PIERS PLOWMAN:

THE ORGANOLOGICAL METAPHOR

by

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ABSTRACT

The paper begins with a discussion of the organic representation of man and society adopted in the debates between late medieval apologists for secular sovereignty on the one hand, and ecclesiastical sovereignty on the other. This organic representation of man and society is what I have called the Organological Metaphor. Strictly speaking the metaphor has been an expression of a hierarchicalised notion of social order. As such, the metaphor has been used as an ideological apology for the received order of late medieval society. The metaphor served as a justification for the ordering of both secular and ecclesiastical governmental hierarchies of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and was adopted as a favourite rhetorical formula in the debates concerning the two pre-eminent corporate bodies of the Middle Ages, the Church (ecclesia or sacerdotium) and the State (imperium or regnum). The metaphor was used in defense of both ruling classes of the late Middle Ages, the clergy and the feudal nobility. As such, the metaphor may be viewed as an ideological formula used in defense of the otherwise crumbling superstructure of society in the late Middle Ages. What is especially interesting about the basically theological metaphor is its flexible adaptation by apologists for both ruling corporate bodies in conflict with one another. Ecclesiastical apologists began to argue that a cleric might hold regnal powers, while secular apologists devised theories that invested

monarchs with sacerdotal powers.

More rationalistic constitutional theorists began to attack the theocratic basis of the metaphor in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The arguments of the constitutional theorists usually ignored St. Augustine's claim that human government was the direct result of original sin and asserted that human government depended not on divine sanction, but on law, feudal contract, and notions of mutual obligation. The rationalists, essentially apologists for the mercantile bourgeoisie and secular lords, succeeded in altering the old organological model of government to the extent that they placed the estate of the king below the same law that governed the king's subjects. However, while there occurred a definite diminution of monarchical sovereignty and a subsequent increase of the power of parliament, this change was effected in theory merely by substituting for the mystical sanction of rulers, the somewhat less mystical sanction of State law. For all intents and purposes the organological model of late Medieval superstructural hierarchy remained intact with the substitution of legal authority for personal authority and the substitution of Crown law for personal prerogative.

The second chapter of the paper is a discussion of denotations and connotations of the Middle English term comune(s). The chapter expands on Professor E. Talbot Donaldson's remarks concerning Langland's use of the term, investigates the definitions of the term given in the Oxford English Dictionary and

the Middle English Dictionary, and describes the historical context in which the term and equivalents were used in the fourteenth century conflict between king and magnates over definition of the community of the realm. The chapter focusses on the centrality of the term to fourteenth century English constitutional theory and suggests that the by and large political usage of the term reflects certain developments in the expanding definition of corporation in fourteenth century constitutional theory.

The third chapter consists of an examination of Donaldson's listing of the occurrence of the term comune(s) in Piers Plowman itself. The chapter includes an investigation of the relation of Langland's use of the term to the uses of both theocratic and rationalistic constitutional theorists. It is the burden of my argument in this chapter that Langland used the term to designate the English Christian commonwealth ordered more on the theocratic organological model than on the legalistic model of the rationalistic theorists. At no time does Langland use the term in the specific and legalistic sense of the rationalists, though at times his usage suggests possible reference to the medieval guild, king's council, and to the urban commune.

The fourth chapter compares the ordering of secular and sacred comune(s) in Piers Plowman with other fourteenth century literary orderings of the comune(s) of late medieval society. The discussion focusses on the portrayal of the three estates and the relationship of the king to his subjects. The method

of the chapter has been, first, to describe briefly orderings of the comune(s) presented in Havelock the Dane, The Parlement of the Thre Ages, Wynnere and Wastoure, Mum and Sothsegger (Richard the Redeless), The Crowned King, The Testament of Love, and the Confessio Amantis. The burden of the argument is that some of these poems lay more emphasis on the parliamentary theories of the rationalistic constitutionalists than on the organological model of more theologically inclined theorists. Secondly, the method of the fourth chapter has been to examine passages which order the secular comune in the three versions of the Visio of Piers Plowman and to describe the development of the revisions. Likewise, there is an examination of the passages which order the spiritual comune in the two versions of the Vita and a description of the development of the revision. Finally there is a summary of the ordering of the two comune(s) in Piers Plowman under a king who may kill without sin in order to protect Dobest. The tentative conclusion of Chapter Four is that the poem presents an ideal monarch who may exercise a sovereign right of absolute judgement in defense of Christian faith and its true representatives. This monarchical sovereignty is inviolate despite any objections of actual prelates. In this way, as Puttenham had it in his sixteenth century assessment of the author of Piers Plowman:

> He that wrote the Satyr of Piers Ploughman seemed to haue bene a malcontent of that time, and therefore bent himself wholy to taxe the disorders of that age, and specially the pride of the Romane Clergy, of whose fall he seemeth to be a very true Prophet. [1]

Puttenham seems to be aware of Langland's prophetic condemnation of the Roman clergy, but may not have been aware of the poet's conservative correction of clerical abuses. In fact, the question of whether Langland was a conservative or a radical malcontent has been a constant stumbling block in the interpretation of Piers Plowman. In most cases critics have overlooked Langland's conservative support of the principle of absolutism. Likewise, such critics have failed fully to appreciate the absolutist tendency of the Tudor reforms in law which led to the dissolution of monasteries and the founding of the Church of England. This confusion is basically a failure of analysis which is encouraged by a naive notion of progress. According to this view, stress is given to the actual event of the fall of the Roman clergy, rather than to the absolutist method by which the fall was effected or to the economic exigencies which encouraged the Tudor confiscation of Church property.

The fifth chapter argues that Piers Plowman is best read as an apology for theocratic kingship, and that Piers id est Christus is the very type of Melchisedek, prefiguration of Christus salvator, Peter the Rock-founder of the Apostolic Church, and Christus pantocrator of the Last Judgement.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abstract

[i] G. Gregory Smith, ed., Elizabethan Critical Essays (1904; reprinted London, 1967), II, pp. 64-65.

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INTRODUCTION

Professor George Kane has summarised the thematic and structural development of Piers Plowman in the following way: "The poem opened with a picture of the earthly commonwealth portrayed as it is and as it should be; it ends with an allegory of the spiritual commonwealth as it should be and as it is." [1] The following paper is essentially an expansion of Kane's remarks concerning the earthly or secular commonwealth portrayed in the Visio(nes) of Piers Plowman and the spiritual or sacred commonwealth portrayed in the Vita(e). The paper intends to investigate the political implications of the poem in its three versions. Critics of Piers Plowman by and large agree that the division between Visio and Vita represents an intentional structuring of the poem by William Langland, its putative author. According to this view of the poem, the author first treats of the ordering of the "faire felde ful of folke" [2] by the ideal labourer-preacher, Piers himself. Piers' attempt to order the folk into a productive community of workers who live by the Christian virtues of humility and charity fails once the harvest is gathered; the folk turn to enjoy the surplus resulting from their labour and the situation deteriorates into a quarrelsome debauch. Piers' pardon, "Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam;/Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum" (B. vii. 111) seemingly offers no solution to the problem of ordering the earthly commonwealth.

Piers turns the pardon over to a priest for translation and, with the dreamer looking on, exclaims,

'Peter!' ... . 'I can no pardoun fynde,
But "Dowel, and haue wel . and god shal haue thi sowle,
And do yvel, and haue yvel . hope thow non other
But after thi ded-day . the devel shal haue thi sowle!"'

(B. vii. 112-115)

Piers' outraged tearing of the pardon ends the Visio and precipitates the Vita of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest in which the poet examines the three orders of life in the spiritual commonwealth.

Both sections of the poem include passages which organize both commonwealths, the earthly and the spiritual, under a single king. The examination of these passages in light of fourteenth century historical, political, and theological conceptions of the comune(s) is the centre of the present paper. My thesis is that the structure of Piers Plowman presents a realisation of the ideal of Christian community, "one flock and one people", which was put forward in many papal pronouncements, and most memorably in the famous bull of Pope Boniface VIII, Unam Sanctam (1302).[3] It would be wrong, however, to argue that the poet is an apologist for any historically contemporary monarch. While the paper argues that the poem aims to realise an ideal of theocratic kingship, at no time does the paper argue that the poet approves of any actual king of England.

In the two commonwealths, earthly and spiritual, the poet finds no lack of subject matter to complain about or to satirize. Contemporary secular and sacred governments are severely criticized. The author of Piers Plowman levels attacks against clerical corruption and papal tyranny as well as against royal misrule and administrative corruption. Likewise, he is unstint-

ing in his attack on the iniquity and greed of the third estate, the commons. The theocratic king who is presented as the ideal ruler in Piers Plowman may be best understood as the type of priest-king after the order of Melchisedek. This priest-king is without natural forbears, "made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life", and sworn with the oaths of Divine Law, first of Retribution and then of Salvation. [4] This theocratic king manifests the powers of Jehovah, God of vengeance; Christus salvator, the Saviour; and Christus pantocrator, the Judge of both the quick and the dead at the Apocalypse. Langland's ideal king resembles the divinely sanctioned king of the Carolingian period.

Piers Plowman itself is an apocalyptic vision prompted by the events of a period typified by continuous feudal warfare; conflict between king and Pope, king and barons, lords and burgesses, and artisans and burgesses; the disintegration of secular and ecclesiastical institutional unity; and the political and social chaos precipitated and encouraged by the period's universal natural disaster, the Black Death. Confronted with the decline of the old feudal order as he knew it, the poet seeks to create an ideal ruler who is justified by eschatological history. This ideal of theocratic kingship must be seen in contradistinction to the elected or legally sanctioned monarchy posited by more rationalistic constitutional theorists.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Introduction

[1] George Kane, Middle English Literature (1951; reprinted London, 1970), p. 246.

[2] This and all subsequent quotations are from Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman in Three Parallel Texts Together With Richard the Redeless by William Langland (1886; reprinted London, 1968), Vol. I The Text. A citation noting text, passus number, and line numbers will follow each quotation bracketed in the body of the thesis as in this case (B. i. 1).

[3] Text in G. R. Elton, ed. and trans., Renaissance and Reformation, 1300-1648 (New York, c 1963), p. 5.

[4] The Holy Bible; An Exact Reprint in Roman Type, Page for Page of the Authorized Version of 1611, intro. by Alfred W. Pollard (1611; reprinted London, 1911), Heb. 7: 16. All subsequent biblical quotations are from this edition; no pagination is included in the edition.

I. THE ORGANOLOGICAL METAPHOR

> For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.
>
> I Corinthians 10:17

> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one bodie: so also is Christ.
>
> I Corinthians 12:12

> For the body is not one member but many.
>
> I Corinthians 12:14

> Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
>
> I Corinthians 12:27

> Therefore the one and only Church has one body, one head, not two heads like a monster, that is to say Christ and Christ's vicar Peter, and Peter's successor; as the Lord said to the same Peter: 'Feed my sheep.' (John 21:16)
>
> Boniface VIII, The Papal Bull Unam Sanctam (1302)

A. The Structure of Text

The first version of Piers Plowman, the A-Text, consists of a fully developed Visio and the false start of a Vita. The second and third versions, the B-Text and the C-Text, include revised Visio(nes) and add two revised Vita(e). These two sections of the completed versions, the Visio(nes) and the Vita(e), form a structural framework for the poem as a whole. The

Visio(nes) concern themselves primarily with Piers Plowman's attempt to achieve the proper ordering of the secular state or regnum. Ultimately Piers fails in this endeavor. The regnum is lost through human perversity in a time of a material over-abundance provided by what appears to be a successful ordering of the secular state. Confronted with his charges squandering the fruits of the harvest in debauchery, Piers rejects the pardon bidding all Mankind to do well and so achieve salvation. The Vita(e) examines the ordering of an ideal sacred state or sacerdotium, as a corrective to the failure of Piers to order the regnum. The Vita(e) begin with the extended exempla of the lives of Do-Wel, Do-Bet, and Do-Best, and conclude with a discussion of sacred history extending from Creation to the Last Judgement, its progress and continuation, and its meaning in the historical present.

The poem thus moves from the discussion of the material and temporal ordering of the regnum in the Visio(nes) to the discussion of spiritual and eschatological ordering of the sacerdotium in the Vita(e). Throughout both Visio(nes) and Vita(e) the ambiguous presentation of Piers the Plowman appears again and again, each time in a different guise or capacity. In the Visio(nes) Piers is the material and active agent of Christian history in the temporal present; he is an earnest laborer and embodiment of the Christian virtues of humility and charity. In the Vita(e) Piers is the continually living figural manifestation or type of the true Christian prince in the lineage of

the house of David; he is the orphan inheritor of both regnum and sacerdotium, of both the crown of kingship and the vestment of priesthood; he is the very type of the sacerdotal king after the order of Melchisedek. Piers like the Creator precedes the Saviour and Martyr and so is the type of Man-God for all time. Piers also succeeds Christ as Salvator and so is a type of Peter the Rock, founder of the Church, and all the Popes who succeed him. Finally according to the prophetic tradition of eschatological history, Piers prefigures Christus pantocrator, the judge of both the quick and the dead.

If, however, one is to understand the poem Piers Plowman and comprehend the meaning of the figure of Piers, the reader of the poem must first understand precisely the political, historical, and philosophical context of the author's ordering of regnum and sacerdotium; without such orientation the meaning of the poem may be distorted. It is in an effort to avoid such distortion of medieval political thought that this paper discusses the term comune(s) as a unifying structural and conceptual principle in Piers Plowman. The paper then turns to a definition of Langland's use of the term comune(s). The discussion of the organological metaphor should acquaint the reader of the thesis with the history and greater implications of the metaphor up to the time of the poem's composition. While comune at all times connotes the greater Christian commonwealth of regnum and sacerdotium, the communitas Christiana, it may also denote a constituent element smaller than but fundamental to the

composition of the greater Christian commonwealth. What is most important is that the poet's effort is not without precedent and that, in fact, his work follows directly in a long tradition of discussion, debate, and conflict between regnum and sacerdotium. His attempt to reconstruct the metaphor reflects the tensions of a time that witnessed the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire (once the regnum proper) the decline of the Roman Church; the splitting of the ecclesia (once the sacerdotium proper) forced by theories of the new regnum, the nascent national state headed by a secular monarch; and at least in England of the fourteenth century, the compromise of the secular monarch forced by lords, prelates, and magnates which led to the deposition of Richard II in 1399. The very conflict between regnum and sacerdotium assumed at a very early date the form of conflict between the heads of the secular and sacred states, the Emperor and the Pope respectively. At a later date the national king assumed the place of the Emperor in the dispute. The development of concepts of sovereignty is then a fundamental part of the discussion of secular and sacred government. Such discussions address themselves either to the authority of the respective heads of the two bodies politic, or to the composition of those bodies. The creation of what is called here the organological metaphor resulted from these discussions of the constitution of the communitas Christiana. The metaphor is properly a philosophical construct with direct application in the discussion of political theology over a long period of

time. In Piers Plowman this discussion centers around the term comune(s), the full significance of which, as body politic, demands investigation of the poet's notion of headship for the two bodies politic and the values governing true succession.

B. Theocratic Kingship

The metaphor was largely developed by both secular and ecclesiastical medieval political theorists, but seems to have derived from Aristotle and Plato. It was then suffused with the teachings of St. Paul (cf. I Cor. 10:16-17; 12:4-31; Eph. 1:23; 3:6; 4:4, 11-16; 5:23, 30; Rom. 12:4-8.) Medieval political theorists first conceived mankind in its totality as an organism, and then established a metaphorical analogy between the organisation of society and the human body, thus creating the organological metaphor. [1] As Otto Gierke remarks, "This led at an early time to some anthropomorphic conceits and fallacies which do not rise above the level of pictorial presentment." [2] The very insistence on pictorial presentation demands that the figure of the body have one head and not appear as the two headed monster or animal biceps. This insistence on singular headship bears on the later developments of the organological metaphor in the disputes over Papal Monarchy and at least suggests the dual nature of Piers the Plowman himself, at once the conflated figure of secular and sacred pre-eminence.

Early exposition of the organological metaphor is controlled by the conflicting claims to sovereignty of the struggling

nascent Church and the Empire. Later exposition of the metaphor is controlled by the conflicting claims to sovereignty of the established Church and struggling nascent national states. In all cases throughout its history the metaphor is adaptable, and apologists for either the ecclesiastical or the secular ruling class might adapt the arguments of their foes to their own purposes. The dual meaning of the theocratic model of the metaphor illustrates the ingenuity exercised by the proponents of the mystical doctrine of body and soul and the advocates of the idealist equation of human society with an extended animate body. As an expression of the body politic, the metaphor endeavours to use the analogy of mankind at large and every smaller group with an animate body, in which all members in their functions supplement and support each other for the good of the other members, "feeling pain in harm that is done to another" member. The anthropomorphic metaphor insists that each part of the human body functions for the sake of the whole and not for its own sake alone. By extension of the analogy, then, the individual exists for the sake of society; the individual must be submerged in society for the sake of the well-being of society itself. In this allegorical form the metaphor leads without undue effort to a thesis of hierarchy and to a metaphorical expression of the superior function of the caput or head of the body politic and corporate (the Emperor, and later the king or Pope), and the inferior position of the subject individual. With the organological metaphor of overriding impor-

tance in the discussion of Medieval political theory, divine law was claimed the inviolable ruler of society. This law is made concrete by the visible ruler and head who disposed of both scientia and potestas and who knew what justice and the interests of the society in his charge demanded. The metaphor argues that the true unity of the Body of the State rests on the proper coherence of the members among themselves and with their head, and posits that so long as each of the members of the body politic performs its appointed functions the body itself will thrive and prosper. Ecclesiastical theorists after St. Paul supposed that the Vicar of Christ (the Pope) represents the only Head of this Mystical Body (corpus mysticum), whereof the Head was Christ. They argued that the Papal claim to sovereignty was inherited in the direct succession of Popes following St. Peter who received the keys to the heavenly kingdom from the Saviour Himself. The secular theorists of the imperial party on the other hand inferred the necessity of a temporal head for each of those two bodies, secular and ecclesiastical, regnum and sacerdotium, which together constitute the one body.

The metaphor here encounters difficulty because members of the opposed camps attempted both to justify the claims to sovereignty of their respective parties, and to rationalize the claims of secular and ecclesiastical bodies politic to the rule of the universitas or communitas Christiana into a single unified rule with a single head. Not until the time of St. Thomas Aquinas was a salutary synthesis proposed and even then such a

theoretical synthesis was insufficient to forestall Schism. Dualist theorists succeeded in rationalising the difficulty that arose in the existence of the two heads and two bodies, temporal and spiritual, by imposing the Christian dual recognition of simultaneous existence of body and soul. [3] The ultimate unity of this body, then, is preserved by the existence of a heavenly head; for though the mystical body (corpus mysticum), like the natural body (corpus naturale) cannot end monstrously as an animal biceps, within the corpus mysticum under its supreme head, there may be parts which themselves are complete bodies each with its own head. According to this dualistic conceit secular authorities would govern the material body of the communitas Christiana, having power of life or death over the bodies of individual believers, while ecclesiastical authorities would govern the immaterial soul of the communitas, having power of pardon and salvation or excommunication and damnation over the souls of individual believers. According to this dualistic conception of the metaphor, the greater church of the community of believers or ecclesia is the corpus mysticum, its spirit is the trinitarian God and the sacramental dispensation, its soul is the priesthood, and all the faithful are its body; however, the ghostly life and the corporal are separately constituted and organized under the unity of spirit so that there are two orders of life with co-ordinate equal rights. A unity of the temporal and the spiritual must then exist, and an inseverable connection and unbroken interaction between the temporal and spiritual hi-

erarchies must display itself in every part and throughout the whole of the corpus mysticum.

Despite the dualistic neutralisation of the conflicting claims of regnum and sacerdotium, imperium and ecclesia, temporal and spiritual authority, body and soul, later medieval political discussion centers more intensely around the dispute between regnal and sacerdotal power and is contemporary with the appearance of numerous venality satires directed against both loci of political power. Even in the earlier speculative explorations of Honourus Augustodunensis, Aegidius Romanus, James of Viterbo, and John of Salisbury preceding the solution of dualistic neutralisation, theorists in the respective camps invested the regnal power of kingship on one hand with attributes of the sacerdotal virtues and power of the priesthood; on the other hand, theorists embellished the sacerdotal power of the priesthood with regnal virtues and the power of kingship. The theorists of the imperial secular party treat fully the Christological attributes of kingship incorporated in the Apocalyptic pictoral presentment of Christus victor and Christus pantocrator reflected in the remarks of Conscience on the "myȝte" of Christ.

> 'Thow knowest wel,' quod Conscience; 'and thow konne resoun,
> That knyȝte, kynge, conqueroure . may be o persone.
> To be called a kniȝte is faire . for men shal knele to hym;
> To be called a kynge is fairer . for he may knyȝtes make;
> Ac to be conquerour called . that cometh of special grace.

> And of hardyness of herte . and of hendenesse bothe,
> To make ordes of laddes . of lande that he wynneth
> And fre men foule thralles . that folweth nouȝt his lawes.
>
> (B. xix. 26-33
> C. xxii. 26-33)

Similarly, apologists for the ecclesiastical power invested prelates of the church with temporal authority of a kind which insisted on their dominance over secular lords. Just as the older form of the metaphor insisted that the head or mind ruled the body and that reason both determined movement and ruled the lower passions, so the allegorical conceit of the dualists dictated that the soul was of higher value than the body and that anima superseded corpus. Soul was equated with mind, body with matter. Allegorically then, soul is a symbol of priesthood and body a symbol of kingship and it followed that just as the soul ruled the body, in the same way priesthood ruled the laity and kings.

Though medieval thought never came to conceive regnum and sacerdotium as two completely separate societies or to detach them from the matrix of that one commonwealth of believers, the res publica Christiana, whose different purposes each body differently served, later corporate conceptions tended to round out the regnum into a state, and the sacerdotium into a church.[4] In his much discussed Bull, Unam Sanctam (1302), Boniface VIII pronounces the thesis of Papal monarchy in the form of the doctrine of theocratic kingship propounded by secular apologists:

> That in this Church and in her power there are two swords, namely the spiritual and the temporal, we are taught by the words of the gospel....

> Therefore both swords, the spiritual as well as the material, are in the power of the Church. But the latter is to be exercised on the Church's behalf and the former by the Church; the former in the hand of the priest, the latter in that of kings and soldiers, but at the beck and sufferance of the priest.
>
> One sword, however, must be beneath the other and temporal authority must be subjected to spiritual. [5]

This formula of Papal monarchy is little more than the new political application of what had been the Papal position during the investiture controversies of the early twelfth century. While Boniface separates spiritual and temporal authority, at last he subordinates the king to the Pope.

While John of Salisbury (1155) advocates the position of the Papacy against the claims of secular kingship he emphasizes the corrective and divine aspects of the office of kingship. [6] According to John's treatise Policraticus, the king's

> office is to give the greater aid to those who are most weak and the greatest opposition to those who desire to do harm.

John's king is to be

> the uncorrupted judge... he whose decision, from the assiduous contemplation of equity, is its very image.

The king is

> to be loosed from the bonds of the law, not because unjust things are permitted him, but because he ought to be one who cultivated equity not from fear of punishment but from love of justice, who seeks the advantage of the commonwealth, and in all things prefers the welfare of others to his private will.

Though John condemns willful tyranny and implies that the king must give at least some attention to the claims of his subjects nonetheless he stands above those subjects. Given this elevated

status,

> ... Not without cause does he bear the sword, with which he sheds blood without blame and without becoming a man of blood, and with which he often kills men without incurring the name or the guilt of a murderer ...

In Book 5 of Policraticus, in one of the most well known and extensive passages utilising the organological metaphor, John concedes that "as the soul rules over the whole body" and as "those things that establish the rites of religion in us and teach us the worship of God ... take the place of the soul in the body of the commonwealth" just so "those men who preside over the rites of religion should be honoured and reverenced as the soul of the body" and "preside over the whole body." Further,

> ... In the commonwealth, the prince takes the place of the head, subject to God alone and to those who act as His representatives on earth, even as in the human body the head is animated and ruled by the soul.

John's notion of the king, then, is rex imago aequitatis and as such does not in any way invalidate or encroach upon the older theocratic notion of rex imago Christi. [7] Salisbury's shift from the more liturgical to the more legalistic aspect of the king and ruler as representative of Christ does not in itself constitute any more than a slight variation of the doctrine of theocratic kingship dei gratia, but his attribution to the king of both absolute power and absolute limitation by law has serious implications. As E. Kantorowicz points out, the effect of Salisbury's doctrine is to express a duality of the office of kingship; as a public person the king is at once the lord or

imago aequitatis, or the serf and servus aequitatis bound under the law. [8] Salisbury's doctrine can be construed as an early expression of the doctrine of limited monarchy in its attempt to rationalize the conflicting notions of absolute and limited rule.

In his Summa Gloria, Honorius Augustodunensis (early 12th c.) anticipates the theory of the derivation of secular from spiritual power which was pronounced in Unam Sanctam (1302) a century later. Honorius argues on the basis of the precedent of Scripture and Pope Silvester's crowning of Constantine on his conversion,

> ... that two swords are necessary for the government of the church in the present life: the one spiritual, namely, the word of God, which the priesthood uses for the wounding of sinners; the other material, which the kingship uses for the punishment of those who are hardened in evil deeds. For it is necessary that the royal power subjugate with the material sword those rebels against the law of God who cannot be corrected by the sacerdotal stole. [9]

The contemporaneous anonymous York Tractates, however, offer the contradictory argument in favour of the precedence of kingship over priesthood in defence of the rights of Henry I of England from whom Anselm refused to accept investiture as archbishop of Canterbury. In the fourth York Tractate, the anonymous argues that

> King and priest have a common unction of holy oil and spirit of sanctification and virtue of benediction, and the common name of God and Christ, and something in common to which the name deservedly applies ... The priest prefigured one nature of Christ: that is, Christ as Man; the king prefig-

> ured the other; that is, Christ as God. The latter, the higher nature by which He is equal to God the Father; the former, the lower nature by which He is less than the Father ... [10]

The anonymous subordinates priestly power to royal. He further maintains that the king may create bishops and grant them "the control of earthly things and guardianship of the church." Thus the anonymous puts forward a fairly clear argument for temporal control of spirituals.

The Papal publicists Aegidius Romanus (c. 1247-1316) and James of Viterbo (c. 1255-1308), however, refined the arguments of the Papal partisans in the investiture controversies and put forth the thesis of the plenitude of papal power in temporals or plenitudo potestatatis. In his De Ecclesiastica Potestate, Aegidius Romanus asserts:

> And if anyone should say that the whole earthly power ought to be under the spiritual in regard to the articles of faith but not in regard to temporal and earthly power, his argument would have no weight, because he who says this does not grasp the force of our reasoning, since bodies as bodies, are under spirits, even as the movers of bodies, and especially the movers of the superior bodies, are themselves ruled through moving spirits and through the intelligences which move the spheres: so temporal powers, can be judged through the spiritual power and especially through the power of the supreme pontiff, who is the supreme and most sublime spiritual power in the church; inferior temporal lords, if they are at fault, can be judged through temporal lords, but those superior temporal lords can themselves be judged through the spiritual power, since among temporal lords they have no superiors. But the spiritual power, and especially the power of the supreme priest, can be judged by no one but God alone, since no man is superior to it. [11]

Aegidius propounds the full claim of sacerdotal or theocratic kingship insisting that:

> a kingship not instituted through the priesthood either was not a kingship but brigandage or was joined to the priesthood. [12]

He continues elaborating the argument tentatively launched by Honorius Augustodunensis presenting the line of Judaeo-Christian inheritance as his precedent.

> For before Saul was instituted through Samuel, as through a priest of God, and set up as king, Melchisedech was King of Salem. (Genesis 14:18) But Melchisedech was a priest as well as a king. Whence it is said (Hebrews 7:1) that he was a priest of the most high God. Therefore in this case the kingship was not independent of the priesthood but united with the priesthood, so that the priesthood was more principal than the kingship. But modern kingships are the successors of kingships instituted through the priesthood, so that before these kingships existed there were kingships instituted through the priesthood. And because the earlier facts are examples and mirrors of later facts, all later kingships ought to be traced back to the first kingship, which was instituted through the priesthood at God's command ... [13]

Aegidius, in more than one sense, here reverses the arguments for lay investiture of prelates emphasizing as he does the prelate's power to ordain kings. His argument fully develops the concept of regnal power which is embedded in divine plan and which is both manifested and justified in eschatological and soteriological history between Creation and the Day of Judgement.

In his <u>De Regimine Christiana</u>, James of Viterbo addresses himself to the difference between the two powers, spiritual and temporal. James claims that:

> the secular power is not called spiritual but temporal, because it concerns nature [which Viterbo associates with the corporal and the beastly] whereas the spiritual power concerns grace ... [14]

James offers a tripartite justification and proof of his assertion that "the spiritual power is the cause of the temporal as its active principle". Citing Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1078-1141), Viterbo argues that "spiritual power has the nature of an active cause in respect of the temporal power, in regard to its institution;" that "temporal power generally, in whomever it is found, is subject to spiritual judgment, and especially to the judgment of him in whom is the fullness of spiritual power namely, the Roman pontiff;" and "that the spiritual power has command over all temporal things inasmuch as they were created to serve and be ordained to spiritual things." In sum, James' thoroughly hierocratic and theological doctrine concerning the relation of regnum and sacerdotium is that:

> the temporal power, by divine law, is subject in all respects to the spiritual power inasmuch as it is ordained to, and for the sake of, the spiritual. Thus, therefore, the spiritual power is related to the temporal power in the same way as the architectonic art is related to a subordinate art, and in the same way as the Holy Scripture is related to sciences discovered by man, which it uses in its service for the manifestation of its truth. Thus the temporal power is summoned to aid the spiritual, and when it is summoned it should bring aid and render obedience.

C. Feudal Kingship

Countering the doctrine of theocratic kingship are those theories of kingship with roots in the feudal relation of the

king and his subjects. These arguments emphasize the binding nature of contractual agreement. It is not certain whether these more constitutional doctrines were derived from feudal practice or from renewed study of the lex natura in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; but whether the source of these doctrines was of Germanic or Roman derivation, all stressed the binding effect of law and of contracted obligation on the king.[15] The theocratic view saw the medieval king as a ruler who created law through the exercise of his divinely appointed will which he effected "on the strength of his own considerations, unimpeded and independent." The feudal view, by contrast, saw the king as a ruler whose will alone did not constitute the material force of law. According to the feudal view the king was subject to the implicit and explicit consent of his feudal tenants-in-chief, secular and ecclesiastical. The focus of these doctrines of contract is the constituent nature of power and rights of election, consent, and resistence of the governed, rather than on divinely derived authority and sovereignty. Emphasis on the nature of mutual contract and consent under feudal law dictated that, far from standing above the community divinely entrusted to him, as the theocratic theorists of kingship claimed, the ruler was a member of that community, by virtue of the feudal contract. The doctrines of theocratic kingship are consistent in their characterisation of the relation of ruler and ruled as the relation of obedience to the command of a superior, not to a legal code. Doctrines of feudal

kingship, however, emphasize more the importance of loyalty and fidelity in the relation of ruler and ruled and so may be construed to deny any need for divine ordination. Theocratic kingship on one hand emphasizes the pre-eminence of the head of the community and is essentially unilateral. Feudal kingship on the other hand is bilateral, for while it denies the principle of absolute authority but of necessity retains the principle of hierarchical jurisdiction, it emphasizes a contract, or pactum, and consensus. In thirteenth and fourteenth century England, emergence of this bilateral feudal doctrine centers around discussion of the king's coronation oath, his council, consent, petition, charter, and the constitutional concepts of the universitas or communitas regna, commune consilium and plena potestas. We will have occasion to return to these concepts in an attempt to define Piers Plowman's use of the term comune(s). The tendency of the feudal doctrine is to emphasize the juridical rather than the military-chivalric function of the ruler and to temper concepts of absolute obedience to authority with those of mutual obligation. Consequently the king's prerogative as mediator between God and man and dispenser of an essentially retributive form of justice in punishment of sinners and criminals is displaced in favour of the view of the king as mediator in his realm between man and man, principally secular and ecclesiastical lords.

D. Constitutional Aspects of the Organological Metaphor

The constitutional aspect of the organological metaphor is developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth century discussions of regnum and sacerdotium in the works of the civilians and the Papal conciliarists respectively. Both camps repeatedly stress the dangers of tyranny of a single head, be it of regnum, sacerdotium, or the unified communitas Christiana. Bracton's treatment of kingship rivals that of John of Salisbury in its inherent ambiguity. Bracton (d. 1268) insists in De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae that barons, vavasors, knights, free-men and serfs are all under the king and "subject to his power, and indeed everyone is under him, and he himself is under no one save God alone." [16] Bracton argues that judges and private persons cannot and ought not "to dispute about royal charters and the deeds of kings." [17] An interpolator adds that:

> The king has a superior, namely, God. Likewise the law, through which he was made king. Likewise his court, namely the counts and barons, because the counts are called, as it were, the partners of the king, and he who has a partner has a master. And therefore, if the king be without a bridle, that is without law, they ought to put a bridle on him, unless they themselves are, with the king, without a bridle. [18]

According to Bracton's formulation, "rex debet esse sub Deo et lege," [19] there is at least the germ of limitation of absolute theocratic kingship.

In his De Potestate Regia et Papali John of Paris (1241-1306) attacks the Papal argument of James of Viterbo. John puts forward the argument that kingship historically precedes

the priesthood of Christ and is contemporary in origin with priesthood in the broader sense. John asserts that the ecclesiastical power has authority over temporals only in cases of spiritual fault relating to faith, marriage and the like, and usury. John, however, contends that the secular judge alone has cognisance and authority in cases of the only other sin in temporals, that of using or appropriating the property of another. Thus, secular judges have jurisdiction according to human, or civil laws, in accordance with property rights and legal claims, and not according to divine law or ordination.

In his Defensor Pacis (1324), which attacks the power of ordination, Marsiglio of Padua (c. 1275-c. 1342) asserts that candidates for ecclesiastical orders ought to be approved or rejected by the legislators or the rulers who bear the authority of those orders. In this assertion Marsiglio stresses the principle of election by the community.

Similarly in an attack on the Avignon Papacy in his De Imperatorium et Pontificum Polestate, William of Occam (c. 1280-1349) goes so far as to assert that Christ forbade the apostles plenitude of power in temporals. William maintains that plenitude of temporal power over all believers is inconsistent with the liberty of the law of the gospel which prohibits slavery. Further William argues that, just as Christ did not give Peter plenitude of power in temporals, neither did He give Peter plenitude of power in spirituals. These proponents of secular power over spiritual power are consistent in their attack on

tyrannical assumption of power by the Papacy.

It was a commonplace of medieval political philosophy and Canon Law that the communitas, or whole society, provided the basis of and sanction for the king's rule. In its feudal application discussion of this commonplace led to definitions of the rights of members of the communitas, including the right of resistence. The struggle to achieve these definitions is clearly reflected in the thirteenth and fourteenth century English constitutional controversies. If it is true (as it is often claimed) that "later medieval political discussion was largely centered around the problem of the conflicting claims of Church and State, the sacerdotium and regnum," [20] with special reference to the problem of sovereignty and authority, it is equally true that the constitutions of each body politic were by no means stable or secure internally let alone externally. Historically, in each case, attempts to neutralise friction first between the respective heads regnum and sacerdotium and then between the respective heads and their constituent members resulted in various theories of parliamentary constitutionalism and conciliarism.

In the secular sphere nobility, prelates, and magnates exercised increasing pressure on the secular head of the body politic in disputes which question the meaning of the term communitas. At the same time the increasing importance of urban trade centers introduced a new consideration in the composition and explication of the organological metaphor, that of the king's

charter and the sworn urban commune. It is the feudal concept of contract which constituted the theoretical basis of a commune's demand for a charter of recognition of status and the right to local jurisdiction in matters of governance, trade, enforcement of the king's peace, and the keeping of order.

The notion of charter, derived from a combination of Roman law and feudal custom, emphasizes more the secular head's juridical capacity than his military-chivalric function as leader of the nobility. Town self-government as a practical measure, even if founded on a charter, is not suggested by the hierarchic structure of the organological metaphor. Rather, town government, even if given status by a charter from a higher source, implies an idea of equality in which all members of a community were in a basic sense equals under law. [21] Ullmann claims that the allegory of body and soul, which gives to law both scientia and potestas, i.e., knowledge of the needs of the communitas and power to effect and enforce these needs, has considerably more ideological significance than is usually given it. The historical circumstances of conflict in the two ruling class governments, and Church and State between each of them, between power and prerogative, and between custom and usage, is indicated in the attempt to rationalize the constitution of the communitas under a single head or a single law. In all cases subservient lower orders are excluded from theory and theoreticians are more interested in the higher order and the source of the right to rule. Theorists prefer to give atten-

tion to the priesthood's claim over laity, and the secular head's claim over his subjects, including prelates. Scientia may accordingly be denied to a lay head in preference to a sacerdotal head or denied to a lay subject in preference to a lay head. The notion of feudal contract and charter, then, as it applies to lords and prelates, clearly subverts the hierarchic-hierocratic power of the metaphor.

Sacerdotal and feudal concepts of headship are, however, never completely separated; just as the two bodies politic, regnum and sacerdotium, were never completely separated in practice, secular lords might sit on ecclesiastical councils and prelates in parliamentary bodies. In formulating his doctrine of dominion in De Civili Dominio, John Wycliffe stresses the pre-eminence of the secular head:

> ... kings, princes, or temporal lords can legitimately and meritoriously take riches away from any ecclesiastical community or person that habitually misuses them, even though such riches were confirmed to them by human grants.[22]

Wycliffe insists with the authority of Isidore of Seville that the secular head's office is one of rule, protection, and wardship derived from Christ and that "He who entrusted His church to their power exacts an accounting from them." While with the support of John of Gaunt, Wycliffe's initial attack was on a corrupt church exacting unfair tribute from secular lords, the later formulation of the doctrine of dominion insisted that even secular lords might default their right to rule because of tyranny, abuse, and unfair exactions. Here, Wycliffe merely

expands the notion of a stewardship of the Church accepted and executed in bad faith. Wycliffe subjects secular lords to the same accounting to a God of retribution previously laid upon ecclesiastics in the form of coercion by secular lords.

E. Piers Plowman, the Mending of the Metaphor

In the early fourteenth century, the conflicts between regnum and sacerdotium, and between king and subjects, reached critical proportions. This crisis was reflected in the inability of the ruling classes themselves clearly to define the constitution of the communitas Christiana, and the organological metaphor was in danger of destruction. [23] Recognition of abuse and instability in ecclesiastical and feudal bodies politic led both secular and ecclesiastical venality satirists to malign arbitrary and tyrannical regnal authority, and to satirize too-worldly sacerdotal authorities in parodic liturgies, prayers, blessings, coronation hymns and the like. [24] To the mystical invocation of the coronation hymns, Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat, which is an expression of Christological theocratic kingship, the satirists retorted in a more patently materialistic vein, reflecting the nature of secular and ecclesiastical corruption and real source of the power of the urban communes:

> Nummus vincit, numus regnat, nummus cunctis imperat, reos solvit, iustos ligat, impedit et liberat. [25]

In the eyes of the satirists, issues of power and prerogative

or custom and usage are attributable to the all-pervading influence of *nummus*, an influence which causes corruption and compromises any attempt to maintain or justify stable headship of the body politic founded on theocratic or parliamentary authority, and expressed by way of the organological metaphor.

It is the mending of the organological metaphor in all its complexity which the author of *Piers Plowman* attempts. The poem itself reflects this complexity, often to the confusion of its readers. Such confusion is the direct result of imperfectly resolved tensions in the allegory of body and soul, the conflict between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, the conflict between kingship and priesthood, the conflict between head and members of the secular body politic, and the conflict between the temporal and the spiritual natures of man and his governance. The division between body and soul, *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, is the implicit scheme which divides *Piers Plowman* into *Visio(nes)* and *Vita(e)*; it also regulates the revision of passages in which there are explicit orderings of *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, the temporal and spiritual *commune(s)* In the sense that the poem strives to unify the corrupt and instable *communitas Christiana* under a single head according to the hierarchical organological metaphor, that metaphor itself regulates the narrative sequence of episodes in the poem, and reinforces the view of a unified temporal and eschatological history which those episodes portray. Finally, the organological metaphor unifies the elusive and variegated figure of Piers the Plowman himself, who is at once the perfect

type of Christian priest and king, Christus rex resurgens, the embodiment of temporal and spiritual aspects of the metaphor and the theocratic or sacerdotal head of the feudal temporal comune(s). In short, Piers is the divinely ordained priest-king whose being is embedded in the divine plan and whose existence is the manifestation of Christus pantocrator, the Judge of body and soul at the time of Apocalypse, prophesied by eschatological history.

LIST OF REFERENCES

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[3] Ruth Mohl, The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (New York, 1933), p. 385.

[4] Ewart Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas (New York, 1954), II, p. 507.

[5] Text in G. R. Elton, ed. and trans., Renaissance and Reformation, 1300-1648 (New York, c 1963), p. 5.

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[7] Ernst Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Thought (Princeton, New Jersey; 1957), pp. 94-95.

[8] Ibid., p. 96.

[9] Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas, II, p. 562.

[10] Summarized from Lewis, pp. 562-566.

[11] Ibid., p. 579.

[12] Ibid., p. 577.

[13] Ibid.

[14] All quotations from James of Viterbo are in Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas, II, pp. 581-585.

[15] The following summary of the feudal or contractual view is based on Walter Ullman, Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages (New York, 1961), pp. 150 ff.

[16] Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas, II, p. 279.

[17] Ibid., p. 280.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ullman, Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages, p. 189.

[20] Morton Bloomfield, Piers Plowman As A Fourteenth Century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, New Jersey; 1962), p. 102.

[21] My summary of charter is based on Ullman, The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages, pp. 57 ff.

[22] Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas, II, p. 127.

[23] Sheila Delany, "Undoing Substantial Connection: Chaucer's Poetry and the Late Medieval Attack on Analogical Thought." Mosaic, Vol. V (Summer, 1972). Professor Delany observes that because both elements of the ruling class maintained similar hierarchies and jurisdictions, "We should not expect, therefore, to find among the opponents of papal power a thorough rejection of the epistemological bases of analogical thought, for the propagandists of royal authority could scarcely afford to dispense with every abstract justification of power. Their aim was not to destroy the metaphysical basis of authority, but simply to transfer it from pope to king. ... Rather than systematic destruction of the basic principles, then, what we find is an eclectic process of rejection and readjustment." (p. 41).

[24] John A. Yunck, The Lineage of Lady Meed, the Development of Medieval Venality Satire (Notre Dame, Indiana; 1963), pp. 302 ff.

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II. DENOTATIONS AND CONNOTATIONS OF THE TERM 'COMUNE(S)'

A. Towards A Political Definition of 'Comune(s)'

In his remarks on the politics of the B- and C-Revisers of Piers Plowman, Professor E. Talbot Donaldson argues that in Piers Plowman the term comune(s) "evidently has no political connotation at all -- that is, it does not connote the modern House of Commons -- but refers either to the entire commonwealth or to the great body of common people socially considered". [1] While Donaldson may be quite correct in asserting that the use of the term comune(s) in Piers Plowman does not connote the modern House of Commons, he is quite wrong in insisting that "the word evidently has no political connotation at all." The term comune(s) has meaning in three separate but essentially related historical and political circumstances. In its first sense comune relates to the two bodies of the Christian commonwealth; regnum and sacerdotium; in its second to the comune of the secular kingdom: secular lords, sacred lords or ecclesiastics, and commons; and in its third to the urban commune in its form as city and brotherhood of guildsmen. All three meanings are suggested in Piers Plowman.

In all three of the above senses English definitions of the term in the fourteenth century tend to be directly related to the political constitution of the kingdom. Thus, insofar as the term comune(s) appears again and again in discussions of English polity during a time when the interests of the lords and mag-

nates are pressed against both king and ecclesiastical lords, the term refers to constitutionally framed political institutions and not to the mystical body politic. As such the term appears in theocratic contexts opposed to notions of Papal theocracy. The problem in the discussion of English polity is not so much whether a community exists as what bodies with secular powers constitute that community under the law.

Closely associated with the term comune(s) are the Latin terms communitas, communitas regni, and communitas communitatum, the French Communauté and les communes, and the Latin adjectival form communis and its declensional variants, as in commune consilium, or voto communi. All these terms appear in thirteenth and fourteenth century English documents relating to the constitution of the realm. It is appropriate to review the meanings of these terms in order fully to appreciate the relation of the term comune(s) to the organological metaphor. My intent is to ascertain whether Langland's use of the term comune(s) conforms more with definitions of the theocratic theorists or with those of the more rationalistic constitutionalists. In general the English, Latin, and French terms apply to a wide series of legally constituted bodies. The context of use must be the deciding factor in any particular case because the constitution of the communitas regni changes over time with consequent component shifts in the composition of the communitas. In thirteenth and fourteenth century France and Flanders the term communitas itself designated not the whole body of citizens, but

the lesser townsmen as opposed to the patriciate. [2] Closely associated with the Latin and French terms are issues of the composition of the realm, the organization and very definition of the commonwealth, and the problems of oath and election involved with the coronation of the head of the regnum, the king himself. It will therefore be necessary to explore these problems briefly before discussing the English term comune(s).

According to the ordinary medieval feudal view, "if the law was being violated, the communitas, or at least its leaders, had some sort of obligation to set things aright." [3] Bracton conceived that, though the king has no peer and must be judged only by God, yet "if the king will not amend what is complained of by an individual ... in such a case the universitas regni and the baronagium may and should correct the king's action in the king's court." [4] Thus, the universitas or communitas regni is a corporation in which the community is a body composed of members, the head being one of those members. [5] In the Latin documents of the twelfth century in England, the terms commune, communa, communia or the rare communitas in ordinary usage did not imply incorporation in the later legal sense. [6] During the reign of Henry III the terms communitas regni or communitas occur more and more frequently in English documents as a direct reaction to Papal claims of sovereignty and taxation. The increasing use of these terms coincides with the rise of the continental urban commune which had as its regular pattern of incorporation the taking of mutual oaths, conjura-

tionis or communionis. [7]

From 1250 onwards, magnates insist that they are the communitas regni. [8] By 1258 parliament "could be conceived as consisting of the king and council" or consilium magnum on the one hand, and twelve barons elected by the commonalty (le commun) - i.e., barons, prelates and magnates - on the other. [9] In 1258 the twelve elected by le commun represented tut le commun de la terre and were elected only pur esparnier le cust del commun, le commun consisting in 1258 of the magnates alone. [10] In 1297 Edward I deliberately expanded the "model parliament" to include the most powerful members of the bourgeoisie in the "commonalty of the realm."

Between 1297 and 1340 the king justified levies without parliamentary consent by arguing that only merchants paid such levies and that with his consent "some or all of the barons" constituted sanction of tout le plus de la communauté. [11] The essence of tout le plus de la communauté in 1297 was that members of the communauté were often all representatives of the merchant class. [12]

In the 1322 Statute of York commons (really knights of the shire and magnates) were admitted in principle to attend parliament. This document relates directly to the constitution of the English commonwealth and seems to have been written in an attempt to curtail the power of enemies of the royal party. The Statute refers to a communauté del royaume as distinct from the king, prelates, earls, and barons, which may participate in

parliamentary decisions relating to the estate of the king. [13] Though the Statute represents an attempt by Edward II "to restrict legislation by magnates detrimental to the crown" and an attempt to justify taxes levied in the interest of common profit, the document does emphasize the function of parliament as a consenting body and also broadens the base of that body. [14] The Statute emphasized the formula quod omnes tangit of the Canon Law, the notion that what touches all must be approved by all. The Statute insists that the king must obtain the consent of all whose rights are affected by an act supposedly for the common good, that is, usually to the benefit of the enfranchised. [15] The Statute mainly concerns itself with the estate of the realm as opposed to the estate of the king, with taxation, and with consent of commons. [16] The customary division between the estate of the king as a member of the body politic and the estate of the crown itself, is observed in the Statute, as was usual when head's and members' interests and rights were separate in relationship to office and membership. [17] In principle the Statute insists that the consent of commons is needed in general statutes for the common profit, and is also required for what the king and his government want or are willing to concede. [18] As such the Statute reflects questions raised about the meaning of the coronation oath and its affirmation embodied in the collaudatio, the more general question of oathing and the commune, and the questions of petition and charter.

It is an early convention in the history of feudal contract

that parties to the contract, both lord and vassal, were bound in one way or another to observe the conditions of the contract and to uphold their oaths of mutual obligation and fealty. The changing substance and interpretation of the English king's coronation oath - the highest oath in the feudal kingdom - illustrates the changing structure of the feudal comune, the subsequent shifts in the nature of consent, and a shift of the position of the king from that of lord to that of mediator and judge bound under law established by the oath.

The early English coronation oath or ordo appears in two recensions of the Anglo-Saxon Dunstan ordo and four Latin and French recensions: the twelfth century Anselm ordo, the 1308 ordo of Edward II, the 1327 ordo of Edward III, and the 1377 Lytlington ordo of Richard II. The ideas underlying the praecepta of the Dunstan and Anselm ordines are that Church and people shall keep true peace, that anyone whether high or low is forbidden rapacity and iniquity, and that in all his judgments the king shall observe equity and mercy. [19] The second recension of the Dunstan ordo describes the praecepta as Primum mandatum regis ad populum. [20] Twelfth century chroniclers draw no sharp distinction between the coronation oath, the coronation service (in which the oath was sworn and affirmed by the assembly in the collaudatio, and in which the king was often anointed after the fashion of a priest's ordination), and the subsequent coronation charter of rights. "It was possible even to treat the charter as if it were the oath, sworn before the altar prior

to the king's being crowned." [21] The ordines move away from the convention of the Anselm ordo requiring the king to swear "to prohibit rapacities and iniquities" [22] toward an explicit oath of promise to maintain laws and customs. [23] "This (oath) was most frequently expressed in the sense of an obligation to preserve the good and abolish the bad laws and customs." [24] The 1308 ordo has constitutional implications usually discussed in terms of the struggle for charters and the events of the baronial revolt which culminated in the Statute of York's annulling of the Ordinances of 1311 "to insure that all future legislation should be in parliament and not in non-parliamentary baronial assemblies" and "to make unconstitutional for ever any repetition of the baronial programme of reforming ordinances based on a commission extracted from the ruler and backed by a theory of violent opposition to an erring king." [25] The 1308 ordo requires "that the king will observe the laws and rightful customs chosen by the people of the realm." [26] The actual words read in French les quiels la communauté de vostre roiaume aura eslu and in Latin quas vulgus elegerit. [27] The implicit issue is whether legislation will be prepared and propounded by the king's ministers in council, primarily prelates and lords, or whether it will be presented in petition by commons. This question of the source of governance is reflected in the 1322 Statute of York, exacted from Edward II by rebellious barons. It declares that:

> any manner of ordinances or provisions made by the king's subjects touching the royal power or against the estate of the king or the estate of the crown shall be null and void; but the measures to be established for the estate of the king and for the estate of the realm and the people shall be considered, agreed and established in parliaments by the king and by the assent of the prelates, earls and barons and the commonalty of the realm, as has been the manner heretofore. [28]

The Statute is a reaction to the autocratic rule of Edward II and invokes the name of Edward I who purportedly swore to restrict statutes, making them subservient to charters. [29] The Statute of York reaffirms the Bractonian principle of law quod omnes tangit, what touches all must be approved by all, which insists that a ruler must obtain consent of all whose rights are affected by an act supposedly for the common good. [30] In effect the Statute restricts unilateral legislative action by the king and insists that the estate of the king is only one of many members of the regnum. The Statute separates the king's estate and person from his office of kingship or the estate of the Crown. [31] Some confusion exists as to whether the Statute of York was democratic and libertarian or whether it was the result of baronial attempts to restrict the part played by commons in legislation. The first view argues that there occurs a broadening of the meaning of communitas regni implicit in the restriction of regnal prerogative. The second view insists that precedent established a parliamentary right of petition by commons, and that the Statute infringed this right and was an attempt by lords to restrict the king's granting of charters to

lesser magnates without baronial consent, thus in effect restricting magnates themselves. According to this second view the commonalty is in fact equivalent to knights and burgesses complementing the people, and it can be argued that reference to commons (commonalty) reduces commons' position by segmentation, i.e., barons are to make those decisions which affect all people, usually enactments concerning

> the estate of the king, and of his heirs and of the kingdom and of the people, were to be made with the consent of prelates, earls, barons, and the commonalty. [32]

On one hand then, to restrict the king's person is to restrict lesser subjects, while on the other hand, to restrict the king's person is to limit his absolute prerogative and expand participation in government of the communitas regni; the real source of the problem is status and increasing power of the sworn urban commune and the king's granting of charter to the sworn commune in return for loans and tax monies after failure to obtain these funds from lords. The reform programme of the rebellious barons of 1322 included "the claim of magnates that they had a right to impose ordinances and 'awards' in the ruler", "the use of parliament as the place for political trials, with judgement by the lords and the approval of the 'people'", and "a distinction between the Crown and the person of the ruler, with a duty of the magnates to the former which might entail resistance to the king." [33] The 1327 coronation oath of Edward III requires that the king observe the laws quels le

peuple, substituting peuple for the term comune(s) used in the oath of 1308. This change in the ordo which indirectly implies the right of resistence, the theory of tyrannicide, the subjection of the king to the law, and essentially allows estates to prosecute their own interest was made after the deposition of Edward II. [34] The substitution of peuple for comune is in itself significant because it seems to imply a depreciation of the comune and supplies a more indeterminate word in its place. The 1377 Lytlington ordo restores the collaudatio removed from the oaths of the thirteenth century while adding an oath of obedience to the king, and requires that the king give his pledge before acclamation by the populace. [35] However, Richard II attempted to reinstitute the ritual anointment and ordination of the ruler, which had been removed from the coronations of the thirteenth century. What is involved is the divergence of the history of the charter from that of the coronation. Richard II's effort to return to the coronation oath of the reign of Henry III in 1216 represents a return to an older form of sacerdotal kingship at a time when the principle of parliamentary government had gained a firm foothold in England, and at a time when charters were not the prerogative of the ruler, but were subject to the consent of lords and magnates involved in measures of common profit. It is not sufficient that the subjects approve the lord and his actions in forms like the collaudatio or propose action by petition; instead they must approve measures themselves in parliament.

The meaning of the term commune(s) as it relates to the sworn commune and later to the corporation of London is well documented. The term as it applies to London is foreign in source and is associated with radical changes in the class structure and government of medieval society. The term is most immediately related to the series of crown charters giving independent status to municipal entities. Two important privileges accrue to the status of commune. The first accords the right to levy taxes within the precincts of the commune; the second grants the right to establish administrative, judicial, and legislative means of governing the lands and people of the commune. The award of the status of commune allows self-governance in the collection of monies and the determination of the peace of the commune; rights of taxation and law enforcement are the privileges granted under charter to the commune. Accordingly,

> a medieval commune, in the fullest meaning of the word, might be regarded as a collective person: a body which could hold property, exercise rights, possess vassals, and do justice. [36]

These rights were first granted to London under the charter of Richard I in 1191 by John with Richard in absentia under a pattern apparently imported from Rouen. [37] Round contends that the three salient features of the London and Rouen charters are an oath to administer justice fairly, special provisions against bribery, and the expulsion of any member of the body convicted of receiving a bribe. [38] The charters of both cities provide

for a Maire or Mayor, and a council of twenty-four members. The size of council apparently was first related to the number of powerful guilds engaged in commerce in the city, later to the number of elected leaders within wards or districts, and finally to the number of the commune consilium of the king, the prototype of the House of Lords. However, the essential feature of the commune is the oath sworn by its members to observe the dictates of the commune and to keep the peace. Councillors were further obligated not to be influenced by bribes, not to leave the council without the Mayor's permission, and to keep secret the proceedings of council. [39]

From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries commune is to be found in a variety of contexts associated with changes of government. It is sufficient here to note the contexts of the occurrence of the term commune before venturing to define its meaning or meanings. In the Middle Ages the term is universally applied to bodies by virtue of their collective capacity to perform legal acts. Thus references are available to the commune of the county, the realm, the borough, the commune of parliament, the commune of honour, and communes of merchants. In 1327 the commons call themselves "La Commune" and very early the term appears in letters from Chancery to Norman communities. In England from the time of Glanvil, who insists in his Exposiciones Vocabulorum that the commune was not a foreign creation, the term more and more becomes associated with the leaders of the gilda mercanda and their constituents. [40] The narrower sense

of communitas, commonalty, arose early but over a period of time emptied commonalty of its comprehensive significance because of the distinction between the official few and the unofficial many. [41] This development hinges first on official recognition of a leader, or head, and his constituent body and the later distinction between recognized representatives and their constituencies. Tait argues that the borough council was, in origin at least, an emanation of the civic communitas, whereas the inclusion of the commons in Parliament was merely a royal addition to the baronial council of the king. It is Tait's position that the term communitas when related to the king and when related to a municipality have different meanings. The salient points of connection between these two definitions are the role played by London in the deposition of kings in 1327 and 1399 and Londoners' insistence on the inclusion of the collaudatio of election in the coronation ceremony of 1377. Since the thirteenth century this ritual had been removed from the installation of the king, but was fundamental to the election of the maire.

B. Lexical Definition of the Term 'Comune(s)'

Lexical definition of the term comune(s) in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is varied and problematic. Before this period the term appears only in its Latin and French forms. The term comune in Middle English has the early meaning, "of or belonging to the community at large, or to a community or cor-

poration's public" (c. 1297) [42] and a subsidiary meaning derived from French as in "common right, the right of every citizen." (c. 1298) [43] Political meanings from 1300 onward include, according to the Middle English Dictionary, 1) "a fellowship or brotherhood, as of a religious community or of devotees" (c. 1300); 2) "owned or used jointly, shared" (c. 1300); 3) the "body of freemen (of a country, city, etc.), the common people, the citizenry; the third estate of a commonwealth (as distinct from the nobility and the clergy)" (c. 1325); and 4) "shared by, or serving, the members of a community or organization also, official, public as opposed to private" in usages related to secular governmental administration as commun(e) counsel (c. 1300). The Middle English Dictionary (MED) records increasing occurrences of the term from approximately 1330 onwards and lists the 1350 French usage of communer, derivative of the verb communen, in the sense of a "member of the third estate, a commoner; freeman, citizen, burgess." The MED proposes that this term has later meanings of "a member of the House of Commons" and "a common soldier, mercenary." Interestingly, the term communer itself has its earliest meanings in more religious than secular contexts, but these meanings change in specific contexts and become associated more with discussion and administration of the sacraments.

The plural form communes is of comparatively late appearance occurring as it does towards the end of the fourteenth century. In the MED the plural communes has meanings which

range from "the common people (of a realm, county, city, etc.); the third estate of a body politic, consisting of the freemen (as distinct from the nobility and clergy) as in lordes and communes and communes and peraille" (c. 1384 ff.) to "the inhabitants (of a city); the subjects (of a ruler); people, rabble" (c. 1384 ff.) to "the common soldiers of an armed force" (c. 1385) to "sustenance (?) as contributed by or to a community or group of people". This last definition is a usage exclusive to Piers Plowman. Communes does not appear until 1433 in the sense of "The House of Commons as representing the third estate of the realm".

MED shows that later definitions of communer include "one who has a share in the use of common land" and "one who has a share (in the joys of heaven)" as in communer of blisse and "Comuners in þe kyngdom of hevyn." These newer meanings of communer may be accounted for by the late fourteenth century events associated with the rise of what has been called bastard feudalism, which allotted pensions and lands to loyal retainers as a reward for military service, and by the controversy over the nature and administration of the sacraments usually attributed to the inspiration of the Lollards.

The MED records a series of meanings for the related term communalté, all of which have very specific political meanings. According to the MED communalté has a meaning "the people of a country, county, city, etc.; a people, nation; a commonwealth, community" extending from 1300 to the sixteenth century. Mean-

ings of 1) "the body of citizens or burgesses as distinct from governmental officials and mere residents; the citizenry" and 2) "the common people, the populace" occur in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Other later uses include "The House of Commons, the Commons," "the membership of a guild, a guild", "a fellowship or brotherhood; also one's companions". Communalté also has meanings in the phrases in communalté "as common property; in equal shares," "in the presence of people, in public" and out of communalté, i.e., "secretly".

Where the term comune(s) and related terms do not have specific political denotations, in most cases the term has connotations of community, connotations which because of the changing nature of class structure and representative government in England from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries demand specific discussion. The term, first used in response to claims of Papal hegemony and later adopted in discussions concerning the constitution of the nascent secular state, is central to the discussion of the constitution of the realm. As such comune(s) has definite historical and political meaning depending upon the context in which the term appears. In the late fourteenth century the term increasingly designates the third estate, magnates and the haut bourgeoisie whose presence in Parliament was the historical ancestor of the House of Commons.

It is the purpose of the third chapter to determine whether contextual appearances of the term comune(s) in Piers Plowman suggest these historical and political meanings. It will be

necessary to examine specific appearances of the term comune(s) in each of the three versions of Piers Plowman. In many instances it will also be necessary to examine parallel passages of the poem which add or eliminate the term comune(s) in the revisions. Examination and analysis of the revisions is necessary because it is an important part of the discussion to note the drift of the revisions towards conservatism and the ideal of theocratic kingship.

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III. THE OCCURRENCE AND MEANING OF THE TERM 'COMUNE(S)' AND ITS COGNATES IN "PIERS PLOWMAN": A CATALOGUE

Despite its unwieldy title, this chapter endeavours simply to record and describe the occurrences of the term comune(s) given by Professor E. Talbot Donaldson in his book, Piers Plowman, The C-Text and Its Poet. In remarking on the sequence between the Goliard and the Angel which follows the ordering of the secular comunes in B-Text and C-Text, Professor Donaldson observes

> that the C-revision of the passage, in the general direction of its thought, is the same as in B: politically, no less, and no more, conservative. [1]

His exhaustive list of the term comune(s) remains the most serious scholarly attempt to make sense of the political message of Piers Plowman, and this chapter will follow the order of Donaldson's list. [2] In Donaldson's list first appear occurrences of the term comune(s) peculiar to A-Test and common to A- and B-Texts; there follow occurrences peculiar to B-Text and then those peculiar to C-Text. Next appear examples common to B- and C-Texts only, and examples of some adjectival usages ("common people," "common help," and "common profit"). [3] This list also includes a discussion of the changes of B-Text's "comune conscience" (B. xv. 515) to C-Text's "the comune and conscience" (C. xxiii. 216). One addition to Donaldson's list appears, which illustrates Langland's philosophical antipathy to

primitive communism. I have neglected adding the many other adjectival uses of the term in the poem because such an addition would be redundant. In the majority of its adjectival appearances the term has the meaning of "ordinary" often with patronising overtones.

A. Occurrences Peculiar to A-Text and Common to A- and B-Texts

Peculiar to A-Text is Wit's speech to Will in an argument with Scripture concerning the definition of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. Will asserts,

> I wende that kinghed and knizthed . and caiseris with erlis
> Wern Do-wel and Dobet . and Do-best of hem alle;
> For I haue seize it my-selfe . and sith then red it aftir,
> How Crist counseillith the comune . and kenneth hem this tale,
> Super cathedram Moisi sederunt principes
> For-thi I wende that tho wyes . wern Do-best of alle.
>
> (A. xi. 218-220)

Comune here seems to mean the earthly Christian community at large, but Will's interpretation of Christ's tale implies that the existence of secular princes is conditional upon the church giving those princes a sacerdotal status as Aaron had done for Moses in the Old Testament.

A- and B-Texts include an occurrence of the term comune(s) in a passage which describes Mede's corruption of justice.

> Meires and maistres . and ze that beoth mene
> Bitwene the kyng and the comuns . to kepe the lawes,
> As to punisschen on pillories . or on pynning stoles.
> Brewesters, bakers . bochers and cookes;

> For theose be men uppon molde . that most harm worchen,
> To the pore people . that percel-mel buggen.
>
> (A. iii. 67-72)

For maistres in the A-Text, masters of trade, B-Text substitutes "maceres" (B. iii. 76) - mace bearing royal government administrators. In addition B-Text replaces A-Text's comuns with "comune" (B. iii. 77). The subtle shift suggested by these substitutions is from urban government to national government and from people whose main commitment is to their constituency or their class to civic and royal officials who were expected to serve the interest of the king and his kingdom. The shift is conservative though it reflects the fact that officials in the London civic bureaucracy and royal officials began to be more important in government than masters of guilds, houses, and so forth. B-Text's substitution of comune for comuns implies that the revised notion of comune(s) is more abstract in the sense that a legal fiction (comune) is substituted for the members of the third estate (comuns) who are the components of that fiction. In B-Text comune(s) may have the more particular sense of the urban commune, particularly London, while in A-Text comuns are clearly members of the third estate. Both texts suggest that comune(s) may be distinguished from their presiding leaders and both texts clearly condemn the exploitation of the poor by victuallers. In both texts the passage reflects the conflict between greater and lesser guilds, non-victualling and victualling guilds, for control of London

in the mid-fourteenth century. In this conflict the victuallers sought charters from the king in petitions submitted in order to escape the control and jurisdiction of city officials representing the interests of the more powerful non-victualling guilds. In both texts as in other passages in Piers Plowman the author's interest in justice for the pore forces him to uphold the principle of hierarchical government and the necessity of support of the ruling establishment. In neither text does Langland condemn officialdom for oppressing the poor; instead he turns on lesser bourgeois brewers, bakers, butchers, and cooks. C-Text's deletion of maceres and its substitution of "shreves and seriauns" (sheriffs and serjaunts) [C. iv. 78] further indicates the tendency of the revisions to increasingly support the king and his appointed officials who, according to Langland, defend the lower classes against predatory guildsmen. Attention to the claims of lower classes is increasingly diminished; Langland moves away from even limited parliamentary democracy in removing power from the hands of bourgeois elements and giving it to royal administrators. Langland implicitly supports royal absolutism and centralisation of authority at a time when just the opposite was happening in society as elements later to be enfranchised in the House of Commons increasingly became the source of the king's financial support.

B. Occurrences Peculiar to B-Text

Among occurrences of the term comune(s) peculiar to B-Text

are those in the B-Prologue's ordering of the secular comune:

1. Thanne come there a kyng . knyȝthod hym ladde,
   Myȝt of the comunes . made hym to regne,

   (B. Prol. 112-113)

2. And thanne cam kynde wytte . and clerkes he made
   For to conseille the kyng . and the comune saue.

   (B. Prol. 114-115)

3. The kynge and the comune . and kynde witte the thridde
   Shope lawe and lewte . eche man to know his owne.

   (B. Prol. 121-122)

4. And thanne gan alle the comune . crye in vers of latin,
   To the kynges conseille . construe ho-so wolde --
   'Precepta Regis . sunt nobis vincula legis'.

   (B. Prol. 143-144 ff.)

There are also the mouse's words to the Rat Parliament,

5. 'For thi I conseille alle the comune . to lat the
   catte worthe,
   And be we neuer so bolde . the belle hym to shewe.'

   (B. Prol. 187-188)

In this last passage, C-Text substitutes "for comune profit" in place of "alle the comune" in B-Text. In all its occurrences in the B-Text version of the ordering of the secular comune (passages 1-5 above), the term signifies either the broad community at large or the third estate, and perhaps the Christian commonwealth (B. Prol. 113). However, in B-Prol. 115 (passage 2) the term has certain religious overtones giving the king sacerdotal power -- the power to save the comune(s). While the passage may only mean that the king will save the comune(s) from civil war or other social disasters, save may also carry the

sense of religious salvation. A more particular sense of the term, that of the guild or brotherhood, does not seem possible in the B-Text version of the hierarchical ordering of the secular comune(s) (B. Prol. 112-157).

A more ecclesiastical usage of the term comune(s) appears in context of Reason's discourse on the rule of reason and the function of the king's council. This appearance of the term stands in the overall context of Reason's discussion concerning the virtue and vice of Meed and follows his urging: "That Lawe shal ben a laborere . and lede a-felde donge, / And Loue shal lede the lande . as the lief lyketh!" (B. iv. 147-148). The narrator / dreamer then carps:

> Clerkes that were confessoures . coupled hem togideres,
> Alle to construe this clause (nullum bonum) . and for the kynges profit,
> Ac nouȝte for conforte of the comune . ne for the kynges soule.
>
> (B. iv. 149-151)

The term comune(s) here clearly indicates the community at large, perhaps the third estate, and possibly the Christian commonwealth. However, conforte of the comune, the kynges profit, and the kynges soul are mentioned as separate entities; the implication is that these considerations are separated by false confessors in bad times. A spiritual meaning seems to be implied by the syntactic parallelism. When all is well, they are one and the same thing united by Lawe and Love.

In Passus of B-Text there appears a discussion of both the Christian attitude that judges Jews "iudas felawes" (B. ix. 84),

and the failure of the Christian to "helpeth other . of that that hym nedeth" (B. ix. 85), -- a principle attributed to Jewish customs. Wit reviles uncharitable mankind,'". shame to vs alle! / The comune for her vnkyndenesse . I drede me, shul abye.'" (B. ix. 87-88) Comune here refers to the earthly community which condemned the Christian saviour. There is the suggestion that the fourteenth century comune is as sinful as that which rejected and condemned Christ. The author here praises brotherly love which he attributes more to Jews than to Christians. At the same time, however, there seems to be an undercurrent of criticism for a community following a common law, perhaps the third estate, which sinfully destroyed the Messiah. The passage suggests an evident gulf between earthly and divine government.

A little later on, in a passage commenting on the humility of Job and his condemnation of "wikked men" that "welden . the welthe of this worlde" and "ben lordes of eche a lande . that oute of lawe liffeth" (B. x. 24-25), Holy Letterrure remarks,

> 'Lo!' ... . 'whiche lordes beth this shrewes!
> Thilke that god moste gyueth . leste good thei deleth,
> And most vnkynde to the comune . that most catel weldeth:
> Que perfecisti, destruxerunt; instus autem quid fecit?'
>
> (B. x. 27-29 ff.)

The passage praises the example of Job who suffered humbly in his affliction and retained his faith. Here comune refers either to the community at large or to a third estate dependent on king's largesse for redress of material ills. The passage

both emphasizes the pre-eminence of law and the necessity of decent lordship, condemning as it does the barons who do not use that wealth to aid the commonwealth, i.e., the state as a whole. This passage appears in a context in which the discussion is about the use of wealth in general. Basically the passage is a plea for more almsgiving - a constant theme in Christian literature and a theme which Langland treats in his discussion of Charity throughout the Vita(e). The author's notions of government, here as elsewhere, are that a lord has certain duties to the poor. The passage also reflects the paradoxical nature of Christian poverty, which is a sign of true humility and therefore good, but which is also the sure sign of earthly injustice.

Another occurrence of the term comune appears in B-Text when Imagynatyf comments just before he vanishes,

> 'The glose graunteth vpon that vers . a gret mede to treuthe,
> And witt and wisdome,' quod that wye, 'was somme tyme tresore,
> To kepe with a comune . no katel was holde bettere
> And moche murth and manhod:'
>
> (B. xii. 290-293)

Comune must be either the political community at large or the greater Christian community; the meaning is broad and of both secular and sacred import. Imagynatyf's remarks reinforce the previous passage's condemnation of the malignly philistine use of Wit and Wisdome by the covetous. The passage essentially argues against the use of supposed virtues in order to make a

profit. Finally, within four lines of each other, there are two occurrences of the term comune in the thirteenth passus of B-Text. Haukyn, Activa vita, minstrel and "wafrere", remarks,

> 'For ar I haue bred of mele . ofte mote I swete,
> And ar the comune haue corne ynough . many a colde mornynge,
> So, ar my wafres ben ywrouȝt . moche wo I tholye.
> Alle Londoun I leue . liketh wel my wafres,
> And lowren whan their lakken hem - . it is nouȝt longe ypassed,
> There was a carful comune . whan no carte came to toune
> With bake bred fro Stretforth . tho gan beggeres wepe,
> And werkmen were agast a litel . this wil be thouȝte longe.'
>
> (B. xiii. 261-268)

The first comune in this passage is the community at large which will starve lest Hankyn works to supply them with bread. The carful comune is clearly the sorrowful population of London, deprived of bread brought in carts by the bakers of Stretforth. The use of comune here seems to be in the specifically political sense of the urban comune of London. Haukyn's use of the word wafres for the bread he peddles is curious insofar as he describes what he sells with a word with clearly sacramental connotations. He observes that pride will only be eradicated "'thourgh payn defaute". (B. xiii. 260) The upshot of what he says is that his work as wafrer is necessary to the maintenance of the earthly comune; physical sustenance is a pre-requisite for the virtuous life.

In summary the definition of comune in B-Text varies. At one point it is the secular community at large, at another the

third estate, at another the urban community. Throughout B-Text, however, emphasis on the sinful, rebellious, and disorganized nature of the comune(s) is evident.

C. Occurrences Peculiar to C-Text

Peculiar to C-Text are the following occurrences of the term comune(s). In a passage which criticizes clerics who stop ministering to the poor and who flee to London in order to take administrative posts, C-Text states that "Conscience cam and acusede hem . and the comune hit herde, / And seide, 'ydolatrie ȝe sofftren . in sundrye places menye,'". (C. i. 95-96) Conscience is speaking to the community at large or the third estate. He attacks greedy priests who act on the authority of bishops and popes and sell worthless pardons for money. He criticizes priests who, by their absence, deprive the poor of spiritual sustenance. In the same vein he criticizes victuallers who demand prices out of reach of the poor and so deprive them of material sustenance. Lady Mede, of course, is the real villain whom both bad priests and victuallers serve. Conscience recoils at the king's wish that he marry Mede arguing that:

> Ther nys cite vnder sonne . ne so riche reome
> Ther hue ys loued and lete by . that last shal eny while,
> With-oute werre other wo . other wicked lawes,
> And customes of couetyse . the comune to destruye.
>
> (C. iv. 204-207)

The cite and the comune are virtually synonymous here, 'cite' functioning as synechdoche for comune. The passage, rather than

preaching on the theological causes of vice, criticizes the real consequences of the acceptance of Mede -- essentially usury at its worst.

Later in passus four of C-Text, Conscience criticises Lady Mede's covetousness and self-interest. In this speech the term comune(s) occurs a number of times. Conscience argues by analogy to the logic of grammar and to the eschatological history of patriarchs and kings. (A-Text and B-Text do not include the arguments based on grammar.) The burden of the first argument is that a king stands in right relation to the comune when, according to the logic of grammar, he is lord antecedent of the comune. The burden of the second argument is that eschatological history justifies theocratic kingship. Conscience equates the court in which he makes his argument -- first to the court of Agag, and later to the court which condemned Christ. Conscience praises the ascendance of the House of David, an event which prefigures the advent Christus salvator, and later Christus pantocrator. The speech as a whole clearly reflects the poet's knowledge of and preference for the theological model of the organological metaphor; the speech also reflects his knowledge of component constituents of Medieval English governments, and his support of a centralised, more or less absolute, royal administration. The gist of Conscience's argument is,

That reson shal regne . and reames gouerne. ...

(C. iv. 441)

And a Cristene kyng . kepen ows ech one.

(C. iv. 445)

In the first occurrences of the term comune(s) in Conscience's speech, Conscience, using the analogy of grammar, gives a full account of the king's claim on the comune and the comune's claim on the king. According to C-Text's conception, the king's claim is direct, the comune's indirect. C-Text reads:

> So indirect thyng ys . inliche coueyte
> To a-corde in alle kyndes . and in alle kynne trauaile,
> With-oute resoun to rewarde . nauȝt recching of the peple.
> Ac relacioun rect . is a ryhtful custome,
> As, a kyng to cleyme . the comune at his wille.
> To folwe hym, to fynde him . and fecche at hem hus consail,
> That here loue thus to him . thorw al the londe a-corde.
> So comune cleymeth of a kyng . thre kynne thynges,
> Law, loue, and leaute, and hym lord antecedent,
> Bothe here hefd and here kyng . haldyng with no partie,
> Bote stande as a stake . that styketh in a muyre
> By-twyne two londes . for a trewe marke.
> Ac the moste partie of the puple . pure indirect semeth,
> For thei wilnen and wolde . as best were for hem-selue,
> Thau the kyng and the comune . al the cost hadde.
> Al reson reproueth . such imparfit puple,
> And halt hem vnstedefast . for hem lacketh case.
>
> (C. iv. 373-390)

This passage proposes an ordering of the community at large under a politically neutral king, who mediates among warring classes. It also excoriates the moste partie of the puple for disobedience to the kyng and the comune; it is the kyng and the comune who bear all the cost for acts done supposedly for the common good. Conscience argues that the king may control the comune at his will. The comune is to follow him, to discover his will, and to bring him his counsel in order that their love for him may be manifested evenly and pervasive-

ly throughout the land. The comune may claim three things of the king, 1) Law, 2) Love, and 3) Leauté (loyalty). The ruler is lord antecedent, head, and king of this comune; he is first lord of the comune. He is to be impartial and favour no party; he is to stand as a mark of direction for travellers through a waste. Most importantly the king and the comune are distinguished from the moste partie of the puple. The king and the comune have a direct claim on the moste partie of the puple who wilnen and wolde . as best were for hem-selue. This reference to the moste partie of the puple is critical of their self-seeking. Conscience, at last, claims that reason reproves such prideful, imperfect, and wrongheaded people for hem lacketh case. (According to the logic of grammar the puple have no place in a sentence.) According to law the puple have no case to plead. What we have here is distinction between the king and the comune; -- the puple of the community at large. This comune is probably the king's appointed council and not a representative Parliament. The king and the comune are joined in mutual obligation. The moste partie of the puple stand outside the contract and, according to Conscience, exploit it. A clear suggestion of the theocratic model of the organological exists in this passage with the king named as head of the comune. The implicit message is that as head of the body politic, the king is the source of reason. The passage supports king and council against the community at large and criticises dissident elements in the commonwealth which were forcing an ex-

pansion of the contract to include Commons. The passage, then, ends with an attack on the bourgeoisie.

Also peculiar to C-Text is the use of comune made by Reason in Passus vi. Reason asks the dreamer who is roaming the fields as a labourer,

> 'Other shappe shon other clothes . other shep other kyn kepe,
> Heggen other harwen . other swyn other gees dryue,
> Other eny other kyns craft . that to the comune nedeth,
> Hem that bedreden be . by-lyue to fynde?'
>
> (C. vi. 17-20)

Comune(s) in this passage means community at large; what is emphasized is that crafts provide the commodities needed by the community at large. In a later passage which stresses right order, C-Text berates the admittance of bondsmen and bastards to holy orders and the creation of knights, ennobled not for valourous deeds, but for their ability to give silver and rents to the royal administration in times of war. The dreamer criticizes these new-made knights who, "For the ryght of this reame . ryden a-ȝens oure enemyes, In confort of the comune . and the kynges worshep." (C. vi. 74-75) Comune may mean the community at large and perhaps the Parliament to which newly created knights of the shire could be admitted.

The following passage clearly reveals C-Text's persistent emphasis on the necessary unity of sacred and secular comune(s):

> 'For the comune ys the kynges tresour . conscience wot wel,
> And al-so,' quath Reson . 'ich rede ȝow riche,

And comuners to a-corden . in alle kynne treuthe.
Let no kynne consail . ne couetyse ow departe,
Than on wit and on wil . alle ȝoure wardes kepe.
Lo! in heuene an hy . was an holy comune,
Til Lucifer the lyere . leyued that hym-selue
Were wittyour and worthiour . than he that was hus maister.
Hold ȝow in vnite . and he that other wolde
Ys cause of alle combraunce . to confounde a reame.'

(C. vi. 182-191)

Reason, as chief faculty of the head of the body politic is consistent with its own nature in this emphasis on hierocratic and hierarchical order. Comune here is called the king's treasure, probably the community at large, and ought to be a holy comune. Historically the king increasingly drew upon the third estate and the city for financial support. Reason stresses that this community suffers from the pride and greed represented by the archetypal rebellion of Lucifer. It is interesting that comuners are distinguished from the rich (C. vi. 183-184) and that Reason, in order to alleviate deep hostility, counsels both parties to depend on Wit and Will to maintain unity lest some disaster similar to Lucifer's rebellion result. Langland implicitly distinguishes between governance by Wit and Wisdom and their philistine application in cheating craftes. This separation between rich and poor comuners and Reason parallels the previous division between king and comune and the "moste partie of the people," (C. iv. 386). Comuners must mean members of the third estate distinguished from the king and his advisors whose function it is to provide against the covetousness of the lower orders. The passage as a whole is an anti-

parliamentary reproach.

In Passus ix of C-Text, Perkyn the Plowman equates the plowman's work in preparing the harvest to the palmer's work in procuring pardons by going on pilgrimages. He recounts the advice he received from Dame Truth:

> 'Consaile nat the comune . the kyng to displese,
> Ne hem that han lawes to loke . lacke hem nat, ich hote.
> Let god worthe with al . as holy writ techeth;
> Super cathedram Moysi sedent, et cetera;
> Maistres, as the meyres ben . and grete men senatours,
> What their comaunde as by the kyng . countrepleide hit neuere,
> Al that they hoten, ich hote . heyliche, thow suffre hem;
> By here warnying and worchying . worch thow ther-after;
> Omnia que dicunt, facite and servate;
> Ac after here doynge do thow nat . my dere sone.'
>
> (C. ix. 84-91)

The context of this passage is a discussion between Piers Plowman and a knight concerning the duties of tenants and their landlords. In short Perkyn and the comune, in this case the community at large and especially the third estate, are to obey all those who are above them in the secular feudal hierarchy. Perkyn and all labourers, in other words, are to serve and obey their heads. The passage alludes to the government of the urban comune. Mayors are identified as maistres complementing the substitution of "maceres" for B-Text's "maistres" earlier in C-Text. Mayors are placed in the same position of lordship over their inferiors as the king is with his. The gist of the passage is that all subjects must obey their lords. Again the poet uses a Biblical passage which emphasizes sacerdotal kingship.

We may now turn to a comparison of B- and C-Texts where C-Text includes an occurrence of the term comune not included in B-Text. B- and C-Texts begin very elaborate rankings of the regnum in Passus VII (B) and Passus X (C) respectively. In these orderings of the regnum distinctions are made between nobles, bishops, merchants, laborers, beggars, and lollers (vagabonds and vagrants) in a descending hierarchy. Each group rejoices after its own fashion at Piers pardon ā penā et ā culpā. C-Text reads

> Kynges and knyghtes . that holy kirke defenden,
> And ryghtfulliche in reames . ruelen the comune,
> Han pardon thorw purgatorie . to passy ful lyghtliche,
> With patriarkes and prophetes . in paradyse to sitte.
>
> (C. x. 9-12)

In the parallel passage B-Text reads, "And ryȝtfullych in reumes . reulen the peple." (B. vii. 10) C-Text replaces peple with the comune, the community at large, and stresses unity. The tendency of C-Text's revision is toward a notion of centralised authority and government and away from individual rights. A little later bishops are said by authority of "oure lord" (C. x. 19) to have the duty

> ' . to distruye, by here powere,
> Lecherie a-mong lordes . and hure luther customes,
> And sitthen lyue as thei lereth men . oure lord treuthe hem graunteth
> To be peeres to a-posteles . alle puple to ruele,
> And deme with hem at domes day . bothe quike and ded.'
>
> (C. x. 17-21)

Secular lords (king, lords, and knights) are compared to patriarchs and prophets, while bishops are equated with apostles.

Kings and knights have authority over the comune and may pass lightly through Purgatorie. In C-Text bishops rule people, not the comune, and pass judgment on the individual soul. It seems implicit, then, that bishops have no real power over virtuous secular lords and the king; if these secular lords may pass through Purgatorie to Heaven by virtue of Piers' pardon, then bishops will not have the opportunity to judge them at any time. It seems likely that C-Text's rejection of peple for comune is intentional, and that the author of C-Text is thinking of secular lords more in terms of their class position than as individuals. Lordship is an institution which supersedes individual lords, according to C-Text. Lords are to have power over the comune including power over ecclesiastics and lay people.

In Passus xvi of C-Text, the dreamer laments his ill fortune and the wicked ways of the world:

> And how that freres folweden . folk that was ryche,
> And peuple that was poure . at lytel prys setten;
> Ne corses of poure comune . in here kirke-ȝerd moste ligge,
> Bote yf he quike by-quethe hem auht . other wolde helpe aquite here dettes.
>
> (C. xvi. 9-12)

Here C-Text seems to use comune in the sense of a rich member of the third estate rather than the sense of the estate itself; comune might be translated as commoner. What is emphasized in the passage is that this comune is poor, beset with debts, and denied Christian burial because of a lack of money to pay friars. Comune may also be an adverb modifying ligge -- the sense

being that friars refuse to bury the poor with everyone else (commonly as "together").

In Passus xvii of C-Text, Liberum Arbitrium describes recourses to law taken by Piers Plowman. Liberum Arbitrium recounts that:

> 'In kynges court he cometh . yf hus counsail be trewe;
> Ac yf couetise be of hus counsail . he wol nat come ther-ynne.
> Among the comunes in court . he cometh but selde,
> For brawelynge and backbytynge . and beryng of false witnesse
> In constorie by-fore the comissarie . he cometh not ful ofte,
> For here lawe is ouere-longe . bote yf thei lacche selver.'
>
> (C. xvii. 357-362)

The passage is part of a general condemnation of both civil and ecclesiastical courts. Piers prefers the courts of the royal administration but will not even venture there if the king has approved of a council of covetous advisors. Piers disdains both the comunes in court, probably a court of common pleas, and the constorie, an ecclesiastical court held by a prelate. Piers is at home only in the king's court. Which royal court is meant is ambiguous; it may be either his Council or the Court of King's Bench. In any case, comunes is a derogatory usage probably meaning commoners. The poet is largely condemning the sins and abuses caused by Mede; a little later on he condemns all forms of deceitful and competitive mercenary endeavour. Later in C-Text Liberium Arbitrium praises Piers

> 'For nother he beggeth, ne biddeth . ne borweth to ȝelde;
> He halt hit a nycete . and a foul shame

To beggen other to borwe . bote of god one;
Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie.'

(C. xvii. 369-371)

Piers has no patience with graft and usury, prefers the dispensation of God and the king to the wrangling litigation of the courts. The above passage insists spiritual and material administration of Justice be unified under a central authority. Piers will not beg or borrow of God or his king except according to the words of the Pater Noster. The message to real beggars is that they must only beg minimal sustenance.

In Passus xviii of C-Text Liberum Arbitrium condemns dos ecclesie and the Schism; he addresses bishops and observes that,

'Yf knyȝt-hod and kynde wit . and the comune and conscience
To-gederes louen leellich . leyueth hig wel, bisshopes,
The lordshup of londes . leese ȝe shulle for euere,
And lyuen as Levitici dude . and as our lord ȝow techeth,
Per primicias et decimas.'

(C. xviii. 216-219)

Emphasis here is on the function of love and loyalty from the triad Love, Law, and Loyalty in government. The comune is at once the third estate, the community at large, and the communitas Christiana. The passage later asserts that the Donation of Constantine was the cause of the creation of dos ecclesie and that prelates must yield up their material goods to secular lords if the angel's words of warning that the Donation is poison are to be heeded. The condemnation of the Donation implies

that the Church ought to divest itself of property and depend on good secular administration to ensure its continuity. C-Text has "knyȝthod and kynde wit . and the comune and conscience", in place of B-Text's knyȝthod and kynde witte . and comune conscience. B-Text emphasizes more the principle of mutual governance of the communitas Christiana, regnum and sacerdotium, while C-Text's revision isolates Conscience as distinct from the secular comune. C-Text thus emphasises the function of the comune in governance more than that of a common conscience of the three estates. Again C-Text moves toward conservatism and a centralised bureaucracy. The result of the revision is profound; spiritual lords are to be stripped of their worldly goods and privileges and excluded from the regnum.

Later in Passus xviii of C-Text, Liberum Arbitrium further describes the respective offices of secular lord and ecclesiastical lord.

> 'For as the kynde is of a knyȝt . other for a kynge to be take,
> And among here enemys . in morteils bateles
> To be culled and ouercome . the comune to defende;
> So is the kynde of a curatour . for Cristis loue to preche,
> And deye for hus dere children . to destroye dedly synne.
> Bonus pastor.'
>
> (C. xviii. 289-293)

Liberum Arbitrium prescribes that bishops are to teach Christian law to lewed men who know no law. Liberum Arbitrium makes kings and knights the defenders of this comune. The comune is clearly the body politic and the communitas Christiana, the ma-

terial manifestation of regnum and sacerdotium which are separate from the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church.

Later on Liberum Arbitrium claims that Jews and Saracens say "'That Jesus was bote a Iogelour . a Iaper a-monge the comune, ... '". (C. xviii. 310) Comune must mean the religious and secular community of Jesus's day, the community at large in time past. In this context, however, comune has the connotation of common folk among whom Christ preached. The passage stands as a criticism of the elitism and pride of unbelievers of old and, by implication, of prideful ruling class of Langland's day.

D. Occurrences Common to B- and C-Texts

The following is a comparative listing of usages of the term comune(s) found in both B- and C-Texts of Piers Plowman.

> The kyng and kny3t-hode . and clergye bothe
> Casten that the comune . shulde hem-self fynde.
> The comune contreued . of kynde witte craftes
> And for profit of alle the poeple . plowmen ordeygned,
> To tilie and trauaile . as trewelyf asketh.
>
> (B. Prol. 116-130)

> And conscience and kynde wit . and kny3t-hod togederes
> Caste that the comune . sholde hure comunes fynde.
> Kyndewit and the comune . contreuede alle craftes,
> And for most profit to the puple . a plouh thei gonne make,
> With leel labour to lyue . whyl lif and londe lasteth.
>
> (C. i. 142-146)

Comune in B. Prol. 117 stresses more the meaning of third estate as opposed to nobles and clergy. Comune in B. Prol. 118 may possibly mean necessary sustenance created by the community at

large. People and plowmen are not part of the comune, but are directed by it. Comune in C. i. 143 is certainly the community at large and it seems likely that comune in C. i. 144 has the same meaning.

In B. iii and C. iv Conscience describes the dangers of Mede to a king:

'Barounes and burgeys . she bryngeth in sorwe,
And alle the comune in kare . that coueyten lyue in trewthe; ... '

(B. iii. 162-163)

'Trewe burgeis and bonde . to nauht hue bringeth ofte,
And al the comune in care . and in coueytyse; ... '

(C. iv. 201-202)

Comune in the B-Text rendition, as well as in C-Text, means the community at large or the third estate, but the change in the meaning of comune effected by the substitution of Trewe burgeis and bonde for Barones and burgeys is profound. In C-Text, comune excludes nobles and is definitely identified with leaders of the third estate and the lower orders.

Conscience continues,

'Shal neither kynge ne knyȝte . constable ne meire
Ouer-lede the comune . ne to the courte sompne,
Ne put hem in panel . to don hem pliȝte here treuthe,
But after the dede that is don . one dome shal rewarde,
Mercy or no mercy . as treuthe wil accorde
Kynges courte and comune courte . consistorie and chapitele,
Al shal be but one courte . and one baroun be iustice; ... '

(B. iii. 313-319)

'Shal nother kyng ne knyȝt . constable ne meyre
Ouer-cark the comune . ne to the courte sompne,
Ne putte men in panell . ne do men plighte here treuthe;

Bote after the dede that is ydo . the dome shal recorde,
Mercy other no mercy . as most trewe a-corden.
Kynges court and comune court . constorie and chapitre,
Al shal be bote on court . and an berne be Iustice; ... '

(C. iv. 471-477)

Conscience is arguing for a centralised law and a centralised system of justice; the result would be to amalgamate king's courts, common courts, and ecclesiastical courts. B-Text would have a feudal baroun the judge of this court. C-Text substitutes an berne; and while the translation baron is still possible, berne may have a punning value of person, child or bairn, -- Jesus the Savior. Comune may denote the community at large, but seems to suggest a third estate subject to the punishment and tax of all three courts; C-Text emphasizes this liability to taxation substituting Quer-cark for the quer-lede of B-Text.

Further on in the episode concerning Lady Mede, Peace foolishly defends Wrong and Mede before the king. In this defence he remarks to Wisdom,

'Wyth-outen gilte, god it wote . gat I this skathe (Mede),
Conscience and the comune . knowen the sothe.

(B. iv. 79-80)

'With-oute gult, god wot . gat iche thys scathe (Mede);
Conscience knoweth hit wel . and alle the trewe comune.'

(C. v. 75-76)

Comune is the community at large or the third estate; Peace is arguing perversely. C-Text's trewe comune is a disparagement of the comune. Peace's definition of the trewe comune later

on in the Mede episode, is that comune which seeks and serves Mede, not Justice.

Both texts have a most curious narrative usage of comune.

Mede mourned tho . and made heuy chere,
For the moste comune of that courte . called hir an hore.

(B. iv. 165-166)

Mede mornede tho . and made heuy cheere,
For the comune called hure . queynte comune hore.

(C. v. 160-161)

It is Mede who suffers a setback in a suit brought by her against Wrong for desertion. In B-Text comune plainly means the most common person and has obvious elitist overtones: even the lowest and the most ignorant know Mede is a whore. In C-Text comune has more the meaning of the consensus of an assembly than anything else. C-Text's second use of comune is closer to an adjectival use; it is the common judgement of the court shared by all present that Mede is a whore and Wrong is not at fault.

After a corrupt reeve complains that Mede has never repaid the services he has done on her behalf, the king calls Conscience to advise him. Conscience says to the king,

... . 'but the comune wil assent,
It is ful hard, bi myn hed . here-to to brynge it,
Alle owre life leodes . to lede thus euene.'

(B. iv. 182-184)

. 'with-oute the comune help,
Hit is ful hard, by myn hefd . there-to hit to brynge,
And alle oure lege ledes . to lede thus euene.'

(C. v. 176-178)

Earlier in C-Text Mede criticized Conscience for offering advice that would lose the king's "heritage of Fraunce" (C. iv. 243) and that would sell a kingdom "conqueryd thorw comune help." There is a qualitative difference between *assent* and *help*. Assent in the fourteenth century was more a matter of principle than of fact. According to apologists for representative government, assent is required for approval of action; assent precedes action. *Comune help*, however, has clearly more material connotations. The phrase is specifically associated with issues of taxation and the levying of troops for the common defence of the realm. C-Text's revision of Conscience's speech to the king more pointedly insists that help and not assent is what is at stake in any discussion of Mede. C-Text chooses to ignore the issue of assent in common actions of defence of the realm. C-Text concentrates instead on the actual means of mustering that defence, and again the revision is opposed to the interests of parliament and the third estate. The difference between B- and C-Texts can be stated in a paraphrase; in C-Text Conscience, as the king's counsellor, advises that common help is more essential than common assent. In fact, the central issue is whether the *comune* is bound to obey the king or whether they can resist levies imposed unilaterally by the king, and not formulated and approved in a common council or by petition.

Reason counsels the king how to rule according to the precepts of religion in a passage which includes several occur-

rences of the term comune. In B-Text the narrator describes what Reason says to the people:

> And sithen he radde religioun . here reule to holde --
> 'Leste the kynge and his conseille . owre comunes appayre
> And ben stewardes of owre stedes . til ȝe be ruled bettre'
> And sithen he conseilled the kynge . the comune to louye,
> 'It is thi tresore if tresoun ne were . and triacle at thi nede'.
>
> (B. v. 46-50)

Comunes in B. v. 47 must mean clerical property liable to taxation or religious bodies subject to taxation. Comune in B. v. 49 is the council advising the king in matters of taxation or the community at large from whom the king may draw financial support. Reason's advice to the king clearly points out that the community at large is the king's tresore, his property to dispose of as he will. What is especially interesting is that Reason warns clergy that the king and his council may seize clerical property unless clerics govern themselves better. In C-Text a long addition, inserted between Reason's counsel to the people and to the king, praises the reforms of Pope Gregory the Great. The insertion argues that clerics should stay in their cloisters in order to avoid covetousness. In the C-Text lines which parallel those in B-Text quoted above, the narrator relates what Reason says in the following way:

> And sitthe he radde religion . here ruele to holde,
> 'Leste the kyng and hus consail . oure comunes a-peyre,
> And be stywardes of oure stedes . til ȝe be stewed betere.'
>
> (C. vi. 145-146)

> And sitthe he consailed the kyng . his comune to louye;
> For the comune ys the kynges tresour . conscience wot wel,

'And also', quath Reson . 'ich rede ȝow riche,
And comuners to a-corden . in alle kynne treuthe.'

(C. vi. 181-184)

C-Text includes the chastisement of religious comunes and the admonition that the community at large is the king's treasure. C-Text goes on to distinguish the rich from commoners and insists that both reach accord in alle kynne treuthe. Comuners are the poorer members of the third estate.

In a discussion concerning Dowel, Piers the Plowman maintains in B-Text:

'Nouȝt thoruȝ wicche-craft, but thoruȝ wit . (and thow wilt thi-selue)
Do kynge and quene . and alle the comune after
ȝyue the alle thei may ȝive . as for the best ȝemere,
And, as thou demest, wil thei do . alle here dayes after;
Pacientes vincunt, &c.'

(B. xii. 168-171 ff.)

C-Text's revision is thorough. In C-Text, Piers remarks to Patience,

'Ther nis wyght in this worlde . that wolde the lette
To haue alle londes at thy lykyng . and the here lord make,
And maister of alle here meeble . and of here moneye after,
The kynge and alle the comune . and cleregie to the aloute
As for here lorde and ledere . and lyuen as thou techest.'

(C. xvi. 166-170)

The essence of Piers' remarks to Patience in both texts is that the comune must be ruled by Charity and Patience. B-Text gives a more particular description of the wyght in C-Text. B-Text notes that emperors, empresses, kings, earls, barons, Popes, and patriarchs all prefer Wit and Reason to Charity. (B. xiii. 164 ff.) Then B-Text records Piers' view that king, queen and

comune be swayed to Charity by Wit. C-Text is profoundly different. C-Text records Piers' cynical observation that king, comune, and clergy will never bow to the rule of Patience. In B-Text Piers concludes that neither Wit nor strength of arms can effect peace between Popes and their enemies, and between Christian kings. In C-Text he abbreviates his warning and deletes any reference to Christian kings. In B-Text comune is more the community at large than simply the third estate, as implied by the C-Text's reference to clergy in C. xvi. 169.

In a passage which explains Christ's descent from the House of David, Conscience recounts the story of the Resurrection of Christ, Christus Resurgens in B-Text, Christus rex resurgens in C-Text,

> 'The Iewes preyed hem pees . and bisouȝte the knyȝtes
> Telle the comune that there cam . a compaignye of his apostеles,
> And by wicched hem as thei woke . and awey stolen it.'
>
> (B. xix. 149-151)

> 'The Iuwes preyed hem of pees . and preyed tho knyghtes
> Telle the comune, that ther cam . a companye of hus apostеles,
> And by-wicched hem as thei woke . and a-way stelyn hit.'
>
> (C. xxii. 154-156)

The comune is clearly the community at large at the time of the Crucifixion and Resurrection; the comune is distinguished from the unconverted Jews. In view of the allegory here (Christ's body as place), comune might also mean the Christian body mystic.

Grace goes to Piers,

And conseilled hym and Conscience . the comune to sompne-

(B. xix. 209)

And consailede hym and Conscience . the comune to someny-

(C. xxi. 214)

Grace intends to grant all creatures with five wits the gift of grace as a weapon in the war against Anti-Christ. The comune identified here is both secular and sacred, and the attack of Anti-Christ is apocalyptic. The Apocalypse denies all dualism, even that which separates the quick and the dead.

While Conscience desperately tries to defend the Barn of Unity, called "holicherche in Englisshe", from the attack of Pride and Anti-Christ, Kynde Wit advises,

'Clennesse of the comune . and clerkes clene lyuynge
Made Vnite holicherche . in holynesse to stonde.'

(B. xix. 377-378)

'Clannesse of the comune . and clerkes clene lyuynge
Made Unite holychurche . in holynesse stonde.'

(C. xxii. 381-382)

Comune is the greater Christian community of believers tentatively separated from officials of the Church, the body politic as distinct from the body ecclesiastical.

In an encounter with the comune, Conscience comments on Piers' second pardon - redde quod debes.

'How?' quod al the comune . 'thow conseillest us to ȝelde
Al that we owen any wyȝte . ar we go to housel?'

(B. xix. 389-390)

'How?' quath alle the comune . 'consailest thou ous to
3elde
Al that we owen eny wyght . er we go to housele?'

(C. xxii. 393-394)

Conscience replies that the payment of debts is the essence of spiritus iusticie and adds that it is necessary for salvation, even though a brewer denies it. The comune represented by the brewer is a recalcitrant and sinful community of self-seekers. Conscience warns that failure to observe the principle of spiritus iusticie will result in the loss not only of the soul, but of life itself. Spiritus iusticie is a hierarchical and implicitly aristocratic notion of just conduct; the principle of spiritus iusticie assures that each class in society will provide for the needs of the classes below them with acts of charity. It is a victualling guildsman, especially perverse because he is a brewer, who will not accede to the Christian doctrine of hierarchical charitable dispense. In the same breath Langland exhorts men to perform acts of charity while condemning those who live by trades.

In a passage concerning good pastorship Conscience speaks of inculcating the cardinal virtues.

'But Conscience the comune fede . and cardynale vertues
Leue it wel thei ben loste . both lyf and soule.'

(B. xix. 405-406)

'Bote Conscience the comune fede . and cardinale vertues
Leyf hit wel, we ben lost . bothe lyf and soule.'

(C. xxii. 408-409)

Comune clearly signifies the members of the Christian community.

A lewd vicar then retorts.

'Thanne is many man ylast' . .....
'I am a curatour of holykyrke . and come neure in my tyme
Man to me, that me couth telle . of cardinale vertues
Or that acounted Conscience . at a cokkes fether or an hennes!
I brew neure cardynal . that e ne cam fro the pope,
And we clerkes, whom they came . for her comunes payeth,
For her pelure and her palfreyes mete . and piloures that hem fol w eth.'

(B. xix. 407-413)

'Then is meny man ylost' . .....
'Ich am a curatoure of holykirk . and cam neuere in my tyme
Man to me, that couthe tell . of cardinale vertues,
Other that acountede Conscience . a cockes fether other an hennes!
Ich knew neuere cardinal . that be ne cam fro the pope,
And we clerkes, when then cameth . for her comunes payeth
For here pelure and palfrayes mete . and pylours that hem folwen.'

(C. xxii. 411-417)

The impoverished vicar is typical of the unlearned characters in Piers Plowman who, after hearing the pronouncements of allegorical personae, point out contradictions between professed faith and acts. The basis of the vicar's complaint is that cardinals themselves do not preach the cardinal virtues to the people; he claims he knows no man who follows conscience or can teach the cardinal virtues. The vicar complains that when cardinals do come to the parishes from the Pope in Avignon or Rome, they exact support for themselves and their entourages from the parish priests and their flocks. The vicar is referring to a general feudal custom which required local retainers to pay the

expense of both royal and curial visits. Comunes has a meaning close to sustenance or tribute. Later in the passage the comune and the vicar wish that no cardinals will visit the "comune people." (B. xix. 418; C. xxii. 422) In this instance comune and comune people must mean the lay community, commoners, by and large the poor. The vicar's wish that cardinals will stay at home is consistent with Conscience's advice in B-Text and C-Text that clerics stay in their cloisters. The vicar criticizes cardinals who do not practice or preach the cardinal virtues and instead lie and linger in luxury at the expense of the poor. (B. xix. 414; C. xxii. 418) The poor comune agrees with the vicar's indictment of clergy. Finally the vicar advises Conscience to stay at the king's court and never to leave that court. Grace, the vicar says, will guide clerks.

> 'And Pieres with his newe plow . and eke with his olde
> Emperour of al the worlde . that alle men were Cristene.'
>
> (B. xix. 424-425)

The vicar states that "the comune" ignores the counsel of Conscience and the cardinal virtues simply because it sees that those who preach the virtues do not in fact practice them. According to the vicar, "the comune" believes spiritus prudencie is a kind of guile and deceit which hides sin and hypocrisy. Thus, throughout the passage the vicar attacks the earthly clergy. In an aside to Conscience, on the other hand, he supports royal administration of justice. The vicar's reference to Piers as Emperor suggests the apocalyptic Christ the Conqueror.

A king enters immediately and makes a speech which reflects certain praecepta of the coronation oath and the use of the organological metaphor.

> And thanne come there a kynge . and bi his croune seyde,
> 'I am kynge with croune . the comune to reule,
> And holykirke and clergye . fro cursed men to defende.
> And if me lakketh to lyue . by the lawe wil I take it,
> There I may hastlokest it haue . for I am hed of lawe;
> For ȝe ben but membres, and I aboue alle.
> And sith I am owre aller hed . I am owre aller hele,
> And holycherche chief help . and chiftaigne of the comune.
> And what I take of ȝow two . I take it atte techynge
> Of spiritus iusticie . for I iugge ȝow alle;
> So I may baldely be houseled . for I borwe neuere,
> Ne craue of my comune . but as my kynde asketh.'
>
> (B. xix. 462-473)

> Then cam ther a kynge . and by hus corone seide,
> 'Ich am kyng with corone . the comune to reule,
> And holychurch and clergie . fro corsede men to defenden.
> And yf me lacketh to lyue by . the lawe wol that ich take
> Ther ich may haue hit hastelokest . for ich am hefd of lawe,
> And ȝe ben bote membrys . and ich a-boue alle.
> Sitthen ich am oure alre hefd . ich am ȝoure alre hele,
> And holychurches chef help . and chefteyn of the comune.
> And what ich take of ȝow two . ich take hit at techynge
> Of spiritus iusticie . for ich Iugge ou alle;
> So ich may baldely beo housled . for ich borwe neuere,
> Ne craue of my comune . bote as my kynde asketh.'
>
> (C. xxii. 467-478)

The king distinguishes comune from holy kirke and clergy. The king swears by his crown and affirms according to the praeceptum of the coronation oath that he will rule the comune and defend the church and its members from the cursed. The whole passage is an extremely clear argument in favour of royal absolutism patterned after the theocratic organological model; the reference to the king's nature, his royal essence, is consistent

with this view. The king places himself above the law, not subordinate to it. He also places himself above the members of the body politic of which he is head. He swears that as king he is the head and the source of prosperity of the regnum and sacerdotium. The king maintains that he is the chief help of holychurch and chieftain of the comune. He asserts that he is judge of alle the secular comune, lords, and ecclesiastics and affirms that he will exact taxes from the entire community according to the demands of his Kynde Witt, or natural reason.

In a passage concerning the relationship of spiritus temperancie, spiritus iusticie, spiritus fortitudinis, and spiritus prudencie, Need asserts

> 'And spiritus iusticie . shal iuggen, wolhe, nolhe
> After the kynges conseille . and the comune lyke.'
>
> (B. xx. 29-30)

> 'And spiritus iusticie . shal Iugen, wol he, nul he
> After the kynges counsaile . and the comune lyke.'
>
> (C. xxiii. 29-30)

Need claims that the principle of Canon Law, spiritus iusticie, is embodied in the judgement of king's counsel and the approval of the comune, the community at large. In essence, a principle of Christian law has been secularized and subjected to secular control; the council of the king was usually composed of nobles and prelates. The passage pays a kind of lip-service to contractual obligation; it is quite inconsistent with the king's speech at the end of Passus xix. Though the passage clearly argues that if the spirit of justice is to be observed, the whole

community must participate in government, the king has already been given sweeping powers of judgement with no mention made of the rights of his subjects.

In a passage concerning the defense of Christendom against the power of anti-Christ, Conscience musters both comunes, regnum and sacerdotium, and all estates - nobles, clergy, and commons.

'And crye we to alle the comune . that thei come to Vnite,
And there abide and bikere . aȝein Beliales children.'

(B. xx. 77-78)

'And crye we on at the comune . that thei come to Unite,
Therto abyde and bykere . aȝeyns Beliales children.'

(C. xxiii. 78-79)

The comune is the greater Christian community for all time mustered against the forces of evil.

In a passage in which Conscience outlines a scheme for royal administration, Envy encourages

' . freres to go to scole,
And lerne logyk and lawe . and eke contemplacioun,
And preche men of Plato . and preue it by Seneca,
That alle thinges under heuene . ouȝte to ben in comune.'

(B. xx. 271-274)

' . freres go to scole,
And lerne logik and lawe . and eke contemplacion,
And preche men of Plato . and prouen hit by Seneca,
That alle thyng vnder heuene . ouhte to beo in comune.'

(C. xxiii. 273-276)

The dreamer criticizes Envy, retorting:

'And it he lyeth, as I leue . that to the lewed so precheth;
For god made to men a lawe . and Moyses it tauȝte,

Non concupisces rem proximi tui.'

(B. xx. 275-276 ff.)

'He lyeth, as ich leyue . that to the lewede so precheth,
For god made to men a lawe . and Moyses hit tauhte,
Non concupisces rem proximi tui.'

(C. xxiii. 277-278 ff.)

Langland has no more sympathy with communalism than he does with primitive capitalism.

In passing, the adjectival uses of comune(s) related to political constitution, "common people", "common help" and "common profit" have been mentioned. These formulae are of fundamental and profound significance in the discussion of the English constitution, taxation, and the justification of policies and of levies imposed for the good of the realm. Elitist uses of the last two formulae need noting. After Holy Church finishes her long lecture to the dreamer concerning the duties of a good Christian, he imagines Mede's marriage before a vast assembly of all classes of men. The dreamer states that the assembly consists

'... of kniȝtes and of clerkis . and other comune people.'

(B. ii. 57)

'Of knyȝtes, of clerkes . of other comune puple.'

(C. ii. 58)

Comune puple are those not ennobled or in orders, commons opposed to nobles and ecclesiastics. During the Mede debate, Reason tells the king that no "reuthe" will be had

' ... til prechoures prechyng . he preued on hemseluen;
Tyl the kynges conseille . be the comune profyte;'

(B. iv. 122-123)

'Tyl that lerede men lyue . as thei lere and techen,
And til the kynges consayle . be al comune profit;'

(C. v. 118-119)

Reason goes on to list a series of hypocrisies which must be extirpated before reuthe may be obtained. Reason sets great store by the principle of comune profyte and king's council's role in its achievement. The passage suggests that all classes must approve of policy effecting comune profyte , but ultimately leaves control in the hands of the king. The passage also suggests the germ of Stubb's "communitas communitatum, a union of organized bodies of freemen" acting as representative advisory bodies to the king. [5]

In summary, one may make several observations concerning Langland's use of the term comune(s) and the politically conservative tendency of the revisions. Langland's use of the term is varied. Comune(s) may mean the community at large, king's council or parliament, the third estate, a religious commune, the commune of London (though not in the expressly legalistic sense of a chartered town), regnum, sacerdotium, or the communitas Christiana. More frequently in the Vita(e) than in the Visio(nes) of B- and C-Texts comune(s) appears as the combined regnum and sacerdotium. C-Text only refers to a holy comune but this exception is telling, used as it is in a passage critical of rebellion, clearly the rights of resistance

which are one basis of a contractual theory of kingship are not holy. Langland's conservative stand against contractual kingship is further stressed on close examination of the revisions. Langland's tendency in the revisions is to pay more and more attention to the details of centralised monarchical government, to stress more and more hierarchical notions of charitable dispense, and to insist that the comune(s) are subject to an absolute theocratic king. Now that the catalogue of the occurrences of the term comune is complete, along with a description of some of the problems in its definition, it is appropriate to turn directly to the orderings of secular and sacred comune in the Visio(nes) and Vita(e) of Piers Plowman and some other contemporary Middle English poems.

LIST OF REFERENCES

III. The Occurrence and Meaning of the Term 'Comune(s)' and Its Cognates in 'Piers Plowman': A Catalogue.

[1] E. Talbot Donaldson, Piers Plowman, the C-Text and Its Poet (1949; reprinted New York, 1966), p. 119.

[2] I refer the reader to Donaldson's fourth chapter, "The Politics of the C-Reviser", pp. 85-120. David C. Fowler has recently made a case for A-Text's radicalism in Piers Plowman, Literary Relations of the A and B Texts (Seattle, Washington, 1961). Donaldson is more interested in the B- and C-Texts; he is "interested largely in eliminating, if possible, the supposed discrepancy between B and C by laying the twin ghosts of B's radicalism and C's ultraconservativism." (Donaldson, Piers Plowman, the C-Text and Its Poet, p. 86.)

[3] Donaldson, Piers Plowman, the C-Text and Its Poet, p. 96, note 8.

[4] Cf. D. W. Robertson and Bernard F. Huppe, Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition (1951; reprinted New York, 1969), p. 222. Grace suggests that Piers should build a Barn in which to store his harvest (B. xix. 312ff.). This Barn is later the "hous Vnite . holicherche on Englisshe" (B. xix. 325), and still later the Castle moated in anticipation of the seige by the legions of Anti-Christ (B. xix. 359ff.).

[5] Donaldson, Piers Plowman, the C-Text and Its Poet, p. 104.

IV. The Ordering of the 'Comune(s)', 'Regnum' and 'Sacerdotium', in "Piers Plowman" and Some Contemporary Middle English Poems

A. The Historical Issues of Governance Restated

A brief restatement of some of the central problems concerning the ordering of *regnum* and *sacerdotium* should clarify the issues inherent in the sequences ordering the *comune(s)* in *Piers Plowman*. First, the *regnum* or secular body politic conventionally consists of the three estates: secular lords or nobles, ecclesiastical lords or prelates, and common's richer members of the third estate not ennobled (merchants, magnates, etc.). Second, the *sacerdotium* in its basic sense consists of all governing bodies of the *ecclesia* or the Church. As interpreted by proponents of papal power, the *sacerdotium* includes or holds sway over the *regnum*, but according to supporters of the royal administration, the *sacerdotium* is only that group of bodies forming the ecclesiastical government which holds power only in ecclesiastical matters. The chief problems associated with governance of the *regnum* are the relationships between the three estates, particularly the king's relation to his council, usually composed of nobles and lords, and the function of the commons in that council, during this period knights of the shire and representatives of mercantile magnates. According to English custom, the king usually summoned this council to settle matters of defence and taxation; members of council were appointed and the schedule of meetings

was not prescribed. The chief issues associated with the governance of the sacerdotium are those which allow or disallow ecclesiastical interference in secular affairs in the prosecution of Christianity. These issues usually involved arguments over the Church's right to extract tithes, levies, and taxes from the regnum, its right to crown, anoint, and ordain pious kings and censure or excommunicate impious kings. Similarly, discussion of the sacerdotium's relation to the regnum involved arguments concerning whether the head of the regnum may exact levies and taxes from ecclesiastical bodies, interfere in the appointment of prelates and clerks, and take steps to unseat greedy prelates or deny the demands of worldly Popes. It will be my purpose here to describe and discuss the resolution of these problems of regnal and sacerdotal governance and also the relation of the two bodies politic to one another proposed by the author of Piers Plowman.

Writing of the author of Piers Plowman as moralist, Helen C. White perceptively observes that the central issue is the problem of poverty. "Poverty is the touchstone of the existing order of the church and society; it is both the explanation of the world's wrong and the solution to it." [1] On the one hand poverty involves a failure of two basic theoretical requirements of Christian life, Justice and Charity. On the other hand it involves an appreciation of the meaning of poverty for the social consequences of the Christian life; self-inflicted poverty is after all a part of the monastic ideal, because pov-

erty, chastity, and obedience are intended to inspire in their practitioners true humility. White's remarks are related to the combination of cynical satire and idealism which are constantly juxtaposed throughout Piers Plowman. It is perhaps more accurate to describe Piers Plowman as a complaint than to describe the poem as a satire. The author of Piers Plowman is faced with the impending collapse of the old feudal order. The collapse involved political upheavals caused by demands of the lower orders for more representative government, economic shifts brought about as feudalism began to give way to mercantile capitalism, and a series of devastating plagues and wars. The author of Piers Plowman does not lack material for his catalogue of abuses in the order of the regnum. The author attacks false counsellors to the king; money-lenders; merchants, and especially smaller sellers of food and domestic wares; self-seeking administrators; and most virulently and persistently, beggars and lollers for their exploitation of the honest poor, the threat their self-seeking poses to the regnum and lordship, and their forsaking of Christian virtue. The focus of the moralist's attack is greed, dishonesty, and Pride. Similarly, the increasing worldliness of the Church and the disruption of hierarchical Church rule which culminates in mid-century in the Great Schism, provides the author with an excess of abuses in the sacerdotium. The author inveighs against both the Pope of Rome and the Pope of Avignon, parasitic cardinals, rack-renting prelates who live in opulence, and false priests who are involved in both royal

and ecclesiastical bureaucracies and who prefer the silver and the luxury of the city to the unremunerative and arduous tasks of priesthood in rural parishes. He maligns with equal vigor lower members of the Church hierarchy, --those monks and friars who prefer to beg, sell indulgences, and flog pigs' knuckles as relics than to serve the Lord, the Church, or the poor. The author attacks members of the sacerdotium for neglect of their proper office of priesthood, the threat their self-seeking poses to the sacerdotium and Christian lordship, their forsaking of Christian virtue, their greed, dishonesty, and Pride. The author's overriding concern is the injury done to the honest poor by false and self-seeking members of the sacerdotium. Willing poverty in the practice of Christian piety is one thing. Another thing altogether is the appearance of unwilling beggars who remain as the notorious sore on the conscience of communities where social problems are not solved by a central authority, secular or ecclesiastical. The author's double perception of poverty itself, at once a Christian virtue and the sign of the lack of Christian Charity and Justice, is reflected throughout Piers Plowman in the naive idealism of the preacher and the latent cynicism of the beggar. These attitudes are constantly polarised and in need of resolution. White further remarks that the author of Piers Plowman possesses the radical idealism of the mystic. For him the ideal and the reality are intimately bound up in a complex relation which gives his symbols not merely an intermediary validity, but a scope and significance

of wider and more nearly final validity. [2] This sort of complexity not only typifies the attitude of mind which created the organological metaphor and allowed medieval theorists to argue in terms of the metaphor for centuries, but is also implicit in the notions of sacred history which narrate the lineage of the true Christian prince and justify Christ's claim to be the Messiah.

One suspects that the author of Piers Plowman would be pleased if the abuses he catalogued were corrected, and if affairs in regnum and sacerdotium were set in right order, king and Pope assuming their rightful places as respective heads of the body politic. However, as the catalogue of complaints grows and is repeated, and as the Dreamer's frustration and desperation increases in his search after Justice, Charity and Piers Plowman, it becomes obvious that mere reform in the order of the two hierarchies is impossible and that a radically new order must and will be established.

The note of expectation in the author's voice, what Morton W. Bloomfield has described as the apocalyptic nature of the poem, is not without precedent in the Christian tradition. [3] Indeed Christian eschatology dictates that the millenium will arrive with the coming of Anti-Christ, Apocalypse, and the Last Judgement by Christus pantocrator in glory. In the most mundane sense, increased corruption signals the imminence of the end of Christian history and the second coming of Christ, not as Saviour but as Judge of both the quick and the dead; Piers Plowman

itself finishes with the apocalyptic assault on the Barn of Unity by the minions of Anti-Christ. [4]

Christian eschatological history is, however, thoroughly imbued with the sense of a continuum. The Old Testament relies on the history of the patriarchs to reveal the progress of the Word of God; the new Testament and the tradition of prophecy rely more on justification of Christianity through the priest-king Melchisedek. Christ Himself is in many ways the product of the conflation of these two traditions. Christ is, first, the Son of Man by virtue of His direct lineage from Adam through the house of David. Second, He is the Son of God by virtue of His assumption of the powers of the priest-king Melchisedek, who like David, though divinely anointed and ordained, was without legal right of inheritance of kingship. [5] Having made sacrifice for the sins of all men, Christ is to return at the Apocalypse and wreak justice on all wrong doers. Cosmic Justice will be meted out and all former evil will be appropriately punished. Those who have not heeded the merciful dispensation of Christ's sacrifice will be visited with the vengeance of the Old Testament God.

The author of Piers Plowman treats the problem of temporal justice in the Mede debate of the Visio. In this sequence, Conscience as advisor to the presiding king distinguishes between good and bad types of reward in a way which directly mirrors the cosmic representation of Christ's dual identity as Saviour and Judge. According to Conscience, only two things deserve to be

called by the name of Mede -- a reward: "the heavenly reward of God and the rewards given to wrong doers. All other sorts of payment are not properly called rewards." [6] Conscience advises that only the reward of heavenly Salvation effected through God's Mercy and Christ's martyrdom, and the Apocalyptic judgment of evil and evil doers may be called Mede. The cash nexus advocated by Lady Mede and her minions has nothing at all to do with the Justice of a Christian kingdom, temporal or cosmic. Conscience, therefore, argues that temporal justice must mirror heavenly Justice, and, by implication, that the king ought to imitate and be the figure of Christus pantocrator. As mediator and intercessor the king should exercise Christ's merciful power. Merciful power is associated with the function of Christian priesthood, merciful dispensation, and distributive Justice. Christ's vengeful power is associated with patriarchal Old Testament law, wrath, and retributive Justice. Conscience explains the two-edged nature of the power of Christus pantocrator and imperator.

> 'Thou knowest wel,' quath Conscience . 'and thow conne reson,
> That knyght, kyng, conquerour . may be o persone.
> To be cald a knyght is fair . for men shal to hym kneole,
> To be cald a kyng is fairour . for he may knyghtes make;
> And to be cald conquerour . that cometh of special grace,
> Of hardynesse of herte . and of hendeness bothe,
> To make lordes of laddes . if lande that he wynneth,
> And fre men foule thrallers . that folwen not hus lawes.'
>
> (C. xxii. 26-33)

Conscience illustrates his point with the example of the subservient position held by the Jews who despised Christ, and

thereby fuses the mundane description of the conqueror in eschatological history with the warning that Justice will be meted out by Christus pantocrator, as it is meted out by the conqueror on earth.

The attempt of the author of Piers Plowman to order the comune(s) is not without parallel in other Middle English poetry. Since St. Augustine had proposed the thesis in his Curtas Dei, medieval political theorists usually asserted that all forms of government after the Fall were the result of sin. In Piers Plowman the salient point of argument is whether proper human government of either regnum or sacerdotium is possible without spiritual regeneration. Piers Plowman considers the ordering of the two comune(s), regnum and sacerdotium (or on an individual level, body and soul), in the Visio(nes) and Vita(e) respectively. However, other orderings are possible.

The thirteenth century poem Havelock the Dane manages to fuse themes of theocratic divinely appointed kingship and feudal contractual kingship. [7] Havelock's claim to the English and Danish thrones is justified by virtue of divine ordination and by his working his way up through society as laborer, merchant, warrior protecting his allies, and king. The poem narrates Havelock's progress from his exile from Denmark to his coronation in England. The fact that Goldborough prophesies by a vision of the cross that Havelock will become king reveals a theocratic tendency in the poem. However, while this element intrudes itself from time to time, the narrative of

the poem records Havelock's heroic success as he rises through the ranks of society. The theocratic strain in the poem thus exists coevally with an heroic strain which praises Havelock's success as warrior and merchant. Thus Havelock becomes king precisely because he combines the heroic qualities of the feudal military ethic and a more pragmatic heroic quality of commercial ambition and success.

Two poems of the alliterative revival of the late fourteenth century -- The Parlement of the Thre Ages and Wynnere and Wastoure -- treat the problem of the ordering of the estates under a king in different ways. The Parlement of the Thre Ages orders individual lifetime and indeed, all men's lifetimes according to occupation and age. Youthe is the figure of aristocracy. Medill-elde represents the tradesman or merchant. Elde represents the monastic orders. In the vision which comprises the greater part of the poem, the dreamer relates the debate between these three characters. Each character in turn argues for the claims of his own estate. Youthe speaks of his paramours and doughty deeds done according to the chivalric ethic of knighthood. Medill-elde, clad in russet, deplores Youthe's extravagance and encourages Youthe to pursue a life of commerce; Medill-elde argues that despite his royal array Youthe is without rents and substantial wealth. In turn Youthe accuses Medill-elde of mean spirited phillistinism saying that Medill-elde has no god save his gold and his property. At last Elde, clad as a penitent, interrupts this debate and

recommends the virtues of spiritual life against the showy excesses of aristocracy and the hard-working narrowmindedness of the middle estate. Elde argues that neither glory nor wealth will save men from death; he goes on to illustrate his point with tales of the exploits of Nine Worthies, "That were conquerours full bene." [8] Thus, The Parlement of the Thre Ages orders the three estates of the kingdom according to activities most appropriate to the three ages of men.

Wynnere and Wastoure solves the problem of class war by presenting a king patterned after the military-chivalric ideal -- a king who mediates between winners (the rich) and wasters (the poor). Again the central dream vision consists of a debate. A king with the Plantagenet motto Honi soi qui mal y pense inscribed upon his tent summons the leaders of two opposing armies drawn up for battle. A messenger warns both armies to hold their places and proclaims that barons who summon armies without the orders of their king do so at the peril of losing their lands and their lives. Two knights appear: Wynnere, who is extravagantly arrayed, and Wastoure, who is clothed in the rags of the peasant and penitent. Wynnere accuses Wastoure of being a thief who would strike, stop, and destroy him. Wastoure retorts that Wynnere owes some of his wealth to the poor and that his soul will suffer for his greedy misdeeds. Wastoure seems to take the position of the poor cleric or the resentful peasant, while Wynnere takes that of secular lords or the bourgeoisie. The subject of their debate is whether those who get

and gain owe a portion to the poor who, having paid rents and tithes, have no surplus to show for their labour. Wynnere combines the arguments of Youthe and Medill-elde; he both praises the extravagant aristocratic life and the life of gaining and getting. Wastoure combines the resentment and malice of the poor toward the rich, the Apocalyptic anger of an Old Testament prophet of doom, and the zeal of a monastic penitent. However, when Wastoure preaches the virtue of monastic poverty, Wynnere wonders where penniless men obtain the pelour of the rich.

Wynnere and Wastoure are unable to resolve their largely economic differences, and Wastoure appeals to the king for judgement. The king replies that Wynnere must go to Rome where he will be kept quite luxuriously by the Pope and his cardinals. The king thus satisfies Wastoure's complaint that Wynnere lives in luxury at the expense of others in the realm. In turn the king orders Wastoure to live by commerce instead of by begging, thus satisfying Wynnere's complaint that Wastoure is a parasite. Wastoure is sent to Chepeside to become an innkeeper who will send his guests packing once they have been served and fleeced. Finally the king orders both Wynnere and Wastoure to return at his call when he is ready to attack the king of France. Thus Wynnere and Wastoure solves the problem of potential warfare between the rich and the poor by assigning both Wynnere and Wastoure a means of livelihood and subjecting both to the king's command in time of war. The king is mediator, judge, and commander.

The alliterative poem, Mum and Sothsegger, attributed by Professor Skeat to the author of Piers Plowman, sympathizes with Richard II in his dispute with Bolingbroke, warns that Richard's courtiers have stripped away the king's power, and asserts that the king has despoiled the people. The poem is essentially a complaint against usurpation and bad administration, and a praise of absolute theocratic kingship. The poem argues that allegiance is secured by Law and Love. [9] As such the poem treats of the king's relation of his subjects and distinguishes three degrees of men who all have particular rights and duties. For the maintenance of a profitable and stable realm,

> ' . . be þese þre degres:
> By gouerna(un)ce of grete . and of good age;
> By styffnesse and strengthe . of steeris well y-yakyd,
> þat beth myȝthffull men . of þe mydill age;
> And be laboreris of land . at lyfflode ne fayle.' [10]

Skeat maintains that those who rule "by governance" and by stiffness, and those who labour represent "the 'thre degres', viz. 1. Oratores (here counsellors); 2. Bellatores (Warriors); and 3. Laboratores (Labourers); according to the old three-fold division." [11] Mum and Sothsegger concerns itself with the control of commerce and has no patience with youthful counsellors. The author of the poem declares that no one twenty-four years of age can counsel any more than a cow can hop in a cage. [12] Rather than proposing the ordering by age in The Parlement of the Thre Ages, Mum and Sothsegger maintains that counsellors must be "of good age", warriors "of þe mydill age", but leaves

the age of laborers undetermined. Mum and Sothsegger, like Wynnere and Wastoure, assumes the necessity of a mighty king and emphasizes the king's mediatory role, but throughout attempts to restore an office which is being undermined by those who will not observe the rule of Love and Law. The chief administrator of this office at least ought to be the king. Like The Parlement of the Thre Ages, Mum and Sothsegger allots certain roles to certain ages of man, but this address to age is more within the context of governance of the realm than that of a man's lifetime. The issue of contractual governance is implied in the criticism of king and subjects in Mum and Sothsegger whereas it was not even broached in The Parlement of the Thre Ages. The issue of contractual government is resolved in the figure and judgement of the king in Wynnere and Wastoure. Clearly, Mum and Sothsegger treats of rule of the regnum according to Christian doctrine whereas Wynnere and Wastoure does not concern itself with the niceties of Christian government. The Parlement of the Thre Ages speaks of the maintenance of Christian government only in the context of encroaching individual death.

The Crowned King, more than Mum and Sothsegger, emphasizes the control exercised upon a king by his subjects. The poem opens with the dreamer's invocation to Christ to reveal the truth of dreams: "'Of care and of confort . at comyng is hereafter!'" The vision itself is of a king asking of his comunes:

'A soleyn subsidie . to susteyne his weres,
To be rered in the reaume . as reson requyred
Of suche as were seemly . to suffre the charge;
That they that rekened were riche . be reson and skyle
Shuld pay a parcell . for here pouere neighboures;
This ordenaunce he made . in ease of his peple.' [14]

Professor Skeat remarks that The Crowned King is an imperfect imitation of Piers Plowman and Mum and Sothsegger and that the king in question is the "youthful yet not incompetent" Henry V. [15] However this may be, the method of assessing the tax by counsel of the rich differs from the practice of Edward III and Richard II who were accustomed to impose a firm to be collected by contracting lords or knights in return for favours or a percentage of the tax collected. In truly desperate straits these kings also attempted to levy the notorious Poll taxes with fixed amounts required from all according to rank.

On the whole, The Crowned King first treats of governance in terms of a feudal contract between lord and vassles, emphasizing more the lord's dependence on his vassals than absolute divine right of rule. The poem emphasizes the advisory role of the king's council, but at last uses the example of Christ from whom the king derives his authority. The poem especially emphasizes Christ's willing death to save man, as a proof to the king that generous governance will make men loyal unto death. The implication of this analogy is that a king, given sufficient proof by his councillors, must work in the common interest even if it be against his own will. Little or no attention is paid to the role of Commons in government; parlia-

ment is more the place of the giving and taking of the collective council of secular, and perhaps, ecclesiastical lords, than a thorough-going organ of democratic government. The clerk seems to be the proper representative of the ecclesiastical office. The clerk is a moral counselor, not a governmental official or representative. The poem emphasizes and argues for a nascent form of mutual obligation, but also pleads for Christian ordering of the comune which associates lordship with consent of vassals and the example of the Martyrdom of Christ. Implicit in this solution is the essential Christian paradox which asserts that lordship may be obtained through sacrifice. The paradox arises in admitting rich and poor alike to heaven because Scripture warns that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The doctrine of Christian charity rationalised this paradox by allowing that the poor shall enter heaven by virtue of their suffering while the rich shall enter heaven if they practice the virtue of almsgiving.

Thomas of Usk's Testament of Love is fundamentally an apologia pro vita sua; in it Thomas recants his earlier infatuation with Lollardry and "contemplates his consequent security with some complacency." [16] The poem reflects Thomas' loyalty to Richard II, a reflection which makes his complacent recantation something of an historical irony; Thomas was executed by the Lancastrians for his part in siding with his king and Nicholas Brembre in securing the condemnation of John of North-

hampton in 1387. [17] Thomas comments extensively on the ordering of the regnum and the office of kingship. Thomas strikes out against the factionalism and tyranny of democracy. The king's role is juridical and he is the primary mainstay of law. The king must not be a tyrant nor must he allow his lesser subjects to be tyrants. He is the sovereign subject to law, but above all his subjects; he is to be servant of the law and in proper execution of law, the servant of his people. What is especially interesting in the passage discussing secular administration of justice is the combination of the head and body of the State, soul and body of the Church, conventions derivative of the organological metaphor.

John Gower did not interest himself "in political solutions to the problems of order and justice," but preferred to concern himself with the spiritual regeneration of individuals and of already established bodies politic. [18] Gower emphasizes both the common good and Law. While Gower's emphasis upon Law as the basis for the common good is consonant with his conservative moralism; he argued for Law and Justice without realizing that these agencies would help destroy the social hierarchy justified by the Augustinian premise that government was the result of the Fall and the product of sin. [19] In Vox Clamantis, Mirour de l'Omme, and Confessio Amantis Gower is concerned with the estates of the realm and the proper observance of their duties according to the old feudal order. [20] In the Confessio Gower sets out to compare the evil times of the reign of Richard II when

there was only war and plunder among the rulers, simony and high-living among the clergy, and arrogance and sloth among commons, with the good old times when temporal lords kept the peace and administered justice, clergy lived exemplary lives and cared for their flocks, and commons kept their place. [21] In Vox Clamantis Gower includes a direct discussion of the responsibility of the king. Gower recognizes the principal function of the king as judicial, sees the common good as dependent upon the virtue of the king, and argues that the king is subject to the law of which he is custodian. [22] At last, however, Gower's position is Augustinian. He concludes that the king's individual sins have social and national significance; he regards Richard II's sinfulness and neglect as the reasons for the disorder and corruption of the kingdom. [23]

B. Piers Plowman

Although the term 'estates' does not appear in Piers Plowman, all classes are introduced and their duties and defections from duty enumerated. It will be necessary now to examine the ordering of the regnum in the Visio(nes) and the ordering of the sacerdotium in the Vita(e) in the three versions of the poem. Of special interest are the sequences in B-Text and C-Text which describe a secular coronation of a king in the Visio and the coronation of the king by ecclesiastics in the Vita.

Though the A-Text makes no direct attempt to order the regnum, it abounds with condemnations of all orders of society

which practise Avarice and Pride. In the regnum, exorbitant personal profit is the major trouble; in the sacerdotium, Simony is the difficulty. In the regnum, small merchants, lawyers, and lollers draw most of the poet's fire; in the sacerdotium, he inveighs against all manner of negligent preachers, priests, and prelates. The poet attacks preachers who preach to the people, "for profyt of heore-wonbes" (A. Prol. 56); priests who leave their parishes and the land, "And aske leue and lycence . at Londun to dwelle, / To singe or for Simonye . for selver is swete" (A. Prol. 82-83); "Bishops Bolde . and Bachilers of diuyn" (A. Prol. 90) who "Bi-comme Clerkes of A-Counte . þe kyng for to serven" (A. Prol. 91); and other sacred seekers after personal profit. A-Text does include the Mede debate and requires that the king rule by Reason and Conscience, but includes no scene quite so specific as the secular coronations of B-Text and C-Text. Reason requires that the king can only keep his crown and gain salvation if he punishes all wrong. (A. iv. 120 ff.) Reason further requires the king to keep a clerk as his advisor in matters of reward and demands: "'That Lawe shal ben a laborer . and leden a-feld dounge, / And Loue shal leden thi land . as the leof lyketh.'" (A. iv. 130-131) A. 3. 19-20 does mention king, commons, and court in one breath, but the passage is a comfort to Mede by the justices and has derogatory implications. (A. iii. 19-20) A. 3. 67-68 echoes the developments of the Prologues to the Visio(nes) of B-Text and C-Text with: "'Meires and Maistres . and e that beoth mene / Bitwene the

kyng and the comuns . to kepe the lawes.'" (A. iii. 67-68)
Of more direct importance in the ordering of the regnum are B. Prol. 103 ff added to A-Text and C. i. 131 ff revised from the B-Text interpolation.

Before the ordering of the regnum in both B-Text and C-Text, there appear passages which discuss the Christian virtue of prelates. These passages speak of Peter's power to bind and unbind and conclude with a critical discussion of the relation of the cardinal virtues to members of the Papal court which bear the name of the virtues. The passages conclude:

> Ac of the cardinales atte Courte . that cauȝt of that name,
> And power presumed in hem . a pape to make,
> To han that power that Peter hadde . impugnen I nelle;
> For in loue and letterure . the eleccioun bilongeth,
> For-thi I can and can nauȝte . of courte speke more.
>
> (B. Prol. 107-111)

> Ac of the cardinales at court that cauȝt han such a name
> And power presumen in hem-self . a pope to make,
> To haue the power that Peter hadde . repugnen ich nelle;
> For in loue and in letterure . lith the grete eleccion;
> Countrepleide it noȝt, quath conscience . 'for holy Churches sake.'
>
> (C. i. 154-158)

Conscience replaces the narrator-dreamer in C-Text and clarifies the meaning of the text concerning the two sorts of cardinals and papal election. The gist of C-Text's revision is to support the court of cardinal's right to make or unmake Popes. B-Text's questioning of whether or not the power of Peter to bind and unbind lies with the court of cardinals is resolved in favour of the conciliarists. After these indirect discus-

sions about the propriety of election in the sacerdotium, there follows the ordering of the regnum recorded below for comparison:

Thanne come there a kyng . kny3thod hym ladde,
Mi3t of the comunes . made hym to regne,
And thanne cam kynde wytte . and clerkes he made,
For to conseille the kyng . and the comune saue.
The kyng and kny3thode . and clergye bothe
Casten that the comune . shulde hem-self fynde.
The comune contreued . of kynde witte craftes,
And for profit of alle the poeple . plowmen ordeygned,
To tille and trauaile . as trewe lyf asketh.
The kynge and the comune . and kynde witte the thridde
Shope lawe and lewte . eche man to knowe his owne.
Thanne loked vp a lunatik . a lene thing with-alle,
And knelyng to the kyng . clergealy he seyde;
'Crist kepe the, sire kyng . and thi kyngriche,
And leue the lede thi londe . so leute the louye,
And for thi ri3tful rewlyng . be rewarded in heuene!'
And sithen in the eyre an heigh . an angel of heuene
Lowed to speke in latyn-- . for lewed men ne coude
Iangle ne iugge . that iustifie hem shulde,
But suffren and seruen-- . for-thi seyde the angel,
'Sum Rex, sum Princeps . neutrum fortasse deinceps;
O qui iura regis . Christi speciala regis,
Hoc quod agas melius . iustus es, esto pius!
Nudum ius a te . vestiri vult pietate;
Qualia vis metere . talia grana sere.
Si ius nudatur . nudo de iure metatur.
Si seritur pietas . de pietate metas!'
Thanne greued hym a goliardeys . a glotoun of wordes,
And to the angel an heigh . answered after,
'Dum rex a regere . dicatur nomen habere,
Nomen habet sine re . nisi studet iura tenere.'
And thanne gan alle the comune . crye in vers of Latin,
To the kynges conseille . construe ho-so wolde--
'Precepta Regis . sunt nobis vincula legis.'

(B. Prol. 112-145)

Thanne cam ther a kyng . kny3t-hod hym ladde,
The muche my3te of the men . made hym to regne;
And thanne cam kynde witte . and clerkus he made,
And conscience and kynde wit . and kny3t-hod to-gederes
Caste that the comune . sholde hure comunes fynde.
Kyndewit and the comune . contreuede alle craftes,
And for most profit to the puple . a plouh thei gonne make,
With leel labour to lyue . whyl lif and londe lasteth.

Than kynde wit to the kyng . and to the comune seide,
'Crist kep the, sire kyng . and thy kyngryche,
And leue the lede so thy londe . that leaute the louye,
And for thy ryȝtful ruelyng . be rewarded in heuene.'
Conscience to cleregie . and to the kyng saide,
'Sum rex, sum princeps . neutrum fortasse deinceps;
O qui iura regis . christi specialia regis,
Hoc ut agas melius . iustus, et esto pius!
Nudum ius a te . vestiri vult pietate,
Qualia vis metere . talia grana sere;
Si seritur pietas . de pietate metas.'

(C. i. 139-157)

C-Text substantially reduces the passage in its attempt at greater certainty.

The passages begin with a king led by knighthood. The first substantial revision occurs in the second line of the passage where C-Text replaces the comunes with the muche myȝte of men as the source of the king's power. Professor Donaldson believes that "the evidence shows that C (and B) thought of knighthood not politically but in its old chivalric sense and this conception of knighthood seems, in both texts, to be derived from its august origin in the newly created heaven of God the Father." [24] Donaldson further argues that C-Text's revision supports the older chivalric knight and diminishes the role of commons in the election of the king. C-Text substitutes the much myȝte of men for comunes in order to give expression to the influence of powerful men in government. Donaldson's reading is convincing insofar as the revision clarifies the role strong and powerful men are to play in governance of the realm. C-Text gives power to knighthood and diminishes the influence of the comune(s). In fact, the rise of mercantile magnates at

the expense of the land-holding knights was the dominant economic movement throughout the fourteenth century, and Langland opposes it. B-Text and C-Text argue that Kynde Witt, or natural reason should appoint clerks. Then C-Text deletes the line which maintains that clerks should counsel the king and save the comune. The next few lines are thoroughly revised in C-Text. B-Text allows that king, counselling clergy and knighthood Casten that the comune . shulde hem-self fynde. The only readings for comune that make any sense here are commonwealth or the urban commune. C-Text's revision removes the king, replacing him with Conscience; C-Text's revision also removes clergy, substituting Kynde Witt which in both texts is to make clerks; C-Text retains knighthood; Conscience, Kynde Witt, and knighthood to-gederes are to Caste that the comune . sholde hure comunes fynde. Compared to the B-Text admonition of king and knighthood that the comune is to fynde itself, C-Text's revision is significant. A single comune is to determine some plural comunes. The revision centralises the authority of rule, giving this authority to powerful interests at the expense of less powerful ones. One of two readings may be possible: 1) that an urban commune is to define its individual members; or 2) that a body with the name comune (king's council) is to determine the common interest of the kingdom. The movement of the revision is anti-democratic.

Both texts agree that Kynde Witt and the comune should devise craftes. The C-Text uses alle craftes and in the next

line substitutes for most profit to the puple for for profit of alle the poeple. B-Text allows the comune to ordain plowmen to till the soil and work as trewe lyf asketh. C-Text both adds the allegorical Kynde Witt and deletes the ecclesiastical word ordeygned in a passage which in both texts expresses the principle of common profit. C-Text, however, has Kynde Witt and the comune make a plouh (plowman), With leel labour to lyve . whyl life and londe lasteth. C-Text changes trewe lyf to leel labour and then adds an apocalyptic note. It is significant that the allegorical persona Kynde Witt makes clergy in both texts, and that in C-Text because of the link proposed between the ecclesiastical clerk and the secular craftsman, Kynde Witt clearly takes part in contriving crafts. In many ways comune in both texts can only be the urban commune where craft-guilds formed the basis of political power.

C-Text completely deletes the next few lines in B-Text that allow the king, the comune, and Kynde Witt to Shope lawe and lewte . eche man to knowe his owne. Instead C-Text has Kynde Witt address the comune with the same speech that in B-Text is assigned to a lunatic speaking cleargealy on his knees before the king. The speech itself instructs the king in the duties of his office. The speech implies that Christ will protect the king and his kingdom only as long as the king respects the restrictions of loyalty. For such rightful ruling the king in turn will be rewarded in heaven. In the B-Text an angel interrupts and intones the oath sworn by the king in the learned

Latin which no lewed man can debate or judge; Conscience uses this speech in C-Text and addresses his words to the king himself.

C-Text deletes the dramatic appearance of the lunatic and the angel and substitutes Kynde Witt and clergy in their places. Likewise, C-Text deletes the passage which has king and comune make lawe and lewte so that men know and prosecute their own interest alone; C-Text then emphasizes the overriding importance of the loyalty of the king's subjects. King and kingdom are found wanting if they do not observe their mutual obligation to one another. C-Text's emphasis is clearly on the overriding importance of loyalty, not on the claims of the lower orders. All the irony of the passages, in which the lunatic and the angel appear, is missing from C-Text. Unless the poet means to impugn two of his poem's best counsellors, C-Text substitutes Kynde Witt and Conscience in the poet's effort to convince the reader of the truth of the two speeches.

The second speech amounts to a chastisement of the king which defines what sort of reward and punishment he might expect as a result of the nature of his earthly rulership. Simply, the speech cautions the king that he will be greeted in heaven and judged mercifully or with naked retributive justice, in direct proportion to his own mercy or tyranny on earth. The theocratic assumption that the king is responsible to God in the same way his subjects are responsible to him is obvious. C-Text is even more insistent than B-Text that the king, once

elected and crowned, though responsible only to God, has onerous obligations to fulfil. At this point C-Text has Conscience retire to the court with the king and the episode of the Rat Parliament begins. B-Text, however, continues in its dramatic vein with a goliard's reply to the angel. The goliard urges the king to observe strict ius, strict rule of law, and implicitly argues against the angel's warning to practice mercy; the goliard insists that the king is subject to ius on earth as he is to the Lord's ius in Heaven. B-Text finally has the comune cry to the king's council in the Latin which it was not supposed to understand: "'Praecepta Regis . sunt nobis vincula legis.'" (The king's praecepta are our chains of law.) The Rat Parliament then begins.

Usually, critics insist that this cry of the comune should be taken at face value. What is of interest here is that C-Text deletes it altogether, thus giving less prominence to the importance of election during the coronation. The sentence is reminiscent of the reference to the power of Peter to bind and unbind -- a reference made some lines earlier in relation to the cardinals' role in the election of the Pope. The binding nature of the praecepta, the oaths sworn at the king's coronation, is the central issue of election. The poem states that king's council is to judge the meaning of the praecepta, and judge whether they are binding on king or comune or both. What is ultimately at stake is whether or not the king himself is bound under the praecepta -- the law which he affirms in his corona-

tion oath.

The Prologue to each of three versions of the Visio, then, deals with the ordering of the regnum under a king crowned by the three estates, and with the role played in the coronation by the allegorical personae, Kynde Witt and Conscience. C-Text's revision tends to ignore the drama and irony of B-Text, and emphasizes the function of the allegorical virtues in the coronation over the function of the estates themselves. C-Text makes it clear that Kynde Witt and Conscience, and not the estates or the Law which governs them, are the factors which control or ought to control the king. C-Text diminishes the control exercised on the king by the estates. Instead of being subject to Law and the estates, the king is subject to virtue. His right to rule is not subject to the consent of the governed, but is contingent on his mirroring of virtue.

In the Prologues of the Vita(e) of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-Best, found in all three texts of the poem, an attempt is made to order the sacerdotium. Once again the poem culminates in the coronation of a king, this time not by the three estates or Kynde Witt and Conscience, but by the three representatives of sacerdotal virtue, Do-Wel, Do-bet, and Do-Best. In all three texts the Prologues to the Vita(e) begin with the dreamer's unfortunate encounters with two crafty friars. The dreamer is roaming about in search of Do-Wel. The dreamer believes that Do-Wel possesses the secret of righteous living which will fulfil Piers Plowman's pardon and save mankind from Christ's wrath-

ful judgment at Doomsday. The dreamer approaches two mendicants who by virtue of their travels believe that they know where to find both Do-wel and Do-yuel. The dreamer asks the friars directly where he may find them. In all three texts the friars answer that Do-Wel and Do-yuel do dwell, have dwelled, and hopefully will everafter dwell with them. The dreamer retorts that what the friars claim is impossible and argues that Do-wel and Do-yuel cannot possibly live in the same place. The friars then launch into a relativistic explanation which argues for the co-existence of good and evil. They conclude their explanation claiming that belief in Christ's crucifixion will save the dreamer from the misfortune of troubles on the earth. They only succeed in confusing the dreamer who claims he has no "kynde" knowing to understand the meaning of their words. (A. ix. 48. B. vii. 57. C. xi. 56) The dreamer continues along his way in search of Do-wel, falls asleep hearing the songs of birds, and has another vision. The dreamer relates that in this vision a man whom he thinks is like himself approached and called him by his kynde name. Confused by this unexplainable familiarity, the dreamer asks how the man knows him and is told that he knows better than anyone. After this curious reply, the dreamer asks directly who the man is and is told that he is Thought. The dreamer then asks the figure who can only be his own alter-ego where he may find Do-wel. Thought begins a long explanation concerning Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best. These descriptions of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best differ somewhat in

detail but not in substance in the three versions.

According to Thought, the follower of Do-wel is true of tongue and of his two hands. A-Text records that Do-wel is also "meke of his mouth" and "mylde of his speche", but B- and C-Texts drop this line. (A. ix. 71) In A- and B-Texts, Do-wel wins his livelihood by means of his labour and his land. In C-Text, however, Do-wel "thoru leel labour lyveth . and loveth his emcristine." (C. xi. 79) C-Text emphasizes loyalty and Christian love as the essence of Do-Wel's labour. All three texts insist that Do-wel is trusty or true of his "tailende" or "tail" (tallage or tallying) and A- and B-Texts claim that he takes only his own in the reckoning. C-Text is more explicit about Do-wel's behaviour in relation to the "tailie" and says that he "halt wel his handes" assumedly from grasping more than his own. (C. xi. 80) C-Text is consistently moral in its focus on Do-wel's actions concerning material gain. All texts agree that Do-wel is neither drunken nor disdainful. Thought's description of Do-wel is that of the Christian layman, and C-Text takes pain to make his obedience to the Christian law of Charity abundantly clear.

Thought then turns to Do-bet and claims that Do-bet is all of what Do-wel is and much more. In all texts Do-bet is low as a lamb, and beautiful rather than merely trusty of speech. A-Text claims that Do-bet has nothing of his own, but assists others where there is need. B-Text records that Do-bet helps all men according to their need. C-Text says Do-bet heartily

helps all men "of that he may aspare". (C. xi. 84) In C-Text, then, Do-bet has wealth which he gives and keeps according to his station and the rule of Charity. C-Text's Do-bet is somewhat less the mendicant altruist, and self-abnegating philanthropist than the Do-bet of A- and B-Texts. Thought narrates that Do-bet has broken all the purses of Avarice (in B- and C-Texts Earl Avarice) and that Mammon's money has made him many friends. According to Thought, Do-bet is religious, renders his bible, and preaches to the people according to St. Paul's maxim to tolerate the unwise. However, A-, B-, and C-Texts disagree in the matter of this maxim. A-Text records, "Libenter sufferte" and translates "ȝe wyse, soffreth the un-wyse . with ow for to libbe." (A. ix. 83-84) B-Text records "Libenter suffertis insipientes, cum sitis ipsi sapientes" and translates "And suffreth the unwise . with ȝow for to libbe." (B. viii. 91 ff. - 92) C-Text is more subtle. C-Text records St. Paul's words as they appear in B-Text but then translates "ȝe worldliche wyse . vnwyse that ȝe suffre, / Lene hem and loue hem . this Latyn ys to mene." (C. xi. 89 ff. - 91) C-Text is more insistent that the meaning of the Latin sentence be conveyed completely as an admonition to the rich to act charitably towards the poor. A- and B-Texts follow their translations of the Latin with a summary command and justification:

> And with glad wille doth hem good . for so god himself hiȝte.
>
> (A. ix. 85)

And with gladde wille doth hem gode . for so god ȝow hoteth.

(B. viii. 93)

It is C-Text's virtue that it seeks to exhort God's command rather than simply give an imprecise translation of command to Charity followed by an affirmation of its propriety and authority.

Do-bet described, Thought turns to describe Do-best. The descriptions of Do-best in the three texts differ substantially. A- and B-Texts assert that Do-best is superior to the other members of the triad and that Do-best bears the bishop's crozier. C-Text neglects placing Do-best above Do-wel and Do-bet and claims more tentatively that Do-best should bear the bishop's crozier. All three versions construe that this crozier is hooked on one end and has a pike on the other. All three texts portray the pastor's staff of authority as a weapon. In A-Text Do-best shall use the hooked end of the staff to hold men "in good lyf." (A. ix. 87) and the piked end "' ... . to punge adoun the wikkede, / That waytern eny wikkednesse . Dowel to teone.'" (A. ix. 88-89) In B-Text, however, Do-best shall use the hooked end of his staff "' ... . to halie men fro helle'" (B. viii. 95) while the piked end shall serve the same purpose of protecting Do-wel against injury. C-Text omits the conceit which includes Do-wel in the definition of Do-best's office. Instead C-Text relates that Do-best shall use the hooked end of his staff to pull:

' ... . ille men to goode,
And with the pyk putte adoune . prevaricatores legis
Lordes that lyuen as hem lust . and no lawe a-counten.'

(C. xi. 91-93)

C-Text's description of Do-best's use of his pastor's staff is conspicuously more precise and mundane. While A- and B-Texts are content to have Do-best keep potential transgressors to the straight and narrow path and protect Do-wel, C-Text categorically condemns prevaricatores legis and emphasizes Do-best's function in holding men to a law which is the true and universal guide of right action. C-Text continues with a comment on the prevaricatores legis and remarks that these wicked lords think that because of their worldly wealth, no bishop should resist their request or command. Then C-Text retorts that Do-best

' ... sholde not dreden hem . bote do as god hihte.
Nolite timere eos qui possunt occidere corpus.'

(C. xi. 98 ff.)

The gist of C-Text's admonitions concerning Do-best is that Do-best should not fear or be hindered by such prevaricatores legis that would kill him.

A- and B-Texts do not include all of C-Text's legalistic instruction. Instead A- and B-Texts introduce the coronation sequence retained in C-Text just after the discussion of prevaricatores legis. This preliminary passage is revised in C-Text. The preliminary passage to the coronation in A- and B-Texts follow:

'And as Dowel and Dobet . duden hem vnderstonde,
Thei han i-corouned a kynge . to kepen hem alle,
That ȝif Dowel or Dobet . dude aȝeyn Dobest,
And were vnbuxum at his biddinge . and bold to don ille,
Then shulde the kynge comen . and casten hem in prison,
And puiten hem ther in penaunce . withouten pite or grace
Bote ȝif Dobest beede for hem . a-byde ther for evere!'

(A. ix. 90-96)

'And Dowel and Dobet . amonges hem ordeigned
To croune one to be kynge . to reule hem bothe;
That ȝif Dowel or Dobet . did aȝein Dobest,
Thanne shal the kynge come . and casten hem in yrens,
And but if Dobest bede for hem . thei to be there for evere.'

(B. viii. 98-102)

B-Text retains the meaning of A-Text while deleting certain unnecessary lines. According to the allegorical portrayal in both texts, a king shall protect Do-best against Do-wel and Do-bet. The significant revisions in B-Text are: 1) the substitution of ordeigned, a word with patently sacerdotal overtones, for vnderstande; and 2) B-Text's more direct expression that Do-wel and Do-bet shall remain in irons in the king's prison until Do-best shall absolve them of their crime. In both texts Do-best the ideal bishop, is given juridical power in the regnum. B-Text's substitution of ordeigned, however, implies that the king in question has power in the sacerdotium as well as in the regnum insofar as he may imprison those inferior to bishops who threaten the sacerdotium.

Throughout the fourteenth century the debate concerning clerical ordination of kings was by no means dead in England. Whether the king was to be ordained or elected was a point of

continuous debate. In the fourteenth century the coronation oath of English kings always included praecepta 1) to protect the Church and 2) to uphold the law of the kingdom. It became a problem which oath was first incumbent upon him. The problem was whether the king was to obey the ecclesiastics, even if to do so violated the law of England, or whether he was to act against the Church if ecclesiastics jeopardized the well-being of the kingdom. A- and B-Texts tend to give the power of punishment of lesser ecclesiastics to the king, while relegating the power of pardon to Do-best. Both texts thus emphasize the praeceptum of the English coronation oath which binds the king to protect the Church. C-Text is even more explicit in this matter and grants the king a more final power of punishment for offenders in the sacerdotium.

C-Text follows the discussion of prevaricatores legis with:

'Thus Dowel and Dobet . diuinede, and Dobest,
And crounede on to be kyng . to culle with-oute synne
That wolde not don as Dobest . diuinede and tauhte.'

(C, xi. 99-101)

The extension of the king's power is profound. C-Text grants the king without qualification the power to kill or remove offenders without committing sin, and not merely imprison, members of the sacerdotium who will not do as Do-best divines and teaches. C-Text then repeats the argument of A- and B-Texts that the king protect the sacerdotium but further asserts that the king shall have power of death over lay preachers and priests who defy Do-best, the bishop.

Finally, all three texts describe the king's coronation and election by the sacerdotal triad.

'Thus Dowel and Dobet . and Dobest the thridde
Crounede on to beo kyng . and bi heor counseil worche,
And rule the reame . bi red of hem alle,
And otherwyse elles not . bute as thei threo assenten.'

(A. ix. 97-100)

'Thus Dowel and Dobet . and Dobest the thridde,
Crouned one to be kynge . to kepen hem alle,
And to reule the Reume . bi her thre wittes,
And none other-wise . but as thei thre assented.'

(B. viii. 103-106)

'Thus Dowel and Dobet . and Dobest the thridde
Crounede on to be kyng . and kepen ous alle,
And reulen alle reaumes . by here thre wittes;
Bote other-wise ne elles nat . bote as thei three assented.'

(C. xi. 102-105)

The three texts differ markedly first with regard to the triad's relation to the king and second with regard to the nature of their counsel. A-Text, the most progressive , insists that the king they crown shall work by their counsel. B- and C-Texts replace a councillor definition with a more paternalistic one in which the king shall protect all members of the sacerdotium. C-Text here substitutes ous for hem and displaces Thought's directive from the triad to the dreamer. A-Text contrives that the king shall govern by the advice (red) of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best, but B- and C-Texts emphasize the wittes rather than the persons of the three. The advice of men thus gives way to their ability to act as advisors; implicit in the revision is a judgment of the quality of advice received. Con-

tinuing in this mode of abstraction, C-Text demands that a king, advised by the Wit or Reason of Do-wel, Do-bet and Do-best shall rule not just a single realm, but all realms. Finally, while A-Text stresses the necessary assent of each member of the sacerdotal triad, B- and C-Texts insist that it is the consensus of the Wit of the three that shall advise and direct the king. The gist of the three texts is to give the king sweeping powers of control over the sacerdotium and to subject that king to principles rather than to men or groups of men in the sacerdotium.

The king's absolute authority in both regnum and sacerdotium is further stressed in the arrangement and rearrangement of the triadic virtues Love, Law, and Lewté. In the Visio(nes) Justice for all practical purposes becomes dependent on the person of the ruler, who is at once the source of law in the state, and above law. Commons may claim of their king Love, Law and Lewté. However, the king's loyalty to truth demands that his subjects be loyal to him, i.e., subject themselves to his absolute authority. P. M. Kean has noted a revision in C-Text which brings together the two triads -- Love, Law, and Lewté; and Do-wel, Dobet, and Dobest: [24] "Thus By-leyue and Leaute . and Loue is the thridde / That maketh men to Dowel . Dobet, and Dobest." (C. xii. 161-162) It is Kean's contention that the substitution of By-leyue for law "emphasizes the fact that Law has ceased to have any political significance and now means God's law, as taught by the Church." [25] The political repercussions of such

a substitution should not, however, be ignored. The maintenance of belief, not of Law, is in fact the source of kingship in Piers Plowman. In the Visio(nes) the king's relationship to commons is such that neither has any existence outside this relationship; the triad of Love, Law and Lewté supports regal antecedence before commons insofar as the triad has neither meaning nor stability outside a Good Ruler. In the Visio(nes) the king's primary function is to administer earthly meed; he is arbiter over the natural world.

In the Vita(e) it is the king's role to protect Dobest in order that Dowel and Dobet may gain actual realisation in Dobest through the working of faith. The king is given the explicit theocratic power to enforce belief, loyalty and love in order to ensure the continuance of the Christian faith. In the life of Christ Himself the potentialities of the three members of the sacerdotal triad are realised when Christ did well and preached; did better and died for men's sins; and did best, was resurrected, and harrowed Hell to return again at the Apocalypse as Christus pantocrator.

The king's antecedence in the two comune(s) demonstrated there remains the problem of eschatological history. If the king is the manifestation of Christ the King and Conqueror in the temporal medieval present, it is Piers Plowman himself who is the manifestation and conflated figura of Christus pantocrator for all time. It will be appropriate to conclude with a discussion of Piers Plowman's relation to the king within the

framework of Christian eschatological history. According to this conception of history Christ's second coming as King and Conqueror is a foregone conclusion, the inexorable end of Christian time which must of necessity come to pass if the validity of Christian doctrine is to be proved.

What is curious about Piers Plowman himself is that he appears as an all pervasive singular figure in both regnum and sacerdotium. Both regnum and sacerdotium have hierarchies of government peculiar to themselves, but the king and Piers have power and authority in each of the comune(s). In the Visio, which deals with individual and collective mortal and material existence, Piers may be regarded as the ideal, humble, obedient, and hard working plowman; he is the lowest member of the secular hierarchy without whom no other member of the regnum could exist for lack of bread. Likewise, in the Vita, which deals with individual and collective spiritual existence, Piers may be regarded as the ideal, humble, and hard working preacher of the poor; he is the lowest member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy without whom a distinctly Apostolic church would not survive for lack of converts. Both manifestations of Piers have it in common that he is not ambitious. The type of Piers aspires to rid himself of greed and pride in his appointed task in supplying sustenance for all, the first material, and the second, the spiritual sustenance of communion. Piers is the sine qua non of theocratic government, that lowest member of the hierarchy of the communitas Christiana.

However, Piers has other manifestations in the hierarchies of regnum and sacerdotium both temporally and within the framework of eschatological history. Piers is, in fact, a multiform manifestation of spiritus iusticie. As P. M. Kean has observed:

> The idea of triads owning a King as a fourth, although it is not always given explicit expression, seems to run persistently through Langland's thought. We have, first, the scheme (which is no invention of his) of the secular state, consisting of Commons, Knighthood, and Clergy with the king at their head. We then have Law, Lewte, and Love, with the king as lord antecedent. Dowel, Dobet and Dobest also have their King, elected and crowned by them in Thought's speech, and in the application of the triad to the life of Christ in passus xix, consisting in Christ himself, as King and Conqueror. Moreover, we can, I think detect a similar tripartite scheme in relation to a King in the treatment of the epiphanies of Piers the Plowman [26]

The epiphanies of Piers are as follows:

> He is seen first as the true labourer, servant of Truth (Dowel); secondly as the leader and organizer of the Field (Dobet); thirdly as the Guardian of the Tree with Power to defeat evil, and as the organizer of the Church, with the power to offer the second pardon (Dobest). [27]

In all his manifestations Piers is the pre-eminent servant of Truth=God, manifest finally as Christ the King.

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[18] John Fisher, "Wyclif, Langland, Gower, and the Pearl Poet on the Subject of Aristocracy" in Studies in Medieval Literature, ed. MacEdward Leach (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 1961), p. 146.

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[24] P. M. Kean, "Justice, Kingship and the Good Life in the Second Part of Piers Plowman" in Piers Plowman, Critical Approaches, ed. S. S. Hussey (London, 1969), p. 87.

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CONCLUSION

In summary, the argument of this thesis is that the three versions of Piers Plowman emphasize the primacy of a theocratic ruler of both regnum and sacerdotium. The revisions of passages of the poem which discuss the organization of the two comune(s) tend to clarify the author's vision of an ideal and all powerful priest-king after the order of Melchisedek.

The first chapter distinguished between theocratic and contractual theories of kingship. The chapter illustrates the often arbitrary and always propagandistic use of the organological metaphor by apologists for the two elements of the medieval ruling class, ecclesiastical lords and secular lords. Rationalistic apologists for national kings (whose financial support came more and more from the urban bourgeoisie) succeeded in demystifying the basis of human government by emphasizing contractual right as against divine right. The long term effective result of these contractual theories was only to enfranchise powerful bourgeois elements by placing the king below laws of State with his subjects. However, even with the changes in conceptions of government forced by economic change and rationalised by ideologues of the national state, the hierarchical principles of government inherent in the organological metaphor remained intact. Thus, although it was gradually modified to reflect the class interest of the developing bourgeoisie, the organological metaphor remained an ideological formula of the ruling class.

> ... what else does the history of ideas prove than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. [1]

Chapter II expanded on the remarks of Professor E. Talbot Donaldson concerning Langland's use of the term comune(s) and focusses on the use of the term in the fourteenth century debates concerning the constitution of the realm. The chapter qualified Donaldson's remarks that Langland's use of comune(s) in Piers Plowman has no political meaning at all. While it is true that Langland does not use comune(s) in the precise sense of the House of Commons, Langland's use of the term must have political meaning given the historical context in which it appears.

Chapter III examined the meaning of the term comune(s) in Piers Plowman itself following the list of occurrences of the term provided by Donaldson. The chapter argued that Langland used the term most often to designate either the third estate or the English Christian commonwealth ordered upon principles of theocratic government. While at times Langland's use of the term comune(s) suggests possible reference to the Medieval guild, king's council (prototype of the House of Lords), and the urban commune, at no time does he use the term in the specific and legalistic sense of the constitutionalists -- the commonwealth represented in a bicameral Parliament by Lords and Commons.

Chapter IV compared the ordering of secular and sacred

comune(s) in Havelock the Dane, The Parlement of the Thre Ages, Wynnere and Wastoure, Mum and Sothsegger (Richard Redeless), The Crowned King, The Testament of Love, and the Confessio Amantis; the chapter then discussed the ordering of the comune(s) in Piers Plowman. The chapter argued that a number of literary portrayals of the organisation of the comune(s) are possible: 1) organisation by age and occupation; 2) organisation by economic function; 3) organisation according to contractual agreement; and 4) organisation under divinely sanctioned authority. Piers Plowman clearly advocates a theocratic form of organisation of the comune(s) which is more fully developed in each subsequent revision of the poem. The poem argues in favour of the ideal of a theocratic ruler of both regnum and sacerdotium whose existence and power is justified by Christian history. The spiritual quest of the Vita(e) complements and reinforces the vision of an ideal king in the Visio(nes).

Piers Plowman is a poetical vision of political order. The formal content of the poem emphasizes the ideal of theocratic kingship firmly rooted in Christian tradition as opposed to feudal kingship based on notions of the mutual obligation of subject and lord. The poem stresses the divinity of feudal aristocratic ideology as opposed to the humanism of nationalist ideology. As such, the formal content of Piers Plowman reflects and so supports an atavistic and reactionary political ideology.

The real content of Piers Plowman, however, is somewhat more elusive. The ideology of theocratic kingship inherent in the

formal content of Piers Plowman obviously militates against the claims of magnates and the then revolutionary elements in the lesser bourgeoisie. In his way, Langland revives the theocratic theories of kingship which had been used to defend the authority of Carolingian kings. [2] The real content of Piers Plowman is then historically conservative insofar as it argues for a return to the status quo ante. However, while patronisingly taking the side of the poor and emphasizing the need for a return to the Apostolic idealism of the early Church, Langland creates a ruler with supreme power over both Church and State. In this regard, Langland seems progressive insofar as he denies the Church secular authority and seems to anticipate the advent of Tudor absolutism two hundred years ahead of its time. Nevertheless, the real content of Piers Plowman is just as conservative as the formal content of the poem. Langland again and again insists that a single divinely appointed ruler is to be the absolute central authority of government. This king shall not be subject to State Law, but shall be the earthly source and instrument of Divine Law.

In turn, the figure of Piers id est Christus is the manifestation of each order in the theocratic hierarchy. In the sphere of secular government, Piers is the obedient serf and plowman, the impossibly charitable and honest merchant, the aristocratic knight, and the theocratic king. In the sphere of sacred government, Piers is the lay preacher, the priest, and the bishop defended by and subject to the authority of the

earthly manifestation of Christus pantocrator, the king. In both spheres Piers is the servant of Truth=God and Charity. Piers is the pre-eminent practitioner of Love, Law, and Lewté -- all three values firmly rooted in a thoroughly mystical belief in the efficacy of Christian history and theocratic kingship.

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Conclusion

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[2] Ernst Kantorowicz treats the transferrence of Carolingian theories of kingship to England and later derivative developments in the law in The King's Two Bodies, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957). It is Kantorowicz' thesis that mystical notions which attributed two bodies to the king, a natural body and an eternal body politic, became thoroughly entrenched in English law even after theories of polity centered kingship had been developed and applied in practice. Only after the overthrow of Charles I was it firmly established that the English king owed his kingship to his Parliament and not to God. Nevertheless, the principle of eternal existence and inalienability of certain rights and privileges was transferred through the legal code from the king to the State.

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