault with</i>
God sendes vengeaunce to make troupe haue pes.	

(2)

- 9 Troupe is messenger to ry3t,
And ry3t is counseille to Iustice;
Iustice in Goddis stede is dy3t.
- 12 Do euene lawe to foolle and wyse,
Set mesure in euene assise,¹
The ri3te weye as lawe ges.
- 15 And lawe be kept, folk nyl not ryse;
That kyngdom shal haue reste and pes.

*envoy for what is morally right**Apply the law impartially**so that; prevails**If; enforced; will not rebel*

(3)

- 3if suche a tale tellere were
- 18 To a kyng apayre a mannys name,
The kyng shulde boþe partyes here,
And punysche þe fals for defame.
- 21 Pan fals men wolde ases for blame,
For falshed body and soule it sles;
Falshed endes ay in shame,
- 24 And troupe in worschipe and in pes.

*talebearer; would**damage (v.)**hear**calumny**desist from slander**destroys**always**But; esteem*

(4)

- Whanne lawe is put fro ri3t assise,
And domes man made by mede,²
- 27 For fawte of lawe 3if comouns rise,
Pan is a kyngdom most in drede.
For whanne vengeaunce a comouns lede,
- 30 Pei do gret harm er þey asses.
There no man oþer doþ mysbede,
That kyngdom shal haue reste and pes.

*kept; fair; verdict**judgements; one; would pass; bribery**lawlessness; the common people**peril**cease**Where; maltreats*

(5)

- 33 Whan craft riseþ a3ens craft,
In burghe, toun or citee,
Þey go to lordes whan lawe is laft,
- 36 Whoche party may strengere be.
But wyse men þe sonere se
By witles wille þey gedre pres.³
- 39 Or lordis medle in foly degre,
Let lawe haue cours in reste and pes.

*force/power**turn to; disregarded**side; prevail**so much sooner; see**Before; intervene; manner*¹ *Preserve moderation in [passing] a fair verdict*² *And the outcome of lawsuits would be allowed to be determined by bribes*³ *[that] through foolish wilfulness they (i.e. the common people) will form a [hostile] crowd*

(6)

3it þere is þe þridde distaunce
 42 Bryngeþ a kyngdom in moche noy3e:
 Ofte chaunge of gouernaunce
 Of alle degre, lowe and hy3e.
 45 A kyng may not al asprie;
 Summe telle hym soþ, summe telle hym les.
 Þe whete fro þe chaf 3e try3e,
 48 So mowe 3e leue in reste and pes.

*There is yet; [cause for] discord
 misfortune
 Frequent
 ranks (n.)
 see
 truth; lies
 wheat; sift
 may; live*

(7)

I speke not in specyale
 Of oo kyngdom the lawe to telle.
 51 I speke hool in generale
 In eche kyngdom the lawe to telle.
 Also is writen in þe gospelle
 54 A word þat God hym seluen ches:
 Raþere þan fi3te, a man go selle
 On of his cloþes, and bi3e hym pes.

*one; speak of
 wholly
 Thus [it]
 chose (i.e. as suitable)
 One; buy; peace*

(8)

57 A worþi kny3t wol worchip wynne,
 He wil not 3elde hym þou3 me þret,
 But raþere as Malice doþ bygynne,
 60 Quenche hit at þe firste het.
 For and 3e lete it growe gret,
 Hit brenneþ breme as fyre in gres.
 63 Laweles nouellerye loke 3e lete,⁴
 So mowe 3e lyue in reste and pes.

*honourable; gain esteem
 yield; people; threaten [him]
 Suppress; heated outburst
 if
 fiercely; [dry] grass or fat*

(9)

Old speche is spoken 3ore:
 66 What is a kyngdom tresory:
 Bestayle, corn stuffed in store,
 Riche comouns, and wyse clergy;
 69 Marchaundes, squyers, chialry
 That wol be redy at a res,
 And cheualrous kyng in wittes hy3e,
 72 To lede in were, and gouerne in pes.

*[An] old saying; once
 cattle
 in a crisis/emergency
 valiant/brave; possessing great wisdom
 war*

⁴ *Take heed that you refrain from innovations that disregard the law*

(10)

- Among filosofres wyse, (i.e. moral) *philosophers*
 In here bokes, men writen fynde
 75 Þat synne is cause of cowardyse. *source/origin*
 Wel lyuyng man: hardy of kynde;⁵
 Wikked lyuere: graceles, blynde, *lacking God's grace; [spiritually] blind*
 78 He dredeþ deþ, þe laste mes. *meal*
 Þe good lyuere haþ god in mynde,
 Þat mannys counseil makeþ pes. *A plan/scheme of such a man*

(11)

- 81 What kyng that wol haue good name,
 He wol be lad by wys counsayle, *Council*
 Pat loue worschip and dreden shame, *honour*
 84 And boldely dar fende and assayle. *fearlessly/confidently; defend as well as attack*
 Pere wit is, corage may not fayle, *sound judgement; will (v.)*
 For wysdom neuere worschip les. *relinquished*
 87 Corage in querelle doþ batayle, *armed combat; does the fighting*
 And ende of batayle bygynneþ pes. *war; is the beginning of peace*

(12)

- Defaute of wit makeþ long counsayle;
 90 For witteles wordes, in ydel spoken,
 Þe more cost, þe lesse auayle;
 For fawte of wyt, purpos broken. *lacks; plans; come to nothing*
 93 In euyl soule no grace is stoken,⁶ *litt.: locked [up]*
 For wikked soule is graceles. *nota* *lacks [God's] grace (i.e. is damned)*
 In good lyuere Goddis wille is loken,⁷ *litt.: locked*
 96 Þat mannys counselle makeþ pes.

(13)

- To wete 3if parlement be wys,
 Þe comon profit wel it preues. *[will] give clear proof*
 99 A kyngdom in comouns lys, *common people; depends on*
 Alle profytes, and alle myscheues. *prosperity; misfortune*
 Lordis wet neuere what comouns greues *causes grief/makes angry*
 102 Til here rentis bigynne to ses.⁸
 Pere lordis ere, pore comons releues, *Where; relent; take heart*
 And mayntene hem in werre and pes.

⁵ *A man living a virtuous life is fearless by nature*⁶ *In a wicked/sinful soul there is no room for God's grace*⁷ *God's will is embodied in a virtuous life*⁸ *Till their rent income begins to cease*

(14)

- 105 Make God 3oure ful frend;
 Do þe comaundement þat he bede.
 Þou3 alle þe world a3en 3ow wend, *against; turn*
 108 Be God 3oure frend, 3e thar not drede. *need*
 For þere as God his frendis lede, *where*
 He saueþ hem boþe on lond and sees.
 111 Whoso fi3teþ, God doþ þe dede,⁹
 For God is victorie and pes.

(15)

- What kyngdom werreþ hym self wiþ ynne,¹⁰ *internally*
 114 Distroyeþ hym self, and no mo. *nothing else*
 Wiþoute here enemys bygynne *Outside [its borders]*
 On eche a syde assayle hem so. *consequently*
 117 Þe comouns þey wil robbe and slo, *kill/destroy*
 Make fyere and kyndel stres. *burn; straw*
 Whan ryches and manhode is wastede and go, *[the lives of] many men*
 120 þan drede dryueþ to trete pes. *fear; negotiate*

(16)

- The world is like a fals lemman, *lover*
 Fayre semblaunt, and moche gyle.¹¹ *appearance; but; treachery*
 123 Wiþouten heire dyeþ no man, *heir*
 God is chief lord of toun and pyle. *[For] God; castle*
 God makeþ mony heire in a whyle,¹² *in due course*
 126 For God ressayueþ eche reles; *[deed of] transfer [of property]*
 God kan breke hegge and style, *break down*
 And make an hey wey to pes. *highway*

(17)

- 129 God made lordis gouernoures
 To gouerne puple in vnyte.
 Þe puple, ne ryches, nys not 3oures,
 132 Al is Goddis, and so be 3e.
 Eche day 3e may 3oure myrrour se. *see*
 Eche man after oþer deses; *dies*

⁹ *Whoever fights, it is God who [actually] does the fighting*

¹⁰ *A kingdom that engages in civil strife*

¹¹ *Beautiful to look at, but full of deceit*

¹² Ll. 125–26: *As time goes by God becomes the heir of many people (i.e. when they die), / For everything is transferred [back] to God as His by right*

135 3oure auncetres arn gon, after shal 3e,
To endeles werre, or endeles pes. *eternal*

(18)

Eche kyng is sworn to gouernaunce,
138 To gouerne Goddis puple in ri3t.
Eche kyng bereþ swerde of Goddis vengeaunce,
To felle Goddis foon in fi3t. *slay; enemies*
141 And so doþ euerons honest kny3t,
That bereþ þe ordre as it wes:¹³ *at all times*
The plough, þe chirche to mayntene ry3t. *the farmers; defend; well*
144 Are Goddis champyons, to kepe þe pes. *[They (i.e. king and knights)] are*

(19)

The worlde is like a chery fayre, *beautiful cherry*
Ofte changeþ all his þynges. *physical characteristics/attributes*
147 Riche, pore, foul and fayre, *ugly*
Popes, prelates and lordynges,
Alle are dedly, and so ben kynges. *mortal*
150 Or deþ lede 3ow in his les, *Before; power/control*
Arraye by tyme 3oure rekenynges, *Put in order; accounts*
And trete wiþ God to gete 3ow pes. *Settle [your] differences*

(20)

153 What bryngeþ a kyngdom al aboute: *to full prosperity*
Wys counseil, and good gouernaunce.
Eche lord wil other loue, *[Then] every*
156 And rule wel labourrers sustynaunce. *provide for; necessities*
God makeþ for his frendis no destauce,
For God kan skatre þe grete pres. *causes; trouble*
159 God for his frendis maþ ordynaunce,¹⁴ *scatter; a large army*
And gouerneþ hem in werre and pes.

(21)

Good lyf is cause of good name; *reputation*
162 Good name is worthi to haue reueraunce. *command respect*
[.]
Synne is cause of greuance. *grief/misery*
165 Eche kyngdom hongep in Goddis balaunce,
Wiþ hym þat holdep, wiþ hym þat fles. *stands fast; flees*

¹³ *Who maintains the knightly code as it was (i.e. of old)*

¹⁴ *God makes provision for the welfare of His friends*

3e haue fre wille; chese 3oure chaunce,
 168 To haue wiþ God werre or pes.

make your choice

NOTES

title Robbins (1959, pp. 39–44) includes the poem under no. 13 in his anthology as: ‘What profits a Kingdom’, a title of his own devising, which Dean (1996, p. 153) adopted as secondary title. The poem appears under the same title in Robbins’ bibliographic publication (1975, pp. 1419, 1661). The poem does not take its title from Kail, as Dean suggests (p. 127), but from the manuscript itself (although not necessarily from the author). Dean has *Treuthe* (p. viii) and *Truthe* (p. 153) for MS *Treuth*.

3 *Charitee*] Here to be taken in the political sense it had acquired since the thirteenth century, as Kantorowicz (1957, p. 242) points out, quoting Thomas Aquinas from his *De regimine principum*: ‘*Amor patrie in radice charitatis fundatur* – Love for the fatherland is founded in the root of charity which puts, not the private things before those common, but the common things before the private’.

4 Proverbial. See Whiting, T 507, ‘Truth may be troubled but never shamed’. Similarly XII.75.

5 Proverbial. See Whiting, T 512, ‘Truth seeks no corners’. Similarly IV.157 and XII.74.

13 Moderation and fairness in the administration of justice is expressed in similar words in I.164, *Do bothe parties euene assise* and in IX.65, 67, *That haldep questes or assise ... / Lette no lawe fro ri3t gyse*. The opposite, satirical sentiment is found in VI.29, *3eue no doom in ri3t assyse*.

14 *ges*] Instance of rhyming usage, since throughout the Poems *3sg. pres.* consistently ends *-eth/-ep* when not at the end of a line (with the single exception in XXIV.30: *clayme3*). Note the further occurrences of rhyme-spelling at the end of l. 6 in stanzas 3, 17, 18 and 21, forced by *pes* in l. 8, inevitable because of the recurring refrain.

23 Proverbial. See Whiting, F 51, ‘Falsehood comes to an evil end’.

30 See also in XVI.60, *to ryse craft a3en craft*.

33 This turn of phrase reappears in XVI.60, *Pey were rebelle, to ryse craft a3en craft*.

38 *gedre pres*] ‘assemble as a hostile throng’. *wille*] Kail ‘wille’, but fully written out in the MS.

45 See Embree (1985, pp. 121–26) on the topos of ‘the king’s ignorance’.

46 *telle*] Kail *telle*, but fully written out in the MS.

55–56 The lines reflect two passages from the Gospel (see l. 53, *Also is writen in þe gospelle*): Matt. 5:40, ‘And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also’, and Matt. 19:21, ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven’.

57–60 ‘These lines include a rough paraphrase of a famous passage from the Sermon on the Mount ... (Matt. 5:39–40)’ (Dean, 1996, p. 177).

59 *bygynne*] Kail *begynne*.

60 Note the play on *het*: the literal meaning of ‘eruption’ of flames (see l. 62) and the figurative meaning of ‘outburst’ of emotion (see l. 59). See also *MED* s.v. *hete* (*n.*(1)) sub 1(b) and 6(c) and *hete* (*n.*(2)) sub a. and b., all expressing ‘(violent action fired by) heated emotions’.

62 *gres*] *MED* glosses ‘dry grass/hay’ s.v. *gras* (*n.*) sub 1(d), but ‘fat’ is equally possible (*MED* s.v. *gres*(*e*) (*n.*)).

63 Succinctly reiterates ll. 41–43.

73 The view expressed in St. (10) – good men are brave, wicked people are cowards – is similarly phrased in II.73–76.

77 Kail has no comma between *graceless* and *blynde*, but they are co-ordinate adjective phrases, describing the state in which the *wikked liuere* finds himself.

78 *laste mes*] Kail glosses ‘adversity’ for *mes*. Dean (1996, p. 177) comments: ‘the idea is that death is the final rite of passage for the soul, whether for “a well lyvyng man” or for a “wikked lyvere”’. However, since ll. 77–78 and 79–80 form syntactical pairs, it is only the *wikked lyuere* who *dreded deþ, þe laste mes*. None of these readings is satisfactory. The literal meaning ‘last meal’ (i.e. of the condemned) makes simple sense here.

82 *counsayle*] here possibly ‘Privy Council’, as it is the king who is given advice.

88 John Gower expressed a similar sentiment in his poetic address to Henry IV: ‘Ffor of bataille the final ende is pes’ (Wright, 1861, p. 6). *bygynneþ*] Robbins (1959, p. 42): *begynneþ*.

91 Proverbial. See Whiting, C 446, ‘The more cost the less avail’.

98 *comon*] Kail and Robbins (1959, p. 42): *comoun*. Robbins (1959, p. 269) comments: ‘comoun profit] a stock phrase, frequently found in manuals of devotion and in wills, for *pro bono publico*’.

99 The pivotal role here assigned to the common people finds expression again in XII.143–44.

101–102 The subject of the lord’s recognition of his tenants merely as rent payers reappears in XIII.43–44,52.

103 Adopts the punctuation of *MED* s.v. *erren v.*(1). Robbins (1959, p. 42) places the comma between *pore* and *comons*, taking *pore* as a noun, which slightly changes the meaning of the line.

111 Cf. IX.143 and XIII.111, *God dop batayle and not 3e*.

113 St. (15). For a discussion of the internal discord and the resulting attacks from abroad see Kail (p. xiii). See also XII (5) on the same topic.

113–14 See Matt. 8:12, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation’. Cf. Mark 3:24 and Luke 11:17.

118 *stres*] The harvest or the thatch of houses, or both.

125 The line is meant to fit into the overall theme of stanzas 16 and 17: God’s absolute dominion over man and his world (especially ll. 131–32). He owns it all, and in due course it must all return to Him. God is, in other words, man’s heir. The key to that thought is found in ll. 123–24, *Wipouten heire dyep no man, / God is chieflord of toun and pyle*. The MS text of l. 125 (so without *here*) turns the meaning round: God makes man his heir, which does not make sense in the present context. Insertion of *here* (=MnE ‘their’) before *heire* puts the meaning right again: ‘God over time makes many people their heir’. When they die they return to Him as his rightful inheritance. The assumed omission of *here* in the MS is a plausible one: the copyist overlooked *here* because of its near identity with the following word *heire*. *MED* is aware of the interpretation difficulty that the MS version of l. 125 presents. S.v. *reles* (n.(2.)) sub 3. it quotes l. 126 not in combination with the preceding l. 125, but with l. 124, *God is chieflord of toun and pyle ... ffor god ressayueþ eche reles*. The natural combination would have been with l. 125 (with the conjectured insertion of *here*), not only because it would have made logical sense, but especially because the author throughout his Poems was used to express his thought-units in two-line phrases.

131–32 Cf. XIII.51, *þe puple is goddis and no3t 3oures*.

136 *endeles*] Kail has *endeless*, apparently misled by the peculiar shape of the following *p* in the manuscript.

139 For the biblical reference to *swerd of vengeance* see I.84. The same phrase occurs in V.39.

140 'Written apparently in support of the statute *De Haeretico Comburendo* passed in 1401' (Robbins, 1959, p. 270).

145 Robbins (1959, p. 270) comments: 'chery fayre] A frequent symbol for the transitoriness of life'.

146 *þynges*] refers to the 'quality' or 'appearance' of the cherry as well as of the people mentioned in ll. 147–49.

150 *les*] *MED* s.v. *les*(*se n.*(1) sub 1.b(a) opts for the figurative sense 'control/power'. Kail chooses the literal meaning 'lace', 'snare', hence: 'Draws you into his snare', i.e. brings you under his control. Dean glosses 'untruth'(?), from *li(e)*, 'a lie'.

162 Line lacking in MS, conjecturally ending with **blame*.

IV

LERNE SAY WELE, SAY LITEL, OR SAY NOȝT

nothing

SUMMARY

Greed brings neither material nor moral reward, nor does refraining from theft out of fear bring heavenly rewards. What matters is a truly virtuous life, no matter what persistent scandalmongers may say. Antagonists you have enough already, so you had better provide for your friends and neighbours.

Unnecessary self-accusations only detract from your reputation, whilst uncalled-for self-praise puts your trustworthiness in doubt. What is wise? It is the poor man who puts the rich man wise to the world, certainly not the misinformation and blandishments of flatterers. So the lord should provide for the poor, rather than favouring self-serving courtiers. In the end, good sense will prevail, and the ruler will take his responsibilities seriously. He will send the flatterers and their indiscretions packing, in favour of discreet and trustworthy servants.

The church should have the courage to put a stop to the current widespread loose living and evil practices that will otherwise put the country to waste. The unrepentant sinner goes to hell, where earthly riches will not help him.

Rich and poor must live by God's commandments: do no wrong, do not quarrel, do as you would that men should do to you. It is the peacemakers who are God's children.

TEXT

(1)

As þe see doþ ebbe and flowe, So fareþ þe world hyder and þedere.	<i>hither; thither</i>
3 Aȝen þe wynd they sayle and rowe, To gadre worldys gooddis to gedere.	<i>gather</i>
At þe last it goþ, y wot not whyder,	<i>know; where</i>
6 As ende of web out of slay, And hem self stoden so slydere, How it is wiþ hym y kan not say. ¹	<i>piece of woven fabric; weaving reed Whilst; they themselves; precariously them</i>

¹ Ll. 1–8: i.e. People exert themselves on the high seas of life to gather worldly goods. In the end their possessions come to nothing. Whether they can keep their [moral] footing in those treacherous conditions is anybody's guess

(2)

- 9 Sum man dar not be þef for drede; *a thief; fear*
 His trouþe is vice, and no vertue. *honesty*
 In heuene he nys not worþi mede, *reward*
- 12 Þat cloþes trouþe in falsed hewe. *Who; [of] falsehood; guise (n.)*
 Maugre his teep he is trewe.²
 Stoken in presoun as best fro stray,
- 15 Here wikked wille groweþ newe;
 Þey thenke more þan þey say.

(3)

- Men may not staunche a comoun noys, *put an end to; widespread; rumours*
- 18 Noþer for loue ne for awe. *According as; general; opinion*
 After men lyue is comoun voys,
 In wrongwys dede or ryȝt lawe.
- 21 Who doþ hem pyne, who doþ hem pawe, *blandishes/flatters (see note)*
 Eche on telle oþer, child and may. *woman/maid*
 Tho that to vertues drawe, *Those; seek*
- 24 Hem thar not recche what [men] say. *need (v.); care (v.)*

(4)

- Tak fro þi foo, and ȝeue þi frende;
 Tak not fro thy frend, to ȝeue þi foo:
- 27 Þy frend wole holde þe vnhende; *unkind*
 Pow haddest on enemy, þan hast þou two.
 Man, be war er þou do so;
- 30 To greue the he wol assay. *harm (v.); try*
 When þyn enemys wexen mo, *become more numerous*
 Litol worchipe of þe say. *praise (n.); about you*

(5)

- 33 Oo prouerbe loke ȝe preue, *One; demonstrate in practice*
 ȝe þat wole to resoun bende:
 Look what neyȝebore most may greue; *Consider/keep in mind*
- 36 By al way make hym þi frende. *By all means*
 Þan wole þyn enemys fro þe wende, *leave you alone*
 Here owen þouȝt wol hem afflay. *[change of] mind; discomfit*
- 39 Be out of daunger of the fende, *power; devil*
 And recche neuere what men say. *care nothing about*

² Ll. 13–15: *Against his (i.e. sum man) own natural inclination he remains law-abiding. Their wicked disposition, locked in [the] prison [of their minds], like beasts kept from straying, increases in intensity*

(6)

To synge or preche generale
 42 Werkys of vices for to blame,
 Summe tak to hem speciale,³
 And say: felow, þou dost vs blame.
 45 Pere he accuseþ his owen name;⁴
 All þat hym se, knowe it may,
 He can not hele his owen shame;
 48 And so alle folk wole say.

*it may [well be so]
 conceal*

(7)

3if men speke of Goddis wille,
 To preyse werkys of vertue,
 51 A good man wole holde hym stille,
 And lete as he hem neuere knewe,
 And noþer chaunge hyde ne hewe,⁵
 54 For vaynglory wolde hem betray.
 Who is fals and who is trewe:
 After þey lyue, alle folk wole say.

*behave as if
 skin; complexion*

(8)

Thou3 a man holynes preche,
 He shetep no3t, but bent his bowe.⁶
 But he lyue as he teche,
 60 He nys not trusty for to trowe.
 For suche seed he doþ sowe
 In stones, in thornes and in clay,
 63 The same he schal repe and mowe;
 So he is worthy, folk wole say.⁷

Unless

To that extent; deserving

(9)

A lord of hym self hap no wyt,
 66 He knoweþ wele, but no wo;
 Of pore men he mot haue hit,
 Knowelechyng of frend and fo.
 69 He is wys that can do so,
 And wel twynnen hem o tway.

*is not wise to the world
 well-being; misery
 must
 Recognizing who is*

distinguish; one from the other

³ Some take it as applying to them personally

⁴ He thereby impugns his own reputation

⁵ Nor will he change [his behaviour] in any respect

⁶ Although he bends his bow, he does not shoot (i.e. he does not substantiate his words)

⁷ That will be the measure of his worth, people will say

In sykernes may he go,
 72 And recche neuere what men say. *Confidently; move about/go his way
 care (v.)*

(10)

Gloseres maken mony lesynges —⁸
 Al to sone men hem leue[] — *Flatterers; tell; lies
 distance themselves from them*
 75 Boþe to lordys and to kynges,
 Þat boþe partye ofte greue[].
 Wolde lordis seche repreue, *Which; injure/cause discomfort
 [I] would; rebuke/censure*
 78 Glosers shuld not go so gay,
 Ne not so hardy for to meue *[Because]; move around; carefree
 bold; utter*
 Suche wordes as they say.

(11)

81 Thou3 prestes prechyng hem avyse, *warn*
 Or mynstrallis synge in song now,
 A glosere wole a lord askuse, *raise their voice*
 84 “Sire, þey synge or preche of gow”. *excuse [himself]*
 Þe lord vnderstondeþ not how *[in praise] of you*
 Þe fals[e] glosere hym bitray.
 87 Wolde he make þo wordis avowe,⁹ *affirm*
 He wolde auyse hym eft to say. *again*

(12)

Many can stomble at a stre,¹⁰ *straw (i.e. a trifle)*
 90 Þey nyl not snapere at a style, *[But]; stumble over*
 And graunte to purpos nay and 3ee, *agree; appropriately*
 Þou3 his þou3t be þens a myle. *away*
 93 Whan falsed lawheþ he forgeþ gyle,
 Half in malice is his play. *falsehood; laughs; plans (v.); foul play*
 Wiþ wysdom who so voydeþ that wyle, *avoids; trickery*
 96 He is wys, alle folk wole say.

(13)

Thou3 men in erþe trouþe hyde,
 On halle roof he wole be sayn. *it (i.e. trouþe); seen*
 99 In botme of see he nyl not byde, *remain*

⁸ Ll. 73–77: *People soon distance themselves from flatterers, / Who are frequent liars / To lords and kings, / Which they both often resent*

⁹ Ll. 87–88: *[On the contrary] he (i.e. the lord) would [rather] make him (i.e. the gloser) affirm those words, [even] command him to repeat them*

¹⁰ Ll. 89–91: i.e. Many people have scruples over some insignificant make-believe, but think nothing of major deceit, and agree, as the occasion demands, with yes or no

But shewe in market, on the playn. *make his appearance; openly*
 And þou3 trouþe a while be slayn, *suppressed*
 102 And doluen depe vnder clay, *buried*
 3ut he wole ryse to lyue agayn,
 And al the sothe he wole say.

(14)

105 Many callen conscience fleschly willis, *inclinations of the flesh*
 And nelen non oþere counseil craue; *seek*
 But soule of reson is gostly skillis, *[endowed with] reason; spiritual; faculty*
 108 Ðat conscience shal hem deme or saue.¹¹
 Fleschely wille is fendes knaue, *the devil's slave*
 Out of reson, out of stray. *[morally] astray*
 111 As they disserue þey shal haue, *deserve*
 For so doþ þe gospel say.

(15)

Falshed wolde trouþes tunge tey3e *tie*
 114 For trewe wordis þat he haþ spoken; *Because of*
 God biddeþ vengeaunce hi3e, *to come quickly*
 And helpe trouþe be wel wroken.
 117 For trouþe lippes ar faste stoken, *tightly locked*
 And false mede haþ þe kay. *bribery; key*
 Whan vengeaunce haþ look broken, *lock*
 120 Pan trouþe shal al þe soþ say. *truth*

(16)

Sumtyme men halwed the holyday, *Once; observed; holy day*
 Now holiday is turned to glotonye.
 123 Sumtyme men vsed honest play, *decent*
 And now it is turned to vilonye.
 And paramour is turned to lecherye – *If; passion*
 126 Sumtyme was loue of good fay – *[there] was; faith*
 And shameles haunted so comounly, *shameless [people] (i.e. prostitutes); visited (pt. ppl.)*
 Vnneþe þey recche what men say. *Hardly*

(17)

129 Summe men sowe here seed in skornes,¹² *contempt/scorn*
 Ofte on oþere mennys londes;

¹¹ Ll. 105–108: i.e. Many people allow their moral sense, with the exclusion of any other yardstick, to be guided by their fleshly desires, but it is the soul, capable of reason, which is the moral yardstick that will decide whether he will be doomed or saved

¹² *Some people spread evil with scornful contempt*

- Summe on stones, summe on thornes,
 132 Summe on hi3e way, summe on sondes. *sandy soil*
 He þat wel vnderstonde,
 Amende while he mende may, *Amend*
 135 Make hym clene and wasche his hondes,
 And recche neuere what men say.

(18)

- Thou3 holy chirche shulde fawtes mende,
 138 Summe put hem of for mede, *put right what is wrong*
 And summe wiþ maystri3e hem defende, *put .. off; them (i.e. fawtes); money*
 That holy chirche stant of hem drede. *[so] forcefully; defend [themselves]*
 141 Þo þat rechelesly sowe here sede, *is afraid of*
 Here lond of vertues ligge ful lay. *Those*
 Þe holy chirche þe corn shuld wede; *Their [own]; lies fallow*
 144 For cowardis þey dar not say. *clear of weeds*
[But]; speak out

(19)

- Gloseres that wiþ lordis bene, *keep company with*
 Pey thryue faste þou3 þey come late,¹³ *prosper*
 147 For þey wole a lord to wene *persuade; to think*
 Þat he is beloued, ther men hym hate, *although*
 And wiþ his frendis make debate, *[persuade him] to quarrel*
 150 Of pore puple pyke here pray. *steal; property*
 Of alle degre, of eche astate,
 After þey lyue, alle folk wole say. *[They will be judged] according as*

(20)

- Fro Goddis sy3t who may stele *eyes; conceal*
 Word or werk, þe lest[e] þou3t. *every*
 Þe comoun voys nyl not hele, *Popular sentiment; cover up*
 156 But loue or hate as werk is wrou3t,
 For soþnes neuere hernes sou3t.¹⁴ *truth; hiding places*
 Who secheþ wel, he may assay: *find out*
 159 The good[e] lyuere neuere rou3t *cared*
 Of his werkis what men say.

(21)

- Of alle degre, of eche astate,
 162 After desert þe name haþ prys. *According to; is esteemed*
 Þat lord his owen worschip doþ hate, *reputation; regards with contempt*

¹³ Rise quickly [in his favour], even if they have newly arrived

¹⁴ I.e. Truth will out

- Pat 3eueþ anoper his offys – *appointed task*
 165 For in astate grace lys – *high office; a good reputation*
 And wilfully wast it away. *it (i.e. his offys)*
 Who is fool, who is wys,
 168 After þey lyue, alle folk wole say.

(22)

- A glosere is gredey ay to craue;¹⁵ *overeager; constantly; ask*
 3eue hym nothyng, þou3 he bede.
 171 A lord þat wole his worschip saue,
 Lerne not at a glosere to don his dede. *Teach; as he does*
 3eue to vertuous men þat haue nede,
 174 Þat to God wole for þe pray.
 Þe pore mannys erande God doþ spede; *activity; favours*
 God wil not here what glosere wole say.

(23)

- 177 Alle þe þou3tes ben but wast *Nota* *pointless*
 Wiþ oute contemplacioun. *meditation*
 Fro heritage of heuene is born o hast *driven; speedily*
 180 Shrifte wiþoute contricioun.¹⁶ *Confession*
 And werkys wiþ oute discrecioun. *moral discernment*
 Þat 3ifte pleseþ not God to pay,
 183 Ne preyer wiþ oute deuocioun;
 God nyl not here what þey say.

(24)

- Sum tyme, and a worschip felle *In former days; if; honour; befell*
 186 To a lorde, in batayle, by Goddis grace,
 3if a glosere wolde telle *boast about it*
 Among folk, byfore his face,
 189 Þe lord wolde bidde hym voyde þe place. *to leave*
 Pou corayest fauel, and stelest his hay.¹⁷ *curry favour; steal; hay (n.)*
 Of alle degre, of eche astate,
 192 After þey lyue, alle folk wole say.

(25)

- A cheunteyn may fy3te o day, *commander*
 Þe victorye wiþ hym stande;
 195 For synne God mon tak it away,

¹⁵ *A flatterer is an importunate beggar*

¹⁶ Ll. 179–80: *Who confesses his sins without contrition / Is denied the kingdom of heaven as his inheritance*

¹⁷ *You flatter [your master] and undeservedly appropriate the praise due to him*

And put His swerde in enemys hande.
Vertues make free, vices make bonde.

- 198 To day is quyk, to morwe is fay.
Dat knew hym self, he wolde wonde
Any good of him self ?wolde say.

*[one is] alive: fated to die
refrain from*

(26)

- 201 What a glosere here or see,
Dou3 it shulde to shame falle,
He knoweþ in chambre preuytee,
204 Telleþ his felow in þe halle;
And felow to felow, tyl þey knowe alle,
Fro toun to toun, in alle contray.
207 The glosere þe comoun voyce hit calle,
For non shulde knowe who first dede say.

*Even if; [somebody's] disgrace; result in
It comes to his knowledge*

(27)

- A good man doþ a lord gret ese;
210 Dat is a trewe officere,
Dat wel can serue a lord to plese,
Passe not þe boundes of his powere;
213 In preuyte, vnwetand, he may come nere.
Be handles and stele noppyng away;
Be blynd of ey3e and deaf of here;
216 Be dombe of mouth and noppyng say.

*is of great benefit
servant (in the house)/official (at court)*

*does not exceed
without anyone's knowledge; near [to him]
handless (i.e. not a thief)
hearing*

(28)

- I wolde suche a statute were,
And þer vpon set a payne,
219 What soget wolde make his souereyn swere
Dat he tolde in counseil layne.¹⁸
Oft glosere makeþ lordis fayne,
222 Passe þe boundes of here play.
Al þat trouþe haþ herde and sayne,
Alle tymes nys not soþ to say.

*law [of the land]
with respect to that; penalty
That; compel
confidence; remain silent [about]
happy
(But); game
seen
proper/fit*

(29)

- 225 When al þe world is þurgh sou3t,
In his best tyme is worst to trest.
Pis world is a fayre nou3t,
228 A fals lemman, þat change lest.
His last ende is had y wist,

*closely examined
should be distrusted most
pretty worthless
lover; likes
vain regret (litt.: had I known)*

¹⁸ *That he would keep secret what he was told in confidence*

When deþ haþ þy lyues kay. *key*
 231 Litel while he mon be myst, *not long*
 So þe executours wol say. *executors* (i.e. of the will)

(30)

They rekene his richesse what it amountes,
 234 Ete and drynke, synge ‘hay 3ol hay’, (litt.: ‘Hey, shout “Health!”’)
 Þe while þe fendis his synnes countes, *devils*
 And bryng to hym þe countertayl; *reckoning* (i.e. for payment)
 237 Wiþ hard paynes hym assaile. *afflict*
 Wiþ berkande fendis brou3t to bay, *By; barking*
 What helpeþ his riches or wys counsaile? *legal counsel*
 240 Hym self his owen tale shal say. *account; must; state*

(31)

God made oo lawe for eche astate, *one; all*
 Riche and pore in al degre; *of every social station*
 243 Do no wrong ne [no] debate, *quarrel* (v.)
 But as þou wolde men dede by þe.
 For God hym self þis wrot He,
 246 Betok to Moyses in His lay. *entrusted; law*
 Be Goddis childre in charyte,
 As God doþ in þe gospelle say.

NOTES

title Louis (1993, p. 2980) renders the title as ‘As þe see doþ ebbe and flowe’.

1 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 111, ‘To ebb and flow like the sea’.

6 *slay*] A weaving reed which clamps into the beater of a weaving loom, keeping warp threads correctly spaced and packing the web threads into place.

13 Proverbial. See Whiting, T 406, ‘Maugre (In spite of) one’s teeth’.

21 Quoting this line, *MED* defines *pauen* (v.) as ‘?To touch or strike (sb.) with the paw’, literally copying *OED*. However, *OED* s.v. *paw* (v.) gives 1611 as the year of first occurrence of *pauen* carrying this (possible) meaning. In the present context it is plausible that *doþ hem pawe* carries the opposite meaning of *doþ hem pyne*, so ‘caresses/strokes/pets him’, hence ‘blandishes/flatters him’.

38 *afflay*] from *afleien*, ‘put to flight’ (*MED* s.v. *afleien* (v.)). Kail’s interpretation ‘afflict’ is perhaps induced by the double *f*.

58 Proverbial. See Whiting, B 481, ‘To bend one’s bow but shoot not’.

61,63 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 542, ‘As one sows so shall he reap’. Cf. XIX.21–22, *For suche seed as þou dost sowe, / Perof shall þyn heruest be*.

74 *leue*] MS *leues*, but the rhyme scheme demands *-e*, the usual plural ending in the manuscript.

76 *greue*] MS *greues*. See the note to l. 74.

82 On the role of *mynstrallis* in giving advice to lords, see Scattergood (1971, p. 15).

- 84 *gow*] Kail glosses ‘gull’ (MnE ‘dupe’), apparently supposing a pun on ‘3ow’, but *OED* gives the 17th century as the earliest occurrence of *gow*=gull. *MED* has only *gulle* (a. 1450) for ‘gull’, making no mention of *gow* as a possible variant form. A contextually more plausible interpretation is ‘[in praise] of you’.
- 89 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 823, ‘To stumble at a straw’.
- 91 Kail has *graunte purpos*, which *MED* s.v. *graunten* (*v.*) sub 2.(b) renders as ‘agree to a proposition’, quoting this line as Kail has it. However, the manuscript has *graunte to purpos*. *MED* s.v. *purpose* (*n.*) sub 3.(b) gives *to purpose* as ‘to the purpose, appropriate’, namely with a *nay and 3ee*. A similar expression occurs in II.28: *And fede hem forth with nay and 3ee*.
- 97,102–104 Proverbial. See Whiting, E 23, ‘The earth will discover secrets’.
- 105–110 Cf. Rom. 8:1–13.
- 111 See Matt. 16:27, ‘For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works’. Cf. Ezek. 7:3; 8:27; 33:20; 36:19; Rev. 2:23.
- 141 *rechelesly*] Kail *recchelesly*. Cf. VII.62, *Here landis of vertue laye don ly3e*.
- 157 Proverbial. See Whiting, T 512, ‘Truth seeks no hems (corners)’.
- 162 A similar sentiment is found in VI.58, *After þy dede resceyue thy name*.
- 163 *worschip*] Kail *worship*.
- 198 Proverbial. See Whiting, T 351, ‘Today alive, tomorrow dead’.
- 200 *?wolde*] The manuscript reading makes for faulty syntax, where *to* instead of *wolde* would make sense.
- 240 See Alford (1988) for the legal implications of this line, quoted s.v. *tale*.
- 243 *no*] Insertion follows Kail.
- 244 Cf. Matt. 7:12, ‘Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets’.
- 247 Cf. Matt. 5:9, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Children of God’. Also, Luke 6:35.

V
WYT AND WILLE

SUMMARY

The title admirably epitomizes the poem's main theme: the struggle within the human soul between the urgings of the spirit of God (*wit*), and man's self-willed, worldly inclinations (*wille*).

The full force of the Triune God is at work through man's *wit* to guide his life in all its human aspects. Because man will harm his soul and fall from God's grace if he allows himself to be guided by his *wille*. This struggle becomes manifest in all aspects of human life.

Wille prevails in bad counsellors, spiritually blind themselves and despoilers of everything that is good in the country. Equally, the realm is led to ruin by people swayed by personal feud and greed. They will all of them meet with God's vengeance.

If *wit* is to prevail, you, the rulers of the land, must rule fittingly, wisely, evenhandedly. And you had better not presume upon your wealth or health; it may all come to nothing without warning. Use the *wit* God has given you to make the right choice between vice and virtue, so that you may live in God's grace.

TEXT

(1)

Man, be war of wikkid counsaile,	<i>counsel</i>
He wol the lede in wayes slidre;	<i>slippery</i>
3 In day of batayle he wol þe faile,	
And make þi goode men to shidre.	<i>tremble</i>
Ri3t as hay þey mon widre,	<i>Just; must wither</i>
6 As blades of gres his seed doþ spille.	<i>grass; is squandered</i>
Gostly blynd goþ, and not neuere whidre,	<i>[He]; spiritually; walks; knows not; whither</i>
Pat leueþ wit, and worchþ by wille. ¹	

(2)

9 Whoso wist what tresoure	<i>If one realized</i>
He haþ þat worcheþ by wit.	

¹ *Who abandons [spiritual] wisdom, and acts according to his worldly inclinations*

- De Fader of heuene is gouernoure,
 12 De Holigost, þe Sone wiþ hit.
 In oo Godhede alle þre are knyht,
 Non departe fro oþer nylle.
 15 In eche mannys herte alle þre þey syt,
 Pat makeþ wit lord aboute his wille.

*controls everything**united**Not one; will be separated**reside*

(3)

- Whoso wyste what wille harmes
 18 Pat willefully fro wyt wendes;
 Fro þe Fader of heuene his soule he charmes,
 Fro grace of þe Holygost hym blendes.
 21 Fro angels pere, soget to fendes,²
 Pat nyl not mende, but ay don ylle.
 Gostely and bodily hym self he shendes,
 24 Pat leueþ wyt and worcheþ by wille.

*turns away**attracts [away]**blinds**equals (n.); subject; devils**mend [his evil ways]; again and again**does harm*

(4)

- In kyngdom, what makeþ debate,
 Riche and pore both anoyþed?
 27 3ong counseil, and preuey hate.
 And syngulere profit ys aspiþed,
 Hiþe and lowe men abyþed;
 30 Echon wayte oþer for to kille.
 Pat kyngdom mot nede be striþed,
 That leueþ wit and worcheþ by wille.

*causes strife**[causes to] feel offended**Immature; secret**If; personal; sought**oppressed**seeks**inevitably; destroyed*

(5)

- 33 That leueþ trouþe and falshed vse,
 And lyue not after Goddis sawe,
 Suche folk God doþ despuse,
 36 Rebelle and ryse aþen his lawe.
 Po puple that stondes of God non awe,
 But robbe and reue, coffres to fylle,
 39 De swerde of vengeaunce on hem is drawe,
 Pat leueþ wit and worcheþ by wille.

*practise**word**despises**[Who]**in awe of**plunder*

(6)

- That ouer puple han gouernaunce,
 42 Loke how Goddis lawe 3e vse,
 Whom 3e refuse and whiche auaunce,
 For Goddis loue or 3oure owen seruyce,

*authority**consider; apply**reject; accept*

² From [being] the equal of angels, he becomes subjugated to devils

- 45 Whiche is þe charge 3ow auyse. *duty; decide [for] yourself*
 Let eche man serue his charge in skylle, *perform; duty; fittingly*
 And 3oure werkis preue 3ow wyse.
- 48 Let wit be lord aboute thy wylle.
- (7)
- Be not to crowele in þy wele, *cruell/pitiless; prosperity*
 Pou nost how sone þou my3t haue lesse. *do not know*
- 51 Be not to sykere of þyne hele,
 Pou no[s]t how sone falle in sykennesse.
 Deþ claymeþ eche man for hesse, *himself*
- 54 And sodeyn deþ no dayes selle. *[has] for sale/available*
 Siþ no man is in sykernesse,
 Be redy euere at Goddis wille.
- (8)
- 57 And on þy strengþe be not to bold, *too confident*
 Ne skorne no pore, ne feble of elde. *[who is] feeble; old age*
 For lyue longe 3e mon be old, *life*
- 60 In feblenes to hoke and helde, *bend; stoop*
 In cowardys 3oure corage kelde. *loses ardour*
 But 3e had help, 3e shuld spille. *If not; die*
- 63 3e þat heuene blisse wole welde, *enjoy*
 Let wit be lord aboute 3oure wille.
- (9)
- God hap lent 3ow discrecioun *ability to distinguish*
- 66 Boþe of wele and of woo,
 Werkis of deuocioun,
 Vyces, vertues, frend and foo.
- 69 Siþ 3e can part hem wel o two, *distinguish; between*
 Let vyces on 3ow brynge no bille. *charge (n.)*
 Pe weye of grace and 3e wol go, *God's grace; if*
- 72 Let wyt be lord aboute 3oure wille.

NOTES

title Louis (1993, p. 2981) renders the title as 'Conflict of will and wit'.

4 *MED* s.v. *shoderen* (*v.*) adds 'error' to the form *shidre*, but in this line it is probably an instance of rhyming usage.

14 Refers to the dogma of the indivisibility of the Trinity.

15 Cf. Gower's *Confessio Amantis* I, 322, 'Thi will is thi principal, And hath the lordschipe of thi witt', as quoted in *OED* s.v. *will* n.(1) sub 6.a.

27 Kail ends the line with a comma instead of a full stop, but this makes for both muddled syntax and sense in ll. 27–29.

39 For the biblical reference to *swerd of vengeaunce* see I.84. The same phrase occurs in III.39.

52 *no[s]t* MS *not* (which Kail follows). *Not* only occurs in the first and third person singular and in the plural.

53–54 Quoted in *MED* s.v. *sodein adv.*, virtually the only quoted instance of the use of *sodein* as an adverb. *MED* follows Kail's reading, where *sodein* is followed by a comma, making it an adverb referring back to *claymep* in l. 53. In the present reading, without the comma, *sodein* is an adjective to *dep*, which makes simple sense of l. 54 as a co-ordinate clause. Cf also VIII.101, '*And sodeyn dep nyl no man kenne*'.

54 Cf. Whiting, D 92, 'Death gives no warning', and D 96, 'Death is certain but not the time'.

61 *kelde*] Rhyme-spelling for *kolde(p)* = 3sg. pres. of *kolden*.

VI
TO LYF BODYLY IS PERYLOUS

SUMMARY

The poem is in the satirical mode, to the extent that it is meant to expose human vices. On the surface, the writer professes to approve as sound moral values the failings he really wishes to expose as abuses. The poem has a touch of humour, but overall the mood is angry. The combination – the ironic reversal of a surface statement, plus the severe tone of voice – properly puts the poem in the category of ‘militant irony’ as Northrop Frye defined it.¹

The poem is a catalogue of recommended misdeeds. Despise, malign, harm and antagonize everybody you value: your best friends, laymen or clergy. Be offensive and obnoxious to them. Scandalize your most valued servants and maids in the worst possible manner. Mix with all the wrong people, fools and undesirables alike. Lead a dissolute life, steal and lie whenever you can, and never give a just verdict. Avoid all acts of charity. Broadcast all these misdeeds, making a public joke of your reputation, and everybody will know and dread you as an immoral and unscrupulous person.

TEXT

(1)

Lerne bodyly to lyue.	
By seruaunt non hyre þou pay.	<i>[his] wages</i>
3 Pore ne riche no 3iftes 3eue,	
But take and gedre al þat þou may.	
Þou3 it come wiþ wrong, say not nay,	<i>in an unlawful manner</i>
6 But falsely loke þou swere and li3e.	<i>see to it that; lie</i>
Þe pore man is the riches pray.	
Lerne þus to lyue bodilye.	<i>after the flesh/as a sinful person</i>

(2)

9 There market beteres gadere in þrong,	<i>idlers; come together</i>
Loke þat company þou lede.	<i>lead</i>
Stalworþly mayntene wrong;	<i>Resolutely; persist in; wrongdoing</i>
12 So may þou wynne moche mede.	<i>Thus</i>

¹ Frye (1957, p. 224).

- To reue fro pore take non hede.
 Do as þou þou3t neuere to dye.
 15 Say noþer pater noster ne crede.
 Lyue þou in ese bodyly. *steal; think nothing of*
- (3)
- Rechelesly þe gouerne, *conduct yourself*
 18 Day and ny3t; walke late
 At cokes hostry and tauerne. *cook's inn (i.e. serving hot food)*
 Pou3 þat no man opere hate, *Although*
 21 Go not er þou make debate. *pick a quarrel*
 To lewed, lettred and clergie, *laymen; clerics*
 Do no reuerence to non astate; *have no respect for*
 24 Þan men wole drede þe bodylye.
- (4)
- The þat þe good wolde teche, *Those who; goodness/virtue*
 Rebuke hem, and foule despise;
 27 Byd hem go to þe chirche and preche.
 Folwe fooles, and fle fro wyse.
 Zeue no doom in ri3t assyse. *administer; justice; proper manner*
 30 Fle fro trouþe and þou hym spy[e]. *if*
 Loke þou be proudest in alle gyse, *most arrogant; affairs*
 Þan men wole preyse þe bodylye.
- (5)
- 33 Loke þou haue sorwe sad, *are deeply distressed*
 Whan þou seest folk haue welfare.
 Loke þou be mery and glad,
 36 Whan þou wost folk haue sorwe and care. *know*
 Fede non hungry, ne cloþe no bare; *the naked*
 Lete herberweles þerout ly; *homeless; out in the open*
 39 Visite no syke, and prisoners spare. *decline to visit*
 Loue þy seluen þus bodyly.
- (6)
- 3if þy man be a good seruaunt
 42 Þat þe were loþ to forgo, *lose*
 Stele þyn owen good fro his hand,
 Bere on hym he stal it so. *Accuse him*
 45 Bryng[e] hym in presoun tho, *then*
 Longe there for to lye,
 Til he be fayn, for sorwe and wo, *delighted*
 48 To swere to serue þe bodylye.

(7)

- And 3if þou haue a damysele
 Pat serueþ þe wel, of trewe lynage, *sound; family stock*
 51 Fonde to make here wombe to swelle, *Try*
 Make no fors of no maryage. *effort*
 And 3if she grucche wiþ þe to rage, *resists; have sexual intercourse*
 54 And alway fro the wole wrye, *keep out of your way*
 Bete here, and 3eue here non oþer wage, *Beat*
 And lyue in lustes bodylye.

(8)

- 57 Thus make þe byknowe. *known*
 After þy dede resceyue thy name. *In keeping with; earn; reputation*
 So shal þyn horn oft blowe,
 60 And hunte after his owen shame.²
 3e þou3 þou be of feble fame, *Even though; have a bad reputation*
 Bere good visage; þy nou3t aspye,³ *evil conduct; discover*
 63 Make þerof but iape and game, *Just make a jokelfun of it*
 In fleschly lustis bodylye.

(9)

- At masse, at matyns, rule 3ow so: *behave*
 66 Leue dewe deuocioun 3ow byhynde. *proper*
 Speke no good of frend ne foo;
 Lete non skorneles fro 3ow wende; *without your contempt/ridicule; go*
 69 Loke no man be thy frende.
 Lete no man thryue, but do hem nye; *injury*
 Kepe hem pore, and to þe bende: *bow*
 72 Þen wole þey drede þe bodylye.

NOTES

title Robbins (1975, p. 1420) has ‘Do evil and be feared—a satire’. *lyff* Kail adds a footnote: ‘read “lyue,” *vb.*’, possibly on the analogy of *lyue* in the text of the poem, but spelling inconsistencies within one poem are not uncommon (e.g. in VII, where the title has *know* and l. 8 reads *knowe*).

29 The opposite conduct is urged in I.164, *Do bothe parties euene assise*, in III.12–13, *Do euene lawe to foolle and wyse, / Set mesure in euene assise*, and in IX.65,67, *That haldeþ questes or assise ... / Lette no lawe fro ri3t gyse*.

30 *spye*] MS *spyse*.

² Ll. 59–60: *Thus your horn* (i.e. deeds) *will often blow* (i.e. make known what you are up to), / *And chase* (i.e. follow around) *your own shame*

³ *Keep a cheerful face; make no secret of your evil conduct*

45 *Brynge*] MS *bryng*, but all imperatives in this poem end in *-e*.

57–60 By contrast with these lines see Matt. 6:2, ‘When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men’.

58 A similar sentiment is found in IV.162, *After desert þe name hap prys*.

59 *oft*] Kail *oft[e]*, possibly because of the exclusive spelling *ofte* elsewhere in the Poems.

61 *3e*] Kail adds a comma: *3e, þou3 thou be etc.*, interpreting *3e* as ‘yeah/yes’ (excl.). The present edition follows the punctuation of this line as quoted in *MED* (so without a comma) s.v. *ye (adv.)* sub 2.c., glossed as ‘even though’.

62 Kail has a comma after *visage*, but since the first half of the line refers back to the preceding line, whilst the second half refers to the following line, a semicolon is appropriate. *MED* is inconsistent in its quotes of this line. S.v. *nought* sub (a) a semicolon is used, as in the present reading, but with a comma s.v. *ther-of* sub 9.(c) and s.v. *jape* sub 3.(b), as in Kail. In the quotation s.v. *jape* *MED* silently amends the manuscript reading *þy nou3t* to *þyn ou3t*, which does not make sense.

VII

MAN, KNOW THY SELF, AND LERNE TO DYE

SUMMARY

Man is finite and must prepare in his lifetime for the salvation of his soul. Unbelievers, those who do not believe in God, hell or heaven, will lose their soul. Make the right choices now, and do not leave your salvation till the moment of your death, when riches, counsellors and flatterers cannot help you, and when God will judge you according to your deeds. So live a virtuous life, assist the poor in their needs (but not the greedy poor), do not boast of any small acts of charity, and keep a careful account of any wrongdoings.

If you have given a good example in your lifetime, exhort other people to follow you on the road to heaven, or if not, warn them not to follow you on the way to your damnation. In man's final reckoning with God, he should not presume upon God's mercy if he has not repented his wasted talents and made a full confession.

Man has been given the capacity to distinguish between good and evil and has a free will, so in the end he must make his own choice, to be saved or damned.

TEXT

(1)

Mannys soule is sotyl and queynt,	<i>strange; mysterious</i>
Shal neuere ende þou3 he dede gynne.	<i>had a beginning</i>
3 The flesch is fals[e], frele and feynt;	<i>wicked; deceiving</i>
Þe world alone wolde wynne,	<i>gain (v.)</i>
Is wormes mete and sek of synne,	<i>corrupted by; sin</i>
6 He nys neuere filt of glotonye,	<i>sated; appetite [for worldly pursuits]</i>
His cloþyng is a dedly skynne.	<i>covering</i>
Man, knowe þy self, and lerne to dye.	

(2)

9 Lerne to dye, and go to skole,	(i.e. train yourself [with that in mind])
Sip þou fro deþ may not fle.	<i>As; cannot</i>
Lete not þy werkys preue þe fool.	<i>stupid (i.e. unfit to learn)</i>
12 Whan deþ wole assaile þe,	

Sende warnestor to þy soule to be;
 By vices fro þy vertues triþe.
 15 3e sette 3oure soule in kynges gre,
 Þat lerneþ wisely for to diþe.

*provisions; [continue] to exist
 separate
 place (v.); position*

(3)

Eche man in certayn is to dye,
 18 At domesday stonde in drede.
 Þere al þe worldis tresorye
 May not bye thy lyf for mede,
 21 No wys counseil þat dede þe lede,
 Ne glosere wiþ his flaterye;
 Non may helpe oþer at nede:
 24 For thy, man, wysely lerne to dye.

*at any price
 guided*

(4)

What may thy richesse þe auayle,
 Whan þou art to deþe dryue.
 27 Thy wynd is layd, þou mayst not sayle,
 Pou3 þou lete out bonet and ryue.
 Loke to vertues þou þe 3yue,
 30 Er tombe be held to þe liþe;
 For he þat gostly wel doþ lyue,
 He lerneþ wysely for to diþe.

*calmed; sail forth
 shake out; bonnet; reef
 devote yourself
 held [out]; dead body
 spiritually*

(5)

33 Two skilles y wole telle, nota
 Why eche man shuld repreue oþeres synne:
 And he wist hym self shuld go to helle,
 36 Counseyle no mo to come þer ynne:
 Þe mo brondes, þe hattere brynne,
 Incresyng of his maladye.
 39 Here nys no charite, 3ut shal he wynne
 To lasse his pyne after he dye.

*reasons
 condemn
 If; knew
 Advise
 fuel; hotter; flames
 Adding to; suffering
 In this life; [act of] charity; succeed
 mitigate*

(6)

And 3if he wiste to heuene to go,
 42 His soule be saued in sikirnes,
 He shulde counseile alle folk do so,
 Saue here soules, and do not mys;
 45 Nou3t for here profyt, but al for his,
 His owen ioye for to hyþe:
 Þe mo soules, þe more blis.
 48 Þenk hereon, and lerne to dyþe.

for a certainty

fail

heighten

(7)

- Thy wikked werkis in þy 3owthe, *youth*
 Seke hem wel tylle þou hem fynde,
 51 And al þy tyme ri3t til nowþe, *now*
 Loke þat fardel þou vnbynde, *pack [of sins]*
 And shewe it wel wiþ shrift[e] wynde, *give evidence of it; oral confession*
 54 No fende spot vppon the spy3e, *devil; blemish (n.); detect*
 And haue repentaunce in mynde.
 On þis manere lerne to dy3e.

(8)

- 57 While man doþ synne in werkis wylde, *wanton*
 Al þat tyme he nys but ded.
 He nys not counted as fool ne childe,
 60 But as a man can good and qued. *can [distinguish between]; wickedness*
 For his soule he telyeþ no bred;¹ *works [to obtain]*
 Here landis of vertue laye don ly3e. *Its (i.e. of the soul); lie untilled*
 63 Do comaundementis þat God bed,
 Þan lernest þou wysely to dy3e.

(9)

- Pore, nedy, and gredey, þat not ne haue,
 66 In Goddis name 3eue þat asken ou3t. *ask for nothing*
 Pore, nedy, and not gredey, þat no3t ne craue,
 3eue hem þou3 þey ne aske nou3t.
 69 And nedeles gredey þyn almes sou3t, *If*
 3eue hem noþyng þou3 þey crye: *beg [for it]*
 Þere nys no nede, 3ifte haþ no mede. *merit*
 72 Suche almesdede mon neuere dye. *come to an end*

(10)

- What argument may beter preue *evidence*
 Why men ben bent to don o mys? *wrong*
 75 Not but defaute of byleue. *lack of*
 I trowe þey wene no God þer nys, *think*
 Ne helle pyne, ne heuene blys,
 78 Paradis ne purgatorie,
 Or elles – a noþer heresy þere is – *else*
 As a best wiþoute soule to die. *animal*

¹ I.e. He does nothing to provide food for his soul; no virtue grows thereon

(11)

- 81 Man of his owen nou3ten haue; *nothing*
 Al is Goddis, and he it lent.
 Perof God wole rekenyng craue, *require*
 84 How þou it wan, held, and spent; *got*
 By leste þou3t, and what it ment;
 Troupe, and lesyng þou dede li3e; *the lies you told*
 87 And 3et þy soule is Goddis rent: *God's property rented to you*
 So quyte þat wel, lerne to di3e. *repay what is due*

(12)

- Whanne þou dest þyn almesdede,
 90 Crie God mercie it is so lite. *Beg; little*
 To counte þy richesse þou my3t haue drede, *be concerned*
 In partye of payment so litel quyte. *As partial (re)payment; paid*
 93 Pou3 þou do mys, God nyl not flyte *reproach*
 Ne þrete þe ones ne twy3e, *once nor twice (i.e. not at all)*
 Body and soule he can smyte. *[Although]; destroy*
 96 Man, drede God, so lerne to dy3e.

(13)

- Man, synne not in ouerhope, *presumptuously*
 Pou wynnest not Goddis mercy wiþ fi3t; *striving [for it]*
 99 Hit wolde brynge þe into wanhope
 To wene no mercy þou haue ne my3t. *think; expect*
 Goddis mercy is medled wiþ his ry3t, *blended; justice*
 102 And fro ry3t God nyl not ply3e; *waive*
 After þe dede þe doom is dy3t. *In accordance with; judgement; passed*
 Man, knowe þis wile er þou dy3e. *well (adv.)*

(14)

- 105 Eche dedly synne is a dedly knyf;
 Why loue men þanne so ofte to synne.
 Eche vertue is a plastre of lyf. *remedy/curative for*
 108 He haþ fre wille: lese or wynne. *lose*
 To salue 3oure sores now begynne;
 Þe Holygost 3oure grace gy3e. *ease the pain of*
 111 Siþ body and soule mon parte o twynne, *may guide*
 To saue þy soule, lerne to dy3e. *from each other*

(15)

- Truste not al to oþere men
 114 In almes dede ne preyere, *Just because of [their]*
 For state of soule can no man kenne,

For þey ben alle in Goddis daungere,
 117 In helle pyne or blisse clere.
 Repentaunce mot mercy byʒe.
 While þy dede is in þy powere,
 120 Be þyn awen frend er þou dyʒe.

power
splendour
earn

NOTES

3 *fals[e]* MS *fals*.

4 Cf. Mark 8:36, 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

53 *shrift[e]* MS *shrift*.

62 Cf. IV.142, *Here lond of vertues ligge ful lay*, where *here* refers to heedless persons.

81 St. (11): Similarly worded in I (5) and VIII (1).

97 St. (13): Similarly worded in I (17) and XX (26).

98 Cf. IX.13, *To stryue wiþ God we may not wynne*.

VIII
A GOOD MAKYNGE OF IOUR DELAYE

SUMMARY

As its main theme, the poem stands out against abuses among the secular clergy. In particular, it inveighs against those who take tithes without looking after the souls of their parishioners, and against beneficed clergymen who are only interested in increasing their temporal possessions.¹

The poem starts off with a general warning: man is answerable for his own deeds, and whether he deserves the bliss of heaven or the pains of hell is entirely his own responsibility. In stanza (3) the focus shifts to a specific target: the parish priest who neglects his divinely ordained duty of caring for the souls of his parishioners, but takes their tithes all the same. With an authoritative ‘*y 3ow forbede*’ the writer then raises his aim and attacks the ecclesiastics of high rank who devote their time to the pursuit of wealth, status and leisure, hiring others to perform their religious duties, and presumptuously relying on God’s mercy and Christ’s redeeming death. Pious words without the deeds to match, in the end will be judged accordingly. So make haste to make good, before unheralded death overtakes you.

TEXT

(1)

Man, haue hit in þy þou3t
Of what matere þou maked is.
3 God made the of nou3t, *nothing*
Al þat þou hast, þou wost, is his. *know*
Wheþer hast þou serued pyne or blisse, *deserved*
6 Seche þy werkis and assaye. *Investigate; test [their quality]*
Py getyng, þy holdyng, þy spendyng mysse, *wrongly*
Fro blisse wolde make Iour delaye.²

(2)

9 To þy bed whan þou shalt go,
Penk what þou hast don sen morn,
Wheþer serued blisse or wo, *[you] have deserved*

¹ See section 3.4.1.3 on the ills within the church, criticized by both orthodox churchmen and Wyclif.

² I.e. Will postpone the day of [eternal] happiness (see also the note to the title)

- 12 Or Goddis name in ydel sworn, *taken in vain*
 Or ellys fals witness born, *given*
 Letted pore men of here pray, *Deprived; what is theirs*
 15 In þy defaut here goodis lorn: *fault; possessions; lost*
 Pou shalt answeere here iour delay.³

(3)

- Who takeþ cure, he bereþ charge *accepts a benefice; has the task*
 18 By Goddis lawe þe folk to preche.
 Pey make conscience large,⁴ *nota*
 Take tye and nyl not teche. *tithes; teach [the Gospel]*
 21 Crist his postles tau3t in speche
 Fro worldis worschip to wende away, *from; esteem; turn away*
 Gostly and bodyly þe soules to leche, *redeem (spiritually)/heal (physically)*
 24 And bad hem: make no iour delay. *(i.e. seek no excuses for delaying)*

(4)

- Worldis good nes not holichirche; *[meant for] the clergy*
 Richesse and worschep y 3ow forbede. *renown*
 27 Þe folkis cherche, in hem 3e worche, *people*
 Here noo oper to don þy dede. *hire; perform; task*
 Þat doþ þe dede is worþy mede. *work; reward*
 30 Pou mayst not serue two lordis to pay; *cannot; satisfy/please*
 Þat on he serueþ in loue and drede, *The one; fear*
 Þat opere he serueþ wiþ iour delay.⁵

(5)

- 33 Who ressayueþ benefys for richesse and ese, *benefice; physical comfort*
 To haue his lyuyng in sykernes, *For a secure livelihood*
 Raþere þan serue God to plese,
 36 He ressayueþ hit o mys. *falsely/wickedly*
 For ri3t as Iudas dede kys *just*
 Ihesus, and after hym betray, *afterwards*
 39 So þey gyle þe soules fro blisse,⁶
 Of Goddis seruyce make iour delay. *In; you waste time*

(6)

- Many seyn: God is so wys, *say*

³ *You will here (i.e. in this life) be answerable for wasting your time*

⁴ Ll. 19–20: *They make their conscience large, / If they take tithes and are not prepared to teach [the Gospel]*

⁵ *Serving the other is wasting your time*

⁶ Ll. 39–40: *So they defraud the souls (i.e. of their parishioners) of [heavenly] bliss. / You waste time [that should be spent] in God's service*

- 42 Endeles ful of alle mercy;
 God nyl not, þou3 y be nys, *does not want; foolishly*
 Lese me þurgh myn owen foly. *Damn*
- 45 So dere God mankynde dede bye; *dearly; bought* (i.e. through Jesus' redeeming death)
 What greueþ God, þou3 y go gay.⁷ *why; merrily*
 Þat synnen in ouerhope, in helle mon ly3e; *presumptuous/unjustified hope; must; lie*
- 48 Þereof mon be non iour delay. *cannot; postponement*

(7)

- Many wole say, þat leue vneueene:⁸ *believe; insecurely*
 And it were soþ þat clerkis telle, *If; true; clergy*
- 51 Fewe folkes shulde come in heuene, *[That]*
 So fele as shulde renne hedlyng to helle. *As many*
 Hit were hard þere to dwelle,
- 54 Wiþ helle houndis stonde to bay. *By; cornered*
 Synne mon be punshed, as saip þe gospelle; *must be punished*
 Þerof mon be no iour delay.

(8)

- 57 That ouere puple haue astate, *authority*
 Colege or eny oþer degre,⁹
 Mayntene no debate *Do not engage in disputes*
- 60 For synguler profyt of temperalte. *personal; worldly goods*
 3oure rule is groundid in charyte,
 As li3t of lanterne to lede þe way.
- 63 To gouerne þe puple in vnyte,
 God bad hem: make no iour delay.

(9)

- Beter is litel ry3twys wonne, *in a just manner; obtained*
- 66 Þereof among þe pore to dele,
 Þan ouermochte geten wiþ synne, *too much* (i.e. more than is one's due)
 Wiþouten desert take pore mennys wele, *undeservedly; possessions*
- 69 And helpe not þe soule to hele, *heal*
 But crye in pyne weylaway. *woe!*
 Þe soules þe curatours wole apele¹⁰
- 72 To answeere of here iour delay. *their*

⁷ *Why should God be angry, if I go [my way] merrily?*

⁸ *Many people of shaky belief may say*

⁹ *In a college* (i.e. the resident body of ecclesiastics of a collegiate [= endowed] church), *or any other body in the Church hierarchy*

¹⁰ *The souls will challenge the curates* (having 'cure' [= spiritual charge] of souls) *[before God's throne]*

(10)

- Why ressayue 3e worschipe þat 3e haue. *[the] esteem*
 For 3oure vertues or for 3oure vys.
 75 And 3e ful worschip saue, *If; true; [wish to] preserve*
 In word and werk 3e mot be wys.
 Þis worldly wysdom is gostly nys, *folly*
 78 Whan werk acordeþ not wiþ wordis 3e say.
 Heuene blys, and þis worldis delys,
 Þat on wil make iour delay. *One of the two*

(11)

- 81 Thow may not knowe a cristen man *cannot*
 Þou3 þou here hym say his crede, *hear*
 Þe ten comaundementis tan *profess*
 84 And speke, and do not þe dede, *but*
 Ne serue God in loue and drede,
 Is heretyk, out of fay. *outside the faith*
 87 After 3oure werkis ressayue þy mede;
 Þerof mon be no iour delay. *In accordance with; reward must*

(12)

- Thou3 worldis richesse on þe falle, *befall you*
 90 And wolde gon bytween God and þe,
 Suffre not þy soule be þralle; *Do not permit; slave*
 Þenk, God bou3t it to make þe fre.
 93 Þou3 þy mayster a tyraunt be,
 Fro Goddis lawe wolde say nay, *Against; no*
 Do as [thapostle] Poule bad þe:
 96 Abyde, and suffre wiþ iour delay. *Endure your lot*

(13)

- Man, þou wost wel þou shalt dy3e;
 What deþ, ne where, þou nost whenne. *do not know*
 99 And synnes wolde þy soule ny3e, *afflict*
 Ay more and more [in] rerage we renne,¹¹ *debt; incur*
 And sodeyn deþ nyl no man kenne. *unexpected*
 102 I rede we drede domesday;
 Be euene wiþ world er 3e gon henne, *urge [you]*
 For þere schal be no iour delay.¹² *Get square; from here postponement*

¹¹ I.e. We become ever more indebted [to God]

¹² I.e. of Judgement Day

NOTES

- title** In Robbins (1975, p. 1420) as ‘Evils in the church’. *A good makynge*] A ‘making good’, i.e. ‘atonement’ (see *MED* s.v. *god* ((*adj.*) sub 4.a)), punning on *makynge*, ‘poem’ (see *MED* s.v. *making(e)* (*ger.*)). *delaye*] ‘postponement’; *Iour delaye*, legal term: ‘day set for a postponed trial’ (see *MED* s.v. *delaye* (*n.*) sub 3.c); *maken delaye*, ‘procrastinate, tarry, waste time’ (ibid. sub 1.c), and [4] sub. 5.b.
- 1–2 Similarly worded in XXII.1–2, *Thenke hertely in þy þou3t / Of what matere þou dede bygynne*.
- 1–3 See Ps. 103:14, ‘For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust’, and Gen. 3:19, ‘... for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return’.
- 2 *is*] A Northern form of ON origin.¹³
- 3–7 I (5) and VII.81–84 express the same thoughts about man’s stewardship of and accountability for everything God gave him.
- 12 See Ex. 20:7 and Deut. 5:11, ‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thou God in vain’.
- 13 *fals*] Kail emends *fals[e]*, which is neither rhythmically nor syntactically required. *MED* s.v. *idel* (*n.*) sub 1.b(c) quotes the line as in the manuscript.
- 18 Kail’s punctuation (a comma after *lawe*, no punctuation mark after *preche*) confuses what are otherwise two straightforward statements: a curate under God’s law is obliged to teach his flock, and: he takes much upon his conscience if he fails to do so, but does take the people’s tithes.
- 21 Kail erroneously has ‘[nota]’ in the margin.
- 25–26 See Matt. 6:19, ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth’.
- 29 See Luke 10:7, ‘The labourer is worthy of his hire’.
- 30 See Matt. 6:24 and Luke 16:13, ‘No man/servant can serve two masters’.
- 33 *benefys*] ‘an ecclesiastical living, an office or position in the Church’ (*MED* s.v. *benefice* (*n.*)).
- 41 St. (6) reflects the message in Rom. 6:1–2, ‘Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid’.
- 49 *vneue[n]*, ‘improperly’, following Kail, although neither *MED* s.v. *uneven(e)* (*adv.*) nor *OED* s.v. *uneven* (*adv.*) give this meaning.
- 55 See Rom. 6:23, ‘For the wages of sin is death’.
- 58 For the MnE rendering of *colege* and *degre*, see also *MED* s.v. *college* (*n.*) sub 1 and s.v. *degre* (*n.*) sub 8.
- 62 See Ps. 119: 105, ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path’.
- 77 See 1 Cor. 1:20, ‘... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?’, and 1 Cor. 3:19, ‘For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God’.
- 81 St. (11) reiterates the warning in VIII (15) against the hypocrite whose outward show of piety is not in keeping with the true state of his soul.
- 81–82 For the Creed and the Ten Commandments as topics of religious instruction, see the note to IX.39.
- 83–84 See James 1:22, ‘But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...’, and Rom. 2:13, ‘For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified’.
- 87 See Rom. 2:6, ‘[God] will render to every man according to his deeds’, and Isa. 59:18, ‘According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies’. Cf. I.140 and VI.58.

¹³ See Wright & Wright (1972, p. 203).

92 *it*] i.e. *py soule*; see also l. 45 above, for the doctrine of God's mercy to man through the redeeming death of Jesus Christ.

95 *thapostle*] not in the manuscript. The insertion follows Kail, to preserve the consistent four-beat rhythm. *Seynte* is, however, equally possible. *MED* quotes the line s.v. *nai* (*interj.*) without insertion.

96 See Eph. 6:5, 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ'.

97–98 Proverbial. See Whiting, D 96, 'Death is certain, but not the time'. See also XXII.57, *Denke þou shalt dye, and nost whenne*.

100 [*in*] *MED* is in two minds about it: *rennen in rerage*, 'go into debt, be found in arrears', s.v. *rerage* (*n.*) sub 1.(a), but *rennen rerage*, 'incur debt', s.v. *rennen* (*v.*(1)) sub 26.(a). See Alford (1988) for the legal implications of the term s.v. *arverage*, where this line is quoted.

IX

WITH GOD OF LOUE AND PES 3E TRETE

come to terms

SUMMARY

In preparation for Easter Communion, the shining high point of the Christian year, the faithful are exhorted to do penance by making a sincerely contrite and full confession, holding back nothing, including money clipping, tampering with weights and measures, or any such sins. If you pretend remorse and keep sinning, the writer warns, you do so on pain of forfeiting your soul to the devil.

It is all too easy to backslide, but stay firm, so that you can take communion (i.e. on Easter Sunday) with a clear conscience. Be prepared: judges must refrain from discriminating the poor. Servants must be paid their due. The fighting man, if he must, should fight only in a just cause, exercising charity towards rebels. The clergy, finally, is bound to hear full confessions and practice all Acts of Charity. They must not leave the cure of the souls, their divinely ordained charge, to somebody else. The parish priest should himself tend his flock: teach the ignorant, help the needy, lead them on the path to heaven. If you are all thus reconciled with God, you may receive Him in Holy Communion.

Again: do as the priest has taught you: be repentant, do penance, seek God and remain with Him and His angels always.

TEXT

(1)

This holy tyme make 3ow clene,
Burnysche bry3t 3oure soules blake.
3 Fro 3ow to God let þe prest be mene,
To do penaunce, and synnes forsake.
Wiþ almes dede amendes make,
6 And repentaunce may grace gete.
In goode werkis wysely wake,
And wiþ God of pes y rede 3e trete.

*until they shine; black
intermediary*

almsgiving

be diligent

I urge you

(2)

9 Wiþ soulis bri3t in God 3e glade
As shynyng angels out of synne,
In worschip of hym þat 3ow made,

*rejoice
free from*

- 12 To knowe 3oure seluen now bygynne.
 To stryue wiþ God we may not wynne,
 Boþe body and soule he can bete.
- 15 Ihesus is broþer of oure kynne;
 For þy wiþ God of [pes] 3e trete.

*rebel against; cannot
 get the better of
 our kin (i.e. mankind)
 Therefore*

(3)

- Ofte han we treted wiþ God o trewe,
 18 And sayde no more synne we wolde;
 And euery 3eere we breke it newe.
 Thre dayes no trewes wiþ hym nele holde
- 21 Synne to bay; many a folde
 On soules helle houndes slete.
 Er 3e come þere, 3onge and olde,
- 24 Wiþ God of pes y rede 3e trete.

negotiated; about [a] truce

anew

at bay; time

attack

(i.e. in hell)

(4)

- Trete while 3e haue 3oure hele,
 For sodeyn dep [maþ] stomblen as blynde.¹
- 27 Þe grettere lordschipe of worldis wele,²
 Þe more in þraldom hit doþ hem bynde.
 Man, þenke þy lyf is but a wynde;
- 30 When þat is blowen, þou art for3ete.
 Holde couenaunt to God, and be kynde.
 For þy wiþ God of pes 3e trete.

health

[makes you] stumble

slavery

breath of wind

has died down

keep [your] pact; honour it

(5)

- 33 3e mot hit shewe, wiþ herte sorwe,
 To a prest, and weel 3ow shryue;
 No3t turne a3en þerto to morwe,³
- 36 But þenke be good al thy lyue.
 Wiþ Goddis sonde looke 3e not stryue,
 Ne derne mornyng counterfete.
- 39 Rekne wysely alle þy wittes fyue,
 Wiþ God of pes when 3e do trete.

make known (i.e. your sin[s]); contrition

properly; make confession

revert

be intent on

against; command; fight

deceptively; remorse; pretend

Answer for [what you have done with]; senses

(6)

- The synnes þat wolde þy soule apayre,
 42 To a prest shewe þe cas.
 Loke þat þou not paynte hit fayre,

would; damage

case

favourably

¹ I.e. Sudden death takes you unawares

² *The more of the world's wealth they have under their control*

³ *Do not return to it (i.e. your unrepentant state) tomorrow*

But shewe it forþ ri3t ful as it was.

- 45 Þat shame is mede for þy trespas; *[your] just deserts*
 For synne þat wolde þy soule þrete *threaten*
 Aske mercy and seche gras, *[God's] grace*
 48 Wiþ God of pes when 3e trete.

(7)

- That clippen money, þey haue þe curs *excommunication*
 Foure tymes in þe 3ere,
 51 Here wa3tes þat þey waye þe wors; *weights; because*
 3erde or elne, fer or nere, *Yardstick; ell measure; far or near (i.e. anywhere)*
 Wheþer þey selle good chep or dere,
 54 But þey þe fullē mesure mete, *Except*
 Hit semeþ in skornyng þat it were⁴
 Wiþ God of pes whan 3e trete.

(8)

- 57 Auyse 3ow þat leden lawe: *Bethink yourself; apply*
 For drede of lordschipe or for mede *[higher] authority; bribery*
 Holde no pore men in awe, *do not overawe*
 60 To storble here ry3t or lette here nede. *To take away; deprive from*
 Hit bryngēþ þe soule in gret drede *peril*
 A3ens Goddis lawe to plete. *plead/largue*
 63 Þe rolles ari3t y red 3e rede, *[court] rolls; carefully; urge you*
 Wiþ God of pes when 3e trete.

(9)

- That haldeþ questes or assise, *inquests; court of assize*
 66 Þat takeþ or 3eueþ fee or hire, *charges; pays; fee; wages*
 Lette not lawe fro ri3t gyse, *Do not prevent; practice*
 Ne mayntene wrongis as master and sire. *Nor; practise*
 69 Þey may be ferd for helle fire, *fear (v.)*
 To ete here ney3ebores at here mete;⁵
 Þat lyf shal not euere more dure. *This [present] life; last (v.)*
 72 For þy wiþ God of pes 3e trete. *Therefore*

(10)

- 3e þat comeþ to Goddis bord, *table (i.e. the altar at communion)*
 Resceyueþ hym in clene lyf; *Receive; guiltless*
 75 Holde non old synnes in hord, *Keep ... hidden*
 For þanne begynneþ a newe stryf; *conflict*

⁴ *It would seem that it was in contempt [of God's command]*

⁵ *I.e. Who ruin their neighbours by abusing their hospitality*

For he to God haþ drawn his knyf, *against*
 78 Þat þenkeþ in skorne þere wolde hym etc.⁶ *Who; with scorn [in his heart]; eat (i.e. the host)*
 Here be war, man and wyf, *Here [on earth]*
 Horde no synne when 3e trete. *(i.e. with God)*

(11)

81 Man, 3if þou haue tan a fal, *made*
 Ryse vp, and no more slyde. *fall (i.e. into sin)*
 O prest, þy shrifte schewe it al,⁷ *reveal*
 84 But hyde no synne in hord by syde. *on the side (i.e. unmentioned)*
 In venyale synne longe to byde, *venial (i.e. minor); remain*
 Makeþ dedly synnes to growe grete. *Causes*
 87 Wiþ 3oure werkis 3e mot chyde *By means of; argue*
 Wiþ God of pes when 3e trete.

(12)

Seuene syþes on þe day, *times*
 90 Men seyn, the ri3twis man doþ falle. *say; righteous*
 Þanne he þat falleþ in synnes alway, *Then*
 How shulde he rekene þo synnes alle, *count/answer for*
 93 But he wrot hem, grette and smalle, *Unless; has written them down*
 Summe at shrifte he schulde for3ete. *[In case]*
 He shulde þe prest þe oftere calle,
 96 Wiþ God of pes when 3e trete.

(13)

Foure acountes þou shalt 3elde: *nota* *pay/render*
 – God made þe lyk to his ymage –
 99 How þou it wan, how þou it helde,
 How þou it spendid in wast outrage. *wasteful excess*
 Forfete not heuene, þyn heritage;
 102 Among seyntes þy soule sete.⁸
 Rekene ere þou renne in rerage, *Count [your money]; debt*
 And wiþ God of pes 3e trete.

(14)

105 Holy writ biddeþ God sende vengeaunce *urges; may impose*
 To kyngdom þat nele not holde his lawe,
 Wrappe and stryf and alle greuaunce *Anger; hostility; malice*

⁶ Ll. 77–78: *For he has drawn his knife against God, / Who would partake of communion with a scornful heart*

⁷ *O priest, when you hear confession everything must come out*

⁸ *Win a place for your soul among the saints [in heaven]*

- 108 Among prynces and pore men þrawe, *rulers; cause*
 Pat nele not leue Goddis sawe, *accept; commandments*
 Ne counte His gynnyng at o clete. *Regard; creation; as a nail (i.e. worthless)*
 111 To werkis of wysdom by tyme 3e drawe, *in time; turn to*
 And wiþ God of pes 3e trete.

(15)

- Whoso leued þat God were trewe, *trusted; would be faithful*
 114 Ðan wolde þey do þat God hem bede. *commanded*
 Pat mende no mysse, but synne ay newe, *make amends for; again and again*
 Hem lakkeþ alle þe poyntes of þe crede.
 117 Serue God for helle drede, *for fear of hell*
 Lest þy soule falle in chete; *be forfeited (i.e. to the devil)*
 And loue God for heuene mede. *reward*
 120 Wiþ loue and drede wiþ God 3e trete.

(16)

- Pou3 þou take ordre or religeoun, *join the clergy or a religious order*
 Wiþ oute charite þou seruest no mede, *deserve; reward*
 123 3eue drynke to þursty, þat han and mown.⁹
 Clope þe naked, and hungry fede,
 Vysite þe pore and syk þat nede, *need (v.)*
 126 And giltles presoneris loos 3e lete, *loose*
 And burye þe dede, is charite dede. *act*
 Wiþ þes werkis wiþ God 3e trete.

(17)

- 129 Ðere þou hast borwed, quyte þy dette, *Where/If; repay*
 And to þy seruauent þat reson is. *And [pay]; reasonable*
 Loke what degre God haþ þe sette;¹⁰
 132 Quyte hym þy dette, þy soule is his, *what you owe Him*
 And resceyue þy dette: heuene blis. *what is due to you*
 Ðere thar þe noþer swynke ne swete; *need; labour (v.); sweat (v.)*
 135 And ordeyne þe wele, and amende þy mys. *properly manage; [worldly] wealth; misdeeds*
 Ðus wiþ God of pes 3e trete.

(18)

- Caste þe not to couetys, *Be not inclined; greed*
 138 3e þat ry3twys werryours be, *with a just cause*
 But loke where ri3t querel lys; *consider; just; [ground for] dispute*
 Chastise þe rebelle in charite.

⁹ ... *who have* (i.e. 'drynke') *and who can* (i.e. 'drynke')

¹⁰ *Be mindful of the place* (i.e. in society) *God has accorded you*

- 141 Pere God is frend, his foomen fle; *foes*
 3e thar not counte hem at o pete; *need (v.); not a bit (litt. 'count as peat')*
 God doþ batayle and not 3e.
 144 Forthy with God of pes 3e trete.

(19)

- And 3e in batayle haue maystrie, *If*
 And fortune serue, and God 3ow spede, *is with you; helps you*
 147 Thank God þe victorie, *achievement*
 And holde it not 3oure owen dede.
 Serue God in loue and drede, *spoils/booty*
 150 And be not proud of 3oure by3ete. *according to; [may] expect; afterwards*
 After 3oure werkis wayte aftur 3oure mede,¹¹
 And so wiþ God of pes 3e trete.

(20)

- 153 3if a clerk haue þurgh hap *happens to have*
 Cure of soules or bischopriche,¹² *Care*
 He hat not bischop, he hat a by shap: *is called; shepherd/'maker-in-the-manner-of*
 156 Make opere after his werkis like.¹³ *(i.e. He makes etc.)*
 To kepe his shep fro helle tike, *hounds*
 In folde go, amonge hem blete; *sheepfold; bleat*
 159 Saf and sounde brynge hem y lyk, *together, without distinction*
 Bytween God and hem to trete.

(21)

- Benefice of holychirche first was graunted *Living; originally*
 162 For prestis, holy lyf to lede, *allow; to be practised (i.e. sin)*
 Dryue out synne, suffre non be haunted; *To hire; perform his task*
 Here non oper to do his dede.
 165 Þe werkman is worþy his mede
 In felde, in toun and in strete.
 Teche vnwys, helpe hem þat nede, *[the] ignorant; those who*
 168 Byfore God for hem to trete. *them*

(22)

- In wordis þey sayn þey wil do wel,
 Take cure of soules as worthi clerkis,
 171 And resceyue þe charge euery del *accept; in every respect*
 To wasche synful soules serkis. *garments*

¹¹ *According to/Following your deeds you may afterwards expect your reward*

¹² *I.e. Responsibility for the people's spiritual welfare or for a diocese*

¹³ *Shapes others in accordance with his (i.e. the bishop's) works*

Pey preue hem self fooles in werkis,
 174 Wiþ holy water nele no parischen wete. *refuse; wet (v.)*
 Caste away Antecrist merkis, *Throw (imp.)*
 Goþ wiþ God of pes to trette. *[Who] goes*

(23)

177 Now sumwhat y haue 3ow sayd *some things*
 What is salue to 3oure [sore].
 To sau3ten wiþ God, holde 3ow payed,¹⁴ *be reconciled; regard (v.)*
 180 And arraye 3ow wel þerfore *prepare yourself*
 To resceyue God, 3oure soules store, *treasure*
 His body in forme of bred o whete, *outer appearance; wheat*
 183 And kepe hym. So 3e nede no more *hold; Thus*
 Eft of pes wiþ hym to trette. *Afterwards*

(24)

Whan þou hast told al þy greuaunce, *that has grieved [your soul]*
 186 Pan do as þe prest þe tau3te;
 Holde wel þy penaunce;
 Repentaunce, for3ete þat nou3t.
 189 Whan 3e wiþ loue God han lau3t, *caught hold of*
 Neuere fro 3ow hym 3e lete. *let go*
 God brynge 3ow to his angels sau3t, *reconciled/at peace*
 192 Þere neuere nys nede o pes to trette. *Where there is never the need*

NOTES

title Robbins (1975, p. 1420) has 'Evils in the state'.

1 'From the exhortation to do penance (l. 9) it follows that the holy time mentioned in the first line is Easter, the time of shrift and penance' (Kail, p. xv). The reference must be to l. 4, rather than l. 9.

4 I.e. during the forty-day period before Easter (Lent), especially in the last week (Holy Week).

13 Cf. VII.98, *Pou wynnest not Goddis mercy wiþ fi3t.*

14 *OED* s.v. *beat* v.(1) sub 10.a signals the meaning 'to overcome' from early 17th c., with transitory meanings from late 15th c. onwards, but l. 14 demonstrates that *beten* was understood as 'overcome, get the better of' as early as the first quarter of the 15th c., as recognized by *MED* s.v. *beten* v.(1) sub 3.

16 *pes*] Inserted, following Kail.

17 In the *MED* citation s.v. *o* (*prep.*(2)) sub 5.b(a), for *treated* read *treted*.

26 The syntax is difficult. I have assumed that (contracted) *math* is missing before *stomblen*.

29 See Ps.103:15–16, 'As for man, his days are as grass ... For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone' for a comparable meaning, but with 'grass' as the symbol of transitoriness rather than the wind.

31 Kail glosses 'kind' for *kynde*. I have adopted 'obedient' as in *MED* s.v. *kind(e)* (*adj.*) sub 4.(a), as

¹⁴ I.e. By Christ's redeeming death

consequent upon the *couenaunt to God*.

33 *herte*] = *sg. gen.*: ‘of the heart’.

38 *derne*] Kail glosses ‘sad’, which is not given in *MED*. The straightforward meaning in this context, as an adverb to *counterfete*, is ‘deceptively’.

39 For the *wittes fyve* as one of the topics of popular religious instruction, see Bremmer (1987, pp. xxii, xxiii). For other such topics see also the reference to the Seven Deadly Sins (l. 86), the Creed (l. 116), and the Seven Works of Bodily Mercy in St. (16).

49–50 *the curs*] ‘The formula read in churches four times a year, setting forth the various offenses which entailed automatic excommunication of the offender,’ *MED* s.v. *curs* (*n.*) sub 2.(a).

65,67 Moderation and fairness in the administration of justice is expressed in similar terms in I.164, *Do bothe parties euene assise*) and in III.12–13, *Do euene lawe to foolle and wyse, / Set mesure in euene assise*. The – satirical – opposite sentiment is found in VI.29, *3eve no doom in ri3t assyse*.

83–84 Confession, to be valid, has to be complete.

89 Refers to Luke 17:4, ‘And if he (i.e. thy brother) trespass against thee seven times a day etc.’.

93 *But*] *Bot* in the *MED* quotation of this line s.v. *gret* (*adj.*, *adv.* and *n.*) sub 5.(b). A misprint.

97–100 See Matt. 5:8, ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect’; and 2 Tim. 3:17, ‘That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished until all good works’; see also Matt. 19:21.

97 *Foure acountes*] Only three are actually listed: *how pou it wan ... helde ... spendid* (ll. 99–100), cf. VII.84.

98 See Gen. 1:26, ‘And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’.

103 Cf. VIII.100 and the relevant textual note.

105–106 See Ps. 149:6–7, ‘Let ... a two-edged sword [be] in their hand (i.e. of the saints); To execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishment upon the people’. See also Jer. 45–51, about the prophecies regarding the devastation of the heathen peoples.

115 Cf. V.22, *Pat nyl not mende, but ay don ylle*.

117 The same sentiment is expressed in ll. 21–22.

123–28 The Seven Works of Bodily Mercy. See also the note to l. 39 above.

143 Cf. III.111, *Whoso fi3teþ, God doþ þe dede*, and XIII.111, *God doþ batayle, and not 3e*.

155 *by shap*] Carries the double meaning ‘near-in-shape’ (referring to l. 156) and ‘with-the-sheep’ (referring to ll. 157–58).

165 See Luke 10:7, ‘The labourer is worthy of his hire’. See also VIII.29, *Pat doþ þe dede is worþy mede*.

169 *þey*] i.e. the *prestis* of l. 162.

172 See Rev. 7:14, ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’.

175 See Rev. 13:16, ‘And he [i.e. the Beast] causeth all ... to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads’.

178 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 43, ‘Lay salve to your own sore’. *sore*] MS *store*.

182 *forme*] For a discussion of the Wycliffite controversy around the ‘accident’ (the outer appearance) and the ‘substance’ (the essential nature) of bread and wine in the Eucharist, see Hudson (1988, pp. 281–90).

185 Kail glosses ‘grievance’ for *greuauunce*, but the need of penance (l. 187) points at sins that have ‘grieved’ the soul.

191 *sau3t*] ‘longed for’ is also possible (see *MED* s.v. *sechen*, sub 6.(e)), but less likely.

X

A GOOD STERYNG TO HEUENWARDE

guide/guidance

SUMMARY

The opening lines are a stinging condemnation of those who behave as masters instead of stewards of God's creation, collecting advance payment by accumulating wealth in this world, while losing their souls in the process.

What follows is in the poetic tradition of the 'complaint of God to man': Man, I created you perfect, but twice you forfeited everlasting life and bliss, first by trespassing against my commandment in paradise, and again by nailing me on the cross. I suffered the pain you deserve for your sins. You hoard the wealth of the world that is really mine, and do nothing to relieve the poor. You steal, commit adultery, desecrate my church, take my name in vain and neglect your divinely ordained duty to care for the souls. But for my lasting love for you, I all but destroyed mankind and his world in the great flood. Yet you thoughtlessly fell back into sin again. You turn to me only when you are in trouble. You are full of pious, but empty words, making a mockery of my law. I am a merciful God, who does not repay your rejection of me. But if you persist in your evil ways, my wrath will find you. I can annihilate everything and everybody on earth. It is all mine, and I can do with it as I please. It is your deeds that will speak for you, king or beggar, at the last judgement. Again: be faithful stewards of my world and of the poor on it. Do not leave any of the gifts I gave you unused, at your peril.

TEXT

(1)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Many man is loþ to here | |
| Repref of vices and werkis ylle; | <i>Reproof</i> |
| 3 For pride hem þenkeþ hem Goddis pere, | <i>equal</i> |
| Pat welde þis worldis wele at wylle; | <i>control; wealth</i> |
| At a sarmon wil bid a frere: | <i>sermon; [they] will; friar</i> |
| 6 Make it short, or ellys be styлле. | <i>else</i> |
| Hym þat is loþ good to lere, | <i>unwilling</i> |
| He shal, wheþer he wole or nylle. | <i>wants to or not</i> |
| 9 We fareþ as knaue þat takeþ his hyre byfore, | <i>behave; servant; in advance</i> |
| Serue his mayster wel þe worse þefore. | <i>for it</i> |

Richesse and hele makeþ men vnkynde,
 12 Pat Goddis seruyce is out of mynde;
 For graceles and gostly blynde
 Þe flesch distroyeþ soules store.

*wealth; indifferent [to God]
 So that; to God; forgotten
 who lack [God's] grace; spiritually
 treasure*

(2)

15 God seiþ: man, y made þe of nou3t,
 And put the into paradys,
 Of erþely þynges þat y wrou3t
 18 To neme þat neded to þyn eys.
 I lent þe fre wil and þou3t,
 Warnyng of foly, to be wys;
 21 At þe tre of wysdom foly þou sou3t,
 And 3af for an appyl þe most of prys.
 Þe same mouþ þat þe appyl gnewe,
 24 In þat mouþ þe holy croys grewe,
 Wheron y dyed for 3oure gylt.
 Purgh þe herte and þurgh þe mylt
 27 I hadde þe poynt, and 3e þe hylt;
 3oure heritage y bou3t 3ow newe.

*nothing
 created
 what you need; eyes (i.e. judgement)
 tree
 highest; price/prize
 ate from
 grew
 spleen*

(3)

3e þou3te 3e had not ynow:
 30 Euere lastyng lyf and euere more rest;
 3e braken my byddyng, 3e benden a bow,
 3e boten an appyl þat þirled my brest.¹
 33 Wiþ water, for synne, þe world y slow,
 Saue seuene, and Noe þat was my gest.
 My loue to man it was so tow,
 36 Hit lasted forþ and nolde not brest.
 For mannys loue I come fro blisse to pyne.
 Man was so pore, he had not to fyne.
 39 3oure gyltes greued God so sare,
 3oure gyltes on my bak y bare,
 Pat God my fader nolde me not spare
 42 Tyl he had 3euen my lyf for þyne.

*enough
 eternal; life; peace
 commandments
 ate of; pierced
 destroyed
 Except
 strong
 break
 love for mankind
 to pay the fine [for his trespasses]
 pained; grievously
 bore/endured*

(4)

My puple, where greued y 3ow or pyne.
 But ladde 3ow þurgh þe see so rede,
 45 With Aaron and Moyses, myn owen hyne,
 And alle 3oure enemys y drowned to dede.

*grieved; pained
 Didn't I; red
 servants*

¹ I.e. You wounded me by forfeiting paradise, you wounded me again on the cross

- For 3e shuld kepe lawe myne,
 48 In wildernes y made 3oure stede,
 To 3ow y planted myn owen vyne,
 And fourty 3eer fed 3ow wiþ angels brede.
 51 Wiþ loue I dede, 3ow my lawe to teche,
 Bycom a man, to be 3oure soule leche.
 Wiþ a spere 3e shed myn herte blod;
 54 Þe pore 3e harme, and do no good;
 3eue I chastyse, 3e calle me wood.
 And but 3e mende, y wol take wreche.

*In order that
place*

incarnated; healer

If; mad

Unless; mend [your ways]; vengeance

(5)

- 57 Man, hast þou ou3t in mynde
 Þe pyne y suffred wiþ þe Iewes felle.
 3oure soules of derkenes to vnbynde
 60 I suffred deþ and heryed helle.
 Answer me: man, was y kynde.
 Mi3t y do more, canst þou me telle.
 63 A beter frend and þou can fynde,
 Leue me, and go wiþ hym dwelle.
 I do þe wele, why dost me woo.
 66 I am þy frend, þou art my foo.
 Þere y 3eue pes, þou makest debate;
 Þere y loue, þou dost hate,
 69 And stekest me wiþ oute þe 3ate.
 My worldys goodis þou holdest me fro.

*ever think of
cruel*

*free from
harrowed hell
was[n't] I obedient*

if

Where; quarrel (v.)

*put; outside
took away from me*

(6)

- Man, þou dost as a thef
 72 Þat hat holycherche gre;
 Whan men wold take hem wiþ repref,
 Þat to chirche he wole fle.
 75 So doþ man þat is in gref
 Or in syknes: þan calleþ he me.
 And 3ut, man, þou art me so lef,
 78 Wiþ mercy and ruþe y bowe to þe.
 3if y byd þe my lawe to fulfille,
 Pou hauntest þy synne, and wonest þeryn stille.
 81 Pou hatest alle þat loue my name.
 Pou wost þou seruest so gret blame;
 How darst þou byd me, for shame,
 84 To bowe to þe or worche þy wille.

*enjoys the favour of
disgrace*

trouble

*yet; dear to me
compassion; pity*

frequent (v.); live; up to this time

*know; deserve
ask; how shameful!
do your bidding*

(7)

- Man, þou to my lawe art knyht; *bound*
 Why ho[l]dest þou werre agaynes me, *wage war*
 87 My worldis goodis in hord to pyt *store up*
 Fro pore þat þy breþeren be. *[Away] from*
 Art þou not warned by holy writ.
 90 I made and bou3te hem as dere as þe. *them (i.e. the poor)*
 Hit is wanhope goþ byfore 3oure wit.² *vain hope; understanding*
 Ðat 3e hyde, ful bry3t y se. *What; see*
 93 For þe pyne y dede for 3ow dry3e, *suffered*
 3eue þyn herte, wiþ teres of þyn ey3e. *tears*
 Repente sore for þy trespas.
 96 So ly3tly my3t þou come to gras, *easily; grace*
 To heuene, to þat worþy plas, *magnificent; place*
 To by3e to þe on rode gan dy3e. *redeem you; cross; [I] died*

(8)

- 99 Man, how darst þou my lawe preche,
 And telle þe articles of þe fay. *faith (i.e. the Creed)*
 My wit word wiþ þy mouþ teche, *covenant [with you]*
 102 And in þy werkis þou seyst hit nay. *deny it*
 Wiþ theues and wiþ spouse-breche *adulterers*
 Pou delest and rennest ny3t and day. *have dealings and carryings-on*
 105 In pyne þou sechest þyn owen wreche, *suffering; seek; destruction*
 Thow temptest me to be wrappeful ay. *provoke; angry; forever/eternally*
 I mad þe wys and fayre, angels pere, *pure; of an angel; equal (n.)*
 108 Pou makest þe fool, and foul fendis fere.³
 Þy ly3tnes þou spendest in harlotrye, *beauty; waste (v.)*
 Þy strengþe in wrappþe and tyrauntrye, *anger; oppression*
 111 Þy fayrenesse in pryde and lecherye.
 Pou settest at nou3t y bou3t so dere. *do not care at all*

(9)

- To greue me, men þenke it game *cause grief; amusing*
 114 To breke þe lawe þat y þe bed,
 In despyt forswere name⁴ *contempt; swear profanely*
 By woundis y had in handis and hed.
 117 I do þe worschipe, þou dost me shame; *hold in high esteem; disgrace (v.)*
 I 3af þe lyf, þou 3af me ded, *inflicted; death*
 Mirre and galle to drynke wiþ grame. *Myrrh; sorrow*

² *Your ungrounded presumption of salvation takes precedence over your understanding/common sense*

³ *You make a fool of yourself, and consort with evil devils*

⁴ *To insult me by taking my name in vain*

- 120 I 3eue þe my body in fourme of bred.
 3e fare wiþ me as gest his yn doþ borwe,⁵ *lodging*
 Resceyue to day, and put me out to morwe.
- 123 Agayn to synne whan 3e go,
 Shamely 3e put me 3ow fro.
 And 3e desyre I be 3oure foo, *enemy*
- 126 3e gete but wreche and dowble sorwe. *bring; only; [my] vengeance [upon you]*
- (10)
- And 3e defoule my holy place, *And [further]; desecrate/profane*
 Þat turneþ þe chirche out of his gyse: *disrupts; customary rites*
- 129 Holy chirche is spirytualle grace, *divine*
 Þe duwe dette: deuyne seruyse. *obligation duly to be fulfilled*
 Pey calle me as he þat no God was.
- 132 Þat cure of soules don despise,
 Fro hem y wole turne my face,
 And calle hem as fooles out casten fro wyse. *expelled; the wise*
- 135 Þat sellen soules for temperal getyng,
 Pey maken skourges to here owe betyng;⁶ *worldly; gain*
 Here good dayes ben wastyng, *In this life; coming to an end*
- 138 And þey, to helle hastyng
 To be wiþ fendis chastyng, *punishment*
 Fulfille on hem my thretyng. *themselves; threats*
- (11)
- 141 My swerde is fyre þat brynnep bry3t,
 Shal shede þe ri3t fro þe wrong. *separate*
 I brenne sheldis and swerdis in fy3t,
- 144 As whirlewynd y skatre þe fals þrong. *scatter; wicked*
 No kyng shal be saued by his my3t, *power*
 Ne þe geaunt, be he neuere so strong. *giant*
- 147 Þat y am God 3e shal knowe ry3t;
 Nes non bot I, endeles long. *full well*
 3e may not serue two lordis to plese, *for all eternity*
- 150 Fede fatte shep in greceles lese. *grassless; pasture*
 Þat plesen me, 3e holde hem nys; *Who; foolish*
 Þat gyleþ þe world, 3e holde hem wys. *deceive*
- 153 3e may not wynne wiþ 3oure delys,⁷ *achieve; self-indulgence*
 Here and in heuene boþe, 3oure ese. *peace of mind*

⁵ *You treat me as a guest who may use his room just for a time*

⁶ *They make whips with which they will themselves be beaten*

⁷ *Ll. 153–54: Your pleasure-seeking [way of life] will not gain you / Peace of mind, either in this life or in heaven*

(12)

- In this world, to folk ful fele *people; many*
 156 Goddis wordis þis myȝt be:⁸
 Man, þou serued me not in þi wele,
 Why shulde y knowe þi pouerte. *have regard for*
 159 Pou loued me not in þi hele, *when in good health*
 In syknes why shulde y rewe þe. *take pity on you*
 Fro my comaundement, þou dede stele *Against*
 162 Of hem þou serued, fong þy fee. *receive; payment*
 Ȝet o God, þe fader of blysse, *one*
 Þe Holy Gost salueþ soule syknesse. *heals*
 165 Pouȝ we agylte þe godhed, *sin against*
 Mercy moueþ þe manhed, *[God's] forgiveness; changes; mankind*
 For loue of his breþered, *brotherhood*
 168 Ȝeue mercy to mekenesse. *[those who live in] affliction/wretchedness*

(13)

- Ȝif man ligge long in synne,
 And wilfully fleep fro grace, *obstinately/deliberately*
 171 To sharpe my wreche y wole bygynne, *sharpen/increase; retribution*
 Take vengeaunce for his trespas:
 His enemys I wole leten hem ynne,
 174 As bestes in forestes ȝow to chas,
 For drede ȝe shal nowhere wynne,
 But fynde my wrapþe byfore here face. *precedes them (i.e. the enemies)*
 177 I saued Moyses in þe rede see,
 Ionas in whales wombe dayes þre;
 Þre children in þe fyre so rede. *red*
 180 Dauyd slow Golyas to dede.
 Do ȝe þe lawe þat y hem bede,
 And ȝe shal haue þe same degre. *[high] rank/position*

(14)

- 183 Man, I can do þe erþe to shake, *make*
 Wiþ flood and drowtes distroye ȝoure wele.
 I chastise erþe, ȝe sample take; *[as a] warning*
 186 I may sle, ȝeue lyf and hele,
 Fyre and thonder fro heuene make;
 Nes non fro my strokes may stele. *Nobody; blows; can; escape*
 189 At domesday do ȝow alle quake, *tremble [with fear]*
 Whan ȝoure owen werkis wole ȝow apele;
 Panne knaue, beggere, pore broþelyng, *accuse*
good-for-nothing; [any] worthless person

⁸ *May well hold this for God's word*

- 192 May apere wiþ pape and wiþ kyng; *appear [before me]; pope*
 Pere shal non reuerence haue, *nobody; enjoy respect*
 Ne mercy, þou3 þey wolde craue; *beg for it*
- 195 Here dedis shal hem deme or saue;
 Pan alle to me shal 3elde rekenyng. *account [for their deeds]*

(15)

- Man, þe worldis good is myn;
 198 How þou it spende tak good hede.
 Hit is myn, and not þyn,
 No more þan þou hast of nede; *need (v.)*
- 201 Not to fostre þe as a swyn, *stuff yourself*
 Py foule flesche in fylþe to fede, *sinful*
 And leue þe pore in hunger and pyn, *wretched circumstances*
- 204 And fynde hem noþer foode ne wede. *clothing*
 And pore folk on þy defaute dy3e, *If; fault*
 Wiþ diues in pyne þou shalt ly3e. *the rich man; torments (i.e. of hell)*
- 207 For þou shuld 3eue God dede þe sende; *[of what] God provided*
 Tak kep how þou it spende, *Take care*
 For þat leueþ þe byhende *what you leave behind*
- 210 Pow mon rekene or þe aby3e. *consider/assess; before; paying [the penalty] for it*

NOTES

3 *hem*] between *þenkeþ* and *Goddis* omitted by Kail.

14 Cf. IX.181 where the ‘soules store’ is said to be embodied in God. See also Matt. 6:20–21, ‘But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also’. Similarly Luke 12:33–34.

22 *MED* s.v. *yeven* (v.) sub 2a.(c) interprets *3ef... þe most of prys* as ‘gave up the highest prize’, but ‘paid the highest price’ is equally possible. Implied in both interpretations is that man, by eating of the forbidden fruit, forfeited eternal life.

24 According to legend, the wood of the holy cross originated from the tree of life in paradise, a seed of which was placed in Adam’s mouth upon his death by his son Seth. The legend was recorded in 1260 by Jacopo de Voragine, bishop of Genoa, in the *Golden Legend*, a popular collection of the legendary lives of saints.

27 I.e. I, Christ, bought [through my redeeming death on the cross] your heritage [of the kingdom of heaven] in a new covenant [with God, which replaces the Old Testament covenant between God and man that held out the *promise* of the kingdom of heaven].

31 *3e benden a bow*] Punning on ‘you bent a branch’ (to grasp the apple), and ‘you sought a new experience’ (the current meaning). The expression derives from Ps. 11:2, ‘the wicked bend their bow’.

40 See Ps. 35:22, ‘Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee’, and Isa. 53:4, ‘Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows’. The reference is also to Christ carrying the cross (of our

guilt) on his back on the way to Golgotha.

43 St. (4) echoes some of the lamentations in the *Improperia* or the Reproaches of the Passion, sung during the Catholic liturgy of the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday. It laments Israel's ingratitude for being led from their captivity in Egypt as a prefigure of man's ingratitude for being freed from eternal damnation through Christ's redeeming death.

49 See Ps. 80:8, 'Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it'.

50 *angels brede*] The 'manna' of Ex. 16, with which God fed the Israelites in the desert. Dubbed 'angels' food' or 'angels' bread' in 2 Esd. 1:19 and in Wisd. of Sol.16:20. The *panis angelicus* of the Roman Catholic liturgy.

53 *blod*] Kail *blood*.

60 *heryed helle*] The 'harrowing of hell' refers to Christ's descent into hell, between the time of his crucifixion and his resurrection, as also formulated in the Apostles' Creed: 'He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again'. In hell Christ saved the souls of the righteous dead who had been waiting there since the beginning of the world. See also XI.19, *Pe soules he loued he fet fro helle*, and *heryed helle* in XXII.52.

69 Carries the double meaning of 'shut me out from your heart' and 'put me [on the cross] outside the gate (i.e. on Golgotha)'. The latter meaning finds expression in Hebr. 13:12, 'Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate'.

86 *holdest*] MS *hoddest*; Kail emends *holddest*, as also *MED* s.v. *putten* (*v.*) sub 8b.(a), but a scribal error of *d* for *l* is the more straightforward possibility.

89 The Bible indeed abounds with warnings against the rich who oppress the poor. The Old Testament in particular in numerous places threatens dire punishment. For instance Ezek. 22:29, 31, 'The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yes, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God'.

98 The keystone of the Christian faith. Christ's redeeming death is referred to in many places in the New Testament, especially in Paul's epistles. See for instance Eph. 1:7, 'In whom (i.e. Jesus Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace'.

149 See Matt. 6:24, 'No man can serve two masters'. Cf. VIII.30.

190 *apele*] A technical legal term, listed by Alford (1988, p. 7), who quotes this line.

197–200 Good stewardship is one of the poet's preoccupations. Cf. I.37–38, VII (11), XIV.74 and XVII.54.

206 Refers to the fate of the rich man in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–25), also known as 'Dives and Pauper'. Mentioned again in XXIV.382.

209 *MED* quotes this line s.v. *byhende* sub 4.b with the general meaning 'for that leaves you at a disadvantage', an illogical inference in the context of the last four lines of the poem, which warn the rich man to keep account of what he has still not shared with the poor of everything God granted him.

XI

GOD AND MAN BEN MADE ATTE ON

SUMMARY

An Easter eulogy on the reunion of God with man through Christ's redeeming death and resurrection, which set man free from Adam's original sin. Freedom was also achieved for the souls of the righteous dead in hell by Christ's 'harrowing of hell', uniting them with the angels in heaven. Thirdly, unity between man and man can be achieved by man himself, if sought in mutual love, humility and peace. A fourth source of unity with God lies within the heart of man, if only he will open his heart to God's permanent offer of reconciliation. And, finally, oneness of God with man becomes possible if and when tearful repentance meets with God's mercy.

God, the all-powerful creator, gave man stewardship of the world, promising heaven for good governance, but hell after misrule. Man has a free will, so the choice is his. He all too soon tired of Christ's love, allowing him too short a time on earth. But the joy of Easter has come, and God and man are once more united. Love me and obey my laws, God says, and you will prosper and have nothing to fear from your enemies. I do this just for my love of you, asking nothing in return.

TEXT

(1)

Glade in God, þis solempne fest	<i>holy feast</i> (i.e. Easter)
Now, Alleluya, is vnloken.	<i>has arrived</i>
3 Þenkeþ how God, lest and mest,	<i>humblest; greatest</i>
On oure enemys hap vs wroken,	
Ðat hadde vs in cheynes stoken,	<i>put</i>
6 Wrappid in synnes many on.	<i>a one</i>
Þe fendis are flowen, þe cheynes are broken,	<i>have fled</i>
And God and man are wel at on.	

(2)

9 First whan God wiþ man was wroþ,	<i>angry</i>
Ðat Adam forfeþed for his vvs,	<i>Whom</i>
Man to angels was so loþ,	<i>hateful</i>
12 Þey dreuen hym out of paradys.	

To amende here foly, God so wys,
Wif fals Iewes let hym slon.

atone for
By; allowed himself

15 Here raunsom was his blod o prys;¹
So was God and man at on.

(3)

And 3it a ferly more byfelle,

marvel

18 Pat God dede þurgh his grete my3t:
Ðe soules he loued he fet fro helle
To paradys, among his angels bry3t.

came and took

21 Hem þou3te þat was a wonder sy3t,
Among here frendes brynge here foon.
Al on wrong God made ri3t;

They; splendid
their; enemies
Everything

24 So made God angels and man at on.

(4)

Ðe þridde saw3tenyng mowe 3e proue:²
When posteles stryuen for hi3e degre,

reconciliation; prove [in practice]
Quarrelled/argued about; position

27 God spak to hem a word of loue,
And seyde: pes wif 3ow be,
Elles 3e may not folwe me,

Otherwise

30 But 3e wille in my gates gon.
So God bond man in charite,
Byddis man and man be wel at on.

Unless; enter into
Thus; imposed an obligation
[He] urges

(5)

33 The ferþe saw3tenyng God vs tau3te,
Ðat best may kepe eche in state:
Let body and soule to gydre be sau3te,
36 Kepe God wifyn 3oure ynnere 3ate.
For who so loueþ þere God doþ hate,
Is berselle to his owen flon.

[good] spiritual condition
reconciled
(i.e. the gate of your soul)

39 We ben vnkynde wif God debate,
Foreuere he profreþ to ben at on.

what
target; arrows
rebellious; oppose
offers

(6)

The fyfte saw3tnyng: synne refuse,
42 Let eche man haue þat shulde ben his.
On mannys syde repentaunce doþ rise,
And on Goddis syde mercy is;

arises/comes about

¹ I.e. With his precious blood he paid the price for their deliverance [from their state of sin]

² *Thirdly, there is a harmony you can bring about yourself*

45 Pay trefeþ of pynes and of blis.³ *are about*
 Repentaunce makeþ wepyng mon. *causes tearful lament*
 When repentaunce and mercy kys,
 48 Pan is God and man at on.

(7)

Thow made not þy self; God dede þe make,
 Put soule of resoun in flesche so frele. *rational soul*
 51 God can leue, God can take *grant; take away*
 Richesse, strengþ, fayrnesse and hele.
 He is victorye in batayles fele, *many*
 54 Can sle soule, blod and bon.
 Nes non fro his strokes may stele. *Nobody; avoid*
 Glade in God, 3e ben at on.

(8)

57 God 3af erþe to mankynde,
 And heuene to hem þat wole be wys, *wise in spirit*
 Þat holden his lawe, haue hym in mynde,
 60 And helle to hem þat wole be nys. *sinful*
 In oure fre wille þe choys it lys
 Heuene or helle to haue, that on. *one of the two*
 63 In heuene and 3e wole haue delys, *if; enjoy bliss*
 Let body and soule be wel at on.

(9)

God may say, fern3ere folk were fayn *last year (i.e. only a short while ago); glad*
 66 To resceyue me ymydde here brest; *(i.e. into their souls)*
 On morwe þey put me out a3ayn; *[But] (i.e. soon after)*
 In my palays þey made þe fendis nest. *(i.e. the church); devil's lair*
 69 To lityl whyle y was here gest. *All too short a time*
 My loue y loste, y make my mon. *beloved (n); grieve/weep*
 Let God now lengere wiþ 3ow rest, *stay*
 72 Now God and man is wel at on.

(10)

Folk þat were fendis fere, *consorted with [the] devil[s]*
 Sulpid in synne derk as ny3t, *Were defiled*
 75 Now are þey fayre angels pere, *equals*
 As shynyng sune in Goddis sy3t.
 3e haue resceyued 3oure God of my3t, *admitted [to your soul]*

³ [God and man] came to terms, with repentant anguish [on the part of man] and [merciful] bliss [on the part of God]

78 Ayþer in oþer 3oure wille is on.⁴ *Mutually; as one/alike*
 3oure hertys were heuy, þey may be li3t;
 Glade in God, 3e ben at on.

(11)

81 Man, and 3e holde my lawe, *if*
 All þyn enemys shal þe drede;
 And þou stonde of me non awe, *[But] if; in awe*
 84 Þyn enemys outeray þe in dede. *overcome; battle*
 For þere as I my frendis lede, *whither*
 Þey shul not sporne at stok ne ston.⁵ *stumble; tree trunk; rock*
 87 In alle here werkis þey shal wel spede, *prosper*
 3if God and man be wel at on.

(12)

Myn enemys y shal reue here sy3t, *deprive of*
 90 3eue syknes and drede, pouert and wo;
 My frendis y 3eue sy3t and my3t,
 Richesse, strengþe ouer here foo.
 93 Hem thar not drede where þey go, *They need not*
 Here wele and worschip, in euery won. *[I give them]; place*
 Siþ 3e be syker, kepe 3ow so. *Now that*
 96 Now God and 3e are wel at on.

(13)

Man, y aske noþyng of þyn. *I (i.e. Christ)*
 For loue, my loued in helle y sou3t. *beloved*
 99 3eue me þy loue, þy soule is myn;
 Or 3eue it hym þat [it] derrere bou3t. *more dearly*
 Suffre[d] pyne for þe; me nedid nou3t *nothing [to relieve my pain]*
 102 In hed, in hand, in foot ne ton. *toes*
 3oure gyltis y bare in herte and þou3t, *endured*
 I made my fadir and 3ow at on.

(14)

105 Sum of my kyndenes 3e my3te me quyte, *beneficence; repay*
 Do þre wordis of my comandement:
 My name, my pyle take not in despite, *castle (i.e. the church); disdain/disparage*
 108 Rule wel þy selue in good atent. *with the proper frame of mind*
 Thow nost how sone be after sent, *do not know; sent for*
 To 3elde rekenyng of Goddis lon. *loan*

⁴ I.e. God and man are both filled with the same spirit

⁵ *They will stumble over nothing* (i.e. their path will be made smooth)

- 111 The rolles of rerage þe fendis han brent, *records of indebtedness; burnt*
 For god and man is wel at on.
- (15)
- And þou me loued, þou wolde me leue, *if; have faith in/believe*
- 114 And do my lawe, and holde it trewe. *renounce*
 How my3test þou me more repreue *reject/relinquish*
 Pan leue my lawe, and tak[e] newe.
- 117 Py vyces wole make þy soule to rewe: *wickedness; cause; regret [them]*
 In derkenes neuere sonne shon;
 Vertues shyne bry3t of hewe. *in bright colours*
- 120 Holde Goddis lawe, 3e ben at on.

NOTES

- 3 *lest and mest*] See Phil. 2:8–11, ‘He (i.e. Jesus) humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord’. Also Mark 12:10, ‘The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner’.
- 19–20 For the ‘harrowing of hell’, see X.60. Also mentioned in XXII.52.
- 26 See Mark 9:34, ‘By the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest’. Also Luke 9:46.
- 30 See Ps. 100:4, ‘Enter into his gates with thanksgiving’.
- 47 A distant echo of Ps. 85:10, ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other’.
- 65 *fern3ere*] Kail *fern 3ere*, but there is no good reason to deviate from the manuscript.
- 86 See Prov. 3:23, ‘Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shal not stumble’, and Jer. 31:9, ‘I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble’.
- 97 Stanzaic pilcrow missing in MS.
- 100 *it*] Rhythmical emendation of MS *hap it*.
- 101 *suffre[d]*] MS *suffre*.
- 107 *pyle*] litt. ‘pillar/castle’; here, *pyle* refers back to *palays* in l. 68.
- 110 *lon*] *MED* glosses ‘spiritual gift of God’ s.v. *lon(e n.*(1) sub 2., quoting this line. Straightforward ‘loan’ is more probable, as something ‘to 3elde rekenyng of’.
- 116 *take*] MS *tak*.

XII

GOD KEPE OURE KYNG AND SAUE THE CROUNE

SUMMARY

Three major themes alternate throughout this piece: to avoid internal disorders within the realm, to support the king, and to defend the nation against its enemies.

The opening lines are a brief burst of Easter joy, immediately followed by an appeal to the nation to stop dissidents and rally around the king. The keynote is unity, symbolised by the royal crown. Nobility, clergy and commons, town and countryside, they must all stick together in peaceful unity, to the envy of our enemies, who are pressing us by force to surrender our possessions abroad. Weakness merely attracts more enemies. What weakens us, to the point of breaking the circle of our unity, are internal quarrels and seditious rumours, let alone open rebellion. Rebellion must be met not with leniency, but with the vengeful hand of the law, to be administered by the king as God's deputy on earth. The ill-considered rebellion of 'Flaunders' (the assassination of a royal prince of France by the Duke of Burgundy) should be a lesson to us.

As God's deputy, the king must do God's bidding, and wield his power to the good, especially of the poor. Abroad, England on several occasions acted as God's scourge wielded against other nations. Internal conflict must not weaken that position of strength. So let reason prevail. The people need a ruler, but at the same time they are the backbone of society.

The poem finally, and once again, makes an urgent plea never to allow the kingdom to go down in internal quarrel and strife, as the laughing-stock of other nations. May God give our people time to repent and revert to a God-fearing life.

TEXT

(1)

Glade in God, calle hom 3oure herte,¹
In ioye and blisse 3oure merþe encres,
3 And kepe Goddis lawe in querte;
Pes holy tyme, lete sorwe ases.
Among oure self God sende vs pes.

*summon back
happiness
free from harm
cease*

¹ *Rejoice in God, renew your loyalty* (i.e. to the king)/*faith* (i.e. in God)

6 Perto eche man be boun: *prepared/ready*
 To letten fooles of here res, *stop (v.); actions*
 Stonde wiþ þe kyng, mayntene þe crowne. *to support*

(2)

9 What doþ a kynges crowne signyfye,
 Whan stones and floures on sercle is bent? *[precious] stones; in a circle (i.e. band)*
 Lordis, comons and clergie
 12 To ben alle at on assent. *of one mind*
 To kepe þat crowne take good tent, *take good heed*
 In wode, in feld, in dale and downe.
 15 Þe leste lyge man, wiþ body and rent, *lowest; vassal; possessions*
 He is a parcel of þe crowne. *[integral] part*

(3)

What signyfyeþ þe stones aboute? *around [the crown]*
 18 Richesse, strengþe, and gret bounte, *excellence*
 Oure townes and castels, þe reme wiþ oute, *realm; around [them]*
 Þey are oure stones of gret pouste. *power*
 21 In pes þey kepe alle þis contre, *preserve*
 Holynes, contemplacioun. *[In] purity/virtue; [and with] consideration*
 God, let hem neuer skaterid be, *them (i.e. þe stones); dispersed*
 24 And saue þe kyng, and kepe þe crowne.

(4)

By 3onde þe see and we had nou3t, *Beyond; if; nothing*
 But alle oure enemys so ney3e vs were, *nearby*
 27 Þou3 alle here gold were hider brou3t, *to this place*
 I wolde set hit at lytyl store. *of little value*
 Oure enemys wolde coke þerfore *go at war over it*
 30 Wiþ ordynaunce and habergeoun, *ordnance; armour*
 Wynne þat, and wel more:
 Oure landes, oure lyues, þe reme, þe crowne.

(5)

33 3if we among oure self debate, *quarrel*
 Ðan endeþ floure of chyualrie. *flower; knighthood*
 Alle oþere londis þat doþ vs hate,
 36 Oure feblenes wole aspye. *notice*
 On euery syde þey wole in hye, *hurry in*
 Þe stalworþe cast þe feble adoun. *overpowers*
 39 3if þey wiþ my3t haue maystrye, *carry the victory*
 Fro þe ri3t heire wolde take þe crowne. *rightful*

(6)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 3if sercle, and floures, and riche stones | <i>If [from]</i> |
| 42 Were eche a pece fro oþer flet, | <i>segment/part; be separated</i> |
| Were þe crowne broken ones, | <i>once</i> |
| Hit were ful hard a3en to knet. | <i>mend</i> |
| 45 Auyse 3ow er 3e suffre þat fit; | <i>Bethink yourself; misfortune</i> |
| Amende, 3e þat mende mown. | <i>are able to</i> |
| 3e þat ben wysest, cast 3oure wyt; | <i>take thought</i> |
| 48 Stonde wiþ þe kyng to kepe þe crowne. | |

(7)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| To kepe þe crowne God graunte 3ow grace, | <i>God's grace</i> |
| And let it neuere be to broken. | <i>broken to pieces</i> |
| 51 For word of wynd lityl trespase, ² | <i>violates the law</i> |
| Non harm nys don, þou3 word be spoken. | |
| Let wysdom be vnloken, | <i>set free</i> |
| 54 Apert and preuyly to rowne. | <i>Openly; privately; make deliberations</i> |
| For non euylle wille no man be wroken, | <i>is intended; avenged</i> |
| But stonde wiþ ri3t, mayntene þe crowne. | <i>sides with; just cause</i> |

(8)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 57 A man my3te be forborn | <i>removed</i> |
| Fer fro a kynges place, | |
| Wolde make a kyng to be forsworn | <i>cause; perjure himself</i> |
| 60 To lette þe lawe, it most not passe, | <i>violate; happen</i> |
| And make hym wene þat he grace, | <i>fancy; [enjoys] God's favour</i> |
| And holy in condicioun, | <i>disposition</i> |
| 63 And mayntene hym in his trespase, | <i>stiffen; criminal conduct</i> |
| While he pykeþ þe stones out of þe crowne. | |

(9)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| A kyngdom must be gouerned by ri3t, | <i>justice</i> |
| 66 To chastyse false þat ar aspyed. | <i>punish; wrongdoings; discovered</i> |
| Falsed and troupe to gydre wole fi3t, | <i>against each other</i> |
| Til oon þat oþer haþ distroyd. | |
| 69 Til troupe be fro treson tryed | <i>separated</i> |
| Shal neuere be pes in regyone. | <i>realm</i> |
| In all kyngdomes þat man haþ gyed, | <i>governed</i> |
| 72 To þe place of vertues God geueþ þe crowne. | |

² I.e. Since empty talk is hardly a violation of the law

(14)

- 105 Eche a kyng haþ Goddis power
 Of lyf and leme to saue and spille. *limb; destroy*
 He muste make God his partener, *co-ruler*
- 108 And do not his owen wille.
 For God resceyueþ eche pore mannys bille, *[formal] complaint*
 And of here playnt God hereþ þe sowne. *sound*
- 111 Sette þoure [domes] in euene skille,
 Counseile þe kyng to kepe þe crowne. *Form your [judgement] properly*
Counsel; preserve

(15)

- The fadir þe wanton child wole kenne, *teach*
- 114 Chastyse wiþ þerde, and bete hit sore. *rod; beat*
 So after, þe fadyr þe þerde wole brenne, *burn*
 When child is wys, and takeþ to lore. *study*
- 117 We han ben Goddis þerde þore,
 Chastysed kyngdom, castell and towne. *We (i.e. the English); once*
 Twyggis of oure þerde we haue forlore. *lost completely*
- 120 God saue þe kyng, and kepe þe crowne.

(16)

- Engliche men dede maystryþes make;
 Þurþ all þe world here word it sprong. *won victories*
command; went forth
- 123 Cristen and heþen þey mad to quake,
 Tok and slown kynges strong. *Made prisoner; killed*
 God, let neuere werre be vs among,
- 126 To lese þat blo of gret renowne,
 Ne neuere oure riþt be turned to wrong. *ruin; reputation; power*
 God saue þe kyng, and kepe þe crowne. *Nor*

(17)

- 129 Among oure self 3if fiþt be raysed,
 Pan stroye we oure awen nest; *spoil*
 Þat haþ victor wole be euel payed, *victory; pay dearly*
- 132 So many good men ben lest. *lost*
 3it is beter bowe þan [brest]. *It*
 Eche man is bounden to resone;
- 135 3e þat ben wysest take þe best;
 Conseile þe kyng, mayntene þe crowne.

(18)

- A comons myȝt sone be shent⁶
 138 Wiþ outen kyng or gouernour. *lord*
 And a kyng wiþoute rent
 Myȝt liȝtly trussen his tresour.⁷
 141 For comons mayntene lordis honour, *exalted status*
 Holy chirche, and religyone; *the religious orders*
 For comouns is þe fayrest flour *flower*
 144 Ðat euere God sette on erþely crowne.

(19)

- God, lete þis kyngdom neuere be lorn
 Among oure self in no distance. *controversy*
 147 Oþer kyngdomes lauȝhe vs not to skorn, *[Let]; ridicule (v.)*
 And sey: for synne God send vengeance.
 God, ȝeue vs space of repe[n]tance, *time for*
 150 Good lyf, and deuocioun. *[A] virtuous way of life*
 And God, kepe in þy gouernance *guidance*
 Oure comely kyng, and saue þe crowne. *noble*

NOTES

title Kail: *God save the kyng, and kepe the crown*, probably on the analogy of the refrain. Robbins (1959, p. 45; 1975, p. 1420) has ‘God save King Henry V’.

6 The feudal arrangement of a vassal and his liege lord.

7 Here, as well as in l. 51, Kail (p. xvi) reads an allusion to a plot by former followers of the deposed Richard II, ‘spreading rumours that the deposed King Richard was still alive, and would come before long to drive away the usurper’. St. (13) is ‘most probably aimed at the Duke of Albany, who had harboured the individual bearing a resemblance to Richard II’ (p. xvii).

8 *þe]* Robbins (1959, p. 45) *þo*, but there is no good reason here to deviate from the manuscript reading.

10 *floures]* Possibly an allusion to the ‘flowers’ in the actual crown of Henry V, in fact of all Plantagenet kings, namely the French ‘fleurs-de-lys’, symbolic of the Plantagenets’ claim on the crown of France.

11 *comons]* Kail, Robbins (1959, p. 45) *comouns*, but there is no reason for an emendation of the MS reading.

12 *at]* Added in a different hand.

19 *þe]* Robbins (1959, p. 45) *þo*. The same remark applies as against l. 8.

25 I.e. in France.

28 *lytyl]* Kail, Robbins (1959, p. 46) *lytel*. But see again the remark against l. 8.

⁶ *The common people are soon brought to ruin*

⁷ *May easily see his fortune/wealth shrink*

- 45 *fit*] Kail glosses 'shock, blow'(?).
- 51 Quoted in *OED* s.v. *wind* *n.*(1) sub 15.(a). Cf. XIII.127.
- 57 According to Robbins (1959, p. 271), St. (8) seems to refer to Henry V's leniency to Oldcastle, the nobleman who chose the side of the Lollards.
- 72 *vertues*] Probably the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude.
- 73 St. (10): cf. III (1).
- 81 *of*] Robbins (1959, p. 47) emends (?)*or* (= before).
- 81–82 Proverbial. See Whiting, E84, 'Look at the end'.
- 91–92 See Ps. 106:3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times'.
- 99 *For þe loue of ten or twelue*] The same phrase occurs in I.11.
- 109 *bille*] Kail glosses 'bill, account', but in the context (*playnt* [l. 110], *counseille* [l. 112]), *MED*'s rendering s.v. *bille* (*n.*) sub 3(a): 'a formal written petition', is more appropriate.
- 111 [*domes*] restores the metre. With the insertion the line is identical with XIII.71. Robbins inserts *assise*.
- 133 Proverbial. See Whiting, B.484, 'Better bow than break'. *brest*] MS *berst*
- 137 *comons*] Robbins (1959, p. 49) *comyns*.
- 147–48 Cf. XVI.63–64.
- 149 *repe[n]tance*] MS *repetance* (no nasal stroke above the second *e*, unless the scribe treated as such the backward slant of the downstroke of the *y* immediately above).

XIII
DEDE IS WORCHYNG¹

SUMMARY

Parliament is there to correct abuses in the realm, but quite often it is too lenient, which invites others who notice this to persist in their wrongdoings. Contrary to other countries, the English judicial system is corrupt, and unstable because of the frequent changes in the law.

You, magnates, are there to rule in righteousness those who are dependent on you. They are not your property; God has placed them in your custody. So take their complaints seriously, and let nobody distract from their rights. They pay their rents and fees, and in return expect to be treated fairly by you. On the other hand, neither pity nor bribes must keep you from correcting with a hard hand treasonable behaviour, incorrigible foolhardiness and self-enrichment. In so doing, make sure you punish the real offender, not an innocent bystander.

The king is admonished to act, openly and wisely, in a God-fearing manner: ban from your court all extravagant wastrels, spendthrifts, in general all untrustworthy and deceitful people. When internal order is restored, strengthen your borders and sea power. With the help of your valorous knights – of greater value for this purpose than the spineless clergy – forcefully press your rightful claims on the throne of France, never giving in to negotiations, which only works out to the enemy's advantage. God may help you to rule your subjects according to his laws. Encourage the good, punish the wicked. Your deeds should prove your moral strength, to bring you heavenly rewards. So start now!

TEXT

- (1)
Whanne alle a kyngdom gadrid ysse
In Goddis lawe, by on assent,
3 For to amende þat was mysse,
Perfore is ordayned a parlement.
Troupe wiþ glad chere þeder went,
6 And falsed stondis ay in drede
- assembled
of one mind
wrong
For that purpose; established
Loyalty; cheerful face; there
treacherousness; all the time; fear*

¹ [Proper] action produces [positive] results

For ferd of ry3twis iugement,
For to be demed after his dede.

*fear; righteous; judgement
judged; according to*

(2)

9 In doom of parlement ofte is fauour,
Pat afterward it harmeþ grete;
Make opere bold take þerof sauour,
12 To mayntene falsed for be3ete.
Slouþe vntyme eft mon swete²
When it is hot, and gloweþ as glede.
15 Stonde wiþ trouþe, and smyte an hete,³
Pat God þonke 3ow for 3oure dede.

*the administering of justice; leniency
does harm
encourages; [who] acquire a taste for
persist in; disloyal/treacherous practice(s); benefit
Negligence; soon; after; sweat (v.)
live coal
on (i.e. with)
So that; will thank*

(3)

Lawe 3eueþ kyng lyf and leme;
18 To hasty slau3t and sodeyn fed,
Lawe 3eueþ no grace to heme.
Morþere, ne treson, ne forcast ded,
21 To 3eue þere mercy God forbed;
Pat fauour my3t destroye a þede.
God in his lawe 3af Moyses red,
24 Wiþ oute he dampneþ þe dede.

*[power over] life and limb
quick-tempered; manslaughter; rash; hostility
gives/allows; them
premeditated act (i.e. act of conspiracy)
allow; them
nation
[his] commandments
Outside [his law]; condemns*

(4)

In alle kyngdomes here lawe his wryten;
For mede ne drede þey chaunge it nou3t.
27 In Engelande, as alle men wyten,
Lawe as best is solde and bou3t.
Eche 3eer newe lawe is wrou3t,
30 And cloþe falsed in trouþe wede.
Fern3er was lawe, now nes it nou3t.
We ben newe fangyl, vnstable in dede.

*their
bribery
cattle
are; being made
garments
In an earlier time; [what] was; of no validity
newfangled*

(5)

33 To stonde wiþ comons in here ry3t,
Is hy3est poynt of charite.
To quyte þat dede no man my3t,
36 Saue onely God in Trynyte.
Þou3 þe comons vnkonnyng be,⁴

*the common people
act
reward; can
ignorant*

² Ll. 13–14: i.e. Negligence to eradicate such treacherousness soon makes it necessary [for Parliament] to double its efforts when treason runs rampant

³ *Stand on the side of loyalty and strike down [treacherousness] with fervour*

⁴ *The common people may be unaware [of your stance on their side] (see l. 33)*

God 3eueþ 3ow neuere þe lasse mede.⁵

- 39 Þat mede askeþ so hey3 degre,
Nes non bot God may quyte þat dede.

requires; standing

(6)

- 3et o wysdom mot 3e lere,
42 Most profyt, and heyest honour:
3oure tenauntes playntes 3e mot here,
For þey kepen alle 3oure tresour.
45 3e are holden to ben here socour.
Non wiþ wrong oþer mysbede;
Forþy God made 3ow gouvernour,
48 In Goddis ry3t to deme þe dede.⁶

*one [piece of]
[That yields] the greatest
listen to
maintain; fortune
their; protector
others; maltreat (imp.)
Therefore; ruler*

(7)

- Lordis þat han castels and toures,
Alle folk stonden of 3ow awe.
51 Þe puple is Goddis, and no3t 3oures,
Þey paye 3oure rente to gouerne lawe.
Let no man here ry3t wiþdrawe,
54 Body ne catelle hem mysbede.
Who doþ so, God sayþ in sawe,
He shal haue heuene for þat dede.

*[Yet]
to you; fees; administer
take away; rights
Man; beast; maltreat
[his] Word*

(8)

- 57 Þe lord þat wole haue good loos,
Stonde fast in trouþe, waxe not faynt.
Let trouþe gon out of cloos,
60 Þat alle folk may here his playnt.
Let treson be shamely ataynt,
Graunte hem no mercy, ne take no mede,
63 For mede wiþ poyson sotyly is maynt,
Mercy my3t cherische hem in here dede.

*enjoy; reputation
loyalty; grow
[its] confining bounds
So that; complaint
convicted
bribes
treacherously; mixed
encourage them (i.e. the traitors)*

(9)

- 3if a man wolde þe ouertylt,
66 Caste þy deþ for to kille,
Let not anoþer by3e his gylt,
Þat neuere in dede dede þe ylle.
69 Dampne no man for non euyl wille
To do þe gylteles blod to blede.

*overthrow
Plans (v.)
pay [the penalty] for
actually
Declare guilty; intent
make; shed*

⁵ *God's reward is not the less for it*

⁶ *To pass judgement on the [people's] conduct according to God's law*

- Sette 3oure domes in euene skille. *Form; judgement; properly*
 72 In drede of God 3e deme 3oure dede. *consider*
- (10)
- Who skorneþ hem þat telleþ hem wit,⁷ *is contemptuous of; gives; sound advice*
 Is rebelle to God þat repreueþ reson.
- 75 Þat loueþ hym most þat hateþ hit *Who; who; it (i.e. wit)*
 A3enst Goddis counseille cast acheson. *aspersions*
 To worschipe hym, þere wit is geson. *respect (v.); lacking*
- 78 For fawte of grace, vertue ben gyde. *In the absence of; good will; force; guide*
 To chastyse fooles is ay in seson, *punish; opportune*
 To worschip or shame, after þe dede. *respect; according to; their; [mis]deeds*
- (11)
- 81 Syngulerte is sotyle þefte. *Personal gain; vile*
 Pey calle hit custom troupe to blende. *blindfold (v.)*
 Whan Troupe wole reherce þat efte, *divulge; afterwards*
- 84 Þan God wil vengeance wiþ troupe sende,
 Shamely falsed to shende,⁸
 Drede and stryf among hem shede. *spread*
- 87 To preue who is Goddis frend,
 Comons be witesse of here dede. *find out*
their
- (12)
- Putte fro court þat chericheþ vys, *Banish from; vice*
 90 Þat place of vertues wolde shende. *Who; revile/mock*
 Nedeles delys and nedeles gys *Extravagant; luxuries; clothing*
 Þe wastours out of worschipe sende. *wastrels/spendthrifts; dishonourably*
- 93 Wiþ wit and vysement alle amende;
 Lete werk be witnes 3e can 3oure Crede. *sense and prudence; put right*
 Wiþ corage and hardynes 3oure reme defende, *deeds; know*
 resolution; realm
- 96 In Goddis querelle 3e do 3oure dede. *cause; perform your task*
- (13)
- A trewe man reccheþ neuere a delle, *honest; cares; not at all*
 Pou3 alle þe world his werkis aspy3ed. *If; see*
- 99 And falsed, for he doþ not welle,
 He wolde troupes tonge were ty3ed, *But*
tied

⁷ Ll. 73–80: *He rebels against God / Who is contemptuous of sound advice, / Who rejects common sense, / Who loves best who hates it (i.e. common sense) / Who casts aspersions on God's counsel. / In the absence of [their] good will, strength be [your] guide, / To punish fools – always opportune – / To teach [them] respect or shame, according to their [mis]deeds*

⁸ *To put falsity to disgraceful shame*

For he shulde not telle who hym ny3ed. *he (i.e. truth); may; him (i.e. truth); harmed*
 102 Perfore þe fals þe false fede, *Thus; support*
 Til trouþe in preson be faste aly3ede, *securely put*
 And dampne trouþe for falsed dede. *condemn*

(14)

105 Whanne 3e han made pes wipynne, *internally/at home*
 All 3oure reme in vnyte,
 Vtteremore 3e mot bygynne, *In the outer regions*
 108 Strengþe 3oure marche, and kepe þe see. *borders; keep [control of]*
 Ofte haue 3e made 3oure fomen fle, *enemies; flee*
 Here hatest blod o brod to sprede.⁹ *Their; hottest; far and wide*
 111 God doþ batayle, and not 3e;
 Pou3 3e fau3t, God doþ þe dede. *did battle; decides; outcome*

(15)

To Fraunce kyng Edwardē had queryle, *With; [a] dispute*
 114 Hit was his kynde heritage; *legitimate*
 And 3e han þe same style, *have; formal title*
 Wip armes of þe selue parage; *coat of arms; equal rank*
 117 And 3it 3oure querelle dede neuere aswage, *abated/subsided*
 Þat God haþ shewed in 3oure manhede.¹⁰
 On see, on land, in eche vyage, *expedition*
 120 In dent of swerd, God demed 3oure dede.¹¹

(16)

Stuffe 3oure castels in eche coost, *Equip; shore*
 Warnestor and folk þeder sende; *Provisions; there*
 123 So mow 3e abate 3oure enemys bost, *put an end to; arrogance*
 But not in trete, in wast to spende. *negotiations; to no purpose*
 Wheþer 3e assayle or defende, *attack*
 126 On see or land, God 3ow spede. *may help*
 Wip word of wynd mad neuere werre ende,¹²
 But dent of swerde endid þe dede. *action*

(17)

129 And 3e þenke werre to holde, *If; wage war*
 Do after hem [þat] is most wys.
 Corage of 3ong, and wit of olde,

⁹ *So that even the most impetuous of them were scattered far and wide*

¹⁰ *This God has instilled in your nature/character*

¹¹ *Through the force of [your] sword, God has passed judgement on your deeds*

¹² *Empty talk has never made an end to war*

- 132 Can telle where þe vauntage lys,
 In dede of armes wonnen prys. *have been won; victories*
 Whan gloser and flaterer on tapetis trede, *sycophant; come forward*
 135 For wynnyng þey counseled to cowardys. *advised*
 Man wan neuere worschip by here dede. *honour; their*

(18)

- Als ofte as 3e trete, *negotiate*
 138 3oure enemys ordynaunce þey di3t. *Conditions; [want to] dictate*
 While 3e trete, ay þey gete; *always; win*
 3e trete 3oure self out of 3oure ri3t.
 141 Pere lakkeþ conscience of kny3t,
 Lete falsed growe tyl he sede. *Where; attitude of mind*
 Ordre of kny3t was mad to fy3t, *nota Milicia &c* *treacherousness; runs to seed*
 144 In Goddis ri3t to ende þe dede. *Estate*

(19)

- Ordre of kny3t hardest is, *toughest*
 On see, on lond, on sholde and depe. *shallows*
 He passeþ relegous ywis, *surpasses; the clergy*
 148 Pou3 þey preye and faste wepe. *However much; uncontrollably*
 Ofte wiþ ful wombe relegous slepe, *stomach*
 Whan kny3tes han hunger, and moche in drede.
 151 Þe beter in clene lyf þey au3t hem kepe,¹³
 As Goddis kny3t to don here dede.

(20)

- On of two 3e mot chese,
 154 On lond or see, o[n] shippes bord,
 Wiþ fi3t 3e wynne, wiþ trete 3e lese. *lose*
 3oure enemys han þat eure in hord, *mind*
 157 Þat þey wynne wiþ word
 3oure townes and castels in lengþe and brede.
 And þat 3e wynne, 3e wynne wiþ sword, *But; what*
 160 Þerfore wiþ swerd do 3oure dede.

(21)

- God 3eue 3ow grace þis reme to 3eme, *help; rule (v.)*
 To cherische þe goode, and chastyse þe nys. *hold in esteem; punish; wicked*
 163 And also serue God to queme, *to please [him]*
 Þat 3oure werkis preue 3ow wys. *May; prove*

¹³ *They would do better by keeping themselves (morally) clean*

- And in 3ow þe helpe it lys¹⁴
 166 Þe puple in Goddis lawe to hede. *rule (v.)*
 Do so now, 3e wynne 3ow prys, *prize*
 And heuene blisse for 3oure dede.
 169 Amen.

NOTES

- title** Robbins (1975, p. 1421) takes for a title ‘Maintain law and Henry’s foreign policy’.
- 4 Cf. XIV.57–58, there with reference to justice instead of parliament.
- 9 *fauour*] ‘Leniency’, in view of St. (3), especially ll. 21–22.
- 14 *glowep as glede*] Proverbial. See Whiting, G 152, ‘To glow like a gleed’.
- 34 For the signification of *charite* see the note to III.3.
- 37 ‘The passage ... seems to include a reproof of the “cunning” lords who used to cheat the Commons by changing the text of their petitions’ (Kail, p. xviii). Yet Kail glosses ‘unskilled’ for *vnkonnyng*, where ‘ignorant/unaware of’ seems more appropriate.
- 45 *socour*] ‘Protector’, in view of St. (7), which describes the traditional role assigned to the *bellatores* as defenders of the *laboratores*.
- 51 Cf. III.131–32, *Þe peuple ... nys not 3oures, / Al is Goddis*.
- 63 *Maynt*] *pt. ppl.* of *mengen*.
- 67 *by3e*] Aphetic form of *abien*.
- 71 XII.111 is identical (but see the note there).
- 73–76 Concisely summarized in XVI.19, *And hate hem þat telle hym so*.
- 81 Cf. I.4, [*Eche man be war ... of...*] *synguler profit by fals assent*, and XVI.59, *For defaute of Iustice, and singulere to wynne*.
- 94 *Crede*] See also the note to IX.39.
- 110 *hatest*] A Northern feature.
- 111 Cf. III.111, *Whoso fi3teþ, God dop þe dede*, and IX.143, *God dop batayle and not 3e*.
- 113 *Edwarde* = King Edward III (1327–1377), Henry V’s great-grandfather.
- 115 *3e* = King Henry V (1413–1422).
- 127 Proverbial. See Whiting, W.638, ‘Word made never war’s end, but sword ended the deed’.
- 130 [*þat*] Follows Kail.
- 154 on shippes bord] MS *or*, but illogical after *see*.
- 168 ‘*Amen* is struck through in *red* ink; but whether it is meant to be erased or not, is doubtful’ (Kail, p. 60, n.). See the note to *Amen* (also struck through in red) at the end of poem I.

¹⁴ *And it lies with you to be the means*

XIV

MAN, BE WARRE ER THE BE WOO

SUMMARY

The highest in the land, even those nearest the king, may easily fall from grace, either because of their own foolishness, the slander of others, or attempts on their lives, in which case they had better leave the country for a while and return when the peril is past.

Every magistrate, including the king, is judged by his deeds, with man as well as God passing verdict on his performance. Climbing the social ladder is fraught with danger anyway, especially as one gets near the king, where his whim or one's own overgreediness may spell social disgrace. And not only the lords of the land, also the humble priest may be called to account, if he neglects his parish in search of more lucrative sources of income. If a magistrate is himself a judge, he should take care to apply the law evenhandedly, without favouritism. Law and justice applies to everybody alike.

Unlawful gain, treason, plunder and killing, tampering with weights and measures, wastefulness and running up debts, squeezing the poor for the benefit of the rich, these are the lordly vices committed in the hunt for ever more riches and which tend to stir up hatred among the common people. And with a church that tolerates simony, and a secular law that tolerates usury, God cannot possibly favour the country.

TEXT

(1)

The herrere degre, þe more wys;
þe gretter worschip, þe noblere fame.

3 þe herrere degre, þe more nys;
þe gretter foly, þe more blame.

After foly folweþ þe shame.

6 Repreued of frendis and scorned of fo,
After þy dede ressayue þy name.
Eche man be war, er hym be wo.

*The higher the rank
importance; illustrious
foolish*

*Rejected; held in contempt
In accordance with; reputation*

(2)

- 9 3if þou be kyngis chaunceller,
Kepe þe crowne hool in stat; *in full power*
3if þou be kyngis counselere,
12 Loke no stoness þerof abate. *Make sure; are reduced [in quality]*
3if oþer wolde make þe kyng þe hate,
others; hate you
Or falsed ouer trouþe go, *treacherousness; before; loyalty*
15 Tak þy leue, and kisse þe 3ate. *leave (n.)*
Eche man be war, er hym be wo.

(3)

- On a mowntayne a sete may not be hyd, *house*
18 Ne lordis werkis in no degre. *in no way*
A lordis werkis wiþ comouns is kyd, *are known by*
Þat he doþ most in preuete. *[Even] those; in private*
21 Gouvernour of kyngdom or Cyte, *Sovereign ruler*
After þey lyue men deme so. *According as; so judge them*
For eche a werk God 3eueþ a fe. *act performed; reward*
24 Eche man be war, er hym be wo.

(4)

- A symple prest wole synge his masse *lowly*
While his lyuyng is but smal. *[ecclesiastical] income*
27 As summe encrese, serue God þe lasse, *increases; less*
Wiþ benefices ten my3te lyue wiþal,¹
And fynde þere noþer houshold ne halle, *Even though; not to be found*
30 Ne serue þe parische, but take hem fro. *takes/steals*
Er God suche rekenyng calle, *Before; calls [for the payment of]*
Be tyme be war, er þey be wo. *In time*

(5)

- 33 Man, do resoun þou3 þou be riche, *do justice*
Ouer cite or town hast gouernaunce.
Loue al crafty folk yliche, *craftsmen; alike*
36 Mayntene no party in distaunce.²
Sette mendis for trespas in euene balaunce; *Fix; damages; in proportion [to the offense]*
For a penyworth of harm tak not two.³
39 Rule wel mesure and sustenaunce.⁴
Eche man be war, er hym be wo.

¹ Ten people could easily live on [his income from] benefices² Do not take sides in a dispute³ I.e. Do not impose a heavy penalty for a light offence⁴ Set proper rules for measures and foodstuffs

(6)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Pe wyseman his sone forbed
 42 Masoun craft and alle clymbyng,
 And shipman craft, for perile of dede,
 And preuey in counseil be ney3 no kyng.
 45 For his mysrulyng þou my3t hyng,
 þat shep my3te grese vnder þy to.
 To fli3e to hy3e treste not þy wyng.
 48 Eche man be war, er hym be wo.</p> | <p>nota</p> | <p><i>[should] forbid</i>
 <i>[To practice] the craft of masonry</i>
 <i>death</i>
 <i>in [his] privy council; near</i>
 <i>misgovernment; hang</i>
 <i>[So] that; sheep; graze; toe</i>
 <i>too; trust; wings</i></p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

(7)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Pou3 þy kyng be fre to 3yue,
 Be þou not gredy to craue;
 51 Make opere folk þe worse to lyue,⁵
 For synguler profyt þou wolde haue.
 Er drede and repref þy berde shaue,⁶
 54 Asese of Couetyys and say hoo.
 The man þat wole his worship saue,
 Be tyme be war, er him be woo.</p> | <p><i>generous; make gifts</i>
 <i>greedy/importunate; ask</i>

 <i>Because of; selfish gain</i>
 <i>shame</i>
 <i>Desist from</i>
 <i>honour</i></p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

(8)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>57 For to amende þat was mys,
 Perfore is ordeyned eche Iustice.
 Lat eche man haue þat shulde ben his,
 60 And turne not lawe for couetyse.
 Ne contryue tresons þere trouþ lys,
 In tyrauntrie to robbe and slo.
 63 Er 3oure werkis preue 3ow nys,
 Eche man be war, er hym be wo.</p> | <p><i>evill/wrong</i>
 <i>For that purpose; created; law</i>

 <i>treasonably conspire; loyalty; is due</i>
 <i>outrageously; kill</i>
 <i>Before; foolish</i></p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

(9)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>3if 3e wole haue pes of 3ong and old,
 66 Let eche man haue þat is ry3t.
 Let comon lawe his cours hold,
 Euene mesure, mett and wy3t.
 69 Man, þou3 þou be moche of my3t,
 Mende fawtes er þou make mo.
 For þat 3e hid God seep in sy3t.
 72 Eche man be war, er hym be wo.</p> | <p><i>among</i>
 <i>rightfully his</i>
 <i>have its proper course</i>
 <i>Correct; measure; size; weight</i>
 <i>may possess great power</i>
 <i>mistakes; more</i>
 <i>what; conceal; clearly</i></p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

⁵ *[It would] make the living [conditions] for other people worse*

⁶ I.e. Before fear and shame get too close for comfort

(10)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Eche lord knoweþ his astate, | <i>the state of his affairs</i> |
| Lyue on þat God hym lent. | <i>granted</i> |
| 75 Þat borweþ moche, he geteþ hate, | <i>Who; borrows; causes</i> |
| Spende waste, passyng his rent; | <i>wastefully; exceeding; income</i> |
| For suche a kyngdom haþ ben shent. | <i>such [people]; ruined</i> |
| 78 Stryf wiþ comons, threp and thro, | <i>contention; wrangling</i> |
| To brynge þat in amendement, | <i>put; to rights</i> |
| Eche man be war, er hym be wo. | |

(11)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 81 Whanne holichirche suffreþ symonye, | <i>tolerates</i> |
| And is wiþ hym enchanted, | <i>deluded</i> |
| And lawe of land suffreþ vsurye, | |
| 84 Vnkyndely synne, and shameles haunted, | <i>Scandalous; shameless people?prostitutes; frequented</i> |
| And vicious folk auaunsed and dawnted, | <i>evil; favoured; flattered</i> |
| And vertues flemed fro eche a wro: | <i>banished; nook and cranny</i> |
| 87 In þat kyngdom God haþ vengeaunce graunted. | <i>permitted</i> |
| Eche man be war, er hym be wo. | |

(12)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| In a kyngdom what makeþ stryf, | |
| 90 No man standes of oper awe: | <i>is respectful</i> |
| Vnkyndely synne, and tyrauntes lyf, | <i>of cruell/violent people; conduct (n.)</i> |
| Vsurye, symonye, and letter of lawe, | <i>those who obstruct</i> |
| 93 And holy chirche rebelle to Goddis sawe. | <i>commands</i> |
| To kepe his comaundement þey say no. | <i>refuse</i> |
| Fro þat kyngdom God his loue wil drawe. | <i>withdraw</i> |
| 96 Eche man be war, er hym be wo. | |

(13)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3if eny folk forgeþ gyles, | <i>plot(s); false tricks</i> |
| Wiþ falsed þy deþ to cast, | <i>intend(s)</i> |
| 99 Pulle vp þe stakes and breke þe styles, ⁷ | <i>posts/pegs; stiles</i> |
| Lete hem no more styke so faste. | <i>be rooted; firmly</i> |
| And whan 3e be þe perile paste, | <i>have behind you</i> |
| 102 Kepe 3ow wel fro deþes flo, | <i>death's arrow</i> |
| Fro costage, and be no more agaste. | <i>(?legal) expense; terrified</i> |
| Eche man be war, er hym be wo. | |

⁷ I.e. Abandon your position

(14)

- 105 Þe flesch haþ many frele frendis: *unstable/transitory*
 RICHESSE, strengþe, fayrnesse, and hele; *beauty; health*
 Whan it is mysved, þe soule it schendis. *corrupts*
- 108 RICHESSE, rauenerere of worldis wele, *thief/plunderer; wealth*
 Take fro þe nedy, to þe nedeles dele,⁸
 And wyldre recheles as a roo. *becomes unruly; reckless(?ly); roe deer*
- 111 Er þoure synnes þoure soules apele, *accuse*
 Eche man be war, er hym be woo.

NOTES

title Proverbial. See Whiting, W45, 'Be ware ere you be woe'. Louis (1993, p. 2983) chooses as title 'Eche man be war, er hym be wo'.

9–12 What is here urged on the king's closest advisers: to keep the realm intact, is extended to all three estates in XII (2) and (3).

17 Alludes to Matt. 5:14, 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid'.

31 An allusion to the parable of the talents in Matt. 25:14–30, verse 19 in particular: 'the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them'.

37 *in euene balaunce*] *MED* s.v. *balaunce* (*n.*) sub 3a gives 'impartially' as the sole meaning, but here 'in proportion' is meant, in view of the following line: *For a penyworth of harm tak not two.*

42 Punning on the figurative meaning 'social climbing' in ll. 3–4.

43 *shipmancraft*] *MED* s.v. *ship-man* (*n.*) sub (a) glosses 'the art of navigation', but 'being a sailor' (by implication: climbing the rigging of a ship) seems more appropriate in the context of the dangers of heights (see ll. 42 and 47).

46 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 224, 'To have sheep graze under one's toe'.

53 *thy berde shaue*] Proverbial. See Whiting, B 119, 'To shave one's beard'.

57–58 Cf. XIII.3–4, with reference to parliament instead of justice.

59 The principle of *suum cuique tribuere* that lies at the root of common law (see also ll. 66–67).

68 *Mesure* and *mett* are virtually synonymous. Also used in a figurative sense in the phrase *measure and met* = 'moderation/temperance' (see *MED* s.v. *met* (*n.*) sub 6).

106 *fayrnesse*] Kail: *fayrenesse*.

⁸ *Takes from the needy, gives to those not in want*

XV

THE DESCRUYUNG OF MANNES MEMBRES

limbs

SUMMARY

The core argument in this piece is the overriding importance of harmony between the social classes within the realm, on pain of its disintegration. The argument takes the familiar form of an analogy of the body politic and the human body, frequently found in the medieval philosophy and literature of the estates.¹ The main theme is introduced by an enumeration of the four elements: earth, water, fire and air, that combine to form the bodily humours, and of the three elements that constitute the rational soul (*þat haþ þe mynde*): life, feeling and reason. What follows is a detailed comparison of parts of the human body and the estates of the realm. Just as the human limbs and organs work together to make the body as a whole function properly, so the estates must work together to make the realm operate as an organic whole.

The detail is remarkable. Passing review are: the head (with the brain as control centre, served by the eyes, ears, nose and mouth), the neck, breast, shoulders and spine, arms, hands, fingers, ribs, thighs, legs, feet and toes. They respectively represent: the king, justice, the clergy, lords, knights, squires, yeomen, lawyers, merchants, craftsmen, farmers and servants. Successive reproachful dialogues between various parts of the body exemplify the lesson that even the slightest discord will trigger a chain reaction that throws the system of interdependent bodily functions out of order. In the same way does the social mechanism in a country come to a standstill if the different, but closely connected classes of society fail to cooperate in good harmony.

TEXT

(1)

Where of is mad al mankynde.

Of seuene þynges, and it be sou3t:

3 Erþe and water, fyre and wynde,

Ðerof is þe body wrou3t;

Ðe soule of þre, þat haþ þe mynde,

if; examined
air
made
possesses; consciousness

¹ For a detailed discussion of the subject, with reference to the present poem, see Mohl (1933, pp. 109–10, 263–64).

6 Of lyf, felyng and of þou3t. *reason*
 Þe soule fro þe body vnbende, *is separated from*
 Whan on of þese lakkeþ ou3t. *is lacking; in any way*

(2)

9 Þe heued y likne to a kyng,
 For he is lord souereyn of al.
 Haþ foure to his gouernyng: *four [organs]; controls (v.)*
 12 Mouþ and nose and eyen wiþal, *also*
 Eryn fayre to his heryng, *good for*
 To serue þe brayn, is pryncypal
 15 Chef of counseil ymagenyng, *Centre; thinking; imaginative*
 To caste before, er after fal. *think ahead; lest; afterwards; [one] falls*

(3)

I lykne þe nekke, moche of my3t, *strength*
 18 Þat body and heued to gydre knyht, *links*
 To a Iustice þat demeþ ry3t;
 For þurgh it comeþ alle wordis of wyt. *judges (v.)*
 21 3if a man take ordre of kny3t,
 Þe coler in þe nekke het; *sound judgement*
 And feloun forfeþe in þefte or fy3t,
 24 Þe iugement in þe nekke set. *chain (as badge of honour); touches*
If; criminal; breaks the law
penalty; is imposed

(4)

Now I lykne mannys brest
 [To] presthod in good degre, *reputation*
 27 Most in perile, lest in rest, *Greatest; humblest; times of peace*
 For besynesse in spirituale,² *Concerned with; task*
 In penaunce and in preyer prest, *renunciation; gathered*
 30 Meke of spirit in pouerte, *humble*
 Holde hospytal to Goddis gest,
 And fede þe pore in charyte. *Practise; hospitality; guests (i.e. strangers)*

(5)

33 Þe shuldres and þe bakebon *spinal column*
 I likne to lordis of þe lond;
 Þe armes to kny3tes, to fende fro fon. *defend; enemy*
 36 Þe squyers I likne to þe hondes;
 Þe fyngres to 3emen þat byfore gon, *yeomen; in front*
 Wiþ bent bowes and bry3t brondes. *swords*

² I.e. Dedicated to a spiritual way of life

39 While alle þys lymes arn wel at on, *As long as*
 Þe body in good plyt it stondes. *condition*

(6)

Mannys rybbes y likne now –
 42 Flesch and skyn in body hydes – *hide/conceal [them]*
 To men of lawe, is to alow *[which] exists (i.e. the law); take into account*
 Þat kepes in loue boþe sydes. *What; harmony*
 45 Rybbes to resoun þou3 þey bow,³
 So lawe doþ, ofte in fauour bydes, *of both parties*
 Tyl ground be sou3t þere lawe doþ grow,
 48 Ende in charite, þat no man chydes. *complains about*

(7)

I likne þe thies, flesch and bon,
 Þat beren þe body quantite, *main part of*
 51 To marchaundes, in perile ride and gon, *go [on foot]*
 Bryngen wynnyng, gold and fee, *profit; movable property*
 Make hi3e houses of lym and ston, *lofty; mortar*
 54 Mayntene burghē, toun and cyte, *Support*
 Welþe and worschip in here won, *renown; dwelling*
 And good houshold of gret plente. *prosperity*

(8)

57 Mannys leggis likne y may
 To alle craftes þat worche wiþ handes, *crafts[men]*
 For al þe body beren þay,
 60 As a tre þat bereþ wandes. *branches*
 Þe feet to lykne y wole assay
 To alle trewe tylyers of landes, *faithful*
 63 Þe plough, and alle þat dygge in clay;
 Alle þe world on hem standes.

(9)

The toes of þe mennys feet,
 66 Þo y likne to trewe hyne, *servants*
 Þat trauayle boþe in drye and weet, *work (v.)*
 In þurst, in hungere and in pyne,
 69 In het, in cold, in snow and slet, *sleet*
 Many hi3e none er þey dyne, *high; noon; [can] eat*
 And wiþ good mete selde met; *solid food; seldom; encounter*
 72 But after howsel, þey drynke no wyn. *Except; in conformity with; Eucharist*

³ Just as the ribs bend to the extent that is reasonably required

(10)

- Toes helpeþ man fro fal to ryse;
 He may not stonde þat haþ no toon,
 75 Lepe ne renne, ne ryde in syse, *in the normal way*
 Wrastle ne fy3te, ne put þe ston. *put the stone [in contest]*
 3if seruant þe maystere refuse, *refuses [to obey]*
 78 Þe seruant lyuyng sone were gon. *livelihood*
 And maystres, þou3 þey ben wyse, *if*
 Wiþ out seruant lyue not alon.

(11)

- 81 I likne þe wombe, and þat wiþ ynne, *stomach*
 To botemeles purs, þat moche doþ take;
 To couetous no wyket pynne; *the avaricious; wicket [gate]; [is] locked*
 84 To glotoun þe garner wyd open make. *the glutton; mouth (litt. storehouse); [is] opened wide*
 Þe wombe preyed þe mouþ to blynne: *pleased; stop moving*
 Þou etest and drynkest, þat y ake. *ache (v.)*
 87 To slepe, quod þe ey3e, we may not wynne *manage*
 Þe wrecched wombe so doþ vs wake. *keeps us awake*

(12)

- We dulle of heryng, quod þe ere. *get dull*
 90 We dase for dronken, quod þe ey3e, *get befuddled*
 I wende but o mone þere were, *thought; one moon*
 And me þou3te two y sey3e. *saw*
 93 Quod þe handis: fro mouþ may we not vs were. *against; defend*
 Quod þe mouþ: y drank while y my3te drye. *dry out*
 Allas, quod þe feet, alle we bere,
 96 And 3oure bargayn dere abye. *pay dearly for your dealings*

(13)

- The handes and feet þe mouþ gan preye:
 Let vs thre dayes reste,
 99 Wiþ alle þyn oþere lymes pleye, *play/enjoy ourselves with*
 Wiþ felaschip, frend and geste. *guests*
 Þe mouþ in anger he dede saye: *grudgingly*
 102 Þes þre dayes do 3our best.
 Al þat tyme, ny3t ne daye,
 No mete ne drynk come in my brest.

(14)

- 105 Thre dayes the mouþ dede faste,
 Tyl wombe calde þe mouþ vnkynde. *cruel*
 Vn[b]lynde thyn handes, are þey faste. *free (v.); tied*

- 108 Stere, and lete þe mylle grynde. *Start moving*
 Quod þe eren: oure heryng is at þe laste. *at an end*
 Quod eyen: we dase, and waxe blynd. *are growing blind*
- 111 Quod handes and feet: oure strengþe is paste.
 Quod brayn and herte: vs wantes mynde. *we lack; [sound] mind*

(15)

- Quod þe mouþe: 3e playne whyle y ete,
 114 And while y faste 3e make gret doel. *lamentations*
 Quod hondes and feet: also we gete *while*
 Þat þou spendest eche a deel, *[Of] what; consume; every part*
 117 We may play, swynke and swete, *labour (v.)*
 While mouþe in mesure makeþ his mele. *as needed; meal*
 For mesure kepeþ kynde hete, *preserves; body heat necessary for life*
 120 And al þat tyme we fare wele. *are in good health*

(16)

- I likne a kyngdom in good astate *Nota bene*
 To stalworþe man, my3ty in hele. *powerful; in good physical condition*
- 123 While non of his lymes oþer hate,
 He is my3ty wiþ an oþer to dele. *able; somebody else*
 3if eche of his lymes wiþ oþer debate, *quarrel (v.)*
- 126 He waxeþ syk, for flesch is frele.
 His enemys wayte erly and late, *becomes; weak*
 In his feblenese on hym to stele. *creep up to/stalk*

(17)

- 129 And hed were fro þe body stad, *If; separated*
 Noþer partye were set at nou3t, *Either; considered worthless*
 And body wiþoute armes sprad. *spread out*
- 132 Were armes wiþ oute handis ou3t?
 Ne handis but þey fyngres had? *anything*
 Wiþoute fingere what were wrou3t? *Or; unless*
 135 Þes lymes makeþ hed ful glad, *made*
 And al þe body, and it be sou3t. *These; joyful*

(18)

- 3if a man hurte þy fynger or too, *toe*
- 138 But þou make deffens o ferre,⁴
 Leg or arm may take þe fro,
 To body or hed aunte hym herre.⁵ *venture (v.); higher*

⁴ Unless you keep your distance in defending yourself

⁵ He may venture higher, to the body or the head

- 141 Ensamble to kyngdom y set this so:⁶
 And oure frendis be destroyed by werre, If
 Pan kepe þe wisely fro þy foo;
 144 For wiþ alle his myȝt he wole come nerre. nearer

(19)

- God saue þis man is so deuysed: *may save; [who]; formed*
 Hed and body, alle lymes in kynde. *in their natural state*
 147 But þere as vertues ben despysed, *if on the other hand*
 To preye to God þey waste here wynde. *breath*
 God leue þat synne may be refused, *grant; got rid of*
 150 And of dedly synnes vs vnbynde, *release*
 And eche stat in his kynde be vsed.⁷ *according to; nature; employed*
 God of his mercy haue vs in mynde. Amen *may remember us*

NOTES

title Robbins (1975, p. 1421) has the title ‘The state compared to man’s body’.

1–7 For a discussion of the medieval view of the faculties which the human body and soul exercise, see Lewis (1964, pp. 152–74).

2 *and it be souȝt*] metrical filler; see also l. 136.

14 *pryncypal*] Treated as a noun in *MED* s.v. *principal*, but clearly adjectival to *chef*. This line and the following are punctuated accordingly, which finds support in the way these lines are quoted in *MED* s.v. *imaginge* (*ger.*).

24 I.e. to be beheaded or hanged.

26 *To*] MS *In*. Kail also has *To*, but does not mark it as an emendation.

29 *prest*] Kail glosses ‘ready’, which is hardly plausible in this context.

55 Cf. XI.94: *Here wele and worschip, in euery won.*

107 *Vnbynde*] MS *Vnkynde* does not make sense. Kail does not emend, but adds the note: [? for *Vnbynde*]. There seems little doubt that the close similarity with immediately preceding *vnkynde* must have caused the scribal error. *Vnbynde* fits the context perfectly.

126 Proverbial. See Whiting, F 272, ‘The flesch is frail’. Echoes Matt. 26:41, ‘... the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’.

⁶ I use this as an illustration of a kingdom, as follows

⁷ And each estate [of the body politic] may function as it was ordained by nature

XVI

A REMEMBRAUNCE OF LIJ FOLYES¹

SUMMARY

As the note to the title explains, the principal motive for this poem is the assassination in 1419 of the Duke of Burgundy and Flanders, although nowhere in the poem is there any explicit mention of the murder itself. What is discussed at length are the duke's follies, their immediate consequences for Flanders and the Flemish themselves, as well as the general lessons to be drawn from these mishaps for the benefit of the author's public.

The accusing finger is first pointed to the self-serving, smooth talkers in the duke's retinue, and their fateful influence. Their advice resulted in an ill-considered, naive understanding with the French Dauphin, as frivolous as buying without paying, as being too intimate with one's superiors, or as making empty assertions and ineffectual threats. The duke's useless and risky earlier war with the Dauphin, also prompted by wicked courtiers, was equally ill-considered. Underrating the strength of his enemy and oblivious of the consequences, Burgundy could not win for lack of the necessary means. It taught him no lessons. The intended alliance with the Dauphin against the king of England was to lead the duke into an unlawful enterprise, with new dangers he did not recognize. The warnings of prudent men remained unheeded, and the plan caused the death of the Duke and the ruin of Flanders, a once thriving country, now in disorder and without peace. It was seen as God's punishment for earlier sins, when the secular authorities were curtailing the Church's rights to preach and teach the Gospel.

It is the story of a Godless, unthinking, irresponsible, loose-living ruler, who gambles all and everything away to win it all, but loses all, and is punished by God accordingly, unlamented by the rest of the world. After all, man has only four true friends, and these he will always find at his side: illness, sorrow, death and fear. They spare neither the poor nor the rich, bringing them meekly to their knees to render account of their deeds.

¹ *A reflection on fifty-two foolish acts*

TEXT

(1)

- Loke how Flaundres doþ fare wiþ his folyhede;
 Durste no man dygge after trouþe wiþ no manere toles.
 3 To wynne wrongly wele, wod þey gan wede,²
 But werkis of wys men were cast vnder stoles.
 Glosers counseled lordis for to take mede,
 6 To maken hem riche, and here lordis pore foles.
 Whan þe souereyns were set here sogettis to drede,
 Þe glosers skulked away for shame of here sooles.³
 9 Falsed shal neuere ben ateynt,
 Til Iuge here eche mannys pleynt,
 Redresse and make an ende,
 12 Or ellys to mercy bende,
 Make hem kyssen and be frende
 Þat were fon feynt.

folly
Dared; tools of any kind
wrongfully; wealth; wildly; went mad
acts (n.); seats (i.e. were disregarded)
Flatterers; accept bribes
themselves (i.e. the glosers); dupes
lords; brought; subjects

Falsity; condemned
hears; complaint
Puts right [a wrong]
else; is inclined

enemies; deceitful

(2)

- 15 Fyfty folyes ben and two;
 Alle þo y wole mynne among.
 To triste in trete to his fo,
 18 Þat hap begyled hem ofte and long;
 And hate hem þat telle hym so,
 And wilfully wole suffre wrong,
 21 It is worthy he smerte and be wo,
 Þat of his owen skyn wole kerue a thong.
 Þat chepen moche, and not han to paye,
 24 And wiþ his lord to homly wole playe,
 Swere moche, and not be trowed;
 Boste moche, and not allowed;
 27 Threte alle men, and neuere on bowed:
 All are folyes, þat y say.

those; tell together (i.e. enumerate)
trust (v.); by [concluding] a treaty
betrayed
those
willingly; are prepared
fitting; suffer pain
from; carve
buy; have [anything]
on too familiar terms; joke (v.)
Swear; but; trusted
Brag; appreciated
Threatens; no one ever; bowed [in submission]

(3)

- He is a fool þat werre wole wake,
 30 Þat may not maynten it wiþ mede;
 And so moche vndertake,
 Pat wot wel he may not spede;
 33 And of his neyþebour his enemy make,
 For a straunge mannys dede.

stir up
back up; bribes
take on
cannot; achieve his goal

unknown

² I.e. Without legal justification they went in mad pursuit of wealth

³ *The glosers skulked away out of embarrassment of (the baseness of) their souls*

- And he þat mesure wole forsake,
 36 And nedles put hym self in drede,
 Of mannys dep̄ haue no rouþe,
 But hate hem þat tellen hym trouþe,
 39 Loue hym þat cherische hym in synne,
 And suche games bygynne
 Where þat he wot he may not wynne,⁴
 42 But besyen hym in slouþe. *restraint/caution; abandon
jeopardy
does not regret
those
hold in high esteem*
- (4)
 He is a fool þat no good can,
 Ne non wole lere, but slow in dede.
 45 A gret fool y holde þat man
 Pat of his enemys haþ no drede.
 Purgh suche foly Flaundres began,
 48 Of after perile þey tok non hede. *later danger(s)*
 Hit is worthy he ete bred of bran,
 Pat wiþ floure his foo wil fede,
 51 And truste al in gloser charmes,
 In hyndryng in worschip of armes,
 And lette lawe it mot not syt, *of a flatterer; spells
To the detriment of; respect for
obstruct; [so that it] cannot; function*
 54 And conscience away flyt,
 May brynge a lord, er þat he wyt,
 Emyddis grete harmes. *becomes aware [of it]
In the midst of*
- (5)
 57 Flaundres was þe richest land, and meriest to mynne;
 Now is it wrappid in wo, and moche welþe raft. *most delightful to remember
deprived of [its] great wealth
personal gain*
 For defaute of Iustice, and singulere to wynne,
 60 Þey were rebelle, to ryse craft aʒen craft. *rebels; force; against
Their; shared in; embroiled in*
 Here lord had part of þe foly þey were wounden ynne,
 For thy he les his lordshipe, and here fraunchise raft.⁵
 63 Here enemys lawhen hem to skorne and seyn: for synne,
 Of here banere of grace God broken haþ þe shaft. *ridicule (v.); because of [their]
[protective] banner*
 When prelat is forbode to preche,
 66 No trewe man trouþe dar teche, *dares*
 Encresyng of temperalte
 Suspende spiritualte: *[The] increasing [role]; secular authority
Puts aside; ecclesiastical authority*
 69 What land is gouerned in þat degre,
 May wayte after wreche. *manner
expect [God's] vengeance*

⁴ Which in the [prevailing] circumstances he knows he cannot win

⁵ For that he lost his honour, and they were robbed of their freedom

(6)

- I holde hym a fool, þou3 he be wys,
 72 Þat spekeþ among men of name
 Þat at his wysdom set no prys, *consider of no value*
 But skorne hym and don blame; *ridicule (v.); criticize*
- 75 And he þat telleþ where peryle lys,
 And gete no þonk, but harm and shame.
 And he þat pleyneþ y holde hym nys, *complains; take for a fool*
 78 Þat get no mendys, but dowble grame. *receives; damages; grief*
 By þese poyntes Flaundes was lest, *Because of; ruined*
 Now is it out of rule and of rest; *in disorder; without peace*
- 81 Drede is here chef gayte. *joy*
 So eche man on hem bayte, *everybody baits them*
 Þat 3et þey honge in awayte *wait in expectation*
 84 Of a newe conquest. *yet another*

(7)

- He þat my3t thryue, and nel not thee, *but; will not/is unable to; prosper*
 Ne his owen harmes knawe,⁶
- 87 Apert ne in preuytee, *Openly; nor; to himself*
 Serue God for loue ne awe, *out of love; out of fear*
 Ne gouerne wel his owen degre, *protects; station in life*
- 90 Ne rule hym self in ry3twys lawe, *conducts; in [conformity with] just*
 Whan wyse men fro hym fle,
 Pen God his grace wole fro hem drawe.
- 93 Þat moche wynneþ, and no thyng wole haue, *[He is a fool] who; but keeps nothing*
 But 3eue it away to nedeles þat craue, *[who] needlessly; beg for it*
 A3ens conscience despit, *In despite of*
- 96 Borwe moche and neuere quyt: *pays back*
 When God for þat gylt smyt, *strikes [in punishment of]*
 What glosere can þat wounde saue. *heal*

(8)

- 99 Þat freek may wel be holden a fool *man*
 Þat wayueþ wit, and worcheþ by wille, *eschews; sound sense; acts; wilfully*
 And skippe into sclandre scol,⁷
- 102 And scorne hym þat telleþ hym skylle;⁸
 And lyue in Lenton as in 3ool *Lent; as if; Yule (i.e. Christmas time)*
 His flesch in foly to fulfille. *gratify*
- 105 Pou3 þe dotarde deye in dool, *imbecile; distress*

⁶ *And does not acknowledge his own moral evil-mindedness*

⁷ *And is quick to enter the School for Scandal (i.e. the company in which one learns to act disgracefully)*

⁸ *And treats with contempt who teach(es) him proper conduct*

	Pe ry3twys nel not rewe his ylle.		<i>bewail; misfortune</i>
	Who so wil not knowe his awen astat,		<i>the state of his own affairs</i>
108	Ne deliuere chekkys er þat he be mat, ⁹		
	He shal haue worldis wondryng,		<i>derision</i>
	And his soule hyndryng,		<i>harm</i>
111	And ay in paynes pondryng;		<i>for ever; pondering</i>
	To mende þanne is to late.		<i>remedy (v.); then</i>
	(9)		
	Of alle folk vppon fold y fynde but foure trewe,		<i>in the world; faithful</i>
114	Þat don here deuere dewely, and take no mede:		<i>duties; duly; payment</i>
	Syknes is oon, and sorw doþ sewe,		<i>comes next</i>
	Þe thridde hat deþ, and þe fierþe drede.		<i>is called</i>
117	Pey clayme vs by custom, for þey oure kyn knewe, ¹⁰	Nota	
	And endid wiþ oure aunsetres tyl þey to erþe 3ede.		<i>fell [in death]</i>
	Pey spare prynce ne pore, old ne newe,		<i>young</i>
120	For þey crepe into his cors, and cloþe hem in his wede.		<i>body; garments</i>
	Drede bryngeþ man to buxomnes;		<i>meekness</i>
	Sorwe of herte makeþ synnes les,		<i>Repentance; sincere; less [important]</i>
123	Syknes breþe stekenyng,		<i>[makes] the breath; smell offensively</i>
	And bowe to a bekenyng,		<i>And [makes man]; summons (n.)</i>
	And bryngeþ hem to rekenyng,		<i>an accounting</i>
126	Tyl deþ alle redresse.		<i>resolves</i>

NOTES

title Robbins (1959, p. 50, and 1975, p. 1421) has this poem under the title ‘The follies of the Duke of Burgundy’. Kail (p. xxi) deduces that ‘XVI ... must have originated in 1419, because it contains references to the folly and to the assassination of John, duke of Burgundy and Flanders. While Henry V was successfully advancing in France, the Dauphin and the Duke of Flanders made war upon each other. At last John, moved by the representations of some friends, agreed to an interview with the Dauphin in order to form an alliance against the King of England. On that occasion the duke was assassinated by the followers of the Dauphin’. For a detailed account of the events that led up to, and ensued from John the Fearless’ assassination at Montereau on 10 September 1419, see e.g. Keen (1973, pp. 369–75).

20 *wole*] Kail *wolle* (err.). Glosses ?‘wish’.

22 Proverbial: to have oneself to blame for misfortune. See Whiting, T 216, ‘To carve a thong of one’s own skin’; a variation of S 652, ‘To have a staff (yard, whip, wand, rod, hammer) for oneself’.

33–34 ‘Instead of assisting his cousin against the King of England, he made war upon him, and so promoted the cause of a stranger’ (Robbins, 1959, p. 272).

⁹ *Nor delivers a check before he is checkmated himself* (i.e. nor delivers a blow before he is attacked himself)

¹⁰ *They claim us according to an old tradition, for they knew us people [already]*

- 33 *nei3ebour* = the Dauphin.
- 34 *straunge mannys* = Henry V of England.
- 37–38 ‘He did not scruple at killing the Duke of Orleans; he even defended that deed, and openly boasted of it, and nobody durst call it a crime’ (Kail, p. xxi).
- 40 *bygynne*] Robbins (1959, p. 51) erroneously has *begynne*.
- 46 *enemys* = France.
- 49–50 Proverbial. See Whiting, B 513, ‘He is worthy to eat bread of bran who feeds his foe with flour’. A variation of C 153 (‘Charity begins with oneself’) and M 63 (‘Each man had liefer do better to himself than to another’).
- 59 Cf. XIII.81, *Singulerte is sotyle þefte. syngulere*] Kail *singulere* (err.).
- 60 Cf. III.33, *Whan craft riseþ a3ens craft*.
- 62 *MED* s.v. *lesen* (v.(4)) notes ‘chiefly early SW’ against *pt. les*.
- 63 Cf. XII.147, *Oþer kyngdomes lau3he vs not to skorn*.
- 65–70 The death of John of Burgundy (alluded to in l. 62) is here seen as God’s *wreche* (l. 70) for the restraints imposed on the Church by the secular authorities in Flanders, not, as Kail (p. xxi) maintains ‘as a punishment for the assassination of the Duke of Orleans (l. 63 *et sqq*)’.
- 66 *trewe man*] a term strongly reminiscent of Lollard usage. See Hudson (1978, p. 146, n. 50).
- 86 *knaawe*] A Northern form, colonized for rhyming purposes only (*knaawe-awe-lawe*).
- 87 *in preuytee*] Robbins (1959, p. 272) glosses ‘in secrecy’; however, ‘to himself’ is more apposite in the context of the confession of sins (see *MED* s.v. *privete* (n.) sub 2.(c)).
- 88 *for love ne awe*] *MED* s.v. *awe* (n.) sub 3.(c) glosses ‘for love nor dread; also, on any account, at all’. I have opted for the more pregnant literal rendering ‘neither out of love nor out of fear’.
- 100 Cf. the refrain line in V: *þat leueþ wit and worcheþ by wille*.
- 101 *sclaundre scol*] Richard Sheridan used a similar phrase for his comedy *The School for Scandal* (1777). I have not been able to establish whether Sheridan borrowed the phrase from the Poems or from any other source, medieval or otherwise. *MED* quotes l. 101 s.v. *sclaundre* sub 2. as its sole source for the phrase *sclaundre scol*.
- 108 Proverbial. See Whiting, C 169, ‘To say checkmate’.
- 119 *ne*] Robbins (1959, p. 51) erroneously has *no*.
- 123 *stekenyng*] *MED* s.v. *stinken* (v.) sub 2a.(b) notes ‘?read *stenkyng*’, indeed the most probable reading.

XVII

LOUE THAT GOD LOUETH

whom

SUMMARY

The heart of the poem is God's appeal to man to win his soul. The author works towards that high point with a preliminary appeal of his own: follow and love God in all his ways, because he is worth loving. He created us in his image, he paid for our sins with his death on the cross, and he is all-forgiving. But we must not love him, or do good works, out of fear for God's retribution, or to earn heavenly bliss. We should love him just for himself, because he is good, because he set us free.

Then follows God's passionate, direct appeal to us: first of all, be deserving of my love, keep away from the pleasures of the world, return everything you acquired wrongfully, and do not steal, flatter or lie. Do good works, do penance and give alms, but above all give me your heart, because all the treasures and beauty of the world, the bones of all the saints' shrines, they mean nothing to me compared with man alive, in expectation of his resurrection. I gave you my love and paid the highest price for it: my death on the cross. Out of love for you I became man myself. If you return my love, your reward will be immense, the bliss of heaven. But if you reject me, my wrath will be terrible: hell and its fiends will await you. And even so, you still belong to me, just as everything else in this world, in heaven and in hell.

Who is your true friend, Satan or I? Satan will let you down. What I offer you is my true love, far more than what the world has to offer. If you turn to me and leave earthly desires behind, you will find me a loyal friend. That I can guarantee, on Jesus' redeeming sacrifice, a herb of incomparable beauty, whose leaves will heal you in times of need.

TEXT

(1)

That ilke man wole lerne wel
To loue God wiþ al his myȝt,
3 Þat loue in his herte fele.
Þere God doþ loue, loue þou ryȝt;
There God doþ hate euerydele,
6 Hate it boþe day and nyȝt,

same

Who

Where; what is [morally] right

utterly

3eue hym noþer mete ne mele,
But flyt hym fere out of 3oure sy3t.

food nor meal (i.e. food in whatever form)
drive

(2)

9 Many gret[e] causes is
To loue God why men ou3te.
He shop vs lyk ymage his,
12 And wiþ his deþ fro pyne vs bou3t.
And 3ut, þou3 we don ofte amys,
For eche a gylt he betep vs nou3t;
15 And we þenke to amende, he profreþ to kys.
Man of loue he haþ besou3t.¹

[There are] a great many reasons

created

misdeed; punishes

If; are minded; make amends; offers

(3)

3if a lord 3eue fee or rent
18 For to do a gret office,
To serue hym wel is þyn atent,
For thy profyt, but not for his.
21 For he fyndeþ þe þy vaunsement,
Py loue vpon þe profyt lys.
Suche worldly louers are gostly blent;
24 Suche loue to God is cold as yse.

wages; income

important; task

intention

considers; advancement

[Whilst]; in ... lies (i.e. depends)

spiritually; blind

ice

(4)

3if þou serue God for helle drede,
Or loue God for his blisse,
27 Þat loue is worth no parfyt mede:
Þou [sechest] thy profyt, and not hisse.
To pyne ne blis take non hede,
30 But loue God for good he is.
Suche loue to God his erande doþ spede,
And pleseþ best to God y wys.

fear

the bliss [he bestows on you]

full; reward (n.)

torments [of hell]; [heavenly] bliss

because; [the all-]good

advances his cause

certainly

Nota de
amore dei
&c.

(5)

33 Fleschly man may do wele
Þe seuene werkes of mercy þat God bed –
3eue pore folk mete and mele,
36 Herberwe, drynk, cloþe and fed –
For syngulere profyt, eche a dele,
For drede of pyne and couetys of mede.
39 Loue God ouer alle, for good he is;
To pyne ne blisse take non hede.

Worldly; may well do

dictated

Shelter; food

[Just] for; selfish; entirely

covetousness

above

¹ *He has entreated man for [his] love*

(6)

- 3if þou sette loue in þat degre: *value (v.); so highly*
 42 To loue God for he þe wrou3t, *because*
 Þan make þou hym as he dede þe, *regard (v.)*
 Þan loue for loue euene is brou3t. *on equal terms*
 45 3if þou loue God for he made þe fre, *because*
 Þat dy3ed for the, to blisse þe bou3t, *Who; died; redeemed*
 Þan dy3e þou for hym, as he dy3ed for þe;
 48 3ut heuene blisse þou quytest hym nou3t. *But; requite; not at all*

(7)

- 3it o thyng þere is byhende, *one; left*
 Man, þat God askeþ of the:
 51 Alle worldys delys fro þyn herte wende, *pleasures; ban (v.)*
 Wiþ alle þyn herte loue þou me.
 Py swete þou3tes [þou] me sende, *pleasing (i.e. to God)*
 54 For worldis goodis myn are he. *are (already); they*
 Loue me gostly, þat am þy frende, *devoutly, [me,] who is*
 Þanne al euyl shal fro þe fle.

(8)

- 57 Þat loue me gostly y can assay, *Who; test*
 For gostly loue in herte y sou3t.
 Do worldly thyng fro þyn herte away,
 60 And haue me principal in þy þou3t. *foremost*
 Be lordē and haue richesse þou may,
 Worldis richesse for man was wrou3t,
 63 Gostly loue, þat is my pray, *property*
 But worldly goodis in heuene comeþ nou3t. *nota* *come; not*

(9)

- For gold and syluer and precyous stones, *For [all their]*
 66 Swetnes of floures, erþely bewte, *flowers; beauty*
 Þe shrynes wiþ alle seyntes bones,
 In heuene were foul felþe to se. *would be; filth*
 69 Tyl body and soule a3en arn ones, *reunited*
 Mad parfyt in claryte,
 Saue God hym self, in heuene wones, *in splendour*
 72 Þe principal mankynde shal be. *Except; [who] lives*
Man [on earth] takes first place

(10)

- God, how may y, man, bygynne
 Wiþ myn herte to loue þe.
 75 Repente, and wylne no more synne, *desire (v.)*

So mowe [we] frendis be.

Good soule sybbe to my kynne,

[is spiritually] kindred; nature

78 For y made it lik to me;

Mankynde y tok, a mayden wiþ ynne,

Human form; assumed; in [the womb of]

So, gostly and bodyly, breþeren be [we].

(11)

81 Who loueþ God, he wil bygynne

For to folwe Goddis lore:

commandments

Loke where he dede wrongly wynne,

immorally; made profits

84 Make amendis, aþen restore.

return (v.)

þoure loue fro me þe parten o twynne

from; have separated

For worldis worship, ryches in store;

honour

87 Heuene þates þe steken and pynne,

shut; lock [against yourself]

þat þe schulde saue þe haue forlore.

What; lost

(12)

To gete loue þus bygynne:

90 Wiþ clene herte and swete þouþt,

Wiþ trewe tong, not falsely wynne,

honest

Ne stele, ne flatre, ne lyþe nouþt.

flatter; lie

93 Do ryþtwys dede, out and ynne,

Act righteously; everywhere

Loke þy werkys be euene wrouþt,

Take care; justly; performed

Do almes and penaunce, and leue þy synne;

96 Wiþ þese þre loue is bouþt.

(13)

God spekeþ to man, and lerneþ lore,

teaches [his] bidding

þe comaundementis and þe Crede.

99 þeue me þy loue, y aske no more,

Wiþ al þy herte, in loue and drede.

And þou nylt þeue it me, warne me byfore,

If; will not; in advance

102 Sette pris to selle it, loue and bede,

ask and bid [a price] (i.e. make a bargain)

I wole þeue the my self þefore.

you; in return

Where myþtest þou haue a betere mede.

get; better value

(14)

105 And þou nelt þeue ne selle it me,

will not; it (i.e. your love)

Aþens me þou wilt debate,

fight (v.)

þan wil y gon away fro þe,

108 And þelde to þe hate for hate.

pay; with

My face wiþ loue shalt þou not se,

But steke þe wiþoute heuene þate,

exclude; outside

111 Fro alle vertues and charyte,

Bereft of

Wiþ helle houndes, in endeles date.

eternally

(15)

Haue y þy loue, so may þou quyte;²

114 I mad þe lik ymage to me.

in my image

And 3if þe þenke þat was to lyte,

little

Þanne þenk y dyed on rode tre.

cross [on which Christ died]

117 Pou3 þou trespas, y do not smyte,

cause affliction

But byd 3if þou wilt mendid be.

ask; cured

And þou be lost, whom wiltow wyte,

blame (v.)

120 Is it long on me or þe.

because of

(16)

Discrecioun of 3ong and old,

Discriminating; between

Of alle þynge, nou3t ou3te;

ought not to exist

123 Of alle þat may be bou3t and sold,

Loue for loue is euenest bou3te.³

with; on the most equal terms

Whan worldis loue doþ fayle and folde,

crumples

126 Goddis loue fayleþ nou3t.

Trewe loue makeþ men be bolde,

fearless

Wiþ loue felawship to gydre is brou3t.

friendship; formed

(17)

129 For loue God com fro heuene toure,

tower (i.e. palace)

In mayden Mary tok mankynde.

For oure swete, he drank ful soure,⁴

sweetness; sourness

132 Where my3t we trewere loue fynde.

His loue passeþ worldis tresoure,

3af sy3t in helle to gostly blynde.

135 And we wole knytte his loue to oure,

If

For soþe, þat knot shal neuere vnbynde.

(18)

Haue y þy loue, so may þou gete

win

138 Þat loue wole þy soule saue.

That love [which]

Among myn angels haue a sete

In ioye of heuene, as seyntes haue.

141 3if þou nelt, y wol þe þrete

do not want to; threaten

² Ll. 113–14: *If I have your love, [then] that is how you may repay the debt you owe me, / [Namely that] I created you in my own image*

³ I.e. Receiving love by offering love is the fairest deal

⁴ I.e. We may enjoy the sweetness of God's forgiveness, because he drank the bitter vinegar and gall on the cross

In helle pyne be fendis knaue. *the devil's servant*
 Wip þy conscience þou trete *come to terms*
 144 Wheþer is þe leuere for to haue. *Which [of the two]; more desirable*

(19)

And þou madde in þy mood *are mad [enough]; mind*
 To werne me þe loue þou has, *deny*
 147 I wole caste on þe myn herte blod, *shed (v.)*
 To bere witnessse þou forfetest gras; *As proof; forfeit; [my] grace*
 And my vengeance, þat is so wood, *terrible*
 150 Wip helle houndis in fyre þe chas. *the fire [of hell]; drives (v.)*
 Pou hast fre wille, knowest euylle and good;
 Chese where wyltow take þy plas. *place*

(20)

153 And þou of þy loue daungere make,⁵ *resistance*
 What may thy loue profyte me.
 And þou3 þou woldest me forsake,
 156 Out of my lordschipe þou my3t not fle. *power*
 Angels bry3t, and deueles blake,
 In helle and heuene, my lordschipes be. *[under] my control*
 159 Þere be no mo wayes to take,
 Is loue or hate more profyt to þe.⁶

(21)

3if þy loue to þy flesch doþ bende, *submits*
 162 To greue me þou dost bygynne. *make me angry*
 3if þou loue þe worlde, þat wole make ende, *will be the end*
 Of hym þou shalt more lese þan wynne. *By; lose*
 165 3if þou be suget, and loue þe fende, *subject to; Satan*
 He wole þe hate, and 3eue pyne for synne.
 Loue me, y am God, þy frende,
 168 And oure loues shal neuere twynne. *be separated*

(22)

Wheþer trewe loue go or sende,
 Hym thar not tary in his dede.⁷ *He must not be delayed*
 171 When mede haþ leue to stande byhynde,⁸

⁵ *If you withhold your love [from me]*

⁶ *What profits you more, love or hate?*

⁷ Ll. 169–70: *Whether true love goes [forth] or sends [forth]* (i.e. to find a friend in need, see l. 174), / *He must not tarry in the act*

⁸ *When worldly reward is allowed to stay behind* (i.e. is no longer of importance)

- Panne trewe loue his erande may spede. *mission; accomplish*
 Pou3 trewe loue haue lityl to spende,
 174 Euere he fyndeþ a frend at nede *Invariably; in need*
 Þat fro his foon wole hym fende. *Who; defend against*
 Who so is loued, hym thar not drede. *need not be afraid*
- (23)
- 177 God sayþ: y haue mercyes to dele; *give*
 Þat wole amende, no more do mys. *Who; wrong*
 My mercyes þousandes mo ken fele *feellenjoy*
 180 Þan þousandis worldis wikkidnes.⁹
 His herte blod wrot oure hele, *salvation*
 And Ihesus body þe parchemyn is; *parchment* (i.e. the document it was written on)
 183 Wiþ trewe loue he prented oure sele,¹⁰ *pressed; seal*
 Þat is heritage of oure blis.
- (24)
- Pere is an herbe þat hatteþ ‘trewe loue’, *is called*
 186 And by name it haþ no pere, *most certainly*
 Is lykned to Ihesus, y may proue: *[as] I can demonstrate*
 His handes and feet þe leues were,
 189 His herte was wiþ a spere þurgh shoue, *thrust through*
 Mannys loue was hym so dere.
 What soule is syk, lay þat herbe aboue, *Every soul that; on it*
 192 Hit makeþ hool al yfere. *all together* (i.e. entirely)
- (25)
- God biddiþ vs do no þynges but two:
 In loue and drede to hym bende; *submit*
 195 Lede þy soule lustes fro, *away from*
 World and flesch, and fro þe fende. *devil*
 Ihesus herte was cleued so, *pierced* (i.e. by the spear); *as it was*
 198 To lete out trewe loue to his frende. *allow to be poured out*
 In that blisse God graunte vs go, *walk*
 Pere trewe loue woneþ wiþ outhen ende.

NOTES

title ll. 4–5 point to the meaning ‘love whom God loves’, rather than ‘love who loves God’.

3 *mele*] Serves as rhyme tag.

28 *sechest*] Inserted as in Kail.

⁹ Ll. 179–80: *Thousands are able to feellenjoy my mercy more! Than thousands the wickedness of the world*

¹⁰ I.e. He confirmed His covenant with repentant man with the seal of His true love.

35–36 Of the seven corporal works of mercy, the first six are based on Matt. 25:35–36, ‘For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me’. The seventh: ‘bury the dead’, is inspired by Tobit 1:17–19. Here, only four of the seven are mentioned.

63–64 The logical, reverse, order of the lines is prevented by the necessities of rhyme.

67–68 A Wycliffite notion, for which see the eighth of the ‘Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards’ (Hudson, 1978, p. 27, and 1988, p. 307).

69 The Christian article of faith that body and soul will be reunited on the day of resurrection finds expression throughout the New Testament, e.g. in John 5:28–29, ‘... all that are in the graves ... shall come forth ... onto the resurrection of life’, and in the text of the Creed: ‘... I believe in ... the resurrection of the body, and the everlasting life’.

76 *we]* MS *3e*.

80 *we]* MS *wet*.

88 *3e]* Kail *ye*.

102 *bede]* Kail renders ‘prayer’, but *loue* and *bede* are both imperatives here, like *sette*. The set phrase *loven and beden* (‘asking and offering a price, to bargain’) appears in *MED* s.v. *loven* (*v.*(2)) sub 3(a) with the meaning ‘ask a price for’, and s.v. *beden* (*v.*) sub 1(b), with the meaning ‘to offer (money for sth), bargain for’. Cf. Dutch ‘loven en bieden’.

129 *heuene toure]* Cf. the vision of heaven in *Piers Plowman*, Prov. 14, *I seigh a tour on a toft trieliche* (= choicely) *ymaked*, and I.12: ‘*The tour up the toft*, *quod she* (= Holy Church), ‘*Truthe* (= God the Father) *is therinne*’.

131 *he drank ful soure]* See Matt. 27:34, ‘They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink’. As here, the second half of the verse is often disregarded. Whiting gives numerous ‘sweet and sour’ proverbs, see e.g. S 943, 945, 946, 947.

147 See Matt. 27:25, ‘Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children’.

179 *fele]* Kail glosses ‘much, many’, which makes for improbably distorted syntax.

181–83 The skin of Christ’s crucified body as the parchment on which is written the redeeming covenant between God and man is a common medieval metaphor known as the Charter of Christ. Repentant man pledges his love of God, and in return inherits heavenly bliss. In the so-called ‘Long Charter’ the metaphor is extended with detailed imagery, such as Christ’s blood as the ink with which the charter is written, and the wound in his side as the seal. Spalding (1914) provides a detailed discussion of the Charter of Christ.

196 Alludes to Eph. 6:11–12, ‘... that you may be able to stand against the whiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of the darkness of this world’. The following verses (Phil. 6:13–17) describe the armour of *Goddis kny3t* (see also XVIII.69 and note). The fixed sequence: ‘world’, ‘flesh’, and ‘devil’, is of common occurrence in ME literature, and generally referred to as ‘the three foes of man’, or ‘the unholy trinity’. See e.g. in *The Sayings of St. Bernard* the description of man’s three foes: his flesh, the world and the fiend (Furnivall, 1892–1901, pp. 760–61). For a more detailed discussion of ‘the three foes’, see Jeffrey (1992, pp. 850–51).

197 See John 19:34, ‘But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water’. The spear also pierced the heart, it is held, which was thus opened to enable Christ’s love to be poured out towards mankind. The Sacred Heart in Catholic symbolism always shows the mark of the spear.

XVIII

THE DECLARYNG OF RELIGIOUN

explanation

SUMMARY

The double meaning of *religioun* in the title ('a pious life' and 'a life in holy orders') is faithfully reflected in the poem itself. The writer's thoughts on *religioun* are sometimes worded in general terms, applying both to a religious life as such and to a life in holy orders; in other places *religioun* refers to a set of principles and rules of conduct specifically applying to the monastic life.

At the start the author identifies *religioun* with obedience to the rules of charity, chastity, contemplation and devotion. Further on in the poem there is mention, in various detail, of such 'house rules', as how to deal with the temptations of the flesh, about the tonsure, monastic habit, vigils, fasting, liturgical prayers, as well as rules about relations with the outside world. If and when to touch hands with secular persons, on correspondence with the secular world, buying and selling at a profit, possession of private property, hours of prayer and work.

In between these concrete subjects pertaining to the monastic life, we find the poet's thoughts on what constitutes a pious life in general, whether in holy orders or not. Preoccupation with worldly matters leaves no room for a spiritual life, a pure heart and moral judgement. Nor does hypocritical obedience to religious duties help to get nearer to God. We must work hard to emulate those more pious than we are, keep away from the loose livers, exercise humility and frugality, love friend and foe, and be charitable in matters of justice.

TEXT

(1)

Who þat wole knowe condicion
Of parfyt lyf in alle degre:¹
3 God is foundour of religion,
Obedyent to charyte.
Swete þou3t in deuocion
6 Is weddid to chastite;
In brennyng contemplacion,
Þe hi3est lyf of spiritualte.

desire (v.); what constitutes

religious orders

[the rule of] charity

[Spiritually] agreeable

Goes hand in hand

ardent; religious meditation

¹ *Of a life governed in all respects by religious/monastic vows*

(2)

- 9 The goode lyueres in spirituale,
 Þe worldly lyueres hem doþ hate;
 Wiþ occupacioun of temperalte
 12 Dryueþ relegeon out at þe 3ate,
 For besynesse of vanyte,
 Vaynglory and hy3e astate.
 15 Þat þus chaungen here degre,
 Þey come to heuene neuere or late.²
- Those who live a good life
 hate them
 Engaging in worldly matters
 [They] drive
 matters
 office
 Who; their ways*

(3)

- What is religion in mynde.³
 18 In clene herte is soule o prys,
 Out of þraldom doþ vnbynde,
 A louer of vertues, a hatere of vys.
 21 Eche soule is parfyt clerk of kynde
 In hy3e discrecion, and wys.
 Of soules men may no fooles fynde,
 24 But assente to þe flesch and make hym nys.
- [It means that]; pure; of great value
 [Which]; servitude (to sin); frees
 [And is]
 in essence
 moral judgement
 Among; cannot
 Unless; yield; [of] themselves; fools*

(4)

- Religeon is champion in batayle,
 Discomfites hys enemy;
 27 3if temptacions hym assayle,
 Þere he hath þe victory.
 Religeon is trewe trauayle
 30 In Goddis seruyce, neuere werye.
 Haue mede wiþ martyres he may not fayle,⁴
 Þat euere is redy for to dy3e.
- victor
 Defeats

 means; faithful; labour
 weary

 Who*

(5)

- 33 Werkys wiþ oute discrecion:
 Vaynglory in staat is brou3t.⁵
 And shrift wiþ oute contricion:
 36 In skorne þe sacrament þey sou3t.
 And preyere wiþ oute deuocion:
 Þou3 þey preye, God hereþ hem nou3t.
 39 Þe lippes turne prayers vp so down,
 Þat spekeþ oþer þan herte þou3t.
- [Pious] acts; moral discernment

 confession
 contempt; the Eucharist; participated in

 turn upside down (i.e. make the reverse of)*

² I.e. They have very small chance of attaining heaven

³ *What is a religious life as we understand it*

⁴ *He cannot fail to receive his reward with the martyrs (i.e. in heaven)*

⁵ *Vainglory that has come to be held in high regard*

(6)

- Cherische no vices in 3oure warde, (i.e. of the monastery)
 42 To serue God in good atent; *proper; attitude*
 And non wiþ other be to harde, *severe*
 Pat ben professed in 3oure couent;⁶
 45 Pey my3te forþenke it afterwarde *regret*
 Pey tok þe abyte, and wolde repente;
 Pey lese of God a gret rewarde *forfeit; from*
 48 Whan wille fro religeon is wente. *fervour; turned away from*

(7)

- A questyon of 3ow y craue – *ask*
 Resoun assoyleþ it by skille – *will argue it out*
 51 Who may here soules saue
 To were an abyte, wole or nelle. *By; will they or will they not*
 Penk on þy berþe, þenk on þy graue, *birth*
 54 Py fleschely lustes not fulfille, *gratify*
 For helle ne heuene shal no man haue,
 Mawgre his teeth, a3eyns his wille.⁷ *Against; [own] desires*

(8)

- 57 Pou3 þou be of gentyl blod, *noble ancestry*
 Penk alle com of Adam and Eue.
 Gadre not in propre worldis good;⁸ *[private] property*
 60 Pat nes no religeous, but worldis reue. *not [in accordance with]; spoils (n.)*
 Þe herre degre, þe mekere of mood.⁹
 Tak no vengeance, þou3 folk þe areue; *rob*
 63 Lat comon lawe stonde as hit stood, *be observed*
 Loke no proude herte þy charyte meue. *Beware; affect*

(9)

- Haue non enuye, day ne ny3t,
 66 To goode lyuers bet þan 3e, *those who live a better life*
 But auy3e faste wiþ alle þy my3t *strive constantly*
 To lyue beter þan doþ he;
 69 Þan countrefetest þou Goddis kny3t;
 Pat is enuye in charite. *you follow the example; soldier of God*
 Alle þou3tes in Goddis doom are di3t, *will be dealt with*
 72 And dedes, after þat þey be. *in accordance with what they consist of*

⁶ *Who have taken the vows of your monastery*

⁷ Ll. 55–56: i.e. For man has a free will; he has the choice of heaven or to hell

⁸ *Do not gather worldly goods into private possession*

⁹ *The higher the position, the humbler the heart*

(10)

- Tho þat lyuen in fleschly delys,
 Fro þat companye remewe; *distance yourself*
 75 Loue here bodyes, but not here vys, *persons; vices*
 And cherische hem to good vertue. *encourage*
 And þo þat wil al gate be nys, *always; foolish*
 78 Loke þou no3t here maneres sewe. *Take care; follow their ways*
 Go to company þat is wys,
 Lete fooles drynke þat þey dede brewe.¹⁰

(11)

- 81 Religeous, be war wiþ whom 3e stonde, *in whose company you are*
 Wiþ gentyles or folk þat worldly is,¹¹ *noble or common people*
 Pat 3e grype not hand in honde; *clasp hands with them*
 84 When 3e take leue loke not 3e kys. *kiss*
 Man to man hem thar not wonde, *hold back*
 Ne woman to woman no peryle ne is, *danger*
 87 But man to woman my3te breke þe bonde, *pledge [of chastity]*
 In towche is susspescioun of mys. *physical contact; sin*

(12)

- Suche towches not 3e byde, *put up with*
 90 Wolde buffete þe soule, and wounde wiþ ynne, *chastise; inwardly*
 3eue oþere cause, þat stonde bysyde, *[It would] give; near(by)*
 To wene it were a bargayn of synne. *think; pledge (n.)*
 93 Towches, in custom, þou3tis hide; *usually*
 Pan sclaundre and shame nylle not twynne. *Nota de*
 With conscience sclaundre and shame doþ chide; *religione,*
 96 To shewe opert he wol begynne. *&c. slander; disgraceful conduct; go away*
argue
show; openly; they

(13)

- With mekenesse 3e may heuene gete, *humility; obtain*
 Dispyse non in low degre; *look down on [people]*
 99 Resceyue no worschip, ne hy3e sete, *Accept; honour; position*
 Pat pryde go bytween God and þe, *So that; comes*
 Wolde make to hem self for3ete, *So that they; each other (i.e. God and you)*
 102 For worldis ryches and vanyte. *Because of*
 War for dronkenesse of drynkes grete, *Beware of*
 Fro glotry of metes of gret daynte.¹² *gluttony; food; excellence*

¹⁰ *Let fools take the consequences of what they have done*

¹¹ I.e. Of secular people, whether of noble or common descent

¹² *Against an intemperate appetite for choice dishes*

(14)

- 105 To religeon mekely bende,
 To serue God in loue and drede.
 To herkene tydynges not 3e wende,
 108 Ne bokes of vanyte not 3e rede.
 Resceyue no lettere, ne non out sende,
 But hit be for 3oure hous nede,
 111 Oþer to kyn or certeyn frende,
 In goodnes 3oure erande for to spede.

*[The rules of your] order; humbly; bow**listen to gossip; concern yourself with**[religious] house**Or; family; reliable**virtue; purpose (n.); serve*

(15)

- Kepe 3oure wacche and seruyce dewe,
 114 And rule of habyte clenely 3eme;
 And fille 3oure hertes wiþ good vertue,
 And wikked vyces fro 3ow 3e fleme,
 117 But loke deuocion growe ay newe.
 Be suche wiþ ynne as 3e outwarde seme.
 Good aungel and wikked boþe 3ow sewe,
 120 And wryten 3oure dedes þat shal 3ow deme.¹³

*vigils; mass; duly**regarding; habit; fully; heed**banish**intensifies; always**in your soul**follow you*

(16)

- Wacche not outrage in wast despence,¹⁴
 Fro hard to nyce þy flesh to fede.
 123 Wiþ bischop or shryfte 3e mowe despence,
 Fro hard to hardere 3oure lyf to lede.
 Withstonde temptacions, make defence;
 126 Þe moo 3e withstonde, þe more mede.
 And 3e wiþ seyntes willē haue reuerence,
 Pan moste 3e countrefete here dede.

*Guard (v.); intemperance; excessive; expenditure**firm; dissolute**confessor; do without**[If you want]; bad to worse**defend yourself [against them]**reward**If; from; respect**follow the example of*

(17)

- 129 Kepe sylence, whyder 3e byde or go,¹⁵
 Fro wordis of vanyte 3oure lippes steke.
 Speke faire to frend and fo,
 132 For fayre speche doþ wrappe breke.
 Þat doþ wrong, deme so.
 Lete not vengeance þy wrappe wreke.
 135 Vengeance is Goddis, he demeþ þo
 In werk and word, all þat men speke

*remain**close**courteously**judge [him] accordingly**revenge (v.)**those (i.e. whom it concerns)**By [their]*¹³ *And keep a record of your deeds, whereby you will be judged*¹⁴ *Be on your guard against overindulging in excessive expenditure*¹⁵ *I.e. Refrain from speaking, whether you are in or away from the monastery*

(18)

- In rule of religeon is ordeyned 3ore: *religious order; in the past*
 138 By3e no thyng to selle and wynne. *Buy; for gain*
 Marchaunt and religeous: on mot be forbore, *[The spirit of]; monk; one; given up*
 Pey may not wone on herte wiþynne. *remain present in*
 141 Ne kepe no iewels ne propre in store; *property; private possession*
 Þat nes no religeous, but dedly synne *in accordance with monastic spirituality*
 In fleshly delices, and loue it more *delights*
 144 To parte þy loue and God atwynne.¹⁶

(19)

- That þenkeþ good þou3t in sylence,
 Þey speken to God in specyale. *in particular*
 147 How mow 3e lette hem, for conscience, *prevent; in fairness*
 Calle hem to werkis genera[l]e.
 Summe bidden, in vertue of obedience, *pray; vow of obedience*
 150 Contemplatyf in spirituale; *Devout; religious duty*
 To religeon they don a gret defence *harm*
 Þat bryngen hem to werkis temperale. *tasks; worldly*

(20)

- 153 Hy3e astate, ne gentyf blod, *noble*
 Bryngeþ no man te heuene blisse.
 Gret hors, ne iewel, ne browded hood, *embroidered*
 156 Nes no cause of holynesse, *D* *o not constitute*
 But pore of spirit and meke of mood. *humble; disposition*
 3eue God þy soule, and eche man hisse. *his [due]*
 159 Gret lordschipe, ne myche good, *honour; many possessions*
 Nes no cause of sykernesse. *security*

(21)

- Tonsure, abyte, ne no wede, *habit; [religious] clothes*
 162 Nes no cause of religeon,
 Ne wakyng, ne fastyng, ne almesdede,
 Ne preyere, ne oreson, *Private nor liturgical prayer*
 165 But þe herte þerto take hede, *Unless; is moved*
 Wiþ werkys of discrecion. *morally conscious action*
 Deuocion makeþ soules to spede *causes; prosper*
 168 Wiþ werkis of contemplacion.

¹⁶ To cause separation between God and your love (i.e. love as a means of attaining union with God)

(22)

Religeon is most meke	<i>humble</i>
In abyte, of alle vertues floures.	<i>flowers</i> (i.e. height/glory)
171 Richesse ne worldis worschipe seke,	<i>honour</i>
But offre to God alle honoures.	<i>proffer</i>
Richesse and worschipe make soules syke,	<i>ill</i>
174 In vaynglory and sharp[e] shoures.	<i>violent storms</i> (i.e. hardship)
Make vertues þe wax, deuocioun þe wyke,	<i>your wax; wick</i>
To brenne bri3t in heuene boures.	<i>mansions</i>

(23)

177 Iustice is religeon in sete,	<i>religion; in court</i>
Þat demep ri3t in alle degre.	<i>judge (v.); in all respects</i>
And queste is religeon, troupe to trete;	<i>inquest; find</i>
180 3eueþ eche man þat his schulde be.	<i>his due</i>
A child may wiþ his fader plete,	<i>argue</i>
And 3ut kepe his charyte,	<i>still; love</i>
183 And of his kyng blameles gete,	<i>innocent; gets [the verdict:]</i>
Lawe is so gentyll and so fre.	<i>generous; independent</i>

(24)

Pou3 summe of thy breþeren don a trespas,	
186 He wole amende and do no moo.	<i>They</i>
Paraenture þou art in þe same cas,	<i>Perhaps</i>
Or after my3t ben in suche two. ¹⁷	
189 Loke not þat þou hym chace,	<i>See to it; harass</i>
Ne sclaundre hym not to haue shame and wo.	<i>calumniate</i>
Pray God for3eue hym of his grace,	
192 And kepe þe wel þou do not so.	<i>take heed</i>

NOTES

4 See 1 Cor. 14:1, 'Follow after charity'.

6 *neuere or late*] A common collocation, with variations such as *selden or neuer* and *now or neuere*.

56 Proverbial. See Whiting, T 406, 'Maugre (in spite of) one's teeth'.

57–58 Echoes the popular rebellious rhyme of the time: *When Adam dalf, and Eve span, / Who was thanne a gentilman* (Dean, 1996, p. 140).

57 *gentyll*] Kail's 'gentle' does not fit the context. See also ll. 82 and 153.

63 *comon lawe*] as administered in the king's courts.

69 *Goddis knyght*] The archetype of the *miles Christi*, 'the soldier of God' is described in Eph. 6:11–17, where he is urged to 'put on the whole armour of God', comprising 'the breastplate of righteousness',

¹⁷ *Or twice as many in the future*

‘the shield of faith’, ‘the helmet of salvation’, and ‘the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God’. The *miles Christi* metaphor is thoroughly treated with Jeffrey (1992, pp. 506–509).

80 Proverbial. See Whiting, B 529, ‘As one brews, let him drink’.

82 *gentyles*] in contrast with ordinary *folk*, as in ll. 57–58. See also l. 153. Kail’s gloss ‘godly people’ is out of context.

106 *serue God in loue and drede*] Echoes the stanzaic refrain in I.

123–24 Clearly anti-Wyclif and anti-Lollard. Wyclif held that God alone can forgive sins, since he alone can know the confessor’s state of mind; hence no priest or friar has power of absolution. See Hudson (1988, pp. 294–301).

138 Quoted in *MED* s.v. *winnen* sub 3a(d.) with the definition ‘to exact extortionate profits; benefit materially by usurious practices or sharp dealings’. But extortion and usury do not come into it. The clergy was simply forbidden to buy and sell at a profit, which is what this line says.

148 *generale*] MS *generall*. See the discussion of scribal crossed *ll*-variations in section 2.5.3.

153 *gentyll*] See the notes to ll. 57 and 82.

157 Alludes to Matt. 5:3, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’.

174 *shoures*] Kail glosses ‘abundance’, but the combination with *sharpe* points to suffering.

180 A literal rendering of the legal tenet of *suum cuique tribuere*.

XIX

SUMMARY

The poem is in the 'Complaint of God' tradition. God says: 'I created you in my image, I became man, and redeemed your sins on the cross. All for my love of you. Now, what have you done for me? What have I done or missed, that you refuse to return my love? You turned away from me in anger, submitting to the sins of the flesh. Repent; stop calling good what is bad, and remember that I am not only a merciful, but also a righteous and avenging God. You have a free will and can make your own choice between heaven and hell. It is so easy to please me: just forsake your sinful pleasures, exert yourself to perform the seven acts of mercy, and observe the Ten Commandments and the Creed.'

TEXT

(1)

[I]n my conscience I fynde, And in my soule I here and see, 3 To repreue man þat is vnkynde, Goddis wordis þis may be: Man of resoun, haue in mynde, 6 I made þe lyk ymage to me. For loue y hadde to mankynde I toke manhed, lyk to þe.	<i>[That]; reprove; rebellious [against God] words; these keep Because of became man</i>
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(2)

9 Mannys loue y 3erned 3ore, þat loue was in myn herte sou3t; Mannys loue sat me so sore, 12 Nas neuere bargayn derrere bou3t. ¹ Man, is þe laft no loue in store. What is þe cause þou louest me nou3t. 15 Telle me 3if y my3te don more, What is byhynde þat lakkeþ þe ou3t.	<i>desired; for a long time desired troubled purchase (n.) left (v.); store (i.e. [your] heart) missing; at all</i>
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¹ I.e. Never have I paid more dearly for what I did

(3)

- For þy loue y meked me lowe, *humbled*
 18 And dyʒed on þe rode tre. *cross*
 Answer, man, and be aknowe, *confess*
 Shewe what þou suffred for me. *Show*
 21 For suche seed as þou dost sowe,
 Þerof shal þyn heruest be,
 In heuene or helle to repe and mowe: *reap and mow* (i.e. get one's deserts)
 24 As þou deserued fong þy fee. *you [will] receive; wages*

(4)

- Man, to þe y make my mone, *complaint*
 I bouʒt þe fro pyne to blisse; *to [attain]*
 27 Melte þyn herte, as hard as stone,
 Þouʒ it be late, amende þy mysse. *Soften*
 In wrapþe þouʒ þou be fro me gon, *misdeeds*
 30 Turne aʒayn, y wol þe kysse. *back*
 To make me frendis of my fon, *enemies*
 Þerfore y ʒaf my lyf for hysse. *theirs*

(5)

- 33 Be war, and loue not worldis good,
 To gete wiþ wrong, and calle it thyn. *in a sinful manner*
 Man, haue it in þy mood: *keep in mind*
 36 Pou shalt rekene, for alle is myn. *give an account [of your conduct]; everything*
 Why bouʒte y þe on the rood. *cross*
 For þou shulde serue, and be myn hyne. *servant*
 39 Make not myn argumentis wood² *reasons; angry*
 To caste þe fro blisse to pyne.

(6)

- Man, why turmentest þou me so.
 42 Euere þy synnes don encresce, *Constantly; add to*
 And þy vices waxen moo, *further*
 And þy vertues wanen lesse. *dwindle*
 45 Thenke good y be thy foo. *[can] be your enemy* (i.e. a vengeful God)
 Whanne wylt þou of þy synne ses, *put an end to*
 Haue mercy on þy soule woo, *Have concern for*
 48 Or haue mynde on me, and ʒeue me pes. *And*

² I.e. Do not make me reason in anger [why I should not]

(7)

To suffre deþ y meked me,
 Fro pyne to blisse þy soule to wynne.
 51 To me so shuldest þou meke þe,
 Leue and forbere þy synne.
 Fro my lordschipe myȝt þou not fle,
 54 Heuene ne helle, ne see wiþ ynne,
 But where and whenne my wille be
 Þy body and soule to parte o twynne.

*humbled myself**in return**reign (n.)**deep in the sea**I may decide**separate (v.)*

(8)

57 Thouȝ y haue graunted þe grace
 To knowe boþe good and ylle,
 Wyte þy self in eche a place,
 60 Wheþer þou wylt þy self spille.
 Þouȝ flesch and world and fend [þe] chas,
 Temptacion profre þe tille,³
 63 Þou myȝt forbere and nouȝt trespas;
 I lente þe knoweleche and fre wille.

*gift**Ask; wherever you are**ruin (v.)**devil; harass**It is in your own power; not*

(9)

In syknesse and pouerte,
 66 Glade þerynne, and þanke me alle.
 Þe more þou hast þerof plente,
 Þe nerre þe be y shalle.
 69 Þan say: Lord, kepe me neyȝ þe;
 At nede here me when y calle.
 Take fro me hele and prosperite,
 72 Raþere þan lete me fro þe falle.

*Rejoice; for everything**nearer**near**In [times of]**health*

(10)

Man, rewe on my paynes sore,
 Repente þy synne, and mercy craue.
 75 By my woundes swere no more,
 Dysmembre no lymes þat y haue.⁴
 Þy wrong wynnyng aȝen restore,
 78 Ȝif þou wilt þy soule saue.
 Lete soule be lord, and go byfore,
 And make þy body þy soule knaue.

*feel pity for**ask for**ill-gotten gains; return**take precedence**subservient to*

³ *Hold out temptation to you*

⁴ *I.e. Do not profane me by naming parts of my body in oaths*

(11)

- 81 Man, and þou wist how *if*
 So li3tly my gre to make,⁵
 Pou noldest, for alle þe worldis prow, *would no want; wealth*
 84 For fleschly lustes me forsake.
 In þy lyue besye þe now, *exert yourself*
 In goode werkis wysely wake; *be diligent*
 87 In loue [and] drede to me bow,
 And fle to me fro synnes blake. *black*

(12)

- Seuene werkis of mercy, kepe hem welle,
 90 Þe comaundementis and þe Crede.
 Alle þy lyue, as y þe telle,
 3eue me þyn herte in loue and drede.
 93 Whyle body and soule to gydre dwelle,
 Pou my3t serue pyne and mede.⁶ *deserve*
 When soule is out of flesch and felle,⁷ *skin*
 96 Shal neuere do synne ne almesdede. *no longer*

(13)

- Mayntene not wrong to calle it ry3t. *Persist in*
 Vengeaunce and mercy ney3ebores ben þo; *they*
 99 As messageres þey ben dy3t, *[God's] messengers; appointed*
 Mercy to frend, vengeaunce to foo.
 3oure dede in derk y se in sy3t, *clearly*
 102 Pere nys no þou3t hid me fro.
 After þy dede þe doom is dy3t; *judgement; passed/administered*
 Vengeaunce and mercy departeþ hem so. *are distributed; accordingly*

(14)

- 105 For my doom is ri3twisnesse,
 Ri3twys longeþ to þe godhede; *Rightful(ly); belongs*
 And my sones dom is wys,
 108 For mercy longeþ to þe manhede.
 Þe Holy Gost grace lys, *grants*
 He 3eueþ lyf, he 3eueþ no dede. *death*
 111 Ouercome my wrapþe and fle fro vys, *Appease*
 And do þe comaundementis þat y bede.

⁵ *How easily you can win my favour*

⁶ I.e. It is in your power to deserve either punishment or reward

⁷ I.e. When the soul has left the body

NOTES

title Missing in the manuscript (as also in XX). For a discussion of the missing title and initial capital, see section 2.2. Kail conjectures: 'God's Appeal to Man'.

17–18 Cf. Phil. 2:8, 'he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross'.

21–22 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 542, 'As one sows so shall he reap'.

27 Cf. Ezek. 11:19, '... and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh'. See also Whiting, H 277.

87 [*and*] The set phrase is *loue and drede*, as in l. 92 and throughout the other Poems (see e.g. I.40; VIII.31; XVIII.106).

92 Alludes to Prov. 23:26, 'My son, give me thine heart'.

XX

SUMMARY

This poem might be seen as a companion piece of the Complaint of God to Man in the preceding poem XIX.

Here fleshly man complains to God that God's son Jesus has wooed away man's beloved, his soul. The complaint reads as a traditional secular love story. The soul, earlier man's paramour and completely subservient to him, has left him to start a passionate love affair with Jesus. She repudiates contemptuously man's entreaties, and declares herself completely contrary to anything he suggests. Man is not so much averse to Jesus' intentions with regard to mankind in general, as his successful efforts to conquer man's soul with promises of a superb home with him in heaven. She comes to treat man like dirt, accusing him of a wicked, blasphemous and wastefully luxurious life.

Man pleads earnestly with God to be united again with his soul, but Jesus and the soul prove inseparable. He loves her to the extent that he was prepared to die for her on the cross. In her turn she is firmly resolved to stick to Jesus throughout his life, his death and his ascent into heaven, and faithfully to follow his example.

God replies, reproving man for his empty complaints, indeed for his sinful life, and praising the soul for her conduct. God points out that it is not man, but Jesus who has reason to complain, his bountiful love for man remaining unrequited. So there is every reason for man to confess and repent, in return for which God is more than willing to forgive him. In the future, man should take what is coming to him uncomplainingly. Then God will bring him unfailingly to the bliss of his heaven.

TEXT

(1)

The tixt of holy writ, men sayn,
Hit sleep, but glose be among.¹

³ The spirit of vnderstandyng quykenep agayn,²
And makep the lyue endeles long.
A fantasie y herde sayn,

*Holy Scripture
kills; unless; comment (n.)*

*life; eternal
imaginary conversation*

¹ I.e. Is daunting, unless explanatory comment goes with it

² *The desire to comprehend restores [the soul] again*

6 Thereof me lust to make a song, *I wish(ed)*
 How mannys flesch to God dede playn *complain*
 On Ihesu Crist, had don hym wrong. *About*

(2)

9 The flesch his playnt þus doþ bygynne
 To God fader, in heuene on hy3t:
 Ihesu, brother of oure kynne, *our kin (i.e. mankind)*
 12 Haþ bygyled me wiþ his sley3t. *deluded; cunning*
 He haþ parted my soule and me o twynne, *divided into two (i.e. separated)*
 And raft [here] fro me by his my3t. *stole; strength*
 15 Now, ry3twys God, let mercy blynne. *righteous; forgiveness; cease*
 On Ihesu, þy sone, do me ry3t. *On (i.e. in my case against)*

(3)

Body and soule þou dede me make
 18 In vnyte to gydre so.³ *closely*
 Now haþ Ihesu my soule take,
 And þus parted oure loue o two.
 21 My soule haþ me [?now] forsake;
 Sum tyme was frend, now is fo;
 Byd me go wolward, faste and wake,⁴ *Requires; dressed in wool; fast (v.)*
 24 Alle here ioye is of my woo. *her; for; misery*

(4)

Fro me to þy sone my soule is flet; *has fled*
 Ful ofte þy sone in me here sou3te; *sought her*
 27 Now here loue to hym so fast is knete, *closely; knit*
 Away fro hym wol sche nou3t.
 She semes dronken, or out of wit,
 30 Of myn euelfare she has no þou3t. *misfortune*
 Þat sorwe is so in myn herte hit, *has struck so forcefully*
 I trowe to depe y mon be brou3t. *believe; must*

(5)

33 Sum tyme my soule was mylde *Once; compliant*
 To my bidyng, in hoot and colde, *(i.e. at all times)*
 Synge or playe, or chambres bylde, *[To] sing; dwellings (i.e. castles in the air)*
 36 Chef seruaunt of myn housholde,
 Now Ihesu haþ made here made and wylde, *mad; wild*

³ Ll. 17–18: *Body and soul you joined together in unity*

⁴ *[My soul] requires me to be penitent (i.e. to wear a rough woollen shirt on the naked body), to fast and to keep vigil*

Fro hym departe neuere she nolde. *does not want*
 39 She setteþ on hym ri3t as a childe, *clutches*
 A3ens me she bereþ here bolde. *behaves; with hostility*

(6)

Whan I of here counseil craue *from; assent (n.); ask*
 42 Of fleschly lustes to haue my wille, *mad*
 She calleþ me wod, and seyþ y raue; *consent to it*
 She willæ neuere graunte þertille. *urges; to think about*
 45 She biddeþ me haue mynde of my graue, *To control myself; good sense; moderation*
 Rule me in resoun and skille. *slave*
 I was mayster, now am y knaue; *reduce me to*
 48 In that stat brynge me she wille.

(7)

Wolde y be proud, she biddeþ be meke;
 Wolde y be gloton, she biddeþ me faste;
 51 Pere y wolde take, she biddes me eke;⁵ *[to] increase (v.)*
 Wolde y be lyther, she biddis be chaste; *wicked*
 3if y fy3te, she biddes ley forþ my cheke; *lay forth (i.e. expose)*
 54 Pere y am slow, she biddis be haste; *quick*
 Here answee is not to seke;⁶ *need not be sought*
 To speke to here, my wynde y waste. *breath; waste (v.)*

(8)

57 Ihesu com fro heuene blisse, *came*
 And tok flesch in a mayden fre, *assumed; gracious*
 Lowely and most [in] mekenesse, *Humbly; supreme; humility*
 60 Hyd vnder flesch oure fraternite. *Covered; in; state of being brothers*
 Now wold take my soule to his, *him*
 For he suffred pyne and pouerte.
 63 3it sumwhat y my3te acorde to þis,⁷
 But why shulde my soule hate me.

(9)

Whan Ihesu and my soule be met,
 66 Sone my werkis þey aspi3e: *deeds; espy*
 Here wit on me fast þey whet: *minds; eagerly; sharpen*
 In shame and skorne and vyleny
 69 To folwe þy fleschly lustes let, *disgrace; immoral behaviour*
cease

⁵ *When I want to take [from others], she instructs me to increase [my wealth by my own efforts]*

⁶ *I.e. She need not look for an answer*

⁷ *Indeed, to some extent I can agree to this*

Or ellis boþe 3e shal dy3e.

Þus am y vnder and ouer set;

72 She spettes on me, and doþ me fy3e.

*both (i.e. you and your soul)
from all sides; set upon
spits; expresses disgust of*

(10)

Wiþ me my soule he doþ þrete,

And makeþ my soule me to hate.

75 Wiþ plesande wordis he hotēþ here gete

In heuene blisse a quenes astate.

Þan comeþ she hom in wrāþþeful hete,

78 Bedēþ here lette, boþe erly and late,

Casteþ me down and doþ me bete,

And tredeþ on me, and makeþ debate.

*Against; warns
causes
promises; to get
position
furious anger
Begg; to let [her] be*

quarrels (v.)

(11)

81 Thanne renneþ she a3en, as she were wood;

To Ihesu, þy sone, she doþ fly3e.

He fedēþ here wiþ his flesch and blood,

84 But þanne here þou3tes mownten hy3e.

She biddiþ me water and bred to food;

As mortkyn forsaken she let me li3e.

87 She holdeþ me euylle and no þyng good,

But a stynkyng carayne in here ey3e.

*as if; mad
flees*

*And; ascend to great heights
to live only on*

carcass

regards

corpse

(12)

Þus my soule my body slees,

90 Wiþ gret anguysche and turment.

She telles: Ihesu dy3ed for pes;

But fro his skole she is went.⁸

93 Bytwen vs werre doþ encres,

Here swerdē is drawn, here bow is bent.

She sayþ: but fleschly lustes sees,

96 We mon be dede, and boþe be shent.

castigates

agony

unless; cease

will; [spiritually] dead; destroyed

(13)

She acordid wiþ Ihesu, and me dede flyte,

And sayde y shulde be maked tame,

99 And sayde my werkys me adyte,

And bryngen me in wikked fame.

3if worldly men me don smyte,

102 And don me boþe wrong and grame,

*came to an agreement; fled from
subdued*

condemn

give me a bad reputation

make me suffer

injure me

⁸ I.e. But she does not practice his teachings (of peace) herself

She loueþ that don me despyte,
And preyep for alle þat don me shame.

*Speak ill of
bring disgrace on*

(14)

105 Hy3e fader, God of ri3twisnes,
Haue mynde of my sorwe sore.
And it be founden Ihesu loued mysse,
108 To me my soule a3en restore –
A litil playnt nes no3t þisse,
And alle þat y haue sayd 3ore –
111 Þat y and my soule be frendis and kisse,
And loue as we dede here byfore.

If; loved [my soul]; in error

small; request

earlier

So that

(15)

For my soule Ihesu suffred wo,
114 Bounden and beten wiþ skourges ynowe,
Crowned wiþ thorn, nayled also
On croos, tyl deþ dede hym bowe.
117 Wiþ a spere his herte let cleue a two,
Wyde open his loue my3te out flowe,
So loþ hym was his loue forgo;⁹
120 He is worþy be loued þat so dede wowe.

[He was]; many

could

so [earnestly]; courted

(16)

My soule, y holde, holy [es it],
For she loueþ Ihesu, þat loueþ here wel.
123 But loue were tendere to loue vsed,
Were harder þan ston, and styffere þan stel.
On Ihesu she is amerous and ful auysed;
126 What worldly þyng she seeþ or fele,
Al worldly ioye she haþ refused,
And me she loueþ neuere a dele.

in my regard

Unless; gently; made familiar with

more unyielding

quite resolved

not at all

(17)

129 I wante my wille, and euel fare y,
Fro worldly merþe put o syde.
Fro worldis worschip she doþ me tary.
132 I may no þou3t fro here hyde.
Þere y blisse, she doþ wary;
Þere y speke fayre, she doþ chyde.
135 She is newe waxen al contrary;
Þere y dwelle, she nyl not byde.

am not getting; badly; feel

joy; deprived of

esteem; keeps away from

can; hide

am full of joy; complains bitterly

pleasantly; scolds

recently; hostile

⁹ *So much he hated forsaking his love [of my soul]*

(18)

- She repreueþ my dagged cloþes,
 138 And longe pyked crakowed shon;
 Vpbreyde[þ] me my grete oþes,
 And sayþ y breke Goddis bone.¹⁰
- 141 Þat me is lef, alle she loþes.
 I seye: oþere men so don.
 She seyþ: þey go to helle woþes.
 144 Wole to wende, wiþ hem to wone.¹¹

showy
shoes with long pointed toes
Reproaches; oaths

despises

punishment
live

(19)

- Wiþ Ihesu alway is she,
 And now she lyþ wiþ hym in cracche,
 147 Now into Egipt wiþ hym doþ fle
 Fro Herowdes, lest he hem cacche.
 In his moder armes born wol she be,
 150 And sowke wiþ hym, as chylde in tacche.
 She folweþ hym in al degre,
 And countrefeteþ to ben his macche.

*manger**carried*

suck; together with; at the nipple
respects
follows his example; bride

(20)

- 153 Wiþ hym doþ drynke and ete,
 To lerne of his discessioun;
 Wiþ hym sche is skourged and bete,
 156 And crucyfyed in his passioun;
 She is wiþ hym in helle hete,
 Wiþ hym in his resurexioun,
 159 And stye into heuene in his fadres se[t]e,
 Pens nolde she neuere come down.

*about; moral judgement**suffering**ascends; home*

(21)

- Now þe playnt is at þe last.
 162 God answerde wiþ mylde soun:
 Flesch, he sayde, þou iangelest fast,
 Moche dene and no resoun.
 165 Alle þy wordes þou dost waste;
 Wille wiþ oute discessioun;
 Þyn awen pleynt þe doþ caste;
 168 Þou turnest þy self vp so down.¹²

*has come to an end**voice*

argue; a great deal
[noisy] clamour; sound thinking

Wilfulness; sound judgement
throws you (i.e. defeats your own case)
upside down

¹⁰ I.e. And says that my behaviour is torture to God

¹¹ *Would you want to go [there,] [too,] to live with them?*

¹² I.e. You put yourself in a state of confusion

(22)

Thou makest maystershepe in al vys,
 And here [turnest] fro my way,
 171 And makest here þral to fleschely delys,
 In vanyte to al worldly play.
 She is ashamed, now she is wys;
 174 Sche lyued in vowtrye so many a day.
 She haþ chosen þe loue most o prys,
 And cast þe fals[e] loue away.

excel; vices
her (i.e. the soul)
slave
frivolous pursuit; pleasures

adultery
precious

(23)

God seip: man, y made þe of nou3t,
 And kyd þat y loued þe dere,
 And soule of resoun in þe wrou3t,
 180 Fayre and wys, angels pere.
 Pou hast defouled þe ymage þat y wrou3t,
 In seruage to fendis and fendis fere.
 183 Sche folwed þy wille in dede and þou3t,
 In alle place, fer and nere.

showed

Sound; equal
profaned
servitude; companions

(24)

On Ihesu þou pleynt dost make,
 186 Sayde he bigyled þe wiþ sley3te,
 And biddest me lete mercy slake,
 And on Ihesu do þe ry3t.
 189 My sone for þe dede deþ take,
 And kydde þe loue most of my3t.
 Þou3 he loue dede forsake,
 192 How woldest þou þis doom were dy3t.

Against
deceived; trickery
forgiveness; cease
against; deal justly with you
suffered
showed; most powerful
Since; gave up
case; dealt with

(25)

Flesch, þy synnes mochil is;
 Pou art cast in þyn awen caas.
 195 Knowleche, repente, and mende þy mys,
 And be in wille no more trespas.
 I nel deme þe in ry3twisnes,
 198 But medle þerwiþ mercy and grace,
 And brynge þy soule to heuene blys,
 Wiþ loue to se me fayre face.

are many
caught; case
Confess
desirous; to do wrong
in righteousness (i.e. by the rules of the law)
mix

(26)

201 In ouerhope, be not to bold
 In synne, for to haue mercy.
 Let not wanhope in þe be old,

unjustified hope; too daring

exist long

- 204 For my grace is euere redy.
 Fro helle pynes hoot and cold *torments*
 I assoyle þe, and out of purgatory. *release*
- 207 At þy deth, or body be cold, *before*
 To Ihesu in heuene þy soule shal fleye.
- (27)
- In good werkis wysely wake, *be diligent*
 210 Playne not on Ihesu, what he sende; *whatever*
 Sykenes, pouerte, mekely take, *humbly*
 Richesse and hele wysely spende, *wealth*
- 213 And helpe alle pore for Goddis sake.
 Ðan God wole lede 3ow, as his frend,
 To ioye of heuene þat shal neuere slake. *diminish*
- 216 Into þat blisse, God graunte vs wende. Amen *to go*

NOTES

title Missing in MS. Kail conjectures: ‘How Man’s flesh complained to God against Christ’.

14 [*here*] Kail *it*. ‘The soul’ admittedly is neuter in other Digby poems (see e.g. VIII.91–92, XI.99–100, XVII.77–78), but throughout the present poem the soul is consistently feminine as the beloved of Christ.

21 [*now*] Follows Kail’s conjectural insertion. An insertion is clearly required, but admittedly almost any other contextually suitable adverb will do.

23 [*go wolward*] My gloss as in *MED* s.v. *wolward* (*adj.*). In addition, *MED* s.v. *welleward* (*adv.*) glosses *go wolward* as ‘the act or practice of going to a well to keep vigil for devotional purposes’. *MED* adduces two quotes for this meaning, both from *Dives and Pauper*, but neither of them gives convincing textual support.

45 [*haue mynde of my graue*] The traditional *memento mori* theme.

59 [*in*] makes better sense contextually than Kail’s insertion of.

60 [*flesch*] MS *flesch fleschly*.

61 Kail unnecessarily inserts *he* before *take*.

83 [*flesch and blood*] i.e. the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

121 [*es it*] MS *it es*. Scribal inversion error, as evidenced by the rhyme scheme.

125 [*amorous*] *MED*, quoting this line s.v. *amorous* (*adj.*) sub 4.(a), glosses ‘devoted to’, but straightforward ‘amorous’ seems preferable, the description of the ‘love affair’ between Christ and the soul bearing overtones of courtly love throughout the poem.

139 [*Vpbreydeþ*] MS *Vpbreyde*, but should parallel *repreueþ* in l. 137.

159 [*sete*] MS *see*.

176 [*false*] MS *fals*. Emended to restore the metre.

183 [*Sche*] Kail *She*, but MS *Sche* is a common variant.

197–98 Echoes I.135, *His mercy is medled with his right*.

201 St. (26): the same warning, similarly phrased, against *ouerhope* and *wanhope* is found in I.(17) and VII.(13).

XXI

A LERNYNG TO GOOD LEUYNGE

instruction

SUMMARY

Man will be blessed, says Christ, according to eight deserts, and the writer expands in turn on the reasons why Christ's blessing is pronounced on those who practice each of these virtues. The humble are generous, charitable and wise counsellors. The meek are openhanded, pacifiers and spiritual healers. The sorrowful repent their sins, obey God, restore illicit gains, and aid the poor. Who hunger and thirst for righteousness seek God and man's fair due and the amendment of sins. The merciful seek no revenge, give to the poor, cheer the troubled and feed the hungry. The peacemakers obey God, want all wars to cease, and the enemies of God to become God's friends. The pure of heart observe God's laws, conform to their destined position and conduct in life, and practice charity. The persecuted for righteousness' sake remain charitable in their oppression, and will find refuge with God.

As an antithesis to, and following each blessing, the author proclaims eternal doom for the sinners whose misdeeds are exactly the reverse of the virtues of the blessed. It should be noted here that the gist of the four curses, or 'woes', in Luke 6, where they follow after the four Beatitudes, does not tally with the substance of our author's curses.

The poem ends, as the corresponding passage in the Gospel, with God's blessing on all people who speak the word of God, the key to heaven for the people who hate and curse you. So fear God, not the worldly oppressor, and be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

TEXT

(1)

Pore of spirit blessed be,	
Pou3 he be lord of richesse fele.	<i>owner</i>
3 He bereþ penaunce and pouerte,	<i>endures hardship</i>
That of his good to pore folk dele.	<i>Who; wealth</i>
Of þe kyngdom of heuene a lord is he,	<i>In; occupies a most eminent position</i>
6 Pat counseyleþ wel to soule hele, ¹	
And lyueþ in werkis of charyte.	<i>lives for [the sake of]</i>
Suche folk to heuene preuyly stele.	<i>quietly; steal away</i>

¹ *Who give good advice towards the salvation of the soul*

(2)

- 9 Siþ God doþ blisse, and graunteþ blis
 Pat don his word, and holde it trewe,²
 Pan þat man cursed is,
 12 Pat lyueþ contrarious þat vertue,
 Pat filleþ his herte wiþ ryches,
 Nedeles aueryce gadryng newe;
 15 For wikkid counseil, helle is his,
 Þere neuere nes reste, but euere remewe.

causes (i.e. is the source of); *grants*
[To those] who
It follows that

[Out of]; new [riches]
advice
change (n.)

(3)

- Blessid be man þat in herte is mylde,
 18 Buxom to lerne, and lef to teche,
 Shal owe þe erþe, and þeron bylde,
 In helpe of mony his rychesse reche,
 21 Of shrewes make Goddis childe,
 Of gostly woundes be soule leche,
 Make tame to God þo þat were wylde.
 24 Of eche good lyuere his werkis preche.

Eager; glad
possess; build (i.e. make his home)
many [people]; gives
wicked people
spiritual; healer

speak [for themselves]

(4)

- Panne cursed be man in herte ruyde,
 Pat neuere nel lere ne vnderstond.
 27 Þou3 he owe erþe, he shal not byde
 Til it be out of his hond.³
 When conscience his werkis chyde,
 30 Pat man shal neuere reioyse lond.
 Fro alle vertues þat doþ hym hyde,
 To alle myscheues he makeþ hym bon[d].

obdurate
will not; learn
possesses; wait

disapproves of
enjoy [the possession of]
he hides himself from
wickedness: slave

(5)

- 33 Blessed be he þat morneþ sore
 His breþere synnes, his awen mysdede
 Repente, and wille to do no more,
 36 But holde þe hestes þat God bede,
 His wrong wynnyng a3en restore,
 And helpe pore þat han nede.
 39 He shal be counforted þerfore,
 In heuene blisse haue his mede.

mourns; grievously
brothers'; wrongdoings

commandments
wrongful gains

comforted
reward

² *To those who do his will and remain faithful to it*

³ *I.e. Till he has lost it again*

(6)

- Than cursed be he haþ ioye of synne,
 42 And euere encreseþ mo and mo,
 Boste þerof, delyte þerynne,
 3eue men ensample to do so,
 45 Heuene 3ates fro hem they pynne,
 Of Goddis frendis make Goddis foo;
 In helle þey purchas here ynne;
 48 His felaschipe with hym thay go.

he (who)
adds [to them]
Boasts
likewise
against; them[selves]; lock (v.)
acquire; their; lodging
followers

(7)

- Blessed euere mote he be,
 Þat hungren and thursten ry3twisnes;
 51 He wolde were wel in al degre
 Þat God and man echon had his.
 Gostly hunger and thurstes he
 54 Þat fayn wolde mende þat is mys.
 Ful filled he shal wiþ grete deynte
 At Goddis feste in heuene blisse.

they
[after] righteousness
They; it would be; respects (n.)
each; his [due]
Spiritually; hunger (v.); thirst (v.)
gladly
Gratified; abundance

(8)

- 57 Than cursed is he þat ful is fylde,
 Wiþ wrong take pore mennys thrift,
 Þat makeþ pore men be [spilde],
 60 For synguler profyt is sotylle theft;
 Make gulteles folk presoned and kylde,
 Of hous and land make wrongwys gyft;
 63 Wiþ hunger and þirst his hous is bylde.
 In helle is shewed euelle sponnen wyft.⁴

[already] satiated
Wrongfully; savings
ruined
personal gain; deceitful
Causes; innocent; to be killed
makes a gift; illegal
becomes visible; faultily spun weft/fabric

(9)

- Blessid be þe mercyable;
 66 Mercy and mede of God he fonges.
 In Goddis doom he stondes stable
 Þat wrekeþ not alle his owen wronges.
 69 To pore folk he is profytable
 Þat leueþ his good hem amonges.⁵
 Sorefulle and hungry, he fyndeþ hem table,
 72 The sorwefulle he gladeþ to synge songes.

merciful
reward; receives
judgement; securely
helpful
The distressed; meal
gladdens

⁴ I.e. In hell it becomes clear the evil he had done in his lifetime

⁵ *Who leaves his possessions with them*

(10)

Thanne, how of hem han hertis stoute
 Pat rewep non pore þat han penaunce,
 75 Han nedeles gold no3t to lene it oute,
 But to þe borwere gret greuaunce;
 But he may quyte, is 3erne aboute
 78 To presone hym or make destauce;
 But he be cursed it is in dowte;⁶
 Þat haþ no mercy, mote haue vengeaunce.

*about those; cruel
 do not care about; suffer hardship
 unnecessary
 But [that]; borrower; [causes] much distress
 Unless; repays [his debt]; diligently busy
 cause trouble
 compassion; receive retribution*

(11)

81 Blessed be he þat louep pes,
 Mekely to Goddis byddyng bende.
 He shal be cleped, at Goddis dees,
 84 Goddis sone, good and hende.
 He wolde alle werre shulde asses,
 Of Goddis foon make Goddis frende,
 87 Make soule wiþ ioye to heuene pres,
 And sorwe and werre to helle wiþ fende.

*Humbly; submits
 throne
 virtuous
 cease
 Cause (v.); proceed with haste
 fiends*

(12)

Than, how of hem þat pes doþ hate,
 90 Wolde oueralle were werre and woo,
 Eche man wiþ oþer debate,
 Pat shulde be frend, make hem foo.
 93 For synguler wynnyng to his astate⁷
 Lede his men oþere to sloo;
 He shal be blessed neuere or late;
 96 His werkis curseþ hym where he go.

*everywhere
 quarrels
 He leads; kill
 everywhere*

(13)

The clene of herte blissed be,
 Pat lyueþ after Goddis lore;
 99 God hym self he shal see,
 Pere as blisse is euere more;
 And gouerneþ wel his owen degre,
 102 And doþ þe dede þat he come fore;
 Fulfylleþ þe werkis of charyte;
 His vertue gadereþ mede in store.

*pure
 commandments
 Where; for ever
 manages; station [in life]
 for which he was born
 reward*

⁶ But he has reason to fear that he is condemned [to hell]

⁷ To add even more personal gains to his possessions

(14)

- 105 The herte þat is fyled in synne,
 And sulpeþ his soule wiþ spottes of blame,
 Goddis curs he doþ wynne *defiled*
 108 Pat spyseþ hym self and Goddis name. *pollutes; stains; disgrace*
 His astate he nele not dwelle þer ynne; *incurs*
 To serue God hym þenkeþ shame. *puts to shame*
 111 3if God and he departe o twynne, *position in life*
 In helle he may be meked tame. *considers; disgrace*
separate
be tamed

(15)

- That is p[ur]sued for ri3twisnes *persecuted; because of [his]*
 114 Is blessid, where he go or ryde; *wherever he goes*
 Þe kyngdom of heuene is his,
 Þat querelle to ende in charite byde. *remains charitable*
 117 God wole brynge hym to heuene blis,
 And fro his enemys þere wole hym hyde; Nota *protect against*
 And þo þat pursue hym with mys, *evil deeds*
 120 To helle þey ben here awen gyde. *guide*

(16)

- Thanne are they cursed in here lyf, *lifetime*
 Pat auauunceþ þe fals, and stroyeþ þe trewe, *favour; wicked; faithful*
 123 Mayntene fals querelle and stryf,
 Ri3twis men wrongly pursue; *unjustly*
 Defowle boþe maydene and wyf, *Defile*
 126 Pat shulde be clene in alle vertue. *pure*
 Eche dedly synne is a dedly knyf,
 For he shal repe þat he sewe.

(17)

- 129 3e shal be blessid, erly and late, *at all times*
 By vertue of Gospelle þat 3e preche.
 3e shul be blessid whan folk 3ow hate,
 132 And cursen 3ow for 3oure speche.
 3oure tonge is kaye of heuene 3ate, *key to*
 3oure word þe way to heuene hem teche.
 135 Folk wiþ 3ow schal debate, *quarrel*
 For me wiþ lesynges 3ow apeche. *Because; men (i.e. they); lies; accuse*

(18)

Glade 3e wiþ ynne and ioye wiþ oute;⁸

138 3oure mede in heuene moche is.

Drede no tyrauntes sterne and sto[w]te

May sle þy body, and take as his.

*oppressors; merciless; mighty**[Who]*

141 God, þe fader of heuene, 3e dowte,

May brynge þe soule to pyne or blis;

He schal deme alle the world aboute,

judge; entire (adj.)

144 To heuene for goode, to helle for mys.

sins

(19)

Of erþe 3e ben cleped salt,⁹

For salt of wisdom soule saues.

147 Go vp ri3t and be not halt,¹⁰

For mayster of seruaunt his seruice craues.

Pyn astate rekene þou shalt,¹¹*do not limp**demands (v.)**possessions; account for*

150 How þou it gat, how þou it saues.

Fewe ben chosen, þou3 mony ben calt,

Fro Goddis seruyce are worldly knaues.¹²*acquired; preserve*

(20)

153 To lanterne 3e ben likned ri3t,

Nota

In alle þe worlde 3e shal be kyd.

3oure prechyng shal be candel li3t,

*lamp; compared; justly**visible*

156 Nou3t vnder worldly buschel hyd,

But on a candel styke on hi3t,

Nou3t vnder a chiste, vnder a lyd,

hidden

159 In good werkis shyne 3e bry3t,

And lyue 3e so, ri3t as 3e byd.

*in a box; lid**are bidden*

NOTES

title *lernyng*] Refers to the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5, the first sixteen verses of which the poet faithfully follows. They contain the eight Beatitudes, followed by two equally well-known exhortations: to be the spiritual ‘salt of the earth’ and the ‘light of the world’. Four of the eight Beatitudes are also found in Luke 6, but this version is not reflected in the text of the present poem.

17–19 A direct reference to Ps. 37:11, ‘But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace’.

⁸ I.e. Rejoice in your soul and show your joy to the world

⁹ *You are called ‘salt of the earth’*

¹⁰ I.e. Conduct yourself virtuously, not immorally

¹¹ I.e. You will have to give an account of how you have managed the resources entrusted to you

¹² *[Away] from the service of God [they] are the slaves of worldly matters*

- 32 *bond*] MS *bonde* The rhyme requires *-d*. Word-final *-d* in the manuscript was flourished as an automatism.
- 59 *spilde*] Emendation as in Kail of MS *spi3ed*, a scribal error, which does not fit the rhyme scheme. *MED* quotes the line as in MS s.v. *spien* (*v.*(2)), but recognizes the possibility of a scribal error.
- 60 The line is nearly identical with XIII.81: *syngulerte is sotyle þefte*.
- 64 Proverbial. See Whiting, W 571, 'Evil spun wool (yarn, web, weft) comes out evil'.
- 113 *pursued*] MS *presued*.
- 128 Proverbial. See Whiting, S 542, 'As one sows so shall he reap'.
- 139 *stowte*] Kail emends *stoute* (without marking it as such), but *stowte* is a valid variant spelling.
- 148 Alludes to Matt. 8:9 and Luke 7:8, 'and I say to ... my servant, Do this, and he doeth it'.
- 149–52 The lines refer, in a free interpretation, to verse 13 in the Beatitudes in Matt. 5, but l. 151 refers directly and verbatim to Matt. 20:16 and 22:14, 'for many be/are called, but few [are] chosen'.
- 156 *buschel*] A bushel, a vessel for measuring out grain.

XXII

KNOWE THY SELF AND THY GOD

SUMMARY

The poem is an urgent call on man to remain faithful to his creator. Man's own fleshly origin, as the poet describes in quite graphic language, is nothing to be proud of. Yet God created him in his own image, prepared him for a blissful life in heaven and, becoming man himself, sealed his love for man as with a bond of marriage. Man in his turn is urged to remain unflaggingly faithful to God and his commandments. He has a choice between good and bad, and the record kept will decide whether it is going to be heaven or hell.

We must never forget that God sent his son among us, who suffered on the cross, harried hell, was resurrected, and ascended to his father. From there he will return to pass judgement, whether we shall go to heaven or to hell. With that in mind, we must keep the ten commandments, perform the seven acts of bodily mercy, avoid the seven capital sins, and use our five senses to good purpose. We must do penance, pray diligently, and keep away from the world and all its wickedness.

TEXT

(1)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Thenke hertely in þy þou3t | <i>earnestly</i> |
| Of what matere þou dede bygynne. | |
| 3 Of fylthy seed þou were wrou3t, | <i>From; made</i> |
| And wan in at þe wyket of synne. ¹ | <i>entered; wicket</i> |
| Foulere fylþe knowe y nou3t | |
| 6 Þan þou were fed þy moder wiþ ynne; | <i>Than; inside</i> |
| In a sake ful of filþe þou was out brou3t, | <i>sack</i> |
| In wrecchednes horyble, and stynkyng skynne. | <i>vileness</i> |

(2)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9 What þou art, knowe þy self wel. | |
| Þou were conceyued in synne, and born wiþ woo. | |
| Þy moder and þou, on fortune whel, | |
| 12 In perile of deþ parted a twoo. | <i>separated; in two</i> |

¹ I.e. Entered the womb through the vulva

In pynes of helle what soules fele –
 And þou in mynde keped þoo –
 15 Hit wolde make þy corage kele,
 Whan þou hadde wil to synne goo.

*that; feel
 them (i.e. pains)
 grow weak
 become sinful*

(3)

God made þe of nou3t, haue in mynde,
 18 Wiþ soule of resoun, lyk his ymage.
 In heuene wiþ angels aboute þe wynde,
 He ordeyned þe endeles heritage.
 21 Wiþ more loue he dede þe bynde,
 Bycome þy brother in mannys lynage.
 He ielous loue and trewest to fynde,
 24 Py soule is spouse to his maryage.

*faculty; reason
 winds (n.)
 prepared; for you
 bound you [to him]
 of mankind; family
 He [is]; most loyal*

(4)

To God thy wedlok wiþ loue holde,
 In brennyng contemplacion,
 27 And make nou3t hym cokewolde,
 To loue in fornycacion.²
 On Goddis mercy be not to bolde,
 30 To falle in temptacion.
 Kepe charite hot, let it not colde,
 For quenchyng of deuocion.

*Before; maintain
 fervent
 cuckold
 By living; adultery
 Of; confident
 So that [you]
 cool (v.)*

(5)

Loue alle folk in charyte,
 Body and soule in good atent,
 As þou wolde þey dede þe;
 36 Þat it Goddis comaundement.
 Who breke þo hestes, cursed is he
 Til þey come to mendement.
 39 Pou preyest eueremore in alle degre
 Tyl þat þou to synne assent.

*proper; frame of mind
 commandments
 repentance
 constantly; in every way
 Before; give in*

(6)

That þou hast don siþ þou were bore,
 42 Alle þy lyuyng byþenk þe newe,
 Wheþer hast þou more in store
 Or of vices or of vertue;
 45 And wheþer hast þou folwed more
 Good aungel or wykked, for boþe þe sewe;

*What; born
 life; ponder; anew
 Which [of the two]
 Either
 follow*

² Ll. 27–28: i.e. And do not forsake his love / by courting worldly temptations

Py countretayle þey wil shewe, þe skore,³
 48 In helle or in heuene, wreten trewe. *faithfully*

(7)

Haue mynde, God sente his sone adoun,
 Tok mankynde in flesh and felle,⁴ *Take thought*
 51 And suffred hard passioun, *Assumed the shape of; skin*
 Dyed on croys, and heryed helle. *endured; sufferings*
 Haue mynde of his resurexioun; *harried*
 54 Byleue alle þis trewe gospelle.
 Haue mynde on his Assencioun;
 On God his fader ri3t hond doþ dwelle. *father's*

(8)

57 Þenke þou shalt dye, and nost whenne; *Keep in mind; do not know*
 Pou art incertayn, þefore drede. *ignorant*
 Fro heuene to erþe God shal come þenne,
 60 Deme euel and good after here dede; *Judge (v.); in accordance with*
 Þe good to heuene blisse renne, *hasten*
 In endeles lyf to haue here mede; *eternal; reward*
 63 Þe wikked in helle for to brenne,
 In endeles pyne deþ shal hem fede. *feed*

(9)

The ten comaundementis þou hem kepe;
 66 Þe seuen werkis of mercy wel hem vse; *practise*
 Þe seuene synnes þou be wepe, *bewail*
 Þy fyue wittes þe auyse. *senses; direct (v.)*
 69 Do penaunce, and preye whyle þou schuld slepe;
 Þe fend and fals[e] world despise; *devil*
 No fleshly lustes þe vndercrepe; *move in on you stealthily*
 72 Fle alle foly and folwe þe wise.

NOTES

1–2 Virtually identical with VIII.1–2.

24 The thought of the tie between Christ and the soul in terms of a courtship is treated in a sustained allegory in XX.

³ They present the other half of the tally, your score

⁴ I.e. Became man in every respect

33–35 Alludes to Matt. 7:12, ‘Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them’, and to Luke 6:31, ‘And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise’.

40 *tyl]* Kail *til*.

52 *heryed helle]* For the concept of the Harrowing of Hell, see also X.60 (and note) and XI.19–20.

57 Proverbial. See Whiting, D 96, ‘Death is certain but not the time’. Cf. VIII.97–98: *Man, þou wost wel þou shalt dyʒe; / What dep, ne where, þou nost whenne*.

XXIII
OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTARE

SUMMARY

This poem is a solid, thoroughly orthodox treatise on the meaning and significance of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Holy Church is the assembly of the faithful, who praise and worship their God day and night, especially in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which feeds the faith of the participants with its life-giving bread, to their everlasting joy. The Eucharist commemorates the institution of the Holy Supper by Christ, on the eve of his sacrificial death and resurrection as a redemption of man's sins, promising everlasting joy to the truly repentant, who partakes of the bread and wine of the Eucharist in the sincere belief that they are Christ's body and blood. Not visibly so, but to us as clear and joyful tokens of a miracle not otherwise comprehensible to earthly man. Not what one sees matters, but what the tokens of bread and wine signify when consecrated by the priest. Nor does it matter how many communicants partake of the one bread. Christ's body remains whole in each of the many pieces of bread, just as Holy Church, being the assembly of no matter how many faithful, is one.

The Eucharist is not without engagement. Those who approach the altar unthinkingly, like animals, without devotion and repentance, will be condemned for ever. The good receive eternal life and the salvation of body and soul.

Holy Supper was a watershed. Before, the Israelites ate the sacrificial paschal lamb – as a prefiguration of Christ's redeeming death – and lived by the Ten Commandments. We, under the new dispensation, live by the life-giving bread of the Eucharist and God's teachings.

The poem ends with an appeal to God to forgive us our sins and lead us to heaven to enjoy Christ's festive meal among the saints. To our senses Christ seems just bread, dead, immaterial, of little consequence. In faith, he is alive, both God and man, and greater than any man on earth. Abraham's sacrifice of his son, the life-giving manna in the desert, the paschal lamb, they are all foreshadowings of Christ's redeeming death and resurrection, which we commemorate in the Eucharist.

TEXT

(1)

I wole be mendid 3if y say mys.	<i>make amends; speak; erroneously</i>
Holychirche nes noþer tre ne stones:	<i>neither; of wood</i>
3 Þe hous of preyers God nempned þys,	<i>has called it</i>
Boþe goode men and wikked ressayueþ at ones.	<i>it welcomes; together</i>
Þere as gadryng of goode men ys,	<i>Where</i>
6 Is holychyrche of flesch and bones.	
Prestes are lanterne, hem to wysse	<i>show</i>
Þe wise weyes to heuene wones.	<i>abodes</i>

(2)

9 Holychirche, hery3e þy saueour –	<i>worship</i>
Þynk þy hurd, God on hi3t –	<i>Think of; flock; high</i>
Wiþ song and ympnes, tyde and houre,	<i>hymns; (at the canonical) times and hours</i>
12 Reioys in hym day and ny3t,	
For he is more þan any honour,	<i>[worldly] glory</i>
For his honour passeþ oure my3t,	<i>surpasses; [earthly] powers</i>
15 For we ben his, and he is oure;	
Alle þou3tes ben to hym dy3t.	<i>dedicated</i>

(3)

A specyalle tyme of heryeng here:	<i>worship; hear [about]</i>
18 Lyueliche quyk bred is put forþ þis day,	<i>Life-giving; living</i>
Whyche in þe table of þe holy soper,	<i>at; supper</i>
Wiþ outen doute was 3ouen oure fay	<i>given; [for] our own faith</i>
21 To þe company of twelfe breþeren þere were.	<i>(i.e. the twelve disciples); [who]</i>
By here ful heryenge ioyed þay –	<i>praise (n.); rejoiced</i>
Wel sowned in here ere –	<i>Well-sounding; ears</i>
24 Wiþ ioly herte fayre song to say.	<i>joyful; pleasing; to sing</i>

(4)

A day is mad of solempnyte,	<i>One [particular]; established; celebration</i>
Of þis table first ordynaunce is worschipful tolde. ¹	<i>institution; devoutly</i>
27 In þis newe kynges table, now knowe we,	<i>With</i>
Newe Estren endeþ the olde.	
Newe thyng dryueþ old þyng fro his degre,	<i>established place</i>
30 Out of mynde, þe lasse of tolde;	<i>even less spoken of</i>
So soþfast sunne, by his pouste,	<i>Just as; real; sun; power</i>
Dryueþ away shadewe and stri3eþ colde.	<i>overcomes</i>

¹ I.e. When it is devoutly related how this [communion] table was first instituted

(5)

- 33 As lyȝt liȝtenep nyȝt fro derkenes of kynde, *lights up; in nature*
 So dede Crist at þe holy soper;
 Bad pertely do so of hym mynde, *in plain words; in his memory*
 36 By holy ordynaunce tauȝt vs to lere, *divine decree; learn*
 Halwe bred and wyn, by hys word and wynd, *consecrate; spirit*
 To an ost of helpe to cristen men here, *To [become]; bread; salvation; for; here (on earth)*
 39 Fro shadwe of deþ to gostly blynd,²
 To liȝt of lyf, to shynen clere.

(6)

- Lore is ȝouen to cristen men, *[Christian] belief; given*
 42 Into flesch passeþ þe bred, *[That]; changes*
 As holychirche doþ vs kenne, *teaches*
 Þe wyn to blod, þat is so red.
 45 Pou seest not fleschly þou takest þenne; *in a worldly sense (what); then*
 By byleue of herte makeþ þe fast fro ded, *faith; heartfelt; safe*
 Wiþouten ordre of þynges to renne *Without; order; [worldly] things; live*
 48 By tokene and word þat he bede. *token; instituted*

(7)

- Wiþ outen help of ordre of þyngis,
 Þe bok of oure byleue is lent, *faith; has been given*
 51 Vnder dyuerce spices only tokenynges, *visible forms (i.e. bread and wine); tokens*
 Pouȝ þe spices fro hym be went, *by; him (i.e. Christ); instituted*
 Not durked ne hyd, but riȝt shynynges, *obscured*
 54 Pouȝ fleschly syȝt fro hym be blent,
 Þe soule haþ ioye and mery synges, *natural; eyes; obscured*
 When good byleue seeþ þe sacrament.

(8)

- 57 Þe blod is drynk, þe flesch is mete, *drink; food*
 Ys gostly fode, þe soules delys; *soul's; delight*
 Neuere-þe-lattere, of Crist to trete, *However; [it is also] to give thought to*
 60 He dwelleþ vnder ayþer spys. *is present; both; [visible] forms*
 Þe ressayuour countep not þat þey ete, *communicants*
 Ne brekeþ it not, but hool it lys. *whole; remains*
 63 Pouȝ a thowsande take at o sete, *partake; in one sitting*
 Alone on takeþ as moche o prys.³ *Only; one; precious*

² Ll. 39–40: *For the spiritually blind [to lead them] from the shadow of death / To the light of [eternal] life, to shine brightly*

³ I.e. It is of as much value if only one partakes

(9)

- While obley in yrnes or boyst ys stoken,
 66 Hit nys but bred, and sengyl bake;
 Whanne þe prest to hit Goddis wordis hath spoken,
 Crystys quyk body vndir bred o cake,⁴
 69 Pou3 it a þousande peces seme broken,
 Nes parted ne wasted, but al holle take.
 In byleue of holychirche who wyl hym 3oken,⁵
 72 A3en þis non argument may make.

*sacramental wafer; baking-irons; casket
 simply baked/baked once*

*appears [to the eye]
 divided; entire
 teachings; yoke (v.)
 argue*

(10)

- That ressayueþ: children, man and wyf,
 Not al yliche deuocioun.
 75 Summe taken it in synne and stryf,
 As bestes wiþ outen discrecioun.
 Þe wikkid resceueþ a dedly knyf,
 78 And his endeles dampnacioun;
 Þe good resceyueþ endeles lyf,
 To body and soule saluacioun.

*receive [the host]
 Know (i.e. experience) not; equally
 mental confusion
 animals; spiritual insight*

eternal

(11)

- 81 When þou to chirche gost
 To resceyue God, wisely go.
 I suppose þe prest haue but on ost,
 84 Breke it, and parte to twenty and mo:
 As moche is þe leste cost⁶
 As in þe grettest pece of þo.
 87 Deme alle yliche, lest and most;
 Quaue not, ne drede not, to sen hit so.

*go wisely (i.e. in a spirit of godliness)
 expect; one; host*

value

*Regard; the same
 Quaver*

(12)

- Pou3 þe prest þe sacrament clyue
 90 In a þowsand peces and þre,
 Þe state, ne stature, ne my3t doþ myue,⁷
 Ne leseþ ne lasseþ of his pouste.
 93 By fleshly sy3t þou shalt not lyue,
 But tokene of brekyng makeþ he;

breaks up

*character; substance; power; change (v.)
 loses; weakens; power
 vision; believe*

⁴ [It is] Christ's living body, beneath the outer appearance of the bread of the Eucharist

⁵ I.e. Who is willing to take upon himself the yoke of the church's teachings

⁶ Ll. 85–86: i.e. The value of the smallest piece of the host is as great as that of the largest

⁷ Ll. 91–94: *Neither its essential character nor its material substance, nor its efficacy changes / Nor does it suffer a loss or weakening of its power. / Do not accept at face value what you see with your eyes, / But [accept] that with the breaking [of the bread] he (i.e. the priest) performs a token (i.e. of Christ's broken body)*

For fleschly skyn no sacrement kan preue,⁸ *explain*
 96 In gostly bylyue shal saued be.

(13)

In old lawe, 3e wyten how
 At estren þey eten a lamb al ded, *Easter*
 99 Is ouer put in newe lawe now: *set aside for*
 At estre we eten quyk bred. *living*
 In old lawe, for mannys prow, *spiritual benefit*
 102 God þe comaumentis bed; *the Ten Commandments; gave*
 And oure newe lawe we don allow, *At the same time; admit as valid*
 And kepen boþe by Goddis red. *teaching*

(14)

105 Lete þy mercy passe ryȝt, *outweigh; justice*
 And forȝeue vs oure mysdede.
 Þy face wiþ loue to seen in syȝt, (i.e. fully)
 108 In lond of lyf þou vs lede. *[eternal] life (i.e. heaven)*
 Among þy seyntes in heuene on hyȝt, *on high*
 At þat feste of lif, God, vs fede. *nourish*
 111 Sopfast bred, God of myȝt, *True*
 Ihesus, herde, þou vs hede. *shepherd; guard*

(15)

In syȝt and in felyng þou semest bred,
 114 In byleue: flesch, blod and bon;
 In syȝt and felyng þou semest ded,
 In byleue: lyf, to speke and gon; *walk*
 117 In syȝt and felyng: noþer hond ne hed,⁹ *hand; head*
 In byleue: boþe God and man;
 In syȝt and felyng: in litil sted, *of little consequence*
 120 In byleue: grettere þyng nes nan. *no one*

(16)

Whan Abraham of Ysaac his offryng made, *sacrifice; presented*
 For a fygure he lykned is *As; prefiguration; is compared*
 123 To angels bred oure fadres hadde, *angels' bread (i.e. manna)*
 Þat God fed hem in wyldernes.
 Afterwardȝ God hem bade:
 126 A paske lomb rosted and etep þes. *paschal lamb; that*

⁸ I.e. For natural man (*fleschly skyn*) cannot explain the true nature of the sacrament

⁹ *noþer hond ne hed*] i.e. (without) either deed or thought

In stede of þat, oure soules to glade,
 We reseceyue oure houselle, God o blisse.

holy communion

NOTES

- 3 See Isa. 56:1, 7, ‘Thus saith the Lord ... mine house shall be called an house of prayer’.
- 11 *tyde and houre*] The seven times of the day set aside for prayer.
- 15 Alludes to Ps. 100:5, ‘We are his (i.e. God’s) people’.
- 26 The institution of holy communion is described in Matt. 26:17–30.
- 28 Christ’s death on the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins, replaces the sacrifice of the lamb on the eve of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. See the note to ll. 97–100 below. Kail (p. xxii) inferred from this line that poem XXIII was ‘apparently intended to be an Easter poem’. Kail was in error here, not, as McGarry (1936, p. 258) assumed, because he should have misinterpreted the medieval connotations attached to *Estren*, but because the poem is actually an English version of St. Thomas Aquinas’ sequence *Lauda Sion* (c. 1264), which he composed for the mass on Corpus Christi, established especially in honour of the Eucharist (*ibid.* pp. 258–59).
- 30 A variation on the saying ‘Out of sight, out of mind’ (see Whiting M 569 and S 307).
- 38 *ost*] MnE ‘host’, the consecrated bread of the Eucharist.
- 65 *yrnes*] According to McGarry (1936, pp. 24, 25, 261) the reference is to the wafer-irons used for the baking of the sacramental bread. See also *MED* s.v. *iren* (*n.*) sub 2.(h). *boyst*] > OFr *boist* = a box or casket in which the hosts were kept for later use in the Eucharist (*ibid.*). See also *MED* s.v. *boist(e n.)* sub 1.(a).
- 66 *sengyl bake*] *MED* s.v. *baken* (*v.*) glosses ‘baked once’, whereas s.v. *sengle* (*adj.*) sub 3.(d) the (adverbial) meaning given is ‘simply, just’. Both versions are possible. Kail glosses the phrase as ‘simple bread’, but the single reference to *bake* as a noun in *MED* s.v. *bake(n pt. ppl. as n.)* only carries the meaning ‘a dish baked in pastry, pie’.
- 71 See Matt. 11:29–30: ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn of me For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light’.
- 77–78 Alludes to 1 Cor. 11:29, ‘For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself’.
- 94 See Luke 22:19: ‘And he took the bread ... and brake it ... saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me’.
- 97 *old*] Kail unnecessarily emends *olde*, as also in l. 101. *3e wyten how*] *MED* s.v. *witen* (*v.*(1)) sub 5.(h) interprets this phrase as a rhetorical question, but the context does not support this construction.
- 97–100 Refers to the Jewish traditional sacrificial lamb as a prefiguration of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Ex. 12:1–24 relates how the exiled Israelites in Egypt were promised by God that they would be spared his wrath and be ‘passed over’, if they smeared the blood of the sacrificial ‘Passover lamb’ on their doorposts, eventually to be led out of exile and into the promised land. So will the repentant sinner be saved from damnation and eventually go to heaven if in the Eucharist he eats the bread of Christ’s body, and drinks the wine of his blood, in recognition of his salvation through the redeeming death of the ‘sacrificial lamb’ who died in his place.
- 105 Sts (14) and (15) are directly addressed to God.
- 107 See 1 Cor. 13:12: ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face’.

111 See John 6:33: 'For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven'.

121–22 Refers to Gen. 22:2, 'And he (i.e. God) said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest ... and offer him ... for a burnt offering'. Isaac is thus a prefiguration of Christ, God's only and beloved son, who uncomplainingly sacrificed himself.

123 *angels bred*] The daily 'manna' God gave to the Israelites during their forty years through the desert on their way to the promised land. A prefiguration of the divine, life-giving food of the Eucharist. See X.50 and note.

125 *Afterwarde*] Actually the paschal lamb (l. 126) is part of the story of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, which of course preceded their forty years in the desert, where God provided the manna to sustain them. The paschal lamb is a prefiguration of Christ's redeeming sacrifice for mankind on the cross..

126–28 An *encore*, with some modification, of ll. 97–100.

XXIV

THE LESSONS OF THE DIRIGE

SUMMARY

The poem paraphrases the nine lessons from Job in the Dirge from the Matins of the Dead, concluded by the imploration *Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna*, from the Requiem Mass. The nine passages from Job are as follows, in the sequence of the Lessons: (1) 7:16–21, (2) 10:1–7, (3) 10:8–12, (4) 13:22–28, (5) 14:1–6, (6) 14:13–16, (7) 17:1–3, 11–15, (8) 19:20–27, (9) 10:18–22.

Each paraphrased biblical text in the poem, as well as the *Libera me, Domine* passage, is interspersed with, or followed by a few stanzas which elaborate on the same theme.

TEXT

*lectio prima: parce mihi, domine*¹

(1)

Almy3ty God, Lord, me spare, For soþe, my dayes werkys ben no3t.	<i>nothing</i>
3 My wittes on ny3tes wrong y ware, Perof longe 3eres mon be wro3t. ²	<i>wrongly; wear out</i> <i>can; made</i>
þenke, man, þou ware born ful bare;	<i>naked</i>
6 Into þis worlde what hastou bro3t. Out of þis worlde whanne þou shalt fare, Pou schalt bere with þe ry3t no3t.	<i>depart</i> <i>absolutely</i>

(2)

9 What is man of gret renown, That of hym self makeþ aldre mest. ³	<i>renown</i> <i>of all</i>
Why settyst þou þy herte, a3en resoun, ⁴	
12 And sodeynly repreuest hem mest. In þe dawenyng þou sou3test hem vpsodoun: Contrary to Godis hest	<i>reject; utterly</i> <i>dawn; examined; thoroughly</i> <i>[Whether]; command</i>

¹ *The first Lesson: spare me, O Lord*

² I.e. Long years are compounded therein.

³ I.e. Who has the highest regard for himself

⁴ *Why do you set your heart [upon him], against [all] reason*

15 Pou purchasest þy saule helle prisoun,⁵ *obtain for*
 For fleschely lust, wormes fest.

(3)

How longe sparest þou me no3t
 18 To swolwe my spotel bote it me gryue.⁶ *but (i.e. only when); causes pain*
 Pou keper of men, alle þyng hast wro3t; *protector*
 What schal y do to þyn byhyue. *benefit/interest*
 21 What hastou set me, contrarie þy þo3t, *Why; caused; intention/desire*
 Py holy lawe to re pryue. *reject*
 Lord, whenne my werkis mon be so3t, *examined*
 24 Dyspyce me no3t in my myschyue. *affliction*

(4)

Ful heuy to my self y am maad withynne; *heavy [burden]; have become*
 My werkes on me heuye isse. *heavy*
 27 Why takest þou no3t away my synne,
 And bere from me my wykednesse. *take*
 I slepe in dust, for we ben kynne, *related (i.e. are dust also)*
 30 For erthe clayme3 me for hisse.
 To seche me eerly 3if þou begynne, *early (i.e. in the morning)*
 I ne may withstonde þe y wisse. *cannot; hold out against; surely*

lectio secunda: tedet animam meam⁷

(5)

33 My soul of my self anoyed isse. *in; feels weary*
 I shal leue my speche a3ens me,⁸
 To my soul y wole speke in bitternesse,
 36 And y shal saye to God so fre: *eagerly*
 Wyl no3t dampne me fro blisse,
 Shew me þe cause, þat wolde I se, *reason*
 39 Why demestou me þo3 y dede mysse,
 Lorde, whether þe þynke good to þe.⁹ *just because; wrong*
whilst; consider [it]

(6)

3if þou chalenge my werk and bere me doun, *censure; oppress*
 42 Me, that am werk of þy hande,

⁵ Ll. 15–16: *You pay with your soul's imprisonment in hell / For the delectations of the flesh, [to become] food for hell's creatures*

⁶ *That I swallow my spittle only in pain*

⁷ *The second Lesson: my soul is weary*

⁸ *I will allow my words [to continue] against myself*

⁹ *Lord, whilst you consider that to you it is proper*

And þou in consayl helpe 3e moun
 To wykked men here synnes withstande,
 45 Wiþ repentaunce and sorwful soun *sounds*
 May launce hem from þe deuelys bande; *cut loose*
 To 3erde of loue y moste me boun; *rod; bow*
 48 Lord, me chastice wiþ þat wande. *rod*

(7)

Wheþer þyn ey3en ben fleschlye,
 Or þou seest as man shal see.
 51 Or þy dayes so sone sy3e, *pass (v.)*
 As other mennys dayes be.
 Or þy 3erys ri3t so hye, *years; just; quickly*
 54 As mennys tymes in here degre, – *according to; [own] nature/condition*
 For þou art God, shal neuer dy3e,
 For sorwe and deþ shal from the fle. –

(8)

57 That þou seche my wykkednesse, *[So] that; inquire after*
 And ransake my synne, *search through*
 And wyte I haue no3t down mysse, *know; sins*
 60 Bote hert and soule clene withynne.
 Sopes þer no man nesse *Truly; is not*
 May skape þyn hond, and from the twynne, *escape from; part (v.)*
 63 Bote repentaunce and mercy kesse. *Unless; kiss [each other]*
 Þat now ben frendis, Lord, make hem kynne. *kindred*

*lectio tertia: manus tue fecerunt me*¹⁰

(9)

Thy hand made me man of [resoun], *[possessing the power] of reason*
 66 And shope me al in compas, *formed; all around*
 And sodeynly þou cast me down,
 For knew y no3t what þou was. *who*
 69 Of me men sample take mowen, *By; take warning*
 Be ware lest þay folwe my tras. *footsteps*
 I hadde lordshipe in feld and toun, *power*
 72 Now on a donghille is my pas. *ordeal*

(10)

Haue mynde on me, Lord, and take hede, *remember*
 Of fen of erthe þou dede me make. *mud*
 75 Into dust a3en þou shalt me lede,

¹⁰ *The third Lesson: thine hands made me*

- My soule from þe body take.
 My flesch is ful sleper atte nede,
 78 And solpeþ my soule wiþ synnes blake.
 Lord God, þy dome y drede;
 Whanne þou comest, y mon awake.
- unreliable; in [time of] trouble
 defiles
 judgement
 had better be awake*
- (11)
- 81 My hert shulde be stedefast:
 Pou hast lopred as mylk and slep in þou3t,¹¹
 Ri3t as chese þou crodest me fast.
 84 I wyte my synnes þat y wrou3t;
 Lorde, alle my synnes away þou cast,
 Bote wiþ my synnes cast me no3t.
 87 Pou knowest how longe my lyf shulde last;
 Pou sette my terme, y passe it no3t.
- strong/unwavering
 in thought (i.e. as it were)
 I blame
 But; throw me [down]
 appoint/fix*
- (12)
- Pou clopedest me with flesch and skyn,
 90 With bones and synewes made me to gyder;
 Lyf and mercy 3af me withyn,
 As brotel vessel y stonde slyder.
 93 Þy sechyng haþ kepyd my gost with wyn.
 A, Lorde, whenne þou comest hyder
 To deme al erþe, þy domes to twyn
 96 Pou3 I wolde fle, I not no3t whyder.
- [The spirit of] life; imparted; inwardly
 fragile; uncertainly
 searching; preserved; joy
 hither
 escape (v.)
 do not know; whither*
- (13)
- To deme þe erthe whanne þou wendys,
 Fro face of þy wrapþe whyder shal I go.
 99 To hyde me wiþ angels aren Goddis frendys.
 And God me hate, þay ben my fo.
 And I hyde me in helle among fendys,
 102 In pyne þay wolen tormente me so.
 I haue synned ri3t moche, my synne me schendys;
 Me thynke þay waxen mo and mo.
- come
 where
 [who] are
 If; they (i.e. the angels)
 fiends
 [state of] sin; condemns
 increase*
- (14)
- 105 My trespas moche arn blamed,
 Bote repentaunce be mendement;
 Byfore þe y drede, y am aschamed.
 108 Whenne þou comest to iugement,
- found fault with
 But; remedy (n.)
 [filled with] awe
 pass judgement*

¹¹ Ll. 82–83: *You have curdled [me], as it were, like milk and milk-cheese, / Just like cheese you have firmly formed me*

Pat weren wylde mon be tamed,
 Al wopen of wraþþe mon be brent;
 111 In bok of lyf þo þat be named¹²
 To ioie of heuene mon be sent.

*[Those] who; unruly; subdued
 weapons; burnt*

(15)

Almyȝty God, Lord, me ȝeme,
 114 In thy mercy þou me lede.
 Whenne my soule is boden out fleme,
 Helpe me, Lorde, atte al my nede.
 117 Whenne þou al þe worlde shal deme,
 Dampne me noȝt after my dede.
 Whenne þat angels blowen here beme,
 120 Penne alle folk may haue gret drede.

*take heed of
 summoned; to flee [from my body]
 in accordance with
 trumpets*

(16)

From worldis worschipe y am shoue,
 And broȝt abas from al astat.
 123 My skyn is cloped al on roue,
 In pouerte and peyne my wyt is mat.
 Lorde, chastice me wiþ ȝerde of loue,
 126 Þouȝ y haue seruyd þe swerde of hat.
 Wherto wyltou þy maystry proue,
 Wiþ suchon as I to make debat.

*renown; expelled
 down; high position
 covered; scabs
 suffering; distraught
 rod
 deserved; hate
 Why; authority
 such [a person]; quarrel (v.)*

*lectio quarta: quantas habeo*¹³

(17)

129 Als many wykkednesse and trespas
 And synnes withoute noumbre mo
 Shew me, why hydest þy fas
 132 Fro me, and demest me þy fo.
 Lorde, þenkes þe solace¹⁴
 This turment, and do me wo.
 135 A drope of thy mercie of oyle of grace,
 Lorde, graunte me er y go.

*without more numbers (i.e. countless)
 Are clear to
 pleases [me]
 whilst [you]*

(18)

I am slyme of erthe, haue in mynde,
 138 Pore of matere and dedely,

*remember
 lacking in substance; mortal*

¹² *Those who are named in the book of life* (i.e. the chosen for eternal life)

¹³ *The fourth Lesson: how many are mine [iniquities]*

¹⁴ Ll. 133–34: *Lord, do you think [that] this torment [gives me] solace / pleasure, whilst you inflict misery upon me*

As a lef styrede with wynde;
 On me þou prouest þy maystry.
 141 Pou prouest þy myȝt, and þat I fynde
 O þe stubble, þat is so drye.
 Pou pursuest me, and wylt me bynde,
 144 Wiþ synnes in my ȝouþe þou wylt me stroye.

*leaf; shaken**superiority**as I observe**want to**of; youth; destroy*

(19)

Lorde, þou pursuest me fast,
 For soþe, aȝens me þou doest wryte:
 147 Bitternesse; bote swete is past.
 I may noȝt blenche whenne þou wylt smyte.
 I trowe þat þou wolt me wast,
 150 With synnes in my ȝouþe do me endite;
 Lorde, on me þy wille þou hast.¹⁵
 My grete synne my self y wyte.

*greatly**Verily; me (i.e. my name)**on the contrary; blissful state**cannot; escape; destroy**fear; wasted away**charge**blame*

(20)

153 In synne þou settest my fot and hede,¹⁶
 And alle my werkes hastou soȝt,
 And alle steppys y euere ȝede;
 156 Ȝe haue nombred alle my wordes and þoȝt.
 And als þou hast taken hede,
 Roten y schal be, wasted to noȝt;
 159 As clothes þat moþþes on hem fede,
 So shal my flesch with wormes soȝt.

*put; head**deeds; examined**went**counted**Even if; notice (n.)**Rotten; nothing**on which moths**attacked by*

(21)

Wo me, so mon y be,
 162 For y haue don moche synne.
 I, wreche, whyder shal y fle,
 For wrechyd lyf y lyued ynne,
 165 My Lord, my God, noȝt bote to the.
 God of mercie, on me mynne.
 Lord, haue mercie on me,
 168 Let noȝt thy loue fro me twynne.

*thus it must be with me**flee**Because of; in which**[I am] nothing; except**be mindful of**be separated**lectio quinta: homo natus¹⁷*

(22)

Man, that is of woman born,

¹⁵ *Lord, you do with me as you please*¹⁶ *I.e. You put my deeds and thoughts in [a state of] sin*¹⁷ *The fifth Lesson: man [that is] born*

Lyuyng short tyme he is.

171 Er his navel be knytte and shorn,
Fulfilde with many wrechidnes.
Er he fro moder be forborn,

174 In peryl of deth bothe partie es.
3if flesch be lord, the soule is lorn;
Bote soule be lord, he leseth his blys.

Before; knotted; cut through
[He is already] filled; vileness
born
parties (i.e. mother and son); are
gains the upper hand; doomed
If; loses

(23)

177 Man geth out as don floures,
Corage and strengthe, and fayre of hewe;
Makeþ moche of hym self, sayþe: al is oures,
180 And repeth þat he neuere ne sewe.
He is defouled be dayes and houres,
And fleep as shadow þat neuere grewe;
183 Dwelleþ neuere in þe self stat of ouris,
Encresceþ mo vyces þan vertew[e].

comes out (i.e. is born)
[With]; in appearance
reaps; sowed
polluted; (i.e. all the time)
Remains; condition; wretchedness
Adds to

(24)

And þou holdest worthy to open thyn ey,
186 And come to me, and clayme for rent,
To loke on such a wrecche as y,
And lede hym with the to iugement,
189 Þer al mankynde in company,
Atte thy general parlement:
Vertues to heuen ther schul 3e try,
192 The vyces in helle fyre be brent.

If; deign
ask; [your] due
worthless person
Where; [is] gathered together
full assembly
lead

(25)

What man may make hym clene,
Pat is conceyed in vnclene sed.
195 Ywhether þou art alone, withoute mene.
To felowschipe þou hast non nede.
Short ar mannys dayes sene,
198 And the nombre of hys monthes in thy dede.
Þou hast sette his terme of fat and lene,
He passeþ it no3t for no mede.¹⁸

himself
from
[I ask you]; company
companionship
appear
according to your decree
times; riches and poverty
exceeds

(26)

201 A, go away a lytel hym fro,
In mendement that he mow rest
Tyl the day he 3erned so,

distance yourself
repentance
longed for

¹⁸ *He cannot exceed it, however much he would be prepared to pay*

- 204 A, of harde man come þat is best. *hard-working*
 Lord, haue no mynde to do me wo, *desire*
 Forber my synnes wolde make me lest. *Bear with; [that]; the most insignificant [of men]*
- 207 Lord, whenne þou comest to deme so
 Al þe world be fyre, boþe est and west,
 God, in þy syȝt þy way y go *before your eyes*
- 210 Ryȝt ham; in þy fayþ me fest. *confirm me*

(27)

- Lord, whenne þou demest alle þyng in riȝt, *justice*
 Wher mercie shal noȝt knawen be, *known*
- 213 Ryȝt leseþ noȝt his myȝt, *loses*
 Þouȝ mercie be in companye. *present*
 Mercy is euere in þy syȝt, *before; eyes*
- 216 For mercie euere þyn eyȝen se.
 Wher euere þy dome is dyȝt, *judgement; dispensed*
 Riȝt claymeþ mercie for his fee. *demands; as payment*

*lectio sexta: quis mihi hoc tribuat*¹⁹

(28)

- 219 Who ȝeueþ to me þat y me hyde *grants*
 Tylle þy wrapþe in helle be past,
 Withouten pyne þy dome to byde,
- 222 Tyl body and soule aȝen be fast? *united*
 With arguments noȝt me chyde; *argumentation; rebuke*
 Þou knowest how longe my lyf shal last.
- 225 Lord, lat mercie be my gyde, *guide*
 And neuere fro þy face me cast.

(29)

- Þou set me a tyme; couenant is tan. *set (imp.); has been agreed*
- 228 Haue mynde on me what dome is diȝt. *Remember; prepared*
 Trowest þou ouȝt þat y, dede man,
 Shal haue aȝeyn man of myȝt, *Do you think at all*
become; power
- 231 And ȝelde rekenyng sen y bygan *settle my account; (i.e. since my birth)*
 With alle dayes þat y now fyȝt? *struggle against*
 Now I abyde þat I fro ran, *remain; what; fled from*
- 234 Tyl my folwyng come to myn insiȝt. *sequel [to my life] (i.e. my death); understanding*

(30)

- Lord, þou shalt clepe me,
 And I shal answer to þe, werk of þyn hande. *your handiwork (i.e. creation)*

¹⁹ *The sixth Lesson: who will give me this*

- 237 Werk of þy ri3t hand take to þe;
 Pou shalt not bynde it in helle bande.
 Pou hast noumbred my steppes, how mony þay be, *fixed the number of*
- 240 How monye y ran, how monye I stande.
 Bot spare þou, Lord, to þe synne of me, *show forgiveness; for*
 Ne wilne no3t deme my werkes 3e fande. *judge; examined*

(31)

- 243 Deme me no3t after my dede, *according to*
 Lorde, I byseche þe,
 I haue don in þy si3t, and tok non hede; *[That]; before your eyes*
- 246 Perfore I praye þy mageste, *majesty*
 God, my wikkednesse away þou lede, *take*
 Myn vnry3t away wasche 3e. *wrongdoings*
- 249 Non more. Lord, at my nede, *No; in*
 Of alle my synnes clense 3e me.

lectio septima: spirit[us] meus²⁰

(32)

- My gost, shalt þou be made newe, *spirit*
- 252 My dayes shulle yshorted be; *will [surely]*
 My soule fro þe body mon remewe, *depart*
 Alone a graue byleueth to me. *Only; remains*
- 255 I haue non synne, no vices me sewe, *are visible to me*
 Myn eyen in bitternesse dwelle y se. *remain*
 Deliuere me, Lorde, and on me rewe, *have pity on me*
- 258 And sette me bysydes the.

(33)

- Whos hande þou wolt a3eyn me fy3t,
 And þou proue þy stronge hande? *If*
- 261 My dayes ben passed to withstonde þy my3t, *are over*
 I may no3t bere þy litel wande. *[even] your light rod*
 My thou3tes ben wasted, turned in ry3t, *grown feeble; confused; completely*
- 264 Turmentynge my herte inwith and ande; *internally, [my] spirit*
 And turnyd day to þe ny3t. *into*
 After derkenesse I haue bedded my bed, I fande. *made my bed*

(34)

- 267 I sayde to stynke and rotenesse: *stench*
 My fader and moder arn 3e;
 And to wormes y sayde þysse:

²⁰ *The seventh Lesson: my soul*

- 270 My systren and my brethern both be 3e.
 And erthe claymeþ me for hysse,
 Where þen now my bydyngge to me. *If dwelling [place]*
 273 My felyngge þou art, and my God of blisse. *refuge*
 Drede of deth droueth me. *torments (v.)*

(35)

- Eche a day synnyng,
 276 And euere newe encres; *increase [of sins]*
 Neuere a day blynnynng, *stopping (i.e. when it stops)*
 Bote euere vertue [wane les.] *all the while; becomes smaller*
 279 To repente no bygynnyng, *[There is]*
 No3t bote gadre synne ay in pres.²¹ *Nothing; except; accumulate; always; abundance*
 In helle is no wynnyng, *saving [of souls]*
 282 Ne non a3eynbyyngge to pes. *redeeming*

*lectio octava: pelli mee*²²

(36)

- My flesches ben wasted, don me refuse, *wasted away; reject*
 My bones cleuyn vnto þe skyn; *are stuck to*
 285 My lippes arn shronken out of syse, *in size*
 Aboute my teth arn left atwyn. *All around; have become apart*
 Haue mercye on myn werk vnwyse, *foolish*
 288 Haue mercie on me, let mercie wyn. *prevail*
 Namly my frendes me no3t despysse; *[That] especially*
 Lordis hande hath towched me more and myn. *more and less (i.e. entirely)*

(37)

- 291 Why purs[ue] 3e me, and on me syte, *sit [in judgement]*
 And arn filled of my flesh and fel.²³ *with; skin*
 Who 3eueþ to [me], þat wolde y wyte, *gives*
 294 Wordes in boke be ered wel, *[that] are inscribed*
 Or in a plate of led wryten *sheet; lead*
 With an yren poyntel, *stylus*
 297 Or in a flynt grauen and spyten *hard stone; carved; engraved*
 By craft of werk, withoute chysel. *hard labour; chisel*

(38)

- I byleue þat soth y say, *truth; speak*
 300 Myn a3eynbyere lyuyngge isse. *redeemer*

²¹ I.e. Because our sins keep accumulating²² *The eighth Lesson: my skin*²³ I.e. And why have you (i.e. the friends) devoured me entirely?

- I shal rysen of þe erthe my laste day,
 Bylapped in my flesch and skyn ywisse; *clothed*
 303 Byholde with myn eyʒen twey, *eyes*
 Se God, my sauour, in blisse;
 Non other eyʒen bote þes, withouten nay; *except these; (i.e. beyond a doubt)*
 306 Þe hope in my bosom yput vp isse. *This; preserved*

(39)

- The soule is in derkenesse from gostly syʒt.
 Lord, ʒyue here rest and pees
 309 Withouten ende, ʒyue here lyʒt,
 Euerlastynge lyʒt þat neuere shal sees. *cease*
 Þou þat rered Lazar on hyʒt *raised; up*
 312 Out of þe graue, stynkyng fro wormes pres, *the mass of worms*
 Þy pauylon of mercy be on hem pyʒt, *tent; over; pitched*
 To reste fro pyne make hem rele. *bring him deliverance*

lectio nona: quare de [uulua] eduxisti me qui, &c²⁴

(40)

- Out of þe wombe why hastou me broʒt.
 Þat wolde y hadde be fordon; *[Me] who; brought to perdition*
 Þanne hadde I be as noʒt, *been*
 318 Noon eyʒe hadde sene me after son; *soon after*
 Þan hadde I be as vnwroʒt, *uncreated*
 Noʒt born from wombe to berelis doun, *burial*
 321 Where my short dayes arn in my þoʒt,
 Where þay shal noʒt be ended moun. *allowed*

(41)

- A, þerfore, Lord, graunte me þes:
 324 To wepe and wayle, repente my synne,
 Þat y torne noʒt aʒeyn to erthe of derkenes, *turn; land*
 To stryues of deþ, be curyd þerynne, *struggles; covered*
 327 Lond of wrethes and þesternesse *wreathing shapes; darkness*
 Per is shadew of deþ, noon oþer wyne;
 Per woneþ euerlastynge for hem lyued mysse, *joy*
 330 Euere gryslyhede, þat neuere schal blynne. *Where; those who lived in sin*
horribleness; cease

libera me, domine²⁵

(42)

Delyuere me, Lord, from endeles deþe,

²⁴ *The ninth Lesson: wherefore hast thou brought me forth out of the womb, etc.*²⁵ *deliver me, O Lord*

In þat grete dredful day,
 333 Where heuenys schullen be styred from erþe breþe,
 Whenne þou shalt come to deme for ay.
 To heuen or helle, þat on he geþ;
 336 Þe word be fyre and grete afray,
 Panne woo to the synful, his soule sleþ,
 And fendys claymen hym for here pray.

*On
 removed; earthly life
 [to] only one [of those two]
 verdict; terror
 [that verdict] destroys*

(43)

339 That day shal be a day of drede,
 Of wrapþe, and myschyf, and wrechidnesse;
 Pere may no man opere rede,
 342 Ne make amendis for his mysse.
 For worldly witsse of synful ded:
 Gostly payne in bitternesse;
 345 Pere helpeþ neþer counseil ne med,
 Ech man for hym self, to payne or blysse.

*affliction
 can; advise
 wrong(s)
 Spiritual; suffering; misery
 advice; bribery*

(44)

What shal y say for shame and drede,
 348 Or what to do, fool and nys,
 Whanne y shal schewe forþ no good dede,
 Byfore so gret iuge and wys?
 351 Al folk on me woln take hede,
 Wayte after vertue, and fynde vys.
 Say: God, mercy, þy dome y drede,
 354 For in þe al mercy lys.

*sinful
 show
 wish; pay attention to
 Search for*

(45)

Now, Crist, of þy mercie we craue;
 Haue mercie on vs, and leue noþt;
 357 We byseche þe, þat come mankynde to saue.
 To bye vs, þou from heuene vs soþt,
 Oure herytage for vs to haue;
 360 Þat wern lorn þou hast boþt.
 Wyl noþt dampne in helle kaue
 Thy honde warke þou hast wroþt.

*beg
 desert [us]
 came
 condemn [us]; pit
 work of your hands*

(46)

363 Þe brennyng soule in helle hete,
 Withouten ende wepe thoo.
 Allas, oure synnes don vs bete,
 366 Þay say: wo, wo, wo.
 Here is no remedie to gete.

*they
 get the better of*

Pay walke in derkenesse to and fro,
 369 Þe stynk and derkenesse is so grete,
 Allas, in þystrynesse we go.

(47)

God, that art shapere of al,
 372 Of slyme of erthe þou me wro3t.
 Wiþ þy blod principal,
 Wonderly þou haste vs bo3t.
 375 Þou3 my body now rote smal,
 My soule to my body shal be bro3t.
 Out of my graue reyse me þou schal
 378 To lyues man; and fayle no3t²⁶

noble
Marvellously
rots; away

raise
alivelliving; [will] fail

(48)

Blod and boon, flesche and felle.
 Here my prayer: in parfitnesse
 381 At domesday comaunde my soule to dwelle
 In Abrahamys bosom, in thy blisse,
 Whenne þou shalt delyuere me fram sy3t of helle.
 384 Þou breke þe 3ates of helle, ywisse,
 Þou sou3test helle in peynes felle,
 3af ly3t to hem in grete bry3tnesse.

perfection

bosom

cruel
those [in hell]; splendour

(49)

387 Alas, y may be schamed sore,²⁷
 At domesday stonde in drede;
 I, to come so gret a Iuge byfore,
 390 And shewe forþ no good dede,
 Bote fardel of synnes gadred in store;
 Þe fendes redy my rolle to rede,
 393 Þe countretayle to shewe, þe score,
 Þe leste steppe þat euere y 3ede.

judge

pack
roll (i.e. the record of my sins); read
other half of the tally (i.e. the reckoning)
smallest; took

(50)

The good aungel on his ry3t syde,
 396 Whenne he hem ladde with merye songe,
 And whenne he wolde no3t folwe hy[m], glyde
 Out of the waye, he wente wronge;
 399 In vertues he nolde abyde.
 Þe good aungel mourned amonge:

led the way
went
Off the path; in the wrong direction
did not want to
grieved; meanwhile

²⁶ To [become] a living man [again], and nothing will be lacking

²⁷ Alas! I have cause to feel deep shame

- With þe soule nel y chyde;
 402 Y 3eue þe vp for endeles longe. *will not argue
length [of time] (i.e. eternity)*
- (51)
- At domesday no man shal be excusyd, *assumed innocent*
 Lord ne lady, mayde ne knaue; *maid nor servant*
 405 For wykked counsel scholde be refusyd,
 And after good counsayle craue. *desire (v.)*
 After warke þat þay vsed, *According to; deeds; done*
 408 I shal hem deme or saue.
 Þe sauyd excusyd, þe dampnyd accusyd, *Those who are saved*
 As thay deseruyd echon haue: *everyone gets*
- (52)
- 411 Ech touche and mouynge with hys honde, *movement*
 Þe leste twynkelynge wyþ his ey3e,
 His wronge worke: sitte or stonde,
 414 Ryde or go, sitte or ly3e.
 Pou3 he spede no3t þere he dede fonde, *did not succeed; where; tried*
 Hys conscience wole hym bewrye; *betray*
 417 Benefice, auauncement, hous or londe, *Gain; promotion*
 The leste bargayn þat he dede bye. *deal; concluded*

NOTES

title ‘Lessons of the Dirige II’ in the bibliography of Muir (1970, p. 384). Kail in his edition mentions ten, instead of nine, Lessons in the title at the top of each page of the poem. However, the tenth is in fact not a Lesson, but the famous part of the Requiem Mass, as put to music by countless composers.
3 *ware]* *MED* s.v. *waren* (v.(2)) sub (b) glosses ‘employ/use’, but ‘tire out/exhaust’ sub (e) is more apposite here.

11 Without the comma after *herte* (as Kail has it), *a3en resoun* is read as a prepositional adjunct to *herte*. The line then assumes a negative meaning, whilst the corresponding line in Job 7:17 is positive: ‘What is man ... that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?’

12, 13 *hem]* The *man of gret renoun* of l. 9.

20 *shal]* Kail misprints *shal*.

30 *clayme3]* Variant spelling of *claymez*. See also III.14: *ges*, as the only other example of 3sg. *pres.* in *-es/-ez* (rather than *-eth/-ep*), occurring not at the end of the line.

47–48 Refers to Prov. 13:24, ‘He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes’.

57 *That]* Starts a consecutive clause (ll. 57–60), subordinate to the main clause in ll. 49–54.

61 *Sopes]* MS *soper*. Follows Kail, who does not mark the amendment. *nesse]* Contraction of *ne* and *es(se)* = ‘is not’.

65 *resoun]* MS *þe soun*.

72 *pas*] Glossed in *MED* s.v. *pas(e (n.(1)))* sub (g), as ‘way of life’, but ‘predicament/ordeal’ sub (h) is more apt here.

82 *lopred*] MnE ‘hardened/curdled’, where the liturgical text of Lesson iii has the opposite meaning of *poured out* (*L. mulsisti*, ‘milked’). The author ignored the liturgical text at this point and with *lopred* opted instead for the literal translation of the following *coagulasti*, in *sicut caseum me coagulasti* (‘Hast thou not ... curdled me like cheese’) in the liturgical text. As a result, there is now mention of ‘hardened/curdled’ three times (including the added mention of slip-cheese), whereas the intended meaning in the liturgical text (as in Job itself) is to illustrate the first lines of Lesson iii: ‘Thine hands have made me and fashioned me’ with the simile of man’s creation as the ‘pouring out as milk’, and his formation as the ‘curdling as of cheese’.

105 *trespas*] Uncommon plural form.

111 *bok of lyff*] Referred to several times in Revelation, e.g. in 3:5, ‘I will not blot out his name out of the book of life’, and 20:15, ‘And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire’.

123 *roue*] Quoted twice in *MED*, correctly glossed s.v. *rove (n.)* as ‘scabby/covered with scabs’ (cf. Job 7:5, ‘My skin is broken, and become loathsome’), but, erroneously associated with the preceding word *clothed*, as ‘something rough/a rough garment’ s.v. *rough(e (n.(1)))* sub (e).

161 Kail unnecessarily inserts *to* between *Wo* and *me*.

184 *vertewe*] MS *vertew*.

186 *clayme for rent*] God asks back man’s soul as his due. Cf. I.39–40: ... *thy soule is Goddis rent; / Quite that wele in loue and drede*.

250a *spirit[us]*] MS *spē*.

267–70 A markedly deviating rendering of Job 17:14, where Job calls corruption ‘my father’, and the worm ‘my mother and my sister’. The same ‘mix-up’ occurs in the prose version of the *Lessons* in the Wheatley Manuscript, betraying that it served as a source for the Digby text (Day, 1921, p. 278).

278 *wane les*] MS *waneles*.

291 *pursue*] MS *pursuye*.

293 *me*] Inserted emendation unmarked in Kail.

314a *uulua*] MS *nulla*

323 *pes*] The line is quoted in *MED* s.v. *strif(e (n.))*, where an alternative for *pes* is given as ‘[?read: pes]’. Unnecessarily so, as here *thes* (‘this’) is cataphoric (see *MED* s.v. *this (pron.)* sub (3)); hence the following colon, introducing the things Job asks of God in the rest of the stanza.

378–79 Run-on lines straddling stanzas 47 and 48.

382 *Abrahamys bosom*] Refers to the story of ‘Pauper and Dives’ in Luke 16:19–26. The beggar Lazarus after his death ‘was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom’. The rich man ends in torment in hell and begs that Lazarus ‘may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue’. But Abraham points out to the rich man that he enjoyed the good things in his life and Lazarus the evil things, and that their fates are for ever reversed in the hereafter. ‘Dives’ is also referred to in X.206: *Wiþ dives in pyne þou shalt ly3e*.

397 *hym*] MS *hy*.

410 I conclude the description of the proceedings on the Day of Judgement in St. (51) with a colon, to introduce the list of standards by which man will be judged in St. (52).

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APPENDIX 1
TABLE OF DATES

Year	Political events	Reference in Poem	Non-political Poems (years assumed)
1399	Deposition of Richard II 13 Oct.: Henry IV crowned 14 Oct.: session of Parliament	I	
1400	—		II
1401	20 Jan.–10 (15?) March: session of Parliament	III	
1402	30 Sept.: session of Parliament		
1403	—		
1404	Jan.: session of Parliament Oct.: session of Parliament	IV	
1405	—		V
1406	1 March–3 Apr.; 25 Apr.–19 June: session of Parliament 13 Oct.–22 Dec.: session of Parliament	VIII VIII	VI
1407	Duke of Orleans assassinated 20 Oct.–2 Dec.: session of Parliament	XII	VII
1408	—		
1409	—		
1410	27 Jan.: session of Parliament	IX	
1411	3 Nov.–20 Dec.: session of Parliament		X
1412	—		XI
1413	3 Feb.: session of Parliament 20 March: death of Henry IV 9 Apr.: Henry V crowned 15 May: session of Parliament	XII	
1414	30 Apr.; Nov.: session of Parliament Lollard conspiracy	XIII	
1415	Battle of Agincourt Nov.: session of Parliament		
1416	March–2 Oct.: session of Parliament		

Year	Political events	Reference in Poem	Non-political Poems (years assumed)
1417	Execution of Oldcastle	XIV (early 1418)	
1418	—		XV
1419	10 Sept.: assassination of Duke of Flanders Oct.: session of Parliament	XVI	
1420	2 Dec.: session of Parliament		XVII
1421	2 May–1 Dec.: session of Parliament Complaints about Benedictine monks	XVIII	
1422	31 Aug.: death of Henry V in France 1 Sept.: Henry VI succeeds to the throne 9 Nov.: session of Parliament		XIX
1423	23 Oct.–24 Feb.: session of Parliament		XX
1424	—		XXI
1425	Apr.: session of Parliament		XXII
1426	3 Feb.: session of Parliament		XXIII
1427	Oct.: session of Parliament		XXIV

APPENDIX 2
LALME LP 7770 (*PIERS PLOWMAN*) COMPARED WITH
 THE CORRESPONDING LP OF THE POEMS

Key:

underlining occurs uniquely in text under which listed

S South (*LALME* item analysed [only] in the South of England)

N North (*LALME* item analysed [only] in the North of England)

* dot map lacking in *LALME*

** item map lacking in *LALME*

*** dot map and item map lacking in *LALME*

() rare

(()) very rare

Item	Representation in <i>Piers Plowman</i>	Representation in the Poems
THESE	<u>this</u> , thes	þes, ((thes)), ((<u>þese</u>))
SHE	she (sche)	she, (sche)
HER	here	here
IT**	hit	<u>it</u> , hit
THEY	they, thay	they, (thay), ((<u>þei</u>))
THEM	hem	hem
THEIR	here (<u>hyre</u>)	here
SUCH	suche, <u>such</u>	suche
WHICH	<u>the-wiche</u> , whiche, <u>wiche</u> , <u>whuche</u>	whiche, ((<u>whoche</u>))
EACH	<u>vche</u> , <u>vch-</u> , eche (ech-, <u>vch-a</u>)	eche, (ech)
MANY	mony (many, <u>monye</u>)	many, mony
MAN	man	man
ANY	eny (<u>ony</u>)	(eny), (<u>any</u>)
MUCH	<u>mochel</u> , moche, <u>muche</u>	moche, <u>myche</u>
ARE	beth	<u>ben</u> , <u>are</u> , <u>arn</u> , <u>ar</u> , ((<u>aren</u>)), ((beth))
IS	is	is, <u>isse</u>
ART (S)	art	—
WAS	was	was, <u>wast</u> , ((<u>wes</u>))

Item		Representation in <i>Piers Plowman</i>	Representation in the Poems
SHALL	<i>sg.</i>	shal	shal, shalt (2 <i>sg.</i>), ((shall)), ((schul))
	<i>pl.</i>	shal	shal, (<u>schullen</u>)
SHOULD		sholde	((sholde, <u>shold</u> , schold(e), schuld(e)))
WILL	<i>sg.</i>	wol (wole)	wole, wol, <u>wolt</u> , <u>wil</u>
	<i>pl.</i>	wol, <u>wolle</u> , <u>wolleth</u>	<u>wole</u> , wol, (wolen), ((wōln)), <u>wil(t)</u>
WOULD <i>sg.</i>		wolde	wolde, <u>woldest</u> , <u>wold</u>
FROM		fram	<u>fro</u> , <u>from</u> , ((fram))
AFTER		aftur	<u>aftur</u> , ((aftur))
THEN**		thenne	<u>þan</u> , <u>þanne</u> , (<u>þen</u>), (<u>þenne</u>), <u>than</u> , (<u>thanne</u>)
THAN		<u>thenne</u> , <u>then</u>	(<u>þan</u>)
THOUGH		thow (<u>thogh</u>)	<u>þouþ</u> , <u>thouþ</u> ((thow))
IF		yf	<u>þif</u> , ((gif))
AGAINST		aʒeyn, aʒen, <u>aʒenes</u> , (<u>aʒennes</u>), (agaynes)	<u>aʒens</u> , aʒen, (aʒeyn), ((agaynes))
AGAIN***		<u>aʒeyn</u>	<u>aʒen</u> , ((agayn)), ((aʒayn))
ERE <i>conj.</i>		ar (<u>are</u>)	<u>er</u>
SINCE	<i>adv.</i>	sethen, sethe, sennes	—
	<i>conj.</i>	<u>sethe-that</u>	<u>siþ</u> , ((<u>sen</u>))
	<i>prep.</i>	—	((<u>sen</u>))
YET		ʒut	ʒut, <u>ʒit</u>
WHILE		the-whyll, <u>the-whiles</u> , <u>whiles</u>	<u>while</u> , <u>whyll</u> , ((þe while))
STRENGTH		strength-, <u>strenghe</u>	<u>strengþe</u> , ((<u>strengþ</u>)), ((strengthe))
WH-		((w-))	—
NOT		nat (<u>naught</u>)	<u>not</u> , <u>nouþt</u>
NOR		ne (<u>no</u>) ((neyther))	ne
WORLD		world	world, <u>worlde</u>
THINK		<u>bythenke</u>	<u>þenk</u> , (<u>thenke</u>), ((þenke))
WORK	<i>n.</i>	werk-	werk-
	<i>v.</i>	worche	worch-
THERE		there	<u>þere</u> , there, <u>ther</u>

Item	Representation in <i>Piers Plowman</i>	Representation in the Poems
WHERE	where	where, ((<u>wher</u>))
MIGHT <i>v.</i>	<u>myhte</u> , <u>myht</u>	<u>my3t</u> , <u>myght(-)</u>
THROUGH*	<u>thorw</u> (<u>thorowe</u>)	<u>burgh</u> , <u>thurgh</u>
WHEN	whenne, when	when, whenne, <u>whan</u> , <u>whanne</u> , ((<u>whenne þat</u>))
<i>n. pl.*</i>	-es (-ys)	-es, -s, <u>-re(n)</u> , <u>-n</u> , <u>-is</u> , <u>-en</u> , <u>-e</u> , -ys
<i>pres. ppl.</i>	-ynge, <u>-ynde</u> , -ande	(-ynge, -ande, <u>-yng</u>)
ASK***	<u>ask-</u>	<u>aske-</u>
BEFORE <i>prep.*</i>	byfore, <u>byfor</u> , tofore	byfore
BEYOND***	<u>by3ende</u>	((<u>by 3onde</u>))
BOTH	bothe	<u>boþe</u> , ((<u>bothe</u>))
BURN (S)	<u>bern-</u>	<u>brenn-</u>
	<i>pt. ppl.</i> <u>ybrent</u>	<u>brent</u>
BUT	bote	<u>but</u> , bote, ((<u>bot</u>))
CAME	<u>kam</u> , <u>cam</u>	(<u>com</u>), ((<u>come</u>))
CHURCH	chirche, <u>churche</u> ((<u>kyrke rh</u>))	chirche
COULD <i>sg.</i>	couþe	—
DAY <i>pl.</i>	dayes	dayes
DIE	dey-, deye, <u>deyde</u>	<u>dy3e</u> , <u>di3e</u> , (<u>dye</u>), ((<u>deye</u> , <u>die</u>))
	<i>pt.</i> <u>deyde</u>	<u>dyed</u> , <u>dy3ed</u>
DO	<i>2sg.</i> dost	<u>doest</u> , dost
	<i>3sg.</i> doþ	doþ, <u>doth</u>
	<i>pt. sg.</i> dede, <u>dide</u>	dede
EITHER + OR	or +	((<u>other +</u>))
EVIL***	<u>euel</u>	(<u>euy</u>), <u>euyll</u>)
EYE <i>pl.</i>	<u>eyes</u> , <u>yes</u>	<u>ey3en</u> , <u>ey3e</u> , <u>eyen</u>
FETCH	fecche, fette	—
FILL (S)	<u>fulfille</u>	((<u>fylle</u> , <u>file</u>))
FIRE	<u>fuyr</u>	<u>fyre</u> , ((<u>fyere</u>))
FIRST	<u>furste</u>	<u>first</u> , ((<u>firste</u>))
	<i>wk. adj.</i> the-furste, the-furst	—

Item	Representation in <i>Piers Plowman</i>	Representation in the Poems	
GATE (S)	gate (3ates)	3ate(s)	
GET <i>pt. ppl.**</i>	for3eten	((<u>geten</u> , <u>goten</u>))	
GIVE <i>pt. sg.**</i>	3af, <u>gaf</u> <i>rh</i>	3af	
GO 3sg. (S)	<u>goth</u>	<u>gop</u> , ((<u>geb</u> , <u>geth</u>))	
GOOD	good	good, <u>goode</u>	
HAVE (S)	<i>inf.</i>	hauen	haue
	<i>pt. sg.</i>	hadde	hadde
HEAR (S)	here, <u>yhere</u> , (<u>huyre</u>)	here	
HENCE	hennes	((<u>henne</u>))	
HIGH	<u>hye</u> , <u>heye</u> , <u>heyh</u>	<u>hy3e</u> , <u>hi3e</u> , <u>hey3</u>	
HIGHT	<u>hihte</u>	<u>hi3t</u> , <u>hy3t</u>	
HILL	hull-	—	
HITHER	<u>hydir</u> -	(<u>hyder</u>), ((<u>hider</u>))	
HOLD <i>pt. pl. (S)</i>	helden	—	
HUNDRED	hundred	—	
I (S)	y (<u>ich</u>)	y, <u>i</u>	
KIND etc. (S)	kynde	kynde	
LEAD <i>pt.</i>	ladde	(<u>ladde</u>)	
LESS	lasse, lesse	lasse, (<u>lesse</u> , <u>les</u>)	
LET <i>pt. (S)</i>	<u>lete</u> , <u>leet</u>	(<u>let</u>)	
LIE <i>v.***</i>	ligge	((<u>ligge</u> , <u>li3e</u>))	
LITTLE	lytel	<u>litel</u> , <u>lityl</u> , (<u>litil</u>), ((<u>lytyl</u> , <u>lytel</u>))	
LIVE <i>v.**</i>	<u>libbe</u> , lyue	lyue, (<u>leue</u>)	
NEITHER + NOR	noþer +	noþer +	
NO-MORE (S)	no-more	—	
OR	or, <u>other</u>	or	
OWN <i>adj.</i>	<u>owne</u> , <u>owene</u> , owen	owen, <u>awen</u> , ((<u>owe</u>))	
PRIDE etc. (S)	<u>pruyde</u>	((<u>pride</u> , <u>pryde</u>))	
READ <i>pt.</i>	radde	—	
THE-SAME	that-ilke, this-ilke	—	
SAY	<u>segge</u>	<u>say</u> , <u>sey-</u> , ((<u>sey</u> n))	

Item	Representation in <i>Piers Plowman</i>	Representation in the Poems
SEE <i>pt. sg.</i> ***	<u>seyh</u>	((<u>sawe</u> , <u>sey3e</u>))
SELF	self, <u>sylue</u> , <u>suluen</u> , <u>sulue</u> , <u>sulf</u>	self
SILVER (S)	<u>suluere</u> , <u>suluer</u>	((<u>syluere</u>))
SIN***	synne	synne
SLAIN (S)	slawe	((<u>slayn</u>))
STEAD (S)	stede-, stede	stede, ((<u>sted</u>))
THENCE***	<u>thennes</u>	((<u>þens</u>))
THITHER	<u>thyder</u>	((<u>þeder(e)</u> , <u>þede</u>))
THOUSAND	<u>þousend</u>	<u>þowsand</u> <i>adj.</i> , ((<u>thowsande</u> <i>n.</i>))
TOGETHER	<u>togyderes</u>	<u>to gydre</u> , ((<u>to gedere</u> , <u>to gyder</u>))
TWO	two	two, ((<u>twey</u>))
UNTIL (S)	tyl	tyl, ((<u>tylle</u>))
WENT***	3ede, <u>yede</u>	(3ede)
WHETHER	<u>where</u>	<u>wheþer</u> , ((<u>whether</u> , <u>ywhether</u>))
WHAT***	what	what
WHITHER	<u>wheder-</u>	((<u>whidre</u>))
WHO (S)	who	who
WHOM (S)	whom, <u>wham</u>	whom
WITEN (N,S) <i>pt. sg.</i>	wiste	((<u>wiste</u> , <u>wist</u>))
WITHOUT <i>pron.</i>	<u>with-uten</u> , with-oute	<u>wiþ oute</u> , <u>wiþ outen</u> , withoute(n), <u>wiþoute</u> , (<u>wiþouten</u>), ((<u>wiþ out</u>))
WORSE	worse, wors	(worse), ((wors))
YIELD	3elde	3elde
-ER <i>comp.</i>	<u>-ore</u> , <u>-ur</u>	<u>-er</u> , <u>-ere</u>
-LY <i>adv.</i>	<u>-liche</u> , <u>-lich</u> , (-ly)	-ly, <u>-ely</u>

APPENDIX 3

THE POEMS IN *A MANUAL OF THE WRITINGS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH*

Key:

B Bibliography

D Description

Poem	<i>MWME</i>		
	Vol.	Author	Page(s)
I Loue God and drede beg. Eche man be war, that bereth astate	5 7 9	Robbins Raymo Louis	pp. 1419 (D); 1661 (B) pp. 2328–29 (D); 2539 (B) pp. 2983 (D); 3363 (B)
II Mede and muche thank beg. In blossomed buske I bode boote	3	Utley	pp. 714 (D); 873 (B)
III Treuth, reste and pes beg. For drede ofte my lippes y steke	5	Robbins	pp. 1419 (D); 1661 (B)
IV Lerne say wele, say litel, or say no3t beg. As þe see doþ ebbe and flowe	9	Louis	pp. 2980 (D); 3362 (B)
V Wyt and wille beg. Man, be war of wikkid counsaile	9	Louis	pp. 2981 (D); 3363 (B)
VI To lyf bodyly is perylous beg. Lerne bodyly to lyue	5	Robbins	pp. 1420 (D); 1661 (B)
VII Man, know thy self, and lerne to dye beg. Mannys soule is sotyl and queynt	7	Raymo	pp. 2328–29 (D); 2539 (B)
VIII A good makynge of iour delaye beg. Man, haue hit in þy þou3t	5	Robbins	pp. 1420 (D); 1661–62 (B)
IX With God of loue and pes 3e trete beg. This holy time make 3ow clene	5	Robbins	pp. 1420 (D); 1662 (B)
X A good steryng to heuenwarde beg. Many man is loþ to here			
XI God and man ben made atte on beg. Glade in God, þis solempne fest			
XII God kepe oure kyng and saue the croune beg. Glade in God, calle hom 3oure herte	5	Robbins	pp. 1420 (D); 1662 (B)

Poem	<i>MWME</i>		
	Vol.	Author	Page(s)
XIII Dede is worchyng beg. Whanne alle a kyngdom gadrid ysse	5	Robbins	pp. 1421 (D); 1662 (B)
XIV Man, be warre er the be woo beg. The herrere degre, þe more qys	9	Louis	pp. 2983 (D); 3363 (B)
XV The descryuyng of mannes membres beg. Where of is mad al mankynde	5	Robbins	pp. 1421 (D); 1662 (B)
XVI A remembraunce of lij folyes beg. Loke how Flaundres doþ fare wiþ his folyhede	5	Robbins	pp. 1421 (D); 1662 (B)
XVII Loue that God loueth beg. That ilke man wole lerne wel			
XVIII The declaryng of religioun beg. Who þat wole knowe condicion			
XIX beg. [I]n my conscience I fynde			
XX beg. The tixt of holy writ, men sayn	3	Utley	pp. 681 (D); 839 (B)
XXI A lernyng to good leuyng beg. Pore of spirit blessed be	7	Raymo	pp. 2312 (D); 2531 (B)
XXII Knowe thy self and thy God beg. Thenke hertely in þy þou3t			
XXIII Of the sacrament of the altere beg. I wole be mendid 3if y say mys	7	Raymo	pp. 2304, 2358 (D); 2525, 2561–62 (B)
XXIV The lessouns of the dirige beg. Almy3ty God, Lord, me spare	2	Muir	pp. 384 (D); 536–37 (B)

GLOSSARY

- a** *interj.* XXIV.201.
- a(n)** *indef. art.* I.1, 75.
- abas** *adv.* down XXIV.122.
- abate** *v.* put an end to, reduce XII.123, XIV.12.
- ableth** *v. 3sg.* enables I.52.
- aboue** *prep.* above V.16, XXII.19; *adv.* on XVII.191; **al** - to full prosperity III.153.
- aboute** *adv.* about, around, busy XII.17, XXI.143; *prep.* all around XXIV.286.
- abyde** *v.* abide, remain VIII.96, XXIV.233.
- aby(3)e** *v.* pay for X.210, XV.96.
- aby3ed** *pt. ppl.* oppressed V.29.
- abyte** *n.* habit XVIII.46, 52.
- accuseþ** *v. 3sg.* accuses, impugns IV.45; **accusyd** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.409.
- acheson** *n.* aspersions XIII.76.
- acorde** *v.* accord, agree, come to an agreement XX.63; **acordeþ** *pl.* VIII.78; **acordid** *pt.* XX.97.
- accountes** *n. pl.* accounts IX.97.
- adoun** *adv.* down XII.38, XXII.49.
- adyte** *v.* condemn XX.99.
- afflay** *v.* discomfit IV.38.
- afray** *n.* terror XXIV.336.
- after** *adv.* (here)after, afterwards, for I.124, XXIV.318; *prep.* after, according to/with, on the basis of I.140, XXIV.407; *conj.* after, according as IV.19, XIV.22; *adj.* later XVI.48.
- afterward(e)** *adv.* afterwards XIII.10, XVIII.45.
- aftur** *adv.* afterwards IX.151.
- agaste** *adj.* terrified XIV.103.
- agayn** *adv.* again IV.103, X.123.
- agaynes** *prep.* against X.86.
- agylte** *v.* sin against X.165.
- a3ayn** *adv.* again, back XI.67, XIX.30; **a3en** I.92, XXIV.222; *prep.* against I.75, XXIV.11; **a3ens** III.33, XXIV.146; **a3eyn** *adv.* again XXIV.325; *prep.* against XXIV.230, 259; **a3eyns** XVIII.56.
- a3eynbyere** *n.* redeemer XXIV.300.
- a3eynbyynge** *ger.* redeeming XXIV.282.
- ake** *v.* ache XV.86.
- aknowe** *pt. ppl.* confessed XIX.19.
- al, all(e)** *adj.* all, every(thing), only I.27, 34, 127; *adv.* XX.35, XXIII.70.
- alas** *interj.* XXIV.387
- aldre** *pron. gen. pl.* of all XXIV.10.
- al gate** *adv.* always XVIII.77.
- allas** *interj.* alas XV.95, XXIV.365.
- Alleluya** *n.* alleluia XI.2.
- allow** *v.* admit as valid XXIII.103; **allowed** *pt. ppl.* appreciated XVI.26.
- almes** *n.* alms VII.69, XVII.95; **almes()dede** *n.* almsgiving VII.72, 89.
- almy3ty** *adj.* almighty XXIV.1, 113.
- alon(e)** *adj.* alone XV.80; XXIV.195; *adv.* only VII.4, XXIII.64.
- alow** *v.* take into account XV.43.
- als** *adv.* as XXIV.129; - ... as *conj.* as ... as XIII.137; **and** - *conj.* even if XXIV.157.
- also** *adv.* also, thus III.53, XII.101; *conj.* while XV.115.
- altere** *n.* altar XXIII(title).
- alway** *adv.* always VI.54, IX.91.
- aly3ede** *pt. ppl.* put XIII.103.
- am** *v. 1sg.* X.66, 147.
- amende** *v.* amend, atone (for), put right I.163, IV.134.
- amendment** *n. in* - to rights XIV.79.
- amendes, amendis** *n.* amends IX.5, XVII.84.
- amorous** *adj.* amorous XX.125.
- among(e)** *prep.* among, with III.73, IX.158; *adv.* meanwhile, together XVI.16, XXIV.400;
- amonges** *prep.* XXI.70.
- amountes** *v. 3sg.* amounts to IV.233.
- amys** *adv.* amiss XVII.13.
- an** *prep.* on XII.15.

- and** *conj.* I.3, XXIV.411; if, even though I.43, XXIV.406.
- ande** *n.* spirit XXIV.264.
- angels** *n. pl.* IX.10, 191; *gen. pl.* V.21, X.107; -
bred(e) manna X.50, XXIII.123.
- anger** *n.* XV.101.
- anguysche** *n.* agony XX.90.
- another, a()noþer** *pron.* another, somebody else I.147, IV.164, VII.79.
- anoy(3)ed** *pt. ppl.* (feel) offended V.26; - *isse* feel weary XXIV.33.
- answere** *v.* answer (for) I.153, VIII.16; *n.* XX.55; **answerde** *v. pt.* XX.162.
- any** *adj.* IV.200, XXIII.13.
- apayre** *v.* damage III.18, IX.41.
- apeche** *v.* accuse XXI.136.
- apele** *v.* accuse, challenge VIII.71, X.190.
- apere** *v.* appear X.192.
- apert** *adv.* openly XII.54, XVI.87.
- appyl** *n.* apple X.22, 23.
- ar(e), ar(e)n** *v. pl.* are I.122, 126, XXIV.99; **art** *2sg.* II.53, XXIV.371.
- areue** *v.* rob XVIII.62.
- argument** *n.* argument(ation), evidence, reason VII.73, XXIII.72; **argument(i)s** *pl.* XIX.39, XXIV.223.
- ari3t** *adv.* carefully IX.63.
- arm** *n.* (limb) XV.139; **armes** *pl.* XV.35, 131.
- armes** *n. pl.* arms (weapons) II.51, XIII.133; coat of arms XIII.116.
- array** *n.* II.2, 10; **arraye** *v.* put in order, prepare III.121, IX.180.
- articles** *n. pl.* X.100.
- as** *adv.* I.110, XXIV.410; as if IV.52, XXIV.319; **as ... as** I.105.
- aschamed** *adj.* ashamed XXIV.107.
- ases(e)** *v.* cease, desist III.21, XIV.54.
- ashamed** *adj.* III.4, XX.173.
- aske** *v.* ask, require II.43, VII.68; **asken** *pl.* VII.66; **askep** *3sg.* XIII.39, XVII.50.
- askuse** *v.* excuse IV.83.
- aspi(3)e, aspye** *v.* espy, discover, notice III.45, VI.62, XX.66; **aspi3ed, aspyed** *pt. ppl.* V.28, XII.66; **aspy3ed** *pt.* XIII.98.
- assaile, assayle** *v.* assail, afflict, attack II.75, IV.237.
- assay** *n.* attempt II.77; *v.* attempt, find out, test IV.30, 158; **assaye** *v.* VIII.6.
- Assencioun** *n.* Ascension (of Christ) XXII.55.
- assent** *n.* mind, connivance I.4, XII.12; **assent(e)** *v.* give in, yield XVIII.24, XXII.40.
- asses** *v.* cease III.30, XXI.85.
- assise** *n.* judgement, verdict I.164, III.13, 25; court of assize IX.65.
- assoyle** *v.* argue out, release XX.206; **assoyleþ** *3sg.* XVIII.50.
- astat(e)** *n.* estate, authority, office I.1, XVI.107.
- aswage** *v.* abate, subside XIII.117.
- at(te)** *prep.* at, in, of I.94, XI(title).
- ataynt, ateynt** *pt. ppl.* condemned, convicted XIII.61, XVI.9.
- atent** *n.* attitude, intention XI.108, XVII.19.
- a two(o)** *adv.* in two XX.117, XXII.12.
- atwyn(ne)** *adv.* apart XVIII.144, XXIV.216.
- auaunce** *v.* accept, favour II.44, V.43; **auaunceþ** *pl.* XXI.122; **auauncement** *n.* promotion XXIV.417; **auaunsed** *pt. ppl.* XIV.85.
- auayle** *v.* avail III.91, VII.25.
- aueryce** *n.* avarice XXI.14.
- au3t** *v.* ought XIII.151.
- auisement** *n.* be good - prudently I.7.
- auncetres, aunsetres** *n. pl.* ancestors III.135, XVI.118.
- aungel** *n.* angel XVIII.119, XXII.46.
- auntre** *v.* venture XV.140.
- auy3e** *v.* strive XVIII.67.
- auyse** *v.* advise, bethink, decide I.141, 162; **auysed** *pt. ppl.* resolved XX.125.
- avowe** *v.* affirm IV.87.
- avyse** *v.* warn IV.81.
- away** *adv.* IV.166, XXIV.248.
- awayte** *n.* expectation XVI.83.
- awe** *n.* awe, fear IV.18, XVI.88; **holde in** - overawe IX.59; **stonden** - be respectful, stand in awe (of) V.37, IX.83.
- awen** *adj.* own II.34, VII.120.
- ay** *adv.* always, for ever III.23, XXIV.334.

- ayþer** *adj.* both XXIII.60; - **in oþer** mutually XI.78.
- bad(e)** *v. pt.* bade VIII.24, XXIII.125.
- bak** *n.* back X.40.
- bake** *v. singyl* - simply baked, baked once XXIII.66.
- bakebon** *n.* spinal column XV.33.
- balauunce** *n.* balance III.165; **in euene** - in proportion XIV.37.
- bande** *n. pl.* bands XXIV.46, 238.
- banere** *n.* banner XVI.64.
- bank** *n.* hillside II.5.
- bare** *adj.* naked XXIV.5; *n.* the naked VI.37.
- bare** *v. pt.* bore, endured X.40, XI.103.
- bargayn** *n.* deal(ings), pledge, purchase XV.96, XVIII.92.
- barge** *n.* I.65.
- batayle** *n.* battle, fighting, war III.87, 88.
- bay** *n. to* - at bay IX.21; **brou3t to** - brought to bay II.76, IV.238; **stonde to** - cornered VIII.54.
- bayte** *v. 3sg.* baits XVI.82.
- be** *prep.* by, in I.7, XXIV.181.
- be(n)** *v.* be, consist of, get I.1, III.149; *pt. ppl.* II.9, XXIV.317; **bene** *pl.* keep company IV.145.
- bed** *n.* II.25, 82.
- bedded** *pt. ppl.* - **my bed** made my bed XXIV.266.
- bede** *v.* bid, beg, dictate IV.170, XVII.102; **bed(e)** *pt.* I.22, VII.63; **bedeþ** *pres. 3sg.* XX.78.
- before** *adv.* caste - imagine, think ahead XII.82, XV.16.
- began** *v. pt.* XVI.47.
- begeten** *v.* accumulate II.59.
- beggere** *n.* beggar X.191.
- begyled** *pt. ppl.* betrayed XVI.18.
- begynne** *v.* begin VII.109, XVIII.96; **begynneþ** *3sg.* IX.76; **begynnyng** *ger. in* - as a start I.47.
- be3ete** *n.* benefit XIII.12.
- bekenyng** *n.* summons XVI.124.
- beloued** *adj.* beloved IV.148.
- beme** *n. pl.* trumpets XXIV.119.
- bende** *v.* bend, be inclined, submit IV.34, VI.71; **benden** *pt.* X.31.
- benefice, benefys** *n.* benefice, gain, living VIII.33, IX.161; **benefices** *pl.* XIV.28.
- bent** *v. 3sg.* bends IV.58; *pt. ppl.* I.69, 81.
- berde** *n.* beard XV.53.
- bere(n)** *v.* bear, accuse, take VI.44, XV.50; - **doun** oppress XXIV.41.
- berelis** *n.* burial XXIV.320.
- bereth, bereþ** *v. 3sg.* bears, behaves, maintains I.1, III.139.
- berkande** *pres. ppl.* barking IV.238.
- berselle** *n.* target XI.38.
- berþe** *n.* birth XVIII.53.
- besou3t** *pt. ppl.* entreated XVII.16.
- best** *adj. sup.* IV.226, XII.84; *adv.* XI.34, XVII.32; *n.* XII.135, XV.102.
- best** *n.* beast, animal, cattle IV.24, VII.80; **bestes** *pl.* X.174, XXIII.76.
- bestayle** *n.* cattle III.67.
- besye(n)** *v.* busy, exert XVI.42, XIX.85.
- besynesse** *n.* matters, task XV.28, XVIII.13.
- bet(er)** *adj. comp.* better VII.73, XVIII.66; *adv.* XIII.151.
- bete** *v.* beat, get the better of, punish VI.55, IX.14; **bete(n)** *pt. ppl.* XX.114, 155; **betep** *pres. 3sg.* XVII.14.
- beterers** *n. pl.* see **market**.
- bethe** *v.* are I.26.
- betok** *v. pt.* entrusted IV.246.
- betray** *v.* IV.54, VIII.38.
- betyng** *n.* beating X.136.
- be wepe** *v.* bewail XXII.67.
- bewrye** *v.* betray XXIV.416.
- bewte** *n.* beauty XVII.66.
- bid(de(n))** *v.* bid, instruct, urge IV.189, X.5, XVIII.149; **biddes, biddeþ, biddis, biddip** *3sg.* IV.115, XVII.193, XX.51, 52; **biddest** *2sg.* XX.187.
- bigyled** *v. pt.* deceived XX.186.
- bigynne** *v.* begin III.102.
- bi3e** *v.* buy III.56.

- bille** *n.* charge, (formal) complaint V.70, XII.109.
- bischof** *n.* bishop IX.155, XVIII.123;
bischopriche *n.* diocese IX.154.
- bitternesse** *n.* bitterness, misery XXIV.35, 147.
- bitray** *v.* betray IV.86.
- blades** *n. pl.* V.6.
- blake** *adj.* black IX.2, XVII.157.
- blame** *n.* blame, disgrace, slander III.21, X.82; *v.* blame, criticize IV.42, 44; **blamed** *pt. ppl.* found fault with III.7, XXIV.105.
- blameles** *adj.* innocent XVIII.183.
- blasande** *pres. ppl.* dazzlingly II.12.
- blede** *v.* (be) shed I.166, XIII.70.
- blenche** *v.* escape XXIV.148.
- blende** *v.* blindfold XIII.82; **blendes** *3sg.* blinds V.20.
- blent** *pt. ppl.* blind, obscured XVII.23, XXIII.54.
- blessed, blessid** *pt. ppl.* XXI.1, 17.
- blete** *v.* bleat IX.158.
- blis(se)** *n.* bliss, happiness, splendour I.28, 114;
blisse *v.* be full of joy XX.133; **blissed** *pt. ppl.* XII.91, XXI.97.
- blo** *n.* reputation XII.126.
- blo(o)d** *n.* blood I.166, XX.83; ancestry XVIII.57, 153.
- blome** *v.* blossom I.62.
- blossemed** *adj.* II.1.
- blowe** *v.* blow VI.59; **blowen** *pl.* XXIV.119; *pt. ppl.* died down IX.30.
- blynd(e)** *adj.* blind III.77, IV.215; *n. pl.* IX.26, XXIII.39.
- blynne** *v.* cease, stop moving XV.85, XX.15;
blynnyng *ger.* stopping XXIV.277.
- blys(se)** *n.* bliss VII.77, X.163.
- bode** *v. pt.* lingered II.1.
- boden** *pt. ppl.* summoned XXIV.115.
- bodily(e)** *adv.* V.23, VI.8.
- body** *n.* body, person III.22, VII.95; *gen.* XV.50;
bodies *pl.* XVIII.75; **bodyly(e)** *adv.* bodily VI(title), 24.
- bo3t** *pt. ppl.* bought XXIV.360, 374.
- bok** *n.* book XXIII.50, XXIV.111; **bokes** *pl.* III.74, XVIII.108.
- bold(e)** *adj.* brazen, daring, with hostility I.157, XVII.127; **be** - dare XII.76; **make** - encourage XIII.11; **bolde(ly)** *adv.* confidently, fearlessly III.84, XX.40.
- bon** *n.* bone XI.54, XV.49; **bone(s)** *pl.* XVII.67, XX.140.
- bond** *v. pt.* imposed an obligation XI.31.
- bond** *n.* slave XXI.32; **bonde** *adj.* bound IV.197; *n.* pledge XVIII.87.
- bonet** *n.* bonnet VII.28.
- boon** *n.* bone XXIV.379.
- boote** *adv.* in the open II.1.
- bord** *n.* board XIII.154; table II.25, IX.73.
- bore** *n.* hole I.95.
- bore** *pt. ppl.* born XXII.41.
- born** *pt. ppl.* born, driven, given IV.179, VIII.13.
- borwe** *v.* borrow, use X.121, XVI.96; **borwed** *pt. ppl.* I.38, IX.129; **borweþ** *3sg.* XIV.75; **borwere** *n. gen.* borrower XXI.76.
- bosom, bosum** *n.* XXIV.306, 382.
- bost** *n.* arrogance XIII.123; **boste** *v.* boast, brag XVI.26, XXI.43.
- bot(e)** *conj.* but, except if, on the contrary X.148, XXIV.18.
- botemeles** *adj.* bottomless XV.82.
- boten** *v. pt. pl.* bit, ate of X.32
- bothe, boþe** *pron.* both I.164. III.19; **boþe ... and** *conj.* III.110, XXIV.208.
- botme** *n.* bottom IV.99.
- bou3t(e)** *v. pt.* bought, redeemed VIII.92, X.90; *pt. ppl.* XIII.28, XVII.96.
- boun** *v.* bow XXIV.47.
- boun** *adj.* ready, prepared XII.6.
- bounden** *pt. ppl.* bound XII.134, XX.114.
- boundes** *n. pl.* **passe þe** - exceed IV.212, 222.
- bounte** *n.* excellence XII.18.
- boures** *n. pl.* mansions XVIII.176.
- bow(e)** *n.* branch X.31; bow (weapon) I.69, XX.94; **bowes** *pl.* XV.38.
- bow(e)** *v.* bow, bend X.78, XV.45; **bowed** *pt.* XVI.27.
- boyst** *n.* casket XXIII.65.
- braken** *v. pt. pl.* broke X.31.
- bran** *n.* XVI.49.

- brayn** *n.* brain XV.14, 112.
- bred** *n.* bread VII.61, IX.182; **angels bred(e)** manna X.150, XXIII.123.
- brede** *n.* breadth I.102, XIII.158.
- breke** *v.* break (down) III.127, IX.19; **brekeþ** *pl.* XXIII.62; **brekyng** *ger.* XXIII.94.
- breme** *adj.* fiercely III.62.
- brenne** *v.* burn X.143, XII.115; **brenneþ** *3sg.* III.62; **brennyng** *pres. ppl.* ardent, fervent XVIII.7, XXII.26; **brent** *pt. ppl.* II.70, XI.111.
- breſt** *v.* break, burst X.36, XII.133.
- breſt** *n.* breast X.32, XI.66.
- breþe** *n.* breath, life XVI.123, XXIV.333.
- breþere** *n. gen. pl.* brothers' XXI.34.
- breþered** *n.* brotherhood X.167.
- breþeren, brethern** *n. pl.* brothers X.88, XXIV.270; **twelſe** - twelve disciples XXIII.21.
- brewe** *v.* brew XVIII.80.
- bri3t** *adj.* bright, dazzlingly II.12, IX.9.
- bro3t** *pt. ppl.* brought XXIV.6, 122.
- broken** *pt. ppl.* III.92, IV.119; **to** - broken to pieces XII.50.
- brondes** *n. pl.* swords XV.38.
- brondes** *n. pl.* fuel VII.37.
- brotel** *adj.* fragile XXIV.92.
- broþelyng** *n.* worthless person X.191.
- brother, borþer** *n.* IX.15, XX.11.
- brought, brou3t** *pt. ppl.* brought, caused, formed II.63, 76.
- browded** *pt. ppl.* embroidered XVIII.155.
- brydelle** *n.* bridle I.85.
- bry3t** *adj.* bright IX.2, X.92; **bry3tneſſe** *n.* splendour XXIV.386.
- bryng(e)** *v.* bring, give, reduce to I.12, IV.236; **bryngen** *pl.* XV.52, XVIII.152; **bryngeþ** *3sg.* III.42, 153.
- brynne** *n.* flames VII.37.
- brynneþ** *v. 3sg.* burns X.141.
- buffete** *v.* chastise XVIII.90.
- burghe** *n.* borough III.34, XV.54.
- burnysche** *v.* burnish IX.2.
- burye** *v.* bury IX.127.
- buschel** *n.* bushel XXI.156.
- buske** *n.* grove II.1.
- but** *conj.* unless I.155, XXIII.94; - **for** II.72; **but** *adv.* only II.10, XXIII.83.
- buxom** *adj.* eager XXI.18.
- buxomnes** *n.* meekness XVI.121.
- buyrnes** *n. pl.* men II.5.
- by** *prep.* by, of I.4, XXIV.298.
- bycom(e)** *v. pt.* became, incarnated X.52, XXII.22.
- byd** *v.* ask, bid, require, urge VI.27, X.79; **byddis** *3sg.* XI.32; **byddyng** *n.* bidding, commandments X.31, XXI.82.
- byde** *v.* bide, put up with, remain IV.99, IX.85; **bydes** *3sg.* XV.46; **bydyng** *n.* dwelling place XXIV.272.
- bye** *v.* buy, conclude, pay I.121, VII.20.
- byfelle** *v. pt.* befell XI.17.
- byfore** *prep.* before IV.188, XXIV.389; *adv.* before, in advance, in front X.9, XX.112.
- bygan** *v. pt.* began XXIV.231.
- bygyled** *pt. ppl.* deluded XX.12.
- bygynne** *v.* begin III.59, 115; **bygynneþ** *3sg.* is the beginning of III.88; **bygynnyng** *n.* beginning XXIV.279.
- by3e** *v.* buy, earn, redeem VII.118, X.98.
- by3ete** *n.* booty, spoils IX.150.
- by 3onde** *prep.* beyond XII.25.
- byhende, byhynde** *adv.* behind X.209, XVII.171; **is** - left XVII.49; **byhynde** *prep.* VI.66.
- byhyue** *n.* benefit, interest XXIV.20.
- byknowe** *adj.* known VI.57.
- bylapped** *pt. ppl.* clothed XXIV.302.
- bylde** *v.* build XX.35, XXI.19; *pt. ppl.* XXI.63.
- byleue, bylyue** *n.* belief, faith VII.75, XXIII.96; **byleue** *v.* believe I.125, XXII.54.
- byleueth** *v. 3sg.* remains XXIV.254.
- bynde** *v.* bind IX.28, XXII.21.
- byſeche** *v.* beseech XXIV.244, 357.
- by ſhap** *n.* shepherd, 'maker-in-the-manner-of' IX.155.
- by()ſyde** *adv.* nearby, on the side IX.84, XVIII.91; **byſydes** *prep.* beside XXIV.258.

- byte** *v.* bite I.85.
bypenk *v.* ponder XXII.42.
bytwen *prep.* between I.15, VIII.90.
by tyme *adv.* in time III.151, IX.111.
- caas** *n.* case XX.194.
cacche *v.* catch XX.148.
cake *n.* XXIII.68.
calde *v. pt.* called XV.106.
cal(e)n *v.* call IV.105, 207; - **hom** summon back XII.1; **callep** *3sg.* X.76, XX.43; **calt** *pt. ppl.* XXI.151.
can *v.* IV.47, XVII.57; know VII.60, XIII.94; **canst** *2sg.* can X.62.
candel li3t *n.* candlelight XXI.155.
candel styke *n.* candlestick XXI.157.
carayne *n.* corpse XX.88.
care *n.* VI.36.
cas *n.* case IX.42, XVIII.187.
cast(e) *v.* cast, shed, throw IX.175, XIII.76; be inclined, intend, plan XIII.60, XIV.98; *pt.* XXIV.67; *pt. ppl.* XVI.4, XX.176; caught XX.194; - **adoun** overpower XII.38; - **before** imagine, think ahead XII.82, XV.16; - **wyt** take thought XII.47; **castep** *3sg.* XX.79.
castell *n.* castle XII.118; **castels** *pl.* XII.19, XIII.49.
catelle *n.* beast XIII.54.
cause *n.* cause, reason, source III.75, 161; **causes** *pl.* XVII.9.
certayn *adv.* in - certainly VII.17.
certeyn *adj.* reliable XVIII.111.
chace *v.* harass XVIII.189.
chaf *n.* chaff III.47.
challenge *v.* challenge XXIV.41.
chambre *n.* chamber II.64, IV.203; **chambres** *pl.* dwellings XX.35.
champion(u)n *n.* champion, victor XVIII.25; **champions** *pl.* III.144.
charge *n.* duty, responsibility, task I.59, V.45.
chargeth *v. 3sg.* requires III.3.
charite(e), charyte *n.* charity, God's grace, (neighbourly) love I.23, 113, IV.247.
charmes *n. pl.* spells XVI.51; *v. 3sg.* attracts (away) V.19.
chas *v.* chase, drive, harass X.174, XVII.150.
chaste *adj.* XX.52.
chastice, chastise *v.* I.77, XXIV.48.
chastite *n.* chastity XVIII.6.
chastyng *pres. ppl.* punishment X.139.
chastyse *v.* chastise, punish X.55, XII.66; **chastysed** *pt. ppl.* XII.118.
chaunce *n.* chances II.47; **chese 3oure** - make your choice III.167; **falle a** - something happen to... I.73.
chaunceller *n.* chancellor XIV.9.
chaunge *n.* change III.43; *v.* IV.53, 228; **chaungen** *pl.* XVIII.15; **chaungeþ** *3sg.* III.146.
chef *n.* centre XV.15; *adj.* chief XVI.81, XX.36.
cheke *n.* cheek XX.53.
chekkyss *n. pl.* check XVI.108.
chep *adv.* cheap IX.53.
chepen *v.* buy XVI.23.
cherche *n.* church VIII.27.
chericheþ *v. pl.* cherish XIII.89.
cherische *v.* cherish, encourage XIII.64, 162.
chery *n.* cherry III.145.
chese *v.* choose I.111, II.13; - **3oure chaunce** make your choice III.167; **ches** *pt.* III.54.
chese *n.* cheese XXIV.83.
chete *n.* reversion of property to lord; **falle in** - be forfeited IX.118.
cheualrous *adj.* brave, valiant III.71.
cheuenteyn *n.* commander IV.193.
cheynes *n. pl.* chains XI.5, 7.
chide, chyde *v.* argue, rebuke, scold IX.87, XVIII.95; **chydes** *3sg.* XV.48.
chief *adj.* III.124.
child(e), chylde *n.* IV.22, VII.59, XX.150; *pl.* XXI.21; **childre(n)** *pl.* IV.247, X.179.
chirche *n.* church III.143, IV.137.
chiste *n.* box XXI.158.
chiualry *n. pl.* knights III.69; **chyualrie** *n.* knighthood XII.34.
chosen *pt. ppl.* XX.175, XXI.151.
choys *n.* choice XI.61.
chysel *n.* chisel XXIV.298.

- cite(e)** *n.* city I.18, III.34.
claryte *n.* splendour XVII.70.
clay *n.* IV.62, IV.102.
clayme *v.* claim, ask XVI.117, XXIV.186;
claymen *pl.* XXIV.338; **claymeþ** *3sg.* V.53,
 XXIV.218; **clayme3** *3sg.* XXIV.30.
clene *adj.* clean, guiltless, pure IV.135, IX.1; *n.*
sg. the pure XXI.97; **clene(ly)** *adv.*
 completely, fully II.69, XVIII.114.
clense *v.* cleanse XXIV.250.
clepe *v.* call XXIV.235; **cleped** *pt. ppl.* XXI.83,
 145.
clere *adj.* clear VII.117, XXIII.40.
clergy(e) *n.* clergy, clerics III.68, VI.22.
clerk *n.* IX.153, XVIII.21; **clerkis** *pl.* clerks,
 clergy VIII.50, IX.170.
clete *n.* at o - as a nail (worthless) IX.110.
cleue *v.* cleave XX.117; **cleued** *pt. ppl.* cleft,
 pierced XVII.197.
cleuyn *v.* stick to XXIV.284.
clippen *v.* clip IX.49.
cloos *n.* confining bounds XIII.59.
cloth, cloþe *n.* I.30, XVII.36; **clothes, cloþes** *pl.*
 III.56, XXIV.159.
clothe, cloþe *v.* clothe, cover II.46, VI.37;
clothed, cloþed *pt. ppl.* II.11, XXIV.123;
cloþedest *pt. 2sg.* XXIV.89; **cloþes** *pres. 3sg.*
 IV.12.
cloþyng *n.* covering VII.7.
clymbyng *n.* climbing XIV.42.
clyue *v.* break up XXIII.89.
cochour *n.* - at hame a stay-at-home II.23.
coffres, n. pl. coffers V.38.
coke *v.* go at war XII.29.
cokes *n. gen.* cook's VI.19.
cokewolde *n.* cuckold XXII.27.
cold(e) *adj.* I.159, XVII.24; *n.* II.87, XX.34;
colde *v.* cool XXII.31.
colege *n.* college VIII.58.
com *v.* come XVIII.58; *pt.* XVII.129, XX.57.
comaunde *v.* command XXIV.381;
coma(u)ndement *n.* commandment,
 demand III.106, XI.106; **comaundemen-**
t(i)s *pl.* I.22, VII.63.
come *v.* come, pass II.65, 72; *pt.* X.37, XXI.102;
comest *2sg.* XXIV.80, 94; **cometh, comeþ**
3sg. II.60, XV.20; *pl.* IX.73, XVII.64.
comely *adj.* noble XII.152.
como(u)n *adj.* common, popular, widespread
 III.98, IV.17; **comone** *n.* community I.12;
como(u)ns *n. pl.* the commons, the
 common people III.27, 103; **comounly** *adv.*
 commonly IV.127.
company(e) *n.* VI.10, XVIII.74; **in** - gathered
 together, present XXIV.66, 189.
compas *n. in* - around XXIV.66.
conceyued *pt. ppl.* conceived XXII.10,
 XXIV.194.
condicio(u)n *n.* condition, disposition XII.62,
 XVIII.1.
conquest *n.* XVI.84.
consayl *n.* counsel XXIV.43.
conscience, n. conscience, attitude I.67, 137; *gen.*
 XVI.95; **for** - in fairness XVIII.147.
contemplacio(u)n *n.* consideration, contem-
 plation, (religious) meditation IV.178,
 XVIII.7.
contemplatyf *adj.* devout XVIII.150.
contray, contre *n.* country IV.206, XII.21.
contrarious *adv.* XXI.12.
contrary *adj.* contrary, hostile XX.135, XXIV.14.
contricio(u)n *n.* contrition IV.180, XVIII.35.
contryue *v.* conspire XIV.61.
coost *n.* shore XIII.121.
corage *n.* courage, ardour II.19, III.85.
corayest *v. 2sg.* curry, cook IV.190.
corn *n.* III.67, IV.143.
cors *n.* body XVI.120.
cost *v.* III.91; *n.* value XXIII.85.
costage *n.* (?legal) expense XIV.103.
couena(u)nt *n.* covenant, pact IX.31, XXIV.227.
couent *n.* monastery XVIII.44.
couetous *n. pl.* avaricious XV.83.
couetys(e) *n.* covetousness, greed IX.137,
 XIV.60.
counforted *pt. ppl.* comforted XXI.39.

- counsaile, counsayle, conseil(le), counselle** *n.* counsel, advice, judgement I.2, II.73, III.10, 96, IV.239; **counseile, counseyle** *v.* counsel, advise VII.36, 43; **counseled** *v. pt.* XIII.135, XVI.5; **counseyleþ** *pl.* XXI.6.
- counsayle, conseil** *n.* (privy) council III.82, XIV.44.
- counselere** *n.* counsellor XIV.11.
- counte** *v.* count, regard VII.91, IX.110; **counted** *pt. ppl.* VII.59; **countes, counteþ** *pl.* IV.235, XXIII.61.
- counterfete, countrefete** *v.* follow the example of, pretend IX.38, XVIII.128; **countrefetest** *2sg.* XVIII.69; **countrefetep** *3sg.* XX.152.
- countertayl, countretayle** *n.* other half of the tally, reckoning IV.236, XXII.47.
- cours** *n.* course III.40, XIV.67.
- court** *n.* XIII.89.
- coward** *adj.* II.74; **cowardis, cowardys(e)** *n.* cowardice III.75, IV.144, V.61.
- cracche** *n.* manger XX.146.
- craft** *n.* force, moral strength, power III.33, XII.75; skill XXIV.298; **craftes** *pl.* craftsmen XV.58.
- crafty** *adj.* - folk craftsmen XIV.35.
- crakowed** *adj.* pointed XX.138.
- craue** *v.* ask, desire, seek IV.106, 169; **craues** *3sg.* XXI.148.
- Crede** *n.* Creed I.126, VI.15.
- crepe** *v.* creep XVI.120.
- crie** *v.* beg VII.90.
- cristen** *adj.* Christian II.69, VIII.81; *n. pl.* XII.123.
- crodest** *v. pt. 2sg.* curdled XXIV.83.
- croos** *n.* cross XX.116.
- croun(e)** *n.* crown XII(title), 8.
- crowele** *adj.* cruel, pitiless V.49.
- crowne** *n.* crown XII.9, 13; **crowned** *pt. ppl.* XX.115.
- croys** *n.* cross X.24, XXII.52.
- crucyfied** *pt. ppl.* crucified XX.156.
- crye** *v.* cry, beg VII.70, VIII.70.
- curatours** *n. pl.* curates VIII.71.
- cure** *n.* cure, care, benefice VIII.17, IX.154.
- curs** *n.* curse, excommunication IX.49, XXI.107; **cursed** *pt. ppl.* XXI.11, 25; **cursen, curseþ** *pl.* XXI.96, 132.
- curyd** *pt. ppl.* covered XXIV.326.
- custom** *n.* custom, old tradition XIII.82, XVI.117.
- cyte** *n.* city XIV.21, XV.54.
- dagged** *adj.* showy XX.137.
- dale** *n.* XII.14.
- dampnacioun** *n.* damnation XXIII.78.
- dampne** *v.* damn, condemn, declare guilty XIII.69, 104; **dampnep** *3sg.* XIII.24; **dampnyd** *n. pl.* the damned XXIV.409.
- damysele** *n.* damsel VI.49.
- dar** *v.* dare II.75, III.84; **darst** *2sg.* X.83, 99.
- dase** *v.* daze, get befuddled XV.90, 110.
- date** *n.* XVII.112.
- daunce** *n.* dance II.42.
- daunger(e)** *n.* power, resistance IV.39, VII.116.
- dawenyng** *n.* dawn XXIV.13.
- dawnted** *pt. ppl.* flattered XIV.85.
- day** *n.* II.74, 84; **dayes** *pl.* V.54, IX.20; *gen. pl.* XXIV.2.
- daynte** *n.* excellence XVIII.104.
- debat(e)** *n.* dispute VIII.59; **make** - cause strife, (pick a) quarrel IV.149, XXIV.128; **debate**, *v.* fight, oppose, quarrel IV.243, XI.39.
- declaryng** *n.* explanation XVIII(title).
- ded(e)** *adj.* dead VII.58, X.46; **dede** *n. pl.* the dead IX.127.
- ded(e)** *n.* death X.118, XIV.43.
- ded(e)** *n.* deed, decree, effect I.155, XIII.20; **dedes** *pl.* XVIII.71, 120.
- dede** *v. pt.* did I.115, XXIV.418.
- ded(e)ly** *adj.* deadly, mortal III.149, XXIV.138.
- deef** *adj.* deaf IV.215.
- deel** *n.* part XV.116.
- dees** *n.* throne XXI.83.
- defame** *n.* calumny III.20; *v.* discredit XII.73.
- defaut(e)** *n.* fault VIII.15, X.205; lack III.89, VII.75.
- defence** *n.* XVIII.125, 151.
- defende** *v.* defend IV.139, XIII.95.

- deffens** *n.* defence XV.138.
- defoule, defowle** *v.* defile, desecrate, pollute X.127, XXI.125; **defouled** *pt. ppl.* XX.181, XXIV.181.
- degre** *n.* manner, nature, rank I.20, III.39.
- del** *n.* respect IX.171; **a de(l)le** *adv.* at all XIII.97, XX.128; **eche a dele** *adv.* entirely XVII.37.
- delay(e)** *n.* see **iour** -.
- dele** *v.* deal, give VIII.66, XIV.109; **delest and rennest** *2sg.* have dealings and carryings-on X.104.
- deliuere** *v.* deliver XVI.108, XXIV.257.
- delys** *n.* delight, bliss, self-indulgence I.44, 58.
- delyte** *v.* delight XXI.43.
- delyuere** *v.* deliver XXIV.331, 383.
- deme** *v.* consider, judge, regard I.155, II.22; **demed** *pt.* XIII.120; *pt. ppl.* XIII.8; **demest** *2sg.* XXIV.132, 211; **demestou** XXIV.39; **demeþ** *3sg.* XII.92, XV.19.
- dene** *n.* clamour XX.164.
- dent** *n.* force XIII.120.
- departe** *v.* depart, distribute, separate V.14, XX.38; **departeþ** *pl.* XIX.104.
- depe** *adv.* deep IV.102; *n.* the deep XIII.146.
- dere** *adj.* dear XVII.190; *adv.* dearly I.121, VIII.45; **derrere** *adv. comp.* XI.100, XIX.12.
- derk** *adj.* dark XI.74; *n.* dark(ness) XII.93, XIX.101.
- derkenes(se)** *n.* darkness X.59, XXIV.266.
- derne** *adj.* secret, XII.94; *adv.* deceptively IX.38.
- des** *n.* table III.6.
- descryuyng** *n.* description XV(title).
- desert** *n.* IV.162, VIII.68.
- deserued** *v. pt.* deserved XIX.24; **deseruyd** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.410.
- deses** *v.* dies III.134.
- despence** *n.* expenditure XVIII.121; *v.* do without XVIII.123.
- despise** *v.* VI.26, X.132.
- despit(e)** *n.* disdain, disparage XI.107; **a3ens** - *prep.* in despite of XVI.95.
- despuse, despuse** *v.* despise V.35, XXIV.289; **despused** *pt. ppl.* XV.147.
- despyt** *n.* contempt X.115; **despyte** *v.* speak ill of XX.103.
- dest** *v. 2sg.* do VII.89.
- destaunce** *n.* trouble III.157, XXI.78.
- destroyed** *pt. ppl.* spilled II.69.
- destroy3e** *v.* kill XII.84.
- desyre** *v.* desire X.125.
- deth, deþ** *n.* death III.78, XX.207; **deþes** *gen.* XIV.102.
- deth** *v. pl.* do I.70.
- dette** *n.* debt, obligation IX.129, 132.
- deueles** *n. pl.* devils XVII.157; **deuelys** *gen. sg.* XXIV.46.
- deuere** *n.* duties XVI.114.
- deuocio(u)n** *n.* devotion IV.183, XVIII.5.
- deuyne** *adj.* divine X.130.
- deuysed** *adj.* formed XV.145.
- dewe** *adj.* due VI.66; *adv.* duly XVIII.113; **dewely** *adv.* XVI.114.
- deye** *v.* die XVI.105.
- deynte** *n.* grete - abundance XXI.55.
- die, di3e** *v.* VII.16, 80.
- di3t** *v.* deal with, dictate, prepare XIII.138; *pt. ppl.* XVIII.71, XXIV.228.
- dirige** *n.* XXIV(title).
- discomfites** *v.* defeats XVIII.26.
- discrecio(u)n, disressioun** *n.* ability to distinguish, discernment, judgement IV.181, XVIII.22, XX.154.
- dispuse** *v.* look down on XVIII.98.
- disserue** *v.* deserve IV.111.
- dista(u)nce** *n.* controversy, discord, dispute I.13, XII.146.
- distresse** *n.* hardship II.52.
- distroye** *v.* destroy X.184; **distroy(e)d** *pt. ppl.* XII.68, XV.142; **distroyeþ** *3sg.* III.114, X.14.
- diues** *n.* the rich man X.206.
- do(n)** *v.* do, cause, make I.116, IV.172; *pl.* I.89, V.22; *pt. ppl.* VIII.10, XII.52; **do(e)st** *2sg.* II.66, XXIV.146; **doth, doþ** *3sg.* I.84, III.31; *pl.* XVIII.10.
- doel** *n.* lamentations XV.114.
- doluen** *pt. ppl.* buried IV.102.

- dom(e)** *n.* doom, judgement XIX.107, XXIV.79;
domes *pl.* III.26, XII.11.
dombe *adj.* dumb IV.216.
domesday *n.* doomsday VII.18, VIII.102.
do(u)n *adv.* down VII.62, XX.79.
donghille *n.* dunghill XXIV.72.
dool *n.* distress XVI.105.
doom *n.* (power of) judgement, justice I.68,
 VI.29.
dotarde *n.* imbecile XVI.105.
double *adj.* ambiguous I.2.
doun *pt. ppl.* done XXIV.59.
doute *n.* doubt XXIII.20.
dowble *adj.* double I.71, X.126.
downe *n.* down XII.14.
dowte *v.* (have reason to) fear XXI.79, 141.
drane *n.* drone II.60.
drank *v. pt.* XV.94, XVII.131.
drawe *v.* seek, turn to IV.23, IX.111; (with)draw
 XIV.95, XVI.92; *pt. ppl.* V.39; **drawen** *pt.*
ppl. IX.77, XX.94.
dred *pt. ppl.* terrified III.4.
drede *n.* dread, fear, jeopardy I.40, 41; *v.* I(title),
 8; **dreden** *pl.* III.83; **dredeþ** *3sg.* III.78.
dredful *adj.* dreadful XXIV.332.
dresse *v.* serve II.55.
dreuen *v. pt. pl.* drove XI.12.
dronken *adj.* drunk, befuddled XV.90, XX.29.
dronkenesse *n.* drunkenness XVIII.103.
drope *n.* drop I.118, XXIV.135.
droueth *v. 3sg.* torments XXIV.274.
drowned *v. pt.* X.46.
drowtes *n.* drought X.184.
drye *adj.* dry XXIV.142; *n.* dryness XV.67; *v.*
 dry out XV.94.
dry3e *v.* suffer X.93.
drynk(e) *n.* drink I.150, XV.104; **drynkes** *pl.*
 XVIII.103.
drynke *v.* drink IV.234, X.119; **drynkest** *2sg.*
 XV.86.
dryue *v.* drive IX.163; *pt. ppl.* VII.26; **dryueþ**
3sg. III.120, XXIII.29; *pl.* XVIII.12.
dulle *v.* get dull XV.89.
dure *v.* last IX.71.
durked *pt. ppl.* obscured XXIII.53.
durste *v. pt.* dared XVI.2.
dust *n.* XXIV.29, 75.
duwe *adv.* duly X.130.
dwelle *v.* dwell, be present, remain VIII.53,
 X.64; **dwelleth**, **dwelleþ** *3sg.* I.107,
 XXIII.60.
dy(3)e *v.* die, come to an end VI.14, VII.48;
dy(3)ed *pt.* X.25, XVII.46; **dyeþ** *3sg.*
 III.123.
dygge *v.* dig XV.63, XVI.2.
dy3t *pt. ppl.* administered, appointed, prepared
 III.11, VII.103.
dyne *v.* eat XV.70.
dysmembre *v.* dismember XIX.76.
dyspyce *v.* despise XXIV.24.
dyuerce *adj.* divers XXIII.51.
ebbe *v.* ebb IV.1.
ech(e) *pron.* each I.1, XXIV.346; - **on** IV.22;
echon V.30, XXIV.410.
eerly *adv.* early XXIV.31.
eft(e) *adv.* after(wards), again IV.88, XIII.83.
eke *v.* increase I.145, XX.51.
elde *n.* old age, V.58.
elles, **ellis**, **ellys** *adv.* else, otherwise II.87,
 VIII.13, XX.70.
elne *n.* ell measure IX.52.
embrowdid *pt. ppl.* embroidered II.12.
emyddis *prep.* in the midst of XVI.56.
enchanted *pt. ppl.* deluded XIV.82.
encres(e) *n.* increase XXIV.276; *v.* increase, add
 to XII.2, XIV.27; **encresce** XIX.42;
encresceþ, **encreseth**, **encreseþ** *3sg.* I.108,
 XXI.42, XXIV.184; **encresyng** *n.* increasing
 XVI.67.
ende *n.* end III.88, IV.6; *v.* VII.2, XII.82; **endes**
3sg. III.23; **endeþ** XII.34; *pl.* XXIII.28;
endid *pt.* XIII.128, XVI.118.
endeles *adj.* eternal III.136, XVII.112; *adv.*
 eternally VIII.42, X.148.
endite *v.* charge XXIV.150.
enemy *n.* IV.28, XVI.33; **enemys** *pl.* III.115,
 IV.31; *gen. pl.* IV.196, XIII.123.

- Englische** *adj.* English XII.121.
ensa(u)mple *n.* example I.78, XV.141.
entendement *n.* intent I.2, 71.
enuye *n.* envy XVIII.65, 70.
eny *pron.* any VIII.58, XIV.97.
er(e) *conj.* before I.55, IX.103.
erande *n.* errand, activity, purpose I.46, IV.175.
ere(n), eryn *n. pl.* ears XV.13, 89, 109.
ere *v.* relent III.103.
ered *pt. ppl.* inscribed XXIV.294.
erly *adv.* early XV.127, XX.78.
erthe, erþe *n.* earth IV.97, XXIV.30; *gen.* XXIV.333; **erþely** *adj.* earthly X.17, XII.144.
es, v. 3sg. is XX.121; *pl.* XXIV.174.
ese *n.* benefit, comfort, peace of mind IV.209, VI.16.
est *adv.* east XXIV.208.
estate *n.* authority I.97.
estre *n.* Easter XXIII.100; **Estren** *pl.* XXIII.28, 98.
ete *v.* eat IV.234, IX.70; **eten** *pl.* XXIII.100; *pl. pt.* XXIII.98; **etest** *2sg.* XV.86; **eteþ** *pl.* XXIII.126.
euel *n. pl.* the wicked XXII.60; *adv.* evilly, badly, dearly, faultily II.66, XII.131; **fare euele** endure suffering II.29; **euelle** XXI.64.
euefare *n.* misfortune XX.30.
euene *adj.* correct, impartial, just I.61, 164; *adv.* XVII.44, 94; **eueneſt** *sup.* XVII.124; **in - balaunce** in proportion XIV.37; **in - skille** properly XII.111, XIII.71.
euenhede *n.* firmness, impartiality I.6, 14.
eu(e)re *adv.* (for) ever, always I.76, XIII.156; **euere()more** *adv.* II.67, XXII.39.
euere laſtyng *adj.* eternal, everlasting X.30; **euerlaſtyng** XXIV.309; *adv.* XXIV.329.
euerons *adv.* at all times III.141.
euery *pron.* every I.95, XII.37; - **del** in every respect IX.171.
euerydele *adv.* utterly XVII.5.
euyl *n.* evil XVII.56; *adj.* III.93, XIII.69; **euylle** *n.* XVII.151; *adj.* XII.55, XX.87.
excusyd *pt. ppl.* excused, assumed innocent XXIV.403, 409.
executours *n. pl.* executors IV.232.
ey(3e) *n.* eye IV.215, XXIV.185; **ey3e(n), eyen,** **eys** *pl.* X.18, XV.12, 87, XXIV.49.
face *n.* IV.188, 133.
fader, fadir, fadyr *n.* father V.11, XI.104, XII.115; *gen.* XXII.56; **fadres** *gen. sg.* XX.159; *pl.* XXIII.123.
faile *v.* fail V.3.
faire *adj.* fair II.3; *adv.* courteously XVIII.131.
fal *v.* fall XV.16; *n.* IX.81, XV.73.
falle *v.* (be)fall, result in IV.202, V.52; - **a chaunce** something happen to... I.73; - **in chete** be forfeited IX.118; **falleþ** *3sg.* IX.91.
fals(e) *adj.* false, wicked I.4, 121; *n. pl.* the wicked III.20, XIII.102; wrongdoings XII.66.
fals(h)ed *n.* falsehood, disloyalty, treacherousness I.62, IV.93; *gen.* IV.12.
falsely *adv.* VI.6, XIII.91.
fame *n.* fame, reputation II.18, VI.61.
fande *v.* examine, try XXIV.242, 266.
fane *n.* weathervane II.58.
fantasie *n.* imaginary conversation XX.5.
fardel *n.* pack VII.52, XXIV.391.
fare *v.* fare, behave, depart, feel XVI.1, XX.129; - **euele** endure suffering II.29; - **wele** be in good health XV.120; - **wiþ** treat X.121; **fareþ** *3sg.* IV.2, X.9.
fas *n.* face XXIV.131.
fast *adj.* fast, safe, united XXIII.46, XXIV.222; **fast(e)** *adv.* firmly, quickly, securely IV.117, XIII.58.
faſte *v.* fast XV.105, 107; **faſtyng** *n.* fast XVIII.163.
fat *n.* riches XXIV.199.
fatte *adj.* fat X.150.
fauel *n.* favour IV.190.
fau3t *v. pt.* did battle XIII.112.
fauour *n.* favour, leniency, mercy I.15, XIII.9; **fauoured** *pt. ppl.* favoured I.156.

- fawte** *n.* absence, lack, want III.92, XII.102; - **of lawe** lawlessness III.27; **fawtes** *pl.* IV.137, XIV.70.
- fay** *adj.* fated to die IV.198.
- fay** *n.* faith IV.126, VIII.86.
- fayle** *v.* fail III.85, XVII.125; **faylep** *3sg.* XVII.126.
- fayn** *adv.* gladly XXI.54; **fayn(e)** *adj.* delighted, glad, happy IV.221, VI.47.
- fayre** *adj.* fair, beautiful, pleasing III.122, 145; *adv.* II.27, IX.43; **fayrest** *sup.* XII.143.
- fayr(e)nesse** *n.* fairness, beauty X.111, XI.52.
- fayp** *n.* faith XXIV.210.
- faytour** *n.* imposter II.63.
- fe(e)** *n.* fee, payment, reward IX.66, XIV.23.
- feble** *adj.* feeble, bad II.53, V.58; *n. pl.* the feeble XII.38.
- feblenes(se)** *n.* feebleness V.60, XV.128.
- fed** *n.* hostility XIII.18.
- fed** *n.* food XVII.36.
- fed** *v. pt.* X.50, XXIII.124; *pt. ppl.* XXII.6.
- fede** *v.* feed, nourish, support II.46, VI.37; - **forth** lead on II.28; **fedep** *3sg.* XX.83.
- feet** *n. pl.* XV.61, 65.
- fel(le)** *n.* skin XIX.95, XXIV.292.
- felaschip(e), felawship** *n.* fellowship, followers, friendship XV.100, XVII.128, XXI.48.
- feld(e)** *n.* field IX.166, XII.14.
- fele** *adj.* many, much VIII.52, X.155.
- fele** *v.* feel I.109, XVII.3.
- felle** *adj.* cruel X.58, XXIV.385.
- felle** *v.* slay III.140.
- felle** *v. pt.* befell IV.185.
- feloun** *n.* criminal XV.23.
- felow(e)** *n.* fellow II.13, 41.
- felowschipe** *n.* companionship XXIV.196.
- felpe** *n.* filth XVII.68.
- felyng** *n.* feeling XV.6, XXIII.113.
- felynge** *n.* refuge XXIV.273.
- fen** *n.* mud XXIV.74.
- fend(e)** *n.* fiend, enemy, Satan IV.39, XIX.61; **fendes** *gen.* I.55, IV.109; *pl.* V.21, XXIV.392; **fendis** *sg. gen.* XI.68, XVII.142; *pl.* IV.235, 238; *pl. gen.* II.33, X.108; **fendys** *pl.* I.87, XXIV.101.
- fende** *v.* defend, fight II.75, III.84.
- fer** *adj.* far II.23; **fer((r)e)** *adv.* (a)far II.65, IX.52, XVII.8.
- ferd** *n.* fear XIII.7; *adj. be* - fear (*v.*) IX.69.
- fere** *n. pl.* companions XX.182; *v.* consort with X.108, XI.73.
- ferly** *n.* marvel XI.17.
- fern3er(e)** *adv.* last year, in an earlier time XI.65, XIII.31.
- ferpe** *adj.* fourth XI.33.
- fest(e)** *n.* feast XI.1, XXI.56.
- fest** *v.* confirm XXIV.210.
- fet** *v. pt.* came and took XI.19.
- fewe** *adj.* few VIII.51; *n.* XXI.151.
- feynt** *adj.* deceitful, deceiving VII.3, XVI.14.
- fierpe** *adj.* fourth XVI.116.
- fight, fi3t** *n.* I.130, III.140; **fi3t(e)** *v.* III.55, XII.67; **fi3tep** *3sg.* I.111.
- fill** *v.* fill XVIII.115; **filled, filt** filled, sated *pt. ppl.* VII.6, XXIV.292; **filllep** *3sg.* XXI.13.
- filpe** *n.* filth XXII.7.
- finger** *n. pl.* fingers XV.134.
- first(e)** *adj.* first III.60, XXIII.26; *adv.* first, originally IV.208, IX.161.
- fit** *n.* misfortune XII.45.
- flaterer** *n.* sycophant XIII.134.
- flaterye** *n.* flattery VII.22.
- flat(t)eryng** *ger.* flattering II.33, 42.
- flatre** *v.* flatter XVII.92.
- fle** *v.* flee I.42, 58; **fles, flep** *3sg.* III.166, X.170.
- fleme** *v.* banish, flee XVIII.116, XXIV.115; **flemed** *pt. ppl.* XIV.86.
- flesch(e)** *n.* flesh VII.3, X.201; **flesches** *pl.* XXIV.283.
- flesch(e)ly, fleschlye** *adj.* fleshly, natural, worldly I.44, IV.109, XXIV.49; **fleschly** *adv.* XXIII.45.
- flet** *pt. ppl.* fled, separated XII.42, XX.25.
- fleye, fli3e** *v.* fly XIV.47, XX.208.
- flo** *n.* arrow XIV.102; **flon** *pl.* XI.38.
- flood** *n.* X.184.
- florische** *v.* embellish II.27.

- flour(e)** *n.* flower XII.34, 143; **floures** *pl.* II.3, XII.10.
floure *n.* flour XVI.50.
flowe *v.* flow IV.1, XX.118.
floweren *pt. ppl.* fled XI.7.
fly3e *v.* flee XX.82.
flynt *n.* hard stone XXIV.297.
flyt *v.* flit, drive XVI.54, XVII.8.
flyte *v.* reproach VII.93; flee from XX.97.
fo *n.* foe, enemy IV.68, XIV.6; *pl.* XXIV.100;
fon *pl.* XV.35, XVI.14.
fode *n.* food II.54, XXIII.58.
fold *n.* world XVI.113.
folde *n.* time IX.21.
folde *n.* sheepfold IX.158.
folde *v.* crumple XVII.125.
foles *n. pl.* fools, dupes II.35, XVI.6.
folk(e) *n.* folk, people I.63, 66; **folkes** *pl.* VIII.51.
folwe *v.* follow I.61, 167; **folwed** *pt.* XX.183; *pt. ppl.* XXII.45; **folweþ** *3sg.* XIV.5, XX.151.
folwyng *n.* sequel XXIV.234.
foly *n.* folly, foolish act I.58, VIII.44; *gen.* III.39;
folyes *pl.* XIV.(title), 15.
folyhede *n.* folly XVI.1.
fomen *n. pl.* enemies XIII.109.
fonde *n.* try VI.51, XXIV.415.
fong *v.* receive X.162, XIX.24; **fonges** *3sg.* XXI.66.
foo *n.* foe, enemy I.106, IV.25; **foon** *pl.* III.140, XI.22.
fool(le) *n.* I.65, III.12; **fooles** *pl.* I.167, VI.28; *gen. pl.* I.46.
foomen *n. pl.* foes IX.41.
foot(e) *n.* II.3, XI.102.
for *prep.* I.11, XXIV.405; *conj.* I.45, II.68; - **to** *prep.* (in order) to IV.42, XXII.63.
forbed *v. pt.* forbade XIII.21, XIV.41.
forbede *v.* forbid VIII.26.
forber *v.* bear with XXIV.206; **forbere** forbear, be in one's power XIX.52, 63.
forbore *pt. ppl.* given up XVIII.139.
forborn *pt. ppl.* removed XII.57; born XXIV.173.
forcast *pt. ppl.* premeditated XIII.20.
fordon *pt. ppl.* brought to perdition XXIV.316.
fore *prep.* for XXI.102.
forestes *n. pl.* forests X.174.
forfete *v.* forfeit, break the law IX.101, XV.23;
forfeted *pt.* XI.10; **forfetest** *2sg.* XVII.148.
forgeþ *v. 3sg.* plan, plot IV.93, XIV.97.
for3ete *v.* forget IX.94, 188; *pt. ppl.* IX.30.
for3eue *v.* forgive XVIII.191, XXIII.106.
forgo *v.* forsake, lose VI.42, XX.119.
forlore *pt. ppl.* lost (completely) XII.119, XVII.88.
forme *n.* outer appearance IX.182.
fornycacion *n.* adultery XXII.28.
fors *n.* effort VI.52.
forsake *v.* forsake, abandon, give up IX.4, XVI.35; **forsake(n)** *pt. ppl.* XX.21, 86.
for soþe *adv.* forsooth, verily XVII.136, XXIV.2.
forswere *v.* take in vain X.115; **forsworn** *pt. ppl.* be - perjure oneself XII.59.
forth, forþ *adv.* IX.44, X.36; **fede** - lead on II.28; **shewe** - produce evidence of II.15.
forþenke *v.* regret XVIII.45.
for()thy, for()þy *conj.* therefore VII.24, IX.16, 144, XIII.47.
fortune *n.* IX.146; *gen.* XXII.11.
fostre *v.* stuff yourself X.201.
fot *n.* foot XXIV.153.
foul(e) *adj.* foul, sinful, ugly III.147, X.202;
foule *adv.* foully, stupidly II.62, VI.26;
foulere *comp.* XXII.5.
founden *pt. ppl.* found XX.107.
foundour *n.* founder XVIII.3.
four *num.* four IX.50, 97.
fourme *n.* form X.120.
fourty *num.* forty X.50.
fram *prep.* from XXIV.383.
fraternite *n.* state of being brothers XX.60.
fre(e) *adj.* free, generous, independent III.167, IV.197.
freek *n.* man XVI.99.
frele *adj.* frail, transitory, weak VII.3, XI.50.
frend(e) *n.* friend III.105, IV.25; **frende(s), frendis, frendys** *pl.* I.100, III.109, XVI.13, XXIV.99.

- frere** *n.* friar X.5.
fro *adv.* from XXIV.368; **fro(m)** *prep.* I.42, XXIV.28.
ful(le) *adj.* full, true I.106, IX.54; **full** *adv.* fully, quite, very I.38, 121.
fulfille *v.* fulfil, gratify X.79, 140; **fulfilde**, **ful filled**, **ful fylde** *pt. ppl.* filled, gratified, satiated XXI.55, 57, XXIV.172; **fulfyllep** *3sg.* XXI.103.
fyere *n.* fire, III.118.
fyfte *num.* fifth XI.41.
fyfty *num.* fifty XVI.15.
fygure *n.* prefiguration XXIII.122.
fy3e *v.* express disgust of XX.72.
fy3t *n.* fight X.143, XV.23; **fy3t(e)** *v.* fight, struggle against IV.193, XIII.143.
fyled *pt. ppl.* defiled XXI.105.
fylle *v.* fill V.38; **fylde** *pt. ppl.* satiated XXI.57.
fylpe *n.* filth X.202, XXII.5; **fylythy** *adj.* filthy XXII.3.
fynde *v.* find, obtain, provide with I.90, II.54; **fyndeþ** *3sg.* XVII.21, 174.
fyne *v.* pay the fine X.38.
fynger *n.* finger XV.137; **fyngres** *pl.* XV.37, XV.133.
fyre *n.* fire III.62, X.141.
fyue *num.* five IX.39, XXII.68.
- gad(e)re** *v.* gather, accumulate, assemble IV.4, VI.9; **gadereþ** *3sg.* XXI.104; **gadred**, **gadrid** *pt. ppl.* XIII.1, XXIV.391; **gadryng** *pres. ppl.* XXI.14, *n.* XXIII.5.
galle *n.* gall X.119.
game *n.* game, amusing, fun VI.63, X.113; **games** *pl.* XVI.40.
gan *v. pt.* began X.98, XV.97.
garner *n.* mouth XV.84.
gat *v. pt.* acquired XXI.150.
gates *n. pl.* XI.30.
gawdy *adj.* yellowish II.11.
gay *adj.* gay, carefree, lighthearted II.12, 79; **gayte** *n.* joy XVI.81.
geaunt *n.* giant X.146.
gedre *v.* gather, form III.38, VI.4.
- general(e)** *adj.* full, general XVIII.148, XXIV.190; **(in) generale** *adv.* generally III.51, IV.41.
gentyl(le) *adj.* noble, generous XVIII.57, 184; **gentyles** *n. pl.* noble people XVIII.82.
ges *v. 3sg.* prevails III.14.
geson *adj.* lacking XIII.77.
gesse *v.* guess II.53.
gest *n.* guest X.34, 121; **gest(e)** *pl.* XV.31, XV.100.
get(e) *v.* get, bring, win II.18, 50; **geten** *pt. ppl.* VIII.67; **getest** *2sg.* II.45; **geteþ** *3sg.* XIV.75; **getyng** *n.* gain X.135; *ger.* getting I.31, VIII.7.
geth, **geþ** *v. 3sg.* goes, comes XXIV.177, 335.
geueþ *v. 3sg.* gives XII.72.
gif *conj.* if I.73.
gilt(e)les *adj.* guiltless I.166, IX.126.
glad *adj.* glad, cheerful, joyful VI.35, XIII.5.
glade *v.* gladden, rejoice IX.9, XI.1; **gladeþ** *3sg.* XXI.72.
glede *n.* live coal I.110, II.70.
glene *v.* get out of II.68.
glose *n.* comment XX.2.
gloser *n.* flatterer II.47, 57; *gen.* XVI.51; **glosere** IV.83, 86; *pl.* IV.207, 221; **gloser(e)s** *pl.* IV.73, 78.
glosyng *ger.* smooth talk II.42, 49.
gloton *adj.* gluttonous XX.50.
glotonye *n.* gluttony, appetite IV.122, VII.6.
glotoun *n.* glutton XV.84.
glotry *n.* gluttony XVIII.104.
glowe *v. 3sg.* glows I.110; **gloweþ** *3sg.* XIII.14.
glyde *v.* went XXIV.397.
gnewe *v. pt.* ate from X.24.
go(n) *v.* go (one's way), enter, turn to I.149, VIII.90; *pt. ppl.* III.119, XV.78; **go** *n.* XXIV.414; **gost** *2sg.* XXIII.81; **goþ** *3sg.* IV.5, V.7; *pl.* IX.176.
god *n.* I(title), 8; **goddis**, **godes**, **godis** *gen.* I.19, 34, XXIV.14.
godhed(e) *n.* godhead V.13, X.165.
gold *n.* XII.27, XV.52.
goo *v.* become XXII.16.

- good(e)** *adj.* I.7, 93.
good *n.* good I.94, VII.60; *pl.* the good XXII.60; **goode** XIII.162; **goodes**, **good(d)is** *pl.* I.26, IV.4, VIII.15.
goodnes *n.* virtue XVIII.112.
gospel(le) *n.* III.53, IV.112.
gost *n.* ghost, spirit XXIV.93, 251.
gost(e)ly *adv.* ghostly, devoutly, spiritually I.45, V.23; **gostly** *adj.* XXI.22, XXIII.58.
goten *pt. ppl.* acquired I.117.
gouerna(u)nce *n.* governance, authority, guidance I.10, XII.151.
gouerne *v.* govern, administer, protect I.21, III.72; **gouerned** *pt. ppl.* I.57, XII.65; **gouerneþ** *3sg.* III.160, XXI.101; **gouernyng** *pres. ppl.* controls XV.11.
gouernour *n.* governor, lord, (sovereign) ruler XII.138, XIII.46; *pl.* XIV.21; **gouernoure** V.11; **gouernour(e)s** *pl.* I.17, III.129.
gow *pron.* you IV.84.
grace, *n.* grace, gift, help III.93, IV.165.
grace *v.* enjoy God's favour XII.61.
graceles *adj.* lacking (God's) grace III.77, 94.
grame *n.* grief, sorrow X.119, XVI.78.
gras *n.* grass IX.47, X.96.
graue *n.* grave XVIII.53, XX.45.
grauen *pt. ppl.* carved XXIV.297.
graunte *v.* grant, consent, permit IV.91, XII.49; **graunted** *pt. ppl.* IX.161, XIV.87; **graunteþ** *3sg.* XXI.9.
gre *n.* position VII.15.
gre *n.* favour X.72, XIX.82.
greceles *adj.* grassless X.150.
gredy *adj.* greedy, importunate, overeager IV.169, VII.65.
gref *n.* trouble XX.75.
gren *n.* green II.11.
gres *n.* fat (or: grass) III.62; grass V.6.
grese *v.* graze XIV.46.
gret(e) *adj.* great, dire, important II.86, III.158; **grete** *adv.* XIII.10.
grette *adj.* great IX.93; **gretter(e)** *comp.* IX.27, XIV.2; **grettest** *sup.* XXIII.86.
greua(u)nce *n.* grievance, distress, misery I.12, 91.
greue *v.* grieve, cause discomfort, make angry I.74, II.41; **greued** *pt.* X.39, 43; **greues**, **greueþ** *3sg.* I.127, VIII.46.
grewe *v. pt.* grew X.24, XXIV.182.
ground *n.* XV.47.
groundid *pt. ppl.* grounded VIII.61.
grow(e) *v.* grow, cause, intensify III.61, XV.47; **groweþ** *3sg.* IV.15.
grucche *v.* resist VI.53.
grynde *v.* grind XV.108.
grype *v.* clasp XVIII.83.
gryshyhede *n.* horribleness XXIV.330.
gryue *v.* cause pain XXIV.18.
gulteles *adj.* innocent XXI.61.
gyde *n.* guide XIII.78, XXI.120.
gyed *pt. ppl.* governed XII.71.
gyft *n.* gift XXI.62.
gy3e *v.* guide VII.110.
gyle *n.* false trick, foul play, treachery III.122, IV.93; **gyles** *pl.* XIV.97.
gyle *v.* deceive, defraud VIII.39; **gyleþ** *pl.* X.152.
gylt *n.* guilt, misdeed X.25, XIII.67; **gyltes**, **gyltis** *pl.* X.39, XI.103.
gynne *v.* beginning VII.2.
gynnyng *n.* creation IX.110.
gys(e) *n.* affairs, clothing, practice VI.31, XIII.91.
3af *v. pt.* gave, inflicted X.22, 118.
3ate *n.* gate X.69, XI.36; **3ates** *pl.* XVII.87, XXI.45.
3e *pron.* you I.6, XXIV.291.
3e *adv.* even though VI.61.
3ede *v. pt.* went, fell, took XVI.118, XXIV.155.
3ee *adv.* yes II.28, IV.91.
3eer(e) *n.* year IX.19, XIII.29; **3eer** *pl.* X.50.
3elde *v.* yield, pay, render III.58, IX.97; - **rekenyng** render an account X.196, XI.110.
3eme *v.* heed, rule XIII.161, XVIII.114.
3emen *n. pl.* yeomen XV.37.
3erde *n.* yardstick, rod I.83, IX.52.
3ere *n.* year IX.50; **3eres**, **3erys** *pl.* XXIV.4, 53.
3erne *adv.* diligently XXI.77.

- 3erned** *v. pt.* desired, longed for XIX.9, XXIV.203.
- 3et** *adv.* yet VII.87, XVI.83.
- 3eue** *conj.* if X.55.
- 3eue** *v.* give, pay IV.25, 26, 170; **3euen** *pt. ppl.* X.42; **3eueþ**, **3eueþ** *3sg.* I.149, IV.164.
- 3if** *conj.* if I.51, 161.
- 3ifte** *n.* gift IV.182, VII.71; **3iftes** *pl.* VI.3.
- 3it** *adv.* yet XI.17, XIII.117.
- 3oken** *v.* yoke XXIII.71.
- 3ong(e)** *adj.* young I.5, IX.23; **3ong** *n. pl.* inexperienced people, the young I.5, XIII.131.
- 3ool** *n.* Yule XVI.103.
- 3ore** *adv.* earlier, for a long time III.65, XII.117.
- 3ouen** *pt. ppl.* given XXIII.20, 41.
- 3our(e)** *pron.* your I.20, XV.102; **3oure seluen** yourselves IX.12; **3oures** I.19, III.131.
- 3ouþe**, *n.* youth XXIV.144, 150.
- 3ow** *pron.* you I.76, II.34.
- 3owthe** *n.* youth VII.49.
- 3ut** *adv.* yet, still I.39, XVIII.182.
- 3yue** *v.* give, devote, make gifts I.5, 44.
- habergeoun** *n.* armour XII.30.
- habyte** *n.* habit XVIII.114.
- had(de)** *v. pt.* II.9, X.27; **haddest** *2sg.* IV.28.
- had y wist** vain regret IV.229.
- haldeþ** *v. pl.* hold IX.65.
- half** *adj.* IV.94.
- halle** *n.* hall II.64, IV.98.
- halt** *adj.* lame **be not** - do not limp XXI.147.
- halwe** *v.* consecrate, observe XXIII.37; **halwed** *pt.* IV.121.
- ham** *adv.* home XXIV.210; **cochour at hame** a stay-at-home II.23.
- han** *v.* have I.123, V.41.
- hand(e)** *n.* IV.196, VI.43; **handes**, **handis** *pl.* X.116, XV.58.
- handles** *adj.* handless IV.214.
- hap** *n.* fate, event **haue þurgh** - happen to have IX.153.
- hard(e)** *adj.* hard, bad, severe IV.237, XVIII.43; **harde** hard-working XXIV.204; **harder(e)** *comp.* XVIII.124, XX.124; **hardest** *sup.* XIII.145.
- hardy** *adj.* bold, difficult, fearless II.76, 79.
- hardynes** *n.* resolution XIII.95.
- harlotrye** *n.* harlotry X.109.
- harm** *n.* harm, moral evil-mindedness III.30, XII.52; **harmes** *pl.* XVI.56, 86.
- harme** *v.* harm X.54; **harmes**, **harmeþ** *3sg.* II.49, XIII.10.
- has** *v. 3sg.* XVII.146, XX.30; **hast(e)** *2sg.* I.10, XXIV.374; **hastou** XXIV.6, 21.
- haste**, **hasty** *adj.* quick(-tempered) XIII.18, XX.54.
- hastyng** *pres. ppl.* hastening X.138.
- hat** *v. 3sg.* is called IX.155, XVI.116.
- hat(e)** *n.* hate I.3, XXIV.126; **hate** *v.* IV.148, 156; **hatest** *2sg.* X.81.
- hatere** *n.* hater XVIII.20.
- hatest** *adj. sup.* hottest XIII.110.
- hath**, **hap** *v. 3sg.* has I.25, III.79; **hat** *3sg.* enjoys X.72.
- hattere** *adj. comp.* hotter VII.37.
- hatteþ** *v. 3sg.* is called XVII.185.
- haue(n)** *v.* have, command I.29, 132.
- haunted** *pt. ppl.* frequented, practised, visited IV.127, IX.163; **hauntest** *2sg.* X.80.
- hay** *n.* IV.190, V.5.
- hay 3ol hayl** *interj.* hey, shout 'Health!' IV.234.
- he** *pers. pron.* I.27, 52; they XVII.54, XXI.49.
- hed(e)** *n.* head X.116, XXIV.153.
- hede** *n.* heed I.54, 86; *v.* heed, guard, rule I.78, XIII.166.
- hedlyng** *adv.* headlong VIII.52.
- hegge** *n.* hedge III.127.
- heire** *n.* heir III.123, 125.
- held** *pt. ppl.* held, believed, got VII.30; **held(e)** *pt. 3sg.* II.8, VII.84.
- helde** *v.* stoop V.60.
- hele** *n.* health, profit, salvation I.53, V.51; *v.* heal VIII.69.
- hele** *v.* conceal, cover up IV.47, 115.
- helle** *n.* hell I.111, VII.35; *gen.* I.41, VII.77; - **houndes** *pl.* hell hounds IX.22, XVII.112; - **tike** hell hounds IX.157.

- help(e)** *n.* V.62, XIII.165; *v.* help, allow I.94, IV.116; **helpēþ** *pl.* IV.239, XV.73.
- helpe** *n.* salvation XXIII.38.
- hem** *pers. pron.* him II.28, X.73; **hem(e)** them I.70, XIII.19; **hem self** *refl. pron.* themselves IV.7, IX.173.
- hende** *adj.* virtuous XXI.84.
- henne** *adv.* from here VIII.103.
- herbe** *n.* herb XVII.185, 191.
- herberwe**, **herborwe** *n.* shelter I.150, XVII.36; **herberweles** *n. pl.* the homeless VI.38.
- herde** *n.* shepherd XXIII.112.
- here** *pers. pron.* her VI.51, 55; herself XX.40; their I.123, II.6.
- here** *v.* hear I.51, III.19; **herde** *pt.* heard XX.5; *pt. ppl.* IV.223; **hereþ** *3sg.* XII.110, XVIII.38.
- here** *n.* hearing IV.215.
- here** *v.* hire VIII.28, IX.164.
- here** *adv.* I.123, VII.39; **hereon** *adv.* VII.48.
- heresy** *n.* VII.79.
- heretyk** *n.* heretic VIII.86; **heretikes** *pl.* I.126.
- heritage** *n.* IV.179, IX.101.
- herkene** *v.* listen XVIII.107.
- hernes** *n. pl.* corners, hiding places III.5, IV.157.
- herre(re)** *adj. comp.* higher XIV.1, XVIII.61; **herre** *adv. comp.* XV.140.
- hert(e)** *n.* heart, I.44, II.4; **hertes**, **hertys** *pl.* XI.79, XVIII.115.
- hertely** *adv.* earnestly XXII.1.
- herte sorwe** *n.* contrition IX.33.
- heruest** *n.* harvest XIX.22.
- heryed** *v. pt.* harried, harrowed X.60, XXII.52.
- heryeng(e)** *ger.* praise, worship XXIII.17, 22.
- hery3e** *v.* worship XXIII.9.
- heryng** *ger.* hearing XV.13, 89.
- herytage** *n.* heritage XXIV.359.
- hesse** *poss. pron.* himself V.53.
- hest** *n.* command(ment) XXIV.14; **hestes** *pl.* XXI.36, XXII.37.
- het** *v. 3sg.* touches XV.22.
- het(e)** *n.* heat, anger I.109, XIII.15.
- heþen** *n. pl.* heathens XII.123.
- heued** *n.* head XV.9, 18.
- heuen(e)** *n.* heaven I.111, XXIV.191; *gen.* I.43, V.63; **heuenys** *pl.* XXIV.333.
- heuenwarde** *adv.* heavenward X(title).
- heuy(e)** *adj.* heavy XI.79, XXIV.26.
- hewe** *n.* hue, appearance, guise IV.12, 53.
- hey3** *adj.* high XIII.39; **heyest** *sup.* greatest XIII.42.
- hey wey**, *n.* highway III.128.
- hid** *v.* hide, conceal XIV.71; **hid(e)** *pt. ppl.* XVIII.93, XIX.102.
- hider** *adv.* to this place XII.27.
- hi3e** *v.* come quickly IV.115.
- hi3e** *adj.* high, lofty V.29, XI.26; **hi3est** *sup.* XVIII.8.
- hi3e way** *n.* highway IV.132.
- hi3t** *n. on* - on high XXI.157, XXIV.10.
- him self** *refl. pron.* himself IV.200.
- hire** *n.* wages IX.66.
- his(se)** *poss. pron.* I.26, 116; **his** theirs XXI.140.
- hit** *pers. pron.* it I.27, 98.
- hit** *pt. ppl.* struck so forcefully XX.31.
- hod** *n.* hood II.83.
- hoke** *v.* bend V.60.
- hold(e)** *v.* hold, practise, regard IV.27, XIV.67; **holden** *pl.* XI.59; *pt. ppl.* XIII.45, XVI.99; **holdest** *2sg.* X.70, 86; **holdeþ** *3sg.* III.166, XX.87; **holding** *ger.* I.31.
- holichirche**, **holy()** **chirche**, **holychyrche** *n.* Holy Church, clergy IV.137, VIII.25, IX.161, XXIII.6; **holycherche** *gen.* X.72.
- holiday**, **holyday** *n.* holy day IV.121, 122.
- holigost**, **holy()** **gost** *n.* Holy Ghost V.12, 20, X.164.
- holy** *adj.* IX.1, 162.
- holynes(se)** *n.* holiness, purity, virtue IV.57, XVIII.156.
- hom(e)** *adv.* home I.38, XII.1.
- homly** *adv. to* - on too familiar terms XVI.24.
- hond(e)** *n.* hand XVIII.83, XXI.28; **hondes** *pl.* IV.135, XV.36.
- honest** *adj.* decent, honourable III.141, IV.123.
- honge** *v.* hang, wait XVI.83; **hongeþ** *3sg.* III.165.
- honour** *n.* XII.141, XIII.42; **honoures** *pl.* XVIII.172.

- hony** *n.* honey II.59, 62.
hoo *interj.* stop I.109, XIV.54.
hood *n.* XVIII.155.
hool *adj.* full, whole XIV.10, XVII.192; *adv.* wholly III.51.
hoot *adj.* hot XX.205; *n.* heat XX.34.
hope *n.* XXIV.306.
hord *n.* hoard X.87; **in** - hidden, on the side IX.75, 84; mind XIII.156; **horde** *v.* hoard, nurse IX.80; **horded** *pt. ppl.* I.165.
horn *n.* VI.59.
horyble *adj.* horrible XXII.8.
hospytal *n.* hospitality XV.31.
hostry *n.* inn VI.19.
hot *adj.* XIII.14, XXII.31.
hoteþ *v.* 3sg. promises XX.75.
houre *n. pl.* hours of prayer XXIII.11; **houres** hours XXIV.181.
hous *n.* house I.18, XVIII.110; **houses** *pl.* XV.53.
housesle *n.* holy communion XXIII.128.
houshold(e) *n.* household XIV.29, XX.36.
how *adv.* I.36, XXIV.240.
how *pron.* who XXI.73, 89.
howsel *n.* Eucharist XV.72.
huge *adj.* I.124.
hunger(e) *n.* II.87, XV.68.
hungren *v.* hunger XXI.50.
hungry *n. pl.* the hungry VI.37, IX.124.
hunte *v.* hunt VI.60.
hurd *n.* flock XXIII.10.
hurte *v.* hurt XV.137.
hyde *v.* hide, cover, protect against IV.97, IX.84;
hyd *pt.* XX.60; *pt. ppl.* XII.95, XIV.17;
hydes *pl.* XV.42; **hydest** 2sg. XXIV.131.
hyde *n.* skin IV.53.
hyder *adv.* hither IV.2, XXIV.94.
hye *v.* hurry XII.37; *adv.* quickly XXIV.53.
hy3e *adj.* high, great, noble III.71, XVIII.14;
adv. XIV.47, XX.84.
hy3e *v.* heighten VII.46.
hy3t *n. on* - on high XX.10, XXIII.109.
hylt *n.* hilt X.27.
hym *pers. pron.* him I.44, XXIV.416; them IV.8;
- **self refl. pron.** I.52, XXIV.346; - **seluen** III.54.
hyndryng *ger. in* - to the detriment of XVI.52; *n.* harm XVI.110.
hyne *n.* servant XIX.38; *pl.* X.45, XV.66.
hyng *v.* hang XIV.45.
hyre *n.* wages VI.2, X.9.
hys(se) *poss. pron.* his II.40, XXIV.271; **hysse** theirs XIX.32.
I *pers. pron.* II.1, XXIV.408.
iangelest *v.* 2sg. argue XX.163.
iape *n.* fun, joke VI.63.
ielous *adj.* jealous XXII.23.
iewel *n.* jewel XVIII.155; **iewels** *pl.* XVIII.141.
ilke *adj.* same XVII.1.
in *prep.* in, before I.6, XXIV.399; *adv.* XXII.4, XXIV.263.
incertayn *adj.* ignorant XXII.58.
incresyng *pres. ppl.* - of adding to VII.38.
insi3t *n.* understanding XXIV.234.
in stede *prep.* instead XXIII.127.
into *prep.* VII.99, XXIV.75.
inwith *adv.* internally XXIV.264.
ioly *adj.* joyful XXIII.24.
iour delay(e) *n.* a day's delay, day set for a postponed trial VIII(title), 16.
ioye *n.* joy VII.46, XII.2; *v.* rejoice XXI.137;
ioyed *pt. pl.* XXIII.22.
is *v.* 3sg. I.19, XXIV.369; 2sg. VIII.2; *pl.* XII.10, XIV.19; **isse** 3sg. XXIV.33, 300; *pl.* XXIV.26.
it *pers. pron.* I.36, XXIV.238.
iuge *n.* judge XII.96, XVI.10.
iugement, *n.* judgment, penalty I.5, XIII.7.
iustice *n.* judge, justice, law III.10, 11.
kan *v.* can III.127, 158.
kaue *n.* pit XXIV.361.
kay(e) *n.* key, IV.118, XXI.133.
kelde *v.* 3sg. loses ardour V.61.
kele *v.* grow weak XXII.15.
ken(ne) *v.* know, teach VII.115, XVII.179.
kep *n.* care X.208.

- kepe** *v.* keep, preserve, take hold I.76, XXII.65; **keped** *pt.* XXII.14; **kepen, kepes** *pl.* XIII.44, XV.44; **kept, kepyd** *pt. ppl.* I.63, XXIV.93.
keper *n.* protector XXIV.19.
kerue *v.* carve II.84, XVI.22.
kesse *v.* kiss XXIV.63.
kille *v.* kill V.30, XIII.66.
kisse *v.* kiss XIV.15, XX.111.
knaue *n.* servant, slave I.55, IV.109; **knaues** *pl.* XXI.152.
knawe *v.* know XVI.86; **knawen** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.212.
knet *v.* mend XII.44; **knete** *pt. ppl.* knit XX.27.
knew(e) *v. pt.* IV.52, 199.
knot *n.* XVII.136.
knowe *v.* know I.8, XXIII.27; **knowest** *2sg.* XVII.151, XXIV.87; **knowep** *3sg.* IV.66, 203.
knoweleche *n.* knowledge XIX.64.
knowelechyng *ger.* recognizing IV.68.
knowleche *v.* confess XX.195.
knyf *n.* knife VII.105, IX.77.
kny3t *n.* knight, soldier III.57, 141; *pl.* XIII.152; **kny3tes** *pl.* XIII.150, XV.35.
knyt(te) *v.* knit, knot, unite XV.18, XVII.135; *pt. ppl.* I.59, XXIV.171.
kyd(de) *v. pt.* known, showed, visible XX.178, 190; **kyd** *pt. ppl.* XIV.19, XXI.154.
kylde *pt. ppl.* killed XXI.61.
kyn *n.* family, people XVI.117, XVIII.111.
kynde *adj.* honourable, legitimate, obedient IX.31, X.61.
kynde *n.* kind, essence, nature II.74, III.76.33.
kyndenes *n.* beneficence XI.105.
kyndel *v.* burn III.118.
kyng *n.* king III.18, 19; **kynges** *pl.* III.149, IV.75; *gen. sg.* XII.58, XXIII.27; *gen. pl.* VII.15; **kyngis** *gen. sg.* XIV.9, 11.
kyngdom *n.* kingdom I.73, III.7; **kyngdomes** *pl.* XII.71, 147.
kynne *n.* kin, kindred IX.15, XVII.77; *adj.* XXIV.29, 64.
kys(se) *v.* kiss, part from I.119, 163.
labourers *n. gen. pl.* labourers' III.156.
lad *pt. ppl.* led (the way) III.82; **ladde** *pt.* X.44, XXIV.396.
lady *n.* XXIV.404.
laft *pt. ppl.* disregarded, left III.35, XIX.13.
lakkeþ *v. 3sg.* is lacking, lacks, missing IX.116, XIII.141.
lamed *pt. ppl.* injured III.5.
land *n.* I.28, XIII.119; **landes, landis** *pl.* VII.62, XII.32.
lane *n.* gift II.63.
lanterne *n.* lamp, lantern VIII.62, XXI.153.
large *adj.* large I.67, VIII.19.
lasse *adj.* less XIV.27, XXIII.30; *v.* mitigate, weaken VII.40; **lasseþ** *3sg.* XXIII.92.
last *adj. sup.* IV.229; *n.* IV.5, XX.161; **laste** *adj.* III.78, XXIV.301; *n.* XV.109.
last *v.* XXIV.87, XXIV.224; **lasted** *pt.* X.36.
lat *v.* let XIV.59, XVIII.63.
late *adv.* IV.146, VI.18.
lau3he *v. - to skorn* ridicule XII.147.
lau3t *pt. ppl.* caught hold of IX.189.
launce *n.* lance II.45; *v.* cut loose XXIV.46.
lawe *n.* law I.6, 14.
laweles *adj.* something that disregards the law III.63.
lawhe *v.* laugh II.36; **lawhen to skorne** ridicule (*v. pl.*) XVI.63; **lawheþ** *3sg.* IV.93.
lay *n.* law IV.246.
lay(e) *adj.* fallow, untilled IV.142, VII.62.
lay *v.* lay, calm XVII.191; **layd** *pt. ppl.* VII.27.
layne *v.* remain silent IV.220.
leche *n.* physician XII.79; *v.* heal VIII.23.
lecherye *n.* lechery IV.125, X.111.
led *n.* lead XXIV.295; **lede** *v.* lead, apply, take I.6, III.29; **leden** *pl.* IX.57.
lef *n.* leaf XXIV.139.
lef *adj.* dear, glad X.77, XX.141; **be** - desire I.51.
left *pt. ppl.* become XXIV.286.
leg *n.* XV.139; **leggis** *pl.* XV.57.
leme *n.* limb XII.106, XIII.17.
lemman *n.* lover III.121, IV.228.
lene *adj.* inadequate II.71; *n.* poverty XXIV.199.

- lene** *v.* lend, give XXI.75; **lent(e)** *pt.* I.37, XIX.64; **lent** *pt. ppl.* V.65, XXIII.50.
lengere *adv. comp.* longer XI.71.
lengthe, lengþe *n.* length I.102, XIII.158.
lent *pt. ppl.* fallen on I.83.
Lenton *n.* Lent XVI.103.
lepe *v.* leap XV.75.
lere *v.* learn I.49, X.7.
lerne *v.* learn, teach IV(title), 172; **lernest** *2sg.* VII.64; **lerneþ** *3sg.* XVII.97; *pl.* VII.16, 32.
lernyng *n.* instruction XXI(title).
les *n. pl.* lies III.46.
les *n.* control I.150.
les *adj. comp.* less XVI.122, XXIV.278.
les *v. pt.* lost, relinquished III.86, XVI.62.
lese *n.* pasture X.150.
lese *v.* lose, damn, ruin II.38, VII.108; **leseth, leseþ** *3sg.* XXIII.92, XXIV.176.
lesse *adj. comp.* XIX.44; *adv.* III.91, V.50.
lessouns *n. pl.* lessons XXIV(title).
lest *conj.* IX.118, XX.148.
lest *pt. ppl.* lost, ruined XII.132, XVI.79.
lest *impers. v. 3sg.* likes IV.228.
lest *adj. sup.* least, humblest XXIII.87; *adv.* XV.27; *n.* XI.3; **leste** *adj.* I.30, 134.
lesyng *n.* lies VII.86; **lesynges** *pl.* IV.73, XXI.136.
let(e) *v.* I.62, III.40; **lete** behave IV.52; **leten** X.173.
let(te(n)) *v.* cease, prevent, obstruct IX.60, XII.7, XX.69; **letted** *pt. ppl.* VIII.14.
letter *n. pl.* those who obstruct XIV.92.
lettere *n. pl.* letters XVIII.109.
lettred *n. pl.* the literate VI.22.
leue *n.* leave II.43, XIV.15; *v.* leave, distance, relinquish IV.74, VI.66; **leueþ** *3sg.* V.8, 24; *pl.* V.33.
leue *v.* believe, accept, trust VIII.49, IX.109; **leued** *pt.* IX.113.
leue *v.* live III.48.
leuere *adj. comp.* more desirable XVII.144.
leuyng *n.* living XXI(title).
leves *n. pl.* leaves XVII.188.
lewed *n. pl.* laymen VI.22.
ley *v.* lay XX.53.
lif *n.* life XXIII.110.
ligge, li3e *v.* lie IV.142, XX.86.
li3e *n.* dead body VII.30.
li3e *v.* lie (utter falsehood) VI.6, VII.86; *n.* I.149.
li3t *adj.* light XI.79; **li3tly** *adv.* easily XII.140, XIX.82.
li3t *n.* light VIII.62, XXIII.40.
li3teneþ *v. 3sg.* lights up XXIII.33.
lik(e) *adj.* like III.121, XVII.78.
likne *v.* compare II.57, XV.9; **likned** *pt. ppl.* XXI.153.
lippes *n. pl.* lips, III.1, IV.117.
list *impers. v. 3sg.* pleases II.44.
lite *adj.* little VII.90.
litel, litil, lityl *adj.* little IV.32, 231, XI.69; **litel, lityl** *adv.* IV(title), XII.51.
loke *v.* look, consider, take care I.59, III.63.
loken *pt. ppl.* locked III.95.
lon *n.* loan XI.110.
lond(e) *n.* land, III.110, XXIV.417; **lond(es), londis** *pl.* IV.130, 142, XII.35.
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longeþ *v. 3sg.* belongs XIX.106, 108.
long on *prep.* because of XVII.120.
loo *interj.* lo, surely II.13, 16.
look *v.* consider, keep in mind IV.35.
look *n.* lock IV.119.
loos *adv.* loose IX.126.
lo(o)s *n.* reputation III.5, XIII.57.
lopred *pt. ppl.* curdled XXIV.82.
lord(e) *n.* lord, the Lord II.25, 39; **lordes, lordis, lordys** *pl.* II.35, III.39, IV.75; **lordis** *gen. sg.* II.27, III.103.
lords(c)hipe *n.* lordship, authority, control I.18, IX.27; **lordschipes** *pl.* XVII.158.
lordynges *n. pl.* lords III.148.
lore *n.* belief, commandments XII.116, XVII.82.
lore, lorn *pt. ppl.* lost, doomed VIII.15, XII.86.
lost *pt. ppl.* XVII.119; **lost** *pt.* XI.70.
loþ *adj.* loath, hateful, unwilling VI.42, X.1.
loþes *v. 3sg.* despises XX.141.
loue *n.* love I.11, 40; **loued, loues** *pl.* XI.98, XVII.168.

- loue** *v.* love, I(title), 8; **loued** *pt.* X.159, XI.113; **louen** *pl.* I.152; **louest** *2sg.* XIX.14; **louep** *3sg.* XI.37, XII.97.
- louer** *n.* lover XVIII.20, XXII.23; **louers** *pl.* XVII.23.
- low(e)** *adj.* III.44, XVIII.98.
- lowely** *adv.* humbly XX.59.
- lust** *n.* XXIV.16; **lustes, lustis** *pl.* VI.56, 64.
- lust** *impers. v. 3sg.* wishes XX.6.
- ly(e)** *v.* lie, be due, depend on VI.38, 46; **lys, lyþ** *3sg.* II.39, XX.146.
- lyd** *n.* lid XXI.158.
- lyf** *n.* life III.161, VII.20; *v.* VI(title).
- lyge man** *n.* vassal XII.15.
- ly3e** *v.* lie VII.62, X.206.
- ly3e** *v.* lie (utter falsehood) VIII.47, XVII.92.
- ly3t** *n.* light XII.93, XXIII.33.
- ly3tly** *adv.* easily X.96.
- ly3tnes** *n.* beauty X.109.
- lyk** *adj.* like IX.98, XVII.11.
- lykne** *v.* compare XV.17, 25; **lykned** *pt. ppl.* XVII.187, XXIII.122.
- lym** *n.* mortar XV.53.
- lymes** *n. pl.* limbs XV.39, 99.
- lynage** *n.* family (stock) VI.50, XXII.22.
- lys** *v. 3sg.* grants XIX.109.
- lyte** *adv.* little I.82; **lyte, lytyl** *adj.* XII.28, XVII.115.
- lytel** *n.* little XXIV.201.
- lyther** *adj.* wicked XX.52.
- lyue** *n.* life IX.36, XIX.85; **lyues** *pl.* XII.32; *gen. sg.* IV.230, XXIV.378.
- lyue** *v.* live I.23, III.64; **lyued** *pt.* XX.174, XXIV.164; **lyuen** *pl.* XVIII.73; **lyueþ** *3sg.* XXI.12, 98; *pl.* XXI.7.
- lyue** *v.* believe XXIII.93.
- lyueliche** *adj.* live-giving XXIII.18.
- lyuer(e)** *n.* liver, one who lives II.73, 75; **lyuer(e)s** *pl.* XVIII.9, 66.
- lyuyng** *pres ppl.* living III.76; *n.* VIII.34, XIV.26; **lyuynge** *adj.* XXIV.170, XXIV.300.
- maad** *pt. ppl.* become XXIV.25.
- macche** *n.* bride XX.152.
- mad** *v. pt.* made X.107, XII.123; *pt. ppl.* XIII.143, XV.1.
- madde** *v.* be mad XVII.145.
- made** *adj.* mad XX.37.
- made** *v. pt.* III.26, 129; *pt. ppl.* XI(title), XIII.105.
- mageste** *n.* majesty XXIV.246.
- make(n)** *v.* make, cause, compel I.13, 157; **makest** *2sg.* X.108, XX.169; **maketh, makeþ** *3sg.* I.106, III.80; *pl.* I.53, XV.165; **made** *pt. ppl.* VIII.2, XX.98.
- makyng** *n.* poem; **good** - atonement VIII(title).
- maladye** *n.* suffering VII.38.
- malice** *n.* III.59, IV.94.
- man** *n.* I.1, 7.
- manere** *n.* manner, kind, way VII.56; *gen.* XVI.2; **maneres** *pl.* XVIII.78.
- manhed(e), manhode** *n.* man(kind), character, nature III.119, X.166, XIII.118.
- mankynde** *n.* mankind VIII.45 XI.57.
- mannes, mannys** *n. gen.* man's I.17, 137.
- many** *adj.* X.1, XV.70; *pl.* IV.89, 105; - a IX.21 XX.174; - on many a one XI.6.
- marchaunt** *n.* merchant XVIII.139; **marchaundes** *pl.* III.69, XV.51.
- market** *n.* shewe in - make his appearance IV.100.
- market beteres** *n. pl.* idlers VI.9.
- martyres** *n. pl.* martyrs XVIII.31.
- maryage** *n.* marriage VI.52, XXII.24.
- masoun craft** *n.* masonry XIV.42.
- masse** *n.* mass VI.65, XIV.25.
- master** *n.* IX.68.
- mat** *adj.* checkmated, distraught XVI.108, XXIV.124.
- matere** *n.* matter, substance I.77, VIII.2.
- maþ** *v. 3sg.* makes III.159, IX.26.
- matyns** *n. pl.* matins VI.65.
- maugre, mawgre** *prep.* against, in spite of IV.13, XVIII.56.
- may** *n.* maid, woman IV.22.
- may** *v.* may, can, will I.46, II.13; **mayst** *2sg.* VII.27, VIII.30.

- mayde(n)** *n.* maid, the Virgin Mary XVII.79, XXIV.404.
- maynt** *pt. ppl.* mixed XIII.63.
- maynten(e)** *v.* maintain, engage in, support II.48, XVI.30.
- mayster(e)** *n.* master VIII.93, XV.77; **maystres** *pl.* XV.79.
- maystershepe** *n.* **makest** - excel XX.169.
- maystrie, maystriȝe, maystry(e)** *n.* mastery, authority, victory IV.139, IX.145, XII.39, XXIV.127; **maystryȝes** *pl.* XII.121.
- me** *impers. pron.* II.32, 49.
- med(e)** *n.* bribe(s), merit, (worldly) reward I.43, XXIV.345.
- medle** *v.* mix, go hand in hand, intervene III.39, XX.198; **medled** *pt. ppl.* I.135, VII.101.
- meke** *adj.* meek, humble XV.30, XVIII.157; **mekere** *comp.* XVIII.61.
- meke** *v.* humble XIX.51; **meked** *pt.* XIX.17, 49.
- mekely** *adv.* humbly XVIII.105, XX.211, XXI.82.
- mekenesse** *n.* meekness, affliction, wretchedness X.168, XVIII.97.
- mele** *n.* meal XV.118, XVII.7.
- melte** *v.* soften XIX.27.
- membres** *n. pl.* limbs XV(title).
- men** *n. pl.* I.30, 53; **mennys** *gen. pl.* IV.130, VIII.68.
- mende** *v.* (a)mend, cure, remedy IV.134, 137; **mendid** *pt. ppl.* XVII.118, XXIII.1.
- mendment** *n.* remedy, repentance XXII.38, XXIV.106.
- mendys** *n. pl.* damages XVI.78.
- mene** *adj.* simple II.10.
- mene** *n.* company XXIV.195.
- mene** *n.* intermediary IX.3.
- mene** *v.* mean II.66; **ment** *pt. ppl.* VII.85.
- mercie, mercy** *n.* mercy I.52, 130; **mercyes** *pl.* XVII.177, 179.
- mercyable** *n.* merciful XXI.65.
- meriest** *adj. sup.* most delightful XVI.57.
- merkis** *n. pl.* marks IX.175.
- merȝe** *n.* happiness, joy XII.2, XX.130.
- mery(e)** *adj.* merry, happy II.31, XXIV.396; **mery** *adv.* XXIII.55.
- mes** *n.* meal III.78.
- messenger** *n.* messenger, envoy III.9; **messengeres** *pl.* XIX.99.
- mest** *n.* most, greatest XI.3; *adv.* XXIV.10, 12.
- mesure** *n.* measure(s), caution, restraint I.61, III.13.
- met(e)** *v.* meet, encounter, experience IX.54, XV.71; *pt. ppl.* XX.65.
- mete** *n.* meat, food I.150, II.55; **metes** *pl.* XVIII.104.
- mett** *n.* size XIV.68.
- meue** *v.* affect, stir up, utter I.77, IV.79.
- might, miȝt** *v. pt.* II.46, X.62.
- mirre** *n.* myrrh X.119.
- mo(o)** *adj. adv. comp.* more III.114, XVIII.126.
- moche** *adj.* much II.7, XIV.69; many a XXIV.162; *adv.* XXIV.103; *n.* XIV.75, XV.82.
- moder** *n.* mother XXII.6, 11; *gen.* XX.149.
- mon** *v.* may, shall, will I.119, IV.195.
- mon(e)** *n.* complaint, lament XI.46, XIX.25.
- mone** *n.* moon XV.91.
- money** *n.* IX.49.
- monthes** *n. pl.* months XXIV.198.
- mony(e)** *adj. pron.* many (a) IV.73, XXIV.240.
- mood** *n.* disposition, heart, mind XVII.145, XVIII.61.
- more** *adv.* I.93, XXIV.290; *adj.* XVIII.126.
- morn** *n.* morning VIII.10.
- morneȝ** *v. 3sg.* mourns XXI.33.
- mornyng** *n.* remorse IX.38.
- morȝere** *n.* murder, XII.94, XIII.20.
- mortkyn** *n.* carcass XX.86.
- morwe** *n.* morning XI.67.
- most** *adj. adv. comp.* III.28, IV.35.
- most(e)** *v.* must, may, shall XII.60, XVIII.128; **mot(e)** I.38, XXI.49.
- mopȝes** *n. pl.* moths XXIV.159.
- mouȝeȝ** *v. 3sg.* moves X.166.
- moun**, *v.* allow, be allowed, XXIV.42, 322.
- mourned** *v. pt.* grieved XXIV.400.
- mouth, mouȝ(e)** *n.* IV.216, X.23, XV.113.
- mouynge** *n.* movement XXIV.411.

- mow(e(n)), mown** *v.* may, must I.49, IX.123, XIII.123, XXIV.69.
- mowe** *v.* mow IV.63, XIX.23.
- mowntayne** *n.* mountain XIV.17.
- mownten** *v.* ascend XX.84.
- my(n)** *pron.* my II.25, VIII.44; mine XVII.54.
- myche** *adj.* many XVIII.159.
- myght(e), myȝt(e)** *v.* might, may, expect I.74, 158, V.50, IX.105; **myghtest, myȝtest** *2sg.* II.87, XI.115.
- myȝt** *n.* might, power(s), strength X.145, XI.18.
- myȝty** *adj.* able, good XV.122, 124.
- mylde** *adj.* mild, compliant XX.33, 162.
- myle** *n.* mile IV.92.
- mylk** *n.* milk XXIV.82.
- mylle** *n.* mill XV.108.
- mylt** *n.* spleen X.26.
- myn** *adv.* less XXIV.290.
- mynde** *n.* mind III.79, VII.55.
- mynne** *v.* mind, remember, tell think XVI.16, 57.
- mynstrallis** *n. pl.* minstrels IV.82.
- myrroure** *n.* mirror III.133.
- mys** *adj.* evil, wrong XIV.57; *adv.* I.31, VII.44; *n.* evil (deeds), fail, harm misdeeds, sin I.161, IX.135.
- mysbede** *v.* maltreat III.31, XIII.54; *imp.* XIII.46.
- myscheue, myschyf, myschyue** *n.* misfortune, affliction, suffering I.76, XXIV.24, 340; **myscheues** *pl.* I.124, III.100.
- mysdede** *n. pl.* misdeeds, wrongdoings XXI.34, XXIII.106.
- my self** *pron.* myself XVII.103, XXIV.25.
- mys famed** *v. pt.* gave a false report of III.2.
- mysrulyng** *n.* misgovernment XIV.45.
- mysse** *adj.* evil, wrong XIII.3; *adv.* in error, sinfully, wrongly I.117, XX.107; *n.* misdeeds, sins, wrongdoing I.103, IX.115.
- myst** *pt. ppl.* missed IV.231.
- mysvsed** *pt. ppl.* corrupted XIV.107.
- myue** *v.* change XXIII.91.
- naked** *n. pl.* the naked IX.124.
- name** *n.* name, reputation II.20, III.18.
- named** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.111.
- namly** *adv.* especially XXIV.289.
- nan** *pron.* no one XXIII.120.
- nas** *v. pt.* was not XIX.12.
- nauel** *n.* navel XXIV.171.
- nay** *adv.* no II.28, IV.91.
- nayled** *pt. ppl.* nailed XX.115.
- ne** *conj.* nor I.62, XXIV.404.
- nede** *adv.* needs I.38, V.31; *n.* need, necessity, trouble I.94, II.78; *v.* need IX.125, 183; **neded, nedid** *pt.* X.18, XI.101.
- nedeles** *adj.* needless, extravagant, unnecessary VII.69, XIII.91; *n. pl.* those not in want XIV.109, XVI.94; **nedles** *adv.* XVI.36.
- nedy** *adj.* needy VII.65, 67.
- neighbores** *n. pl.* neighbours I.162.
- nekke** *n.* neck XV.17, 22.
- nel(e)** *v.* will not IX.20, XVI.85; **nelen, nelle** *pl.* IV.106, XVIII.52; **nelt** *2sg.* XVII.105, 141.
- neme** *v.* take X.18.
- nempned** *v. pt.* has called XXIII.3.
- nerre** *adv.* near IV.213, IX.52; **nerre** *comp.* XV.144, XIX.68.
- nes(se)** *v.* is not VIII.25, XXIV.61.
- nest** *n.* nest, lair XI.68, XII.130.
- neȝer ... ne** *conj.* neither ... nor XXIV.345.
- neuer(e)** *adj.* never I.114, XII.23; **neuere þe lasse** *conj.* not the less XIII.38; **neuere-þe-lattere** however XXIII.59.
- newe** *adj.* IV.15, XI.116; *adv.* anew IX.19, 115.
- newe fangyl** *adj.* newfangled XIII.32.
- neyȝ(e)** *adv.* near(by) XII.26, XIV.44.
- neyȝebore, neȝebour** *n.* neighbour IV.35, XVI.33; **neyȝebores** *pl.* IX.70, XIX.98.
- no** *adj.* I.33, XXIV.403; *adv.* XIV.94.
- noblay** *n.* nobleness XII.86.
- noblere** *adj. comp.* XIV.2.
- noght** *adv.* not I.11; **noȝt** IX.35, XX.109; *pron.* nothing VII.67, XXIV.8.
- molde** *v. pt.* would not X.36, 41; **moldest** *2sg.* II.72, XIX.83.
- nombre** *n.* number XXIV.198.

- nombred(e)** *pt. ppl.* counted, taken account of I.113, XXIV.156.
- non** *adj.* no I.54, XXIV.305; *pron.* no one IV.208; *interj.* no! XXIV.249.
- none** *n.* noon XV.70.
- noo(n)** *adj.* no VIII.28, XXIV.318.
- nose** *n.* XV.12.
- nost** *v. 2sg.* do not know V.50, 52; **not** *3sg.* does not know V.7; *pl.* do not know XXIII.74.
- not** *pron.* nothing I.37, VII.65; *adv.* not I.12, XII.108.
- noþer** *pron.* either XV.130; - ... **ne** *conj.* neither ... nor IV.18, XXIII.117.
- nouellerye** *n.* innovations III.63.
- nou3t** *adv.* not VII.45; *n.* worthless IV.227; **nou3ten** *pron.* nothing VII.81.
- noumbre** *n.* numbers XXIV.130.
- noumbred** *pt. ppl.* fixed the number of XXIV.239.
- now** *adv.* IV.82, XXIV.375.
- nowhere** *adv.* X.175.
- nowþe** *adv.* now VII.51.
- noy3e** *n.* misfortune III.42.
- noys** *n.* rumours IV.17.
- nyce** *adj.* dissolute XVIII.122.
- nye** *n.* injury VI.70.
- ny3e** *v.* afflict VIII.99; **ny3ed** *pt.* harmed XIII.101.
- ny3t** *n.* night II.74, VI.18; **ny3tes** *pl.* XXIV.3.
- nyl(le)** *v.* will not I.63, V.14; **nylt** *2sg.* XVII.101.
- nys** *v.* is not I.37, III.4.
- nys** *adj.* folly, foolish, sinful I.45, II.34; *n. pl.* the wicked XIII.162.
- o(n)** *pron. num.* one II.7, IV.193; **o** *ind. art.* a I.14, IX.83.
- o** *prep.* of, about IV.179, IX.17; **o brod** far and wide XIII.110; **o ferre** distance XV.138; **o mys** falsely, wickedly, wrong VII.74, VIII.36; **o syde** aside XX.130; **o tway** one from the other IV.70; **o two** between V.69, XX.20; **o twynne** from each other, into two VII.111, XVII.85.
- oble** *n.* sacramental wafer XXIII.65.
- obedience** *n.* XVIII.149.
- obedyent** *adj.* obedient XVIII.4.
- occupacioun** *n.* **wiþ** - of engaging in XVIII.11.
- of** *prep.* I.23, VIII.72.
- office** *n.* task XVII.18.
- officere** *n.* official, servant IV.210.
- offre** *v.* proffer XVIII.172.
- offryng** *n.* sacrifice XXIII.121.
- ofte** *adj.* frequent III.43; *adv.* often I.166, XX.26; **oftere** *comp.* IX.95.
- offys** *n.* appointed task IV.164.
- old** *adj.* I.165, II.53; **old(e)** *n. pl.* the old IX.23, XIV.65.
- on** *prep.* I.81, X.40.
- ones** *adv. num.* once VII.94, XII.43.
- oo(n)** *num.* one III.50, XII.68.
- open** *adj.* XV.84, XX.118; *v.* XXIV.185.
- opert** *adv.* openly XVIII.96.
- or** *conj.* I.18, 150.
- or** *conj.* before I.87, 143.
- ordayned** *pt. ppl.* established XIII.4.
- ordeyne** *v.* ordain, create, manage IX.135; **ordeyned** *pt.* XXII.20; *pt. ppl.* XIV.58, XVIII.137.
- ordinaunce, ordynaunce** *n.* ordnance, conditions, decree I.75, III.159.
- ordre** *n.* (religious) order, estate III.142, IX.121.
- oreson** *n.* prayer XVIII.164.
- ost** *n.* bread, host XXIII.38, 83.
- other ... or** *conj.* either ... or II.21.
- oþer** *adv.* other XVIII.40.
- other(e), oþer(e)** *pron.* I.78, III.31, IV.22, XIV.51; *pl.* IX.156, XIV.13; **oþeres** *gen. pl.* VII.34.
- oþes** *n. pl.* oaths XX.139.
- ouer(e)** *prep.* over, above, before I.10, VIII.57; **ouer** *adv.* XX.71, XXIII.99.
- oueralle** *adv.* everywhere XXI.90.
- ouercome** *v.* appease XIX.111.
- ouerhope**, *n.* presumptuous/unjustified hope VIII.47, XX.201; **in** - presumptuously I.129, VII.97.
- ouermoche** *adv.* too much VIII.67.

- ou3t** *pron. adv.* any(thing), at all, ever VII.66, X.57.
- ou3te** *v.* ought XVII.10, 122.
- oure** *pron.* our XII.19, 20; **oure(s)** ours XVII.135, XXIV.179.
- oure self** *pron.* ourselves XII.5, XII.33.
- ouris** *n. pl.* wretchedness XXIV.183.
- out(e)** *adv.* XVII.93, XXI.75; **out of** *prep.* I.126, II.82.
- out casten** *pt. ppl.* expelled X.134.
- outeray** *v.* overcome XI.84.
- outrage** *n.* excess, intemperance IX.100, XVIII.121.
- ouertylt** *v.* overthrow XIII.65.
- owe(n)** *adj.* own I.33, X.136.
- owe** *v.* own, possess XXI.19, 27; **oweth** *3sg.* I.27.
- oyle** *n.* oil XXIV.135.
- palays** *n.* palace XI.68.
- palfrey** *n.* palfrey II.14.
- pape** *n.* pope X.192.
- paradis, paradys** *n.* paradise VII.78, X.16.
- parage** *n.* rank XIII.116.
- paramour** *n.* passion IV.125.
- paraurenture** *adv.* perhaps XVIII.187.
- parcel** *n.* part XII.16.
- parchemyn** *n.* parchment XVII.182.
- parfitnesse** *n.* perfection XXIV.380.
- parfyt** *adj.* perfect, full XVII.27, 70.
- parische** *n.* parish XIV.30.
- parischen** *n.* parishioner IX.174.
- parlement** *n.* parliament, administering, assembly III.97, XIII.4.
- part(e(n))** *v.* part, distinguish, share V.69, VII.111, XVII.85; **parted** *pt.* XX.20, XXII.12; *pt. ppl.* XX.13, XXIII.70.
- partener** *n.* co-ruler XII.107.
- partie(s)** *n. pl.* parties I.164, XXIV.174.
- party(e)** *n.* party, side III.36, XV.130; **partye(s)** *pl.* III.19, IV.76; **in partye of ...** in partial ... VII.92.
- pas** *n.* ordeal XXIV.72.
- paske lomb** *n.* paschal lamb XXIII.126.
- passe** *v.* (sur)pass, exceed, happen IV.212, 222; **passed** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.261; **passep** *3sg.* XIII.147, XVII.133.
- passioun** *n.* suffering(s) XX.156, XXII.51.
- passyng** *adj.* exceeding XIV.76.
- past(e)** *adv.* XV.111, XXIV; **paste** *prep.* XIV.101.
- paternoster** *n.* VI.15.
- pauylon** *n.* tent XXIV.313.
- pawe** *v.* blandish, flatter IV.21.
- pay(e)** *v.* pay (dearly), please, satisfy IV.182, XIII.52; **payed** *pt. ppl.* IX.179, XII.131.
- payment** *n.* VII.92.
- payne** *n.* penalty, suffering IV.218, XXIV.344; **paynes** *pl.* IV.237, XVI.111.
- paynte** *v.* paint IX.43.
- pece** *n.* piece, part, segment XII.42, XXIII.86; **peces** *pl.* XXIII.69, 90.
- pees** *n.* peace XXIV.308.
- penaunce** *n.* penance, renunciation IX.4, IX.187; **hardship** XXI.74.
- penyworth** *n.* pennyworth XIV.38.
- pere** *n.* equal X.3, 107; *pl.* V.21, XI.75.
- perfeccyone** *n.* perfection XII.102.
- perile, peryl(e)** *n.* peril, danger XIV.43, XVI.75, XXIV.174.
- pertely** *adv.* in plain words XXIII.35.
- perylous** *adj.* perilous VI.(title).
- pes** *n.* peace III.iii, 8.
- pete** *n.* peat at o - not a bit IX.142.
- peyne** *n.* pain, suffering XXIV.124; **peynes** *pl.* XXIV.385.
- philosofres** *n.* philosophers III.73.
- pilage** *n.* plunder II.68.
- place** *n.* IV.189, X.127.
- planted** *v. pt.* X.49.
- plas** *n.* place X.97, XVII.152.
- plastre** *n.* curative, remedy VII.107.
- plate** *n.* sheet XXIV.295.
- play** *n.* play, game, pleasures II.42, IV.94; **play(e)** *v.* play, joke II.36, XV.117.
- playn** *n.* on the - openly IV.100.
- playn(e)** *v.* complain XV.113, XX.7.
- playnt** *n.* complaint, request XII.110, XIII.60; **playntes** *pl.* XIII.43.

- plente** *n.* plenty, prosperity XV.56, XIX.67.
plesande *pres.ppl.* pleasing XX.75.
plese *impers. v.* please II.25, IV.211; **plesen** *pl.* X.151; **pleseþ** *3sg.* IV.182, XVII.32.
plete *v.* plead, argue IX.62, XVIII.181.
pleyneþ *v. 3sg.* complains XVI.77.
pleynt *n.* complaint XVI.10, XX.167.
plough *n.* plough, farmers III.143, XV.63.
ply3e *v.* waive VII.102.
plyt *n.* condition XV.40.
pondryng *n.* musing XVI.111.
popes *n. pl.* III.148.
pore *adj.* poor, humble lacking I.89, III.104; *n.* I.138; *pl.* the poor, pauper IX.125, X.54; poverty XVIII.157.
post(e)les *n. pl.* apostles VIII.21, XI.26.
pouert(e) *n.* poverty, hardship, suffering X.158, XI.90.
pouste *n.* power XII.20, XXIII.31, 92.
power(e) *n.* IV.212, XII.105.
poynt *n.* point, act X.27, XIII.34; **poyntes** *pl.* IX.116, XVI.79.
poyntel *n.* stylus XXIV.296.
poyson *n.* poison XIII.63.
pray *n.* prey, property, what is theirs IV.150, VI.7.
pray *v.* II.15, IV.174.
prayer *n.* XXIV.380.
preche *v.* preach, speak IV.41, 57; **prechyng** *pt. ppl.* IV.81; *n.* XXI.155.
precious *adj.* precious XVII.65.
prelat *n.* prelate XVI.65; **prelates** *pl.* III.148.
prented *v. pt.* priessed XVII.183.
pres, *n.* abundance, army, crowd III.38, 158.
pres *v.* proceed with haste XXI.87.
preson *n.* prison II.30, XIII.103.
presone *v.* imprison XXI.78; **presoned** *pt. ppl.* XXI.61.
presoneres *n. pl.* prisoners IX.126.
presoun *n.* prison II.52, IV.14, VI.45.
prest *adj.* gathered XV.29.
prest *n.* priest IX.3, 34; **prestes**, **prestis** *pl.* IV.81, IX.162.
presthod *n.* priesthood XV.26.
preue *v.* prove, explain, find out I.79, IV.33; **preues** *3sg.* III.98; **preues**, **preueth** *pl.* I.125, II.34.
preue(y) *adj.* privy, secret I.3, 99; **preuylly** *adv.* privately, quietly XII.54, XXI.8.
preuete, **preuyte(e)** *n.* secrecy IV.213, XVI.87; **in preuete** in private XIV.20.
preye *v.* pray, please XIII.148, XV.97; **preyed** *pt.* XV.85; **preyest** *2sg.* XXII.39; **preyeþ** *3sg.* XX.104.
preyer(e) *n.* (private) prayer IV.183, VII.114; **preyers** *pl.* XVIII.39, XXIII.3.
preyse *v.* praise IV.50, VI.32; **preysede** *pt.* II.7.
pride *n.* X.3.
principal *adj.* noble XXIV.373; *adv.* foremost XVII.60; *n.* first place XVII.72.
pris *n.* price XVII.102.
prisoners *n. pl.* VI.39.
prisoun *n.* imprisonment XXIV.15.
professed *adj.* those who have taken the vows XVIII.44.
profit *n.* I.4, III.98, V.28.
profre *v.* hold out, offer XIX.62; **profreþ** *3sg.* XI.40, XVII.15.
profyt *n.* profit, gain II.68, VII.45; **profytes** *pl.* prosperity III.100; **profyte** *v.* profit XVII.154.
profytable *adj.* helpful XXI.69.
propre *n.* property XVIII.59, 141.
prosperite *n.* prosperity XIX.71.
proud(e) *adj.* proud, arrogant IX.150, XVIII.64; **proudest** *sup.* VI.31.
proue *v.* prove, demonstrate XI.25, XVII.187; **prouest** *2sg.* XXIV.140, 141.
prouerbe *n.* proverb IV.33.
prow *n.* spiritual benefit, wealth XIX.83, XXIII.101.
prowesse *n.* prowess II.19.
pryde *n.* pride X.111, XVIII.100.
prynce *n.* prince, ruler I.142, XVI.119; **prynces** *pl.* IX.108.
pryncypal *adj.* principal XV.14.

- prys** *n.* prize, victories XIII.133, 167; price, esteem, value IV.162, X.22; **o prys** precious, of great value XI.15, XVIII.18.
- pulle** *v.* pull XIV.99.
- punysche** *v.* punish III.20; **punsched** *pt. ppl.* VIII.55.
- puple** *n.* people I.10, 19.
- purchas** *v.* acquire, obtain for XXI.47; **purchasest** *2sg.* XXIV.15.
- purgatorie, purgatory** *n.* VII.78, XX.206.
- purpos** *n.* plan III.92; **to** - appropriately IV.91.
- purs** *n.* purse XV.82.
- pursue** *v.* XXI.119, 124; **pursued** *pt. ppl.* XXI.113; **pursuest** *2sg.* XXIV.143, 145; **pursueth** *3sg.* I.50.
- put** *v.* III.25, IV.138.
- py3t** *pt. ppl.* pitched XXIV.313.
- pyke** *v.* pick, steal IV.50; **pykep** *3sg.* XII.64.
- pyked** *pt. ppl.* pointed XX.138.
- pyle** *n.* castle III.124, XI.107.
- pyn(e)** *n.* pain, torment I.28, X.203; **pynes** *pl.* XI.45, XX.205; **pyne** *v.* pain IV.21, X.43.
- pynne** *v.* lock XV.83, XVII.87.
- pyt** *v.* store up X.87.
- quake** *v.* quake, tremble X.189, XII.123.
- quantite** *n.* main part XV.50.
- quaue** *v.* quaver XXIII.88.
- qued** *n.* wickedness VII.60.
- queme** *v.* please XIII.163.
- quenche** *v.* suppress III.60; **quenchyng** *n.* quenching XXII.32.
- quenes** *n. gen. sg.* queen's XX.76.
- querel(le), queryle** *n.* quarrel, armed combat, cause III.87, IX.139, XIII.113.
- querte** *n. in* - free from harm XII.3.
- queste** *n.* inquest XVIII.179; **questes** *pl.* IX.65.
- questyon** *n.* question XVIII.49.
- queynt** *adj.* mysterious VII.1.
- quod** *v. pt.* said XV.87, 89.
- quyk** *adj.* alive, living IV.198, XXIII.18.
- quykeneþ** *v. 3sg.* restores XX.3.
- quyt(e)** *v.* pay (back), repay, requite, reward I.40, XVI.96; **quytest** *2sg.* XVII.48.
- raft** *v. pt.* deprived, robbed, stole XVI.62; *pt. ppl.* XVI.58, XX.14.
- rage** *v.* have sexual intercourse VI.53.
- ran** *v. pt.* ran, fled XXIV.233, 240.
- rank** *adj.* profuse II.2.
- ransake** *v.* search through XXIV.58.
- rapere** *adv.* rather III.55, 59.
- raue** *v.* rave, behave foolishly I.53, XX.43.
- rauenere** *n.* plunderer, thief XIV.108.
- raansom** *n.* ransom XI.15.
- raysed** *pt. ppl.* raised XII.129.
- rebelle** *n.* rebel IX.140, XIII.74; *pl.* XVI.60; *v.* V.36, XIV.93.
- rebuke** *v.* VI.26.
- recche** *v.* care IV.24, 40; **reccheþ** *3sg.* XIII.97.
- reche** *v.* give XXI.20.
- recheles** *adj.* reckless XIV.110; **rechelesly** *adv.* IV.141, VI.17.
- red(e)** *adj.* X.44, XXIII.44.
- red** *n.* counsel, teaching XIII.23, XXIII.104; **red(e)** *v.* advise, speak, urge I.109, IX.63.
- rede** *v.* read XVIII.108, XXIV.392.
- redresse** *v.* put right, resolve XVI.11, 126.
- redy** *adj.* ready III.70, V.56.
- refu(y)se** *v.* refuse, get rid of, reject I.100, V.43; **refused** *pt. ppl.* XV.149, XXIV.405.
- regyone** *n.* realm XII.70.
- reherce** *v.* divulge XIII.83.
- reiyoys(e)** *v.* rejoice, enjoy XXI.30, XXIII.12.
- rekene** *v.* reckon, answer for, assess IV.223, IX.92; **rekened** *pt. ppl.* I.118.
- rekenyng** *n.* reckoning, account(ing) I.29, 35; **rekenynges** *pl.* III.151.
- rekne** *v.* answer for IX.39.
- relegeon, religeo(u)n, religioun** *n.* religion, (religious) order IX.121, XVIII(title), 12, 25; **religyone** *pl.* XII.142.
- relegous** *n. pl.* the clergy XIII.147, 149; **religious** *n.* monk XVIII.81, 139; religiousness, monastic spirituality XVIII.60, 142.
- reles** *n.* deliverance, transfer III.126, XXIV.314.
- releues** *v. pl.* takes heart III.103.
- reme** *n.* realm XII.19, 32.
- remedie** *n.* remedy XXIV.367.

- remembraunce** *n.* reflection XVI(title).
remewe *v.* depart, distance oneself XVIII.74, XXIV.253; *n.* change XXI.16.
renne *n.* run, incur, live VIII.52, 100; **rennest** *2sg.* X.104; **rennep** *3sg.* XX.81.
renoun, renowne *n.* renown, power XII.126, XXIV.9.
rent *n.* rent, due, possessions I.39, VII.87; **rentis** *pl.* III.102.
repe *v.* reap IV.63, XIX.23; **repeþ** *3sg.* XXIV.180.
repenta(u)nce *n.* VII.55, XII.149.
repente *v.* repent, confess X.95, XVII.75.
reportours *n. pl.* talebearers III.2.
reprf *n.* reproof, disgrace, shame X.2, 73, XIV.53.
repreue, repryue *v.* reprove, censure, reject IV.77, XXIV.22; **repreued** *pt. ppl.* XIV.6; **repreuest** *2sg.* XXIV.12; **repreueþ** *3sg.* XIII.74, XX.137.
rerage *n.* debt, indebtedness VIII.100, IX.103.
rered *v. pt.* raised XXIV.311.
res *n.* actions, crisis, emergency III.70, XII.7.
resceyue *v.* receive, accept, admit I.98, 140; **resceyued** *pt. ppl.* XI.77; **resce(y)ueþ** *3sg.* XII.109, XXIII.77; **resceyueþ** *pl.* IX.74, XXIII.79.
reson(e), resoun *n.* reason(able) I.102, IV.107, XII.134.
ressayue *v.* receive, welcome VIII.73, 87; **ressayueþ** *3sg.* III.126, VIII.33; *pl.* XXIII.73.
ressayuour *n. pl.* communicants XXIII.61.
rest(e) *n.* III(title), X.30.
rest(e) *v.* rest, stay XI.71, XV.98.
restore *v.* restore, make amends, return I.92, XVII.84.
resurexioun *n.* resurrection XX.158, XXII.53.
reue *v.* deprive of, plunder, steal V.38, VI.13; *n.* spoils XVIII.60.
reueraunce, reuerence *n.* respect I.89, III.162.
rewarde *n.* reward XVIII.47.
rewe *v.* bewail, care about, regret I.92, X.160; **reweþ** *pl.* XXI.74.
rewme *n.* realm I.74.
reyse *v.* raise XXIV.377.
riche *adj.* rich I.89, XII.41; **richer** *comp.* I.147; **richest** *sup.* XVI.57.
riche *n. pl.* the rich I.138; **riches** *gen.* VI.7.
riches *n. pl.* riches, profit IV.239; **richesse** I.53, II.17.
ride *v.* XV.51.
right *n.* I.135; **ri3t** III.138, XII.127; **ri3t(e)** *adj.* III.14, 25; **ri3t** *adv.* right, fair, just V.5, IX.44.
ri3twis *adj.* righteous IX.90, XXI.124; **ri3twys** *adj. or adv.* rightful(ly) XIX.106.
ri3twisnes(se) *n.* righteousness XIX.105, XX.105.
rise *v.* (a)rise, come about I.165, III.27; **riseþ** *3sg.* III.33.
robbe *v.* rob III.117, V.38.
rode *n.* cross X.98; - **tre** XVII.116, XIX.18.
rolle *n.* roll XXIV.392; **rolles** *pl.* IX.63, XI.111.
roo *n.* roe deer XIV.110.
rood *n.* cross XIX.37.
roof *n.* IV.98.
rosted *v. imp. pl.* roast XXIII.126.
rote *v.* - **smal** rot away XXIV.375.
roten *adj.* rotten XXIV.158.
rotensse *n.* rottenness XXIV.267.
roue *n.* scabs XXIV.123.
rou3t *v. pt.* cared III.159.
rouþe *n.* regret XVI.37.
rowe *v.* row IV.3.
rowne *v.* make deliberations XII.54.
rule *n.* rule VIII.61, XVI.80; *v.* rule, behave, control III.156, VI.65.
ruþe *n.* pity X.78.
ruyde *adj.* obdurate XXI.25.
rybbes *n. pl.* ribs XV.41, 45.
ryche *adj.* rich II.2.
ryches *n. pl.* riches, splendour II.2, III.119.
ryde *v.* ride II.14, XV.75.
ry3t *adj.* right IV.20, XIV.66; *adv.* III.143, XV.19; **ry3t, ryht** *n.* I.36, III.9.
ry3twis, ry3twys *adj.* righteous, just IX.138, XIII.7; **ry3twys** *adj.* righteous, just, with a

- just cause IX.138, XVI.90; *adv.* VIII.65; *n.* XVI.106.
- ry3twisnes** *n.* righteousness XX.197, XXI.50.
- rys(e(n))** *v.* rise, get the better of, rebel I.63, 143, XXIV.301.
- ryue** *n.* reef VII.28.
- sacrament** *n.* sacrament, Eucharist XVIII.36, XXIII(title).
- sad** *adj.* sorwe - deeply distressed VI.33.
- saf** *adj.* safe IX.159.
- saiþ** *v.* 3sg. says VIII.55.
- sake** *n.* sack XXII.7.
- sake** *n.* XX.213.
- salt** *n.* XXI.145, 146.
- saluacioun** *n.* salvation XXIII.80.
- salue** *n.* salve IX.178; *v.* ease the pain of, heal VII.109; **salueþ** 3sg. X.164.
- same** *adj.* I.148, IV.63.
- sample** *n.* - take take as a warning X.185, XXIV.69.
- sank** *v.* pt. II.4.
- sare** *adv.* grievously X.39.
- sarmon** *n.* sermon X.5.
- sat** *v.* pt. troubled XIX.11.
- saue** *prep.* except X.34, XVII.71.
- saue** *v.* save, heal I.50, IV.108; **saued** *pt. ppl.* VII.42, X.145; **saues** 2sg. XXI.150; **saues**, **saueþ** 3sg. III.110, XXI.146.
- saueour** *n.* saviour XXIII.9.
- sau3t(e)** *adj.* at peace, reconciled IX.191, XI.35.
- sau3ten** *v.* be reconciled IX.179.
- saule** *n.* soul XXIV.15.
- sauour** *n.* delight, taste II.4, XIII.11.
- sauyd** *n. pl.* those who are saved XXIV.409.
- sauyour** *n.* saviour XXIV.304.
- sawe** *v.* pt. saw II.5.
- sawe** *n.* commands, commandments, word V.34, IX.109.
- saw3t(e)nyng** *n.* reconciliation XI.25, 41.
- say(e), sayn** *v.* I.109, XV.101, XX.1; **sayd** *pt. ppl.* said IX.177, XX.110; **sayde** IX.18; *pt.* XX.98, 163; **sayþ(e)** 3sg. XIII.55, XXIV.179.
- sayle** *v.* sail (forth) IV.3, VII.27.
- sayn(e)** *pt. ppl.* seen IV.98, 223.
- schal** *v.* shall IV.63, XXIV.377; **schalt** 2sg. XXIV.8.
- schamed** *pt. ppl.* feel shame XXIV.387.
- sche** *pron.* she XX.28, 183.
- schendis, schendys** *v.* 3sg. condemns, corrupts XIV.107, XXIV.103.
- schewe** *v.* show, reveal IX.83, XXIV.349.
- schold(e), schuld(e)** *v.* pt. should I.100, IX.94, XXII.69, XXIV.405.
- schul(len)** *v.* shall XXIV.191, 333.
- sclaundre** *v.* calumniate XVIII.190; *n.* slander XVIII.94, 95; - **scol** school for scandal XVI.101.
- scoles** *n. pl.* schools II.33.
- score** *n.* XXIV.393.
- scorne** *v.* hold in/treat with contempt XVI.102; **scorned** *pt. ppl.* XIV.6.
- se(n)** *v.* see, appear III.133, XXIII.88; **sene** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.197, 318.
- seche** *v.* seek, inquire after, investigate IV.77, VIII.6; **secheþ** 3sg. III.5, IV.158.
- sechyng** *n.* searching XXIV.93.
- sed(e)** *n.* seed IV.141, XXIV.194.
- sede** *v.* sow seed, run to seed I.62, XIII.142.
- see** *n.* sea I.28, II.29; **sees** *pl.* III.110.
- see** *v.* II.17, XIX.2; **seest** 2sg. VI.34, XXIII.45; **seeth, seep** 3sg. I.95, XII.93.
- seed** *n.* IV.61, 129.
- sees** *v.* cease XX.95, XXIV.310.
- seiþ** *v.* 3sg. says X.15, XX.177.
- sek** *adj.* corrupted VII.5.
- seke** *v.* seek VII.50, XVIII.171.
- selde** *adv.* seldom XV.71.
- sele** *n.* seal XVII.183.
- self** *adj.* same XXIV.183.
- selle** *v.* sell, have for sale/available III.55, IV.54; **sellen** *pl.* X.135.
- selue** *adj.* þe - equal XIII.116.
- semblaunt** *n.* appearance III.122.
- seme** *v.* seem, appear XVIII.118, XXIII.69; **semes, semeþ** 3sg. IX.55, XX.29; **semest** 2sg. XXIII.113, 115.

- sen** *prep.* since VIII.10; *conj.* XXIV.231.
- send** *v.* send, impose, provide XII.148; **sende** VII.13, IX.105; **sendes** *3sg.* I.151, III.8.
- sengyl** *adj.* simple XXIII.66.
- sent(e)** *v. pt.* sent (for), bestowed I.34, XXII.49; **sent** *pt. ppl.* XI.109, XXIV.112.
- sercle** *n.* circle XII.10, 41.
- serkis** *n. pl.* garments IX.172.
- seruage** *n.* servitude XX.182.
- serua(u)nt** *n.* servant II.40, VI.2; *gen.* XV.78.
- serue** *v.* (de)serve, perform, satisfy I.41, 148; **serued** *pt.* II.24, X.157; **serued, seruyd** *pt. ppl.* VIII.5, XXIV.126; **seruest** *2sg.* IX.122, X.82; **serueþ** *3sg.* VI.50, VIII.31.
- seruice, seruyce, seruyse** *n.* service, mass, task I.140, X.130, XXI.148.
- ses** *v.* cease, put an end to III.102, XIX.46.
- seson** *n. in* - opportune XIII.79.
- set(e)** *v.* IV.218, IX.102.
- sete** *n.* seat, court, sitting XIV.17, XVII.139.
- sette** *v.* set, ask, value VII.15, XVII.102; *pt.* XII.144, XXIV.88; *pt. ppl.* IX.131, XXIV.199; **settest** *pt. 2sg.* XXIV.153; **settest, settyst** *pres.* X.112, XXIV.11.
- setteþ** *v. 3sg.* - on clutches XX.39.
- seuen(e)** *num.* seven IX.89, XXII.66.
- sewe** *v.* be visible to, come next, follow XVI.115, XVIII.78.
- sewe** *v. pt.* sowed XXI.128, XXIV.180.
- sey(e)** *v.* say XII.148, XX.142; **seyn** *pl.* VIII.41, IX.90; **seyst** *2sg.* X.102; **seyþ** *3sg.* XX.43, 143; **seyde** *pt.* XI.28.
- sey3e** *v. pt.* saw XV.92.
- seyntes** *n. pl.* saints IX.102, XVII.140; *gen.* XVII.67.
- shadew(e), shadow, shadwe** *n.* shadow XXIII.32, 39, XXIV.182, 328.
- shaft** *n.* XVI.64.
- shake** *v.* XI.183.
- shal(le)** *v.* shall I.148, XIX.68; **shalt** *2sg.* VIII.97, XXI.149.
- shame** *n.* shame, disgrace II.21, III.23; *v.* XIII.80.
- shameles** *n. pl.* the shameless IV.127, XIV.84.
- shameley** *adv.* shamefully X.124, XIII.61.
- shapere** *n.* creator XXIV.371.
- sharpe** *adj.* sharp XVIII.174.
- sharpe** *v.* sharpen, increase X.171.
- shaue** *v.* shave XIV.53.
- she** *pron.* VI.53, XX.173.
- shed** *v. pt.* X.53.
- shede** *v.* spill, spread, waste I.118, II.62.
- shede** *v.* separate X.142.
- sheldis** *n. pl.* shields X.143.
- shende** *v.* (bring to) ruin, disgrace, revile XIII.85, 90; **shendes** *3sg.* V.23; **shent, pt. ppl. I.66, XII.137.**
- shep** *n. pl.* sheep IX.157, X.150.
- shetep** *v. 3sg.* shoots IV.58.
- shew(e)** *v.* show, instill, make known II.16, XXIV.38; **shewe forth** II.15; **shewed** *pt. ppl.* XIII.118, XXI.64.
- shidre** *v.* tremble V.4.
- shipman craft** *n.* the craft of seamanship XIV.43.
- shippes** *n. gen. sg.* ship's XIII.154.
- sholde** *n.* shallow XIII.146.
- shon** *n. pl.* shoes XX.138.
- shon** *v. pt.* shone XI.118.
- shop(e)** *v. pt.* created, formed XVII.11, XXIV.66.
- shorn** *pt. ppl.* cut through XXIV.171.
- short** *adj.* X.6, XXIV.170.
- shoue** *pt. ppl.* expelled XXIV.121.
- shoures** *n. pl.* storms XVIII.174.
- shrede** *n.* thread I.30.
- shrewes** *n. pl.* wicked people XXI.21.
- shrift(e)** *n.* confession IV.180, XVIII.35; **shrifte wynde** oral confession VII.53.
- shronken** *adj.* shrunken XXIV.285.
- shryfte** *n.* confessor XVIII.123.
- shrynes** *n. pl.* shrines XVII.67.
- shryue** *v.* make confession IX.34.
- shul** *v.* shall XI.86, XXI.131.
- shuld(e)** *v. pt.* should I.162, II.43; **shuldest** *2sg.* XIX.51.
- shuldres** *n. pl.* shoulders XV.33.
- shulle** *v. pl.* will XXIV.252.

- shyne(n)** *v.* shine XI.119, XXIII.40; **shynyng** *pres. ppl.* IX.10, XI.76; **shynynges** *pl.* XXIII.53.
- sight** *n.* eyes I.133.
- signyfy** *v.* signify XII.9; **signyfyep** *pl.* XII.17.
- sikirnes** *n.* certainty VII.42.
- singulere** *n.* personal gain XVI.59.
- sire** *n.* sir IV.84, IX.68.
- siþ** *conj.* as, now that, since V.55, XXII.41.
- sitte** *n.* sitting XXIV.413, 414.
- skape** *v.* escape from XXIV.62.
- skatre** *v.* scatter, disperse III.158, X.144; **skaterid** *pt. ppl.* XII.23.
- skille** *n.* skill, faculty, moderation XVIII.50, XX.46; **in euene skille** properly XII.111, XIII.71; **skilles, skillis** *pl.* IV.107, VII.33.
- skippe** *v.* 3*sg.* is quick XVI.101.
- skole** *n.* school VII.9, XX.92.
- skore** *n.* score XXII.47.
- skorn(e)** *n.* scorn, contempt, disgrace IX.78, XVIII.36; **lau3he to -**, **lawhen to -** ridicule (*v.*) XII.147, XVI.63; **skornes** *pl.* IV.129.
- skorne** *v.* scorn, deceive, ridicule II.35, V.58.
- skorneles** *adj.* without contempt/ridicule VI.68.
- skornyng** *n.* contempt IX.55.
- skourged** *pt. ppl.* scourged XIV.155.
- skourges** *n. pl.* scourges, whips X.136, XX.114.
- skulked** *v. pt.* XVI.8.
- skylle** *n.* proper conduct, reason XVI.102; **in -** fittingly V.46; **skylles** *pl.* I.90.
- skyn(ne)** *n.* skin VII.7, XV.42.
- slake** *v.* cease, diminish XX.187, 215.
- slay** *n.* weaving reed IV.6.
- slayn** *pt. ppl.* suppressed IV.101.
- slau3t** *n.* manslaughter XIII.18.
- sle** *v.* slay, destroy X.186, XI.54; **sles** 3*sg.* III.22; **slep** 3*sg.* XXIV.337.
- slep** *n.* milk-cheese XXIV.82.
- slepe** *v.* sleep XIII.149, XV.87.
- sleper** *adj.* unreliable XXIV.77.
- slees, sleep** *v.* 3*sg.* castigates, kills XX.2, 89.
- slet** *n.* sleet XV.69.
- slete** *v.* attack IX.22.
- sley3t(e)** *n.* cunning, trickery XX.12, XX.86.
- slidre** *adj.* slippery V.2.
- slo(o), slon** *v.* destroy, kill III.117, XI.14, XXI.94.
- slouþe** *n.* sloth, negligence XIII.13, XVI.42.
- slow** *adj.* XVI.44, XX.54.
- slow** *v. pt.* slew, destroyed, killed X.33, 180; **slowen** *pl.* XII.124.
- slyde** *v.* fall IX.82.
- slyder(e)** *adj.* precariously, uncertainly IV.7, XXIV.92.
- slyme** *n.* slime XXIV.137, 372.
- smal(le)** *adj.* small IX.93, XIV.26; **rote smal rot** away XXIV.375.
- smerte** *v.* smart XVI.21.
- smyt(e)** *v.* smite, cause affliction, destroy I.84, XVI.97.
- snapere** *v.* - at stumble over IV.90.
- snow** *n.* XV.69.
- so** *adv.* so, accordingly I.148, III.116.
- so liche** *adv.* likewise I.116.
- socour** *n.* protector XIII.45.
- sodeyn** *adj.* sudden, rash, unexpected V.54, VIII.101; **sodeynly** *adv.* suddenly XXIV.12, 67.
- soget** *adj.* subject I.20; *n.* IV.219, V.21; **sogettis** *pl.* XVI.7.
- so3t** *v. pt.* sought, attacked by, examined XXIV.358; *pt. ppl.* XXIV.23, 154.
- solace** *n.* XXIV.133.
- sold(e)** *pt. ppl.* I.156, XIII.28.
- solempne** *adj.* holy XI.1.
- solempnyte** *n.* celebration XXIII.25.
- solpeþ** *v.* 3*sg.* defiles XXIV.78.
- son** *adv.* soon XXIV.318.
- sonde** *n.* command IX.37.
- sondes** *n. pl.* sandy soil IV.132.
- sone** *adv.* soon IV.74, XI.109; **sonere** *comp.* III.37.
- sone** *n.* son V.12, XIV.41; **sones** *gen.* XIX.107.
- song(e)** *n.* XX.6, XXIV.396; **songes** *pl.* XXI.72; **synge in song** raise one's voice IV.82.
- sonne** *n.* sun XI.118.
- sooles** *n. pl.* souls XVI.8.
- sopere** *n.* supper XXIII.19, 34.

- sore** *adj.* sore XIX.73, XX.106; *adv.* sore(ly), dearly, grievously X.95, XII.114; *n.* sore IX.178; **sores** *pl.* VII.109.
- sorefulle** *n. pl.* the distressed XXI.71.
- sorw(e)** *n.* sorrow, contrition, repentance VI.36, XVI.115; **sorwe sad** deeply distressed VI.33.
- sorwefulle** *n. pl.* the sorrowful XXI.72; **sorwful** *adj.* XXIV.45.
- soþ** *adj.* fit, proper, true IV.224, VIII.50; **soþ**, **sothe** *n.* truth III.46, IV.104; **soþes** *adv.* truly XXIV.61.
- soþfast** *adj.* real, true XXIII.31, 111.
- soþnes** *n.* truth IV.157.
- sotyl(l)e** *adj.* strange, deceitful, vile VII.1, XIII.81, XXI.60; **sotly** *adv.* treacherously XIII.63.
- souerayn**, **souereyn** *n.* sovereign, lord, master II.43, IV.219; **souereyn** *adj.* XV.10; **souereyns** *pl.* XVI.7.
- sou3t** *pt. ppl.* sought, desired, examined XV.2, 47; **sou3t(e)** *pt.* IV.157, XX.26; **sou3test** *2sg.* XXIV.13, 385.
- soul(e)** *n.* soul, faculty I.39, XXIV.33; **soule(s)** *gen.* IX.181, XVI.110; **soules** *pl.* VII.44, IX.170.
- soule leche** *n.* healer of the soul X.52, XXI.22.
- soun** *n.* sounds, voice XX.162, XXIV.45.
- sounde** *adj.* sound IX.159.
- soure** *n.* sourness XVII.131.
- sowe** *v.* sow IV.61, 129.
- sowke** *v.* suck XX.150.
- sown(e)** *n.* sound, reputation XII.86, 110.
- sowned** *v. pt. wel* - well-sounding XXIII.23.
- space** *n.* time XII.149.
- spak** *v. pt.* spoke XI.27.
- spare** *v.* spare, show forgiveness VI.39, X.41; **sparest** *2sg.* XXIV.17.
- speche** *n.* speech, saying, words II.65, III.65.
- speciale** *adv.* personally IV.43; **in specyale** in particular III.49, XVIII.146; **specyalle** *adj.* special XXIII.17.
- spede** *v.* accomplish, advance, serve I.46, IV.175.
- speke(n)** *v.* speak III.3, XVIII.146; **spekest** *2sg.* II.66; **spekeþ** *3sg.* XVI.72, XVII.97; *pl.* XVIII.40.
- spende** *v.* spend, consume, waste X.198, 208; **spendest** *2sg.* X.109, XV.116; **spendid**, **spent** *pt. 2sg.* VII.84, IX.100; **spendyng mys(se)** misspend, spend wrongly I.31, VIII.7.
- spere** *n.* spear II.45, X.53.
- spettes** *v. 3sg* spits XX.72.
- spices** *n. pl.* visible forms XXIII.51, 52.
- spilde** *pt. ppl.* ruined XXI.59.
- spille** *v.* destroy, die, ruin, squander V.6, 62.
- spirit** *n.* spirit, desire XV.30, XVIII.157.
- spirituale** *n.* religious duty XVIII.150.
- spiritualte** *n.* spirituality, ecclesiastical authority XV.28, XVI.68.
- spirytuale** *adj.* divine X.129.
- spoken** *pt. ppl.* III.65, 90.
- sporne** *v.* stumble XI.86.
- spot** *n.* blemish VII.54.
- spotel** *n.* spittle XXIV.18.
- spottes** *n. pl.* stains XXI.106.
- spouse** *n.* XXII.24.
- spouse-breche** *n. pl.* adulterers X.103.
- sprad** *pt. ppl.* spread out XV.131.
- sprong** *v. pt.* went forth XII.122.
- spy(3)e** *v.* espy, detect VI.30, VII.54.
- spys** *n.* form XXIII.60.
- spyseþ** *v. 3sg.* puts to shame XXI.108.
- spytten** *pt. ppl.* engraved XXIV.297.
- squyers** *n.* squires III.69, XV.36.
- staat** *n.* high regard XVIII.34.
- stable** *adj.* securely XXI.67.
- stad** *pt. ppl.* separated XV.129.
- stakes** *n. pl.* pegs, posts XIV.99.
- stal** *v. pt.* stole VI.44.
- stalworþe** *adj.* powerful XV.122; *n.* XII.38.
- stalworþly** *adv.* resolutely VI.11.
- stande** *v.* stand, stay IV.194, XVII.171; **standes**, **stant** *3sg.* XV.64; **standes awe** is respectful XIV.90; **stant drede** is afraid of IV.140.
- stat(e)** *n.* (e)state, character, (spiritual) condition VII.115, XIV.10.
- stature** *n.* substance XXIII.91.
- statute** *n.* law IV.217.

- staunch** *v.* put an end to IV.17.
- sted(e)** *n.* stead, place III.11, X.48; **in litil** - of little consequence XXIII.119.
- stede** *n.* noble/war horse I.142, II.14.
- stedefast** *adj.* strong, unwavering XXIV.81.
- steke(n)** *v.* close, exclude, put III.1, XVII.87; **stekest** *2sg.* X.69.
- stel** *n.* steel XX.124.
- stele** *v.* steal (away), avoid, stalk IV.153, 214; **stelest** *2sg.* IV.190.
- steppe** *n.* step XXIV.394; **steppes, steppys** *pl.* XXIV.155, 239.
- stere** *v. imp.* start moving XV.108.
- stereth**, *v. 3sg.* steers I.65.
- sterne** *adj.* merciless XXI.139.
- sterue** *v.* die II.87.
- steryng** *n.* guide, guidance X(title).
- stille** *adj.* still IV.51.
- stille** *adv.* up to this time X.80.
- stoden** *v. pt. pl.* stood IV.7.
- stok** *n.* tree trunk XI.86.
- stoken** *pt. ppl.* stuck, locked (up) III.93, IV.14.
- stoles** *n. pl.* seats XVI.4.
- stomble(n)** *v.* stumble IV.89, IX.26.
- ston** *n.* (precious) stone, rock XI.86, XV.53; **stones** *pl.* IV.62, 131.
- stonde** *v.* stand II.47, XIII.58; **stondes, stondis** *3sg.* XII.77, XIII.6; **stondes** *pl.* V.37.
- stood** *v. pt.* XVIII.63.
- storble** *v.* take away IX.60.
- store** *v.* store, private possession, treasure III.67, IX.181.
- storne** *n.* storm II.30.
- stoute, stowte** *adj.* cruel, mighty XXI.73, 139.
- straunge** *adj.* unknown XVI.34.
- stray** *n.* IV.14; **out of** - astray IV.110.
- stre** *n.* straw II.26, IV.89; **stres** *pl.* III.118.
- strengere** *adj. comp.* - **be** prevail III.36.
- strengþ(e), strengthe** *n.* strength V.57, XI.52, XXIV.178; **strengþe** *v.* strengthen XIII.108.
- strete** *n.* street IX.166.
- stri3ed** *pt. ppl.* destroyed V.31; **stri3eþ** *sg.* overcome XXIII.32.
- strokes** *n. pl.* strokes, blows XI.188, 55.
- strong(e)** *adj.* X.146, XXIV.260.
- stroy(3)e** *v.* destroy, spoil, waste I.158, II.60; **stroyeþ** *pl.* XXI.122.
- stryf** *n.* strife, conflict, hostility IX.76, 107.
- strype** *v.* strip II.26.
- stryue** *v.* argue, fight, quarrel, rebel IX.13, 37; **stryuen** *pt. pl.* XI.36.
- stryues** *n. pl.* struggles XXIV.326.
- stubble** *n.* XXIV.142.
- stuffe** *v.* stuff, equip XIII.121; **stuffed** *pt. ppl.* III.67.
- styf** *adj.* mighty I.142; **styffere** *comp.* more unyielding XX.124.
- styke** *v.* be rooted XIV.100.
- style** *n.* stile III.127, IV.90; **styles** *pl.* XIV.99.
- style** *n.* formal title XIII.115.
- stille** *adj.* still X.6.
- stynk(e)** *n.* stink, stench XXIV.267, 369; **stynkyng(e)** *pres. ppl.* XX.88, XXIV.312.
- styred(e)** *pt. ppl.* removed, shaken XXIV.139, 333.
- suche** *adj. pron.* I.76, 100.
- suchon** *pron.* such a person XXIV.128.
- suffre** *v.* suffer, endure, tolerate VIII.91, 96; **suffreþ** *3sg.* XIV.81, 83; **suffred** *pt.* X.58, 60.
- suget** *adj.* subject; **be** - obey, be subject to I.102, XVII.165.
- sulpeþ** *v.* defile, pollute XXI.106; **sulpid** *pt. ppl.* XI.74.
- sum** *pron.* some IV.9, XI.105; **summe** *pl.* I.83, 84.
- summe** *n.* sum XIV.27.
- sum()***tyme* *adv.* in former days, once, sometime IV.121, 185.
- sumwhat** *pron.* some things, somewhat II.16, IX.177; *adv.* XX.63.
- sun(n)e** *n.* sun XI.76, XXIII.31.
- suppose** *v.* expect XXIII.83.
- suspende** *v.* put aside XVI.68.
- sussescioun** *n.* suspicion XVIII.88.
- sustenaunce, sustynaunce** *n.* necessities, foodstuffs III.156, XIV.39.
- swelle** *v.* swell VI.51.

- swerd(e)** *n.* sword I.84, XIII.120.
swere *v.* swear IV.219, VI.6.
swerue *v.* get II.82.
swete *v.* sweat IX.134, XIII.13.
swete, *adj.* agreeable, pleasing XVII.53, 90; *n.* sweetness, blissful state XVII.131, XXIV.147; **swetnes** XVII.66.
swolwe *v.* swallow XXIV.18.
sword *n.* XIII.159.
sworn *pt. ppl.* sworn, taken III.137, VIII.12.
swyn *n.* swine X.201.
swynke *v.* labour IX.134, XV.117.
sybbe *n.* kindred XVII.77.
syde, *n.* side XI.43, 44; **sydes** *pl.* XV.44; **by** - on the side IX.84; **on eche a** - consequently III.116; **put o** - deprive XX.130.
sy3e *v. pass* XXIV.51.
sy3t *n.* eyes, sight, vision IV.153, XI.21; **in** - clearly, fully XIV.71, XIX.101.
syk(e) *adj.* ill, sick XV.126, XVIII.173; *n. pl.* VI.39, IX.125.
sykenes(se), **syknes** *n.* sickness V.52, X.76, XX.211.
syker(e) *adj.* sure V.51, XI.95.
sykernes(se) *n.* security V.55, XVIII.160; **in** - confidently, secure IV.71, VIII.34.
sylence *n.* silence XVIII.129, 145.
syluer *n.* silver XVII.65.
symonye *n.* simony XIV.81, 92.
symple *adj.* lowly, simple XII.104, XIV.25.
synewes *n. pl.* sinews XXIV.90.
synful *adj.* sinful IX.172, XXIV.343; *n.* XXIV.337.
synge *v.* raise one's voice, sing IV.41, 82; **synges** *3sg.* XXIII.55.
synguler(e) *adj.* personal, selfish I.4, V.28.
syngulerte *n.* personal gain XIII.81.
synne *n.* (state of) sin I.42, III.164; *pl.* XXIV.103; **synnes** *pl.* IV.235, VIII.99.
synne *v.* sin I.129, IX.18; **synnen** *pl.* VIII.47; **synned** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.103.
synnyng *ger.* sinning XXIV.275.
syre *n.* sir II.17.
syse *n. in euene* - in an impartial manner I.61; **in** - in the normal way XV.75; **out of** - in size XXIV.285.
system *n. pl.* sisters XXIV.270.
syt(e) *v.* function, reside, sit V.15, XXIV.291.
sytes *n. pl.* times IX.89.
table *n.* XXI.71, XXIII.19.
tacche *n. in* - at the nipple XX.150.
tak(e) *v.* take I.78, IV.25; **take** *pt. ppl.* XX.19; **takest** *2sg.* XXIII.45, XXIV.27; **takeþ** *3sg.* I.145, VIII.17; **taken** *pl.* I.86, 122.
tale *n.* account I.154, IV.240.
tale tellere *n.* talebearer III.17.
talking *n.* discussion, conversation II.6.
tame *adj.* subdued, tame XX.98, XXI.23; **tamed** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.109.
tan *v.* agree, make, profess VIII.83; *pt. ppl.* IX.81, XXIV.227.
tapetis *n. pl.* carpets XIII.134.
tary *v.* keep away, tarry XVII.170, XX.131.
tauerne *n.* tavern VI.19.
tau3t *pt. ppl.* taught XXIII.36; **tau3t(e)** *pt.* VIII.21, IX.186.
teche *v.* demonstrate, teach VI.25, VIII.20; *3sg.* IV.59.
teeth, **teep** *n. pl.* I.85, IV.13.
telle *v.* tell, boast about, give, speak of I.137, III.46; **tellen** *pl.* XVI.38; **telles**, **telleþ** *3sg.* IV.204, XX.91.
telyeþ *v.* works VII.61.
temperal(e) *adj.* worldly X.135, XVIII.152.
temperalte *n.* secular authority, worldly goods/matters VIII.60, XVI.67.
temptest *v. 2sg.* provoke X.106.
temptacion *n.* temptation XIX.62, XXII.30; **temptacions** *pl.* XVIII.27, 125.
ten *num.* I.11, XXII.65.
tenauntes *n. gen. pl.* tenants' XIII.43.
tendere *adv.* gently XX.123.
tent *n.* heed XII.13.
teres *n. pl.* tears X.94.
terme *n.* terms, times XXIV.88, 199.
teth *n. pl.* teeth XXIV.286.
tey3e *v.* tie IV.113.

- than, þan** *conj.* I.147, III.55; *adv.* then I.64, III.120.
thank *n.* II(title), 7; **thank, þanke** *v.* IX.147, XIX.66.
thanne, þanne *adv.* then IX.76, XX.81.
thar *v.* must, need I.80, III.108.
that *pron.* I.1, 22; what IX.114, XIV.59; he who XIV.75, XXI.13; those who XVIII.15, XXIV.64.
þat *pron.* I.40, 57.
þat *conj.* that III.75, XV.86.
thay *pron.* they I.85, XXIV.410; **þay** XV.59, XXIV.407.
the, þe *def. art.* I.11, III.47.
the *pron.* you I.115, IV.32.
the *pron. pl.* those VI.25.
the, þe *adv.* I.107, III.37.
thede, þede *n.* nation, a whole people I.158, XIII.22.
þeder(e) *adv.* there IV.2, XIII.5.
thee *v.* prosper XVI.85.
thef, þef *n.* thief IV.9, X.71.
theft, þefte *n.* XIII.81, XXI.60.
þei *pron.* they III.30.
þen *conj.* XXIV.272; **þen(ne)** *adv.* VI.72, XXII.59.
þenk(e), thenke *v.* think I.82, VII.48, IX.29; **þenkes, thenkes, thenkeþ, þenkeþ** *3sg.* II.61, 81, IX.78, XXIV.133.
þens *adv.* away, thence IV.92, XX.160.
ther, ere *adv.* there, where II.61, 72; **there** about that I.82 ; **there as, þere as** I.67, III.109.
therefore, þerfore *adv.* for/over it, therefore, thus I.90, IX.180.
þerof *adv.* for/of it, thereof VI.63, XXIV.4.
þerout *adv.* out in the open VI.38.
þertille *adv.* to it XX.44.
þerto *adv.* thereto, to it IX.35, XII.6.
þer vpon *adv.* with respect to that IV.218.
therwith, þerwiþ *adv.* therewith II.46, XX.198.
theryn, þeryn(nne), þer ynne *adv.* therein I.107, VII.36, X.80, XIX.66.
thes, þes *pron.* this I.119, XII.4; **þes, these** these I.26, XXIV.305; **þes(e)** that XV.8, XXIII.126.
þesternesse *n.* darkness XXIV.327.
theues *n. pl.* thieves I.122, X.103.
they, þey *pron.* I.20, III.30.
þi *pron.* your IV.25, X.159.
thies *n. pl.* thighs XV.49.
þirled *v. pt.* pierced X.32.
þirst *n.* thirst XXI.63.
this, þis(se) *pron.* I.123, X.156, XX.109.
tho, þo *pron.* those I.151, IV.87.
tho *adv.* then VI.45.
þo3 *conj.* just because XXIV.39.
þo3t *n.* desire, intention, thought XXIV.21, 321; *pl.* XXIV.156.
thonder *n.* thunder X.187.
thong *n.* XVI.22.
thonk(e), þonk *n.* thank II.15, 45, XVI.76; **þonke** *v.* XIII.16.
thoo, þoo *pron.* them, they XXII.14, XXIV.364.
thorn *n.* XX.115; **thornes** *pl.* IV.62, 131.
thou, þou *pron.* I.115, IV.28.
thou3, þou3 *conj.* though II.26, IV.57; **þou3** if XII.103, XV.79.
þou3t *v. pt. 2sg.* thought VI.14; **þou3te** *pl.* X.29, XI.21.
þou3t *n.* thought IV.38, 92; **þou3tes, þou3tis** *pl.* IV.117, XVIII.93.
þousandes, þousandis *n. pl.* thousands XVII.179, XVII.180.
thow, þow *pron.* you IV.28, VIII.81.
thow *conj.* though I.20.
þowsand *num.* thousand XXIII.90; **þowsande** *n.* XXIII.63.
þral *n.* slave XX.171.
þraldom *n.* slavery IX.28, XVIII.19.
þralle *n.* slave VIII.91.
þrawe *v.* cause IX.108.
thre, þre *num.* three V.13, IX.20.
threp *n.* contention XIV.78.
þret(e), threte *v.* threaten III.58, VII.94, XVI.27.
thretyng *n.* threats X.140.
thridde, þridde *num.* third III.41, XVI.116.
thrift *n.* savings XXI.58.

- thro** *n.* wrangling XIV.78.
þrong *n.* throng X.144; **in** - together VI.9.
þryue *v.* prosper IV.146, VI.70.
þurgh, **þurgh** *prep.* through I.103, VIII.44.
þurgh shoue *pt. ppl.* thrust through XVII.189.
þurgh sou3t *pt. ppl.* closely examined IV.225.
þurst *n.* thirst XV.68.
þursten *v. pl.* thirst XXI.50.
þursty, *n. pl.* thirsty IX.123.
thus, **þus** *adv.* I.49, VI.8.
thy, **þy** *pron.* your I.31, IV.27; **þyn**, **þyn(e)** I.37, IV.37, V.51.
þyng, **þyng** *n.* (worldly) thing, physical characteristic/ attribute I.33, XII.81; **þynges**, **þyngis** *pl.* III.146, XXIII.49.
þynk(e), **þynke** *v.* consider, seem think of XXIII.10, XXIV.40, 104.
þys *pron.* it XXIII.3; these XV.39.
þy self, **þy self**, **þy selue(n)**, **þy selue(n)** *pron.* yourself I.8, 9, II.85, VI.40, VII.8.
þysse *pron.* this XXIV.269.
þysterne *n.* darkness XXIV.370.
til *conj.* till III.102, VI.47; **tille** *prep.* to XIX.62.
tixt *n.* text XX.1.
to *prep.* I.5, XXIV.393; *adv.* too I.82, XXII.29.
to(o) *n.* toe XIV.46, XV.137; **toes**, **to(o)n** *pl.* XI.102, XV.65, 74.
to broken *pt. ppl.* broken to pieces XII.50.
to day *adv.* today IV.198, X.122.
to gedere, **to gyder**, **to gydre** *adv.* together II.59, XI.35, XXIV.90.
tok(e) *v. pt.* took, assumed, became, made prisoner II.6, XIX.8.
tokene *n.* token XXIII.48, 94.
tokenynges *pres. ppl. pl.* tokens XXIII.51.
told(e) *pt. ppl.* told, spoken I.154, XXIII.26; **tolde** *pt.* IV.220.
toles *n. pl.* tools XVI.2.
tombe *n.* tomb VII.30.
to morwe *adv.* tomorrow IV.198, IX.25.
tong(e) *n.* tongue XIII.100, XVII.91.
tonsure *n.* XVIII.161.
tormente *v.* torment XXIV.102.
torne *v.* turn XXIV.325.
touche *n.* touch XXIV.411.
toun, **town(e)** *n.* town III.34 XII.118, XIV.34; **townes** *pl.* II.70, XII.19.
toure *n.* tower XVII.129; **toures** *pl.* XIII.49.
tow *adj.* strong X.35.
towche *n.* physical contact, touch XVIII.88; **towches** *pl.* XVIII.89, 93.
towched *pt. ppl.* touched XXIV.290.
tras *n.* footsteps XXIV.70.
trauayle *n.* labour II.38, XVIII.29; travels II.23; *v.* work XV.67.
trauaylyng *pres. ppl.* working II.9; travelling II.29.
tre *n.* tree X.21, XV.60; **rode** - cross XVII.116, XIX.18.
trede *v.* come forward, tread, undertake I.134, XIII.134; **tredeþ** *3sg.* XX.80.
treso(u)n *n.* treason XII.69, 94; **contryue tresons** treasonably conspire XIV.61.
tresory *n.* treasury III.66; **tresorye** *pl.* VII.19.
tresour(e) *n.* fortune, treasure V.9, XII.140.
trespace *n.* criminal conduct, trespass XII.63; **trespas** *pl.* IX.45, X.95.
trespas(e) *v.* do wrong, trespass XII.51, XVII.117.
trespasour *n.* malefactor II.63.
trest(e) *v.* trust IV.226, XIV.47.
trete *n.* treaty, negotiations XIII.124, 155; *v.* treat, be about, settle III.120, 152; **treteþ** *pl.* XI.45; **treteþ** *pt. ppl.* IX.17.
treuth *n.* truth I.78, III.title.
trewe *n.* truce IX.17; *n. pl.* the faithful XXI.122; *adj.* true, diligent, loyal II.38, 40; *adv.* XI.114, XXI.10; **trewere** *adj. comp.* XVII.132; **trewest** *sup.* XXII.23
trewe loue *n.* true love XVII.127, 169.
trewes *n.* truce IX.20.
tri3e *v.* separate VII.14.
triste *v.* trust XVI.17.
trouþe, **trouhte** *n.* truth, loyalty III.2, 4; **trouþe** *gen.* IV.117, XIII.30; **trouþes** *gen.* IV.113, XIII.100.

- trowe** *v.* believe, fear, trust II.86, IV.60, VII.76;
trowest *2sg.* XXIV.229; **trowed** *pt. ppl.* XVI.25.
- trussen** *v.* shrink XII.140.
- truste** *v.* trust VII.113, XVI.51.
- trusty** *adj.* IV.60.
- try** *v.* lead XXIV.191; **tryed** *pt. ppl.* separated XII.69; **try3e** sift III.47.
- Trynyte** *n.* Trinity XIII.36.
- tryp** *n.* journey I.134.
- tunge** *n.* tongue IV.113.
- turment** *n.* torment XX.90, XXIV.134.
- turmentest** *v. 2sg.* torment XIX.41; **turmentynge** *pt. ppl.* XXIV.264.
- turne** *v.* turn, disrupt revert IX.35, X.133;
turnest *2sg.* XX.168, 170; **turnep** *sg.* X.128;
turned, turnyd *pt. ppl.* IV.122, XXIV.265.
- twelfe, twelue** *num.* twelve I.11, XXIII.21.
- twenty** *num.* XXIII.84.
- twey, two** *num.* two I.90, XXIV.303.
- twyggis** *n. pl.* twigs XII.119.
- twy3e** *adv.* twice VII.94.
- twyn** *v.* escape XXIV.95.
- twynkelynge** *n.* twinkling XXIV.412.
- twynne(n)** *v.* distinguish, divide, separate IV.70, XVII.168; **(de)parte o** - VII.111, XVII.85.
- tyde** *n.* (canonical) time XXIII.11.
- tydynges** *n. pl.* gossip XVIII.107.
- ty3ed** *pt. ppl.* tied XIII.100.
- tyl(le)** *conj.* till, before IV.205, VII.50.
- tylyers** *n. pl.* tillers XV.62.
- tyme** *n.* time II.84, IV.226; **tymes** *pl.* IV.224, IX.50.
- tyraunt** *n.* tyrant, cruel person VIII.93; **tyrauntes** *gen.* XIV.91; *pl.* I.91, XXI.139.
- tyrauntrie, tyrauntrye** *n.* intimidation, oppression I.3, X.110; **in** - outrageously XIV.62.
- type** *n.* tithes VIII.20.
- vanyte** *n.* frivolous pursuit, vanity XVIII.13, 102.
- vaunsement** *n.* advancement XVII.21.
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- vnderstond** *v.* understand XXI.26; **vnderstondes** *3sg.* IV.85, 133.
- vndertake** *v.* take on XVI.31.
- vneuene** *adv.* insecurely VIII.49.
- vnhende** *adj.* unkind IV.27.
- vnkonnyng** *adj.* ignorant XIII.37.
- vnkynde(ly)** *adj.* cruel, indifferent, scandalous X.11, XIV.83.
- vnloken** *pt. ppl.* arrived, set free XI.2, XII.53.
- vnnepe** *adv.* hardly IV.128.
- vnstable** *adj.* unstable XIII.32.
- vntyne** *adv.* soon XIII.13.
- vnwetand** *adv.* without anyone's knowledge IV.213.
- vnwro3t** *adj.* uncreated XXIV.319.
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vsurye *n.* usury XIV.83, 92.
vtteremore *adv.* in the outer regions XIII.107.
vyage *n.* expedition XIII.119.
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vyne *n.* vine X.49.
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wa3tes *n.* weights IX.51.
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SAMENVATTING

Where of is mad al mankynde is een nieuwe editie van vierentwintig laat-middeleeuwse anonieme gedichten. Zij maken deel uit van het handschrift Digy 102 dat wordt bewaard in de Bodleian Library van de Universiteit van Oxford. Een eerdere editie, van de hand van J. Kail, verscheen in 1904 onder no. 124 (Old Series) van de Early English Text Society. Zoals aangegeven in de Inleiding (hoofdstuk 1) verschilt de aanpak in de nieuwe editie in twee belangrijke opzichten van die van Kail. De in die tijd gebruikelijke diplomatische teksttranscriptie van Kail heeft plaats gemaakt voor een moderne kritische teksteditie, met marginale glossen en voetnoten, alsmede toelichtende aantekeningen in eindnoten, terwijl elk gedicht wordt voorafgegaan door een korte samenvatting. In de tweede plaats verschaft de nieuwe editie in de inleidende hoofdstukken een breder inzicht in de taalkundige aspecten en culturele achtergronden van de tekst dan Kail, die zich grotendeels beperkt tot een historische verantwoording van de datering van de Poems. De Inleiding bevat tevens een beknopt analytisch-bibliografisch overzicht van sinds de dertiger jaren verschenen edities van enkele afzonderlijke gedichten, en van een aantal fragmenten in bloemlezingen en thematische studies.

Hoofdstuk 2 geeft een codicologische en taalkundige analyse van het manuscript. Paragraaf 2.1 beschrijft het handschrift waarin de gedichten zijn overgeleverd. Het betreft een verzamelhandschrift, met daarin, behalve een unieke tekst van de vierentwintig gedichten (de Poems), een incomplete tekst van de C-versie van Langland's *Piers Plowman*, een berijmde parafrase door Richard Maidstone van de zeven boetspsalmen, en tenslotte een Dialoog tussen het Lichaam en de Ziel, een anoniem rijmdicht. Een analyse van de wijze waarop het handschrift tot stand is gekomen maakt het aannemelijk dat er sprake is van twee zgn. productie-eenheden, één met de *Piers Plowman*-tekst en één met de drie overige teksten. Deze productie-eenheden werden in een latere fase samengevoegd tot een gebruikseenheid. De codex kwam in 1632 in het bezit van Sir Kenelm Digby, die het manuscript in 1634 doneerde aan de Bodleian Library. Alle vier gedichten in Digby 102 zijn in cursief schrift doorlopend als proza geschreven.

Een analyse van het schrift van de Poems in paragraaf 2.2 toont een Anglicana boekletter met invloeden van het Secretary-schrift, typisch voor het begin van de vijftiende eeuw. Tevens beschrijft deze paragraaf de opmaak (regel- en stanza-indicaties, invoeging van titels, uitvoering en versiering van de initialen, rubricatie, enz.).

Paragraaf 2.3 behandelt de datering van de Poems. Naar alle waarschijnlijkheid zijn ze vanaf 1401 successievelijk over een periode van zo'n vijftieng jaar tot stand gekomen, met een frequentie van ruwweg één gedicht per jaar. Kail beargumenteerde deze datering uitvoerig in zijn editie van 1904. Na grondige verifiëring komt de huidige editie tot dezelfde conclusie. Een aantal van de Poems bevatten passages die lijken te verwijzen naar passages in de parlementaire Handelingen van de betreffende periode, en naar enkele andere dateerbare politieke en kerkelijke gebeurtenissen. Een vergelijkende tabel in een bijgevoegd appendix laat zien dat de volgorde en intervallen van de verspreide passages in de Poems grotendeels parallel lopen met die van de dateerbare gebeurtenissen.

Paragraaf 2.4 geeft een uitvoerige analyse van het dialect waarin de Poems in Digby 102 zijn overgeleverd. Het dialectgebied werd benaderd zowel langs paleografische als linguïstische weg. De paleografische analyse is gebaseerd op een vergelijking van het schrift van de Poems met dat van *Piers Plowman*, een tekst die de *Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English (LALME)* al had vastgesteld als afkomstig van de Malvern Hills (zuid-west Worcestershire). De vergelijking wees uit dat de tekst van de Poems en die van *Piers Plowman* naar alle waarschijnlijkheid door een en dezelfde kopiist zijn afgeschreven, wat leidt tot de conclusie dat ook het schrift van de Poems-tekst afkomstig is van de Malvern Hills. Ter meerdere zekerheid werd vervolgens een linguïstisch analyse uitgevoerd. Met behulp van dialectprofielen en locatiekaarten van significante woordvormen in *LALME* kon aan de hand van een variant op een bestaande localiseringstechniek bevestiging van de paleografische conclusie worden verkregen.

Paragraaf 2.5 bevat een verantwoording van de redactionele spelregels. Het uitgangspunt is dat de onderhavige editie een 'maatschappelijk document' wil zijn, dat wil zeggen, een document dat 'opnieuw een venster opent op het maatschappelijke landschap van het laat-middeleeuwse Engeland, gezien door de ogen van een ontwikkelde, hartstochtelijk geïnteresseerde, eigentijdse beschouwer.' De uit deze opvatting voortvloeiende redactionele spelregels zelf sluiten deze sectie af.

Hoofdstuk 3, waarin de literaire en culturele achtergronden van de Poems worden behandeld, wordt ingeleid met een profielschets van de anonieme auteur. Paragraaf 3.1 gaat in op de identiteit van de auteur. Dat er sprake is van één auteur, in plaats van meerdere, wordt aangetoond aan de hand van de consistente stijl en van enkele door alle gedichten heen terugkerende thema's. Vervolgens vindt verificatie plaats van Kail's conclusie dat de dichter waarschijnlijk een prior of abt was en zitting had in de Commons. De parlementaire vertegenwoordigingen waarbinnen de dichter gezocht zou kunnen worden, zowel in de Commons als bij de Lords, worden successievelijk overwogen en ter zijde gesteld. Indicaties in de Poems zelf, alsmede een aantal externe factoren, voeren tot de alternatieve profielschets van een Benedictijner monnik, die zijn thuisbasis had in het Benedictijner klooster van de Westminster Abbey en als kanselarij-schrijver werkzaam was in het aanpalende koninklijke paleis. Aannemelijk wordt

gemaakt dat de kloosterbelofte van plaatsgebondenheid (*stabilitas loci*) geen beletsel vormde voor deze bezigheid, mede gezien de exceptionele omstandigheden, te weten de sterk gesecculariseerde relaties tussen de Abbey en het paleis met zijn bestuurlijke apparaat, de nauwe banden die de machtige, wereldlijke kloosterabt onderhield met de koning, en het gegeven dat Abbey en paleis afwisselend als vergaderplaats dienden van de Commons.

Paragraaf 3.2 beoogt een beeld te vormen van de geïntendeerde lezerskring van de Poems. Deze lijkt voor wat betreft de eerste zeventien gedichten een geheel andere dan die van de laatste zeven. Er is een aanwijsbare, en bij benadering dateerbare cesuur naar toon en inhoud tussen de eerste en de tweede groep gedichten. Tegelijkertijd met deze cesuur vond een ommekeer plaats binnen de Benedictijner orde, na een dwingende koninklijke oproep om zich tot een minder wereldlijke levenswandel te bekeren, met als mogelijk gevolg het einde van het kanselarijwerk van de auteur. Betoogd wordt dat er onder zijn lezers een soortgelijke cesuur valt te onderkennen: een aanvankelijke kring van lezers in en rond de koninklijke kanselarij, de veronderstelde werkomgeving van de auteur, een tweede onder de medebroeders binnen de muren van het Benedictijner klooster.

Paragraaf 3.3 behandelt de stijl van de Poems. Deze laat enerzijds een technisch competente dichter zien, anderzijds een auteur met beperkte dichtertelijke kwaliteiten. Metriek, alliteratie, rijmschema's en enjambement hebben voor hem geen geheimen, maar hij toont zich beperkt in zijn mogelijkheden op het punt van dichtertelijke beeldspraak, die zich vrijwel uitsluitend beperkt tot algemeen gangbare vergelijkingen en metaforen. Ook spreekwoorden en vaste uitdrukkingen zijn in overvloed aanwezig.

Paragraaf 3.4 onderzoekt de politieke, sociale en morele denkwereld van de auteur voor zover die zich laat kennen uit de Poems, tegen de achtergrond van de Engelse samenleving in het eerste kwart van de vijftiende eeuw. Deze thema's doen zich in de Poems gefragmenteerd voor, gezien hun occasionele karakter en spreiding over een periode van jaren. Omgekeerd komen de Poems daarom ook gefragmenteerd aan de orde in thematische literaire studies. In paragraaf 3.4.1 krijgen deze afzonderlijke politieke, sociale en morele thema's hun plaats in het totaal kader van de laat-middeleeuwse Engelse standenmaatschappij en de daarin participerende burger. Aan de hand van passages in de Poems wordt een beeld geschetst van de samenleving zoals die er idealiter zou moeten uitzien naar de ordening van God: de onveranderlijk gegeven traditionele geledingen van adel, geestelijkheid en derde stand, verenigd onder een koning die God's wetten met wijs beleid en krachtige hand uitvoert tot heil van de natie. Vervolgens wordt het tegenbeeld opgeroepen van de verre van volmaakte realiteit, zoals overduidelijk blijkt uit veel van de Poems: misstanden binnen elke maatschappelijke geleding, alsmede onderlinge wrijving en ronduit strijd tussen de geledingen, en met de koning. Speciale aandacht krijgt de botsing tussen de kerk en Wyclif. Diens kritiek op misstanden binnen de kerk, en zijn afwijkende opvattingen over een aantal kerkelijke dogma's, met name betreffende het leerstuk over het wezen van de Eucharistie,

vonden gehoor bij veel volgelingen, de Lollards. Leer en aanhang werden als destabiliserende elementen in de samenleving door kerk en overheid krachtig bestreden. De dichter blijkt weliswaar veel van de kritiek op de kerkelijke misstanden te delen, maar onderschrijft nadrukkelijk de kerkelijke dogma's.

In paragraaf 3.4.2 komen de observaties van de dichter over de falende mens aan de orde, zowel in zijn relatie tot de hem omringende samenleving als in zijn relatie tot God. De erfzonde belet de mens te leven naar het eerste Gebod: heb God lief boven alles. De falende mens leeft dan ook steeds in angst voor de dood en de verschrikkingen van de hel, in de Poems een geregeld terugkerend schrikbeeld. Ook ten aanzien van het tweede Gebod: heb uw naaste lief als uzelf, schiet de mens schromelijk tekort. Met zijn moreel verwerpelijke gedrag benadeelt hij de samenleving. Voortdurend trekt de dichter daarom fel van leer tegen de corruptie, hebzucht en trouweloosheid van vleiers en valse raadgevers. Daarnaast roept hij ook nadrukkelijk op tot inkeer, boete en verzoening met God, langs de weg van biecht en Eucharistie. Als verklaard moralist laat hij daarbij echter nooit na er op te wijzen dat het geloof niet zonder de werken kan. De mens is rentmeester van God's schepping en wordt beloond met eeuwige zaligheid of gestraft met eeuwige hellepijn, al naar gelang zijn daden. De mens beschikt tenslotte over een vrije wil om te kiezen voor goed of voor kwaad.

Paragraaf 3.4.2 wordt afgerond met een beschrijving van de laatste zeven gedichten als de zoektocht van de dichter naar God. Van de eerste zeventien gedichten zijn toon en inhoud die van de gelovige moralist, altijd met één oog gericht op de actualiteit. De laatste zeven zijn die van de gelovige zoeker naar gemeenschap met God. Deze omslag wordt verklaard in paragraaf 3.2, als hierboven beschreven. In zijn laatste gedichten bekommert de schrijver zich niet meer over 's mensen gedragingen in de hem omringende wereld, maar om de mens in zijn relatie tot God. Hoe redt de mens zijn eeuwige ziel in de strijd tegen het kwaad? De dichter reikt daarvoor de middelen aan. De mens wordt zalig door zich over te geven aan Gods liefde voor, en bemoeienis met de mens, door Christus' leefregels in de Bergrede na te leven, door de regels van de eigen kloosterorde na te leven, en, met de woorden van Job, door schuld te belijden als reiniging van zijn zonden. Met deze instelling vindt hij middels de Eucharistie zijn weg naar God. Met wat de orthodoxe, leerstellige dichter schrijft over de Eucharistie heeft hij zich mogelijk (ook) willen afzetten tegen de totaal afwijkende opvattingen van Wyclif over dit sacrament.

Tot slot een enkel woord over het beoogde doel van deze editie en de daartoe aangewende middelen. De reikwijdte van het analytische commentaar, de tekstbehandeling, de samenvattende inleiding bij elk gedicht, de verklarende marginale glossen en noten, en de uitputtende woordenlijst, zijn ieder voor zich consequent toegesneden op het doel: voor zowel gespecialiseerde anglisten als de bredere kring van geïnteresseerde mediëvisten een breed toegankelijk beeld te schetsen van het maatschappelijke, sociale, en religieuze denken in het Engeland van de late middeleeuwen, zoals het zich laat kennen in de gedichten van een goed geïnformeerde en breed geïnteresseerde, eigentijdse waarnemer.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Louis Johan Philip Verheij

Geboren 13 november 1931 te Pernis, thans gemeente Rotterdam.

Met het diploma Mulo-A op zak (1948) begon ik in hetzelfde jaar als jongste bediende aan mijn maatschappelijke loopbaan. Deze verliep grillig: via enkele administratieve functies (1948-1961), onderbroken door een half jaar als corrector bij de NRC (1955), volgde een marketingfunctie bij Lego (1961-1965). Vervolgens werkte ik als bedrijfs-economisch vertaler Engels bij Philips (1965-1970), en leraar Engels aan een HEAO in Groningen (1970-1973). Mijn laatste werkgever was Robeco, waar ik van 1973 tot 1990 werkte als marketing manager voor de landen waarmee de communicatie werd verondersteld in het Engels plaats te vinden, in de praktijk Engeland, Noord-Amerika, het Verre Oosten en Australië. In 1990 werd ik benoemd als Groeps- en directiesecretaris en assistent-to van de bestuursvoorzitter. In die functies, met een tussentijdse benoeming als onderdirecteur in 1991, ging ik in 1996 met pensioen. Ik bleef daarna bij Robeco betrokken als oprichter/secretaris/voorzitter van de Vereniging van Gepensioneerden van de Robeco Groep.

Mijn opleiding verliep na de Mulo uitsluitend in de avonduren. Ik legde een praktische basis met het praktijkdiploma boekhouden (1950). Daarna volgden Gymnasium α (staatsexamen 1957), onderbroken door twee jaar militaire dienst (1952-1954), daarna Engels MO-A (1961) en Engels MO-C (1967). De MO-B opleiding heb ik niet kunnen voltooien. In mijn drie HEAO-jaren achtte ik het nodig om het vak Engels grondig om te bouwen tot een echt HEAO-curriculum, terwijl ik bij Robeco al direct betrokken raakte bij de initiëring en opbouw van de afdeling marketing, een destijds voor Robeco totaal nieuwe discipline. In beide gevallen bleef er onvoldoende tijd en energie beschikbaar voor gedegen studie. Na mijn pensionering eind 1996 slaagde ik in 2000 aan de Universiteit Leiden *cum laude* voor het doctoraal examen Engelse taal- en letterkunde.