

THE YEARBOOK OF LANGLAND STUDIES

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31
(2017)

Edited by

Alastair Bennett, Katharine Breen,
and Eric Weiskott



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D/2017/0095/307

ISBN: 978-2-503-57877-4

ISSN: 0890-2917

eISSN: 2031-0242

DOI: 10.1484/J.YLS.5.114168

Printed in the EU on acid-free paper

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MENACING BOOKS: *THE PRICK OF CONSCIENCE* AND THE RHETORIC OF REPROOF

Ann Killian

*Qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam.
Qui vero mala in ignem eternum...*

[...] þat þat han do wel | Schuln wend into everlesting ciel,
And þei for soþe þat han don sinne | To þe fuir off helle þat euer schal brenne.¹

Verse 41 of the Athanasian Creed casts Christian salvation in terms of a terrifyingly strict dichotomy.² Those who ‘do well’ will live forever in heaven, while evildoers will be consigned to hell fire. According to medieval theologians, imaginatively meditating upon the stark contrast between these two fates could inspire feelings of holy dread, leading to moral conversion. This premise spurred

¹ My transcription of Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 90, fol. 2^v (abbreviations silently expanded and punctuation supplied).

² Verse 41 echoes Matthew 25. 46, was cited at prime in the Sarum Rite, and was associated with the Last Judgement. See Alford, ‘*Piers Plowman*’, pp. 56–57. This verse, of course, appears on the ‘pardon’ sent by Truth in *Piers Plowman* B.7.113–14, a coincidence to which I will return (cited from *Piers Plowman*, ed. by Kane and Donaldson).

Ann E. Killian (ann.killian@yale.edu) is a PhD candidate in English at Yale University.

Abstract: This essay examines a recension of *The Prick of Conscience* to investigate how mainstream clerics reproved ecclesiastical misgovernance in vernacular writings circulating alongside *Piers Plowman*. Adopting Bromyard’s vituperative rhetoric, the text indicts lay and clerical ‘governors’ alike. Bilingual, prosimetric interpolations produce a reformist discourse that expounds the Christian mandate to ‘do well’. As an authorizing strategy, the interpolator posits works of demotic theology as sources of vernacular literary authority and envisions an ambitious programme of scriptural translation. Yet the difficulty of rendering academic theology into English verse foreshadows the generic demise of works like *PoC*.

Keywords: *Prick of Conscience*, John Bromyard, Wimbledon, reproof, translation, Auriol, dream vision, teaching, interpolation, reform.

the production of theological compendia, including vernacular literary works, which describe in graphic detail what awaits the damned and the blessed after Judgement. But the problem remains: how does one undertake to 'do well' in this life so as to avoid punishment in the next? That question calls for continual discernment by each person throughout life.

The composition of new and improved textual resources sought to aid this process of discernment. In late fourteenth-century England, calls for the translation of Scripture and theological writings into the vernacular grew insistent. Expressing the pressure felt by clerics to meet this demand, one poet recounted a dream vision in which Pope Gregory appears, menacing him with a book and ordering him to show out its contents: 'Therefore y wole do as þei me bad | And shewe out þat y haue in couert, | Thyngis þat stiken in myn hert'.³ Assuming that this book is in Latin, 'showing out' its contents implies an act of translation. The poet-dreamer describes the task of translation as 'a ful gret charge' to bear, one that involves a daunting amount of work. The sheer terror experienced by the dreamer communicates the necessity of such labour. Books bring people to salvation by teaching how to 'do well'. Clerics who have access to this knowledge but fail to share it should feel a creeping dread. They may be held accountable if any under their charge incur damnation.

This menacing dream vision appears in a recension of *The Prick of Conscience* (*PoC*). Composed in the final decades of the fourteenth century, the recension contains two interpolations: one in the Prologue, which takes as its starting point verse 41 of the Athanasian Creed, and another in part 6, which includes the dream vision. Passages of English verse alternate with paragraphs of Latin prose throughout. Because the interpolator rearranged material to add an eighth part to the usual seven-part structure, I refer to this recension as the Eight-Part *PoC*. Driven by the pastoral mandate to preach and to teach, the interpolator reproves vicious behaviour, especially among persons holding positions of authority, whether ecclesiastical or secular. Scholars have treated with suspicion the interpolator's decision to chastise misbehaving clerics in the vernacular, due to a modern association of anticlerical satire with lollardy. Developments in lollard studies over the past four decades have refuted the simplistic assumption that censure of the clergy implies heterodoxy.⁴ Nevertheless, the Eight-Part *PoC*

³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fol. 100^v.

⁴ On the emergence of lollard studies, see Fiona Somerset's introduction to *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, pp. 9–16. Foundational to the field is Hudson, *Premature Reformation*.

raises a larger question about late medieval religious culture in Britain that we have not yet satisfactorily answered: why would mainstream writers choose to reprove a presumably Latinate audience in English? What was at stake in translating the discourse of fraternal correction into the vernacular? While students of *Piers Plowman* have debated the issue, we need to analyse other texts, previously labelled heterodox, to understand the rhetorical strategies employed in addressing ecclesiastical abuses.

In re-evaluating the Eight-Part *PoC*, I argue that its anticlerical passages must be more thoroughly contextualized. I trace the Eight-Part interpolator's appropriation of a rhetorical trope from the mainstream preacher's manual, John Bromyard's *Summa praedicatorum* (1348).⁵ In adapting Bromyard's material for a universal audience, the Eight-Part *PoC* expands the concept of Christian governance to incriminate secular princes as well as prelates. Its catalogue of clerical abuses participates in a wider call for the moral reformation of society as a whole. Analysing how the Eight-Part *PoC* frames its clerical critique illuminates the similar logic operating in Thomas Wimbeldon's St Paul's Cross Sermon (c. 1387). While studies of Wimbeldon's sermon have fretted over its possible heterodoxy, I propose laying this suspicion to rest so that we can ask more interesting questions about what a mainstream cleric, university graduate, and famous preacher like Wimbeldon might have been up to.

As Wimbeldon's sermon and the Eight-Part *PoC* demonstrate, in vernacular texts composed at the end of the fourteenth century, calling out prelates for misbehaviour did not constitute an act of subversion. Rather, choosing to write in the vernacular linguistically reinforced the argument that English society *in toto* was in urgent need of spiritual renewal. By addressing clerics in the vernacular, these texts situate them within the wider Christian community and insist that salvation of the ordained is inextricably tied to the fate of all the baptized. The Eight-Part *PoC* signals its appeal to clerical readers by interweaving English verse with Latin prose, thereby fashioning a sophisticated bilingual discourse. In this respect it participates in a literary project vital to *Piers Plowman* as well. The macaronic structures of both reflect the pastoral duty to share the fruits of Latinate learning with an inclusive Christian community. This fundamental obligation persisted into the fifteenth century. While critics have posited a sea shift in the ecclesiastical hierarchy's attitude toward lay catechesis following the

⁵ Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, quotes from Bromyard's *Summa* extensively. See especially the chapters on satire and complaint, pp. 210–374. Bromyard, a Dominican friar based in Hereford, wrote the *Summa* over a twenty-year period. See Boyle, 'Date of the *Summa praedicatorum*', p. 535.

Wycliffite controversy, the Eight-Part *PoC* provides evidence of continuity within the Church's pastoral agenda in the decades either side of 1400. A textually related, bilingual handbook for priests, the *Speculum Christiani* (c. 1410), attests ongoing concern for pastoral formation under the aegis of the 'orthodox' reform movement within the early fifteenth-century prelacy.⁶

Reproving clerical vice, if not a heretical act, was nevertheless a bold enough gesture that writers who penned public denunciations needed to authorize their inflammatory rhetoric. In the final section of this essay, I examine how the Eight-Part interpolator endeavours to establish *PoC* and related works as sources of vernacular authority. As Ralph Hanna has argued, *PoC* belongs to a literary tradition of vernacular verse compendia produced in Yorkshire between 1280 and 1380.⁷ These works signal their affiliation through intertextual quotation. Not only does the Eight-Part interpolator adopt *PoC* as a vehicle for new scriptural translations, including an English psalm paraphrase; he also quotes from other northern poems such as *Cursor mundi* and *Speculum vitae*. This clerkly practice of quotation invokes these encyclopedic texts as vernacular authorities.

Why the production of such comprehensive works of 'vernacular theology' came to an end c. 1380 remains subject to debate. While some have pointed to censorship in the wake of Archbishop Thomas Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions (1409), Hanna has posited generic demise as a more persuasive explanation.⁸ The Eight-Part *PoC* lends support to this claim. The interpolator's meta-commentary on the 'ful great charge' of translation intimates why poets might have deselected the octosyllabic metre and schematic form of *PoC* and its ilk. His difficulty translating academic theology into English verse, even when fitted out with a Latin prose apparatus, goes some way toward explaining the shift to English prose in Wycliffite writings and to Latin prose in the mainstream *Speculum Christiani*. Despite the Eight-Part interpolator's valiant attempt to craft a bilingual, prosimetric reformist discourse, he comes up short, foundering in the attempt to render more theological topics accessible to lay readers in the vernacular. It is this body of knowledge that he wishes desperately to make available in English, lest Pope Gregory's threat of damnation come to pass. With salvation on the line, the prospect of failing to translate works that might help people 'do well' inspired a fantastic vision of menacing books.

⁶ On the 'orthodox' reform movement, see Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church'.

⁷ Hanna, '*Speculum vitae*', pp. 128–29.

⁸ Hanna, '*Speculum vitae*', p. 129. Hanna is rebutting Nicholas Watson's controversial assessment of the effect of Arundel's legislation on works of 'vernacular theology'.

An Apology for Studying The Prick of Conscience

To understand late medieval religious culture in Britain, we must learn more about *The Prick of Conscience*. This under-studied text featured centrally in the moral and theological education of laity and clergy alike, over several generations. For a century and a half, scribes creatively engaged with this major work of demotic theology, producing various recensions tailored to suit local circumstances. As one example of this engagement, the Eight-Part *PoC* merits our attention for the light it sheds on the pastoral reform efforts and literary compositional practices of mainstream clerics around the turn of the fifteenth century.

In their descriptive guide to *PoC* manuscripts, Robert Lewis and Angus McIntosh describe the subgroup of copies attesting the Eight-Part recension:⁹

It consists of four manuscripts, and, though the text exists in somewhat different form in each, the subgroup itself can conveniently be characterized as having two interpolations and one rearrangement. The first interpolation consists of 440 lines of English verse and much Latin prose incorporating an attack on the clergy, a common subject in Lollard writings; it is inserted between lines 192 and 193 of the Prologue. The second interpolation consists of a long series of Latin prose additions (the length varying from manuscript to manuscript), interspersed with 563 lines of English verse, also incorporating some anti-clerical sentiment; it is inserted in book 6, between the end of the seventh pain of hell (line 6894) and the beginning of the eighth (line 6895). The rearrangement involves transferring some text from book 5 (112 lines corresponding to lines 6346–409) to the end of book 7 (between lines 9474 and 9475, with a new eight-line link added at the end of 7) to become a book 8, on the world after judgment day.

In its fullest form, the recension contains over one thousand interpolated lines of English verse, fewer than one hundred of which have been published.¹⁰ Aside

⁹ Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, p. 7. The subgroup includes: London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687; Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 90; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Ashmole 60 and e Musaeo 76. Antiquaries 687 is one of three manuscripts in which *PoC* appears alongside *Piers Plowman*. See Doyle, 'Remarks', pp. 47–48. Horobin, 'Harley 3954', p. 77, discusses textual variants in the Antiquaries 687 copy of *Piers*, an A text contaminated with B readings. The scribe of English 90 also copied a C text of *Piers Plowman* in London, British Library, MS Additional 34779, one of three cases in which a single scribe copied both works. See Doyle, 'Ushaw College, Durham, MS 50', and Horobin, 'Scribe of Rawlinson Poetry 137', pp. 22–23.

¹⁰ Fifty-three lines from Ashmole 60, fol. 97, published in *Ballads from Manuscripts*, ed. by Furnivall and others, pp. 63–64; forty-two lines from Ashmole 60, fols 4–5, in *Thornton Romances*, ed. by Halliwell-Phillips, pp. 259–61. In this folio-size manuscript, copied at the

from Hope Emily Allen, no one has commented on the Eight-Part's Latin components.¹¹ Two printed extracts excited interest for their denunciation of clerical misgovernance. In Allen's description of the recension, she posited that the Eight-Part *PoC* was composed by a 'Lollard sympathizer' because one particular passage contained what she refers to as 'Lollard jargon'.¹²

Focusing almost exclusively on this feature of the text, Lewis and McIntosh refer to the recension as 'the Lollard subgroup' of *PoC* manuscripts. Such a narrow lens obfuscates the interpolator's positive effort to imagine new methods of preaching and teaching, the twin mandate that came to define the Church's pastoral agenda in the fifteenth century. In re-evaluating the Eight-Part *PoC*, I follow Lewis and McIntosh in basing my observations on Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 90, which they consider the most complete copy.¹³ I refer also to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, which has received the most scholarly attention due to the scribe's attribution of the poem to Richard Rolle.¹⁴ This factor led Allen to her conclusions, which have been frequently referenced but little evaluated.¹⁵

end of the fourteenth century, the interpolated content (fols 1–7, 88–104^r) fills over twenty-four leaves of forty lines each, although at least two folios containing interpolated content are missing.

¹¹ Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, pp. 6–7, comment on the length of Latin passages in each of the four manuscripts in the subgroup but do not evaluate content.

¹² Allen, *Writings*, p. 397. Andrew Cole has argued that the use of terms commonly found in Wycliffite writings cannot be taken as proof of Wycliffite sympathies. See Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, p. 93. See also Hudson, 'A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?'.

¹³ Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, p. 7 n. 18, and p. 90, and Tyson, 'Hand-List'. *Earliest Advocates*, ed. by Dove, pp. lviii–lix, dated the manuscript between 1380 and 1400. Images of English 90 can be viewed online via the University of Manchester Library at <<http://enriqueta.man.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/6mfnc0>> [accessed 1 August 2017].

¹⁴ Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, p. 95; Black, *Descriptive, Analytical*, pp. 104–05. Because Ashmole 60 is the earliest of five manuscripts attributing *PoC* to Rolle, Allen argued that the scribe had added Rolle's name 'to give it safe conduct' because 'some of the material inserted is almost Lollard' (*Writings*, p. 375).

¹⁵ For example, Derek Pearsall follows Allen in arguing that attribution of *PoC* to Rolle in some manuscripts was made, 'no doubt [...] in order to cleanse it from heretical taint after it had been interpolated in some versions with Lollard material' (*Old English and Middle English Poetry*, p. 139). The editors of *The Idea of the Vernacular* are more cautious: 'The text, though it was regarded as orthodox, was owned by various suspected Lollards and in the atmosphere of anxiety that surrounded the movement was sometimes held suspect itself. Furthermore, like many other Middle English religious works (including *Pore Caitif* and Rolle's *English Psalter*), it was periodically interpolated with passages of anticlerical satire' (Wogan-Browne and others,

As this case study aims to demonstrate, analysing the large corpus of *PoC* manuscripts promises to enrich significantly our understanding of late medieval England's religious culture. Although the importance of *PoC* to this culture has long been recognized, critical analysis of the poem has made little headway due to the sheer number and variety of manuscript witnesses.¹⁶ More copies of *PoC* survive than of any work in Middle English other than the Wycliffite Bible.¹⁷ By the fifteenth century, 'the poem was known all over England (not to mention Anglo-Ireland)' and had penetrated metropolitan culture.¹⁸ In their 'corrected and amplified reading text' based on Richard Morris's 1863 edition, Ralph Hanna and Sarah Wood count at least 170 copies of *PoC*, including extracts and recensions, produced from the mid-fourteenth into the fifteenth centuries.¹⁹ When copying this versified theological compendium, users adapted *PoC* to meet local needs, leaving behind a textually varied corpus. Thus far, editors have not attempted to represent the textual *mouvance* of this tradition, opting to publish regional versions of the poem or single texts.²⁰ For example, Hanna and Wood's edition collates nine northern copies in an attempt to represent most nearly the poetic text as it was composed in Yorkshire, probably in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.²¹ The critical apparatus of their edition, with its copious textual and literary notes, will enable future studies of the poem's reception among audiences of varying educational status and social class.²²

eds, *Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 242). They cite Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 485–87.

¹⁶ Recent literary critical studies of *PoC* include: Chickering, 'Rhetorical *Stimulus*'; Fitzgibbons, 'Enabled and Disabled "Myndes"' and 'Critical Pleasure'; and Rentz, *Imagining the Parish*.

¹⁷ Manuscripts containing the Wycliffite Bible number about 250. See the index of manuscripts in Dove, *First English Bible*, pp. 281–306. The Wycliffite Bible translation was probably begun in the 1380s. Both the Early and Later Versions were in circulation by the 1390s (p. 3).

¹⁸ *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, p. xiv. The editors note that few northern texts achieved such wide dispersal after c. 1330 (n. 3).

¹⁹ For the most recent list of *PoC* manuscripts, see *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, pp. 378–83.

²⁰ In addition to *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, see the single-text edition in *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Morey.

²¹ For descriptions of these manuscripts, see *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, pp. xv–xxxiv. Morris provided 'a print version of quite the best manuscript he could have known, BL, MS Cotton Galba E.ix, with light corrections, in the main derived from other British Museum copies', with a missing quire supplemented from BL, MS Harley 4196 (pp. xiv–xv).

²² 'Copies associated with most classes of the laity, secular priests, monks, nuns, and others

The question of audience remains crucial because of the contradictory evidence offered by the poem itself, particularly the Prologue. Due to its stated address ‘til laude men þat er unkunnand, | Þat can na latyn understand’ (*PoC*, ll. 338–39), early studies by modern scholars concluded that *PoC* was recited aloud, perhaps in sermons, for the benefit of illiterate laypeople.²³ Yet, as the editors of *The Idea of the Vernacular* anthology explain, the work’s ‘picture of hell, heaven, and purgatory draws on Anselm, Honorius of Autun, and other authorities on the topic with unusual attention to up-to-date theological detail, in a field of thinking that was changing rapidly’.²⁴ Moreover, manuscript evidence proves the poem received studious attention from learned readers. A majority of copies was owned by secular and regular clerics, some with a university education, as Simon Horobin has illustrated.²⁵ Hanna has traced a number of *PoC* manuscripts circulating in North Yorkshire, often produced by Augustinian canons.²⁶ Some copies feature extensive marginal source citation and Latin glosses.²⁷

‘All this’, *The Idea of the Vernacular* editors conclude, ‘not to mention the poem’s sheer length, suggests that its true purpose was informative, even scholarly, as much as evangelistic; this is perhaps why it describes itself as a “tretice”’.²⁸ Supporting this assessment of the poem’s ‘scholarly’ appeal, the Eight-Part *PoC* offers evidence of a university-educated cleric expanding the poem for a Latinate audience, likely other clerics with pastoral duties. Writing in the final decades of the fourteenth century, the interpolator still considered *PoC* an effective medium for instructing a wide audience in the complexities of moral theology.

Contextualizing the Catalogue of Clerical Abuses in the Eight-Part PoC

The Eight-Part *PoC* reproves clerical abuses in caustic terms that scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries associated with lollardy. Wendy Scase and others decisively overturned older assessments of fourteenth-century anticlericalism, deepening our understanding of the widespread use

survive or are recorded, and despite its length the work is often found complete, rather than in extract’ (Wogan-Browne and others, eds, *Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 242).

²³ On early critical reception of the poem, see Lewis, ‘Medieval Popularity, Modern Neglect’.

²⁴ Wogan-Browne and others, eds, *Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 241.

²⁵ Horobin, ‘Scribe of Rawlinson Poetry 137’.

²⁶ Hanna, ‘Augustinian Canons’ and ‘Some North Yorkshire Scribes’.

²⁷ On Latin glossing in *PoC* manuscripts, see Galloway, ‘Gower’s *Confessio amantis*’, p. 55.

²⁸ Wogan-Browne and others, eds, *Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 241.

of denunciation and vituperative rhetoric in mainstream clerical writings.²⁹ But these studies focused largely on *Piers Plowman*. It is time to extend these insights to the Eight-Part *PoC*. If the catalogue of clerical abuses is not lollard propaganda, how should we read it? By re-contextualizing the passage cited by Allen, we see that it makes up one part of a larger argument comprised of an English-verse paraphrase of Wisdom 6. 2–15, amplified with a passage of Latin prose, which serves to introduce the English-verse denunciation of ecclesiastical misgovernance. This bilingual *prosimetrum* presents the list of clerical abuses as one example of the kind of immoral behaviour practised by figures of authority across social estates. Prelatical vice is one instance of a broader phenomenon, though a particularly egregious one. I argue that the Eight-Part *PoC* takes up the rhetoric of reproof directed against the clerical order in Bromyard's *Summa* and extends its terms to indict a broader swathe of social 'governors'.

A similar logic underlies Thomas Wimbleton's 'Redde rationem villicationis tue' (c. 1387), the most widely copied Middle English sermon.³⁰ Scholars have posited that this work too may have been associated with lollardy due to its 'explicit criticism of the clergy in front of a lay audience'.³¹ But evidence does not otherwise suggest that medieval audiences viewed the text at all suspiciously. Rather, the manuscript witnesses indicate that the sermon appealed to book producers of various inclinations.³²

²⁹ For example, see Scase, '*Piers Plowman*'. For a succinct overview of scholarship on Langland and lollardy, see the introduction to *Piers Plowman*, ed. by Pearsall, pp. 25–29.

³⁰ The Middle English text survives in seventeen English copies, plus one abbreviated text; the sermon is also attested in four Latin copies. For the most recent study in preparation for a new edition, see O'Mara, 'Thinking Afresh'. O'Mara argues that previous editions have not accounted for the heterogeneity among manuscript copies; accounting for the conflicting evidence calls into question the sermon's author, date, and occasion for delivery.

³¹ O'Mara, 'Thinking Afresh', p. 163. O'Mara also suggests that apocalypticism in the sermon's second half 'might in some quarters be associated with heterodox thinking'. Previous critics have found other grounds for linking the sermon with heterodoxy. Although there are records of several Thomas Wimbletons who may have authored the sermon, Siegfried Wenzel, among others, has favoured a priest licensed to preach by the bishop of Winchester, whose register specifies that Wimbleton was not to 'assert or preach any heretical or erroneous opinions'. But another possibility is one Thomas Wimbleton cited in Merton College's 'Catalogus vetus' as the most famous preacher in all of England (O'Mara, 'Thinking Afresh', p. 160). Studying print editions of the sermon, Alexandra Walsham has argued that the text was published after the Reformation because Wimbleton was mistakenly identified with Wyclif ('Inventing the Lollard Past').

³² According to O'Mara, the sermon 'is found in orthodox and heterodox manuscript

Analysing the rhetorical strategies of these two works in tandem demonstrates how mainstream clerical writers sought to develop a new pastoral mode in the final decades of the fourteenth century. I want not only to question assumptions made about the Eight-Part *PoC* but also about better-known contemporary works like Wimbledon's sermon. Modern readers' narrow focus on criticism of the clergy has distorted critical interpretation of these texts. During this period, clerics — mainstream and lollard, without distinction — translated critiques of their own social order from authoritative pastoral manuals as part of a call for church reform. These texts address not only prelates but also secular rulers and, indeed, all Christians who must govern their own spiritual conduct. As an antidote to abuses, reformists prescribed teaching, the practice of modelling virtuous action for others.

Before turning to the Eight-Part's catalogue of clerical abuses, a brief summary of this recension's two interpolations will demonstrate the interpolator's broad concern with misgovernance across social orders. The Prologue interpolation (inserted between *PoC* ll. 192 and 193) begins with verse 41 of the Athanasian Creed, quoted in Latin and then paraphrased in English. To 'do well', one must learn to distinguish vice from virtue because people in all stations of life require this knowledge to attain joy. Covetous pride paints vice in a favourable light despite Christian law, but God will destroy such liars like the cedars of Lebanon, the oaks of Bazan, and the ships of Tarshish. When Christ appears on Doomsday to judge false Christians, Jews, and heathens (as *PoC*, ll. 6053–70 explains), a double curse will fall on those hypocrites who lead others into wrong, like blind leading the blind. By way of analogy, one who has never before sailed on a ship should not be appointed navigator lest the ship sail into peril.³³ Those who do not repent of their vicious living will end up in hell without hope. Rather than follow hypocritical leaders, persons desiring to acquire virtues should turn to books because, as Paul says, all has been written for our learning (Romans 15. 4).

context'; for example, alongside a friar's sermon, which she considers orthodox, and with a set of Wycliffite sermons, 'the most heretical context imaginable' ('Thinking Afresh', pp. 163–64). She later acknowledges that 'modern critics do not know whether to regard Wimbledon's sermon as an orthodox or heterodox product, to the extent that either of these terms can be meaningful' (p. 166).

³³ Owst refers to a Latin sermon in Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS li. iii. 8, fols 129 ff., which likewise analogizes the Church to a ship 'in the hands of [...] incompetent seamen' and 'in danger of complete destruction' (*Literature and Pulpit*, p. 280). He describes this manuscript of sermons as 'full of the more lively, sarcastic kind of censure that we found typical of Bromyard' (p. 279).

A versified extract from Isidore's *Sententiarum* recommends the reading of saints' lives in order to see perfection as in a mirror. Following a list of exemplary biblical figures, the interpolator cites, from the prologue to *Cursor mundi*, the famous exhortation against reading romances.³⁴ Because they will be judged according to their fruits, writers should provide alternative entertainment by making rhymes about the Virgin Mary, Christ's disciples, and the saints. The Eight-Part interpolator then takes up this theme, adding that clerics and religious ought to be especially well read. There will be no excuse on Judgement Day for those who can consult for themselves the law set forth in Holy Writ.

The part 6 interpolation (inserted between *PoC*, ll. 6894 and 6895) develops Hell's seventh pain, the sight of grisly devils. This terrible vision includes the spectacle of other damned souls. Wicked men are instruments of the devil in this life, and they become devils in the next. Vicious living is particularly egregious among those who exercise the office of pastor or governor while on earth. Persons who prefer luxurious, worldly lifestyles will be struck down like Lucifer and the fallen angels, like the cedars of Lebanon, not only for failing to produce good fruit themselves, but for keeping others from flourishing as well. This warning applies especially to kings and lords of high status, whom the poet compares to fallen Babylon (Isaiah 47. 1) and imprisoned Boethius. The poet tells how Jerusalem was led to destruction by false leaders in the Church and courts of justice, pointing to this history as a cautionary tale. For Christians who similarly lack true belief, only study of Holy Scripture promises hope against the threat of egoistic covetousness. A satiric complaint against ecclesiastical abuses culminates with the injunction not to lose any time in repenting, because at Doomsday there will be no mercy.³⁵ Learn from the parable of the foolish bridesmaids and the servants

³⁴ *Cursor mundi*, ed. by Morris, ll. 1–26. *Cursor mundi* is a Middle English verse encyclopedia of universal history, extant in four copies produced in the 1320s or '30s. Five more, relatively complete, copies survive, including a southern recension of the poem (Wogan-Browne and others, eds, *Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 267–68). The *PoC*-poet likely knew the work, and it was a source, along with *PoC*, for the *Speculum vitae* (*Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, p. xxxvi).

³⁵ Furnivall published this catalogue of clerical abuses, beginning '3if lorel lordis þis vnderstode' (*Ballads from Manuscripts*, ed. by Furnivall, pp. 63–64). Carleton Brown discovered that this passage formed the first half of a 126-line poem in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo 198 (SC 3712), copied on a flyleaf in the late fourteenth century (fol. 172). According to Brown, the Eight-Part *PoC* interpolator extracted these lines from the independent treatise preserved in e Musaeo 198. Brown entitles the poem 'A treatise in reproof of worldliness in the clergy, and against the reading of romances'. See Brown, *Register*, II, 1. Unfortunately, text on the flyleaf of e Musaeo 198 is now illegible, so I rely on Brown's description of its content.

in the vineyard, the poet cautions. Concluding the interpolation, he recounts a dream vision, presumably the inspiration for his prophetic denunciation of false prelates in the final Latin prose passage, entitled *Carmen Lugubre*.

Worth noting is the continual emphasis on the obligation of every person, regardless of estate, to live virtuously. Vice infiltrates all levels of society and must be rooted out. But those in positions of authority assume greater responsibility. The catalogue of clerical abuses appears as part of this broad social critique. The passage of Middle English verse alleged by Allen as evidence of 'Lollard jargon' follows a substantial Latin commentary on Wisdom 6. 2–15.³⁶ Bromyard cites this chapter ('Sapi. vi') in the *Summa* entry on 'Damnatio',³⁷ and quotes Wisdom 6. 2 in the entry on 'Iudices'.³⁸ In both cases, Bromyard stresses that persons of high office, whether ecclesiastical or secular, will be held to stricter account. In the 'Damnatio' entry, Bromyard cites Wisdom 6 in support of his assertion that, as much as greater authority is placed in a person of high office, so many more people look to him and follow his example, whether right or defective, out of either fear or love ('et exemplum vel actus vel defectus timore vel amore sequuntur'). Those who lead badly will come to a hard judgement in the end.

The second half of the 'Treatise' in e Musaeo 198 appears in the Prologue interpolation, in the passage published by Halliwell-Phillipps; first noted in Bülbring, 'Zu den Handschriften' (for a summary of his findings, see Allen, *Writings*, pp. 389–90).

³⁶ Allen highlights the terms 'Goddis lawe', 'false cristene men', 'pise vnkunynge abbotis', 'rekles doctours', 'falce Erchedekene', 'falce preestis', 'falce kepyng', 'falce persounnes', and 'ful leccherous foolis' (*Writings*, pp. 391–93). An indictment of false Christians appears in Bromyard's *Summa*, under the entry 'Damnatio' (pars prima, s.v. 'damnatio', cap. 1, 18). Just as a king will be more angry with a servant who had sworn fealty and then turned traitor, than with another who was not bound to him, so God will be against false Christians ('falsos christianos') who bound themselves to him in baptism by a solemn vow, and promised to be his servants and reject the devil. If afterward they do not hold the law and mandates of God ('dei mandata et legem'), it is lawful to punish them like the Saracens; that is to say, they will be damned like them (my translation).

³⁷ To one who has greater place, estate or office ('maiozem locum / statum / vel officium tenet'), sin is more grave and the punishment will be heavier, whether he be a person of the world or an ecclesiastic ('sive sit persona secularis sive ecclesiastica') (Bromyard, *Summa*, pars prima, s.v. 'damnatio', cap. 1, 20).

³⁸ 'Iudicium tam ecclesiasticorum quam secularium'. The second article of this entry asserts that a judge is one who has the virtue of knowledge or prudence ('scientiam seu prudentiam'). He knows how he must act: neither being deceived nor deceiving, like an eye without sight, or like a blind scout keeping watch over a besieged castle, or a blind shepherd watching over sheep among wolves (Bromyard, *Summa*, pars prima, s.v. 'iudices', cap. 9, 1). The trope of blindness appears repeatedly in the English verse and Latin prose interpolations of the Eight-Part *PoC*.

In other words, rulers and governors will be judged by their success or failure to model virtuous living for others.

The mandate to teach by example receives strong emphasis in the Eight-Part *PoC*. To introduce the quotation of Wisdom 6, the interpolator provides an English-verse prologue, first asserting the praiseworthiness of the biblical text and specifying its intended audience, in the vein of a literary commentary:³⁹

3it þe Book of Wisdom sais
 Wordis þat arn mykil to prais,
 For he spekiþ openly
 To grete kyngis þat arn myȝtty,
 And to alle manere of men
 That othere shulden reule, teche and ken,
 Eiþer bodily other gostly,
 To hem he spekiþ specialy.
 And ilk a man he kallip a kyng
 That here haþ eny gouernyng.⁴⁰

Although the biblical author writes in an ‘open’ style, the interpolator must gloss in advance the verse’s stated address to *reges*.⁴¹ Readers should understand that these words apply to people of any estate, but especially to those charged with ruling or teaching others. This clarification sets up an exegesis of the pericope’s moral significance:

He biddeþ hem loue God and his lawe
 And teche it othere men to knawe,
 And þer abouten he muste be bisy
 And eueremore þeronne study.
 And þanne þei shal coroned be
 In heuene blisse, in þat citee,
 And haue more worschipe and honour
 Than euere hadde here kyng or Emperour.
 And ȝif þei here dignyte seche,
 Her owen profyt and her owen worschipe,
 In ful gret payne þei shal be

³⁹ This passage in the Eight-Part *PoC* closely parallels some English verses in five copies of the *Speculum Christina*, ‘Septima Tabula’. See *Speculum Christiani*, ed. by Holmstedt, pp. 113/1–137/3 (cited by page and line number).

⁴⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fols 94^v–95^r.

⁴¹ Wisdom 6. 2 ‘Audite ergo, reges, et intelligite; discite, iudices finium terrae’ (all citations of the Vulgate are to *Biblia sacra*, ed. by Colunga and Turrado).

For coueitise of heiȝ dignyte,
 That þei hadden thurgh Goddis grace,
 And siþþe to hym vnkynde þei wace,
 For nomore reuerence shal þei haue
 Than a sely pore knaue.⁴²

Study of God's law will lead to heavenly bliss, but seeking after worldly dignities will end in 'ful gret payne', synonymous in *PoC* with hell fire. This moral exegesis of Wisdom fits into the interpolator's overall agenda to explicate verse 41 of the Athanasian Creed; that is, to define 'doing well' as virtuous living learned through study of the Bible.

This English-verse introduction leads into a full quotation of Wisdom 6. 2–15 in Latin, followed by a substantial amplification that shifts the focus from high-ranking governors generally to ecclesiastical rulers specifically. Rectors of the Church should listen and hasten to understand, that they might serve justice and truth, because they have accepted power from God. They should teach the rule of faith with good works and explain God's judgement, because God will see not only their works but also their thoughts and wishes. Whoever governs is subject to the hardest judgement. On that day, three questions will be asked: 'Prima questio erit: Quis huc te adduxit, obquare tamen venire voluisti? Secunda questio: Quomodo vixisti? Tercia: Qualiter rexisti?' (Ashmole 60, fol. 95^v). What drew you here (charity or cupidity, the common good or a private one), or why did you wish to come? In what manner did you live? How did you rule or govern? In answer to each, the writer contrasts good priests, who imitate Christ's apostles, with bad priests, who follow Judas and Satan.

These three questions appear in Bromyard's *Summa* entry on the 'Ordo clericalis', which specifies four questions that clerics should ask themselves: 'quomodo intrastis, quomodo vixistis, quomodo resistis, quomodo bona ecclesie expenditis'.⁴³ The fourth, how did you spend the Church's goods, raises issues specific to clerics: the misuse of church funds, absenteeism, and simony. The

⁴² Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fol. 95^r.

⁴³ Cited in *Wimbledon's Sermon*, ed. by Knight, n. to ll. 145–47. Knight cites another sermon on Wimbledon's chosen text, from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 406, fol. 439, in which priests are asked three questions: 'Quis te huc adduxit? Quid hic agis? Quam ob causam huc venire voluisti?' *SC* incorporates the questions into a gloss on Isaiah 24. 23: 'Euery man schal zelde vp a streyte a-cownte and reson be-for god of al thynges that he has doon or spoken; be whych helpes, bi what meryte, and by what entente he has comen to any state or degre; hou he has entrede, hou he has lyuede, hou he has perseuerede; what he has lernede, what he has taught, and in what doctrine he has continuede' (*Speculum Christiani*, ed. by Holmstedt, p. 54/7–16).

Eight-Part *PoC* names these abuses specifically in the English-verse passage that follows the Latin commentary on Wisdom 6. Moving from English-verse prologue and paraphrase to Latin quotation and gloss, the interpolator adapts Bromyard's reproofing rhetoric to a new, bilingual mode of teaching. He situates clerical abuses alongside a critique of secular rulers who are likewise called to teach virtue by example. Because Allen only commented briefly on the content of the interpolated Latin passages, we have not previously acknowledged that a mainstream preacher's reference provides the structuring principle behind the Eight-Part *PoC*.

Wimbleton's sermon also cites the three questions but makes explicit their applicability to persons both ecclesiastical and secular. Worded slightly differently, they structure the first half of Wimbleton's sermon on Luke 16. 2, '3elde rekenynge of þy baylie'. Wimbleton distinguishes between three different types of stewards: 'prestis þat han cure of mennis soulis, and temperal lordis | þat hauen gouernayle of peplis; and þe þridde baylie shal acounte only for hymself, and þat is euerich oþer Cristene man, of þat he haþ reseyuod of God'.⁴⁴ Wimbleton takes care to emphasize that all persons are obligated to 'do well' by God, using their intellect and free will responsibly in order to lead lives of virtue. On the day of reckoning, each of these three types of stewards — priests, temporal lords, and all self-governing men — will answer three questions:

þe firste questioun, how hast þou entred; þe secunde, how hast þou reulid; and þe þridde, how hast þou lyuyd. And 3if þou canst wel assoyle þese þre questiouns, was þer neuere noon erþely lord þat so rewardip his seruauent wiþoute comparisoun as þy Lord God shal reward þe, þat is wiþ lif and ioie þat euere shal laste.⁴⁵

Redeploying these three questions within an explication of Christian stewardship, Wimbleton shows that the idea of good governance involves one's motivation for entering into a certain state of life, one's conduct in that position, and one's general manner of living. The virtuous will find their reward in heaven, while those who are 'recheles' of their own welfare 'and take noon hede of þis rekenyng' will incur untold sorrow and woe (152–53). Urging the audience to balance desire for joy against dread of pain, Wimbleton reiterates the central tension animating *PoC* and the Eight-Part recension. Although glossing different biblical texts, the Eight-Part *PoC* and Wimbleton's sermon develop along similar lines because of the framework laid out by these questions drawn from Bromyard.

⁴⁴ *Wimbleton's Sermon*, ed. by Knight, ll. 140–45.

⁴⁵ *Wimbleton's Sermon*, ed. by Knight, ll. 145–51.

The commonalities between Wimbledon's sermon and the Eight-Part *PoC*, given their shared reliance on Bromyard, demonstrate that writers of the late fourteenth century were redeploying the language of clerical critique to address a wider audience of lay and ecclesiastical governors. Rather than suspect all such writers of heterodoxy, we might see this evidence as a sign that the issue of church reform was broached in vernacular writings, mainstream and lollard alike.⁴⁶ The Eight-Part *PoC* illustrates the potential for Latin and vernacular to cooperate in crafting a reformist discourse.⁴⁷ Rather than constituting a subversive act that opened up a hermetic clerical discourse to lay readers, writing in the vernacular here addresses a predominantly bilingual, clerical audience. Like the Oxford theologian Richard Ullerston, the Eight-Part interpolator exhorts other clerics to translate Scripture and theological writings into the common tongue for pragmatic reasons.⁴⁸ Together, theologians and preachers might endeavour to realize a common agenda, both striving to explicate scriptural truth in clearer and more affective terms. Access to the biblical text grounds the interpolator's vision for a newly invigorated moral education. These calls for moral reform spurred the creation, in the early fifteenth century, of new resources for pastoral formation.

From the Eight-Part PoC to the Speculum Christiani

Communicating the urgent need for clerical abuses, and general immorality, to be denounced, the part 6 interpolation concludes with a first-person assertion: 'For y nyl leue for no man to preche, | To reprove, wryte and also teche; | For þer is difference as y wene | Bytwene techyng and prechyng euene' (Ashmole 60, fol. 100^v). Adopting a prophetic voice, the interpolator asserts that he will

⁴⁶ This perspective complements Fiona Somerset's assessment of 'the extensive overlaps with and mutual influence between lollard and mainstream writings', which, she argues, 'might inform our understanding of late medieval English religious culture'. See Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ian Johnson has launched an incisive critique of the trend in medieval scholarship of the early to mid-1990s to represent vernacular writing and culture in subversive opposition to Latinate hegemonic discourse. See Johnson, *Middle English Life of Christ*, p. 22. In particular Johnson refutes Nicholas Watson's argument that the innovative and exploratory spirit evident in fourteenth-century Middle English religious literature was suppressed by self-censuring fifteenth-century writers who feared the ecclesiastical punishments instituted by Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions. See Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 822–25.

⁴⁸ Ullerston authored a tract in defence of vernacular translation of Scripture in 1401. See Gillespie, 'Religious Writing', p. 236.

not, on behalf of any man, cease to preach, reprove, write, or teach. He utilizes these diverse modes of exhortation to stir in his audience the desire for moral reformation. Yet he acknowledges that these various activities are reserved for different clerical offices. The final couplet translates the first line of the ensuing Latin prose commentary: ‘Magna differencia est inter praedicacionem et doctrinam’. This canonical distinction serves as the opening proclamation of the pastoral handbook, *Speculum Christiani* (*SC*).⁴⁹ A Middle English translation renders it thus:

A grete difference es be-twene prechyng and techyng. Prechyng es in a place where es clepyng to-gedyr or foluyng of pepyl in holy dayes in chyrches or other certeyn places and tymes ordeyned ther-to. And it longeth to hem that been ordeyned ther-to, the which haue iurediccion and auctorite, and to noon othyr. Techyng es that eche body may enforme and teche hys brothyr in euery place and in conable tyme, os he seeth that it be spedful. For this is a gostly almesdede, to which euery man es bounde that hath cunnyng. (*SC* 2.5–13)⁵⁰

Reviewing what is known about this pastoral handbook sheds light on the composition of the Eight-Part *PoC*. The number of passages these two works share suggests that they were produced at the same time, perhaps within the same institution. The Eight-Part interpolator may even have been one of the clerics involved in assembling *SC*.

SC was probably drafted and revised continually between 1380 and 1410.⁵¹ Vincent Gillespie has called for further investigation of the work due to its emergence during ‘a period of some crisis in the English church.’⁵² Having

⁴⁹ Vincent Gillespie considers *SC* a successful production of the orthodox reform movement leading up to the Council of Constance (1414–18). See ‘*Doctrina* and *predicacio*’, pp. 19–20.

⁵⁰ In *SC*, this conclusion is confirmed by a catena of patristic quotations. The Eight-Part *PoC* contains only part of the gloss found in *SC*: ‘Tria sunt genera elimonsinarum. Egenti largiri quicquid poteris, dimittere eis, a quibus lesus fueris, errantem corrigere et in uiam ueritatis reducere’ (*Speculum Christiani*, ed. by Holmstedt, p. 5/19–21). In Middle English, ‘Thre maner of kyndes been of almes: On to 3eue what thou may to the nedy and pore. The secunde to for-3eue hem of hert that other hauen trespassed or hurte the. The therde to amende and teche hym that errys and dos amys, and to lede hym 3en in-to the way of truthe’ (p. 4/21–25). *PoC* and its tradition pertain to the third manner of almsgiving, that is, sharing with the ignorant the truth gleaned from one’s learning.

⁵¹ This account of *SC* and pastoral manuals in general is indebted to the work of Professor Vincent Gillespie. See Gillespie, ‘Literary Form’; ‘*Cura pastoralis*’; and ‘Evolution of the *Speculum Christiani*’.

⁵² Gillespie, ‘*Doctrina*’, p. 19.

localized the archetypal dialect of *SC* to Lincolnshire, Gillespie posits that it may have been composed at York Minster because use of the text by secular clerics at the Minster (many of whom were transplants from the diocese of Lincoln) is attested from an early date.⁵³ The bishoprics of Lincoln and York were both heavily invested in clerical reform during this period, and Gillespie sees this handbook as an exemplary fruit of their efforts.⁵⁴

SC consists largely of Latin prose, with doctrinal points supported by quotations from Scripture and the Fathers. It is arranged in eight *tabulae* dealing with basic catechetical subjects such as the Articles of Faith and the Ten Commandments. Six of these feature vernacular verse. Gillespie has identified a pastoral *summa* known as the *Cibus Anime* as the source for *SC*'s Latin material.⁵⁵ The *SC* compilers rearranged *Cibus* material, extracting only that information essential to pastoral ministry. *SC* evolved from its parent text gradually. The earliest manuscript copies seem to represent a 'draft' stage of the recension, as several independent attempts were made to redeploy *Cibus* material in a compact *vade-mecum*.⁵⁶ The variety in content and layout attested by the earliest copies, in comparison to the 'orthodox' form the text had assumed by c. 1410, suggests they are products of one and the same milieu or religious institute where extracts from *Cibus* circulated alongside vernacular texts of a catechetical nature.⁵⁷ English sources included part 2 of *PoC* and chapter 6 of Richard Rolle's 'Form of Living'.⁵⁸ Hanna and Wood deem *SC*'s 'Septima Tabula' to be a *PoC* extract: 'About one quarter of this 119-line-long poem directly cites [*PoC*], and much of the remainder is paraphrase or more distant adaptation'.⁵⁹ The editors also find seven Latin proverbs dispersed throughout *PoC*, which do not have an

⁵³ Gillespie, 'Literary Form', pp. 228–43; 'Cura pastoralis', pp. 42–46.

⁵⁴ Gillespie, 'Cura pastoralis', pp. 45–46.

⁵⁵ Gillespie, 'Literary Form', pp. 199–200 and 229–44, dates *Cibus* to the fourth quarter of the fourteenth century.

⁵⁶ Gillespie, 'Literary Form', p. 325.

⁵⁷ Gillespie, 'Literary Form', p. 307. See also Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church', pp. 22–23.

⁵⁸ *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, p. 382, list *SC*, 'Septima Tabula', as an extract of *PoC* because it contains rearranged passages from part 2 on worldly mutability. Allen, *Writings*, p. 405, argued that *SC*, 'Quinta Tabula', was likely drawn from the same (unidentified) source as chapter 6 of Rolle's 'Form of Living'. Allen did not believe this list of 'what files a man and what makes him clean' originated with Rolle. A versified extract (on sins of the heart, mouth, and deeds) can be found, unattributed to Rolle, in *Speculum vitae*, ll. 5595–5834. See *Speculum vitae*, ed. by Hanna, p. lx.

⁵⁹ *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, p. 382 n. 17.

identifiable patristic source, but which do have parallels in *SC*.⁶⁰ The group of clerics who drafted *SC* evidently kept a copy of *PoC* close to hand.

The Eight-Part interpolator seems to have numbered among this group, or at least to have had access to the same pool of Latin and vernacular sources that appear in various draft copies of *SC*.⁶¹ For example, two passages in the part 6 interpolation correspond to a fifty-two-line *exemplum* that appears only in early copies of *SC*, inserted in the seventh table.⁶² It describes ancient worship in the Jerusalem temple. The Eight-Part interpolator splits the *exemplum* in half, patching in his own metrical translation of Psalm 136. 1–4:⁶³

He seiþ, now sytteþ þe citee alane,
 Nakid as a widuwe wil of wane.
 Now beriþ truage þat er was prince,
 Ful of folk in ilk a provynce.
 To conforte hire now nys þer nan,
 Thus of Ierusalem he made his man.
 Her of we reden in þe sauter book
 Openly who so wole it look:
 He seiþ, in Babiloyne we sette
 Vppon þe wattris and sore grette
 Whanne we þouzten vppon Ierusalem,
 The chief citee of al oure rew.
 [...]
 And whanne we þouzten of þis citee
 Gret sorwe in herte hadde we,
 And whan we wepte and oure handis wronge,
 Oure enemyes scorneden vs euere amonge
 And baden vs synge songis of Syon
 And maden foule mowes vs vppon.

⁶⁰ *Index of Middle English Verse*, no. 1342, extant in about forty copies. See the 'Index of Quotations and Allusions', in *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, p. 408.

⁶¹ Internal evidence points to a northern origin for the Eight-Part *PoC*'s interpolated English verse. Allen, *Writings*, p. 390, identified northern rhymes in the poem, most noticeably the survival of the northern long 'a' in rhyming words such as 'mane/stane' and 'ham/alan'.

⁶² Holmstedt published this *exemplum* in an appendix. See *Speculum Christiani*, ed. by Holmstedt, pp. 340–42.

⁶³ 'Super flumina Babylonis illic sedimus et flevimus, cum recordaremur Sion. In salicibus in medio ejus suspendimus organa nostra; quia illic interrogaverunt nos, qui captivos duxerunt nos, verba cantionum; et qui abduxerunt nos: Hymnum cantate nobis de canticis Sion. Quomodo cantabimus canticum Domini in terra aliena?'

We answereden hem, how þat myȝtte be
 That we shulde synge in vncouþ contre,
 That loost hadden lond and al oure riches
 And arn put in seruage and hard distres.⁶⁴

Metrical translations of the psalms (other than the seven Penitential Psalms) are rare in Middle English.⁶⁵ This example illustrates the difficulty, as four scriptural lines have been expanded into ten couplets to meet the demands of rhyme and metre. The interpolator seeks first to clarify the psalm's historical context, or literal sense, as the words of the prophet Jeremiah, mourning the Babylonian exile. Interwoven within the translation are details of the burning of Jerusalem recounted in historical books of the Bible; these historical verses also make up the first half of the *SC exemplum* (ll. 1–30). Another forty verses from the *SC exemplum* (ll. 31–50), denouncing covetous priests for causing the destruction of Jerusalem, have been grafted into the interpolation after Latin quotations of Micah 3. 8–12 and Gregory's *Pastoral Care*: 'Cause ruine populi sunt sacerdotes mali' (Ashmole 60, fol. 93^v).⁶⁶ The latter appears in the prologue to *SC*: 'Wyked prestes been cause of the myschefe of the pepul' (6.13–14).

That the Eight-Part interpolator likely numbered among the group of clerics responsible for composing *SC* identifies his *PoC* recension with the orthodox reform movement of the early fifteenth century. With the addition of new English-verse passages paraphrasing biblical texts, the Eight-Part *PoC* reflects an ambitious vision for vernacular poetry as the preferred medium for translating Latin scriptural and theological writing. Whereas *SC* incorporates relatively short vernacular poems into Latin material excerpted from a pastoral manual, the Eight-Part *PoC* remains a long vernacular poem, fitted out with new versified translations and additional Latin prose commentary. Choosing *PoC* as the vehicle for disseminating his teaching agenda, the interpolator demonstrates the value placed on the northern literary tradition of vernacular compendia to which *PoC* belongs.

⁶⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fol. 92^{r-v}.

⁶⁵ Annie Sullivan has shown that Middle English verse paraphrases even of single psalms are uncommon before 1400. See Sullivan, *English Psalms*, pp. 34–50. For a complete list of Middle English Psalter translations, see Morey, *Book and Verse*, pp. 172–94. See also Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song*.

⁶⁶ *Liber regulae*, ed. by Migne.

Vernacular Quotation as auctoritas in the Eight-Part PoC

In expanding *PoC*, the Eight-Part interpolator did not intend to disseminate subversive lollard polemic. I have tried to show that the interpolated content translates mainstream preaching handbooks and points toward renewed emphasis on the pastoral mandate to preach and to teach that was taken up enthusiastically by the fifteenth-century English Church. Overlapping content between the Eight-Part *PoC* and *Speculum Christiani* supports this conclusion. But there remains a formal issue to be addressed. The Eight-Part interpolator must have perceived *PoC* and its northern poetic tradition to be a valuable literary vehicle for moral instruction. The Eight-Part *PoC* belatedly asserts its place within the regional literary culture that flourished in the North of England, c. 1280–1380.⁶⁷ Featuring quotations from *Cursor mundi* and *Speculum vitae*, the interpolations evince ongoing adaptation and imitation of these earlier poems.⁶⁸ While previous scholars identified the borrowings from *Cursor*, I want to think more rigorously about why the interpolator engaged in such extensive intertextual quotation.

This question is especially poignant when we consider that the interpolator composed the Eight-Part recension just as the schematic literary form of vernacular *summae* was, according to Ralph Hanna, on its way out of fashion.⁶⁹ *Speculum vitae*, composed in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, is usually considered the last of this lineage. Why this literary tradition petered out before the close of the fourteenth century remains an open question. What brought about the decline in production of large-scale works of versified demotic theology? Despite their immense popularity, did widespread dissemination of manuscript copies ‘saturate the market’, as Michael Sargent has suggested?⁷⁰ Or, as Nicholas Watson has argued, did clerics steeped in this vernacular

⁶⁷ Ralph Hanna has edited several of the texts in this tradition. In addition to *PoC*, see *Speculum vitae*, ed. by Hanna, and *Richard Rolle*, ed. by Hanna.

⁶⁸ The Eight-Part Prologue interpolation (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fol. 4^r) rearranges and expands *Speculum vitae* 2227–30, which differentiates the active from the contemplative life.

⁶⁹ Hanna, ‘*Speculum vitae*’, argues that the reiterative dream structure of *Piers Plowman* offers a formal critique of schematic works like *Speculum vitae*, which Langland knew.

⁷⁰ Michael Sargent argues that the number of surviving manuscripts can be taken as ‘a rough indication of the number originally produced, and the number originally produced as a gauge of the demand for copies in that age of bespoke book production’ (‘What Do the Numbers Mean?’, p. 207). He notes rising production of *PoC* copies in the latter half of the fourteenth century and first half of the fifteenth, until the point of ‘market saturation’ was reached by the mid-fifteenth century (pp. 218–21).

tradition react fearfully to the threat of censorship following Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions?⁷¹

The Eight-Part *PoC* illuminates this gap in literary history. It illustrates the literary value accorded to this northern tradition as well as the limitations of the schematic form, which the interpolator clearly perceives as a burden. Building on the achievements of northern vernacular *summae*, its dense web of intertextual citation marks the Eight-Part *PoC* as a literary text, concerned not only with imparting information but also continuing a poetic tradition. Yet, by embarking upon but failing to fulfil its stated aim (explaining in English certain theological topics to the laity), the interpolated content conveys an awareness of the limitations of *PoC*'s literary tradition that go some way toward explaining its demise. As demand for more sophisticated theological writing in English rose toward the end of the fourteenth century, the interpolator conveys his sense of the inefficiency of translating into long-form verse. The prospect of failing to meet the laity's need for spiritual instruction implies grave consequences.

Intertextual quotation features repeatedly in works of the regional literary culture of Yorkshire. Both *PoC* and *Speculum vitae* cite the prologue to *Cursor*, which itself gestures back to that of the *Northern Homily Cycle*.⁷² *Speculum vitae* recycles lines from *PoC*, redeploying them in 'borrowings [that] do not simply involve adopting the same order of argument, but a variety of close citations'.⁷³ We can understand this practice of quotation as a mode of establishing the *auctoritas* of a vernacular textual tradition. In a study of refrains in medieval French music and poetry, Jennifer Salzstein has argued that clerical writers in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France creatively exploited 'clerical literary techniques' like quotation in order to lend authority to vernacular songs.⁷⁴ The practice of quotation posits 'vernacular cultural production as literary' and presents songs as 'exempla of learning and sources of wisdom.' In fourteenth-century Yorkshire,

⁷¹ For a controversial assessment of the effect of Arundel's legislation on works of 'vernacular theology', see Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 859–64. Watson lists *PoC* among the Middle English religious literature written during the pre-1409 'golden age' of vernacular theology. Its continued circulation during the fifteenth century was partly due, according to Watson, to Arundel's legislation, which had banned new translations of Scripture (pp. 831–32).

⁷² The *Cursor mundi* prologue, which itself quotes *The Northern Homily Cycle*, is alluded to in the prologue to *PoC*, and is reworked again in *SV*. See *Speculum vitae*, ed. by Hanna, pp. 535–36.

⁷³ *Prick of Conscience*, ed. by Hanna and Wood, p. xxxv.

⁷⁴ Salzstein, *Refrain and the Rise of the Vernacular*, p. 7.

I propose, poets writing in the vernacular likewise relied upon quotation as an authorizing gesture.

The Eight-Part interpolator imitates this practice of quotation as a way of grounding his own new vernacular poetry in an authoritative tradition. He takes a turn riffing on the famous introduction to *Cursor*, patching lines together in a different order and sewing them up with verses composed in the same style.⁷⁵ By contrasting his spiritually profitable subject matter with ‘the vain poetry of romance’, the Eight-Part interpolator signals his poem’s affiliation with a literary tradition stretching back through *SV*, *PoC*, and *Cursor* — a lineage traceable through the redeployment of established rhetorical conventions.⁷⁶

Exemplifying the literary effect of this creative technique, a passage from the Prologue interpolation mines the language of *PoC* and emulates its style to generate new verses. The interpolator incorporates images of Hell torments from *PoC* to describe how spiritual blindness results in the confusion of virtue with vice. Damned souls will bewail their obstinacy in Hell for eternity:

Alas þe time þat we were born!
 Foreuermore ar we now lorn.
 The rek off our turmentrie
 Wiþ gret stink schal hit steize
 In piche fuyr and eke brinston.⁷⁷
 We may make a drery mon
 Euer world wiþ out end
 For we nold ous neuer amend.
 The bed þat we in now lize,
 A delfful þing is hit to scrie,
 Off smale wormes manyfold.
 We may telle off cares cold,
 Addres and snakes and taddes grete
 Abouen ous schal lie and frete,
 The blod sowke, þe flesch gnawe,⁷⁸

⁷⁵ The Eight-Part *PoC* quotes *Cursor* more extensively than either *PoC* or *SV*. Extracts include *Cursor*, ll. 1–26, 33–50, 51–64, 65–68, 85–97, and 253–60. (The poem identified by Brown in e Musaeo 198 contains only the first excerpt.) On patchwork as a metaphor used in grammar-school composition exercises, see Scase, ‘Latin Composition Lessons’, p. 41.

⁷⁶ *Speculum vitae*, ed. by Hanna, p. 535.

⁷⁷ The third pain of Hell described in the *PoC* is ‘filthe and stinke’ (*PoC*, ll. 6557 and 6671–94).

⁷⁸ See the fifth pain of Hell, thirst (*PoC*, ll. 6729–90), as well as the eighth, gnawing by vermin (ll. 6891–7004). On the traditional association of dunghills with snakes and snow, see

For we liueden nouȝt on Cristes lawe.
 Venim off dragons is now our wine
 And off aspidis þat is to ous strong pine.
 Cold wind and tempest strang,
 Alas þat euer we liued in land!
 In frost fresing and cold snawe,⁷⁹
 Who þat liueþ and þis miȝt knawe
 Off himselff he myȝt take hede
 And noþing more þan God to drede.⁸⁰

No line is a direct quotation from the main *PoC*, but certain couplets with their rhymes have been preserved in reverse order, like ‘þus for þai did ay ogayns Goddes lawe, | Vermyn and wode bestes sal þam ay gnawe’ (*PoC*, ll. 6903–04). Deeply versed in the language and style of *PoC*, the interpolator redeploys its images, imitates its verse form, and develops its themes — all compositional techniques learned in grammar school. Wendy Scase has argued that *Piers Plowman*-tradition poets, trained to emulate and amplify exemplary sources, modelled their works on the style of *Piers*, rather than of Latin authors.⁸¹ But schoolroom exercises were not the only occasion for learning to compose poetry through imitation and amplification. Reproducing vernacular catechetical literature employed these skills as well. The many scribes who contributed to the corpus of extant *PoC* manuscripts treated their copy text as a stylistic model for generating fresh material. They relied upon these techniques to refashion the poem for different audiences. In the Eight-Part recension we see the interpolator recycling images and echoing rhymes from *PoC*, summoning before the mind’s eye a vision of Hellish torments meant to have a chilling, visceral effect.

What marks this exercise in quotation as creative is the shift in voice. The Eight-Part interpolator puts his own characteristic rhetorical spin on this passage by switching the pronouns from third to first person. More than a simple catalogue of infernal punishments, the text gives voice to the damned, who cry out in painful lament. Repetition of ‘alas’ and use of collective first-person pronouns raise an expressive chorus of regret and admonition, meant to inspire dread in the reader. Throughout the Eight-Part *PoC*, this emphasis on voice works to express affective responses to historical events. The text’s specifically literary quality stems

Lawler, ‘Langland Translating’, p. 62.

⁷⁹ The second Hell pain is cold (*PoC*, ll. 6633–70).

⁸⁰ Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 90, fol. 5v.

⁸¹ Scase, ‘Latin Composition Lessons’, pp. 39–40 and 52–53.

from its rhetorical skill in rendering the voices of Solomon, the Psalmist, and the prophet Jeremiah in poetic English.

Intertextual quotation and stylistic imitation serve as two strategies to establish the authority of vernacular verse in the Eight-Part *PoC*. The interpolator's use of the first person, however, signals a move away from overt reliance on an authoritative vernacular tradition. Newly composed passages reflect a desire to translate more sophisticated theological writing into English. The interpolator justifies this spirit of innovation by foregrounding his command of Latinate theological learning, which he feels compelled to translate into the vernacular. Three passages merit attention for their commentary on the task of writing demotic theology: an apology in Latin explaining the need for vernacular translation, a call to disseminate the teaching of theologian Peter Auriol to a general audience, and a dream vision that locates the poet in a lineage of prophets and teachers.⁸²

The part 6 interpolation embellishes *PoC*'s description of the seventh pain of Hell, 'Of þe devels þat þar er hydusly dight' (*PoC*, ll. 6567–68), by supplying an explanation of the devils' nature. At this belated moment, the poet justifies his decision to render passages from Latinate sources into English:

Nunc sequitur de pena que est mutua visio dampnatorum, que in multis locis sacris scripture inuenitur et ex ratione illicitur. Non memini me audiuisset ab aliquo istam penam laicis in anglicis declaratam nec expositam, ideo volo hic aliquas auctoritates allegare et postea degrescionem facere et carmen lugubre, vt mihi praeceptum est canere ypocritis, apostatis, homicidis, mendacibus....⁸³

(Now follows concerning the punishment that is mutual sight of the damned, which is found in many sacred places of Scripture and is summoned from reason. I do not remember that I have heard that punishment declared or expounded to the laity in English by anyone. Therefore I wish here to give some authorities and afterward to compose a digression and a mournful song, just as I was instructed to sing about hypocrites, apostates, homicides, liars...) (my translation)

In this fascinating declaration to Latinate readers, the interpolator defends his efforts to supplement the lack of textual resources available to the unlearned laity. Because he has not heard anyone expound on the topic 'mutua visio

⁸² Seeking to authorize his own innovative programme of vernacular catechesis, Reginald Pecock, graduate cleric and London rector writing in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, opens his *Reule of Crysten Religioun* with a dream vision in which he is visited by allegorical ladies representing Truths of Universal Philosophy. See *Reule*, ed. by Greet, pp. 31–36.

⁸³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fol. 88r.

dampnatorum' in English, 'therefore' he will provide and explicate relevant authorities. The *ideo* alone speaks volumes about the thought processes and pastoral impulses that sparked the composition of bilingual verse treatises like *PoC*. The poet has recognized a gap in catechetical texts that should be remedied lest some of the souls under his charge be left in dangerous ignorance.

As the opening apology establishes, the part 6 interpolation displays a surprising degree of self-reflexivity. Subsequently, in an unexpected narratorial digression, the interpolator praises one of his favourite theologians, the *modernus* Peter Auriol. A French Franciscan who flourished in the early fourteenth century, Auriol wrote a *Compendium litteralis sensus totius Biblie* (1319) that divides Scripture into eight parts depending on the formal or generic aspect of the biblical books.⁸⁴ In this extraordinary passage, unparalleled in English verse of the period, a speaking 'I' encourages the audience to consult Auriol's exegesis of the Jerusalem temple's significance in salvation history:

Petir Aurily mykil spekeþ he
 Of þis temple and þis citee
 That y ne may nouȝt in Englisch telle
 For so longe nyly nouȝt dwelle.
 He tretip of alle Goddis lawe,
 Wel were hym þat book myȝtte knawe,
 For þat he spekeþ so openly
 That clerkis may knowe it liztly.
 But þis book is seldom sene
 Among clerkis, as y wene.
 Sumdel þer of y shal to ȝow sett,
 That lerid men may knawe þe bet,
 And specialy of Ieromy
 And also of þe prophete Isay,
 And Salamones bookis þree,
 Openly þat men may hem see.

As in the paraphrase of Wisdom 6, the interpolator stresses Auriol's 'open' style of writing. He places a clear premium on the prophetic books and wisdom literature, reflective of his interest in literary voice. The Jerusalem temple serves as a central figure for the threat that moral corruption poses to the Christian Church. The ode to Auriol continues:

⁸⁴ Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 135. Wyclif borrowed this eightfold scheme in his *Postilla super totam Bibliam*, which confirms that Auriol was known in Oxford during the 1370s when Wyclif was there delivering lectures on the *Postilla*. See Dove, *First English Bible*, p. 25.

And whanne þei han it seen and knawe,
 To lewid men þei may it shewe.
 Bettre matere for to kenne
 Fond neuere clerk to lewid menne!
 [...]
 The siztte of hym haþ mykyl maad it,
 The loue þat y haue to Holi Wrytt,
 And shulde ilk man as y wene
 3if þei sawe as y haue sene,
 And 3if þei willen enquire bisily
 Of clerkis trauailid in study.
 But who so þynkeþ wel to spede,
 First he muste þe Bible rede,
 And mekely and wisly loke þe lettre,
 Of alle þynge þou shalt spede þe bettere.⁸⁵

Reading Auriol is not only intellectually stimulating; it also deepens readers' affective response to Scripture. Such brilliant academic material deserves to be disseminated to the wider Christian community. Auriol's *forma tractandi* opens up the meaning of Holy Writ with astounding clarity. The interpolator recognizes that devout laypeople want to avoid the infernal torments described so vividly in *PoC*, but the surest path to virtue — reading and studying the Bible — remains inaccessible to many. A better-educated clergy could provide the requisite guidance and translated textual resources. He implies that if more clerks studied Auriol, their preaching would gain in wisdom. They could then transmit this understanding to the *lewid*. The interpolator desires to render the matter into English himself — 'Sumdel þer of y shal to 3ow sett, | That lerid men may knawe þe bet' — but one senses the hard labour involved in translating works the length of Auriol's commentary, which explicates the entire Bible. The poet apologizes with regret 'That y ne may nouzt in Englisch telle | For so longe nyly nouzt dwelle'. The problem lies not in the laity's lack of understanding or inability to comprehend scholastic writing but constraints on the individual translator's time. Rendering these texts in the vernacular proves a demanding and even overwhelming task. Instead, he encourages readers to seek out this knowledge from others, to 'enquire bisily | Of clerkis trauailid in study'. Understanding the spirit of the biblical letter requires collaboration between clerks with access to Latinate learning and the *lewid* who justifiably desire that access.

⁸⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fols 92^v–93^r.

Concluding the part 6 interpolation, the poet recounts a dream vision in which several saints threaten him with damnation if he fails to transmit the knowledge with which he has been charged. The narrating 'I' seeks to justify his right to speak, especially since he dares to criticize princes of the institutional Church. He defends his poetic work by adopting the voice of Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, translating Romans 1. 14: 'For y am halden to ilk a man | To shewe þe good þat y can, | Boþe to wise and to vnwise' (Ashmole 60, fol. 100^r). He may be an unworthy messenger of God's word — 'y am nouȝt so gret a clerk', he apologized earlier — yet he is bound to teach what he can, as the recipient of an inspired vision:

The grete clerk seynt Gregory
 Haþ manassid me ful dredfully,
 Bifore me he brouȝte a book
 And bad me rede þeronne and look,
 And fyue wytnessis he wiþ hym brouȝt
 To make me bileue and drede nouȝt:
 Crist, seynt Ion, and Malechy,
 Alle þise three þei stoden hym by,
 The worschipful Beede and Moysees,
 Thise fyue appereden wiþouten les.
 And but y dide as þei beden me,
 They seiden þat y shulde dampnyd be.
 A ful gret charge me þynkeþ y bere,
 Here wordis sownen euere in myn ere.
 The grisly look þat þei lokid on me
 It reueþ þe sleep out of myn eȝe,
 Wheþer so þat y slepe or wake,
 It makip myn herte tremble and quake.
 And for þat y am so sore adrad
 Therfore y wole do as þei me bad.⁸⁶

This evocative dream vision daringly situates the interpolator within apostolic and prophetic traditions of revelatory writing. The construction of a narrative persona with a distinct presence takes the interpolation beyond the realm of straightforwardly instructional verse. Christ appears to him as he did to Paul on the road to Damascus.⁸⁷ Because of this vision, Paul counted himself one of

⁸⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 60, fol. 100^{r-v}.

⁸⁷ Acts 9. 3–9.

the original Apostles.⁸⁸ Moses saw God on Mount Horeb when he received the Decalogue, and Malachi prophesied Christ's advent. John described a vision of the end times in the Apocalypse; this may be the book brought before the speaker, as it testifies to Christ's second coming.⁸⁹ Although the interpolator presents himself as terrified by these figures, their appearance places him in their company. Through the vision, he can claim the authority endowed by divine inspiration.

The mention of Pope Gregory, who sent Augustine of Canterbury to convert the English, as well as Bede, credited with translating scriptural books into the vernacular, establishes the interpolator's particular commission, his 'ful gret charge' as prophet to the contemporary English Church.⁹⁰ Pastors and preachers best please Christ by instructing the faithful under their care and reproving sinful behaviour. *PoC* and other poems in its literary tradition fulfil precisely this obligation to teach. As a work of demotic theology, *PoC* set an important precedent for the programmatic translation of Christian learning into English.⁹¹ Perhaps the book that 'the grete clerk seynt Gregory' bids the interpolator read is *PoC* itself, an English 'book of prophecy' endowed with authority as a text worthy of study alongside biblical revelation.

Continuing the account of the dream vision, the final English verse passage of the part 6 interpolation concludes, 'Therfore y wole do as þei me bad | And shewe out þat y haue in couert, | Thyngis þat stiken in myn hert' (Ashmole 60, fol. 100^v). The covert matters sticking in the interpolator's heart concern the errors of those belonging to his own clerical class. He menaces them at length in the Latin passage that concludes the interpolation, entitled *Carmen Lugubre* (Ashmole 60, fols 100^v–104^r). It addresses the same two-pronged subject that has been pursued throughout: what virtues are necessary to the ordained and the deficiencies of contemporary priests. The *Carmen Lugubre* boils over in passionate denunciation of hypocrisy, not only evinced by clerics but by all in positions of worldly authority. Incapable of restraining the onslaught of inspired discourse, the writer 'dwells' in Latin for the remainder of the interpolation. The sheer length of this swansong, which runs to 294 lines in Ashmole 60, demonstrates that Latin composition came easily and more naturally to the clerically trained

⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 15. 3–8.

⁸⁹ Revelation 22. 19–20.

⁹⁰ *The General Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible* asserts, 'Bede translatide þe Bible and expownde myche in Saxoyn, þat was Englissh or comune langage of þis lond in his tyme' (*Earliest Advocates*, ed. by Dove, p. 84/2935–37).

⁹¹ See Gillespie, 'Vernacular Theology'.

than writing in the vernacular. Translating religious writing and expounding theology in English metre demanded artistry and skill. What effort the writer invested in composing these interpolations reflects the value he accorded the Church's pastoral agenda.

Conclusion

Given this final note of lugubrious dismay, we might ask whether the piecemeal nature of the revision that produced the Eight-Part *PoC* — with its haphazardly placed interpolations in the Prologue and part 6 — culminated with the poet throwing up his hands. He had, after all, assumed an ambitious task: explicating verse 41 of the Athanasian Creed, which contains all Holy Writ, with 'al teching and preching shewed þerinne, | And alle vertues and alle sinne' (English 90, fol. 3^r). As summaries of religious belief developed over hundreds of years, creedal statements demanded exposition. Hammered out in church councils that sought to reach definitive conclusions while uniting divisive factions, Christian creeds declare revealed truths with such economy that their very simplicity of phrase renders them opaque, even to believers. *Piers Plowman* dramatizes this paradoxical ambiguity with the infamous tearing of the pardon at the end of B.7. The scene problematizes how to interpret the same creedal clause: 'Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam | Qui vero mala in ignem eternum' (B.7.113–14). The long, narrative exposition of the 'pardoun' sent by Truth (7.1–106) interprets its meaning generously as pardoning Piers and his heirs 'a pena & a culpa', 'for euermore after' (7.3–4). When a priest demands to see the document, however, he 'can no pardoun fynde | But dowel and haue wel and god shal haue þi sowle | And do yuel and haue yuel hope þow non other | Þat after þi ded-day þe deuel shal haue þi sowle' (7.115–18). Rather than help Piers walk in the way of truth, the priest merely cites the proverb, 'do well and have well', a 'gnomic dictum' loaded with moral significance that he refuses to explain.⁹² Although the priest fulfils his promise to Piers to 'construe eche clause and kenne it þe on englich' (7.108), he fails in his pastoral obligation to teach and to preach.

Unlike Langland's scoffing priest, the Eight-Part interpolator assumes that the creedal verse, a summation of Christian eschatology, represents only a starting

⁹² I adopt the term 'gnomic dictum' from Anne Middleton. See Middleton, 'Dowel', p. 145. She traces the genealogy of the 'do well and have well' dictum back to the *Similitudinarianum* of William de Montibus (d. 1213), where it appears 'as a defining example of a pastoral adage that is memorable but inadequate to its purpose' ('Dowel', p. 149).

point on the lifelong journey of adult faith formation. The injunction to ‘do well’ plays an equally catalytic role in *Piers Plowman*. As Anne Middleton has argued, the third vision of *Piers* assumes the task of unpacking this poetic formulation. The priest’s didactic utterance incites the Dreamer’s search for ‘imaginative self-knowledge and penitent self-scrutiny’.⁹³ This shared quotation marks Langland and the Eight-Part interpolator as near contemporaries, both experimenting with literary forms that might model effective pastoral catechesis. Like Langland, the interpolator addresses a universal Christian audience by means of a Latin-English macaronic structure. He presents his work as an exploration of the creedal mandate to ‘do well’ and authorizes his literary project through inclusion of a first-person dream vision. As one of many *PoC* adaptors, the Eight-Part interpolator’s compositional techniques of quotation and imitation parallel those of poets in the *Piers Plowman* tradition. These common features illuminate our understanding of the niche carved out for vernacular poetry in attempts to reinvigorate pastoral education at the end of the fourteenth century.

Unfolding the implications of doctrine to guide conscience-formation constituted the ‘ful gret charge’ facing pastors. Northern vernacular *summae* had long endeavoured to meet this demand through pragmatic translation and compilation. Attempting to innovate on this tradition, the Eight-Part interpolator invoked Auriol’s biblical exegesis as a new source for teaching an inclusive audience about the moral interpretation of Scripture. He recognized a need for higher quality, biblically grounded preaching and teaching.

During the same period, Wycliffite academics undertook not only a translation of the Bible but also of theological reference works and commentaries.⁹⁴ While the Wycliffites developed a distinctive style of English prose to accomplish their agenda, the Eight-Part interpolator (and the compilers of *SC*) remained committed to a tradition of English verse in dialogue with Latin prose. We have observed what value the interpolator accords English verse composition, which he seems to find more demanding than writing in Latin. He imitates the *PoC*-poet’s style and language as though the poem were a canonical text studied in the classroom like Latin authors. The dream-vision conceit, in which Pope Gregory menaces with book in hand, dramatizes the experience of reading *PoC*, a work that summons the dead as re-embodied voices of a living tradition. As a work of demotic theology, *PoC* opens up these authoritative texts, letting them speak

⁹³ Middleton, ‘Dowel’, p. 143.

⁹⁴ For an assessment of English textual production by academic Wycliffites, see Hudson, ‘Five Problems’.

again to a contemporary audience. Their voices become available for performance by preachers and teachers who must transmit their message faithfully, but who are also responsible for revivifying it through adaptation to meet changing circumstances. The dream vision emphasizes how daunting clerics found this ‘ful gret charge’, what an immense challenge they faced in seeking to render all these voices from the long tradition of Christian exegesis into a new language and culture. By the end of the fourteenth century, long-form English verse no longer seemed up to the task.

* I wish to thank Ardis Butterfield, Alastair Minnis, the Yale Working Group in Medieval British Cultures, two anonymous readers, and the *YLS* editors for their generous comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

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