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THE JEWS IN "PIERS PLOWMAN"

City University of New York

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THE JEWS IN PIERS PLOWMAN

by

DOROTHY MILLNER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York.

1984

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE JEWS IN PIERS PLOWMAN

by

Dorothy Millner

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What were Langland's attitudes toward the Jews? Langland's treatment of the Jews in his poem is considered both in terms of the text itself and against a larger cultural backdrop which includes the position of Jews in England, aspects of the Christian-Jewish encounter, and the complexities of theology during the late medieval period.

The cultural background includes the well-known violence of Christians against Jews. But it reveals, also, that there was a quiet history of friendly intercourse between Christians and Jews.

Langland's attitudes toward Jews appear to be positive. The practice of charity was an important value to the poet, and he points to the Jews as an example of a charitable and caring community. When a Christian

prelate reflects a lack of concern for the poor, he is judged a "Judas felawe." As the practice of lending money at interest was viewed as sinful by the Church and Langland, he uses the pejorative term "usurer" to describe Christian or Jew engaged in such practice. The emphasis is on conduct, rather than whether the person is a Christian or Jew.

Could Langland have known Jews? Records of the Domus Conversorum in England show a continuing movement of Jewish converts in and out of the Domus during the fourteenth century. Many of these converts were instructed in the Christian faith and sent out as clergy to various parishes. Thus, the poet may very well have met converts in the course of his work as a clerk in minor orders.

The poet was not a lone voice in pointing to the Jew as an example of charitable behavior. Nor was Langland alone in his concern for the salvation of the Jew. Other men of that period tried to find ways around the rule of baptism. This seems particularly significant in terms of the Jew since he bore the burden of blame for the Crucifixion.

The quiet history of friendly relations depicted between Christian and Jew dispels the narrow, one-sided notion that the medieval Christian attitude toward the Jew was one of hostility only; there were many light as well as dark elements in the Christian-Jewish encounter.

PREFACE

Morton W. Bloomfield's article on the "Present State of Piers Plowman Studies," suggests two directions for future Piers Plowman scholarship: "(1) the study of the meaning of Langland's words and lines, and (2) a general study of the backgrounds in . . . various literatures, as well as in social and economic history."¹ Bloomfield feels this general study would "make possible a new understanding of the intellectual and social atmosphere of fourteenth century England."²

Many years have passed since Morton Bloomfield wrote his review of Piers Plowman studies in 1939 and additional insights to the poem have been developed. There has been, however, very little study of Langland's treatment of the Jews, whether specifically or against the related backdrop of the salvation of the "righteous heathen" matter.³ I wish to examine these areas by analyzing textual references to the Jews and by studying various materials for information on the medieval encounter between Christian and Jew in fourteenth century England. Since no century exists in isolation, this examination will include the legacy inherited from previous centuries, particularly the thirteenth.

In the thirteenth century, there were settled communities of Jews in many parts of England and records exist which reveal a great deal about their way of life, and about their interactions with Christians, both neighbors and others. In 1290, however, the Jews were expelled from England. Many of them crossed the channel into France but were expelled from France in 1306.

These two expulsions kept Jews on the move and "underground." While there were converted Jews and crypto-Jews in England in the fourteenth century, only the converts were there legitimately. Thus, records of a Jewish presence in England in the fourteenth century are sparse. Nevertheless, the thirteenth century material provides a vantage point from which one may better understand some of the ideas prevalent in the fourteenth century. Both Haskins and Cantor have pointed out that many of the concepts and controversies of the fourteenth century are related to, or have their roots in, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁴

Langland's view of the Jew as an example of moral behavior which the Christian should emulate (B,IX,84-90)

seems remarkable, or at least unusually favorable, during a time when Jews were accused of such horrors as ritual murder (killing a Christian child as a sacrifice for the festival of the Passover), and poisoning wells (causing the Black Plague). In this milieu, Chaucer's The Prioress's Tale seems to be a "natural" one; the young boy killed by Jews because of his singing in praise of the Virgin reflects a situation consonant with the accepted belief of the ordinary person.⁵

Langland's pointing to the Jews as an exemplum gives rise to many questions. Is his view unique, a lone voice in a wilderness of hatred for the Jew, or might it reflect a view shared by others as well? Did Langland's view of the Jews come only from his knowledge of the Scriptures, or could he have known Jews personally? Was the medieval Christian attitude toward the Jew perhaps ambiguous and complex, encompassing more than the narrow, one-sided stereotype which is the most usual contemporary view of the medieval attitude?

Or could Langland be using a mere rhetorical trick of upbraiding Christians by comparing specific aspects of their conduct unfavorably to that of Jews and reflecting

only a patronizing attitude toward the Jew as basically inferior? What were Langland's attitudes toward Jews?

The purpose of my study is to try to throw some light on these questions and the related question of whether Langland's sense of the problem of the salvation of the Jews was different from the general medieval Christian sense of the classic problem of the salvation of the heathen, or those who lived before the Incarnation.

The study encompasses the twofold approach suggested by Bloomfield. The first three chapters deal primarily with the social, economic, political, religious, and intellectual milieu in which the Christian and Jewish encounter took place. These chapters examine how ordinary Christians and Jews related to each other. References are made to related, pertinent passages in Piers Plowman.

The following three chapters, IV through VI, deal specifically with an analysis of Langland's textual references to Jews. These chapters contain some historical material which relates specifically to the

subject matter and forms the introduction to the particular chapter.

I owe debts to many people and institutions. Particularly, I wish to mention a few people and two institutions. I wish to acknowledge gratefully the scholarship of the late Professor Helaine Newstead, in whose course in Middle English Literature this study originated. I wish to thank my adviser, Professor Robert O. Payne for his encouragement, help, and guidance. I wish to thank Dean Martin Stevens for reading the manuscript and for giving me many useful suggestions. And I wish to thank Pamela Fetters for her patient assistance in typing this manuscript.

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It has been a privilege to study at the Graduate School and University Center of the City of New York and to engage in research at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

PREFACE

¹Morton W. Bloomfield, "Present State of Piers Plowman Studies," Speculum, XIV (1939), p. 232.

²Ibid., p. 232.

³See W. O. Evans' article, "Charity in Piers Plowman," Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches, ed. S. S. Hussey (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1969). See also Richard J. Schoeck's article, "Chaucer's Prioress: Mercy and Tender Heart," The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies, ed. John M. Osterreicher, Vol. II (New York, 1956). See also Ruth M. Ames, The Fulfillment of the Scriptures: Abraham, Moses, and Piers, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

⁴Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the 12th Century, (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961), p. 362. See also, for example, Norman F. Cantor, "The Interpretation of Medieval History," Essays on the Reconstruction of Medieval History, ed. Vaclav Mudroch and G. S. Couse, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), p. 5.

⁵Edwin J. Howard, Geoffrey Chaucer (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 168.

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CHAPTER I

The Cultural Background

What were some of the events, beliefs, and practices which shaped the direction and form of the Christian and Jewish encounter during the late medieval period?

One of the major events which began in 1347, and continued at fairly frequent intervals throughout the fourteenth century, was the Black Death. This was the term given to a plague which carried off about half the population of England and the Continent and has been referred to as perhaps the worst disaster in recorded history.¹ There was no known remedy and no escape. One can imagine the terror and sheer helplessness of a public faced with the enormity of such an unprecedented mortality rate and its resultant loosening of all social ties as families and villages were decimated.²

Rats and fleas were carriers of the disease, but this was not known at the time. The disease was widely viewed as a punishment from God. In Piers Plowman, Reason "preued that thise pestilences were for pure

synne."³ While believing that the Black Death was God's will, nevertheless, Ziegler states: ". . . medieval man also concluded that His instruments were to be found on earth and that, if only they could be identified, it was legitimate to destroy them."⁴ There were various victims of this conclusion at various times: Saracens, Jews, and lepers were all suspected of causing the plague by poisoning the well water. (In Narbonne even the English were accused.)⁵ However, Jews appeared to be given the leading role; even when Saracens and lepers were accused, Jews were seen as the instigators of the lepers' actions.

Ziegler explains that wells in crowded areas were polluted by sewage and Jews were suspect because they preferred to draw water from running streams.⁶ If so, this custom may have been noticed many years before the plague appeared. The charge of Jews' encouraging lepers to poison wells appears during earlier epidemics occurring in 1318. Capgrave in his Chronicle of England, states:

And in this same yere (1318) the Mysseles thorow oute Cristendam were slaundersed that thei had mad covenant with Sarasines for to poison alle Cristen men, to pur venym in wellis, and alle maner vesseles that long to mannes use; of whеч malice mony of hem were convicte, and brent, and many Jewes that gave hem counсел and coumfort.⁷

The same suspect triumverate and the same charge appeared in 1321 in Languedoc when lepers were burned for poisoning wells. It was claimed that the Jews had paid them for this activity, and that the Jews, in turn were paid by a Saracen king.⁸

Jews died as quickly as Christians during the plague, but this fact did not save the survivors from being burned in large numbers throughout the Continent. Even the Church's efforts to save them by threatening excommunication to their killers failed. The situation was exacerbated because a number of Jews had been imprisoned and tortured; they "confessed" to anything their inquisitors suggested.⁹ In Avignon, however, the Pope was able to protect the Jews. He also was able to protect himself. Assuming that some disinfectant was necessary, he "stopped all sessions of court, locked himself in a room, allowed no one to approach him, and had a fire burning before him all the time."¹⁰

In England, there were isolated incidents of persecution, but no serious full-scale disorders. Was this because there were not many Jews in England after

their expulsion in 1290 by King Edward I? Any widespread disorders would surely have been recorded by chroniclers, but such accounts do not exist.¹¹ Instead, the records reflect that in England the main concern was the sick were dying without benefit of clergy, some of whom had died while others had abandoned their cures because of fear.¹²

Reactions to the plague, such as violence and the abandonment of homes and cures, seem to reflect the "fight or flight" syndrome that modern psychology believes is a response to extreme stress. Jews were the greatest victims of mob violence during the plague and this was probably due to various factors, among which were the pejorative beliefs about them.

One of the beliefs, current at the time, was that Christian children were seized and tortured to death by Jews as part of a yearly religious ritual during the Passover season. The first continuous record of a series of such ritual murder accusations occurred in England in 1144 at Norwich. A young boy was alleged to have been horribly murdered by the Jews during Holy Week. (The Christian Easter and the Jewish Passover festival usually

occur at nearly the same time or within a week or two of each other.) The story appears for the first time in a Latin work, The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich, written about 1173 by Thomas of Monmouth, a contemporary of the events related.¹³ In this account, Godwin, a priest, stated before the Synod that the murder was supposed to be an imitation of the Passion. To make matters even worse, an apostate who became a monk, Theobald of Canterbury, attested (if the account is correct), that every year "the Jews must sacrifice a Christian in some part of the world to the Most High God in scorn and contempt of Christ, that so they might avenge their sufferings on Him."¹⁴ These words of a converted Jew were considered by Thomas of Monmouth "to be all the truer in that we received them as uttered by one who was a converted enemy, and also had been privy to the secrets of our enemies."¹⁵

The episode is also recorded in Capgrave's Chronicle of England.

In the same year (1236?)¹⁶ the Jewys of Norwych were convicte before the Kyng, that thei had stole a child, whos name was William; and thei circumcided [sic] him, and kept him in secrete place many dayes, and, as it is comonly said at Norwych, thei put him on a crosse, and so he deyed.¹⁷

According to Roth, rather than being "convicted before the Kyng," the Jews were protected by the civil authorities during this episode.¹⁸ Modern inquirers have concluded that the boy may have died as a result of a cataleptic fit and been prematurely buried by relatives.¹⁹

The charge was repeated in Gloucester in 1168. While records are vague, a child named Harold was alleged to have been seized, circumcised and murdered in imitation of the Passion.²⁰ A third episode in 1255, that of Hugh of Lincoln, has been immortalized by the words of Chaucer's Prioress:

O yonge Hugh of Lincoln, slain also
 With cursed Jewes, as it is notable --
 For it is but a litel while ago --²¹

Matthew Paris described the aftermath of this event:

About this same time, some infamous Jews, to the number of seventy-one, who had been condemned to death by a jury of twenty-five knights, for the murder of the wretched boy crucified at Lincoln, were detained in prison at London to be hung, and as their enemies state, they sent messengers privately to the Minor brethren, begging them to intercede on their behalf, that they might be released from prison and saved from death, although they were deserving of a most disgraceful one. The brethren then (as the

world reports, if in such a case the world is to be believed), influenced by bribes, interceded for these Jews, and by their prayers released them from prison and saved them from the death they had deserved.²²

The belief spread to the Continent where the accusations cost the lives of untold numbers. In trying to determine the origin of this belief, Roth traces the origin to the custom by Jews of inflicting punishment on the effigy of Haman during the carnival festival of Purim, and its evolution into an alleged episode during the fifth century when a church historian related that during the Purim festival some drunken Jews bound a Christian child on a cross and killed him.²³

Another simpler explanation given by Trachtenberg is that mysterious deaths were closely associated with magic and sorcery, and the ritual murder accusations originated in the belief that Christian blood was needed by Jews for the Passover service.²⁴ This association of ideas--blood and Passover--may have been derived from the Bible: "And the blood [of the lamb] shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (EX. 12:13). All of these elements--lamb, sacrifice,

blood--are significant in the Bible, both the old and the new. It is an irony that Jews whose religion forbids the eating of blood, or its use in any way, should have suffered from such an accusation.

There is no mention of such a belief with regard to Jews needing Christian blood for ritual purposes in Piers Plowman. There is, however, a reference to the concept of transubstantiation when the Samaritan recommends the drinking of a child's blood as a cure for the wounds of the man attacked by thieves:

Neither Feith ne fyn hope, so festred be hise
woundes,
Withouten the blood of a barn born of a mayde.
And [he be] bathed in that blood, baptised as it
were,
And thanne plastred with penaunce and passion of
that baby,
He sholde stonde and steppe; ac stalworthe worth
he neuere
Til he haue eten al the barn and his blood
ydronke.

(B, XVII, 95-100)

Another major element in the Christian-Jewish encounter which influenced attitudes toward each other was the belief in magic by both Christian and Jew. Prevailing superstitions and the supernatural cast given to natural happenings contributed to the atmosphere of fear and terror in which many lived. Christians and Jews

had heard of men who had no shadows, believed in witches and ghouls who would devour children, and resorted to spells and incantations as a remedy for various ills.²⁵ Not only ordinary people, but also those of greater learning such as the rabbis and priests, believed in the reality of a spirit world populated with angels and demons. Those individuals who were thought to be able to invoke and conjure up these spirits and persuade them to some action, whether good or ill, were powerful indeed. The belief in magic was closely interwoven with religion. And because of basic religious and cultural differences, the Jew was particularly vulnerable to the suspicions of his Christian neighbors who viewed him as "the magician par excellence."²⁶

Many of the beliefs and superstitious usages which became part of Judaism can be called "folk religion" in that these beliefs and superstitions expressed the common attitude of the people and made up their "everyday" religion. The "folk religion" was not legitimate or official Judaism, and these beliefs and superstitious usages are far removed from Biblical Judaism.²⁷ For example, the custom of "searching out the leaven" just before Passover involves a ritual search for bread crumbs

in all the corners of every room in the house. These imaginary crumbs are swept up and carried outside to assure that there is no leavened bread in the house during Passover. Such activity, however innocent, by its very strangeness, if observed by Christians, might easily arouse their fear; they might consider these strange actions as some kind of mysterious means of working magic.

In magic, the offering (or bribe) was intended to preserve the good will of the unseen powers. Just before the holiday of Yom Kippur, in which it is believed that each Jew is judged in accordance with his deeds in the previous year and is either inscribed in the Book of Life for the coming year or not, there is a ritual involving a fowl. The fowl is passed around the head of the subject three times while the subject recited various prayers culminating with an announcement to the effect that the fowl is to be the substitute for the individual, i.e., the fowl is destined for death, the individual for life. The fowl was then slaughtered and given as charity to the poor, although rabbis preferred that the money value of the fowl be given rather than the bird itself since the bird now contained the sins transferred from the subject.²⁸

Another offering to the spirits is the practice on the first day of the Rosh Hashanah holiday of visiting a moving body of water into which Jews threw crumbs from their pockets. Symbolically, these crumbs are the person's sins which he is casting off to the fishes. The rabbis were against this practice, but the people believed they were sloughing off a "whole year's transgressions."²⁹

These few examples of prevalent Jewish rites to ward off evil happenings from themselves suffice to show that these activities might appear mysterious to the uninitiated and might be construed by Christians as some sort of odd practice of magic by the Jews.

The Christian fear of harm from Jewish sorcery sometimes caused horrible results. At the coronation of Richard I in London toward the end of the twelfth century, Jews were "robbed and scourged" by courtiers. According to Roger of Wendover's account, the King, afraid of magical incantations, had forbidden Jews or women to attend the coronation.³⁰ Many Jews were killed before the disorder was over in London, York, Lynn, and

Lincoln to which it had spread.³¹ In Capgrave's Chronicle, the episode is shown to have been held on an "unlucky" day, but there is no mention made of the use of magic:

In these dayes deyed Kyng Herry the Secunde; and when he was ded, Richard, his brothir was crowned of Baldewyn bischop of Cauntirbyry, the IX. day of September, wech day is hald suspect of supersticious men, and onto the Jewys it was not esy. For than dwelled thei in this reme; and at the Kyngis coronacion thei drew to London, in hope for to have grace of the Kyng, that thei schuld pay lesse tribute than thei ded before. The Kyng comaunded that there shuld no Jew com in the Cherch in tyme of his coronacion, ne in the Halle at tyme of mete. Summe of them were malapert, and entred into the Halle; and happed a man to smite a Jew, and seid on to him that he brak the Kyngis comaundement. The puple that stod there, supposyng it was the Kyngis wil that the Jewis schuld be served soo, and with stonis and staffis soute the Jewis thorw London, beet hem, and robbed hem, and by this exauple thus were they served thow oute the rem, and thus voided they the rem.³²

Nevertheless, the practice of magic also served as a means for Christian and Jew to help each other whenever there was illness. The primary cause of disease was thought to be the action of demons or angels. Demons were seen as evil agents, but angels could also cause sickness. In the latter instance, the angel would take action against an individual because of sinful behaviour and, therefore, the punishment was considered to be from

heaven.³³ Christians were agreeable to using Jewish physicians or folk remedies. Some medical practitioners acquired such reputations that they were asked to travel to other countries to aid individuals of importance. One such case is that of a rabbi known as Master Elias of London who was requested by the Count of Flanders to come in person to administer a remedy to an ill nephew. An extant letter from Master Elias to the Chancellor of England requests permission, which was granted, for him to go to Flanders.³⁴ How much of the medical treatment by Jewish physicians was scientific and how much was counter-magic to the onslaughts of demons or angels, who can say? Superstition and magic in medicine were part of the Jewish cultural heritage, but also Jewish physicians had the advantage of a wide knowledge of languages, a knowledge of Arabic-Greek medical works in Hebrew translation, and a propensity for study and travel which added to their training. In any event, scientific success added to their reputation as superior magicians.³⁵

There was also no Jewish prejudice against being cured by Christians. When ill, Jews asked for the care of Christian women who specialized in charms.³⁶ Even the

restrictions against religious incantations were not taken as absolute. According to one authority, it was the sound rather than the words which effected a cure, therefore "a Christian may be permitted to heal a Jew even if he invokes the aid of Jesus and the saints in his spell."³⁷ Fortunately, both religions allowed for a practical approach to the problem of illness. Exceptions existed, of course; there is an account of a seriously ill Jewish woman who refused the offer of her Christian friend of a relic, a stone from the grave of Jesus, known to have healing power.³⁸

One major difference between the Jewish and Christian use of magic is that the Jewish "magician" remained on the periphery of the religious life and never really strayed from the major tenet of his faith, his belief in God, but merely extended and elaborated on this faith. Medieval Jewish magic relied primarily on the "Powers of Good." These were invoked by calling upon "the holy Names of God and His angels."³⁹ It was this reliance on the good, and the absence of any satanic element, which kept this practice, which may be called a part of the folk-religion, within the framework of Judaism. Nevertheless, religious leaders tried to

eradicate these practices, and the official attitude of the Synagogue was against such ideas and practices, but they were too popular with the people. Therefore, the rabbis "were often obliged to accord the elements of this folk-religion a grudging recognition and acceptance."⁴⁰ Conversely, the use of magic was prohibited by the Church not necessarily because it was magic but because in some instances, it became a force against the Church.⁴¹ Whether this was in fact so became, at times, immaterial. Tuchman relates how the King of France, in dire financial straits, closed the famous monastic order of the Templars and all its branches in England and Europe on the basis that the Templars committed various horrors including the worship of Satan who was thought to be the ultimate source of magic.⁴² There were some Christians who believed that Jews, too, bore allegiance to Satan.⁴³ This belief did not appear irrational to those who could find no other explanation for the fact that Jews did not believe in the divinity of Jesus.

Jewish folk tradition has it that Jesus was able to heal, conjure up spirits, and even walk on water through the use of magic. (Formulas for conjuring up spirits and walking on water without wetting the feet exist in a

mixed Hebrew and Aramaic handbook of magic formulae entitled The Sword of Moses which was well known in the tenth century but is thought to be a much older work.)⁴⁴ Langland voices his concern in this regard, for even when Lazarus was raised from the dead, the Jews thought it was done by means of magic.

And whan he [Jesus] lifte vp Lazar that leid was
 in grave
 And vnder stoon deed and stank; with stif vois
 hym callede:
Lazare veni foras;
 Dide hym rise and rome ri₃t bifore the Iewes.
 Ac thei seiden and sworn with sorcerie he
 wrou₃te.

(B,XV, 593-596)

The events, beliefs, and practices which have been depicted reflect aspects of the Christian-Jewish medieval encounter that are brush strokes against the larger backdrop of religious difference and similarity. The tension between the seen world and the unseen one which existed in the realm of magic carried over into religion. The Jew who might be met on the street was also the unseen Jew of history who was the subject of the sermons, plays, the Gospels, and Old Testament stories that were heard by Christians in their everyday lives. In all of these areas, the Jew might be depicted as the respected Patriarchal Covenant Jew or the despised enemy

implicated in the death of their Savior. Thus, the Jew was a complex figure of many aspects, and a problem with which the Christian had to come to terms in some way since his religion was inextricably involved with the Jew.⁴⁵

For the Jew, there was the one and only Bible, his anchor in an alien, sometimes hostile, world where he could easily lose his moorings. While Christian and Jew shared this Bible, which the Christian called the Old Testament, it was not the same book to them. For the Jew, it was still his Bible, containing his covenant with God, his charge to be a "holy people," and God's witness in the world. For the Christian, the Trinity begins with Genesis, and the Old Testament is viewed as ground and warrant for the New (Rom: 1:2).⁴⁶ This overlay of new Testament doctrine onto the happenings of the Old Testament was, for the Jew, an "appropriation" of his Book to an alien purpose. But for the Christian, the Trinity and the Incarnation were the fulfillment of the Scriptures, a fulfillment which was prefigured in the Old Testament. It was a belief which began with the first Jewish Christians.⁴⁷

Thus, in the play, "Abraham and Isaac" from the Brome Manuscript, Abraham prays to a triune God:

Now, Lord God of Hevyn, in Trynyte',
 Allmyty God Omnypotent,
 Myn offeryng I make in the worchope of the,
 And wyth thys queke best I the present.
 Lord, reseve thow myn intent,
 As [thow] art God and grownd of our gre.⁴⁸
 (383-388)

A passage from Piers Plowman together with its corresponding passage in Genesis may illuminate at least one way that this prefiguration took place. Langland has Abraham saying:

So is the fader forth with the sone and fre will
 of bothe,
Spiritus procedens a patre et filio, etc.
 Which is the holy goost of alle, and alle is but
 o god.
 Thus in a somer I hym sei₃ as I sat in my
 porche;
 I roos vp and reuerenced hym and ri₃t faire hym
 grette.
 Thre men, to my si₃te, I made wel at ese,
 Wessh hir feet and wiped hem, and afterward thei
 eten
 Calues flessh and Cakebreed; and knewe what I
 thou₃te.
 (B, XVI, 223-229)

The corresponding passage is in Genesis XVIII: 1-4:

And the Lord appeared unto him [Abraham] by the terebrinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up

his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed down to the earth, and said: 'My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee from thy servant. Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under the tree.

The Biblical passage goes on to describe how Abraham set before the three men calves flesh and cakebread.

In the Langland passage, the three men that Abraham sees are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost--one God. In the commentary on this portion of Genesis in the Pentateuch, rabbinic interpretation of the passage is that the three men are angels or instruments of God, and Abraham is addressing the one who appears to be the chief angel. To conclude otherwise, that these three men were God, would be to violate the central theme of Judaic thought: that the "Lord is One." Also, the Deity was surrounded with such a sense of awe and dread that Jews, at least those who remained Jews, could not conceive of a God appearing in human form.⁴⁹

A third example will be cited to show the intermingling of the Old and New Testament in a sermon that the medieval Christian would have heard on an Easter morning:

Therefore the Apostle saith, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, with the unleavened bread of sincerity...and truth. And note that, of old time, at the eating of the typical lamb, many things were required; which, spiritually understood, are required of us, who sacramentally eat the True Lamb, Jesus Christ, slain from the foundation of the world.

The sermon goes on to list the Old Testament requirements (just two of these will be shown):

Whence also in Exodus, "your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year." By which was set forth, that not by any woman, but only by a male, Jesus, immaculately conceived and born of the immaculate Virgin, and without blemish, either original or actual, it behoved that we should be saved.

Whence in Exodus, "An uncircumcised person shall not eat thereof." By this is set forth, that they who are about to receive the Body of Christ must circumsise the heart, the tongue, and the head.⁵⁰

This superimposing of the events of one time frame on another, the sense of immediacy these prior events had in the medieval world, together with a prevailing belief that this world was nearing its end may account for the intermingling of past, present, and future time which was such a significant component of the medieval Christian perspective. Russell Peck speaks about this perspective in paintings:

One commonly encounters this triple time sense in medieval art where one portion of a painting will depict the realm of eternity, others various moments in history both past and present, as if all exist simultaneously as a single whole.⁵¹

A natural extension of this perspective is the unseen but familiar world of Heaven and Hell. Piers Plowman, with its middle earth set between the tower of truth and pit of falsehood, its shifts back and forth from the fourteenth century to Biblical times, its projection of future events, and lack of concern for linear chronology, is a perfect reflection of this medieval time and space perspective.

The Christian-Jewish encounter was affected by this time and space perspective because the Jew was at one and the same time, the Jew of History charged with having played a part in the death of Christ; the present medieval Jew who was for the most part stubbornly refusing to be converted; and the Jew who was inextricably involved in the future, the end of time salvation of all mankind. Langland's portrayal of the Jews in Piers Plowman encompasses all of these perspectives.

Paul had said "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (ROM. 11:2). While the Jews had gone astray and were now dispersed, their eventual integration through conversion into the corpus christianum was a sine qua non for the salvation of mankind, the second advent of Christ, and entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.⁵² And in the interim? Paul had said, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (ROM. 11:28). It is these words which posed a problem for the Church and reflect its official attitudes and actions toward the Jews. The need to separate and isolate the Jew from the Christian caused the Church to issue its own "Thou shalt or thou shalt not" in the form of various edicts and bulls. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 initiated no really new legislation, but renewed, expanded, and sought to enforce older decrees: that Jews should be distinguished by dress or badge, that Jews should not hold public office "since it would be altogether too absurd that a blasphemer of Christ should exercise authority over Christians," that Jewish converts should not observe any of the old customs or rites of the Jews, and that Christians paying excessive interest rates to Jews would be excommunicated.⁵³

Another reason for the more stringent enforcement of these decrees which were demanded by the Fourth Lateran Council was the alarming spread of heresy in Europe in the thirteenth century and the fourteenth, a movement of dissent for which the Church considered the Jews to be at least partly responsible.⁵⁴ Thus, by singling out the Jew as the object of its repressive measures, the Church may have hoped to "persuade" vacillating Christians to remain within its fold.⁵⁵

On the other hand, although the Church considered it necessary to protect its members socially, economically, and theologically from the influence of the Jews, they had to be protected from attacks and encroachments by Christians. The Church was prompted not only by humaneness, but also by the necessity of preserving the Jew because he was an inherent part of the overall theological plan of salvation. This principle of protection and tolerance was decreed as early as Pope Gregory I (590-604). And from the twelfth century through the 15th, the principle was maintained by a continuing series of edicts, the general purpose of which was to prevent Christians from forcing Jews to convert,

from exercising violence against them, and from robbing them or desecrating their cemeteries.

A refutation of the ritual murder accusations against Jews was first issued by Innocent IV in 1247, and was repeated by various popes in the ensuing years. In 1272, Pope Gregory X issued the significant decree that "inasmuch as the Jews are not able to bear witness against the Christians, we decree furthermore that the testimony of Christians against Jews shall not be valid unless there is among these Christians some Jew who is there for the purpose of offering testimony."⁵⁶ Whether the lone Jew would have been listened to is another matter, but, at least, this was an effort to be fair.

The dialectical content of Paul's words seems to include both the creation of a problem and an attempt at a solution of the problem created. If the Jew had not been continually pointed up over the centuries as an enemy, then it might never have been necessary to level against him the accusations of well poisoning and ritual murder. For if one has an on-going enemy, how natural it is for him to be the cause of all unexplainable ills. Because religion played such a large role in the everyday

life of the medieval Christian, the Church's ambivalent attitude of segregating yet protecting the Jew was bound to affect Christians and thus the Christian-Jewish relationships.

Civil authorities could either enforce ecclesiastical decrees to the letter, or enforce those which served their own purposes. England, in 1218, for example, was the first country in Europe to enforce the regulation for Jews to wear a distinguishing badge but they did not enforce the economic regulations which would have been detrimental to the Jewish occupation of moneylending which was useful to the King.⁵⁷

The examination of some of the events, beliefs, and practices which shaped the medieval Christian-Jewish encounter reflects a cultural atmosphere in which certain forces--superstition, economic factors, the complexities of theology--were at work, and affected this encounter.

There is no mention in Piers Plowman of the belief that the Jews were God's instrument in the Black Plague, and there is no mention of the belief that Jews needed the blood of a Christian child for ritual purposes. It

is probable that Langland gave no credence to these prevalent beliefs. The economic factor of moneylending and the complexities of theology do play a part in Langland's portrait of the Jews and these topics are dealt with in later chapters.

In the next chapter, the way of life of Jews in England will be explored, as well as some specific encounters between Christians and Jews in London, Canterbury, Norwich, and other areas in England. (Occasionally, an example, duly noted, is cited from another country.)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER I

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⁴Philip Ziegler, The Black Death (London: Collins Press, 1969), p. 97.

⁵Ibid., p. 97.

⁶Ibid., p. 100.

⁷Francis Charles Hingeston, ed. Chronicle of England by John Capgrave (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858), p. 186.

⁸Ziegler, op. cit., p. 98.

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¹¹Ziegler, op. cit., p. 108.

¹²Coulton, op. cit., p. 498.

¹³Marcus, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁴Marcus, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁵Marcus, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁶The incident is shown as occurring in the same year in which King Henry III married Eleanor, daughter of the Earl of Provence. The year given is 1236 which must be in error as other sources show the year as 1144.

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²²Matthew Paris, Historia Major, Translated from the Latin by the Reverend J. A. Giles, D.C.L., Vol. 3 of 3 Vol. (London: Henry G. Bohn, Covent Garden, 1852), p. 163.

²³Roth, op. cit., pp. 520-522.

²⁴Joshua Trachtenberg, Jewish Magic and Superstition, A Study in Folk Religion (New York: Atheneum Press, 1975), p. 1.

²⁵Israel Abrahams, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, (New York, Atheneum Press, 1981), p. 367.

²⁶Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁷Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. viii.

²⁸Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. 163.

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³⁴Franz Kohler, ed., Letters of Jews Through the Ages, Vol. I, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), p. 246.

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³⁶Roth, A History of the Jews in England, p. 121.

³⁷Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. 200.

³⁸Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. 200.

³⁹Trachtenberg, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰Trachtenberg, op. cit., pp. vii-viii.

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⁴²Barbara W. Tuchman, A Distant Mirror, The Calamitous 14th Century (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 43.

⁴³Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴⁴Marcus, op. cit., p. 244.

⁴⁵Harold Fisch, The Dual Image, (Great Britain: Richardson & Coppin Ltd., 1971), pp. 12-15.

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⁵²Adolf F. Leschnitzer, "Alienation of the Jewish Image in Christian Consciousness," University of California: Viator, Vol. 2 (1971), pp. 393-394.

⁵³Marcus, op. cit., p. 139.

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⁵⁶Marcus, op. cit., pp. 151-153.

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CHAPTER II

The Image of the Medieval Jew in England
and His Way of Life

In Piers Plowman, after the Crucifixion and the desecration of the body of Jesus, Feith delivers an everlasting curse upon the Jews:

And ye, lurdaynes, han ylost for lif shal haue
the maistrye;
And youre fraunchise that fre was fallen is in
thraldom;
And ye, cherles, and youre children cheue shulle
[ye] neuere,
[Ne] haue lordshipe in londe ne no lond tilye,
But [as] barayne be and [by] vsurie [libben],
Which is lif that oure lord in alle lawes
acurseth.
Now youre good dayes arn doon as daniel
prophecied;
Whan crist cam hir kyngdom the crowne sholde
[lese]:

(B, XVIII, 102-109; C, XX, 106-111)

Was this, in actuality, a picture of the way of life of the Jew in medieval England? How did the Jew live? How did he and his Christian neighbor relate to each other? What was he like, this medieval English Jew? Is it possible to cut through the mist of centuries and resurrect a living sense of him? From a few extant sketches and caricatures of medieval English Jews found in the margins of various Account Rolls in the Public

Record Office in London, it is possible to conjure up a picture of the late thirteenth century English Jew, at least to see how he looked to his neighbors. The sketches reflect a beak-like nose, prominent eyes, overhanging forelock, and straggly beard.¹

The sketches reveal a Jewish badge, in the form of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments symbolizing the Old Testament, placed on the breast of the outer garment.² (This badge, at times decreed to be in white or yellow cloth or parchment, was required by law in England as a consequence of a decree by the Fourth Lateran Council which met in 1215. At that time, the Jew must have resembled his contemporaries. The reason given for distinguishing the Jew from the Christian was that, through error, sexual intercourse was taking place between the two groups. Thus, identification, which was to be worn by Jews and Saracens, was supposed to eliminate any future pretext of error. It was this legislation put into effect by Pope Innocent III, which tended to segregate the Jew socially and isolate him from his Christian neighbors.)³

The usual external garment for men was a hooded cloak. The Jews in the sketches are wearing these, except for one who has on a pointed Jewish hat, the pileum cornutum, (as prescribed by the Council of Vienna in 1267).⁴ This man may have come from Europe as English Jews were identified by the Jewish badge; they do not appear to have been forced to wear distinctive garments.⁵

The ordinary speech of the Jews of England to each other at this time was Norman French; most of them came from northern France.⁶ Their names were generally French equivalents of Hebrew names. Surnames were little used; when they were it usually indicated the place of origin (le Francais) or personal peculiarity (le Long), or occupation (le Scriveneur). Usually, a Jew was distinguished from others similarly named by indicating where he lived or his father's name. As the Jews became anglicised there is a gradual adoption of English names. For example, Benjamin became Bateman and Perez became Peter. An amusing episode is cited by Roth from the Close Rolls about the Hebrew name Hayyim which means life. Originally Vives in French, it became Hagin in English. The meaning of the original Hebrew name was known at Court; this knowledge is indicated by Henry

III's pun (C.R. 1266, p. 208): "the King wishes to Master Hagin son of Moses, a better state of life."⁷

That life was comfortable for many Jews is indicated by the fact that many lived in stone houses. These were the better homes and were occupied only by Jews, aristocrats, and the higher level of ecclesiastics.⁸ Apparently, the Jews were among the first in England to use stone houses for ordinary, as opposed to royal, occupation.⁹ The stone houses of very solid construction were thought to have been built for security as well as comfort, but at a time when most people had flimsy wooden houses, the stone houses could very well have aroused jealous comment. In London, Lincoln, and York, there were many stone houses which Jews had built for themselves.¹⁰ In Winchester, "while many of their neighbors were living in poor houses of timber, or wattle and daub, with thatched roofs, they [the Jews] built themselves sumptuous dwellings of stone (brickmaking being then a lost art in England)."¹¹ In Norwich, however, in addition to the stone house of a wealthy Jew named Jurnet, which was a miniature castle, the houses of the Jews were similar to those of their Christian neighbors: narrow timber and plaster dwellings, crowded together, with shops on the ground floor.¹²

While many Jews were prosperous, there were also many poor ones¹³ who lived in less grand places, but it is the stone houses which have gained attention, perhaps because there are many still standing today in Lincoln, Norwich, and other English towns.¹⁴

The Jews owned their homes. In Canterbury, in particular, there is a record of Jews being quite active in buying and selling homes amongst themselves and also among the nuns and monks of the surrounding local parishes. There were no restrictions imposed on acquiring houses from either lay people or the clergy; the deeds were recorded in Latin and Hebrew. A decree was issued in 1231 (C.R. 1231, p. 555) forbidding the monks to continue selling property to Jews, but the monks ignored this edict and continued selling to Jews until just before the Expulsion of Jews in 1290.¹⁵

Generally, the Jews lived together in a particular area or street. This was not because they were legally confined to be in an area, but because they tended to live in close proximity with each other, perhaps for social reasons. However, the Jews' quarter, or Jewry

Street was not a ghetto, as in the European sense, for Christians usually lived there as well, as was the case in Canterbury, Norwich, and London.¹⁶ In London, in particular, the Church established centers of activity, such as hospitals, among the Jews, and many of the nobility bought the homes of wealthy Jews.¹⁷ In one instance, the home of a religious Jew became, in turn, a synagogue and then a church. These establishments were sometimes next door to each other, a fact which could become a problem. Adler describes how the "Friars of the Sack" complained about the Jews in the synagogue nearby, that "they [the Friars] were not able to make the body of Christ in quiet because of the howling of the Jews."¹⁸

The center of Jewish life was the synagogue. It was not only a place of worship but also a place of general assembly for communal meetings and business transactions. Each community had one; often it was just an area set aside in one of the larger homes, except for London which is supposed to have had at least five synagogues during the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁹ At that time, these synagogues were supporting about 2,000 Jews living in London. The next largest communities, Lincoln and Canterbury, were

considered to be half the size of London while other communities were thought to harbor approximately fifty to a hundred persons.²⁰ Except for London, the numbers were small compared to the general population.²¹

The proximity of synagogue and church, and particularly the proximity of the homes of Jews and Christians led to a certain amount of interaction. At the very least, Jews and Christians were not strangers to each other, and at best, they were probably not only good neighbors but also friends.

An episode between the Jews of Canterbury and the monks of Christ Church reflects that friendly relations existed between the Jews and the Cathedral clergy. The episode, occurring in 1187, revolves around an eighteen month struggle in which the monks of Christ Church rebelled against the Archbishop Baldwin who was trying to impose his will on them, even to the point of starving them into obedience. The majority of the people in Canterbury supported the rebels. The Jews must have felt themselves as part of this majority for they said prayers for success of the rebels and, on a more practical note, smuggled food and drink to the hungry monks. Gervase,

the historian of Canterbury, (Chronicles of Canterbury, Rolls Series, i, p. 405), wrote "The Archbishop excommunicated, the Jews prayed. A wonderful contrast indeed!"²² Relations between Christians and Jews in Canterbury were so amicable that Canterbury Jewry escaped the riots that occurred in London, York and elsewhere after the coronation of Richard I (1189). When the Archbishop Stephen Langton (who had been influential in the Fourth Lateran Council) in 1222, tried, through the threat of excommunication, to prevent Christians from selling food to Jews or communicating with them, the guardian to the young Henry III countered this injunction by another: that anyone following Langton's injunction was to be arrested.²³

In Winchester also, where Jews lived during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there were amicable relations between Christians and Jews. A Jew expressed himself about life in Winchester in idyllic terms:

This is for the Jews the Jerusalem of these parts.
 Here, and here only, they enjoy perpetual peace.
 Here is the school of those who would live well,
 and prosper.
 Here men are men. Here there is bread in plenty,
 and wine for nothing. Here the monks are so full of pity and kindness,
 the clerks so wise and free, the citizens so civil and

faithful, the women so beautiful and so pure, that I am tempted to become a Christian when I am with such Christians. Go thither, to the best of cities, the mother of all. Wintonians have but one failing, and that, after all, is only a matter of custom: like watchmen, they tell lies, but only in the inventing of stories. No where under heaven are false rumours so easily concocted; otherwise they are all truth-tellers.²⁴

One can only wonder whether those "false rumours" might have involved Jews, and the writer was being discreet.

An occurrence in Hereford, at the end of the thirteenth century, reflects the fact that not only were Christians and Jews in contact with each other and comfortable about the contact, but that Christians could and did ignore Church edicts, at least when the occasion promised to be entertaining. In 1286, Christians were invited to attend a Jewish wedding feast, an elaborate one that included horsemanship, minstrels, and play acting. Even the fact that the Bishop threatened to excommunicate any Christian who attended the wedding was not a sufficient deterrent to keep them from attending.²⁵

That these social occasions were not isolated occurrences is evident in the epistles of Honorius IV to Archbishops in England in 1286 in which he states, "Yet

Christians and Jews go on meeting in each others' houses. They spend their leisure in banqueting and feasting together and hence the opportunity for mischief becomes easy."²⁶

And some mischief there was. Social intercourse did lead to illicit relationships and even intermarriage. Toward the end of the twelfth century a very prominent Jew, Jurnet of Norwich, married a wealthy Christian woman called Miryld, the daughter of Humphrey de Havile. Jurnet was fined 6,000 marks and was reported to have given up all his possessions. His wife's property was also escheated to the King. They left England for a year, returned and paid 1,800 marks for the privilege of residing in England again and receiving the goodwill of the King. A daughter born of this marriage knew Hebrew and was considered a Jewess even though born of a Christian mother.²⁷ The daughter, in this sense, may have reflected a famous saying in the Book of the Pious: "The offspring of a Jew who married a wife not of the Jewish race, but who was a woman of good heart and modesty and charity, must be preferred to the children of a Jewess by birth who is, however, destitute of the same good qualities."²⁸

In the early thirteenth century, a Christian deacon at Oxford, through the study of Hebrew, had been led to convert to Judaism and to marry a Jewess. He was brought to trial and turned over to the Sheriff of Oxfordshire. That worthy, "expressing his regret that he would go to Hell without his paramour, immediately had him burned."²⁹

Later, in 1275, a somewhat similar marriage occurred. Robert of Reading, a Dominican friar was also led to convert to Judaism through the study of Hebrew literature. He changed his name to Haggai and married a Jewess. Jewish chroniclers of the period associated the effect of this marriage, which became a cause celebre, with deteriorating relationships between Christians and Jews and leading indirectly to the Expulsion in 1290. Much more likely, probably, was that it may in part have been responsible for the Statutum de Judeismo of 1275.³⁰ (The statute is discussed below.)

The fate of Robert of Reading and his spouse is unknown. He defended his conversion to Judaism before Edward I who gave him over to the Archbishop of Canterbury for punishment which might well have been

severe if England followed the policies current in Spain and France. In those countries, Christian men who married or otherwise had intercourse with Jewish women were burned to death.³¹ A much lighter penalty, at least for the Jewish man, was prescribed by the Austrians. There the Council of Vienna, in 1267, ordered any Jew having an illicit relationship with a Christian woman to be imprisoned until a fine of ten marks was paid. However, the Christian woman "who has participated in this accursed procedure, must be whipped through the town, and driven away without hope of future return."³²

Many of the decrees of the period can be seen as the attempt by the Church to keep Christian and Jew apart so that these relationships would not have a chance to develop. One of the elements emphasized in Honorius IV's epistles to English clergy, for example, was that Jews took Christian women into their homes as nurses for the care of their children and then frequently these women had immoral relationships with the Jewish men. As a result, the Council of Exeter issued a decree in 1287 which forbid such employment by Christian women in Jewish households because it might lead to their conversion and marriage to Jews.³³

Both Church and Judaic law prohibited intermarriage between Christian and Jew. Thus, in both religions, conversions occurred whenever Christian and Jew wished to achieve a married status. Often, the conversion did not last. The Church, particularly, was troubled by these marriages because, in many instances, conversion to Christianity was assumed by Jews and Jewesses only to obtain Church approval of their marriages, and later they would revert back to Judaism. The Church position was similar to that of Langland in Piers Plowman, wherein conversion of the Jew was sought as a step toward his salvation.

The Rabbis, too, frowned on intermarriages although they did approve some marriages where the Christians converted to Judaism. According to the Jewish Midrash, three factors were necessary in order for the marriage to be successful: the convert's affection for Judaism, his love for a Jewess, and his desire to secure the benefits of Jewish charity.³⁴ Any such marriage, however, which resulted in the conversion of Christians to Judaism was considered heresy by the Church. Conversely, the conversion and marriage of a Jew to a Christian was

viewed as such a calamity in a Jewish household that a shiva mourning period was held for the individual as if he or she were dead. And sometimes, converted Jews were assaulted or coerced into returning to Judaism by their co-religionists.³⁵

Even after a couple were married, the marriage was not safe. Rabbi Moses of Coucy, in his travels to Spain in the thirteenth century, observed mixed marriages in which Jewish men had married Christian or Mohammedan women. He insisted on divorces for every such marriage.³⁶

If one considers the sociological and theological traumas endured by the participants in intermarriage, as well as the penalties involved, it is difficult to imagine such a marriage being contemplated. Yet, if one uses as a basis for measurement the amount of activity generated to prevent such unions, the extent of such relationships may have been considerable. It is a tribute to the courageous human spirit that Christian-Jewish intimacy could take place against such enormous odds.

The life of the medieval Jews in England can probably best be described as a life of peace and prosperity interlaced with outbreaks of disorder and assault by mobs. Five of these assaults starting in Norwich in 1144 were as a result of ritual murder accusations against the Jews. These occurred in Gloucester (1168), Bury St. Edmunds (1181), Bristol (1183), and Lincoln (1255). Another major disorder against the Jews occurred in London at the coronation of Richard I in 1189. The belief that Jews practice magic arts at coronations may have initiated this outbreak. (The Jewish custom of reciting a special benediction on seeing a monarch could have caused such a misunderstanding.) The outbreak might also have been caused by the crusading spirit, then very alive in France, reverberating from across the Channel. (In any event, Henry III had the Jews placed in the Tower of London during his recoronation ceremony in 1220. Whether this was to protect himself from the practice of magic or to protect the Jews is not known.) The worst massacre occurred at York in 1190 for religious and economic reasons. The barons were heavily indebted to the Jews and burned all the records of this indebtedness which had been deposited in the Cathedral for safekeeping.³⁷

But certainly there were peaceful interludes in which the Jews prospered and in which the King prospered as well from them. The Jews lived under a charter of liberties and protection issued first by Henry I (1100-35), and continued by succeeding kings. Under the charter, the Jews were recognized as a separate community under the special protection of the king. The charter guaranteed to them "freedom of movement throughout the country, relief from ordinary tolls, protection from misuse, free recourse to royal justice and responsibility to no other, permission to retain land taken in pledge as security, and special provision to ensure fair trial."³⁸

Henry II (1154-89) even extended these privileges to include that of internal jurisdiction according to Talmudic law, except if there was an offense by a Jew against the public order. Thus, the Jews had complete autonomy in the areas of their own community regulations, domestic disputes, wills, and other civil matters. All contracts among themselves were written in Hebrew. Any agreements drawn up according to Rabbinic formulae were considered valid in royal courts. If a Jew was accused

of larceny, housebreaking, or other mayhem then he would be tried before royal justices, but even then, in many instances, a jury of twelve Jews would be chosen presumably because they would be more aware of the facts in the case.³⁹

The Jews were a literate group, and conformed to a basic prescribed course of study which was similar in all lands. Boys began to learn the Hebrew script at the age of five, continued with Hebrew grammar, the Scriptures, the Mishnah (code of Rabbinic law forming the base of the Talmud) and by the age of fifteen began to read the Talmud. The Talmud included the study of religion, ethics, folklore, and jurisprudence. After three years of such study, when students became eighteen years of age, they were encouraged to a deeper understanding of the texts, exploration, and independent thinking. Those who wished could also go on to learn philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, music, and medicine.⁴⁰

"Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6) has always been taken very seriously by most Jews. The feeling for books and learning is reflected in this remark by a medieval Jew, "Avoid bad society, but

make books your companions. Let your bookcases and shelves be your gardens and your pleasure grounds. Pluck the fruit that grows therein, gather the roses, the spices, and the myrrh. If your soul be satiate and weary, change from garden to garden, from furrow to furrow, from sight to sight. Then will your desire renew itself, and your soul be satisfied with delight."⁴¹

In England, in addition to Hebrew, Jews were able to understand documents written in French, English, or Latin although most of them could not write Latin. While the education of women was not viewed with the same sense of necessity which it had for the men, they were given some training, mainly in the vernacular language. And no matter how isolated a household was in a country village, a tutor would be provided for children.⁴²

Thus, the education of the medieval Jew provided both a spiritual and an intellectual anchor in times of adversity and the mental stimulation which they probably could not get from their main occupation, which was moneylending. In Europe and Asia, Jews were involved in diverse occupations: merchants, vintners, book-binders, goldsmiths, farmers, scribes, peddlers, physicians,

etc.⁴³ Few of these trades were carried on in England, mainly because almost every occupation demanded membership in a guild, and Jews were not admitted. Also, the religious and economic lives were so intertwined that membership in a guild demanded an oath of religious allegiance to the Trinity that Jews were not able to make. It was in England, therefore, "that moneylending first became the characteristic Jewish occupation."⁴⁴

There were also Christian moneylenders, notably the Lombards from Italy and the Cahorsins from southern France. However, as the Church considered lending money at interest to be usury, a crime similar in nature to sorcery, blasphemy, and heresy, the risks involved in such an occupation for the Christian made it, for the most part, unacceptable to them. Judaic thought, also, did not approve of usury, but it made a distinction between lending money to the poor to meet their most pressing needs, in which case no interest was to be charged, and lending money for commercial purposes, in which case a fair rate of interest was permitted. The former loan is a means of relieving distress, while the latter permitted some profit from the commercial enterprise.⁴⁵

Credit transactions, i.e., charging one price for cash and a higher price if payment was to be deferred, was a practice acceptable to Islamic law and Judaic law. That it was not considered usurious is confirmed by a responsum of Maimonides, twelfth century Jewish physician, philosopher, and legal scholar who states: "This is the accepted custom among people in trade, and without it most commerce would come to a standstill."⁴⁶

In any event, the Jews in England were very successful in their moneylending: it brought them into contact with the higher levels of English society. It brought them comforts and, in some cases, great wealth which seems to have been spent ostentatiously enough to incur jealousy. Conversely, it also brought them into the middle of two major conflicts, between Crown and Church, and between the King and the barons.

As stated previously, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) had issued social regulations which were introduced in England in 1218. But when the Church tried to institute economic regulations which would have undermined the economic practices of the Jews and

subjected them to Church courts, the King reaffirmed the rights of the Jews according to the charter and repudiated any Church interference "as the Bishops have no concern with our Jews" (P.R. 1218, p. 157).⁴⁷ At least one of the issues was that the Church felt the King had given the Jews an unusually favorable position in that they were able to sue the clergy in the royal court for the recovery of a loan. The clergy felt that the royal court would not regard their property or the issues with the consideration it would be given in a Church court, or as it was usually referred to, in the court of the bishop or Courts Christian.

The Church's position was that "since not even good Christians can sue a cleric before a secular court, much less shall the enemies of the Cross be allowed to do so under any circumstances."⁴⁸ The struggle between Church and Crown was an ongoing one, with the Crown overriding any orders issued by the bishops. The financial returns from the Jews who paid very large taxes to the Crown, as well as a "tallage", an arbitrary levy on the Jewish community as such, were significant. In addition, the Jews advanced large sums of money to the Crown whenever needed, for which loans they received drafts on county

revenues.⁴⁹ The consequence of this latter practice also could have been detrimental to the Jews, for when the time came for the Jews to collect this money from the sheriffs of the counties, it would be natural for the sheriffs to associate their payment with the Jews, rather than the Crown.

The protection of the Jews by the Crown, while important to their well being and economic success, nevertheless resulted in a loss of the good will and toleration which was necessary in order for the Jews to continue to exist amicably in the country.

The second conflict, in which the Jews were caught between the Crown and its barons links up to, according to Postan, the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290.⁵⁰ The essence of the problem was that many of the lesser baronage, the knights, borrowed money from the Jews pledging their land in security. When the knights were unable to pay their debts, the mortgages were transferred by the Jews to the great monastic houses or to the larger magnates who were eager to add to their already vast estates. The magnates refused to accept payment even when offered, preferring to have the land.

The debt of the knightly class has been attributed in general to the inflation in the latter part of the thirteenth century, and to the availability of many more luxuries as international trade expanded. The possibility that their incomes did not match their social pretensions has also been suggested as a reason for the indebtedness of the knights.⁵¹

In the civil war which developed between the knights led by Simon de Montfort and the royalists, the Jews suffered also. In every city in which an outbreak occurred, the Jews were set up for attack and their business records of indebtedness destroyed. Henry III, in order to curb the power of the larger magnates as well as to redress the economic grievances of the knights, began a series of reform measures which were disastrous for the Jews. Privileges under the original Charter were curtailed, and they were forbidden to lend money at interest on land pledged as security. All obligations already transacted were cancelled. These provisions were enacted in 1269. In 1271, they were forbidden to hold land of any kind. In 1275, the Statutum de Judaismo was issued which prohibited Jews and Christians from lending

money at interest and restricted Jews to residence in a few urban centers.⁵²

This ruling effectively cancelled the Jews' means of livelihood and the new King, Edward I, tried to provide other means by permitting them alternative occupations such as that of merchants and artisans. They were also free to buy or lease agricultural land for farming. But it could only be held for ten years. Edward was giving the Jews the opportunity to live by means of commerce, handicrafts, and agriculture. These were occupations at which Jews in other places and times had excelled.⁵³

While this was a conscientious attempt to free the Jews economically from moneylending, it did not take into consideration or allow for the problems involved in such a change. The Jews were not admitted to the Craft Guilds which controlled industry or the Guild Merchant which controlled trade. Nor could they travel about in safety. The agricultural option was possible except that it would have meant living in rural isolation among a hostile peasantry. The limitation of ten years to the experiment also gave no feeling of security or permanence to their lives.⁵⁴ And while the Statute gave with one

hand, it took away with the other. It reinforced and extended discrimination by its restrictions on travel and places of residence. It imposed the Jewish badge on all persons over the age of seven and the badge was made more prominent: it had to be a larger size; the color had to be yellow; and, it had to be worn over the heart.⁵⁵

How could the Jews make a new place for themselves and become integrated into the economic life of England and yet, at the same time, be pushed further away from Christian society? The dichotomy again causes one to think of the aforementioned words of Paul: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes" (ROM. 11:28).

Some of the wealthier men were able to trade in corn and wool. Some Londoners received licenses to deal in jewelry. A few people rented lands for woodcutting. Some converted to Christianity. And some did what they had always done, but now it was done surreptitiously and illegally. Some resorted to coin clipping, i.e., filing the edges of the coin and melting these filings into bullion. A large number of these was imprisoned and

later killed.⁵⁶ In Piers Plowman, Langland describes the practice of coin clipping by Jews and Lombards (B,V,237-240).

When Edward I returned to England from a prolonged visit to the Continent in 1289, he was faced with an experiment that had failed. He could have reinstated moneylending as a legitimate occupation for the Jews or granted them the social freedom which would have made them normal English citizens, a status which would have given their new occupations a chance of success. In the climate of the time, however, the latter conception may have never occurred to either Jew or Christian. What was not a new concept, however, was banishment. The Jews had already been expelled from a number of English towns and their additions to the specified areas of residence had caused crowding and exacerbated problems. Thus, banishment may have seemed to Edward I the only solution to the problem; the act of expulsion occurred in July 1290 and the Jews were ordered to leave England by the following November. According to Roth, this edict was greeted with joy by the general population.⁵⁷

Roth's statement about the general happy reaction of Christians to the expulsion of Jews is difficult to accept in view of the fact that just four years earlier Honorius IV had found it necessary to remonstrate the English Church for permitting Christians and Jews to meet in each other's homes and attend banquets and feasts together. Could their relationships have deteriorated to such an extent?

Numerous reasons have been advanced for the expulsion. Baron has a theory that links the growth of a centralized government with religious intolerance, the latter manifesting itself in mob riots against the alien minority, then anti-Jewish legislation, then expulsion or forced conversions.⁵⁸ In other words, the Jews' alliance with royal power under which they prospered and through whose financial contributions the King was able to overcome the resistance and power of his large magnates, was also the cause of their downfall. Abrahams, also, sees the strong, centralized monarchy as a reason for the expulsion and draws an analogy to the independent republics of Italy, where the Jews could weather temporary storms by moving to a neighboring state.⁵⁹ In England, the centralized restrictions meant there was no

place to hide. Postan suggests that economic reasons, rather than anti-semitic ones, were the cause of the expulsion; Bolton, Gies, and Roth feel the reasons were partly financial and partly religious, while Parkes believes the expulsion was part of the general prejudices and customs of the times.⁶⁰ Roth believes that Church pressure during Edward's absence on the Continent, the fact that the Jews by now were mostly impoverished and that the function they had rendered was no longer necessary were all aspects of the expulsion. The Italians and Cahorsins were supplying financial capital but concealing their interest charges.⁶¹

Evidence that the major reasons for the expulsion were economic and nationalistic is reinforced by the fact that in the fourteenth century there is an increasing hostility among Christians against other Christians, foreigners who "sailed from Dover or from the Thames with rich profits made in England, for it seemed to them that these Lombard bankers, Hanse merchants, or Flemish traders could only have grown rich at the expense of Englishmen."⁶² In Piers Plowman, Reason advises in this regard:

That no man go to Galis but if he go for euere.
 And alle Rome renneres, for Robberes [of]
 biyonde,
 Bere no siluer ouer see that signe of kyng
 sheweth,
 Neither [grotes no gold ygraue with kynges coyn]
 V[p] forfeiture of that fee, wh[o] fynt [hym] at
 Douere,
 But it be Marchaunt or his man or Messenger with
 lettres,
 Prouysour or preest or penaunt for hise synnes.
 (B,IV,127-133; C,IV,124-130)

Were there any Jews left in England after 1290? The answer is in the affirmative if the view of the majority of Rabbinic authorities is taken as to who constitutes a Jew. (These views are reflected in Rabbinic Responsa, which are replies by these authorities to questions put to them by other scholars.) The consensus is that the apostate Jew is still a Jew.⁶³ One may disagree with this viewpoint in general, perhaps, but in the particular cases of those medieval Jews who converted to Christianity out of desperation, or force, or as an alternative to leaving England, one can only agree that they were still Jews in the deepest level of their beings and in their inner outlook.

Converted Jews were housed for the most part in the Domus Conversorum, an institution founded in London, in 1232 by Henry III at the suggestion of the Church. These

converts were supported by royalty in keeping with the principle of the Third Lateran Council in 1179 that the circumstances of converts should be improved after accepting Christianity.⁶⁴ Also, as a matter of practicality, the Domus was necessary because a Jew had to turn over to the King whatever assets he had prior to conversion since they were considered to have been gained through sinful means. The Church disapproved of this practice, however, and under Edward I a convert could retain half of his assets while the other half went to the Domus. Ironically, the King levied a poll tax on Jews (before the Expulsion) which also went toward the upkeep of the Domus Conversorum.⁶⁵

The Domus was never empty of converted Jews from its beginning until its decline early in the seventeenth century. Where did these converts come from? Adler speculates that Jewish men and women came from other places (France, Germany, Flanders, Italy, Spain, etc.) not knowing, perhaps, that residence in England was not permitted. Once there, they may have entered the Domus as a means of financial support, or left the country. Or, possibly, the knowledge of the London refuge was widespread on the Continent and, again, Jews came to it

especially for financial sustenance. In some cases, the individuals had been living in England for some time before their conversion. They came from Eton, Woodstock, Stratford, Leicester and Dartmouth.⁶⁶

Once at the Domus, the Jews were baptized and given names of their patrons or godfathers. In some cases, even the King was sponsor to a baptized Jew. Converts were instructed in the Christian faith and many were then sent out as clergy to various parishes, abbeys, and priories. Converts did not have to live on the premises of the Domus, but could move about freely. Records of the Domus Conversorum during the fourteenth century show a continuing movement of converts in and out of the Domus.⁶⁷

There were, also, apostates who tried to live by their wits rather than by means of the Domus. One vagabond who professed that through magic he could detect thieves was consulted professionally by the Council of the Duke of York in 1390, only to have his enterprise discovered to be a fraud. He was ordered to leave London forever.⁶⁸

It is possible, too, that the French expulsion of Jews in 1306 either caused some of them to come back to England or to come for the first time. Jewish physicians were asked to come to England. A Magister Elias came with five companions at the request of Edward II in 1309.⁶⁹ And, as mentioned previously in Chapter I, an English chronicle notes that there had been an epidemic (presumably in England) in 1318; Jews and lepers were considered to be the cause and were convicted and burned to death. There is also a report from Jewish and non-Jewish sources that a second expulsion occurred under Edward III in 1358 and Roth speculates that there may have been crypto-Jews who had settled there again, had been discovered, and expelled at that time. And, in 1376, there was a complaint by the Commons that "the Lombard (i.e., Italian) usurers harbored Jews and Saracens in their midst."⁷⁰ In 1391, in London, a letter was written in Hebrew by a rabbi named Solomon Levi. In the letter, he complained he could not appropriately celebrate Purim because of the lack of kosher wine in London. This same rabbi later became the Archbishop Paul of Burgos.⁷¹

Thus, notwithstanding the expulsion edict there was an on-going movement of Jews into England during the fourteenth century. And also many Englishmen traveled abroad in countries where Jews still lived openly and did business with the English. So the encounters and relationships between medieval Christians and Jews went on; some were superficial and some were enduring, as it is with all people in every time.

Could Langland have known Jews? The answer appears to be in the realm not only of the possible, but the probable. As Langland is thought to have been a clerk in minor orders, he may even have met in his work converts sent out from the Domus as clergy.

The chapter began with the expression in Piers Plowman of Feith's everlasting curse upon the Jews, and the question of whether, in fact, Feith's words described, in actuality, the way Jews lived in late medieval England. The demarcation delineated by Feith appears to be a true to life depiction. When the episodes of violence against the Jews are added to the picture, an even bleaker scene is created. Yet, as has been shown, there were positive aspects. In fleshing out

Feith's sketch, there is revealed a picture with many light elements as well as dark. While confined to the occupation of moneylending, the Jew prospered through this occupation. He was able to acquire and to enjoy great wealth, and to have contacts with the upper levels of English society. During certain periods, the Jew was able to own and sell land. The way of life of the Jew in late medieval England was not a static one. The conditions under which he lived were varied; some of these conditions were much better than the picture Feith depicts, while, at other times, the conditions were much worse.

In thinking about the medieval Jew and his way of life, one needs also to try to imagine his situation and his feelings about that situation. Otherwise, one is left with only the external Jew, the one observed from the outside, so to speak. But what of the inner Jew?⁷² In the suffering involved in being forced to leave his home or, alternatively, give up his religion if not his faith, what sustained him? In addition to his faith, one of the beliefs which sustained him through adversity was the conviction that he was morally superior to those who persecuted him. And while Christians saw

his sufferings as witness to the truth of Christianity, he viewed his suffering or wanderings as a martyrdom for the sake of "the Lord is One."⁷³

Wherein is the truth? "For cristen and vnchristen cleymeth it echone" (B,I,93). Holy Church, speaking in Piers Plowman, reflects a unity of thought in the early stages of the poem which seems to transcend the positions of both Church and Synagogue. She equates truth with "god hymseluen" and, in her examples, reflects that Jew and Christian both can know and serve the truth: "For David in hise dayes dubbed kny₃tes, Dide hem sweren on hir swerd to seruen truth euere (B,I, 98-99)." And Christ, knighted ten, and "tau₃te hem [thoru₃] the Trinitee [the] treuthe to knowe: (B,I, 109)."

Langland seems to be saying, through the words of Holy Church, that Christian and Jew are capable of knowing truth, i.e., the eternal verities, and living in a manner which reflects these verities. The words of Holy Church seem simple, but are actually complex. Is Langland talking about truth as qualities of integrity, honesty, sincerity which are taught by Christianity and Judaism rather than truth as the established principles on which these religions rest?

In the next chapter, the quest for truth through Biblical exegesis and disputation will be explored by examining the interaction of medieval Christians and Jews in their shared search for more knowledge about God's word.

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Chapter II

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²Ibid., p. 23.

³Marcus, op. cit., pp. 137-138.

⁴Roth, op. cit., p. 23.

⁵Abrahams, op. cit., p. 297.

⁶Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews in England, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 93. See also Louis I. Rabinowitz, The Social Life of the Jews of Northern France in the 12th to 14th Centuries as reflected in Rabbinical Literature of the Period, (London: Edward Goldston Ltd., 1938), pp. 238-239.

⁷Roth, A History of the Jews in England, p. 94.

⁸Coulton, Medieval Panorama, p. 310.

⁹Roth, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁰Roth, op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹W. Lloyd Woodland, The Story of Winchester, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1932), p. 108.

¹²Gies, op. cit., p. 63.

¹³Roth, op. cit., p. 276. According to Roth there was a fairly numerous "pauper proletariat."

¹⁴Gies, op. cit., p. 73.

¹⁵Michael Adler, Jews of Medieval England, (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1939), pp. 68-69.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 69. See also Gies, p. 63 and Elkin Nathan Adler, pp. 52-53.

¹⁷Roth, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

¹⁸Elkan Nathan Adler, op. cit., p. 52.

¹⁹Elkan Nathan Adler, op. cit., p. 51.

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²¹See Salo W. Baron, "The Jewish Factor in Medieval Civilization," in Robert Chazan, ed., Medieval Jewish Life (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976), p. 7. While no reliable figures seem to be available for London's general and Jewish population in 1290, he estimates that London may have had 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants. The "Old Jewry" area accommodated about 2,000 Jews, but Jews were not confined to this area. Therefore, the number of Jews in London may be somewhat above this number.

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²³Michael Adler, op. cit., pp. 55, 63.

²⁴Woodland, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

²⁵Abrahams, op. cit., p. 427.

²⁶Salo W. Baron, op. cit., p. 12. The passage cited is a translation from Honorius IV's bull.

²⁷Lewis I. Newman, "Intermarriage between Jews and Christians during the Middle Ages." The Jewish Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 2, (1926), pp. 6-7.

²⁸Ibid., p. 7.

²⁹Roth, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁰Roth, op. cit., p. 276.

³¹Newman, op. cit., Vol. II, No. 3 (1926), p. 26.

³²Cited by Newman in the aforementioned article from Canon 17 of the decrees of the Council of Vienna in 1267.

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- ³⁴Newman, Vol. II, No. 2 (1926), p. 3.
- ³⁵Roth, op. cit., p. 83.
- ³⁶Newman, Vol. II, No. 3 (1926), p. 24.
- ³⁷Roth, op. cit., pp. 19-24, 42.
- ³⁸Roth, op. cit., p. 6.
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- ⁴⁰Marcus, op. cit., p. 373-7.
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- ⁵¹J. L. Bolton, The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1980), p. 105.
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- ⁵³Parkes, op. cit., p. 220.
- ⁵⁴Roth, op. cit., p. 72.
- ⁵⁵Gies, op. cit., p. 72.
- ⁵⁶Gies, op. cit., p. 72.
- ⁵⁷Roth, op. cit., p. 85.
- ⁵⁸Baron, op. cit., pp. 40-41.
- ⁵⁹Abrahams, op. cit., p. 401.
- ⁶⁰See Postan, op. cit., p. 165, Bolton, op. cit., p. 340, Gies, op. cit., p. 73, and Parkes, op. cit., p. 220.
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- ⁶⁶Adler, op. cit., pp. 321-326.
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- ⁶⁸Charles Pendrill, London Life in the 14th Century (London: Kennikat Press, 1971), pp. 202-203.
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CHAPTER III

**The Quest for Truth: Christian and Jewish Encounters in
Biblical Exegesis and Disputations**

The search for truth, the concern with what is the best way, the collision between orthodoxy and new ideas, as well as the questioning which is so much a part of Piers Plowman all reflect much of the religious spirit of inquiry in the fourteenth century. It was a time when the learned John Bromyard, a Dominican, believed that it was perfectly all right "to quote pagans and their works as witness to the truth," when Uhtred of Boldon, Nicholas de Lyra, and Langland were concerned with the salvation of the unbaptized (discussed below in Chapter V), and Adam Easton, the Benedictine monk-scholar, among others, studied Hebrew at Avignon and Rome in order to understand better the Old Testament.¹ It was a time when, at Oxford, Hebrew was being taught by a convert from Judaism.²

The religious ferment and controversy, which were so continuous as to seem almost indigenous to the fourteenth century, were very much a development and legacy of the thirteenth century.³ And the ferment of ideas, the

freedom, and diversity of thought had their roots in the intellectual revival and methodological changes in Biblical exegesis which took place in the twelfth century.⁴

The interaction between Christian and Jewish scholars in Biblical exegesis and in disputations played its part in contributing to the intellectual and religious ferment. In the areas of exegesis, it had previously been thought that the influence of Rashi (1040-1105) began with Nicholas of Lyra (1279-1340). Smalley has shown, however, that Hugh of St. Victor (1097-1141), director of the monastic abbey in Paris, was in contact with the north French school of rationalist exegetes founded by Rashi.⁵

According to his disciple, Andrew of St. Victor, Hugh learned the Pentateuch in its literal sense from the Jews. In his Notulae, Hugh's references to Jews are frequent and he objectively notes their opinions and contrasts it with Christian views usually without discussion of differences. Several of his explanations of Genesis can be found in Rashi and in Joseph Kara, Rashi's nephew; three explanations of Exodus can be found

in the work of Rashbam, who was Rashi's grandson. Both Kara and Rashbam were Hugh's contemporaries; Rashbam was then the leader of the rationalist school.⁶

By studying Scripture in the original, Hugh followed in the tradition of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. He inspired his students to learn Hebrew also. His attitude toward original sources is reflected in his notes on Genesis:

If you hold that the Septuagint version is more to be approved than the Hebrew, because the Greek texts of Scripture are truer than the Hebrew, and if you hold that the Latin version is to be approved more than the Greek, you will make no progress in understanding the Old Testament Scriptures--since, on the contrary, the Greek texts are truer than the Latin, and the Hebrew texts are truer than the Greek.⁷

Hugh's contribution to Biblical scholarship lay in his emphasis on learning Hebrew and on the literal interpretation of the text; he taught his students to begin their studies with the literal historical sense before going on to the allegorical and tropological senses. This emphasis on the literal interpretation may have been as a consequence of his exposure to Rashi's commentaries, and discussions with Kara and Rashbam. Smalley believes that such a collaboration "may have

involved a real contact in which a specifically Jewish method influenced the Christian [exegesis]."⁸

What was this method which influenced Christian theologians and also made Rashi's name a household word among Jews in his own lifetime and today? Basically, the methods used for interpreting the Scriptures were the peshat, a method which is literal, i.e., it sees in the text only the meaning which is there and the derash, a method which looks for what the text might mean or what can be deduced from it. The latter interpretations were allegorical, moral, or mystical.⁹

There were two main categories of material: Midrash Halackah, which is authoritative legal exegesis and Midrash Haggadah, which is ethical exegesis. The former term denotes "walking" and indicates the way of life in accordance with the laws of the Pentateuch. The Haggadah is in the realm of opinion and explains through saga, legends, poetry, folk-tales, superstition, and some historical fact, as well. The word "Midrash" means "inquiry" or "to seek" and is a general term applied to Biblical and Talmudic exegesis.

Over hundreds of years, in the attempt to arrive at meaning from all possible angles, the explanations sometimes went far afield and included many differences in approach. Both halackic and haggadic exegesis brought "to the examination of the text a preconceived notion, as it were, and it reconciles text and preconceived notion sometimes by traditional, sometimes by arbitrary, methods [which are] often more ingenious than rational."¹⁰

Rashi's achievement was based on his predilection for a rational and literal exegesis, and on the clarity and simplicity of his language in his commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud. He was neither an original thinker nor a classifier. His aptness was in his clear, logical thinking and his ability to illuminate the meaning of obscure passages or previous fanciful commentary through the use of plain and precise language. Also, when a Talmudic explanation seemed to him irrational, he had the courage to disagree and provide a logical explanation. If the homiletic exposition did no violence to the text, he made no change. He was a linguist and could handle with ease the rabbinical idiom which was a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. And he translated into rabbinical Hebrew texts which were totally in Aramaic. Sometimes he

used a French word where there was no Hebrew equivalent. Thus, Rashi opened up and brought into "public" ken, so to speak, for both Christians and Jews, the non-Hebrew portions of the Bible.¹¹ He was also the only Jewish commentator who covered in addition to the Talmud, the whole Bible, i.e., the Pentateuch and the Scriptures.¹²

Rashi was not able to free himself totally of the derash method; it remained for his grandson, who headed the school at Troyes after Rashi's death to achieve that intellectual independence. Yet, one can see that Rashi, seeker after truth, would have attained an even sounder exegesis were life not short and the work long. This is revealed in the words of his grandson:

The friends of reason should steep themselves in this principle of our sages, that natural exegesis can never be superceded. And R. Solomon [Rashi], my maternal grandfather. . .who commented on the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, devoted himself to the development of the natural meaning of the text; and I, Samuel, son of Meir, discussed his explanations with him and before him, and he confessed to me that if he had had the leisure, he would have deemed it necessary to do his work all over again by availing himself of the explanations that suggest themselves day after day.¹³

Just as it remained for Rashbam to go beyond his grandfather in the emphasis on the rational-literal interpretation, so it was that Andrew of St. Victor, another seeker after truth, evolved beyond his master, Hugh, and took a strong literalist position. The reform of scriptural studies at St. Victor resulted from Andrew's firmly held principle that saw no conflict between a strong faith and the right of continuing discovery. In words which reflect his integrity and which surely must be one of the most impassioned pleas for truth, Andrew writes:

If Jerome had judged it idle, rash, or presumptuous to expend enthusiasm and work for the sake of investigating the truth of the scriptures after the fathers had taken such great care to elaborate on them, then never would that wise, industrious, and good man, who kept in mind that it is written: 'Make good use of your time,' have worked so hard on this task or have spent his whole life at it. For he surely knew, that learned man knew--he knew, I say, and he knew best--how obscure truth is, how deep it lies buried, how far from mortal sight it has plunged into the depths, how it will admit only a very few, by how much work it is reached, how practically no one ever succeeds, how it is dug out with difficulty and then only bit by bit . . . Careful search can find it, but only in such a way that careful search can find still more. No one can bring out all of it but ferrets it out in bits and pieces and, when all is said and done, in vain. While fathers and forebears discovered it, more remained for sons and descendants to find. While it is always sought, more always remains to be sought. While it is always being found, more always remains to

be found. Therefore, just because our forebears gave themselves over to the search for truth through studying and expounding sacred scripture, there is nothing dishonorable or presumptuous or wrong or idle or superfluous about us lesser men devoting ourselves to that same search.¹⁴

The rationalism and simplicity of the Biblical exegesis of the school of Rashi may be what appealed to Andrew. One aspect of this rationalism was the ability of his Jewish teachers to explain biblical miracles by reducing these to natural phenomena. Andrew was able to discuss their interpretations with them through a friendly interchange of ideas. He appears to have been "fascinated by his Jewish teachers" and admitted "with cheerful indifference that he [could] not hold his own against the Jews in argument."¹⁵ Obviously, there must have been many arguments which he could not accept, but many times he prefers the Jewish exegesis as being more rational than the Christian. Apparently, he accepted enough Jewish explanations to be accused by Richard of St. Victor, a contemporary, of "Judaizing." i.e. of believing the Jewish explanations. Richard was also in contact with the Jews at Rashi's school but was not as ready to accept their exegesis. In looking over Andrew's work, Richard writes his objections to what seems to him to be an acceptance by Andrew of the Jewish explanation:

In many places the Jewish opinion is given as though it were not so much the Jews' as his own, and as though it were true. On that passage: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" he gives the Jewish objections or questions without answering them; he seems to award the prize to them, since he leaves them as though they were unanswerable.¹⁶

As this was a crucial text in Christian doctrine, Richard wrote a tract refuting the explanations cited by Andrew. His refutation upset a disciple of Andrew, and Richard gives this as a reason for writing another tract, this time in the form of a dialogue, which was the method most in use at the time. In the dialogue there is an interlocutor who has not been convinced by the first tract and arguments are advanced in a conversational form because "such exposition is pleasanter to hear."¹⁷

The dialogue, usually between a Christian and Jew, was the general method used to educate and persuade Jews to the truth of Christian doctrine. In a procedural handbook written by an unknown author, the strategy advanced advises avoiding entirely arguments relating to the defense or explanation of the New Testament and concentrating on using the Old Testament, particularly citing the Prophets. Ten typical questions are asked and answered in the dialogue and the Christian always

stresses the interpretation of "the letter by means of the spirit." The Jew rebels at this explanation as a perversion of his Scripture and he is then provided with a detailed account of the mysteries of his own religion.¹⁸ The existence of such a handbook reflects an assumption about the nature of truth which is totally antithetical to that of Andrew. There is no investigation, no search for truth; truth has been given and it only needs to be transmitted.

Against this backdrop, the integrity of Andrew's scholarship may be more truly appreciated. Andrew's writings include and identify the Jewish interpretations on many other doctrinal points besides the prophecy of Isaiah which had specifically concerned Richard. He wrote many "Judaizing commentaries" on the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Proverbs, to name but a few of his works. His manuscripts have been found in various English monastic libraries and on the Continent. The manuscripts in the English monastic libraries are de luxe editions, more decorated and better written than those on the Continent. The finest of these de luxe editions is thought to be in Cambridge; it is MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 30.¹⁹

In the thirteenth century, Andrew's influence may be traced in the work carried on by a new Franciscan order sponsored by Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), Bishop of Lincoln and teacher at Oxford, and in the work of Roger Bacon (d. 1292), the Franciscan friar, who was his pupil.²⁰ Grosseteste and Bacon studied Hebrew with Jews at Oxford where Hebrew scholarship flourished.²¹ Bacon knew Hebrew so well that he composed a Hebrew grammar.

Grosseteste and Bacon were concerned about the errors which had crept into the Vulgate through the mistakes of copyists over the years and felt that the Vulgate should be tested for errors by a close reference to and comparison with the Hebrew text.²² Unlike Andrew, however, Grosseteste's scholarly attitude toward the Hebrew language encompassed also a desire to convert Jews. His concern with their salvation is reflected in his work, De Cessatione Legalium, which is a direct appeal to Jews and reflects a central thesis: that the new faith evolved from and replaces the old. His method is to take each Judaic ritual and show its corresponding new Christian "sign", e.g., circumcision has evolved to baptism, the Passover ritual has evolved to the ritual of the Eucharist.²³

Grosseteste was not only concerned with the status of the Jew in the next world. He had a real concern for Jews in this world. When Jews were expelled from Leicester by Simon de Montfort in 1231, Grosseteste, then Archdeacon of Leicester, was concerned about their economic plight. He approved a proposal submitted to him by the Countess of Winchester and other landowners which would have given the expelled Jews a place on their estates in return for some manual labor thereon. There is no evidence, however, that anything ever came of this idea.²⁴

Bacon, too, was concerned about the conversion of Jews, about the "unspeakable loss of souls," and wished to educate them to the truth of Christian doctrine.²⁵ His concern included the proper education of Christians as well. He disapproved of the method being used to teach children, urged instead that children be read the text itself, and holds up the Jewish way of teaching a child as an example to be followed:

For God's law should be read to children, that they might ever grow accustomed to the truth of the faith, and especially the simplest and most moral books of the Old and New Testament, even as some are now taught from Bibles in verse; but

it would be better that they should hear and construe the Gospels in prose, and the Epistles, and the Books of Solomon; since that versified Bible mutilates everything, and is worthless. For man should first be taught in those things which pertain to the salvation of his soul, that he may grow accustomed to go from good to better; wherefore the Jews, in their youth, learn first of all the law of God.²⁶

Bacon's words are echoed in Piers Plowman when Ymaginatif, in speaking of the Bible, says:

Wel may the barn blesse that hym to book sette,
That lyuyng after lettrure saue[d] hym lif and
soule.

(B,XII,187-188; C,XIV,126-127)

Bacon admired the fact that Andrew of St. Victor had gone to Hebrew sources, but he did not quite approve of Andrew's literal exegesis, preferring rather the traditional spiritual connotations. While a conservative thinker in this regard, nevertheless, writing about one hundred years after Andrew (about 1272), Bacon seems to reflect a mind that enjoys being stimulated by an interplay of ideas and appears willing to move in new directions. He writes about Andrew's work: "he stirs us up about the doubtful passages of our translations, . . . and sends us to the Hebrew that we may seek our explanations more surely at the root. Few would take thought for the true explanation of this passage and of

many others, unless they had seen how Andrew treats it."²⁷

Bacon encouraged the study of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Aramaic (sometimes called Chaldean). Because there were few Greeks or Saracens available for teaching those languages, he understood the lack of knowledge in that area, but felt that Hebrew and Aramaic should present no problem because "Jews are to be found everywhere."²⁸

While Grosseteste and Bacon are the most well known in the area of Biblical scholarship influenced by Andrew of St. Victor, the serious study of Andrew's work in England continued to form the background for the biblical scholarship of others, and there was a growing number of Hebraists by the late thirteenth century.²⁹

That there was an ongoing contact among Christian and Jewish scholars through the continuing efforts of Christian scholars to correct their Latin texts is reflected in the words of an unknown Christian scholar who was working with a Hebrew-Latin Psalter written in the late thirteenth century. In the prologue to the Psalter, the scholar explains that he has attempted to

group all the known Latin versions together for a comparison with the Hebrew. He concludes:

And so in this manuscript I have written all the aforesaid translations briefly beside the Hebraica, that having tested them all I may choose that which is better, and that one may bear witness to another in refutation of the worse. The extent of error in our Vulgate version appears in the Hebrew; and the other translations witness it too, now one, now another, now several together, almost at every verse, for it sometimes has more, sometimes less, sometimes other than the true one [i.e. the Hebrew]. The same, more or less, with all the translations, for that which is called St. Jerome's differs less from the Hebrew; but it does sometimes, owing to corruption introduced by others, or to his own carelessness or lack of skill, for "the good Homer sometimes sleeps". He does not claim to have set down the Hebrew truth altogether, but to have changed nothing wittingly . . .

But as he was instructed and helped by the earlier translations, so am I, both by his and the others (for that reason I have noted them), and also by the Jews. I make bold to correct any one of them, by the witness of the others, following now one, now another, now none of them, but demonstrating from elsewhere. And this I do, not presumptuously nor rashly, but after very careful collation and examination of ours and inquiry into the Hebrew truth, and so with manifest condemnation of error and the witness of the Jews.³⁰

The legacy of the men who had contributed so much to Biblical scholarship: Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor, Rashi and his school, Grosseteste, and Bacon and his school was continued in the fourteenth century. Their

influence is particularly reflected in the work of the Dominican scholar, Nicholas Trivet (1258-1328) and the Franciscan, Nicholas of Lyra (1279-1340).

The commentaries on the Psalter written by Nicholas Trivet reflect a literal exegesis. He refers to the Hebrew text and often gives the Jewish interpretation as well as the Christian in order "that truth may appear more clearly when set beside fiction,"³¹ leaving it up to the reader to decide wherein lay the truth. It was probably just this kind of activity, the juxtaposing of two alternative points of view, which was thought-provoking to scholars and intelligent lay people and contributed to the intellectual and religious discussions and controversies of the time.

Nicholas of Lyra is often mentioned as the first Christian commentator on the Bible who quotes Rashi in his commentaries and refers to him by name.³² By this time, turning to rabbinic sources was no longer novel. Lyra was following the practice of many Christian scholars before him. In his Postillae, Lyra gives first the literal exegesis of the text as being the foundation of any other interpretation. He then provides, in

parallel fashion, the spiritual exegesis. Frequent references are made to Rashi's exegesis. He also made use of Rashi's "postilla" system, i.e., the clarification of the text in verse succession.³³

Lyra used his excellent knowledge of Hebrew and the Old Testament to write polemical tracts to disprove some of Rashi's Biblical exegesis. Unlike many other such tracts, Lyra's work is distinguished by its scholarship and the power of its intellectual argument. Lyra also went beyond Rashi and displays a vast knowledge of other Jewish material. He uses for his exegesis material from Maimonides, from the Talmud, and from Midrashic literature.³⁴ In the twelfth century "Hebrew truth" was thought to be found mainly in St. Jerome's Vulgate. In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the "Hebrew truth" was being found by Biblical scholars in Hebrew manuscripts. Rashi's influence had been the link in a chain which began with Hugh of St. Victor and merged with Nicholas of Lyra to become a factor in the Reformation:

Sir Lyra non lyrasset
Lutherus non saltasset.³⁵

But this takes us beyond our time period. Perhaps it was his wide knowledge and respect for the rabbinical

literature which was the basis for Lyra's belief in the salvation of good Jews. In any event, he succeeded in bringing his knowledge of this literature to the fore and continued the process of opening up Judaic viewpoints to critical scrutiny. By making such Hebrew material accessible to other Christian scholars and lay people, he contributed to an interplay of ideas that may be seen as a kind of intellectual yeast which contributed to the spiritual ferment in the culture.

There was another area of Christian-Jewish contact in regard to Hebrew manuscripts, one that included forced public disputations. How did the public disputations begin? What was the nature of the contact?

There appear to have been two separate channels of Christian interest in rabbinical writings. The first channel, which has been described, reflects a scholarly search and exploration of the material for the purpose of more knowledge. The second channel was combative in nature; it led to the disputations held under the auspices of church and state in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. These disputations could become quite hostile and aggressive on the part of Christians

and Jews, occasionally resulting in the burning of Hebrew manuscripts.

The first such burning was actually brought about by the Jews themselves; it may have set the precedent for other such destructions which were begun, in many instances, (as were the disputations, also) by the zeal of Jewish converts for whom the search was over. They had "found" the truth and sought to help the Church impose it on other Jews.³⁶

It was in France, in 1233, that a Hebrew manuscript, Moreh Nebhuchim (The Guide to the Perplexed), became an issue among Jews. It had been written by Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), a brilliant rabbi-philosopher from the Arab world. The work was a radical departure from Judaic beliefs in that it created a harmonious marriage of Greek philosophical thought to Hebrew categories of faith.³⁷ The work caused a raging controversy between liberal and orthodox Jews; the orthodox opposed it on the basis that it was heretical. The heresies included the denial of the immortality of the individual soul, the questioning of sacrosanct Biblical law, and the turning of God into an

abstraction. Thus, while the liberals hailed it as a new Torah (Bible), orthodox rabbis feared for the very survival of Judaism. A few of these were so concerned that they went to the Dominicans to enlist their help. As these ideas were not only a threat to Judaic belief but Christian heresy as well, the Dominicans arranged to have all the works of Maimonides burned.³⁸

The precedent set was not long in being followed. In 1239, a Jewish convert, Nicholas Donin, denounced the Talmud to Pope Gregory IX as containing blasphemies against Christianity and charged that Jewish students of the Talmud were so taken by its legends that they neglected to study the Bible itself; that these factors hindered the re-education of Jews and, thus, their conversion.³⁹ Gregory ordered the Talmud and all other rabbinic works to be placed under Dominican and Franciscan control for examination. The mandate was heeded only in France, where four rabbis were compelled to meet with Donin in the first public disputation held in 1240 before Louis IX and his court. The consequence was that the Talmud was condemned and burned in or about 1242. An Archbishop Gautier tried to help the Jews save their manuscripts, but he died suddenly and this event

reinforced the righteousness of the event; his death was viewed as a fair punishment of divine command.⁴⁰

The burning of the Talmud (also known as the Oral Law), the prohibition of its use, and the first forced public disputation were serious events with serious consequences, not the least of which was the loss of countless Hebrew manuscripts and the closing of the School of Rashi at Troyes. Another very important consequence was that it again focused the attention of the Church on this body of rabbinical writings. While sporadic attempts had been made to prohibit the study of the Talmud as far back as the eighth century,⁴¹ it had apparently not been seen previously as the central pillar of Judaism which was preventing the conversion of the Jews. Jewish converts to Christianity, however, were very much aware of the Talmud's value to the Jews and understood that their continued survival and development depended on its study. Why was it so important? An unknown Talmudic sage said, "Turn it, and turn it again, for everything is contained in the Torah. Regard it and grow old in it, and never abandon it, for there is no greater virtue." This Torah was the cornerstone; the Talmud represented an evolution of centuries of effort by

thousands of sages who spent their lives studying the Torah; the Talmud defined Judaism.⁴²

Thus, when Donin aroused the Church to the fact that the Jews had a second law, other than the Bible, which the Christians shared, and that it was this second law which kept Jews from accepting Christianity, it almost necessitated some kind of countering action by the Church. Since more effort was necessary for conversion purposes than just pointing out to the Jew the true meaning of the Bible, the Church set itself the task of examining and combating a vast body of supplementary material which the Jews considered to have been part of the revelation at Sinai.⁴³ An interesting theory has been advanced that "the existence of a second revealed interpretation challenged the Church's own second revelation. Many churchmen did not comprehend fully this tradition and to some the existence of a revelation consequent to the Gospel covenant must have seemed subversive and heretical."⁴⁴

In 1286, Pope Honorius in a letter to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, "complained of the influence in England of the book commonly called

'Thalamud', which the Jews of the realm put forth as being of greater authority than the law of Moses."⁴⁵ While his letter tightened strictures against Jews generally, there is no evidence that this complaint in any way lessened the on-going Biblical scholarship. Nor, despite the original papal mandate in 1240, is there any evidence of any seizure of Hebrew writings in England.⁴⁶ And there were no burnings. The only activity that can be construed as religious pressure was Edward's order that all Jews attend conversionist discourses given by the Dominicans in response to a Papal Bull issued in 1279.⁴⁷ None of the force or violence taking place across the Channel with regard to rabbinical writings took place in England. Was this due, perhaps, to the scholarly exegesis which had been quietly taking place by learned men throughout the century?

The examination of the Talmud in France led to the Church's composition of The Extractions de Talmud which points up the errors in the Talmud. During this process, much had been made of Rashi's commentaries. However, the authors of the Extractions took material out of context and concentrated on the derash material rather than the literal peshat. Also, they seemed not to realize that

there was no "theological character or authority to the exegetical ingenuities of the Midrash, or the playful imaginations of the Haggada."⁴⁸

All was not completely negative, however. For the rabbinical material was read and portions of the Talmud and of Rashi were translated into Latin. It would seem that despite the hostility, there was an interest in further investigation, whatever the motivation. Even if it were to encourage conversions, nevertheless, "the Christian polemical writings ensured the preservation and wider knowledge of Rashi."⁴⁹ The disputations, as well, created a wider audience for Hebrew viewpoints even after the debates had taken place. In later years, the Talmud became an element used by Christian scholars to support Christian truths. In other instances, both approaches were used by Christians: the Talmud contained blasphemies and also evidence to support Christianity.⁵⁰

There was a parallel activity going on among Jewish scholars. Just as Christian awareness of the Talmud came from information supplied by Jewish converts, so the familiarity of the Jews with Christian texts and rituals came from contacts with converts. And there were some

translations of Christian polemical material from Latin into Hebrew.

There was a similarity, also, between the Christian use of the Talmud and the Jewish use of the Gospels. While they differed in their interpretations of the Bible, nevertheless, both religions shared an acceptance of its authority and divine origin. This was not true with regard to the Talmud and the New Testament. Thus, in polemical writings or debates, the Jews used the same approach as the Christians; the material was carefully examined and then used to disprove beliefs of the "adversary".⁵¹

Perhaps as a counter-movement to prevent conversions, the Jews compiled their own instruction manual, a collection of Jewish arguments against Christian interpretations of the Old Testament, critiques of the Gospels, and criticisms of Christian doctrine. One such compilation, the Nizzahon Vetus (Old Book of Polemic), is thought to have been written in Hebrew in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.⁵² The arguments reflect the major theological issues; the method used is to give a scriptural passage, then what

the "heretics" (it is a little odd to see the Christians referred to en masse as "heretics") say about it, followed by how to refute this interpretation. A few of the fairly short arguments will be quoted just to indicate their nature as well as their aggressive tone:

"And behold, three men stood over against him" (Gen. 18:2). The heretics say: "He saw three and prayed to one," and they are the father, the son, and the impure spirit; he saw that the three are one and prayed to him. In answering this question you can trip him up and refute him with his own words by telling him: Of course Abraham saw three, but he did not pay attention to them and prayed instead to one, for God is one and his name is one. And this is precisely what we do. This refutation is valid because according to their words, it should have said, "He saw three and prayed to him," for only then would it mean that the three were one and Abraham prayed to that one. As it is, when it says that he prayed to one, the implication is that this one is not one of the three.⁵³

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The heretics say: "And they dipped the coat in the blood" (Gen. 37:31); this story of Joseph prefigures the hanged one. For example, the fact the Joseph's mother was barren prefigures Mary, who was a virgin. The answer is: How can one draw such an analogy between the living and the dead? Joseph was not killed; they merely desired to kill him. Jesus, on the other hand, was actually hanged. If the heretic will reply that only the human part of Jesus was killed, the answer is that if this is so, how did he differ from other men? In other men, too, the flesh dies while the soul goes either to paradise or to hell.⁵⁴

* * * * *

"Remember the Sabbath day . . ." (Exod. 20:8). The heretics say that the proper interpretation is not that work is prohibited but that one must not sin. This would mean that it is prohibited to sin only on the Sabbath but the rest of the week it is permitted.⁵⁵

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"He put a veil over his face" (Exod. 34:3). The heretics say that this alludes to the curtain hung over our face, i.e., to the fact that we do not understand the commandments of God. They are mistaken, however, because its real purpose is to serve as an indication that one should not believe in the hanged one. For if as a result of a face-to-face conversation with God the face of Moses, who was flesh and blood, shone to the point where people were afraid to approach him, then the divine presence itself would certainly do so. Jesus' face, then, should have shone from one end of the earth to the other. In fact, however, no light radiated from his face any more than it does from anyone else, so that one ought not to believe in him, for it was all sorcery.⁵⁶

The harsh bluntness of polemic seems to be far removed from exegesis: nevertheless, the lines between them can sometimes blur. What is important is the ever valuable contact it brought between Christian and Jew, whether face-to-face or in the realm of poring over each other's concepts. While Jews were completely puzzled by the mystery of the Trinity, and Christians had no use for the Jews' necessity to adhere to exact Biblical law, nevertheless, they shared an underlying heritage which each respected, and which made it possible for them to

stimulate each other's thinking in the quest for God's verities. Certainly, the exegetical contacts and polemical collisions between medieval Christian and Jew contributed to the forces of change and intellectual revival that began in the twelfth century and continued to evolve and to stir up religious concepts and controversies in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Many of these stirrings-up, as Roger Bacon might have phrased it, are reflected in Piers Plowman. For the central core of the poem is a search for truth, the same search inherent in the activity of scholarship depicted in this chapter. While polemic is not a search as such, the process itself may make men examine their views and, in this sense, it may move them forward.

Exegesis and polemic are very much a part of Piers Plowman. For example, the Dreamer's search for Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best can be considered ethical exegesis in poetic form; it reflects an inquiry into ways of living that will be in accordance with Biblical teachings so that the Dreamer may save his soul. The polemics or disputes in Piers Plowman serve as a means of examining and explaining theological concepts. The Dreamer's

argumentative responses of "No," "Nay," and "Contra" enliven the dialogue. At one point, in very human fashion, the Dreamer disputes with himself as he thinks about Scripture's text:

Al for tene of hir text trembled myn herte
 And in a weer gan I wexe, and with myself to
 dispute
 Wheither I were chosen or no³t chosen;
 For crist cleped vs alle, come if we wolde,
 Sar³ens and scismatikes and so he dide the
 Iewes:

(B,XI,115-120; C,XII,48-53)

In addition to similarities of method, there is some similarity of thought, also, in Langland's work and that of the aforementioned scholars. To Langland, as to St. Andrew of Victor, the search for truth was an on-going one. To Langland, as to Grosseteste and Bacon, the conversion of Jews was an important concern. And to Langland, as to Nicholas de Lyra, the salvation of good Jews was, surely, part of God's plan.

In succeeding chapters, a textual analysis will be made of Langland's treatment of the Jews in his poem, as well as of his views on those specific theological issues which involved Jews, particularly the salvation of the unbaptized.

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Chapter III

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- ²³Ruth M. Ames, The Debate between the Church and the Synagogue in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval England, Ph. D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1950, pp. 364-367. Also, see, for example, "The Disputation of Peter of Cornwall against Symon the Jew," Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke, (eds.) R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin, R. W. Southern (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. 143-152. Heiko A. Oberman presents an overview of the exegetical problem posed by the Hebrew Bible to its Christian interpreters. See, for example, his chapter on "Biblical Exegesis: The Literal and the Spiritual Sense of Scripture," Forerunners of the Reformation, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).
- ²⁴Roth, op. cit., p. 69.
- ²⁵Bevan & Singer, op. cit., p. 299.
- ²⁶G. G. Coulton, Social Life in Britain, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 62. Cited from Opus Tertium, ed. Brewer (Rolls Series), 1859, p. 54.
- ²⁷Smalley, op. cit., p. 146. Cited from Compendium, viii, ed. Brewer (Rolls Series), pp. 482-483.
- ²⁸Bevan and Singer, op. cit., p. 299.
- ²⁹Smalley, op. cit., p. 249.
- ³⁰Smalley, op. cit., p. 253. Cited from the prologue of a Hebrew-Latin Psalter, The MS. Corpus Christi College Oxford, Corpus II.

³¹Smalley, op. cit., p. 259. The author cites from MS. Bodley 738, fo. 4091.

³²Smalley, op. cit., p. 263. Smalley mentions that prior to Lyra, William de la Mare specifically refers to Rashi's work as the perus and Smalley believes that as yet unexplored glosses of the late thirteenth century will reveal references to "Rabbi Solomon."

³³Hailperin, op. cit., pp. 251, 142.

³⁴Hailperin, op. cit., pp. 140-141, 252.

³⁵Smalley, op. cit., p. xiii.

³⁶Hailperin, op. cit., p. 250.

³⁷Daniel Jeremy Silver, Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy, 1180-1240. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 1.

³⁸J. Munz, Maimonides. Translated from the German by Henry T. Schmitt Kind (Boston: Winchell-Thomas Co., 1935), pp. 153-155.

³⁹Silver, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴⁰Marcus, op. cit., pp. 145-149.

⁴¹Adin Steinsaltz, The Essential Talmud, Translated from the Hebrew by Chaya Galai (New York: Basic Books, 1976) pp. 81-82.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 3-5.

⁴³Silver, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴⁴Silver, op. cit.

⁴⁵Roth, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴⁶Roth, op. cit., p. 55.

⁴⁷Roth, op. cit., p. 79.

⁴⁸Hailperin, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

⁴⁹Hailperin, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

⁵⁰Berger, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

⁵¹Berger, op. cit., pp. 30-34.

⁵²Nizzahon Vetus or Old Book of Polemic, A Critical Edition. Introduction, translation, and commentary by David Berger in The Jewish Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

⁵³Nizzahon Vetus. Passage cited is from Vayera Elav. Translated by David Berger, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵⁴Nizzahon Vetus. Passage cited is from Vayeshev Ya'aqov. Translated by David Berger, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵⁵Nizzahon Vetus. Passage cited is from Vayishma' Yitro. Translated by David Berger, op. cit., p. 65.

⁵⁶Nizzahon Vetus. Passage cited is from Ki Tissa. Translated by David Berger, op. cit., p. 68.

CHAPTER IV

The Jew as "Exemplum" and as "Judas Felawe"

The foregoing exploration has focused on events, situations, and the general atmosphere in which the medieval Christian-Jewish relationships took place. In the process, the medieval Jew has been brought out of the shadows for a moment in time. The re-creation of this interaction between Christian and Jew and the environment in which it took place may provide a larger context in which to view Langland's treatment of the Jews.

What was Langland's attitude toward Jews? They play a small but integral role in the poem as they and the "Hebrew truth" are part of a number of the author's concerns, such as the importance of charity, the Mosaic law, and the practice of usury. The Jews are involved, also, in the Christian theology of the poem, i.e., the Crucifixion, the Second Advent, and the author's concern with the salvation of the unbaptized. All of these factors have a small part to play in the Dreamer's quest for truth and for knowledge about the best way to live in this world in order to achieve eternal life.

As the poem begins, the Dreamer's words seem to reflect a lack of religious surety or religious knowledge for he asks Holy Church to:

preye for my synnes;
 And [ek] kenne me kyndely on crist to bileue.
 (B,I,81)

He is not interested in any "tresor" but asks her to tell him only "How I may save my soule that Seint art yholden." (B,I,84)

In her response to the Dreamer's question, Holy Church says:

Whan alle tresors arn tried treuthe is the
 beste;
 I do it on Deus caritas to deme thee sothe.
 It is as dereworthe a drury as deere god
 hymselfen." (B,I,85-87)

Holy Church appeals to God to teach the Dreamer what Truth is and equates it with God. In the long and somewhat rambling passage which follows, Holy Church's description of truth encompasses the thought that truth is reflected by the honest man of goodwill who does well and that, according to the Gospel, such a man is a god on earth and in Heaven, too. (B,I,88-90) She continues with

the idea that clergy who know Truth should teach it "For cristen and vncristen cleymeth it echone." (B,I,93). The examples given reflect that Jew and Christian both can know and serve the truth:

For Daud in hise dayes dubbed kny₃tes, Dide
hem sweren on hir swerd to seruen truth euere
(B,I,98-99)

and Christ, knighted ten, and

tau₃te hem [thoru₃] the Trinitee [the] treuthe
to knowe:
(B,I,109)

Again, interweaving qualities which reflect both Judaic and Christian examples and values, Holy Church says that truth teaches that love "is triacle of heuene," "And lered it Moyses for the leueste thyng and moost lik to heuene" (B,I,148,151). Offshoots of love are the qualities of charity, mercy, and pity which Jesus had for "that peple that peyned hym to dethe" (B,I,171).

These examples of the qualities of love and pity lead Holy Church on to say how important it is to "louen leelly and lene the powere" (B,I,181) because

Feith withouten feet is [feblere than nou₃t],
And as deed as a dore[nail] but if the ded[e]
folwe:
(B,I,186-187)

Truth, love, and its offshoots, pity, mercy, and charity are significant, perhaps utmost, values to Langland. All of these involve the relationship of man to his fellow man. As part of a discourse between Wit and the Dreamer, identified as Will, Wit comments on the duty of giving to the poor, the importance of people helping one another, and contrasts the behavior of Christian and Jew in this regard:

Sholde no cristene creature cryen at the yate
 Ne faille payn ne potage and prelates dide as
 thei sholden.
 A Iew wolde no₃t se a Iew go Ianglyng for
 defaute
 For alle the mebles on this moolde and he amend
 it my₃te.
 Allas that a cristene creature shal be vnkynde
 til another!
 Syn Iewes, that we Iugge Iudas felawes,
 Eyther of hem helpeth oother of that that h[y]m
 nedeth,
 Whi [ne wol] we cristene of cristes good be as
 kynde?
 [So] Iewes [shul] ben oure loresmen, shame to
 vs alle!

(B,IX,82-90)

In the foregoing passage, Langland seems to be saying that ordinary Jews, who are usually considered in the same category as Judas, i.e., betrayers or traitors, are helpful to each other's needs, while Christian clergymen lack concern for fellow Christians who are

hungry or in need. Wit continues with the scathing remark that such a prelate is really in a class with Judas:

Bisshopes shul be blamed for beggeres sake.
 He is [Iugged with] Iudas that 3yueth a Iaper
 siluer
 And biddeth the beggere go for his broke
 clothes:

(B,IX,92-94)

The foregoing passages do not appear as part of Wit's discourse in either the A-Text or the C-Text. Possibly an observed experience which occurred after writing the A-Text led the poet to include the passage about Jewish charity in the B-Text. As to why these passages were not included in the C-Text, one can only speculate that Langland may have felt he was being too harsh with the clergy. The A-Text and the C-Text reflect only a mild discourse by Wit about the necessity for Holy Church to help fatherless children, widows, and simpletons. (A,X,58-70; C,X,182-186).

Holding the Jew up as an example of charitable behavior to each other was not unique to Piers Plowman during that time. There is similar mention made of the Jews in a sermon by Thomas Brunton (1320-99), a Benedictine monk of Norwich and Bishop of Rochester from

1371 until 1389. It has been suggested that Langland regarded Brunton as his spiritual guide; they were contemporaries and Brunton's sermons reflect the social, political, and religious climate of Piers Plowman¹. In one of his sermons, Brunton says:

I preach against the injustice of certain rich men who show less compassion towards the poor than do the Jews or Saracens. The leaders of the Jews collect from the rich that the poor may be fed. The princes of the Christians indeed collect from the poor that the rich may be supported in their pride.²

The English Dominican friar, John Bromyard, comments also on the care of the Jews for their poor, and the piety of the Jews. He, too, uses the Jew as an example for the Christians "whom they put utterly to shame."³

It is possible, of course, that Langland and the preachers, Brunton and Bromyard, were merely using rhetorical tricks to upbraid the Christians by comparing specific aspects of their conduct unfavorably to that of Jews, reflecting thereby only a patronizing attitude toward the Jew as basically inferior. A very obvious example of such a "compliment" is cited:

I have heard that a certain Jew, playing at dice with a Christian and hearing how he blasphemed God when he lost, stopped his ears

and rose from the game and fled, leaving his money on the table. For the Jews not only will not blaspheme God, but will not even listen to blasphemers. How wretched are those taverners who, for a little gain, suffer such blasphemous fellows, worse than Jews, to revile God in their houses.⁴

In the foregoing passage, there is no mistaking the disdain, or contempt, with which Jews were viewed.

Was the practice of charity an important value to Jews? The Talmud expresses the concept of charity in two ways, that of alms giving and kindly deeds. Alms giving is designated by the Hebrew word Tzedakah, which means "righteousness." All of man's possessions are considered to be a temporary loan from the Creator and by giving charity to the poor one is returning to God what is His.⁵ The idea is expressed by David who asks, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" He answers his own question, "For all things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee." (I Chron. XXIX:14)

The practice of charity is considered such a duty in rabbinic tradition, and of such spiritual benefit that "even the beggar who is maintained by charity must himself practice charity." "Give much or give little,

only give with your heart for the sake of God."⁶ There is the particularism of "Jews are responsible for one another,"⁷ as well as the universality of "Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deut. X:19)

Thus, Biblical and rabbinic tradition emphasize the importance of charity. The comments in Piers Plowman and the statements of Brunton and Bromyard do sound as if they are being spoken about observed or known behavior. An informal structure did exist in the medieval Jewish community to eliminate any necessity for a poor Jew to beg for his needs in public. In order to avoid having a poor person be put into such a shameful position, a system of poor relief existed.

The system included the collection of money through tithes (not less than ten percent, but not more than twenty percent of the profits of the wealthy), the distribution of food, the lodging of poor travelers in the homes of the wealthy, and the provision for vagrants in hostelries. Widows were given a pension and orphans were taken care of until they were married. Poor girls were provided with dowry money. Thus, among medieval

Jews any public solicitation of alms would have been rare.⁸

It would seem that the portrait of the Jew as depicted in this passage may not only reflect a contemporary example but be based also on the ethical foundation of the Hebrew Bible. Langland may be thinking in terms of such a context in calling the Jews "oure loresmen." The words recall those of Roger Bacon:

from [the Jews] began the foundation of our faith and we ought to consider that they are of the seed of the patriarchs, and prophets, and, what is more, from their stem the Lord was born, and the glorious Virgin, and apostles, and saints innumerable have descended.⁹

It is possible, too, that Langland may have been aware of the Christian and Hebrew scholarship and interaction in Biblical exegesis which was taking place in England during his time and which brought to the fore Hebrew concepts. This possibility is reinforced when Langland points to dread of God as a feeling needed to "do-well." Concepts such as dread of God, vengeance of God, and justice of God are not usually associated with Christianity, which emphasizes the love and forgiveness of Christ. Yet, Langland has Wit saying:

That dredeth god, he dooth wel; that dredeth
 hym for loue
 And [dredeth hym] no₃t for drede of vengeaunce
 dooth therfore the bettre;
 (B,IX,97-98)

The passage does not appear in the C-Text. In the A-Text, the thought is similar to that in the B-Text, but it is phrased differently. The full passage in the A-Text is:

And that is dred of god, dowel it makith
 It is begynnyng of goodnesse god for to douten.
 Salamon it seide for a soth tale:
Inicium sapiencie timor domini.
 For doute men doth the bet; dred is such a
 maister
 That he makith men meke & mylde of here speche.
 (A,X,79-83)

In this context, "doute" means fear.

The commandment, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God," (Deut. VI:13) reflects the fact that fear or awe acts as a powerful deterrent against evil actions.¹⁰ It is the beginning of setting limits to one's actions. Punishment for evil doing is very much a part of Judaic thought, bound up with the concept of a just God. In his final discourses in Deuteronomy, Moses made use of every motive that influences men, including fear of God, in order to win the people over to a higher spiritual life.¹¹

The commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. VI:5) is complementary to the command of fearing God. It provides the higher incentive for living in accordance with the will of God. Moses tried to instill a love of God in Jews by reminding them of God's love, friendliness, and patience to His people,¹² and taught the people to emulate these qualities in their relations with each other. Thus, Moses' commandment was designed to inspire people to good conduct through love of God.

Wit's comments, therefore, reflect the awareness that an individual who fears God will "do-well" out of fear of punishment. The individual who acts out of a mixture of fear and love, or one who acts only out of love of God will "do-better" because, while the actions may be the same, the latter action will be from a higher spiritual motive.

These concepts are reinforced at the end of the passus in a kind of summing up by Wit which includes significant changes.

Dowel, my [deere], is to doon as lawe techeth:
To loue [and to love thee and no lif to greue;

Ac to loue and to lene], leue me, that is
 dobet;
 To 3yuen and to yemen bothe yonge and olde,
 To helen and to helpen, is dobest of alle.
 [Thanne is dowel] to drede, and dobet to suffre
 And so cometh dobest [aboute] and bryngeth
 adoun mody,
 And that is wikked wille that many werk
 shendeth,
 And dryueth away dowel thoro₃ dedliche synnes.
 (B,IX,202-210)

The C-Text includes only the first five lines of
 this passage (C,X,301-305); the A-Text leaves out these
 five lines but includes the next three lines (A,X,216-
 219). Taken together, the A and C-Texts include the
 entire passage in the B-Text, except the very last line.

The foregoing passage still retains the concept that
 fear of God leads one to "do-well." However, "dobet"
 seems aligned not only with love, but with suffering.
 This quality connotes a Christian rather than a Judaic
 concept. While Judaism recognizes that good may come out
 of suffering, it is not considered as a good per se.

In the last lines, Wit seems to be saying that "do-
 best" comes about from combining the Judaic-Christian
 concepts, i.e., that out of the fear and love of God and
 suffering, man is brought to give up his pride and wicked
 will and live a life without sin.

A sermon thought to be delivered in London about 1387 by Thomas Wimbledon contains a similar emphasis on the dread of God, suffering, and their effects on the actions of men. He says:

Also otherwile God sendith siknesse and tribulacion to wickid men, and that for two causis. First, for they schulde the rathere drede God and leue here synne. . . For we seeth ofte men in sekenesse knowe here God that neuere wolden have turned to hym while they hadden ben hoole. Also God sendith hem syknesse ofte to agaste other men lest they folweden here synnes.¹³

Perhaps these ideas were part of the climate of the times.

In the narrative of the woman found guilty of adultery, there is an example of the view that the God of the Hebrew Bible is synonymous with the quality of harsh letter-of-the-law justice, while Christ epitomises love. The woman was to be stoned to death in accordance with Mosaic law; she was saved from this fate by Jesus' words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8:3-11).

Imaginatif, who has been called the Dreamer's "chief instructor,"¹⁴ retells this narrative to the Dreamer (XII,72-82), beginning with the phrase:

For Moyses witnesseth that god wroot for to
 wisse the peple
 In the olde lawe as the lettre telleth, that
 was the lawe of Iewes
 (B,XII 72,73)

In retelling this narrative to the Dreamer (B,XII,72-82), Imaginatif reminds the Dreamer of Christ's charity. He says that "for cristes loue, that of Clergie is roote" (B,XII,71) and draws the analogy that just as Christ's words saved the woman, "so clergie is confort to creatures that repenten" (B,XII,83). Previously Wit has castigated the clergy for their lack of charity. Now, Imaginatif softens the Dreamer's view of the clergy by reminding him of Christ's words. The contrasting views of Wit and Imaginatif appear to reflect a change in the author's own mind to Imaginatif's view of the clergy.

A significant change in the passage appears in the C-Text. The introductory phrase is changed to read:

For Moyses witnesseth that god wroet and Crist
 with his fynger;
 Lawe of love oure lorde wroet long ar Crist
 were,
 (C,XIV,37-38)

The narrative itself is left out; four lines are added to the introductory phrase.

And Crist came and conferemed and holy kyrke
 made
 And in soend a signe wroet and saide to the
 Iewes:
 'That seth hym sulue synnelees, sese not, y
 hote,
 To strike with stoen or with staf this strompet
 to dethe.'

(C, XIV, 39-42)

Thus, the changes in the C-Text include Langland's awareness that long before Christ, love was a quality of the Biblical God and his law, which Christ later confirmed. Also, in changing the term "woman" to the pejorative "strompet," Langland appears to indicate his own displeasure with the "lady's" conduct. The line that "oure lorde wroet long ar Crist were" is puzzling in that it appears to indicate that Langland at this point did not really believe or may have been ambivalent about the orthodox Christian doctrine that the New Testament was prefigured from the time of Genesis and that Christ was one of the three men that Abraham saw and before whom he set meat and bread. (B, XVI, 223-229; C, XVIII, 240-244; Gen. XVIII: 1-4). In the C-Text, Abraham's explanation of the Trinity draws a disbelieving response from the Dreamer:

'This is myrke thyng for me,' quod y, 'and for
 many another,
 How o lord myhte lyue o thre; y leue hit nat,'
 y sayde.

(C,XVIII,197-198)

As part of another discourse that the clergy, as
 leaders, should set an example and give both food for the
 body and spirit to the people, Anima goes on to cite the
 "lele lawe":

In stoon for it stedefast was and stonde sholde
 euere.

Dilige deum & proximum is parfit Iewen lawe;
 (B,XV,582-586, not in C)

The phrase is repeated during the narrative of the
 Good Samaritan when Spes (Hope, Moses) shows the Dreamer
 the words written on "a pece of an hard roche":

Dilige deum & proximum tuum,
 This was the tixte, trewely I took ful good
 yeme.
 The glose was gloriously writen with a gilt
 penne:

In hijs duobus mandatis tota lex pendet &
prophet[e]

(B,XVII,13-16; C,XIX,13-16)

The Dreamer seeks assurance from the Samaritan
 (Charity, Jesus) that what he has been told to believe by
 Faith (Abraham) and Spes (Hope, Moses) is really true:

'A, swete sire', I seide tho, 'wher I shall
 bileue,

As Feith and his felawe enformed me bothe,
 In thre persones departable that perpetuele
 were euere,
 And alle thre but o god? thus Abraham me
 tau₃te;
 And Hope afterward he bad me to louye
 O god with al my good, and alle gomes after
 Louye hem lik myselue, ac oure lord abouen
 alle.'

(B,XVII,127-133; C,XIX,4-100)

The C-Text is similar in thought and almost similar
 in wording.

The Samaritan's response to the Dreamer includes an
 interesting change.

'After Abraham,' quod he,' that heraud of
 armes,
 Sette [faste] thi feith and ferme bileue;
 And as hope highte thee I hote that thow louye
 Thyn euene Cristene eueremoore eueneforth with
 thiselue.

(B,XVII, 134-137)

While Moses commanded the Dreamer to love God and
 all men, the Samaritan's command is to love "thy fellow
 Christian." Is Langland being ironic? Has he looked at
 his world and observed how hard it seems to be for man to
 love his fellow man, especially the outsider, the Jew,
 whom Paul had called an enemy and who was to be loved
 only for the sake of the Patriarchs?

The Dreamer had indicated previously that the Mosaic law to love all men was too difficult and that those who learned that law would not practice it for long (B,XVII,49; C,XIX,45). How strange that the Samaritan who was "so full of pity," should limit the commandment to loving only Christians. On the surface, the Samaritan has just helped a person in a situation in which both Abraham and Moses have been found wanting. The Samaritan took the person to the grange called Lex Cristi. (In the C-Text, the grange is called lavacrum-lex-dei; Pearsall explains it as the baptismal font symbolic of entry into the Law or Church of Christ.¹⁵) Could Langland be saying that Abraham and Moses are wanting in that they do not practice what they preach? Or, are they found wanting in not accepting Jesus as Christ in what appears to be an easier law to fulfill? And is Charity greater than Faith and Hope if it is limited to Christians?

In any event, Langland has changed the New Testament narrative of the Samaritan (Luke X: 30-37), which reflects a contrast between the actions of Jews and those of a Samaritan, a people with whom (according to St. John 3:9) the Jews had no dealings. The original parable shows up the Jews as lacking in compassion for another people.

The lesson of the original narrative was that to love one's neighbor means to love all people; however, Langland may be indicating that inherent in the narrative itself is a seed from which may sprout a Christian's lack of compassion for the non-Christian. It is perhaps in this sense, then, that the commandment of the Samaritan in Piers Plowman is particular rather than universal.

In the C-Text, the Samaritan's response is watered down and becomes innocuous.¹⁶ Moses is left out entirely:

And as Abraham the olde of a god the tauhte,
 Loke thow louye and bileue al they lyf-tyme.
 And yf Kynde Wit carpe here-azen or eny kyne
 thouhtes
 Or eretikes with argumentis, thien hoend that
 thow hem shewe.

(C, XIX, 107-109)

And in a later passus, Conscience reverts to the conventional statement that before the time of Christ men did not love their enemies. (B, XIX, 112-114; C, XXI, 112-114).

The flow and ebb of Langland's thoughts reflect what it means to think: to move outward from the safe harbor

of an orthodox view into unknown waters, yet to try to hold onto one's moorings. Thus, he raises questions without providing answers that close the door to further inquiry, and is able to hold contradictory ideas in a kind of unresolved tension.¹⁷

In the very lines spoken by Wit pointing to the Jew as a moral model and teacher, Langland interweaves the thought that Jews are judged as "Judas felawes." The identification of Jews with the Crucifixion of Christ was a familiar motif. In his portrayal of the Crucifixion, Langland describes the event in an almost similar fashion to the way it is depicted by the Apostles. The envy and ill will of the Jews who plotted to kill Jesus (B,XVI,136; Matt. 27:18), the betrayal of Jesus by Judas with a kiss (B,XVI,152; Matt. 26:48,49), the narration of the event itself (B,XVIII,37-75; Matt. 27:1-54 and John 19:32-33) and the aftermath in which the Jews tried, through bribery, to have it appear as if the body was stolen (B,XIX,154-156; Matt. 28:13), all follow the source material.

Three differences occur in Langland's version, two of which somewhat temper the New Testament text. In the

Gospel account, Pilate is reluctant to have Jesus crucified and orders his death only because the Jews demand it. Langland's version does not mention any such reluctance by Pilate. Dame Study, in her discourse about the general lack of knowledge regarding the Scripture, had previously told the Dreamer of Pilate's role in the Crucifixion:

Or prechen of the penaunce that Pilat wro₃te
 To Iesu the gentile that Iewes todrowe
 [On cros vpon caluarye as clerkes vs techeth],
 (B,X,34-36)

This passage is also in the A-Text (XI,26-28), but does not appear in the C-Text.

The second difference is that the Gospel states: "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54); the Dreamer first qualifies this statement with the words that "some seie that he was goddes sone that so faire deide: Vere filius dei erat iste." (B,XVIII,68; C,XX,71)

The third difference, in the Gospel account of John (19:32-34), merely includes the legend of Longinus taken from the Legenda Aurea.¹⁸

It is for the spearing of Jesus, i.e., the desecration of the dead body, which is forbidden in Biblical law, and not the Crucifixion itself which is a Roman punishment, that Feith then begins "the false Iewes [to] despise," swears "vengeaunce," condemns them and their children never to own land, to "barayne be and [by] vsurie [libben], which is lif that oure lord in alle lawes acurseth." (B,XVIII,92-107). Why does Langland make Feith's curse related to the desecration of the dead Jesus, rather than to the Crucifixion itself? It may be because the Crucifixion was viewed as providential.

The passage in the C-Text (XX,96-111) is similar except for a one word difference in the last line which softens the word "acurseth" to "defendeth," which means "prohibits." "The which is lif that oure lord in alle lawes defendeth." (C,XX,111).

Langland refers to the Crucifixion repeatedly in both the B-Text and the C-Text.¹⁹ The three descriptive references to the event in the C-Text correspond to the three descriptive references in the B-Text except that the first reference in the C-Text (XVIII,164-178) is a shortened version. While not all the words are exactly

similar, the passages are quite similar in thought. Yet despite all the pejorative terms, in Langland's description of the Crucifixion, the poet believes that the Jews were God's instruments in the death of Jesus, and that this death was part of a foreordained plan for mankind. Anima states:

For wel may every man wite, if god had wold
 hymselue,
 Sholde neuere Iudas ne Iew have Iesu doon on
 roode,

(B,XV, 263-264)

This passage does not appear in the C-Text. Langland may have changed his mind, or he may have become cautious about stating such a viewpoint.

However, Holy Church reflects the same concept when she says , in all three texts, that God:

Loked on vs with loue and leet his sone dye
 Mekely for oure mysdedes to amenden vs alle.
 And yet wolde he hem no wo that wrou₃te hym
 that peyne,
 But mekely with mouthe mercy [he] bisou₃te
 To haue pite [on] that peple that peyned hym to
 dethe.

(B,I,167-171; A,I,141-145; C,I,163-167)

When the Dreamer asks Faith whether the Jews will be Jesus' adversary when he jousts in the tournament in Jerusalem, the response indicates that Jesus does not see the Jews as the enemy:

'Who shal Iuste with Iesus,' quod I, 'Iewes or
Scribes?'

'Nay,' quod [feith, but] the fend and fals doom
[to deye.]

(B,XVIII,27-28; C,XX,26-27)

It is Death who is the universal enemy, that Jesus
has come to fight and conquer.²⁰

Be that as it may, the condemnation by Faith that
Langland portrays is certainly a vivid reflection of some
of the terms and conditions under which medieval Jews had
to live. While Jews had few other options than to earn a
living by usury, Christians, as well as Jews, practiced
usury. Langland's knowledge of this fact is evident in
his two examples. In the description of Avarice, one of
the seven deadly sins, Covetousness, a Christian,
responds to Repentance's question as to whether he had
ever practiced usury:

'Vsedestow euere vsurie,' quod Repentaunce, 'in
al thi lif tyme?'

'Nay, sothly,' he seide, 'saue in my youthe.
I lerned among lumbardes [a lesson and of
Iewes],

To weye pens with a peis and pare the heuyeste
And lene it for loue of the cros, to legge a
wed and lese it.

Swiche dedes I dide write if he his day breke;
(B,V, 237-242)

The passage does not appear in the A-Text. In the C-Text, the first four lines are similar. The last two lines are changed to read:

And lente for loue of the wed, the whych y
 lette bettere
 And more worth then the moneye or men that I
 lenede.

(C,VI, 243-244)

The lesson learned from the Lombards and Jews refers to coin-clipping.²¹ Coins were filed down before passing them on. The filings, or clippings, were then turned into sheet silver. Sometimes the sheet silver was used to cover sheets of base metal which were then passed off as solid silver.²² The English coin was mutilated in this process. The coin "was clipped round almost to the inner part of the ring, and the border which bore the letters was either entirely destroyed or enormously defaced."²³

The last two lines of the passage in the C-Text reflect that the money was loaned and a pledge or security received by the lender. Covetousness is saying that the pledge was of more value than either the money or the borrower. Thus, the loan was made with the hope that the borrower could not repay by the date due and would forfeit the "wed" or security.²⁴

In the B-Text passage, the money was loaned for "love of the cross." It is not clear what this means; perhaps Covetousness had made a loan to the clergy. If such were the case, however, a pledge of sacred vessels or vestments would have been a violation of Church law.²⁵ The action itself seems to be similar in both texts, although it is not clear whether Covetousness lost out on the pledge (if the loan was made to the clergy) or the borrower lost his pledge.

The second example of usury is the practice of it by Haukyn. Haukyn confesses that he "Lened for loue of the wed," (XIII,359).

And [what body] borwed of me abou³te the tyme
 With presentes pryuely, or paide som certeyn;
 So, [wolde he] or no³t wolde, wynnyn I wolde.
 (B,XIII,375-377)

The Church's prohibition against money lending at interest led Christians so engaged to the use of various such ruses as described by Haukyn: secret gifts or cash payments. Apparently, these were fairly common practices.

[Business men] circumvented the usury laws by courtesy loans, fictitious partnerships, dry

bills of exchange, and most of all by interest...interest was a payment for not having returned a loan on time. The loan was made for a few days or weeks free, and then a charge was imposed, not for the use of the money, for that would be usury, but for the failure to pay back.²⁶

For Jew and Christian, money lending in whatever guises, provided a livelihood and answered legitimate business needs. These activities laid the foundation for modern banking and business practices. The practice of usury, i.e., interest on loans, was viewed as immoral by the Church, but an interesting analogy is drawn by Gras between money lending practices and doing one's duty to one's fellow man:

The Jews displayed a spirit of individual action, a rationality, accountability, and ambition for worldly success that doubtless acted as a foil to the influence of the Christian Church.

Here we have a curious situation. The Jews have given us both Christianity and Judaism. The early Middle Ages accepted Christianity, so far as they could assimilate it, whilst the later Middle Ages dallied with Judaism at the very time the Jews themselves were exiled. The earlier religion of love, of heavy emotional charge, sufficient in fact to send men and women into seclusion for the rest of their lives and to drive armies of warriors to the Holy Land, made room for a system of duty to one's fellow man under a contractual relationship. Keeping books with God doubtless aided the Jew to keep books with man; and keeping books with man was indispensable to the development of business. Just as Christ had

been crucified and yet his precepts followed, so were the Jews driven from pillar to post and yet their spirit was emulated.²⁷

The concept of keeping books with God calls to mind Piers' redde quod debes. And the exile of Jews calls to mind Avignon, where the Jews were under papal protection; it was a place from which they were never expelled. There is, in fact, a reference to the Jews in Avignon in the poem. It is part of a discourse by an ignorant vicar who is against the possibility of visits from cardinals residing in Rome and Avignon. People have cried out against the sinful behavior of the cardinals, and the vicar says:

'For Thi' quod this vicory, 'by verray god I
 wolde
 That no Cardynal coome among the comune peple,
 But in hir holynesse helden hem stille
 At Auynoun among Iewes--(Cum sancto sanctus
eris & etc.
 Or in Rome as hir rule wole the relikes to
 kepe;

(B,XIX,419-23; C,XXI,419-423)

Avignon was known to be a sinful and materialistic city where benefices were sold and "worldly cardinals lived in shameful luxury on the exploitation of the faithful."²⁸ In general, it appears that Langland and his countrymen disapproved of the Papal Court at Avignon.

But for Jews, Avignon was a sanctuary. There were about two hundred families of Jews and they were permitted to engage in industry or trade.²⁹ The Jews sold room furnishings, clothes, food, horses, and even prayer books to the popes and other clergy. They also provided parchment for letter-writing and made bindings for missals or other books.³⁰ The Jews had, also, an opportunity to teach Hebrew as there was a "lively" interest in the study of Hebrew and Greek, which indicates that a certain degree of scholarly activity took place there.³¹ And, as mentioned previously, Adam Easton, the Benedictine monk-scholar who later became a cardinal, spent many years studying Hebrew at Avignon.³²

However, the vicar is speaking of a different type of cardinal. He is saying that sinful cardinals should stay in Avignon among the Jews. The flippant remark "with the holy of holies you will be holy" is ironic and reflects the attitude of a vicar who is ignorant.

Avignon, as the papal seat, was a financial center. Thus, the Jews among their other activities, were probably engaged in loaning money to the clergy. Chadwick interprets the remark to mean that the vicar

hopes the cardinals "will remain at the papal court at Avignon, competing with Jewish money lenders there in unholiness."³³

There is another facet to the vicar's words which may extend the range of its meaning. The phrase, "holy of holies," refers to the Hebrew Tabernacle or Sanctuary. It was a portable center of worship set up by Moses, containing the Ark of the Covenant in an inner chamber, in accordance with the commandment: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." (EX:XXV:8). The Sanctuary was a visible religious symbol and reminder to the people that God was in their midst.³⁴

In using the phrase "holy of holies," was the poet thinking, perhaps: What kind of example are the cardinals setting for the other clergy and the common people? The cardinals in Rome are just relic keepers and the cardinals in Avignon are sinners in what was supposed to be a holy place where life was to be sanctified in the service of God.

The values of the poet include a reverence for all things divine, a profound respect for Moses as a moral teacher and religious leader of the Jews, and a belief in the importance of the office and the role of the clergy. That he himself would never be flippant about the Ark of the Covenant is reflected in the words of Imaginatif:

Archa dei, in the olde lawe, leuytes it kepten;
 Hadde neuere lewed man leue to leggen hond on
 that cheste
 But he were preest or preestes sone, Patriark
 or prophete.
 [Saul for he sacrificed sorwe hym bitidde,
 And his sones also for that synne myscheued,
 And manye mo other men, that were no leuites,
 That with archa dei [wenten] in [worship and
 reuerence]
 And leiden hand theron to liften it vp loren
 here lif after.
 Forthi I conseilte alle creatures no clergie to
 dispise
 Ne sette shorte bi hir science, whatso thei don
 hemselue.]

(B,XII,113-122; C,XIV,58-65)

What, then, is the meaning of the previous passage? Perhaps, here, too, the poet is able to hold a configuration of differing ideas, with one or another dominant at different times, or all held together, unresolved, at the same time.

Can one, then, proceeding with caution, say, with a semblance of certainty, what Langland's attitudes are toward the Jew?

Langland, through the words of Wit, has pointed to the Jews as an example of charitable behavior and concern for each other.³⁵ Thus, one can say that he respects the actions of the Jews. When the Jew reflects this love and responsibility to his fellow man, then he is setting a good example, an important value to Langland. And when the Christian prelate reflects a lack of concern for the poor, he is judged a "Judas felawe."³⁶ Again, it is the action, or rather lack of action in this case, which is significant to Langland. Since the clergy are leaders and "standard bearers," such an omission by the prelate warrants the poet's harsh language and shows that a "Judas felawe" to Langland can be anyone who betrays his fellow man. The term had, by then, become part of the language as a synonym for falsity, whether that falsity involved Jew or Christian.

The same emphasis on conduct, rather than whether the person is a Christian or Jew, appears with regard to the occupation of money lending. As the practice of

lending money at interest was viewed as sinful by the Church and Langland, he uses the pejorative term "usurer" to describe Christian or Jew engaged in such practice.

Besides the ordinary Jew, there is the Jew of the Hebrew Bible. There seems to be no doubt that the Patriarchs, and the Bible itself, its commandments and precepts, exert a very strong appeal to Langland and influence his thinking. In particular, Langland emphasizes Mosaic law. It is Moses, as a law-giver, rather than as a type of Christ, for whom Langland seems to have great respect.

The Jews of the Crucifixion are another matter. It is the one area which stands out in stark, unrelieved harshness in its depiction of the actions of the Jews. The poet follows fairly consistently the account of the Crucifixion in the Gospels, the original source of which is in the Greek language. Nevertheless, with the exception of Luke, it was written by Jews about Jews.³⁷

In addition to the foregoing, one must consider, as well, what Langland does not say. In pointing up the social evils of the age, he does not accuse Jews of

causing the Black Death by poisoning wells. The plague was the result of "pure synne." And there is no mention of the prevalent idea that Jews needed the blood of a child for a religious ritual. This concept is reflected only by the Samaritan with regard to baptism (B,XVII,95-97). Also, there is no mention of any connection between Jews and the practice of sorcery.

In the process of thinking oneself forward, it may be best to hold tentatively these threads of thought, as well as the questions and apparent contradictions, and move on to consider such theological issues as the salvation of the Jew, as well as others who were not baptized, and the promise of universal salvation during the Second Advent. These topics will be considered in the following two chapters.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Chapter IV

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⁸Abrahams, op. cit., pp. 308-311.

⁹Bevan and Singer, op. cit., p. 299.

¹⁰Hertz, op. cit., p. 770.

¹¹Hertz, op. cit., p. 925.

¹²Hertz, op. cit., p. 925.

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¹⁴Morton W. Bloomfield, Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, 1961) pp. 170-174.

¹⁵Derek Pearsall provides this explanation in his edition of the C-Text, p. 309, n. 71.

¹⁶E. Talbot Donaldson discusses many of the changes and differences in the A-, B-, and C-Texts in Piers Plowman: The C-Text and Its Poet, (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966). Donaldson believes that in the C-Text the poet is more careful not to give offense than he is in the A or B Texts. See, particularly, his chapter "The Art of the C-Reviser." G. H. Russell, in his article "Some Aspects of the Process of Revision in Piers Plowman" in S. S. Hussey (ed.), Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches, (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1969) speculates with regard to some of these revisions; he believes that many are scribally introduced variations.

¹⁷Priscilla Martin brings out a number of these irreconcilable statements in Piers Plowman, The Field and the Tower (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 53-54, 57.

¹⁸Derek Pearsall provides the explanation that the story of Longinus' blindness, healing, and conversion is in the Legenda Aurea XLVII. See p. 323, n. 82.

¹⁹See B, XVI, 136-161; B, XVIII, 37-35; B, XIX, 139-156; also C, XVIII, 164-178; C, XX, 35-80; C, XXI, 139-156.

²⁰Martin, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

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²²H. G. Richardson, The English Jewry under Angevin Kings (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1960), p. 217.

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²⁴Derek Pearsall provides this explanation in his edition of the C-Text. See p. 120, n. 243.

²⁵Cave and Coulson, op. cit., p. 175. In A.V.C. Schmidt's edition of the B-Text, he provides the explanation that the cross refers to the cross on the coins and, therefore, the meaning is that the loan was made for the love of money. See A.V.C. Schmidt, ed., The Vision of Piers Plowman by William Langland, A Complete Edition of the B-Text, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), p. 317, n. 236-248.

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²⁹Yves Renouard, The Avignon Papacy 1305-1403, trans. Denis Bethel, (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), p. 92.

³⁰Solomon Grayzel, "The Avignon Popes and the Jews," Historia Judaica, II (1940), pp. 1-2.

³¹Gene Brucker, "An Unpublished Source on the Avignones Papacy: The Letters of Francesco Bruni," Traditio XIX (1963), p. 361.

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³³Dorothy Chadwick, Social Life in the Days of Piers Plowman, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969), p. 12.

³⁴Hertz, op. cit., p. 325.

³⁵Elizabeth D. Kirk, The Dream Thought of Piers Plowman, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 125, n. 21. See also G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama, op. cit., p. 359.

³⁶Walter W. Skeat in his version of the B-Text used a different manuscript in which even stronger language was used: "He is worse than Iudas." (IX,90) in William Langland, The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1969.

³⁷Quentin Lauer, S. J. "The Genius of Biblical Thought," The Bridge, II (1956), p. 208. Father Lauer feels that it is an "anomaly" that the New Testament comes to us through the Greek language, rather than the Hebrew. However, he believes the "anomaly" was "providential" because the Church was destined to assimilate Greek and later Roman thought. I think it would have been useful to have the "Hebrew truth," as well as the Greek.

CHAPTER V

The Salvation of the Unbaptized

One of the issues which was of theological concern during the fourteenth and earlier centuries was the salvation of the Jew and a related issue, the salvation of the righteous heathen. Would the good Jew who lived according to his law, or the good heathen who lived according to his own high standards be condemned to eternal perdition?

The position of the Church was stated in the Lateran Council of 1299. ". . . there is one holy catholic and apostolic church, outside of which there is neither salvation nor remission of sins; . . .Indeed we declare, announce, and define, that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff."¹

Men being what they are, however, this was not considered by everyone to be the final word on the subject. The complaint of the Austin Canon Robert Mannyng of Bourne in his popular didactic poem Handlyng

Synne² points up at least some degree of uncertainty in this regard:

Ofte we here the lewede men seye
 That erre ful moche oute of the weye,
 That of the Iewes seye sum oun,
 'They ne wote whether they be saued or noun;'
 But of sum prestes ys gretter tene,
 That so of the Iewes also wene;
 Certes, they are alle yn were,
 And yn the feyth they are not clere,
 For, shal neuer Iewe that deyeth Iewe,
 Of heuene blys haue part ne prewe
 But he be crystenede yn the holy gaste
 An yn the sacrament be ful stedfast.

(9516-9527)

Mannyng's poem reflects the orthodox view that salvation is not possible for the Jew who dies a Jew. But it shows, also, that not only were the ordinary, uneducated people unsure of this "certainty," but that even some of the learned clergy were not sure whether the Jews would be saved.

Perhaps because of an awareness throughout the century of continuing questioning and dissent which had penetrated the Church itself, the Church issued another decree at the Council of Florence, over a hundred years later, which spelled out specifically that "all who are outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews, heretics, and schismatics, cannot partake of

eternal life, but are doomed to the eternal fire of hell, if they do not enter the Church before the end of their lives."³ Baptism was the regular means of entry into the Church.

And what of the Jews or the heathens who had lived before the Incarnation? Thomas Aquinas considered that for Jews living before the Incarnation, the act of faith in the "Old Law," combined with the ritual of circumcision was powerful and effective. However, under the "New Law," faith must be combined with baptism in reality or desire. "In case baptism with water cannot be received, the saving act of faith must include, implicitly, readiness to be baptized."⁴ This allowance for an implicit readiness left room for a good deal of interpretation.

The situation with regard to heathens or pagans was different, since, unlike the Jew, the heathen did not believe in one God. Thus, for the heathen who lived before the Incarnation, Thomas considered that faith in providence was sufficient for salvation. After the Incarnation, however, an explicit act of faith in Christ, i.e., baptism, was necessary for salvation.⁵

All of this thinking seems to be in accordance with Christ's words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16) But, is it?

The problem of interpretation was not an easy one. Salvation, in a personal or universal sense, was an extremely important and complex subject which men interpreted in terms of varying ranges and degrees, depending upon their character, inclination, intellectual acumen, capacity for argument, or compassion.

The Jew, in particular, was a problem for the Church. He was not a heathen; he was usually well-versed in the Bible and believed in one God. He was not a heretic. i.e., "one who professed himself a Christian, but refused to conform to Catholic doctrine." ⁶ (However, as has been shown, both Christians and Jews, at times, accused each other of heresy; the Church charged the Jews with heresy in regard to the Talmud, a post-biblical innovation, and the Jews called the Christians "heretics," because the Jews felt "their" Bible was being misinterpreted.)⁷ In addition, the Jew lived among

Christians and was not ignorant of Christianity. Thus, being neither heathen, heretic, nor ignorant of the Bible or Christian beliefs, the Jew, in not accepting Christ as the Son of God, was thought to be a "deliberate unbeliever."⁸ It was not only the Crucifixion that perpetuated the enmity of some Christians, but the ongoing, generation after generation, refusal to accept Christianity; it was believed that this refusal was due to the Jew's stubborn temperament. There was plenty of evidence for the latter in the Hebrew Bible itself. For had not God called the Jews "a stiff-necked people"? (EX:32:9). The Jew was thus "hoist on his own petard," and some Christians believed that Jews "knew" the Truth but refused to see it.⁹

This thought is reflected in a great deal of medieval art. In stained glass church windows and in sculptured figures on cathedrals, there are numerous depictions of Church and Synagogue as two women. The "blindness" of the Jew is usually reflected by the Synagogue as a woman with a band over her eyes and the Tables of the Law slipping from her hand.¹⁰

Actually, the refusal by the Jews to accept Jesus as the Son of God was neither stubbornness, nor blindness, nor "hardness of heart." It was based on an obedience and faithfulness to the rock on which Judaism rests, that the Lord is One. (Deut. 32:39)¹¹ The idea of a god with a son seemed to Jews a blasphemous idea and a throw-back to polytheism.¹²

Anselm (1033--1109), in his treatise, Cur Deus Homo?, reflects an awareness of the viewpoint that Jews held, one about which Christians may have become concerned. He says:

The unbelievers deride our simplicity, saying that we injure and insult God in asserting that He entered a mother's womb, was born of a woman, nourished with her milk and other human food, and--not to mention many other things which seem inconsistent with God's nature--suffered weariness, hunger, thirst, blows, crucifixion and death among robbers.¹³

Anselm's treatise was a response to criticisms of the Christian faith and inquiries which were "being directed against just those incidents in the human history of Jesus which were increasingly the subject of Christian meditation."¹⁴ At least one of these critics was known to be a learned Jew and it is believed that Anselm had him in mind when he wrote the treatise.¹⁵

The Jew, in his refusal to accept Jesus as the Lord's Son, as well as through his polemics, was a special challenge to Christian theologians. Some, like Anselm, painstakingly tried to answer their criticisms, and to explain, instruct, and persuade Jews to Christian beliefs. At times, they were successful and conversions resulted.

The orthodox position, the desire to teach Jews to accept Jesus as the Lord's Son and be saved, as well as a questioning of Church doctrine, are facets of Langland's search for truth on this subject. Certainty and uncertainty about who would be saved, and whether the Jews, as well as others who were not baptized (Saracens and Greeks), would be saved, reflect concerns which were very much "in the air," during the time Langland was writing his poem. It was part of the whole spirit of inquiry; views long held and, perhaps, taken for granted were being reconsidered, first one way, and then another, in search of an answer, a truth, or a solution which would seem to fit in with man's sense of God's justice, love, and mercy. Langland's poem reflects this fluid process in the movement of his thought with regard to the

interrelated concerns of baptism, conversion, and salvation.

In a discourse on the virtues of poverty, Scripture tells the Dreamer that the poor Christian will inherit Heaven but that the rich Christian needs a special grace and mercy. The Dreamer counters this idea with the statement that those who are baptized are safe, regardless of whether they are rich or poor. (B,X,347-57) Scripture then goes on to introduce a startling idea:

'That is in extremis,' quod Scripture, '[as]
 Sar₃ens and Iewes,
 Mowen be saued so, and [so] is oure bileue;
 That [arn] vnchristene in that caas may cristen
 an hethen,
 And for his lele bileue, whan he the lif tyneth
 Haue heritage [in heuene] as [an hei₃]
 cristene.

(B,X,352-356; A,XI,235-239)

There are two different thoughts in this passage: first, Scripture seems to be saying that in an extreme situation such as a Saracen or Jew being at the point of death, they may be saved through baptism. The second concept involves an extreme situation, also. Scripture is saying that a non-Christian, i.e., a Saracen or Jew, may baptize a heathen who is at the point of death, and

the heathen because of his true belief and desire for baptism will have salvation in Heaven as much as any saved Christian who is in Heaven. The passage does not appear in the C-Text.

Despite the fact that these ideas sound heretical or almost so, Langland has a sound basis for them in Christian theology. Aquinas' statement about schismatics reflects these ideas:

Only in a case of necessity may one receive baptism from a schismatic. For it is better for a man to go out from this life signed with the sign of Christ, no matter who gives it, even a Jew or a pagan, than without this sign conferred in baptism.¹⁶

Thus, in an extreme situation, if a person was at the point of death, and decided at the last moment to enter the Church through baptism, a Jew or pagan could perform this rite if no clergy or other Christian was available. The Church does not take an absolute position on the words used, only that what is intended is expressed "and that each of the persons of the Holy Trinity be invoked."¹⁷

The wide latitude of this position, as well as the compassion it reflects for a dying person, indicates, of

course, the importance of the baptismal rite and its signification. But, what about those who have died without this rite?

The Dreamer broods about the fact that learned men of good will, such as Solomon and Aristotle, are held to be damned by the Church (B,X,384-388), while David and Paul who committed wicked acts are in Heaven with the saints (X,429-432). Implied is the thought that it all seems so unfair. But then, again, perhaps not. He says,

For crist cleped vs alle, come if we wolde,
 Sar₃ens and scismatikes and so he did the
 Iewes:
O vos omnes sicientes venite, etc.
 (B,XI,119-121; C,XII,52-53)

The Dreamer reflects that, after all, men are free to choose salvation. Christ called everyone; even Jews, Saracens, and schismatics are free to accept baptism and be saved. Implied may be the idea that it is their own fault if they are damned.¹⁸ But then a very odd thought comes to the surface of the Dreamer's mind, and shows how troubled he is:

For thou₃ a cristen man coueited his cristendom
 to reneye,
 Ri₃tfully to reneye no reson it wolde.
 (B,XI,125-126; C,XII,58-59)

He can think of no valid reason for reneging on his contract. But why would his heart incline him to such an act? Unable, perhaps, to acknowledge this thought as his own, the Dreamer distances it and seems to be thinking theoretically. Trajan¹⁹ breaks suddenly into the discussion between Scripture and the Dreamer. Trajan, a Roman emperor born in Spain, had certainly never been baptized; nevertheless, he was brought out of Hell because of his "pure truthe" (B,XI,156).

'And I saued as ye [may] see, withouten
 syngynge of masses,
 By loue and by lernyng of my lyuyng in truthe;
 Brou₃te me fro bitter peyne ther no biddyng
 my₃te.'

(B,XI,151-153)

The equivalent lines in the C-Text introduce another idea:

'And y saued as ₃e may se withoute synynge of
 mo masses.
 Loue without lele bileue as my lawe rihtfoel
 Sauerd me, Sarrasyn, soule and body bothe.'

(C,XII,84-86)

The addition of the word "mo" masses, meaning additional ones, is puzzling. The second line indicates that Trajan had no true, i.e., religious, belief; love was the rightful law by which he lived. However, could the juxtaposition of words such as "mo masses," "love," "lawe

rihtfoel," and "soule" indicate that Langland may have thought that Trajan did have a religious spirit? It is only in the B-Text that Trajan is called a "paynym of rome" (XI,163) which generally meant a pagan but could have meant, also, that Trajan was a Moslem.

According to Skeat, the terms "Saracen" and "pagan" were used synonymously in the Middle Ages to describe Moslems who were thought to be idolaters.²⁰ There may be a reason for the synonymous use of these terms. Roth states that the Paynim or Moslem was considered to be unfortunate in that, unlike the Jew, he was ignorant of Christianity and, therefore, "he was one who had never known the truth."²¹ Thus, not knowing the Christian truth might have been construed by many Christians as being pagan. While Langland calls Trajan a Saracen, this could be because Trajan was born in Spain, a fact which Langland may or may not have known.

This is not to suggest that Trajan was not a pagan; he lived long before the development of the Moslem religion. It is only to suggest that Trajan's life of "pure truthe" does not fit the poet's definition of, and therefore, sense of, what it is to be "heathen."

According to Langland, the term "heathen" comes from the word "heath" and "untilled earth." He describes what the word means by drawing an analogy between a new born baby before it is baptized and rough cloth which has just been woven. Until the cloth has been stretched, washed, and shaped by the tailor, it is not fit for use. And so it is with an unbaptized baby; it is unprepared, i.e., not ready for salvation. "It is hethene as to heueneward and helpless to the soule" (B,XV,458).

Another example that Langland uses to reinforce the idea of heathen as "untilled," or "uncultivated," is the similarity of heathen to a wild region in which untamed, savage beasts are running about unharnessed (B,XV,460-461). Thus, the term, "heathen," is equated with being uncivilized, wild, and lacking order, discipline, and control.

This description does not fit Trajan. He was not "helpless to the soule." From the poet's portrait of a heathen, one can better understand Langland's concerns and the problem with which he, and others of his time, wrestled. Langland calls Trajan an "vncristene creature"

(XI,143; C,XII,76). And, as has been shown, the poet differentiates between an "vncristene" and a "heathen".²²

In any event, what is certainly clear is that the unbaptized Trajan was saved because of the virtue of his actions; he had lived a life of truth and love: a man who dealt righteously with his fellow man. This fact seems to satisfy the Dreamer and he points to the Mosaic law as if to corroborate that a life lived in truth and love is what God really wants of man, and this is what Moses taught:

[Loue and lewtee is a leel science,
 For that is the book blissed of blisse and of
 ioye;
 God wrou³te it and wroot it with his [owene]
 fynger,
 And took it moises vpon the mount alle men to
 lere].

(B,XI,167-170)

In the C-Text, the foregoing passage is taken out. The book becomes plural, and Langland includes the New Testament, seeming to forget its baptismal requirement. Trajan says:

So loue and leute hit ben oure lordes bokes
 And cristis oune clergie, he cam fro heuene to
 teche hit,

(C,XII,95-96)

The orthodox Christian position is then emphasized as to how men became brothers in blood through Christ's blood (B,XI,200-201; C,XII,107-108).

The Dreamer reflects that the problem of baptism is still worrying him in a conversation with Ymaginatif in the following passus. Ymaginatif, speaking specifically of Aristotle, Socrates, and Solomon, voices the hope that God in His goodness would give their souls rest since their learning has benefited mankind (B,XII,268-275; C,XIV,191-197). But the Dreamer seeks additional assurance, and voices his deeply-felt concern. As he reiterates the Church position, it seems to be in the voice of an outsider, one who does not feel himself to be at one with the "clerkes." He says:

'Alle thise clerkes,' quod I tho, that [o]n
 crist leuen
 Seyen in hir Sermons that neither Sarsens ne
 Iewes
 Ne no creature of cristes liknesse withouten
 cristendom worth saued.'
 'Contra!' quod Ymaginatif thoo and comsed to
 loure,
 And seide, 'Saluabiter vix Iustus in die
Iudicij;
Ergo saluabitur,' quod he and seide no moore
 latyn.
 Troianus was s trewe knyght and took neuere
 cristendom
 And he is saaf, seith the book, and his soule
 in heuene.

(B,XII,277-284; C,XIV,199-205)

The B-Text uses the term "cristendom" for baptism; the C-Text is more explicit and uses the word "bapteme." "The righteous man shall scarcely be saved on the day of judgment; therefore he shall be saved." (It is believed that Langland was referring to I:Pet:4:18.)²³ Thus, Ymaginatif tells the Dreamer that the Jew, Saracen, or pagan who is a righteous person will be saved, and holds up Trajan as proof of this statement. It seems that righteous conduct is at the heart of Langland's concerns, and one has a sense that the poet feels that such conduct, in itself, should be sufficient for salvation.

Ymaginatif adds that two additional forms of baptism are possible, that of martyrdom or fire. The latter possibility is considered a divine fire that brings light, or an "immediate divine inspiration to the infidel of good will."²⁴ It was this "baptism" by divine inspiration which provided theologians with some leeway from the absolute doctrine that the baptism ritual was a necessity for salvation.

A crucial passage follows when Ymaginatif says:

Ac truthe that trespased neuere ne trauersed
 ayeins his lawe,
 But lyueth as his lawe techeth and leueth ther
 be no bettre,
 And if ther were he wolde amende, and in swich
 wille deieth
 Ne wolde neuere trewe god but [trewe] truthe
 were allowed.
 And wheither it worth [of truthe] or no₃t,
 [the] worth [of] bileue is gret,
 And an hope hangynge therInne to haue a mede
 for his truthe;
 (B,XII,287-292; C,XIV,209-214)

The passage confirms the thought toward which the poet has been moving. The Dreamer has been concerned specifically in the previous passage with the Jew and the Saracen and the fact that clergy say they will not be saved. The key phrase in Ymaginatif's response seems to be that the righteous man who lives in accordance with his belief and what his law teaches, and believes that there is no better law will be saved because a true God would not permit otherwise.

Kane-Donaldson have made some conjectural restorations in the passage based on the meaning, "And the intrinsic value of faith is great, whether it actually comes to be faith in the true religion (cp, if ther were he wolde amende) or not." 25

While many theologians had been concerned with a way to give men a sort of last minute opportunity before death to accept Christianity and be saved,²⁶ Langland, instead, goes to the heart of the matter in his concern that the righteous person of whatever faith, who keeps that faith and believes it to be best, should be saved.²⁷ And there is no mistaking the hope that a true God would surely provide such salvation. In this regard, Langland's thought is in keeping with rabbinic thought: that all the righteous, Gentiles as well as Jews, have a share in the world to come. The rabbis worried even about what would happen to the children of wicked Gentiles, and decided that God would surely preserve them.²⁸

The poet's thought on this subject seems to flow to this point, and then begins to ebb away from the concept expressed by Ymaginatif. The change is evident when the subject is brought up again by Anima, who says that sola fides sufficit to save ignorant people and so Saracens, Scribes, and Greeks may be saved. (B,XV,389-390)

The poet has introduced a different thought, that of being ignorant or ignorant of the Christian faith, which

might give these people an acceptable excuse. Anima continues with only the Saracens, saying that their belief is somewhat like the Christian for they, too, believe in one God (B,XV,393-395). Holding these two ideas in mind - ignorance of the Christian faith, and a belief in God - the poet moves toward another solution of the problem. Anima, again including the Scribes and Greeks, says:

And sith that thise Sar₃ens, Scribes and
 [Grekes].
 Han a lippe of oure bileue, the lightlier me
 thynketh
 Thei sholde turne, whoso trauail[e wolde] to
 teche hem of the Trinite.
 (B,XV,501-503)

In his continuing search for a solution, Langland reverts to a safe harbor. As Anselm, Grosseteste, Bacon, and others had wished to convert the Jews by educating them to the truth of Christian doctrine, Langland, too, moves in this direction. While Jews are not mentioned in the foregoing passage, they are shown in Skeat's version (B,XV,492-494). Langland may have been ambivalent about including the Jews among the ignorant because of their knowledge of the Mosaic law.

The C-Text arrives at this solution, also, but through a more indirect route, and by the addition of a long passage which does not appear in the B-Text. After the comment that sola fides sufficit for ignorant people (only Saracens are mentioned here), Free Will says:

For Sarrasynes may be saved so yf they so
 byleued
 In the letynge of here lyf to leue on holy
 churche.

(C,XVII,123-124)

And "holy churche" turns out to be "Charite."
 (C,XVII,125)

The poet seems to be trying out various ideas in an attempt to achieve salvation for the unbaptized; this one appears to be a variation of the aforementioned "immediate divine inspiration" concept, but the emphasis is on righteousness or "right" feeling. Thus, a person at the point of death who has a belief in God and feels a sense of charity or benignity may be saved. Or, perhaps, if the person has lived a life of charity, he will be saved.

It has been suggested that the poet is alluding in this passage to the clara visio doctrine of Uhtred de

Bolden.³⁰ Whether Langland knew Uhtred de Boldon or was influenced by him is not really known. Since it was a period when various new ideas regarding salvation were coming to the fore, Langland was probably stimulated by the climate of the times as a whole.

The clara visio idea seems to be an elaboration of the "immediate divine inspiration" concept. Uhtred's theory was that all human beings had a moment of clear vision immediately before death and during that moment the soul could choose or reject God. If the person chose God, he would be saved.³¹ However, Uhtred de Boldon was accused of heresy; one aspect of the charge was that he was accused of reasoning that "Saracens, Jews, and pagans could be saved by common justice without their having the faith of Christ."³² Under attack, Uhtred retreated and reaffirmed that a belief in Christ was necessary for salvation.³³

Actually, in his effort to arrive at a fair solution to the problem of salvation for the unbaptized, Uhtred de Boldon's proposal was not so different from others of a similar mind who had not been accused of heresy. In any case, there was never an absolutely clear division

between orthodoxy and heresy because definitions varied depending on attitudes, time, and place.³⁴

The new material added to the C-Text includes another significant passage. Free Will says:

Iewes and gentel Sarresines iugen hemsulue
 That lelyche they byleue, and 3et here lawe
 diuerseth,
 And o god that al bygan with gode herte they
 honoureth
 And ayther loueth and byleueth in o god
 almighty.
 Ac oure lord aloueth no loue but lawe by the
 cause:
 For lechours louyen a3en the lawe and at the
 laste ben dampned,

(C, XVII, 132-137)

The poet seems to make a differentiation here between ignorant and noble Saracens. These presumably educated Saracens and the Jews believe that they have a true belief, yet each has a different law. (In Skeat's edition, "gentel" is not shown as an adjective describing Saracens. Instead, the word is shown as "Gentiles," which refers to another category of persons.³⁵ Skeat, C, XVIII, 132.) Nevertheless, both believe in the one God that "bygan al." The poet is pointing up the importance of love within a framework of religious belief and law. He uses, as an example, lechers who may claim that they "love," yet this is, of course, a misuse of the

law. Trajan had said, "Lawe withouten loue, ley there abene!" (B,XI,171) The poet is saying that love without law is dangerous. In the C-Text, Trajan's words have been changed to "for lawe withouten leutee, ley ther abene!" (C,XII,91) "Leutee" may mean virtue, i.e., living with justice toward one's neighbor.³⁶

The passage seems to differentiate between people whose conduct takes place within a framework of religious precepts which are taken seriously, and those who are not bound by such limits. Thus, a person who fears and loves God may "do better" than one who has no such belief. Implied may be the thought that love alone as "rihtfoel lawe," may not be sufficient to insure good conduct in most people.

The passage is significant, also, because the poet groups together Jews, Saracens, and Christians as people who live within a framework of law and love for and belief in God. However, Free Will goes on to say that Saracens and Jews do not love the lord in the right way, as expressed in the Golden Legend (C,XVII,156-157), and do not have a true belief because they believe in a mediator, i.e., Mahomet as Messiah to the Saracens. (C,XVII,156-159)

Possibly, the poet may mean that Jews and Saracens do not love God in the right way because they do not love the Trinity. With regard to mediators, he may mean that Jews and Saracens have had religious leaders or prophets, inspired men, who brought God's Word to them. Thus, the Christian faith is truer because it bases itself on the divinity of Jesus. The passage is a difficult one because Jesus, too, is considered a Messiah and mediator.

From this new material in the C-Text, the poet moves to the logical next step which is that of educating Saracens, Scribes, and Jews to the Christian faith (C,XVII,251-253). The B-Text had arrived at this position earlier, (B,XV,501-503) but the C-Text reflects more clearly the progression of the poet's thought.

At the end of the passus in both B and C-Texts, the poet seems to review and try to pull together his thoughts and feelings about Jews mainly, but also the Saracens. Anima says:

And Iewes lyuen in lele lawe; oure lord wroot
 it hymselfe
 In stoon for it stedefast was and stonde sholde
 euere.
Dilige deum et proximum is parfit Iewen lawe;

And took it Moyses to teche men til Messie
 coome,
 And on that lawe thei l[e]ue and leten it the
 beste.

(XV,582-586)

The C-Text takes out the important word, "lele" in the first line, and removes the second and third line (XVII,297-299).

Ymaginatif had assured the Dreamer that the righteous who live in accordance with their law and deem it best would be saved. Nevertheless, going on from this point, the poet, through the words of Anima, seems to desire something more. He is puzzled. Here was a people that knew Christ was a "parfit prophete" who performed many miracles. One would think, he seems to imply, that by the feast that Jesus made as well as by the miracles, the Jews might well have seen that "Messie he semede" (XV,587-592; C,XVII,300-303). Jesus even brought Lazarus from the grave, but the Jews thought it sorcery.³⁷

It appears that Langland was not aware that the Jews were not impressed with miracles per se; there were so many miracles performed by various prophets in the Bible, but no other prophet had ever claimed divinity--the miracle was always attributed to God. There were even

precedents for reviving the dead; apparently, Elijah and Elisha performed this feat, among other miracles. (I Kings 17:1-24 and II Kings 4:14-37). Perhaps, the poet was aware of these Scriptural narratives; the use of the word "semede," rather than "is" or "was" may reflect his own lack of surety.

The C-Text adds a few lines of rather strong language to this long speech, which are not in the B-Text.

And ³ut they seyen sothly and so doen the
 Sarrasynes
 That Jesus was bote a iogelour, a iapare
 amonges the comune,
 And a sofistre of soercerie and a pseudo-
propheta

(C,XVII,309-311)

Donaldson believes the statement to mean that the Jews thought Jesus "a commoner who asserted that he was a king."³⁸ The poet must have heard or been aware of some of the harsher Jewish polemics on this subject; there seems to have been Saracen polemics as well. The C-Text reflects, also, the odd idea (at least it is odd with respect to the Jews) that the Jews and Saracens expect to achieve salvation through Moses, Mahomet, and the "god that made al" (C,XVII,314-316).

In the B-Text only, there is a hint of anger³⁹ against the Jews, who are "tho wrecches" who thought that Jesus was a false prophet, and that the Messiah is still to come (B,XV,539-604). But the anger is quickly dissipated as Anima states what is for the poet a key point: that Saracens and Jews "konne the firste clause of oure believe, Credo in deum patrem omnipotentem," and, therefore, prelates can guide them, little by little, to speak, remember, and recite from memory the rest of the Apostles' Creed (B,XV,608-613; C,XVII,318-322). The odd thing about this passage is the sense that the emphasis is on being able to recite the words almost by rote rather than on believing what one is saying.

The poet's way is the way of gentleness and patience. There is no attack on the "stubbornness" or "blindness" of the Jews.⁴⁰ Instead, there is a strong concern for the salvation of those who are unbaptized. It is not an abstract, theoretical concern, but an anxious, deeply emotional concern. It is almost as if he has to be sure that the unbaptized will be saved, and at this stage of his thinking, the orthodox way is the safe way. For if the Jews do not accept Christ as the Lord, they seem to be lost in this world as well as the next.

In this world, Jews who convert to Christianity are "frankeleyns, free men" and "gentil men with Jesus" while those who do not are "vnder tribut and taillage as tikes and cherles." (B,XIX,37-40; C,XXI, 37-40) And in the next world? Book says:

And al the Iewene Ioye vniioynen and vnlouken;
 And but thei reuer[en]sen his roode and his
 Resurexion
 And bileue on a newe lawe be lost, lif and
 soule.

(B,XVIII,258-260; C,XX,266-268)

In the flow and ebb of the poet's thoughts as he searches for a way that the unbaptized may be saved, many thoughts have come to the fore which reflect his deep desire for their salvation. One can sense that the poet was affected by the story of Trajan who was saved through moral virtue only, unsupported by any religious structure. But other than advising Christians to help heathens in hope of amendment (B,X,369), most of his interest seems to be with Jews and Saracens, an interest which many medieval churchmen shared.⁴¹ The "lele" law of the Jews is referred to again and again; and the poet has pointed up the dangers of even such a virtue as love if it is not bounded by law, i.e., religious precepts. Langland, toward the end of the poem, seems to return to

the safety of orthodoxy; all things considered, the best way seems to be to patiently and gently teach Jews and Saracens to say the rest of the Apostles' Creed since they already believe in God.

Is this the last word? If so, the prospects would appear to be bleak for those who do not wish to convert. Owens has suggested that, through the lines spoken by Christ, the poet reflects his belief that salvation will be extended to all men.⁴²

A[re] to be merciabie to man thanne my kynde
 [it] asketh
 For we beth bretheren of blood, [ac] noȝt in
 baptisme alle.
 Ac alle that beth myne hole bretheren, in blood
 and in baptisme,
 Shul noȝt be dampned to the deeth that [dureth]
 withouten ende:
 (B, XVIII, 375-378; C, XX, 417-420)

Because of this passage, one of great weight since the words are spoken by Christ, Owens believes that Langland holds out the possibility, perhaps even the assurance, that all human beings, through Christ's mercy, will be saved, baptized or not. Pearsall seems to think that "hole bretheren," means only Christians, but Christians would all be baptized. Skeat believes the word "blood" signifies kinship or relationship.⁴³ This,

too, reflects a universality, i.e., all human beings. In a very special sense of kinship, then, the Jews would be included for had not the poet taken pains to point out that Iesu crist on a Iewes do₃ter li₃te"? (B,XI,248; not in C-Text)

However, it must be pointed out that Langland qualifies the foregoing passage; in the same speech, Christ goes on to say:

'Thus by lawe,' quod oure lord, 'lede I wole
 fro hennes
 Tho [ledes] that [I] lou[e], and leued in my
 comynge;

(B,XVIII,400-401; C,XX,443-444)

In these lines, it would appear, again, that only those men who believed in Christ would be saved.

The poet seems to be ambivalent about the necessity of baptism for salvation and ambivalent, also, about the necessity for a belief in Christ in order to be saved. In the rich diversity of the views encompassed by the poem, there is a range which includes orthodoxy as well as the sense that Trajan's "pure thruthe," or David's "to serue god goodliche" (B,XI,281; not in C), are sufficient for salvation.

It may be valid to take Ymaginatif's discourse (B,XII,287-292; C,XIV,209-214) as the view arrived at by the poet after many years of reflection. As mentioned previously, Ymaginatif has been called the Dreamer's "chief instructor."⁴⁴ In Langland's use of the term, imagination includes the ability to review and contemplate and, thus, to make sense out of one's experience. While it is part of the reasoning process, imagination, in so far as it is "creative reflection," is considered a higher faculty.⁴⁵

Thus, Ymaginatif's discourse (B,XII,287-292; C,XIV,209-214) is significant by the very nature of the speaker. If one does take Ymaginatif's discourse as the view to which the poet, himself, is inclined, then he believes that the righteous person who lives in accordance with his faith, whatever that may be, will be saved. "Ne wolde neuere trewe god but [trewe] truthe were allowed." (B,XII,290) The poet gets very close to allowing for different approaches to living a truthful life.

In the process of his search for truth, the poet "stirs up" some sacrosanct Christian doctrine, including even the question of why a "newe lawe" was needed. (B,XVII,33; C,XIX,32) And, like a pagan or a Jew, the Dreamer is puzzled by the Trinity.⁴⁶ Even Abraham's explanation does not help; he cannot understand three in one, and believes "hit nat." (C, XVIII,197-198)

It appears as if no question was too sacrosanct to be asked and no subject too sacred to be explored. In this sense, the spirit of the poem is very much in tune with its stimulating time. Questions as to why baptism was necessary for salvation, and concerns about other ways of achieving eternal life were part of the general exploration of religious questions and Biblical exegesis taking place in England during the fourteenth century.

Nicholas de Lyra, for example, was quoting questions from Jewish polemical writings about baptism, questions which, in our time, would be considered sharply offensive: "Why was baptism necessary in light of Jesus' presumed purity?" "Why did a new spirit descend upon him if the holy spirit was already within him?"⁴⁷ Yet one may assume that Nicholas de Lyra explored these questions

without taking offense since he, too, was concerned with salvation for good Jews.⁴⁸

It is this same sort of open and objective spirit in exploring religious beliefs which pervades Langland's poem. And in his search for truth, he creatively weaves the questions, debates, and exegesis into poetry.

In the next chapter, the views in Piers Plowman which relate to Hebraic-Christian views of a Messiah and a Messianic age will be explored.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER V

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²Roberd of Brunne, Handlyng Synne, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1862), pp. 294-295. Printed from MSS. in the British Museum and Bodleian Libraries.

³Rev. J. de Reeper, "The Problem of the Salvation of the Heathen," Worldmission (VI, 1955), p. 356.

⁴Ibid., pp. 366-367. The author cites from St. Thomas, III, 70, 4.

⁵Ibid., p. 361. The author cites from De Veritate, q. 14, a. 11, ad. 1.

⁶Cecil Roth, "The Mediaeval Conception of the Jew," (ed.) Israel Davidson, Essays and Studies in Memory of Linda R. Miller, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), p. 174.

⁷Above, pp. 78-79; 14.

⁸Roth, op. cit., p. 174.

⁹Roth, op. cit., pp. 174-175. Also, see Berger, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁰Schlauch, op. cit., p. 455.

¹¹A. Roy Eckardt, Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians, (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), pp. 104, 160.

¹²Berger, op. cit., p. 263.

¹³R. W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages, (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1953), p. 236. The author cites from Cur Deus Homo?, I. 3.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Vol. II, ed. Blackfriars, Latin Text and English translation (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, n. d.), II-II,39,1.

¹⁷New Catholic Encyclopedia, II, editorial staff at Catholic University of America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967-1979), p. 65.

¹⁸T. P. Dunning points this out to be the Church position as well as Langland's in his article, "Langland and the Salvation of the Heathen," Medium Aevum, XII (1943), p. 47.

¹⁹The original source of the story of how Trajan was "baptized" by St. Gregory's tears, "for without baptism none will ever see God," was told by an anonymous monk of Whitby. See Bertram Colgrave, The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, Text, Translation and Notes (Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas Press, 1968), pp. 127, 162-163. Apparently, baptism by tears was invented to get over the hurdle of getting an unbaptized person into Heaven. The story had wide ramifications during the Middle Ages.

²⁰Skeat, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 169, n. 87.

²¹Roth, "Mediaeval Conception of the Jew," op. cit., p. 174.

²²Above, p.

²³Skeat, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 188, n. 204. See also Pearsall, op. cit., p. 244, n. 203.

²⁴Dunning, op. cit., pp. 48-49. Dunning's estimate throughout is that Langland's position is the same as the Church position. Dunning wrote his article as a response to that of R. W. Chambers' article, "Long Will, Dante, and the Righteous Heathen," in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, IX (1923). Dunning disagrees with Chambers who believes, for example, that Langland "contradicts all known authorities in making Trajan's salvation depend solely upon his own virtues." See p. 66. However, unlike Langland, neither Chambers nor Dunning makes a distinction between non-Christian and heathen; both men lump Jews, Saracens, and heathens into one category, that of heathen.

²⁵Kane-Donaldson, op. cit., p. 209. Skeat states that "Treuthe" signifies a righteous man (II. p. 188, n. 209), but Pearsall, in referring to Skeat's comment, turns Skeat's word "man" into "heathen." See Pearsall, p. 245, n. 209. And Pearsall cites Rom. 2:13-15 as the basis for line 290, (p. 245, n. 213), but Paul's argument does not seem to reflect the context of Langland's passage because Paul has stated that salvation is through the gospel of Christ (Rom. I:16-17): thus, when Paul speaks of faith, he means the Christian faith.

²⁶Dunning, op. cit., pp. 48-52.

²⁷W. O. Evans points out that Langland comes very close to the heretical position of Origenism in that he seems to move toward the salvation of all souls; see, e.g., his article, "Charity in Piers Plowman," in Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches ed. S. S. Hussey (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1969) p. 269.

²⁸Rev. A. Cohen, op. cit., p. 369.

²⁹In Skeat's B-Text, Jews are listed instead of Greeks. See XV, 382-383.

³⁰G. H. Russell, "The Salvation of the Heathen: An Exploration of a Theme in Piers Plowman," University of London: Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, 29 (1966), pp. 112-113.

³¹M. E. Marcett, Uhtred de Bolden, Friar William Jordan and Piers Plowman, (New York: Publ. by Auth, 1938), p. 38.

³²Ibid., p. 44.

³³Ibid., p. 44. Of interest, also, may be Uhtred's view regarding what he calls three Jewish sects: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. He considers these sects to be heresies, not religions, and gives his reasons "why Christ did not follow the legitimate religiones of the Old Testament, like the Sons of the Prophets." See "Two Treatises of Uhtred of Boldon on the Monastic Life," in Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke, eds. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin, R. W. Southern (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. 375-378.

³⁴Jeffrey B. Russell ed. Religious Dissent in the Middle Ages, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1971), p. 3.

³⁵Skeat believes the word "Gentiles," as used here, does not refer to Christians. See Skeat, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 228, n. 130.

³⁶This meaning of "leutee" is suggested by P.M. Kean, who points out the lack of agreement among editors and translators regarding the meaning of the word. See, for example, Kean's article, "Love, Law and Lewte in Piers Plowman," in Style and Symbolism in Piers Plowman, ed. Robert J. Blanch (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969).

³⁷Above, p. 13.

³⁸Donaldson, op. cit., p. 98.

³⁹Schmidt believes that Anima is pitying the Jews rather than reflecting anger. See Schmidt, op. cit., p. 346, n. 599.

⁴⁰Above, p. 127.

⁴¹Chadwick, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴²Owens, op. cit., p. 276-277.

⁴³Pearsall, op. cit., p. 338, n. 419; also, Skeat, op. cit., Vol. II., p. 264, n. 439.

⁴⁴Above, p. 114.

⁴⁵Randolph Quirk, "Vis Imaginativa," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 53 (1954), pp. 81-83. See also H.S.V. Jones, "Imaginatif in Piers Plowman," JEGP, 13 (1914), pp. 583-588.

⁴⁶Ames, The Debate between Church and Synagogue, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴⁷Berger, op. cit., p. 313, n. 18-19.

⁴⁸Coulton, Medieval Panorama, p. 527.

CHAPTER VI

The Messianic Vision

During the period following the Crucifixion and Resurrection, and at various times in those early ensuing centuries, a belief prevailed that the Second Advent (in the belief of Jews, the first Advent) would occur soon.¹ When the event did not occur, the idea went underground, but came strongly to the fore again during the late twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.²

The world view of many, educated and ignorant alike, included the belief that the world was in its "last days," and that the end was near. Much of this thinking stemmed from the medieval view of time, from calculations which were made as to the "age" of the world, and from concomitant ideas about the coming of the redeemer, all of which had been absorbed from late Hebraic apocalyptic literature, early Christian thought, and apocalyptic elements in prophetic literature.³

The medieval perspective of time rested on a Biblical base. The Creation had been the beginning; the

"last days" signified the end. A sermon preached in London about 1387 reflects what Peck has called the medieval "triple time sense," the intermingling of recent time with that of the past and the future.⁴ The Sermon contains the belief that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Then each of these days is reckoned as an age of one thousand years. The present order was considered to be the sixth age. The world had been given seven ages, or a total of seven thousand years of existence. An analogy is drawn that just as God rested on the seventh day, so, in the seventh age, or "in the seventh thousand of 3eris the noubre of hem that shullen be saued shal be fulfilled and reste schal be to seyntis ful in body and in sowle."⁵

The concept of a day as an age may have been derived from the words of the Psalmist that "a thousand years in thy sight are like one day" (Ps.90,4). The notion that one day of Creation represented a thousand years is found in a pseudepigraphical Jewish work, the Book of Jubilees, written about 200 B.C.⁶ The concept of a "world week" of seven thousand years appears in the Secrets of Enoch, written around the beginning of the Christian era.⁷ And the seven thousand years as seven ages is mentioned also

in the Testament of Abraham written in the first century.⁸ By the third century, a concept is found in the Talmud that the world would last six thousand years; it would then be destroyed and remain destroyed for another thousand years.⁹

In early Christian literature, the idea that the six days of Creation represent six thousand years of history appears first in the Epistle of Barnabas, thought to be written about 150 A.D. The Epistle contains, also, the belief that the Second Advent would occur at the end of the six thousand year period, and there would be a Sabbath of a thousand years for the saints.¹⁰

Augustine added to this concept of time as six ages based on the six days of Creation. Instead of the idea of one day representing a vague one thousand years of history, Augustine defined each age historically as beginning with an important event initiated by God. The ages were outlined as the age of Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, the Babylonian Captivity, and the age of Christ. Augustine believed that as man had been created on the sixth day, so in the sixth age, he would be renewed in the image of God.¹¹

One may view this periodization of time and events as a horizontal line cut through at intervals by vertical lines which signify the abrupt, great interventions of God in history.¹² The ages which marked the occurrence of these events, were viewed as "primarily vertical," in the sense that one age was not thought of as developing out of the previous ages, nor did one event cause another to happen.¹³

In the twelfth century, Hugh of St. Victor noted that just as God had created the world in six days, so the work of "redemptive restoration" as a progressive creation in time would take place in six stages: "sex dies" equaled "sex aetates." The seventh day, the Sabbath rest, was equated with the "final beatitude of eternity," which was outside of historical time.¹⁴

Hugh of St. Victor's thought reflected a new awareness of events in history as a sequential progression. His thinking may have been influenced by his contacts with Rashi and other Jewish exegetes whose view of history was in terms of growth, development, and

process.¹⁵ In any case, the development of this concept in the twelfth century gave an impetus to "seeing the connection of events in a messianic and eschatological perspective."¹⁶ The medieval world saw itself as part of a world which had become old, and thus, the time for the last major event was at hand. The Christians expected the Second Advent; the Jews expected the Advent, i.e., the coming of the Messiah for the first time.

Although many Christian and Jewish theologians discouraged attempts to calculate the exact time for this event to occur, it did not prevent projections from being made. The fourteenth century was chosen by many as the time. Rashi, in the twelfth century, basing his calculations on the Book of Daniel, conjectured that the Messiah would arrive in 1352.¹⁷ Bacon, in the late thirteenth century, was saying that "the times of the Antichrist [were] at hand."¹⁸ The Antichrist days, according to Christian thought, were just prior to the Second Advent. Thus, Wimbledon's sermon in 1387 reflects the prediction that "the grete Anticrist schulde come in the fourtenth hundred 3eer fro the birth of Crist, the whiche noumbre of 3eeris is now fulfilled not fully twelve 3eer and an half lackynge."¹⁹

The preacher avoids giving any absolute time of the Antichrist's appearance, "sith y haue not that knowlechyng, but to schewe that he is ny₃, but how ny₃ I wote neuere."²⁰ Wimbledon's calculations of the conjectured year as 1400 were based also on the Book of Daniel, elements of which are apocalyptic.²¹

Apocalyptic literature is characterized by mysterious components, signs and symbols that can only be decoded by those with secret knowledge. It contains angels, demons, Messiahs (sometimes one, sometimes more than one) and reflects a future that includes a catastrophic upheaval during which time the wicked would be punished, a great political ruler and king would usher in a Messianic age of good will and peace, and all the righteous would be resurrected.²²

The apocalyptic writer offered hope and encouragement to Jews during troubled times of persecution. Many such works proliferated from 200 B.C. to about 100 A.D. during the Roman occupation of Palestine. The writings were an attempt to create order out of a chaotic world in which wickedness seemed to

flourish. Surely, God would ultimately triumph and establish a righteous kingdom in which the Jews could live in peace. Thus, these writings reflect a correlation between the extent of wickedness and its concomitant despair, and the expectation that it would have to end soon. How could it be otherwise, if God is just?²³

In a sense, late apocalyptic literature was a vulgarization of the apocalyptic elements in prophetic literature.²⁴ In the latter, there was also the "Day of the Lord," which would be a "day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds" (Joel 2:2). It would be initiated by God and there would be enormous cosmic manifestations (Is. 24:19-23). After this day of judgement, there would be a renovation of the world and of people which would result in universal peace (Is. 2:2-4) and salvation (Is. 25:8-9).

While both prophetic and apocalyptic literature had certain elements in common, prophets tended to see a golden future of political freedom, and moral perfection as continuous with the present order of things, and happening in this world as a process of human

development, while the apocalyptic literature was less optimistic and thought in terms of a sharp breaking up of this world and of historical time.²⁵

The prophetic hopes for the Jewish people were practical, in-this-world, hopes with spiritual overtones: there would be a great human leader and king, a descendant of David, in a human situation, who would help the Jews to create a re-organized Jerusalem first and then bring about a just world. Thus, salvation was a political, social, ethical, and universal concept, an event and a time which would take place on earth. It was not a theological concept, per se, except for the fact that it would be initiated by God.²⁶

Conversely, the emphasis of the apocalyptic or pseudepigraphical literature was more in the realm of the fantastic and the catastrophic, such as in the Book of Enoch. It is in this book, a pseudepigraphic work, that the word, "Messiah,"²⁷ used to connote an expected redeemer, appears for the first time. The Book of Enoch is thought to have been composed in the time of Herod, about 34 B.C. Herod considered himself as the Messiah, but the Jews hated him and considered him to be Satan,

the Destroyer, a concept similar to the Christian idea of an Antichrist.²⁸

In the Talmud, the expectations of the Messiah reflect, generally, a national rather than universal emphasis. The Messiah is a descendant of David, a great leader who will vanquish foes, liberate the people, and repossess Palestine. There were different versions of how this event would come about, and, as the derash or figurative method was used, these interpretations could get quite fanciful. In all versions, however, there was unanimity as to the mortal nature of the redeemer.²⁹

It is the prophetic vision which most clearly resembles Langland's vision. Conscience prophesies of a time to come in the political and social realm:

And Daidid shall be diademed and daunten hem
 alle,
 And oon cristene kyng kepen [vs echone].
 Shal na moore Mede be maister [on erthe],
 Ac loue and lowenesse and leautee togideres;
 Thise shul ben Maistres on moolde [trewe men]
 to saue.

(B,III,288-292; C,III,440-444)

The prediction by Conscience is based on his own "kynde wit," i.e., his natural intelligence or common sense (B,II,284). The time will be one in which men will live under the rule of reason (B,III,285).

Conscience creates a world view which appears to reflect a time when the divinely chosen king of the Davidic line will free men from oppression and create a merger of Judaic--Christian oversight in the political realm and Judaic--Christian values in the social realm. "And David shal be diademed and daunten hem alle, And oon cristene kyng kepen [vs echone] (B,III,288-289).³⁰ There will be social harmony because love, humility, and loyalty will be the masters of men on earth, i.e., men will act toward each other with these qualities, and it is these qualities which will "saue [trewe men]" (III, 291-292) Conscience appears to be saying that men will be saved by righteous conduct.

Carruthers has suggested that despite the fact that Conscience' vision includes the rule of a Christian king, and is one in which priests will have to "behave themselves" (B,III,311-314), nevertheless, the social order depicted is not a Christian one because the "element of grace, necessary for any genuinely Christian society, is entirely lacking."³¹ Carruthers states:

What Conscience envisions is no reign of the saints on earth, but a society of enlightened, reasonable men. The love which sustains it is

not Christian caritas but "kynde loue," natural love, and Conscience' acknowledged instructor is Kynde Wit.³²

If Conscience' vision is not one of a Christian millennial society, it certainly qualifies (except for the Christian king) as a portrayal of a Hebrew Messianic golden age. Langland reflects his awareness of this fact in the words of Conscience spoken before the King:

Ac kynde loue shal come ³it and Conscience
 togideres
 And make of lawe a laborer; swich loue shal
 arise
 And swich pees among the peple and a parfit
 truthe
 That Iewes shul wene in hire wit, and wexen
 glade,
 That Moyses or Messie be come into [myddel]
 erthe,
 And haue wonder in hire hertes that men beth so
 trewe.

(B,III,299-304; C,III,451-456)

In the C-Text, there is a small but significant difference in this prophetic passage. The first four lines are similar to the B-Text, but the last two lines are as follows:

That here kyng be ycome fro the court of
 heuene,
 That ilk Moyses or Messie, that men ben so
 trewe.

(C,III,455-456)

In the foregoing lines, the use of the possessive "here kyng" indicates that it is the Messiah of the Jews who is to come, that same Moses or Messiah that the Jews will recognize as the one for whom they have been waiting.

A spiritual regeneration is prophesied in this particular passage. Conscience foresees a golden age of such peace and truth that even the Jews will be convinced that the deliverer or redeemer has come. For men will act with such love, and in such good conscience, toward their fellow man that the Law will actually work. The evidence of the redeemed nature of men in this world will be such that the Jew will be able to accept intellectually that a golden age has come, and, as Evans has stated, "rejoice at this good."³³

The vision contains the necessary political, social, ethical, and universal elements connected with the Jewish concept of a Messiah, and thus it would be acceptable to the Jews. It seems as if the passage points up Langland's respect for the moral dimension of the Jew as well as Langland's awareness of the reason why some Jews did not accept Jesus' first Advent as that of the

expected prophetic Messiah. The main reason was that the first Advent did not transform society and inaugurate universal peace and justice; another reason was that Jesus was not the great political leader who was to have restored Jerusalem.³⁴

In the line in which Conscience states that Jews will think that "Moyses or Messie be come into [myddel] erthe" (III,303), Langland seems to give Moses and Messiah equal status. This may have reference to differences among Jews during the Middle Ages as to whether the coming Messiah would be superior to Moses.

The widely known philosopher-rabbis, Maimonides and Hasdai Crescas, were the foremost representatives of these divergent views. Maimonides held that Moses was superior to any Messiah, while Crescas thought that the coming Messiah would excel even the law-giver. The difference in views was important to Jews and to Christians as well because the view represented by Maimonides was thought to counteract the force of the Christian argument that their Savior surpassed Moses. The representatives of Crescas' view created a dilemma for Jews. Crescas' view that the coming Messiah was

superior to Moses meant also that the Messiah's law would supersede the Mosaic law. This, of course, was exactly what Christians believed.³⁵

If Langland was aware of this controversy among Jews, he resolves it nicely in giving Moses and the Messiah a seemingly equal status. And his high regard for Moses is evident also in the passage following which depicts the upheaval which is to precede the golden age. Moses is not included in the misfortunes which are to occur to Mahomet and Mede.

Langland includes an apocalyptic element, mysterious signs, in his prophetic vision of the Day of Judgment which will precede the golden age. Conscience says:

And er this fortune falle fynde men shul the
 worste,
 By sixe sonnes and a ship and half a shef of
 Arwes;
 And the myddel of a Moone shal make the Jews
 torne,
 And Sar₃yne for that si₃te shul synge Gloria
in excelsis etc.,
 For Makometh and Mede myshappe shul that tyme;
 (B,III,325-329; C,III,478-481)

A possible explanation of the riddle may be that since the sun is a star which is the source of light and life to the whole world, the six suns may mean the Shield

of David and reflect the blaze of spiritual light that would attend the coming of the Messiah of the Davidic line. The connection between the hexagram and the legend of David's magic shield, which protected him, is evident in Jewish writings after 1300.³⁶ Ship was an old name for the nave of a church; the medieval Latin navis or "ship" was from the metaphor of the Church as a ship. A half sheaf of arrows was twelve arrows.³⁷ This may refer to the Twelve Apostles or the leaders of the Twelve Tribes of Israel who would direct the way to the conversion of the Jews. Great changes were always believed to take place at the time of the full moon, and the riddle may imply that the conversion of the Jews would take place through the coming of "their" Messiah, through the agency of the Church, and through the direction of the Apostles or the leaders of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.³⁸

In any event, while Mahomet will be lost, apparently, Moses will come through this upheaval period safely. In a sense, this may reflect the poet's belief that Moses will come into his own, so to speak, after that upheaval because the Mosaic law can be fulfilled in total only in a redeemed world. Then the Law will work.

Another version of what will happen during this worst of times is reflected in a passage from Wimbledon's sermon. There will be:

Wo to the paynyme, that ³af that worchipe to dede ymagis wrou³t of mennes hondis, and to other creatures that he schulde haue ³oue to God that hym wrou³te.

Wo to the Iewe, that trusted so much in the olde lawe; than schal he see Marie sone demynge the world, whom he despised and sette on the cros.

Wo to the false Cristene man, that knewe the wille of his Lord and fulfilled it not.³⁹

The parallelism of the foregoing poetic passage reflects that the "false Cristene" is in as much danger as the Jew and the pagan. All of these are told that "wyth the [fend] in helle thou schalt euere abyde."⁴⁰ The specificity and sharpness of the preacher's tone provides a contrast to the general quality and mildness of Langland's depiction of this upheaval, in which only "Makometh and Mede [will] myshappe" (B,III,329).

There is also a difference in emphasis. While the preacher's emphasis is on what will happen to individuals, Langland's emphasis is on a social order free of Mede. Again, this is the prophetic vision of a

redeemed world. In this regard, Scholem's explanation of the Messianic idea may be pertinent:

A totally different concept of redemption determines the attitude to Messianism in Judaism and in Christianity; . . . Judaism, in all of its forms and manifestations, has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community. It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world and which cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance. In contrast, Christianity conceives of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private world of each individual, and which effects an inner transformation, which need not correspond to anything outside.⁴¹

While Langland's emphasis in the prophetic passages being explored, is societal, nevertheless one has only to remember the Dreamer's urgent question to Holy Church, "How I may saue my soule," (I, 84), to realize that Judaic and Christian concepts are interwoven elements in Langland's thought.⁴²

The prophetic passages which have been explored do not contain references to an Antichrist. And it is not clear whether the poet made any connection between his prophetic passages in Passus III and the Antichrist forces at work at the end of his poem. The concept of an Antichrist, a "false fiend" who would reign over all the

world prior to the Second Advent was a fairly common belief of the medieval period.⁴³ One of the most prevalent beliefs concerning this Antichrist was that he would be a Jew. Emmerson states:

As Christ's opponent, prefigured and symbolized in the Old Testament, [according to Christian beliefs], Antichrist is identified continually as a Jew, who, pretending to be the Messiah, will attempt to take the place of Christ.⁴⁴

Emmerson has traced some features of the Antichrist tradition and believes that the medieval idea that the Antichrist would be a Jew may stem, in part, from the words "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). According to Emmerson, the Jews were expected to accept the false Antichrist because they had not accepted the true Christ. The words of Christ were "used as proof"⁴⁵ in this regard:

I am come in my Father's name and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. (John 5:43)

None of this thinking about the Antichrist as a Jew, or the acceptance by Jews of the Antichrist as the Messiah appears in Piers Plowman. Conversely, in references to Antichrist which appear in Passus XX (53,

64, 69, 127-128, 216; C, XXII, 53, 64, 69, 128, 216), it seems to be the Church itself which is identified with Antichrist.⁴⁶ And it is Antichrist who overturns truth:

Antecrist cam thanne, and al the crop of truthe
Torned it [tid] vp so doun and ouertilte the
roote,

(B,XX,53-54; C,XXII,53-54)

There is no indication of waiting for a Second Advent. Truth has been overturned, and Conscience does not wait but sets out actively to search for Piers, a complex "figura," considered to be the "sign of truth."⁴⁷

The prophetic passages round out the picture of Langland's attitudes toward the Jews and seem to provide the clearest indication of the poet's respect for them. The social order of universal peace, justice, and moral perfection which Conscience depicts as occurring in this world is a social order which will gladden the hearts of Jews (III,302). And rejoicing at the prospect of such a good world reflects "goodness in them."⁴⁸

Again, what Langland does not say is important, also, in revealing his attitudes toward the Jew. In view of the common belief that the Antichrist was a Jew under whose rule evil would reign, it seems particularly

significant that there is no such reference by Langland to such an idea. He seems to have understood that Jews try to live in accordance with Mosaic law, a law which the poet esteemed because it taught Jews to love and fear God, and to live with justice, love, and mercy toward each other.

To Langland, as to Andrew of St. Victor, the spirit of inquiry, the search for truth, was, in itself, a never-ending process and value. The poem, as a reflection of this search, is open-ended. The quest is a continuing one. There is no final Truth.

And just as there is no final Truth arrived at in the poem, so, also, there are no final answers arrived at in this study. Nevertheless, this exploration has shed light on the questions which formed the basis for this study: questions about the medieval Christian-Jewish encounter, about Langland's attitudes toward Jews, about whether the poet might have known Jews, and about some theological issues concerning Jews in the poem. Thus, it seems that some cautious and tentative statements can be made about these questions and concerns.

The violence in the Middle Ages is well known; much has been written about the hatred and persecution the Jews endured from Christians. An examination of the Christian-Jewish encounter, against the cultural background and atmosphere of medieval England, has revealed some of the forces--superstition, economic factors, and the complexities of theology--at work in the violence against Jews, particularly with regard to the Black Death, the ritual murder myth, the belief in magic, and the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290.

Paul's words regarding Jews, that they were enemies but "beloved for the fathers sakes," (ROM.11:28) created a dichotomy that posed a problem for the Church and, thus, eventually, for the ordinary person as well. The need to both isolate the Jew and yet protect him because he was an inherent part of the theological plan for salvation led to patterns of behavior which were contradictory in nature.

Another dichotomy involved the similarity and difference of the religion itself, which was both a source of sharing and of tension. Christian and Jew shared the Hebrew Bible, but it was not the same book to

them. The overlay of New Testament doctrine onto the Old Testament, while standard Church doctrine for the Christian, was, for the Jews, an appropriation of his Bible for an alien purpose.

Yet, a quiet history of friendly intercourse between Christian and Jew has been revealed. Neighborly relationships, friendships, and even intermarriages took place. The latter event, in particular, took great love and courage on the part of the participants because punishment for such a union might be death. There was also a quiet history of interaction between Christian and Jewish scholars in Biblical exegesis, an interaction which played a significant role in contributing to the intellectual and religious spirit of inquiry and controversy in the fourteenth century.

The Jewish scholar, Rashi, and his school, influenced Christian scholars. Rashi's method of exegesis was to expound the literal sense of the Hebrew "truth," a method which appealed to Hugh of St. Victor, who emphasized the importance of studying the Bible in its original Hebrew. Rashi's method of exegesis and Hugh's emphasis on the study of the Bible in the Hebrew

continued to interest and influence Christian scholars in their on-going search for more knowledge about God's word throughout the ensuing thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In the commentaries of Nicholas Trivet during the fourteenth century, the Christian and Jewish interpretations are set side by side and the reader is left to decide wherein lay the truth. Could such a treatment, i.e., the deliberate juxtaposing of alternative points of view have been used by Langland as well, albeit in a poetic way? If so, it might offer an explanation for what seem to be contradictory and irreconcilable viewpoints in the poem.

Wherein is the truth? "For cristen and vnchristen cleymeth it echone" (B,I,93). Through the words of Holy Church, Langland seems to be saying that Christian and Jew are capable of knowing truth, i.e., the eternal verities, and living in a manner which reflects these verities.

Could Langland have known Jews? As records of the Domus Conversorum during the fourteenth century show a

continuing movement of Jewish converts in and out of the Domus, and as many converts were instructed in the Christian faith and sent out as clergy to various parishes, the poet may very well have met converts in the course of his work as a clerk in minor orders.

In any event, the poet's attitude toward Jews seems to be based both on their conduct, and on the respect which Langland has for the law of Moses. The Jew is held up as an example of charitable behavior, while a "Judas Felawe" can be anyone who betrays his fellow man or relates to him in an uncaring way. The values which Langland prizes are values and religious precepts which Jew and Christian alike hold dear: truth, love, charity, justice, order, and law. It seems as if the poet's attitude toward the Jew, and toward all men, is conditioned by the extent to which these qualities are reflected in their relationships with each other.

The Dreamer's moving question to Holy Church, "How I mat saue my soule" (B,I,84) is the heartbeat of the poem. Yet even more moving than the concern with personal salvation is the poet's deep desire for the salvation of the unbaptized Jew or Saracen. Again, it is

the conduct of the person which seems to be of primary concern. "Ne wolde neuere trewe god but [trewe] truthe were allowed" (B,XII,290).

The poet longs for a time when God and men will be given their due, when

swich loue shal arise

And swich pees among the peple and a parfit
 truthe
 The Iewes shul wene in hire wit, and wexen
 glade,
 That Moyses or Messie be come into [myddel]
 erthe,
 And haue wonder in hire hertes that men beth so
 trewe.

(B,III,300-304; C,III,452-456)

Then all men will live in unity. Langland's vision merges with the old vision of Isaiah. Their words were important for their worlds, and even more important for our world. For today, unlike other times, it is man who has the power to make this century the "end of days." The "triple time sense" of the medieval world is the true sense of time: past, present, and future are now. May we, as Langland said, make "loue and pees" our "maistres," so that the rhythm of history will continue to sound in the ongoing current of time.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER VI

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⁶William M. Green, Augustine on the Teaching of History, University of California Publications in Classical Philology, Vol. 12, No. 18 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), p. 322. The author's source for Jubilees, 4,30, is R. H. Charles, Book of the Secrets of Enoch (Oxford, 1896) p. 45f.

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¹³V. A. Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi; (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 119. See also Chapter V, "Medieval Time and English Places" for an explanation of how the time perspective relates to medieval drama.

¹⁴Chenu, op. cit., p. 180. The author cites from De sacramentis Christianae fidei i 1.28 (PL, CLXXVI, 204; Deferri, p. 26).

¹⁵Lauer, S. J., op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁶Chenu, op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁷Joseph Sarachek, The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature, (New York: Hermon Press, 1968), p. 59.

¹⁸Coulton, Life in the Middle Ages, II, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁹Wimbledon's Sermon, op. cit., p. 116.

²⁰Wimbledon's Sermon, op. cit., p. 116-117.

²¹Wimbledon's Sermon, op. cit., p. 116.

²²Nathaniel Kravitz, 3,000 Years of Hebrew Literature, (Chicago, The Swallow Press, 1972), p. 114.

²³Ibid., p. 115.

²⁴Sarachek, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁵Sarachek, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁶Sarachek, op. cit., p. 1.

²⁷Klausner points out that the Hebrew word, Mashiah (in English, Messiah, and in Greek, Christes), was a term which originally meant "anointed with oil." It gradually came to be a term used for any person, such as king or high priest, charged with the responsibility of high office. The will to power, and, thus, to possible self-aggrandizement, was hallowed through the sacrament of anointing with oil the one chosen to rule. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." (2 Sam. 23:3) The sacrament was an attempt to insert an ethical concept into the political realm. The words, "anointed with oil", gradually became a title signifying "chosen." In the later development of Jewish eschatology, "Messiah" became the term for the long-awaited king of the Davidic line who would rule over a golden age. See Klausner, op. cit., pp.7-8.

²⁸Klausner, op. cit., pp. 8, 374.

²⁹Saracheck, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁰According to Pearsall, David is "the type of Christ ruling in the millennium." (p. 84, n. 441). In this regard, see following remarks by Carruthers on same page.

³¹Mary Carruthers, The Search for St. Truth, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 58.

³²Ibid., p. 58.

³³Evans, op. cit., p. 231.

³⁴Sarachek, op. cit., p. 197, 192. The author cites from Hasdai Crescas' polemical essay, "A Refutation of Christian Principles." Crescas (1340-1410) was a widely known rabbi-philosopher.

³⁵Sarachek, op. cit., p. 196.

³⁶Gerson Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 268-269.

³⁷Edwin, Tunis, Weapons, A Pictorial History (New York: World Publishing Company, 1954), p. 63.

³⁸This interpretation is suggested only as a possible interpretation, as no explanation of this riddle has been encountered thus far. The interpretation is presented with the hope that it may spur the search for a documented explanation.

³⁹Wimbledon's Sermon, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

⁴⁰Wimbledon's Sermon, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴¹Scholem, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴²This view differs from that of Bloomfield whose thesis in Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, op. cit., p. 139, is that Piers Plowman is concerned with Christian perfection, an idea created by the monastic tradition, rather than with salvation.

⁴³Cantor, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁴Richard Kenneth Emmerson, Antichrist in the Middle Ages (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 79.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁶David Aers, Chaucer, Langland, and the Creative Imagination (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 213, n. 34.

⁴⁷Carruthers, op. cit., p. 171.

⁴⁸Evans, op. cit., p. 271.

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