

**Waymarks in the Mind:**

**Finding the Kingdom in Lancelot's Vulgate Quotations and Bible Contexts**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD at Cardiff University**

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## Summary

Scholars recognise the importance of the Vulgate quotations in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, but few have investigated the relevance of the original biblical *context* from which these quotations are taken: discussion of the Vulgate contexts has been very limited even though the Bible contexts reflect *Piers*' vernacular text. Research for this thesis, examining the context of every Bible quotation and its associated materials, revealed a series of themes: 'Truth' was a major instance, but 'Baptism' and 'Ordination' were also of significant account. The thesis is divided into two parts because the Vulgate contexts demonstrate considerable pertinence both to the poem's structure and interpretation. Part one covers structure: chapter one surveys the history of *Piers* criticism on the Bible; chapter two, Langland's Bible use. Chapter three covers how Langland considers 'Truth' contextually through sequential quotations in the first quarter of *Piers*. Part two deals with interpretation, and examines how Langland employs Bible frames of reference to explore two Sacraments: Baptism (chapter four), waymarks for Baptism (chapter five) and Ordination (chapter six).

Without knowledge of the biblical contexts, the subtlety of the poem and its inherent polemic recedes. This thesis argues that the *contexts* of the biblical quotations are of substantial consequence to a re-alignment of *Piers* study. Perhaps of greater significance than the Bible quotation itself, the *whole* biblical experience forms the poem. Langland's knowledge of the Bible was immense and trustworthy: it gives *Piers* voice. Langland assumes a wide and detailed biblical knowledge from his audience: as with the use of *etcetera* after the Bible quotations, the mind is triggered by numerous waymarks such as 'Marc menep in þe Gospel' which work to guide and reassure, to confirm the pathway towards the Kingdom of God. Medieval Christian life and Langland's use of Bible contexts are fundamental to this thesis' argument.

For Pat



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## Abbreviations

Biblical abbreviations are taken from: F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg, *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 12-14.

Except where stated otherwise, all biblical references in this thesis are to the Vulgate and its English translation in the Douai-Rheims version. The abbreviations used for the names of biblical books are listed below with their full names as printed in the Douai-Rheims translation, the Authorised Version (where this is different) and, in parentheses, the Latin of the Vulgate.

Act	The Acts of the Apostles ( <i>Actus Apostolorum</i> )
Apc	The Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle / Revelation ( <i>Apocalypsis Iohannis</i> )
Col	The Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians ( <i>Epistula Pauli ad Colossenses</i> )
I Cor	The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians ( <i>Epistula I Pauli ad Corinthios</i> )
II Cor	The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians ( <i>Epistula II Pauli ad Corinthios</i> )
Dn	The Prophecy of Daniel ( <i>Danihel propheta</i> )
Dt	The Book of Deuteronomy ( <i>Liber Deuteronomii</i> )
Ecl	Ecclesiastes ( <i>Liber Ecclesiastes</i> )
Eph	The Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians ( <i>Epistula Pauli ad Ephesios</i> )
Ex	The Book of Exodus ( <i>Liber Exodi</i> )
Ez	The Prophecy of Ezechiel / Ezekiel ( <i>Hiezechiel propheta</i> )
Gal	The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians ( <i>Epistula Pauli ad Galatas</i> )
Gn	The Book of Genesis ( <i>Liber Genesis</i> )
Hbr	The Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews ( <i>Epistula Pauli ad Hebraeos</i> )
Iac	The Catholic Epistle of St. James the Apostle ( <i>Epistula Iacobi</i> )
Idc	The Book of Judges ( <i>Liber Iudicum</i> )
Ier	The Prophecy of Jeremias / Jeremiah ( <i>Hieremias propheta</i> )
Io	The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. John ( <i>Evangelium secundum Iohannem</i> )
I Io	The First Epistle of St. John the Apostle ( <i>Epistula I Iohannis</i> )
III Io	3 John ( <i>Epistula III Iohannis</i> )
Iob	The Book of Job ( <i>Liber Iob</i> )
Ios	The Book of Josue / Joshua ( <i>Liber Iosue</i> )
Is	The Prophecy of Isaias / Isaiah ( <i>Isaias propheta</i> )
Lam	The Lamentations of Jeremias / Jeremiah ( <i>Lamentationes</i> ) ( <i>Threni</i> )
Lc	The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. Luke ( <i>Evangelium secundum Lucam</i> )
Lv	The Book of Leviticus ( <i>Liber Levitici</i> )
Mal	The Prophecy of Malachias / Malachi ( <i>Malachi propheta</i> )

Mc	The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. Mark ( <i>Evangelium secundum Marcum</i> )
Mi	The Prophecy of Micheas / Micah ( <i>Micha propheta</i> )
Mt	The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew ( <i>Evangelium secundum Mattheum</i> )
Os	The Prophecy of Osee / Hosea ( <i>Osee propheta</i> )
II Par	The Second Book of Paralipomenon / II Chronicles ( <i>Liber II Paralipomenon</i> )
Phil	The Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians ( <i>Epistula Pauli ad Philippenses</i> )
Prv	The Book of Proverbs ( <i>Liber Proverbiorum</i> )
Ps	The Book of Psalms ( <i>Liber Psalmorum</i> )
I Pt	The First Epistle of St. Peter the Apostle ( <i>Epistula I Petri</i> )
II Pt	The Second Epistle of St. Peter the Apostle ( <i>Epistula II Petri</i> )
I Rg	The First Book of Samuel (otherwise called the First Book of Kings) ( <i>Liber I Regum</i> ) / I Samuel ( <i>Liber I Samuhelis</i> )
Rm	The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans ( <i>Epistula Pauli ad Romanos</i> )
Sap	The Book of Wisdom ( <i>Liber Sapientiae Salomonis</i> )
Sir (Ecli)	Sirach / Ecclesiasticus ( <i>Liber Iesu filii Sirach</i> / <i>Liber Ecclesiastici</i> )
So	The Prophecy of Sophonias / Zephaniah ( <i>Sofonias propheta</i> )
I Th	The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians ( <i>Epistula I Pauli ad Thessalonicenses</i> )
II Th	The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians ( <i>Epistula II Pauli ad Thessalonicenses</i> )
I Tim	The First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy ( <i>Epistula I Pauli ad Timotheum</i> )
Za	The Prophecy of Zacharias / Zechariah ( <i>Zaccharias propheta</i> )

## Societies

EETS	Early English Text Society
SEENET	The Society for Early English and Norse Electronic Texts
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

## Technical Preface

All references and quotations will be from William Langland, *'Piers Plowman': a Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z versions*, vol. 1. Text, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London; New York: Longman, 1995). Because, during the course of this thesis, the discussion will at times need to compare the B and C-text versions of the poem, the *Parallel-Text* edition has been chosen as a base text. However, unless otherwise stated, reference in general will be to the B-version of *Piers Plowman*.

All Vulgate quotations will be taken from *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatem Versionem recensuit et brevi apparatu instruxit Robertus Weber, OSB*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983 [1969]). This thesis will adhere to the sparsity of punctuation in the Vulgate edition, but the critical apparatus in the edition will be omitted. The edition's capitalisation will be followed exactly. The Psalms will be numbered according to the Vulgate tradition. Names and abbreviations of all references for Bible books will also follow the Latin Vulgate practice, except within the main text where Anglican name-use will be followed. All biblical abbreviations in the Abbreviations section are taken from F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg, *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 12-14. For the ease of the general reader, Vulgate Bible quotations will generally be followed by the English from the Douai-Rheims translation in square brackets. However, in view of deteriorating knowledge of the Bible and Christianity, the main reason for placing the Bible in English translation in the body of the text is to introduce and encourage medieval students without Latin to read and understand a different aspect of *Piers*. In order to save the reader considerable time and energy looking up the Bible references for themselves, the Bible citations will sometimes be quoted at length. Where the Vulgate Latin is relevant to the argument and where it illustrates *Piers Plowman* quotations and their contexts, the Latin will be used in the main body of the thesis followed immediately by the Douai-Rheims translation in square brackets; but where the Latin merely acts as an exemplum from the Bible, the English translation will appear in the main body of the thesis, and the Latin will be placed in the footnotes.

All English Bible quotations unless otherwise specified will be taken from *The Holy Bible*. Translated from the Latin Vulgate and diligently compared with other editions in divers languages (Douai, A.D. 1609; Rheims, A.D. 1582) published as revised and annotated by authority with a preface by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1957). The edition of the Douai-Rheims translation quoted in this thesis uses italics where a biblical writer quotes from elsewhere in the Bible and this typographical convention is reproduced here. The edition of the Vulgate used in this thesis does not employ italics. Therefore, in order to indicate the particular words quoted by Langland, italics have been added in some quotations from the Vulgate so that the poet's use is clearly recognisable.

Punctuation at the end of quotations is sometimes adapted to fit the context of this thesis.

In the footnotes, a single author's work will generally be listed in chronological order; where several authors are cited to illustrate a point, alphabetical order will be followed.

The Bibliography includes works mentioned directly, but also many that have influenced the thinking behind this thesis (see also bibliographical note).

Up to three editors to an edition will be listed individually, but four or more will be referenced as *et al.*

Readers and listeners will usually be referred to by the general term of audience.

Finally, 'yogh' will be represented by italic '3'.

## Introduction

William Langland had command of the Bible: the methodology behind this thesis is simple, and the approach is grounded on this principle. Yet although such a premise may seem obvious, and although scholars have always accepted how well Langland (whoever he was) knew the Bible, research on the biblical quotations has focussed on their sources rather than on the Bible contexts themselves, which have never been comprehensively or systematically explored. Very few academics have taken the matter further than the quotations' origins: therefore the full implication of the corpus of Bible contexts as an entity has never been realised: critics of Langland have only viewed the quotations' contexts piecemeal. Because the biblical contexts affect both the structure and the interpretation of *Piers Plowman*, such selectivity has limited, even distorted, the way in which scholars see the poem. Langland's proficiency in the Bible needs to be understood, because without such recognition, *Piers* cannot be read, I would argue, as the poet expected it to be.

Close-reading of *Piers* and the Bible texts together shines a strong light into the medieval world and on how the poem may well have been understood in a profoundly Christian era: this thesis will attempt to restore that cultural memory. For Langland the foundation of his Christian understanding was the Bible. Using the Latin of the Bible gave *Piers* a double authority: firstly, Latin as the language of learning and knowledge, and secondly, the authority of the Vulgate itself. Obviously, the Commentary and exegeses of the Church Fathers as well as the *Glossa Ordinaria* were important to the

poet,<sup>1</sup> as were tools such as *distinctiones* and concordances,<sup>2</sup> but the original, fundamental authority for all such sources is the Bible: *distinctiones* were doubtless aids for the poem's composition, but were not themselves the inspiration for *Piers*. In consequence, while not underestimating the importance of such studies, the argument of this thesis will make the Bible alone the primary way of analysing *Piers*.

The Bible is intrinsic to *Piers*; it permeates the poem's structure through the Latin biblical quotations and should influence interpretation of the work. Operating as both the poem's skeleton and its muscle, the Bible and Christianity also both provide, in a real sense, the poem's lifeblood: that Langland was devoutly Christian remains inescapable. The poet's mastery of Bible texts is exceptional; even if one ignores the Latin quotations themselves, the lines of *Piers* are full of biblical allusion, translation and paraphrase: Langland's various uses of the Bible remain an intricate, interconnected system and *Piers* can often seem a series of condensed biblical information.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'commentary' and 'exegesis', although frequently used synonymously, are distinct: commentary has different layers of depth, and works like an extended paraphrase. The word 'exegesis', technically anachronistic in Langland's period, comes from the Greek, and roughly translates 'explain', 'interpret', with the sense of drawing out interpretation. My thanks go to Professor Robert Swanson for explaining this difference to me.

<sup>2</sup> Concordances are usually alphabetical lists of subject-themed Bible quotations used for sermon construction, whereas *distinctiones* tend to include more complex theological material: the implication of a single word varies as its meaning is dependent on its biblical context. On concordances, see Richard H. Rouse, and Mary A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the 'Manipulus florum' of Thomas of Ireland*, Studies and Texts, 47 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979), pp. 32-36. For explanation and definition of *distinctiones*, see Judson Boyce Allen, *The Friar as Critic: Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), pp. 32-34, 98-108; Judson Boyce Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: a Decorum of Convenient Distinction* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 142-50; Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers*, pp. 3-90, especially pp. 69-72. For other examples of *distinctiones*, see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952, 1983, 1984), pp. 246-48. For Langland's use of *distinctiones*, see John A. Alford, 'The Role of the Quotations in *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum*, 52 (1977), 80-99; Allen, *Ethical Poetic*, pp. 275-83, 287.

<sup>3</sup> Some critics consider that the 'the very text [of the Bible] itself' was becoming less familiar by the fourteenth century. Janet Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers*, English Literature in History, 1 (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. 171. See also Robert S. Sturges, 'Textual Scholarship: Ideologies of Literary Production', *Exemplaria*, 3:1 (Spring 1991), 109-31 (pp. 117-19). Langland, however, as this thesis argues, does not indicate any lack of familiarity with the Bible.

Yet, at the same time, the poet's agenda appears straightforward: the reader or listener is expected to recognise, understand and to contextualise the Bible quotations and reference.<sup>4</sup> For although Langland's methods for utilising the Bible in *Piers* may be varied, the most obvious and striking form is the number of Latin quotations frequently taken verbatim from the Bible or adapted from the Liturgy or biblical Commentaries;<sup>5</sup> Bible reading would not have been the only way of gaining biblical information, and the Vulgate was not always the exact source for Langland's Bible quotations. However, within the Liturgy, contexts are always very close to the original biblical themes and other material, like collects and anthems, reverberate with scripture.

Amongst clerics, knowledge of Bible texts, in many forms, must have been greater in the late fourteenth century than many modern scholars might think, because liturgical readings work through the Bible methodically and repeatedly: to hear these passages every day throughout the year, throughout one's life, instils a deep familiarity. Recognition, in consequence, is spontaneous. The Bible is endorsed through the Liturgy and awareness accentuated. Moreover, a quotation need not be absolutely exact to be pungent; the gist may be equally evocative: for example, knowing that the quotation comes from a passage where Christ criticises the Pharisees, the religious authority of that time, adds piquancy to Langland's satire of the fourteenth-century Church. Neither does a Vulgate quotation have to be complete: whether by scribes or Langland himself, the excerpts in the manuscripts are frequently unfinished, thereby implying that the audience is fully capable of supplying the contextual words of the *etcetera* for themselves. The Bible contexts, therefore, could also be used to provoke an unwritten but potent agenda.

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<sup>4</sup> In future, readers and listeners will usually be referred to by the general term of audience.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Alford, *'Piers Plowman': A Guide to the Quotations* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), for discussion, see especially pp. 1-2, 16-23.

Langland's intention was to direct every Christian soul along the path to the Kingdom of God, therefore the Vulgate quotations become his waymarks.<sup>6</sup> Unlike signposts, waymarks are subtle but provide the clearly visible signs that walkers look for to reassure themselves of their whereabouts and to lead them towards a given destination: when Langland uses phrases such as 'Marc menep in þe Gospel' (X. 275), the poet expects his audience to follow scriptural directions. With the Vulgate quotations, it seems eminently probable that Langland knew much more than the single line that he quoted, and sought to bring the full force of the biblical contextual knowledge to his poem: the poet assumed that his audience would appreciate the whole intellectual and spiritual connotation of his reference. Langland uses one or, occasionally, two words of Bible Latin tucked into a vernacular line which will be termed 'trigger' words because they also cause an audience to recall the original biblical passage and context. In some cases when the word is commonly used in the Bible, several extracts can come to mind at once which expand and enhance understanding. Moreover, there are many Bible passages that associate with one another, not just in the medieval comprehension of the Old Testament prefiguring the New, but in a more general interrelated way, and many Bibles cross-reference these associated texts.

In consequence, as this thesis will seek to demonstrate in its examination of all these resources, the poet's use of biblical context not only makes the poem come alive in a subtle and deeply satisfying way, but can intensify its meaning. This assumption of audience knowledge, then, must have been a reservoir of understanding on which Langland was able to draw as he constructed the poem, and, no doubt, a major part of

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<sup>6</sup> Langland's purpose concerning the necessity to search for and to strive along the pathway towards the Kingdom of God is reflected in the title of this thesis.

*Piers*' popularity. The reliance would have been, predominantly, on a Christian audience for whom, like Langland, the Latin Bible constituted a vibrant part of their perception and way of thinking, a part of their vocabulary.

Research for this thesis involved the examination of the context of every Vulgate (or Vulgate-inspired) quotation in *Piers* and a comparison made with the Douai-Rheims translation. Bible texts associated with the Vulgate quotation and its context have also been investigated. The research revealed a great variety of themes and topics which became apparent from the Vulgate contexts and the associated material which affect both the structure and interpretation of *Piers*. In order to demonstrate examples of this versatility, each separately-themed chapter in the thesis illustrates Langland's Bible use in a different way; leading from the early chapters which describe Langland's basic method to the final chapters which determine the full complexities of the poet's Bible use.

The purpose of this thesis is to give an overview of the importance of the Bible contexts in *Piers*. Although the whole poem was researched, the choice was made to concentrate on certain of the *Passūs* which best illustrate the argument; but there is much more to discover and analyse: the same principles which have been applied to the examination of the Vulgate quotation contexts and Langland's Bible use in this thesis would also be relevant to interpret many other themes and topics, such as apocalypse, repentance or even the danger of drunkenness, but, because of the constraints of length, it has been necessary to limit the material.

The Bible contexts in *Piers* affect both the poem's structure and its interpretation, and therefore the thesis has been divided into two parts. The first part will focus on Bible

context and the poem's structure. In order to locate the research of this thesis within the framework of Langland scholarship, chapter one contains a review of the history of previous academic study from the nineteenth century to the present time, with principal emphasis on Langland and the Bible quotations. Chapter two gives exemplars and illustrates generally how Langland used the Bible in the construction of *Piers*; how the poet made choices from his immense biblical knowledge to structure the poem. The passage on 'Book' as Bible from Passus XVIII begins the discussion, and demonstrates how knowledge of Bible references, implicit but not necessarily specified, provides the backbone of the poem. This segment is followed by sections which give examples of biblical allusion (especially in relation to 'Dowel') and trigger words which typically construct essential elements on which Langland builds. Next comes a brief analysis which shows how Bible contexts work in the organisation of Passus III, and then an assessment of how the Psalms (basic both to the Liturgy and to *Piers*) and associated Bible texts are handled by Langland. Short sections follow on *distinctiones*, Latin, and also on audience: all three required structural decisions by Langland. Finally, a brief comparison is made between Langland and Chaucer's use of the Bible as part of their poetic formation. Chapter three looks at each Bible quotation consecutively from the Prologue to Passus four, and examines how the subject of Truth / truth connects through the contexts of the poet's Vulgate citations. Chapter three indicates that Langland's use of the tools of *distinctiones* and concordances in the poem's structure were likely to have been more intricate than previously understood and thereby sets up the discussion about these devices in later chapters.

Part two of the thesis turns to Bible context and the interpretation of *Piers* with regard to two of the Sacraments, and the argument of the thesis develops into an exploration of the intricacies of Langland's Bible use. Chapter four examines the implications of biblically-based theology and the Liturgy (as understood in the fourteenth century) on the commitment of Baptism: a theme which runs through *Piers* and its quotations. Chapter five expands the debate about *distinctiones* and Langland's use of waymarks while still focussing on the Baptism theme. Langland displays an overt orthodoxy on the topic of Baptism: even the salvation of Trajan, the unbaptised heathen, is evaluated through a traditional Christian aphorism and is, therefore, in essence, orthodox. Langland's Bible quotations and contexts concerning Baptism seem straightforward and biblically orientated.

The contexts of the Bible quotations, however, can deliver covert castigation: the method Langland used to discuss the duties and responsibilities of the clerical hierarchy following Ordination is the subject of chapter six. A clerical audience was likely to have seen greater criticism and satire of the priesthood in the Bible contexts than is even apparent in the vernacular lines of *Piers*. Such recognition was also likely to have been disruptive to the Church hierarchy and so, in that sense, unorthodox. The topic of Baptism was chosen because this Sacrament is the initiation of the Christian soul on the path to salvation: an individual's entry into the Church of Christ and, therefore, of particular interest to Langland. Ordination, or rather the discussion of the subsequent duties and responsibilities incumbent upon the ministry of the Christian Church, holds equal importance to the poet.

While this new research on the Bible contexts is here organised into, and restricted to, these six chapters, it has also revealed a plethora of other themes and topics which are presently unexplored owing to the restrictive nature of a single thesis. Every Bible context may be seen to incorporate a variety of subjects: for example, a single Bible quotation's circumstance might refer both to Baptism and Penance. Choices have had to be made: Langland displays the attributes of a complex poet, and the Bible quotations and their context serve multiple purposes. Equally, the Bible is largely coherent and, like Langland, may also be read in myriad ways. However, notwithstanding these complications and the limitation of choice, research has led to a concentration on three main conclusions which this thesis will recurrently seek to demonstrate.

Firstly, there are overarching themes in the Bible contexts which endorse, colour and augment Langland's ideas in *Piers Plowman* and can be used to illustrate a range of concepts. Secondly, when Langland says that a Gospel text comes from, for example, Mark, the poet means Mark (and not another evangelist): Langland's knowledge of the Bible is to be trusted. This assertion might sound obvious, yet modern editors are inclined to mistake Langland's meaning and intention when the poet refers to the Bible in this way, and, in certain cases, this oversight can make even punctuation invalid. Editors of *Piers* need to look carefully in the Bible and then to re-read the context of *Piers* to see if there is a connection; there usually is: overwhelmingly, Langland is correct. Bible commentary has been the main focus in scholars' efforts to discover what Langland might mean in these references; the Bible less so. This thesis will attempt to restore the balance with its different approach. If Langland suggests that illustrations for his argument are to be found in Peter and Paul, the poet expects his audience to know the

appropriate citation. Examples will be given throughout the thesis where appropriate and, in particular, in chapter five.

Lastly, whatever contentions scholars may have regarding the date or order of the B and C versions, research for this thesis has indicated that the C-text contains more inflammatory material than the B-text, not less; issues like the tearing of the pardon may have been removed, but matters of a radical nature have gone to ground and been concealed within some of the Bible contexts of the additional passages and quotations in C. The criticism of Church authority, of the priesthood, in C is greater than has previously been realised. The biblical contexts have a powerful, coded, political programme: an explicit and implicit focus. Yet there is argument for the case that in recognising and understanding the Bible in *Piers*, the Bible simplifies, or at least clarifies, what Langland is saying, and explains some of the so-called digressions. Overall, this thesis intends to evaluate the Bible contexts both in regard to the structure and the interpretation of the poem, and aims to explore Langland's too often unappreciated agendas through the wealth of untouched Bible information inherent in *Piers*.

## Part One

### Bible Context and Structure in *Piers*

## Chapter One

### Bible Context Criticism

#### 1.1 Introduction

Critics have long considered it to be unquestionable that, whatever the poet's true identity, William Langland's main concern was to promote the Christian soul on its path to salvation; to bring souls closer to the Kingdom of God. We know that throughout *Piers* the poet remains concerned with Truth; that the poem parallels Truth (God) with truth (the moral quality). We know that Langland used concordances and *distinctiones* to structure his work and weave together related subject matter through Bible quotations. What has not been considered, except occasionally and in partial form, is the depth of interpretation that the biblical quotations offer. For a poet immersed in the Bible, who 'speaks Bible',<sup>1</sup> the *contexts* of the quotations he used would also be part of the structure and fabric of his thinking and creative process.

Schmidt writes that, although Langland frequently provides a waymark for the quotation's source, the poet 'does not necessarily expect his audience to *identify* the quotation'.<sup>2</sup> However, the poet's audience would be able to recognise Bible references (even if not identify their exact location),<sup>3</sup> and, most likely, place the passages in context:

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<sup>1</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield, *'Piers Plowman' as a Fourteenth-century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of 'Piers Plowman': a Critical Edition of the B-text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt, Everyman Series, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Dent; Vermont: Tuttle, 1978, 1995), p. xlviii (Schmidt's italics). Schmidt (p. xlviii) comments on the way *Piers* might engage people unfamiliar with Latin. Schmidt argues that, because of the poet's frequent translation and paraphrase of the Latin into English, Langland is able to target audiences with all levels of literacy: yet, the poet does not always translate the Latin, which might presume a learned audience for the Latin quotations.

<sup>3</sup> In comparison, unlike *Piers*, the text, *Dives and Pauper*, specifically references its frequent Bible quotations with Bible book and chapter. See, for example, *Dives and Pauper*, ed. by Priscilla Heath Barnum, EETS, 275, vol. I, part I (London; New York; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 56, (Matthei vii). This difference in *Piers* may indicate an assumption of audience knowledge about the Bible.

many devout Christians of every era, continuously made aware of Bible through the Liturgy, might perceive such nuances with various levels of perception.<sup>4</sup> For these readers, therefore, with the inclusion of numerous biblical quotations, Langland composed his poem not in two but in three dimensions. The *whole* biblical experience, the wider connotations of Bible quotations and associations would have informed and augmented the poem: *distinctiones* afford merely a tool. Father Pepler gives some examples of this greater understanding:

[Langland] made his own the words of David, of the Gospels, of the Doctors of the Church. Apt quotations from the Psalter, for example, appear on every page. [Pepler here gives examples] We could multiply such quotations indefinitely. While some are obvious maxims from the New Testament, many of the applications are ingenious and reveal an unflinching attention to the meaning of the words recited [...].<sup>5</sup>

*Piers* and the Bible, then, are completely intertextual.

Yet as a whole, *Piers* might be likened to a chameleon: the work has been changed by scribes, probably appropriated by the rebels of the 1381 Uprising,<sup>6</sup> and allotted to different genres over the years by critics who cannot agree about its meaning or structure. This level of uncertainty may have been created by a lack of commentators' attention to Langland's expectation of an audience's biblical understanding. The critical focus of this thesis and of this chapter will be limited to the significance of the biblical

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<sup>4</sup> Schmidt (*Vision*, p. xlvi) remarks that, even in lines not directly from the Liturgy, Langland's poetry reflects 'the lustre of liturgical Latin'. Other sources, such as medieval drama, stained glass and wall-paintings, would have fed the medieval mind with biblical understanding. Christ as Piers Plowman also figures in church art. See E.W. Tristram, 'Piers Plowman in English Wall-Painting', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 31 (1917), 135-40. R.E. Kaske writes on imagery from the Malvern area which reflects *Piers*. See R.E. Kaske, 'Piers Plowman and Local Iconography', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 31 (1968), 159-69.

<sup>5</sup> Conrad Pepler, O. P., *The English Religious Heritage* (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1958), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Justice argues that the rebels were influenced by *Piers*; Anne Hudson is less sure: Jill Mann thinks the A, B, C order of the versions is unlikely. See Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California; London: University of California Press, 1994); Anne Hudson, 'Piers Plowman and the Peasants Revolt: a Problem Revisited', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 8 (1994), 85-106; Jill Mann, 'The Power of the Alphabet: a Reassessment of the Relation of the A and the B Versions of Piers Plowman', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 8 (1994), 21-50.

quotations (in the widest sense to include the associated biblical material) within the poem: the importance of the Bible both to interpretation of *Piers* and its form.<sup>7</sup> Other pertinent but secondary topics such as ‘Book’ and the relevance of Langland’s audience will be dealt with in chapter two. In an alternative analogy on a biblical theme, *Piers* might better be likened to Joseph’s coat of many colours: Langland uses the Bible in innumerable different ways which this thesis will also explore in chapter two. The argument of this thesis centres on how the Bible gives the poem voice, and this chapter will trace the development of critics’ views on the Bible quotations and their contexts.

## 1.2 Nineteenth-Century Criticism

Thomas Wright, antiquarian, historian, archaeologist, the famous editor of *Political Songs*, considers that:

The writer of *Piers Plowman* was neither a sower of sedition, nor one who would be characterized by his contemporaries as a heretic. The doctrines inculcated throughout the book are so far from democratic, that he constantly preaches the Christian doctrine of obedience to rulers. Yet its tendency to debase the great, and to raise the commons in public consideration, must have rendered it popular among the latter: and, although no single doctrine of the popish religion is attacked, yet the unsparing manner in which the vices and corruptions of the church are laid open, must have helped in no small degree the cause of the Reformation.<sup>8</sup>

Wright is correct in part: on the surface, Langland remains orthodox and obedient to Church hierarchy; but on the other hand the poet must have sowed within his audience

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<sup>7</sup> A biblical focus will, at times, necessitate the inclusion of the works of critics who write from a Christian standpoint, but whose output may not always be strictly Bible-based.

<sup>8</sup> [William Langland], *The Vision and Creed of ‘Piers Plowman’*, ed. by Thomas Wright, 2 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: John Russell Smith, 1856), vol. I, pp. xxii-xxiii. Henry Morley thought Langland ‘a Church Reformer in the truest sense, seeking to strengthen the hands of the clergy by amendment of the lives and characters of those who are untrue to their holy calling. The ideal of a Christian life shines through his poem, while it paints with homely force the evils against which it is directed’. Henry Morley, selected, edited and arranged, *Illustrations of English Religion* (London; Paris; New York: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1877), p. 101.

deeper thoughts of dissatisfaction with authority than Wright recognises. The argument of this thesis concerning Langland's use of the Bible will focus particularly on the contextual associations which bring a stronger yet subtle voice, and deliver more fire to the text than was apparent to Wright.<sup>9</sup> For if, as one nineteenth-century cleric, Thomas Whitaker, observes, Langland had 'very familiar knowledge of the Vulgate [...which he] appears to quote from memory',<sup>10</sup> the poet might also use the Bible to introduce a sub-text of its own through the biblical contexts and associations.

Although Walter W. Skeat, another cleric, supplies 'copious and erudite notes',<sup>11</sup> and makes frequent references to the poet's use of the Bible, he appears not to comment on the implications of the work's biblical contexts.<sup>12</sup> Yet, Skeat, like Langland, expected his readership to recognise Gospel references:

A large number of the Latin quotations with which the text is crowded, is taken from the Latin (Vulgate) version of the Bible. [This edition indicates] the references except in the case of some passages from the Gospels, etc., *which are easily found* [my italics].<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Langland's use of Bible contexts as a weapon against Church authority will be discussed in chapter six.

<sup>10</sup> [William Langland], *Visio Willi de Petro Plouhman Item Visiones ejusdem de Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest. Or, The Vision of William Concerning Peirs [sic] Plouhman, and the Visions of the Same Concerning the Origin, Progress and Perfection of the Christian Life. Ascribed to Robert Langland, a Secular Priest of the County of Salop; and Written in, or Immediately After the Year MCCCCLXII*, ed. by Thomas Dunham Whitaker (London: John Murray, 1813), p. xxxix. Whitaker (*Visio*, pp. 1-18), a priest himself, paraphrases and translates Langland's Bible Latin in the notes to this edition, but this learned cleric makes little comment on the poet's Bible use except to say (*Visio*, p. 14, note 313, line x) that Langland 'had surely read his gospels with little attention, when he supposed the betrayal and apprehension of Christ, to have happened on the same day with the Crucifixion'. Whitaker (*Visio*, p. xvii), in his Introductory Discourse, thinks Langland to be orthodox with no 'tendency' to Lollardy, but is frequently scathing of Langland in his notes, and considers (p. 14, note 330, line i), for example, that the poet is 'weak and fanciful' on the subject of the Trinity, and uses 'foolish illustration'. For a modern assessment of Whitaker as an editor of *Piers*, see Charlotte Brewer, *Editing 'Piers Plowman': the Evolution of the Text*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 37-49.

<sup>11</sup> Vincent DiMarco, *'Piers Plowman': a Reference Guide* (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1982), p. xv.

<sup>12</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of William Concerning 'Piers the Plowman' in Three Parallel Texts Together with 'Richard the Redeless'*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), vol. II: Preface, Notes, and Glossary.

<sup>13</sup> Skeat, *Vision*, vol. II, p. 21, n. 30.

Skeat, like Wright, also recognised the nature and intent of Langland's use of words, but that these mid and late nineteenth-century clerical critics, for all their scholarly excellence, did not comment in any depth on biblical context seems very surprising. However, pre-occupations, for a very long time, focussed on the poet's identity, on authorship, philology, dating, and manuscripts; the A, B and C-texts; *Visio* and *Vita* separations.

Yet as DiMarco (*Reference*, p. xvii) attests:

A major preoccupation of twentieth-century scholarship and criticism of the poem has been the elucidation of its thematic and structural unity in relation to theological thought.

In consequence, although no more recent researcher or critic has attempted to examine the biblical quotations' contexts in any detail, such research may seem the obvious step: either John Alford's *Guide* or his 'Role' article might have been thought to inspire such an attempt.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this examination of the critical literature will now turn to twentieth-century views of Langland's biblical use.

### 1.3 Early Twentieth-Century Criticism

The work of clerics like Skeat and the Very Revd Canon Daniel Rock (1799-1871) had laid a foundation of Christian knowledge on which scholars could build.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Alford, *Guide*, (1992); Alford, 'Role', 80-99. In July 2008, Edwin Craun told me in private conversation that John Alford had meant to research the contexts of the quotations.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Rock, *The Church of Our Fathers, as Seen in St. Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury, with Dissertations on the Belief and Ritual in England Before and After the Coming of the Normans*, ed. by G.W. Hart and W.H. Frere, 4 vols (London: John Hodges, 1903-4), originally published, London: C. Dolman, 1852-3. Margaret Deanesly and H.H. Glunz's research on the Bible also influenced literary criticism. See Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920; Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002); H.H. Glunz, *History of the Vulgate in England: from Alcuin to Roger Bacon: Being an Inquiry into the Text of some English Manuscripts of the Vulgate Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

Twentieth-century critics frequently concentrated on issues similar to those witnessed in the nineteenth. M. Ray Adams's examination of Langland's Bible use states that:

No poem in English not purporting to be a metrical paraphrase of parts of the Bible has made a more thorough use of Scripture than *Piers Plowman*. Yet in the large body of critical literature that has accumulated about the poem little has been written about the significance of this element.<sup>16</sup>

However, Adams ('Vulgate', p. 556) centres on the Vulgate 'in order to determine what implication can be drawn from [the quotations] about [Langland's] ecclesiastical connections', his identity and social status.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the article deliberates the provenance of the Bible quotations to focus on proof of single authorship for *Piers*.

Thereby, Adams continues the traditions of research from the previous century. Adams ('Vulgate', p. 559, n. 15), like Wright, thinks:

Scripture is for [Langland] the court of final appeal for the conduct of life. He uses the biblical quotation as the seal of authority for a statement about the principles of Christian behaviour and very rarely for poetic purposes or pictorial effect.

Maybe so, but Langland's use of the Bible as 'a seal of authority', as this thesis will seek to demonstrate, can sometimes hide a deeper agenda.

A year before Adams, G.R. Owst introduced ideas about the probability of Langland's use of the Bible as a preacher, a sermon-writer.<sup>18</sup> In this same period, Sister Carmeline Sullivan discusses the poet's use of Latin insertions and states of *Piers*:

No work, whether literary production or dogmatic treatise, is so interlarded with Latin scriptural quotation and Patristic *excerpta* [...]. Yet in the large body of

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<sup>16</sup> M. Ray Adams, 'The Use of the Vulgate in *Piers Plowman*', *Studies in Philology*, 24 (1927), 556-66 (p. 556).

<sup>17</sup> See Adams, 'Vulgate', pp. 558-59.

<sup>18</sup> G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: an Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c.1350-1450*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926). Owst expands on the theme in *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: a Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961). See also G.R. Owst, 'The "Angel" and the "Goliardeys" of Langland's Prologue', *Modern Language Review*, 21 (1926), 270-79.

critical literature that has accumulated about the poem, little has been written concerning the significance of this literary peculiarity.<sup>19</sup>

Sullivan (*Latin Insertions*, p. 91) also writes:

The introduction of whole Latin verses from Scripture for the purpose of illustrating a point or substantiating a teaching is not a rare practice in the moral and didactic literature of Langland's time, and the sprinkling in of innumerable shreds of Latin into the English lines of the poem is one of the literary *curiositates* which is likewise well enough known, but not yet adequately studied.

Sullivan (*Latin Insertions*, pp. 50-1), in a carefully researched work, mentions the biblical sources, comments on Langland's accomplished and 'comprehensive knowledge of the Bible', but omits to discuss the quotations' *context*. Again, Langland's use of so many biblical quotations raises the question of why this major phenomenon of the poem has remained under-researched by critics with interest in *Piers* and the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

Some critics have concentrated on specific quotations: Francis A.R. Carnegie, for example, thinks the poem could be read through *fiat voluntas tua* and *dilige deum et proximum tuum*.<sup>21</sup> Carnegie ('Relations', p. 5) sees these maxims as 'one and the same', 'the two factors of supreme importance in the attainment of salvation, trust in God and love'. However, the study seems to be chiefly a synopsis of the poem's narrative and the work ethic; not indulging in deeper analysis of Langland's quotation use.

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<sup>19</sup> Sister Carmeline Sullivan, *The Latin Insertions and the Macaronic Verse in 'Piers Plowman'*, Dissertation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1932), p. vii. Sullivan divides the quotations into categories: those that could be identified as 'footnotes or marginal glosses' (p. 1); those whose exclusion 'would interfere with the logical progression of the sentence or would obscure its real meaning' (p. 21); and those that 'are worked macaronically into the English lines of the poem' (p. 66) as an inseparable part of Langland's poetics.

<sup>20</sup> It seems to be simply an oversight for, as one more modern critic has written: 'The extraordinary intertextual presence of the Bible in *Piers Plowman* and its influence on the style and content of the poem are universally acknowledged'. Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., '*Piers Plowman* and the Gospel and First Epistle of John', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 10 (1996), 89-127 (p. 89).

<sup>21</sup> Francis A.R. Carnegie, 'The Relations Between the Social and Divine Order in William Langland's "Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman"', *Sprache und Kultur der germanischen und romanischen Volker*, A. Anglistische Reihe, 12 (Breslau: Verlag Priebatschs Buchhandlung, 1934), p. 5.

For obvious reasons, *Piers* has always attracted critics who are devout Christians. One example, Father T.P. Dunning, C.M. examines ‘the thought of the poem’,<sup>22</sup> the importance of ‘its moral and didactic bias’,<sup>23</sup> and comments on the fact that ‘all through each version of the poem the Vulgate is quoted with a frequency which argues intimate knowledge’.<sup>24</sup> Father Dunning concentrates on the Fathers for interpretation of *Piers*; he does not dwell on biblical context, yet he recognises its importance. For example, in order to explain the *Deus caritas* quotation, Father Dunning (*Interpretation*, p. 42) quotes the three verses which precede the I John 4 reference.<sup>25</sup> He also uses St Augustine’s *Commentary* to augment the argument, but the contention of this thesis remains that the enduring *primary* source is the Bible.

Greta Hort set the scene for Alford, and researched Langland’s sources and his uses of the Breviary, Missal and Bible as authority.<sup>26</sup> But, as Hort (*Religious Thought*, p. 31) rightly states: ‘once an authority has been used as a text, it may be used for controversial purposes’. Hort refers to the actual quotation not its context, but the same argument applies.<sup>27</sup> This thesis will continue to claim that Langland, by inserting the Bible into the verse, also gave the poem the power of its Latin authority for anyone who can locate that quotation. Hort (*Religious Thought*, p. 40) considers his use of Latin

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<sup>22</sup> T.P. Dunning, C.M., *‘Piers Plowman’: an Interpretation of the A-Text* (Dublin: The Talbot Press; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1937), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Dunning, *Interpretation*, p. 7. For a general study of medieval ideas, see D. Chadwick, *Social Life in the Days of ‘Piers Plowman’*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922).

<sup>24</sup> Dunning, *Interpretation*, p. 11. Father Dunning (p. 12) also recognises that ‘the Bible had to be interpreted in accordance with the tradition of the Church’ as any independent evaluation was discouraged.

<sup>25</sup> A. I. 84 cf. I Io. 4. 8. Dunning, interpreting A. I. 82-126, quotes I Io. 4. 4-8. For names and abbreviations of all references for the Bible, see the Technical Preface and Abbreviations sections.

<sup>26</sup> Greta Hort, *‘Piers Plowman’ and Contemporary Religious Thought* (London: SPCK, 1938), p. 53. Hort thought the quotations came from Langland’s knowledge of the Breviary and Missal, and seems uncertain as to his familiarity with the Bible.

<sup>27</sup> Many critics have remarked, as Morton W. Bloomfield thinks, that the poem was an ‘inflammable work’. Morton W. Bloomfield, ‘Present State of *Piers Plowman* Studies’, *Speculum*, 14:2 (1939), 215-32 (p. 222).

demonstrated that Langland aimed for a ‘theological’ not ‘devotional type of religious literature’,<sup>28</sup> thereby increasing the poem’s influence towards cerebral rather than affective piety. However, she refutes the idea that Langland had a target audience but maintains that, nevertheless, *Piers* required awareness and comprehension of the allusions used.<sup>29</sup>

As Nevill K. Coghill remarks:

[I]t is a character of Langland’s writing to throw out hints and images to be developed later in the poem, and some of the larger insertions in the B-text strongly suggest that this was, or became, a conscious device.<sup>30</sup>

Such apparent deliberate planning by Langland in relation to his choice of Bible quotation will be discussed throughout this thesis. That some critics were prepared to take these concepts further and consider the poem to be deliberately obscure;<sup>31</sup> even arguing that *Piers* used types of ‘syllabic anagram’ to conceal his meaning,<sup>32</sup> might be viewed as somewhat exaggerated thinking, but, nonetheless, there remains room to examine throughout the body of this thesis how far Langland took his possibly intentional and recondite Bible use.

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<sup>28</sup> Hort (*Religious Thought*, p. 59) maintains that ‘no-one can fully appreciate *Piers Plowman* who has not had some grounding in theology’.

<sup>29</sup> Hort, *Religious Thought*, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> Nevill K. Coghill, ‘The Pardon of *Piers Plowman*’, in *Style and Symbolism in ‘Piers Plowman’: a Modern Critical Anthology*, ed. by Robert J. Blanch (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1969), pp. 40-86 (p. 63).

<sup>31</sup> Allan H. Bright, *New Light on ‘Piers Plowman’* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980). Authorised facsimile of the original book, printed from the microfilm copy of the Oxford University Press, 1928 edition (London: Humphrey Milford, 1928). For some examples of Bright’s views, see pp. 30, 76.

<sup>32</sup> Ladislav Cejp, *An Introduction to the Study of Langland’s Piers the Plowman: B-Text*, Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis Series, 9 (Olomouci: Palackého Universita, 1956), p. 38. Cejp (pp. 37-71), in a chapter called ‘The Semantic Interpretation of Piers the Plowman’, argues for a bizarre construct of Langland’s political agenda concerning the rebels of 1381.

In contrast to researchers like Sullivan and Hort, many eminent scholars of *Piers* only touch on the quotations as a source of interpretation of the poem. E. Talbot

Donaldson realises the importance of biblical context in interpretation:

The lines are, of course, a direct paraphrase from St. Luke's account of the Parable of the Unwilling Guests, which concerns those who would "eat bread in the kingdom of God". It is in the same chapter of the Gospel that Christ advises the persons in the multitude to count the cost before they decide to become His disciples, warning them that they must first renounce all that they have.<sup>33</sup>

Donaldson debates Langland's meaning in relation to this Bible passage, yet uses the Bible sporadically, and not in any concerted fashion to explain *Piers*.<sup>34</sup> Although he examines Bible context, Donaldson overlooks the implications of the particular Bible passage in Matthew's Gospel, which goes on to berate the Pharisees with a series of invective 'woes'.<sup>35</sup> In consequence, it is difficult to consider that Donaldson was totally correct when he writes (*C-text*, p. 103) about Langland's perceived political agenda concerning the lower classes:

Hence there seems to be no recognition of a political *comune* and the lesson derived from Christ's words both by B and C is that the common people should be obedient to their superiors – should not, indeed, try to wield any political power.

Christ was highly critical of the spiritual authorities of his time, and Langland followed his example. All members of fourteenth-century society who were able to recognise the biblical allusions and place them must have been influenced by *Piers*.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Donaldson, *C-Text and its Poet*, Yale Studies in English, vol. 113 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 167. Donaldson writes about C. VII. 291-303a cf. Lc. 14. 18-20, and refers also to Lc. 14. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Donaldson, *C-Text*, pp. 102-3. Donaldson refers to C. VIII. 85-91 cf. Mt. 23. 1, but the Gospel context is relevant (see chapter six below). As this thesis will argue in chapter six, the additional Bible citations inserted into the C-text and their biblical contexts have considerable political power. By ignoring the wider context of specific quotations, Donaldson fails to understand the greater political point and misses Langland's increased - not reduced - attacks on authority.

<sup>35</sup> Mt. 23. 13-36.

<sup>36</sup> These comments will be expanded in the chapter six on Ordination.

#### 1.4 Criticism in the 1950s

The 1950s onwards saw an immense increase in scholarly criticism of the poem and much debate. D.W. Robertson, Jr. and Bernard F. Huppé, in particular, caused an ongoing (and sometimes heated) discussion with their assessment of the Bible quotations, glosses and Commentaries.<sup>37</sup> They read the poem's allegory as centering predominantly on *caritas*. But for these commentators (*Scriptural Tradition*, p. 2), the biblical quotations expanded in critical importance:

The existence of a large body of Scriptural quotations in the text of the poem furnishes a key to the ultimate source of its allegorical meaning. [...] these quotations are not haphazard, decorative, or macaronic, but are connected intimately with the *sentence* of the poem.

According to Robertson and Huppé, the *sentence*, the basic Christian tenet of *caritas*, love, as fundamental to the Bible's meaning,<sup>38</sup> and through which the Bible was understood, had a hierarchical formation: literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. Moreover, Robertson and Huppé (*Scriptural Tradition*, p. 3) were controversially categorical in their assertions that:

The Scriptural quotations in *Piers Plowman* should be examined in the light of the exegetical tradition which developed on the basis of this technique. Moreover, [Robertson and Huppé would] attempt to show that throughout the poem, even in passages unsupported by direct quotation from the Bible, the author had the *sentence* of Scripture constantly in mind.

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<sup>37</sup> D.W. Robertson, Jr., and Bernard F. Huppé, '*Piers Plowman*' and *Scriptural Tradition*, Princeton Studies in English, no. 31 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951). For reviews of this work, see, for example, Morton W. Bloomfield, *Speculum*, 27:2 (April 1952), 245-49; Stella Brook, *Review of English Studies*, IV:14 (1953), 150-51; T.P. Dunning, *Medium Ævum*, 24 (1955), 23-29; Randolph Quirk, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 52 (1953), 253-55. Quirk (p. 254) thinks Robertson and Huppé must be 'congratulated for directing our attention to the actual biblical context of these quotations'. For further discussion, see E. Talbot Donaldson, 'Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature', pp. 1-26; R.E. Kaske, 'Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature: the Defense', pp. 27-60; Charles Donahue, 'Summation', pp. 61-82, in *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1958-59*, ed. with a foreword by Dorothy Bethurum (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>38</sup> Robertson and Huppé, *Scriptural Tradition*, p. 11.

Certainly, Langland held ‘Scripture constantly in mind’. The fundamental basis to *Scriptural Tradition*, although divisive in critical debate, proves salient to the argument of this thesis concerning Langland’s Bible usage: the Bible and the Bible quotations’ integral position in the interpretation of the poem. Although Robertson and Huppé might be considered extreme in relying so heavily on ‘the exegetical tradition’, many of their suppositions seem acceptable: for example:

The Biblical quotations were often as important for the parallel passages within the Scriptures that they were intended to invoke as they were for themselves. In locating any citation [Robertson and Huppé] were forced to take into account not only the passage in question but related passages as well.<sup>39</sup>

With *Scriptural Tradition*, studies of *Piers* began to view the biblical quotations as seminal, even if the ‘related passages’ have yet to be evaluated in totality.

Alfred L. Kellogg looks at two specific quotations in an analysis of changes Langland made to the Vulgate.<sup>40</sup> Following Robertson and Huppé’s work and Skeat’s notes, Kellogg examines these references by looking at the commentaries to the Bible, notably Augustine.<sup>41</sup> Although Langland quite clearly uses the context of Isaiah in the surrounding lines of the quotation, and knowledge of the Bible passage evokes strong images,<sup>42</sup> Kellogg focuses on entirely different aspects; not commenting on this artistic phenomena in passing, even though he (‘Two Scriptural Texts’, p. 398) concludes:

Langland was very much a part and an observer of the world of his time, but he existed simultaneously and perhaps even more fully in a world of Biblical interpretation and allusion.

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<sup>39</sup> Robertson and Huppé, *Scriptural Tradition*, p. 15. Huppé also made a close examination of Langland’s wordplay at this time. See Bernard F. Huppé, “‘Petrus id est Christus’: Word Play in *Piers Plowman*, the B-Text’, *A Journal of English Literary History*, 17:3 (September 1950), 163-90. Huppé (p. 179) thinks word-play helps give consistency to the poem, that ideas established in the Prologue are echoed and augmented later in the poem: ‘[t]o miss this is to miss the unity of the poem (in the three texts)’.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred L. Kellogg, ‘Langland and Two Scriptural Texts’, *Traditio*, 14 (1958), 385-98 (p. 398).

<sup>41</sup> Kellogg, ‘Two Scriptural Texts’, pp. 386-90. See also Alfred L. Kellogg, ‘Satan, Langland, and the North’, *Speculum*, 24:3 (July 1949), 413-14.

<sup>42</sup> B. I. 105-33.

The 1950s raised many issues of critical interest, for example, audience,<sup>43</sup> personification allegory,<sup>44</sup> and the exemplary Christian life.<sup>45</sup> Some critics made Langland's use of the biblical context part of their own argument: for example, Robert Worth Frank, Jr., although he does not elaborate, explains the context of the *redde quod debes* quotation,<sup>46</sup> and connects Langland's use of it to Romans. R. E. Kaske, on the other hand, examines Langland's detailed Bible use and suggests Psalm 18 as 'a kind of framework' for the character Book:<sup>47</sup>

Possibly the general contours of Book's speech called to mind the psalm and some of its conventional interpretations, and this in turn led to the inclusion of the figure directly out of the psalm. If we remember the frequent references to the Psalms that run through Passus XVIII especially, such a conjecture does not appear unlikely.<sup>48</sup>

Kaske makes a very valid, interpretative point, but in spite of this understanding of Langland's allusions, no complete study of the overall biblical contexts was made.

Conrad Pepler, O.P., like Bloomfield, debates the stages of the spiritual life.<sup>49</sup> Yet Father Pepler makes scant reference to Langland's use of Bible quotation except by

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<sup>43</sup> See J.A. Burrow, 'The Audience of *Piers Plowman*', in *Essays on Medieval Literature*, by J.A. Burrow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 102-16, reprinted with corrections and a new postscript from an article in *Anglia*, 75 (1957), 373-84.

<sup>44</sup> See Robert Worth Frank, Jr., '*Piers Plowman* and the Scheme of Salvation: an Interpretation of *Dowel, Dobet, and Dobet*', Yale Studies in English, vol. 136 ([Hamden, Connecticut]: Archon Books, 1969 [c.1957]).

<sup>45</sup> See Morton W. Bloomfield, '*Piers Plowman* and the Three Grades of Chastity', *Anglia*, 76 (1958), 227-53. In particular, Bloomfield (p. 227) debates 'Christian perfection' in *Piers*. Dom Denys Rutledge in 'Langland and the Liturgical Tradition', *Dublin Review*, 228 (1954), 405-16 continues the debate begun by M. Ray Adams in 'Vulgate' against a background of the state of Christianity in the 1950s.

<sup>46</sup> Frank, *Scheme*, pp. 96-118 re: Rm. 13. 7-8.

<sup>47</sup> R.E. Kaske, '*Gigas* the Giant in *Piers Plowman*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 56 (1957), 177-85 (p. 185). Kaske, ('*Gigas*', p. 185) refers to Ps. 18. 1-8. Kaske looks at Langland and biblical exegesis: see R.E. Kaske, 'Langland's Walnut-Simile', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 58:4 (October 1959), 650-54.

<sup>48</sup> For Book's speech, see B. XVIII. 229-59. Kaske ('*Gigas*', p. 185, note 25) writes: 'The prominent Four Daughters of God theme is of course a development of Ps. 84. 11'; see also Skeat, *Vision*, vol. II, pp. 247-65, *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> Pepler, *Religious Heritage*. Father Pepler argues this progression using as example: Langland, the *Ancrene Riwle* and the mystics.

comparison: he comments (*Religious Heritage*, p. 310) that in Julian of Norwich's work '[t]he Scriptures [...] hardly put in an appearance, except incidentally'. Other critics from this period are concerned with various Christian aspects of *Piers* but not the Bible quotations or their context as such.<sup>50</sup> David Daiches writes that *Piers* 'lacks artistic unity' with 'only sporadic control over [the] material'; that, although the poem 'is a remarkable work', he depreciates the biblical quotations as 'the stringing together of Latin tags'.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately Daiches seems unable to see the 'unity' to be found within the reader's or hearer's mind: the 'tags' are simply a trigger, as will be explained in chapter two.

### 1.5 Criticism in the 1960s

In this period, understanding of *Piers* grew: Beryl Smalley's scholarship manifested a greater realisation of medieval Christianity in the 1950s and 1960s;<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Salter, in her introduction to *Piers*, focuses on religious aspects of the poem.<sup>53</sup> In another major contribution to *Piers* studies, the primary motivation for Bloomfield was

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Zeeman [Salter], '*Piers Plowman* and the Pilgrimage to Truth', *Essays and Studies*, n.s., 11 (1958), 1-16. Historians, too, have frequently displayed interest in the poem and Langland's thought. See, for example, W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, based on the Birkbeck Lectures, 1948 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955; reprinted Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Mediaeval Academy of America, 1980), *passim*. See also May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century 1307-1399*, *The Oxford History of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 527-57, *passim*. For Pantin's later work, see W.A. Pantin, 'Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. by J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 398-422.

<sup>51</sup> David Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2 vols (London: [The Ronald Press, 1960]; Secker and Warburg, 1961), I, p. 126.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Smalley, *Study*, (1952); Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960); Beryl Smalley, 'Problems of Exegesis in the Fourteenth Century', *Miscellanea Mediævalia*, 1 (1962), 266-74.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Salter, '*Piers Plowman*': *an Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962). Salter (*Introduction*, p. 7) writes of 'the inseparability of religious and artistic forces' in the poem, and advocates that *Piers* must be viewed 'in its own context of space and time'. See also Elizabeth Salter, 'Piers Plowman and "The Simonie"', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 203 (1967), 241-54. Salter (p. 248) compares these two poems with their similar focus on 'the spiritual ill-health' of the fourteenth-century'. Other studies focus on Bible-based religious issues: see, for example, P.M. Kean, 'Langland on the Incarnation', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 16:64 (1965), 349-63; Ben H. Smith, Jr., *Traditional Imagery of Charity in 'Piers Plowman'* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966).

to locate the poem's form and content firmly within medieval thought. He (*Apocalypse*, p. v) writes:

[T]he thesis of this book is that *Piers Plowman* is concerned with the subject of Christian perfection rather than with salvation. The former is the creation of the monastic tradition and is the older and more social Christian world view. This tradition was still alive in the fourteenth century and in England. It is orientated towards the Kingdom of God and eschatology. It finds its natural expression in the apocalyptic frame of mind and in corresponding literary forms. *Piers Plowman* can best be understood as an apocalypse that reflects this older Christian tradition.

These Christian themes dominated. Although (as this thesis will seek to prove) the Bible quotations and their contexts present and shape the subject matter of the poem, Bloomfield disregards this aspect.<sup>54</sup> Kaske, however, retains thoughts about the importance of Bible allusion and quotation in his criticism of *Piers*, and finds associations with biblical passages which aid interpretation: for example, when he remarks:

I do not think it has ever been pointed out that the first half of this line, "Kynde loue coueiteth nou3te," is a virtual translation of the words "Charitas non aemulatur" in I Corinthians 13. 4, from a famous characterization of charity [Kaske here quotes the Bible passage]. In the second half of line 150, the "coveting" of speech is strongly suggested by the theme of the following chapter, I Corinthians 14.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Another influential critic, John Lawlor, well-versed in Langland's use of wordplay, hardly mentions the quotations and ignores their biblical contexts. See John Lawlor, *'Piers Plowman': an Essay in Criticism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1962). See especially chapter VI: 'Allegory, Similitude and Wordplay', pp. 240-80. However, some critics were researching the quotations in depth: see Anne Havens Fuller, 'Scripture in *Piers Plowman B*', *Medieval Studies*, 23 (1961), 352-62. Other critics, like David C. Fowler, were also interested in examining Langland's Bible use: for example the way in which the poet translates the Bible. See David C. Fowler, *Piers the Plowman: Literary Relations of the A and B texts* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1961), pp. 40-41.

<sup>55</sup> R.E. Kaske, "'Ex Vi Transicionis" and its Passage in *Piers Plowman*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62 (1963), 32-60 (p. 34). Kaske discusses B. XIII. 131-64a (especially XIII. 152), and quotes firstly: I Cor. 13. 4-7, and secondly: I Cor. 14: 1-4; 12-13. Kaske (p. 34, note 6) also suggests the relevance of the remainder of I Cor. 14, and refers the reader to I Th. 5. 13; II Pt. 1. 7, 9. The '*Ex Vi Transicionis*' passage seems to intrigue critics, see, for example, Ben H. Smith, Jr., 'Patience's Riddle, *Piers Plowman B*, XIII', *Modern Language Notes*, 76:8 (December 1961), 675-82.

Kaske continues to make such connections with other Corinthians' passages in this part of the poem,<sup>56</sup> and comments ('*Ex Vi Transicionis*', p. 35) on '[t]he meaning crowded into Langland's one-line adaptation'. Furthermore, Kaske seeks to examine inter-connected Bible passages. These biblical associations lie hidden and assume the audience's contextual knowledge and participation; to return to Kaske ('*Ex Vi Transicionis*', p. 55):

If this interpretation has been at all convincing, our recognition of so intricate and precise a pattern of learned allusion in lines 150-56 speaks strongly for the likelihood of similar patterns in other "riddling" or "prophetic" passage of *Piers Plowman*, and suggests that the intellectual texture of the poem itself may be much more complex, and much more dependant on learned allusion, than some of us are yet ready to admit.

This thesis concurs and will attempt to build on this statement.

In the 1960s, several commentators were inclined to consider that *Piers* might be based on sermon structures.<sup>57</sup> Christian aspects of the poem continued to absorb critics.

Edward Vasta, in an authoritative study, aimed 'to define the nature of salvation in Langland', and to show 'that Langland's goal is, indeed, the goal of the mystic'.<sup>58</sup>

Vasta's concern (*Spiritual Basis*, p. 23) lay with 'concepts from medieval spirituality' and not with the Bible in particular. As may be seen in the quotation below, Vasta (*Spiritual Basis*, p. 55) acknowledges that Langland relies on audience recognition of

Bible verses:

<sup>56</sup> Kaske, '*Ex Vi Transicionis*', p. 34 re: I Cor. 12. 4-11.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, A.C. Spearing, 'The Art of Preaching and *Piers Plowman*', in *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964; London: Edward Arnold, 1964, 1972), pp 107-34, expanded from A.C. Spearing, 'Verbal Repetition in *Piers Plowman* B and C', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62:4 (1963), 722-37. See also John Burrow, 'The Action of Langland's Second Vision', *Essays in Criticism*, 15:3 (1965), 247-68, reprinted in J.A. Burrow, *Essays on Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 79-101.

<sup>58</sup> Edward Vasta, *The Spiritual Basis of 'Piers Plowman'* (London; The Hague; Paris: Mouton and Co., 1965), p. 13.

Langland continually assumes knowledge on the part of the audience. The truth of this is most obviously indicated by his use of Latin quotations. Usually [Langland] leaves the [Latin quotations] untranslated, at times he incorporates into his own English only the key Latin words, at other times he starts a Latin quotation and leaves an *& cetera* and the reader's own knowledge to finish it.<sup>59</sup>

Again, we find that critics recognise the phenomenon that Langland expected the audience of *Piers* to identify the quotations, and more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, to place them in their biblical context. Vasta (*Spiritual Basis*, pp. 55-6) continues:

Lady Church's answer itself assumes one sees how her teaching is based on the *Deus caritas* text, knows in what sense a man becomes like God (and has in mind the gospel passage and the words of St. Luke to this effect), and understands how it is that man naturally loves God.

Unfortunately, the comment is unclear. Vasta appears confused concerning the origin of the *Deus caritas* text: it comes from John's Epistle (not Luke's Gospel) from a chapter that concentrates on love (of God to mankind and mankind to each other), and which describes 'in what sense a man becomes like God'.<sup>60</sup> This mistake notwithstanding, Vasta makes a sound point.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Vasta (*Spiritual Basis*, p. 55, note one) writes that 'our inability to understand this poem' has added to the idea that 'Langland was a moderately learned man with an unsystematic mind, and that he wrote for a popular audience', but Vasta does not concur with this view.

<sup>60</sup> I lo. 4. 8. The nearest passage on love in Luke's Gospel is probably Lc. 6. 27-38 which reiterates the parts of the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew's Gospel (5-7). It is possible that this was the extract that Vasta held in mind when he wrote *Spiritual Basis*. Schmidt (*Vision*, p. 18, note to line 91) connects the passage with Lc. 12. 33-34: 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Lc. 12. 34). The nearest passage in Luke to Vasta's statement: 'in what sense a man becomes like God' could be Lc. 20. 36: 'Neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels and are the children of God being the children of the resurrection', but I o. 10. 34, 'you are gods' (based on Ps. 81. 6) might also come to mind. The verse continues: 'If he called them gods to whom the word of God was spoken' (I o. 10. 35). The ethos of Psalm 86, echoed in the Gospels, advocates love of one's neighbour. Vasta (*Spiritual Basis*, pp. 98-120) correctly identifies *Deus caritas* with I lo. 4 in a later chapter, but seems, again, to be confused as to where the quotation is to be found (I lo. 4. 8, 16). Vasta (*Spiritual Basis*, p. 98, note 1) states: 'the actual words *Deus caritas* do not figure in the part of St. John's epistle which Dunning considers relevant', i.e. I lo. 4. 4-8 (Dunning, *Interpretation*, pp. 42-45. Father Dunning concurs with my own identification of a possible Lucan reference, Lc. 6). However, Vasta demonstrates an ongoing recognition of the importance of Bible context for interpreting *Piers*. Andrew Galloway detects Cato's influence in Langland's use of 'god by þe gospel'. See Andrew Galloway, 'Two Notes on Langland's Cato: *Piers Plowman* B.I.88-91; IV.20-23', *English Language Notes*, 25:2 (December 1987), 9-12 (p. 10).

<sup>61</sup> Vasta continues to note that Langland assumes audience knowledge. See, for example, *Spiritual Basis*, pp. 68, 99.

Many critics echo Vasta's sentiments regarding the context of the biblical quotations: yet the understanding of Langland's knowledge and its derivation remain under-researched. Robert G. Risse, Jr. comments on 'the debate over the use of patristic exegesis in the criticism of medieval literature'.<sup>62</sup> Risse ('Paraphrase', p. 717) demonstrates interest in Langland's source material:

Just as the Isaiah paraphrase was absorbed into the commentary on Avianus and thus found its way into the general currency, so it may be conjectured, much else in the Scriptural tradition became a part of the general knowledge shared by all educated men through the medium of the school commentaries. Since the commentaries on most of the curriculum authors still remain in manuscript, much editorial work remains to be done before the evidence is available to verify any formulation concerning their general influence and significance.

A similar conjecture might be made regarding the quotations themselves. Unlike those educated in the fourteenth century, twenty-first-century readers cannot take knowledge of the Scriptures for granted. What had been seen as a lack of structure and inaccuracy earlier in the century was still open to scrutiny and re-examination.<sup>63</sup> *Piers* continued to be viewed as one of the 'few [m]edieval poems in which the literal level is so tenuous and confused'.<sup>64</sup>

Other Christian critics from the 1960s like Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., well-known for his writing on the medieval mystics, continue to comment on Langland's 'enigmatic' nature,<sup>65</sup> the author's care 'to preserve his anonymity',<sup>66</sup> and his use of the Scriptures,<sup>67</sup> but does not consider the importance of Bible context. Moreover, such puzzling material

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<sup>62</sup> Robert G. Risse, Jr., 'The Augustinian Paraphrase of Isaiah 14. 13-14 in *Piers Plowman* and the Commentary on the *Fables* of Avianus', *Philological Quarterly*, 45:4 (1966), 712-17 (p. 716).

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Kellogg, 'Satan', 1949. As Kellogg (p. 413) points out, Langland quotes 'St. Augustine's paraphrase of Isaiah rather than the Isaiah text itself', and Kellogg (p. 414) adds that 'Langland's mystery, then, turns out to be not particularly mysterious and in fact almost self-explanatory'.

<sup>64</sup> Rosemary Woolf, 'Some Non-Medieval Qualities of *Piers Plowman*', *Essays in Criticism*, 12:2 (April 1962), 111-25 (p. 112).

<sup>65</sup> E. Colledge, O.S.A. and W.O. Evans, '*Piers Plowman*', *Month*, n.s., 32:12 (1964), 304-13 (p. 304).

<sup>66</sup> Colledge and Evans, '*Piers*', p. 305.

<sup>67</sup> Colledge and Evans, '*Piers*', p. 308.

makes Spearing see *Piers* as ‘one of the most fascinating, and also one of the most difficult, of fourteenth-century poems’.<sup>68</sup> Spearing (*Criticism*, p. 108) deems the problem to be one of ‘organization, *dispositio*’, and considers (*Criticism*, p. 131) that ‘despite the great quantity of scholarly work that has been done on it’, *Piers* was still of uncertain kind, seeming ‘to give up very little of itself to attempts at theological analysis or at the separation of its meaning into a variety of allegorical layers’. Moreover, Spearing (*Criticism*, p. 134) considers:

Langland’s purpose is also expressed in the inter-weaving and fusing of themes in the whole poem, and of words in its style; and these are techniques which the medieval art of preaching can certainly help us to understand.

A true comment, but this thesis will seek to rectify the gap in critical research that Spearing (and others) do not consider: that the context of the Bible quotations helps to structure the poem’s *dispositio*; that the biblical circumstance of the Vulgate quotations offers cohesion.<sup>69</sup> As Vasta asserts in discussion of the poem’s interpretation:

There is need, in short, of much more detailed inquiry into the way in which *Piers Plowman* begins. In our understanding of the poem’s beginning lies our hope of finally understanding the entire work.<sup>70</sup>

I concur. From the very first biblical quotation, this thesis will seek to demonstrate how the surrounding verses of every Bible quotation structure the content of the poem: not just through the use of *distinctiones* but in the poem’s very essence.

In the 1960s, views on Langland’s use of the quotations continue to be varied:

Donald R. Howard claims:

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<sup>68</sup> Spearing, *Criticism*, p. 107. See again the chapter on ‘The Art of Preaching and *Piers Plowman*’, pp. 107-34.

<sup>69</sup> Although since Alford’s ‘Role’ in 1977, critics have generally accepted that the poem’s organisation is based on *distinctiones*, this thesis will argue for a re-assessment of what the Bible quotations and their *contexts* offer - not just to the structure but to the interpretation of *Piers* in a way that was not explored by Spearing in the 1960s (or Alford later).

<sup>70</sup> Edward Vasta, ‘Truth, the Best Treasure, in *Piers Plowman*’, *Philological Quarterly*, 44:1 (1965), 17-29 (p. 29).

In the same way, the Latin quotations represent the association and application of learnt ideas to ideological conflicts. They are suggested by a certain train of thought; they clarify it or resolve it; and they furnish the suggestion for further thoughts. They represent the convergence upon our mental life of remembered precepts and scraps of intellection as they enter and leave our inner stream of imagery and verbalization.<sup>71</sup>

Such use of language concerning conscious and unconscious thought was typical of a period absorbed in Freudian concepts. However, although Howard's book is based on the three temptations set out in John's Epistle,<sup>72</sup> and although (as the above excerpt demonstrates) Howard shows interest in Langland's Bible quotations, their contexts were overlooked.

Criticism in the 1960s remains interested in the authorship question. Furthermore, John A. Yunck's research on venality satire helped determine future scholarship.<sup>73</sup> There were several works that look backwards to past scholarship with collections of essays.<sup>74</sup> However, for the purpose of this thesis, one of the most important contributions to the latter part of the decade was made by S. S. Hussey in an edition of important articles.<sup>75</sup> P.M. Kean, for example, uses biblical allusion to interpret the poem, but does not develop this procedure further.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Kean ('Justice', p. 109) states:

Yet it is surprising how little [Langland] actually has to say on the main controversial topics of the day – on, for example, [...]; the relation of the sacramental life of the Church (which he seems to take for granted) to the individual; the significance of the Bible (which he uses in a traditional way and never translates).

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<sup>71</sup> Donald R. Howard, *The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 206.

<sup>72</sup> I lo. 2. 16.

<sup>73</sup> John A Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Meed: the Development of Mediæval Venality Satire*, Publications in Mediæval Studies Series, 17 (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963).

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Blanch, *Style*, 1969; Edward Vasta, ed., *Middle English Surveys: Critical Essays* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965); Edward Vasta, ed., *Interpretations of Piers Plowman* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

<sup>75</sup> S.S. Hussey, ed., *'Piers Plowman': Critical Approaches* (London: Methuen, 1969).

<sup>76</sup> P. M. Kean, 'Justice, Kingship and the Good Life in the Second Part of *Piers Plowman*', in *Critical Approaches*, ed. by Hussey, pp. 76-110 (p. 104 re: Is. 14. 4-6).

In her comment regarding translation, Kean makes a somewhat wide-ranging statement which this thesis will hope to qualify and examine in chapter two below. In particular Kean's rhetorical question ('Justice', p. 108) will be explored:

The most important [question] is probably that of how far in the *Vita* Langland is concerned with the reform of Church and State, how far with the inner reformation of the individual. For Langland, it must be remembered, the two problems cannot altogether be separated.

Kean makes a pertinent statement here that needs to be teased out carefully.<sup>77</sup>

Another important critic at the end of this decade was Raymond St-Jacques, whose work on *Piers* and the Liturgy now started to be published. Like the connections made previously to *Piers* and sermon structure, St-Jacques's input was significant. For example, St-Jacques writes:

The same Latin tag [*redde quod debes*], when viewed in its liturgical context, takes on extra richness and even more relevance to both the themes it is meant to unite, those of Church Unity and of Antichrist's Coming. The Gospel from which the words are taken, Matthew 18: 23-35, is read on the twenty-third Sunday after the feast of the Holy Trinity [...]. Two liturgical commentators, Rupert of Deutz and Guillaume Durand, interpret the liturgy of this Sunday in terms of Church unity [...]. Like these commentators, Langland, as seen above, associates his Latin quotation with Church unity in three out of the five times he uses it.<sup>78</sup>

As St-Jacques has written elsewhere (and this thesis argues), we are best able to understand Langland's motifs when 'the reader's mind is bathed in the same currents of biblical imagery and commentary as was Langland's'.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Kean's statement is particularly apt concerning Langland's criticism of the clergy (discussed in chapter six below): the poet's censure applies to both the Ordained individual and the corporate Church hierarchy.

<sup>78</sup> Raymond C. St-Jacques, 'Conscience's Final Pilgrimage in *Piers Plowman* and the Cyclical Structure of the Liturgy', *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 40 (1970), 210-23 (pp. 217-18). See also Raymond St-Jacques, 'Langland's Christ-Knight and the Liturgy', *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 37:1 (January – March 1967), 146-58; Raymond St-Jacques, 'The Liturgical Associations of Langland's Samaritan', *Traditio*, 25 (1969), 217-30.

<sup>79</sup> Raymond St-Jacques, 'Langland's "Spes" the Spy and the Book of Numbers', *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 24:6 (1977), 483-85 (p. 485).

## 1.6 Criticism in the 1970s

As we move into the 1970s, Christian issues become increasingly important to

*Piers* scholarship: for example, Ruth M. Ames thinks:

Although there is no one formula which neatly decodes all these scriptural references and allegories, there is, I believe, one theme that underlies and runs through a great many of them – the fulfillment of the Scriptures. [...] The fulfillment of the law and the prophets is one of the basic tenets of Christianity.<sup>80</sup>

Ames is correct as far as this supposition extends: many critics have considered that *Piers* holds a particular theme,<sup>81</sup> but it may be considered that Langland's agenda is far more complicated and incorporates even more than Ames believes. *Piers* displays a simple, single premise with regard to attaining the Kingdom of God, but the technique in which Langland seeks to achieve his goal is legion: the poet, as this thesis will argue, uses the Bible and his understanding of Christian principles continuously.<sup>82</sup>

The manner in which Ames uses the Bible as a starting point for *Piers*' criticism is profoundly useful and perceptive; she is one of a relatively small number of critics whose deep understanding of Christianity and the Bible illuminates Langland scholarship:

Langland, for example, often seems difficult when he is not, simply because he did not feel it necessary to explain what was obvious to him and to his contemporaries. A surprising number of Scriptural texts and arguments had appeared in similar contexts from the earliest days of the Church through the Middle Ages, in popular as well as in learned works. [...] Langland had no reason to suspect that his work would ever need a learned gloss. Many of his contemporaries might miss his aesthetic subtleties, but they would surely catch his

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<sup>80</sup> Ruth M. Ames, *The Fulfillment of the Scriptures: Abraham, Moses, and Piers* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> See, for one example, Bloomfield's theory of *Piers* and Apocalypse which is also pertinent.

<sup>82</sup> For a view on Langland and the Kingdom of God, see Judith Dale, 'Making the Kingdom Come: the Poet and *Piers the Plowman*', in *From Dante to Solzhenitsyn: Essays on Christianity and Literature*, ed. by Robert M. Yule (Wellington: Tertiary Christian Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1978), pp. 55-71.

Scriptural references, most of which were taught from pulpit, paintings, and stage.<sup>83</sup>

Ames's understanding of Langland also underpins the research of this thesis, and few critics state so clearly what this thesis will engender: that scripture itself offers the key to unlock *Piers*:

The deepest meanings, however, always come out of Langland's study of the Scriptures. It is clear from any number of allusions that Langland shared the exegetical approach of the Fathers, that he was steeped in the liturgy, and that his way of looking at the doctrine fit into an unbroken literary tradition. Yet his creative fire transmuted the doctrine into poetry of the first order.<sup>84</sup>

Langland's poetry, like Milton's, is based on the whole Christian vision, and this aspect of both poets frequently seems under-appreciated and misunderstood in a secular age: this thesis aims to contribute to the glossing that Ames thinks necessary to Langland's verse. If Langland's source of inspiration was the Bible, a substantial amount of the contents of which he probably knew by heart, then the poet's use of the Bible might be thought carefully considered; the Scriptural repetition in Langland always had purpose and design and, therefore, the biblical contexts had them also. This thesis intends to build on Ames's work on Langland and the Scriptures, and to include biblical contexts as a further aid to interpretation.

The 1970s developed into an exciting period for studies of Langland's biblical background with Sister Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P. starting to publish.<sup>85</sup> Sister Davlin's insights provide deeper knowledge of Christian and biblical matters in the poem, which

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<sup>83</sup> Ames, *Fulfillment*, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Ames, *Fulfillment*, p. 73.

<sup>85</sup> See Sister Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Kynde Knowyng as a Major Theme in *Piers Plowman B*', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 22:85 (1971), 1-19; Sister Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Petrus, id est, Christus: Piers the Plowman as "The Whole Christ"', *Chaucer Review*, 6:4 (1972), 280-92.

will be explored in greater detail in this chapter below.<sup>86</sup> In this period, a profusion of acclaimed scholars is acknowledged. Joseph S. Wittig's 2001 *Concordance* was the culmination of a lifetime's diligence.<sup>87</sup> Wittig understands the importance of Bible context:

While agreeing that the verse is indeed meant to show Piers' faith in the pardon, one might argue that it also demonstrates both his understanding of it and a precise rejection of the priest's position. To see how this is so, it is necessary to consider the verse in the context of the psalm, and the psalm in the context of its interpretative tradition. [...] One need only recall the verse of the familiar psalm to realize that fearing no evil because of the presence of God is not something that occurs *in vacuo*.<sup>88</sup>

Wittig ('Inward Journey', p. 278) goes on to enumerate the different points contained in the Psalm, and concludes that 'even at the most superficial level, Piers' quoting the verse can be read as a commentary, both ironic and corrective, on the priest's attitude'. Stephen A. Barney also explored *Piers* and the commentary tradition in an illuminating way.<sup>89</sup>

Robert Adams, in a well-argued and provocative article,<sup>90</sup> reconsiders the literature concerning Langland's use of the Liturgy as a structural form in *Piers*, and takes issue with much previous scholarship, particularly Hort, but also Goodridge, Bloomfield and Kirk, who are just some of the eminent critics that Adams ('Liturgy', p.

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<sup>86</sup> See also Margaret Jennings, C.S.J., 'Piers Plowman and Holychurch', *Viator*, 9 (1978), 367-74. Other critics continue to examine *Piers* from a biblical standpoint, although not necessarily through Langland's Vulgate quotations: see, for example, Katherine B. Trower, 'The Figure of Hunger in *Piers Plowman*', *The American Benedictine Review*, 24 (1973), 238-60.

<sup>87</sup> Joseph S. Wittig, 'Piers Plowman': Concordance: Will's Vision of 'Piers Plowman', Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best (London; New York: The Athlone Press, 2001).

<sup>88</sup> Joseph S. Wittig, 'Piers Plowman' B, Passus IX-XII: Elements in the Design of the Inward Journey', *Traditio*, 28 (1972), 211-80 (p. 278). Wittig refers to Psalm 22, and delineates the exegetical position thus expanding the critical argument.

<sup>89</sup> Stephen A. Barney, 'The Plowshare of the Tongue: the Progress of a Symbol from the Bible to *Piers Plowman*', *Mediaeval Studies*, 35 (1973), 261-93. See also David Aers, '*Piers Plowman*' and *Christian Allegory* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975). Aers distinguishes between the theory and practice of exegesis and categorically refutes Robertson and Huppé's argument as set out in *Scriptural Tradition*.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Adams, 'Langland and the Liturgy Revisited', *Studies in Philology*, 73:3 (1976), 266-84.

267) targets with the accusation of ‘overstated truisms’ regarding the effect of the Liturgy on the poem. Adams (‘Liturgy’, p. 266) writes:

Over the last two decades, it has become fairly common for studies of *Piers Plowman* to deal with the poem’s apparent lack of structure by alluding suggestively to the influence of the liturgical calendar as a principle of design.

One trigger for such interest was the exploration of sources for Langland’s biblical tags, and the endeavour ‘to make sense of Langland’s seemingly haphazard quotations’<sup>91</sup> which ‘come in differing degrees of ambiguity’.<sup>92</sup> Adams (‘Liturgy’, p. 280) is surprised to find ‘how seldom Langland’s use of or reaction to a scripture text parallels the exegesis of the homilies’. In his consideration of the number of Langland’s quotations which might have come from the Breviary, Adams (‘Liturgy’, p. 276) deems that ‘in the overwhelming majority of these cases, there is nothing to rule out their having been taken *from the Vulgate itself* [my italics]. In addition, the poet’s scriptural use indicates to Adams (‘Liturgy’, p. 280) that Langland can employ Bible quotations ‘for very literal and sometimes almost banal purposes’. Adams was unable to determine whether the Liturgy in the form of the Breviary or even the Missal overly influenced Langland’s construction of *Piers*.<sup>93</sup> This thesis would argue that all such sources (as well as exegesis) are founded in the Bible, and the Bible as a starting point for examination of *Piers* is fruitful.

The late 1970s produced a flood of important *Piers* criticism and research.<sup>94</sup> John

A. Alford’s interest in the role of the quotations affected views about both the work’s

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<sup>91</sup> Adams, ‘Liturgy’, p. 270. Adams refers to Hort’s work in this instance.

<sup>92</sup> Adams, ‘Liturgy’, p. 276.

<sup>93</sup> The poem’s structure was a prime influence on research at this juncture. See, for example, A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Claud A. Thompson, ‘Structural, Figurative, and Thematic Trinities in *Piers Plowman*’, *Mosaic*, 9:2 (1976), 105-14. Thompson argues that the Trinity underlies the poem’s organisation which turns on the number three and its multiples.

<sup>94</sup> J.A.W. Bennett publishes an edition. J.A.W. Bennett, ed. with notes and glossary, William Langland, *Piers Plowman: the Prologue and Passus I-VII of the B text as found in Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 581* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

structure and content.<sup>95</sup> Alford writes about ‘the poem’s actual appearance on the printed page’:<sup>96</sup>

Thus, even before we begin reading, we are impelled to ask: “What is the relation between the quotations and the rest of the poem?” In my view, this question is more pertinent than any other to the art of *Piers Plowman*.<sup>97</sup>

Alford continued to attempt to expand these thoughts (and this thesis is in no small way indebted to the perceptive nature of his work). Alford (‘Role’, p. 81) analyses Robertson and Huppé’s formative book, and expands on their conclusion that the ‘verbal concordance [was] a structural principle in Passus III’.<sup>98</sup> As Alford points out, Robertson and Huppé only mention *concordia verborum* in a single footnote, and, for them, Passus III appears to be an isolated example of concordance use. Alford (‘Role’, p. 81) considers that ‘there is an extraordinary amount of verbal concordance in the poem, but we will see it only if we read the quotations properly’. For Alford (‘Role’, p. 82), ‘properly’ ‘presumes a certain amount of scriptural knowledge on the part of the reader’, and the ability to follow Conscience’s observation to Lady Mede that: ‘Ac yow failed a konnyng clerk þat kouþe þe leef han torned.’<sup>99</sup> Alford (‘Role’, p. 82) is absolutely right in that: ‘the whole point of some quotations resides in the “etc.”’: indeed, this thesis stands on that assumption.

Alford was nevertheless asserting a new premise in 1977 that Langland began construction of the poem with the Latin, as a sermon maker. However, this thesis considers that interpretation of *Piers* relies on both English and Latin; that the Vulgate

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<sup>95</sup> Interest in the Latin quotations was not limited to their biblical sources: see Erika C.D. Lindemann, ‘Analogues for Latin Quotations in Langland’s *Piers Plowman*’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 78 (1977), 359-61.

<sup>96</sup> Alford, ‘Role’, p. 80.

<sup>97</sup> Alford, ‘Role’, p. 80.

<sup>98</sup> Alford writes in reference to Robertson and Huppé, *Scriptural Tradition*, p. 71, n. 42.

<sup>99</sup> Alford, ‘Role’, pp. 81-2. See B. III. 347.

contexts add a hidden, unwritten dimension to the poem, and are held in the mind of the reader in a form of poetical exegesis which interweaves with the English and the original Latin to form the whole. Yet Alford ('Role', p. 82) is incorrect to think that people in our age regard the use of biblical concordance as 'artificial or even childish'.<sup>100</sup> Priests use concordances as an aid to composing their sermons even today: moreover, the facility to recall biblical text and contexts from memory is still prevalent amongst Christians.

It would appear that the incessant repetition of texts from sermon collections made 'not only the quotations themselves but even whole clusters of quotations become commonplace'.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, 'the larger scriptural context' cannot be ignored: it is 'an essential part of the meaning of these lines [B. XIV.1-4 cf. Luke 14. 15-24] (and also [...] of the entire passus)'.<sup>102</sup> Alford's concentration on Langland's use of concordances was ground-breaking research. Alford ('Role', p. 96) makes a commendable assertion:

As a general rule, any long stretch of frequent quotations in *Piers Plowman* is a tell-tale sign of the process by which the passage was created. [... The relationship between one quotation and the next] supports and confirms the other. Using Passus XIV as a basis, I have tried to show that the quotations are related to each other *horizontally* (so to speak) and to the English portions of the poem *vertically*; that they are, in fact, the matrix out of which the poetry developed.

This thesis intends to build on Alford's work in both its interpretation of the poem and evaluation of its structure.<sup>103</sup> *Distinctiones* (as well as the Liturgy and patristic commentary), have a significant place in *Piers*, but this thesis argues that Langland's

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<sup>100</sup> I know from personal experience that concordance use for sermon composition is not a lost art.

<sup>101</sup> Alford, 'Role', pp. 84-5.

<sup>102</sup> Alford, 'Role', p. 87.

<sup>103</sup> In this period, Alford's work on Langland's quotations also included identification of their sources. See, for example, John Alexander Alford, 'A Note on *Piers Plowman* B. XVIII. 390: "Til Parce it Hote"', *Modern Philology*, 68-69 (1970-72), 323-25; John A. Alford, 'Some Unidentified Quotations in *Piers Plowman*', *Modern Philology*, 72:4 (May 1975), 390-99. Alford also seeks elucidation of *Piers* directly from the Bible. See John A. Alford, 'Haukyn's Coat: Some Observations on *Piers Plowman* B. XIV. 22-7', *Medium Ævum*, 43:2 (1974), 133-38. For background to other influences surrounding Langland, see *The World of 'Piers Plowman'*, ed. and translated by Jeanne Krochalis and Edward Peters, Middle Ages Series ([Philadelphia]: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

understanding and knowledge of the Bible were even more profound and important than Alford suggests; the ‘real’ not just the ‘verbal’ concord can be seen in scriptural contexts as well as in the verbal families of the concordances.<sup>104</sup>

Several critics from the 1970s continued to explore Langland not just through the poet’s knowledge of *distinctiones* and the Bible but using the poet’s understanding of the Liturgy and biblical commentaries: for example, Raymond St-Jacques and Thomas D.

Hill in a profusion of articles.<sup>105</sup> As Hill states:

Again, one problem in contemporary Langland scholarship is how familiar Langland was with patristic and medieval exegesis and how much he was influenced by it. The fact that he uses the phrase in question [‘thre clothes’] casually, as if he expected his readers to understand, suggests that in this instance at least Langland presumes that he and his readers shared a common knowledge of the ‘language’ of exegesis.<sup>106</sup>

Hill recognises the significance of Langland’s assumptions about audience

understanding, and, in this article, uses it to prove that ‘Langland was a very skilful and a very careful as well as a very great poet.’<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> ‘When the words of the material being divided [example of *gloria* given] and those of the divisions appear in the authorities, and when the meaning of no word is wrenched to make the authority apply, the authorities are said to be in “verbal” and “real” concord with the division. When the ideas of theme and division appear in the authorities, but the words do not, the authorities are said to be in “real” concord only.’ Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, edited from British Museum MS. Royal 18 B. xxiii, EETS, Original Series, 209 (London; New York; Toronto: published for EETS by Oxford University Press, 1960), p. xlvii. This thesis will discuss these issues when appropriate but particularly in chapter five.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Raymond St-Jacques, ‘Langland’s Bells of the Resurrection and the Easter Liturgy’, *English Studies in Canada*, 3:2 (1977), 129-35; St-Jacques, “‘Spes’ the Spy”, pp. 483-85; Thomas D. Hill, ‘The Light that Blew the Saints to Heaven: *Piers Plowman* B.V.495-503’, *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 24:96 (October 1973), 444-49; Thomas D. Hill, ‘A Liturgical Allusion in *Piers Plowman* B. XVI. 88: *Filius, bi the Fader Wille and frenesse of Spiritus Sancti*’, *Notes and Queries*, 220:12 (December 1975), 531-32.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas D. Hill, ‘Christ’s “Thre Clothes”’: *Piers Plowman* C.XI.193’, *Notes and Queries*, c.s., 223 (n.s., 25):6 (June 1978), 200-203 (pp. 202-3). Hill (p. 203) observes that Langland was not muddled or unclear, but ‘meant precisely what he said’: it is our modern lack of understanding that makes *Piers* seem confused. The long, erudite sermons from the Victorian period must also have assumed the capacity of the hearers to understand.

<sup>107</sup> Hill, ‘Christ’s “Thre Clothes”’, p. 203. Other critics evaluate Langland’s erudition, see C. David Benson, ‘An Augustinian Irony in “Piers Plowman”’, *Notes and Queries*, 221 (February 1976), 51-54. Benson (p. 54) considers Langland to have profound knowledge and expected the same from his audience:

Langland's recognition of his audience's knowledge argues the case that the poet composed *Piers* deliberately: that the poem's poetics were not created in any casual manner. For the argument in this thesis, such intentional and purposeful composition is crucial. That 1978 was a significant year for editions reflects not only the expansion of *Piers* studies, but the esteem in which the poet was coming (and continues) to be held.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, Daniel Maher Murtaugh's examination of how the '*imago dei*' features *Piers* illustrates the direction of criticism.<sup>109</sup> Yet, although Murtaugh investigates Langland's use of the Bible and the commentaries, he does not dwell on the quotations themselves or their contexts.<sup>110</sup> Robert Adams also continues to evaluate the importance of biblical knowledge in the exploration of *Piers*.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, Christian theology and Langland come together in Lawrence Clopper's erudite and well-argued article: another demonstration of late 1970s interest in Christian beliefs in relation to the poet.<sup>112</sup>

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'Langland has a sophisticated knowledge of a difficult patristic work and is presumably writing for others at least some of whom were equally well-read'.

<sup>108</sup> William Langland, *Piers Plowman: the C-Text*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (London: Edward Arnold, 1978; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994). Pearsall has more recently brought out a revised version: William Langland, *Piers Plowman: a New Annotated Edition of the C-Text* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008). See also Schmidt, *Vision*, 1978, 1995. Kane and Donaldson's B-text edition was published a few years earlier: '*Piers Plowman*': the B Version. *Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best*, an edition in the form of Trinity College Cambridge MS.B.15.17, corrected and restored from the known evidence, with variant readings, ed. by George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, revised edn (London: The Athlone Press; Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1975, 1988). Skeat's editions were continuously republished throughout the twentieth century: notably 1906, 1924, 1940, 1961, and 1972.

<sup>109</sup> Daniel Maher Murtaugh, '*Piers Plowman*' and the Image of God (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1978).

<sup>110</sup> For an example of Murtaugh's discussion on the Bible quotations, see Murtaugh, '*Image of God*', pp. 113-14.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Adams, 'The Nature of Need in *Piers Plowman* XX', *Traditio*, 34 (1978), 273-301. See especially pp. 281-301 for Adams' discussion of Bible commentary on the interpretation of Need in *Piers*.

<sup>112</sup> Lawrence M. Clopper, 'Langland's Trinitarian Analogies as Key to Meaning and Structure', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s., 9 (1979), 87-110. Clopper examines Christian imagery and trilogies in the Fathers.

Jill Mann recognises that the Bible was ‘clearly fundamental to [Langland’s] thought’ even when the poet does not quote directly from the Bible.<sup>113</sup> Mann (‘Eating’, p. 36) writes:

It is not necessary to assume that Langland was or ever had been a monk [...] to envisage his being familiar with the notion thus described [that of *ruminatio* on sacred texts by monks], and his having memorized and contemplated many passages of scripture in this way. His poem itself makes clear that Langland had meditated on a large number of biblical texts – and also on their relationship to each other, so that one text called another to mind in a manner that habitual contemplation and study of the Bible made natural.

In identifying Langland’s skill in this type of ruminating meditation, Mann displays great understanding of Langland’s thought processes. Her assessment of how Langland holds biblical texts in his mind, ‘juxtaposing them with another scriptural text’, is prescient:<sup>114</sup>

Such texts provide a sort of ‘hidden structure’ in the poem, organizing and articulating its development – or at the very least, they are nodal points which serve to generate and concentrate its ideas.<sup>115</sup>

Such comments are to be recommended and, in her assessment, Mann comes closer to the position of this thesis than most critics; Mann’s sensitive understanding of Langland’s knowledge and use of the Bible can seldom be evidenced in the majority of criticism. However, as this thesis hopes to prove, Langland’s Bible use is far more intricate, deep and far-reaching than even Mann would allow.

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<sup>113</sup> Jill Mann, ‘Eating and Drinking in *Piers Plowman*’, *Essays and Studies*, n.s., 32 (1979), 26-43 (pp. 29-30).

<sup>114</sup> Mann, ‘Eating’, p. 43.

<sup>115</sup> Mann, ‘Eating’, p. 38. Mann refers here to the possibility of Langland’s rumination on Mt. 4.4; Lc. 4.4 with regard to the dinner passage in Passus XIII (B. XIII. 21-176). For this monastic technique, see also Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a Study of Monastic Culture*, translated by Catherine Misrahi, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961, 1974, 1982), especially pp. 72-75.

## 1.7 Criticism in the 1980s

As the abundant studies and inspirational collections of essays published in the 1980s demonstrate, *Piers* scholarship flourished.<sup>116</sup> Critics continued to debate areas of *Piers* seen to be problematical like the Pardon scene.<sup>117</sup> Theological matters such as the discussions concerning ‘Dowel’ were ongoing during this period,<sup>118</sup> but the burgeoning interest in *Piers* research was evidenced not least by the advent of *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* in 1987.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, Vincent DiMarco’s reference guide made

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<sup>116</sup> For some examples of studies, see David Aers, *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination* (London; Boston, Massachusetts; Henley, Oxon: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), especially pp. 1-79; David Aers, ‘Reflections on the “Allegory of the Theologians”, Ideology and *Piers Plowman*’, in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. by David Aers (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), pp. 58-73; David Aers, *Community, Gender and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988), especially Aers’ chapter: ‘*Piers Plowman*, Poverty, Work, and Community, Gender, and Individual Identity’, pp. 20-72; John M. Bowers, *The Crisis of Will in ‘Piers Plowman’* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986); Janet Coleman, ‘*Piers Plowman*’ and the ‘Moderni’ (Roma: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1981); A.V.C. Schmidt, *The Clerkly Maker: Langland’s Poetic Art*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, IV (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987); Myra Stokes, *Justice and Mercy in ‘Piers Plowman’: a Reading of the B Text Visio* (London; Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984); Hugh White, *Nature and Salvation in ‘Piers Plowman’*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, VI (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988). For examples of essay collections, see *A Companion to ‘Piers Plowman’*, ed. by John A. Alford (Berkeley, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1988); *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988); *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell*, ed. by Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1986). Burrow also reprinted noteworthy articles from previous decades: see Burrow, *Essays*, 1984. A special volume of Elizabeth Salter’s essays demonstrates a lifetime of medieval scholarship – not least on *Piers*. Elizabeth Salter, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*, ed. by Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, Rosemary Woolf, ‘The Tearing of the Pardon’, in *Critical Approaches*, ed. by Hussey, pp. 50-75, reprinted in Rosemary Woolf, *Art and Doctrine: Essays in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Heather O’Donoghue (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), pp. 131-86. See also Denise N. Baker, ‘From Plowing to Penitence: *Piers Plowman* and Fourteenth-Century Theology’, *Speculum*, 55:4 (October 1980), 715-25.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Lawrence M. Clopper, ‘The Contemplative Matrix of *Piers Plowman* B’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 46:1 (1985), 3-28; Marie Collins, ‘Will and the Penitents: *Piers Plowman* B. X. 420-35’, in *Sources and Relations: Studies in Honour of J.E. Cross*, ed. by Marie Collins, Jocelyn Price and Andrew Hamer (Leeds: University of Leeds, School of English, 1985), pp. 290-308; Philomena O’Driscoll, ‘The Dowel Debate in *Piers Plowman* B’, *Medium Ævum*, 50 (1981), 18-29. Matters of theology and mysticism increased in popularity during the period: for example, the Medieval Mystical Tradition Symposiums began in 1980: see, for example, A. P. Baldwin, ‘The Tripartite Reformation of the Soul in *The Scale of Perfection, Pearl* and *Piers Plowman*’, in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium III. Papers read at Dartington Hall, July 1984*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1984), pp. 136-49.

<sup>119</sup> D.S. Brewer began to publish the *Piers Plowman Studies* Series in 1981: see Anna P. Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in ‘Piers Plowman’*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, I (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981). See also Anne Middleton, ‘*Piers Plowman*’, in Albert E. Hartung, ed., *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*,

academic research easier;<sup>120</sup> and the controversial Z-text edition was thought-provoking.<sup>121</sup> Penn R. Szittyá and Wendy Scase provoked debate.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, research on fourteenth-century heresies widened views and re-instigated discussion on Langland and Lollardy.<sup>123</sup>

Judson Boyce Allen began to build on Alford's seminal work, and investigate Langland's Bible use.<sup>124</sup> Allen's work will be discussed in more detail in chapter two below, but suffice to say at this stage that, as Allen ('Reading', p. 343) puts it: 'it seems by now a presumption of criticism that Langland thought in concordances and *distinctiones*'.<sup>125</sup> Siegfried Wenzel explains concordance use:

In late medieval preaching, "concordance" had become a major technique of "inventing" material for the sermon and developing it; a preacher would amplify his points with the help of scriptural and other "authorities" which contained the

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1050-1500, by members of the Middle English Group of the Modern Language Association of America, 11 vols (New Haven, Connecticut: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967-2005), vol. 7, (1986), pp. 2211-2234. "Based upon A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1400, by John Edwin Wells, New Haven, 1916, and supplements 1-9, 1919-1951", J. Burke Severs, general editor (vols 1-2), Albert E. Hartung, general editor (vols 3-10); Peter J. Beidler, general editor (vol. 11).

<sup>120</sup> DiMarco, *Reference*, (1982).

<sup>121</sup> William Langland. '*Piers Plowman*': *the Z Version*, ed. by A.G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer, Studies and Texts, 59 (Toronto, Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983).

<sup>122</sup> Penn R. Szittyá, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986); Wendy Scase, '*Piers Plowman* and the New Anticlericalism', *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>123</sup> Pamela Gradon, *Langland and the Ideology of Dissent*, Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, read 16 October 1980 (London: The Proceedings of the British Academy, 66, 1980; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 179-205; Pamela Gradon, ed., *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Anne Hudson's work had been flourishing prior to the 1980s: see, for example, Anne Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), but see also Anne Hudson, ed., *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Anne Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books* (London; Ronceverte: Hambledon Press, 1985), especially chapter seven: 'A Lollard Mass', pp. 111-23; Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); D.A. Lawton, 'Lollardy and the "Piers Plowman" Tradition', *Modern Language Review*, 76:4 (1981), 780-93; Christina von Nolcken, '*Piers Plowman*, the Wycliffites, and *Pierce the Plowman's Creed*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 2 (1988), 71-102. For a summation of Langland's influence, see Anne Hudson, 'Epilogue: the Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', in *Companion*, ed. by Alford, pp. 251-66.

<sup>124</sup> See especially Allen, *Ethical Poetic*, pp. 275-83, 287; Judson Boyce Allen, 'Langland's Reading and Writing: *Detractor* and the Pardon Passus', *Speculum*, 59:2 (April 1984), 342-62.

<sup>125</sup> Allen ('Reading', p. 343) also considered that Langland owned a Bible, or at least part of one. For further background reading, see Christina von Nolcken, 'Some Alphabetical Compendia and How Preachers Used Them in Fourteenth-Century England', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 271-88.

key word (*concordancia verbalis*) or at least the key idea (*concordancia realis*).<sup>126</sup>

The scholarship of both Alford and Allen influenced many critics.<sup>127</sup>

David C. Fowler's book on the Bible informed scholars of medieval literature on the subject.<sup>128</sup> Margaret E. Goldsmith, a well-respected critic, writes authoritatively and in detail about the way in which Langland uses the Bible and his assumption of audience knowledge.<sup>129</sup> Goldsmith ('Pilgrimage', p. 120) maintains that Langland writes 'for a wide Christian readership'. Goldsmith ('Pilgrimage', p. 120) adds:

[Langland employs] the language of the scriptures as preachers up and down the country were wont to do. The biblical texts come to him caught up in webs of patristic teaching and already imbued with non-literal meaning, of which his more serious and perspicacious readers will need only to be reminded. The parables of the New Testament, instinct with moral and (as then thought) allegorical significance, are a natural source of inspiration; the familiar metaphors from the Epistles can be brought to life, and the 'spiritual' meanings which have accrued to the Psalms present the required contrast between secular and 'inward' understanding.

Few modern scholars can pronounce with such perception. Goldsmith, in her criticism, highlights Langland's *omission* from the Bible text as an aid to interpretation,<sup>130</sup> and recognises that Langland held Bible passages in his mind as he composed the poem.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Siegfried Wenzel, 'Medieval Sermons', in *Companion*, ed. by Alford, pp. 155-72 (p.159).

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, David G. Allen, 'The Dismas *Distinctio* and the Forms of *Piers Plowman* B.10-13', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 3 (1989), 31-48; James F.G. Weldon, 'Gesture of Perception: the Pattern of Kneeling in *Piers Plowman* B.18-19', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 3 (1989), 49-66.

<sup>128</sup> David C. Fowler, *The Bible in Middle English Literature* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1984). See especially chapter five: 'Piers the Plowman as History', pp. 226-96. Yet, Fowler does not discuss Bible contexts in *Piers*.

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Figure of 'Piers Plowman': the Image on the Coin*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, II (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981); Margaret E. Goldsmith, 'Will's Pilgrimage in *Piers Plowman* B', in *Medieval Literature and Antiquities: Studies in Honour of Basil Cottle*, ed. by Myra Stokes and T.L. Burton (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 119-32. Goldsmith's viewpoint values the Fathers and monastic commentary traditions as a way to understand *Piers*: see, for example, Margaret E. Goldsmith, 'Piers' Apples: Some Bernadine Echoes in *Piers Plowman*', in *Sources and Relations*, ed. by Collins, Price and Hamer, pp. 309-25.

<sup>130</sup> Goldsmith, 'Pilgrimage', p. 122.

<sup>131</sup> Goldsmith, 'Pilgrimage', p. 123. Goldsmith also considers *Piers* in the light of the *Glossa Ordinaria*. Goldsmith (*Figure*, p. 93, n. 20) asserts, concerning Alford's 'Role', that the view that 'Langland's biblical quotations create the structural framework of the poem, which the narrative fills out [...] oversimplifies the

Like Goldsmith ('Pilgrimage', p. 121), this thesis will argue that without profound biblical knowledge it seems no wonder that 'some critics' find *Piers* 'to be a somewhat rambling composition'. Yet, although in many senses the Bible clarifies the poem, the current problem remains, not simply of a lack of knowledge, but the reality that such understanding comes from a living, working faith; a total package.

Because Langland's mastery of the Bible was so great, it is to be commended when Goldsmith (Pilgrimage', p. 124) writes:

It can hardly be accident that Scripture's homily to Will also singles out these two commandments from the ten. Some scribes, and the editors, suppose that '*Non mecaberis*' (B. X.364) is a plain error. Though we cannot now be certain of the original reading, I find it easier to credit that Langland is being intolerably cryptic, in his attempt to make Scripture speak 'derkliche', than that he would write *mechaberis* intending *occides* – and repeat the mistake in revising the passage for the B-text.<sup>132</sup>

The original critical point concerning this particular B-text passage is not specific to the present argument,<sup>133</sup> but that Langland can use the Bible to be 'intolerably cryptic' could be viewed as an entirely possible, if not probable, scenario; the need to be politically obscure or enigmatic was becoming imperative in the late fourteenth century. As Goldsmith ('Pilgrimage', p. 122) points out in her reference to 'derkliche', Langland most likely held both I Corinthians 13 and James 1 with their references to 'mirrors' in his mind at one and the same time; certainly Langland made repeated use of these two Epistles and apparently knew them well. Langland's use of the word, *enigmate* could

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matter, but it is not going too far to say that the outline of the conceptual structure came to Langland from Latin material'.

<sup>132</sup> Goldsmith uses Schmidt's edition (*Vision*, 1978).

<sup>133</sup> Langland's use of I Cor. 13 is seen again later in the poem: 'Ac I sei3 hym neuere sooply but as myself in a mirour: / *Hic in enigmate, tunc facie ad faciem.*' (B. XV. 161-62a cf. I Cor. 13. 12).

therefore be considered an ironic pun.<sup>134</sup> Early in the twentieth century, Chadwick (*Social Life*, p. 1) remarks on the need for the impersonal nature of *Piers*:

The loosely connected allegory enabled the writer to attack abuses he would not have dared to mention openly. Direct satire of great persons in Church and State would have been disastrous to him.

The import of this statement will be re-examined in chapter six.

The 1980s (like the 1970s) saw a number of critics examining *Piers* through many aspects of Christian influence: Bible scholarship,<sup>135</sup> Commentary,<sup>136</sup> Liturgy<sup>137</sup> and

<sup>134</sup> Vulgate: 'videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem nunc cognosco ex parte tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum' [We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face. Now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known.] (I Cor. 13. 12). As Goldsmith considers that Langland thought of both passages, see also James. Vulgate: 'quia si quis auditor est verbi et non factor hic comparabitur viro consideranti vultum nativitatis suae in speculo consideravit enim se et abiit et statim oblitus est qualis fuerit' [For if a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself and went his way and presently forgot what manner of man he was.] (Iac. 1. 23-24).

<sup>135</sup> See, for example, Sister Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Kynde Knowyng as a Middle English Equivalent for "Wisdom" in *Piers Plowman B*', *Medium Ævum*, 50:1 (1981), 5-17; Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Piers Plowman and the Books of Wisdom', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 2 (1988), 23-33; Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., *A Game of Heuene: Word Play and the Meaning of 'Piers Plowman' B*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, VII (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989). Other research published at this time, for example, John Bossy, 'The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700', *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), 29-61 gives useful Christian background for *Piers* studies.

<sup>136</sup> From Skeat onwards, critics have connected *Piers* with Biblical commentary: see, for example, J.A.W. Bennett, 'Langland's Samaritan', *Poetica*, 12 (1981), 10-27; Bruce Harbert, 'Truth, Love and Grace in the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*', in *Literature in Fourteenth-Century England: the J.A.W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Perugia, 1981-1982*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Tübingen: G. Narr; Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 33-48. James Simpson considers that Langland must have had access to Augustine's *De Trinitate*: see James Simpson, "'Et Vidit Deus Cogitationes Eorum': a Parallel Instance and Possible Source for Langland's Use of a Biblical Formula at '*Piers Plowman*' B.XV.200a", *Notes and Queries*, 231 (March 1986), 9-13. For other examples, see Nick Gray, 'Langland's Quotations from the Penitential Tradition', *Modern Philology*, 84 (August 1986), 53-60; A.V.C. Schmidt, 'Langland's "Book of Conscience" and Alanus de Insulis', *Notes and Queries*, 227 (December 1982), 482-84; A.V.C. Schmidt, 'Langland, Chrysostom and Bernard: a Complex Echo', *Notes and Queries*, 228 (April 1983), 108-10; Penn R. Szittyá, 'The Trinity in Langland and Abelard', in *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske*, ed. by Arthur Groos, et al (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), pp. 207-16. For an alternative view that attests to Langland's originality, see David G. Hale, "'The Glose was Gloriously Written": the Textuality of Langland's Good Samaritan', *Proceedings of the PMR Conference*, 14 (1989), 127-34. Hales ('Glose', p. 133) writes: 'In *Piers Plowman*, the gloss gloriously written is not that of the theologians, but the glorious poetry of William Langland'.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Thomas D. Hill, 'When God Blew Satan Out of Heaven: the Motif of Exsufflation in *Vercelli Homily XIX* and later English Literature', *Leeds Studies in English*, 16 (1985), 132-41; M. Teresa Tavormina, '*Piers Plowman* and the Liturgy of St. Lawrence: Composition and Revision in Langland's Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 84:3 (Summer 1987), 245-71; M.F. Vaughan, 'The Liturgical Perspectives of *Piers Plowman B*, XVI-XIX', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3 (1980), 87-155; Weldon, 'Gesture of Perception', pp. 57-65. Tavormina (*Liturgy*, p. 259) draws attention to liturgical influences in

sermons. Therefore, the examination of Langland's sources continued as an important issue. Wenzel ('Medieval Sermons', p. 156) lucidly asserts: '[t]here is no doubt that in both its substance and its form *Piers* owes much to medieval exegesis of the Bible'.

Wenzel, following Owst, goes on to argue for the essential central place of sermon study,<sup>138</sup> and seeks to demonstrate how understanding sermon instruction might elucidate *Piers* for present-day audiences.<sup>139</sup> Much contemporary research has been needed to rectify the problem of modern perplexity concerning many different aspects of medieval Christian life.

Adams seems well aware of the importance of Langland's Bible use:

Certainly, Langland's repeated subtleties in the use of scriptural allusions indicates the folly of trying to dictate in advance, by means of an extrinsic rule of modern literary criticism, what he may or may not be allowed to do with them. If we neglect total scriptural contexts in order to satisfy an overly fastidious concept of the textual limits of *Piers*, we run the risk of following the example of Meed, who, on reading *omnia probate*, was so well pleased that she failed to pursue the verse to its conclusion.<sup>140</sup>

Alford maintained his research on the quotations,<sup>141</sup> and Donaldson his observation of Langland's diverse skills with words including those from the Bible.<sup>142</sup> Donaldson ('Scriptural Quotations', p. 67) contends that: 'Langland expropriates a text from St. Paul

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*Piers* but also to those 'additional contexts outside the Bible. Psalm 111:9, for instance, is used in a common Latin grace after dinner, a setting which would familiarise the verse'.

<sup>138</sup> Wenzel, 'Medieval Sermons', p. 157.

<sup>139</sup> Wenzel, 'Medieval Sermons', pp. 163-64.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Adams, 'Some Versions of the Apocalypse: Learned and Popular Eschatology in *Piers Plowman*', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol. 28 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 194-236 (p. 225). Adams also demonstrates interest in Langland's theology: see, for example, Robert Adams, 'Piers's Pardon and Langland's Semi-Pelagianism', *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 367-418; Robert Adams, 'Langland's Theology', in *Companion*, ed. by Alford, pp. 87-114 (see especially pp. 95-104 for the sections on Grace, Sacraments and Eschatology).

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, John A. Alford, 'More Unidentified Quotations in *Piers Plowman*', *Modern Philology*, 81 (February 1984), 278-85.

<sup>142</sup> E. Talbot Donaldson, 'Langland and Some Scriptural Quotations', in *The Wisdom of Poetry in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel, Medieval Institute Publications (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University, 1982), pp. 67-72.

in order to give himself authority for putting forth a theological doctrine that totters on the border of orthodoxy'. Langland liked wordplay, the 'twisting of syntax',<sup>143</sup> and also to 'exploit the potentialities of language in order to give a text an added or somewhat different meaning'.<sup>144</sup> Donaldson's statements re-enforce this present argument that Langland's knowledge of the Bible and control over his use of biblical material allowed the poet the freedom to develop his ideas, to exploit the sacred text to deliver controversial even dangerous ideas. Donaldson ('Scriptural Quotations', p. 71) came to recognise that:

Langland's biblical quotations are generally understandable in context, though at times, [...] they also perform an important function in giving structure to the poem by verbal concordance.<sup>145</sup>

Like Donaldson, E. Peter Nolan investigated Langland's language use; how Latin and English 'intertwine'.<sup>146</sup> Helen Barr realised that Langland's employment of Bible quotations should be considered essential to the understanding of structure and interpretation in *Piers*. In an influential article, Barr displays rare insight into a number of issues concerning Langland's use of the Latin quotations.<sup>147</sup> Barr's discussion about the quotations' change of purpose in Passus XVIII is illuminating, and illustrates how Langland's familiarity with the Bible and the Liturgy (and supreme command of the

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<sup>143</sup> Donaldson, 'Scriptural Quotations', p. 69.

<sup>144</sup> Donaldson, 'Scriptural Quotations', p. 68. See also Davlin, *Game of Heuene*, 1989; R.A. Shoaf, "'Speche þat spire is of grace": a Note on *Piers Plowman* B. 9. 104', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 1 (1987), 128-33.

<sup>145</sup> Donaldson comes to realise the importance of the biblical quotations: in his earlier work (for example, *C-text*, 1949), the critic does not consider their relevance.

<sup>146</sup> E. Peter Nolan, 'Beyond Macaronic: Embedded Latin in Dante and Langland', in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis: Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Bologna 26 August-1 September 1979*, ed. by R.J. Schoeck, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 37 (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1985), pp. 539-48 (p. 546).

<sup>147</sup> Helen Barr, 'The Use of Latin Quotations in *Piers Plowman* with Special Reference to Passus XVIII of the 'B' Text', *Notes and Queries*, 231 (December 1986), 440-48.

material) allowed him to adapt it to the highest creative advantage. However, Barr ('Use', p. 440) writes:

Quotations from Latin texts are used all the way through *Piers Plowman*. For the most part they are used as authorities to support, overturn, refute, or clinch arguments within the poem.

This statement might be augmented: the *contexts* of the quotations are of no less importance in that they form their own authority and argument. Yet Barr ('Use', p. 441) does comment on how Langland may hold 'a particular biblical context in mind', and uses this biblical context in the vernacular: thereby displaying the importance of the biblical contexts to the poem. Indeed, Barr ('Use', p. 441) states further:

The wider context of a biblical passage can often add breadth of meaning to a passage in *Piers* or even elucidate a somewhat tenuous line of argument. [...] That Langland expected the context of a quotation to be recalled can be seen from his customary habit of quoting a half-line, leaving the rest to be supplied.<sup>148</sup>

However, despite the significance of Barr's assertion and the recognition of the place that the Bible contexts hold in the poem, she has taken the argument on biblical circumstance no further, and does not examine all the quotations' context in detail. This thesis hopes to resolve this small omission.

## 1.8 Criticism in the 1990s

The 1990s sees an increase in critical interest in late fourteenth-century mystics in general,<sup>149</sup> and the mystics and Langland in particular.<sup>150</sup> All manner of spirituality is

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<sup>148</sup> Barr cites Thought's use of Phil. 3. 19 (B. IX. 61a) as one example of 'the wider context', and gives as incidence of Langland's practice of quoting only part of a line: B. X. 397a; B. XV. 234a.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. by William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997).

<sup>150</sup> See, for example, *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S.S. Hussey*, ed. by Helen Phillips (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990). See especially Anna P. Baldwin, 'The Triumph of Patience in Julian of Norwich and Langland', pp. 71-83.

examined and evaluated:<sup>151</sup> academics, like Bossy, continue to aid understanding of late-medieval Christian life;<sup>152</sup> and Margaret T. Gibson greatly adds to our knowledge of the *Glossa Ordinaria* and the Bible.<sup>153</sup> Avril Henry looks at biblical imagery in *Piers*,<sup>154</sup> and Anne Savage expands on Mann's concept of scripture and eating.<sup>155</sup> During this decade, Sister Davlin continues to read the poem through the Bible,<sup>156</sup> and other scholars of the Bible also assess Langland's use of scripture: Marjorie Reeves states:

Selecting, out of many, two key personifications, Holy Church and Lady Meed, we see vividly illustrated how Langland draws his images from the Bible. Holy Church descends from the Tower of Truth on the Hill to teach Will. This recalls the 'tabernacle' on the 'holy hill' of Psalms 15 [Vulgate: Psalm 14] or 43 [42] and the Mount of Transfiguration in Luke's Gospel.<sup>157</sup>

Reeves ('Bible', p. 56) points out 'the medieval writer's sense of moral purpose, founded on a scriptural warrant'. Langland's motivation for reform and other influences on *Piers*, such as Joachim of Fiore, is discussed by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton in a development of

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<sup>151</sup> See, for examples, Piero Boitani, and Anna Torti, eds., *Religion in the Poetry and Drama of the Late Middle Ages: the J.A.W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Perugia, 1988* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990); Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: 'Ancrene Wisse' and Associated Works*, translated and introduced by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson; preface by Benedicta Ward (New York; Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991).

<sup>152</sup> See, for example, John Bossy, 'Christian Life in the Later Middle Ages: Prayers', read 15 September 1990, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6:1 (1991), 137-50; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400 - c.1580* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992); Joseph H. Lynch, *The Medieval Church: a Brief History* (London; New York: Longman, 1992).

<sup>153</sup> *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria*: facsimile reprint of the editio princeps of Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81, introduction by Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992). See also Margaret T. Gibson, *The Bible in the Latin West* (Notre Dame, Indiana; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

<sup>154</sup> Avril Henry, 'Some Aspects of Biblical Imagery in *Piers Plowman*', in *Mystics*, ed. by Phillips, pp. 39-55. See also Gillian Rudd, 'The State of the Ark: a Metaphor in Bromyard and *Piers Plowman* B.X.396-401', *Notes and Queries*, 235 (March 1990), 6-10.

<sup>155</sup> Anne Savage, '*Piers Plowman*: the Translation of Scripture and Food for the Soul', *English Studies*, 74 (1993), 209-21.

<sup>156</sup> Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Tower and Tabernacle: the Architecture of Heaven and the Language of Dwelling with/in God in the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 10 (1993), 99-110; Sister Davlin, 'Gospel and First Epistle of John', pp. 89-127.

<sup>157</sup> Marjorie Reeves, 'The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages', in *Reading the Text: Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory*, ed. by Stephen Prickett (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 12-63 (p. 54). Sister Davlin expands extensively on Langland's use of this theme: Davlin, 'Tower and Tabernacle', pp. 99-110.

Bloomfield's stance.<sup>158</sup> In the 1990s, many editions dedicated to eminent researchers evidence the diversity of *Piers* scholarship.<sup>159</sup> *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* brought out a special section devoted to gender studies that demonstrated how the prevailing scrutiny on the body in medieval scholarship overflowed into *Piers* Commentary review.<sup>160</sup> Feminist issues also preoccupy *Piers* scholars in this period.<sup>161</sup>

This is not to say that there was not a continuation of exegetical readings of *Piers*,<sup>162</sup> nor investigation into possible sources, liturgical and otherwise.<sup>163</sup> Alford's outstanding work answered many of the questions that earlier scholars had reviewed concerning the quotations and their origins.<sup>164</sup> Some scholars continue to assess biblical reference in *Piers*. In a carefully considered article, J. J. Anderson examines Langland's use of Bible quotation in detail, and compares the changes that the poet makes to them

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<sup>158</sup> Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and 'Piers Plowman'*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For apocalypticism, see also Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), especially Richard K. Emmerson, 'Introduction: the Apocalypse in Medieval Culture', pp. 293-332, and Penn Szitty, 'Domesday Bokes: the Apocalypse in Medieval English Literary Culture', pp. 374-97; M. Teresa Tavormina, 'The Chilling of Charity: Eschatological Allusions and Revisions in *Piers Plowman* C.16-17', in *Art and Context in Late Medieval English Narrative: Essays in Honor of Robert Worth Frank, Jr.*, ed. by Robert R. Edwards (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 51-77.

<sup>159</sup> See, for examples, Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, eds., *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Richard G. Newhauser and John A. Alford, eds., *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995); Mícheál F. Vaughan, ed., *Suche Werkis to Werke: Essays on 'Piers Plowman' in Honor of David C. Fowler* (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1993).

<sup>160</sup> See *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 12 (1998). See, for example, Andrew Galloway, 'Intellectual Pregnancy, Metaphysical Femininity, and the Social Doctrine of the Trinity in *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 12 (1998), 117-52.

<sup>161</sup> See, for one example, Colette Murphy, 'Lady Holy Church and Meed the Maid: Re-envisioning Female Personifications in *Piers Plowman*', in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: the Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. by Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 140-64.

<sup>162</sup> For one example, see John A. Alford, 'Langland's Exegetical Drama: the Sources of the Banquet Scene in *Piers Plowman*', in *Literature and Religion*, ed. by Newhauser and Alford, pp. 97-117.

<sup>163</sup> See, for examples on the liturgy as source material: Bruce Harbert, 'Langland's Easter', in *Mystics*, ed. by Phillips, pp. 57-70. On medieval treatises as sources, see, for example, Joan Heiges Blythe, 'Sins of the Tongue and Rhetorical Prudence in *Piers Plowman*', in *Literature and Religion*, ed. by Newhauser and Alford, pp. 119-42.

<sup>164</sup> Alford, *Guide*, 1992. James W. Marchand also published on quotation sources: see James W. Marchand, 'An Unidentified Latin Quote in *Piers Plowman*', *Modern Philology*, 88 (1990-91), 398-400.

between the different versions of the poem.<sup>165</sup> However, Anderson does not consider their Bible context. Intertextuality, the issue of the interrelation between Langland's use of Latin and the English, is discussed by Dieter Mehl, whose article draws heavily on previous scholarship.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, the Bible itself continues to inspire research;<sup>167</sup> and Wycliffite sermons, particularly, generate much interrelated Langland study from the editions of *English Wycliffite Sermons*.<sup>168</sup> Other sermon collections also yield academic reward.<sup>169</sup>

In the 1990s, James Simpson publishes his first *Introduction*,<sup>170</sup> and evaluates medieval views on satire;<sup>171</sup> while Pamela Raabe examines the different stance on

<sup>165</sup> J.J. Anderson, 'Some Aspects of Scriptural Quotation in 'Piers Plowman': Lady Holy Church', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, vol. 77: 3 (Autumn 1995), 19-30.

<sup>166</sup> Dieter Mehl, 'Piers Plowman and Intertextuality', *Poetica*, 32 (1990), 8-24. In the 1990s research on other aspects of language results in two important studies on *Piers*. See Helen Barr, *Signes and Sothe: Language in the 'Piers Plowman' Tradition*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, X (Cambridge, [England]; Rochester, New York: Brewer, 1994); Gillian Rudd, *Managing Language in 'Piers Plowman'*, *Piers Plowman Studies*, IX (Cambridge, [England]; Rochester, New York: Brewer, 1994).

<sup>167</sup> See, for examples, Michael P. Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song: the Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), especially chapter six, 'William Langland, Radical Psalmist', pp. 189-215; Theodore L. Steinberg, 'Piers Plowman' and Prophecy: an Approach to the C-Text, *Garland Studies in Medieval Literature*, 5 (New York; London: Garland, 1991).

<sup>168</sup> Anne Hudson's work on heresy, which began in the 1960s, blossomed through the decades. The series of *English Wycliffite Sermons*, edited with Pamela Gradon, continued into the 1990s: see Anne Hudson, ed., *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); vols IV and V, ed. by Pamela Gradon and Anne Hudson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, eds., *Heresy and Literacy, 1000 – 1530*, *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*, 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>169</sup> See, for example, H. Leith Spencer and Siegfried Wenzel's work on sermons which has also enabled *Piers* scholarship: H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Siegfried Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons: Bilingualism and Preaching in Late Medieval England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994). See also Lawrence Warner, 'Jesus the Jousting Knight and Medieval Theories of Atonement in *Piers Plowman* and the "Round Table" Sermons', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 10 (1996), 129-43.

<sup>170</sup> James Simpson, *'Piers Plowman': an Introduction to the B-Text* (London; New York: Longman, 1990); but see also James Simpson, *'Piers Plowman': an Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007).

<sup>171</sup> James Simpson, 'The Constraints of Satire in *Piers Plowman* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*', in *Mystics*, ed. by Phillips, pp. 11-30.

paradox in Langland's period.<sup>172</sup> A new edition to the C-text instigates debate,<sup>173</sup> and another bibliography stimulates research:<sup>174</sup> all witness the force of Langland studies.

### 1.9 Criticism from 2000 to Date:

Through this new century's decade, Sister Davlin continues to publish prolifically on Langland: an article on spirituality;<sup>175</sup> a book on the place of God in *Piers*;<sup>176</sup> an article with an intriguing slant on *Piers* Commentary studies;<sup>177</sup> articles on the Holy Spirit,<sup>178</sup> and devotional postures;<sup>179</sup> and, in 2009, a chapter on Langland in the Blackwell *Companion*.<sup>180</sup> Other writers also demonstrate interest in spiritual themes.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Pamela Raabe, *Imitating God: the Allegory of Faith in 'Piers Plowman' B* (Athens, Georgia; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1990). Britton J. Harwood examines belief in *Piers*: Britton J. Harwood, *'Piers Plowman' and the Problem of Belief* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

<sup>173</sup> [William Langland], *Piers Plowman: the C version: Will's visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best / an edition in the form of Huntington Library MS HM 143, corrected and restored from the known evidence, with variant readings ed. by George Russell and George Kane* (London; Berkeley, California: Athlone Press: University of California Press, 1997). Two translations of the poem were also published in the 1990s: E. Talbot Donaldson, *William Langland, Will's Vision of 'Piers Plowman': an Alliterative Verse Translation*, edited, introduced, and annotated by Elizabeth D. Kirk and Judith H. Anderson (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1990); George Economou, *William Langland's 'Piers Plowman': the C Version, a Verse Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

<sup>174</sup> Derek Pearsall, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Langland* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990). General interest in the fourteenth century in the 1990s resulted in the publication of histories useful for research: W.M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England, 1327-1377* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1990); Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>175</sup> Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'The Spirituality of *Piers Plowman*: a New Look', *New Blackfriars*, 81:949 (2000), 124-28.

<sup>176</sup> Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., *The Place of God in 'Piers Plowman' and Medieval Art* (Aldershot; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>177</sup> Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Piers Plowman as Biblical Commentary', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 20 (2003), 85-94.

<sup>178</sup> Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'The Kindness of God: the Holy Spirit in *Piers Plowman*', *Spirituality*, 10 (2004), 275-79.

<sup>179</sup> Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Devotional Postures in *Piers Plowman B*, with an Appendix on Divine Postures', *The Chaucer Review*, 42:2 (2007), 161-79.

<sup>180</sup> Sister Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'William Langland', in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*, ed. by Rebecca Lemon, et al (Chichester; Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 116-33. Sister Davlin, in two of these works ('Commentary' and 'William Langland'), pays particular attention to biblical contexts in her estimation of Langland's Bible use.

<sup>181</sup> See, for example, David Aers, 'The Sacrament of the Altar in *Piers Plowman* and the Late Medieval Church in England', in *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image*, ed. by Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University

Wycliffite topics maintain a focus;<sup>182</sup> and Hudson's recent *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif's Writings* illustrates again her dedication to academic study.<sup>183</sup> Such research has inspired many critics, not least Andrew Cole and Fiona Somerset, who continue to look at Langland through the eyes of Lollard scholarship.<sup>184</sup> Single-topic books on the poem,<sup>185</sup> and essay collections also augment *Piers* studies.<sup>186</sup> The Penn

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Press, 2002), pp. 63-80; Charlotte Clutterbuck, *Encounters with God in Medieval and Early Modern English Poetry* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2005). The interpretation of 'Kynde' remains of interest to *Piers* scholars. See, for example, Nicolette Zeeman, 'The Condition of Kynde', in *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. by David Aers (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 1-30. Research on medieval sermons continues. See Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Late Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Siegfried Wenzel, *Preaching in the Age of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation*, Medieval Texts in Translation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

<sup>182</sup> Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). In 2003, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* devotes a complete series to Lollardy: see, for example, Derek Pearsall, 'Langland and Lollardy: from B to C', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 7-23. David Aers revisits the ongoing topic of poverty: David Aers, 'John Wyclif: Poverty and the Poor', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 55-72.

<sup>183</sup> Anne Hudson, *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif's Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). See also Anne Hudson, 'Langland and Lollardy?', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 93-105. Hudson's great contribution to scholarship is acknowledged in a special edition. See *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. by Helen Barr and Ann. M. Hutchinson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). For background on Lollardy, see also Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's 'Festial': Orthodoxy, Lollardy, and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006); Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 45 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>184</sup> See Andrew Cole, 'William Langland and the Invention of Lollardy', in *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003); Andrew Cole, 'William Langland's Lollardy', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 23-54; Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 71 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Cole devotes chapters two and three to Langland, and has strong ideas: he writes in the Preface that 'far from eschewing Wycliffism out of fear of censorship or partisan distaste, [Langland] viewed Wycliffite ideas as a distinctly new intellectual resource'. See Fiona Somerset, 'Expanding the Langlandian Canon: Radical Latin and the Stylistics of Reform', Special Section: Langland and Lollardy, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 73-92; Fiona Somerset, 'Wycliffite Spirituality', in *Text and Controversy*, ed. by Barr and Hutchinson, pp. 375-86.

<sup>185</sup> See Nicolette Zeeman, '*Piers Plowman* and the Medieval Discourse of Desire', Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 59 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See also Lawrence M. Clopper, '*Songes of Rechelesnesse*': *Langland and the Franciscans* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007); Anne M. Scott, '*Piers Plowman* and the Poor' (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004). Both these books reintroduce and expand earlier research, see, for example, Scase, *New Anticlericalism* (1989) and Szittyá, *Antifraternal* (1986); Derek Pearsall, 'Poverty and Poor People in *Piers Plowman*', in *Medieval English Studies*, ed. by Kennedy, Waldron and Wittig, pp. 167-85. For further discussion of antifraternalism, see G. Geltner, 'Brethren Behaving Badly: a Deviant Approach to Medieval Antifraternalism', *Speculum*. 85:1 (January 2010), 47-64.

commentaries begin to feature as an aid to research;<sup>187</sup> the appearance of the excellent *Piers Plowman* electronic archive,<sup>188</sup> and A.V.C. Schmidt's commentary volume boost scholars' appreciation of the poem.<sup>189</sup>

Critics, other than Davlin, continue to examine *Piers* through the Bible: Thomas

D. Hill augments Bloomfield's famous phrase when he writes:

[...] Langland's language is so deeply biblical – the meaning of the word [in this instance] *caro* for him is defined by biblical usage rather than by the conventions of secular Latin. Langland is a poet who revered speech as the gift of God and for him the metaphors of the Latin Bible bore deep authority. The word *caro* is thus both a Latin word and a biblical allusion, and we cannot fully understand Langland's art unless we understand the allusion as well as its literal meaning.<sup>190</sup>

Hill's comment might be seen to apply also to Langland's use of Vulgate contexts which are intrinsic to the allusion; and their full import we need to understand. If, as William

<sup>186</sup> See, for example, Aers, *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry*, 2000; *William Langland's 'Piers Plowman': a Book of Essays*, ed. by Kathleen M. Hewett-Smith (New York; London: Routledge, 2001). See especially Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., 'Chaucer and Langland as Religious Writers', pp. 119-41.

<sup>187</sup> Andrew Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on 'Piers Plowman'*, vol. 1, C Prologue – Passus 4; B Prologue – Passus 4; A Prologue – Passus 4 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Stephen A. Barney, *The Penn Commentary on 'Piers Plowman'*, vol. 5, C Passūs 20 - 22; B Passūs 18 -20 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

<sup>188</sup> R. Adams, et al, eds., William Langland, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vol. 1, Corpus Christi College, Oxford MS. 201 (F), CD-ROM (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, SEENET, 2000); Thorlac Turville-Petre and Hoyt N. Duggan, eds., William Langland, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.17 (W), CD-ROM (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, SEENET, 2000); Katherine Heinrichs, ed., William Langland, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vol. 3, Oxford, Oriel College, MS 79 (O), CD-ROM (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, for the Medieval Academy of America and SEENET, 2004); Hoyt N. Duggan and Ralph Hanna, eds., William Langland, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vol. 4, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 581 (L), CD-ROM (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, for the Medieval Academy of America and SEENET, 2004); Eric Eliason, Thorlac Turville-Petre and Hoyt N. Duggan, eds.; Patricia R. Bart and M. Gail Duggan, associate eds., William Langland, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vol. 5, London, British Library, MS. Additional 35287 (M), CD-ROM (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, for the Medieval Academy of America and SEENET, 2005); Michael Calabrese, Hoyt N. Duggan and Thorlac Turville-Petre, eds., William Langland, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vol. 6, San Marino, Huntington Library Hm 128 (Hm, Hm2), CD-ROM (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, for the Medieval Academy of America and SEENET, 2008).

<sup>189</sup> A.V.C. Schmidt, *William Langland, 'Piers Plowman': a Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, vol. II. Introduction, Textual Notes, Commentary, Bibliography and Indexical Glossary, Medieval Institute Publications (Kalamazoo, Western Michigan: Western Michigan University, 2008). Many other works now appear which add greatly to the general background of Langland's time: see, for example, C. David Benson, *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval English Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

<sup>190</sup> Thomas D. Hill, 'The Problem of Synecdochic Flesh: *Piers Plowman* B.9.49-50', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 15 (2001), 213-18 (p. 217).

Elford Rogers suggests, Langland is ‘a medieval intellectual’,<sup>191</sup> we should acknowledge that intelligence, and recognise that the *whole* Bible quotation has been chosen with deliberate intent – not just the lines that appear in the poem which form the trigger for the memory (and the imagination).

The increase in the bibliography of this thesis for the last thirty years reflects the current interest in *Piers* – even if that interest has not been translated to any great extent into research on the Vulgate quotations’ contexts. George Kane, in his biography of Langland, ignores the poet’s awe-inspiring biblical knowledge, although the poet’s phenomenal mastery of biblical material must be a factor in ascertaining his identity.<sup>192</sup>

#### 1.10 Conclusion

Educated clerical gentlemen of the nineteenth century with the incentive, the time - and the money - to expand their knowledge of subjects of interest to them laid the groundwork for later research. Yet, as can be seen from this overarching history of criticism on the Bible through the decades, none of the major critics, well-versed in Christian and Bible issues have taken the matter very far. Assertions have been made that Langland knew the Bible, and that the contexts of Bible quotations hold relevance to *Piers Plowman*, but no-one has taken the matter to its logical conclusion.

Many critics specifically write about the Latin Bible quotations and use the Bible to interpret the poem (Davlin, 1970s to date; Schoeck, 1985; Simpson, 1986); many consider Langland’s use of wordplay (Huppé, 1950; Donaldson, 1982; Schmidt, 1987;

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<sup>191</sup> William Elford Rogers, *Interpretation in ‘Piers Plowman’* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), p. 22.

<sup>192</sup> George Kane, ‘William Langland’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: from Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, vol. 32, Knox to Lear (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in association with the British Academy, 2004), pp. 488-93.

Shoaf, 1987). Nevertheless, it would seem that following an increasing interest concerning the Bible quotations through the early part of the twentieth century, Alford's 'Role' (1977) and *Guide* (1992) form a defining moment on the subject of the quotations in *Piers* scholarship like a pair of impressive bookends between which the works of other researchers (like Mann, Allen, and Barr) stand. No *Piers* scholar's bookshelf would be complete without them and studies still frequently refer to them. Yet, it appears that, instead of inspiring further research in this field, Alford's two great achievements have caused an intellectual brake rather than a stimulus: post-1992 scholars seemed to become more absorbed in innumerable areas of study apart from the Vulgate quotations.

It might seem obvious to investigate the quotations' biblical context in a methodical fashion from beginning to end: it has never been done except piecemeal: yet the Bible is the poem's voice. In conclusion, this thesis proposes that the *contexts* of the Vulgate quotations are of no less importance than the quotations themselves; that they form their own authority and argument: this statement will be evaluated in the next chapters.

## Chapter Two

### Langland's Use of the Bible: Contexts in the Fourteenth Century<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1 Introduction

As this thesis contends, Langland's mastery of the Bible is indisputable.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the first part of this chapter will examine the variety of ways in which Langland uses the Bible to structure *Piers* and, through a number of biblical examples, seek to illustrate how knowledge of Bible texts and contexts enriches understanding of the poem. A body of late fourteenth-century opinion, encapsulated by Wyclif,<sup>3</sup> was beginning to re-assert the importance of the primacy of the Bible text itself over interpretation; the Bible is fundamental, and always retains final authority over the commentary or exegesis which may stem from it: therefore, in this thesis, the Bible alone

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<sup>1</sup> As Elizabeth Salter writes: 'This is why there is no end to the search for medieval literature and literary forms which may have shaped the three versions of [Langland's] life's work: we should not reject the plainest metrical paraphrase of the Scriptures nor the rarest epistle on the spiritual life as sustenance for his journeying'. Elizabeth Salter, 'Langland and the Contexts of *Piers Plowman*', *Essays and Studies*, n.s., 32 (1979), 19-25 (p. 25). Salter's comment makes sense, and this thesis will search the ultimate source for Langland: the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph S. Wittig describes Langland's 'familiarity with Scripture' as 'intimate'. Joseph S. Wittig, *William Langland Revisited*, Twayne's English Authors Series, 537 (New York: Twayne, 1997), p. 8. Wittig (*William Langland*, p. 109) also recognises that Langland makes assumptions regarding his audience's knowledge of Scripture, and remarks that recognition of Bible contexts would supply 'powerful reinforcement [...] for the sentiment expressed'.

<sup>3</sup> For evidence of the Lollard focus on literacy, on the content of the Bible, and the popularity of the Wycliffite Bible itself, see, for one example of Hudson's research, Anne Hudson, 'Lollard Book Production', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, Cambridge Studies in Publishing and Printing History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 125-42. Wyclif (and many others in the fourteenth century) believed that the Bible held 'all truth'. John Wyclif: *On Simony [Tractatus de Simonia]*, translated by Terrence A. McVeigh (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), p. 10. See also Ian Christopher Levy, translated with an introduction and notes, John Wyclif: *On the Truth of Holy Scripture [De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae]*, Commentary Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: published for TEAMS by Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2001). Wycliffite sermons advocate that Christ's sheep be fed 'in pasturis of holy wryt'. Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. II, p. 268, l. 32. Yet Wyclif was not alone in recognising the importance of access to the Bible. See David Lawton, 'The Bible', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. I: to 1550, ed. by Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 193-233, especially pp. 197-99, 202-07, 209-14, 219, 229. On *Piers* and the Bible, see Lawton, 'Bible', pp. 214-16.

forms the basis for the way of reading *Piers*.<sup>4</sup> In addition, this chapter will also discuss the manner in which this biblical material may shape an unseen part of *Piers*' framework; the biblical contexts of the quotations chosen by Langland and his use of *distinctiones*. The second part of the chapter will briefly examine Langland's application of Latin in *Piers*; what this use of Latin might have meant for medieval audiences and who they might have been. Langland and Chaucer's use of the Bible will briefly be compared in the light of fourteenth-century Christianity in order to establish an overview.

## 2.2 The Context of the Bible in 'Book'

This thesis recognises that Langland was bilateral in his knowledge and approach: the poet shows (and appears to expect from his audience) complete familiarity with the Latin of the Bible, yet he also assumes understanding of the complexities of Christian culture which lie beneath the poem. Langland always acknowledges the importance of finding the path to the Kingdom of God. Langland's acuity with the Bible (from whatever source that might have come: the Vulgate, the Liturgy or elsewhere) should not be underestimated. Neither should the importance that the Bible had for the medieval world as the mouthpiece of God.<sup>5</sup> So when Langland personifies the Scriptures as 'Book', one

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<sup>4</sup> The dilemma was whether the uneducated, lay community might misinterpret the sacred text, but between clerics this difficulty would not have been so great an issue. Elizabeth Lunz observes that Langland was not bound by patristic exegesis: see 'The Valley of Jehoshaphat in *Piers Plowman*', *Tulane Studies in English*, 20 (1972), 1-10 (pp. 9-10). For an overview of medieval commentary and literary works, see Reeves, 'The Bible', pp. 12-63. For example of apocalyptic thought as a way of reading *Piers* through the exegetes, especially Joachim de Fiore, see Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism*, pp. 162-203. For the influence of Peter Comestor's popular Bible, see James H. Morey, 'Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 6-35. For background on the literary style of the Bible itself, see Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> In the Bible, God's power is evidenced, for example, in his spoken word at the Creation (Gn. 1). The Gospels were particularly revered as the word of God. See Katherine Zieman, *Singing the New Song: Literacy and Liturgy in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 78, 81-4.

might expect that critics would be alerted to a matter of importance. Yet, except for a handful of scholars, Book's speech (unlike the Pardon scene, for example) has elicited little comment.<sup>6</sup> One critic, Hugh White, recognises that 'the majority of commentators' consider 'Book' to be the Bible,<sup>7</sup> and editors such as Schmidt and Pearsall, following Kaske, agree that Langland's reference to 'Book's 'two brode ei3en' (XVIII. 229) signifies the two Testaments (and Laws) of the Bible.<sup>8</sup> However, Pearsall's consideration that Book's eyes might be read as 'the power of seeing both literal and spiritual truth', White finds less obvious.<sup>9</sup> Much commentary has concentrated on the syntax and grammar of Book's speech as an aid to interpretation and not on a most significant point: 'Book' as the voice of God; the voice of authority.<sup>10</sup>

The Bible remains clear on the potency and intact nature of God's word as spoken through the prophets: for one example, Moses tells the Israelites:

et nunc Israhel audi praecepta et iudicia quae ego doceo te ut faciens ea vivas et ingrediens possideas terram quam Dominus Deus patrum vestrorum daturus est vobis non addetis ad verbum quod vobis loquor neque auferetis ex eo custodite mandata Domini Dei vestri quae ego praecipio vobis<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> R. E. Kaske, 'The Speech of "Book" in *Piers Plowman*', *Anglia*, 77:2 (1959), 117-44. Kaske (p. 117) claims to be the first to write on the subject, and interprets Book's speech through exegesis, homily and the liturgy. See also Richard L. Hoffman, 'The Burning of "Boke" in *Piers Plowman*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 25:1 (March 1964), 57-65. Hoffman makes incisive, reasoned comments and additions to Kaske's article while using grammar and Bible Commentary as a basis for interpretation.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh White, 'Book's Bold Speech and the *Archana Verba* of *Piers Plowman* Passus B XVIII', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 77:3 (Autumn 1995), 31-46 (p. 31, n. 2).

<sup>8</sup> For discussion of Book's eyes, see Kaske, 'Speech', pp. 124-29 (p. 127). See also Barney, *Penn Commentary*, pp. 54-55, 57; Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, p. 332, note to line 239; Schmidt, *Vision*, p. 481, note to line 229.

<sup>9</sup> White, 'Book's Bold Speech', p. 31, n. 2 in reference to Pearsall, *C-text* (1994), p. 329, note to line 239.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, E. Talbot Donaldson, 'The Grammar of Book's Speech in *Piers Plowman*', in *Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Margaret Schlauch*, ed. by M. Brahmer, Stanislaw Helsztynski and Julian Krzyzanowski (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966), pp. 103-9; Joseph S. Wittig, 'The Middle English 'Absolute Infinitive' and the Speech of Book', in *Magister Regis*, ed. by Groos, *et al*, pp. 217-240.

<sup>11</sup> Langland most likely used the Vulgate Bible so this text will be followed throughout this thesis. For evidence of this assumption, see, for example, Amanda Holton, 'Which Bible Did Chaucer Use? The Biblical Tragedies in *The Monk's Tale*', *Notes and Queries*, 253:1 (March 2008), 13-17 (p. 15); Grace W. Landrum, 'Chaucer's Use of the Vulgate', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 39 (1924), 75-100 (pp. 76, 78).

[And now, O Israel, hear the commandments and judgements which I teach thee, that doing them, thou mayst live, and entering in mayst possess the land which the Lord the God of your fathers will give you. You shalt not add to the word that I speak to you: neither shall you take away from it. Keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.] (Dt. 4.1-2)

Moreover, Christ explains that the seed in the Parable of the Sower is ‘the word of God’ (Lc. 8. 11) and emphasises the importance of obedience to the word:<sup>12</sup>

quod autem in bonam terram hii sunt qui in corde bono et optimo audientes  
verbum retinent et fructum adferunt in patientia

[Those seeds that fall] on the good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience.] (Lc. 8. 15)

Humankind should live: ‘by every word of God’ (Lc. 4. 4):<sup>13</sup> therefore Book has a powerful persona.

In consequence, given that Book’s speech in Passus XVIII of *Piers* is based on Psalm 84, which as Hoffman attests, in medieval commentary, was thought to be ‘a prophecy of Christ’s career’,<sup>14</sup> it might seem profitable to look more closely at the Bible as a source of inspiration for Langland. Psalm 84 again focuses on hearing the word:

ostende nobis Domine misericordiam tuam et salutare tuum da nobis audiam quid loquatur in me: Dominus Deus quoniam loquetur pacem in plebem suam et super sanctos suos et in eos qui convertuntur ad cor verumtamen prope timentes eum salutare ipsius ut inhabitet gloria in terra nostra<sup>15</sup>

[Shew us, O Lord, thy mercy; and grant us thy salvation. I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me: for he will speak peace unto his people. And unto his saints: and unto them that are converted to the heart. Surely his salvation is near to them that fear him: that glory may dwell in our land.] (Ps. 84. 8-10)

<sup>12</sup> Vulgate: ‘semen est verbum Dei’ (Lc. 8. 11). For the Parable of the Sower, see Lc. 8. 5-15.

<sup>13</sup> Vulgate: ‘in omni verbo Dei’ (Lc. 4. 4). See also Dt. 8. 3; Mt. 4. 4; Lc. 8. 21, 11. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Hoffman, ‘Burning’, p. 58. See also Kaske, ‘Speech’, p. 117. For further comment on Book’s speech in Passus XVIII, Ps. 18 and medieval commentary, see Kaske, ‘*Gigas*’, pp. 177-85. In general, Alford’s *Guide* suggestions of Bible sources for the quotations will be followed.

<sup>15</sup> The Gallicanum version of the Psalms was generally the most familiar form of the Psalter in fourteenth-century England and will be used here. For discussion of the various pertinent psalters and of the Psalms as an unstable text, see Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

Such sentiments are reflected in *Piers* but also mirror Book's identity. The Christian soul must strive and give attention to the word of God without failing, and Passus XVIII recounts Christ's life on earth thus causing Langland's audience to reflect on the model for perfection. Moreover, the Passus works through Christ's Passion both in its narrative and its Bible quotation; therefore, Langland reminds the reader of the promise inherent in Christ's Resurrection: the poet also does this openly when Will awakes from his dream vision.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the recollection of the assurance of eternal life calls to mind its opposite: the threat of eternal damnation. The Apocalypse, St. John's dream vision, foretells the future in this difficult Bible passage which conflates Christ with his word: the Bible:

et dicit mihi scribe beati qui ad cenam nuptiarum agni vocati sunt et dicit mihi haec verba vera Dei sunt et cecidi ante pedes eius ut adorarem eum et dicit mihi vide ne feceris conservus tuus sum et fratrum tuorum habentium testimonium Iesu Deum adora testimonium enim Iesu est spiritus prophetiae et vidi caelum apertum et ecce equus albus et qui sedebat super eum vocabatur Fidelis et Verax vocatur et iustitia iudicat et pugnat oculi autem eius sicut flamma ignis et in capite eius diademata multa habens nomen scriptum quod nemo novit nisi ipse et vestitus erat vestem aspersam sanguine et vocatur nomen eius Verbum Dei [...] et de ore ipsius procedit gladius acutus ut in ipso percutiat gentes et ipse reget eos in virga ferrea et ipse calcatur torcular vini furoris irae Dei omnipotentis

[And he said [*sic*] to me: Write: Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith to me: These words of God are true. And I fell down before his feet, to adore him. And he saith to me: See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Adore God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And I saw heaven opened: and behold a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called faithful and true: and with justice doth he judge and fight. And his eyes were as a flame of fire: and on his head were many diadems. And he had a name written which no man knoweth but himself. And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood. And his name is called: THE WORD OF GOD [*sic*]. [...] And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty.] (Apc. 19. 9-13, 15)

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<sup>16</sup> XVIII. 426-30.

Medieval Christians, familiar with the New Testament, on reading *Piers*, might recall these verses. As John's Gospel states about Christ: 'In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum' [In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God: and the Word was God.] (Io. 1. 1). Moreover, when 'the sword of the Spirit' represents the word of God (Eph. 6. 17),<sup>17</sup> and when we read that the word of God is 'living and effectual and more piercing than any two edged sword' (Hbr. 4. 12),<sup>18</sup> it correlates with the Apocalypse passage, and Langland's 'Book' starts to take on a different dimension.

Closer examination of the speech by 'Book' demonstrates another aspect of God. When Truth (which, when used with a capital letter in *Piers*, usually signifies the Almighty)<sup>19</sup> says: 'I here and see bope' (XVIII. 260), we need to look also at what the Bible says about God's eyes.<sup>20</sup> As we already have seen, 'his eyes were as flame of fire' (Apc. 19. 12), which perhaps recalls the Pentecostal tongues of fire: the announcement of the arrival of the Holy Spirit who speaks to the Church through the Bible.<sup>21</sup> God's eyes 'behold all the earth, and give strength to those who with a perfect heart trust in him' (II Par. 16. 9).<sup>22</sup> The importance of hearing God's voice and doing well in his sight is a

<sup>17</sup> Vulgate: 'et gladium Spiritus quod est verbum Dei' (Eph. 6. 17).

<sup>18</sup> Vulgate: 'vividus est enim Dei sermo et efficacis et penetrabilior omni gladio accipiti et perstringens usque ad divisionem animae ac spiritus compagum quoque et medullarum et discretor cogitationum et intentionum cordis' [For the word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow: and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.] (Hbr. 4. 12).

<sup>19</sup> Although the manuscripts vary with their use of a capital 'T', editors favour the practice of using a capital letter when Langland equates 'Truth' and God.

<sup>20</sup> Kaske ('Speech', pp. 126-29) also links Book's eyes with biblical reference: for example, I Io. 1. 1-2 and Apc. 4. 6: 'The references scattered through my text and footnotes seem to me to point to the Breviary as probably the most important inspiration for the passage' (Kaske, 'Speech', p. 133).

<sup>21</sup> Act. 2. 1-4.

<sup>22</sup> Vulgate: 'oculi enim eius contemplantur universam terram et praebent fortitudinem his qui corde perfecto credunt in eum' (II Par. 16. 9).

recurrent theme in the Bible (and *Piers*)<sup>23</sup> because the ‘eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and the evil’ (Prv. 15. 3).<sup>24</sup> God’s ‘eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, and their iniquity hath not been hid from my eyes’ (Ier. 16. 17).<sup>25</sup> ‘neither is there any creature invisible in his sight’ (Hbr. 4. 13).<sup>26</sup>

The inference of an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-present God is exemplified in

Psalm 138, a short example from which follows:

Domine probasti me et cognovisti me tu cognovisti sessionem meam et surrectionem meam intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe semitam meam et funiculum meum investigasti et omnes vias meas praevidisti quia non est sermo in lingua mea ecce Domine tu cognovisti omnia novissima et antiqua tu formasti me et posuisti super me manum tuam [...] quo ibo ab spiritu tuo et quo a facie tua fugiam si ascendero in caelum tu illic es si descendero ad infernum ades

[Lord, thou hast proved me, and known me: thou hast known my sitting down, and my rising up. Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off: my path and my line thou hast searched out. And thou hast foreseen all my ways: for there is no speech in my tongue. Behold, O Lord, thou hast known all things, the last and those of old: thou hast formed me, and hast laid thy hand upon me. [...] Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present.] (Ps. 138. 1-5, 7-8)

Such a deity might be expected to inspire awe and a contrite heart in the medieval

Christian soul, and the line in *Piers* that recalls Truth’s sight would no doubt trigger the memory of what the Bible says about God. However, the Psalms offer comfort about the seeing, hearing God:<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See, for example: ‘quare ergo non audisti vocem Domini sed versus ad praedam es et fecisti malum in oculis Domini [Why then didst thou not hearken to the voice of the Lord: but hast turned to the prey, and hast done evil in the eyes of the Lord?] (I Rg. 15. 19).

<sup>24</sup> Vulgate: ‘in omni loco oculi Domini contemplantur malos et bonos’ (Prv. 15. 3).

<sup>25</sup> Vulgate: ‘quia oculi mei super omnes vias eorum non sunt absconditae a facie mea et non fuit occulta iniquitas eorum ab oculis meis’ (Ier. 16. 17).

<sup>26</sup> Vulgate: ‘et non est ulla creatura invisibilis in conspectu eius omnia autem nuda et aperta sunt oculis eius ad quem nobis sermo’ (Hbr. 4. 13). See also Job: ‘dedit ei Deus locum paenitentiae et ille abutitur eo in superbiam oculi autem eius sunt in viis illius’ [God hath given him place for penance: and he abuseth it unto pride. But his eyes are upon his ways.] (Iob 24. 23); ‘oculi enim eius super vias hominum et omnes gressus eorum considerat’ [For his eyes are upon the ways of men: and he considereth all their steps.] (Iob 34. 21).

<sup>27</sup> ‘I here and see bope’ (XVIII. 260).

ecce oculi Domini super metuentes eum qui sperant super misericordia eius ut  
eruat a morte animas eorum et alat eos in fame

[Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in  
his mercy. To deliver their souls from death and feed them in famine.] (Ps. 32. 18-  
19)

deverte a malo et fac bonum inquire pacem et persequere eam oculi Domini super  
iustos et aures eius in precem eorum

[Turn away from evil and do good: seek after peace and pursue it. The eyes of the  
Lord are upon the just: and his ears unto their prayers.] (Ps. 33. 15-16)

The Psalms are an important and familiar part of Christian worship; repeated on a  
continuing cycle, therefore, some (or even all) of these images may well have been in  
Langland's thoughts as he composed *Piers*: if one becomes saturated in the Bible, it can  
be difficult to tease out one concept from another as the biblical verses merge together.

Certainly, a reader of *Piers* well-acquainted with Scripture might find these  
contexts inundate the mind. As will continue to be discussed in this chapter, Langland's  
use of the Bible encompasses every aspect of *Piers*, and the poet delights in wordplay,  
and exhibits ingenious language skills in his employment of Bible texts: modern readers  
need to remain constantly alert to biblical reference. For example, when Truth  
paraphrases and translates Psalm 23, '*Attolite portas*' [lift up the gates], interpretation  
becomes enriched in the remembrance of the Psalm's context concerning the 'King of  
Glory' and his triumph over hell:

adtollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portae aeternales et introibit rex  
gloriae quis est iste rex gloriae Dominus fortis et potens Dominus potens in  
proelio adtollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portae aeternales et introibit  
rex gloriae quis est iste rex gloriae Dominus virtutum ipse est rex gloriae

[Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the  
King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong  
and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye

lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of Glory.] (Ps. 23. 7-10)

cf.

‘Suffre we!’ seide Trupe; ‘I here and see boþe  
A spirit spekeþ to helle and bit vnsperre þe yates:  
“*Attolite portas.....*”

A vois loude in þat light to Lucifer crieþ,

“Prynkes of þis place, vnþynneþ and vnloukeþ!

For here comeþ wiþ crowne þat kyng is of glorie.” (XVIII. 260-64)<sup>28</sup>

Although medieval readings of the Bible involved well-known allegorical levels, such closeness to the original Bible passage is typical of Langland’s poetry, and demonstrates great affinity with the Bible text; the Psalm reverberates in this segment of *Piers*; so does the ending of the Apocalypse citation quoted above in this section which could perhaps have been connected in Langland’s imagination: ‘And he hath on his garment and on his thigh written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS’ [*sic*] (Apc. 19. 16).<sup>29</sup>

The Apocalypse frequently refers to the ‘book of life’: ‘et qui non est inventus in libro vitae scriptus missus est in stagnum ignis’ [And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire.] (Apc. 20. 15).<sup>30</sup> Other similar prophecies are equally threatening:

et si quis deminuerit de verbis libri prophetiae huius auferet Deus partem eius de ligno vitae et de civitate sancta et de his quae scripta sunt in libro isto

[And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things that are written in this book.] (Apc. 22. 19)

The concepts of Book as the word of God and the book of life might be considered hard to separate: both flourish within this Bible citation which also reminds us of God’s

<sup>28</sup> For discussion on liturgical aspects of these lines, see Barney, *Penn Commentary*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>29</sup> Vulgate: ‘et habet in vestimento et in femore suo scriptum rex regum et Dominus dominantium’ (Apc. 19. 16).

<sup>30</sup> Vulgate: ‘et vidi mortuos magnos et pusillos stantes in conspectu throni et libri aperti sunt et alius liber apertus est qui est vitae et iudicati sunt mortui ex his quae scripta erant in libris secundum opera ipsorum’ (Apc. 20. 12).

power. One can begin to understand how the resonance of the Bible infiltrates *Piers* when the mind is encouraged (and able) to become saturated with associated Bible verses. The speech of 'Book' is no exception to the rule that this thesis will continue to stress:

Langland's use of the Bible sets *Piers* on fire. For minds attuned to the numerous Bible texts that focus on the word of God, this Bible knowledge and recognition allows 'Book' to become illuminated in the imagination.

### 2.3 How the Bible Works in *Piers*: i) the Dowel Allusion<sup>31</sup>

As this chapter's section on 'Book' as the Bible demonstrates, the Bible is evident everywhere in *Piers*; it therefore seems productive to examine the matter further, and to break down how Langland uses the Bible: for instance, to look at biblical allusion. Such allusion remains an enormous topic which could well form a thesis in itself: examples abound, but Langland's choice of the image of Dowel makes the point. The concept of Dowel is introduced through the pardon which quotes the Athanasian Creed: '*Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam; / Qui vero mala, in ignem eternam*' [And they who have done well shall go into everlasting life; [and] they who really [have done] evil, [will go] into everlasting fire.] (VII. 110a). The Creed states that the desire to be in a state of salvation is essential to the health of the Christian soul; that any soul who wants to be saved must above all else retain the Catholic faith and that in order to find salvation every soul must believe and adhere to this faith.<sup>32</sup> This verse from the Creed is based on a text

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<sup>31</sup> For discussion of Langland's discourse on Dowel, see for one example, O'Driscoll, 'Dowel Debate', pp. 18-29. For further discussion, see Rosanne Gasse, 'Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest in Middle English Literature', *Florilegium*, 14 (1995-96), 171-95; Anne Middleton, 'Two Infinities: Grammatical Metaphor in *Piers Plowman*', *Journal of English Literary History*, 39:2 (June 1972), 169-88.

<sup>32</sup> The Athanasian Creed sets out the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Although the Creed is a powerful statement, it is no less adamant in its tenets than New Testament texts: see, for example, Mc. 16. 16; Io. 3. 18; Apc. 21. 8. For further explanation on the Athanasian Creed, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the*

from Matthew 25: an apocalyptic chapter about judgement and the Kingdom of Heaven, and the verse in question follows a biblical passage enumerating doing well through the corporal acts of mercy, a theme of love for one's neighbour which preoccupies Langland.

The poet personifies 'Do Well': 'And how Dowel at þe day of dome is digneliche vnderfongen' (VII. 172). Dowel becomes a Christ-like figure recalling the sheep and goats imagery and eschatology of Matthew 25:<sup>33</sup> 'That after oure deþ day, Dowel reherce / At þe day of dome, we dide as he hi3te' (VII. 200-1). Although it seems likely, given Langland's references to 'þe day of dome' and the context and substance of these lines of *Piers*, that Langland had Matthew in mind, John's Gospel too reveals a similar tenet in a passage on spiritual retribution:

et procedent qui bona fecerunt in resurrectionem vitae qui vero mala egerunt in resurrectionem iudicii

[And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgement.] (Io. 5. 29)

Texts in the Bible are often associated with one another; perhaps in the sense of the Old Testament pre-figuring the New, but also in their themes and theological thinking. The excerpt from Matthew relates to the apocalyptic book of Daniel in the Old Testament which tells of the coming of Antichrist and the Last Days and may also be seen to add to any understanding of *Piers*:<sup>34</sup>

In tempore autem illo consurget Michael princeps magnus qui stat pro filiis populi tui et veniet tempus quale non fuit ab eo ex quo gentes esse coeperunt usque ad tempus illud et in tempore illo salvabitur populus tuus omnis qui inventus fuerit

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*Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross, third edition ed. by E.A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957, 1974, 1997), p. 119; Claude Beaufort Moss, *The Christian Faith: an Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* (London: SPCK, 1943), pp. 461-63. Moss (p. 462) writes: 'Medieval Christians did not recognize "honest doubt": they sincerely thought that those who rejected Christianity could only do so out of sheer wickedness'.

<sup>33</sup> Mt. 25. 31-46.

<sup>34</sup> Mt. 25. 46.

scriptus in libro et multi de his qui dormiunt in terrae pulvere evigilabunt alii in vitam aeternam et alii in opprobrium ut videant semper

[But at that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people: and a time shall come such as never was from the time that nations began even until that time. And at that time shall thy people be saved, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always.] (Dn. 12. 1-3)<sup>35</sup>

Given Langland's concern for judgement and salvation, apocalypse and the Kingdom of Heaven, the poet's use of the single word 'Dowel' sparks all manner of biblical connection in the mind.

The three above-mentioned quotations from Matthew, John and Daniel are just the most obvious biblical allusions to Dowel. If we, like Will, 'seke Dowel' (VIII. 2) and look further in the Bible (as, no doubt, Langland intended his audience to do) the result is fruitful, and other scripture would, perhaps, have been part of Langland's inspiration. For example, God speaking to Cain echoes the Athanasian Creed's premise: 'nonne si bene egeris recipies' [If thou do well, shalt thou not receive?] (Gn. 4. 7).<sup>36</sup> The Psalms too echo similar sentiments of doing well (and badly):

Dixit iniustus ut delinquat in semet ipso non est timor Dei ante oculos eius quoniam dolose egit in conspectu eius ut inveniatur iniquitas eius ad odium verba oris eius iniquitas et dolus noluit intellegere ut bene ageret iniquitatem meditatus est in cubili suo adstitit omni viae non bonae malitiam autem non odivit

[The unjust hath said within himself that he would sin: there is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his sight he has done deceitfully, that his iniquity may be found unto hatred. The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile: he would not understand that he might do well. He hath devised iniquity on his bed: he hath set himself on every way that is not good: but evil he hath not hated.] (Ps. 35. 2-5)

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<sup>35</sup> See also Apc. 12. 7; 17. 8. For discussion of the use of the Book of Daniel in Middle English texts, see J. A. George, 'Repentance and Retribution: the Use of the Book of Daniel in Old and Middle English Texts', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 77:3 (Autumn 1995), 177-92.

<sup>36</sup> The complete Vulgate verse reads: 'nonne si bene egeris recipies sin autem male statim in foribus peccatum aderit' [If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? But if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door?] (Gn. 4. 7).

If we look at Ecclesiastes, the language is again reflected by Langland in *Piers*:

et cognovi quod non esset melius nisi laetari et facere bene in vita sua omnis enim homo qui comedit et bibit et videt bonum de labore suo hoc donum Dei est

[And I have known that there was no better thing than to rejoice and to do well in this life. For every man that eateth and drinketh, and seeth good of his labour, this is the gift of God.] (Ecl. 3. 12-13)

Themes of working for bread and the grace of God are important in *Piers*.

Yet no less does Isaiah's exhortation strike a chord with the poem which

emphasises the New Testament teaching on doing well in loving one's neighbour:

discite benefacere quaerite iudicium subvenite oppresso iudicate pupillo defendite viduam [...] si volueritis et audieritis bona terrae comedetis quod si nolueritis et me provocaveritis ad iracundiam gladius devorabit vos quia os Domini locutum est

[Learn to do well. Seek judgement. Relieve the oppressed. Judge for the fatherless. Defend the widow. [...] If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land. But if you will not and will provoke me to wrath, the sword shall devour you: because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.] (Is. 1. 17, 19-20)<sup>37</sup>

The commandment to love your neighbour remains fundamental to Christian life and an ongoing issue in *Piers*.

Strongly worded in James's Epistle and quoted by Langland, duty towards your

fellow coupled with teaching on hypocrisy and respect for the poor as 'heirs of the kingdom' (Iac. 2. 5) resounds with doing well:<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See also Acts: 'quoniam audivimus quia quidam ex nobis exeuntes turbaverunt vos verbis evertentes animas vestras quibus non mandavimus [...] visum est enim Spiritui Sancto et nobis nihil ultra inponere vobis oneris quam haec necessario 'ut abstinence vos ab immolatis simulacrorum et sanguine suffocato et fornicatione a quibus custodientes vos bene agetis valete' [Forasmuch as we have heard that some going out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, to whom we gave no commandment: [...] For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things: That you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication: from which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well. Fare ye well.] (Act. 15. 24, 28-29).

<sup>38</sup> See XV. 583; XVII. 11a; C. XIX. 14 cf. Iac 2. 8.

audite fratres mei dilectissimi nonne Deus elegit pauperes in hoc mundo divites in fide et heredes regni quod repromisit Deus diligentibus se vos autem exonorastis pauperem nonne divites per potentiam opprimunt vos et ipsi trahunt vos ad iudicia nonne ipsi blasphemant bonum nomen quod invocatum est super vos si tamen legem perficitis regalem secundum scripturas diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum bene facitis

[Hearken, my dearest brethren: Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him? But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you by might? And do they not draw you before the judgement seats? Do not they blaspheme the good name that is involved upon you? If then you fulfil the royal law according to the scriptures: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; you do well.] (Iac. 2. 5-8)<sup>39</sup>

It becomes apparent that what Langland calls the idea of Dowel resonates through the Bible (as well as being a tenet of the Athanasian Creed) and was no idle choice of term for Langland. Based on an assumption of his medieval audience's knowledge, in a single word, through myriad biblical associations and allusions Langland is able to build a greater picture of what Dowel means than simply that based on Matthew's Gospel or even the Creed itself. Steven Justice writes:

Langland insists that one *do* (well, better, best) but does not say *what* one is to do. Because no institutional authority seems able to define Dowel, the poem exhorts the reader to action while it digressively worries what actions are called for and who has the right to say.<sup>40</sup>

Langland does not need to say: the Bible says it for him; for medieval Christians such recognition and understanding of these scriptural texts would be implicit. In becoming alert to the biblical allusions to 'Dowel' (as with 'Book'), one begins to be aware not only how rich, vibrant and fascinating Langland's tacit reference to these Bible texts makes *Piers*, but also how they simplify and explicate Langland's apparent digressions.

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<sup>39</sup> Langland refers or quotes from this chapter of James eighteen times throughout the four versions of *Piers*. For passages about duty to our neighbour in the Bible, see also Lv. 19. 18; Mt. 22. 39; Mc 12. 31; Rm. 13. 9; Gal. 5. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Justice, *Rebellion*, p. 114.

### 2.3.1 How the Bible Works in *Piers*: ii) ‘Trigger’ Words

Langland is a master of wordplay and adept at using either a single word or a pair of words in Latin in various ways to activate the imagination: these words will be termed ‘trigger’ words. For any effect to be fruitful, Langland’s audience is required to recognise these prompts: such assumptions of audience knowledge by the poet are crucial. For example, humour cannot function properly without such understanding and, in Passus V, Langland gives a typical illustration:

Til Gloton hadde yglubbed a galon and a gille,  
Hise guttes gonne to gobelen as two greedy sowes;  
He pissed a potel in a *Paternoster*-while, (V. 340-42)<sup>41</sup>

For the comedy to succeed, not only does one need to know how much liquid is comprised in ‘a galon and a gille’ but also how long it takes to say or sing the Lord’s Prayer.

Again, when Sloth, the priest, speaks the following lines, the satire is not straightforward: ‘He bigan *Benedicite* with a bolck, and his brest knocked, / And raxed and rored, and rutte at þe laste (V. 391-92). In this section of *Piers*, the emphasis focuses on Confession: Repentaunce calls Sloth to: ‘rape þee to shryfte!’ (V. 393).<sup>42</sup> However, the word ‘*Benedicite*’ also forms part of several Psalms which offer equally comic effect, given the laxity of Sloth’s position as a priest: ‘in ecclesiis *benedicite* Deum Dominum’ [In the churches bless ye god the Lord.] (Ps. 67. 27); ‘*benedicite* Domino omnes virtutes eius ministri eius qui facitis voluntatem eius’ [Bless the Lord, all ye hosts: you ministers of his who do his will.] (Ps. 102. 21); ‘domus Israhel *benedicite* Domino domus Aaron

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<sup>41</sup> Langland’s humour drives the poet’s point on Glutton’s sin and the need for repentance, see Nick Gray, ‘The Clemency of Cobblers: a Reading of “Glutton’s Confession” in *Piers Plowman*’, *Leeds Studies in English*, 17 (1986), 61-75.

<sup>42</sup> *Benedicite* is the first word of the Confession rite (Donaldson, *Translation*, p. 51, n. 9). The term would also be familiar from the Office of Lauds.

*benedicite* Domino domus Levi *benedicite* Domino qui timetis Dominum *benedicite* Domino' [Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron. Bless the Lord, O house of Levi: you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.] (Ps. 134. 19-20). The Psalms were so very well-known in the fourteenth century that these additional connections which the single word '*Benedicite*' makes when coming from Sloth's mouth should not be underestimated, and may well have given these lines of *Piers* a further ironic twist.

Langland does not need to articulate everything that he wants to foreground: for example, the call to repentance of the character, *Vigilate*: 'Repentest þe no3t?' quod Repentaunce – and ri3t wiþ þat he swowned, / Til *Vigilate* þe veille fette water at hise ei3en' (V. 443). *Vigilate* may also be seen to be Bible-based: '*vigilate et orate ut non intretis in temptationem Spiritus quidem promptus est caro autem infirma*' [Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh weak.] (Mt. 26. 41).<sup>43</sup> Langland's choice of name, *Vigilate*, when understood in the Bible context of Matthew, makes this conversation between the priest, Sloth, and Repentance poignant but topical: Christ wakes the disciples (the forerunners of the Christian ministry) from their sleep in the Garden of Gethsemane.<sup>44</sup> Taking together the Bible and *Piers*' passages, suggesting the failure of the clergy (especially bishops) to follow their vocation may be seen to instance a typical fourteenth-century problem: sleeping mitred figures often

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<sup>43</sup> See also Mc. 13. 33-37. This theme is also seen in apocalyptic Wycliffite sermons: see Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. II, pp. 135-41 (based on Mc. 13). The quotation from Matthew 26 demonstrates a certain popularity as it provides the foundation text for the late fourteenth-century work, *The Chastising of God's Children*. The author translates the citation after its use in the first instance, and then writes '*Vigilate et orate et cetera*'. *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. by Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), p. 96, p. 100, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> Mt. 26. 31-46; Mc. 14. 26-42.

illustrate manuscripts.<sup>45</sup> The Bible extract emphasises the particular failure of Peter, the ‘rock’ on which the Church was to be built, and Peter also symbolises the authority of the bishops in the medieval period.

A verse from I Corinthians endorses the stance of ‘watching’: ‘*vigilate* state in fide viriliter agite et confortamini’ [Watch ye: stand fast in the faith: do manfully and be strengthened.] (I Cor. 16. 13). Obviously these ‘*Vigilate*’ Bible citations centre on the Christian belief that neither the day nor the hour of the Parousia, when Christ returns to earth, can be known:<sup>46</sup> therefore, for the medieval Christian, confession, contrition and penance are ongoing. The passage from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans given below stresses this apocalyptic urgency: it might have been written for Sloth who lies in bed during Lent with his ‘lemman’ in his arms (V. 411) and, like the priest, ‘Sire Piers’, in the public house (V. 313), has been fond of his ale:<sup>47</sup>

et hoc scientes tempus quia hora est iam nos de somno surgere nunc enim propior est nostra salus quam cum credidimus nox praecessit dies autem adpropiauit abiciamus ergo opera tenebrarum et induamur arma lucis sicut in die honeste ambulemus non in comesationibus et ebrietatibus non in cubilibus et in pudicitiiis non in contentione et aemulatione sed induite Dominum Iesum Christum et carnis curam ne feceritis in desideriiis

[And that, knowing the season, that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is passed and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy. But

<sup>45</sup> Mt. 16. 18-19 cf. Mt. 7. 13-27, Lc. 6. 39-49. For one example of manuscript illustration, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Denise L. Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: the Politics of Book Production in the Douce ‘Piers Plowman’*, *Medieval Cultures*, 15 (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), figure 18: False Friar, Sleeping Bishop, and Wolf with Sheep from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104, fol. 44. Anglo-Irish, 1427.

<sup>46</sup> See Mt. 24. 42-44; Mc. 13. 32-33; Lc. 12. 37-40; I Io. 2. 18; Apc. 14. 15, 16.15.

<sup>47</sup> V. 454-55. For a discussion of Sloth, see Andrew Galloway, ‘Making History Legal: *Piers Plowman* and the Rebels of Fourteenth-Century England’, in *Book of Essays*, ed. by Hewett-Smith, pp. 27-29. Galloway (p. 27) describes ‘how Sloth’s portrait brings to focus a range of social tones more topically rebellious than scholars usually perceive’.

put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ: and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.] (Rm. 13. 11-14)

Again, for those in Langland's audience with wide-ranging knowledge of biblical texts, such mental associations spark amusement but also affirm all that Langland is advocating about reform of the clergy in *Piers*.

Yet in terms of Langland's use of '*Vigilate*', recollection of Peter's Epistle, quoted below might also have triggered a pressing call to repentance for fourteenth-century bishops and priests with regard to their duties and responsibilities to their 'flock':

pascite qui est in vobis gregem Dei providentes non coacto sed spontanee secundum Deum neque turpis lucri gratia sed voluntarie neque ut dominantes in cleris sed formae facti gregi et ex animo et cum apparuerit princeps pastorum percipietis inmarcescibilem gloriae coronam [...] humiliamini igitur sub potenti manu Dei ut vos exaltet in tempore visitationis omnem sollicitudinem vestram proicientes in eum quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis sobrii estote *vigilate* quia adversarius vester diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret cui resistite fortes fide scientes eadem passionum ei quae in mundo est vestrae fraternitati fieri

[Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint but willingly, according to God: not for filthy lucre's sake but voluntarily: Neither as lording it over the clergy but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart. And when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory. [...] Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation: Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you. Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith: knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world.] (I Pt. 5. 2-4, 6-9)

Langland's use of a single trigger word, such as '*benedicite*' or '*vigilate*' in the poem's structure, may have affected medieval interpretation of *Piers* in many deep and unexpected ways: Langland's satire exists within the Bible contexts as well as in the vernacular composition, and both aspects of Langland's composition thread through the poem freely. Incidence of these types of occurrence will be explored in the next section.

### 2.3.2 How the Bible works in *Piers*: iii) The Importance of Bible Context and the Structure of Passus III

Langland does not just rely on allusion or biblical trigger words: Bible contexts and word association are also important. The words of the verses that surround the Latin Vulgate Bible quotations form the basis of understanding for what Langland means: the poet seldom intends his reader to stop interpretation at the end of the poetic line where he uses the Bible quotation. Concerning biblical texts, Robert Adams argues that, although Langland may omit to cite various Bible extracts, there are many associated passages which undeniably influence interpretation of the poem and are part of the structure of any understanding:

Here someone may wish to call a halt and remind us that, however nicely the aforementioned texts from [and here Adams quotes Bible texts relevant to his own argument] appear to mix with the rest, their evidential value is nil since Langland never actually cites them. The general principle on which this *caveat* is based is undeniably sound; but in developing an interpretation of a given passage of *Piers Plowman* it may be of small worth. Such a rule is manifestly obtuse when applied to *Need*, whose identity is defined by texts from Job and Proverbs to which no explicit reference is made! Certainly Langland's repeated subtleties in the use of scriptural allusions indicates [*sic*] the folly of trying to dictate in advance, by means of an extrinsic rule of modern literary criticism, what he may or may not be allowed to do with them. If we neglect total scriptural contexts in order to satisfy an overly fastidious concept of the textual limits of *Piers*, we run the risk of following the example of Meed, who, on reading *omnia probate*, was so well pleased that she failed to pursue the verse to its conclusion.<sup>48</sup>

Unquestionably, Langland's scriptural reminders, the Vulgate quotations, are the skeleton of the text but, as Adams also says, other related Bible texts bring themes in the poem into 'sharper focus':<sup>49</sup> it should not be considered that the Bible quotations used by the poet form the sole influence on the poem because, as has already been demonstrated, associated biblical material also features as an important part of the construct. Therefore,

<sup>48</sup> Adams, 'Apocalypse', p. 225. See also Adams, 'Need', pp. 273-301.

<sup>49</sup> Adams, 'Apocalypse', p. 225.

although critics have long considered that Langland used *distinctiones* to compose *Piers*, this contention must be considered partial, and this point will be discussed further in chapter five below.<sup>50</sup>

At this juncture, however, concentration will centre on the biblical context of the quotations used by Langland as part of *Piers*' structure. For example, in Passus III, the first quotation comes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. The A-text version adds another verse from the same quotation: '*Amen, amen, dico vobis, receperunt mercedem suam*' a mere eleven lines later,<sup>51</sup> whereas the B-text includes this same quotation nearly two hundred lines later.<sup>52</sup> This feature appears to indicate that Langland could hold biblical passages and their context in his mind while he composed the poem, and he was not just using a single quotation in a random fashion or relying on a concordance: the poet exercised control over biblical material.<sup>53</sup> As may be seen, Langland uses first the Bible quotation about the left and right hand (III. 72a), while the 'Amen' verse (III. 254a) is manifested later in the poem: the poet did not need to follow

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<sup>50</sup> For further discussion of *distinctiones*, see G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: the Earlier Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 80-85; Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, pp. 246-49. See also note 77 in this chapter below.

<sup>51</sup> A. III. 54; A. III. 64a.

<sup>52</sup> III. 72a; III. 254a.

<sup>53</sup> Vulgate: 'Adtendite ne iustitiam vestram faciatis coram hominibus ut videamini ab eis alioquin mercedem non habebitis apud Patrem vestrum qui in caelis est cum ergo facies elemosynam noli tuba canere ante te sicut hypocritae faciunt in synagogis et in vicis ut honorificentur ab hominibus *amen dico vobis receperunt mercedem suam* te autem faciente elemosynam *nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua* ut sit elemosyna tua in abscondito et Pater tuus qui videt in abscondito reddet tibi' [Take heed that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. And when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.] (Mt. 6. 1-4). See Barr, 'The Use of Latin Quotations', pp. 440-448; Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, p. 83, note to line 74a: 'As often, the biblical passage quoted is a cue to the context and not a summary of its theme, which is here the warning by Jesus against ostentation in almsgiving, or expectation of a return'. The Latin quotation: '*Nesciat sinistra quid faciat dextera*' appears in the A, B, and C versions but not Z.

Matthew consecutively. Such treatment appears to indicate that the poet had a wider understanding of the Bible passage than the employment of *distinctiones* might suggest.

Langland frequently directs the reader to a specific Bible passage (which accentuates the poet's purpose), and, by application of a waymark, instructs us where to look: in this case, 'as Mathew vs techep' (III. 254). When this passage in the poem begins, it develops into criticism of those in authority, the 'Maires and maceres' (III. 76) who abuse their power and wealth because they do not prevent, and fail to punish, the small retailers who overcharge the poor for their food.<sup>54</sup> Langland also emphasises their 'coueitise' (III. 68). The poet castigates those who resort to bribery, the secret giving of money for selfish purpose, but implicitly attests, through the Matthew context, that those who submit to this vice will be judged by God: 'thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee', 'For God knowep þi conscience and þi kynde wille' (see Mt. 6. 4 above cf. III. 67). Langland's argument may be seen both to build and to be endorsed through the Vulgate quotations' contexts.

Moving now to an additional quotation in the C-text, Langland turns to Psalm 25:

'*In quorum manibus iniquitates sunt...*' (C. III. 118a). The psalmist seeks judgement from God in order to enter God's Kingdom and separates himself from wrong-doing:

non sedi cum concilio vanitatis et cum iniqua gerentibus non introibo odivi  
ecclesiam malignantium et cum impiis non sedebo [...] ne perdas cum impiis  
animam meam et cum viris sanguinum vitam meam *in quorum manibus*  
*iniquitates sunt* dextera eorum repleta est muneribus

[I have not sat with the council of vanity: neither will I go in with the doers of unjust things. I have hated the assembly of the malignant: and with the wicked I will not sit. [...] Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked: nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands are iniquities: their right hand is filled with gifts.] (Ps. 25. 4-5, 9-10)

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<sup>54</sup> III. 76-81

It seems that the unwritten, unspoken part of the Latin biblical phrase used by Langland is also important to interpretation. As Pearsall notes, the fact that the Bible quotation reflects that ‘their right hand is filled with gifts’ is the whole point of the poet’s argument at this juncture.<sup>55</sup>

Yet Langland continuously establishes his reasoning in this way: the biblical context of the quotations that the poet uses is essential to the poem’s structure (and, obviously, interpretation) in the way that the poet builds his argument. For example, the second Latin quotation in Passus III of the B-text goes on to emphasise God’s judgement: ‘*Ignis deuorabit tabernacula eorum qui libenter accipiunt munera*’ (Iob 15. 34). Job’s biblical passage discusses the doomed state of the wicked thus endorsing and continuing Langland’s rationale: consider, for example, Langland’s reference to the buildings that have been constructed with the money from bribes: ‘For toke þei on trewely, þei tymbred nou3t so hei3e’ (III. 85) compared with Job’s prophecy of the outcome for the houses of the wicked man: ‘*habitavit in civitatibus desolatis et in domibus desertis quae in tumulos sunt redactae*’ [He hath dwelt in desolate cities, and in desert houses that are reduced into heaps.] (Iob 15. 28).

Langland’s medieval audience might have derived some wry amusement in recalling this and other verses from the Job passage which Langland has used to trigger their imagination: ‘*non credat frustra errore deceptus quod aliquo pretio redimendus sit antequam dies eius impleantur peribit et manus eius arescet*’ [He shall not believe, being vainly deceived by error, that he may be redeemed with any price. Before his days be full he shall perish: and his hands shall wither away.] (Iob. 15. 31-32). It might seem that

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<sup>55</sup> Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, p. 85, note to line 118a: ‘In Ps. 26 [Vg.25]:10 David prays not to be condemned with men ‘in whose hands are evil devices (and whose right hands are full of bribes)’.

Langland intimates that: 'For to amenden maires and men þat kepen lawes' (III. 94), that these high-ranking officials might see the salutary lesson in Job; that the hands full of gifts may wither and the hands' owners perish in God's judgment.

If we look at the full context of Langland's Vulgate quotation, it reads:

*congregatio enim hypocritae sterilis et ignis devorabit tabernacula eorum qui munera libenter accipiunt concepit dolorem et peperit iniquitatem et uterus eius praeparat dolos*

[For the congregation of the hypocrite is barren: and fire shall devour their tabernacles, who love to take bribes. He hath conceived sorrow, and hath brought forth iniquity: and his womb prepareth deceits.] (Iob 15. 34-35)

The verse is part of a speech by Eliphaz (one of Job's Comforters), which describes in some detail the likely outcome for the sinner, and Langland, too, resembles a fourteenth-century 'Comforter'. It is pertinent to consider Job's context because Langland foresaw a similar fate for his contemporaries, and, furthermore, the context of the Job quotation continues the hypocrisy theme introduced from the context of Matthew used for the previous quotation twenty-three lines earlier.

Most interestingly, in commanding her to refrain from sin, the king treats Mede as Christ treated the sinner in Langland's allusion to John's Gospel where Christ speaks to the woman taken in adultery:

Woman, where are they who accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more. (Io. 8. 10-11)<sup>56</sup>

Langland's lines given below paraphrase and translate John's Gospel, and the poet may be urging contrition and change on all those who favour Mede: the king;<sup>57</sup> the clergy;<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Vulgate: 'mulier ubi sunt nemo te condemnabit quae dixit Domine dixit autem Iesus nec ego te condemnabo vade et amplius iam noli peccare' (Io. 8. 10-11). Conscience implies that Mede is a whore, 'For she is tikel of hire tail' (III. 131).

<sup>57</sup> III. 10.

<sup>58</sup> III. 15, 26.

the mayor:<sup>59</sup> ‘But I forgyue þee þat gilt, and graunte þee my grace; / Hennes to þi deep day do so na moore!’ (III. 108-9).<sup>60</sup> It begins to be apparent that, as well as biblical quotation, *Piers* is an intricate mix of biblical allusion from the quotations’ surrounding and associated Bible verses. Momentum in the poem is built on the skeleton of biblical quotations that mirror and reflect each other: both through the quotations themselves and their biblical context. Langland’s topics, as seen in these examples, resonate with the Bible as they ebb and flow through the poem.

#### 2.4 The importance of Context and Structure in Langland’s use of the Psalms and Associated Bible Texts

As this chapter has begun to demonstrate, the importance of the Psalms as an influence on the structure of *Piers* is self-evident, and so will now be examined in more detail in this section.<sup>61</sup> As has also been seen, Langland makes diverse use of the Bible; whether derived from a primary or secondary source, the Vulgate quotations form a substantial part of *Piers*: the poet was extremely well-acquainted with the Bible, with biblical reference. In an audience with equal knowledge, Langland’s biblical material and allusions cascade through the mind. Yet the Bible Latin and the Middle English mingle together in an easy, natural way: this aspect of Langland’s poetics is most important;

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<sup>59</sup> III. 87.

<sup>60</sup> This example is just one of many instances where Langland translates biblical texts: it cannot be considered correct to take the view that the poet ‘never translates’ the Bible (Kean, ‘Justice’, p. 109).

<sup>61</sup> For discussion of the Psalms in Langland’s period, see Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song; The Place of the Psalms in the Intellectual Culture of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Nancy Van Deusen (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999). The Psalms were also available in English in Langland’s period: for a view on Rolle’s translation and commentary on the Psalms, see John A. Alford, ‘Rolle’s *English Psalter* and *Lectio Divina*’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 77:3 (Autumn 1995), 47-59.

indeed, Simpson calls *Piers*, 'vernacular scripture'.<sup>62</sup> It is not unreasonable to assume that Langland anticipated an audience with a biblical and Christian understanding shared with his own; that Langland composed *Piers* not simply with the consideration that his audience would be *familiar* with the Bible passages he uses, but that the poet created the poem with the *expectation* that an audience would be able to place a particular quotation in context with an ease which the familiarity of the Psalms certainly facilitates.<sup>63</sup>

Many of the poem's topics are approached in this way, through biblical circumstance, but especially those themes that it might have been hazardous for Langland to express overtly: in the chapters on interpretation in the second part of the thesis, this aspect of *Piers* will be examined in greater detail. However, although this particular approach to the Bible quotations and their surrounding verses works in many aspects of *Piers*, because the Psalms were so well-known (and examples from them, therefore, make the principle of this thesis easier to understand), concentration in this section will focus on Langland's use of the Psalms, and those Bible texts associated with the Psalms, as a method of demonstration.

Langland's technique with the Psalms is complicated: the poet has a sub-text. A single line of Bible quotation triggers the brain and makes the rest of the Psalm sing in the head.<sup>64</sup> Langland routinely uses biblical context as part of his argument:

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<sup>62</sup> James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, The Oxford English Literary History, vol. 2. 1350-1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 483.

<sup>63</sup> The Psalms demonstrate the point, but this thesis contends that placing Bible quotations in context was unlikely to have been as unusual as modern scholars appear to anticipate - particularly not for clerics.

<sup>64</sup> On the Psalms as a type of concordance, see Michael P. Kuczynski, 'Rolle among the Reformers: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Wycliffite Copies of Richard Rolle's *English Psalter*', in *Mysticism and Spirituality*, ed. by Pollard and Boenig, pp. 177-202 (p. 196). On Langland's use of the Psalms, see Kuczynski, 'Rolle', pp. 200-202.

memorisation of the Psalms, the need to be *psalteratus*,<sup>65</sup> the sense that the brain had to become one's library, in fact, the whole familiarity of the Psalms through the daily office allows subtle interpretation. The ability to recollect the complete Psalter was not unusual and hardly surprising given the frequency of Psalter use in the daily Office and in the Liturgy.<sup>66</sup> Langland's repetition of Psalm quotation, for example Psalm 14,<sup>67</sup> shows similarity to the monastic method of recollecting the context, but the Psalms were familiar to fourteenth-century clerics and laity alike.

A simple example may illustrate how such intimate knowledge of the Psalms again evidences the poet's wit. As has been seen, Langland makes Sloth, one of the Seven Deadly Sins, a priest, and reveals this cleric's failure to live up to certain standards of worship and pastoral care when Sloth says:

I haue be preest and person passynge þritty wynter,  
 Yet kan I neyþer solue ne syngne ne seintes lyues rede,  
 But I kan fynden in a feld or in a furlang an hare  
 Better þan in *Beatus vir* or in *Beati omnes*

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<sup>65</sup> *The Luttrell Psalter: a Facsimile*, commentary by Michelle P. Brown (London: The British Library Board, 2006), p. 16. For techniques of monastic reading and recollection, see Jacqueline Hamesse, 'The Scholastic Model of Reading', in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, in association with Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1999), pp. 103-19; Leclercq, *Desire for God*, pp. 72-77. For discussion of memory in the medieval period, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: a Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 70, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 2008). See also Mary Carruthers, 'Imaginatif, Memoria, and "The Need for Critical Theory" in *Piers Plowman Studies*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 9 (1995), 103-14, with a response by Jeremy Tambling (114-20). On memorising the Liturgy and 'ways of remembering', see M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn ([London]: Edward Arnold, 1979; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), pp. 110, 173-80.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Horobin states that, in addition to all their other duties and in the space of a year, probationary 'vicars' were required 'to learn the psalter, antiphony, hymnary, and histories by heart'. Simon Horobin, 'The Scribe of Rawlinson Poetry 137 and the Copying and Circulation of *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 19 (2005), 3-26 (pp. 13-14). Yet as Lynn Staley observes, although the Penitential Psalms were originally drawn on 'to augment monastic private devotion' before becoming part of the Offices of the Church, they also came to be used by 'devout lay people'. Lynn Staley, 'The Penitential Psalms and Vernacular Theology', *English Language Notes*, 44:1 (2006), 113-20 (p. 113). Pious members of the laity, too, must have known many Psalms by heart.

<sup>67</sup> Ps. 14. 1 used at II. 39 (C. II. 40), III. 234a, VII. 52a, XIII. 127 (C. XV. 134); Ps. 14. 2 at III. 237a; Ps. 14. 5 at C. II. 42, III. 241a (A. 3. 221a), VII. 42a (Z. 8. 47, A. 8. 46a). See Alford, *Guide*, pp. 37, 38, 53, 54, 84. Ps. 14 advises obedience to God and care for others as the way into God's sanctuary.

Construe clausemele and kenne it to my parisspens. (V. 416-20)<sup>68</sup>

Within the context of the two Psalms mentioned here, Langland makes an ironical pun; the first quotation, *Beatus vir*, runs: ‘Beatus vir qui non abiit in consilio impiorum et in via peccatorum non stetit’ [Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners.] (Ps. 1. 1).<sup>69</sup> This Psalm expresses an ideal of piety, but Langland’s priest is ignorant of the saints and fails his parishioners. An alternative source for Langland could be another Psalm which also begins *Beatus vir*; and which delights in the benefits of those who, according to the commentary in the Douai-Rheims Bible (p. 802): ‘would be constant in the service of God’.<sup>70</sup> The second Psalm reference used in the *Piers* extract quoted above, *Beati omnes*, begins: ‘*Beati omnes qui timent Dominum qui ambulant in viis eius labores manuum tuarum quia manducabis*’ [Blessed are all they that fear the Lord: that walk in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands.] (Ps. 127. 1-2). Remembering Sloth’s declaration concerning his rustic skills, ‘the labours of his hands’: ‘For I kan fynden in a feld or in a furlang an hare’ (V. 418), one hopes that the hare which Sloth, the priest, found in the field made good eating (and amused Langland’s audience).

<sup>68</sup> Langland omits both references to these Psalms from the C-version.

<sup>69</sup> To those familiar with the Liturgy, the Psalms are instantly identifiable through their opening words which are the equivalent of a title. Other Psalms include the words ‘*Beatus vir*’ in later verses and might also be recalled by an audience: ‘*beatus vir cui non inputabit Dominus peccatum nec est in spiritu eius dolus*’ [Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin: and in whose spirit there is no guile.] (Ps. 31. 2 cf. Rm. 4. 8); ‘*beatus vir cuius est nomen Domini spes ipsius et non respexit in vanitates et insanias falsas*’ [Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord: and hath had regard to vanities, and lying follies.] (Ps. 39. 5). See also Ps. 33. 9; 83. 6, 13; 126. 5. For comment on Langland’s use of Psalm 1, see Michael P. Kuczynski, ‘The Psalms and Social Action in Late Medieval England’, in *Psalms*, ed. by Van Deusen, pp. 191-92. For general comment on Langland’s use of the Psalms, see Douglas Wurtele, ‘The Importance of the Psalms of David in William Langland’s *The Vision of Piers Plowman*’, *Cithara*, 42:2 (2003), 15-24.

<sup>70</sup> Vulgate: ‘*Beatus vir qui timet Dominum in mandatis eius volet nimis*’ [Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments.] (Ps. 111. 1).

In addition to the Bible quotations that Langland uses in *Piers*, it frequently seems well to recall other recognised and accepted biblical-verse connections because these links also appear relevant: for example, lines associated with Psalm 1 from the Book of Joshua read: ‘non recedat volumen legis huius de ore tuo sed meditaberis in eo diebus ac noctibus ut custodias et facias omnia quae scripta sunt in eo tunc diriges viam tuam et intelleges eam’ [Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it.] (Jos. 1. 8). Such knowledge endorses Langland’s stance and augments the poet’s criticism of priestly ignorance through the poem’s Bible framework.

This section will now elaborate on these precepts of Bible knowledge: Langland employs the Psalms not merely to amuse but also to satirise. Although Langland uses fewer than half of the Psalms in the Psalter,<sup>71</sup> yet his frequent application of a waymark, ‘Dauid in þe Sauter seiþ’, draws attention: for instance, in the lines before the next example: ‘*Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt*’ [Thy rod and thy staff they have comforted me.] (Ps. 22. 4 cf. XII. 13-13a). A ‘*baculus*’ signifies a bishop’s staff, a shepherd’s crook. In the context of the poem, in which the Psalm quotation appears, Langland’s verse suggests that the Lord’s rod is joyful but like a double-edged sword; as in Augustine’s *Commentary*, it can be both a comfort and a chastisement.<sup>72</sup> But the Psalm continues: ‘parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me inpinguasti in oleo caput meum’ [Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil.] (Ps. 22. 5). Therefore the passage on penance in *Piers* might also be read as a direct reminder to the clergy of their Ordination; of their

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<sup>71</sup> Langland uses sixty-one out of a possible one hundred and fifty Psalms: see Alford, *Guide*, pp. 121-24.

<sup>72</sup> Goldsmith, *Figure*, p. 18.

vows and their head being anointed with chrism, the ineffaceable mark on the soul, and part of the ceremonial procedure at the Ordination of priests: thus Langland continues his particular criticism of the priesthood.

In Passus XII, Langland has already issued the same apocalyptic threat to amend one's life (similar to those seen in the sections above on 'Book' and 'Dowel'): '*Si non in prima vigilia nec in secunda*' (XII. 9a cf. Lc. 12. 38). In Luke, the origin of Langland's quotation here, Peter asks if the parable is addressed specifically to the disciples or to all. Christ replies with the Parable of the Faithful or Unfaithful Servant: although there is application for all Christians, Christ's words were directed to the future ministers of the Church. Therefore Langland's use of the quotation from the Psalm might allow imagination to be stretched and to consider the 'table', mentioned in the Psalm's context, an 'altar'. It might seem pertinent to remember these important connotations in Psalm 22 that may reflect Langland's reasons for including a quotation from it at this juncture in the poem for his (presumably) clerical audience: Psalm 22 might recall for the audience the pastoral duties of the clergy, especially bishops.

In the B-text passage with the Psalm's quotation, Ymaginatif's prompting of Will, has two relevant adjacent quotations which demonstrate apocalyptic calls to expiate sin. Therefore, Langland's choice of these Vulgate quotations and the placing of them together may not seem an inappropriate direction to bishops, in particular, to penance: in so doing, the poet endorses the import of the Psalm quotation and its circumstance.<sup>73</sup> The context of these biblical extracts appears apposite: one from Luke, already discussed above, concerns the unfaithful servant who knew the will of his Lord but failed in his

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<sup>73</sup> Langland appears to choose these three quotations from the overall import of their contexts as much as from simple word association or *distinctiones*. Such connections between the quotations will be discussed further in chapter five.

duty: for whom the Lucan passage adds the rider that of those to whom much is given, a great deal is expected.<sup>74</sup> The other, from the Apocalypse, urges the need for zeal and penance following verses on the arrogance of the rich and powerful: ‘That thou mayest see’ (Apc. 3. 18).<sup>75</sup> Taken together,<sup>76</sup> not just these three Vulgate quotations but their contexts (and also the circumstance of the associated biblical verses) augment understanding and reveal the possibility of a (hidden) political agenda: an agenda contained in the biblical circumstance of Langland’s quotation from Psalm 22.<sup>77</sup> As this section on the Psalms illustrates, Langland, in his campaign to reform the clergy was able to use the Psalms’ contexts both to amuse and to satirise.

## 2.5 *Distinctiones*

Alford, Mann and Allen are clear in their understanding of Langland’s use of *distinctiones*.<sup>78</sup> Yet, from what may be seen from examination of the Vulgate quotations’

<sup>74</sup> XII. 9a cf. Lc. 12. 38, but see also the biblical context (Lc. 12. 39-48). For example, the Vulgate verses: ‘Ille autem servus qui cognovit voluntatem domini sui et non praeparavit et non fecit secundum voluntatem eius vapulabit multas qui autem non cognovit et fecit digna plagis vapulabit paucis omni autem cui multum datum est multum quaeretur ab eo et cui commendaverunt multum plus petent ab eo’ [The servant] who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. And unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.] (Lc. 12. 47-48).

<sup>75</sup> Vulgate: ‘et collyrio inungue oculos tuos ut videas ego quos amo arguo et castigo aemulare ergo et paenitentiam age’ [And anoint thy eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore and do penance.] (Apc. 3. 18-19 cf. Prv. 3. 12).

<sup>76</sup> Ps. 22; Lc. 12. 39-48; Apc. 3. 18-19.

<sup>77</sup> For a view of how Langland uses Psalm 22 in the Pardon scene of Passus VII, see Kuczynski, ‘The Psalms and Social Action’, pp. 209-11.

<sup>78</sup> Alford, ‘Role’, pp. 80-99; Mann, ‘Eating and Drinking’, pp. 26-43; Allen, *Ethical Poetic*, especially pp. 275-76; Allen, ‘Reading’, pp. 342-62. For other research on *distinctiones*, see R. H. and M. A. Rouse, ‘The Verbal Concordance to the Scriptures’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 44 (1974), 5-30; Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, ‘Biblical Distinctions in the Thirteenth Century’, *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, 41 (1974), 27-37; Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers*, pp. 3-90, especially pp. 7-23; Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, ‘Statim invenire: Schools, Preachers, and New Attitudes to the Page’, in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 201-25; Le P.C. Spicq, *Esquisse d’une Histoire de l’exégèse Latine au Moyen Age* (Paris: Vrin, 1944); Christina von Nolcken, *The Middle English*

contexts, associated Bible passages and biblical allusion, the matter is far from straightforward. The use of a word or contextual concordance must have formed a valuable tool for Langland, but, as Mann ('Eating and Drinking', p. 36) writes concerning the monastic practice of ruminating on Scripture:

[It is possible] to envisage [Langland] having memorized and contemplated many passages of scripture in this way. His poem makes itself clear that Langland had meditated on a large number of biblical texts – and also in their relationship to each other, so that one text called another to mind in a manner that habitual contemplation and study of the Bible made natural.<sup>79</sup>

These lists of words and connected Bible texts must have allowed Langland individual choices: perhaps *distinctiones* acted more in the form of a trigger that allowed the mind to range beyond the limits of these aids to Bible study and sermon making. Certainly, to the modern mind with its limited propensity to activate the memory in such a way, such mental compendia seem daunting and somewhat unrealistic: yet, the cogency of this medieval ability should not be underestimated.<sup>80</sup>

Allen considers that Langland had access to his own Bible (or part of one in a codex): even those quotations which are liturgical (as Alford demonstrates in *Guide*) will have had their origin from a Bible source.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, a medieval audience's knowledge of Bible contexts (especially that of a clerical audience) should not be dismissed;

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*Translation of the Rosarium Theologie, A Selection ed. from Cbr., Gorville and Caius Coll. MS 354/58* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1979); von Nolcken, 'Alphabetical Compendia', pp. 271-88. For other reference works of the period, see Alastair J. Minnis, 'Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Rôle of the *Compiler*', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 101 (1979), 385-421.

<sup>79</sup> It was deemed worthwhile to repeat Mann briefly here rather than to make cross-reference to chapter one.

<sup>80</sup> As Davlin (*William Langland*, p. 118) writes, 'For someone like the poet, who knows the Bible well, each quotation recalls or suggests another': it is entirely plausible that the reason why scholars have not been able to identify the exact *distinctiones* that Langland used throughout *Piers* is because the poet retained such information in his mind, and knew these biblical catalogues of quotations from memory, or even compiled his own lists from a number of *distinctiones* at his disposal. As George Shuffelton phrases it, books grew to be 'intimately known' by clerics. George Shuffelton, '*Piers Plowman* and the Case of the Missing Book', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 18 (2004), 55-72 (p. 64).

<sup>81</sup> Allen, 'Reading', p. 343.

Langland's own biblical knowledge, as indicated throughout *Piers*, should not be underrated. Most importantly, however the Bible quotations were selected, the contexts would be known from constant liturgical use, and an audience would make interpretation (whether Langland intended them to do so or not).

The fact that medieval Bibles had no verse numbers and Bible users must have had 'to read around' would mean that the context more easily formed part of the whole because there would have been no obvious separation within the text.<sup>82</sup> Allen ('Reading', p. 347) writes:

Thus, we must deal with each of Langland's quotations, as John Alford first advised us, not as an isolated verse, but as part of a larger passage which Langland was reading, and interpreting as God's description of his own life in his own world, after the manner of all devotional reading. [...] Sometimes it will be a whole short Psalm, or chapter, or *lectio*. Just as Langland could use a detail near a verse he quoted, so he could quote a verse near the passage he had looked up.

The Bible quotation contexts appear worthy of scrutiny.

As Allen ('Reading', p. 347) also states on another equally relevant point in regard to Langland's specific choice of Bible material on a certain theme: 'The coherence is far too neat, too relentless, too obsessive for accident. Langland is clearly pursuing a theme, and with a great deal of passion'.<sup>83</sup> Allen ('Reading', p. 351) further remarks that Langland had a 'formidable collection' of Bible citations on one specific topic, yet Allen seems unclear how the poet accumulated them: perhaps Langland was a more avid (and acute) scholar of the Bible than as yet perceived. In our reappraisal of Langland's use of *distinctiones*, we need to consider the impact of incessant, daily, *ruminatio*: the Vulgate

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<sup>82</sup> Allen, 'Reading', p. 343.

<sup>83</sup> 'By the fourteenth century the form of the scholastic sermon, the so-called thematic sermon, had become pretty well standardized: [...].' Rouse and Rouse, '*Statim invenire*', p. 217.

Latin became in reality a first language.<sup>84</sup> Alford states of Rolle that he ‘composed with one ear to the Bible’;<sup>85</sup> and Savage (‘Translation of Scripture’, p. 210) remarks on Piers’ treatment of the people in Passus V: ‘he starts them off gently with the way to truth via scripture’. These comments seem not to elicit the full force of the Vulgate’s influence in the fourteenth century. Langland did not offer the Bible an ‘ear’: the Scriptures were not outside him but within; the whole dynamic impetus of his every fibre.

## 2.6 Conclusion on Langland’s Use of the Bible for Structural Poetics

As seems evident from this chapter’s review, Langland’s use of the Bible establishes scripture as part of the poem’s structure, not only through the obvious skeleton of the Vulgate quotations in *Piers* but extensively from the quotations’ surrounding verses and other associated Bible passages: the full power of Langland’s poetry cannot be seen or understood if these biblical contexts are ignored. The poet expected recognition of biblical material, and made its familiarity part of his artistic construction: aftershocks of, for example, the psalmic words reverberate in the mind. The matter is much more complicated than a simple use of *distinctiones*, however useful these tools may have been for Langland.

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<sup>84</sup> Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, in a conference plenary, argued that the border between secular and religious is an anachronistic division; that clerks were ‘amphibious’. Many were not comfortable with copying in English, and demonstrate grammatical and orthographical errors (although it was a ‘niche market’, and therefore possible to trace a single scribal hand). Some manuscripts in the vernacular are glossed in Latin to explain differences in English grammar. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *The “Clerical Proletariat” and the Rise of English: a New Look at Fourteenth-Century Book Production*, 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, 13-16 May 2010, Saturday 15 May.

<sup>85</sup> John A. Alford, ‘Biblical *Imitatio* in the Writings of Richard Rolle’, *English Literary History*, 40:1 (Spring 1973), 1-23, (p. 23). Alford (*Imitatio*, pp. 14-15) writes of Rolle: ‘Because of his extreme familiarity with Scripture, any given biblical verse must have existed in Rolle’s mind as part of a context, and not [...] as an apt saying or isolated piece of biblical wisdom’. Such proficiency would hardly be uncommon and Langland was no different.

Quite apart from the implications for interpretation, Sullivan's suggestion that the Latin quotations are 'extraneous' to the structure of the poem must be seen as faulty.<sup>86</sup> By 'extraneous', Sullivan (*Latin Insertions*, p. 1) means that those Vulgate quotations which illustrate the surrounding vernacular lines of *Piers* like 'footnotes or marginal glosses', but which sit outside the Middle English, do not directly form part of the poem's structure. But 'extraneous' as a word to identify Langland's different types of Vulgate quotation use is misleading and limited; 'complementary' might have been a more appropriate term for there are no truly 'extraneous' Vulgate quotations in *Piers* either in the sense of its structure or its interpretation.<sup>87</sup> As Alford (*Guide*, p. 9) writes: 'If medieval scribes inserted any of the quotations, they probably saw their action not as adding to the poem but rather as making explicit what was already in it'. Any audience, with profound knowledge of the Bible, can appreciate biblical resonances and interpret additional meaning from every Vulgate quotation as well as from the unwritten Bible contexts and associated Bible texts.

The biblical quotations confirm Langland's deep knowledge of the Bible, and can hardly be regarded as coincidental, but are a carefully considered inclusion: research for this thesis has resulted in an awe-struck recognition of the ingenious nature of Langland's poetic craft and the astute political agenda couched in Bible extracts. They can, and should, be seen as a demonstrable part of the ongoing structure and argument of *Piers Plowman*, and an important, inseparable, aspect of Langland's poetics. The Vulgate

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<sup>86</sup> Sullivan, *Latin Insertions*, p. 1. Alford (*Guide*, pp. 3-9) discusses this issue in depth and examines Sullivan's categorisation of Langland's Vulgate quotation use. Alford quotes Schmidt, *Clerkly*, p. 91: both scholars disagree with Sullivan's term 'extraneous'. Schmidt, (*Clerkly*, p. 91) considers the possibility that a closer description might be 'appended' quotations rather than 'extraneous'.

<sup>87</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 5) argues that Sullivan's definition is 'problematic', but that it has affected the line numbering of every *Piers* edition since her dissertation.

quotations (but no less biblical allusion, paraphrase, translation and ‘trigger’ words) are just the most obvious ways in which Langland uses the Bible; in minds adept with Bible nuance many other passages may saturate understanding, as the sections on ‘Book’ and ‘Dowel’ demonstrate. The poet’s contextual composition reveals distinct underlying themes which flourish beneath his creative art. Through the biblical context, the quotations circle round each other in both spiritual and moral themes and are intrinsic to the building of Langland’s argument. The Vulgate quotations in *Piers* set the mind on fire and their contexts fan the flames. The remaining part of this chapter will touch on Langland’s use of Latin, and his audience (as both are indicators of Langland’s structural purpose) and, finally, make brief comparison between Langland’s and Chaucer’s use of the Bible.

## 2.7 Langland’s Use of Bible Latin

Because the Bible quotations feature as an essential (and atypical)<sup>88</sup> part of

Langland’s poetics, the poet’s use of Latin will now be reviewed.<sup>89</sup> As Pearsall argues:

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<sup>88</sup> Alford (‘Role’, p. 80) considers that, because of the large number of Bible quotations, the poem’s ‘actual appearance on the printed page’ does not ‘look like any other medieval poem’ (Alford’s italics). James H. Morey, however, disagrees with Alford’s statement: ‘Readers of biblical literature may well have been familiar with this kind of poem, and Langland had ample precedent for his own methodology of poetic composition’. James H. Morey, *Book and Verse: a Guide to Middle English Biblical Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 130. But Alford has a point: see, for one example, Walter W. Skeat’s edition of *Pierce the Ploughman’s Crede*: transcribed and edited from MS. Trin. Coll., Cam., R. 3, 15, collated with MS Bibl. Reg. 18. B. xvii. in the British Museum, and with the old printed text of 1553; to which is appended *God spede the Plough* (about 1500 A.D.) from MS. Lansdown 762, EETS, Original Series, 30 (London: published for EETS by N. Trübner and Co., 1867). *Pierce* does not display a plethora of Bible quotation, but uses occasional biblical allusion (see ll. 89-90 cf. Phil. 3. 17-18). Philippians, a common Bible reference, is also referred to by Langland (B. IX. 60-63) and by Chaucer in *The Pardoner’s Tale* (521-33 cf. *The Parson’s Tale*, 819-20). All references to *The Canterbury Tales* quotations are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Tunbridge Wells: Houghton Mifflin, 1987; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), first edition published as *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by F.N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

<sup>89</sup> Clanchy writes on the the accessibility of Latin amongst the populace. See Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, especially chapter seven: ‘Literate and Illiterate’, pp. 224-52. See also Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London; New York: Methuen, 1982;

Langland's Latin almost always functions in the closest relation with the English text, sometimes even with the Latin quotation embedded in the syntax of the surrounding English verses. Independent quotations, usually from the bible, the liturgy, or the church fathers, act to recapitulate or clinch an argument, to generate new text, or to provide firm and authoritative stepping-stones in what Langland may have thought of as the flux of the vernacular.<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, in the vast majority of the extant *Piers* manuscripts, the scribes who copied the poem draw attention to the Bible quotations: for example, in the use of rubrics.<sup>91</sup> Pearsall ('Gower's Latin', p. 15) goes on to argue that Langland, 'like other religious writers', uses the Bible as a source for authority: 'to allude to the existence of a body of authority that stands outside the author's text'.<sup>92</sup>

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London; New York: Routledge, 2002). Jill Mann caused great debate with her view of Langland's use of Latin and its effect on audience. See Mann, 'The Power of the Alphabet', pp. 21-50. For a response to Mann, see George Kane, 'An Open Letter to Jill Mann about the Sequence of the Versions of *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 13 (1999), 7-34. Patricia A. Baer argues that '[...] Langland suggests that the search for grace does not require Latin literacy at a sophisticated level': moreover, the poet chose to write intertextually, and could, therefore, appeal to readers of Latin and English. Patricia A. Baer, 'Cato's "Trace": Literacy, Readership, and the Process of Revision in *Piers Plowman*', in *The Medieval Reader: Reception and Cultural History in the Late Medieval Manuscript*, ed. by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History, Third Series*, vol. 1 (New York: AMS Press, 2001), pp. 123-47 (p. 138).

<sup>90</sup> Derek Pearsall, 'Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*', in *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. by A. J. Minnis, York Manuscript Conference [1987] (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 13-25 (p. 15). Spencer finds that sermons of the period follow a similar practice to that witnessed in *Piers*: they exhibit frequent quotations in Latin which are then translated into English or paraphrased. Again, Latin gave sermons authority. See Spencer, *Preaching*, p. 56.

<sup>91</sup> Pearsall, 'Gower's Latin', p. 15. See also *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, vols 1-6.

<sup>92</sup> Sociolinguistics demonstrates the occurrence of code-switching from one language to another for a variety of reasons - perhaps to infer status or solidarity to an audience from the employment of a specific, chosen language. Langland's use of Latin associates with the world and authority of the Bible, but this thesis underlines the importance of looking for the continuation of the points conveyed by the Latin Bible quotations, as Langland presents these within his English text too. The code-switching may veil the fact that biblical ideas continue through the vernacular text. For the principles of code-switching and examples, see Penelope Gardner-Chloros, 'Code-switching: Language Selection in Three Strasbourg Department Stores', in *Sociolinguistics: a Reader and Coursebook*, ed. by Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski, *Modern Linguistics Series* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 361-75; Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, *Learning About Language Series* (London; New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 41-54; Muriel Saville-Troike, *The Ethnography of Communication: an Introduction*, *Language in Society Series*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford; Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1982, 1989), pp. 57-70. On the authority of Latin, see Norman Blake, *The English Language in Medieval Literature* (London; Melbourne; Toronto: Dent, 1977), pp. 32-33.

None of these statements requires any dispute, but a further contention might be that, in focusing on the supremacy of God's word, in accentuating the importance and dominion of the Latin Bible quotations and in their continual use, Langland cannot but also draw attention to the contexts of those same Bible passages that he employs, and to generate those contexts with equal power. Whether the poet's action was deliberate need not be an issue here, but it would seem to be unlikely, given Langland's command of the Bible, that he did not remember the quotations' contexts and realise their political implication.

As Somerset controversially asserts, academics should not disregard the 'radical potential' of Latin (as opposed to the vernacular),<sup>93</sup> nor consider the Latin language not 'suitable for addressing a broad public on topics of reform'.<sup>94</sup> As this thesis will continue to argue, the Bible can be demonstrated to be a dangerous text. Latin held authority

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<sup>93</sup> The Church hierarchy had begun to become hostile to books in the vernacular by 1388. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Langland "in his Working Clothes"? Scribe D, Authorial Loose Revision Material, and the Nature of Scribal Intervention', in *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions: Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, York Manuscript Conferences: Proceedings Series, vol. 5, ed. by A.J. Minnis (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 139-67 (p. 151). For the rise of the vernacular and lay literacy, see John H. Fisher, 'Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century', *Speculum*, 52 (1977), 870-99; Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books of Religion', in *Book Production*, ed. by Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 317-44. For an alternative view on the vernacular, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *et al*, eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: an Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1999). On the power of the vernacular, see a number of articles by Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822-64; 'Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God', in *New Medieval Literatures*, 1, ed. by Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland and David Lawton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 85-124; 'Visions of Inclusion: Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27:2 (Spring 1997), 145-87; 'The Middle English Mystics', in *The Cambridge History of Middle English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 539-65, especially pp. 544-65.

<sup>94</sup> Somerset, 'Langlandian Canon', p. 77. Somerset remarks elsewhere: 'the Latin language itself was, in a sense, multilingual. Latin was no-body's mother tongue'. Fiona Somerset, "'Al þe comonys o voys atonys": Multilingual Latin and the Vernacular Voice in *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 19 (2005), 107-36 (pp. 107-8). Somerset also writes on Latin, the vernacular and audience in Fiona Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 37 (Cambridge University Press, 1998), see especially chapter two: "'Lewed Clergie": Vernacular Authorization in *Piers Plowman*', pp. 22-61.

within the Church, the Law and government:<sup>95</sup> Somerset maintains that those familiar with the language sought to control and exclude those outside its linguistic confines.<sup>96</sup> Moreover Somerset ('Langlandian Canon', p. 83) promotes the idea that, for those on the outside of an exclusive Latinate circle, 'nothing is more dangerous, more radical, than the Latin of scholastic argumentation'.

Maybe so, but because no present-day scholars have yet investigated Bible contexts in their entirety, any argument concerning the nature of Langland's Latin (whether radical or not) must be considered partial.<sup>97</sup> One matter is certain: as scholars have continuously remarked, Langland frequently remains ambiguous; issues are not straightforward in *Piers*, for example whether Langland advocates Latin literacy in Passus VII.<sup>98</sup> However, like the use of Bible contexts, such equivocal practice might be viewed as a deliberate ploy: what is unprovable, is unpunishable.

## 2.8 Audience(s)<sup>99</sup>

The prolific use of Latin obviously has bearing on Langland's reception; such concentrated Bible use suggests a fourteenth-century clerkly audience for *Piers* as erudite

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<sup>95</sup> Latin was believed to possess strong, positive qualities which were absent from the vernacular: repeating the Psalms (even if the Latin was not understood) was thought to convey benefit. See Bazire and Colledge, *Chastising*, p. 75.

<sup>96</sup> Somerset, 'Langlandian Canon', pp. 77-79.

<sup>97</sup> Langland's prolific use and translation of Bible Latin may be seen as dangerous practice. See Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 822-64.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Savage, 'Translation of Scripture', pp. 211-13.

<sup>99</sup> Burrow visualises separate audiences: clerical and wealthy lay people (Burrow, 'Audience', pp. 105-07). Anne Middleton's research expands Burrow's view considerably. See Anne Middleton, 'The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*', in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. by David Lawton (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982), pp. 101-23. Middleton has long been interested in the study of audience: Anne Middleton, 'The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II', *Speculum*, 53 (1978), 94-114; Anne Middleton, 'Making a Good End: John But as a Reader of *Piers Plowman*', in *Medieval English Studies*, ed. by Kennedy, Waldron and Wittig, pp. 243-66. See also Thorlac Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge: Brewer; Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), pp. 40-47. For good background, see Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

as Langland himself.<sup>100</sup> Certainly the scribes who copied the great numbers of the poem's manuscripts must have been equally familiar with Bible texts. Some scribes can be seen to translate the *Piers* text that they copy into a more comprehensible form, perhaps for different markets: some copies indicate a wealthy patron; others, a less literate target.<sup>101</sup> Changes to the original may also have been made to serve a Lollard readership.<sup>102</sup>

As Melissa M. Furrow suggests in an insightful article, the large amount of Latin in *Piers* raises several questions, but, mainly, Furrow queries not only the assumptions made by medieval writers about audience but also those framed by contemporary scholars.<sup>103</sup> Take, for example, the thought that aristocratic women at the court of Richard II would have been incapable of understanding the Latin jokes in the *Canterbury Tales* (and by definition, therefore, *Piers*, also), especially when one considers that the use of Latin was an everyday occurrence in religious observance.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, a copy of *Piers*

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<sup>100</sup> Other critics have pondered what Langland expects from his audience's recollection of biblical texts, and about the assumptions that the poet makes regarding recognition of his Bible quotation's context. See, for example, Davlin, 'Biblical Commentary', pp. 87-89; Davlin, *William Langland*, pp. 118-19. Traugott Lawler thinks that the 'prime actual audience and intended public [was] specifically those involved in pastoral care': in other words priests with the cure of souls. Traugott Lawler, 'The Secular Clergy in *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 16 (2002), 85-117 (p. 116).

<sup>101</sup> Merja Black, 'A Scribal Translation of *Piers Plowman*', *Medium Ævum*, 67:2 (1998), 257-290 (pp. 268-69). For further discussion of scribal practice, see, for examples, Kerby-Fulton, 'Scribe D', pp. 139-67; Siegfried Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons: 'Fasciculus Morum' and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1978), pp. 108-10. As scholars have recognised, scribes must have formed part of the poem's first audience. For discussion, see, for example, Horobin, 'Copying and Circulation of *Piers Plowman*', pp. 3-26; George Russell, "'As They Read It': Some Notes on Early Responses to the C-Version of *Piers Plowman*", *Leeds Studies in English*, 20 (1989), 173-89. For further discussion of scribes, manuscripts and the implications on audience, see C. David Benson, 'Another Fine Manuscript Mess: Authors, Editors and Readers of *Piers Plowman*', in *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies: Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 15-28.

<sup>102</sup> Black, 'Scribal Translation', p. 169.

<sup>103</sup> Melissa M. Furrow, 'Latin and Affect', in *The Endless Knot: Essays on Old and Middle English in Honor of Marie Borroff*, ed. by M. Teresa Tavormina and R.F. Yeager (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), pp. 29-41 (p. 32).

<sup>104</sup> For an argument on the wide-ranging everyday uses of Latin, see Furrow, 'Latin', pp. 29-32. On woman readers of *Piers*, see also Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Piers Plowman', in *Cambridge History*, ed. by Wallace, pp. 513-38 (pp. 528-29).

was bequeathed to a woman, Agnes Eggesfield, in 1400;<sup>105</sup> such a valuable bequest suggests Latin literacy.<sup>106</sup> Neither should we presume that knowledge of Latin and the Bible in every lay congregation, as Savage writes ('Translation of Scripture', p. 209), 'must by definition be secondhand';<sup>107</sup> such assertions negate the intelligence of people who listened endlessly to sermons and the liturgy: understanding might be extremely limited but not necessarily non-existent.

Memory as an aid in the process of language-learning in the medieval period ought not to be underestimated, as Furrow ('Latin', p. 36) argues:

But at this point it becomes obvious that a distinction between literate and non-literate (that is, readers of Latin and non-readers of Latin) could be misleading. After all, the normal practice was reading aloud: those who could read would read to those who could not. And the process of learning - recognizing, memorizing, reciting - begins before the process of reading.

Moreover, Furrow ('Latin', pp. 33-34) quotes from the Rolls, and gives a diverse list of those who claimed benefit of clergy from merchants to butchers and craftsmen, and concludes:

In short, a person cannot automatically be assumed to have been illiterate by virtue of either rank or sex, although it was certainly a minority overall who benefitted from formal education.

Furrow ('Latin', p. 35) discusses the level of Latin held and how Langland can give Latin 'an exclusionary role'. However, as Furrow ('Latin', p. 41) also states, Langland used 'familiar Latin biblical texts'; and familiarity with scriptural passages may well have

<sup>105</sup> Furrow, 'Latin' p. 32. See also Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Langland and the Bibliographic Ego', in *Written Work*, ed. by Justice and Kerby-Fulton, pp. 67-143 (p. 114). On other bequests of *Piers*, see Robert A. Wood, 'A Fourteenth-Century London Owner of *Piers Plowman*', *Medium Ævum*, 53 (1984), 83-90.

<sup>106</sup> In the 1395 Will of Lady Alice West, 'alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch' are to be bequeathed to her daughter-in-law, Iohane. *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate, London*, ed. and copied by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS, Original Series, no. 78 (London; New York; Toronto: published for EETS by Oxford University Press, 1882), p. 5. On a clerical bequest of *Piers*, see Rees Davies, 'The Life, Travels, and Library of an Early Reader of *Piers Plowman*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 12 (1999), 49-64.

<sup>107</sup> See also Somerset, 'Multilingual Latin', pp. 116-36.

come from English sermons which lay people heard or read in treatise form.<sup>108</sup> Furrow ('Latin', p. 41) believes that '[a]ll adults in late fourteenth-century England knew some Latin': such a statement offers a rational explanation for *Piers*' popularity, and it might therefore seem inadvisable to be too categorical about Langland's audience.

Yet with such incorporation of Latin, one ought to presume a large clerical audience, and as Kerby-Fulton ('Piers Plowman', p. 532) writes, Langland most likely belonged to a clergy elite:

Certain criticisms of the clergy (whether of monks or friars) were not intended for the eyes and ears of vernacular readers and Langland did not want to betray that trust, although in the heat of indignation he flirts with it. Rather, he often seems concerned to be recognized as a member of the clerical club. [...] Here, as so often at the interface of Latin and English in the poem, is the evidence of a necessarily implied dual audience, and his behaviour at such points suggests not so much that he was part of a 'new anti-clericalism', but of ongoing interclerical controversies in which he respected jurisdictional boundaries.<sup>109</sup>

Helena Halmari and Robert Adams also argue for the likelihood of Langland's erudition:

Langland's mixing of Latin and English [...] is highly structured [...H]e uses the mixing of Latin into Middle English as a register marker: a rich source of indexing, for the reading audience, his learned background and his knowledge of religious literature.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> For example of English prose sermons, see Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*, 4 parts, SERMO: Studies on Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation Sermons and Preaching, vol. I (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007).

<sup>109</sup> Kerby-Fulton gives example: B. 13. 71-3a (Kane and Donaldson, eds.); C. 15. 79-80 (Pearsall, ed.). Kerby-Fulton and Justice argue for the possibility that 'civil servants read, wrote, and gestured reform, or perhaps even quiet revolution', and that these 'legal scribes and civil servants formed a crucial part of Langland's initial coterie audience'. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Culture in the English and Irish Civil Service: the "Modus Tenendi Parliamentum" and its Literary Relations', *Traditio*, 53 (1998), 149-202 (p. 149; p. 179). Kerby-Fulton has written prolifically on Langland and audience. See, for other examples, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice, 'Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380-1427', in *New Medieval Literatures*, 1, ed. by Scase, Copeland and Lawton, pp. 59-83; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Professional Readers of Langland at Home and Abroad: New Directions in the Political and Bureaucratic Codicology of *Piers Plowman*', in *New Directions*, ed. by Pearsall, pp. 103-29; Kerby-Fulton, 'Scribe D', in *Middle English Poetry*, ed. by Minnis, pp. 139-67.

<sup>110</sup> Helena Halmari and Robert Adams, 'On the Grammar and Rhetoric of Language Mixing in *Piers Plowman*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 103 (2002), 33-50 (p. 34). For another sociolinguistic stance,

Furthermore, Halmari and Adams ('Language Mixing', pp. 48-49) conclude:

Langland's Latin insertions, regardless of their syntactic positions, seem to follow a rhetorical purpose; he uses this mixing in a manner typical of religious texts of the time. Most Latin is inserted for **topical reference** [*sic*] – to be the key to a theological argument that Langland wants to introduce and elaborate. Simultaneously, through this conventionalized switching pattern, Langland is enforcing, and re-enforcing, his own clerical and scholarly identity. [...] Langland's massive use of Latin in *Piers Plowman* is intended to evoke the whole rich world of Scriptural knowledge for his audience, a group already well versed in this knowledge. [...] For Langland, every Latin word, every Latin phrase, and every Latin clause provides a full referential artillery – a key to the world of Scripture and the philosophy provided there. Simultaneously, what better way of communicating his authority and his ingroup membership in the world of *clergy* could there be than the use of Latin?

Whoever Langland's audience might have been initially (and it seems obvious that the question is not straightforward), certainly for a clergy audience, the Latin Bible quotations and their contexts formed an important part of their understanding of *Piers*: as it should ours.

Recent manuscript scholarship is thought to have increased understanding of the type of person who comprised Langland's first readers (or listeners).<sup>111</sup> The first audience

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see articles, for example, by Tim William Machan, 'Language Contact in *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum*, 69 (1994), 359-85; Tim William Machan, 'Medieval Multiculturalism and Gower's Literary Practice', *Studies in Philology*, 103:1 (Winter 2006), 1-25.

<sup>111</sup> A.S.G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall write that the *Piers* manuscripts usually display 'minimal decoration' which argues for a less-wealthy audience. A.S.G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall, 'The Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts', in *Book Production*, ed. by Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 257-78 (p. 261). The lack of illumination in *Piers* manuscripts is in direct contrast with many Psalters and Books of Hours. See, for example, Michael Camille, 'Labouring for the Lord: the Ploughman and the Social Order in the Luttrell Psalter', *Art History*, 10:4 (December 1987), 423-54. Other research impinges on ideas about audience: C. Paul Christianson's work demonstrates the thriving state of London book production in Langland's period. C. Paul Christianson, 'Evidence for the Study of London's Late Medieval Book-Trade', in *Book Production*, ed. by Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 87-108. For background on the development of readers and reading in the medieval period, see M.B. Parkes, 'Reading, Copying and Interpreting a Text in the Early Middle Ages', in *Reading*, ed. by Cavallo and Chartier, trans. by Cochrane, pp. 90-102; Paul Saenger, 'Reading in the later Middle Ages', in *Reading*, ed. by Cavallo and Chartier, trans. by Cochrane, pp. 120-48. See also Paul Saenger, 'Silent Reading: its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator*, 13 (1982), 367-414 (pp. 390-414).

for *Piers* was diverse: ranging from the 1381 rebels<sup>112</sup> to, as Kane and Donaldson (p. 122) phrase it, ‘persons of education and therefore of some standing’.<sup>113</sup> Kane and Donaldson also think Langland had patronage:<sup>114</sup> certainly it might be assumed likely that the poet needed protection. One may deduce that Langland’s primary circle was not all-exclusive but reached out into a wider domain; one evidenced not only from the large numbers of *Piers* manuscripts still extant but also from the fact that the manuscripts had a comprehensive circulation.<sup>115</sup> Kerby-Fulton (‘Bibliographic Ego’, p. 99) considers that the anonymous nature of communication and possession of *Piers* manuscripts ‘links the poem with the publishing of more socially or politically sensitive works than those of Chaucer or Lydgate’. Moreover, Kerby-Fulton (‘Bibliographic Ego’, p. 103) thinks that ‘Langland was writing from a position on the cutting edge (so to speak) of ecclesiastical disturbances’ which in itself infers ideas about the radical nature of Langland’s inner circle.

Kerby-Fulton promotes the idea that Langland’s audience included scribes from the civil service; a coterie in London;<sup>116</sup> Caroline Barron also thinks Langland was a London poet.<sup>117</sup> However, Simpson (among others) considers that Langland’s readership spread more widely than London:

The poem’s imagined audience would seem to be theologically sophisticated, but debarred from the higher reaches of Latin learning. This is the audience, ranging

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<sup>112</sup> See, for one example, Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, chapter 3: ‘*Piers Plowman* in the Rising’, pp. 102-39.

<sup>113</sup> ‘*B Version*, ed. by Kane and Donaldson, revised edition, p. 122, n. 47. See also Kerby-Fulton, ‘Bibliographic Ego’, p. 69.

<sup>114</sup> *B Version*, ed. by Kane and Donaldson, revised edition, p. 122. n. 47.

<sup>115</sup> Kerby-Fulton, ‘Bibliographic Ego’, p. 110.

<sup>116</sup> Kerby-Fulton, ‘Bibliographic Ego’, pp. 115-19.

<sup>117</sup> Caroline M. Barron, ‘William Langland: a London Poet’, in *Chaucer’s England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. by Barbara Hanawalt, Medieval Studies at Minnesota, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 91-109. For discussion of *Piers*’ C-text manuscripts and their dialects, see Horobin, ‘London and Opeland’, pp. 248-69.

from civil servants, to priests, to merchants and artisans, that Lollard writing also attracted.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, who did Langland intend to receive the advantage of *Piers*' instruction? Perhaps, as Simpson (*Reform*, p. 380) phrases it: '[*Piers*]' constantly shifting audience finally forms one audience, a Church from which no one is irredeemably excluded'.<sup>119</sup>

## 2.9 A Comparison of Langland and Chaucer's Bible Use

Before this chapter on Langland and Bible use ends, comparison of the way in which Langland (viewed as a religious writer) and Chaucer (the 'secular humanist') manipulated Scripture might also seem appropriate, even if necessarily brief.<sup>120</sup> The contrast between the two (arguably) London writers is an interesting one. For example, in the Prologue to *The Pardoner's Tale*, Chaucer gives the Pardoner a sermon text: *Radix malorum est Cupiditas* from Paul's first letter to Timothy.<sup>121</sup> The citation is, of course, part of Chaucer's joke with his audience as the greedy Pardoner knows his own fault, but never seeks to take his own advice: 'I preche of no thyng but for coveityse' (l. 424). Yet, if the context of the Bible quotation is examined, it, too, adds to our amusement, and is worth quoting in full.

<sup>118</sup> Simpson, *Reform*, pp. 345-46.

<sup>119</sup> Simpson appraises another poem in this tribute: John Audelay's *Marcol and Solomon*.

<sup>120</sup> For an insightful discussion and comparison of Langland and Chaucer, see Davlin, 'Religious Writers', pp. 199-41. See also Valerie Edden, 'The Bible', in *Chaucer: an Oxford Guide*, ed. by Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 332-51. For comparison and general discussion of Chaucer and Langland, see John M. Bowers, *Chaucer and Langland: the Antagonistic Tradition* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007). Comparison of the two poets is not a recent phenomenon: see, for example, Nevill Coghill, 'Two Notes on *Piers Plowman*', *Medium Ævum*, 4 (1935), 83-94. It is also worth noting that scholars consider that Chaucer was familiar with the Wycliffite Bible, and that it shaped the poet's translations. Craig T. Fehrman, 'Did Chaucer Read the Wycliffite Bible?', *Chaucer Review*, 42:2 (2007), 111-138 (p. 128).

<sup>121</sup> I Tim. 6. 10.

Through the Bible quotation's context (in a way not unlike Langland's) Chaucer indicates the proud Pardoner's blasphemous character to his audience, and he sets up audience expectation of the story about envy and evil suspicions which follows in the

*Tale*:

quicumque sunt sub iugo servi dominos suos omni honore dignos arbitrentur ne nomen Domini et doctrina blasphemetur [...] si quis aliter docet et non adquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Iesu Christi et ei quae secundum pietatem est doctrinae superbus nihil sciens sed languens circa quaestiones et pugnas verborum ex quibus oriuntur invidiae contentiones blasphemiae suspiciones malae conflictationes hominum mente corruptorum et qui veritate privati sunt existimantium quaestum esse pietatem est autem quaestus magnus pietas cum sufficientia nihil enim intulimus in mundum haut dubium quia nec auferre quid possumus habentes autem alimenta et quibus tegamur his contenti sumus nam qui volunt divites fieri incidunt in temptationem et laqueum et desideria multa inutilia et nociva quae mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem *radix* enim omnium *malorum est cupiditas* quam quidam appetentes erraverunt a fide et inseruerunt se doloribus multis

[Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honour: lest the name of the Lord and his doctrine be blasphemed. [...] If any man teach otherwise and consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to that doctrine which is according to godliness. He is proud, knowing nothing, but sick about questions and strifes of words: from which arise envies, contentions, blasphemies, evil suspicions, Conflicts of men corrupted in mind and who are destitute of the truth, supposing gain to be godliness. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food and where-with to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition. *For the desire of money is the root of all evils:* which some coveting have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows.] (I Tim. 6. 3-10)

The dry humour of *The Pardoner's Tale* is powerful: the call to '[l]ooketh the Bible, and ther ye may it leere' (l. 578) double-edged like the *Tale* itself. The entreaty to take note of the Bible seems far from Langland's. Yet, although not essential to enjoy the *Tale*, nonetheless knowledge of the biblical circumstance of the Epistle text enriches our

pleasure in Chaucer's writing skills;<sup>122</sup> perhaps even aided Chaucer's composition. It seems apparent that Chaucer was very familiar with this chapter of Timothy; as were, no doubt, his audience, and that Chaucer, like Langland, could use this knowledge and expectation to good affect.<sup>123</sup>

The poet's use of Timothy has a different dimension, however, when Chaucer also quotes from the Epistle in the *Retraction*:

But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun,/ that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene, / bisekyng hem that they from hennes forth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes and to studie to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun to doon in this present lyf, / thurgh the benigne grace of hym that is kyng of kynges and preest over alle preestes, that boghte us with the precious blood of his herte, / so that I may be oon of hem at the day of doom that shulle be saved. *Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia secula. Amen.* (ll. 1088-92)

If comparison is made with the last verses of I Timothy 6, it seems self-evident that this virtuous entreaty to God keeps the Pardoner's pledge of a 'moral tale' (*Prologue*, l. 460), and demonstrates a world far from the Pardoner's sardonic promise.

Yet it also appears to confirm that Chaucer held the Bible in his mind quite as much as did Langland, and that Chaucer kept the whole biblical context in his head as he wrote about confession in the *Retraction*:

tu autem o homo Dei haec fuge sectare vero iustitiam pietatem fidem caritatem patientiam mansuetudinem certa bonum certamen fidei adprehende vitam aeternam in qua vocatus es et confessus bonam confessionem coram multis testibus praecipio tibi coram Deo qui vivificat omnia et Christo Iesu qui

<sup>122</sup> See also *The Man of Law's Tale* which refers to the 'roote of iniquitee!' (l. 358 cf. I Tim. 6. 10). I am indebted to Lawrence Besserman, *Chaucer and the Bible: a Critical Review of Research, Indexes, and Bibliography* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1988), p. 378. Chaucer also alludes to the Epistle in *The Summoner's Tale*, a scatological – not a religious tale: 'We fare as seith th'apostle; clooth and foode / Suffisen us, though they be nat ful goode' (ll. 1881-2 cf. I Tim. 6. 8). Besserman claims other references to I Tim. 6: for example, in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (I Tim. 6. 8 cf. ll. 326-27).

<sup>123</sup> This chapter from I Timothy was popular: see also 'The Two Ways', in *The Works of Sir John Clanvowe*, ed. by V.J. Scattergood (Cambridge: Brewer, 1965), p. 69, see ll. 463-68 cf. I Tim. 6. 9.

testimonium reddidit sub Pontio Pilato bonam confessionem ut serves mandatum sine macula inreprehensibile usque in adventum Domini nostri Iesu Christi quem suis temporibus ostendet beatus et solus potens rex regum et Dominus dominantium [...] divitibus huius saeculi praecipe non sublime sapere neque sperare in incerto divitiarum sed in Deo qui praestat nobis omnia abunde ad fruendum bene agere divites fieri in operibus bonis facile tribuere communicare thesaurizare sibi fundamentum bonum in futurum ut adprehendant veram vitam

[But thou, O man of God, fly [*sic*] these things: and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called and hast confessed a good confession before many witnesses. I charge thee before God who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate, a good confession. That thou keep the commandment without spot, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which in his times he shall shew, who is the Blessed and only Mighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords. [...] Charge the rich of this world not to be highminded nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy): To do good: to be rich in good works: to give easily: to communicate to others: To lay up store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life.] (I Tim. 6. 11-15, 17-19)

Whether Chaucer's knowledge of the Bible was as great as Langland's is debatable, but, like Langland, he uses biblical reference and allusion for various affect.

We cannot know whether a secular or a sacred use of the Bible was closer to Chaucer's own purpose or to the poet's persona, but careful examination of the poem, *Truth: Balade de Bon Conseyl*, seems to reveal close links to Langland's Bible use. This section will now analyse Chaucer's use of biblical allusion, and align the poem within the framework of Christian understanding. When the poet writes: 'And trouthe thee shal delivere, it is no drede' emphatically at the end of every verse (ll. 7, 14, 21, 28), the line recalls John's Gospel: 'et cognoscetis veritatem et veritas liberabit vos' [And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.] (Io. 8. 32). In the Bible context, Christ speaks to those Jews, the outsiders of the Jewish congregation who believed in him: to whom Christ promises: 'si vos manseritis in sermone meo vere discipuli mei eritis' [If

you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed.] (Io. 8. 31); there is therefore no need to be afraid: 'it is no drede'.

Chaucer sets up a dichotomy of truth and the falsehood of the world from the beginning of the poem: 'Flee fro the prees and dwelle with sothfastnesse' (*Truth*, l. 1); John's Gospel, too, contrasts God's truth with the world of the devil's lies:

vos ex patre diabolo estis et desideria patris vestri vultis facere ille homicida erat ab initio et in veritate non stetit quia non est veritas in eo cum loquitur mendacium ex propriis loquitur quia mendax est et pater eius

[You are of your father the devil: and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning: and he stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.] (Io. 8. 44)

Chaucer seems to allude to these Bible texts.

As with Langland, for Chaucer, truth has double meaning: God and the moral quality; Chaucer's poem refers to the spiritual matter of seeking God (Truth), as can be seen in verse three:

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse;  
The wrastling for this world axeth a fal.  
Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:  
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!  
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al;  
Hold the heye wey and lat thy gost thee lede,  
And trouthe thee shal deliver, it is no drede. (ll. 15-21)

Biblical allusion burgeons in this verse: the original idea of pilgrimage: 'Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse' refers to the exile's journey through alien country, the unnatural place, towards perfect nature, heaven. *Piers*, too, represents a spiritual journey. In the Old Testament, we have Abraham's example of physical pilgrimage; the patriarch

was called by God to leave his country, his family and go into the land that God showed him.<sup>124</sup>

The New Testament consistently sets up the premise concerning the Christian quest; the pilgrimage of life. To quote the *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (p. 1288), this undertaking can be viewed not as ‘a journey to a particular place, but as exile from one’s native land voluntarily undertaken as a form of asceticism’: it is an ‘ascetic ideal of perpetual pilgrimage for the love of God’. Several Pauline passages make this idea clear:

quia eratis illo in tempore sine Christo alienati a conversatione Israhel et hospites testamentorum promissionis spem non habentes et sine Deo in mundo nunc autem in Christo Iesu vos qui aliquando eratis longe facti estis prope in sanguine Christi [...] quoniam per ipsum habemus accessum ambo in uno Spiritu ad Patrem ergo iam non estis hospites et advenae sed estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei

[That you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the conversation of Israel and strangers to the testament, having no hope of the promise and without God in this world. But now in Christ Jesus, you, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. [...] For by him we have access both in one Spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners: but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God.] (Eph. 2. 12-13, 18-19)

imitatores mei estote fratres et observate eos qui ita ambulant sicut habetis formam nos multi enim ambulant quos saepe dicebam vobis nunc autem et flens dico inimicos crucis Christi quorum finis interitus quorum deus venter et gloria in confusione ipsorum qui terrena sapiunt nostra autem conversatio in caelis est unde etiam salvatorem expectamus Dominum Iesum Christum

[Be ye followers of me, brethren: and observe them who walk so as you have our model. For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction: whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.] (Phil. 3. 17-20)

Paul encourages the Christian way of life and criticises those hypocrites, who profess to the Christian faith but deny the Spirit, and contrasts them to true Christians, who,

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<sup>124</sup> Gn. 12. 1.

although far from perfect, strive to walk in obedience to Christ's way; Chaucer's 'heye wey';<sup>125</sup> those people who seek citizenship in heaven, Christ's Kingdom; Chaucer's 'hoom' (*Truth*, l. 17). A medieval audience would most likely remember the biblical contexts about pilgrimage and read more into the poem. They would know, for example, to quote Hebrews, that Christians were 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth' who, as the Philippians passage suggests, in reality, belong in heaven.<sup>126</sup> Paul contrasts those who walk in Christ's way with those who do not.

There are other biblical resonances with Chaucer's 'wildernesse': for example, when Christ has been without food in the wilderness, the devil tempts him to turn stones into bread: Christ answers that man may only live through the word of God.<sup>127</sup> Christ quotes from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy which demonstrates that the way from the wilderness to God involves keeping his commandments:

omne mandatum quod ego praecipio tibi hodie cave diligenter ut facias ut possitis vivere et multiplicemini ingressique possideatis terram pro qua iuravit Dominus patribus vestris et recordaberis cuncti itineris per quod adduxit te Dominus Deus tuus quadraginta annis per desertum ut adfligeret te atque temptaret et nota fierent quae in tuo animo versabantur utrum custodires mandata illius an non adflixit te penuria et dedit tibi cibum manna quem ignorabas tu et patres tui ut ostenderet tibi quod non in solo pane vivat homo sed in omni verbo quod egreditur ex ore Domini

<sup>125</sup> For Bible reference to the 'way', see Mt. 7. 13-14; Lc. 1. 79; Io. 14. 1-6. See below for discussion.

<sup>126</sup> This passage reflects on the faith of Old Testament individuals. Vulgate: 'iuxta fidem defuncti sunt omnes isti non acceptis repromissionibus sed a longe eas aspicientes et salutantes et confitentes quia peregrini et hospites sunt supra terram' [All these died according to faith, not having received the promises but beholding them afar off and saluting them and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth.] (Hbr. 11. 13).

<sup>127</sup> Vulgate: 'Tunc Iesus ductus est in desertum ab Spiritu ut temptaretur a diabolo Et cum ieiunasset quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus postea esuriit et accedens temptator dixit ei si Filius Dei es dic ut lapides isti panes fiant qui respondens dixit scriptum est non in pane solo vivet homo sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei' [Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.*] (Mt. 4. 1-4).

[All the commandments, that I command thee this day, take great care to observe: that you may live, and be multiplied, and going in may possess the land, for which the Lord swore to your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way through which the Lord thy God hath brought thee for forty years through the desert, to afflict thee and to prove thee: and that the things that were in thy heart might be made known, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not. He afflicted thee with want, and gave thee manna for thy food, which neither thou nor thy fathers knew: to shew that *not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.*] (Dt. 8. 1-3)

Chaucer's mention of 'wildernesse' in *Truth* sets up numerous biblical connections.

Langland also refers to 'wildernesse' in this way:

Til it [a barn] be cristned in Cristes name and confermed of þe bisshop,  
It is heþene as to heueward, and helples to þe soule.  
'Heþen' is to mene after heep and vntiled erþe -  
As in wilde wildernesse wexeþ wilde beestes,  
Rude and vnresonable, rennyng wipouten keperes. (XV. 456-60)<sup>128</sup>

Heathens dwell furthest from heaven, so also the unbaptised. In consequence, the heath, 'open wasteland',<sup>129</sup> or wilderness offers little in terms of physical or spiritual food (any sort of 'bread'); God feeds the faithful. Like Christ in the desert, so all humankind (and every beast) is totally reliant on God. Consistently, *Piers* illustrates how the soul must move from darkness to light;<sup>130</sup> from the wilderness to heaven, and so in *Truth* does Chaucer.

But what does the Bible mean by wilderness? The words for wilderness and desert are synonymous in the Bible; as Edmund Leach defines biblical wilderness:

<sup>128</sup> As Schmidt (*Vision*, p. 469) points out, the poet plays with the 'th' and 'v' of heathen and heavenward, which are 'near-identical sounds in L[angland]'s dialect'. For discussion of the etymology and Latin, see also Blake, *English Language*, p. 94.

<sup>129</sup> *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, ed. by Robert K. Barnhart (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 1988), p. 471.

<sup>130</sup> Langland and Baptism (with its emphasis on light and darkness) will be discussed in depth in chapters four and five.

It signified “wild” territory, untamed by man but not necessarily uninhabitable. *Midbar*, the usual Hebrew equivalent, included dry pasture land where sparse grazing was available for sheep; indeed, this was its principal meaning.<sup>131</sup>

Wilderness, a marginal place, can be a source of God’s strength to which a man of God can retire in order to find help for the soul.<sup>132</sup> In the Bible, then, wilderness is a place rife with supernatural symbolism.

The spiritual pilgrimage in *Piers* from the wilderness towards heaven begins in earnest following the tearing of the pardon when ‘preieres’ and ‘penaunce’ become his plough (VII.120). In Chaucer’s *Truth*, too, the reader is encouraged to ‘Know thy contree’ and ‘look up’ to heaven, to God (l. 19). When Chaucer adds reference to ‘Hold the heye wey and lat thy gost thee lede’ (l. 20), the poet touches on a rich vein of biblical allusion. For example, in Isaiah: ‘vox clamantis in deserto parate viam Domini rectas facite in solitudine semitas Dei nostri’ [Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God.] (Is. 40. 3).<sup>133</sup>

Further Bible citations augment understanding of Chaucer’s ‘heye wey’ on which the soul must be led:

semita iustorum declinat mala custos animae suae servat viam suam contritionem  
praecedit superbia et ante ruinam exaltatur spiritus

[The path of the just departeth from evils: he that keepeth his soul keepeth his way. Pride goeth before destruction: and the spirit is lifted up before a fall.] (Prv. 16. 17-18)

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<sup>131</sup> Edmund Leach, ‘Fishing for Men on the Edge of the Wilderness’, in *Literary Guide*, ed. by Alter and Kermode, pp. 579-99 (pp. 585-86). Leach (p. 586) adds: ‘The prototype Wilderness is provided by the geographic environment of the wanderings in the Book of Exodus. If you are in Egypt, the Wilderness is where you get to if you cross the Red Sea; if you are in the land of Israel, the Wilderness is where you get to if you cross the Jordan. The Wilderness is the Other World. Entering or leaving the Wilderness symbolizes a metaphysical movement from the here and now to the timelessness of the Other or vice versa’.

<sup>132</sup> Leach, ‘Fishing’, p. 588.

<sup>133</sup> See also Is. 11. 16.

Chaucer's line 'The wrestling for this world axeth a fal' (*Truth*, l. 16) seems to reflect

Proverbs.<sup>134</sup> Isaiah and Jeremiah also show a similar ethos to Chaucer's sentiments:

et erit ibi semita et via et via sancta vocabitur non transibit per eam pollutus et  
haec erit nobis directa via ita ut stulti non errent per eam

[And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way: the  
unclean shall not pass over it. And this shall be unto you a straight way, so that  
fools shall not err therein.] (Is. 35. 8)

statue tibi speculam pone tibi amaritudines dirige cor tuum in viam directam in  
qua ambulasti

[Set thee up a watchtower: make to thee bitterness: direct thy heart into the right  
way wherein thou hast walked.] (Jer. 31. 21)

The most probable influence on Chaucer's thinking for the 'heye wey', however,  
might be from a variety of Gospel texts given below. Matthew also gives warning of the  
consequences of the failure to walk on the right route in the proper fashion towards the  
Kingdom of God:

Intrate per angustam portam quia lata porta et spatiosa via quae ducit ad  
perditionem et multi sunt qui intrant per eam quam angusta porta et arta via quae  
ducit ad vitam et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam

[Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that  
leadeth to destruction: and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the  
gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!] (Mt. 7.  
13-14)

inluminare his qui in tenebris et in umbra mortis sedent ad dirigendos pedes  
nostros in viam pacis

[To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death: and to direct  
our feet into the way of peace.] (Lc. 1. 79)

Non turbetur cor vestrum creditis in Deum et in me credite in domo Patris mei  
mansiones multae sunt si quo minus dixissem vobis quia vado parare vobis locum  
et si abiero et praeparavero vobis locum iterum venio et accipiam vos ad me  
ipsum ut ubi sum ego et vos sitis et quo ego vado scitis et viam scitis dicit ei

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<sup>134</sup> Chaucer's line also brings to mind images of Jacob wrestling. See Gn. 32, especially v. 24.

Thomas Domine nescimus quo vadis et quomodo possumus viam scire dicit ei  
 Iesus ego sum via et veritas et vita nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me

[Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God: believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you: because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am, you also may be. And whither I go you know: and the way you know. Thomas saith to him: Lord, we know not whither thou goest. And how can we know the way? Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me.] (Io. 14. 1-6)

Chaucer's poem, *Truth*, might seem to be particularly aligned with John's Gospel with its emphasis on truth and the way. It might be hard not to believe that any (or all) of these allusions did not come into the minds of Chaucer and his audience when they listened (or read) *Truth*. Moreover, from the direct links between the Bible and *Truth*, it seems that Chaucer's belief in Christian ideology was not as divergent from orthodox medieval Christian understanding as many critics might maintain. Certainly the poem reveals that Chaucer (like Langland) found the Bible a rich seam of inspiration; a source of creative impulse which could be understood and appreciated by fourteenth-century audiences.

## 2.10 Conclusion

The stance of this chapter is simple: in the mind of any audience of *Piers*, from the fourteenth to the twenty-first century, the quotations have a life of their own from recall of the Bible context: interpretation comes from both within and without the poem because Langland (as does Chaucer) triggers the mind through his use of the Bible. However, such use of the Bible could be considered dangerous: once a text goes into the public domain, no author can have control over what an audience does with the material on offer.

Even the fact that Langland used many secondary sources and not simply the Vulgate for the Latin,<sup>135</sup> for example, the poet's use of the Liturgy or Commentary, does not diminish the assertion regarding the contexts of the Latin Bible references: for an audience much of the original Vulgate would have been accessible from both these sources. Even a part-quotation will be completed by the hearer or reader who, if familiar with the original, will just fill in the missing parts. For example, if someone familiar with the Catholic Mass might hear: 'Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem' and perchance the speaker went on to say 'Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum', it would be automatic to fill in the missing section in one's head: 'factorem cæli et terræ, visibilium omnium, et invisibilium'. Memory, as a tool, is fundamental and should not be underestimated.

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<sup>135</sup> Scholars know that the Vulgate itself was not a single text. See Alford, *Guide*, pp. 17-19.

## Chapter Three

### Context and Structure in *Piers*: Truth as Examined Through the Contexts of Sequential Vulgate Quotations

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the biblical contexts of *Piers*' Vulgate quotations, from the Prologue to the end of Passus five, Truth, the Word of God and speech acts may be seen not just as important, but linked thematically: this focus is also displayed through biblical allusion. Chapter two surveyed Langland's Bible use in a general way, but the poet's employment of the Bible will now be examined in detail: the emphasis of this chapter will centre on the specific investigation of 'truth' as it appears within the Vulgate quotations in the early part of the poem. As Alford (*Companion*, p. 33) notes: 'Truth as a social ideal is the dominant, one might almost say the characterizing, concern of late fourteenth-century poetry'.<sup>1</sup> Mary Carruthers states:

The central problem in *Piers Plowman* is not a moral one, though its moral application is apparent; it is one of knowing Truth. [...*Piers*] is an epistemological poem, a poem about the problem of knowing truly.<sup>2</sup>

The development of ideas about Truth, and closely-related themes, can be traced through an examination of the poem's structure, and viewed through the context of the Vulgate

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion of the concept of 'truth' in the period, see Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), especially pp. 1-31. For an etymological account of 'truth', see Richard Firth Green, 'Ricardian 'Trouthe': A Legal Perspective', in *Essays on Ricardian Literature In Honour of J.A. Burrow*, ed. by A.J. Minnis, Charlotte C. Morse and Thorlac Turville-Petre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 179-202. For discussion of the spiritual dangers of erroneous speech, see Douglas Wurtele, 'The Bane of Flattery in the World of Chaucer and Langland', *Florilegium*, 19 (2002), 1-25. On deviant speech, see Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David A. Lawton, *Blasphemy* (New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Search for St. Truth: a Study of Meaning in 'Piers Plowman'* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). For discussion of the different understandings of 'truth' in *Piers*, see Murtaugh, *Image of God*, pp. 5-10, and *passim*.

quotations.<sup>3</sup> Each Vulgate quotation will be examined in consecutive order of its appearance in *Piers*, and the biblical context and associated material evaluated in order to illustrate how Langland uses the dichotomy of Truth<sup>4</sup> (and the devil) and truth (and false speech) contextually through sequential quotations in the Prologue and first four Passūs.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2 Truth in the Prologue Vulgate Quotations

The first Latin biblical quotation in *Piers* sets up an important premise for the poem: ‘*Qui turpiloquium loquitur*’ [He who utters foul speech] (Prol. 39).<sup>6</sup> Although this quotation does not have a direct Bible source, several biblical references support the Latin, and each context expands interpretation of the poem.<sup>7</sup> When Langland concentrates on what ‘Poul prechep’ (Prol. 38), we should be guided by the poet, and look, for example, at what Ephesians says about the dangers of misusing speech which will result in separation from God:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us [...]. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: Or obscenity or foolish talking or scurrility, which is to no purpose: but rather giving of thanks. For know you this and understand: That no fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the

<sup>3</sup> For critical discussion of structure in *Piers*, see, for example, Burrow, ‘Action’, in *Essays on Medieval Literature*, by Burrow, pp. 79-101; Joseph S. Wittig, ‘The Dramatic and Rhetorical Development of Long Will’s Pilgrimage’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 76 (1975), 52-76.

<sup>4</sup> It has long been recognised that ‘Truth’ in *Piers* refers to the nature of the Godhead: see, for example, Skeat, *Vision*, vol. 2, p. 71, n. 198.

<sup>5</sup> Research for this thesis has revealed that Langland’s use of the Bible quotations, their contexts and associated material to demonstrate the theme of ‘Truth’ appears to be terminated by the poet at the end of Passus V, but the principle will be well-established by the end of Passus IV, so, for reasons of space, it seems advisable to stop there.

<sup>6</sup> The full *Piers* line reads: ‘*Qui loquitur turpiloquium* is Luciferes hyne’ [He who utters foul speech is Lucifer’s (the devil’s) man.] (Prol. 39).

<sup>7</sup> In general, Alford’s suggestions of Bible sources for the quotations will be followed in this thesis, but Judson Boyce Allen also writes incisively on the quotations and their sources: see *Ethical Poetic*, pp. 93-94, *passim*, and ‘Reading and Writing’, pp. 342-62. See also Galloway, *Penn Commentary*, p. 72.

children of unbelief. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light. For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth: Proving what is well pleasing to God. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: but rather reprove them. For the things that are done by them in secret, it is a shame even to speak of. (Eph. 5. 1-12)<sup>8</sup>

This Ephesians citation advocates walking in truth, and may be compared to a passage in Colossians which also promotes the avoidance of false words:

Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead: and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is the service of idols. For which things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief. In which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now put you also all away: anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth. Lie not to one another: stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, And putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him that created him. (Col. 3. 1-10)<sup>9</sup>

Both the extracts from these Epistles demonstrate a preoccupation with the proper use of speech for those who seek the kingdom of God. Paul's list of evils - anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech, lies - are predominantly sins of the tongue, the

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<sup>8</sup> Vulgate: 'estote ergo imitatores Dei sicut filii carissimi et ambulate in dilectione sicut et Christus dilexit nos et tradidit se ipsum pro nobis [...] fornicatio autem et omnis immunditia aut avaritia nec nominetur in vobis sicut decet sanctos *aut turpitudine aut stultiloquium aut scurrilitas* quae ad rem non pertinent sed magis gratiarum actio hoc enim scitote intellegentes quod omnis fornicator aut immundus aut avarus quod est idolorum servitus non habet hereditatem in regno Christi et Dei nemo vos seducat inanibus verbis propter haec enim venit ira Dei in filios diffidentiae nolite ergo effici participes eorum eratis enim aliquando tenebrae nunc autem lux in Domino ut filii lucis ambulate fructus enim lucis est in omni bonitate et iustitia et veritate probantes quid sit beneplacitum Deo et nolite communicare operibus infructuosis tenebrarum magis autem et redarguite quae enim in occulto fiunt ab ipsis turpe est et dicere' (Eph. 5. 1-12).

<sup>9</sup> Vulgate: 'igitur si conresurrexistis Christo quae sursum sunt quaerite ubi Christus est in dextera Dei sedens quae sursum sunt sapite non quae supra terram mortui enim estis et vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo cum Christus apparuerit vita vestra tunc et vos apparebitis cum ipso in gloria mortificate ergo membra vestra quae sunt super terram fornicationem immunditiam libidinem concupiscentiam malam et avaritiam quae est simulacrorum servitus propter quae venit ira Dei super filios incredulitatis in quibus et vos ambulastis aliquando cum viveretis in illis nunc autem deponite et vos omnia iram indignationem malitiam blasphemiam *turpem sermonem* de ore vestro nolite mentiri invicem expoliantes vos veterem hominem cum actibus eius et induentes novum eum qui renovator in agnitionem secundum imaginem eius qui creavit eum' (Col. 3. 1-10).

antithesis of truth. As associated Bible texts, the two above-quoted biblical passages indicate strongly the necessity of truth in the Christian life, and, as the foundation for the first Vulgate quotation in *Piers*, establish Langland's preoccupation with the theme of truth.

As has been demonstrated in chapter two, Langland characteristically holds several Bible passages in his mind at once. Consequently, it might be relevant to examine other associated Bible verses for discussion of the avoidance of darkness (sin), and keeping conversation with truth (and Truth as Christ), for example again, in Ephesians:

This then I say and testify in the Lord: That henceforward you walk not as also the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind: Having their understanding darkened: being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. [...] But you have not so learned Christ: If so be that you have heard him and have been taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus: To put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind: And put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth. Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth, every man with his neighbour. (Eph. 4. 17-18, 20-25)<sup>10</sup>

In this passage, Paul continues to instruct against evil speech.<sup>11</sup>

Again, other Bible verses connected to the above-quoted Colossians passage can be found in I Peter which also teaches that the way to salvation is to live in truth:

Wherefore, laying away all malice and guile and dissimulations and envies and all detractions, As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation. (I Pt. 2. 1-2)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Vulgate: 'hoc igitur dico et testificor in Domino ut iam non ambuletis sicut gentes ambulant in vanitate sensus sui tenebris obscuratum habentes intellectum alienati a vita Dei per ignorantiam quae est in illis propter caecitatem cordis ipsorum [...] vos autem non ita didicistis Christum si tamen illum audistis et in ipso edocti estis sicut est veritas in Iesu deponere vos secundum pristinam conversationem veterem hominem qui corrumpitur secundum desideria erroris renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestrae et induite novum hominem qui secundum Deum creatus est in iustitia et sanctitate veritatis propter quod deponentes mendacium loquimini veritatem unusquisque cum proximo suo' (Eph. 4. 17-18, 20-25).

<sup>11</sup> Eph. 4. 25-32.

<sup>12</sup> Vulgate: 'deponentes igitur omnem malitiam et omnem dolum et simulationes et invidias et omnes detractiones sicut modo geniti infantes rationale sine dolo lac concupiscite ut in eo crescatis in salutem' (I Pt. 2. 1-2).

All these associated Bible citations reflect on the importance of Truth / truth, and the rejection of sin and the devil: they give background to Langland's quotation.

Alford (*Guide*, p. 33) considers that Langland's use of the Latin citation 'probably reflects a gloss on John 8'.<sup>13</sup> When Langland writes that those who speak basely are 'Luciferes hyne' (Prol. 39), the Gospel reference renders new meaning through the Vulgate context: the relevant excerpt from John 8 dwells on important instruction concerning truth and lie, and will be quoted at length:

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed him: If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth: and the truth shall make you free. They answered him: We are the seed of Abraham: and we have never been slaves to any man. How sayest thou: You shall be free? Jesus answered them: Amen, amen, I say unto you that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. Now the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth for ever. If therefore the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know you are the children of Abraham: but you seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do the things that you have seen with your father. They answered and said to him: Abraham is our father. Jesus saith to them: If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God. This Abraham did not. You do the works of your father. They said therefore to him: we are not born of fornication: we have one Father, even God. Jesus therefore said to them: If God were your Father, you would indeed love me. For from God I proceeded and came. For I came not of myself: but he sent me. Why do you not know my speech? Because you cannot hear my word. You are of your father the devil: and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning: and he stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But if I say the truth, you believe me not. Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. (Io. 8. 31-47)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Alford quotes Io. 8. 34: 'whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin' (Vulgate: 'quia omnis qui facit peccatum servus est peccati'), but Io. 8. 44 which describes the devil as the father of lies seems closer to Langland at this juncture.

<sup>14</sup> Vulgate: 'dicebat ergo Iesus ad eos qui crediderunt ei Iudaeos si vos manseritis in sermone meo vere discipuli mei eritis et cognoscetis veritatem et veritas liberabit vos responderunt ei semen Abrahae sumus et nemini servivimus umquam quomodo tu dicis liberi eritis respondit eis Iesus amen amen dico vobis quia omnis qui facit peccatum servus est peccati servus autem non manet in domo in aeternum filius manet in aeternum si ergo Filius vos liberaverit vere liberi eritis scio quia filii Abrahae estis sed quaeritis me

Taken together, the Ephesians, Colossians, Peter and John extracts quoted in this section form associations with truth in the mind: they begin to set out Langland's agenda, and give the poem a driving force.<sup>15</sup>

It may seem surprising that a single three-word Latin quotation, concerning the efficacy of speech: '*Qui turpiloquium loquitur*' (Prol. 39), holds so much significance, but the biblical connections of the Epistles and the relevance of John are essential to understanding: Truth becomes established as part of the structure of *Piers*, and interpretation is diminished without the biblical knowledge that Langland could assume from his medieval audience. Listening to the readings of the Liturgy regularly over a long period of time makes Bible passages become part of the psyche. Without knowledge of the *context* of the Bible quotations, and this internalised knowledge inculcated in individuals through familiarity with the Liturgy, the poem lacks the foundation, a whole dimension. The often short biblical quotations will lack for most modern readers that penumbra of further signification and associations.

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interficere quia sermo meus non capit in vobis ego quod vidi apud Patrem loquor et vos quae vidistis apud patrem vestrum facitis responderunt et dixerunt ei pater noster Abraham est dicit eis Iesus si filii Abrahae estis opera Abrahae facite nunc autem quaeritis me interficere hominem qui veritatem vobis locutus sum quam audivi a Deo hoc Abraham non fecit vos facitis opera patris vestri dixerunt itaque ei nos ex fornicatione non sumus nati unum patrem habemus Deum dixit ergo eis Iesus si Deus pater vester esset diligeretis utique me ego enim ex Deo processi et veni neque enim a me ipso veni sed ille me misit quare loquellam meam non cognoscitis quia non potestis audire sermonem meum vos ex patre diabolo estis et desideria patris vestri vultis facere ille homicida erat ab initio et in veritate non stetit quia non est veritas in eo cum loquitur mendacium ex propriis loquitur quia mendax est et pater eius ego autem quia veritatem dico non creditis mihi quis ex vobis arguit me de peccato si veritatem dico quare vos non creditis mihi qui est ex Deo verba Dei audit propterea vos non auditis quia ex Deo non estis' (Io. 8. 31-47).

<sup>15</sup> Allen (*Ethical Poetic*, p. 277) considers, and it seems likely, that there is concordance (perhaps on "'stultus" and its derivatives') of the '*Qui turpiloquium loquitur*' quotation with Ecl. 10: 'The words of the mouth of a wise man are grace: but the lips of a fool shall throw him down headlong. The beginning of his words is folly: and the end of his talk is a mischievous error'. [Vulgate: 'verba oris sapientis gratia et labia insipientis praecipitabunt eum initium verborum eius stultitia et novissimum oris illius error pessimus'] (Ecl. 10. 12-13).

Langland's first Latin quotation initiates themes about speech in the Prologue which continue with subtle emphasis through biblical allusion: for example in the following lines:

I fond þere freres, alle þe foure ordres,  
 Prechyng þe peple for profit of [þe wombe]:  
 Glosed þe gospel as hem good liked;  
 For coueitise of copes construed it as þei wolde. (Prol. 58-61)

The lines recall Philippians with its comparison of earthly preoccupations with the ideal focus on a conversation with Christ:

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing you be otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you. Nevertheless, whereunto we are come, that we be of the same mind, let us also continue in the same rule. Be ye followers of me, brethren: and observe them who walk so as you have our model. For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction: whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3. 15-20)<sup>16</sup>

When Langland alludes to Philippians, with its emphasis on a spiritual conversation in truth, the connections between the previously-quoted biblical extracts in this section and the various underlying themes (triggered by words such as 'walk', spiritual 'conversation', 'covetousness') of the Philippians passage are marked.

Examples of these links abound: 'Walk then as children of the light' (Eph. 5. 8); 'covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you' (Eph. 5. 3); 'Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth' (Col. 3. 2); 'To put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And

<sup>16</sup> Vulgate: 'quicumque ergo perfecti hoc sentiamus et si quid aliter sapitis et hoc vobis Deus revelabit verumtamen ad quod pervenimus ut idem sapiamus et in eadem permaneamus regula imitatores mei estote fratres et observate eos qui ita ambulant sicut habetis formam nos multi enim ambulant quos saepe dicebam vobis nunc autem et flens dico inimicos crucis Christi quorum finis interitus quorum deus venter et gloria in confusione ipsorum qui terrena sapiunt nostra autem conversatio in caelis est unde etiam salvatorem expectamus Dominum Iesum Christum' (Phil. 3. 15-20). Cf. III Io. 4: '*ambulantes in veritate*' ['walk in truth'].

be renewed in the spirit of your mind' (Eph. 4. 22-23); 'For which things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief. In which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now put you also all away: anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth' (Col. 3. 6-8); 'Why do you not know my speech? Because you cannot hear my word. You are of your father the devil: and the desires of your father you will do' (Io. 8. 43-44); 'no fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God' (Eph. 5. 5). The inter-relation of these Vulgate extracts coalesce in the mind of those familiar with the scriptures of the Liturgy: Langland's words 'for profit of [þe wombe]' (Prol. 59) trigger an abundance of associated Bible passages, and memory of 'Let no man deceive you with vain words' (Eph. 5. 6), the 'former conversation' (Eph. 4. 22), bring an ironic twist to Langland's anti-fraternal satire. The Vulgate passages cannot but intensify Langland's denunciation of the friars who preached to the people and '[g]losed þe gospel' (Prol. 60). The subtle continuation of the subject of the spoken word (in this case on preaching) continues the poet's own conversation with his reader.

Part of Langland's next use of Latin is not from the Vulgate,<sup>17</sup> but again resonates with biblical allusion:

*Qualia vis metere, talia grana sere:  
Si ius nudatur, nudo de iure metatur;  
Si seritur pietas, de pietate metas.* (Prol. 136-38)

Loosely translated, the lines infer that such grain as you sow is the grain that you reap. If the law is denuded by you then the law will be sown and returned to you in similar bare fashion. If you sow piety and compassion: may you reap similar reward. Numerous Bible

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<sup>17</sup> These Latin lines in *Piers* (Prol. 132-45) are a compilation of several sayings that were in use in this period, and are not original to Langland (Donaldson, *Alliterative Verse Translation*, p. 5, n. 9; p. 6, notes 2 and 3).

citations, listed below, evidence similar principles: a common phenomenon in Bible

reading:<sup>18</sup>

Speak not any thing rashly, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. Dreams follow many cares: and in many words shall be found folly. If thou hast vowed any thing to God, defer not to pay it. For an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth him: but whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it. And it is much better not to vow than after a vow not to perform the things promised. Give not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; and say not before the angel: There is no providence. Lest God be angry at thy words and destroy all the works of thy hands. Where there are many dreams, there are many vanities and words without number: but do thou fear God. If thou shalt see the oppressions of the poor, and violent judgements, and justice perverted, in the province, wonder not at this matter: for he that is high hath another higher, and there are others still higher than these. Moreover, there is the king that reigneth over all the land subject to him. A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money: and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them. So this also is vanity. (Ecl. 5. 1-9)<sup>19</sup>

But he that had received the one talent came and said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown and gatherest where thou hast not strewed. And being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth. Behold here thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and

<sup>18</sup> Because of the quantity of examples in this instance, only those considered closest to an understanding of Langland will be given in the main body of the text. Other examples, those which illustrate the multiplicity of biblical examples, will be given in full in the footnotes. See, for example, Vulgate: 'quin potius vidi eos qui operantur iniquitatem et seminant dolores et metunt eos flante Deo perisse et spiritu irae eius esse consumptos' [On the contrary I have seen those who work iniquity, and sow sorrows, and reap them, Perishing by the blast of God, and consumed by the spirit of his wrath.] (Iob 4. 8-9). See also, Vulgate: 'qui seminat iniquitatem metet mala et virga irae suae consummabitur qui pronus est ad misericordiam benedicetur de panibus enim suis dedit pauperi' [He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils: and with the rod of his anger he shall be consumed. He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed: for of his bread he hath given to the poor.] (Prv. 22. 8-9).

<sup>19</sup> Vulgate: 'ne temere quid loquaris neque cor tuum sit velox ad proferendum sermonem coram Deo Deus enim in caelo et tu super terram idcirco sint pauci sermones tui multas curas sequuntur somnia et in multis sermonibus invenitur stultitia si quid vovisti Deo ne moreris reddere displicet enim ei infidelis et stulta promissio sed quodcumque voveris redde multoque melius est non vovere quam post votum promissa non complere ne dederis os tuum ut peccare faciat carnem tuam neque dicas coram angelo non est providentia ne forte iratus Deus super sermone tuo dissipet cuncta opera manuum tuarum ubi multa sunt somnia plurimae vanitates et sermones innumeri tu vero Deum time si videris calumnias egenorum et violenta iudicia et subverti iustitiam in provincia non mireris super hoc negotio quia excelso alius excelsior est et super hos quoque eminentiores sunt alii et insuper universae terrae rex imperat servienti avarus non implebitur pecunia et qui amat divitias fructus non capiet ex eis et hoc ergo vanitas' (Ecl. 5. 1-9). See also Vulgate: 'in gutture tuo sit tuba quasi aquila super domum Domini pro eo quod transgressi sunt foedus meum et legem meam praevaricati sunt [...] quia ventum seminabunt et turbinem metent culmus stans non est in eis germen non faciet farinam quod si et fecerit alieni comedent eam' [Let there be a trumpet in thy throat, like an eagle upon the house of the Lord: because they have transgressed my covenant and have violated my law. [...] For they shall sow wind and reap a whirlwind. There is no standing stalk in it, the bud shall yield no meal; and if it should yield, strangers shall eat it.] (Os. 8. 1, 7).

slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not and gather where I have not sowed. Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers: and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away therefore the talent from him and give it him that hath ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant, cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There, shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Mt. 25. 24-30)<sup>20</sup>

Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ. [...] Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. (Gal. 6. 1-2, 7-9)<sup>21</sup>

It might seem a long list, but the point remains (as seen in chapter two, with the many Bible references incorporated into a single verse of Chaucer's poem *Truth*) that, when one is constantly soaked in biblical images, and the Christian ethos permeates the mind, the understanding becomes flooded with an inseparable abundance of Bible quotation and context. All converge at once.

The proverbial Ecclesiastes citation (and the tone of Matthew and Galatians) appears as a particularly strong influence on Langland in this instance. In the *Piers*

<sup>20</sup> Vulgate: 'accedens autem et qui unum talentum acceperat ait domine scio quia homo durus es metis ubi non seminasti et congregas ubi non sparsisti et timens abii et abscondi talentum tuum in terra ecce habes quod tuum est respondens autem dominus eius dixit ei serve male et piger sciebas quia meto ubi non semino et congrego ubi non sparsi oportuit ergo te mittere pecuniam meam nummulariis et veniens ego recepissem utique quod meum est cum usura tollite itaque ab eo talentum et date ei qui habet decem talenta Omni enim habenti dabitur et abundabit ei autem qui non habet et quod videtur habere auferetur ab eo Et inutilem servum eicite in tenebras exteriores illic erit fletus et stridor dentium' (Mt. 25. 24-30). See also Mt. 8. 12; Mc. 4. 25; Lc. 8. 18, 19. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Vulgate: 'fratres et si praeoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo delicto vos qui spiritales estis huiusmodi instruite in spiritu lenitatis considerans te ipsum ne et tu tempteris alter alterius onera portate et sic adimplebitis legem Christi [...] nolite errare Deus non inridetur quae enim seminaverit homo haec et metet quoniam qui seminat in carne sua de carne et metet corruptionem qui autem seminat in spiritu de spiritu metet vitam aeternam bonum autem facientes non deficiamus tempore enim suo metemus non deficientes' (Gal. 6. 1-2, 7-9). See also Vulgate: 'hoc autem qui parce seminat parce et metet et qui seminat in benedictionibus de benedictionibus et metet' [Now this I say: He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly: and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings.] (II Cor. 9. 6).

Prologue, the speech quoted in the lines above is spoken by an angel.<sup>22</sup> In minds culturally-charged with the Bible, recall of the Ecclesiastes context, triggered by Langland's Latin quotation, might well issue warning to the King's court to speak the truth: 'Give not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; and say not before the angel' (Ecl. 5. 5). Langland can use the Bible as a political device and not just for spiritual or pastoral purpose. Emphasis on justice and judgement in Langland's poem here reflects the Ecclesiastes excerpt with its mention of the 'oppressions of the poor, and violent judgements, and justice perverted' (Ecl. 5. 7);<sup>23</sup> both the Ecclesiastes and Matthew citations remind the rich and powerful of their duty before God. When Alford (*Guide*, p. 33) reveals that these same Latin verses 'were added by a scribe to the text of a sermon preached in 1315',<sup>24</sup> the statement should not surprise: politics and the Bible are largely indivisible - especially within a society steeped in Christian culture and belief.

Later in the Prologue, in the first direct Vulgate quotation, Langland quotes a proverbial saying based on Ecclesiastes, which also appears to constitute the poet's political motive.<sup>25</sup> The biblical context teaches the importance of truth and the efficacy of the wise use of speech:

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<sup>22</sup> Prolog. 131.

<sup>23</sup> Prolog. 132-38.

<sup>24</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 33) refers to an article by J.A.W. Bennett, 'Sum Rex, Sum Princeps, etc. (Piers Plowman B, Prologue 132-8)', *Notes and Queries*, 7:10 (October 1960), 364, and a response by Barbara M.H. Strang, 'Piers Plowman B, Prologue 132-8', *Notes and Queries*, 7:11 (November 1960), 436. Both critics consider that the lines are earlier than Langland, and that they were in the general domain, but that does not exclude the possibility that the lines were biblically-inspired.

<sup>25</sup> Not all the networks of ideas associated with biblical quotations are purely theological or pastoral. There are also examples of biblical quotations which Langland's audience would undoubtedly have recognised as implying a set of political ideas. Langland's use of '*vae tibi terra cuius rex est puer*' (quoted in this next example), like the resonances of Ecl. 5. 1-9 quoted above, seems one such: Chaucer cut '*vae tibi terra cuius rex est puer*' from *The Tale of Melibee*, because, it might be assumed, around the period 1376 to 1395, this particular biblical line would have been somewhat impolitic for use by a poet so closely associated with Richard II's court. Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 925-26, note to line 1199. Langland did not cut the quotation from the C-text, although it is not in A or Z. Is. 11. 6 might have been more tactful: Vulgate: 'et

verba oris sapientis gratia et labia insipientis praecipitabunt eum initium verborum eius stultitia et novissimum oris illius error pessimus stultus verba multiplicat ignorat homo quid ante se fuerit et quod post futurum est quis illi poterit indicare labor stultorum adfliget eos qui nesciunt in urbem pergere *vae tibi terra cuius rex est puer* et cuius principes mane comedunt beata terra cuius rex nobilis est et cuius principes vescuntur in tempore suo ad reficiendum et non ad luxuriam

[The words of the mouth of a wise man are grace: but the lips of a fool shall throw him down headlong. The beginning of his words is folly: and the end of his talk is a mischievous error. A fool multiplieth words. A man cannot tell what hath been before him. And what shall be after him, who can tell him? The labour of fools shall afflict them that know not how to go to the city. Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and when the princes eat in the morning. Blessed is the land, whose king is noble, and whose princes eat in due season, for refreshment, and not for riotousness.] (Ecl. 10. 12-17 cf. Prol. 196)

The Prologue deals with issues of authority, both secular and ecclesiastical, but also with the underlying value of prudent speech.

Langland derides the ‘iaperes and iangeleres, Iudas children’ who ‘Feynen hem fantasies, and fooles hem makeþ’ (Prol. 35-36).<sup>26</sup> These people: ‘Faiteden for hire foode’ (Prol. 42) and ‘risen wiþ ribaudie’ (Prol. 44).<sup>27</sup> The close connection with Vulgate passages is evident: they can be seen as inherent to *Piers*. The pilgrims and palmers who ‘hadden leue to lyen’ (Prol. 49) now elicit the poet’s disdain: ‘To ech a tale þat þei tolde hire tonge was tempred to lye / Moore þan to seye soop, it semed bi hire speche (Prol. 51-52). The friars’ misuse of their licence to preach has already been observed above,<sup>28</sup> but the pardoner also preaches with selfish intent and false promise.<sup>29</sup>

Langland moves up the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and does not spare the bishops and bachelors of divinity who fail to shrive their parishioners, preach or pray for them.<sup>30</sup>

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puer parvulus minabit eos’ [and a little child shall lead them]. My thanks go to Helen Phillips for alerting me to the *Melibee* omission.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ecl. 10. 12-15.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ecl. 10. 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> Prol. 58-61.

<sup>29</sup> Prol. 68-82.

<sup>30</sup> Prol. 87-91.

Worse still: 'Hire messe and hire matyns and many of hire houres / Arn doone

vndeuoutliche' (Prol. 97-98). Langland also berates senior lawyers:

Sergeant[z], it semed, þat seueden at þe Barre,  
 Pleteden for penyes and poundes þe lawe,  
 And no3t for loue of Oure Lord vnlose hire lippes ones.  
 Thow my3test bettre meete myst on Maluerne Hilles  
 Than get a 'mom' of hire mouþ er moneie be shewed! (Prol. 212-16)

Such blatant misuse of speech gains fierce reprimand from Langland. The emphasis on the proper, the truthful use of language is inherent in the vernacular lines, as well as within the Latin quotations and associated biblical material. Langland's admonishments of society gain depth from recall of connected biblical contexts and those from the Latin quotations, but also from the surrounding verses of the biblical allusion that the poet uses.

### 3.3 Truth in Passus I Vulgate Quotations

Following the Prologue, with its many examples of the abuse of the tongue, Langland develops the truth theme in Passus I. Lady Holy Church comes to the Dreamer to explain the importance of Truth, called the 'fader of feip' (I. 14), and Wrong, described as the 'Fader of falshede' (I. 64).<sup>31</sup> Langland now places Truth, God, in direct contrast with Satan, the father of lies.

Truth, both as a synonym for God and as an ethical quality, permeates *Piers*. In order to illustrate the point, this section will examine Passus I closely. Lady Holy Church explains that Truth lives in the tower on the hilltop that the Dreamer has seen at the beginning of the poem:<sup>32</sup> '[Truþe] wolde þat ye wrougte as his word techep' (I. 13). As

<sup>31</sup> For other discussion of Lady Holy Church's 'rhetoric', see Laurie A. Finke, 'Truth's Treasure: Allegory and Meaning in *Piers Plowman*', in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. by Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca, [New York]; London: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 51-68 (p. 53).

<sup>32</sup> Prol. 14; I. 12.

was demonstrated in chapter two, ‘word’ signifies the Bible: synonymous with truth. Moreover, in choosing the story of Lot as a biblical reference,<sup>33</sup> Langland alerts his audience to the perils of drink, but also demonstrates, by the association of ideas, the apocalyptic dangers of rejecting God – and additionally, the dangers of deceit, of disobeying the divine word, the truth.

When Langland makes an additional point and writes: ‘Leue nou3t þi likame, for a liere hym techep’ (I. 38), the poet implies that the devil lurks behind the desires of the body: ‘þe fend and þi flessch folwen togidere’ (I. 40), and again sets up the contrast with Truth, God. The next Bible quotation builds on the theme, but is possibly triggered not by verbal concordance but by contextual association. The ‘*Reddite Caesari*’ passage in Matthew voices the fact that Christ is a ‘true speaker’, a teacher of truth:

Tunc abeuntes Pharisei consilium inierunt ut caperent eum in sermone et mittunt ei discipulos suos cum Herodianis dicentes magister scimus quia verax es et viam Dei in veritate doces et non est tibi cura de aliquo non enim respicis personam hominum dic ergo nobis quid tibi videatur licet census dare Caesari an non cognita autem Iesus nequitia eorum ait quid me temptatis hypocritae ostendite mihi nomisma census at illi obtulerunt ei denarium et ait illis Iesus cuius est imago haec et suprascriptio dicunt ei Caesaris tunc ait illis *reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari et quae sunt Dei Deo*

[Then the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to insnare him in his speech. And they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God in truth. Neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us therefore what dost thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said: Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him: Caesar’s. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.] (Mt. 22. 15-21)<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> ‘*Inebriemus eum vino dormiamusque cum eo, vt seruare possimus de patre nostro semen*’ (I. 31a cf. Gn 19. 32). Lot does not take seriously the power of God’s threat to destroy Sodom and Gomorrha, nor the need to obey God’s instruction, see Gn. 19. 1-38, especially 14-16. Lot’s wife disobeys God and is turned into a pillar of salt (Gn. 19. 17, 26).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. I. 52-53. For similar account, see also Mc. 12. 13-17; Lc. 20. 20-26.

The emphasis of the poem continues on the importance of truth and true speech:

“*Reddite Cesari,*” quod God, “þat *Cesari* bifalleþ,  
*Et que sunt Dei Deo,* or ellis ye don ille.”  
 For ri3tfully Reson sholde rule yow alle,  
 And Kynde Wit be wardeyn youre welþe to kepe,  
 And tutour of youre tresor, and take it yow at nede;  
 For housbondrie and he holden togidres. (I. 52-57)

Langland plays on the word ‘tresor’, and associates Reason and Kind Wit with God (in contrast to Satan, who causes man to ‘don ille’). The poem immediately continues with Lady Holy Church’s description of Wrong, the ‘Fader of falshede’, and the ‘castel of care’ where he lives (I. 58-70). So Langland, through Lady Holy Church, gives examples of Wrong’s (Satan’s) false speech:

Adam and Eue he egged to ille,  
 Counseilled Kaym to killen his broþer;  
 Iudas he iaped wiþ Iewen siluer,  
 And siþen on an eller hanged hym after.  
 He is lettere of loue and lieþ hem alle:  
 That trusten on his tresour bitrayed arn sonnest. (I. 65-70)

God’s treasure is compared to Satan’s counterfeit coin as the poet reminds his audience about ‘swiche wise wordes of Holy Writ’ (I. 72) used by Lady Holy Church. As Alford notes: ‘The Lady’s repeated use of the word *tresour* recalls the biblical injunction [...] (Matt. 6:19-21)’.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John A. Alford, ‘The Design of the Poem’, in *Companion*, ed. by Alford, pp. 29-65 (pp. 34-35). Vulgate: ‘nolite thesaurizare vobis thesauros in terra ubi erugo et tinea demolitur ubi fures effodiunt et furantur Thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in caelo ubi neque erugo neque tinea demolitur et ubi fures non effodiunt nec furantur ubi enim est thesaurus tuus ibi est et cor tuum’ [Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust, and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.] (Mt. 6. 19-21).

In a similar fashion, Langland continues the sub-text of ‘wise wordes’, truth and lie, with the next biblical quotation: ‘*Deus caritas*’ (I. 86). The biblical context augments and illuminates *Piers*’ ideas on truth as well as God’s love:<sup>36</sup>

carissimi nolite omni spiritui credere sed probate spiritus si ex Deo sint quoniam multi pseudoprophetae exierunt in mundum in hoc cognoscitur Spiritus Dei omnis spiritus qui confitetur Iesum Christum in carne venisse ex Deo est et omnis spiritus qui solvit Iesum ex Deo non est et hoc est antichristi quod audistis quoniam venit et nunc iam in mundo est vos ex Deo estis filioli et vicistis eos quoniam maior est qui in vobis est quam qui in mundo ipsi de mundo sunt ideo de mundo loquuntur et mundus eos audit nos ex Deo sumus qui novit Deum audit nos qui non est ex Deo non audit nos in hoc cognoscimus Spiritum veritatis et spiritum erroris carissimi diligamus invicem quoniam caritas ex Deo est et omnis qui diligit ex Deo natus est et cognoscit Deum qui non diligit non novit Deum quoniam *Deus caritas est* [...] si quis dixerit quoniam diligo Deum et fratrem suum oderit mendax est qui enim non diligit fratrem suum quem vidit Deum quem non vidit quomodo potest diligere

[Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit: but try the spirits if they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this is the spirit of God known. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God. And this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh: and he is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome him. Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore of the world they speak: and the world heareth them. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Dearly beloved, let us love one another: for charity is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is charity. [...] If any man say: I love God and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?] (I Io. 4. 1-8, 20)

Langland’s scriptural reminders form the skeleton of the text. Langland builds and develops the argument of his poem not only in the vernacular but through the Bible quotations, the context of which are glossed throughout the work.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> As Zeeman [Salter] (‘Pilgrimage’, p. 214) writes: ‘The deepest theme of *Piers Plowman* might, then, be viewed as an exploration of the journey to God through Christ – the reaching of the “treasure of Truth” along the highroad of Love: a study of the way in which Christ, with his doctrine of love, enables the pilgrim to Truth and his goal, Truth, to become one’.

Even a cursory reading of the biblical context demonstrates that, for Langland, in the explication about ‘truth’, the whole biblical frame of reference is intrinsic to the poet’s thinking:

‘Whan alle tresors arn tried,’ quod she, ‘treuþe is þe beste.  
I do it on *Deus caritas* to deme þe soþe;  
It is as dereworþe a drury as deere God hymself.  
[For] whoso is trewe of his tonge and telleþ noon ooþer,  
And dooþ þe werkes þerwiþ and wilneþ no man ille,  
He is a god by þe Gospel, agrounde and olofte,  
And ylik to Oure Lord, by Seint Lukes wordes. (I. 85-91)

Langland makes no error in referring to Luke here, as some critics may have thought.<sup>38</sup>

The line: ‘It is as dereworþe a drury as deere God hymself’ (I. 87), displays an intricate pun: [truth] is as valuable, beloved, a treasure as God himself, and indicates that

Langland could also be referring to - and reminding his readers about another dichotomy:

the Gospel passage that differentiates good and evil speech. The ambition of every

Christian is to be ‘ylik to Oure Lord’ (Truth): to do so, one must speak the truth from a

‘good’ (and a faithful, obedient) heart:

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And why call you me Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say? (Lc. 6. 45-46)<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For example, in the passage from John’s First Epistle above, which continues the dichotomy of God and Satan: ‘the spirit of truth’ is God and ‘the spirit of error’, Antichrist. This significant phrase will be discussed in more detail at a later stage in chapter four below as it has important implications. For discussion of medieval understanding concerning Antichrist, see Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: a Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981). See also Mary J. Carruthers, ‘Time, Apocalypse, and the Plot of *Piers Plowman*’, in *Acts of Interpretation: the Text in its Contexts, 700-1600: Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Literature in Honor of E. Talbot Donaldson*, ed. by Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth Kirk (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1982), pp. 175-88.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Donaldson, *Alliterative Verse Translation*, p. 11, n. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Vulgate: ‘Bonus homo de bono thesauro cordis sui profert bonum et malus homo de malo profert malum ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur Quid autem vocatis me Domine Domine et non facitis quae dico’ (Lc. 6. 45-46). Matthew’s Gospel adds the following words to a similar passage: ‘Dico autem vobis quoniam omne verbum otiosum quod locuti fuerint homines reddent rationem de eo in die iudicii ex verbis enim tuis iustificaberis et ex verbis tuis condemnaberis’ [But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be

When the actual reference is placed in context (which anyone with good knowledge of the Bible could do), in a mind familiar with the Scriptures, the citations all converge and all illustrate Langland's point.

As has been demonstrated, analysing and identifying the biblical quotations in Langland's work remains complicated because the Bible quite obviously permeated the poet's thought-process. If the same few lines in *Piers* are examined,<sup>40</sup> the concept of man as a God: 'a god by þe Gospel' (I. 90) builds on Psalm 81.<sup>41</sup> The Psalm seeks justice for the poor and needy, and asks God to judge the earth: a sentiment that dominates the ethos of *Piers*. Yet, Christ quotes this verse of the Psalm in John in a passage on belief and blasphemy; where the Pharisees accuse Christ of false speech:

Jesus answered them: Many good works I have shewed you from my Father. For which of those works do you stone me? The Jews answered him: For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your law: *I said, you are*

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justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.] (Mt. 12. 36-37). As Schmidt identified, Langland's thought here combines with another passage in Luke that speaks about the Kingdom of God: Schmidt (*Vision*, p. 18, note to line 91) considers that Langland refers to Lc. 12. 33-34. Vulgate: 'Nolite timere pusillus grex quia conplacuit Patri vestro dare vobis regnum Vendite quae possidetis et date elemosynam Facite vobis sacculos qui non veterescunt thesaurum non deficientem in caelis quo fur non adpropiat neque tinea corrumpit ubi enim thesaurus vester est ibi et cor vestrum erit' [Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. Sell what you possess and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not: where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.] (Lc. 12. 33-34). Skeat (*Vision*, vol. 2, p. 23, n. 86) thinks Langland refers to Lc. 16. 10-13, or Lc. 8. 21. Dunning (*Interpretation*, pp. 44-45) believes Lc. 6. 35 to be the source. However, Langland makes several different biblical allusions in this passage: in the line: 'He is a god by þe Gospel, agrounde and olofte' (I. 90) the poet may be making an allusion to Io. 3. 14: 'et sicut Moses exaltavit serpentem in deserto ita exaltari oportet Filium hominis' [And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the son of man be lifted up.], and Io. 12. 34: 'oportet exaltari Filium hominis' [The Son of man must be lifted up.]. As this thesis will debate, Langland can allude to several Bible (especially Gospel) passages in the space of a few lines of poetry: the poet's practice needs careful teasing out as the overt reference to Luke does not preclude an allusion to John (or other additional Bible citations), one on top of the other. Andrew Galloway detects Cato's influence in the line: 'god by þe Gospel'. See Andrew Galloway, 'Two Notes on Langland's Cato: *Piers Plowman* B I.88-91; IV.20-23', *English Language Notes*, 25:2 (December 1987), 9-12 (p. 10).

<sup>40</sup> I. 85-91.

<sup>41</sup> Ps. 81. 6. According to the Douai-Rheims (p. 781) gloss: Psalm 81 is 'an exhortation to judges and men in power'. Langland again moves freely from one Bible reference to another – and expects his audience to follow.

*gods?* If he called them gods to whom the word of God was spoken; [...] the scripture cannot be broken. (Io. 10. 32-35)<sup>42</sup>

Such intricate conflation of biblical allusion expands and enriches the poem. Langland's knowledge and use of the Bible seems deep and far-reaching; his choice of quotation remains consistently pertinent. It would appear that Langland holds in mind a whole mix of biblical contexts in the *Deus caritas* reference. The audience familiar with the Bible would pick up the ongoing themes of truth and lie, treasure and the counterfeit currency of the hypocrite through Luke's words: 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (Lc. 6. 45).

That Langland held numerous biblical references in his mind at one and the same time can again be illustrated by the succeeding passage in the poem: 'And taken *transgressores* and tyen hem faste / Til treuþe hadde ytermyned hire trespas to þe ende' (I. 96-97).<sup>43</sup> Ezekiel writes: 'And I will pick out from among you the transgressors and the wicked, and will bring them out of the land where they sojourn: and they shall not

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<sup>42</sup> Christ quotes Ps. 81. 6, which is italicised in the Douai-Rheims, and replicated here. Vulgate: 'respondit eis Iesus multa opera bona ostendi vobis ex Patre meo propter quod eorum opus me lapidatis responderunt ei Iudaei de bono opere non lapidamus te sed de blasphemia et quia tu homo cum sis facis te ipsum Deum respondit eis Iesus nonne scriptum est in lege vestra quia ego dixi dii estis si illos dixit deos ad quos sermo Dei factus est [...] non potest solvi scriptura' (Io. 10. 32-35). *Peake's Commentary* explains this somewhat difficult verse: 'To blur the distinction between God and man is blasphemy because it infringes God's majesty; man can never make himself God. [...] The argument is more than this, for the Psalm [81. 6] speaks not of men 'making themselves' gods, but of the movement of God to men through his word; and that which is seen in the ministry of Jesus is the supreme movement of God to men in his personal Word [Io. 1. 1]'. Matthew Black and H.H. Rowley, eds., *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), pp. 856-57.

<sup>43</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 35) considers that these next lines relate to James: 'which identifies *transgressores* as those who violate the law of love ("Diliges proximum tuum")': Vulgate: 'si tamen legem perficitis regalem secundum scripturas diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum bene facitis si autem personas accipitis peccatum operamini redarguti a lege quasi transgressores' [If then you fulfil the royal law, according to the scriptures: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*: you do well. But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, being reproved by the law as transgressors.] (Iac. 2. 8-9. Christ's words are italicised in the Douai-Rheims). James's Epistle has much to say on the subject of the tongue: see, for example, Iac. 1. 26; 3. 1-18; 5. 12. As discussed in chapter two, the words: 'you do well' are reminiscent of Langland's 'Dowell'. Alternatively, Donaldson (*Alliterative Verse Translation*, p. 11, n. 5) connects the same lines to Isaiah, a passage on the Suffering Servant that foretells the Passion of Christ. Vulgate: 'et ipse peccatum multorum tulit et pro transgressoribus rogavit' [And he hath born the sins of many and hath prayed for the transgressors.] (Is. 53. 12).

enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord' (Ez. 20. 38).<sup>44</sup>

However, '*transgressores*' (from Latin: '*transgredior*': 'to go over to another side or party')<sup>45</sup> might perhaps be translated as 'wicked' as well as 'transgressors'. If so, identifying Langland's precise biblical source becomes complicated. Possibly all the citations are relevant; in the same way that all the 'Do well' references blur, one into another.

The following lines of the poem return to the theme of 'truth' and 'trespass' with discussion of 'truth' in the sense of 'faithfulness', 'loyalty', a central medieval meaning of the word:

Til treuþe hadde ytermyned hire trespas to þe ende.  
 For Daudid in hise dayes dubbed knyȝtes,  
 And dide hem sweren on hir swerd to seruen treuþe euere;  
 And þat is þe profession apertly þat apendeþ to knyȝtes,  
 And nauȝt to fasten o Friday in fyue score wynter,  
 But holden wiþ hym and wiþ here þat wolden alle treuþe. (I. 97-102)<sup>46</sup>

The poet illustrates the poem with Bible references that expand the written text on several levels: it seems that, through the poem, Langland was teaching Truth / 'treuþe to knowe' (I. 109).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Vulgate: 'et eligam de vobis transgressores et impios et de terra incolatus eorum educam eos et terram Israhel non ingredientur et scietis quia ego Dominus' (Ez. 20. 38).<sup>44</sup> Although not using the word 'transgressores', Psalm 118 chimes with Langland's ideas about 'truth': 'vidi praevaricantes et tabescebam quia eloquia tua non custodierunt' [I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away; because they kept not thy word.] (Ps. 118. 158).<sup>44</sup> Verses from Proverbs (as in the following example), with its many sayings on deceit, often sound as though they inspired Langland: 'de fructu oris homo saturabitur bonis anima autem praevaricatorum iniqua qui custodit os suum custodit animam suam qui autem inconsideratus est ad loquendum sentiet mala vult et non vult piger anima autem operantium inpinguabitur verbum mendax iustus detestabitur impius confundit et confundetur iustitia custodit innocentis viam impietas vero peccato subplantat' [Of the fruit of his own mouth shall a man be filled with good things: but the soul of transgressors is wicked. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul: but he that hath no guard on his speech shall meet with evils. The sluggard willeth and willeth not: but the soul of them that work shall be made fat. The just shall hate a lying word: but the wicked confoundeth, and shall be confounded. Justice keepeth the way of the innocent: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.] (Prv. 13. 2-6).

<sup>45</sup> Cassell's *Latin-English English-Latin Dictionary*, [ed.] by D.P. Simpson, 5th edn (London: Cassell; New York: Macmillan, 1959, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968), p. 611.

<sup>46</sup> These lines seem to demonstrate that the Psalm or Proverbs quotations were more likely to have been in Langland's mind than Isaiah.

When the next Bible quotation refers to Lucifer, the Vulgate citation emphasises his pride, but any reference to the devil sets up contrasts between truth and lie:<sup>48</sup>

And mo þousandes wiþ hym þan man kouþe nombre  
 Lopen out wiþ Lucifer in loþliche forme  
 For þei leueden vpon hym þat lyed in þis manere:  
*Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero Altissimo.* (I. 116-19)<sup>49</sup>

Although this is not a direct quotation, Langland uses verses from the Isaiah passage as the basis for this section of the poem.<sup>50</sup> Once the poet has again made the distinction concerning the danger of belief in the devil's lies, he returns to his emphasis on truth both as a synonym for God and a moral quality:

Ac þo þat werche wel as Holy Writ telleþ,  
 And enden as I er seide, in truþe, þat is þe beste,  
 Mowe be siker þat hire soule shul wende to heuene,  
 Ther Treuþe is in Trinitee and troneþ hem alle.  
 Forþi I seye, as I seyde er, by siþte of þise texts –  
 Whan alle tresors arn tried, Truþe is þe beste.  
 Lereþ it þ[u]s lewed men, for lettred it knoweþ –  
 That Treuþe is tresor þe trieste on erþe. (I. 130-37)

The weight with which Langland stresses Truth / truth in these lines denotes the fundamental significance and magnitude which the poet places on veracity, to 'be trewe of youre tonge' (I. 179).

Even Langland's proverbial Latin quotations have biblical echoes: many, no doubt, were originally Bible-based. *Heu michi quod sterilem duxi vitam iuuenilem* (I.

<sup>47</sup> Langland refers to 'Truth' as God as well as the moral quality.

<sup>48</sup> See Io. 8. 31-47 quoted above in section 3. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Is. 14. 13-14. Vulgate: 'qui dicebas in corde tuo in caelum conscendam super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis ascendam super altitudinem nubium ero similis Altissimo' [And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the most High.] (Is. 14. 13-14).

<sup>50</sup> I. 111-29 cf. Is. 14. 7-19. For discussion of sources for this quotation, see Kellogg, 'Satan, Langland, and the North', pp. 413-14 and 'Two Scriptural Texts', pp. 385-98; Risse, 'Augustinian Paraphrase', pp. 712-17; Robertson and Huppé, *Scriptural Tradition*, p. 44, n. 52.

141a) is reminiscent of several Bible verses that bewail the barren, sinful life led in youth:

In thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed. [...] Shew, O Lord, thy ways to me, and teach me thy paths. Direct me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art God my Saviour, and on thee have I waited all the day long. [...] The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember [...] All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth: to them that seek after his covenant and his testimonies. (Ps. 24. 2, 4b-5, 7a, 10)<sup>51</sup>

The importance of truth remains close to any interpretation of *Piers*: it certainly seems possible (within a culture so immersed in the Psalms) that such recollections and links were feasible.

The next biblical quotation: *Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis* (I. 178a cf. Lc. 6. 38) is emphasised by the vernacular,<sup>52</sup> and resounds through the Bible: similar teaching to Luke appears in Matthew and Mark.<sup>53</sup> However, as ever with the Bible, many texts are associated one with another:<sup>54</sup> these connections demonstrate that teaching against the falsehood of hypocrisy remains of paramount importance, and, certainly, the contextual verses in Luke discussed above in this section bear out the

<sup>51</sup> Vulgate: 'Deus meus in te confido non erubescam [...] vias tuas Domine demonstra mihi et: semitas tuas doce me dirige me in veritatem tuam et doce me quoniam tu es Deus salvator meus et te sustinui tota die [...] delicta iuventutis meae et ignorantias meas ne memineris [...] universae viae Domini misericordia et veritas requirentibus testamentum eius et testimonia eius' (Ps. 24. 2, 4b-5, 7a, 10). For other Bible references, see also Gn. 8. 21; Iob 13. 26; 20. 11-18; Ecl. 11. 8-10; Ier. 3. 25.

<sup>52</sup> 'For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.' (Lc. 6. 38) cf. 'For þe same mesure þat ye mete, amys ouþer ellis, / Ye shulle ben weyen þerwiþ whan ye wenden hennes.' (I. 177-78).

<sup>53</sup> Langland largely follows the Latin given in Luke, but leaves out the word '*quippe*', see Alford, *Guide*, p. 36. Lc 6. 38 cf. Mt. 7. 2; Mc. 4. 24. See also Rm. 12. 9-21, especially vv. 17-19.

<sup>54</sup> 'Give: and it shall be given to you.' (Lc. 6. 38, which is to be used by Langland a few lines later). But see, for example, Vulgate: 'sin autem eum qui peccavit dignum viderint plagis prosternent et coram se facient verberari pro mensura peccati erit et plagarum modus' [And if they see that the offender be worthy of stripes: they shall lay him down, and shall cause him to be beaten before them. According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be.] (Dt. 25. 2 cf. II Cor. 11. 23-24); Vulgate: 'numquid iuxta plagam percutientis se percussit eum aut sicut occidit interfectos eius sic occisus est in mensura contra mensuram cum abiecta fuerit iudicabis eam meditata est in spiritu suo duro per diem aestus' [Hath he struck him according to the stroke of him that struck him? Or is he slain, as he killed them that were slain by him? In measure against measure, when it shall be cast off, thou shalt judge it. He hath meditated with his severe spirit in the day of heat.] (Is. 27. 7-8).

instruction to resist duplicity.<sup>55</sup> Awareness of a passage in Matthew would add force to Luke: an extract where Christ upbraids the Pharisees.<sup>56</sup> Yet, when Langland, in the last Bible quotation of Passus I, returns to quote Luke: ‘*Date, et dabitur vobis* – for I deele yow alle’ (I. 201 cf. Lc. 6. 38),<sup>57</sup> it comes as an emphatic recommendation to seek the truth in Truth’s words.

The penultimate Bible quotation comes from James: ‘*Fides sine operibus mortua est*’ [Faith without works is dead] (I. 187a cf. Iac. 2. 26):<sup>58</sup> from the same chapter probably used by Langland earlier in Passus I.<sup>59</sup> It recapitulates, by association, teaching on veracity and the truth of ‘the royal law’ (Iac. 2. 8); Truth’s New Commandment to love God and your neighbour. Passus I ends with re-iteration of its main theme on truth: as Langland puts it:

Forþi I seye as I seide er by si3te of þise textes:  
 Whan alle tresors ben tried, treuþe is þe beste.  
 Now haue I told þee what truþe is – þat no tresor is bettre–  
 I may no lenger lenge þee wiþ; now loke þee Oure Lord! (I. 206-9)

Such repetition demonstrates Langland’s concern about truth: concern amply displayed in the context of the biblical references, and one that would be lost without biblical knowledge; ‘by si3te of þise textes’.

### 3.4 Truth in Passus II Vulgate Quotations

Langland is not just employing a specific Bible verse to illustrate a point, but is using the Latin Vulgate Bible to signpost, to draw attention to, the main issues in the

<sup>55</sup> Lc. 6. 38-45 cf. Mt. 7. 1-5.

<sup>56</sup> Mt. 12. 34-37.

<sup>57</sup> ‘And þat is þe lok of loue þat letþ out my grace, / To conforten þe carefulle acombred wiþ synne.’ (I. 202-3, see Mt. 5. 42-48; Lc. 6. 27-31, 35-36).

<sup>58</sup> As is apparent, Langland refers to this chapter of James’s Epistle constantly: ‘you do well’ (Iac. 2. 8, 19).

<sup>59</sup> I. 96 cf. Iac. 2. 9.

poem. Passus I initiates the understanding of truth in order to ‘knowe þe false’ (II. 4), so that when Lady Mede appears in Passus II, the audience recognises her evil persona: ‘Fals’ and ‘Fauel’ stand on Mede’s *left* side (II. 5-6); her father was ‘Fals’, ‘þat haþ a fikel tonge, / And neuere soop seide siþen he com to erþe’ (II. 25-26). Biblically, the left side is reserved for the damned.<sup>60</sup> Again, the reference to Mede’s father is based on John’s Gospel when Christ reprimands the Pharisees: the Gospel passage turns on truth, and the Pharisees’ failure to be true to God.<sup>61</sup>

The first Latin reference of Passus II comes in two parts, and continues the truth theme. Firstly, Langland emphasises that the child is like the father in reference to Mede’s father, the devil, ‘*Qualis pater, talis filius*’ (II. 27a). The quotation comes from the Athanasian Creed;<sup>62</sup> a treatise of doctrinal dogma which ‘hammers its points home’.<sup>63</sup> With this short quotation in Passus II, Langland’s audience would be reminded not only of the Creed’s importance to salvation, but also, once again, of the polarity between the devil and God. In the Creed, obviously, ‘*pater*’ and ‘*filius*’ refer to the first and second Persons of the Trinity. Langland will quote from the Creed in the Pardon scene.<sup>64</sup> Although its clauses concerning perdition are currently unpopular, yet, for Langland, it

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<sup>60</sup> Mt. 25. 31-46.

<sup>61</sup> Io. 8. 42-47.

<sup>62</sup> Alford, *Guide*, p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed: the Paddock Lectures for 1962-3* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964), p. 66. As the *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (p. 119) phrases it, ‘[t]he creed is prefaced and concluded with the assertion that belief in the truths it asserts is necessary to salvation’. A greater part of the Athanasian Creed is quoted in section 4.4.2 below.

<sup>64</sup> VII. 110a cf. Kelly, *Athanasian Creed*, pp. 17, 20; vv. 2, 41.

manifests the Christian verity: '*christiana veritate*', as the Creed itself terms it.<sup>65</sup> the Creed evokes the potent and dread consequences of failing to seek Truth.<sup>66</sup>

The second part of the Latin quotation, linked together in the same line in the B-text: '*Bona arbor bonum fructum facit*' (II. 27a), delivers an equally dire warning in its context:

Adtendite a falsis prophetis qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas aut de tribulis ficus Sic omnis *arbor bona fructus bonos facit* mala autem arbor fructus malos facit non potest arbor bona fructus malos facere neque arbor mala fructus bonos facere omnis arbor quae non facit fructum bonum exciditur et in ignem mittitur igitur ex fructibus eorum cognoscentis eos

[Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.] (Mt. 7. 15-20)

Langland, as can be seen, delights in setting up contrasts of evil and good: duplicity, hypocrisy, against truth / Truth. The biblical extract, from the Sermon on the Mount, concerns the Kingdom of God: it contends that truth cannot be hidden, and will manifest itself. The two Bible references, placed together by Langland, are connected on more than one level; as a straightforward comparison of Mede and her father, and as apocalyptic caveat.<sup>67</sup> Langland's purpose for his fourteenth-century audience (if not

<sup>65</sup> Kelly, *Athanasian Creed*, p. 18, v. 19.

<sup>66</sup> As Kelly (*Athanasian Creed*, p. 126) puts it: '[I]n spite of the off-putting terms in which they are expressed, the true significance of the damnatory clauses lies in the reminder they give of the awful responsibility of making the right decision in matters of fundamental belief'.

<sup>67</sup> Apocalyptic literature tends to be written to fill a specific need as *Peake's Commentary* (p. 1043) explains: 'When it was felt that they [the apocalyptic books in the Bible – e.g. Daniel] might throw some light on the Christian book, the Jewish apocalypses began to be studied rather exhaustively in modern times, and it is found that they were written in periods of stress to encourage readers to persevere in faith and good works. They often warn that further tribulation is yet to come, after which the patience of the

actually in a state of persecution), as can be witnessed by the previous use of quotation, was indeed to encourage them to persist in belief and right action.

The importance of the concept of truth continues to hold the content of the poem together. Trigger words such as ‘*Caritatis*’ (II. 35) suggest several possibilities of meaning,<sup>68</sup> but the Bible was probably the source.<sup>69</sup> Langland’s use of ‘*Caritatis*’ brings thoughts of I John 4 (quoted in section 3.2 above) with its contrasting focus on the love of Christ (Truth) and Antichrist (falsehood). The First Epistle of John fits well with the theology of the Incarnation in the Athanasian Creed,<sup>70</sup> and the thinking about good and evil fruit in the quotations which Langland has just used. The themes of truth, in both the poem and the Epistle extract, connect Langland’s thinking about Mede and her parent: the father of lies.<sup>71</sup>

Other possibilities of source material co-exist,<sup>72</sup> but the use and context of ‘*caritatis*’ in Hebrews seems more significant to *Piers*: ‘et consideremus invicem in provocationem *caritatis* et bonorum operum’ [And let us consider one another, to

saints will be rewarded by their receiving the Kingdom of God. Early Christians found comfort in these books during days of persecution’.

<sup>68</sup> Alford (*Guide*, pp. 36-37) thinks that the Latin word ‘*caritatis*’, ‘suggests something more specific or technical than merely “charity”’. Alford (p. 37) refers to Janet Coleman’s argument that ‘in the context of fourteenth-century theology, the term includes the notion of grace’. See also Coleman, ‘*Moderni*’, p. 142.

<sup>69</sup> Langland may have made the mental connection of Matthew 7 with Romans possibly triggered by the poet’s use of ‘lippe’, ‘portion’ – or lump: Vulgate: ‘si enim amissio eorum reconciliatio est mundi quae adsumptio nisi vita ex mortuis quod si delibatio sancta est et massa et si radix sancta et rami’ [For if the loss of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, so is the lump also: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.] (Rm. 11. 15-16). Someone as totally bilingual as Langland would switch from one language to another with ease.

<sup>70</sup> See, for examples: I Io. 4. 2 (cf. Athanasian Creed vv. 29-31), and I Io. 4. 15 (cf. Athanasian Creed v. 30).

<sup>71</sup> For the connection between Satan and Antichrist, see Emerson, *Antichrist*, pp. 37-40. For biblical reference, see II Th. 2. 1-16.

<sup>72</sup> See the following examples: Vulgate: ‘memores operis fidei vestrae et laboris et *caritatis* et sustinentiae spei Domini nostri Iesu Christi ante Deum et Patrem nostrum’ [Being mindful of the work of your faith and labour and charity: and of the enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father.] (I Th. 1. 3. My italics.); ‘nos autem qui diei sumus sobrii simus induti lorica[m] fidei et *caritatis* et galeam spem salutis’ [But let us, who are of the day, be sober, having on the breast plate of faith and charity and, for a helmet, the hope of salvation.] (I Th. 5. 8. My italics.). Both these biblical references, and their context in Thessalonians, resonate in *Piers*.

provoke unto *charity* and to good works.] (Hbr. 10. 24. My italics.). The passage continues:

Not forsaking our assembly as some are accustomed: but comforting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after having the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins: But a certain dreadful expectation of judgement, and the rage of a fire which shall consume the adversaries. A man making void the law of Moses dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses: How much more, do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean, by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of grace? (Hbr. 10. 25-29)<sup>73</sup>

Here, '*caritatis*' is associated with the concepts of 'good works', sin, truth and apocalypse – as well as 'charity', love; all topics already seen as important in *Piers*.

Although trigger words in *Piers* remain complicated to identify, all these Bible quotations might seem relevant, and thought to colour the poem's interpretation.

Langland continues to dichotomise true speech and false, and to give truth the ultimate merit. The poet's next use of Bible quotation turns to Psalm 14:

How construeþ Daudid þe Kyng of men þat [cacch]eþ Mede,  
 And men of þis moolde þat mayntayneþ truþe,  
 And how ye shul saue yourself? The Sauter bereþ witesse:  
*Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo...?*  
 And now worþ þis Mede ymarried to a mansed sherewe,  
 To oon Fals Fikel-tonge, a fendes biyete.  
 Fauel þoru3 his faire speche haþ þis folk enchaunted,  
 And al is Lieres ledynge þat [heo] is þus ywedded. (II. 36-43)<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Vulgate: 'non deserentes collectionem nostram sicut est consuetudinis quibusdam sed consolantes et tanto magis quanto videritis adpropinquantem diem voluntarie enim peccantibus nobis post acceptam notitiam veritatis iam non relinquitur pro peccatis hostia terribilis autem quaedam expectatio iudicii et ignis aemulatio quae consumptura est adversarios irritam quis faciens legem Mosi sine ulla miseratione duobus vel tribus testibus moritur quanto magis putatis deteriora mereri supplicia qui Filium Dei conculcaverit et sanguinem testamenti pollutum duxerit in quo sanctificatus est et Spiritui gratiae contumeliam fecerit' (Hbr. 10. 25-29).

<sup>74</sup> Langland's satire continues to emphasise the importance of truth: for examples, see II. 65-66; 69-70; 78-83.

Again, Langland's use of the Bible illuminates the poem; knowledge of the context makes interpretation clearer, and illustrates the Psalm's (and Langland's) emphasis on salvation through Truth / truth:

*Domine quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo aut quis requiescet in monte sancto tuo qui ingreditur sine macula et operatur iustitiam qui loquitur veritatem in corde suo qui non egit dolum in lingua sua nec fecit proximo suo malum et obprobrium non accepit adversus proximos suos ad nihilum deductus est in conspectu eius malignus timentes autem Dominum glorificat qui iurat proximo suo et non decipit qui pecuniam suam non dedit ad usuram et munera super innocentes non accepit qui facit haec non movebitur in aeternum*

[Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice. He that speaketh truth in his heart: who hath not used deceit in his tongue: Nor hath done evil to his neighbour: nor taken up a reproach against his neighbours. In his sight the malignant is brought to nothing: but he glorifieth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his neighbour, and deceiveth not; he that hath not put out his money to usury, nor taken bribes against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall not be moved for ever.] (Ps. 14. 1-5)<sup>75</sup>

Clearly, Langland expects his audience to concentrate on the virtue of truth far more deeply than the bare lines of the poem could ever suggest: the Bible and *Piers* stay inseparable.

Langland obviously keeps the Bible firmly in mind all the time (and expects his audience to do the same) with constant interweaving and total intertextuality. The poet propels *Piers* to far greater depths and heights with such biblical reference. Critics, like Alford and Schmidt, have discussed whether Langland uses the Latin Bible quotation to gloss the English lines of the poem (or the other way around),<sup>76</sup> but the Latin Bible quotations are far more important than mere gloss. Through the biblical context, Langland's Vulgate references circle round each other in both spiritual and moral theme,

<sup>75</sup> The C-text emphasises the importance of Psalm 14 by placing two quotations from the Psalm close together (C. II. 39a; 40a).

<sup>76</sup> Alford, *Guide*, pp. 5-6. See also Schmidt, *Clerkly Maker*, pp. 90-91.

and are intrinsic to the building of the poet's argument. If we assume that Langland's audience understood the implications of the Psalm's first line, and could remember the rest (as has been demonstrated, the Psalms were in regular use throughout the offices of the Church, and memorised by clerics), then an audience would also infer additional meaning from the Bible verse.

Sometimes the context of the Bible quotation appears obscure, ostensibly saying one thing when it means another. For example, the next biblical reference:

And God graunted to gyue Mede to truþe,  
 And þow hast gyuen hire to a gilour – now God gyue þee sorwe!  
 The text telleþ þee no3t so, Truþe woot þe soþe,  
 For *Dignus est operarius* his hire to haue –  
 And þow hast fest hire to Fals; fy on þi lawe!  
 For al bi lesynges þow lyuest and lecherouse werkes;  
 Symonye and þiself shenden Holi Chirche. (II. 120-26)

The actual quotation comes from Luke,<sup>77</sup> but, like so many biblical references, it can be associated with other verses in the Bible: one of which is I Timothy:<sup>78</sup>

Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour: especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith: *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn:* and *The labourer is worthy of his reward.* Against a priest receive not an accusation, but under two or three witnesses. Them that sin reprove before all: that the rest also may have fear. (I Tim. 5. 17-20)<sup>79</sup>

Both the Luke and Timothy citations deal with the probity of the priesthood: 'those who labour in the word and doctrine' must be above reproach, and live in truth.<sup>80</sup> The context

<sup>77</sup> Lc. 10. 7.

<sup>78</sup> See also Dt. 24. 14-15; Mt. 10. 10.

<sup>79</sup> In this instance, to avoid confusion, Langland's use is underlined in the Douai-Rheims as well italicising the Vulgate: 'qui bene praesunt presbyteri duplici honore digni habeantur maxime qui laborant in verbo et doctrina dicit enim scriptura non infrenabis os bovi trituranti et *dignus operarius* mercede sua adversus presbyterum accusationem noli recipere nisi sub duobus et tribus testibus peccantes coram omnibus argue ut et ceteri timorem habeant' (I Tim. 5. 17-20).

<sup>80</sup> If Langland's audience were largely clerical, the contexts of these Bible references would not be lost on them, and would deliver a hidden thrust which underlies the poet's argument about Mede.

of the quotation from Luke presents criteria for the first disciples who went out to spread God's word.<sup>81</sup>

The other quotation in Timothy: '*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn*' may be linked with the Luke reference from Passus I on truth in judgment as it forms the context for the Deuteronomy passage also quoted above in section 3.3 notes.<sup>82</sup>

It is repeated in a Pauline extract on the law,<sup>83</sup> which continues:

For these things are written for our sakes: that he that plougheth, should plough in hope and he that thrasheth, in hope to receive fruit. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things? (I Cor. 9. 10-11)<sup>84</sup>

In consequence, a single Bible quotation can never be considered in a straightforward way, but only as a conglomeration of associated material: Mede, the 'gilour' (II. 121), may be seen, through the contexts of the Luke, Timothy, Deuteronomy and Corinthians quotations discussed above, as directly connected to the clergy, Symonye, who 'shenden Holi Chirche' as 'Truþe woot þe soþe'.

*Piers* may be seen as simple both in structure and meaning, but only if one recognises the prime significance of the Bible in the poem; even profound in its

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<sup>81</sup> Christ's disciples are precursors for all Christians, but especially for priests who have inherited the call, and vow to promulgate the Gospel.

<sup>82</sup> Lc. 6. 38 cf. Dt. 25 in the following quotation. Vulgate: 'si fuerit causa inter aliquos et interpellaverint iudices quem iustum esse perspexerint illi iustitiae palmam dabunt quem impium condemnabunt impietatis sin autem eum qui peccavit dignum viderint plagis prosternent et coram se facient verberari pro mensura peccati erit et plagarum modus ita dumtaxat ut quadragenarium numerum non excedant ne foede laceratus ante oculos tuos abeat frater tuus *non ligabis os bovis terentis in area fruges tuas*' [If there be a controversy between men, and they call upon the judges: they shall give the prize of justice to him whom they perceive to be just. And him whom they find to be wicked, they shall condemn of wickedness. And if they see that the offender be worthy of stripes: they shall lay him down, and shall cause him to be beaten before them. According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be. Yet so, that they exceed not the number of forty: lest thy brother depart shamefully torn before thy eyes. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn on the floor.] (Dt. 25. 1-4).

<sup>83</sup> I Cor. 9. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Vulgate: 'nam propter nos scripta sunt quoniam debet in spe qui arat arare et qui triturat in spe fructus percipiendi si nos vobis spiritalia seminavimus magnum est si nos carnalia vestra metamus' (I. Cor. 9. 10-11).

simplicity. Langland mixes the Latin with the vernacular in an easy manner; not so much for the purpose of translation or explanation, but because the poet was confident that his audience could recognise references, and would use them to interpret the poem. As discussed above, when the poem begins to criticise priests who fail in their duties and harm the Church (thoughts perhaps triggered by the biblical connections listed above), the context of the Luke's Gospel quotation, where Christ sends out the seventy-two with instruction to preach the Kingdom and heal the sick, becomes pertinent:

And he said to them: The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send labourers into his harvest. Go: Behold I send you as lambs among wolves. [...] And heal the sick that are therein and say to them: The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. (Lc. 10. 2-3, 9)<sup>85</sup>

The labourers in the harvest must be 'worthy' of their hire: the seventy-two were the fore-runners of the priesthood, the servants of Truth who should live in truth.

Langland continues to keep criticisms of the priestly office in mind with the next Latin quotation, '*fornicatores*' (II. 181). Langland appears to be holding several topics together within Passus II: marriage of honourable partners; honourable prelates who speak the true word of God:

Sire Symonye hymself shal sitte vpon hir bakkes.  
 Denes and souþdenes, drawe yow togideres;  
 Erchedekenes and officials alle youre registrers,  
 Lat sadle hem wiþ siluer oure synne to suffre—  
 As deuoutrye and diuorses and derne vsurie —  
 To bere bisshopes aboute abrood in visitynge.  
 Paulynes pryuees for pleintes in þe consistorie  
 Shul seruen myself þat Cyuyle is nempned.  
 And cartsadle þe commissarie — oure cart shal he [drawe],  
 And fecchen [oure] vitailles at *fornicatores*;  
 And makeþ of Lyere a lang cart to leden alle þise opere,

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<sup>85</sup> Vulgate: 'Et dicebat illis messis quidem multa operarii autem pauci rogate ergo Dominum messis ut mittat operarios in messem Ite ecce ego mitto vos sicut agnos inter lupos [...] et curate infirmos qui in illa sunt et dicite illis adpropinquavit in vos regnum Dei' (Lc. 10. 2-3, 9).

As fobberes and faitours pat on hire feet rennen. (II. 172-83)

Although Alford does not list a Bible reference in this instance, there appears to be one biblical use of the word '*fornicatores*' that resoundingly parallels Langland's comments concerning the fundamental principle that clergy live in Truth / truth, and whose conversation must be with Christ (and not with Mede and the devil):

Let the charity of the brotherhood abide in you. [...] Remember them that are in bands, as if you were bound with them: and them that labour, as being yourselves also in the body. Marriage honourable in all, and the bed undefiled. For fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have. For he hath said: *I will not leave thee: neither will I forsake thee.* So that we may confidently say: *The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man shall do to me.* Remember your prelates who have spoken the word of God to you: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today: and the same for ever. (Hbr. 13. 1, 3-8)<sup>86</sup>

The idea that the clergy were guilty of covetousness, and needed to be content with such things as they had, was never far from Langland's satire: in such manner, *Piers* is reminiscent of this Hebrews quotation.

To digress to the C-text at this juncture, Langland adds another biblical trigger word which proves illuminating: 'Symonye my felawe / Wol ryde vpon *rectores*' (C. II. 183-84).<sup>87</sup> There are biblical references to '*rectores*' in Wisdom which, given Langland's fondness for punning, may well be relevant:

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<sup>86</sup> Vulgate: 'caritas fraternitatis maneat [...] mementote victorum tamquam simul vincti et laborantium tamquam et ipsi in corpore morantes honorabile conubium in omnibus et torus immaculatus *fornicatores* enim et adulteros iudicabit Deus sint mores sine avaritia contenti praesentibus ipse enim dixit non te deseram neque derelinquam ita ut confidenter dicamus Dominus mihi adiutor non timebo quid faciat mihi homo mementote praepositorum vestrorum qui vobis locuti sunt verbum Dei quorum intuentes exitum conversationis imitamini fidem Iesus Christus heri et hodie ipse et in saecula' (Hbr. 13. 1, 3-8). *Peake's Commentary* (p. 1018) has useful insights on the seemingly random list of advice given in Hebrews: 'There was apparently a well-established ethical catechesis in the Church from early apostolic days, which lays down the main lines followed by the practical teaching in the New Testament epistles'. The Douai-Rheims italicises quotations which refer to Jos. 1. 5 and Ps. 117. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Pearsall (*New Annotated Edition*, p. 76, note to line 187) thinks that '*rectores*' were 'rectors, priests holding the living of a parish' (as opposed to *persones* or parsons). Alford (*Guide*, p. 37) considers that this quotation could be mention of '*rectores ecclesiae*' from Ecclesiasticus: 'audite me magnati et omnes populi

But all men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and who by these good things that are seen, could not understand him that is. Neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman: But have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world. (Sap. 13. 1-2)<sup>88</sup>

This Wisdom excerpt links with Romans: the first chapter of this Epistle sets out Paul's apostleship,<sup>89</sup> and his willingness to preach the Gospel.<sup>90</sup> The verses connected to the Wisdom passage make interesting reading in view of Langland's preoccupation with truth and clergy imperfection:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice. Because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. His eternal power also and divinity: so that they are inexcusable. Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God or given thanks: but became vain in their thoughts. And their foolish heart was darkened. For, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man [...]. Wherefore, God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness: to dishonour their own bodies among themselves. Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. (Rm. 1. 18-25)<sup>91</sup>

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et *rectores ecclesiae auribus percipite* [Hear me, ye great men, and all ye people, and hearken with your ears, ye rulers of the church.] (Sir. 33. 19).

<sup>88</sup> Vulgate: 'vani sunt autem omnes homines quibus non subest scientia Dei et de his quae videntur bona non potuerunt intellegere eum qui est neque operibus ad tendentes agnoverunt quis esset artifex sed aut ignem aut spiritum aut citatum aerem aut gyrum stellarum aut nimiam aquam aut solem et lunam *rectores orbis terrarum deos putaverunt*' (Sap. 13. 1-2).

<sup>89</sup> Rm. 1. 1-6.

<sup>90</sup> Rm. 1. 9-17.

<sup>91</sup> Vulgate: 'revelatur enim ira Dei de caelo super omnem impietatem et iniustitiam hominum eorum qui veritatem in iniustitiam detinent quia quod notum est Dei manifestum est in illis Deus enim illis manifestavit invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas ut sint inexcusabiles quia cum cognovissent Deum non sicut Deum glorificaverunt aut gratias egerunt sed evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis et obscuratum est insipientis cor eorum dicentes enim se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt et mutaverunt gloriam incorruptibilis Dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis [...] propter quod tradidit illos Deus in desideria cordis eorum in inmunditiam ut contumeliis adficiant corpora sua in semet ipsis qui commutaverunt veritatem Dei in mendacio et coluerunt et servierunt creaturae potius quam creatori qui est benedictus in saecula' (Rm. 1. 18-25).

Considering the context of Langland's use of *rectores*, the Romans passage might also trigger reference to the abuses that the poet sees within the fourteenth-century priesthood: those who change 'the truth of God into a lie'. As will be further discussed in chapter six, Langland makes good use of biblically-connected material to initiate covert criticism of priests. Paul ends the chapter thus:

Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness: full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity: whisperers, [d]etractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, [f]oolish, dissolute: without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. Who, having known the justice of God, did not understand that they who do such things, are worthy of death: and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them. (Rm. 1. 29-32)<sup>92</sup>

Strong language certainly, but such criticisms - when referred obliquely to a Church authority who, 'having known the justice of God', has now become estranged from Truth, and so reveals itself to be reprehensible - irradiate *Piers*.

In Ephesians Paul makes another reference to *rectores* where use of the word connects to the devil: 'adversus mundi *rectores* tenebrarum' [the rulers of the world of this darkness.] (Eph. 6. 12), and where the 'spirits of wickedness in high places'<sup>93</sup> echo with the scene at the court of Westminster where truth 'sayde but lytel' (C. II. 200).<sup>94</sup> In a series of single trigger words: *fornicatores*, *rectores*, Langland evokes powerful images critical of Church authority which turn light into darkness, truth into lie. The verses,

<sup>92</sup> Vulgate: 'repletos omni iniquitate malitia fornicatione avaritia nequitia plenos invidia homicidio contentione dolo malignitate susurrone detractores Deo odibiles contumeliosos superbos elatos inventores malorum parentibus non oboedientes insipientes inconpositos sine affectione absque foedere sine misericordia qui cum iustitiam Dei cognovissent non intellexerunt quoniam qui talia agunt digni sunt morte non solum ea faciunt sed et consentiunt facientibus' (Rm. 1. 29-32). The C-text may be seen to have additional inflammatory material delivered through Bible context and associated passages as will also be argued further in chapter six.

<sup>93</sup> Vulgate: 'contra spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus' (Eph. 6. 12).

<sup>94</sup> The line between Langland's criticism of secular law and ecclesiastical authority becomes blurred.

following on from the above-mentioned quotation in Ephesians, might offer advice to recalcitrant clergy:

Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of justice: [...] In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God). [...] And for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the gospel, [f]or which I am an ambassador in a chain: so that therein I may be bold to speak as I ought. (Eph. 6. 13-14, 16-17, 19-20)<sup>95</sup>

If Langland's concern was that Sothnesse 'sayde but lytel' (C. II. 200), Paul's Epistles are certainly relevant. The poet appears to use a prodigious biblical knowledge to make his point concerning the importance of Truth / truth: as well as building a structural framework on truth from the Vulgate quotations.

### 3.5 Truth in Passus III Vulgate Quotations

To return to the B-text, in Passus III, the biblical context of the quotations apparently moves away from the truth theme: however, the essence of the subject of truth does not disappear. Langland's direction on the perils of Mede is one of the major issues in Passus III: underhand dealings, like duplicity and hypocrisy, are branches of untruth. The first Latin Bible reference comes from the Sermon on the Mount; a crucial biblical passage concerning salvation and the Kingdom of God: the context of which resonates with ideas of Mede in *Piers*:

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<sup>95</sup> Vulgate: 'propterea accipite armaturam Dei ut possitis resistere in die malo et omnibus perfectis stare state ergo succincti lumbos vestros in veritate et induti lorica iustitiae [...] in omnibus sumentes scutum fidei in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere et galeam salutis adsumite et gladium Spiritus quod est verbum Dei [...] et pro me ut detur mihi sermo in apertione oris mei cum fiducia notum facere mysterium evangelii pro quo legatione fungor in catena ita ut in ipso audeam prout oportet me loqui' (Eph. 6. 13-14, 16-17, 19-20).

Adtendite ne iustitiam vestram faciatis coram hominibus ut videamini ab eis alioquin mercedem non habebitis apud Patrem vestrum qui in caelis est cum ergo facies elemosynam noli tuba canere ante te sicut hypocritae faciunt in synagogis et in vicis ut honorificentur ab hominibus amen dico vobis receperunt mercedem suam te autem faciente elemosynam *nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua* ut sit elemosyna tua in abscondito et Pater tuus qui videt in abscondito reddet tibi

[Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. And when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.] (Mt. 6. 1-4)<sup>96</sup>

Christ advises against hypocritical behaviour; against Pharisaic conduct. Langland's opprobrium also revolves round those in society who ought to know better:

Ac þer was murþe and mynstralcie Mede to plese:  
That wonyep̄ at Westmynstre worshiþeþ hire alle.  
Gentilliche wiþ ioye þe iustices somme  
Busked hem to þe bour þer þe burde dwellede,  
Confort[ed]en hire kyndely by Clergies leue. (III. 11-15)

Again, the biblical circumstance endorses and augments Langland's satire against the dishonesty, the untruth of secular and ecclesiastical authority.

The context of the next quotation, while still berating the taking of bribes, also returns to themes of dissimulation and the sins of the tongue:

docuit enim iniquitas tua os tuum et imitatis linguam blasphemantium  
condemnat te os tuum et non ego et labia tua respondebunt tibi [...] numquid  
grande est ut consoletur te Deus sed verba tua prava hoc prohibent [...] quid  
tumes contra Deum spiritus tuus ut proferas de ore huiusmodi sermones [...] non  
recedet de tenebris ramos eius arefaciet flamma et auferetur spiritu oris sui  
non credat frustra errore deceptus quod aliquo pretio redimendus sit antequam  
dies eius impleantur peribit et manus eius arescet [...] congregatio enim  
hypocritae sterilis et *ignis devorabit tabernacula eorum qui munera libenter  
accipiunt* concepit dolorem et peperit iniquitatem et uterus eius praeparat dolos

[For thy iniquity hath taught thy mouth: and thou imitatest the tongue of blasphemers. Thy own mouth shall condemn thee, and not I: and thy own lips

<sup>96</sup> III. 72a.

shall answer thee. [...] Is it a great matter that God should comfort thee? But thy wicked words hinder this. [...] Why doth thy spirit swell against God, to utter such words out of thy mouth? [...] He shall not depart out of darkness. The flame shall dry up his branches: and he shall be taken away by the breath of his own mouth. He shall not believe, being vainly deceived by error, that he may be redeemed with any price. Before his days be full he shall perish: and his hands shall wither away. [...] For the congregation of the hypocrite is barren: and fire shall devour their tabernacles who love to take bribes. He hath conceived sorrow, and hath brought forth iniquity: and his womb prepareth deceits.] (Iob 15. 5-6, 11, 13, 30-32, 34-35 cf. III. 96)<sup>97</sup>

Langland's subtle reminder on untruth runs parallel to the poet's criticism of bribery, but the issue of truth stays forefront on the poet's agenda:

Quod Conscience to þe Kyng, 'Crist it me forbede!  
 Er I wedde swich a wif, wo me bitide!  
 For she is frele of hire feiþ and fikel of hire speche,  
 [...]  
 Youre fader she felled þoru3 false biheste,  
 And haþ apoisoned popes and apeireþ Holy Chirche.  
 [...]  
 For she is tikel of hire tail, talewis of tonge,  
 [...]  
 She leteþ passe prisoners and paieþ for hem ofte,  
 And gyueþ þe gailers gold and grotes togidres  
 To vnfette þe Fals – fle where hym likeþ;  
 And takeþ Trewþe bi þe top and tieþ hym faste,  
 And hangeþ hym for hatrede þat harm[e]de neuere.  
 [...]  
 Ther she is wel wiþ þe kyng, wo is þe reaume –  
 For she is fauourable to Fals and fouleþ Truþe ofte.'  
 (III. 120-22, 127-28, 131, 137-41, 153-54)

When Mede impresses the King with her reply, to counteract her, Langland makes

Conscience speak three quotations from Psalm 14,<sup>98</sup> a psalm which illustrates the way to

<sup>97</sup> Allen ('Reading and Writing', p. 346) considers that Langland did not read Matthew 'with any attention' (apropos the A and Z texts), nor saw the context of Iob 15. 34: yet the context does fit with Langland's argument (and mine). Even if Langland used Hugh of St Cher's gloss as a source (and not the Bible), it does not preclude the possibility that the poet knew the original Bible versions, and held them and their contexts in mind.

<sup>98</sup> These verses of Psalm 14 were quoted in full in section 3.4. Vulgate: '*Domine quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?*' [Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?] (Ps. 14. 1 cf. III. 234a); '*qui ingreditur sine macula et operatur iustitiam*' [He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice.] (Ps. 14. 2 cf. III.

salvation, the path towards the Kingdom of God for the person who ‘pursueþ truþe’ (III. 241).<sup>99</sup> Once again, Conscience’s reply uses monastic and sermon-devisers’ techniques to return the mind back to the Latin biblical quotations used earlier in Passus III.<sup>100</sup>

Although Langland chooses not to use the specific verse from the Psalm concerning truth at this point in the poem (as so often with Langland’s use of Bible quotations), the memory holds it in the mind. As Bible teaching associates usury with keeping one’s word,<sup>101</sup> Langland’s use of the psalm verse: ‘qui pecuniam suam non dedit ad usuram et munera super innocentes’ [He that hath not put out his money to usury, nor taken bribes against the innocent.] (Ps. 14. 5) may still be considered part of Langland’s truth theme, and understood, in the same sense as ‘bribery’ and ‘hypocrisy’, as a perversion of truth.

The next quotations in Passus III turn to Psalm 25<sup>102</sup> and Matthew 6.<sup>103</sup> Certainly, momentum in the poem, at this juncture, is built on the skeleton of biblical quotations that echo and reflect each other. It seems possible that the culmination of the argument in Matthew: ‘Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice’ (Mt. 6. 33) which aligns so well with Psalm 14 stayed unsaid (but understood): the true ‘*culorum* of þis cas’ (III. 280). The context of the Matthew quotation: ‘Amen, Amen, receperunt mercedam

237a); ‘*qui pecuniam suam non dedit ad usuram et munera super innocentes*’ [[H]e that hath not put out his money to usury, nor taken bribes against the innocent.] (Ps. 14. 5 cf. III. 241a).

<sup>99</sup> Vulgate: ‘*qui loquitur veritatem in corde suo qui non egit dolum in lingua sua*’ [He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue.] (Ps. 14. 3).

<sup>100</sup> Leclercq, *Desire for God*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>101</sup> Dt. 23. 21-23. Laws against usury may be found in Ex. 22. 25; Lv. 25. 36-37; Dt. 23. 19-23. (*Peake’s Commentary* (p. 416). The Bible also teaches that the taking of bribes risks untruth: ‘*nec accipias munera quae excaecant etiam prudentes et subvertunt verba iustorum*’ [Neither shalt thou take bribes, which even blind the wise, and pervert the words of the just.] (Ex. 23. 8).

<sup>102</sup> III. 249. Langland’s next direct use of the Latin Bible goes to Ps. 25. 10 and, unlike in the C-text (III. 118a), he quotes the verse in full: the right hand which should be the giver of justice is, instead, ‘filled with gifts’, ‘*dextera eorum repleta est muneribus*’.

<sup>103</sup> III. 254a. A new C-text quotation is added here (C. III. 307a), taken from Lv. 19. 13: Vulgate: ‘*non morabitur opus mercennarii apud te usque mane*’ [The wages of him that hath been hired by thee, shall not abide with thee until the morning.]. According to Alford (*Guide*, pp. 38-9), the reference was a ‘commonplace in canon law, enjoining the prompt payment of wages [...]; delayed payment was regarded as a form of usury’.

suam' [Amen, Amen, they have received their reward] (III. 254a cf. Mt. 6. 2) advocates acting in honesty before God (and not in order to seek reward from humankind):<sup>104</sup> in other words, to seek Truth / truth.

Langland's references to the story of Saul, through the trigger word '*Regum*', in Kings, certainly bear out the advice to seek truth.<sup>105</sup> Saul forsakes God, does not execute God's commandments, and lies to Samuel about the matter.<sup>106</sup> Although Saul repents, the king's disobedience and untruthfulness are punished by God. David, a man 'prudent in his words' (I Rg. 16. 18), became God's anointed in Saul's place.<sup>107</sup> As Langland writes: 'And whoso trespaseþ ayein truþe or takeþ ayein his wile, / Leaute shal don hym lawe, and no lif ellis (III. 293-94). The continuation of the truth theme progresses both through the vernacular and the Bible quotations.

Langland's Vulgate quotation now turns to the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the coming of Christ:<sup>108</sup> Truth's arrival in the world is further brought to mind with the poet's use of '*Gloria in excelsis*' (III. 328). At the Incarnation, the shepherds stress the importance of seeing the word: 'videamus hoc verbum quod factum est quod fecit Dominus et ostendit nobis' [let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath

<sup>104</sup> Mt. 6. 1-8, 16-21.

<sup>105</sup> III. 259-79 cf. I Rg. 15 & 16. Langland paraphrases much of the story.

<sup>106</sup> I Rg. 15. 1-26.

<sup>107</sup> I Rg. 16. 13.

<sup>108</sup> III. 308a; III. 324a cf. Is. 2. 3-4. Vulgate: '[Christus] docebit nos vias suas et ambulabimus in semitis eius quia de Sion exhibit lex et verbum Domini de Hierusalem et iudicabit gentes et arguet populos multos et conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres et lanceas suas in falces *non levabit gens contra gentem gladium nec exercebuntur ultra ad proelium*' [Christ] will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall come forth from Sion: and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge the Gentiles and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation: neither shall they be exercised any more to war.] (Is. 2. 3-4).

shewed to us.] (Lc. 2. 15).<sup>109</sup> The shepherds are in sharp contrast to fourteenth-century pastors: Langland speaks, not of reality, but of an idealised world of truth:

Preestes and persons wiþ *Placebo* to hunte,  
 And dyngen vpon Daid eche day til eue.  
 Huntynge or haukyng if any of hem vse,  
 His boost of his benefice worþ bynomen hym after. (III. 311-14)<sup>110</sup>

The reference to the Psalm: ‘*placebo* Domino in regione vivorum’ [I will please the Lord in the land of the living.] (Ps. 114. 9),<sup>111</sup> demonstrates that Langland retains the truth emphasis of a perfect Langlandian world:

But after þe dede þat is doon oon doom shal rewarde  
 Mercy or no mercy as Truþe [moot] acorde.  
 Kynges court and commune court, consistorie and chapitle -  
 Al shall be but oon court, and oon baron be iustice:  
 That worþe Trewe-tonge. (III. 318-22)

The focus on truth, and the merging, repetitive nature of biblical quotation contexts which each add to and endorse the truth theme, can hardly be regarded as coincidental, but might be seen as a demonstrable part of the ongoing structure and argument of *Piers*: yet the quotations and allusions seep from the structure, and converge in the mind. It seems unlikely that *distinctiones* were Langland’s tools for these trigger words because

<sup>109</sup> ‘[H]oc verbum’ again calls to mind the beginning of John’s Gospel with its emphatic reference to ‘the Word’: a Vulgate quotation that Langland adds to the C-text: ‘Verbum caro factum est’ [[And] the word was made flesh.] (C. III. 355 cf. Io. 1. 14, but see Io. 1. 1-5).

<sup>110</sup> The C-text makes an emphatic addition: ‘*Dirige*’ (C. III. 463) from the Liturgy recalling Psalm 5. Vulgate: ‘odisti omnes qui operantur iniquitatem perdes omnes: qui loquuntur mendacium virum sanguinum et dolosum abominabitur Dominus [...] Domine deduc me in iustitia tua propter inimicos meos *dirige* in conspectu meo viam tuam quoniam non est in ore eorum veritas cor eorum vanum est sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum linguis suis dolose agebant iudica illos Deus decidant a cogitationibus suis secundum multitudinem impietatum eorum expelle eos quoniam inritaverunt te Domine’ [Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity: thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie. The bloody and the deceitful man the Lord will abhor. [...] Conduct me, O Lord, in thy justice: because of my enemies, direct my way in thy sight. For there is no truth in their mouth: their heart is vain. Their throat is an open sepulchre: they dealt deceitfully with their tongues: judge them, O God. Let them fall from their devices: according to the multitude of their wickednesses cast them out: for they have provoked thee, O Lord.] (Ps. 5. 7, 9-11). The C-text additions will be further discussed and evaluated in part two of the thesis.

<sup>111</sup> As Alford (*Guide*, p. 41) says, these Psalms begin the Office of the Dead. See also Pearsall (*New Annotated Edition*, p. 99, note to lines 464-65). Langland’s use of these liturgical words at this point in *Piers* adds an ironic twist to the poet’s focus on Truth / truth: interpretation of the poem relies on the Office of the Dead at this juncture.

their source was liturgical not biblical, yet the contextual links with the truth theme remain evident.

When Langland uses a series of biblical quotations from a similar source,<sup>112</sup> and draws attention to that source over a series of poetic lines, it demonstrates a continuation of the poet's thought process: for example, in the use of Proverbs 22:

*melius est nomen bonum quam divitiae multae super argentum et aurum gratia bona [...] qui seminat iniquitatem metet mala et virga irae suae consummabitur qui pronus est ad misericordiam benedicetur de panibus enim suis dedit pauperi [Victoriam et honorem acquirat qui dat munera; animam autem aufert accipientium]*<sup>113</sup> eice derisorem et exhibit cum eo iurgium cessabuntque causae et contumeliae qui diligit cordis munditiam propter gratiam labiorum suorum habebit amicum regem oculi Domini custodiunt scientiam et subplantantur verba iniqui [...] inclina aurem tuam et audi verba sapientium adpone autem cor ad doctrinam meam quae pulchra erit tibi cum servaveris eam in ventre tuo et redundabit in labiis tuis ut sit in Domino fiducia tua unde et ostendi eam tibi hodie ecce descripsi eam tibi tripliciter in cogitationibus et scientia ut ostenderem tibi firmitatem et eloquia veritatis respondere ex his illi qui misit te

[A good name is better than great riches: and good favour is above silver and gold. [...] He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils: and with the rod of his anger he shall be consumed. He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed: for of his bread he hath given to the poor. He that maketh presents shall purchase victory and honour: but he carrieth away the souls of the receivers. Cast out the scoffer, and contention shall go with him: and quarrels and reproaches shall cease. He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips, shall have the king for his friend. The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge: and the words of the unjust are overthrown. [...] Incline thy ear and hear the words of the wise: and apply thy heart to my doctrine. It shall be beautiful for thee, if thou keep it in thy bowels: and it shall flow in thy lips. That thy trust may be in the Lord, wherefore I have also shewn it to thee this day. Behold I have described it to thee three manner of ways, in thoughts and knowledge: That I might shew thee the certainty, and the words of truth, to answer out of these to them that sent thee. (Prv. 22. 1, 8-12, 17-21)<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> III. 330; 336; 350.

<sup>113</sup> The copy of *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* used for this thesis does not give this part of the verse, although Alford (*Guide*, p. 42) refers directly to it as a source, and the Douai-Rheims translates it. In consequence, the relevant quotation in square brackets has been taken from an internet Vulgate site: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/pro022.htm#009>.

<sup>114</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 42) suggests that the 'etc' at III. 350 could mean that '[t]he next few verses [...] are also pertinent to the scene', and gives the following verse as illustration: 'Cast out the scoffer, and contention shall go with him: and quarrels and reproaches [*causae et contumeliae*] shall cease. He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips, shall have the king for his friend'. Bible context remains

Again, the reader may observe the interweaving of biblical material with the vernacular verse, and how the substance of the poem is augmented by contextual knowledge of the Bible.

Interspersed between the Proverbs quotations come two quotations that Langland separates, yet which form part of the same Vulgate verse: ‘omnia autem probate quod bonum est tenete’ [But prove all things: hold fast that which is good.] (I Th. 5. 21).<sup>115</sup> Langland remains categorical throughout Passus III concerning proper behaviour; the way to avoid destruction, and seek salvation.

Langland explains the importance of biblical context in Conscience’s words:

‘I leue wel, lady,’ quod Conscience, ‘þat þi Latyn be trewe.  
 Ac þow art lik a lady þat radde a lesson ones,  
 Was *omnia probate*, and þat plesed hire herte –  
 For þat lyne was no lenger at þe leues ende.  
 Hadde she loked þat oþer half and þe leef torned,  
 She sholde haue founden fel[1]e wordes folwyng þerafter:  
*Quod bonum est tenete* - Truþe þat text made.  
 And so, [madame, ferde ye] – ye kouþe na moore fynde  
 Tho ye [on Sapience loked], sittynge in youre studie.  
 This text þat ye han told were [tidy] for lordes,  
 Ac yow failed a konnyng clerk þat kouþe þe leef han torned. (III. 337-47)

Langland advises his readers not to take a quotation out of context: ‘*omnia probate*’ should not be isolated from ‘*Quod bonum est tenete*’, nor: ‘*He that maketh presents shall purchase victory and honour*’ separated from ‘*he carrieth away the souls of the receivers*’.<sup>116</sup> Context is paramount.<sup>117</sup> It appears that Langland believed that ‘[f]or what

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the unwritten part of the poem. Schmidt’s editions do not place an ‘etc’ at III. 350, but the principle suggested by Alford remains relevant.

<sup>115</sup> III. 339; 343.

<sup>116</sup> The Thessalonians chapter begins with apocalyptic warning: Vulgate: ‘de temporibus autem et momentis fratres non indigetis ut scribamus vobis ipsi enim diligenter scitis quia dies Domini sicut fur in nocte ita veniet cum enim dixerint pax et securitas tunc repentinus eis superveniet interitus sicut dolor in utero habenti et non effugient’ [But of the times and moments, brethren, you need not, that we should write to you: For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night. For

things soever were written were written for our learning: that, through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope' (Rm. 15. 4).

Langland's stress that 'Truþe þat text made' (III. 343) resonates with the ongoing theme: Truth, God, stands for the totality of all that is good. Therefore if the text is God's (that is, in the Bible), it has the final (the only) authority. When Langland writes 'or þe Book lieþ!' (III. 251), the poet's medieval audience would have recognised the absolute impossibility of this thought: Truth cannot lie; the Word of God as expressed in the Bible cannot be false. The medieval emphasis falls on the inseparable nature of God as Truth, and Langland appears to hold the concept continually in mind.

### 3.6 Truth in Passus IV Vulgate Quotations

Langland's Vulgate quotations maintain 'truth' as an underlying theme within their biblical context in the only Bible references in the B-text of Passus IV:

Oon Waryn Wisdom and Witty his feere  
 Folwed hem faste, for þei hadde to doone  
 In þe Cheker and þe Chauncerye, to ben discharged of þynges,  
 And to riden faste for Reson sholde rede hem þe beste  
 For to saue hem for siluer from shame and from harmes.  
 A[c] Conscience knew hem wel, þei loued coueitise,  
 And bad Reson ryde faste and recche of hir neiþer:  
 'Ther are wiles in hire wordes, and with Mede þei dwelleþ –  
 Ther as wraþe and wranglynge is, þer wynne þei siluer;  
 Ac þere is loue and leautee, þei wol no3t come þere:  
*Contricio et infelicitas in viis eorum...*

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when they shall say: Peace and security; then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child. And they shall not escape.] (I Th. 5. 1-3).

<sup>117</sup> Barr ('Use', p. 444, n. 6) writes: 'While the textual transmission of the manuscript falls outside the scope of this present essay, it is possible that some of the truncating of citations may be scribal rather than authorial. [...] The problem with incomplete quotations is that in some cases one is not given guidance as to how much further one is to go after the '&c''. But the mind and memory have no bounds. Moreover, if the quotations are linked together - however loosely - by a single theme over a quarter of the poem (as Truth / truth links the quotations from the Prologue through to the end of the first five Passūs) that situation can hardly be considered 'scribal': unless scribes are to be credited with composing this whole section of the poem.'

Thei ne gyueþ no3t of God one goose wyngē:  
*Non est timor Dei ante oculos eorum.*  
 For þei wolde do moore for a dozeyne c[apo]nes  
 Than for loue of Oure Lord or alle hise leeue seintes!  
 Forþi, Reson, lat hem ride, þo riche by hemselue –  
 For Conscience knoweþ hem no3t, ne Crist, as I trowe.’ (IV. 27-41)

The two Bible references italicised above are taken from Psalm 13 which denounces transgressors who fail to seek God, or live in his ways, and who, instead, commit myriad sins of the tongue:

Dixit insipiens in corde suo non est Deus corrupti sunt et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis: non est qui faciat bonum non est usque ad unum: Dominus de caelo prospexit super filios hominum ut videat si est intellegens aut: requirens Deum omnes declinaverunt simul inutiles facti sunt non est qui faciat bonum non est usque ad unum sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum linguis suis dolose agebant venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum quorum os maledictione et amaritudine plenum est veloces pedes eorum ad effundendum sanguinem *contritio et infelicitas in viis eorum* et viam pacis non cognoverunt *non est timor Dei ante oculos eorum*: nonne cognoscent omnes qui operantur iniquitatem qui devorant plebem meam sicut escam panis Dominum non invocaverunt illic trepidaverunt timore ubi non erat timor: quoniam Deus in generatione iusta consilium inopis confudistis quoniam Dominus spes eius est quis dabit ex Sion salutare Israhel cum averterit Dominus captivitatem plebis suae exultabit Iacob et laetabitur Israhel

[The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no, not one. The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and unhappiness in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Shall not all they know that work iniquity, who devour my people as they eat bread? They have not called upon the Lord: there have they trembled for fear where there was no fear. For the Lord is in the just generation: you have confounded the counsel of the poor man, but the Lord is his hope. Who shall give out of Sion the salvation of Israel? When the Lord shall have turned away the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad.] (Ps. 13. 1-7)<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> IV. 36a, 37a

Direct comparison of *Piers* to the Psalm reveals how closely the contexts of both passages weave together; the one relies on the other. For example, the King's court lacks Reason; its supposedly intellectual members, Wisdom and Witty, are corrupt, covetous and, like the fool in the Psalm, 'gyueþ no3t of God one goose wynges' (IV. 37):<sup>119</sup> they have 'wiles in hire wordes, and with Mede þei dwelleþ' (IV. 34).<sup>120</sup> Yet although the court, the world of authority, is in partnership with corruption, it seems only Conscience cannot align himself with Mede.<sup>121</sup>

The Law fails Truth, as Passus IV displays: the highest authority in the land 'devour[s] my people as they eat bread' (Ps. 13. 4): as the Psalm repeats: 'there is none that doth good, no, not one' (Ps. 13. 1, 3). Through implication, Langland suggests that only God can be the hope of the poor man: deceit and other sins of the tongue are manifest, and pervade the seat of the country's powerbase. Truth seems in abeyance. Yet the understanding that God overcomes evil and delivers his people reaches through the poem from knowledge of the Psalm's final verses, and relieves the bleak picture that the poet gives about authority: because of Christ's Redemption, *accidia* was a mortal sin for medieval man. Awareness of the Psalm's context concerning Truth / truth augments any understanding, and Passus IV, without this recognition, exhibits a very different mood.

Psalm 13 is also quoted directly (and extensively) in Romans: a passage which centres on God's truth, and adds greatly to any comprehension of Passus IV as it includes both Langland's citations:

est autem Deus verax omnis autem homo mendax sicut scriptum est ut iustificeris in sermonibus tuis et vincas cum iudicaris si autem iniquitas nostra iustitiam Dei

<sup>119</sup> Ps. 13. 1-3.

<sup>120</sup> Ps. 13. 1-4.

<sup>121</sup> IV. 1-12. Conscience advises Reason: 'A[c] Conscience knew hem wel, þei loued coueitise, / And bad Reson ryde faste and recche of hir neiþer.' (IV. 32-33).

commendat quid dicemus numquid iniquus Deus qui infert iram secundum hominem dico absit alioquin quomodo iudicabit Deus mundum si enim veritas Dei in meo mendacio abundavit in gloriam ipsius quid adhuc et ego tamquam peccator iudicor et non sicut blasphemamur et sicut aiunt nos quidam dicere faciamus mala ut veniant bona quorum damnatio iusta est [...] sicut scriptum est quia non est iustus quisquam non est intellegens non est requirens Deum omnes declinaverunt simul inutiles facti sunt non est qui faciat bonum non est usque ad unum sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum linguis suis dolose agebant venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum quorum os maledictione et amaritudine plenum est veloces pedes eorum ad effundendum sanguinem *contritio et infelicitas in viis eorum* et viam pacis non cognoverunt *non est timor Dei ante oculos eorum* scimus autem quoniam quaecumque lex loquitur his qui in lege sunt loquitur ut omne os obstruatur et subditus fiat omnis mundus Deo

[But God is true and every man a liar, as it is written: *That thou mayest be justified in thy words and mayest overcome when thou art judged.* But if our injustice commend the justice of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust, who executeth wrath? (I speak according to man.) God forbid! Otherwise how shall God judge this world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, unto his glory, why am I also yet judged as a sinner? And not rather (as we are slandered and as some affirm that we say) let us do evil that there may come good? Whose damnation is just. [...] As it is written: *There is not any man just. There is none that understandeth: there is none that seeketh after God. All have turned out of the way: they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, there is not so much as one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have dealt deceitfully. The venom of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery in their ways: And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.* Now we know that what things soever the law speaketh, it speaketh to them that are in the law: that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may be made subject to God.] (Rm. 3. 4-8, 10-19)

Paul's Epistle instructs that those 'that are in the law' are subject to the law: as those in the fourteenth-century 'Chauncerye' (IV. 29) are bound by the law. Knowledge of the biblical context, of the Psalm, but more particularly of the Romans quotation, suggests even stronger criticism of legal authority than appears the case within the poem: 'Mede ouermaistreb Lawe and muche truþe letteþ' (IV. 176).<sup>122</sup> Bearing in mind the violent

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<sup>122</sup> See IV. 135-84.

retribution that was inflicted on lawyers during the Uprising of 1381,<sup>123</sup> Langland's use of Psalm 13 (through the Romans connection) gives the poem inflammatory qualities.

Langland criticises more than the Law. Although Langland writes that the King tries to enforce the good and punish Wrong,<sup>124</sup> Mede holds more power at the court:

'And yet,' quod Reson, 'by þe Rode! I shal no ruþe haue  
While Mede haþ þe maistrie in þis moot-halle.  
Ac I may shewe ensamples as I se ouþer.  
I seye it by myself,' quod he, 'and it so were  
That I were kyng with coroune to kepen a reaume,  
Sholde neuere Wrong in þis world þat I wite my3te  
Ben vnpunysshed in my power, for peril of my soule,  
Ne gete my grace þoru3 giftes, so me God saue!  
Ne for no mede haue mercy, but mekenesse it made.' (IV. 134-42)

Langland implies that the king has no reason; the aristocracy, no truth:

'Reed me no3t,' quod Reson, 'no ruþe to haue  
Til lordes and ladies louen alle truþe  
And haten alle harloterie, to heren it or to mouþen it.' (IV. 113-15)

As may be seen in the quotation below, Langland does not exempt those Church members who live against Truth. Reason continues to list the failures in fourteenth-century society in contrast to the implied true qualities of an ideal world:

Til clerkene coueitise be to cloþe þe pouere and fede,  
And religiose romeris *Recordare* in hir cloistres  
As Seynt Beneyt hem bad, Bernard and Fraunceis;  
And til prechours prechyng be preued on hemselue;  
Til þe Kynges counseil be þe commune profit;  
Til bisshopes bayardes ben beggeris chaumbres,  
Hire haukes and hire houndes help to pouere religious. (IV. 119-25)

Throughout these lines of Passus IV, an audience hears the echoes of Psalm 13: 'They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no, not one' (Ps. 13. 1). For Langland, in the places of power, truth is dead.

<sup>123</sup> *Froissart 'Chronicles'*, selected, translated and ed. by Geoffrey Brereton, Penguin Classic Series (London: Penguin Books, 1968, revised 1978), p. 217; McKisack, *Fourteenth Century*, p. 410.

<sup>124</sup> IV. 80-86.

Although ‘*Recordare*’ is not listed in Alford as having a Bible source, there are interesting biblical resonances in *Piers* at this juncture: the Douai-Rheims translates ‘*Recordare*’ as ‘remember’:<sup>125</sup> for example, ‘Remember, thy servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not on the stubbornness of this people, nor on their wickedness and sin.’ (Dt. 9. 27).<sup>126</sup> Jeremiah also seems pertinent to *Piers*:

The Lord saith to me: Assuredly it shall be well with thy remnant [those faithful to God], assuredly I shall help thee in the time of affliction and in the time of tribulation, against the enemy. [...Jeremiah replies] O Lord, thou knowest, remember me, and visit me, and defend me from them that persecute me: [...]. Thy words were found and I did eat them: and thy word was to me a great joy and gladness of my heart, for thy name is called upon me, O Lord God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of jesters. (Ier. 15. 11, 15-17)<sup>127</sup>

As Langland deplores the state of authority in fourteenth-century society, so the Lamentations of Jeremiah bewail the adversity of the people, and the destruction of Jerusalem:

Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to aliens: our houses to strangers. We are become orphans without a father: [...]. We have drunk our water for money: we have bought our wood. [...] We have given our hand to Egypt and to the Assyrians that we might be satisfied with bread. Our fathers have sinned and are not: and we have borne their iniquities. [...] Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted: renew our days, as from the beginning. (Lam. 5. 1-4, 6-7, 21)<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Donaldson (*Alliterative Verse Translation*, p. 36, n. 6) considers that ‘*Recordare*’ is ‘the first word of the offertory of the Mass’, but the *Roman Missal* uses ‘*Memento*’: see *The Missal in Latin and English: Being the text of the Missale Romanorum with English rubrics and a new translation* (Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1950), pp. 726, 732.

<sup>126</sup> Vulgate: ‘*recordare* servorum tuorum Abraham Isaac et Iacob ne aspicias duritiam populi huius et impietatem atque peccatum’ (Dt. 9. 27).

<sup>127</sup> Vulgate: ‘dicit Dominus si non reliquiae tuae in bonum si non occurri tibi in tempore adflictionis et in tempore tribulationis adversum inimicum [...] tu scis Domine *recordare* mei et visita me et tuere me ab his qui persequuntur me [...] inventi sunt sermones tui et comedi eos et factum est mihi verbum tuum in gaudium et in laetitiam cordis mei quoniam invocatum est nomen tuum super me Domine Deus exercituum non sedi in concilio ludentium [...]’ (Ier. 15. 11, 15-17).

<sup>128</sup> Vulgate: ‘*recordare* Domine quid acciderit nobis intueri et respice obprobrium nostrum hereditas nostra versa est ad alienos domus nostrae ad extraneos pupilli facti sumus absque patre [...] aquam nostram pecunia bibimus ligna nostra pretio comparavimus [...] Aegypto dedimus manum et Assyriis ut saturaremur pane patres nostri peccaverunt et non sunt et nos iniquitates eorum portavimus [...] converte nos Domine ad te et convertemur innova dies nostros sicut a principio’ (Lam. 5. 1-4, 6-7, 21).

The Psalms, too, call on God to remember those who seek truth:

Let all them be confounded that act unjust things without cause. [...] Direct me in thy truth, and teach me; [...]. Remember, O Lord, thy bowels of compassion: and thy mercies that are from the beginning of the world. The sins of my youth and my ignorance do not remember. [...] The Lord is sweet and righteous: therefore he will give a law to sinners in the way. He will guide the mild in judgment: he will teach the meek his ways. All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth: to them that seek after his covenant and his testimonies. [...] Who is the man that feareth the Lord? He hath appointed him a law in the way that he hath chosen. (Ps. 24. 4-10, 12)<sup>129</sup>

Blessed are they that keep judgement and do justice at all times. Remember us, O Lord, [...]. That we may see the good of thy chosen, that we may rejoice in the joy of thy nation. (Ps. 105. 3-5)<sup>130</sup>

The Psalm references may not be entirely word-specific: yet, the wider Bible context could well have augmented medieval understanding.

This examination of Passus IV has shown that intertextual matters regarding the Bible and *Piers* are complicated and, in some respects, largely unexplored, but the context of these above-mentioned biblical citations, as seen in the examples surveyed, colour the poem, and appear to enrich its meaning and theological or pastoral themes. There is far more to the issue of Langland's biblical citations than simple identification of Bible sources. His technique, moreover, seems at times to involve the implications of specific single words, and does not rely only upon his insertion of whole lines or phrases from the Bible. Certain words he uses (*rectores*, is an example) trigger the mind and, in a medieval mind especially, have the potential to recall biblical verses, and linked biblical

<sup>129</sup> Vulgate: 'confundantur omnes: iniqua agentes supervacue [...] dirige me in veritatem tuam et doce me [...] *reminiscere* miserationum tuarum Domine et misericordiarum tuarum quia a saeculo sunt delicta iuventutis meae et ignorantias meas ne memineris [...] dulcis et rectus Dominus propter hoc legem dabit delinquentibus in via diriget mansuetos in iudicio docebit mites vias suas universae viae Domini misericordia et veritas requirentibus testamentum eius et testimonia eius [...] quis est homo qui timet Dominum legem statuet ei in via quam elegit (Ps. 24. 4-10, 12). *Reminiscere* (Ps. 24. 6), as an act of remembering, is translated 'remember'.

<sup>130</sup> Vulgate: 'beati qui custodiunt iudicium et faciunt iustitiam in omni tempore *memento* nostri Domine [...] ad videndum in bonitate electorum tuorum ad laetandum in laetitia gentis tuae' (Ps. 105. 3-5). Although '*memento*', not '*recordare*' is used, the principle of 'recall' has resonance.

passages – a process which occurred spontaneously no doubt for the well-informed and devout contemporary Christian reader.

Passūs IV and V of the C-text have Latin material which also includes legal terminology: it remains clear that Langland is concerned with law and justice as the additional Bible quotations also demonstrate.<sup>131</sup> To quote Langland again: ‘Mede ouermaistreb Lawe and muche truþe letteþ’ (IV. 176). Implicitly, *Piers* refers to God’s law – not just to the law of the land. Mede prevents Truth / truth.

### 3.7 Conclusion

Carruthers (*St. Truth*, p. 21) writes: ‘No one has yet denied that *Piers Plowman* is labyrinthine in structure, overly discursive, and badly organized’, but careful analysis of the biblical references disproves this statement to a very large extent: *Piers*’ structure appears more straightforward when viewed through a biblical spectrum.<sup>132</sup> Chapter three has sought to show how Langland uses the Bible to structure *Piers* in a way beyond the use of simple tools in the form of *distinctiones*. This thesis seeks to build on previous scholarship (such as Alford’s *Guide*), and to expand understanding: the Vulgate quotations form the structural bones of *Piers*, but the Bible contexts flesh the skeleton.

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<sup>131</sup> In the C-text, Langland uses additional Latin quotations, not from the Bible, that refer to legal matters in Passūs IV and V: e.g. writs. See Alford, *Guide*, pp. 43-44; Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, notes to pp. 108-109. Langland’s use of legal terminology and the law has produced much scholarship, see, for examples: John A. Alford, ‘*Piers Plowman*: a Glossary of Legal Diction’, *Piers Plowman Studies*, V (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988); Galloway, ‘Making History Legal’, pp. 7-39. Many critics have built on Alford’s research on legal diction. See Barr, *Signes and Sothe*, especially pp. 133-66. On medieval law, see Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: the Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasants’ Revolt*, Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2001).

<sup>132</sup> Whitaker, (*Vision*, p. xxxix) thinks *Piers*, ‘beyond comparison, the most obscure work in the English tongue’. Alternatively, Dunning (*Interpretation*, p. 159) believes in the ‘structural excellences of the poem’, and that *Piers* is fashioned on a ‘definite plan, which is carefully adhered to and skilfully carried out all through’.

It seems apparent that the concept of 'truth', in all its diverse senses, is discussed not only through the vernacular text and the Latin quotations, but also within the contexts of those quotations, the associated biblical passages and biblical allusion. As has been demonstrated, 'truth' in some form (no matter how loose the connection) stands at the root of Langland's Bible use from the B-text Prologue to Passus V.<sup>133</sup> This assertion also means that the poetry holds far greater force for anyone who can identify the quotation, remember the context and fill in all Langland's *etceteras*. The emphatic reiteration of 'truth' in this manner re-enforces *Piers* in a way not previously explored in any depth,

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<sup>133</sup> My research has revealed that the concept 'truth' is linked to Langland's Bible use as far as the end of Passus V, but, for reasons of space, I have chosen to end discussion with Passus IV. Carruthers (*St. Truth*, p. 63) notes (for different reasons) the 'structural change from Passus V to Passus VI'. Similarly, the form of the Bible quotations around Passus XIX onwards changes in character, so that neither the Bible quotations nor the biblical contexts appear relevant in quite the same way as earlier in the poem. I have been told in a private conversation with Lawrence Warner that this change as a phenomenon is also borne out in the manuscripts (Warner has also written on an aspect of this issue. See Lawrence Warner, 'The Ending, and End, of *Piers Plowman* B: the C-Version Origins of the Final Two Passus', *Medium Ævum*, 76:2 (2007), 225-50). This late change seems out of character with the rest of the poem. Yet, the *Spiritus paraclitus* (XIX. 202, 207) that initiates Langland's preoccupation with the four Cardinal Virtues: *Spiritus Prudencie* (XIX. 278); *Spiritus Temperancie* (XIX. 283); *Spiritus Fortitudinis* (XIX. 291); *Spiritus Iusticie* (XIX. 304), *passim* may be based on Isaiah: Vulgate: 'et egredietur virga de radice Iesse et flos de radice eius ascendet et requiescet super eum spiritus Domini spiritus sapientiae et intellectus spiritus consilii et fortitudinis spiritus scientiae et pietatis et replebit eum spiritus timoris Domini non secundum visionem oculorum iudicabit neque secundum auditum aurium arguet sed iudicabit in iustitia pauperes et arguet in aequitate pro mansuetis terrae et percutiet terram virga oris sui et spiritu labiorum suorum interficiet impium et erit iustitia cingulum lumborum eius et fides cinctorium renis eius habitabit lupus cum agno et pardus cum hedo accubabit vitulus et leo et ovis simul morabuntur et puer parvulus minabit eos vitulus et ursus pascentur simul requiescent catuli eorum et leo quasi bos comedet paleas et delectabitur infans ab ubere super foramine aspidis et in caverna reguli qui ablactatus fuerit manum suam mittet non nocebunt et non occident in universo monte sancto meo quia repleta est terra scientia Domini sicut aquae maris operientes' [And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord, He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears. But he shall judge the poor with justice, and shall reprove with equity the meek of the earth: and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. And justice shall be the girdle of his loins: and faith the girdle of his reins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them. The calf and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall rest together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on other hole of the asp: and the weaned child shall thrust his hand into the den of the basilisk. They shall not hurt, nor shall they kill in all my holy mountain, for the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the covering waters of the sea.] (Is. 11. 1-9). See also the description of the Holy Spirit descending on the Apostles at Pentecost (Act. 2). Although in the crucial early stages of *Piers*, the truth theme is intrinsic to the Bible quotations and their contexts, Langland never loses sight of Truth / truth as the ideal throughout the poem.

and allows for augmented understanding. Part two of the thesis will seek to expand this understanding of *Piers*, and display how Bible contexts' affect and intensify interpretation.

## Part Two

### Bible Context and Interpretation in *Piers*

## Chapter Four

### Bible Context, Interpretation and the Sacrament of Baptism in *Piers*

#### 4.1 Introduction

Langland's impetus in *Piers Plowman* is consistent; the poet seeks to enable the soul on its path to salvation; to lead every soul to the Kingdom of God. This purpose is the dynamic force of *Piers*: for Langland, nothing else matters. Any reading of *Piers* needs, at the very least, to bear Langland's original redemptive dynamic in mind. Furthermore, in an age when the majority considered salvation in Christ to be essential, without doubt, Langland's drive reflected a need within society that *Piers* answered, and was a main reason for the poem's popularity.

The Bible and its contexts may be seen to account for much of the poem's vibrancy. Part one of this thesis examined the effects of Bible contexts on the structure of Langland's poem. In part two, chapter four begins the discussion on interpretation with its focus on Christian salvation. While considering the particular case of the contexts of the Bible quotations relevant to the Sacrament of Baptism, this chapter will continue to concentrate on the larger subject of the mechanisms by which Langland sought to achieve his goal. Firstly, Langland always expects his audience not just to recognise any quotation from the Bible wherever and whenever he uses it, but also to appreciate the implications and associations of Bible contexts and reference. Secondly, Langland invariably assumes that his audience will understand all the references that he makes to the doctrines on which the Sacraments of the Christian faith are built.<sup>1</sup> The Sacrament of

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<sup>1</sup> As Pepler (*Religious Heritage*, p. 53) says, '[t]he Mass, the Sacraments and the Liturgy are for Langland the first essentials in the life of grace'. Other critics have also recognised the importance of the Liturgy in *Piers*. See, for example, Harbert, 'Langland's Easter', in *Mystics*, ed. by Phillips, p. 57. For some

Baptism (like Ordination which will be discussed in chapter six) involves a set of vows which incur duties and responsibilities on the catechumen.<sup>2</sup> Other biblically-based elements, such as faith and repentance, are also necessary for the baptismal candidate;<sup>3</sup> the grace of the Holy Spirit is the means to the end, to salvation. Baptism rests on a series of Christian understandings: for example, themes of sight and light are implicit in Baptism; the catechumen sees Truth and aspires to new life in the light of Christ's salvation, which in turn sets up dichotomies such as light and darkness, Christ and the devil. For Langland, these baptismal requisites and polarities do not need explanation to his audience, but appear in *Piers* frequently as reminders to the baptised that they must not renege on their vows nor backslide in faith nor fail to repent; these background prompts of the component parts of Baptism continually remain implicit, as well as explicit, throughout *Piers*. This chapter will explain how the Bible quotations' contexts intensify the reminders about Baptism in Langland's vernacular text, and will clarify the Christian framework of Baptism behind Langland's thinking.

#### 4.2 The Rite and Ceremony of Baptism: the Background to Langland's Thinking

The first echo of Baptism is a reference to the World, the Flesh and Devil, a theme which pervades *Piers* directly and indirectly.<sup>4</sup> Although the issue of Baptism and its theology has frequently been a focus for critics of Langland, the influence of the quotations' biblical context on the poet's handling of this theme seems not to have been

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documentary background to the development of the Christian Church and its doctrines, see *Documents of the Christian Church*, selected and ed. by Henry Bettenson, The World's Classics Series, 495 (London: Oxford University Press, 1943).

<sup>2</sup> In the case of infant Baptism, godparents would make a commitment to ensure that the child is brought up to understand what these vows entail, and to remake these promises for themselves at Confirmation. Langland refers to this sacramental sequence at B. 15. 456.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 150. See Act. 8. 13, 2. 38.

<sup>4</sup> I. 38-42. The issue will be discussed in depth in section 4.3.

discussed in any depth.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, while in Langland's age, a period of widespread Christian belief, Baptism would have been part of everyday life and practice, in the more secular twenty-first century, the current Baptism rite and ceremonies are familiar, yet, in a sense, unfamiliar because Christians are in a minority, and in a minority doubtless also among Langland's modern readers. Yet remnants of the practices of medieval Christianity exist today, and the theology is largely unchanged from Langland's time, but, for many, including those who currently study *Piers*, knowledge of such concepts is inevitably limited. Langland would have understood Baptism to be the soul's entry into the Church, that indeed the baptised *are* the Church. As Gasse ('Dowel', p. 188) writes concerning the progress of the Christian soul in *Piers*:

One message is thus immediately clear: Christians can only do well, do better, and do best with the sustaining power of divine grace, and this power is available to all through the sacraments of the Church.<sup>6</sup>

Grace is given through the Sacrament of Baptism, and, as will be evidenced in this chapter, this issue is an implicit part of Langland's understanding of the baptismal Rite.<sup>7</sup> Baptism forms the foundation for the Christian life and the base for all other Sacraments.

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<sup>5</sup> For examples of critics' discussion of Langland's views on Baptism and salvation, see Adams, 'Theology', in *Companion*, ed. by Alford, pp. 87-114 (especially pp. 98-101); Donaldson, 'Scriptural Quotations', in *Wisdom of Poetry*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and Wenzel, pp. 71-72; Frank Grady, 'Piers Plowman, St. Erkenwald, and the Rule of Exceptional Salvations', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 6 (1992), 63-88; Thomas D. Hill, 'Universal Salvation and its Literary Context in *Piers Plowman B.18*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 5 (1991), 65-76; Derek Pearsall, 'The Idea of Universal Salvation in *Piers Plowman B and C*', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39:2 (Spring 2009), 257-81; G.H. Russell, 'The Salvation of the Heathen: the Exploration of a Theme in *Piers Plowman*', *The Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 29 (1966), 101-16; Cindy L. Vitto, *The Virtuous Pagan in Middle English Literature*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 79, part 5 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1989). For further discussion of Baptism, see Hill, 'Exsufflation', pp. 132-41. For a discussion of Langland's imagery and redemption, see Traugott Lawler, 'The Gracious Imagining of Redemption in *Piers Plowman*', *English*, 28:3 (1979), 203-16.

<sup>6</sup> Gasse refers not to Baptism but to the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. However, in the Sacrament of Baptism, the same principle of grace applies.

<sup>7</sup> Following certain developments of theological thought by Augustine and Aquinas, the Baptismal Office, as understood in medieval times, evolved. Augustine expanded the concepts of Baptism to include not just Baptism in water through the Holy Spirit but also martyrs in 'baptism of blood' and the 'baptism of desire' to be 'in certain cases as equivalents of the Sacrament'. See *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 151.

Certainly, Baptism, with the Eucharist,<sup>8</sup> can be considered the most important of the Sacraments, because it represents a new beginning for the sinful soul: the catechumen turns to Christ, and vows to renounce the devil and all his works.<sup>9</sup> Baptism and Eucharist fuse together in the medieval liturgy of the Mass for Easter Even:<sup>10</sup> a service of anticipation of the new life witnessed on Easter morning, and, in consequence, an appropriate occasion for Baptisms to be conducted.<sup>11</sup> This Easter Even Office illustrates well how medieval Christians approached Baptism. For example, Psalm twenty-six, set for this Office, foregrounds the importance of anointing, and begins: ‘David priusquam liniretur Dominus inluminatio mea et salus mea quem timebo Dominus protector vitae meae a quo trepidabo’ [The psalm of David before he was anointed. The Lord is my light and my salvation: Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: Of whom shall I be afraid?] (Ps. 26. 1).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> On the Eucharist in *Piers*, see David Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), especially chapter two (pp. 29-51); Jennifer Garrison, ‘Failed Signification: *Corpus Christi* and *Corpus Mysticum* in *Piers Plowman*’, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 23 (2009), 97-123.

<sup>9</sup> See *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1384 on ‘Renunciation of the Devil’. See also *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), pp. 353, 372.

<sup>10</sup> *Catholic Church, The Sarum Missal*, edited from Three Early Manuscripts by J. Wickham Legg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916), pp. 123-32. See also *The Sarum Missal in English* newly translated by Frederick E. Warren, 2 parts (London: The De la More Press, 1911), pp. 280-86. All reference to Warren will be to part one. For useful explanation and background to the development of Christian Liturgy, see Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Dacre Press, [January 1945], August 1945); John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: a Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> For a vivid account of the atmospheric service of the Easter Even Liturgy and Baptism, see Karl Tamburr, *The Harrowing of Hell in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2007), pp. 1-13, especially pp. 5-10.

<sup>12</sup> See also the Vulgate passage: ‘ne laeteris inimica mea super me quia cecidi consurgam cum sedero in tenebris Dominus lux mea est iram Domini portabo quoniam peccavi ei donec iudicet causam meam et faciat iudicium meum educet me in lucem videbo in iustitiam eius’ [Rejoice not, thou, my enemy, over me, because I am fallen. I shall arise. When I sit in darkness the Lord is my light. I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he judge my cause and execute judgement for me. He will bring me forth into the light. I shall behold his justice.] (Mi. 7. 8-9).

Here the dichotomy between Christ and the devil is evidenced: seeing in the light of Christ (and rejecting darkness) leads the soul to accept the Christian doctrine, and subsequently to enter the Christian Church at Baptism. In the Office of Baptism, not only does the use of water represent cleansing, but the gift of a lighted candle, as it had been in medieval times, is still used as a sign and symbol of leaving the darkness of the devil for the light of Christ.<sup>13</sup> During the medieval Easter Even liturgy a fire was lit, but the service took place without candles, and exorcism (the averting and destruction of the powers of evil) was a prerequisite:<sup>14</sup> the links between the services run deep; Baptism and exorcism have always been connected:<sup>15</sup>

I exorcise thee, most unclean spirit, and every illusion of the enemy, in the name of God the Father-almighty, and in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, that thou shouldest depart and withdraw from this creature of frankincense or incense with all thy deceitfulness and guile; that this creature may be sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [...].<sup>16</sup>

Such rite and ceremony would have been familiar to most people in the fourteenth century for whom the devil was a living entity not a philosophical supposition or myth.

Langland's own understanding of Baptism would include, not only the continual annual experience of the Easter Even service, but also the immediacy of the devil's reality; when Langland writes of the devil, the threat is actual. Though the existence of the devil is currently seen as a difficult concept, it is necessary to bear in mind what

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<sup>13</sup> J. H. Maude, *The History of the Book of Common Prayer*, Oxford Church Text Books, 6th edn (London: Rivingtons, 1949), p. 90. See, for comparison, *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), pp. 344-73 (p. 363). Emphasis on light and sight is still evident in the Liturgy of Holy Baptism. For critical discussion of this practice and *Piers*, see Edward C Schweitzer, "Half a Laumpe Lyne in Latyne" and Patience's Riddle in *Piers Plowman*, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 73:3 (1974), 313-27 (pp. 315-23).

<sup>14</sup> Warren, *Sarum*, p. 265.

<sup>15</sup> *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 588.

<sup>16</sup> Warren, *Sarum*, p. 267 cf. Legg, *Sarum*, p. 116: 'Exorcizo te immundissime spiritus et omne phantasma inimici in nomine dei patris omnipotentis. et in nomine ihesu christi filii eius et spiritus sancti. ut ex eas et recedas ab hac creatura thimiamatis siue incensi cum omni fallacia atque nequicia tua ut sit hec creatura sanctificata in nomine domini nostri ihesu christi [...]'. Warren's translation is given as published.

Langland and his earlier audiences believed about the power of darkness; understanding this medieval mindset is paramount to understanding Langland in this instance.

Furthermore, if the Easter Even service is examined in detail, the readings, the lessons for this Mass, bear out central themes which are also baptismal: God's power in the Creation (Gn. 1-2. 2); the passing over from the powers of darkness as symbolised by Moses parting the waters of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians (Ex. 14. 24 -15. 1); the cleansing and protection of God's people (Is. 4); Moses' charge to Joshua to bring the children of Israel into the land which God has promised and to the priests of Israel, the Levites, to remain faithful (Dt. 31. 22-30).<sup>17</sup> The Epistle gives no less an emphasis on faith and cleansing, and the instruction to the faithful Christian soul 'to seek the things that are above':

Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead: and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. (Col. 3. 1-4)

This Colossians passage suggests, by implication, the consequences of not seeking or turning to Christ; when Christ returns 'in glory', the errant Christian soul who has minded the 'things that are upon earth' will be separated from Christ in darkness, and be outside the Kingdom of God, and, as such, demonstrates one of Langland's major concerns.

The biblical context of Colossians shows the choices of good and evil set out in opposition to each other; it continues with instruction to resist sin:<sup>18</sup> to 'put you also all

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<sup>17</sup> Warren, *Sarum*, pp. 274-75.

<sup>18</sup> Vulgate: 'igitur si conresurrexistis Christo quae sursum sunt quaerite ubi Christus est in dextera Dei sedens quae sursum sunt sapite non quae supra terram mortui enim estis et vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo cum Christus apparuerit vita vestra tunc et vos apparebitis cum ipso gloria' (Col. 3. 5-7).

away: anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of our mouth. Lie not to one another: stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds',<sup>19</sup> to put on 'the new' in the image of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Biblically, the devil is considered the father of lies,<sup>21</sup> so there is an unspoken polarity between Christ and the devil inherent in the Colossians passage.<sup>22</sup>

Again, in the words of the Epistle, the link between the Easter Even Mass and the Rite of Baptism is clear: the emphasis is on the dichotomy of sins of speech and the devil (the old man) set against the need to become the new man in truth, in Christ. As was seen in chapter three of this thesis, the biblical importance of Truth / truth is inseparable from Langland's world, and seeking Truth, Christ (rather than the falsehood of Satan), is intrinsic to Baptism and to the Christian life, but these details are perhaps obscured from those unfamiliar with Christian thinking.

#### 4.3 The Baptism Theme in Passus I: the Baptismal Vows

In a series of waymarks, Langland heightens the consciousness of his medieval audience regarding their obligations in Baptism by reminding them of their duties and responsibilities through the Bible quotations and contexts. *Piers* is far from a narrative, but an exhortation to live the Christian faith, and Langland frequently prompts his

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<sup>19</sup> Vulgate: '[nunc autem] deponite et vos omnia iram indignationem malitiam blasphemiam turpem sermonem de ore vestro nolite mentiri invicem expoliantes vos veterem hominem cum actibus eius' (Col. 3. 8-9).

<sup>20</sup> Col. 3. 10-17. Vulgate: 'et induentes novum' (Col. 3. 10). The Gospel passage for the Easter Even service tells the good news of Christ's Resurrection (Mt. 28. 1-7) echoed in the anthem (Warren, *Sarum*, p. 288).

<sup>21</sup> Io. 8. 44.

<sup>22</sup> The 'old man' is also, of course, the Pauline former sinful self and both senses are relevant here.

audience concerning the purpose and function of Baptism vows.<sup>23</sup> For those well-versed in the Christian rite, baptismal themes can be seen to begin early in *Piers*:

Leue nou3t þi likame, for a liere hym techeþ –  
 That is þe wrecched *world*, wolde þee bitraye.  
 For þe *fend* and þi *flessh* folwen togidere,  
 And that seeþ þi soule and seith it in þin herte.  
 And for þow sholdest ben ywar, I wisse þee þe beste. (I. 38-42 – my italics)<sup>24</sup>

The lines signal Langland's concerns with what he calls the wretched world, the 'fend' (the devil) and the flesh: they are an oblique reference to the vows of the Baptism Office to renounce Satan and all forms of evil, and a reminder to Langland's audience that they must do the same: 'þow sholdest ben ywar'.

The world, the flesh and the devil represent the sins that Christ resisted at his Temptation by Satan:<sup>25</sup> therefore, if the Christian soul is to follow Christ, it is particularly important to combat these forces from Baptism onwards. Christ was baptised by John the Baptist in his Baptism of Penance, but Christ promised his followers Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire.<sup>26</sup> Langland would have known that Temptation and Baptism are linked both in the Bible and in Christian tradition, and that Christ's own Baptism directly precedes the Temptation. As in Langland's time the devil was considered ever present, a very real threat, at Baptism the catechumen vows to reject the powers of evil.

<sup>23</sup> Other contemporary texts endorse Langland's viewpoint on the importance of the Baptism vows of the devil and all his works; of the need to resist the temptations of the flesh, the world and all evil. See, for example, *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, ed. by Margaret Connolly, EETS, Original Series, 303 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> According to Morton W. Bloomfield, the author of the *Ancrene Riwe* (c.1225) was 'the first in English to classify the Sins according to the world, the flesh, and the devil'. Bloomfield, Morton W., *The Deadly Sins: an Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* ([East Lansing]: Michigan State University Press, 1952), p. 150.

<sup>25</sup> Mt. 4. 1-11 cf. Lc. 4. 1-13. Luke's Gospel has a different order but the same temptations.

<sup>26</sup> See Mt. 3. 11; Mc. 1. 8; Lc 3. 16; Io. 1. 26; Act. 1. 5, 11. 16, 19. 1-7.

Such medieval understanding was ongoing: exorcism of salt and water took place before Mass every Sunday throughout the year.<sup>27</sup> Both salt and water formed part of the act of purification intrinsic to the Baptism Rite, and after the exorcism at Mass the following Anthem was said repeatedly for emphasis: ‘Thou shalt purge me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be clean; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow’.<sup>28</sup> These would have been familiar words because the Anthem is taken from the fourth penitential psalm.<sup>29</sup>

To demonstrate the importance of this idea to Langland, I shall digress from Passus I for a moment because these particular lines from this penitential psalm, used in the Anthem at Mass, are employed by the poet when he advocates repentance in an additional C-text quotation:

Thenne 3erneth he into 3outhē and 3eeplīche he secheth  
 Pruyde, with alle þe purtinaunces, and pakketh hem togyderes,  
 And laueth hem in þe lauendrie, *Laborauī-in-gemitu-meo*,  
 And bouketh hem at his breste and beteth hit ofte,  
 And with warm water of his yes woketh hit til he white:  
*Lauabis me, et super niuem dealabor*  
 Thenne syngeth he when he doth so, and som tyme wepyyng:  
*Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.*  
 (C. XVI. 329-334a)<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Warren, *Sarum*, p. 13 cf. Legg, *Sarum*, p. 10: ‘Exorcizo te creatura salis per deum (+) uiuum. per deum (+) uerum. per deum (+) sanctum. [...] ab eo loco quo asperses fueris omnis fantasia et nequicia. uel uersucia diabolice fraudis: omnisque spiritus inmundus adinratus: per eum qui uenturus est iudicare uiuos et mortuos et seculum per ignem’ [I exorcize thee, O creature of salt by the living (+) God, by the true (+) God, by the holy (+) God. [...] and from that place where thou shalt have been sprinkled, let every delusion and wickedness, or craft of devilish cunning, when adjured, flee and depart. Through him who shall come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire’. (+) signifies the place in the rubrics where the priest was to make the sign of the cross. This exorcism was also said after Prime.

<sup>28</sup> Warren, *Sarum*, p. 15 cf. Legg, *Sarum*, p. 11: ‘Asperges me domine ysopo et mundabor lauabis me et super niuem dealabor’. See below and note 35 for further explanation about salt and Baptism.

<sup>29</sup> Vulgate: ‘asperges me hysopo et mundabor lavabis me et super nivem dealabor’ [Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.] (Ps. 50. 9).

<sup>30</sup> The second Latin quotation comes from Ps. 50. 9; the third from Ps. 50. 19: Vulgate: ‘sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus cor contritum et humiliatum Deus non spernet’ [A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.]

As this later echo of Baptism illustrates, the baptismal vows are all-encompassing, extend throughout the Christian's journey of salvation to the Kingdom of God, and cover every way in which humankind may sin. Therefore each act of repentance is, in effect, the renewal of these sacred promises first made at Baptism. The first Latin quotation in these lines of *Piers*, '*Laboravi-in-gemitu-meo*' (C. XVI. 331) comes from the first penitential psalm, 'I have laboured in my groanings' (Ps. 6. 7):<sup>31</sup> a contextual verse of the psalm demonstrates the link to Baptism with the constant underlying threat of the devil: 'Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping' (Ps. 6. 9).<sup>32</sup> Langland's writing throughout *Piers* builds on assumptions and associations first articulated for Christians in the rites of Baptism: there can be no doubt that when Langland mentions the devil, sin and temptation, he connects these with their antidotes, exorcism and Baptism; such understanding is an intrinsic part of the argument in *Piers*.

To return to the baptismal vows, through Baptism the soul enters the Christian Church, and therefore it may be considered appropriate that the Baptism theme is initiated, through the vows against Satan referred to in the quotation above: 'That is þe wrecched *world*, wolde þee bitraye./ For þe *fend* and þi *flessh* folwen togidere' (I. 39-40. My italics), in the Passus in *Piers* which introduces the character, Holy Church. Holy Church directs Will to '[g]o to þe Gospel' (I. 46) when, like the Pharisees seeking to trap Christ,<sup>33</sup> he asks her about 'þe moneie of þis molde þat men so faste holdeþ' (I. 44), and 'to whom þat tresour appendeþ' (I. 45). Langland, in this allusion to this sin of the world,

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<sup>31</sup> Vulgate: 'laboravi in gemitu meo lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum in lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo' [I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears.] (Ps. 6. 7). Psalm six was thought particularly effective against the sin of pride. See Zieman, *Singing the New Song*, p. 135. Pride was linked to Satan's fall (Is. 14. 11-15).

<sup>32</sup> Vulgate: 'discedite a me omnes qui operamini iniquitatem quoniam exaudivit Dominus vocem fletus mei' (Ps. 6. 9).

<sup>33</sup> Mt. 22. 15-22; Lc. 20. 21-26.

‘þe moneie of þis molde’, shows a preoccupation in *Piers* with riches as the world’s most effective temptation to sin. The instruction ‘You cannot serve God and mammon’ (Mt. 6. 24),<sup>34</sup> as a dichotomy of true and false riches, was perhaps in Langland’s mind, or the Parable of the Sower that tells how: ‘that [seed] which fell among thorns are they who have heard and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit’ (Lc. 8. 14).<sup>35</sup>

The biblical quotation in Passus I: ‘*Inebriemus eum vino dormiamusque cum eo, ut seruare possimus de patre nostro semen*’ (I. 31a cf. Gn. 19. 32), just prior to the above mentioned reference to the world, the flesh and the devil, refers to the story of Lot, which displays the perils of drunkenness and lechery, sins of the flesh.<sup>36</sup> It can also be seen to be related to the baptismal echoes in these lines (I. 38-42), and to intensify the Baptism theme: the story of Lot (which parallels that of the Flood) relates how the unjust people of the sinful city of Sodom face destruction because they reject God, and, therefore, represent a direct opposition to what is meant by Baptism where the catechumen turns to God and renounces evil.

Seeing in the light of Christ leads to Baptism; sight and light are the antithesis of the devil’s darkness. Unlike the sight which comes through accepting Christ in Baptism,

<sup>34</sup> Vulgate: ‘non potestis Deo servire et mammonae’ (Mt. 6. 24).

<sup>35</sup> Vulgate: ‘quod [semen] autem in spinis cecidit hii sunt qui audierunt et a sollicitudinibus et divitiis et voluptatibus vitae euntes suffocantur et non referunt fructum’ (Lc. 8. 14 cf. Mt. 13. 22; Mc. 4. 19). Bible teaching against the dangers of money (in contrast to the riches of Christ) is myriad, but see I Tim. for examples: Vulgate: ‘radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas quam quidam appetentes erraverunt a fide et inseruerunt se doloribus multis’ [For the desire of money is the root of all evils: which some coveting have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows.] (I Tim. 6. 10), and ‘divitibus huius saeculi praecipe non sublime sapere neque sperare in incerto divitiarum sed in Deo qui praestat nobis omnia abunde ad fruendum’ [Charge the rich of this world not to be highminded nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy).] (I. Tim. 6. 17). The Gospels of Matthew and Luke, particularly, have plentiful images concerning treasure and seeking the Kingdom of God. See, for some examples: Mt. 6. 19-21, 13. 44, 19. 21-24; Lc. 12. 13-21 and 31-34, 18. 22-25, but see also Mt. 12. 35.

<sup>36</sup> For background to Lot’s story, see also Gn. 11. 27 and 31, 12. 4-5, 13, 14, 19.

in this Genesis story, blindness afflicts those who oppose God.<sup>37</sup> Certainly Langland might be thought to have made the connection between Lot, Baptism and the Flood (itself considered an harbinger of Baptism). Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt because she disobeyed God's command.<sup>38</sup> Salt exhibits the properties of purification, and, from its ability to preserve, gives physical as well as spiritual protection from corruption.<sup>39</sup> From the eighth century, a grain of salt, once exorcised and blessed, was placed symbolically in a catechumen's mouth.<sup>40</sup> Langland's baptismal theme is inherent in the mind of a Christian audience, and the poet's deliberate use of this Genesis quotation displays the richness of interpretation that the Bible contexts offer. These interrelated images are not presented by Langland in isolation; they would hold resonance for the Christian audience: the poet's continual subtle reminders of the Christian's obligation in Baptism would form part of the medieval audience's overall understanding.

One further point needs expansion with regard to Langland's thinking concerning Baptism at this juncture of the chapter's discussion. A biblical allusion to the danger of riches (a sin of the world) has been demonstrated: 'Ac þe moneie of þis molde þat men so faste holdeþ - / Telleth me to whom þat tresour appendeþ' (I. 44-45). But by the inclusion of the story of Lot, Langland's continuing concentration on the iniquities of mankind is also represented by gluttony, in the form of drink, and incest (both sins of the flesh).

Gluttony has links in the medieval mind with lechery, but also with idolatry. In

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<sup>37</sup> Gn. 19. 1-11. Vulgate: 'et eos qui erant foris percusserunt caecitate a minimo usque ad maximum ita ut ostium invenire non possent' [And them that were without, they struck with blindness from the least to the greatest, so that they could not find the door.] (Gn. 19. 11) cf. Sap. 19. 16: 'percussi sunt autem caecitate sicut illi in foribus iusti cum subitaneis cooperti essent tenebris unusquisque ostii sui transitum quaerebat' [But they were struck with blindness, as those others were at the doors of the just man, when they were covered with sudden darkness: and every one sought the passage of his own door.].

<sup>38</sup> Gn. 19. 17, 26.

<sup>39</sup> *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1447.

<sup>40</sup> Maude, *History*, pp. 84-85, 89. Roman pagan rituals also included the use of salt 'to chase away the demons'. *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 1447-48.

consequence, Langland's passage works, like the biblical parallel to which he next alludes on two levels: Caesar and God,<sup>41</sup> the worship of worldly and spiritual wealth. Unsurprisingly, Langland retains these baptismal concepts of evil, the world and the flesh, the sinful trio, in his mind when the poet's next topic moves from away from discussion of these first two perils of the world and the flesh that implicitly reflect the baptismal vows, and centres on the third, the devil, 'Wrong' (I. 63), called the '[f]ader of falshede' (I. 64 cf. Io. 8. 44) who lives in 'þe castel of care' (I. 61).<sup>42</sup> Langland's preoccupation with Baptism may be seen to continue when Holy Church explains to Will who she is, and describes the role and the promises made by godparents on behalf of an infant at Baptism:

'Holi Chirche I am,' quod she, 'þow ou3test me to knowe.  
I vnderfeng þee first and þe feiþ tau3te.  
Thow brou3test me borwes my bidyng to fulfille,  
And to louen me leely þe while þi lif dureþ.' (I. 75-78)

Holy Church refers to her teaching, and directly to the vows of Baptism, the 'borwes', which bind the Christian soul in obedience into the mores of the Church, the body of Christ: 'to louen me leely þe while þi lif dureþ'.

Thus Baptism themes can be seen to appear both in an explicit way (in the vernacular lines of the poem), and in an implicit way (in the minds of an audience): firstly, with knowledge of the biblical circumstance surrounding the quotations that the poet chooses to use, and through an audience's recollection of their Christian practice,

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<sup>41</sup> I. 44-53 cf. Mt. 22. 21. Holy Church paraphrases the context of Langland's next Bible quotation at I. 46-53 cf. Mt. 22. 15-22.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Lc. 8. 14 as seen above: Vulgate: 'quod [semen] autem in spinis cecidit hii sunt qui audierunt et a sollicitudinibus et divitiis et voluptatibus vitae euntes suffocantur et non referunt fructum' [that [seed] which fell among thorns are they who have heard and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit.] (Lc. 8. 14 cf. Mt. 13. 22; Mc. 4. 19).

but also through numerous associated Bible texts; both those to which Langland alludes and those which are suggested by the baptismal theme.

Later in Passus I Langland again turns to focus on the dangers of the devil, a theme central to medieval ideas about Baptism, and emphasised in baptismal vows. Langland continues to think about ‘transgressores’ (I. 96) and ‘trespas’ (I. 97), and goes on to contrast evil with good, with Christ. To people of Langland’s time (and to modern-day Christians), Christ is alive, a very real being, and, like the devil, not a mere concept. So when Langland refers to the Fall of the Angels, the origin of Satan, the poet’s audience would be alert to this intense polarity: ‘But Crist, kyngene kyng, kny3ted tene – / Cherubyn and Seraphyn, swiche seuene and anoþer’. (I. 105-106).<sup>43</sup> Cherubim and Seraphim,<sup>44</sup> ‘the principalities and powers’ (Eph. 1. 21, Col. 1. 16) who serve God, were divided from the disobedient fallen angels who ‘brak buxomnesse’ (I. 113). The ‘anoþer’ (I. 106) was the unidentified order governed by Lucifer himself, the once light-bearing devil who became the prince of darkness (in contrast and in direct opposition to Christ, who brought light to the world).<sup>45</sup> Satan’s fall was traditionally associated with the passage from Isaiah 14 to which Langland alludes: ‘*Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero Altissimo*’ (I. 119):

infernus subter conturbatus est in occursum adventus tui suscitavit tibi gigantes omnes principes terrae surrexerunt de solis suis omnes principes nationum universi respondebunt et dicent tibi et tu vulneratus es sicut nos nostri similis effectus es detracta est ad inferos superbia tua concidit cadaver tuum [...] quomodo cecidisti de caelo lucifer qui mane oriebaris corruisti in terram qui vulnerabas gentes qui dicebas in corde tuo in caelum conscendam super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum *sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis* ascendam super altitudinem nubium *ero similis Altissimo* verumtamen ad infernum detraheris in profundum laci

<sup>43</sup> Seraphim are traditionally associated with cleansing fire, light and purity (Is. 6. 1-7).

<sup>44</sup> For definitions of Cherubim and Seraphim see *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 327 and p. 1484.

<sup>45</sup> Mt. 4. 16 cf. Is. 9. 2; Lc. 2. 32; Io. 1. 4-9.

[Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee at thy coming: it stirred up the giants for thee. All the princes of the earth are risen up from their thrones, all the princes of the nations. All shall answer and say to thee: Thou also art wounded as well as we. Thou art become like unto us. Thy pride is brought down to hell: thy carcass is fallen. [...] How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations? And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit.] (Is. 14. 9-15)<sup>46</sup>

As can be seen from the above quotation, Langland adapts and conflates two different parts of the Isaiah citation: 'I shall place [my] foot in the north and I shall be like the most High' (I. 119 cf. Is. 14. 13-14).<sup>47</sup>

Medieval understanding of the devil's pride but also his reality was based in scriptures like this Isaiah passage. Medieval belief in the devil living in the north may also be seen to be borne out in the modernised version of the stage plan for *The Castle of Perseverance* appended to the Macro manuscript in which the scaffolds reflect baptismal vows against evil by implication: west (*Mundus*, the world), south (*Caro*, the flesh) and north (*Belial*, the devil).<sup>48</sup> 'Deus', God's scaffold, is placed in the east (nearest to Jerusalem).<sup>49</sup> These traditional associations again demonstrate belief in the actuality of the devil: but that God was positioned in the east is also found in *Piers*; for example, in

<sup>46</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 35) and Schmidt (*Vision*, p. 414), following Robertson and Huppé, *Scriptural Tradition*, (p. 44, n. 52), attribute Langland's source to Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. See also Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, pp. 61-62, note to line 111a. For further comment, see Thomas D. Hill, 'Two Notes on Exegetical Allusion in Langland: *Piers Plowman* XI, 161-167, and B, I, 115-124', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 75 (1974), 92-97 (pp. 92-94); Thomas D. Hill, 'Satan's Pratfall and the Foot of Love: Some Pedal Images in *Piers Plowman* A, B and C', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 14 (2000), 153-161; Kellogg, 'Satan and Scriptural Texts', pp. 413-14; Risse, 'Augustinian Paraphrase', pp. 712-17.

<sup>47</sup> Vulgate: 'qui dicebas in corde tuo in caelum conscendam super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis ascendam super altitudinem nubium ero similis Altissimo' (Is. 14. 13-14).

<sup>48</sup> 'Belial' means 'worthless' in Hebrew. *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 1996), p. 129. See also *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 180.

<sup>49</sup> David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 797.

the C-text: ‘Estward til heuene, euere to abyde / There Treuthe is, þe trone that Trinite ynnne sitteth.’ (C. I. 133-34).<sup>50</sup> In Christian belief, Christ will come from the east on the Last Day: ‘For as lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.’ (Mt. 24. 27).<sup>51</sup>

Therefore a single line of a conflated Isaiah text, ‘*Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero Altissimo*’ (I. 119), holds rich implication and association: not only would a medieval audience recall the baptismal vows to withstand evil, but also the threat that the devil holds to their salvation; the surrounding verses of the pictorial Isaiah quotation emphasise the apocalyptic dangers of the devil: ‘I will be like the most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit.’ (Is. 14. 14-15).<sup>52</sup> Medieval audiences recognised that keeping the vows of Baptism leads to salvation, and allows the soul to enter the Kingdom of God: Langland keeps referring (I think intentionally) to the devil and all his works so that an audience might not forget these baptismal promises.

Having explored both direct and indirect reference to the Baptism vows with their opposition to the tripartite concepts of sin, this chapter will now examine how Langland weaves other elements of the essential components of Baptism into Passus I.

#### 4.3.1 The Baptism Theme in Passus I: Faith and Baptism

The biblical circumstance of the Vulgate quotations’ contexts from Passus I have been traced in consecutive order in this chapter, as was done in chapter three in the discussion of structure and the theme of Truth / truth in *Piers*. However, although the

<sup>50</sup> See also: ‘Estward Y beheld aftir þe sonne / And say a tour, as Y trowed: Treuthe was thereynne.’ (C. Prol. 14-15).

<sup>51</sup> Vulgate: ‘Sicut enim fulgur exit ab oriente et paret usque in occidente ita erit et adventus Filii hominis’ (Mt. 24. 27).

<sup>52</sup> Vulgate: ‘ero similis Altissimo verumtamen ad infernum detraheris in profundum lacu’ (Is. 14. 14-15).

Bible is a coherent text in its demonstration of the relationship between God and man, these very same Bible quotation contexts may now be seen to augment the poem's content and interpretation regarding Baptism.<sup>53</sup> The Office of Baptism emphasises the importance of faith, and, to return to the Bible quotation concerning Lot (I. 31a),<sup>54</sup> Langland is able to introduce the theme of faith through this Genesis story, and continues to develop the underlying baptismal theme in subtle ways through this Bible reference.

Lot was the antithesis to a figure representing faith, and in using the story to depict the perils of drunkenness, the poet introduces an unspoken biblical reference that may indicate another direct polarity in a medieval audience's mind: Abraham, seen as an emblem of faith, obeys God, keeps covenant with him, and is rewarded in old age with the birth of a son, Isaac.<sup>55</sup> Abraham's story in Genesis is intertwined with that of his nephew, Lot, but Lot's destiny takes a very different course from that of the patriarch. Unlike Abraham, Lot has abused God's goodness (after God saved him), and does not keep faith with God. Not only has he offered his daughters' virginity as a bribe which might be seen as a sin of the world,<sup>56</sup> but, in the verse that Langland quotes, Lot's weakness for drink (a sin of the flesh) allows him to be tricked into committing incest with his daughters so that the world can be repopulated.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> As will be further explained, a single Bible quotation may express more than one theme: for example, in this particular instance, the citation, '*Inebriemus eum vino dormiamusque cum eo, ut seruare possimus de patre nostro semen*' (I. 31a cf. Gn 19. 32), was read to elucidate truth in chapter three, in order to demonstrate the perils of rejecting God (Truth) and embracing deceit, but now the same quotation will be used to illustrate faith and Baptism.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Tait argues that Langland's source for the story of Lot's incestual behaviour was Peter Comestor's *Historia Evangelica* which stresses that Lot is 'unpardonable' because of 'his unbelief' which was the 'cause' of Lot's incest. Peter Tait, 'In defence of Lot', *Notes and Queries*, 18:8 (1971) 284-85 (p. 285).

<sup>55</sup> See Gn. 12. 1-4, 13. 14-18, 15. 1-6, 17. 1-27, 21. 1-4.

<sup>56</sup> Gn. 19. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Gn. 19. 30-38.

Lot, in what might be seen as an exemplum to Langland's audience, lacks faith, and turns towards evil (the devil), and not towards God.<sup>58</sup> In choosing this particular scriptural passage concerning Lot, as was seen in chapter three on Truth, Langland alerts the reader to the perils of drink, but also demonstrates for the attentive reader or listener, by the association of ideas, not only Lot's lack of faith, but the apocalyptic dangers of rejecting God. Such a reminder would, in turn, recall to the Christian mind the necessity of the opposite action: turning to Christ in Baptism because Lot, in his embrace of the world, the flesh and the devil, represents the antithesis of the baptismal candidate. In chapter three, each Latin Bible quotation was examined in turn to ascertain the effects of the context on structure in *Piers*. Now, a deeper assessment of the same passage of poetry and quotation illustrates how the biblical contexts are open to another separate, yet interconnected interpretation, and can be read differently. The context of Langland's Bible quotations, unlike *distinctiones*, cannot be tied to a single word, implication or

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<sup>58</sup> *Peake's Commentary* (p. 191) explains the consequence of holding back on God as shown in the Genesis passage: 'Just as the Yahwist had used an ancient myth of the destruction of mankind to depict symbolically the inevitable consequences of man's rejection of God's rule, so here he uses a similar myth, only this time of a destruction of mankind by fire, to depict the consequences of Lot's choice. He had failed to profit by his deliverance in [Genesis] ch[apter] 14, and had returned to Sodom; now he is involved in the final fate of the wicked city and loses everything; his wife, turning back, becomes the dreadful type of those of whom the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks, "those who shrink back and are destroyed" (Heb. 10: 39), while he himself is saved "so as by fire". That the story is a fragment of a myth of the destruction of mankind is shown by the words of Lot's daughters in [Genesis] 19: 31, "There is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth", that is to say, Lot and his daughters are the only survivors of the catastrophe, just as Noah and his family were of the Flood. As the final touch of tragedy in the picture, the fruit of the unnatural union of Lot's daughters with their father is the birth of two of the traditional enemies of Israel, namely Moab and Ammon'. In the Bible, Moab and Ammon were figures of evil who rejected God and would not serve him (Idc. 10. 6). The children of Moab and Ammon were guilty of pride (like the devil: see Is. 14. 11-15), and blasphemy (So. 2. 10), and treated by God as was Sodom and Gomorrah: with 'the dryness of thorns and heaps of salt and a desert even for ever' [Vulgate: 'propterea vivo ego dicit Dominus exercituum Deus Israel quia Moab ut Sodoma erit et filii Ammon quasi Gomorra siccitas spinarum et acervi salis et desertum usque in aeternum reliquiae populi mei diripient illos residui gentis meae possidebunt eos'] (So. 2. 9). *Peake's* eloquent clarification of the emphasis on destruction by fire (Gn. 19. 24), as opposed to destruction by water in the Flood (Gn. 7. 17-24), illustrates the parallels with Christ's promise of Baptism by the Holy Spirit and fire, and John the Baptist's baptism by water and penance as other readers of Langland well-versed in the Bible would recognise. See Mt. 3. 11; Mc. 1. 8; Lc 3. 16, Io. 1. 26; Act. 1. 5, 11. 16, 19. 1-7.

theme. Moreover, there is cohesion, wholeness, between the Bible and *Piers*: if the wider biblical contexts (as well as Langland's specific Vulgate quotations' contexts) are included in the overall debate about the poem, the complex nature of *Piers* may be seen to unravel, and become richer through a plethora of biblical allusion. The context of the Genesis quotation about Lot demonstrates how ideas intrinsic to the Office of Baptism: faith in God and acceptance of God (and the rejection of evil) link into thoughts on the baptismal vows and into Langland's debate on Baptism and salvation.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.3.2 The Baptism Theme in Passus I: Grace and Baptism

Salvation is achievable through the grace of God in the baptismal Office. In order to consider Baptism and grace in Passus I, the lines about Holy Church and Will need to be re-examined. Here, Langland again emphasises the obligations of Baptism as part of his continuous focus on bringing the Christian soul to salvation. Holy Church, with a mild reprimand, reminds Will of his Baptism:

‘Holi Chirche I am’, quod she, ‘þow ou3est me to knowe.  
I vnderfeng þee first and þe feiþ tau3te.  
Thow brou3test me borwes my biddyng to fulfille,  
And to louen me leelly þe while þi lif dureþ.’ (I. 75-78)

Will immediately makes the proper response: he falls to his knees and seeks grace:

‘Thanne I courbed on my knees and cried hire of grace’ (I. 79). Will seeks to be open to the gift of the Spirit promised and received at Baptism.

Will's gesture would act as another reminder to Langland's audience of the importance of grace, that salvation cannot be achieved without it; Baptism and the grace of the Holy Spirit are inseparable concepts. However the lines also trigger the

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<sup>59</sup> In the B and C versions Langland adds the Latin Vulgate Bible text from Genesis to the story used in A and Z, thereby emphasising his point, and giving it authority.

recollection of what Baptism means: because of the soul's proclivity to sin, this new beginning regularly requires reactivation through repentance and penance, themselves requisites of Baptism. Langland's audience would also recall how this new beginning is described in the Gospels; both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke attest to the importance of Baptism within the Kingdom of God.<sup>60</sup>

Twenty-first century audiences are less conversant with the principles and biblical background of Christian Baptism, and, perhaps, some explanation is needed in order to connect with these implicit understandings in *Piers*. There are many examples: the Acts of the Apostles differentiates between the baptism of John who 'baptized the people with the baptism of penance' (Act. 19. 4),<sup>61</sup> and Paul who baptised 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Act. 19. 5).<sup>62</sup> Acts goes on to describe how 'when Paul had imposed his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them: and they spoke with tongues and prophesied' (Act. 19. 6).<sup>63</sup>

The poet's understanding of grace and the Holy Spirit would be based on such biblical reference and, furthermore, Langland and his medieval audience would be alert to the passage where Christ explains the significance of John the Baptist:

Hic enim est de quo scriptum est ecce ego mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam qui praeparabit viam tuam ante te Amen dico vobis non surrexit inter natos mulierum maior Iohanne Baptista qui autem minor est in regno caelorum maior est illo A diebus autem Iohannis Baptistae usque nunc regnum caelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud [...] et si vultis recipere ipse est Helias qui venturus est

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<sup>60</sup> Mt. 3; Lc. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Vulgate: 'Iohannis baptizavit baptismum paenitentiae populum' (Act. 19. 4).

<sup>62</sup> Vulgate: 'his auditis baptizati sunt in nomine Domini Iesu' (Act. 19. 5).

<sup>63</sup> Vulgate: 'dixit autem Paulus Iohannis baptizavit baptismum paenitentiae populum dicens in eum qui venturus esset post ipsum ut crederent hoc est in Iesum his auditis baptizati sunt in nomine Domini Iesu et cum inposuisset illis manum Paulus venit Spiritus Sanctus super eos et loquebantur linguis et prophetabant' (Act. 19. 4-6). See also again Mt. 3. 11; Mc. 1. 8; Lc 3. 16; Io. 1. 26; Act. 1. 5, 11. 16, 19. 1-7.

[For this is he of whom it is written: *Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.* Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is lesser in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away. [...] And if you will receive it, he is Elias that is to come.] (Mt. 11. 10-14)<sup>64</sup>

As *Peake's Commentary* (p. 831 re: Lc. 7. 28) states: 'John belongs to the old order, not to the Kingdom', but the reappearance of Elijah was believed to foreshadow the salvation of Israel.<sup>65</sup>

Salvation is at the core of *Piers*, and knowledge of these Bible passages influences interpretation as, for example, in the ethos of the context of the quotation in italics above from Matthew: the italicised quotation comes from Malachi,<sup>66</sup> and the prophecy describes the Second Coming of Christ when humankind will be purified, and judgement executed on those who have disobeyed God's commandments: as such, it would have been part of medieval understanding. Malachi continues:

et quis poterit cogitare diem adventus eius et quis stabit ad videndum eum ipse enim quasi ignis conflans et quasi herba fullonum et sedebit conflans et emundans argentum et purgabit filios Levi et colabit eos quasi aurum et quasi argentum [...] et placebit Domino sacrificium Iuda et Hierusalem sicut dies saeculi et sicut anni antiqui et accedam ad vos in iudicio et ero testis velox maleficis et adulteris et periuris et qui calumniantur mercedem mercennarii viduas et pupillos et opprimunt peregrinum nec timuerunt me dicit Dominus exercituum ego enim Dominus et non mutor [...] a diebus enim patrum vestrorum recessistis a legitimis meis et non custodistis revertimini ad me et revertar ad vos dicit Dominus exercituum

[And who shall be able to think of the day of his coming? And who shall stand to see him? For he is like a refining fire and like the fuller's herb. And he shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi and shall refine them as gold and as silver [...] And I will come to you in judgement and will be a speedy witness against sorcerers and adulterers and false swearers and

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Lc. 7. 28. See also Mc. 9. 10-12. The Douai-Rheims gloss (p. 18) clarifies 'suffereth violence' in the following way: 'It is not to be obtained but by main force, by using violence upon ourselves, by mortification and penance and resisting our perverse inclinations'.

<sup>65</sup> *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 539; *Peake's Commentary*, p. 784. See also Mal. 4. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Mal. 3. 1.

them that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widows and the fatherless: and oppress the stranger and have not feared me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord and I change not: [...] For from the days of your fathers you have departed from my ordinances and have not kept them: Return to me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord of hosts.] (Mal. 3. 2-7)

Malachi also stresses the importance of turning to God. In consequence, these associated passages interconnect, and further expand any understanding of Baptism in *Piers*.

Furthermore, as will be seen in the passage from Isaiah quoted below, the prophet emphasises the importance of preparation before seeking God, and recounts the assurance that God offers. This apocalyptic prophecy again foretells Christ's return to the earth, but most importantly these Old Testament passages find their echo in the Gospels with John the Baptist's ministry and the Baptism of Christ:<sup>67</sup>

consolamini consolamini populus meus dicit Deus vester loquimini ad cor Hierusalem et avocate eam quoniam conpleta est malitia eius dimissa est iniquitas illius [...] vox clamantis in deserto parate viam Domini rectas facite in solitudine semitas Dei nostri [...] ecce Dominus Deus in fortitudine veniet et brachium eius dominabitur ecce merces eius cum eo et opus illius coram eo sicut pastor gregem suum pascet in brachio suo congregabit agnos et in sinu suo levabit fetus ipse portabit [...] qui autem sperant in Domino mutabunt fortitudinem adsument pinnas sicut aquilae current et non laborabunt ambulabunt et non deficient

[Be comforted, be comforted, my people saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her: for her evil is come to an end, her iniquity is forgiven. [...] The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God. [...] Behold the Lord God shall come with strength: and his arm shall rule. Behold his reward is with him and his work is before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather together the lambs with his arm and shall take them up in his bosom, and he himself shall carry them that are with young. [...] But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.] (Is. 40. 1-31)

Such vibrant words form the basis of the promise of Baptism, but may also be seen as the pivot of Langland's poem: the comfort of God's protection, extended to the

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<sup>67</sup> Mt. 3; Mc. 1. 1-11; Lc. 3. 2-22. At his Baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descends on Christ (Lc. 3. 22).

Christian soul on reaching the Kingdom of God, becomes the inspiration to seek salvation through the grace of God's Spirit. Without knowledge of such Bible reference, recognising the full import of Langland's discussion about Baptism and grace may be difficult. As part of their culture, a medieval Christian audience would, no doubt, have many such biblical images in mind from texts such as the Gospels, Acts, Isaiah and Malachi on which Langland would have been able to draw; the poet could assume that such familiar texts formed part of his audience's perception of their Christian faith through their experience of the Liturgy.

One further point may need clarification: to Langland's mind, Will's gesture in seeking grace was, no doubt, a basic natural reaction. However, grace and the Holy Spirit are difficult concepts for the modern mind to absorb or understand: what Will is doing may even seem alien. The grace of the Holy Spirit is an essential element in Baptism, and to understand fully Baptism in *Piers*, and what Langland pre-supposes his audience to know needs consideration. Although the doctrine and theology regarding the Holy Spirit is intricate and complex, yet, in essence, such understanding remains accessible to an audience familiar with the Bible passages on which these matters are based.

Comprehension of God's Spirit can be seen to develop as a gradual process in the Bible: the Spirit inspires the prophets, and is chiefly the inspiration for all virtue and sanctity; the Holy Spirit actively empowers all that is good.

Received by every catechumen at Baptism, given in the light of Christ, the Spirit becomes the link with Christ, instrumental in the worship of God and every other aspect of living the Christian life. Through the Spirit, which fills all Christian souls, every

follower of Christ will be raised at the last into a spiritual existence with God.<sup>68</sup> God's Spirit, through Baptism, links Baptism with the Church because the baptised are the Church. Langland's readers need to remember that the poet intentionally uses Holy Church herself to remind Will of his Baptism and everything he has promised.

It can be seen as no accident that Langland initiates ideas of Holy Church and Baptism so early in the poem, because Baptism is the first step into a life in Christ through the Church. The poet directly refers his audience to look to the Church's teaching: 'þow ou3est me to knowe' (I. 75). Langland's intention for his audience is that they remember the implications of the Sacrament of Baptism, to make them repent. Will falls on his knees, and seeks grace; he appeals to Holy Church to renew, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, his faith in Christ: 'And also kenne me kyndely on Crist to bileue' (I. 81). Holy Church had reminded Will that she 'vnderfeng þee first and þe feiþ tau3te' (I. 76), and Will returns to the initial moment of his entry into the Church when he was taught his belief in the Creed. Moreover, Holy Church brings Will back to remember her ordinances: 'my biddyng to fulfille, / And to louen me leelly þe while þi lif dureþ' (I. 77-78). This command might be seen as political, as an assertion of the Church's power, but it is also the precise trigger for Will, as he did at his Baptism, to seek the Holy Spirit, and to save his soul (I. 84). Such impetus accounts for much of *Piers'* relevance and popularity in Langland's time. Yet, seven lines of *Piers* (I. 75-81) can contain diverse implications from a wealth of Christian doctrine, theology and Bible reference; without this background understanding, interpretation of *Piers* falls short.

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<sup>68</sup> For further explanation of the theology and biblical reference behind the Sacrament of Baptism, see *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 783-84.

#### 4.4 The Baptism Theme in Passus V

In Passus V Langland continues to connect and combine references to both faith and grace to Baptism, and this Passus demonstrates how Langland handles the inter-relation of themes within the topic of Baptism which were evidenced in Passus I when Holy Church says: ‘I vnderfeng þee first and þe feiþ tau3te’(I. 76). For example, at the beginning of Passus V, Will says his ‘bileue’ (V. 7), an affirmation of his faith and presumably his Creed, a prime constituent of the baptismal Office,<sup>69</sup> before he starts to dream about Reason’s sermon on sin and its consequences. Reason (V. 11-59) addresses his homily throughout the ranks of society; in fact, Reason preaches to the whole Kingdom of God, ‘þe feld ful of folk’ (V. 10), from Wastour to the king and, finally, the Pope.

Passus V is largely concerned with discussion of sin (and the Seven Deadly Sins in particular), and unsurprisingly Langland quotes from the fourth penitential psalm (V. 276). The penitential psalms would have been very familiar to Langland’s original audience from their regular use in the Liturgy, and the poet would need only to quote the first words: ‘*Miserere mei, Deus, wher I mene trouþe / Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti*’ (V. 276-276a cf. Ps. 50. 3, 8) for the rest to be brought to mind:

secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam amplius  
lava me ab iniquitate mea et a peccato meo munda me [...] *ecce enim veritatem  
dilexisti* incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi asparges me hysopo et  
mundabor lavabis me et super nivem dealbabor [...] averte faciem tuam a peccatis  
meis et omnes iniquitates meas dele cor mundum crea in me Deus [...] ne proicias  
me a facie tua et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me

[According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. [...] For behold thou hast loved truth: the uncertain and hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to me. Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou

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<sup>69</sup> Maude, *History*, p. 89.

shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. [...] Turn away thy face from my sins: and blot out all my iniquities. Create a clean heart in me, O God: [...] Cast me not away from thy face: and take not thy holy spirit from me.] (Ps. 50. 3-4, 8-9, 11-13)

As has been discussed above,<sup>70</sup> the words from this penitential psalm form the anthem from the liturgy of exorcism repeated every Sunday at Mass: Langland's use of this psalm continues to foreground the Baptism theme with its implicit focus on turning to Christ, sin, repentance, cleansing and grace.

#### 4.4.1 The Baptism Theme in Passus V: the Dichotomies of Baptism

This section will continue to trace Langland's Bible quotations consecutively as they appear in Passus V. After the penitential psalm, Langland's next quotation in Passus V comes from Psalm 17, a psalm concerned with deliverance and the dichotomy of darkness and light, the devil and Christ: '*Cum sancto sanctus eris: construwe me þat on Englissh*' (V. 278 cf. Ps. 17. 26): the surrounding psalmic verses reverberate with baptismal ethos. The focus remains on cleanliness before God (in Baptism signified by being washed in holy water at the font), and turning from the darkness of temptation and iniquity towards God's light through his grace: as evidenced in Baptism:

et ero immaculatus cum eo et observabo ab iniquitate mea et retribuet mihi  
 Dominus secundum iustitiam meam et secundum puritatem manuum mearum in  
 conspectu oculorum eius *cum sancto sanctus eris* et cum viro innocente innocens  
 eris et cum electo electus eris et cum perverso perverteris quoniam tu populum  
 humilem salvum facies et oculos superborum humiliabis quoniam tu inluminas  
 lucernam meam Domine Deus meus inluminas tenebras meas quoniam in te  
 eripiar a temptatione

[And I shall be spotless with [God]: and shall keep myself from my iniquity. And the Lord will reward me according to my justice; and according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes. With the holy, thou wilt be holy: and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent. And with the elect thou wilt be elect: and

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<sup>70</sup> See section 4.2.

with the perverse thou wilt be perverted. For thou wilt save the humble people; but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud. For thou lightest my lamp, O Lord: O my God enlighten my darkness. For by thee I shall be delivered from temptation.] (Ps. 17. 24-30)

The oppositions of the holy and profane, of light and darkness, of God and the devil (the initiator of iniquity for Langland) in the psalm resonate with the ethos of the Easter Even service (with its anticipation of the light of Christ), and, therefore, with Baptism.

Because the psalms, as such a regular part of the Liturgy, are so familiar, their contexts are always evocative. Langland's next Vulgate quotation in Passus V, '[m]isericordia eius super omnia opera eius' (V. 282a cf. Ps. 144. 9), comes from a psalm of praise, but has relevant baptismal style in its context, in its oppositions, because it would remind Langland's audience of the promise of God's salvation to those who choose to turn from the destruction of iniquity towards God's love, as may be seen in the psalm's ending:

iustus Dominus in omnibus viis suis et sanctus in omnibus operibus suis prope est Dominus omnibus invocantibus eum omnibus invocantibus eum in veritate voluntatem timentium se faciet et deprecationem eorum exaudiet et salvos faciet eos custodit Dominus omnes diligentes se et omnes peccatores disperdet laudationem Domini loquetur os meum

[The Lord is just in all his ways: and holy in all his works. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth. He will do the will of them that fear him: and he will hear their prayer, and save them. The Lord keepeth all them that love him: but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord.] (Ps. 144. 17-21)

The psalmist turns to God in truth, and Langland, in his use of these psalms, issues an unspoken challenge to his reader to do the same: in this unvoiced way the poet reinforces the meaning of Baptism.

This section's discussion of the dichotomies of Baptism in Passus V will omit the next consecutive Latin quotation from Ephesians (which will be discussed in chapter 5.4

below), and move on to examine the quotation next but one: '*Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris vidit lucem magnam*' (V. 494a cf. Is. 9. 2). When he quotes Isaiah, Langland's mind remains focused on opposites, on light and darkness, which, as the Easter Even Liturgy demonstrates, are part of the understanding of Baptism:

*populus qui ambulabat in tenebris vidit lucem magnam* habitantibus in regione umbrae mortis lux orta est eis [...] parvulus enim natus est nobis filius datus est nobis et factus est principatus super umerum eius [...] multiplicabitur eius imperium et pacis non erit finis super solium David et super regnum eius ut confirmet illud et corroboret in iudicio et iustitia amodo et usque in sempiternum zelus Domini exercituum faciet hoc

[The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen. [...] For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: [...] His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace. He shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom: to establish it and strengthen it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.] (Is. 9. 2, 6-7)

Other contrasts are implicit in this Isaiah prophecy of the birth of Christ: Christ's Kingdom of peace and right judgement is, by definition, the antithesis of that described in this Isaiah chapter: the prophet tells of a sinful nation that speaks: 'in superbia et magnitudine cordis' [in the pride and haughtiness of their heart.] (Is. 9. 9).

Isaiah foresees, in the passage quoted below, that the Syrians and Philistines, the ancient enemies of Israel depicted in the Bible as evil, will 'devour' Israel. Isaiah says that the Israelites have not sought after God. No doubt, because of their opposition to God, peoples like the Syrians and Philistines might symbolise a type of devil for

Langland's audience:

Syriam ab oriente et Philisthim ab occidente et devorabunt Israhel toto ore in omnibus his non est aversus furor eius sed adhuc manus eius extenta et populus non est reversus ad percutientem se et Dominum exercituum non inquisierunt

[The Syrians from the east, and the Philistines from the west: and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his indignation is not turned away: but his hand is stretched out still. And the people are not returned to him who hath struck them, and have not sought after the Lord of hosts.] (Is. 9. 12-13).

Isaiah (like Langland) repeatedly tells his audience that God will be merciful to those who turn to him and away from sin: ‘in omnibus his non est aversus furor eius sed adhuc manus eius extenta’ [After all these things his indignation is not turned away: but his hand is stretched out still.] (Is. 9. 21). Without knowledge of the biblical context in this chapter of Isaiah, these close resemblances of thinking and intention between the prophet and the poet are undetected: in consequence, the richness of comparison and the biblical nuances that enlarge understanding are lost.

The choice of the Isaiah quotation with its stress on light and darkness underlies Langland’s implicit understanding about Baptism; that the Christian needs light in order to see, to believe. Moreover, the poet writes prior to the Isaiah reference above:

And sippe wiþ þi selue sone in oure sute deidest  
 On Good Fryday for mannes sake at ful tyme of þe day;  
 [...]
   
 The sonne for sorwe þerof lees si3t for a tyme  
 Aboute mydday whan moost li3t is and meel-tyme of seintes -  
 Feddest þo wiþ þi fresshe blood oure forefadres in derknesse: (V. 488-494)

The reader is expected to remember the Gospel narratives which describe how the world fell dark at the time of Christ’s death: ‘A sexta autem hora tenebrae factae sunt super universam terram usque ad horam nonam’ [Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour.] (Mt. 27. 45).<sup>71</sup> The darkness of the Crucifixion is repelled in the glory of the Christ’s Resurrection even as the soul goes from darkness to light in Baptism. Langland appears to have held these important concepts concerning Baptism in mind as he composed these sections of *Piers*.

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<sup>71</sup> See also Mc. 15. 33; Lc. 23. 44.

#### 4.4.2 The Explicit Baptism Theme in Passus V: the Vernacular Poetry

As was seen in Passus I,<sup>72</sup> in Passus V Langland also handles the topic of Baptism in the vernacular lines of the poem: when the poet writes ‘the moot is of Mercy’ (V. 586), he could be making an allegorical point. Water is used symbolically in the Office of Baptism, and the water of the moat seems to demonstrate the protection that the mercy of Christ offers the Christian soul in that sacrament. Langland begins to set up the moat allegory when he writes: ‘Wadeþ in þat water and wassheþ yow wel þere, / And ye shul lepe þe li3tloker al youre lif tyme’ (V. 568-69).<sup>73</sup> The lines quoted here form part of an elaborate exposition of the two commandments: love God and love your neighbour, which are based on the original Ten Commandments (V. 560-84). Actively (and perfectly) to love your neighbour is to avoid sin. Langland advises the reader to follow the Commandments, and to leave certain sins ‘on þi lift half’ (V. 578 cf. Mt. 25. 31-46) where the devil traditionally belongs: thus the poet directly reminds his audience of their baptismal vows to reject the devil, and intimates the need to turn to Christ. Matthew 25, Langland’s inspiration for ‘þi lift half’, lists the deeds necessary for salvation, and teaches the Christian soul to be ready for Christ’s return to earth; the judgement that will follow on failure to care for their neighbour; to prepare for the Kingdom of God.

The allusion to Matthew’s Gospel in ‘þi lift half’ also triggers a mental connection in the coming lines because the castle, the ‘court as cler as þe sonne’ (V. 585), which the moat surrounds, alludes to this Kingdom: ‘[The kerneles ben of] Cristendom þat kynde to saue, / Botrased wiþ “Bileef-so-or-þow-beest-no3t-saued.”’ (V. 588-89). The quotation concerning ‘bileef’ from the Athanasian Creed (sourced by Mt. 25. 46)

<sup>72</sup> For example, Passus I. 38-41, 75-78.

<sup>73</sup> The context of the quotations from Psalms 50 and 17 (V. 276-276a, V. 278) also concentrates on washing and cleanness (especially 50. 4, 9, 12 and 17. 21-25).

buttresses the Christian soul.<sup>74</sup> The Christian reader is thereby alerted to the tenets of the Catholic faith as presented in the Creed, which remains consistently unequivocal regarding salvation, and concerning access to God's Kingdom. As so often in *Piers*, these allusions have greater connotation in the mind than the vernacular lines can display. The Athanasian Creed is direct in its expression of the outcome for the soul who does not follow Christian doctrine.

Like Langland's use of the Vulgate quotations with their implicit resonances and unexpressed meanings, the unspoken implication in the poet's reference to this Creed holds another key to what the poet continually urges his audience to do throughout *Piers*: if Langland's baptised readers seek salvation, they cannot afford to renege on their Baptism vows or their belief:

Quicumque vult salvus esse, ante omnia opus est ut teneat catholicam fidem: quam nisi quis integram inviolatamque servaverit, absque dubio in aeternum peribit. [...] ita tres deos aut dominos dicere catholica religione prohibemur.[...] Qui vult ergo salvus esse, ita de trinitate sentiat. Sed necessarium est ad aeternam salutem ut incarnationem quoque domini nostri Iesu Christi fideliter credat. Est ergo fides recta ut credamus et confiteamur quia dominus noster Iesus Christus Dei filius et deus pariter et homo est. [...] Qui passus est pro salute nostra, descendit ad inferna, surrexit a mortuis, ascendit ad caelos, sedit ad dexteram Patris, inde venturus iudicare vivos et mortuos: ad cuius adventum omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis et reddaturi sunt de factis propriis rationem; et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam aeternam, qui mala in ignem aeternum. Haec est fides catholica: quam nisi quis fideliter firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit

[Whoever desires to be saved must above all things hold the Catholic faith. Unless a man keeps it in its entirety inviolate, he will assuredly perish eternally. [...] so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to speak of three Gods or Lords. [...] So he who desire to be saved should think thus of the Trinity. It is necessary, however, to eternal salvation that he should also faithfully believe in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equally both God and man, [...] Who suffered for our salvation, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, whence he will come to judge living and dead: at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies,

<sup>74</sup> Schmidt, *Vision*, p. 430, n. 585-608; Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, p. 152, note to line 236.

and will render an account of their deeds; and those who have behaved well will go to eternal life, those who have behaved badly to eternal fire. This is the Catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he will not be able to be saved.]<sup>75</sup>

At the end of Passus V, Langland demonstrates a lighter touch than that of the Creed, but the poet stays equally focused. As Mark's Gospel states: 'qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit salvus erit qui vero non crediderit condemnabitur' [He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.] (Mc. 16. 16).

Langland appears not to adhere to the more stringent tenets of the Catholic

Church: Piers says:

'Mercy is a maiden þere, hap myȝt ouer hem alle;  
And she is sib to alle synfulle, and hire sone also,  
And þoruȝ þe help of hem two – hope þow noon ooþer –  
Thow myȝt gete grace þere, so þow go bityme.' (V. 635-38)

We are not told that the pardoner and the woman, the sinners, go 'to eternal fire', but that they disappear without trace: 'I ne woot where þei bcome' (V. 642). Yet Langland's allusions to Matthew's Gospel and the Athanasian Creed underlie the poet's gentle reminder to seek grace: 'Thow myȝt gete grace þere', and stress the urgency of the situation: 'so þow go bityme'. This thesis will discuss, in section 5.6.1 below, how Langland's compassion and his stress on God's mercy are also evidenced in the poet's treatment of Trajan, the unbaptised pagan.

#### 4.5 The Baptism Theme in Passus IX: the Devil as a Dichotomy

Passus IX illustrates ideas of Baptism further, but the argument of this section of the chapter needs to unravel the allusive, complex, track of Langland's thinking and

<sup>75</sup> The Latin and the English translation are taken from Kelly, *Athanasian Creed*, pp. 17-20, but see also *The Book of Common Prayer: with the additions and deviations proposed in 1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 110-112. The Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque vult*) is concerned with the theology of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

imagery connected with baptismal themes in this part of *Piers*, and to begin from a standpoint earlier in the poem, in Passus VIII, where Langland begins Will the dreamer's pilgrimage to seek Dowel. The reader is introduced to the friars who tell Will a long parable about man and sin using the symbolism of man in a boat on stormy water.<sup>76</sup>

Although water is not an allusion to Baptism here, the need to resist sin in the form of the world, the flesh and the devil is still in Langland's thoughts:

The boot is likned to oure body, þat brotel is of kynde,  
That þoru3 þe fend and þi flessch and þis frele worlde  
Synneþ þe sadde man [seuen siþes a daye]. (VIII. 42-44)

To digress away from the B-text for a moment, the C-text has an additional quotation in its discussion of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest which further demonstrates where Langland's mind is going: '*Nolite timere eos qui possunt occidere corpus*' [And fear ye not them that kill the body.] (C. X. 99a cf. Mt. 10. 28). The Bible quotation continues: '*animam autem non possunt occidere sed potius eum timete qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam*' [and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.]. 'Him' is the devil who lurks behind the written word; the baptismal vow against Satan remains intrinsic to Langland's argument in Passus IX as Will continues to seek Dowel. So to return now to Passus IX, the *Princeps huius mundi* [prince of this world] quotation (IX. 8), that appears in the A, B and C versions of the text, is biblical; the phrase occurs three times in John's Gospel.<sup>77</sup> At the end of his public

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<sup>76</sup> Langland could be making subtle biblical allusion here: Christ, in the boat with his disciples, stills the storm and chides them for their lack of faith (Mt. 8. 23-27; Mc. 4. 35-40; Lc. 8. 22-25). In all three synoptic Gospels, this passage immediately precedes the narrative where Christ casts out devils into the Gadarene swine, and thus Langland, by such allusion, keeps the Baptism theme in mind. My thanks go to the Revd John Blick who alerted me to this reference.

<sup>77</sup> See Vulgate: '*nunc iudicium est mundi nunc princeps huius mundi eicietur foras*' [Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.] (Io. 12. 31); '*iam non multa loquar vobiscum venit enim princeps mundi huius et in me non habet quicquam*' [I will not now speak many things with you. For the prince of this world cometh: and in me he hath not any thing.] (Io. 14. 30); '*de iudicio autem*

ministry, Christ tells the disciples that ‘the prince of this world’ not only is ‘already judged’ (‘iudicatus est’, Io. 16. 11) but will be ‘cast out’ (‘eicietur foras’, Io. 12. 31).

John 12, in the quotation given below, builds towards the climax of the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

The biblical context of Langland’s quotation demonstrates one of the moments of intense spirituality in the Gospels when God’s Spirit speaks from heaven, and can thus be associated mentally with Christ’s Baptism and the Transfiguration.<sup>78</sup> The Gospel context, with its emphasis on darkness and light, has important resonance in *Piers* for the urgency of keeping the Baptism vows: the choice to be made between Christ and the devil:

respondit Iesus et dixit non propter me vox haec venit sed propter vos nunc iudicium est mundi nunc *princeps huius mundi* eicietur foras et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra omnia traham ad me ipsum hoc autem dicebat significans qua morte esset moriturus [...] adhuc modicum lumen in vobis est ambulate dum lucem habetis ut non tenebrae vos comprehendant et qui ambulat in tenebris nescit quo vadat dum lucem habetis credite in lucem ut filii lucis sitis

[Jesus answered and said: This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgement of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. (Now this he said, signifying what death he should die.) [...] Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not. And he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be children of light.] (Io. 12. 30-36)

As can be seen in the context of the Vulgate quotation, Langland’s insistent call to seek the light of Christ (and reject the darkness of the devil), in order to avoid the fate of being cast out from the Kingdom, runs parallel between the Bible quotation contexts, and the dynamic of *Piers* to urge every Christian soul to search for salvation. John’s Gospel, as does Langland in *Piers*, also suggests the shortness of time to act: ‘adhuc modicum

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quia princeps mundi huius iudicatus est’ [And of judgement: because the prince of this world is already judged.] (Io. 16. 11).

<sup>78</sup> Io. 12. 28. But see Io. 12. 28 cf. Mt. 3. 17; Mc. 1. 11; Lc. 3. 22 (Christ’s Baptism), and Mt. 17. 5; Lc. 9. 35; 2 Pt 1. 18 (Transfiguration).

lumen in vobis est ambulate dum lucem habetis ut non tenebrae vos comprehendant' [Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not.] (Io. 12. 35).<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Langland's use of the '*Princeps huius mundi*' quotation triggers associations with the hope that Christ promises thus increasing the urgency: 'venit enim princeps mundi huius et in me non habet quicquam' [For the prince of this world cometh: and in me he hath not any thing.] (Io. 14. 30). The contexts of the three quotations from John's Gospel which relate to the '*Princeps huius mundi*' citation speak of judgement, and would remind Langland's fourteenth-century audience about the Parousia when the world would end, when Christ returns to judge the earth: thus Langland's choice of this quotation from John increases the compulsion to act, but essentially the poet is setting up the reader for an exposition in Passūs IX and X about Baptism.

To return to the previous discussion on the tripartite elements of sin, Langland re-introduces the theme of the devil at the beginning of Passus IX, and continues to depict inherent concepts of Baptism: the world, the flesh and the devil: 'And þat is þe castel þat Kynde made, *Caro* it hatte / And is as mucche to mene as "man wiþ a soule."' (IX. 49). *Caro*, the flesh, can be read several ways here: Sister Davlin (*Game of Heuene*, pp. 54-56) remarks on the different meanings of *Caro*, and expands Wit's definition of 'a man with a soul'.<sup>80</sup> Conversely, the continuous reference, both overt and oblique, to the figure of the devil means that when Langland refers to *Caro*, the reader is encouraged to make several associations at one and the same time. For example, the human body created by

<sup>79</sup> As the Gospel tells us, Christ is preparing the disciples for his Crucifixion and death: 'et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra omnia traham ad me ipsum' [And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.] (Io. 12. 32).

<sup>80</sup> See especially p. 55. In Passus XI, Langland continues to make a studied point about the sins of the flesh: *Concupiscencia carnis* (B. XI. 13, 17, 30, 40, 43 cf. I Io. 2. 16).

God (IX. 33-35), but despoiled by the Fall, ‘is the castel þat Kynde made’, but also the sinful flesh, ‘þe castel of care’ (I. 61) that can only be saved through Baptism and the redemption of Christ.

As this thesis has argued, Langland encourages the reader to hold more than one interpretation at once. With complicated puns spread through the text, the slippery meanings of Medieval Latin words like *Anima* and *Caro* allow Langland an elusive flexibility of meaning. The implicit baptismal theme of the world, the flesh and the devil that underlies the means to salvation continues with the lines of Bible quotation that follow:

Muche wo worþ þat wi3t þat mysruleþ his Inwit,  
 And þat ben glotons glubberes – hir God is hire wombe:  
*Quorum deus venter est.*  
 For þei seruen Sathan, hir soule shal he have:  
 That lyuen sinful lif here, hir soule is liche þe deuel.  
 Alle þat lyen the good lif are lik God almy3ty:  
*Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet...* (IX. 60-64a cf. Phil. 3. 19 and I Io. 4. 16)

Firstly, the concept of gluttony, and therefore idolatry, sets up the contrast of those who ‘seruen Sathan’ with those who serve Christ. Secondly, the First Epistle of John, a popular source of inspiration for Langland, focuses on the opposition between those who seek Christ, and those who favour Satan. The Philippians passage also sets out this clear choice:

verumtamen ad quod pervenimus ut idem sapiamus et in eadem permaneamus  
 regula imitatores mei estote fratres et observate eos qui ita ambulant sicut habetis  
 formam nos multi enim ambulant quos saepe dicebam vobis nunc autem et flens  
 dico inimicos crucis Christi quorum finis interitus *quorum deus venter* et gloria in  
 confusione ipsorum qui terrena sapiunt nostra autem conversatio in caelis est unde  
 etiam salvatorem expectamus Dominum Iesum Christum qui reformabit corpus  
 humilitatis nostrae configuratum corpori claritatis suae secundum operationem  
 qua possit etiam subicere sibi omnia

[Nevertheless, whereunto we are come, that we be of the same mind, let us also continue in the same rule. Be ye followers of me, brethren: and observe them who walk so as you have our model. For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction: whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory, according to the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto himself.] (Phil. 3. 16-21)

Again, from within the Philippians context with its dichotomy of a heaven set against the destruction of hell, Langland is able to continue his direction to his audience to keep the baptismal vows, to avoid the enemy of the soul.

#### 4.5.1 The Baptism Theme in Passus IX: the Duties of the Baptised

Langland continues to berate the excesses of the flesh as was evidenced before in the reference to Lot.<sup>81</sup> The poet's condemnation of the abuse of the flesh through drink: 'Allas! þat drynke shal fordo þat God deere bou3te' (IX. 65), is followed by a long tirade about the Church's obligations, but as these lines from *Piers* quoted below suggest, Baptism only begins a life in Christ:

Fooles þat fauten Inwit, I fynde þat Holy Chirche  
 Sholde fynden hem þat hem fauteþ, and faderlese children,  
 And widewes þat han no3t wherwith to wynnen hem hir foode,  
 Madde men and maydenes þat helpelese were –  
 Alle þise lakken Inwit, and loore bihoueþ.  
 Of þis matere I my3te make a long tale  
 And fynde fele witnesses among þe foure doctours,  
 And þat I lye no3t of þat I lere þee, Luc bereþ witnesse.  
 Godfader and godmoder þat seen hire godchildren  
 At myseise and at myschief and mowe hem amende  
 Shul haue penaunce in purgatorie, but 3if þei hem helpe.  
 For moore bilongeþ to þe litel barn er he þe lawe knowe  
 Than nempnyng of a name, and he neuer þe wiser! (IX. 67-79)

<sup>81</sup> See sections 4.3 and 4.3.1 on the Baptism theme in Passus I.

The passage speaks of the obligations of godparents at the initiation of Baptism, and the duties of all Christians towards their neighbour as Langland has already emphasised.<sup>82</sup>

The baptismal vows to resist sin and to turn to Christ involve living a life in Christ; following Christ's example. The duty of the baptised is to care for their neighbour: the lines: 'For moore bilongep to þe litel barn er he þe lawe knowe / Than nempnyng of a name' imply that Baptism devolves duties and responsibilities on the Christian community.

In his reference to widows and the fatherless, Langland may allude to an important passage from Isaiah that teaches those who would be saved how to 'do well':

lavamini mundi estote auferte malum cogitationum vestrarum ab oculis meis  
quiescite agere perverse discite benefacere quaerite iudicium subvenite oppresso  
iudicate pupillo defendite viduam et venite et arguite me dicit Dominus si fuerint  
peccata vestra ut coccinum quasi nix dealbabuntur et si fuerint rubra quasi  
vermiculus velut lana erunt

[Wash yourselves: be clean. Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes. Cease to do perversely. Learn to do well. Seek judgement. Relieve the oppressed. Judge for the fatherless. Defend the widow. And then come and accuse me, saith the Lord. If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson they shall be white as wool.] (Is. 1. 16-18)<sup>83</sup>

For the reader familiar with the Bible, Langland's lines recall the Isaiah quotation with its reference to the cleansing of Baptism when sins are 'made as white as snow'.<sup>84</sup>

Langland's thoughts continue to revolve around the theme of how to do well. The protection of widows and fatherless children is taught in the Bible, and stems from the commandment in Exodus: 'viduae et pupillo non nocebitis' [You shall not hurt a widow

<sup>82</sup> See section 4.4.2 above on vernacular poetry.

<sup>83</sup> More modern readers are familiar with the different theological emphasis of the Authorised Version translation from the Hebrew: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord'. *The Holy Bible*. The Authorized King James Version (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> Traditionally, and symbolically, the Baptism candidate wears white clothing during the ceremony.

or an orphan.] (Ex. 22. 22).<sup>85</sup> As one critic has observed, James' Epistle exhorts the faithful in a similar fashion.<sup>86</sup> However, Langland's reference to Luke, 'Luc bereþ witesse' (IX. 74), may have been occasioned by the poet's thoughts about the responsibilities of the Church: 'I fynde þat Holy Chirche / Sholde fynden hem þat hem fauteþ' (IX. 67-68). The clergy, of all participators in a life lived in Christ, have the greatest obligation (a subject that will be dealt with in depth in chapter six):

ad tēdite a scribis qui volunt ambulare in stolis et amant salutationes in foro et primas cathedras in synagogis et primos discubitus in conviviis Qui devorant domos viduarum simulantes longam orationem hii accipient damnationem maiorem

[Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes and love salutations in the market place and the first chairs in the synagogues and the chief rooms at feasts: Who devour the houses of widows, feigning long prayer. These shall receive greater damnation.] (Lc. 20. 46-47)<sup>87</sup>

When Langland refers to Luke's Gospel, the poet may be reflecting on Christ's command: 'vade et tu fac similiter' [Go and do thou in like manner.] (Lc. 10. 37). The directive follows the Parable of the Good Samaritan which is exclusive to Luke.<sup>88</sup> The exemplum is told to the lawyer who asks how to possess eternal life and who his neighbour might be, but the key issue is revealed in the lawyer's answer to Christ's question:

quis horum trium videtur tibi proximus fuisse illi qui incidit in latrones at ille dixit qui fecit misericordiam in illum et ait illi Iesus vade et tu fac similiter

[Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers? But [the lawyer] said: He that sheweth mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: go and do thou in like manner.] (Lc. 10. 36-37)<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Iob 22. 3-9; Ps. 67. 5-6, 81. 3-4, 145. 9; Mal. 3. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Iac. 1. 27, 2. 1-26. See Donaldson, *Translation*, p. 83, n. 6. Donaldson disregards Luke as a source but considers Act. 6. 1 to be a possibility.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Mc. 12. 38-40. Langland's concerns about the hypocrisy of Church authority will be discussed further in chapter six.

<sup>88</sup> Lc. 10. 25-37.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. 'Allas þat a Cristene creature shal be vnkynde til anoþer' (IX. 84).

In this Parable, the priest and the Levite avoid helping the man who has been injured by robbers.<sup>90</sup> *Piers* is reminiscent of Luke's Gospel: 'I fynde þat Holy Chirche / Sholde fynden hem þat hem fauteþ' (IX. 67-68).

Langland expects his reader to know the Gospel references concerning the provision of food and comfort to the needy: 'Sholde no Cristene creature cryen at þe yate / Ne faille payn ne potage, and prelates dide as þei sholden' (IX. 80-81). Implicit within Langland's fierce admonition concerning the Church's obligations, 'and prelates dide as þei sholden' (IX. 81), is the reminder of every baptised Christian's duty.<sup>91</sup> Care for the helpless is the antithesis of sin, of the world, the flesh and the devil. Langland does not merely remind his Christian audience of their baptismal vows, the poet insists that every baptised soul should carry out the duties and responsibilities incumbent on them. The concurrent strands of Christian themes, Baptism and the New Commandment, are inseparable in Christian practice: through an assumption of audience knowledge on these matters, Langland continually makes Baptism a topic that he does not always place openly on the page (for the poet would not consider that to be necessary), but nevertheless it is consistently present in the poem.

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<sup>90</sup> Lc. 10. 30-32.

<sup>91</sup> For Old Testament teaching on feeding the hungry see: Job. 22. 6-7, 24. 3-25; Ps. 106. 9, 145. 7; Prv. 25. 21-22; Is. 32. 6, 58. 7-10). Isaiah 58 connects themes of darkness and light with feeding the hungry: Vulgate: 'cum effuderis esurienti animam tuam et animam adflictam repleveris orietur in tenebris lux tua et tenebrae tuae erunt sicut meridies' [When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shalt thy light rise up in the darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday.] (Is. 58. 10). For one example of New Testament instruction, see the parable of the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25. 31-46). Mt. 25. 46 is considered to be the base text for the Athanasian Creed. Langland's line: 'no Cristene creature cryen at þe yate' (IX. 80) probably alludes to the Parable of Dives and the beggar, Lazarus – again, a story exclusive to Luke (Lc. 16. 19-31).

#### 4.6 The Baptism Theme in Passus XI

In order to demonstrate how subtle Langland's directives can be, and the connections which the Bible contexts elicit in a mind familiar with the Bible, this chapter will now examine the ramifications of Langland's contextual use of the Bible in greater depth. A short section of Passus XI will be used as an example of how Langland interrelates and builds on themes using biblical context. As this thesis has done before, an analysis will be made of the biblical context of each Latin quotation in a methodical and consecutive fashion as they occur in Passus XI, and the implications appraised. The question of whether the poet has a specific agenda with his choices of biblical quotation will be considered in more detail, and whether certain themes occur and re-occur.

At the beginning of Passus XI, Langland has concentrated, in a dream within a dream, on '*Concupiscencia Carnis*', on the lust of the flesh.<sup>92</sup> The chapter in I John, from which this reference comes, discusses sin: 'nolite diligere mundum neque ea quae in mundo sunt si quis diligit mundum non est caritas Patris in eo' [Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.] (I Io. 2. 15), and the devil.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, Langland revisits baptismal themes when the poet dwells on the transgressions of flesh and the world, but also the devil by

<sup>92</sup> See XI. 13, 17, 30, 40, 43 cf. I Io. 2. 16.

<sup>93</sup> I Io. 2. 18-23. Vulgate: 'filioli novissima hora est et sicut audistis quia antichristus venit nunc antichristi multi facti sunt unde scimus quoniam novissima hora est ex nobis prodierunt sed non erant ex nobis nam si fuissent ex nobis permansissent utique nobiscum sed ut manifesti sint quoniam non sunt omnes ex nobis sed vos unctionem habetis a Sancto et nostis omnia non scripsi vobis quasi ignorantibus veritatem sed quasi scientibus eam et quoniam omne mendacium ex veritate non est quis est mendax nisi is qui negat quoniam Iesus non est Christus hic est antichristus qui negat Patrem et Filium omnis qui negat Filium nec Patrem habet qui confitetur Filium et Patrem habet' [Little children, it is the last hour: and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are become many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us: but that they may be manifest, that they are not all of us. But you have the unction from the Holy One and know all things. I have not written to you as to them that know not the truth, but as to them that know it: and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is Antichrist, who denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.] (I Io. 2. 18-23).

implication.<sup>94</sup> Again, when Langland introduces Elde, who ‘heuy was of chere’, early in the Passus (XI. 27), there are reverberations with Baptism in the ‘old man’ from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: ‘hoc scientes quia vetus homo noster simul crucifixus est ut destruat corpus peccati ut ultra non serviamus peccato’ [Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer.] (Rm. 6. 6). Within a Passus devoted to discussion of sin<sup>95</sup> and Baptism,<sup>96</sup> Langland can be seen to play with the dual concepts of old age and the Old Man.

Langland’s next Bible Latin quotation from John’s Gospel, which refers to the Nicodemus passage, endorses the discussion concerning Baptism at this juncture. Apart from the puns on old age, the Nicodemus excerpt allows Langland to enter once again an unspoken discussion concerning many of the prerequisites for the Office of Baptism: being ‘born again’ (renunciation of the devil’s works and repentance); belief, faith and the grace that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Unspoken but implicit, these themes are recurrent within the poem, and Langland’s argument in Passus XI concerning Baptism continues to build through the Vulgate quotations and their contexts:

erat autem homo ex Pharisaeis Nicodemus nomine princeps Iudaeorum hic venit ad eum nocte et dixit ei rabbi scimus quia a Deo venisti magister nemo enim potest haec signa facere quae tu facis nisi fuerit Deus cum eo respondit Iesus et dixit ei amen amen dico tibi nisi quis natus fuerit denuo non potest videre regnum Dei dicit ad eum Nicodemus quomodo potest homo nasci cum senex sit numquid potest in ventrem matris suae iterato introire et nasci respondit Iesus amen amen

<sup>94</sup> XI. 12-60.

<sup>95</sup> XI. 12-33.

<sup>96</sup> XI. 75-84, 123-26. The narrative concerning Trajan in Passus XI discusses the theology of Baptism and salvation (XI. 140-229a). For discussion of the development of this legend, see Gordon Whatley, ‘The Uses of Hagiography: the Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages’, *Viator*, 15 (1984), 25-63. For a theological perspective, see T.P. Dunning, ‘Langland and the Salvation of the Heathen’, *Medium Ævum*, 12 (1943), 45-54. For another viewpoint on Trajan in *Piers*, see Elizabeth Doxsee, “‘Trew Treuthe” and Canon Law: the Orthodoxy of Trajan’s Salvation in *Piers Plowman C-text*’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 89 (1988), 295-311.

dico tibi *nisi quis renatus fuerit* ex aqua et Spiritu non potest introire in regnum Dei quod natum est ex carne caro est et quod natum est ex Spiritu spiritus est non mireris quia dixi tibi oportet vos nasci denuo Spiritus ubi vult spirat et vocem eius audis sed non scis unde veniat et quo vadat sic est omnis qui natus est ex Spiritu respondit Nicodemus et dixit ei quomodo possunt haec fieri respondit Iesus et dixit ei tu es magister Israhel et haec ignoras amen amen dico tibi quia quod scimus loquimur et quod vidimus testamur et testimonium nostrum non accipitis si terrena dixi vobis et non creditis quomodo si dixero vobis caelestia credetis

[And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him: Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him. Jesus answered and said to him: Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith to him: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again? Jesus answered: Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Wonder not that I said to thee: You must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where he will and thou hearest his voice: but thou knowest not whence he cometh and whither he goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said to him: How can these things be done? Jesus answered and said to him: Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? Amen, amen, I say to thee that we speak what we know and we testify what we have seen: and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things, and you believe not: how will you believe, if I shall speak to you heavenly things?] (XI. 82a cf. Io. 3. 1-12)

Yet, again, Langland, in using this particular Vulgate quotation, emphasises not just the principles of Baptism but also the duties and responsibilities inherent within the sacrament. Theologically, Baptism, being born again, can only be undertaken once.

Therefore Langland's stress is implicit: once baptised, the Christian must continuously seek spiritual not earthly concerns. When Langland writes of sin, faith, grace or of dichotomies such as, for example, sight and light, the connections to Baptism in *Piers* appear irrefutable, because such understanding is absolutely intrinsic to what it means to be Christian. The principles of Baptism are the foundation of the Church's life, and any attempt to seek salvation has to be founded on turning from all manner of sin in

faith; turning to Christ and seeking his grace: Baptism *is* faith and repentance. Langland's straightforward and orthodox way of approach to Baptism in *Piers*, through central Bible teaching on Baptism, translates into accepted Christian principles, and is evidenced through Bible quotation contexts.<sup>97</sup>

This passage in John's Gospel also teaches that the Holy Spirit does not cease to operate once a Baptism is over; every baptised Christian, through everything that they say and do, must constantly strive to seek the Kingdom of God through the Spirit in the light of Christ:

omnis enim qui mala agit odit lucem et non venit ad lucem ut non arguantur opera eius qui autem facit veritatem venit ad lucem ut manifestentur eius opera quia in Deo sunt facta

[For every one that doth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest: because they are done in God.] (Io. 3. 20-21)

Langland's reference to John's Gospel remains part of his debate on the theology of Baptism, but, because of the biblical context, it may also be read, once again, as the poet's challenge to every baptised Christian soul. Langland's choice of scripture (as with the Genesis quotation concerning Lot) cannot be viewed as coincidental, when the poet keeps applying the same baptismal refrains to his audience as an instrument of his redemptive dynamic in *Piers*. Surely, this Vulgate Gospel quotation with its highly-charged multi-faceted context, as with many similar ones, is not simply chosen from a Bible concordance.

The next chapter will expand on Langland's Bible choices, and investigate how the complex nature of the Vulgate quotation contexts may affect our view of *distinctiones*

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<sup>97</sup> Langland's discussion of the salvation of Trajan, an unbaptised pagan, does not affect the basic understanding of the Rite and Ceremony of the Sacrament of Baptism in *Piers*, nor alter the poet's promotion of Baptism which is entirely orthodox.

and *Piers*; it will also examine further whether the poet's employment of Bible waymarks such as 'Luc bereþ witanesse' can be trusted.

## Chapter Five

### Bible Contextual Connections, Waymarks and the Sacrament of Baptism in *Piers*

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will assess whether the complex nature of the Vulgate quotation contexts, and their value as a means of interpretation, as evidenced in chapter four, might affect our view of Langland's use of *distinctiones*. The coherent nature of the Bible in Christian perception and Langland's use of biblical material suggests this may not be as straightforward as has previously been thought, and this matter needs investigation. Chapter four touched on the issue that the contexts of many of the Bible quotations which Langland chose to use, unlike *distinctiones*, cannot be tied to a single word, implication or theme, and can deliver multiple meanings which Langland is able to adapt at will: interconnected themes that seem to work outside accepted *distinctiones* use.

The coherence between the Bible and *Piers* from the wider biblical contexts (as well as the contexts of Langland's specific Vulgate quotations) demonstrates the intricate nature of *Piers*: the poem, through this plethora of biblical allusion and context offers an extraordinary richness, and suggests that Langland's Bible knowledge was eminently greater than the simple need to seek help from concordances (although they may obviously have been of benefit). If Langland's mastery of Bible texts were as exceptional as this thesis suggests, this contention has significant implications which necessitate re-examination of exactly how Langland inundates the poem with biblical imagery: for example, editors' assumptions that Langland made mistakes with what I have termed waymarks, such as 'Luc bereþ wnesse', may not be valid. This chapter will

also examine some examples of the poet's employment of these biblical markers to evaluate whether we should trust Langland's direction.

## 5.2 The Baptism Theme in Passus I: *Deus caritas*: Truth or Baptism?

To take first the multi-faceted meanings of a single Bible quotation, in Passus I, the citation in Holy Church's speech: "Whan alle tresors arn tried, quod she, 'treuþe is þe beste. / I do it on *Deus caritas* to deme þe soþe'" (I. 85-86 cf. I Io. 4. 8) was shown in chapter three to illustrate the *distinctiones*-type of connection based on the word 'truth'. Langland's choice of quotation can now be seen to demonstrate the poet's absolute logic in the fulfilment of Christian lore on love at this juncture of the poem: '*Deus caritas*' [God is love] is a text from a passage the context of which separates the meaning and reality of God from Antichrist, the devil, and can therefore be read as a continuance of the Baptism theme with its dichotomy of good and evil:

in hoc cognoscitur Spiritus Dei omnis spiritus qui confitetur Iesum Christum in carne venisse ex Deo est et omnis spiritus qui solvit Iesum ex Deo non est et hoc est antichristi quod audistis quoniam venit et nunc iam in mundo est vos ex Deo estis filioli et vicistis eos quoniam maior est qui in vobis est quam qui in mundo ipsi de mundo sunt ideo de mundo loquuntur et mundus eos audit nos ex Deo sumus qui novit Deum audit nos qui non est ex Deo non audit nos in hoc cognoscimus Spiritum veritatis et spiritum erroris carissimi diligamus invicem quoniam caritas ex Deo est et omnis qui diligit ex Deo natus est et cognoscit Deum qui non diligit non novit Deum quoniam *Deus caritas* est

[By this is the spirit of God known. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God. And this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh: and he is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome him. Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore of the world they speak: and the world heareth them. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Dearly beloved, let us love one another: for charity is

of God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is charity.] (I Io. 4. 2-8)

As can be seen in Passus XIV, Langland was also aware of another text from I John which shows the love of the world in opposition to the love of Christ: ‘nolite diligere mundum neque ea quae in mundo sunt si quis diligit mundum non est caritas Patris in eo’ [Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.] (I Io. 2. 15 cf. XIV. 59a).

In chapter three, the ‘*Deus caritas*’ quotation’s context (like that in Genesis concerning Lot discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.3.1 above) could be seen to illustrate Truth / truth, and to demonstrate how Langland may have structured *Piers*. As has been discussed, critics have long considered the importance of *distinctiones* and other aids to composition in *Piers*. However, as this thesis shows, the Bible quotations and their contexts may have more than one root or application of meaning; the ‘*Deus caritas*’ quotation also links into Langland’s Baptism theme. Quite clearly, if the ‘*Deus caritas*’ citation and the other Bible quotations in Passus I discussed above are reviewed from the point of view of interpretation, instead of structure, and located within Christian understanding, a reader may find additional meaning in the Bible contexts: meanings greater (and more subtle) than a single *distinctiones* word-definition or contextual concordance could afford. Such recognition endorses the view that Langland’s command of the Bible was far beyond the need to rely significantly on such tools. Langland can be seen, through his choice of biblical allusion, quotation and context, as evidenced in a single Bible reference, and which may be seen in the above citation, *Deus caritas*, from I John 4, to hold several connected motifs together within the theme of Baptism: sin (in the form of the world, the flesh and the devil) as the antithesis of Christ, faith and grace.

Langland may appear a complex poet when the Bible quotations and their contexts may be seen to serve multiple purposes yet, for the mind saturated in Christian belief, *Piers* appears much more straightforward. Whether the poet quotes the Bible directly, through allusion or even through associated ideas about Baptism, Langland's Christian audience can absorb, connect and evaluate the references, and, as was no doubt Langland's intention, be constantly reminded of their baptismal vows: to recognise the need to realign themselves on the path to salvation, to the Kingdom of God. The Bible as a reference point in the poem enriches interpretation, and conveys deeper understandings of the poem to an audience that can identify the wider contexts of Christian circumstance.

### 5.3 An Interconnected Bible Quotation in Passus V

Langland, in his use of the Bible, continues to assume that his audience can appreciate any Christian reference that he might make. This chapter will now take a different approach to the single-word focus on *distinctiones*, and illustrate Langland's subtlety of quotation choice. In a series of linked Vulgate quotations and their contexts, Langland's call to focus on spiritual, rather than earthly matters, is endorsed by the poet's inclusion of words from the *Exultet* from the Easter Even Liturgy: '*O felix culpa! O necessarium peccatum Ade!*' [O happy fault! O necessary sin of Adam!] (V. 484a),<sup>1</sup> and the reminder to '*Vigilate*' (V. 443), to keep watch, with all its attendant biblical connotations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For biblical background to Adam's 'necessary sin', see Rm. 5. 9-21; I Cor. 15. 21-22, 42-49.

<sup>2</sup> See, for one example: '*sobrii estote vigilate quia adversarius vester diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret*' [Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.] (I Pt. 5. 8). This text would have been familiar from the Liturgy as it forms part of the Mattins service (feria 3). See Alford, *Guide*, p. 48. Additionally, many other Vulgate Bible references use *Vigilate*, to 'watch', see Mt. 24. 42-43 (cf. Mc. 13. 33-35), 25. 13, 26. 38-41 (cf. Mc. 14. 34-38); Lc. 21. 36; I. Cor. 16. 13; I. Pt. 4. 6-8.

Langland's use of biblical and liturgical Latin has clear, ongoing baptismal resonance. To follow Langland's consecutive use of Latin quotation in this section of Passus V, another quotation from the Creation story in Genesis: '*Faciamus hominem ad ymaginem et similitudinem nostram*' [Let us make man to our image and likeness.] (Gn. 1. 26 cf. V. 487a), links to the *Exultet* quotation because it again gently reminds the reader of another baptismal dichotomy: where Adam failed, Christ triumphed. Hope is engendered by the fact that humans are made in God's image: hope is brought also by Baptism as the first step for the Christian soul to the salvation that Christ offers through his death and Resurrection. The baptismal vows renounce evil in all its forms, and turn from the sins of Adam to Christ.<sup>3</sup> In order to understand this reference to Adam in *Piers*, its connection to Baptism, and to clarify how these quotations might be linked in Langland's mind through his Christian understanding, some Christian principles and biblical background need further explanation.

One example of this link is that, in Baptism, the believer is united with Christ and shares in Christ's Resurrection. A passage from Romans about Baptism sets out how, through Christ's Resurrection, Christians are delivered from their sins, and the death they faced through the Fall. The 'old man', of whom Paul speaks in the Romans citation quoted below, explains the implication of Langland's reference to Adam, because Adam and the old man are one and the same: at Baptism, catechumens turn their back on Adam and turn to Christ. The Creation quotation and the *Exultet* reference to Adam can be seen to link together through Langland's assumption of knowledge of Paul's teaching:

an ignoratis quia quicumque baptizati sumus in Christo Iesu in morte ipsius baptizati sumus consepulti enim sumus cum illo per baptismum in mortem ut quomodo surrexit Christus a mortuis per gloriam Patris ita et nos in novitate vitae

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<sup>3</sup> See again Bible references in note 1 in this chapter above.

ambulemus si enim conplantati facti sumus similitudini mortis eius simul et resurrectionis erimus hoc scientes quia vetus homo noster simul crucifixus est ut destruat corpus peccati ut ultra non serviamus peccato qui enim mortuus est iustificatus est a peccato si autem mortui sumus cum Christo credimus quia simul etiam vivemus cum Christo

[Know you not that all we who are baptized [*sic*] in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. For he that is dead is justified from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ.] (Rm. 6. 3-8)

In Baptism ‘our old man is crucified with him [Christ]’, and we are made new and cleansed from sin: ‘sed abluti estis sed sanctificati estis sed iustificati estis in nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi et in Spiritu Dei nostri’ [But you are washed: but you are sanctified: but you are justified: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God.] (I Cor. 6. 11). In Baptism, Christians turn away from the fallen nature of Adam and begin to take on the characteristics of Christ and, in another dichotomy of death and life, are made new.<sup>4</sup>

Langland links the Genesis Creation quotation to John’s First Epistle: ‘*Et alibi, Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo*’ [and elsewhere, ‘he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him’.] (V. 487a cf. I Io. 4. 16) in a way that appears to be unconnected to *distinctiones*. These two Vulgate quotations interrelate with associated Bible teaching which, in turn, augments any understanding of *Piers*. The concept of Baptism is implicit in the context of I John through its tacit references to those souls who have turned to Christ and received his Spirit:

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<sup>4</sup> See also Rm. 13. 11-14; Gal. 3. 22-29.

in hoc intellegimus quoniam in eo manemus et ipse in nobis quoniam de Spiritu suo dedit nobis et nos vidimus et testificamur quoniam Pater misit Filium salvatorem mundi quisque confessus fuerit quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei Deus in eo manet et ipse in Deo et nos cognovimus et credidimus caritati quam habet Deus in nobis Deus caritas est et *qui manet in caritate in Deo manet et Deus in eo* in hoc perfecta est caritas nobiscum ut fiduciam habeamus in die iudicii quia sicut ille est et nos sumus in hoc mundo

[In this we know that we abide in him, and he in us: because he hath given us of his spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father hath sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us. God is charity: and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him. In this is the charity of God perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment: because as he is, we also are in this world.] (I Io. 4. 13-17)

John's Epistle is important to Langland, and he quotes from it often.<sup>5</sup> However, the two Bible quotations may be seen to work together as a whole if Christian premise is considered.<sup>6</sup>

Langland's logical waymarks from the Liturgy and the Bible quotations' context in these lines appear to run thus: no matter that Adam failed (*Exultet*), we are made in God's image (Genesis) therefore if, through grace, we turn from sin to Christ in love we need have no fear in the day of judgement (John's First Epistle). Or as Langland also puts it: 'For I shal biseche for alle synfulle Oure Saueour of grace / To amenden vs of oure mysdedes and do mercy to vs alle' (V. 479-80). Repentance of sin illustrates a constant renewal of the vows to reject the devil made in the Office of Baptism. The baptismal principles are implicit: repenting from evil and turning to Christ in faith and love, through the gift of the Spirit, leads to salvation. Langland does not need to make any reminder to

<sup>5</sup> Line numbering follows Schmidt, *Parallel-text edition* (see also Alford, *Guide*, p. 134): I Io. 2. 15 cf. B. XIV. 59a (C. XV. 262a); I Io. 2. 16: B. XI. 13, 17, 30, 40, 43 (C. XI. 174, 178, 191, 312, 315); I Io. 3. 14: B. XI. 175a (C. XII. 100a); I Io. 4. 8: B. I. 86 (Z. I. 31, A. I. 84, C. I. 82); I Io. 4. 16: B. I. 86 (Z. I. 31, A. I. 84, C. I. 83), C. III. 403a, B. V. 487a, B. IX. 64a; I Io. 4. 18: B. XIII. 164a, C. XV. 166a; I Io. 5. 11 cf. B. XII. 290.

<sup>6</sup> '*Faciamus hominem ad ymaginem et similitudinem nostram; / Et alibi, Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo*' (V. 487a).

his audience concerning their baptismal vows in an explicit way; the choice to be made between good and evil is part of Christian ideology, and the doctrine of Baptism held inherently in the mind from knowledge of the Bible contexts which the poet uses. Moreover, the interconnections from Christian understanding which firmly link these Latin quotations seem more complex than simple *distinctiones* use.

### 5.3.1 Another Interconnected Bible Quotation in Passus V

This section again exemplifies how, through his command of Bible citation, Langland was able to bring to his audience's mind (through their own biblical knowledge) a variety of diverse images and perception. In Passus V the poet continues the call to penance (another sacrament that necessitates turning to God) with the inclusion of a quotation from Luke.<sup>7</sup> Then Langland chooses a Bible reference from John's Gospel: '*Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*' [And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.] (Io. 1. 14 cf. V. 501a), from a chapter which emphasises notions of light and darkness and the focus on Baptism. The Gospel chapter tells of Christ's Baptism<sup>8</sup>, and refers to John the Baptist's ministry.<sup>9</sup> It also recalls the fact that John practised the Baptism of Penance:<sup>10</sup> repentance is a requisite for the state of mind necessary for Christian Baptism in Christ.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Lc. 5. 32 cf. V. 499a.

<sup>8</sup> Io. 1. 29-34.

<sup>9</sup> Io. 1. 6-8, 15-28.

<sup>10</sup> Io. 1. 23. See also Mc. 1. 4; Lc. 3. 3; Act. 13. 24, 19. 4. Cf. Mt. 3. 2: 'Do penance'. The Douai-Rheims (p. 5) elaborates: '*Pœnitentiam agite*, [...]. Which word, according to the use of the scriptures and the holy fathers, does not only signify repentance and the amendment of life, but also punishing past sins by fasting and such like penitential exercises'. The King James Bible has a different theological emphasis and refers to 'repentance' not 'penance' in all these citations.

<sup>11</sup> *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1384. 'By the [third century] there had emerged a developed system of public Penance which was regarded as a "second baptism."' *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1250.

After two further biblical citations that endorse penitence,<sup>12</sup> Langland then quotes from Psalm 35 (V. 509a cf. Ps. 35. 7-8), and the context of the psalm, ‘*Dicit inustus*’, is again relevant; it would recall, in the mind of Langland’s Christian audience, how the need to ‘do well’ involves choice between good and evil, and re-activation of baptismal vows through repentance. The psalmist contrasts the darkness of the fate of the iniquitous (who do not hate evil) with the outcome for those who trust God: they find the ‘fountain of life’ in God’s light:

Dixit iniustus ut delinquat in semet ipso non est timor Dei ante oculos eius quoniam dolose egit in conspectu eius ut inveniatur iniquitas eius ad odium verba oris eius iniquitas et dolus noluit intellegere ut bene ageret iniquitatem meditatus est in cubili suo adstitit omni viae non bonae malitiam autem non odivit Domine in caelo misericordia tua et veritas tua usque ad nubes [...] *homines et iumenta salvabis Domine quemadmodum multiplicasti misericordiam tuam Deus filii autem hominum in tegmine alarum tuarum sperabunt inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus tuae et torrente voluntatis tuae potabis eos quoniam apud te fons vitae in lumine tuo videbimus lumen praetende misericordiam tuam scientibus te et iustitiam tuam his qui recto sunt corde non veniat mihi pes superbiae et manus peccatoris non moveat me ibi ceciderunt qui operantur iniquitatem expulsi sunt nec potuerunt stare*

[The unjust hath said within himself that he would sin: there is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his sight he hath done deceitfully, that his iniquity may be found unto hatred. The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile: he would not understand that he might do well. He hath devised iniquity on his bed: he hath set himself on every way that is not good: but evil he hath not hated. O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven: and thy truth reacheth even to the clouds. [...] Men and beasts thou wilt preserve, O Lord: O how hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God! But the children of men [Adam] shall put their trust under the covert of thy wings. They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure. For with thee is the fountain of life: and in thy light we shall see light. Extend thy mercy to them that know thee: and thy justice to them that are right in heart. Let not the foot of pride come to me: and let not the hand of the sinner move me. There the workers of iniquity are fallen: they are cast out and could not stand.] (Ps. 35. 2-13)

<sup>12</sup> V. 507 cf. Ps. 84. 7 (Alford, *Guide*, p. 50, but Schmidt (*Vision*, p. 88) considers the source to be Ps. 70. 20); V. 508 cf. Ps. 31. 1 (the second penitential psalm).

The psalm predicts an apocalyptic end for the iniquitous; like the devil expelled from heaven, they are cast out, ‘*expulsi sunt*’. The contrasts in the context of the Psalm are all baptismal issues with which the reader has become familiar within *Piers*: sight, light and darkness; the choice between good and evil and of turning towards or away from God. Through the context of the psalm, Langland introduces the topic of Baptism into the poem.<sup>13</sup>

It is possible to take Psalm 35 and make comparison with this psalm and the examples of other Bible quotations used in chapter four from Passūs I and V, and to identify certain themes within the contexts: themes which again suggest more complex word associations than *distinctiones* might allow. Langland sets up comparisons and contrasts through his choice of Vulgate contexts; undeniable connections appear evident between the contexts of the Bible quotations that have been examined in *Piers*. To recapitulate and set out themes in Psalm 35 against themes in some of the quotations that chapter four examined in the following examples: the contrast with the inebriation of Lot (seen in the Passus I quotations) and those inebriated with God;<sup>14</sup> the unjust sinners of Sodom;<sup>15</sup> the destruction of sinners;<sup>16</sup> the focus on Christ and away from the devil that Psalm 35 inspires.<sup>17</sup> Through the use of Psalm 35, Langland foregrounds certain comparisons: the poet sets the unjust in opposition to those who turn to Christ. However, Langland’s use of this psalm also demonstrates how intricate a single Vulgate quotation

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<sup>13</sup> The poet repeats the same verse quotation from Psalm 35 in Passus X, again following a section on Baptism and sin (X. 409a cf. Ps. 35. 7).

<sup>14</sup> Gn. 19. 30-38 cf. Ps. 35. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Gn. 1. 26 cf. Ps. 35. 1-5.

<sup>16</sup> Ps. 144. 20 cf. Ps. 35. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. I lo. 4. 1-8, Ps. 67. 19-23.

can be for interpretation of *Piers*, and how diverse and varied the images that it may suggest to an audience immersed in Christian understanding.

#### 5.4 An Ephesians Quotation Context and its Associated Bible Texts in Passus V

As this thesis continues to argue, connections to subjects such as Baptism within the poem may be established *implicitly* through an assumption of audience appreciation of Christian biblical knowledge: sometimes these associations are found *explicitly* in the Vulgate context. This section will return to examine a quotation in Passus V, the context of which is rich in Baptism imagery and the baptismal principles which have been evaluated in both chapters on Baptism in this thesis. Moreover, this particular Vulgate quotation context further illustrates the premise that the matter of Langland's choice of Vulgate quotation might seem to be more complicated than a simple word choice from a *distinctio* or concordance.

Towards the end of Passus V, Langland reminds his audience of Christ's sacrifice, and makes direct reference to Baptism through an Ephesians quotation:

And sippe wiþ þi selue sone in oure sute deidest  
 On Good Fryday for mannes sake at ful tyme of þe day;  
 Ther þiself ne þi sone no sorwe in deep feledest,  
 But in oure secte was þat sorwe, and þi sone it ladde:  
*Capitium duxit captiuitatem.* (V. 488-491a cf. Eph. 4. 8)

The context of this Ephesians passage evidences again the recognised dichotomies in Baptism reference seen in chapter four: light and darkness, sight and blindness, good and evil, life and death. However, more than displaying a series of baptismal opposites, it focuses on the inseparability of Baptism and the Church, and becomes another challenge from Langland to his audience to live out the baptismal vows that they have made:

obsecro itaque vos ego vinctus in Domino ut digne ambuletis vocatione qua vocati estis cum omni humilitate et mansuetudine cum patientia subportantes invicem in caritate solliciti servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis unum corpus et unus spiritus sicut vocati estis in una spe vocationis vestrae unus Dominus una fides unum baptisma unus Deus et Pater omnium qui super omnes et per omnia et in omnibus nobis unicuique autem nostrum data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi propter quod dicit ascendens in altum *captivam duxit captivitatem* dedit dona hominibus [...] donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei et agnitionis Filii Dei in virum perfectum in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi [...] veritatem autem facientes in caritate crescimus in illo per omnia qui est caput Christus [...] hoc igitur dico et testificor in Domino ut iam non ambuletis sicut gentes ambulant in vanitate sensus sui tenebris obscuratum habentes intellectum alienati a vita Dei per ignorantiam quae est in illis propter caecitatem cordis ipsorum qui desperantes semet ipsos tradiderunt impudicitiae in operationem inmunditiae omnis in avaritia vos autem non ita didicistis Christum

[I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called: With all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit: as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ. Wherefore he saith: *Ascending on high, he led captivity captive: he gave gifts to men.* [...] Until we all meet into the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ: [...] But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ. [...] This then I say and testify in the Lord: That henceforward you walk not as also the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind: Having their understanding darkened: being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness. But you have not so learned Christ.] (Eph. 4. 1-20 quoting Ps. 67. 19)

Paul confirms that the baptised travel under the protection of grace: in ‘the unity of the Spirit’ (Eph. 4. 3). As has been argued in chapter four, grace and faith are necessary components of Baptism: Paul speaks of the ‘unity of faith’ (Eph. 4. 13) which will come when Christ returns to the earth, and exhorts the Ephesians (like Langland in *Piers*) to be true to their calling in Christ as ‘One body’ in the Church (Eph. 4. 4), ‘one baptism’ (Eph.

4. 5).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, although post-dating Langland, the Douai-Rheims translation (p. 766) introduces Psalm 67 (which Paul quotes in the Ephesians citation above) as: ‘The glorious establishment of the church of the New Testament, prefigured by the benefits bestowed on the people of Israel’, and its gloss (p. 767) for this verse in Psalm 67 also makes connection with the Baptism theme:

Carrying away with thee to heaven those who before had been the captives of Satan; and receiving from God the Father gifts to be distributed to men; even to those who were before unbelievers.

Paul urges the Ephesians to unite in their Baptism in the grace of God: a thought evidenced in Langland’s hope for his own Church. Langland’s vision in the C-text that the fourteenth-century Church would undergo this transformation, and live up to Paul’s exhortation for ‘one body’, ‘one baptism’ may be seen to be influenced by these Bible images: ‘Ac ar þat kyng come, as cronicles me tolde / Clerkes and Holy Kirke shal be clothed newe’ (C. V. 178-79).

The indivisibility of Baptism and the Church is a theme articulated in I Corinthians: ‘etenim in uno Spiritu omnes nos in unum corpus baptizati sumus sive Iudaei sive gentiles sive servi sive liberi et omnes unum Spiritum potati sumus’ [For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free: and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink.] (I Cor. 12. 13). Langland’s understanding of Baptism and the Church as indivisible is bound completely within this Bible teaching, and should be seen as inseparable from interpretation of *Piers* and its theme on Baptism. Such richness of multi-faceted concepts and meanings in the interrelated Ephesians and Psalm contexts display notions more complex than that the

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<sup>18</sup> Paul’s emphasis on ‘unity’ in this passage may even have been part of Langland’s vision of the ideal Church: ‘þat hous Vnite – Holy Chirche on Englissh’ (XIX. 331).

simple tool that *distinctiones* offer, and, again, suggest that Langland's command of the Bible was great. Recognition of the implication of Baptism (and the unity of the Church within that Baptism) adds another dimension to our appreciation of these lines in *Piers*. It might seem that Langland, with the vernacular reminders of the greatness of Christ's sacrifice for humankind,<sup>19</sup> in choosing this particular Ephesians quotation with its resonance with the Ascension,<sup>20</sup> and its emphasis on Church unity and Baptism, would also have galvanised his Christian audience to turn to Christ more closely in repentance, and renew their baptismal vows. It is, after all, Repentaunce who speaks these lines.<sup>21</sup>

### 5.5 Following Langland's Waymarks for Baptism in Passus X

Complex Vulgate contexts are only one way in which Langland directs his audience. Unlike signposts, waymarks are the subtle but clearly visible signs that walkers look for to assure themselves of their path and to lead them towards a given destination. With so many biblical allusions, direct Bible quotation, Bible contexts and associations, *Piers* seems rather involved, but less so if Langland's guidelines, his waymarks, are observed. Langland expects his reader to recall the relevant passages from the Bible when the poet particularly mentions a Bible author by name - in this next instance, Peter and Paul. For example, in Passus X, the poet has Will argue with Scripture about Baptism:

‘*Contra,*’ quod I, ‘by Crist! þat kan I repreue,  
And preuen it by Peter and by Poul boþe:  
That is baptized beþ saaf, be he riche or pouere.’ (X. 343-45)

Readers unfamiliar with the Bible might perhaps need some elucidation. To take Langland's reference to Peter first: the pertinent citation from Peter's Epistle, given by

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<sup>19</sup> V. 484a-506.

<sup>20</sup> Alford, *Guide*, p. 50.

<sup>21</sup> V. 478.

Langland as proof of Will's argument with the character, Scripture, likens the water of Baptism with the Flood, but again issues reminders of Christ's sacrifice and the obligation, as seen in the vows of Baptism, to resist sin if salvation is to be sought:<sup>22</sup>

melius est enim beneficientes si velit voluntas Dei pati quam malefacientes quia et Christus semel pro peccatis mortuus est iustus pro iniustis ut nos offerret Deo mortificatus carne vivificatus autem spiritu in quo et his qui in carcere erant spiritibus veniens praedicavit qui increduli fuerant aliquando quando expectabat Dei patientia in diebus Noe cum fabricaretur arca in qua pauci id est octo animae salvae factae sunt per aquam quod et vos nunc similis formae salvos facit baptismum non carnis depositio sordium sed conscientiae bonae interrogatio in Deum per resurrectionem Iesu Christi qui est in dextera Dei profectus in caelum subiectis sibi angelis et potestatibus et virtutibus

[For it is better doing well (if such be the will of God) to suffer than doing ill. Because Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust: that he might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit, In which also coming he preached to those spirits that were in prison: Which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was a building: wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. Whereunto baptism, being of the like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Who is on the right hand of God, swallowing down death that we might be made heirs of life everlasting: being gone into heaven, the angels and powers and virtues being made subject to him.] (I Pt. 3. 17-22)

When Langland issues these reminders, and directs us to specific Bible references, we need to follow the poet's guidelines: an audience can then recognise Langland's warning regarding proper action for a baptised Christian.

Langland, in the lines last quoted above, also refers to seeking proof from Paul's Epistles, and, again, the poet's audience needs to take both Apostles in conjunction.

Paul's passage on Baptism in Romans 6 has already been discussed in section 5.3 above,

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<sup>22</sup> *Peake's Commentary* (p. 1029) clarifies Peter's Epistle: '[In which...saveth you]' makes a comparison between the water of the Flood and the water of baptism, between the eight people in the ark and the Christians who are being addressed, and between the deliverance of those in the ark and the salvation of the Christians. The O[ld] T[estament] event is regarded as a type or foreshadowing of Christian baptism. [...] Baptism is not merely an external washing; it is the pledge of God's forgiveness. [...] [Verse] 21c indicates that the efficacy of baptism derives from Christ's resurrection. [Verse] 22 cf. Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:15'.

but I shall recapitulate here the central meaning of this Romans citation. As chapter four explored, with Baptism, the soul through grace becomes party to the salvation offered by Christ through his sacrifice. Paul informs the Romans that, through Baptism, the baptised share in Christ's death and Resurrection by becoming dead to sin and the power of the devil; in Baptism the 'old man' dies and a new life is born (Rm. 6. 6). With Baptism, the conflict of good and evil is evidenced: Christ wins a soul, Satan loses one, and Paul tells the Romans that, in the conduct of their life, Christians, after Baptism, must remember to whom they belong.<sup>23</sup>

Galatians has another possible source for Langland's reference. This citation, quoted below, stresses the importance of faith which, with repentance (as has been discussed previously in chapter four on Baptism), forms a constituent part of baptismal principle. Moreover Paul, as was seen in the Ephesians citation quoted in section 5.4 above emphasises the unity of the Church, the body of Christ, in Baptism:

*sed conclusit scriptura omnia sub peccato ut promissio ex fide Iesu Christi daretur  
credentibus prius autem quam veniret fides sub lege custodiebamur conclusi in  
eam fidem quae revelanda erat itaque lex pedagogus noster fuit in Christo ut ex  
fide iustificemur at ubi venit fides iam non sumus sub pedagogo omnes enim filii  
Dei estis per fidem in Christo Iesu quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis  
Christum induistis non est Iudaeus neque Graecus non est servus neque liber non  
est masculus neque femina omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu si autem  
vos Christi ergo Abrahae semen estis secundum promissionem heredes*

[But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise, by the faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe. But before the faith came, we were kept under the law shut up, unto that faith which was to be revealed. Wherefore the law was our pedagogue in Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after the faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue. For you are all children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.] (Gal. 3. 22-29)

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<sup>23</sup> Rm. 6. 11-14, 16.

By its implication, Langland's short comment quoted at the start of this section: 'And preuen it by Peter and by Poul bope: / That is baptized beþ saaf, be he riche or pouere.' (X. 344-45), deals with several points of theology through knowledge and understanding of the biblical context: Baptism, obviously, but also the freedom and promise of new life which Baptism offers; sin (and the tripartite strands that sin represented to the medieval mind); faith; grace; doing well and salvation.

All these topics can be seen as part of the Baptism theme as well as being major issues in *Piers*: Langland's reference to them through the contexts of Peter and Paul can be easily missed if Langland's waymark goes unrecognised, if Langland's explicit direction is not heeded, and the Bible contexts are not examined. Moreover, through these Bible contexts, Langland is able to exhort his audience (as do Peter and Paul) to live a life concomitant with their abjurations at Baptism. These Epistle passages stress the magnitude of what Christ offers, and, in consequence, inflict pain and guilt on the Christian soul who knows how they have failed in the duties and obligations inherent in their baptismal promises. Therefore, Langland's reference to Peter and Paul remains part of his debate on the theology of Baptism (which will culminate in Passus XI in the salvation of Trajan as an unbaptised pagan), but also delivers a stern directive to every baptised Christian soul. As such, Langland's waymarks deserve our attention.

#### 5.6 *Distinctiones*, Waymarks and Baptism in Passus XI

This section will continue to evaluate the Vulgate quotations in Passus XI in consecutive order, and to consider the way in which Langland may have used *distinctiones* here. However, also worthy of attention are the waymarks that Langland

positions in *Piers* concerning the places in which an audience might find Bible reference:

these are purposeful, and, in the following cases, illustrate the interrelation of these

Vulgate quotations with Baptism. In *Piers*, even seemingly unrelated Bible quotations

appear to link with Baptism themes. For example, when Langland writes: ‘*Non oderis*

*fratrem*’ (XI. 88 repeated at 93 - and therefore emphasised) the ruling stems from

Leviticus.<sup>24</sup> However, again, Langland refers us to Peter and Paul, to ‘take hem boþe to

witnesse’ (XI. 87). There is evidence to substantiate Langland’s claim - especially from a

poet whose continuous focus is on love and not hate: this passage in *Piers* speaks of

chastising one’s brother, not so much in terms of anti-fraternalism, but in the context of

compassion, as one’s brother in Christ: ‘Ac be neueremoore þe firste þe defaute to blame’

(XI. 103), and renewal: ‘*Nisi quis renatus fuerit*’ [Unless a man be born again.] (XI. 82a

cf. Io. 3. 5). If we examine Peter and Paul and look for passages on love not hate, we may

come closer to Langland’s meaning. Peter advocates the ethos of Baptism; to seek the

purification of the soul and to be born again in verses that stress brotherly love:

animas vestras castificantes in oboedientia caritatis in fraternitatis amore simplici  
ex corde invicem diligite adtentius renati non ex semine corruptibili sed  
incorruptibili per verbum Dei vivi et permanentis

[Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love, from a  
sincere heart love one another earnestly: Being born again, not of corruptible

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<sup>24</sup> Lv. 19. 17. Critics have generally concentrated on aspects of chastisement rather than Christian compassion in their search for source material. For discussion on medieval concepts of fraternal correction, see Edwin D. Craun, ““3e, by Peter and by Pou!”: Lewte and the Practice of Fraternal Correction’, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 15 (2001), 15-25, with responses from David C. Fowler (26-29), and Lawrence M. Clopper (30-34). Craun (p. 18) considers that no modern critic of *Piers* (including Skeat) ‘has found a credible Petrine text’, but remarks (p. 21 and note 9) that a thirteenth-century commentary connects Lv. 19. 17 with 2 Pt. 2. 15-16 (Balaam and his ass). For further discussion of this *Piers* passage, see Clopper, “*Songes of Rechelesnesse*”, pp. 305-07. However, Alford (*Glossary of Legal Diction*, p. xiii) writes that, amongst poets writing in the vernacular in this period, ‘Langland is arguably the most prone to exploit the double meanings of words’. Murtaugh (*Image of God*, p. 2) concurs: ‘In Langland we have a poet who, when faced with two alternative modes of meaning, generally tries for both at once’. Langland may well be discussing different aspects of brotherly love: anti-fraternal correction and ‘*caritas*’ and holding both in contention.

seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.] (I. Pt. 1. 22-23).<sup>25</sup>

In Romans Paul also teaches brotherly love and that, as in Baptism, Christians must turn their back on evil:

dilectio sine simulatione odientes malum adherentes bono caritatem fraternitatis invicem diligentes honore invicem praevenientes

[Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood: with honour preventing one another.] (Rm. 12. 9-10).<sup>26</sup>

However, when Langland adds: ‘þe Apostle seide’ to his second citation, ‘*Non oderis fratrem*’ (XI. 92), we should take note and read this as another of the poet’s waymarks.<sup>27</sup>

If we accept that reference to the Apostle is likely to mean John,<sup>28</sup> it is necessary to examine the associated Bible texts, for example, in I John. There are several citations that teach brotherly love, but also the tenets of Baptism: for example, I John 2 emphasises the dichotomy of light and darkness:

qui dicit se in luce esse et fratrem suum odit in tenebris est usque adhuc qui diligit fratrem suum in lumine manet et scandalum in eo non est qui autem odit fratrem suum in tenebris est et in tenebris ambulat et nescit quo eat quoniam tenebrae obcaecaverunt oculos eius

[He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light: and there is no scandal in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth: because the darkness has blinded his eyes.] (I Io. 2. 9-11)

<sup>25</sup> See also I Pt. 2. 17, 5. 14; II Pt. 1. 4-9.

<sup>26</sup> See also Rm. 14. 10-21; I Th. 4. 6-9 cf. Vulgate: ‘cum autem venisset Cephas Antiochiam in faciem ei restiti quia reprehensibilis erat’ [But when Cephas was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.] (Gal. 2. 11).

<sup>27</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 72) lists Leviticus as Langland’s source. Alford, however, although not mentioning John’s Epistle, makes a comparison with I Tim. 5. 20, a verse frequently used in anti-mendicant works: Vulgate: ‘peccantes coram omnibus argue ut et ceteri timorem habeant’ [Them that sin reprove before all: that the rest also may have fear.].

<sup>28</sup> Although modern theologians are unsure whether the Gospel writer and the author of the Epistles are one and the same person, these Vulgate contexts fit so well with what Langland is saying in *Piers* here about brotherly love that it might seem that the poet did not make such discrimination; for Langland the ‘Apostle’ seems to mean John. The Apostle’s hallmark (like Langland’s) is love.

Verses in I John 3 instil the importance of brotherly love, but also set up a contrast of those who are part of the body of Christ and those who are ‘children of the devil’:

in hoc manifesti sunt filii Dei et filii diaboli omnis qui non est iustus non est de Deo et qui non diligit fratrem suum [...] nos scimus quoniam translati sumus de morte in vitam quoniam diligimus fratres qui non diligit manet in morte

[In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever is not just is not of God, nor he that loveth not his brother. [...] We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.] (I Io. 3. 10-14)

A citation from I John 4 illustrates the hypocrisy of not living through the Gospel message in brotherly love:

si quis dixerit quoniam diligo Deum et fratrem suum oderit mendax est qui enim non diligit fratrem suum quem vidit Deum quem non vidit quomodo potest diligere et hoc mandatum habemus ab eo ut qui diligit Deum diligat et fratrem suum

[If any man say: I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother.] (I. Io. 4. 20-21)

However, any mention of lies resonates with association with the devil, as the father of lies,<sup>29</sup> and therefore, again, introduces an opposition of Christ and the devil which, as has been seen, is part of baptismal principle. This teaching on brotherly love, juxtaposed with deceit, evidenced in I John 4 is endorsed again by Langland through the Psalter in the poet’s next quotation, ‘in þe Sauter also seiþ Dauid þe prophete’ (XI. 94):

os tuum abundavit malitia et lingua tua concinnabat dolos sedens adversus fratrem tuum loquebaris et adversus filium matris tuae ponebas scandalum haec fecisti et tacui *existimasti inique quod ero tui similis* arguam te et statuam contra faciem tuam intellegite nunc haec qui obliviscimini Deum nequando rapiat et non sit qui eripiat

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<sup>29</sup> Io. 8. 44.

[Thy mouth hath aboundeth with evil: and thy tongue framed deceits. Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I was silent. Thou thoughtest unjustly that I should be like unto thee: but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face. Understand these things, you that forget God: lest he snatch you away and there be none to deliver you.] (XI. 95 cf. Ps. 49. 19-22)

It seems apparent from all these contexts that *distinctiones*, focusing on the word 'brother', may well have been a tool in Langland's composition at this point.<sup>30</sup>

That fact does not take account of so many other related issues in Passus XI which are brought to light through the contexts of Peter, Paul and John. Moreover, we should not gloss over the evidence that Langland has pre-supposed that his audience can recollect these Vulgate contexts at will – as the poet quite obviously does himself because he so specifically directs his audience where to look in the Bible.

This series of quotations based on brotherly love also bring to mind Baptism (the topic of Passus XI) and baptismal issues: purification and re-birth;<sup>31</sup> blindness and sight; darkness and light;<sup>32</sup> turning from evil to good.<sup>33</sup> Such a variety of meaning is evidenced by these Vulgate citations; Langland suggests infinitely more when he draws our attention to the Bible. What might appear to be a standard injunction on the *distinctiones* 'brother': '*Non oderis fratrem*', might also be considered a continuation of Langland's thinking about Baptism in the love of Christ - as well as evidencing how the poet enjoys holding in mind more than a single concept at one and the same time.

To follow this thesis' preference for examining each of Langland's quotations in turn, the next consecutive Vulgate quotation's context in Passus XI comes from Psalm 49

<sup>30</sup> Interspersed between the two quotations based on Leviticus, the poet uses a quotation from Matthew (XI. 90 cf. Mt. 7. 1), from the Sermon on the Mount, which teaches duty to one's brother. The issue of Langland and *distinctiones* will be further evaluated in the Conclusion of this thesis.

<sup>31</sup> I. Pt. 1.

<sup>32</sup> I. Io. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Rm. 12; I Io. 3.

which, while condemning evil speech against one's brother,<sup>34</sup> adds an apocalyptic rider: 'intellegite nunc haec qui obliviscimini Deum nequando rapiat et non sit qui eripiat' [Understand these things, you that forget God: lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you.] (Ps. 49. 22). Therefore when Langland adds next a quotation from Matthew from the Parable of the Marriage Feast: 'multi autem sunt vocati pauci vero electi' [For many are called, but few are chosen.] (Mt. 22. 14 cf. XI. 112, 114), it should come as no surprise when the poet begins to debate: 'Weiþer I were chose or no3t chose; on Holi Chirche I þou3te, / That vunderfonged me atte font for oon of Goddes chosene' (XI. 117-18). It seems that Langland might intend these apocalyptic reminders to prompt recall of baptismal vows.

Subsequently, Langland quotes from Isaiah: 'o omnes sitientes venite ad aquas' [All you that thirst, come to the waters.] (Is. 55. 1 cf. XI. 120a).<sup>35</sup> Isaiah continues with a profound summons to return to the ways of God, to hear his call while there is still time and to seek his mercy:

et qui non habetis argentum properate emite et comedite venite emite absque argento et absque ulla commutatione vinum et lac quare adpenditis argentum non in panibus et laborem vestrum non in saturitate audite audientes me et comedite bonum et delectabitur in crassitudine anima vestra inclinate aurem vestram et venite ad me audite et vivet anima vestra [...] quaerite Dominum dum inveniri potest invocate eum dum prope est derelinquat impius viam suam et vir iniquus cogitationes suas et revertatur ad Dominum et miserebitur eius et ad Deum nostrum quoniam multus est ad ignoscendum

[and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat. Come ye: buy wine and milk without money and without any price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which does not satisfy you? Hearken diligently to me and eat that which is good: and your soul shall be delighted in fatness. Incline your ear and come to me. Hear and your soul shall live. [...] Seek

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 49. 19-21 cf. XI. 95.

<sup>35</sup> Vulgate: 'o omnes sitientes venite ad aquas' cf. Langland's use: 'O vos omnes sicientes, venite...'. See also an associated text from the Apocalypse: Vulgate: 'ego sitiendi dabo de fonte aquae vivae gratis' [To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely.] (Apc. 21. 6).

ye the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord: and he will have mercy on him: and to our God; for he is bountiful to forgive.] (Is. 55. 1-7)

As examined through a short section of intricate and subtle Bible contexts, Langland's continual injunctions reiterate the need to seek God and spiritual food; to seek the light and to do well; to love your neighbour as yourself before Christ returns to judge the world: as Langland reminds us, apocalypse and Baptism are closely related.

Indeed, Baptism and salvation cannot be separated as Langland's next Vulgate quotation demonstrates because, as was seen in chapter four, faith is a pre-requisite for Baptism: '*Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit*' [He that believeth and is baptised.] (XI. 124a cf. Mc. 16. 16).<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as the richness and complexity of this biblical evidence displays, for Langland, *distinctiones* were tools, not an absolute, necessity nor all-encompassing but one limited device: perhaps like a group of tiny flowers in an open meadow of Bible material available in the poet's mind. This thesis suggests that Langland's command of the Bible was immense: the waymarks are another aspect of the poet's skill and should not be ignored.

#### 5.6.1 Baptism, Trajan and Another Quotation Waymark

Finally, in the examination of Passus XI Vulgate quotations, this section will turn to the passage on Trajan,<sup>37</sup> and Langland's compassionate discussion of the possibility of salvation for the unbaptised soul, which brings out clearly the way Langland's thinking connects Baptism with the issue of who is saved. The focus will not be the areas of study

<sup>36</sup> Vulgate: '*qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit salvus erit qui vero non crediderit condemnabitur*' [He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall he condemned.] (Mc. 16. 16).

<sup>37</sup> XI. 140-318.

covered already by numerous critics, but a continued emphasis on the Bible quotation contexts and their influence on interpretation.<sup>38</sup> Here the underlying theme remains Baptism with its reliance on trust and belief in God. The Latin quotation, '*Fides sua*' [her faith] (XI. 217 cf. Lc. 7. 50), refers to the story of how the woman with the alabaster jar finds salvation when Christ forgives her sin because of her belief. Langland emphasises faith when he writes:

For some wordes I fynde writen, were of Feiþes techyng,  
That saued synful men, as Seint Johan bereþ wnesse:  
*Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis.*  
Forþi lerne we þe lawe of loue as Oure Lord tau3te. (XI. 225-227)

The Latin quotation poses several complications - not least to decide where to look for the biblical context. Editors rightly assign the Bible quotation to either Matthew (7. 2) or Luke (6. 38), and seem to consider that Langland has mistaken the Bible reference.<sup>39</sup>

If, however, the reader disregards the editor's punctuation (in this case Schmidt), and continues to follow Langland's waymark to John, and to focus on the poet's concentration on 'faith' - and not on the Gospel reference - the picture is quite different.

John's Epistle has this to say on faith and belief:

omnis qui credit quoniam Iesus est Christus ex Deo natus est et omnis qui diligit eum qui genuit diligit eum qui natus est ex eo in hoc cognoscimus quoniam diligimus natos Dei cum Deum diligamus et mandata eius faciamus haec est enim caritas Dei ut mandata eius custodiamus et mandata eius gravia non sunt quoniam omne quod natum est ex Deo vincit mundum et haec est victoria quae vincit mundum fides nostra quis est qui vincit mundum nisi qui credit quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem Iesus Christus non in aqua

<sup>38</sup> See chapter four, note five, for examples of critics of Langland who have written on the theology of Baptism in *Piers*.

<sup>39</sup> See for examples: Donaldson, *Translation*, p. 112; Kane and Donaldson, *B Version*, p. 451; Schmidt, *Vision*, p. 177; William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Translation of the B-text*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by A.V.C. Schmidt, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 299, n. to p. 118. Schmidt states that there is 'no parallel in John'; William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, The Donaldson Translation, Middle English Text, Sources and Backgrounds, Criticism, Norton Critical Edition, ed. by Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2006), p. 175, n. 3. All these editions listed here give punctuation as Schmidt above.

solum sed in aqua et sanguine et Spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant Spiritus et aqua et sanguis et tres unum sunt [...] qui credit in Filio Dei habet testimonium Dei in se qui non credit Filio mendacem facit eum quoniam non credidit in testimonio quod testificatus est Deus de Filio suo et hoc est testimonium quoniam vitam aeternam dedit nobis Deus et haec vita in Filio eius est qui habet Filium habet vitam qui non habet Filium Dei vitam non habet haec scripsi vobis ut sciatis quoniam vitam habetis aeternam qui creditis in nomine Filii Dei

[Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And every one that loveth him who begot loveth him also who is born of him. In this we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the charity of God: That we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not heavy. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory which overcometh the world: Our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ: not by water only but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit which testifieth that Christ is the truth. And there are Three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one. And there are three that give testimony on earth: the spirit and the water and the blood. And these three are one. [...] He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself. He that believeth not the Son maketh him a liar: because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of his Son. And this is the testimony that God hath given to us eternal life. And this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son hath not life. These things I write to you that you may know that you have eternal life: you who believe in the name of the Son of God.] (I Io. 5. 1-8, 10-13)

Langland has demonstrated how John's Epistle spells out the doctrine on 'þe lawe of loue' that Christ taught (XI. 227).<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the poet has been constantly reminding us of the New Commandment to love God and to love one's neighbour. Langland's Vulgate quotation from Matthew merely endorses the exhortation to faith and love with an illustration to remind the reader of the consequences of failure to love one's neighbour: *Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis* [and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.] (XI. 226a cf. Mt. 7. 2).

<sup>40</sup> See also I. 86, V. 487b, IX. 64a cf. I Io. 4. 7-21.

There is no disconnection between the two references: Langland knows his Bible far better than we who live in the twenty-first century. As has been evidenced on several occasions, it appears important to close-read *Piers*, and to trust what Langland tells us when he directs his audience to seek specific biblical orientation. Trajan has already spoken of why he was saved through love and living in truth (with a pun on ‘Truth’):<sup>41</sup>

And I saued, as ye may see, wipouten syngynge of masses,  
By loue and by lernyng of my lyuyng in truþe,  
Brou3te me fro bitter peyne þer no biddyng my3te. (XI. 150-52)

In order to follow Langland, we need constantly to bear in mind Christian principles, in this case, love.

It is possible to identify a variety of strands which run continuously in and out of the Bible quotations’ contexts (as well as through the vernacular). Again, through Langland’s expectation and assumptions about his audience’s knowledge of the Bible context, the reader is led through concepts of the commandments, faith, Baptism and even to the doctrine of the Trinity similar to that set out so forcefully in the Athanasian Creed. Langland made no mistake with his reference to ‘Seint Johan’. There would have been absolutely no need to differentiate or explain this apparent ‘switch’ to a Christian audience well-versed in the Bible. Additionally, the medieval reader might also remember the first chapter of John’s Epistle which deals with sin, God’s faithfulness to us, and seeing in the light:

Quod fuit ab initio quod audivimus quod vidimus oculis nostris quod perspeximus et manus nostrae temptaverunt de verbo vitae et vita manifestata est et vidimus et testamur et adnuntiamus vobis vitam aeternam quae erat apud Patrem et apparuit nobis quod vidimus et audivimus adnuntiamus et vobis ut et vos societatem habeatis nobiscum et societas nostra sit cum Patre et cum Filio eius Iesu Christo et haec scribimus vobis ut gaudium nostrum sit plenum et haec est adnuntiatio quam

<sup>41</sup> Sister Davlin (‘Religious Writers’, p. 140) comments on this ‘mutual indwelling, effective likeness to God (as, for example, in Trajan, who lives in *treuthe* and is given salvation by the God who is *Treuthe*)’.

audivimus ab eo et adnuntiamus vobis quoniam Deus lux est et tenebrae in eo non sunt ullae si dixerimus quoniam societatem habemus cum eo et in tenebris ambulamus mentimur et non facimus veritatem si autem in luce ambulemus sicut et ipse est in luce societatem habemus ad invicem et sanguis Iesu Filii eius mundat nos ab omni peccato si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus ipsi nos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est si confiteamur peccata nostra fidelis est et iustus ut remittat nobis peccata et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate

[That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the word of life. For the life was manifested: and we have seen and do bear witness and declare unto you the life eternal, which was with the Father and hath appeared to us. That which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you: that you also may have fellowship with us and our fellowship may be with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you, that you may rejoice and your joy may be full. And this is the declaration which we have heard from him and declare unto you: That God is light and in him there is no darkness. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another: and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity.] (I. Io. 1. 1-9)

Here, as so often, familiarity with the wider biblical context, outside the boundaries of the immediate quotation that Langland places within his text, increases our understanding of *Piers*. Such wider biblical references, though implicit, also relate to the large-scale structure of the poem and its ideas. The biblical links in John's Epistle between, for example: faith, sight (light) and the cleansing of sin (darkness) augment similar themes in the poem at this juncture.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This thesis has taken the example of Baptism to illustrate the diversity of interpretation that is possible from a single Vulgate quotation. However, because the Bible, in Christian interpretation, is coherent, this random illustration might well be

applied to a variety of other themes: Penance, for example, or Truth. *Distinctiones* were (and still are) an extremely useful tool, but to think that Langland was reliant solely on their use is to diminish recognition and acceptance of the poet's Bible knowledge and Christian understanding.

Langland's directives, whether through Vulgate quotations and their contexts or biblical allusion or waymarks, can be subtle: the connections which the Bible contexts elicit in a mind familiar with the Bible are myriad. The poet may be seen to interrelate with Vulgate material, and to build on themes using biblical context: such skill illustrates the complexity of any theory concerning Langland's *distinctiones* use. Intersecting themes indicate that Langland's command of the Bible allowed him to select his quotations from recall of a vast collection of connected material; the poet could make selection to illustrate whatever he might need to discuss in *Piers*.

Langland expects an audience proficient with the Bible: the poet's waymark directions seem far more accurate than has been understood, but the matter needs to be addressed in greater detail than space in this thesis can allow. However, I absolutely believe that Langland use of *distinctiones* was from a position of strength and not necessity: the poet's mastery of biblical material suggests as much.

## Chapter Six

### Bible Context, Interpretation and the Sacrament of Ordination in *Piers*

#### 6.1 Introduction

In chapters four and five dealing with Baptism, Langland was seen to use the Bible and accepted Christian principles to explore ideas about the Sacrament in a profound but orthodox way. The quotations' Bible contexts were seen as intrinsic to interpretation of the poem, and to exemplify the basic elements of Baptism; Langland seeks to turn the blind to the light of Christ. However, despite his apparent orthodoxy, Langland could be unorthodox: for example, Trajan, an unbaptised pagan, follows the Christian doctrine of salvation; he is saved, not by Baptism, but '[b]y loue and by lernyng of my lyuyng in truþe' (XI. 151).<sup>1</sup> Langland continuously bears Truth / truth in mind through the Vulgate quotation context in both implicit and explicit ways, as chapter three showed.

Yet Langland also uses the Bible and biblical circumstance in a radical fashion to intensify his criticism of the Church. This chapter analyses Langland's choice of Vulgate quotation, and seeks to demonstrate how the Vulgate contexts can focus upon the blind ineptitude of priests, particularly bishops, and their failure to do their duty towards the community.<sup>2</sup> The vows of the Sacrament of Ordination (like Baptism) lay many duties

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<sup>1</sup> In C, Langland modifies this line: 'Loue withoute lele bileue as my lawe rihtfoel / Saued me, Sarrasyn, soule and body bothe' (C. XII. 88-89). There are several instances in the New Testament where Christ commends non-Jews. See, for some examples, the Good Samaritan in the Parable (Lc. 10. 25-37); the Samaritan leper (Lc. 16. 11-19; the Samaritan woman at the well (Io. 4. 1-30). C. David Benson considers that Trajan 'is detached from the effects of sin and need for redemption that are so central to the poem'. See C. David Benson, '*Piers Plowman* as Poetic Pillory: the Pillory and the Cross', in *Historical Inquiry*, ed. by Aers, pp. 31-54 (p. 48).

<sup>2</sup> Criticism of the sins of the clergy was prohibited by the Arundel Constitutions of 1407 and 1409: therefore Langland's late fourteenth-century satire of the clerical hierarchy was on the outer limits of this censorship. See Ross, *Sermons*, p. xxxviii, n. 2; Watson, 'Censorship', 822-64. For background on what the

and responsibilities on those who undertake such commitment: Langland's strong belief in this principle underlies much of his censure of the priesthood; the poet's denunciation of those clergy who fall short of their Ordination vows demonstrates his great anger. The depth of the poet's condemnation is often expressed only through the surrounding verses of the Vulgate quotation, and becomes apparent solely in the minds of those in Langland's audience who can locate the biblical quotation, and process its implications.

## 6.2 Heli and Other Blind Priests

Bearing in mind assumptions of audience knowledge, in sections 6.2 and 6.2.1 of this chapter, a passage from Passus X will be close-read in two short segments, biblical allusion sought, and each Bible reference examined in consecutive order. This chapter on Ordination seeks to investigate connections between blindness and truth, and to explore how Langland sees them in relation to the priesthood. As the New Testament frequently relates, Christ linked hypocrisy with blindness: both were seen as the greatest danger for a religious ministry.<sup>3</sup> Hypocrisy is untruth, and thus may be understood as a mirror image of truth. Langland, following Christ, considers that the fine-sounding words, '*bele*

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laity expected of the clergy in the period, see R.N. Swanson, 'Problems of the Priesthood in pre-Reformation England', *The English Historical Review*, 417 (October 1990), 845-69, especially pp. 845-55, 869-69. For an historical account of a fourteenth-century diocese, see William J. Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: the Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth Century*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). On education (requisite for progression to the priesthood), see Nicholas Orme, 'Langland and Education', *History of Education*, 11:4 (1982), 251-66.

<sup>3</sup> See, for some examples of Christ's condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees: Mt. 7. 3-5, 15. 1-20, 23. 1-33; Lc. 12. 1-3. For Paul, hypocrisy was a sign of the last days of the world: Vulgate: 'Spiritus autem manifeste dicit quia in novissimis temporibus discedent quidam a fide adtententes spiritibus erroris et doctrinis daemoniorum in hypocrisi loquentium mendacium et cauteriatam habentium suam conscientiam' [Now the Spirit manifestly saith that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils, Speaking lies in hypocrisy and having their conscience seared.] (I. Tim. 4. 1-2).

*paroles*' (XV. 115), the hypocrisy of 'preestes, prechours and prelates' (XV. 114)

damaged the Church;<sup>4</sup> through the hypocrisy of not keeping their Ordination vows.

When the poet refers to Heli, the blind priest,<sup>5</sup> it can surely be no coincidence that such mention comes in a passage from *Piers* about the importance of the Bible, God's (Truth's) word, which may be seen in direct contrast to the words of the hypocritical priests who vow at Ordination to preach and teach. Before the lines on Heli, Langland sets up a dichotomy between priests' blindness, their hypocrisy – and Truth / truth:

I rede ech a blynd bosard do boote to hymselfe –  
 As persons and parisshe preestes, þat preche sholde and teche  
 Alle maner men to amenden, bi hire myȝte.  
 This text was told yow to ben war, er ye tauȝte,  
 That ye were swiche as ye seyde to salve wiþ oþere.  
 For Goddes word wolde noȝt be lost – for þat wercheþ euere;  
 If it auailed noȝt þe commune, it myȝte auaille yowselfe.  
 Ac it semeþ now sooply, to [siȝte of þe worlde],  
 That Goddes word wercheþ no [wiȝt] on lered ne on lewed  
 But in swich a manere as Marc meneþ in þe Gospel:  
*Dum cecus ducit cecum, ambo in foueam cadunt.*  
 Lewed men may likne yow þus – þat þe been liþ in youre eiȝen,  
 And þe festu is fallen, for youre defaute  
 In alle maner men þoruȝ mansede preestes. (X. 266-78)

Not just the Vulgate quotation itself,<sup>6</sup> but the biblical allusions and biblical circumstance in these lines need to be carefully teased out, if we are to follow Langland's train of thought and interpret *Piers*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This passage on the priesthood and hypocrisy from Passus XV will be examined in detail in section 6.5.2 below. For further comment, see A.V.C. Schmidt, 'Lele Wordes and Bele Paroles: Some Aspects of Langland's Word-play', *The Review of English Studies*, ns., vol. 34, no. 134 (1983), 137-50 (pp. 140-41).

<sup>5</sup> X. 279-82 cf. I Rg. 4. 1-18.

<sup>6</sup> In the period, the quotation from Matthew's Gospel (Mt. 15. 14 cf. Lc. 6. 39) was used as a popular caution for the priesthood: for example, John Mirk uses it as an exemplum at the beginning of his *Instructions*. John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. by Edward Peacock, EETS, Original Series, 31, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn (London: published for EETS by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1868, 1902), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Langland refers to Mt. 7. 3-5, but see also Mt. 6. 22-23: Vulgate: 'Lucerna corporis est oculus si fuerit oculus tuus simplex totum corpus tuum lucidum erit si autem oculus tuus nequam fuerit totum corpus tuum tenebrosus erit si ergo lumen quod in te est tenebrae sunt tenebrae quantae erunt' [The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee, be darkness: the darkness itself how great shall it be!].

Langland's direct reference to a 'text' (X. 269) pre-supposes audience knowledge as Langland is not referring here to the Vulgate quotation that he uses later in these lines: the poet alludes to the passage from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel quoted below where Christ preaches the Kingdom of God, and warns against blind hypocrisy.<sup>8</sup> To the medieval mind and for medieval exegetes, Christ's own words were sacrosanct:<sup>9</sup> therefore, when Langland uses such quotations they hold particular weight. Langland's 'blynd bosard' (X. 266) reflects Christ's words against hypocrisy and blindness:

Quid autem vides festucam in oculo fratris tui et trabem in oculo tuo non vides aut quomodo dicis fratri tuo sine eiciam festucam de oculo tuo et ecce trabis est in oculo tuo hypocrita eice primum trabem de oculo tuo et tunc videbis eicere festucam de oculo fratris tui

[And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye: and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.] (Mt. 7. 3-5)

When Langland paraphrases Matthew briefly, it again illustrates that the poet expected his audience to recognise the context of the line: 'þe beam liþ in youre ei3en' (X. 276).

Yet the extended Vulgate context is also relevant: Matthew continues:

Nolite dare sanctum canibus neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos ne forte conculcent eas pedibus suis et conversi dirumpant vos

[Give not that which is holy to dogs. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine: lest perhaps they trample them under their feet: and turning upon you, they tear you.] (Mt. 7. 6)

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<sup>8</sup> Langland refers to Christ's similar teaching on hypocrisy with two earlier quotations in *Piers* which the poet takes from Luke (X. 262a cf. Lc. 6. 41; X. 264a cf. Lc. 6. 42. See Alford, *Guide*, p. 66). Langland's waymark: 'Marc menep in þe Gospel' will be discussed later in this section.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Wailes describes how exegetes had more room for interpretation on topics (in this case the parables) on which Christ had not spoken. Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1987), p. 100. Even some modern Bibles continue to accentuate Christ's words by printing them in red.

Behind Langland's thinking that the blind, foolish clergy, 'do boote to hymselfe' (X. 266), need to make amends, and heal themselves of hypocrisy, '[t]hat ye were swiche as ye seyde to salve wiþ opere' (X. 270), there could be a sense that the 'pearls' of the Bible are being given to swine.

To return to the painstaking analysis of the *Piers* passage: Langland urges the clergy to look more closely at the Bible: 'For Goddes word wolde no3t be lost – for þat wercheþ euere; / If it auailed no3t þe commune, it my3te auaille yowselfe' (X. 271-72). If we follow Langland's clear direction, his waymark, and look more carefully at Mark's Gospel: 'as Marc menep in þe Gospel' (X. 275), particularly at the verses which describe similar teaching to that part of Matthew from which Langland's quoted Vulgate reference comes: '*Dum cecus ducit cecum, ambo in foueam cadunt*' [if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.] (Mt. 15. 14 cf. X. 275a),<sup>10</sup> there is a passage where Christ, following Isaiah, criticises the hypocritical Pharisees, the religious authorities who mirror the falsehood of the fourteenth-century priesthood:

at ille respondens dixit eis bene prophetavit Esaias de vobis hypocritis sicut scriptum est populus hic labiis me honorat cor autem eorum longe est a me in vanum autem me colunt docentes doctrinas praecepta hominum relinquentes enim mandatum Dei tenetis traditionem hominum baptismata urceorum et calicum et alia similia his facitis multa

[But he answering, said to them: Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men.* For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pots and cups: and many other things you do like to these.] (Mc. 7. 6-8)<sup>11</sup>

Isaiah, too, is relevant to understanding *Piers*. As may be seen in the full Isaiah passage quoted below, when Langland writes: 'That Goddes word wercheþ no [wi]3t on

<sup>10</sup> See Mt. 15. 1-20 cf. Mc. 7. 1-23.

<sup>11</sup> Christ's quotation is from Is. 29. 13. See also Mt. 15. 7-9.

lered ne on lewed' (X. 274), it could well be a reference to the learned and the illiterate men in Isaiah: the 'lered' who will not read the book [the Bible] and the 'lewed', who cannot. Isaiah's citation comes from a prophecy that includes a passage on hypocrisy, which also augments Langland's attack on those members of the priesthood who live in spiritual torpor; those for whom the book is sealed; whose 'works are in the dark' (Is. 29. 15); whose hearts stray far from God into earthly concerns:

quoniam miscuit vobis Dominus spiritum soporis claudet oculos vestros prophetas et principes vestros qui vident visiones operiet et erit vobis visio omnium sicut verba libri signati quem cum dederint scienti litteras dicent lege istum et respondebit non possum signatus est enim et dabitur liber nescienti litteras diceturque ei lege et respondebit nescio litteras et dixit Dominus eo quod adpropinquat populus iste ore suo et labiis suis glorificat me cor autem eius longe est a me et timuerunt me mandato hominum et doctrinis ideo ecce ego addam ut admirationem faciam populo huic miraculo grandi et stupendo peribit enim sapientia a sapientibus eius et intellectus prudentium eius abscondetur vae qui profundi estis corde ut a Domino abscondatis consilium quorum sunt in tenebris opera et dicunt quis videt nos et quis novit nos

[For the Lord hath mingled for you the spirit of a deep sleep: he will shut up your eyes: he will cover your prophets and princes, that see visions. And the vision of all shall be unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which when they shall deliver to one that is learned, they shall say: Read this. And he shall answer: I cannot for it is sealed. And the book shall be given to one that knoweth no letters, and it shall be said to him: Read. And he shall answer: I know no letters. And the Lord said: Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me, and they have feared me with the commandment and doctrines of men: Therefore, behold I will proceed to cause an admiration in this people, by a great and wonderful miracle: for wisdom shall perish from their wise men, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. Woe to you that are deep of heart, to hide your counsel from the Lord! And their works are in the dark, and they say; Who seeth us, and who knoweth us?] (Is. 29. 10-15)

No doubt Langland follows Christ's teaching, and, by drawing attention to Mark, also means to incorporate into his audience's Christian understanding these Old Testament references: words which are loaded with the expectation of priestly duty, and warnings to priestly authority that their blind hypocrisy will be revealed in the light that is Christ.

To return to Langland's waymark, 'as Marc meneþ in þe Gospel' (X. 275), and to continue teasing out the biblical references, the main point here in *Piers* is the problem of hypocritical priests and 'Goddess word' (X. 274); therefore we need to look again at Christ's teaching in Mark's Gospel, which examines how the Pharisees have made 'void the word of God' (Mc. 7. 13). Mark continues:

et dicebat illis bene irritum facitis praeceptum Dei ut traditionem vestram servetis  
 Moses enim dixit honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam [...] vos autem dicitis si  
 dixerit homo patri aut matri corban quod est donum quodcumque ex me tibi  
 profuerit et ultra non dimittitis eum quicquam facere patri suo aut matri  
 rescindentes [*rescindere*, to rescind, revoke, abrogate a law] verbum Dei per  
 traditionem vestram quam tradidistis et similia huiusmodi multa facitis

[And he said to them: Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition. For Moses said: *Honour thy father and thy mother*. [...] But you say: If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban (which is a gift) whatsoever is from me shall profit thee.<sup>12</sup> And further you suffer him not to do anything for his father or mother. Making void the word of God by your own tradition, which you have given forth. And many other such like things you do.] (Mc. 7. 9-13 - my underlining)<sup>13</sup>

All the Bible citations from Mark, Isaiah and Matthew quoted above intensify Langland's argument about the priesthood's hypocrisy, and form part of any understanding of the *Piers* passage, but Mark holds particular, important resonance for Langland regarding the word of God.

Yet editors of *Piers*, as can be seen from their punctuation, consider that Langland mistakes the Gospel from which the poet's quotation comes.<sup>14</sup> I would positively

<sup>12</sup> According to the *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (p. 417), 'Corban' means 'oblation' in Hebrew: this word is 'peculiar to Ezekiel and the Priestly material of the Pentateuch, for altar offerings, either the fixed obligatory dues, or free-will votive gifts. It is probably to this latter kind of gift that Christ refers in Mk. 7: 11 when He objects to the practice of letting 'Corban' take precedence over the duty of maintaining one's parents'.

<sup>13</sup> The line relevant to my argument is underlined; the italicised line is from the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20. 12), and therefore copied exactly from the Douai-Rheims translation.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Schmidt, *Parallel-Text Edition*, used in this thesis, but see also Kane and Donaldson, *B Version*, p. 423. Donaldson (*Alliterative Verse Translation*, p. 97) changes 'Mark' to 'Matthew' in the text. However, the manuscripts appear to vary between the use of Mark and Matthew. See Kane and Donaldson,

disagree: the poet is not wrong. Langland comments on the efficacy of God's word: 'þat wercheþ euere' (X. 271), but when the poet writes: 'Goddess word wercheþ no [wi]3t on lered ne on lewed / But in swich a manere as Marc meneþ in þe Gospel' (X. 274-75), Langland refers not *forward* to the Vulgate quotation from Matthew: '*Dum cecus ducit cecum, ambo in foueam cadunt*' (X. 275a), but *back* to what Mark says about '[m]aking void the word of God': 'Goddess word wercheþ no [wi]3t'. No doubt Langland's fear is that God's word (which is God's Law) might become ineffectual, because it would become unbelievable from the mouth of a hypocrite (who also fails in his duty and responsibility to preach and teach God's word to his people).<sup>15</sup> Langland specifically directs his audience to look in Mark: this suggests that the poet has expectation of an audience very familiar with Bible nuance, and capable of recognising and differentiating between the Gospels. Such a command of the Gospels could not have been uncommon amongst those who heard the Liturgy regularly. It is therefore safe to assume that Langland uses both Mark and Matthew as part of his argument; the poet makes his stance on hypocritical priests '[m]aking void the word of God', but then goes on to use a quotation from Matthew's Gospel to augment his attitude about the dangers of blind leaders: Matthew does not use the words '[m]aking void the word of God' which are peculiar to Mark.<sup>16</sup>

Neither does Langland contradict himself: it is in the 'si3te of þe worlde' that the problem lies: 'Ac it semeþ now sooply, to [si3te of þe worlde], / That Goddess word

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*B Version*, p. 423, note to l. 281. Perhaps the variation might be due to a particular scribe's own familiarity with the Gospels.

<sup>15</sup> This technique of Langland's, to use a waymark, and then to use an illustrative quotation from a *different* Bible source, is typical. For another example, see chapter five, section 5.6.1, above.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew speaks only of making 'void the commandment of God' (not of making void God's word; Mark uses both expressions): Vulgate: 'et non honorificabit patrem suum aut matrem et irritum fecistis mandatum Dei propter traditionem vestram' (Mt. 15. 6 cf. Mc. 7. 9 quoted above).

wercheþ no [wi]3t on lered ne on lewed' (X. 273-74), with religious authority's behaviour, not in God's word. The surrounding verses of Langland's quotation from Matthew make this point clear:

at ille respondens ait omnis plantatio quam non plantavit Pater meus caelestis  
eradicabitur Sinite illos caeci sunt duces caecorum caecus autem *si caeco ducatum  
praestet ambo in foveam cadunt*

[But he answering, said: Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.] (Mt. 15. 13-14)<sup>17</sup>

The world ('þe worlde', X. 273), as understood in the sense of the world, the flesh and the devil, is blind, as are the reprehensible ordained leaders whose hypocritical failings also makes those in the world and in their charge, blind : 'And þe festu is fallen, for youre defaute / In alle maner men þoru3 mansede preestes' (X. 277-78).

Taken together, the Vulgate contexts from Mark, Isaiah and Matthew given above, all introduced by Langland himself in the *Piers* passage quoted at the beginning of this section, appear to suggest certain guiding principles, a warning, to the priesthood: do not be blind or live in darkness; look carefully at God's word, seek Truth / truth, and be sure that you are worthy of preaching and teaching scripture to others: God's word must not be made void through your hypocrisy; failure will deprive you of your soul's salvation, and you will fall into the pit with the devil.<sup>18</sup> Without knowledge or understanding of the biblical allusion and circumstance, the interpretation of these lines of *Piers* cannot be complete, and the editing may be seen as inaccurate. Moreover, close-reading of these lines of *Piers* against the Bible demonstrates that Langland's knowledge

<sup>17</sup> This quotation, although apparently based soundly on Matthew (cf. Lc. 6. 39), comes from penitential texts, and is not an exact Bible quotation: see Alford, *Guide*, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> In Christian understanding, mention of 'the pit' suggests the abode of the devil and the damned: see Apc. 9. 1-11; 17. 8; 20. 1-15; 21. 8.

of the Bible was immense: the waymark to Mark's Gospel does not indicate any necessity of an intermediary in the form of exegesis or commentary, but requires direct and intimate knowledge of the Bible itself. Without doubt, if the biblical background is lacking, Langland's greater condemnation of Church leaders to fulfil the duties and responsibilities of Ordination cannot be fully appreciated.

### 6.2.1 Heli and the Sins of Other Priests

As close-reading seems to have so much to offer regarding interpretation of *Piers*, this section will continue the practice, and turn now to Langland's discussion of Heli, the blind priest; *Piers* and the Bible will continue to be close-read together in order to analyse the next section of Passus X in relation to the poet's condemnation of the Ordained:

The Bible bereþ wnesse þat alle þe [barnes] of Israel  
 Bittre abou3te þe giltes of two badde preestes.  
 Offyn and Fynes: for hir coueteise  
*Archa Dei* mysshapped and Ely brak his nekke.  
 Forþi, ye correctours, claweþ heron, and correcteþ first yowselue,  
 And þanne mowe ye manliche seye, as Dauid made þe Sauter:  
*Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis: Arguam te,  
 et statuam contra faciem tuam.*  
 And þanne shul burel clerkes ben abashed to blame yow or to greue,  
 And carpen no3t as þei carpe now, and calle yow doumbe houndes –  
*Canes non valentes latrare* –  
 And drede to wraþe yow in any word, youre werkmanshipe to lette,  
 And be prester at youre preiere þan for a pound of nobles,  
 And al for youre holynesse – haue ye þis in herte. (X. 279-90)

In the first Latin reference '*Archa Dei*', the symbol of God's presence, Langland says the Ark 'mysshapped' (X. 282) because of the covetousness of the priests, Ophni and Phinees (X. 281), but the Bible just states that it 'was taken', '*et arca Dei capta est*' (I Rg. 4. 11,

17, 19, 21, 22).<sup>19</sup> This apparent invention might be because Mark's Gospel (in the passage discussed in section 6.2 above) relates a slightly different list of the evils that defile humankind from those enumerated in Matthew.<sup>20</sup> One such difference is that Mark's account includes the sin of covetousness: '*avariti[a]*' (Mc. 7. 22), one of the primary criticisms of fourteenth-century clergy, and, as such, it could be considered further reason to believe that Langland is indeed thinking about Mark's Gospel as he writes.

To turn to the second Bible quotation in the Passus X passage quoted above in this section, when Langland speaks of the Psalter,<sup>21</sup> he encourages the clerical orders to change their ways: - '*panne mowe ye manliche seye*' (X. 284) - and therefore boldly and with religious courage to say the lines from Psalm forty-nine that the poet quotes:

*'Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis: Arguam te, et statuam contra faciem tuam'* [Thou thoughtest unjustly that I should be like to thee: but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face.] (Ps. 49. 21). From use of these psalmic lines, and his chastisement of the fourteenth-century clergy here, Langland might also perhaps have been justifying his own reproof of the Ordained ministry, and recalling how Paul stood against Peter when the former Pharisee thought that the 'rock' of the Church was behaving in an inappropriate way and encouraging hypocrisy: '*sed cum vidissem quod non recte ambularent ad veritatem evangelii dixi Cephae coram omnibus*' [But when I saw that they

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<sup>19</sup> Vulgate: '*et arca Dei capta est duoque filii Heli mortui sunt Ofni et Finees*' (I Rg. 4. 11); '*et arca Dei capta est*' (I Rg. 4. 17); '*capta est arca Dei*' (I Rg. 4. 21); '*capta esset arca Dei*' (I. Rg. 4. 19, 22). According to the *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (p. 104), the Ark of the Covenant was 'symbolically interpreted by the Christian Fathers and theologians', and associated with a rich symbolism wherein the Ark signifies 'the Lord'.

<sup>20</sup> Mc. 7. 20-23 cf. Mt. 15. 16-20.

<sup>21</sup> X. 284-85.

walked not uprightly unto the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all.] (Gal. 2. 14).<sup>22</sup>

Consistently the Psalm's wider circumstance links with the biblical contexts of the quotations in *Piers* discussed above in section 6.2: the Psalm refers to those who hate discipline and cast God's words behind them;<sup>23</sup> their speech is evil and full of deceit.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the Psalm's penultimate verse contains an apocalyptic warning: relevant, in this instance, to hypocritical, fourteenth-century Ordained ministers: 'intellegite nunc haec qui obliviscimini Deum nequando rapiat et non sit qui eripiat' [Understand these things, you that forget God: lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you.] (Ps. 49. 22).<sup>25</sup> Therefore the Psalm's context continues to stress the import of the Mark,

<sup>22</sup> See Gal. 2. 1-14, especially verse 11: Vulgate: 'cum autem venisset Cephas Antiochiam in faciem ei restiti quia reprehensibilis erat' [But when Cephas was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.]. See also: Vulgate: 'et ego dico tibi quia tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam et portae inferi non praevalent adversum eam' [And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.] (Mt. 16. 18, but for how Simon came to be called Cephas (Peter), see Io. 1. 42).

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 49. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Ps. 49. 19-20.

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 49: Vulgate: 'PSALMUS ASAPH Deus deorum Dominus locutus est et vocavit terram a solis ortu usque ad occasum ex Sion species decoris eius Deus manifeste veniet Deus noster et non silebit ignis in conspectu eius exardescet et in circuitu eius tempestas valida advocabit caelum desursum et terram discernere populum suum congregare illi sanctos eius qui ordinant testamentum eius super sacrificia et adnuntiabunt caeli iustitiam eius quoniam Deus iudex est DIAPSALMA audi populus meus et loquar tibi Israhel et testificabor tibi Deus Deus tuus ego sum non in sacrificiis tuis arguam te holocausta autem tua in conspectu meo sunt semper non accipiam de domo tua vitulos neque de gregibus tuis hircos quoniam meae sunt omnes ferae silvarum iumenta in montibus et boves cognovi omnia volatilia caeli et pulchritudo agri mecum est si esuriero non dicam tibi meus est enim orbis terrae et plenitudo eius numquid manducabo carnes taurorum aut sanguinem hircorum potabo immola Deo sacrificium laudis et redde Altissimo vota tua et invoca me in die tribulationis et eruam te et honorificabis me DIAPSALMA peccatori autem dixit Deus quare tu enarras iustitias meas et adsumis testamentum meum per os tuum tu vero odisti disciplinam et proiecisti sermones meos retrorsum si videbas furem currebas cum eo et cum adulteris portionem tuam ponebas os tuum abundavit malitia et lingua tua concinnabat dolos sedens adversus fratrem tuum loquebaris et adversus filium matris tuae ponebas scandalum haec fecisti et tacui existimasti inique quod ero tui similis arguam te et statuam contra faciem tuam intellegite nunc haec qui obliviscimini Deum nequando rapiat et non sit qui eripiat sacrificium laudis honorificabit me et illic iter quod ostendam illi salutare Dei' [The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken: and he hath called the earth. From the rising of the sun, to the going down thereof: out of Sion the loveliness of his beauty. God shall come manifestly: our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. A fire shall burn before him: and a mighty tempest shall be round about him. He shall call heaven from above, and the earth, to judge his people. Gather ye together his saints to him: who set his covenant before sacrifices. And the heavens shall declare his justice: for God is judge. Hear, O my people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify to thee: I am God, thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy

Isaiah and Matthew references, and endorses Langland's argument about the importance of truth and God's word as discussed.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Psalm sets up contrasts between saints and sinners which reflect Langland's theme about priests at this point in the poem:<sup>27</sup> furthermore, the saints, unlike Heli's sons, 'set [God's] covenant before sacrifices' (Ps. 49. 5).<sup>28</sup> The Bible background can be seen to add vitality, and to strengthen the poet's reasoning in *Piers* concerning the state of the Church. The poet will no longer be 'silent' ('haec fecisti et tacui', Ps. 49. 21), and his chastisement of the 'false brethren' ('falsos fratres', Gal. 2. 4) of the fourteenth-century ministry becomes intensified through the medium of biblical circumstance.<sup>29</sup>

With the final Vulgate quotation quoted above in this section, Langland encourages the ecclesiastical 'dourbe houndes' (X. 287) to change: '*Canes non valentes latrare*' [dumb dogs not able to bark.] (X. 287a); those in Church authority, 'ye correctours' (X. 283), must 'correcteþ first yowselue' (X. 283) before they can – or should – bark.<sup>30</sup> The context of the Isaiah 'dumb dogs' passage must have given

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sacrifices: and thy burnt offerings are always in my sight. I will not take calves out of thy house: nor he goats out of thy flocks. For all the beasts of the woods are mine: the cattle on the hills, and the oxen. I know all the fowls of the air: and with me is the beauty of the field. If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? or shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God the sacrifice of praise: and pay thy vows to the most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. But to the sinner God hath said: Why dost thou declare my justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hast hated discipline: and hast cast my words behind thee. If thou didst see a thief thou didst run with him: and with adulterers thou hast been a partaker. Thy mouth hath abounded with evil, and thy tongue framed deceits. Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son: These things hast thou done, and I was silent. Thou thoughtest unjustly that I should be like to thee: but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face. Understand these things, you that forget God; lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you.] (Ps. 49. 1-22).

<sup>26</sup> X. 266-75a.

<sup>27</sup> Saints: Ps. 49. 1-15; Sinners: Ps. 49. 16-22.

<sup>28</sup> Vulgate: 'congregate illi sanctos eius qui ordinant testamentum eius super sacrificia' (Ps. 49. 5). Cf. 1 Rg. 2. 12-17. This citation concerning Heli's sons is discussed further in section 6.3 below.

<sup>29</sup> As was argued in chapter 5.6, Langland could be thinking of 'fratros' more literally as brother in Christ, and not necessarily always as 'brother' in terms of the friars.

<sup>30</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 66) writes that Langland's usage of the verse 'is commonly cited in reproof of negligent priests'. For discussion of the 'dourbe houndes' quotation, see Alfred L. Kellogg, 'Langland and

inspiration for the criticism of sleeping bishops who did not protect the sheep in their pastoral care.<sup>31</sup> Isaiah reads:

speculatores eius caeci omnes nescierunt universi *canes muti non valentes latrare*  
videntes vana dormientes et amantes somnia et canes inpudentissimi nescierunt  
saturitatem ipsi pastores ignoraverunt intellegentiam omnes in viam suam  
declinaverunt unusquisque ad avaritiam suam a summo usque ad novissimum

[His watchmen are all blind. They are all ignorant: dumb dogs not able to bark, seeing vain things, sleeping, and loving dreams. And most impudent dogs, they never had enough: the shepherds themselves knew no understanding. All have turned aside into their own way, every one after his own gain, from the first even to the last.] (Is. 56, 10-11)

Biblically, watchmen are prophets;<sup>32</sup> those who listen to the word of God and speak it to the people. Langland's contention concerning the fourteenth-century ecclesiastical equivalents was that they were not merely ignorant and obtuse, but failing in their duty to serve both God and their neighbour: they have 'turned aside into their own way'.

Again, the surrounding verses from Isaiah alert an audience to the problems of blindness: blind bishops cannot see Truth / truth. Langland's urgency remains centred on 'Goddess word' (X. 271-75), and the obligation of priests (especially bishops) through the vows of the Sacrament of Ordination to 'preche' and 'teche' (X. 267). As Langland says about those who have an obligation to propagate the Gospel, their interests lie elsewhere:

Ac now is Religion a rydere, a romere by stretes,  
A ledere of louedayes and a lond buggere,  
A prikere [vp]on a palfrey fro manere to manere,  
An heep of houndes at his ers as he a lord were. (X. 305-08)

It appears that the poet continues to hold the 'houndes' of the Isaiah quotation in mind in his satire concerning the mercenary motives, the covetousness ('*avariti[a]*', Mc. 7. 22) of

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the "Canes Muti", in *Essays in Literary History Presented to J. Milton French*, ed. by Rudolf Kirk and C.F. Main (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), pp. 25-35.

<sup>31</sup> See, for a manuscript illustration example, MS Douce 104, fol. 44, an Anglo-Irish manuscript dated 1427 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in Kerby-Fulton and Despres, *Iconography*, figure 18.

<sup>32</sup> Ez. 3. 17, 33. 7.

the clergy; Langland derides the Ordained, in the same way as does Isaiah: ‘every one after his own gain’.

### 6.2.2. Associated Gospel Contexts and Inadequate Priests

To add one last point concerning Langland’s Bible quotation from Matthew:

‘*Dum cecus ducit cecum* [...]’ [if the blind lead the blind.] (X. 275a cf. Mt. 15. 14), the poet, in criticising Church authority, follows Christ’s example: the Vulgate quotation is part of Christ’s rebuke of the Pharisees.<sup>33</sup> However, as has been frequently evidenced in this thesis, the Bible has many associated and interrelated texts, and this quotation also appears in Luke’s version of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>34</sup> As can be seen from comparing both Gospels from the Vulgate as set out in notes thirty-three and thirty-four below, neither quotation reflects Langland’s exact use. Therefore, although it remains likely that Matthew was the source because of the connection with Mark’s Gospel discussed above in section 6.2 above, it cannot be certain, and the contexts of the Luke citation could be equally relevant. As Langland references Luke for the quotation elsewhere (in a *Passus*

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<sup>33</sup> Vulgate: ‘*Sinite illos caeci sunt duces caecorum caecus autem si caeco ducatum praestet ambo in foveam cadunt*’ [Let them alone: they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.] (Mt. 15. 14). Wyclif also placed the reform of the priesthood at the forefront of his proposals, and his Bible use demonstrates a repeated comparison of corrupt clergy (and friars) to the Pharisees. For examples, see *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-71), vol. I, Sermons on the Gospels for Sundays and Festivals, pp. 14-17, 19-21, 24-27, 280-83. For further Wycliffite use of the Pharisees as illustration in sermons, and of their constant condemnation of hypocrisy within the priesthood, see also Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. II, pp. 71-76; 82- 87; Hudson, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. I, pp. 238-39. For the occasion of Wycliffite differentiation of ‘scribes’ as ‘prelats’ (or ‘secular prelates’), and ‘religious’ (or ‘newe religious’) as ‘pharisees’, see Hudson, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. I, pp. 232-33, ll. 1-31; pp. 244-45, ll. 6-15. In the manuscripts of *Piers*, scribes frequently draw attention to the parts of the poem that refer to the ‘obligations and failures of clerics’. See C. David Benson, and Lynne S. Blanchfield (with acknowledgements to the work of Marie-Claire Uhart), *The Manuscripts of ‘Piers Plowman’: the B-version* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Vulgate: ‘*Dicebat autem illis et similitudinem numquid potest caecus caecum ducere nonne ambo in foveam cadent*’ [And he spoke also to them a similitude: Can the blind lead the blind? Do they not both fall into the ditch?] (Lc. 6. 39).

that also deals with the inadequacies of the clergy),<sup>35</sup> it is evident, once again, that the poet was very familiar with the different Gospel accounts. A Christian audience would also be conversant with the Gospels from the Liturgy, and both versions and their contexts could well be brought to mind: such comprehension of the Bible reference amongst Langland's audience would inevitably affect reception and interpretation of *Piers*.

The Lucan verse that immediately follows the '*Dum cecus ducit cecum*' quotation proves pertinent: 'Non est discipulus super magistrum perfectus autem omnis erit sicut magister eius' [The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfect, if he be as his master.] (Lc. 6. 40).<sup>36</sup> *Peake's Commentary* (p. 830) adds:

In Luke [the verse] means that to avoid becoming a blind guide one must exercise self-criticism. Luke seems in these sayings to have in mind the disciple considered as an apostle; they are concerned with missionary and pastoral functions. This marks a difference from Matthew's sermon, which applies to all Christians as such.

*Peake* (though a modern Anglican commentary) remains apposite in most instances, and, for readers of this thesis unacquainted with the Bible, such explanations may be useful. In this case, the biblical emphasis on 'the disciple considered as an apostle', indicating those fore-runners of Church authority, would not have been lost on Langland. Moreover, the immediate context in this chapter of Luke also contains themes about the efficacy and probity of the priesthood, so close to Langland's purpose in *Piers*, particularly at this juncture: the salvation of the lay community is jeopardised by hypocritical priests; the people cannot 'gather figs from thorns':

Non est enim arbor bona quae facit fructus malos neque arbor mala faciens fructum bonum unaquaeque enim arbor de fructu suo cognoscitur Neque enim de

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<sup>35</sup> XII. 184a cf. Lc. 6. 39.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mt. 10. 24; Io. 13. 16, 15. 20.

spinis colligunt ficus neque de rubo vindemiant uvam Bonus homo de bono thesauro cordis sui profert bonum et malus homo de malo profert malum ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur Quid autem vocatis me Domine Domine et non facitis quae dico

[For there is no good tree that bringeth forth evil fruit: nor an evil tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For every tree is known by its fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns: nor from a bramble bush do they gather the grape. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And why call you me Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say?] (Lc. 6. 43-46)

Again, it is worthwhile looking at *Peake* (p. 830):

[Verses] 43-44. Only a good disciple can (not be a blind guide but) produce good converts. A missionary who is a 'thorn' cannot bear fruit. 45-46 warns against false disciples.

Langland did not consider many of the priests that he knew to be good disciples, 'good fruit': they were not keeping the Bible passages in their hearts, or following Christ's instruction to preach the Kingdom of God.<sup>37</sup> As Ordained ministers, such neglect is not just hypocritical but disobedient: they 'do not the things which I say'. Vulgate contexts may be seen to remain part of the overall understanding of *Piers*.<sup>38</sup>

To take the argument on the importance of biblical contexts a step further:

Langland (and no doubt many of his medieval audience, too) appears to have a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, and, when Bible contexts are recalled, words such as 'good fruit', which appear in several places in scripture, tend to make the connections merge together. Similar biblical allegories coalesce, and send the mind off on tangents; the intellect connects with the quotation itself, next with the quotation's own

<sup>37</sup> Christ sends out his disciples to preach the Kingdom of God: see Mt. 10. 1-42; Mc. 3. 13-19, 6. 7-13; Lc. 9. 1-6, 10. 1-12.

<sup>38</sup> Langland uses Latin in a variety of ways: R. Oliphant, in a short article, comments on Langland's satirical use of the Latin term *pridie*, the name of the negligent priest in the tavern, 'Sire Piers of Pridie' (B. V. 313) which emphasises Pridie's irresponsibility, and assumes audience knowledge. R. Oliphant, 'Langland's "Sire Piers of Pridie"', *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 7:5 (May 1960), 167-68.

specific circumstance, and then, may collect together any number of other relevant fragments that the memory has in store: recollection forms a conglomeration of related material. For example, mention of ‘fructum bonum’ [good fruit] might recollect the Parable of the Sower: the seed (the word of God) when it falls on good ground yields fruit abundantly.<sup>39</sup> Again, from a passage about penance and baptism, the mind recalls the apocalyptic warning: ‘iam enim securis ad radicem arborum posita est omnis ergo arbor quae non facit fructum bonum exciditur et in ignem mittitur’ [For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.] (Mt. 3. 10 cf. Lc. 3. 9).

Or recollection might be of Matthew’s Gospel, in a similar passage to that from Luke quoted above, but even more denunciatory: Christ berates the Pharisees and likens the Church authorities to vipers who, as evil fruit, will be judged and condemned by their empty words:

*Aut facite arborem bonam et fructum eius bonum aut facite arborem malam et fructum eius malum siquidem ex fructu arbor agnoscitur progenies viperarum quomodo potestis bona loqui cum sitis mali ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur Bonus homo de bono thesauro profert bona et malus homo de malo thesauro profert mala Dico autem vobis quoniam omne verbum otiosum quod locuti fuerint homines reddent rationem de eo in die iudicii ex verbis enim tuis iustificaberis et ex verbis tuis condemnaberis*

[Either make the tree good and its fruit good: or make the tree evil and its fruit evil. For by the fruit the tree is known. O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things whereas you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.] (Mt. 12. 33-37)

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<sup>39</sup> Matthew, Mark and Luke do not use the specific term ‘fructum bonum’ in the Parable of the Sower, but see for comparison: Mt. 13. 23; Mc. 4. 20; Lc. 8. 15. See also Mt. 7. 16-20.

The probity of hypocritical priests was no less of a problem in Christ's time than Langland's.

Any (or even all) of these associated passages overflow into any interpretation of *Piers*, amalgamate and (again) augment a series of pertinent themes at this point in the poem: the disciples of Christ (the clergy) should seek perfection ('Dobest' as Langland might phrase it); the Ordained need to be known as 'good fruit', worthy to preach and teach God's word (as the Parable of the Sower advocates), or suffer damnation. Matthew, Mark and Luke may not have the explicit words, 'fructum bonum', in their narration of the Parable of the Sower, yet Langland, in his unspoken contrast of 'badde preestes' (X. 280) against the good, the ideal, does seem to hold such concepts in mind in these lines of *Piers*. Moreover, the hypocrisy in the hearts of the Pharisees: 'ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur' [For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.] (Lc. 6. 45) is paralleled by Langland: 'al for youre holynesse – haue ye þis in herte' (X. 290).

Therefore, it seems entirely possible that Langland could have thought of both Matthew and Luke (as seems likely with the texts from Mark and Matthew discussed in section 6.2 above), and that the poet (and his audience) would have recalled many of these related Bible texts from both Gospels.

Perhaps it may not be necessary to be specific in this case about whether Matthew or Luke was the source of the '*Dum cecus ducit cecum*' quotation, as all such Bible references cannot but augment interpretation of *Piers*; when Langland criticises Church authority in the poem, all relevant Bible references and contexts become evocative. Medieval audiences would have been particularly alert to these nuances. The fourteenth-century audience of *Piers* would have had more to think about than simply the actual

lines of the poem: the biblical allusion and direct references fire the imagination, and strengthen *Piers*' meaning. Langland integrates the Bible with *Piers* for a reason: without knowledge of Bible contexts, interpretation of the poem might be considered a mere skeleton without flesh.

### 6.3 Priesthood in the C-text: the Heli Passage Reviewed

This section will continue close-reading *Piers* and the Bible simultaneously: the practice illustrates not only the great importance of the Bible in understanding the poem, but also Langland's integral criticism of authority which is inherent in biblical knowledge. To return to Langland's reference to Heli, the blind priest, the context of the story in I Samuel needs now to be examined in detail as Langland expected his audience to know about Heli, to think about the account as they read or listened to *Piers*.<sup>40</sup> As Langland expands the subject in the C-text,<sup>41</sup> from a mere mention in B,<sup>42</sup> and transfers the reference to the Prologue,<sup>43</sup> it seems obvious that the poet wanted to prioritise Heli, and elaborate the point. Therefore, this thesis will now turn from the B version and concentrate instead on the C-text of *Piers*.

Heli's sin was that he 'honoured [his] sons' rather than God (I Rg. 2. 29);<sup>44</sup> the 'Ydolatrie' of which Langland writes:

And [Conscience] seide, 'Ydolatrie 3e soffren in sondrye places manye,  
And boxes ben yset forth ybounde with yren

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<sup>40</sup> The story of Heli and his sons was used as a caveat to the clergy in, for example, sermons and pastoral handbooks in Langland's period: see Siegfried Wenzel, 'Eli and His Sons', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 13 (1999), 137-52 (p. 139).

<sup>41</sup> C. Prol. 95-127.

<sup>42</sup> X. 279-82.

<sup>43</sup> C. Prol. 95-127.

<sup>44</sup> Vulgate: 'et magis honorasti filios tuos quam me ut comederetis primitias omnis sacrificii Israhel populi mei' [and thou hast rather honoured thy sons than me, to eat the firstfruits of every sacrifice of my people Israel?] (I Rg. 2. 29).

To vndertake þe tol of vntrewe sacrefice. (C. Prol. 96-98)

Heli's sons, Langland's 'fals prestis' (C.Prol. 106), were 'children of Belial, not knowing the Lord' (I Rg. 2. 12).<sup>45</sup> They were lawless, and showed a dereliction in their duty to God; I Samuel describes Heli's sons' particular sins concerning sacrifice:<sup>46</sup> they covet the benefits of the sacrifice for themselves rather than dedicating it to God, just like those medieval priests who also sought their own profit and fail the people: 'Ac for it profiteþ 3ow into pursward, 3e prelates soffren / That lewed men in mysbileue lyuen and dyen' (C. Prol. 101-102).<sup>47</sup> The Bible story continues: 'erat ergo peccatum puerorum grande nimis coram Domino quia detrahebant homines sacrificio Domini' [Wherefore the sin of the young men was exceedingly great before the Lord: because they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord.] (I Rg. 2. 17). Langland compares Heli's sons to the priests of his own time who 'vndertake þe tol of vntrewe sacrefice' (C. Prol. 98). Langland foresees that, because of the negligence of fourteenth-century priests, particularly bishops,<sup>48</sup> the laity will be withdrawn from the service of God, 'lewed men in misbileue lyuen and

<sup>45</sup> Vulgate: 'porro filii Heli filii Belial nescientes Dominum' (I. Rg. 2. 12). In the Bible, Belial is virtually synonymous with Lucifer and Satan as the devil. See, for example, II Cor. 6. 15. For definition and explanation, see *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 180 (Belial), 1002 (Lucifer), 1456 (Satan), 474-75 (devil).

<sup>46</sup> I Rg. 2. 13-16.

<sup>47</sup> Vulgate: 'neque officium sacerdotum ad populum sed quicumque immolasset victimam veniebat puer sacerdotis dum coquerentur carnes et habebat fuscinulam tridentem in manu sua et mittebat eam in lebetem vel in caldarium aut in ollam sive in caccabum et omne quod levabat fuscinula tollebat sacerdos sibi sic faciebant universo Israheli venientium in Silo etiam antequam adolerent adipem veniebat puer sacerdotis et dicebat immolanti da mihi carnem ut coquam sacerdoti non enim accipiam a te carnem coctam sed crudam dicebatque illi immolans incendatur primum iuxta morem hodie adeps et tolle tibi quantumcumque desiderat anima tua qui respondens aiebat ei nequaquam nunc enim dabis alioquin tollam vi' [Nor the office of the priests to the people: but whosoever had offered a sacrifice, the servant of the priest came, while the flesh was in boiling, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand, And thrust it into the kettle, or into the cauldron, or into the pot, or into the pan: and all that the fleshhook brought up, the priest took to himself. Thus did they to all Israel that came to Silo. Also before they burnt the fat, the servant of the priest came, and said to the man that sacrificed: Give me flesh to boil for the priest: for I will not take of thee sodden flesh, but raw. And he that sacrificed said to him: Let the fat first be burnt to day, according to the custom, and then take to thee as much as thy soul desireth. But he answered, and said to him: Not so; but thou shalt give it me now, or else I will take it by force.] (I Rg. 2. 13-16).

<sup>48</sup> Pearsall (*New Annotated Edition*, p. 49, note to line101) considers that Langland's use of the word 'prelate' has adverse meaning; one that reverberates with the disparagement of bishops in Wycliffite works.

dyen' (C. Prol. 102): sincere belief is essential if one is to worship God aright.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, bishops (like Heli) ought to keep the sons of the Church in order.<sup>50</sup>

Heli's sons 'made the people of the Lord to transgress' (I Rg. 2. 24).<sup>51</sup> The contrast of Samuel's behaviour in the Bible, set against that of the sons of Heli, resonates with Langland's call to fourteenth-century Church authority, to the Ordained.<sup>52</sup> God punishes Heli with the death of his sons, the taking of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines and Heli's own demise.<sup>53</sup> Langland seems to believe that the medieval Church is in even worse straits: 'God shal take vengeance on alle suche prestis, / Wel hardere and grettere on suche shrewed faderes' (C. Prol. 121-22): the reference to Heli must obviously be seen as an apocalyptic warning to Church authority to change its ways, or take punishment from Christ himself:

And for þei were prestis and [folk] of Holy Chirche,  
 God was wel þe wrother and took þe raper vengeance.  
 'Forthy Y sey, 3e prestes and [folk] of Holy Churche,  
 That soffreth men do sacrefyce and worschipe maumettes –  
 And 3e shulde be here fadres and [betre hem techen] –

<sup>49</sup> Schmidt (*Parallel-Text Edition*, vol. II, Indexical Glossary, p. 839) weights 'mysbileue' as 'superstition'.

<sup>50</sup> See Wenzel, 'Eli', p. 138. Wenzel gives examples of other late fourteenth-century texts, such as visitation sermons, that use Heli in similar fashion as an exemplum. Wenzel ('Eli', p. 148-49) also thinks that Langland's tone 'has a Wyclifite ring to it' when the poet condemns prelates for allowing pecuniary advantage (C. Prol. 99-102) from the worship of 'maumettes' (C. Prol. 118-21).

<sup>51</sup> Vulgate: 'nolite filii mi non enim est bona fama quam ego audio ut transgredi faciatis populum Domini' (I Rg. 2. 24).

<sup>52</sup> Vulgate: 'crevit autem Samuhel et Dominus erat cum eo et non cecidit ex omnibus verbis eius in terram et cognovit universus Israhel a Dan usque Bersabee quod fidelis Samuhel propheta esset Domini et addidit Dominus ut appareret in Silo quoniam revelatus fuerat Dominus Samuheli in Silo iuxta verbum Domini et evenit sermo Samuhelis universo Israheli' [And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him: and not one of his words fell to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan to Bersabee, knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord. And the Lord again appeared in Silo; for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Silo, according to the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to pass to all Israel.] (I Rg. 3. 19-21).

<sup>53</sup> I. Rg. 4. 17-18: Vulgate: 'respondens autem qui nuntiabat fugit inquit Israhel coram Philisthim et ruina magna facta est in populo insuper et duo filii tui mortui sunt Ofni et Finees et arca Dei capta est cumque ille nominasset arcam Dei cecidit de sella retrorsum iuxta ostium et fractis cervicibus mortuus est senex enim erat vir et grandevus et ipse iudicavit Israhel quadraginta annis' [And he that brought the news answered, and said: Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter of the people: moreover thy two sons, Ophni and Phinees, are dead: and the ark of God is taken. And when he had named the ark of God, he fell from his stool backwards by the door, and broke his neck and died. For he was an old man, and far advanced in years: And he judged Israel forty years.].

God shal take vengeance on alle suche prestis,  
 Wel hardere and grettere on suche shrewed faderes,  
 Than euere he dede on Offnies and Fines [here] fader,  
 For 3oure shrewed soffraunce and 3oure oune synne.  
 3oure masse and 3our matynes and many of 3oure oures  
 Ar don vundeuouteliche; drede is at þe laste  
 Lest Crist in his Constorie acorse of 3ow manye!’ (C. Prol. 116-27)

Once again, knowledge of biblical circumstance emphasises and endorses Langland’s argument in *Piers* concerning the duties and responsibilities of Ordination. Moreover, the C-text additions to the Heli passage in the poem can be seen to augment criticism of ordained authority.

#### 6.4 C-text Vulgate Quotation and Additions in *Piers*: the Significance of Bible Circumstance

The preceding examination of a short section of the C-text Prologue continued to demonstrate the benefit of intertextual close-reading as a way of interpreting *Piers*.<sup>54</sup> Other C-text Bible quotation additions, in particular, may be seen to hold resonance with the methodology of this thesis that reading *Piers* through the Bible contexts offers a lodestar for interpretation of the poem: Langland’s command of the Bible is indisputable.

Yet, as this thesis has continually emphasised, because of the depth and strength of Christian culture in the fourteenth century (and in subsequent centuries - until quite recently) there must have been many readers or listeners of *Piers* who recognised, not only the biblical quotation itself, but who could, whether from the Liturgy or perhaps from memorising the Psalms, identify the Bible passage and finish the *etcetera* that we find in the manuscripts. Even more than this, the ongoing immersion in Bible nuance would have enabled medieval Christians to discern far more meaning and have an

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<sup>54</sup> C. Prol. 95-127.

enriched appreciation of the poem: to ignore (or be unaware of) the context of the quotations and biblical allusion is to miss much of the subtlety of *Piers*, and, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, much of Langland's criticism of Church authority.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the quotations which will now be analysed all appear in a long additional section of *Piers*' C-text.<sup>55</sup> Langland has been contrasting the rich merchant with the poor messenger, patient poverty, and, initially, this comparison seems to have general application.<sup>56</sup> Yet, as was demonstrated in chapter two, single trigger words in Latin have an effect similar to the manuscripts' use of *etcetera* in that they focus the mind on Bible references suggested by the quotation itself: one such example can be seen in Passus XIII: '*contumax*' [stubborn, obstinate] (C. XIII. 84). Editors disagree: Schmidt, but not Pearsall, italicises Langland's use of *contumax* which is not mentioned by Alford as a biblical quotation.<sup>57</sup> However, Schmidt may well be correct, because this could be a biblical reference from Deuteronomy: the full passage has echoes of Heli and his sons as in the Prologue, and concerns a recalcitrant and wilful son in need of correction, and reads:

si genuerit homo filium contumacem et protervum qui non audiat patris aut matris imperium et coercitus oboedire contempserit adprehendent eum et ducent ad seniores civitatis illius et ad portam iudicii dicentque ad eos filius noster iste protervus et *contumax* est monita nostra audire contemnit comesationibus vacat et luxurie atque conviviis lapidibus eum obruet populus civitatis et morietur ut auferatis malum de medio vestri et universus Israhel audiens pertimescat

[If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience: They shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgement: And

<sup>55</sup> C. XII. 168-XIII. 99.

<sup>56</sup> C. XIII. 32-99.

<sup>57</sup> The general consensus of opinion inclines towards '*contumax*' as meaning 'in contempt of court' (Pearsall, *New Annotated Edition*, p. 231, note to line 85; Schmidt, *Parallel-Text Edition*, vol. II, Commentary, p. 609), but in view of the way in which Langland is about to criticise the priesthood, the biblical interpretation is also valid.

shall say to them: This our son is rebellious and stubborn; he slighteth hearing our admonitions; he giveth himself to revelling, and to debauchery and banquetings. The people of the city shall stone him: and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it, may be afraid.] (Dt. 21. 18-21)

There seems to be a subtle (or perhaps cautious) shift of emphasis and a dual agenda which builds in momentum through the Vulgate quotation verses which Langland uses in *Piers* to flank the Deuteronomy quotation. When the Vulgate contexts are examined together, it is possible to get some intimation of the sub-text of Langland's thinking. For example, the circumstance of the Vulgate quotation from Galatians: '*alter alterius onera portate*' [Bear ye one another's burdens.] (Gal. 6. 2 cf. C. XIII. 77a) prior to the Deuteronomy *contumax* reference. In this Galatians context, as has been observed previously in this chapter, there appear to be gentle reminders within the surrounding Bible verses that the 'spiritual' should 'instruct' those who are 'overtaken in any fault', and each should 'prove his own work': it reads:

fratres et si praeoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo delicto vos qui spirituales estis huiusmodi instruite in spiritu lenitatis considerans te ipsum ne et tu tempteris *alter alterius onera portate* et sic adimplebitis legem Christi nam si quis existimat se aliquid esse cum sit nihil ipse se seducit opus autem suum probet unusquisque et sic in semet ipso tantum gloriam habebit et non in altero unusquisque enim onus suum portabit communicet autem is qui catecizatur verbum ei qui se catecizat in omnibus bonis nolite errare Deus non inridetur quae enim seminaverit homo haec et metet quoniam qui seminat in carne sua de carne et metet corruptionem qui autem seminat in spiritu de spiritu metet vitam aeternam

[Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ. For if any man think himself to be some thing, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every one prove his own work: and so he shall have glory in himself only and not in another. For every one shall bear his own burden. And let him who is instructed in the word communicate to him that instructeth him, in all good things. Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh of the flesh

also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit of the spirit shall reap life everlasting.] (Gal. 6. 1-8)

As was seen before (in section 6.2.1 above), where Langland's use of the Psalm recalls the Galatians 2 passage, Langland, through the Galatians 6 context, is again asserting his prerogative to criticise those in high authority within the Church.

The biblical context recommends humility, but emphasises spiritual, not worldly, pursuits: wealth, for example, would come in this category and fits with the main thrust of Langland's argument; the way in which Langland is about to go in *Piers*: 'Vch a parfit prest to pouerte sholde drawe' (C. XIII. 99).<sup>58</sup> Paul encourages the community of brethren to 'instruct' each other, and Langland is about to do so once again. The Deuteronomy citation may now seem less general instruction but more specific: the 'stubborn and unruly son [of the Church], who will not hear the commandments' and 'slighteth obedience' (Dt. 21. 18) will find himself at 'the gate of judgement' (Dt. 21. 19), or as Paul puts it, will 'reap corruption' (Gal. 6. 8). It could perhaps be assumed that Langland's audience might observe the poet to be criticising priests, and exhorting them to change their ways, not just in the vernacular lines of the poem, but through the Vulgate context which also consistently recalls the consequences of failure to reform: the threat of damnation.

Certainly, in this additional C-text material of Passus XIII, the surrounding verses of other Bible quotations endorse the argument of this chapter that Langland is using the Vulgate to stress his criticisms about priestly deficiencies through constant contextual reminders of their sacramental duties. For example, the citation from Mark that Langland

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<sup>58</sup> As in this instance, the contexts of the Vulgate quotations used by Langland may frequently be seen to reflect and inspire the vernacular content of *Piers*. I would question whether this is purely the result of Langland's employment of *distinctiones*, because the whole Bible circumstance of the Vulgate quotation often seems to become part of the poem.

uses: '*qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit* [He that believeth and is baptized.] (Mc. 16. 16 cf. C. XIII. 86a), which follows the Deuteronomy '*contumax*' reference discussed earlier, concerns the importance of faith for the soul seeking salvation. In the full Marcan verses quoted below, Christ speaks to the disciples with words which are reflected in the bishop's instruction to priests at Ordination to preach the Gospel to 'every creature':<sup>59</sup>

et dixit eis euntes in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creaturae  
*qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit* salvus erit qui vero non crediderit  
 condemnabitur

[And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.] (Mc. 15-16)

The dual-levels of open censure and covert reproval from the Bible contexts continue to operate. Throughout the additional lines in the C-text, Langland continues to stress to the priesthood the importance of obedience; the duty to follow in faith set against the dangers of spiritual blindness and its threat of apocalypse: failure to keep the Ordination vows by deliberately omitting to preach the Gospel, to spread God's word, can be viewed as hypocrisy.

When taken together with the '*contumax*' and Galatians citations quoted above, the Marcan reference on Baptism might be read as yet another subtle reminder to a priest, to be a 'trewe messenger' (C. XIII. 87) in patient poverty, and of the duty and responsibility inherent in his Ordination vows. The Church hierarchy functions through

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<sup>59</sup> See Maude, *History*, p. 116. Traugott Lawler expresses interest that Langland makes 'preacher' and 'teacher' synonymous with 'priest', but the poet's practice should come as no surprise given that preaching and teaching is the remit of the ordained from the vow that they make. Lawler, 'Secular Clergy', pp. 86-87, 91-93. Although I absolutely agree with the article's premises on 'clerical terminology' in *Piers* as set out on pp. 85-86, Mícheál F. Vaughan's response (pp. 118-29) contains pertinent qualification: particularly (p. 123) on which version scholars are to identify as the embodiment of the poem, *Piers Plowman*. On the fluidity of the versions, see also Alan J. Fletcher, 'The Essential (Ephemeral) William Langland: Textual Revision as Ethical Process in *Piers Plowman*, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 15 (2001), 61-98, including responses from Wendy Scase (85-88), and Judith Dale (89-94), pp. 68-72, 75-76.

obedience both to God and to ecclesiastical superiors: the vow of obedience is mandatory.<sup>60</sup> Certainly, through the *contumax* reference, Langland maintains this underlying theme of obedience, as well as the threat of the Last Judgement which pervades *Piers* in these Vulgate contexts. Poverty, ostensibly the remit of this section of *Piers*: ‘Vch a parfit prest to pouerte sholde drawe’ (C. XIII. 99), is exonerated, but the probity, duties and spiritual trust – or even belief – of the parish priest are also emphasised through these three Vulgate quotations’ contexts with their threat of damnation as the consequence of failure.

Because a priest is in charge of the cure of souls, negligence means the loss of a soul’s salvation in the Kingdom of God, and therefore, in Langland’s eyes, the worst possible offence. Moreover, with his next Vulgate quotation in Passus XIII, Langland sets up the contrast between those who give their all (like the poor widow: ‘*Amen dico vobis, quia hec vidua paupercola*’ [Amen I say to you, this poor widow.] (C. XIII. 97a),<sup>61</sup> and those who could do better: the Pharisees (and other clergy). The description of the predatory nature and hypocrisy of the Pharisees precedes the story of the widow in the

<sup>60</sup> *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1170.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Mc. 12. 41-44; Lc. 21. 1-4. Vulgate: ‘et sedens Iesus contra gazofilacium aspiciebat quomodo turba iactaret aes in gazofilacium et multi divites iactabant multa cum venisset autem una vidua pauper misit duo minuta quod est quadrans et convocans discipulos suos ait illis amen dico vobis quoniam vidua haec pauper plus omnibus misit qui miserunt in gazofilacium omnes enim ex eo quod abundabat illis miserunt haec vero de penuria sua omnia quae habuit misit totum victum suum’ [And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury. And many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow: and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling his disciples together, he saith to them: Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living.] (Mc. 12. 41-44); Vulgate: ‘respiciens autem vidit eos qui mittebant munera sua in gazofilacium divites vidit autem et quandam viduam paupercolam mittentem aera minuta duo et dixit vere dico vobis quia vidua haec pauper plus quam omnes misit nam omnes hii ex abundantia sibi miserunt in munera Dei haec autem ex eo quod deest illi omnem victum suum quem habuit misit’ [And looking on, he saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites. And he said: Verily, I say to you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God: but she of her want hath cast in all the living that she had.] (Lc. 21. 1-4).

temple treasury in both Mark and Luke;<sup>62</sup> those who ‘devorant domos viduarum sub obtentu prolixae orationis’ [devour the houses of widows under the pretence of long prayer.] (Mc. 12. 40).

The Gospel context in Mark not only shows Christ criticising the hypocrisy and arrogance of authority (the scribes and Pharisees), but is followed by Christ’s prediction of events that would signify the end of the world,<sup>63</sup> and therefore the consequent urgency to preach the gospel: ‘Et in omnes gentes primum oportet praedicari evangelium’ [And unto all nations the gospel must first be preached.] (Mc. 13. 10). These interrelated themes frequently recur, and Langland appears to repeat similar reminders and admonishments to the priesthood concerning the bishop’s instruction given to them at Ordination to bring the gospel of salvation to all.<sup>64</sup> The circumstance of the Vulgate quotations link together, and emphasise Langland’s underlying themes in Passus XIII in ways that might again seem too complex, too diverse and subtle, to be attributed solely to a focus on a single word or theme, on the use of a device such as *distinctiones*.<sup>65</sup> Most

<sup>62</sup> Mc. 12. 38-40; Lc. 20. 45-47. Vulgate: ‘Et dicebat eis in doctrina sua cavete a scribis qui volunt in stolis ambulare et salutari in foro et in primis cathedris sedere in synagogis et primos discubitus in cenis Qui devorant domos viduarum sub obtentu prolixae orationis hii accipient prolixius iudicium’ [And he said to them in his doctrine: Beware of the scribes, who love to walk in long robes and to be saluted in the marketplace, And to sit in the first chairs in the synagogues and to have the highest places at suppers: Who devour the houses of widows under the pretence of long prayer. These shall receive greater judgment.] (Mc. 12. 38-40); Vulgate: ‘Audiente autem omni populo dixit discipulis suis adtendite a scribis qui volunt ambulare in stolis et amant salutationes in foro et primas cathedras in synagogis et primos discubitus in conviviis Qui devorant domos viduarum simulantes longam orationem hii accipient damnationem maiorem’ [And in the hearing of all the people, he said to his disciples: Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes and love salutations in the market place and the first chairs in the synagogues and the chief rooms at feasts: Who devour the houses of widows, feigning long prayer. These shall receive greater damnation.] (Lc. 20. 45-47).

<sup>63</sup> Mc. 13. 1-37.

<sup>64</sup> Wycliffite sermons also complain about the inadequacy of the priesthood in this respect: ‘Crist hap ordeyned hise preestis bope to teche and preche his gospel’, and not to avoid these duties; to ‘flee ypocrisye’. Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. II, p. 75, ll. 105-6, 113. See also p. 74, ll. 80-90.

<sup>65</sup> D. Vance Smith writes: ‘The elements of a well-constructed work will concord with each other because of their common beginning, the harmonious disposition of the parts of a sermon, for example, deriving from a single origin’. D. Vance Smith, *The Book of the Incipit: Beginnings in the Fourteenth Century*, Medieval Cultures, vol. 28 (London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 71.

importantly, an audience conversant with the New Testament, like Langland himself, would be familiar with the Vulgate quotations' circumstance, and capable of detecting multiple layers of meaning.

The next lines of *Piers* end the C-text addition, and the B-text begins again, but this C-text *Piers* passage is worthy of examination, and links with the argument in this section concerning Langland's criticism of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in extra C-material. The poet adds mundane issues of poverty to the debate on the spiritual impoverishment of the priesthood, and reminds priests of their duties and obligations:

So pore and pacient parfitest lyf is of alle;  
 Vch a parfit prest to pouerte sholde drawe.  
 For *Spera in Deo* speketh of prestis þat han no spendynges suluer  
 That yf thay trauaile treulyche and trist in God almyhty,  
 Hem sholde neuere lacke lyflode, noþer lynnen ne wollene.  
 The tytyle 3e take 3oure ordres by telleth 3e ben avaunsed  
 And nedeth nat to nyme siluer for masses þat 3e synge.  
 For he that toek 3ow a tytyle sholde take 3ow wages,  
 Or þe bischop þat blessed 3ow and enbaumed 3oure fyngeres. (C. XIII. 98-106)<sup>66</sup>

Langland, in the line: 'þe bischop þat blessed 3ow and enbaumed 3oure fyngeres', makes direct reference to the Sacrament of Ordination, and to the duties and responsibilities of bishops and senior clergy towards lesser clerics.

Maude (*History*, pp. 116-17) describes the Rite and Ceremony of Ordination in the medieval period, including the anointing of hands:

Ordinations took place, in the case of all Orders except the Episcopate, on the Saturday of one of the four Ember seasons, and as had always been the case, in the course of the Mass. [...] The candidates for the priesthood then come forward, and the bishop says, 'It is the duty of a priest to offer, to bless, to preside, to

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<sup>66</sup> The B-text stresses probity, but is less emphatic with its reminder of the Ordination service: 'Or þe bisshop þat blessep yow, if þat ye ben worpi' (B. XI. 291). A priest's title was not his name, but a technical term in canon law, an indicator, perhaps of his probity, but essentially of the independent financial means by which an ordained man might live as his station merited. For discussion of the medieval meaning of the term 'title', and its use as a 'biting attack' by Langland, see R.N. Swanson, 'Langland and the Priest's Title', *Notes and Queries*, 231 (December 1986), 438-40 (p. 439).

preach, [to make, conficere], and to baptize'. The bishop and the priests present lay their hands on the candidates, and the bishop recites the Roman prayer of consecration. Then the priests are vested in stole and chasuble, [...] Then the bishop blesses and anoints the hands of the priests.

The probity of the candidates was publically avowed during the service.<sup>67</sup> In

consequence, in this simple line: 'þe bischop þat blessed 3ow and enbaumed 3oure fyngeres' (C. XIII. 106), Langland prompts all priests to recall the vows that they took; to contemplate the solemn nature of Ordination.<sup>68</sup>

*Spera in Deo* [Hope in God.] (C. XIII. 100 cf. Ps. 42. 6) would also remind priests of the words to be said as they approach the altar for the most holy liturgy, High Mass: 'et introibo ad altare Dei' [And I will go in to the altar of God.] (Ps. 42. 4).<sup>69</sup> So again, even while debating financial matters, like stipends, Langland subtly (yet commandingly) reminds priests that to 'offer' is part of their most sacred duty, and prompts recall of what they were instructed to do at Ordination by the bishop to whom they have sworn obedience.

Langland goes on to criticise those priests who fail in their obligation to offer; to take services of worship in a proper fashion: the 'ouerskipperes':

So [is hit] a goky, by God! þat in þe gospel fayleth  
 Or in masse or in matynes maketh eny defaute:  
*Qui offendit in vno, in omnibus est reus.*  
 For ouerskipperes also in þe Sauter sayth Daudid:  
*Psallite Deo nostro, psallite; quia rex terre Deus, psallite sapienter.*  
 The bishop shal be blamed before God, as Y leue,  
 That crouneth suche for Goddes knyhtes that conne nat *sapienter*  
 Nother syng ne rede [ne seye a masse of þe daye].  
 Ac neuer noþer is blameles, the bischop ne þe chapeleyn,  
 For *ignorancia non excusat*, as Ych haue herd in bokes. (C. XIII. 119-128)

<sup>67</sup> Maude, *History*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>68</sup> In the change from 'thay' to '3oure' in the above extract (C. XIII. 98-106), Langland switches from general to personal criticism of the priesthood.

<sup>69</sup> Alford, *Guide*, pp. 76-77. See also *The Missal in Latin and English*, p. 685.

The wider Bible circumstance endorses and augments these lines of *Piers*; the context of the first Latin quotation from James: '*Qui offendit in vno, in omnibus est reus*'

[whosoever offend in one point, is become guilty of all.] (C. XIII. 121a cf. Iac. 2. 10), reiterates Langland's theme of the need to do well, 'bene facitis':

si tamen legem perficitis regalem secundum scripturas diliges proximum tuum  
sicut te ipsum bene facitis si autem personas accipitis peccatum operamini  
redarguti a lege quasi transgressores quicumque autem totam legem servaverit  
*offendat autem in uno factus est omnium reus*

[If then you fulfil the royal law, according to the scriptures: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; you do well. But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, being reproved by the law as transgressors. And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.] (Iac. 2. 8-10)

James writes about the proper care of the poor in this chapter,<sup>70</sup> which (along with the right use of money) has been the overt motif for Langland in Passus XIII. James also stresses the importance of faith and works,<sup>71</sup> and the duty of care incumbent on every Christian.<sup>72</sup>

When, however, James focuses on the way in which a Christian must regard the rich and powerful: 'si autem personas accipitis peccatum operamini redarguti a lege quasi transgressores' [But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, being reproved by the law as transgressors.] (Iac. 2. 9), a verse which is directly part of the understanding of the quotation used by Langland, there is perhaps another dimension to the poet's use of this Epistle. James seems to imply that if you have respect [*accipitis*], are obsequious or do good works for people just because they are wealthy or powerful (instead of helping

<sup>70</sup> Iac. 2. 1-7.

<sup>71</sup> Iac. 2. 12-26.

<sup>72</sup> Iac. 2. 15-16: Vulgate: 'si autem frater aut soror nudi sunt et indigent victu cotidiano dicat autem aliquis de vobis illis ite in pace calefacimini et saturamini non dederitis autem eis quae necessaria sunt corporis quid proderit' [And if a brother or sister be naked and want daily food: And one of you say to them: Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?]

the poor) such an act is not equivalent with loving one's neighbour, and resembles hypocritical Pharisaic practice.<sup>73</sup>

James proclaims New Testament teaching that the rich and influential on earth may not have similar benefit in the Kingdom of God.<sup>74</sup> A corollary of this type of thinking would be that respect has to be earned as the result of living a true Christian life, and seeking the spiritual riches of God's Kingdom: the lack of such ideals is exactly what Langland has been criticising about the priesthood:

So pore and pacient parfiteſt lyf is of alle;  
 Vch a parfit preſt to pouerte ſholde drawe.  
 For *Spera in Deo* ſpeketh of preſtis þat han no ſpendyng ſuluer  
 That yf thay trauaile treulyche and triſt in God almyhty. (C. XIII. 98-101)

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<sup>73</sup> See *Peake's Commentary*, p. 1023; Jac. 2. 1-13: Vulgate: 'fratres mei nolite in personarum acceptione habere fidem Domini nostri Iesu Christi glorie etenim si introierit in conventu vestro vir aureum anulum habens in veste candida introierit autem et pauper in sordido habitu et intendatis in eum qui indutus est veste praeclara et dixeritis tu sede hic bene pauperi autem dicatis tu sta illic aut sede sub scabillo pedum meorum nonne iudicatis apud vosmet ipsos et facti estis iudices cogitationum iniquarum audite fratres mei dilectissimi nonne Deus elegit pauperes in hoc mundo divites in fide et heredes regni quod repromisit Deus diligentibus se vos autem exhonoraſtis pauperem nonne divites per potentiam opprimunt vos et ipsi trahunt vos ad iudicia nonne ipsi blasphemant bonum nomen quod invocatum est super vos si tamen legem perficitis regalem secundum scripturas diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum bene facitis si autem personas accipitis peccatum operamini redarguti a lege quasi transgressores quicumque autem totam legem servaverit offendat autem in uno factus est omnium reus qui enim dixit non moechaberis dixit et non occides quod si non moechaberis occides autem factus es transgressor legis sic loquimini et sic facite sicut per legem libertatis incipientes iudicari iudicium enim sine misericordia illi qui non fecit misericordiam superexultat autem misericordia iudicio' [My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory, with respect of persons. For if there shall come into your assembly a man having a golden ring, in fine apparel; and there shall come in also a poor man in mean attire: And you have respect to him that is clothed with the fine apparel and shall say to him: Sit thou here well: but say to the poor man: Stand thou there, or: Sit under my footstool: Do you not judge within yourselves, and are become judges of unjust thoughts? Hearken, my dearest brethren: Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him? But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you by might? And do not they draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme the good name that is invoked upon you? If then you fulfil the royal law, according to the scriptures: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; you do well. But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, being reproved by the law as transgressors. And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all. For he that said: Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also: Thou shalt not kill. Now if thou do not commit adultery, but shalt kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye and so do, as being to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy. And mercy exalteth itself above judgment.]

<sup>74</sup> See, for example: Mt. 19. 24; Mc. 10. 25; Lc. 18. 25.

The Psalm context of the second Bible quotation in the previously quoted *Piers* passage concerning ‘ouerskipperes’ (C. XIII. 122), continues to insist on the correct conduct for a priest: ‘*Psallite Deo nostro, psallite; quia rex terre Deus, psallite sapienter*’ [Sing praises to our God, sing ye: [...] For God is king of all the earth: sing ye wisely.] (C. XIII. 123 cf. Ps. 46. 7-8).<sup>75</sup> The psalm reminds Langland’s audience of the greatness of God’s power, and therefore the poet explicitly emphasises the need to sing wisely: ‘*sapienter*’ (Ps. 46. 8 cf. C. XIII. 123, 125),<sup>76</sup> and, implicitly, stresses that the alternative to such behaviour, to sing imprudently, without respect for God, is to accept the consequence which is, as James says: ‘being reprovved by the law as transgressors’ (Iac. 2. 9).<sup>77</sup>

Yet, again, Langland places the onus on higher Church authority; they cannot escape God’s wrath because they wield power on earth: the bishop is responsible before God to ordain priests who are worthy ( and financially solvent), so bishops cannot be viewed as ‘blameles’ (C. XIII. 127), and respect of higher authority is of no value without probity: ‘The bishop shal be blamed before God, as Y leue, / That crouneth suche for Goddes knyhtes that conne nat *sapienter*’ (C. XIII. 124-25). Moreover, as Langland has reminded his audience through James’ Epistle, to be guilty of one misdemeanour, is to be guilty of all: ‘*Qui offendit in vno, in omnibus est reus*’ [whosoever offend in one point, is

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<sup>75</sup> For discussion of ‘*Psallite sapienter*’, see Zieman, *Singing the New Song*, pp. 62-72. On how the Black Death affected the quality of the priesthood, see Dohar, *Pastoral Leadership*, p. 7, *passim*; Zieman, *Singing the New Song*, pp. 99-113.

<sup>76</sup> Vulgate: ‘Omnes gentes plaudite manibus iubilate Deo in voce exultationis quoniam Dominus excelsus terribilis rex magnus super omnem terram subiecit populos nobis et gentes sub pedibus nostris elegit nobis hereditatem suam speciem Iacob quam dilexit’ [O clap your hands, all ye nations: shout unto God with the voice of joy. For the Lord is high, terrible: a great king over all the earth. He hath subdued the people under us: and the nations under our feet. He has chosen for us his inheritance, the beauty of Jacob which he hath loved.] (Ps. 46. 2-5).

<sup>77</sup> Vulgate: ‘redarguti a lege quasi transgressores’ (Iac. 2. 9).

become guilty of all.] (C. XIII. 122 cf. Iac. 2. 10).<sup>78</sup> Langland remains unequivocal about the perfection which the ordained must seek. Taken as a whole, the C-text additional material (and the passage following it) evidences a series of over-arching themes on the duty and probity of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which intertwine through both the vernacular and biblical material: through the C-text Vulgate contexts a radical criticism of ordained authority may be seen.

### 6.5 The Radical Nature of C-text Additions: Passus VIII

Section 6.5 will study a series of C-text quotation additions beginning with Passus VIII. This chapter will now bring into question the notion that Langland toned down *Piers Plowman* after the B-text had been appropriated by the rebels of the 1381 Uprising,<sup>79</sup> and, instead, to instil the idea that, through his use of the Bible, the poet's criticism of authority in the C-text was equally strong, but went to ground, and became far more subtle.<sup>80</sup> Because this sub-text of the poem was unwritten, and dwelt only in the minds of those in Langland's audience who could locate the biblical material, there has to be a possibility, if not a probability, that Langland could have been far more subversive

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<sup>78</sup> On a technical note, Zieman (*Singing the New Song*, p. 159) observes how this citation from James 'adheres to Langland's metrical contract', thus 'unifying' the poem. As Zieman (*Singing the New Song*, pp. 158-59) argues, Langland appears to copy the Bible's ability to incorporate the 'two textual practices' of 'singing and sermonizing'. In consequence, a sense of authority, inherent from Langland's poetic practice, must have emanated from *Piers*.

<sup>79</sup> See, for some examples of this view, Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, pp. 102-139; Kerby-Fulton, 'Bibliographic Ego', in *Written Work*, ed. by Justice and Kerby-Fulton, pp. 69-70ff.; Kerby-Fulton, 'Piers Plowman', in *Cambridge History*, ed. by Wallace, pp. 524-25; Smith, *The Book of the Incipit*, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> This thesis takes the view that the date of the C version is after B. Bloomfield ('Present State', p. 217) thinks the C-version a 'more prudent' text. George H. Russell (among several critics) discusses Langland's 'two drives' for the changes from the B to the C version: the 'desire to produce a poem different in kind from its predecessors and decisively changed in certain of its directions and a desire to modify and clarify certain theological and political positions adopted in the B version'. George H. Russell, 'Poet as Reviser: the Metamorphosis of the Confession of the Seven Deadly Sins', in *Acts of Interpretation*, ed. by Carruthers and Kirk, pp. 53-65 (p. 55). See also G.H. Russell, 'Some Early Responses to the C-version of *Piers Plowman*', *Viator*, 15 (1984), 275-300.

than many present-day scholars acknowledge. The new research of this thesis has involved examining each and every Bible quotation and its context, and one of the findings has been that, rather than toning down the B-text, the additional quotations and biblical allusion of the C-text demonstrate greater criticism of ordained Church officials, not less.

There are numerous examples of Langland's technique. If we look for a moment at the B-text, in Passus VI, for instance, *Amice, ascende superius* [Friend, go up higher.] (B. VI. 47a cf. Lc. 14. 10), invites recall of the quotation's original biblical circumstance from a parable in Luke where Christ's direction to learn humility is addressed to the lawyers and Pharisees, the authorities of the time.<sup>81</sup> In the C-text, the similar section includes additional Latin material: *Super cathedram Moysi sedent* (C. VIII. 86a), and *Omnia que dicunt facite et servate* (C. VIII. 90a), from Matthew.<sup>82</sup> These two Bible quotations would again alert Langland's audience to the fact that the poet was thinking about members of the Church hierarchy: '*super cathedram Mosi sederunt scribae et Pharisei*' [The scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses.] (Mt. 23. 2 cf. C. VIII. 86a).<sup>83</sup> Langland does not need to elucidate the facts about who was sitting where, because his audience would know this information already. Ostensibly, Langland advocates obedience, and professes to give the instruction: '*omnia ergo quaecumque dixerint vobis servate et facite*' [All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you,

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<sup>81</sup> Lc. 14. 7-14.

<sup>82</sup> Mt. 23. 2-3.

<sup>83</sup> This Matthew citation was a recognised quotation against the dissimulation of the clergy (Alford, *Guide*, p. 69). Matthew 23 had also commonly been used for antifraternal purpose. See Szittyá, *Antifraternal Tradition*, pp. 34-41.

observe and do.] (Mt. 23. 3 cf. C. VIII. 90a). Langland then paraphrases the Bible: “Ac aftur here doynge ne do thow nat, my dere sone,” quod Peres’ (C. VIII. 91).<sup>84</sup>

Continually, however, the detail of Langland’s criticism is in the context, and in the words which follow the poet’s Vulgate reference in Matthew; the Gospel continues:

secundum opera vero eorum nolite facere dicunt enim et non faciunt Alligant autem onera gravia et inportabilia et inponunt in umeros hominum digito autem suo nolunt ea movere omnia vero opera sua faciunt ut videantur ab hominibus [...] amant autem primos recubitus in cenis et primas cathedras in synagogis et salutationes in foro. et vocari ab hominibus rabbi

[but according to their works do ye not. For they say, and do not. For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders: but with a finger of their own they will not move them. And all their works they do for to be seen of men. [...] And they love the first places at feasts and the first chairs in the synagogues, And salutations in the market place, and to be called by men, Rabbi.] (Mt. 23. 3-7)

Obedience to such church leaders might also seem ‘insupportable’.

The biblical passage continues with a long Gospel segment, known for its seven ‘Woes’, in which Christ forcefully berates the Pharisees for their concentration on peripheral outward matters unconnected with internal spirituality and seeking the Kingdom of God; for their blind hypocrisy and deficiencies as spiritual leaders (with such attendant echoes for the fourteenth-century Church) as careful close-reading of this long passage shows:<sup>85</sup>

Vae autem vobis scribae et Pharisei hypocritae quia clauditis regnum caelorum ante homines vos enim non intratis nec introeuntes sinitis intrare [...] Vae vobis scribae et Pharisei hypocritae quia circuitis mare et aridam ut faciatis unum

<sup>84</sup> See also Mt. 23. 3: Vulgate: ‘secundum opera vero eorum nolite facere’ [but according to their works do ye not.].

<sup>85</sup> Six of the seven ‘woes’ are given in this illustration: the seventh: ‘vae vobis scribae et pharisei hypocritae qui comeditis domos viduarum occasione longa orantes propter hoc amplius accipietis iudicium’ [Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive the greater judgment.] is given only in the footnotes of the Vulgate edition used for this thesis (p. 1562) with its variations, but see also Mark’s Gospel concerning the scribes who ‘devour the houses of widows under the pretence of long prayer’ [Vulgate: ‘devorant domos viduarum sub obtentu prolixae orationis’] (Mc. 12. 40).

proselytum et cum fuerit factus facitis eum filium gehennae duplo quam vos vae vobis duces caeci qui dicitis quicumque iuraverit per templum nihil est qui autem iuraverit in aurum templi debet stulti et caeci quid enim maius est aurum an templum quod sanctificat aurum et quicumque iuraverit in altari nihil est quicumque autem iuraverit in dono quod est super illud debet caeci quid enim maius est donum an altare quod sanctificat donum qui ergo iurat in altare iurat in eo et in omnibus quae super illud sunt et qui iuraverit in templo iurat in illo et in eo qui inhabitat in ipso et qui iurat in caelo iurat in throno Dei et in eo qui sedet super eum Vae vobis scribae et Pharisei hypocritae quia decimatis mentam et anethum et cyminum et reliquistis quae graviora sunt legis iudicium et misericordiam et fidem haec oportuit facere et illa non omittere Duces caeci excolantes culicem camelum autem gluttientes Vae vobis scribae et Pharisei hypocritae quia mundatis quod de foris est calicis et parapsidis intus autem pleni sunt rapina et inmunditia Phariseae caece munda prius quod intus est calicis et parapsidis ut fiat et id quod de foris est mundum Vae vobis scribae et Pharisei hypocritae quia similes estis sepulchris dealbatis quae a foris parent hominibus speciosa intus vero plena sunt ossibus mortuorum et omni spurcitia sic et vos a foris quidem paretis hominibus iusti intus autem pleni estis hypocrisi et iniquitate Vae vobis scribae et Pharisei hypocritae quia aedificatis sepulchra prophetarum et ornatis monumenta iustorum et dicitis si fuissetis in diebus patrum nostrorum non essemus socii eorum in sanguine prophetarum itaque testimonio estis vobismet ipsis quia filii estis eorum qui prophetas occiderunt Et vos implete mensuram patrum vestrorum serpentes genimina viperarum quomodo fugietis a iudicio gehennae

[But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter. [...] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte. And when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, that say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but he that shall swear by the gold of the temple is a debtor. Ye foolish and blind: for whether is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it is a debtor. Ye blind: for whether is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? He therefore that sweareth by the altar sweareth by it and by all things that are upon it. And whosoever shall swear by the temple sweareth by it and by him that dwelleth in it. And he that sweareth by heaven sweareth by the throne of God and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you tithe mint and anise and cummin and have left the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and faith. These things you ought to have done and not to leave those undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become

clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness. So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just: but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, that build the sepulchres of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the just, And say: If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?] (Mt. 23. 13-33)

Mental association of many similarities of the blind (and covetous) Pharisees with the medieval Church hierarchy demonstrates an example of Langland's deliberate technique in his choice of Vulgate quotation, and of the poet's assumption that an audience might engage with such a familiar Gospel passage. Those hypocritical fourteenth-century priests who 'shut the kingdom of heaven against men' (Mt. 23. 13),<sup>86</sup> and committed other spiritual crimes against those who sought the Kingdom of God, were a major vexation for Langland.<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, through an apparently conformist use of Vulgate citations, Langland makes strong reinforced reference to the duplicity and flagrant abuse of power by those in high office. A clerical audience would remember that Christ was specifically criticising the religious authorities, and therefore when Langland harangues 'Maystres, as þe mayres ben, and grete menne, senatours' (C. VIII. 87), it seems unlikely that the audience did not include 'prestes, prechours and prelates' (C. XVI. 267) into Langland's (unspoken) list. The part of the quotation that Langland uses seems to be about humility and obedience; the unwritten part satirises authority. Langland is radical, subtle. The poet follows Christ's example: he challenges authority – and like Christ, Langland uses the same weapon: the Bible.

<sup>86</sup> Vulgate: 'quia clauditis regnum caelorum ante homines' (Mt. 23. 13).

<sup>87</sup> See, for one example, B. X. 274-78.

### 6.5.1 The Radical Nature of C-text Additions: Passus XIV

Section 6.5.1 will continue to examine C-text additions turning now to Passus XIV. To take close-reading of biblically-associated passages a step further, another additional Vulgate quotation to the C-text concerning Church authority merits investigation as it, too, resonates with Langland's criticism of the medieval Church, and, again, illustrates the poet's typical practice of expanding comment about its deficiencies by implicit reference. Taken from a chapter in Acts where Paul speaks to the clergy at Ephesus, the chapter demonstrates Paul preaching penance and faith to 'maiores natu ecclesiae' [the ancients of the church.] (Act. 20. 17).<sup>88</sup> Paul gives warning to bishops to 'beware ravening wolves' and 'to support the weak'.<sup>89</sup>

adattendite vobis et universo gregi in quo vos Spiritus Sanctus posuit episcopos regere ecclesiam Dei quam adquisivit sanguine suo ego scio quoniam intrabunt post discessionem meam lupi graves in vos non parcentes gregi et ex vobis ipsis exsurgent viri loquentes perversa ut abducant discipulos post se propter quod vigilate memoria retinentes quoniam per triennium nocte et die non cessavi cum lacrimis monens unumquemque vestrum et nunc commendo vos Deo et verbo gratiae ipsius qui potens est aedificare et dare hereditatem in sanctificatis omnibus argentum aut aurum aut vestem nullius concupivi ipsi scitis quoniam ad ea quae mihi opus erant et his qui mecum sunt ministraverunt manus istae omnia ostendi vobis quoniam sic laborantes oportet suscipere infirmos ac meminisse verbi Domini Iesu quoniam ipse dixit *beatius est magis dare quam accipere*

[Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departure ravening wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, keeping in memory that for three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you, night and day. And I now commend you to God and to the word of his grace, who

<sup>88</sup> See also Act. 20. 17-21.

<sup>89</sup> Wycliffites, too, thought that 'a good herde schulde kepe his schep fro woluy's': it was a forceful analogy. Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. II, p. 268, ll. 35-36. Peter S. Taitt considers that '[i]f anything, the C-text is a stronger condemnation of the priesthood, for it restores the suggestions of a wolf in the sheepfold'. Peter S. Taitt, *Incubus and Ideal: Ecclesiastical Figures in Chaucer and Langland*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies, 44 (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975), p. 147.

is able to build up and to give an inheritance among the sanctified. I have not coveted any man's silver, gold or apparel, as you yourselves know. For such things as were needful for me and them that are with me, these hands have furnished. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring you ought to support the weak and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how he said: It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.] (C. XIV. 16a cf. Act. 20. 28-35)

The quotation used by Langland is of itself innocuous, but taken in its biblical context, and when considered against the Vulgate quotations in the B-text which show supplementary reference, so closely connected to the duty of bishops to 'watch', to protect the flock, the C-text addition seems more striking.<sup>90</sup> Some B-text quotations were removed from C, but must still have been in the poet's mind as relevant, if no longer perhaps strong enough for his current argument.

The next Vulgate quotation in this passage of C is retained from B: '*Scientes et non facientes variis flagellis vapulabunt*' [And that servant, who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.] (C. XIV. 18a; B. XII. 56a cf. Lc. 12. 47),<sup>91</sup> and comes from the Parable of the Servant Entrusted with Supervision. This parable was predominantly understood, at the time that Langland wrote, as Christ's direction to Church elders, to bishops, to be vigilant

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<sup>90</sup> For example, Langland: 'Si non in prima vigilia nec in secunda' cf. Vulgate: 'et si venerit in secunda vigilia et si in tertia vigilia venerit et ita invenerit beati sunt servi illi' [And if he shall come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants.] (B. XII. 9a cf. Lc. 12. 38). Luke issues an apocalyptic warning of the Last Judgment which precedes the Parable of the Faithful and the Unfaithful Servant, or as Wailes (*Parables*, pp. 173-77) calls it: 'The Servant Entrusted with Supervision'. See also, Langland: 'Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt' cf. Vulgate: (and note the context of this verse): 'virga tua et baculus tuus ipsa me consolata sunt parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me inpinguasti in oleo caput meum' [Thy rod and thy staff: they have comforted me. Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil.] (B. XII. 13a cf. Ps. 22. 4-5). 'Table' might be considered as 'altar' and the anointing, as a reference that might remind a priest of his Ordination.

<sup>91</sup> Alford (*Guide*, p. 79) points out that Langland adapts this quotation from Luke (Lc. 12. 47).

concerning their responsibilities to their flock.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, Wailes (*Parables*, p. 174)

states:

The term *dispensator* (“steward”) from the text in Luke strengthens the identification of this figure in the parable with the apostles and their successors, since Paul used it with reference to the early Church: “Let a man so account us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now here it is required in stewards that a man be found trustworthy” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2 [...]).<sup>93</sup>

Wailes (*Parables*, p. 175) adds that Bible commentators considered that a ‘greater reward in salvation [would be] enjoyed by the clergy who have helped bring souls to God’: the converse was also true as the contexts of Langland’s quotations keep reminding the ordained.<sup>94</sup>

It is interesting, however, to speculate on why Langland chose to quote Luke’s version of the Parable of the Servant Entrusted with Supervision: especially when direct comparison is made between the relevant lines of this parable in the accounts from Luke and Matthew. To take Luke first:

<sup>92</sup> Wailes, *Parables*, p. 174. According to Wailes (p. 176), Hugh of Saint-Cher, widely regarded as an influence on Langland, considered in his commentary on this parable in Matthew (Mt. 24. 45-51) that ‘Faithless clergy make fetid the mouth of the Church’.

<sup>93</sup> Vulgate: ‘sic nos existimet homo ut ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei hic iam quaeritur inter dispensatores ut fidelis quis inveniatur’ [Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God. Here now it is required among the dispensers that a man be found faithful.] (I Cor. 4. 1-2).

<sup>94</sup> Langland (and his audience) would also have familiar with the text in the Gospel of John which stresses that Christ’s Apostles must follow his example: Vulgate: ‘Si ergo ego lavi vestros pedes Dominus et magister et vos debetis alter alterius lavare pedes exemplum enim dedi vobis ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis ita et vos faciatis Amen amen dico vobis non est servus maior domino suo neque apostolus maior eo qui misit illum si haec scitis beati eritis si feceritis ea’ [If then I being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. Amen, amen, I say to you: The servant is not greater than his lord: neither is the apostle greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them.] (Io. 13. 14-17). Yet modern critics sometimes fail to recognise Langland’s multi-level satire. John S. Chamberlin remarks that ‘[p]atristic and medieval interpreters of the passage understood the parable [of the Servant Entrusted with Supervision] to mean [...] that as stewards of God’s bounty, everyone with possessions has the obligation to dispense their goods to help those in need’. John S. Chamberlin, ‘What Makes *Piers Plowman* So Hard to Read?’, *Style*, 23:1 (Spring 1989), 32-48 (p. 37). Chamberlin considers that Langland refers to almsgiving, but the poet again has a dual agenda: the parable also firmly demonstrates the duty of the priesthood ‘to dispense their [spiritual] goods to help those [in their flock] in [spiritual] need’.

Ait autem ei Petrus Domine ad nos dicis hanc parabolam an et ad omnes dixit autem Dominus quis putas est fidelis dispensator et prudens quem constituet dominus super familiam suam ut det illis in tempore tritici mensuram beatus ille servus quem cum venerit dominus invenerit ita facientem vere dico vobis quia supra omnia quae possidet constituet illum Quod si dixerit servus ille in corde suo moram facit dominus meus venire et coeperit percutere pueros et ancillas et edere et bibere et inebriari veniet dominus servi illius in die qua non sperat et hora qua nescit et dividet eum partemque eius cum infidelibus ponet *Ille autem servus qui cognovit voluntatem domini sui et non praeparavit et non fecit secundum voluntatem eius vapulabit multas* qui autem non cognovit et fecit digna plagis vapulabit paucis omni autem cui multum datum est multum quaeretur ab eo et cui commendaverunt multum plus petent ab eo

[And Peter said to him: Lord, dost thou speak this parable to us, or likewise to all? And the Lord said: Who (thinkest thou) is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord setteth over his family, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom, when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, he will set him over all that he possesseth. But if that servant shall say in his heart: My Lord is long a coming; and shall begin to strike the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and to drink and be drunk: The lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not, and at the hour that he knoweth not: and shall separate him and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers. And that servant, who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.] (Lc. 12. 41-47)<sup>95</sup>

Luke's account, unlike Matthew quoted below, draws attention to the fact that it was Peter, the chief elder of the future Church, who enquired of Christ to whom this parable was addressed.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Luke makes the distinction that the servant 'knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will' (Lc. 12. 47);<sup>97</sup> the servant is, therefore, not just negligent but disobedient, and it will be this breach that will

<sup>95</sup> Langland used an adaptation, but the original is italicised in the Latin Vulgate quotation.

<sup>96</sup> Vulgate: 'Ait autem ei Petrus Domine ad nos dicis hanc parabolam an et ad omnes' [And Peter said to him: Lord, dost thou speak this parable to us, or likewise to all?] (Lc. 12. 41).

<sup>97</sup> Vulgate: 'Ille autem servus qui cognovit voluntatem domini sui et non praeparavit et non fecit secundum voluntatem eius vapulabit multas' [And that servant, who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.] (Lc. 12. 47).

merit his punishment. Luke also emphasises that to him to whom ‘much is given, of him much shall be required’ (Lc. 12. 48).<sup>98</sup>

Matthew demonstrates subtle differences: no mention of deliberate disobedience and a more straightforward approach than Luke:

Si autem dixerit malus servus ille in corde suo moram facit dominus meus venire et coeperit percutere conservos suos manducet autem et bibat cum ebriis veniet dominus servi illius in die qua non sperat et hora qua ignorat et dividet eum partemque eius ponet cum hypocritis illic erit fletus et stridor dentium

[But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My lord is long a coming: And shall begin to strike his fellow servants and shall eat and drink with drunkards: The lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not and at an hour that he knoweth not: And shall separate him and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.] (Mt. 24. 48-51)

Langland’s specific and deliberate choice of Luke over Matthew suggests a detailed agenda; it might seem apparent that Langland had the bishops in mind as a particular target. The poet’s argument following the ‘*Scientes et non facientes variis flagellis vapulabunt*’ quotation includes lines which disparage the Church, and, by implication, Church leaders in particular: ‘And Holy Chirche horen helpe, auerous and coueytous - / Druyeth vp Dowel and distruyeth Dobest’ (C. XIV. 21-22). As there can be no doubt that Langland had intimate knowledge of the Gospels, and understood their nuances, it would be safe to assume that the poet’s choice of Luke and its attendant connotation had calculated purpose.

The contexts of the Acts and Luke quotations in the C-text, taken together, demonstrate a powerful challenge to the fourteenth-century Church elders. A bishop’s

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<sup>98</sup> Vulgate: ‘qui autem non cognovit et fecit digna plagis vapulabit paucis omni autem cui multum datum est multum quaeretur ab eo et cui commendaverunt multum plus petent ab eo’ [But he that knew not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.] (Lc. 12. 48).

duty must include, not only discipline of the lower clergy, but, as the Bible demonstrates, rebuke of each other if necessary.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Paul's chastising admonition in Acts to these men in high ecclesiastical office echoes convincingly with the warnings in *Piers*. Paul seems to prophesy that which was to occur in the fourteenth century: the 'ravens wolves' (Act. 20. 29) will devastate the flock.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, to Langland's audience, 'of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them' (Act. 20. 30) might well have seemed a reference to Wyclif.<sup>101</sup> Paul's rejoinder concerning cupidity might find its counterpart in Langland's frequent caution to the clergy to go and do likewise: 'I have not coveted any man's silver, gold or apparel, as you yourselves know' (Act. 20. 33-34).<sup>102</sup>

Those conversant with the Liturgy and well-read in the Bible, and as familiar with the Bible as Langland himself, would most likely recognise the poet's quotation as part of Paul's speech to the 'ancients of the church'. In consequence, as was seen in Passus VIII, this additional quotation in the C-text (in this case, one not used elsewhere in *Piers*) increases, not diminishes, Langland's criticism of authority, because it clearly reminds those who hear or read it of a bishop's duty. The C-text addition of the Acts quotation is further endorsed and augmented by the Luke citation. Langland must have seemed an uncomfortable irritant (perhaps even dangerous) to the 'ravens wolves' of the fourteenth-century Church hierarchy. The ongoing sub-plot running through the contexts of the Latin Vulgate quotations (with the attendant power of the Bible itself), beneath the

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Lv. 19. 17; Sir. 19. 13-17; Mt. 18. 15-17; Lc. 17. 1-3; 2 Th. 3. 14-15; Iac. 5. 19-20, but cf. Mt. 5. 22, 7. 1-5.

<sup>100</sup> Vulgate: 'lupi graves in vos non parcentes gregi' (Act. 20. 29).

<sup>101</sup> Vulgate: 'et ex vobis ipsis exsurgent viri loquentes perversa ut abducant discipulos post se' (Act. 20. 30).

<sup>102</sup> Vulgate: 'argentum aut aurum aut vestem nullius concupivi ipsi scitis' (Act. 20. 33-34).

orthodoxy of the surface text, demonstrates Langland's serious (and greater) reproof of ordained authority.

### 6.5.2 The Radical Nature of C-text Additions: Passus XVI

In this section's evaluation of the radical nature of the C-text, a passage from B will be compared and close-read with the similar, but more provocative, account in C. As well as Bible quotations' context, Langland uses biblical allusion as a way to increase his censure of authority.<sup>103</sup> In the B-text, Langland describes the lower echelon 'blind guides' of fourteenth-century religious life, the 'beggeris' (presumably the friars) and the prayer-sayers, the 'bedemen', as 'Loken a lambren and semen lif-holy' (B. XV. 205-6). Now, in the C-text, the poet hardens his attitude to all clergy, and makes the passage stronger as a detailed examination of the biblical allusions in these lines confirms:

Ypocrisyse is a braunche of pruyde, and most amonges clerkes,  
 And is ylikned in Latyn to a lothly dong-hep  
 That were bysnwed al with snowe, and snakes withynne,  
 Or to a wal ywhitlymed and were blak withynne;  
 Riht so many prestes, prechours and prelates,  
 That ben enblaunched with *bele paroles* and with *bele* clothes,  
 And as lambes they loke, and lyuen as wolues. (C. XVI. 263-69)

cf.

For [in Latyn ypocrisie] is likned to a dongehill  
 That were bisnewed wiþ snow, and snakes wiþinne,  
 Or to a wal þat were whitlymed and were foul wiþinne.  
 Right so manye preestes, prechours and prelates –  
 Ye [b]en enblaunched wiþ *bele paroles* and wiþ cloþes,  
 Ac youre werkes and wordes þervnder aren ful w[o]lueliche. (B. XV. 111-116)<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Langland is also open in his stringent criticism of 'inparfit' priests: 'Riht so oute of Holy Church al euel spredeth / There inparfit preesthoed is, prechares and techares' (C. XVI. 244-45).

<sup>104</sup> David Aers, among many other critics, has drawn attention to Langland's subversive techniques in denouncing clerical behaviour. David Aers and Lynn Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), pp. 67-68.

In the C-text, the poet turns his attack on the pride of priests, preachers and bishops, and myriad biblical allusions resound through these lines.<sup>105</sup> Pride was associated with the devil: the serpent of Genesis and the Apocalypse,<sup>106</sup> and the sin which caused Lucifer's fall from heaven.<sup>107</sup> Therefore hypocrisy, as a 'braunche' of the sin of pride, determines the grievous failings of the 'clerkes', and also, therefore, links hypocritical priests, preachers and bishops with the devil.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, in the C-text, Langland writes that hypocrites are 'blak withynne' (C. XVI. 266), as opposed to being just 'foul wipinne' (B. XV. 113). In this way, as Langland did with their pride, the poet links dissembling clerks with Satan because, in medieval art, black is colour of the devil.<sup>109</sup>

Langland's condemnation of fourteenth-century Church authority as the 'snakes withynne' (C. XVI. 265) also resounds with the Gospels. Jewish authority, the Pharisees and Sadducees, are termed 'vipers', for example by John the Baptist in a passage about penance, the need to 'yield good fruit' and the threat of judgement:

Videns autem multos Pharisaeorum et Sadducaeorum venientes ad baptismum suum dixit eis progenies viperarum quis demonstravit vobis fugere a futura ira facite ergo fructum dignum paenitentiae et ne velitis dicere intra vos patrem habemus Abraham dico enim vobis quoniam potest Deus de lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abrahae iam enim securis ad radicem arborum posita est omnis ergo arbor quae non facit fructum bonum exciditur et in ignem mittitur

<sup>105</sup> For further commentary on this passage in *Piers* and its connection to the thirteenth-century *Summa virtutum de remediis anime*, see Siegfried Wenzel, 'Medieval Sermons', in *Companion*, ed. by Alford, p. 169.

<sup>106</sup> Gn. 3. 1-15; Apc. 12. 7-9, 20. 1-3. See again *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 180 (Belial: 'worthlessness', 'wickedness', 'destruction'); pp. 474-75 (devil: 'calumniator', 'accuser'); p. 1002 (Lucifer: 'light-bearer'); p. 1456 (Satan: 'adversary', especially 'one who plots against another'): as may be seen, the words have separate meanings, but they are frequently used synonymously.

<sup>107</sup> Is. 14. 9-19.

<sup>108</sup> Humility seems not to have been prevalent amongst the clergy criticised by Langland here. It is small wonder that Langland's ongoing criticism of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was hypocrisy: John H. Arnold writes that, in sermons of the period: 'The themes they emphasized [*sic*] were humility, contrition and charity'. John H. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 44. Langland foresees that 'Pride [shal] be Pope and prynce of Holy Chirche' (B. XIX. 224; C. XXI. 224).

<sup>109</sup> George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 151.

[And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: Ye brood of vipers, who hath shewed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.] (Mt. 3. 7-10)

Moreover, as was demonstrated in section 6.5 above, in the ‘seven woes’ of Matthew’s Gospel, Christ conducts a vociferous condemnation of the Pharisees and their hypocrisy: ‘You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgement of hell?’ (Mt. 23. 33).<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the ‘ywhitlymed’ wall of *Piers Plowman* echoes with the ‘whited sepulchres’ of Matthew’s Gospel (Mt. 23. 27), again from the ‘woes’ passage quoted above in section 6.5.

It also resounds with Paul’s speech to Ananias in Acts:

postera autem die volens scire diligentius qua ex causa accusaretur a Iudaeis solvit eum et iussit sacerdotes convenire et omne concilium et producens Paulum statuit inter illos intendens autem concilium Paulus ait viri fratres ego omni conscientia bona conversatus sum ante Deum usque in hodiernum diem princeps autem sacerdotum Ananias praecepit adstantibus sibi percutere os eius tunc Paulus ad eum dixit percutiet te Deus paries dealbate et tu sedens iudicas me secundum legem et contra legem iubes me percuti et qui adstabant dixerunt summum sacerdotem Dei maledicis dixit autem Paulus nesciebam fratres quia princeps est sacerdotum scriptum est enim principem populi tui non maledices

[But on the next day, meaning to know more diligently for what cause he [Paul] was accused by the Jews, he [the tribune] loosed him and commanded the priests to come together and all the council: and, bringing forth Paul, he set him before them. And Paul, looking upon the council, said: Men, brethren, I have conversed with all good conscience before God until this present day. And the high priest, Ananias, commanded them that stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him: God shall strike thee, thou whited wall. For, sittest thou to judge me according to the law and, contrary to the law, commandest me to be struck? And they that stood by said: Dost thou revile the high priest of God? And Paul said: I knew not, brethren, that he is the high priest. For it is written: *Thou shalt not speak evil of the prince of the people.*] (Act. 22. 30, 23. 1-5)<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> See also Mt. 23. 13-33 and Mt. 12. 22-42.

<sup>111</sup> The italicised quotation comes from Ex. 22. 28.

Paul considers Ananias (the equivalent of a bishop) to be a hypocrite, a ‘whited wall’, and does not recognise the high priest’s authority. As has been demonstrated, ecclesiastical authority’s hypocrisy is a recurrent theme in *Piers*, as well as in the Bible, but the two would, most likely, constantly merge together in the mind of an audience well-acquainted with scripture.

Langland’s mention of ‘Latyn’ (C. XVI. 264) acts like a type of waymark: it directs the audience’s mind to focus on the Bible, and therefore on several associated themes and passages. The biblical allusions in the *Piers* passage, quoted at the beginning of this section, are complex: when Langland says that hypocrisy ‘in Latyn’ is likened ‘to a lothly dong-hep’ (C. XVI. 264),<sup>112</sup> not only do the Matthew and Acts passages come to mind, but also (among others) one in Job:

hoc scio a principio ex quo positus est homo super terram quod laus impiorum  
brevis sit et gaudium hypocritae ad instar puncti si ascenderit usque ad caelum  
superbia eius et caput eius nubes tetigerit quasi sterquilinum in fine perdetur et  
qui eum viderant dicent ubi est velut somnium avolans non inveniatur transiet  
sicut visio nocturna oculus qui eum viderat non videbit neque ultra intuebitur eum  
locus suus

[This I know from the beginning, since man was placed upon the earth, That the praise of the wicked is short and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds: In the end he shall be destroyed like a dunghill; and they that had seen him, shall say: Where is he? As a dream that fleeth away he shall not be found: he shall pass as a vision of the night: The eyes that had seen him, shall see him no more, neither shall his place any more behold him.] (Iob 20. 4-9)<sup>113</sup>

The Job citation links, not only with the ‘dong-hep’ allusion in Langland, but also with the references to hypocrisy, pride and the sense of apocalypse: the last a theme which,

<sup>112</sup> Cf. B. XV. 111.

<sup>113</sup> The chapter continues with apocalyptic warning to the rich man who mistreats the poor (Iob 20. 14-23). There are many similar biblical connections with riches, for example where the poor are raised from the dunghill, see I Rg. 2. 8; Ps. 112. 7.

unsurprisingly, remains part of the nature of both the Bible and *Piers*, and resonates between the two.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, another biblical reference, in this short section of the poem, invigorates interpretation: when Langland writes: ‘And as lambes they loke. And lyuen as wolves’ (C. XVI. 269), a stronger statement than the lines that the poet puts in B,<sup>115</sup> the words evoke numerous Bible images. The most obvious example comes from Matthew’s Gospel: ‘Adtendite a falsis prophetis qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces’ [Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.] (Mt. 7. 15).<sup>116</sup> As discussed in section 6.2 above, the wider context of this chapter in Matthew appears relevant to *Piers*, and speaks both of hypocrisy and probity.<sup>117</sup> But, to return to the imagery addressed to the bishops in Acts 20, discussed in section 6.5.1, this reference again seems particularly pertinent: ‘ravening wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them’ (Act. 20. 29-

<sup>114</sup> For other biblical passages which connect a sense of apocalypse and the theme of the dung or dunghill, see Is. 5. 25; Jer. 16. 4; Ez. 7. 19; So. 1. 17-18; Lc. 14. 33-35.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. ‘Ac youre werkes and wordes þervnder aren ful w[o]lueliche’ (B. XV. 116).

<sup>116</sup> See also Mt. 10. 16; Lc. 10. 3. When he sends the disciples out on mission, Christ uses the terminology of sheep or lambs going amongst wolves.

<sup>117</sup> The immediate context of the Vulgate: ‘Intrate per angustam portam quia lata porta et spatiosa via quae ducit ad perditionem et multi sunt qui intrans per eam quam angusta porta et arcta via quae ducit ad vitam et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam Adtendite a falsis prophetis qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos numquid colligunt de spinis uvas aut de tribulis ficus sic omnis arbor bona fructus bonos facit mala autem arbor fructus malos facit non potest arbor bona fructus malos facere neque arbor mala fructus bonos facere omnis arbor quae non facit fructum bonum exciditur et in ignem mittitur igitur ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos’ [Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction: and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it! Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.] (Mt. 7. 13-20).

30).<sup>118</sup> Certainly one could imagine that Langland frequently thought of these verses in his concern about the ordained.

A chapter much used by Langland from John's Gospel,<sup>119</sup> moreover, sets out the duty of the Good Shepherd towards his sheep, and this imagery connects back to the Old Testament.<sup>120</sup> For example, Ezekiel writes about disobedient priests who despise God's law, and cannot distinguish between holy and profane; the ravening wolves who prey on the helpless and destroy souls:

et factum est verbum Domini ad me dicens fili hominis dic ei tu es terra immunda et non conpluta in die furoris coniuratio prophetarum in medio eius sicut leo rugiens capiensque praedam animam devoraverunt opes et pretium acceperunt viduas eius multiplicaverunt in medio illius sacerdotes eius contempserunt legem meam et polluerunt sanctuaria mea inter sanctum et profanum non habuere distantiam et inter pollutum et mundum non intellexerunt et a sabbatis meis averterunt oculos suos et coinquinabar in medio eorum principes eius in medio illius quasi lupi rapientes praedam ad effundendum sanguinem et perdendas animas et avare sectanda lucra

[And the word of the Lord came to me saying: Son of man, say to her: Thou art a land that is unclean and not rained upon in the day of wrath. There is a conspiracy of prophets in the midst thereof: like a lion that roareth and catcheth the prey, they have devoured souls, they have taken riches and hire, they have made many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have despised my law and have defiled my sanctuaries: they have put no difference between holy and profane, nor have distinguished between the polluted and the clean, and they have turned away their eyes from my sabbaths: and I was profaned in the midst of them. Her princes in the midst of her are like wolves ravening the prey to shed blood and to destroy souls and to run after gains through covetousness.] (Ez. 22. 23-27)<sup>121</sup>

The covetous princes of the Church in Langland's time were not unlike the men

described in Ezekiel. As John's Gospel teaches (and Langland believed),<sup>122</sup> the work of a

<sup>118</sup> Vulgate: 'lupi graves in vos non parcentes gregi et ex vobis ipsis exsurgent viri loquentes perversa ut abducant discipulos post se' (Act. 20. 29-30).

<sup>119</sup> See Alford, *Guide*, p. 131: B. XV. 496a, C. XVII. 193a, C. XVII. 291a (Io. 10. 11); C. XVIII. 265a (Io. 10. 16); B. XVI. 120a, C. XVIII. 151a (Io. 10. 20); B. XII. 290 (Io. 10. 28); C. XVI. 340a (Io. 10. 38).

<sup>120</sup> Io. 10. 1-18, especially vv. 12-13. See also. Ps. 22. 1-3, 79. 2-4; Is. 40. 11; Jer. 31. 10; Ez. 34; Za. 11. 3-17. See also, for other wolf and sheep imagery in the Old Testament: Is. 11. 6, 65. 25.

<sup>121</sup> See also Mi. 3. 11; So. 3. 3.

<sup>122</sup> Io. 10. 11.

good spiritual shepherd is to give his life for the sheep; to increase, not diminish, their chance of salvation, and this was obviously the cause of the poet's especial indignation with the higher clergy.<sup>123</sup> According to Langland, fourteenth-century ecclesiastical shepherds were greatly lacking, and had more in keeping with 'the hireling' (Io. 10. 12-13) who abandons the flock to the wolves; the hypocritical 'prestes, prechours and prelates' (C. XVI. 267) who look like lambs but 'lyuen as wolues', and prey on those in their care (C. XVI. 269).<sup>124</sup>

Such intricate biblical allusion woven through, in this instance, seven lines of poetry demonstrates how *Piers* needs careful analysis.<sup>125</sup> biblical reference must be teased out from the poem before Langland's use of the Bible may be seen in its full vitality. The most obvious biblical citations (for example, Mt. 7. 15) frequently remain partial for the purposes of interpretation, because of the flood of biblical imagery that invades the mind from the mention of even a single word or phrase.

## 6.6 Conclusion

From the illustrations given in this chapter alone, Langland's command of the Bible can never be in doubt: the poet's choice of Vulgate quotation, the relevance of the associated Bible material, biblical allusion and the waymarks all permeate a Christian audience's mind, and exemplify the subtlety of the poet's poetic construction. Langland has the skill of a pyrotechnician, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, uses the

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<sup>123</sup> For discussion on Langland's use of this quotation from John's Gospel to establish his point at B. XV. 491-96a, see Lawrence Warner, 'Becket and the Hopping Bishops', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 107-34. Warner (p. 111) comments that Langland is never 'explicit': 'the evidence lies in the rhetorical register of both his biblical citations' and the poet's choice of vocabulary.

<sup>124</sup> Kerby-Fulton, ('Piers Plowman', p. 525) considers that in C, as part of a post-1381 toning-down of the text, Langland reverts to his ideas in A regarding the 'negligent shepherd topos'.

<sup>125</sup> C. XVI. 263-69.

Bible with immense precision to induce inflammatory ideas. The denigration of the priesthood, which the poet seems to have hidden beneath the surface of *Piers*, merits most careful investigation. Close examination of the biblical context of the Vulgate quotations used by Langland reveals an ongoing sub-text which weaves amongst the overt lines of the poem, and demonstrates strong connections between biblical materials. The poet uses the Bible to promote radical themes which augment the written text; Langland's agenda appears on the surface, but also exists forcefully beneath it.

Not only are the biblical contexts of the quotations used by the poet essential both to structure and meaning, but Langland continuously establishes his castigation of the hypocritical clergy in this way. Such subtlety must have been dangerous: those with similar knowledge of the Bible would have been able to recognise the implications of the contextual material. The 'blind guides' and 'whited sepulchres' of the fourteenth-century Church, to whom Langland makes reference in both B- and C-texts, would not have relished the poet exposing them to very public poetic scrutiny.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, senior clergy would not have taken kindly to the open reminders, which Langland gives through the medium of the Bible contexts, that they were reneging on their Ordination vows, and failing in their duties and responsibilities. Therefore, we should not be surprised to learn that some have thought that the Bishop of Lincoln may have recalled manuscripts of the poem in order to disrupt its influence.<sup>127</sup> Even so, Langland's guilt (if one may call it that) is extremely hard to prove, because the surface text appears conformist.

<sup>126</sup> See, for example B. XV. 90-116, C. XVI. 240-69 cf. Mt. 15. 14, 23. 3-33, especially v. 27.

<sup>127</sup> I learnt about John Buckingham, Bishop of Lincoln (1363-98), from Professor Stephen Knight who, in turn, was made aware of this hypothesis by Professor George Russell. Some critics favour the idea that Langland was more sympathetic to the monks than to the secular clergy: see, for example, Kerby-Fulton, 'Piers Plowman', in *Cambridge History*, ed. by Wallace, p. 530. See also Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Was William Langland a Benedictine Monk?', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 4:1 (March 1943), 57-61. Kerby-Fulton ('Piers Plowman', p. 530) considers that Langland's stance 'is an unusual, and characteristically

Yet in criticising the probity of power, Langland would, most likely, have also undermined the dogmas laid down by that authority because the poet's censure of the Church hierarchy would have caused his audiences to re-think on every level. The Church could not remain in *Concordia*, of one heart and mind, under the attack of such dangerous criticism: constant assault on the probity of power has ongoing implication.<sup>128</sup> Although Langland does not denigrate the office of priesthood itself, only the perversion of priestly duties and responsibilities, dissatisfaction with representatives of the establishment involved in outrageous wrongdoing leads to anger and resentment of the system itself;<sup>129</sup> the awareness of the malaise drives a need, if not to rebellion, at least to provoke immediate change, reform.

Disrespect of authority causes re-examination of the policies, or even the beliefs, which that power advocates. The followers of Wyclif with their focus on (and knowledge of) the Bible would not have been ignorant of Langland's hidden agenda; neither can the

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independent blend of progressively reformist monastic and pastoral positions – theologically orthodox and spiritually imaginative, a combination the subtleties of which were increasingly open to misinterpretation after 1381'. Yet, if we consider Langland's criticism of the Abbot of Abingdon (B. X. 325) in the light of the poet's next Vulgate quotation (Is. 14. 4-6 cf. X. 327a), it is hard not to consider that Langland, who felt such anger against ecclesiastical authority in the fourteenth century (particularly the wealthy monks whom the poet believed used their power corruptly), and the plight of the poor and hungry (whom Langland thought the monks misused): to ponder the possibility that the poet held the whole of Isaiah 14 in his mind as he composed *Piers* (see Is. 14. 1-32). In Isaiah 14, God strikes oppressive authority: the people who upset the natural order of God's creation, 'that troubled the earth' (Is. 14. 16), for them, Isaiah foresees a gruesome end (Is. 14. 19), but prophesies that the poor shall be fed, and 'rest with confidence' (Is. 14. 30); God gives hope to the poor (Is. 14. 32) - all themes intrinsic to *Piers*. The Bible contexts of this Passus X passage demonstrate a coordinated theme within the structure. In connecting - by association - the Abbot of Abingdon with Satan (Is. 14. 4-25), Langland certainly made a strong political statement through his use of Bible quotation and context. For discussion of the dispute between the Abbot of Abingdon and the 1381 Rebels, see Galloway, 'Making History Legal', pp. 23-25, 35-39.

<sup>128</sup> For discussion of protest poetry in the period, see George Kane, 'Some Fourteenth-Century 'Political' Poems', in *Religious and Ethical Literature*, ed. by Kratzmann and Simpson, pp. 82-91; J.R. Maddicott, 'Poems of Social Protest in Early Fourteenth-Century England', in *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1986), p. 130-44.

<sup>129</sup> This situation was made manifestly apparent in 2009 through the expenses scandal in the UK parliament.

poet have been unaware of the strength of the biblical armoury at his disposal.<sup>130</sup> As quoted in chapter one, Wright acknowledged Langland's mastery of the Bible, but considered (*Vision*, vol. I, pp. xxii-xxiii) that the poet was not 'a sower of sedition nor one who would be characterized by his contemporaries as a heretic', that 'he constantly preaches the Christian doctrine of obedience to rulers'.<sup>131</sup> The examples from the C-text alone make a mockery of this statement.<sup>132</sup>

The richly allusive (and illusive) style of Langland's Bible use is impenetrable to an audience of *Piers* with no knowledge of the Bible, and the poet's increased condemnation unprovable by the authority of Langland's own time; it may even, perhaps, have offered some protection from the censorship of post-Lollard England. To couch profound criticism of secular and Church authority in the authority of the Bible was not only subtle, but shrewd and ingenious. *Piers* offers surface meaning in acceptable

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<sup>130</sup> Cole (*Literature and Heresy*, pp. 44-45) thinks that Langland 'refuses to view "lollardy" through the eyes of orthodoxy or to ride the waves of opinion after the Blackfriars Council that Wycliffites must be resoundingly condemned [...W]e cannot look at the Wycliffite context – and specifically at the legal, sermonical, and historiographical problems of "lollardy" – without seeing Langland's C text in the very center [*sic*] of it all'. See also Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, pp. 70-71: Cole (p. 71) does not consider Langland 'a poet who shrinks from controversy and stifles his own voice', but that Langland 'does indeed have "Lollard sympathies" else, if he had been concerned to reveal them, the poet 'surely would have written his new poetry differently'. Other writers, like John Mirk, for example, were at pains to check the Wycliffite heresy. See Alan J. Fletcher, 'John Mirk and the Lollards', *Medium Ævum*, 56:2 (1987), 217-24. For an evaluation of Langland and Wyclif, see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 398-408.

<sup>131</sup> To repeat in full Wright's quotation (*Vision*, vol. I, pp. xxii-xxiii) used in chapter one: 'The writer of *Piers Plowman* was neither a sower of sedition, nor one who would be characterized by his contemporaries as a heretic. The doctrines inculcated throughout the book are so far from democratic, that he constantly preaches the Christian doctrine of obedience to rulers. Yet its tendency to debase the great, and to raise the commons in public consideration, must have rendered it popular among the latter: and, although no single doctrine of the popish religion is attacked, yet the unsparing manner in which the vices and corruptions of the church are laid open, must have helped in no small degree the cause of the Reformation'. However, other more recent critics consider Langland to be less conventional: 'In particular, the general presumption that Langland is wholly orthodox in his religion and conservative in his politics seems to exist in a void, apart from historical evidence and social considerations. The point has never been validated: it has been carried by acclamation, and has won the status of agreed truth by repetition'. See David Lawton, 'English Poetry and English Society: 1370-1400', in *The Radical Reader*, ed. by Stephen Knight and Michael Wilding (Sydney: Wild and Woolley, 1977), pp. 145-68 (p. 158).

<sup>132</sup> Kerby-Fulton and Justice ('Reformist Intellectual Culture', p. 180) argue that '[i]t is well known that Langland more than once openly expresses a fear of speaking out, and sometimes "censored" his poem in revision': in view of the Bible contexts of the C-text, this statement needs some qualification.

formulas that would satisfy Church authorities, but which, to the attuned attention of like-minded observers, could relay a deep-seated agenda and *Discordia*. If sowing the seeds of disruption, if *Discordia*, can indeed be considered, as Bloomfield (*Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 65) suggests, 'equivalent to heresy', then Langland might genuinely be considered heretical, if only, in a single definition, to the orthodoxy of the Church hierarchy. Even if the poet can be considered theologically sound, Langland's use of the Bible as a weapon against the transgressions of the ordained made his orthodoxy, unorthodox.

## Conclusion

‘And of al Holy Writ he made a roof after’ (B. XIX. 330)

This thesis set out with three aims, and each proposition will now be reconsidered and appraised in turn. Firstly, to re-examine the assertion that there are overarching themes in the contexts which endorse, colour and augment Langland’s ideas which he presents through *Piers Plowman*. From very different aspects, the Truth, Baptism and Ordination chapters show how Langland, with ease and fluidity, is able to recast the Bible quotations and contexts into various formats which suit his purpose: there can be no doubt that the poet did indeed demonstrate a mastery of biblical texts and contexts. Although within the space and confines of a doctoral thesis, it was not possible to display more than a tiny fraction of what Langland does with the Bible: it was only feasible to give the best examples of different practices. The intention was to exhibit a diverse approach within the strict confines of a unified thesis.

The Truth chapter holds an implicit theme which the quotations carry forward through the structure of the poem. The topic of Baptism, on the other hand, is evidenced through many Vulgate quotations and their contexts, but, again, often below the surface, in the biblical milieu of *Piers*. Once this principle of overt and covert Bible use was established, the thesis was able to extend the argument to reveal how Langland, through these Bible contexts, was able to be politically adroit, to challenge the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the ordained, in a period where no-one, however powerful, even archbishop or king, was safe.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury, was murdered on Tower Hill, London, by the rebels in 1381; Richard II was deposed in 1399, and most probably murdered in 1400. Saul, *Richard II*, pp, 69, 417-26.

Secondly, the question of waymarks and whether Langland's biblical guidelines hold authority. Langland's knowledge of the Bible is, most definitely, to be trusted: a poet who re-writes his poem so many times over the course of his life is likely to notice basic mistakes about Bible references. Sister Davlin ('*Kynde Knowyng*', 1971, p. 19) considers Langland a poet who uses words 'with precision', and this skill needs consideration and respect. The essential technique remains that, to understand what Langland means and to follow the waymarks, twenty-first century readers must be open to the whole spectrum of the Bible and to fourteenth-century Christian understanding: indeed, as far as possible, to adopt the medieval Christian mindset. Modern readers of *Piers* need to look carefully in the Bible, and then to re-read the context of *Piers* to see if there is a connection; there usually is. As this thesis has maintained, overwhelmingly, Langland is correct.

Yet, research has frequently demonstrated that, in order to ascertain Langland's technique, it is crucial - constantly - to bear in mind the Christian ethic: as was seen, in examples like the 'Apostle seide' (XI. 92) and 'Seint Johan bereþ witesse' (XI. 226), with Langland and Saint John the emphasis must always be – can only be – on 'þe lawe of loue as Oure Lord tau3te' (XI. 227). It will never be enough to look only at '*Non oderis fratrem*' (XI. 92): Langland is almost punning here, and having fun with his audience who would know from Christian doctrine that the only way forward is to turn from hate to love. Once the poet's method is understood, the simplicity of the waymarks may be seen as extraordinary.

As this thesis has argued, close-reading of these lines of *Piers* against the Bible demonstrates that Langland's knowledge of the Scriptures was immense: the waymark to

Mark's Gospel does not indicate the necessity of any intermediary in the form of interpretation from exegesis and Commentary, but assumes direct and intimate knowledge of the Bible itself. Langland does not say: look at what Augustine (or Hugh or whoever) says 'Marc meneþ in þe Gospel' (X. 275). Commentary cannot have been the only way to read the Bible in the fourteenth century, as this direct reading straight from the Gospel shows.<sup>134</sup> Langland's technique is to discuss one topic, but then to use a quotation from another part of the Bible as a good illustration. The waymark is not used to indicate where the quotation is to be found - that information the poet expects the audience to know - but to guide the mind to the subject under discussion.

Such practice in the use of *specific* biblical guidance presumes great audience rapport with the Bible. Langland may then go on to a theme set up by that quotation – or he may continue to discuss the theme set up by the waymark, and this procedure presupposes that an audience is able to appreciate and follow these waymarks as and when the poet presents them. C. David Benson ('Augustinian Irony', p. 52) writes: '[Langland] makes exacting demands on the knowledge of his audience [...] in this most intellectual of Middle English poems', but perhaps this statement may be seen as a more modern than medieval difficulty. Langland properly assumes a capability from his audience for, at the very least, intimate, close-reading of the Gospels.

Yet is it just the Gospels? Kuczynski (*Prophetic Song*, p. 193) considers, as does this thesis, that:

For Langland, the authority of the Psalter itself is prior to and greater than that of the commentaries: it is the very foundation of exegesis and of canon law. A chief

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<sup>134</sup> Langland was part of the growth of English vernacular spirituality among the laity. For discussion of this growth, see George R. Keiser, "'Noght how lang man lifs; bot how wele": the Laity and the Ladder of Perfection', in *'De Cella in Seculum': Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 145-59 (p. 145).

aspect of Langland's psalm radicalism is his disavowal of the common medieval view [...] that the Psalter's meaning could only be apprehended when refracted through the prism of exegetical discourse. Langland certainly uses the exegetes himself, but his absolute trust resides in the naked text of the Psalms – David's literal sense – which he allows to speak bluntly throughout *Piers Plowman*.

It does not make complete sense to believe, as so many critics appear to do, that people like Langland took evidence second-hand, even if that were the contemporary Church authority's official stance.<sup>135</sup>

If applied more widely to the other Bible texts which Langland uses in such profusion and with such care, it might seem that, in misunderstanding the waymarks, Langland studies may also have forfeited much that might enable a more full interpretation of *Piers*. In pursuing understanding of *Piers* only through the narrow prism of exegesis, and believing, about an age where the translation of the Bible and its wider access for lay readers was at the forefront of radical thought, that a person of Langland's intellectual capabilities and Christian motivation, might be limited to looking at or using the Bible solely through Commentary (or the *Glossa Ordinaria*) might be considered shortsighted. This concept does not exclude the importance of the Commentaries to the poet, but these documents are not exclusive; not the sole resources at Langland's disposal.

Another issue is that editors need to look much more closely at both *Piers* and the Bible - and the relation one to another - before assuming that Langland's Bible assertions are incorrect: punctuation needs alteration in several places. Scholars need to be encouraged to go back and have another look at Langland's use of the Bible; to research

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<sup>135</sup> In their approach to knowledge of the Vulgate and the dissemination of the Bible out into the wider arena, Langland and Wyclif seem to share a similar viewpoint. Moreover, Langland (again, like Wyclif) was obviously familiar with the Commentaries, but preferred a more direct path to Truth / truth. For an example (from his orthodox sermons) of John Mirk's view of direct access to Christ, see Ford, *Festial*, pp. 1-2.

the material in the Vulgate contexts in greater depth: there is much more to discover.

Without accepting that this unwritten text exists as part of the poem, and incorporating this understanding into our appreciation of the poem, we cannot begin to analyse *Piers Plowman* in all its original glory.

During the research for this thesis, it became clearer as time went on that there could be no question but that Langland was in complete control of the Bible passages that he used (whether the quotations or allusions): that the poet did mean precisely what he said. The use of translation and paraphrase should have indicated this phenomenon, but, initially, there was a reluctance to question the eminent scholars who have edited *Piers* and, perhaps, an initial lack of confidence in my own grasp of the Bible and the preliminary notion about Langland's biblical adeptness which had prompted this investigation. Trust, in where Langland was directing us to look in any given line, grew - as did respect: the poet had, not just biblical expertise, but a sure empathy for what the Bible says.

Langland (and his fourteenth-century audience) had a living knowledge of the Bible – the feel and language of the Bible which people absorbed – which was, perhaps, a main reason why *Piers* had the effect that it did: it was recalling people to what they already knew. They were presumably aware, too, that Langland was right, and that is why *Piers* was so powerful. Fourteenth-century readers would not have needed to look up Langland's Bible waymarks: they would have recognised them intuitively or why else was the poem so popular?

Lastly, to re-assess this thesis' contention concerning the additional C-text material: there can be no doubt that the extra Vulgate quotations which Langland inserted

into C hold significant inflammatory substance in their contexts and associated biblical passages. With his manifest knowledge of the Bible, there cannot be any question but that the poet was aware of the reformist nature of these inclusions, and also to have known that using the power and authority of the Bible itself would intensify *Piers*' effectiveness. Langland challenged the conscience of every Christian, but his deliberate choice of quotations – with an active not passive purpose – must have made the clerical hierarchy decidedly uncomfortable: the impact of the numerous, pointed biblical contexts should not be underestimated. Authors write to be read (or heard), and *Piers* is not the intimate diary of a recluse: it was written with the intention to effect change, and the number of extant manuscripts suggests that *Piers* filled a public need.

The assertion in chapter six that Langland used the Bible as a weapon should not be understood in an aggressive sense of the word, because the poet appears to be genuinely compassionate as the lines on love, on sinners, on Trajan, demonstrate. That Langland was heretical also needs some qualification: in the sense that he confronted authority, he was. But heresy always depends on a particular standpoint: as far as the Pharisees and Sadducees were concerned, Christ was a heretic, and these religious authorities actively sought Christ's destruction.<sup>136</sup> Langland follows Christ in his criticism of corrupt, hypocritical ecclesiastical officials.

Langland's critical stance hardly indicates the behaviour of a lowly Mass priest:<sup>137</sup> the poet's essential awareness of duty and responsibility - which he expects from his fellow priests - derives from a sense of power and authority, from passion and fire - and

<sup>136</sup> For some examples, see Mt. 12. 14, 24, 22. 15, 26. 57-68, 27. 1-2; Mc. 3. 6, 14. 53-65, 15. 1; Lc. 22. 52-71, 23. 1-25; Io. 18. 3, 12-15, 19-24, 28-40.

<sup>137</sup> This view is asserted by many critics. See, for example, Eamon Duffy, 'Religious Belief', in *A Social History of England, 1200-1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 293-339 (p. 322).

anger! Research for this thesis has led to a review of ideas about certain points: who Langland was, and also the poet's use of *distinctiones*. Again, these issues will be tackled in turn.

Firstly, some speculation concerning Langland's identity: in the same way in which the poet uses the Bible that evidences - not just expectation - but even an assurance of audience knowledge: we might appear to be looking in the wrong place to discover who the poet was.<sup>138</sup> In view of the extent, control and sheer brilliance with which Langland uses the Bible; the potency, the intellect, the passionate authority is highly unlikely to emanate from some dry, minor clerk working in a dusty scribal cell poring over a *distinctiones*, looking for inspiration.<sup>139</sup> Langland is too much on top of all the material, far too authoritative, and more likely to have been a high-ranking cleric: a supposition made purely from the force with which he writes.

The Church had a responsibility to lead towards truth - the ways of truth; to promulgate the power of the Gospel and the application of it in daily life, and this energy exudes from the poem. Langland is passionate about Christian belief: it is never some sterile, remote theory. The poem pulsates with an enthusiasm, fervour and vitality which come from the Bible references and Christian understanding. Baptism is for everybody, but those who take this commitment to Christ further, and make the vows of Ordination, have extra duties and responsibilities (and privileges) which, as Langland saw it, were not being fulfilled. Therefore *Piers* is a call to arms - to repentance - particularly to the priesthood. A priest's duty is to guide (and care for) the flock: Langland is (perhaps

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<sup>138</sup> For discussion of Langland and identity, see Anne Middleton, 'William Langland's "Kynde Name": Authorial Signature and Social Identity in Late Fourteenth-Century England', in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530*, ed. by Lee Paterson (Berkeley, Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 15-82.

<sup>139</sup> See Alford, 'Role', p. 99.

personally) aware of what is required of leaders, and points this out. The poet made direct, deliberate choices with the Bible quotations that he used: they do not appear random or used in isolation, but emanate from a Bible scholarship immensely greater than modern scholars appear to have understood. This fact, in turn, gives indication of Langland's persona.

Although the 'strong light' that was spoken about in the Introduction may have some shadows around it in that more research is necessary, the understanding of the poet's biblical proficiency as demonstrated in *Piers* is incontrovertible. Langland not just 'speaks Bible',<sup>140</sup> he lives, thinks and breathes Bible: the poet's biblical knowledge is awe-inspiring, and, during the course of the research, has led to great esteem for the poet's acumen and erudition; to the acknowledgement that it would be hard to disregard this attribute in any future assessment of *Piers*. Langland is so totally bilingual; the poet is as familiar with the Vulgate as his vernacular. Research has led to a belief that the whole process was fluid as one language triggered the other again and again. Langland's erudition, again, plausibly points to a high-powered priest or bishop. Either he was so high-ranking that he had no need of protection (which, given 1381 and Richard's demise, is unlikely), or he had the benefit of a strong and influential patron: there can be no middle ground.

Secondly, another speculation: research for this thesis has engendered the opinion that Langland did not use *distinctiones* on a regular basis. The poem reads as if Langland had used *distinctiones* and concordances for a long period of time, but is now so conversant with the Bible and the Liturgy that the content flows freely. It seems credible

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<sup>140</sup> Bloomfield, *Apocalypse*, p. 37.

also that the poet became so familiar with such material that he held these themes and word associations in his memory. Langland is truly intertextual in that the Latin and the English seem to flow with equal force: the poet's concordance use was likely to have been second nature. It would not seem that Langland has no use for *distinctiones* (I think he does): it is how he uses them, and for what purpose and effect, and whether he needs them at all, except to refresh the memory. It seems possible that the poet was able to pick and choose at random from a vast store of information: perhaps from a large number of various reference books, but because his Bible use is so refined, such application would have been occasional not incessant - as we might sometimes use a dictionary to check a spelling.

Langland would not have looked at *distinctiones* and wondered what to put next: there appears to be no undue reliance on a concordance: the use seems much more balanced, so it would be hard to identify which *distinctiones* the poet used: it might be expected that he adapted the material which he found there for his own purposes and requirements for such was the poet's command of the Bible. Again, this premise is indicated from the internal evidence within *Piers*, as specified in the paragraphs above relating to the poet's Bible use. The contexts of the Vulgate quotations used by Langland may frequently be seen to reflect and inspire the vernacular content of *Piers*. I would question whether this is purely the result of Langland's employment of *distinctiones*, because the larger Bible circumstance of the Vulgate quotation often seems to become part of the poem. There is a sense in which the discussion of *distinctiones* is simplistic: yes, there are connections to lists of coordinating Bible words and passages, but, frequently, these are also in the mind anyway. *Distinctiones*, concordances are tools, aids,

and not the basis for poetic inspiration: in practice, as in all forms of scholarship, it works the other way around.

Modern scholars must learn to look in the Bible with new eyes in order to consider the ‘feel’ of the *Piers* passage, and relate that to the ethos of the Bible: especially (obviously) the New Testament. I do not think that the Bible quotations are merely pertinent bits from the Scriptures that fit neatly into the vernacular at certain points in the poem. Neither do I consider that they simply aid Langland’s argument, or feature as a means of structuring the text – as they would if the sole purpose for the use of *distinctiones* were to find the ‘right’ citation. The Bible quotations, both through their immediate context and through wider biblical associations, broaden out all aspects of the poem; enrich understanding: they invite the mind to deepen, expand and uncover every concept.

Yet an author, having invited the audience to consider even a single Bible quotation, cannot control how much of that quotation is remembered and pondered in the mind. When Langland uses so many biblical references, the problem increases significantly. At the very least, whether intentionally or not, Langland unlocked a dangerous field of thinking: a minefield of material open to exploitation.<sup>141</sup> When Langland quotes the Bible, and opens and expands the mind: the biblical context leads into other contexts, which flow outwards: one quotation is reminiscent of another connected to it and so on. Biblical principles are expressed in *Piers* in different terms but much as it is demonstrated in Bunyan and Milton. *Piers* might be viewed as a parable: the

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<sup>141</sup> As Jim Rhodes argues, in reference to Passus XVIII, Langland writes in an open-minded and innovative way: the poet is not bound by rigid rules, but is willing to ‘play’ with ideas so that ‘readers [are able] to form their own judgment of the events described’. Jim Rhodes, *Poetry Does Theology: Chaucer, Grosseteste, and the ‘Pearl’-Poet* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 64-65. This thesis concurs with such reasoning.

poem deals with the ordinary everyday problems relevant to the people of the times, about the needs of the time, in the language of the time.

*Piers* is simple – if the poem seems complicated, it is because the twenty-first century audience has largely ‘forgotten’ the language of Christianity and the Bible that Langland uses: in consequence, our comprehension is partial. We look at so many individual ‘trees’ (such as the sources, *distinctiones*, theology, the Fathers, the *Glossa*, sermon studies), and all are of great interest, but incomplete – mere pieces of the puzzle – not the whole. Researchers are in serious danger of missing how to look at the ‘wood’. We are at risk of analysing the structure without recognising the energy that exudes from the Bible contexts in *Piers*: it may be likened to looking at a lifeless body undergoing postmortem. Critical analyses of the poem based on other criteria are fascinating, but are, in a sense, peripheral and not rudimentary to the poem.

As Sister Davlin (*Kynde Knowynge*, 1971, p. 18) writes: ‘[S]cholars have tended to underestimate the extent, complexity, and precision of Langland’s word-play’: the same might be said about the Bible contexts; scholars have known that they were important, but have not taken the matter further.<sup>142</sup> If this new research allows scholars (and non-academics) to see the living, breathing text through the biblical contexts, and to blow the dust off the mystique of the Bible, it should make room for a different type of *Piers* commentary, to allow *Piers* to be viewed afresh; to see these hidden agendas.

So also, any reading of the end of *Piers* needs to be considered within the whole understanding of medieval Christian belief. For example, the poem’s conclusion does not demonstrate negativity. Conscience remains willing to seek grace and the Christ-like

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<sup>142</sup> Sister Davlin refers, in particular, to Huppé’s work. See Huppé, ‘Word Play in *Piers Plowman*’, pp. 163-90.

Piers Plowman, and that ending fits exactly and firmly (as one might expect of Langland) within Christian doctrine: for him, there can be no cessation to the struggle until Christ comes again in glory: until that time, the battle for each individual and for the Church itself, must continue.<sup>143</sup>

Although it is not possible to realise the total import of this new research, but only to touch on a few particularly relevant examples, yet Langland's knowledge and command of the Bible reaches into myriad different areas of Langland studies, not just *Piers'* ending: for example, manuscripts and editing, dating of the versions, interpretation of Langland's political agendas as well as the poet's dynamic regarding the Kingdom of God. Close-reading the poem against the Bible needs more investigation, especially in the areas which I have termed waymarks. The themes and topics could be expanded: only very close-reading of the selected quotations reveals the full implications of what may be discovered through this method of study. The argument is not that the poet knew the Bible quotations word for word (although I think he probably did), but that familiarity with Bible readings - whether from the Liturgy or elsewhere - becomes so fixed in the brain that the mind just knows and recognises when and where such and such biblical episodes occur: however partially; not necessarily chapter and verse. It would not be strange - or alien (as it largely is to us) - but all part of the normal understanding and practice of medieval times. Modern scholars have been missing much of what would have been so very obvious to Langland's first readers and audience.

Another secondary intention in this thesis was to get closer to Langland's original meaning through the Bible quotations and their contexts. This new research has made *Piers*, so often considered an arid, disorganised, obscure late fourteenth-century text,

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<sup>143</sup> See also Wittig, 'Long Will's Pilgrimage', p. 76.

come alive, because it allows it to be seen as coherent, and relevant to Langland's troubled age. The Bible is the poem's common denominator which brings it together. *Piers* should not be seen as an arcane curiosity: neither is it solely a literary, social or historical document, something odd and distant to be analysed in a remote way: that could never have been Langland's intention, nor was this its affect on audiences through the centuries - or it could never have been so popular or lasted so long. Part of my own curiosity was to understand something of what a fourteenth-century audience would have seen in *Piers*. If viewed, as it was clearly meant to be, through its biblical and Christian contexts, it becomes not just a living testament of Langland's faith, but a vital polemic: the Bible contexts are intended to arouse the audience, on a number of levels, to the crucial issues of the day: issues not so unlike our own.

*Piers'* richness of expression must have attracted an audience grounded in the Bible, but, more importantly, not just appealed to them, but focused the reform of the Church that was so important to Langland. It would have reminded his fourteenth-century audience of fundamentals, of the need to go back to what matters; of the essential elements; of the foundation: the Christian faith and the Bible. Examination of the Bible quotations is just the beginning, but they are the key to Langland's personality, to the deeply-concerned human being that wrote *Piers*. For the poem was not mere political polemics; the poet believed what he wrote, which is why *Piers* has lasted, and has had such an impact over the centuries into our own time. *Piers* is not just a poem, not just a social or historical document: it is an example of a living faith.

The Bible contexts offer another way of looking at *Piers*. It was the audience recognition of the contexts that made the poem powerful, and which affected the

Christian audiences of Langland's time. Because modern scholars have overlooked - and undervalued - the contexts as an entity, we have also underestimated and ignored the poem's effect: its content must have been very powerful indeed to have had the influence that it did. *Piers* has a life-form of its own. Going back endlessly to the Bible context and close-reading the Bible alongside *Piers* has led (as has been said so often) to an implicit trust in Langland's Bible knowledge. This thesis has concentrated on the Bible contexts alone, but if, as was demonstrated through a few lines of *Piers* in chapter six, translation, paraphrase and allusion are included with the Vulgate contexts, the result is overwhelming: the black and white poem explodes into colour. *Piers* has so much more to reveal: it is the knowledge of the biblical *context* which colours the poem, whereas the *actual* Bible quotation draws the theme in black and white.

Where does the future lie – how can the information from this research influence future criticism – especially in view of deteriorating knowledge of the Bible and Christianity? The reason for placing the Bible in English translation in the body of the text is to introduce and encourage medieval students without Latin to read and understand a different aspect of *Piers*. Another, if secondary, aim of this thesis has been to provide some insights into what it might have meant to be Christian in the fourteenth century, because, for the secular twenty-first century, *Piers* largely speaks a foreign language. *Piers* does not exist without the Bible: if the Bible were taken away, there would be nothing left of the poem: it would become dumb. The attempt to provide this information, the detail of a medieval Christian world, is obviously anachronistic, but it still seems possible to get inside the poem on its own terms. People of Langland's time would recognise and understand the biblical references, connect with them as part of their

language, part of their culture, part of their being: the poem impacted strongly on people. Christianity and the Bible were their everyday experience: Langland's period (like our own) exhibited a 'spiritual hunger'.<sup>144</sup> Yet, it is important to remember, as this thesis has argued, that Langland also uses the Bible for humour (as does Chaucer) in a way that might seem somewhat irreverent to the post-Victorian age.

To sum up: most critics of *Piers*, in an intermittent fashion over the years, have only touched upon Langland's Bible quotation and contextual usage. Although editors and commentators have known about Langland's Bible use, have sourced the quotations, and discussed the matter in general, the full force of what the Bible means to both the structure and interpretation of *Piers* has perhaps been underestimated and under-researched. The biblical sources for the quotations in *Piers* may almost all have been identified, but the implications of Langland's Bible use are far greater than appears to have been realised. The *contexts* of *all* the Vulgate quotations need to be looked at as a viable whole within the poem. The absolute, precise attribution of the quotations to specific Bible verses is, in one sense, partial from the point of view that so many Bible passages are associated and thematically linked that such allocation just begins the journey. Research on the quotations that concentrates on the source material is interesting, necessary and useful but, in a way, misses the point, because whether the Vulgate comes from the Liturgy or the Breviary, Commentary or exegesis, it still comes from the Bible. In a mind used to hearing or reading the Bible in all its various forms, the connections leap out and hit one between the eyes. As medieval monks knew, to read a

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<sup>144</sup> R.N. Swanson, translated and annotated, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation*, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 21.

Bible passage and meditate on it, to allow it to float in the mind, brings with it a deep appreciation of each and every nuance.

From where Langland sourced his material does not affect the argument of this thesis, because the Bible is always his ultimate authority and the greatest influence on his Christian life. The whole phenomenon which is *Piers* - the quotations, the allusions, the translation and paraphrase - all the biblical, contextual and associated material needs to be untangled as it has great riches to offer Langlandian scholarship. The Bible is integral to *Piers*: without understanding this treasury in its entirety (rather than piecemeal as in the past, and as far as is possible in our age and culture), Langland scholars can only scratch the surface of the poem.

Christianity and the Bible were such a vibrant part of Langland's thinking and writing: his belief pervades the poem, and powers its very being. For twenty-first century editors and commentators, a lack of familiarity with the Bible, and Christian principles and practice, has to be an hindrance to understanding *Piers*, because without this knowledge we miss the essence of the poem. For example, to recognise the extent of Langland's profound criticism of the priesthood, it is necessary to identify myriad Bible references. As the Bible puts it: 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner' (I Cor. 13. 12).<sup>145</sup> In order to see 'face to face', and grasp Langland's intent, twenty-first century scholars might be advised to return to fundamentals, and use the Bible as a means of investigating *Piers*. Again and again, Langland uses the Bible as authority, but we have

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<sup>145</sup> Vulgate: 'videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem nunc cognosco ex parte tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum' [We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face. Now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known.] (I Cor. 13. 12).

not always followed Langland's direction, and this omission has diminished, not only the accuracy of our editions, but our comprehension.

Recollection of the biblical contexts and associated material which can inundate the minds of those permeated with Bible images makes Langland's vernacular lines come alive with meaning and force. It is not a matter of whether the Latin or the English came first – or whether which language is most important to the poem. Langland is truly intertextual, even if Latin had higher status.

Cultural immersion in the Bible imbues the vernacular lines of the poem with meaning; an intense, cogent impetus, which through a chain reaction, like 'Chinese whispers', brings the poem into a vibrant technicolour, and expands the dimensions of *Piers*. Such associations are what establish a connection with an audience and make a work vital: no doubt this vibrancy and intimate reality made the poem popular simply because of its pertinent, and constant, reminders of the way to God's Kingdom. Sister Davlin ('Religious Writers', p. 140) writes with great perception:

Implicit in the whole of *Piers Plowman*, though it appears on the surface to be inconclusive and incoherent, is an entirely coherent perception of the nature of God and God's relationships with creation, based upon insistent probing of what the church believes.

Critics who claim that Langland is: 'obscure, rambling or digressive' cannot have seen the importance of the biblical material.<sup>146</sup>

Langland's intention was to reach deep down into what matters to a human soul; to affect his audience to such an extent that they would jettison all that prohibited salvation, and move forward towards Christ; towards the Kingdom of God. *Piers*, although remote in time, can never be a bland, desiccated scholarly treatise but always an

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<sup>146</sup> Priscilla Martin, '*Piers Plowman*': *the Field and the Tower* (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1979), p. 57.

animated exposition written to bring life (soul and body) to all. It may seem strange to end a serious piece of research with what might appear to be light-hearted comment, but a large part of *Piers'* dramatic impact could well have been the Bible waymarks which detonate in the brain like a pyrotechnic display. Langland's deliberate choice of Vulgate passages were taken from the box of fireworks at his disposal: catherine wheels (spinning, whirring, sending out strong, brightly-coloured flames into the atmosphere of the mind); roman candles (puffs of light with the occasional bang which illustrate a point, and deliver a sharp wake-up call); squibs (jumping and exploding when least expected) and rockets (firing up into the spiritual stratosphere - to land in the Reformation: and beyond). The poet's storehouse of biblical gunpowder caused explosions: a power of light in darkness. This inflammatory (and endangered) material, this biblical polemic, should be re-ignited.

## Bibliographical notes

When authors alter their method of address, names have been standardised to the name first listed in the Bibliography. However, in the main body of the thesis, names are given as published.

With joint authors or co-editors, these works will be listed immediately after the studies written solely by the first named scholar, and placed in chronological order.

Where the publication date is identical, books by the same author are listed before their edited works or articles.

The dates of earlier editions will be given in square brackets where known.

\* An asterisk by an author's name indicates works that have not been cited but which have been influential to the thinking and planning behind the thesis.

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#### Electronic resources

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<http://www.piersplowman.org/yearbook/biblio.asp>

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<http://www.biblestudytools.com/>  
<http://www.crosswalk.com/>  
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