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Through the world both east and west.

SOLDIER 3: Yea, let him hang there still
And make mows on° the moon.

SOLDIER 4: Then may we wend at will.°

SOLDIER 1: Nay, good sirs, not so soon.

For certes us needs another note:°

290 This kirtle° would I of you crave.

SOLDIER 2: Nay, nay, sir, we will look by lot°
Which of us four falls it to° have.

SOLDIER 3: I rede° we draw cut° for this coat—
Lo, see how soon—all sides to save.°

SOLDIER 4: The short cut shall win, that well ye wot,°
Whether it fall to knight or knave.

SOLDIER 1: Fellows, ye tharf° not flite,°

For this mantle is mine.

SOLDIER 2: Go we then hence tite,°

300 This travail° here we tine.°

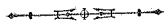
faces at
go when we please

we have other business
garment
draw lots
it falls to
advise / straws
to satisfy all parties
know

need / quarrel

quickly
effort / waste

[END OF MEDIEVAL BIBLICAL DRAMA]



Vernacular Religion

As Middle English religious writers were fond of pointing out, Christ's apostles preached and wrote in the mother tongues of their audiences. The early Western church used Latin, the dominant world language of late-imperial Rome. With the passing centuries, though, the Latin of the church was less and less accessible to most laypeople. They heard a liturgy they understood mostly through vernacular explanations and visual images in the church. Latin became a protective bulwark for clerical authority and the institutional church. Increasingly, this control of the Bible and doctrine accompanied an anxiety among clerics about laypeople reading or interpreting religious texts in the absence of ecclesiastical oversight. Other aspects of the church, such as its great wealth and varying degrees of clerical corruption, also alienated many laypeople in England and elsewhere.

Throughout the Middle Ages, both the established church and its critics were aware of these problems. One response was a persistent call for more and better preaching in local vernaculars. Yet the learning and energies of parish clergy were very uneven. Such "secular" clergy needed books of simple instruction and sample sermons in English for the whole church year. Toward this end, John Mirk wrote a lively and very popular sermon cycle, the *Festial*, toward the end of the fourteenth century. The later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries also witnessed a growing desire among laypeople for more intimate religious experience: "affective piety" as it has been called. Expressive and intense depictions of scriptural events such as the Crucifixion (see page 561) invited intense and expressive response, such as we will witness, in highly exaggerated form, in *The Book of Margery Kempe*.

In the midst of this religious yearning, dissatisfaction, and incomplete response by the church, there arrived the disruptive brilliance of John Wyclif. Wyclif came to public notice at Oxford by the 1350s, initially as a superb though radical practitioner of the technical scholastic theology of his day. He took increasingly extreme positions on a number of religious issues,

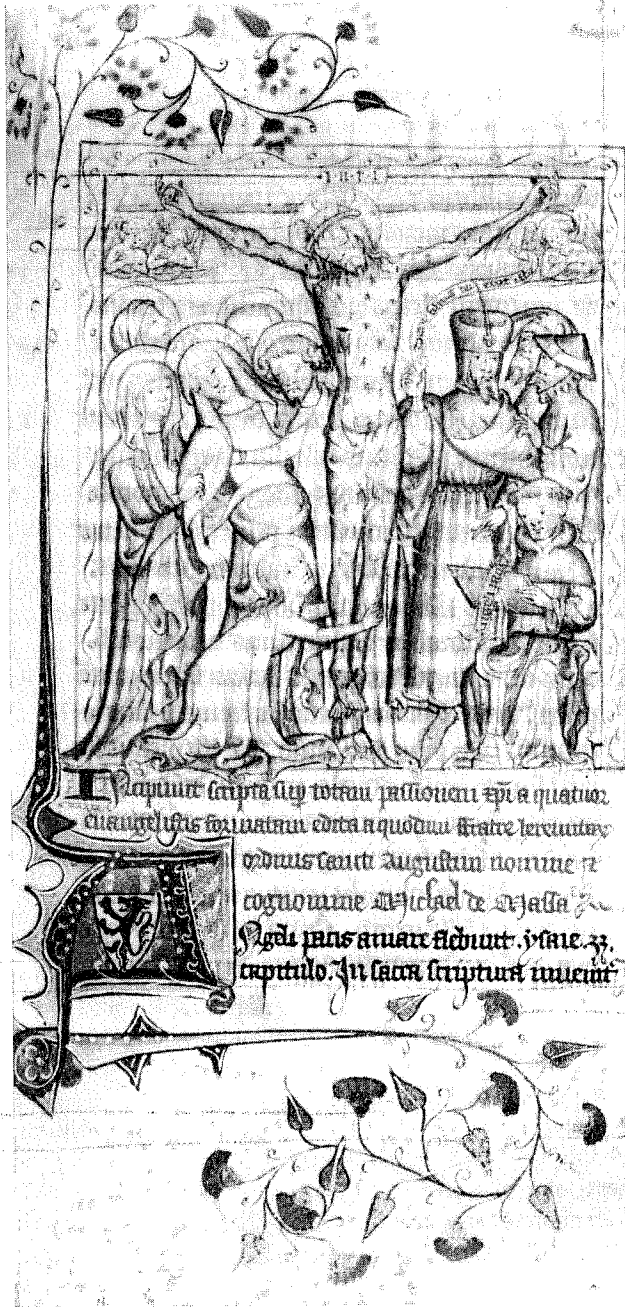
key among them the nature of the Eucharist. Wyclif maintained—against established orthodoxy—that eucharistic bread was not utterly transformed into the body of Christ (“transubstantiated”) when blessed by the priest. Perhaps more challenging to the everyday work of the church, he held that a man in a state of sin could not be a priest—that the priestly role was vested in the individual, not his enactment of the sacraments.

Wyclif vigorously supported ecclesiastical poverty. He argued that tithes could be withheld and used charitably elsewhere, even that the vast accumulated wealth of the church should be “disendowed” and placed in the hands of the secular government. The first notion appealed to many common people, and the latter intrigued a royal court plagued by debt. Wyclif was brought to London by John of Gaunt in 1376 to preach his views about disendowment. The church tried to condemn him as a heretic in 1377, but Gaunt deflected their efforts. Wyclif’s evolving view of the Eucharist was harder to defend, though, and another church council in 1381 found that and other positions heretical; Wyclif retired from Oxford to his parish church, where he continued to write at a great pace until his death in 1384. Despite the church’s condemnation, though, Wyclif’s ideas gained followers (called “Lollards” by the late 1380s) at every level of society, and noble sympathizers were influential in the household of Richard II.

Wyclif insisted throughout his life that laypeople had a right to understand, even enter into, theological debate. And that meant they needed access to the fundamental work of all Christian belief, the Bible, in English. A group of his learned adherents undertook an enormous and complex project toward this end. They translated the Bible but also wrote extensive English commentaries based on Latin tradition and produced a full cycle of sermons urging Lollard doctrines; one is included below. Of course, laypeople had always heard biblical passages in English, since they were the basis of most sermons. The great threat of Wyclif and his followers was that they felt the Bible could be used to criticize and correct the church. Along with the impressively organized text production mentioned above, there were Lollard schools, and a network of household “cells” where Lollard texts and ideas were studied and discussed. Taken all together, the outlines of something like a shadow church emerge. The 1430 “confession” of Hawisia Moone, included here, reflects many of these activities, and suggests the major beliefs that Lollards supported.

All of this was profoundly unnerving to the institutional church. Writing around 1390, the monastic chronicler Henry Knighton mentions the English Bible and comments: “that, which formerly belonged to those clergy who were sufficiently learned and intelligent, was made available to any lay person, even women, who knew how to read.” It was relatively easy to condemn Wyclif’s own beliefs and remove him from Oxford, even to burn other Lollards, but far harder to locate and suppress the network of local Lollard groups. And in a culture where church and state were so intimately linked, Lollard religious beliefs soon posed a political threat. Knighton also says Wyclif was inspired by John Ball, the priest who helped lead the Rising of 1381 (see pages 495–503). The movement lost virtually all its aristocratic support after a rebellion against Henry V in 1413, led by the Lollard Sir John Oldcastle.

Repression of Lollard beliefs had been in the air since the church council that condemned Wyclif in 1381. By 1401, Parliament passed a statute that called for the burning of unrepentant heretics. In the somewhat paranoid atmosphere of a threatened church and a king (Henry IV) who had usurped the throne, almost any vernacular religious writings might smell of heresy and political subversion. “Lollard” came to mean almost anyone outside of holy orders who spoke or acted religiously beyond narrow community norms, as we see in the case of Margery Kempe. The 1409 Constitutions enacted under Archbishop Thomas Arundel officially restricted preaching, writing, or translation in English. All these activities had to be licensed by a bishop or his council. Mere possession of some vernacular books, including the Bible, was a ground for arrest and examination. Rumor too could lead to ecclesiastical inquiry, as happened repeatedly to Margery Kempe. The closing passages of the Confession of Hawisia



Crucifixion Scene, from a manuscript of Michael de Massa's *On the Passion of Our Lord*, 1405. This illumination is found at the beginning of a narrative of the Passion written in Latin and Middle English. Delicate yet emotive, it evokes much of the "affective spirituality" of its era. The drawing is in pale brown ink and wash, which only renders more emphatic and disturbing the bright red of Christ's elaborately detailed wounds. The weeping Virgin Mary sways, nearly fainting, while Mary Magdalene kneels and clutches Christ's legs. Even the angels look down in sorrow, though the men at right are more restrained. Late-medieval worshipers were encouraged to imagine themselves as if present at such scenes of high pathos. Here, the author of the text, Michael de Massa, is depicted among the witnesses of Christ's suffering; the scroll hanging from his desk contains the first words of his book: *Angeli pacis*. . . .

Moone suggest the sort of surveillance culture that the religious world of late medieval England had become.

Archbishop Arundel and the church did not oppose all religious reading in the vernacular, however. For instance, Arundel patronized the translation (by Nicholas Love) of a long tract of meditations on the life of Christ. This was a form of meditation recommended to laypeople because knowing the story of Christ's life did not require direct knowledge of the Bible, nor did it involve questions of doctrine or the institutional church. Nonetheless, popular Lollardy continued through the end of the Middle Ages, and over 240 medieval copies of the Wycliffite Bible survive, more than any other Middle English text.

from *The Wycliffite Bible*
*John 10.11–18*¹

I am a good shepherd. A good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But a hired hyne,² and that is not the shepherd, whose are not the sheep his own,³ seeth a wolf coming, and he leaveth the sheep and fleeth, and the wolf ravisheth and disparpleth⁴ the sheep. And the hired hyne fleeth for he is an hired hyne, and it pertaineth not to him of the sheep. I am a good shepherd and I know my sheep and my sheep know me, as the father hath known me and I know the father, and I put⁵ my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this fold; and it behoveth me to bring them together; and they shall hear my voice, and it shall be made one fold and one shepherd. Therefore the father loveth me for I put my life that eftsoon⁶ I take it. No man takith it from me, but I put it of myself; I have power to put it, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have taken of my father.

from *A Wycliffite Sermon on John 10.11–18*¹

Ego sum pastor bonus. Johannis X²

Christ telleth in his gospel the manners of a good herd,³ so that hereby we may wit⁴ how our herds fail now. And default of such herds is most peril in the church for, as right office of them should most bring men to heaven, so default in this office draweth men most to hell. Christ telleth of himself how *he is a good herd.* For he is the best herd that mankind may have, for he is good by himself and may no way fail, for he is both God and man, and God may no way sin. And thus we have the measure to know a good herd and an evil, for the more that a herd is like to Christ he is the better, and the more that he straungeth⁵ from him he is the worse in this office.

And eft,⁶ when Christ hath given the measure to know good herds, he telleth the highest property that falleth to a good herd: *a good herd*, as Christ saith, *putteth his life for his sheep*, for more charity may none have than to put his life for his friends,

1. The process that resulted in the "Wycliffite" Bible is complex and still unclear. The translation was the work of followers of Wycliffite ideas, but Wyclif himself did not participate in it. It was also a huge and well-organized undertaking, that involved study of the Latin original aided by learned commentaries. The later and more colloquial version is given here. We have modernized spellings but altered vocabulary as little as possible, to retain the syntax and rhythms of the original Middle English.

2. Servant.

3. An awkward construction, derived from close adherence to the Latin.

4. Seizes and scatters.

5. Lay down, commit.

6. Another time.

1. Dating from the later 14th century, this is only one sermon from a huge sermon cycle produced in connection with the Wycliffite Bible. Note the rhetorically effective use of alliteration in parts of the sermon.

2. I am a good shepherd (Latin). John 10.

3. Shepherd, priest.

4. Know.

5. Differs.

6. Again.

and, if he worketh wisely, for to bring these sheep to heaven, for thus the herd hath most pain and the sheep most profit. Thus may we see who is a good herd and who faileth in this office. For as Christ putteth wisely his own life for his sheep, so Antichrist putteth proudly many lives for his foul life; as, if the fiend led the pope to kill many thousand men to hold his worldly state, he sued⁷ Antichrist's manners. * * *

And thus seem our religious⁸ to be exempt from charity, for, need a man never so much to have help of such goods, yea if they⁹ have stones or jewels that harm them, they will not give such goods nor their value to help their brethren, nor cease to annoy¹ themselves in building of high houses, nor to gather such vain goods if it do harm to their brethren. Such avaricious men are far from manners of a good herd. And so these new religious² that the fiend hath tolled³ in, by color to help the former herds, harm them many gates,⁴ and letten⁵ this office in the church, for true preaching and worldly goods are spoiled by such religious. And therefore teacheth Christ to flee them, for they are ravishing wolves: some will as briars tear the wool of sheep and make them cold in charity, and some will sturdily as thorns slay the sheep of holy church.

And thus is our mother shend⁶ for default of man's help. And more meed⁷ might no man have than to help this sorry widow, for princes of priests and Pharisees that called Christ a beguiler croched⁸ to themselves the choosing of many herds in the church, and they are taught by Antichrist to choose his herds and not Christ's. And thus faileth Christ's church. Lord, since herds should pass⁹ their sheep as men pass bleating sheep, how should Christ's church fare if these herds were turned to wolves? But Christ saith thus it fareth among the herds of the church, that many of them are hired hynes and not herds over the sheep, for the sheep are not their own, and so they love too little the sheep. For, if they have their temporal hire,¹ they reckon not how their flock fare. And thus do all these curates that tell more by² worldly winning than by virtues of their subjects or soul's heal³ to come to heaven.

Think
of
Langland
+
Chaucer's
Parson in
the GP

Such are not herds of sheep but of the dung and wool of them, and these shall not have in heaven joy of the sheep that they keep. Such hynes see wolves coming to flocks that they should keep, and they flee for dread of nought. And these wolves ravish these sheep and scatter them for this end, that then they may sooner perish. And this moved Paul to found no order,⁴ for Christ's order is enough, and then should all Christian men be more surely in one flock. Lord, if cowardice of such hynes be damned of Christ, how much more should wolves be damned that are put to keep Christ's sheep? But Christ saith a clean⁵ cause why this hired hyne fleeth thus: for he is an hired hyne and the sheep pertain not to him, but the dung of such sheep and this dung sufficeth to him, however the sheep fare. Some are wolves without, and some are wolves within and these are more perilous, for homely⁶ enemies are the worst. * * *

But Christ saith he is a good herd and knoweth his sheep and they him, for the office that falleth to herds maketh him known among them. As my father knoweth me and I again know my father, so, saith Christ, I put my life to keep my sheep against wolves.

7. He (the pope) followed, imitated.

8. Clerics.

9. I.e., the clerics.

1. Trouble, injure.

2. Friars.

3. Lured.

4. In many ways.

5. Hinder.

6. Ruined.

7. Reward.

8. Seized.

9. Surpass.

1. Wages.

2. Consider more important.

3. Their salvation.

4. I.e., no religious order such as monks or friars.

5. Simple.

6. Familiar.

And as this knowing might not quench⁷ betwixt Christ and his father, so should these herds watch upon their sheep, and they should know him, not by bodily feasts nor other signs⁸ that he doth, but by three offices of a herd that Christ hath limited⁹ to him. It falleth to a good herd to lead his sheep in wholesome pastures, and when his sheep are hurt or scabbed to heal them and grease them, and when other evil beasts assail them then help them. And hereto should he put his life to save his sheep from such beasts. The pasture is God's law that evermore is green in truth, and rotten pastures are other laws and other fables without ground. And cowardice of such herds that dare not defend God's law witnesseth that they fail in two offices suing¹ after: for he that dare not, for world's dread, defend the law of his God, how should he defend his sheep for love that he hath to them? And if they bring in new laws contrary to God's law, how should they not fail after in other offices that they should have?

But Christ that is head of herds saith that *he hath other sheep that are not yet of this flock, and them must he bring together and teach them to know his voice. And so shall there be one flock and one herd over them all.* These sheep are heathen men or Jews that Christ will convert, for all these shall make one flock, the which flock is holy church—but far from this understanding that all men shall be converted.²

John Mirk
from *Festial*¹

*Hortamur vos, ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis. Corinthians VI.*²

Good men and women, these words that I have said in Latin be thus to say in English: "We admonish you that ye take not the grace of God in vain." These be the words of St. Paul, Christ's holy apostle, that be read in the epistle of this day. By the which word this holy apostle chargeth all good people that they take heed what grace God sendeth them and that they take not that grace in vain. God giveth grace to man all times; but, for a man needeth more his grace this time than another, therefore, of his high mercy, he giveth nowadays more abundance of Lent than any other time. The which grace he parteth in three ways; that is to say, in way of gracious abiding, in way of gracious deeming,³ and in way of gracious amends-making. These three ways God sendeth his grace to you.

Wherefore, right as St. Paul admonisheth his disciples, right so I admonish you that be my children in God, that ye take not this grace of God in vain.

Ye have a common saying among you and say that God's grace is worth a new fair. Then taketh heed how much worth God's grace is. For, though any of you had as much gold as a fair is worth, but he had God's grace with it, it should turn him more into shameship than into worship. Thus ye may see by very reason that God's grace is more worth than any fair. But yet ye shall know further. For, though

7. Be extinguished.

8. I.e., liturgical rituals.

9. Assigned.

1. Following.

2. The preacher does not agree with the opinion that all mankind will convert.

1. Even as Wyclif's followers were attacking the secular clergy for their failure to preach, efforts were being made to supply parish priests of limited education with model sermons. John Mirk's *Festial*, c. 1390, is a sermon cycle

organized around the church year and the calendar of the saints. At least in part it is a response to Lollard ideas, especially Lollard opposition to religious images. While it has none of the zeal of Wycliffite sermons, the *Festial* gives some impression of what was being heard when priests did try to educate their flock. Modern English version by William Matthews.

2. 2 Corinthians 6.1.

3. Judging.

a man had never so much riches and prosperity here, that cometh all of God's grace. But-if⁴ he take that grace well and please his God withal, it shall turn him into damnation.

But, for the poor plaineth on the rich and say they be unkind to God and do not as God biddeth them do and full elder⁵ see a mote in another man's eye that cannot see a beam their own; therefore, ye shall know well that it is a special grace of God when he maketh a man rich and some man poor. He maketh them rich that they with their riches should succour the poor in their need, and so with their goods buy them heaven. And some he maketh poor that their poverty shall be their salvation. For God knoweth well, if they were rich they would forget their God and so spill⁶ themselves. Cp
Langland

Wherefore, we admonish you, both rich and poor, that ye take not this grace of God in idle nor in vain. But he that is rich, set not his heart thereupon, but ever be in dread, lest he misspend it, and thank God of his grace. And he that is poor, grouch he not against his God, ne deem he not the rich, but take his poverty in patience, and thank God of his grace; for, at the last he shall have that for the best. Estates

But a man, be he rich or be he poor, if he have grace of God to see how much he taketh of God and how little he giveth again, very reason will tell that he is more worth damnation than salvation. But, for God is full of grace and sheweth his grace to all his handiwork, and for he knoweth our frailty, he hath compassion of us and giveth us his grace in abiding of amendment. That is: though thou trespass sore against him, he will not smite anon, but graciously abideth, for he hath much liever for to do grace than vengeance. And that is for two causes, as St. Augustine saith.

One is: if God had done vengeance, anon the world had been ended many a day ago, and so many had been unborn that now be holy saints in heaven.

That other cause is: for to shew how full he is of grace, and how fain he will do grace and mercy to all that will leave the evil and take the good. Wherefore he saith thus by his prophet: *Nolo mortem peccatoris, sed ut magis convertatur et vivat*: "I will not," he says, "that a sinful man be dead, but I will rather that he turn to good life."

Thus ye heareth how gracious God is in abiding. Wherefore, I admonish you that ye take not this grace in vain, but thinketh well how he hath spared you from Easter hitherto, whereas he might, by right, have smitten you with his sword of vengeance each day. For, as St. Anselm saith, the least sin that a man doth, it unworshipeth⁷ God. Then, if a man did anything that unworshipped his worldly king, he were worthy to take his death, much more is a man worth the death that unworshipeth him that is King of Heaven and lord and king over all kings. But, right as he passeth all in dignity, right so he passeth all in grace and bounty. But, though ye feelen him gracious, be never the bolder to lie in sin, but hieth you for to cleanse you thereof. For though he abide long, at the last He will smite such that will not amend them. And when he smiteth, he smiteth sore.

I read that there was a knight that had no rents of his own, but he had gotten much good in wars. And, when he had all spent out, he yode⁸ and wedded a lady of that country that was rich enough. And though he was poor, he was a seemly man of person. Story
as
exempl

Exemplum

4. Unless.
5. Quickly.
6. Destroy.

7. Dishonors.
8. Went.

She said to him thus: I wot well that thou art a seemly man of body, but for thou art poor I may not, for shame, take thee but-if thou have much gold or many rents. But for thou hast no gold, do as I teach thee, and get gold. Go into such a place where many rich merchants come, and get thee gold, and then thou shalt have me."

Then went he thither. And it happened that there came a rich merchant that way. And he anon took him, and bare forth his gold, and slew him and buried him. And then after came to the lady and said, "Lo!—the sum of gold I have gotten of such a man, and buried him there!"

Then said the lady, "Go again tonight and look if thou aught hear."

Then yede he that night and stood by the dead man's grave. And at midnight there came a light from heaven down to the grave, and then the grave opened, and the corpse sat up and held up his hands to God, and said, "Lord that art righteous judge, do thou wreke⁹ me upon this man that hath thus falsely slain me for my true chattel."

And therewith came a voice from heaven and said, "This day thirty winter thou shalt have vengeance." And then the corpse thanked God and lay down in his grave again.

Then was this knight sore afeared, and went to this lady and told her all, and how the voice said how, that day thirty winter, he should have vengeance.

Then said the lady, "Yea," quoth she, "Much may fall in thirty winter! Go we together and be wedded!"

So they lived y-fer¹ twenty year, in prosperity and weal. But ever this knight was adread of this vengeance, and said to the lady, "Now twenty year be passed, and the ten will hie fast. What is thy best counsel?"

Then she said, "We will make this castle as secure and as strong as we may. And, that same day, we shall gather all our friends and stuff² us with men enow, and so we shall scape well enough.

And so they did. When the day came, they gathered a great sum of men into the castle, and set them to the meat, and made all the mirth that they could. Then was there a harper, and harped always at the meat.

But, for there may no wicked spirit come there ne have no powsty³ as far as the harp is heard, there came out of the kitchen a brothel,⁴ bawded with grease, and rubbed his strings with his bawdy hands. Then was this harper wonder wroth, and with his harp would have smitten this brothel. But, for he flew fast away, the harper sued⁵ him out of the castle. And, when he came out, this brothel vanished away.

Then this harper turned again—and saw this castle sink into the earth, all afire. Thus ye may see, though God abide long, at the last he smiteth sore. Wherefore, I admonish you that ye take not his grace of abiding in vain, but bethinketh you well of your misdeeds and cometh betimes and cleanseth you. For God giveth you all an high grace of deeming, for thereas he is truth and righteousness, and he may not deem but with righteousness. And then shall none scape undamned,⁶ for, as Job saith, "Though we would strive with him, we may not answer of one good deed for a thousand that he giveth us."

9. Avenge.

1. Together.

2. Provide.

3. Power.

4. Low fellow.

5. Followed.

6. Unjudged.

Preaching and Teaching in the Vernacular¹

Since Christ bade his disciples and other preachers and teachers of God's law to teach the gospel to every man and woman in every language, there may no prelate arten nor letten² preaching and teaching of the gospel in English; but every prelate and preacher is bound to preach and teach the gospel of Christ and his law to the people after the conning³ that God hath sent to them. And therefore, though it be these days defended⁴ and inhibited by some prelates that men should teach the gospel in English, I answer and say to them as the apostles said to Annas and Caiaphas and to the prelates and to the bishops and the masters⁵ of the Jews which defended the apostles for to preach the gospel, *Obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus*.⁶ * * * And, leve⁷ friend, since it is lawful to preach the gospel in English, it is lawful to write it in English, both to the teacher and to the hearer if he con writing,⁸ for by writing is most sure examination of man's speech and by writing God's law may best be cowd⁹ and best kept in mind. And therefore, leve friend, although some prelates have defended me to teach the gospel and to write it in English, yet none of them hath defended you nor may defend you to con the gospel in English that is your kindly¹ language. * * * And since I have written the gospel to you in well great dread and persecution, ye that be in such security that no prelate may letten you nor distress you for conning nor for keeping of the gospel, conneth it and keepeth it with good devotion. * * * And, as ye may hear, now preaching and teaching of the gospel and of God's law is arted and letted² more than it was wont to be, therefore taketh goodly the teaching that cometh to you freely. And though the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian³ be now newly begun to letten teaching and preaching of God's word and God's law and to compel men to worship graven images of stone and of tree, stand ye stiff in the faith. * * *

Christ said not to him,⁴ as prelates and men of holy church do these days to men and women that ask them questions of holy writ, of conscience and of God's law, "Oh thou borel clerk, what entermettest thou thee⁵ with holy writ and with God's law? Say thy Pater Noster and thy Creed, and it is enough to thee!" and though they⁶ con neither their Pater Noster nor their Creed—for they understand it not, but say it as a starling or a jay—and many men say it not so well. This is the teaching of prelates and of men of holy church these days. And cause is for⁷ many prelates and men of holy church be so lewed⁸ that they can nought answer, nor they con well

1. From a series of sermons (or discussions of scripture) written by a friar in the early 15th century and probably meant for private reading by a lay aristocrat. The same writer is author of a popular vernacular dialogue on religion, *Dives and Pauper*, "Rich Man and Poor Man." The author is orthodox, especially regarding key issues such as the Eucharist and confession; as a friar, he is a natural enemy of Lollards. Yet he opposes the Arundel Constitutions of 1409, castigates the corruption of the church, criticizes enclosed orders like monks, and opposes the worship of images. All these positions were dangerous at the time—the Constitutions forbid criticism of the clergy to a lay audience—and the writer is careful to associate himself with his powerful lay patron and "leve friend." Mere ownership of *Dives and Pauper* was sometimes considered a sign of heretical leanings. We have modernized spellings but altered vocabulary as little as possible, to retain the syntax and rhythms of the original Middle English.

2. Blame nor hinder.
3. Understanding.
4. Forbidden.
5. Teachers.
6. It is more important to obey God than men (Acts 5.29).
7. Dear.
8. Knows how to write.
9. Known.
1. Natural, inborn.
2. Blamed and hindered.
3. Roman emperors who persecuted Christians.
4. A questioner.
5. Oh you uneducated layman, why do you concern yourself.
6. Even though they (the laymen).
7. The cause is that.
8. Ignorant.

their Creed, and therefore they defend English books of God's law. * * * They love no multiplication⁹ of God's law, for they would not be asked nor opposed; and for many of them be well lewed, therefore they would keep the people in overdone lewedness,¹ that themselves in their lewedness might seem wise.

Nicholas Love

from *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*¹

But now furthermore for to speak of the blessed birth of Jesus and of that clean and holy deliverance² of his dear mother Mary, as it is written in part by revelation of our lady made hereof to a devout man, when time of that blessed birth was come, that is to say the Sunday at midnight, God's son of heaven, as he was conceived in his mother's womb by the Holy Ghost, without seed of man, so going out of that womb without travail or sorrow, suddenly was upon hay at his mother's feet. And anon she, devoutly inclining with sovereign joy, took him in her arms, and sweetly clipping³ and kissing, laid him in her barm,⁴ and with a full pap, as she was taught of the Holy Ghost, washed him all about with her sweet milk, and so wrapped him in the kerchief of her head, and laid him in the crèche.⁵ And anon, the ox and the ass, kneeling down, laid their mouths on the crèche, breathing at their noses upon the child, as they knew by reason that in that cold time the child so simply hiled⁶ had need to be hot in that manner. And then his mother kneeling down worshipped and loved God, inwardly thanking and saying in this manner: "Lord God, holy father of heaven, I thank thee with all my might that hast given me thy dear son, and I honor thee, almighty God, God's son and mine." Joseph, also honoring and worshipping the child, God and man, took the saddle of the ass and made thereof a cushion our lady to sit on and a suppoyle⁷ to lean to. And so sat the lady of all the world in that simple array beside the crèche, having her mild mode⁸ and her lovely eyes, with her inward affection, upon her sweet dearworth⁹ child.

But in this poor and simple worldly array what ghostly riches and inward comfort and joy she had may no tongue tell. Wherefore if we will feel the true joy and comfort of Jesus, we must with him and with his mother love poverty, meekness, and bodily penance, as he gave us example of all these here in this birth and first coming into this world.

For of the first, that is poverty, saint Bernard in a sermon of the Nativity of our lord, telling how he was born to comfort of mankind, saith in this manner: "God's

9. Dissemination.

1. Excessive ignorance.

1. At the same time that the Arundel Constitutions were suppressing much vernacular theological and mystical writing, the Carthusian Nicholas Love (d. 1424) was adapting into English the thirteenth-century Latin *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, widely attributed to Bonaventure (but actually by another Franciscan). The *Mirror* draws from all the gospels, but also from later legends, to narrate Christ's life; Love adds elements directed specifically against Lollards. He offers detailed tableaux for meditation and devotion but omits much of Christ's teaching. The *Meditations* thereby invite pious reflection in "those of simple understanding" but draw the reader away from issues of the church and its doctrines. As is reported in many manuscripts of the *Mirror*, it was submitted to Archbishop Arundel under the terms

of the 1409 Constitutions; he "commended it, ordering it to be published for the edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics and Lollards." Appealing to the same affective piety seen in much late medieval religious art, the *Mirror* was widely read and copied. We have modernized spellings but altered vocabulary as little as possible, to retain the syntax and rhythms of the original Middle English.

2. Delivery.

3. Embracing.

4. Lap.

5. Manger.

6. Clothed.

7. A prop.

8. Manner.

9. Precious.

upports
institutional
positions

virtues
of
patient
poverty

son comforteth his people. Wilt thou know his people? That is of whom speaketh David in the psalter and saith: *Lord, to thee is belaft the poor people.*¹ And he² himself saith in the gospel: *Woe to you rich men that have your comfort here.*³ How should he comfort them that have their own comfort? Wherefore Christ's innocence and childhood comforteth not janglers and great speakers, Christ's weeping and tears comforteth not dissolute laughers, his simple clothing comforteth not them that go in proud clothing, and his stable and crèche comforteth not them that love first seats and worldly worship. And also the angels in Christ's nativity appearing to the waking shepherds comfort none other but the poor travailers,⁴ and to them tell they the joy of new light, and not to the rich men that have their joy and comfort here."

Also as to the second, we may see at this birth both in Christ and in his mother perfect meekness. For they were not squeamish of the stable, nor of the beasts, nor of hay and other such abject simpleness. But this virtue of meekness both our lord and our lady kept perfectly in all their deeds, and commend it sovereignly to us. Wherefore be we about⁵ with all our might to get this virtue, knowing that without it is no salvation. For there is no work or deed of us that may please God with pride.

Also as to the third we may see in them both, and namely⁶ in the child Jesus not a little bodily penance. Of the which saint Bernard saith thus: "God's son, when he would be born, that had in his own free will to choose what time he would take⁷ thereto, he chose the time that was most noisome and hard, as the cold winter, namely to a young child and a poor woman's son, that scarcely had clothes to wrap him in, and a crèche as for a cradle to lay him in."

from *The Confession of Hawisia Moone of Loddon*¹

In the name of God tofore you, the worshipful father in Christ, William by the grace of God bishop of Norwich, I Hawise Moone, the wife of Thomas Moone of Loddon of your diocese, your subject, knowing, feeling, and understanding that before this time I have been right homely and privy with many heretics, knowing them for heretics. And them I have received and harbored in our house, and them I have concealed, comforted, supported, maintained and favored with all my power. Which heretics' names be these: Sir William Whyte, Sir William Caleys, Sir Huwe Pye, Sir Thomas Pert—priests—John Waddon, John Fowlyn, John Gray, William Everden, William Bate of Sethyng, Bartholomew Cornmonger, Thomas Burell and Betty his wife, William Wardon, John Pert, Edmond Archer of Loddon, Richard Belward, Niclas Belward, Bartholomew Monk, William Wright and many other.² Wich have oft times kept, held, and continued schools of heresy in privy chambers and privy places of ours, in the which schools I have heard, conceived, learned and reported the errors and heresies which be written and contained in these indentures. That is to say:

1. Psalm 10.14.

2. I.e., Christ.

3. Luke 6.24.

4. Laborers.

5. Let us endeavor.

6. Especially.

7. Choose.

1. Hawisia Moone's confession is among records of heresy trials kept for Bishop William Alnwick from 1428 to 1431. Most of the accused are, like Hawisia, from a cluster of villages on the border of Norfolk and Suffolk. We

have modernized spellings but altered vocabulary as little as possible, to retain the syntax and rhythms of the original Middle English.

2. These names suggest that Hawisia Moone was part of a Wycliffite cell based on a network of family and local connections, but linked across England by itinerant preachers such as the famous William White, who preached in Kent as well as Norfolk and Suffolk. Among those listed by Hawisia, White, Pye, and Waddon were all burned for heresy.

Sp. Margery Kemp

First, that the sacrament of baptism done in water in form customary in the church is but a trifle and not to be pondered, for all Christ's people is sufficiently baptized in the blood of Christ. And so Christ's people needeth none other baptism. Also that the sacrament of confirmation done by a bishop is of none avail nor necessary to be had, for as much as when a child hath discretion, and can and will understand the word of God, it is sufficiently confirmed by the Holy Ghost and needeth none other confirmation. Also that confession should be made only to God and to none other priest, for no priest hath power to remit sin nor to assoile³ a man of any sin. Also that no man is bound to do no⁴ penance which any priest enjoine⁵ him to do for their sins which they have confessed unto the priest, for sufficient penance for all manner of sin is every person to abstain him from lying, backbiting and evil doing, and no man is bound to do none other penance. Also that no priest hath power to make Christ's very⁵ body at mass in form of bread, but that, after the sacramental words said at mass of the priest, there remaineth only material bread. Also that the pope of Rome is father⁶ Antichrist, and false in all his working, and hath no power of God more than any other lewed man, but if⁷ he be more holy in living; nor the pope hath no power to make bishops, priests nor none other orders. And he that the people call pope of Rome is no pope, but a false extortioner and a deceiver of the people. Also that he only that is most holy and most perfect in living in earth is very pope. And these sing-masses that be cleped⁸ priests are no priests, but they be lecherous and covetous men, and false deceivers of the people; and with their subtle teaching and preaching, singing and reading, piteously they pile⁹ the people of their good, and therewith they sustain their pride, their lechery, their sloth and all other vices; and always they make new laws and new ordinances to curse and kill cruelly all other persons that hold against their vicious living.¹ Also that only consent of love betwixt man and woman, without contract of words and without solemnization in church and without symbred asking² is sufficient for the sacrament of matrimony. Also it is but a trifle to anoint a sick man with material oil consecrated by a bishop,³ for it sufficeth every man at his last end only to have mind of God. Also that every man may lawfully withdraw and withhold tithes and offerings from priests and curates and give them to the poor people; and that is more pleasing to God. Also that the temporal lords and temporal men may lawfully take all possessions and temporal goods from men of holy church, and from all bishops and prelates, both horse and harness, and give their goods to poor people; and thereto the temporal men be bound in pain of deadly sin.⁴ Also that it is no sin any person to do the contrary of the precepts of holy church. Also that every man and every woman being in good life out of sin is as good a priest and hath as much power of God in all things as any priest ordered,⁵ be he pope or bishop. Also that censures of holy church, sentences and cursings nor of suspending given by prelates or ordinaries⁶ be not to be dreaded nor to be feared, for God blesseth the cursings of bishops and ordinaries. Also that it is not lawful to swear in any case⁷ nor it is not lawful to pletyn⁸ for any thing. Also that it is not lawful to

3. Absolve.

4. Any.

5. True.

6. I.e., father of.

7. Any other layman, unless.

8. Are called.

9. Rob.

1. Moone's words, initially in legal form and rather terse, now begin to echo the tone (and frequent alliteration) of some Wycliffite sermons.

2. Reading of banns.

3. I.e., to administer last rites.

4. Since worldly possessions corrupt the true church, Moone implies, secular lords are religiously obligated to undo that corruption by disendowing the church.

5. Ordained.

6. The prelates' deputies.

7. I.e., legal case.

8. Sue in court of law.

verb
for
removing
hair
from
sheepskin

slay a man for any cause, nor by process of law to damn any traitor or any man for any treason or felony to death, nor to put any man to death for any cause, but every man should remit all vengeance only to the sentence of God. Also that no man is bound to fast in Lent, Ember days,⁹ Fridays nor vigils of saints, but all such days and times it is lawful to all Christ's people to eat flesh and all manner meats indifferently at their own lust¹ as often as they have appetite as well as any other days which be not commanded to be fasted. Also that no pilgrimage oweth to be done nor be made, for all pilgrimage-going serveth of nothing but only to give priests goods that be too rich, and to make gay tapsters and proud hostelers. Also that no worship nor reverence ought be done to any images of the crucifix, of our Lady nor of none other saints, for all such images be but idols, and made by working of man's hand; but worship and reverence should be done to the image of God, which only is man. Also that all prayer ought be made only to God and to none other saints, for it is doubt if there be any such saints in heaven as these sing-masses approve² and command to be worshipped and prayed to here in earth.

Because of which and many other errors and heresies I am called tofore you, worshipful father, which have cure of my soul, and by you fully informed that the said³ my affirming, believing, and holding be open errors and heresies, and contrary to the determination⁴ of the church of Rome. Wherefore I willingly follow and sue the doctrine of holy church and depart from all manner of error and heresy, and turn with good will and heart to the onehead⁵ of the church, considering that holy church spareth not her bosom to him that will turn again, nor god wishe not the death of a sinner but rather that he be turned and live, with a pure heart I confess, detest and despise my said errors and heresies, and these said opinions I confess hereticous and erroneous, and to the faith of the church of Rome and all universal holy church repugnant. And, for as much as by the said things that I so held, believed and affirmed, I showed myself corrupt and unfaithful, that from henceforth I show me uncorrupt and faithful, the faith and doctrine of holy church truly to keep I promise, * * * and swear by these holy gospels by me bodily touched, that from henceforth I shall never hold error nor heresy, * * * nor no such things I shall obstinately defend. * * * I shall never after this time be no recettour, fautour,⁶ counselor or defender of heretics or of any person suspect of heresy, nor shall I never trowe to them,⁷ nor wittingly I shall fellowship with them nor be homely with them, nor give them counsel, succor, favor nor comfort. If I know any heretics, or of heresy any persons suspect, or of them fautours, comforters, counselors or defenders or of any person making privy conventicles or assemblies, or holding any diverse or singular opinions from the common doctrine of the church, I shall let you, worshipful father, or your vicar general in your absence, or the diocesans of such persons have soon and ready knowing, so help me God at holy doom and these holy gospels! In witness of which thing I subscribe here with my own hand a cross + and to this part indented to remain in your register I set my signet; and that other part indented I receive under your seal to abide with me unto my life's end.⁸ Given at Norwich in the chapel of your palace the iiii day of the month of August, the year of our Lord a thousand four hundred and thirty.

[END OF VERNACULAR RELIGION]

9. Periods of fasting in each of the four seasons of the church year.

1. Pleasure.

2. Attest.

3. Aforesaid.

4. Doctrine.

5. Unity.

6. Harborer, supporter.

7. Believe in them.

8. An indented document had two copies of the same text on a single sheet of parchment, which was then authenticated by a seal and cut unevenly (indented) in two, to be retained by the two parties to the document.