This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

"I Wol Nat Serve ..."
Authority and Submission In Late
Medieval English Literature

presented by

Susan Christina De Long Charnley

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English

Philip C. McGuire
Major professor

Date 4-5-96

"I WOL NAT SERVE . . ."
AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION
IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE

By

Susan Christina De Long Charnley

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1996

ABSTRACT

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The rightness of relations is a major theme in late medieval literature. The criteria for rightness include the identity of wills, the doctrine of submission, and the *imitatio Dei*. The identity of wills refers to the sharing of goals and desires shared by two persons in a hierarchical relationship (king and subject, master and servant, husband and wife, et cetera). The doctrine of submission establishes obedience as a pre-requisite for authority. The *imitatio Dei* urges likeness to Christ as the foundation for rightness. These three criteria emerged from the junctures of feudal, commercial and Christian ideologies. The historical events that reveal these junctures include the ceremonies that recognize and name medieval relations, the plague, taxation policies, and legislation such as the statute of laborers and the statute of mortmain. In literature, the works most revealing of late medieval ideas about relation include those by Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, Julian of Norwich, the *Pearl*-poet, Guillaume de Deguileville, and William Langland. In both kinds of evidence, historical and literary, we can see a nexus of ideological discourses that was recognized in late medieval England as the right relation. Further, such discourses anticipate certain ideas about relation in modern thought.

Dedicated to Arthur Richard De Long with love and respect.

Illegitimus non carborundum!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the assistance given to me by Dr. John Alford, Dr. Lister Matheson, Dr. Philip McGuire and Dr. William Whallon.

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INTRODUCTION

"I wol nat serve Venus ne Cupide

Forsothe, as yit, by no manere weye."

So declares the formel eagle in rejecting all three of her avian suitors in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles* (652).[1] Her refusal is a striking conclusion to the parliament. The question under consideration is not whether she should take a mate—all the assembled birds assume that she will act "according to nature"—but whom she should choose. Her refusal is all the more surprising since Nature herself has just indicated her own preference: "If I were Resoun, certes, thanne wolde I / Conseyle yow the ryal tersel take" (632-33). None of the assembly is prepared for the formel's decision. In refusing to serve Love, albeit "with dredful vois," the formel is rejecting not only the counsel of her superiors but also the traditional order of things. That order, as the language of the poem makes clear, is conceived largely in feudal terms.[2]

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[1] All Chaucer references are to *The Riverside Chaucer* 3rd edition, Larry D. Benson ed. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1987.

[2] Throughout the poem, for example, the birds use the language of fealty-oaths to describe their loyalty to the Formel, as seen most incongruously perhaps in the third tercel eagle's declaration, "I am hire treweste man" (479).

Among modern critics of the poem, J. A. W. Bennett is exceptional in judging the formel's behavior against "the realities of feudal life," which rarely permitted such expressions of "instinctive femininity":

> [H]ere at the end of the vision modesty becomes dignity—as if in conscious contrast to the alluring half-naked Venus at the beginning. The point is perhaps less quickly taken in the twentieth century than in the fourteenth, when the interest of the speech would lie, not so much in the request for a respite as in the claim to a "choys al fre": the realities of feudal life—or for that matter of aristocratic life in any century before the present, allowed little such freedom . . . . . Yet Chaucer is here championing it, or at least admitting the possibility of it, even when the maiden is of such a rank that her betrothal is the whole commonwealth's concern. In literature, admittedly, such a situation was not new: it was the very condition that provided the element of suspense in many a *demande d 'amour*. (Bennett 177)

Bennett's view has not received the attention it deserves. Few scholars actually ponder the implications of the formel's refusal within the world of the poem or that of its late-medieval audience. Certainly if we read the *Parliament of Fowles* without thought of its context or setting, as if it were a peculiar sort of twentieth-century work, none of us would find the formel's choice at all remarkable. Since freedom of choice is a mandate of modern democratic ideology, why shouldn't the formel refuse to serve? But the *Parliament of Fowles is* not a modern poem, and the formel's world (in its most extended

sense) can never be one of modern democracy. The formel's words must raise questions for modern readers about the nature of service in late medieval England. What contexts existed for statements of service, non-service, lordship, and non-lordship? Is it possible for twentieth-century readers to fully appreciate the significance of a declaration such as the formel's "I wol nat serve"?

One context for understanding the significance of the formel's words, a context frequently overlooked, is philosophical tradition. What binds all issues of service or non-service in the Middle Ages is the concept itself of relation. Virtually all medieval discussions of this concept go back to Aristotle. In his *Categories,* Aristotle explains that "lord" and "servant" are correlative terms: "All relatives are spoken of in relation to correlatives that reciprocate. For example, the slave is called slave of a master and the master is called master of a slave . . ." (18). He elaborates as follows:

> Again, if that in relation to which a thing is spoken of is properly given, then, when all the other things that are accidental are stripped off and that alone is left to which it was properly given as related, it will always be spoken of in relation to that. For example, if a slave be spoken of in relation to a master, then, when everything accidental to a master is stripped off—like being a biped, capable of knowledge, a man—and there is left only its being a master, a slave will always be spoken of in relation to that. For a slave is called slave of a master. On the other hand, if that in relation to which a thing is spoken of is not properly given, then, when the other things are stripped off and that alone is left to which it was given as

> related, it will not be spoken of in relation to that. Suppose a slave is given as *of a man* . . . and strip off from man his being a master; a slave will no longer be spoken of in relation to a man, for if there is no master there is no slave either. (*Categories* 20)

Aristotle's analysis of the master-slave relation was extended by later thinkers to reciprocal relations of every sort—lord and servant, king and subject, husband and wife. The category of relation became an implicit part of virtually all medieval inquiries into the nature of social and political authority.

Boethius' further analysis of the concept in the *Consolation of Philosophy* proved to be especially influential in shaping medieval definitions of power. Lady Philosophy asks: "Do you think of a man as powerful when you see him lacking something which he cannot achieve? A man who goes about with a bodyguard because he is more afraid than the subjects he terrorizes and whose claim to power depends on the will of those who serve him?" (Watts 87-88). For Boethius the category of relation must be qualified by how the reciprocal elements operate. The tyrant certainly *appears* to be in authority, yet Lady Philosophy's question implies that he is actually among the least powerful of men. Boethius' division of "relation" into two aspects—formal and substantive—made a profound impression on medieval writers. Again and again, as we shall see, these writers make a distinction between those who are truly lords (or servants) and those who are "lords" or "servants" in name only.

Another aspect of Boethius' analysis that appears repeatedly in medieval discussions of power and authority is his emphasis on the will. "Do you think of a man as

powerful," Lady Philosophy had asked, ". . . whose claim to power depends on the will of those who serve him?" For John of Salisbury, writing in the twelfth century, the proper end of the social hierarchy could be realized only by an "identity of wills."

> The health of the whole republic will only be secure and splendid if the superior members devote themselves to the inferiors and if the inferiors respond likewise to the legal rights of their superiors, so that each individual may be likened to a part of the others reciprocally and each believes what is to his own advantage to be determined by that which he recognizes to be most useful for others. (*Policraticus* 126)

John of Salisbury's model for this ideal republic is the corporate body of the church (as described in I Corinthians 12: 12, the *locus classicus*),[3] and readers should not be surprised that "love" emerges as a vital political principle. The "identity of wills," John of Salisbury explains, "is an indication of love." Where personal and social structures of relation are marked by such love, the agents are truly what their names define. Form and substance are in harmony.

John of Salisbury's allusion to Corinthians implies an analogy between the secular and spiritual realms, the former actually validated by the latter. Indeed, nowhere is the criterion of "identity of wills" more central than in discussions of man's subordination

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[3] "For just as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (I Cor. 12: 12, *Douay-Rheims*).

to God. As Guillaume de Deguileville points out, however, there is a fundamental difference between spiritual and secular lordship:

> But whan man was foormed þanne was God cleped Lord, in tokne þat whan he hadde seruauntes he was lord and lordshipinge. Whan he hadde seruauntes þanne he was Lord, and yit he was neuere þe grettere. But þe lordes of þis cuntre ben not swich, as me thinketh, for þe mo seruauntes þei haue so miche þei make hem þe grettere: here seruauntes and here meyne yiuen hem lordshipe. Lordship was knyt in subgis and engendred, and if þe subgis ne were, lordshipes shulden perishen. (723-731)

Guillaume's analysis is clearly indebted to the *Categories*; and, as we shall see, he explicitly acknowledges the importance of Aristotle's notion of relation or, as he refers to it in the logical terminology of the times, the *predicamentum ad aliquid.*

What motivated John of Salisbury, Guillaume de Deguileville, and other medieval writers to apply the *predicamentum ad aliquid* to a wide range of actual structures of subordination was, in part, the search for what might be called "the right relation." In poetic form this search culminates in the late fourteenth-century allegorical masterpiece known as *Piers Plowman.* The whole of the poem could be summarized as a quest for "the right relation," but the theme is perfectly distilled in Conscience's speech before the King (passus 3 of the C version):

> 'Relacoun rect,' quod Consience, 'is record of treuthe,
> *Quia ante late rei recordatiuum est.*

Folowynge and fyndynge out þe fundement of a strenghe,
And styfliche stande forth to strenghe þe fundement
In kynde and in case and in þe cours of nombre.
As a leel laborer byleueth þat his maister
In his pay and in his pite and in his puyr treuthe
To pay hym yf he parforme and haue pite yf he faileth
And take hym for his trauaile al þat treuthe wolde;
So of holy herte cometh hope, and hardy relacoun
Seketh and seweth his sustantif sauacioun,
That is god the ground of al, a graciouse antecedent.
And man is relatif rect yf he be right trewe. (C.III.343-354)

The images employed by Conscience—images of master, servant, pay, travail, searching, and sowing—are the images that the works to be examined here use repeatedly to illustrate the right relation. In particular the parables found in Julian of Norwich's *Book of Shewings* and *Pearl* are rife with such imagery. Further, the essential definition that frames Langland's passage is that the right relation is "truth" in its medieval sense—that is mutual fealty, loyalty, and faithfulness in action and word.

With Langland the integration of "relation" as a logical category and the relations of men in actual society is achieved most fully. Langland's poem examines with uncommon thoroughness the relations—right and un-right—of God, King and subjects to each other and to various principles such as law, justice, reason, and faith. As John Alford explains,

> The validity of truth [or right relation] as a standard of social conduct derives from the fact that it is the principle upon which heavenly order itself rests. God, in the aspect of a great feudal lord, commanded truth of his angels. One participates in this order through obedience to God's vicars on earth, that is, the king and his justices, the church, parents, husband—in short, any authority that does not require one to act against the divine commandments. ("Design" 36)

The pressure for this definition of "the right relation" or this search for its synonym "truth" came from the poet's experience of its diminishing importance in society. Citing a number of medieval works, Alford notes, "Again and again writers of the period extol truth as the political virtue par excellence. And again and again they lament its decline, citing as the two main causes 'meed' (money, the acquisitive instinct) and 'will' (willfulness, 'singularity,' personal ambition). . ." ("Design" 33). Late medieval English literature is replete with complaints about the undermining of the traditional feudal value of "truth" by more commercial values, by the rise of a wage or profit economy, capitalism, call it what you will. Historians may disagree on the terms, or on the degree of the change—but there can be no doubt that in Langland's time, in the late fourteenth century, the values of a money economy had begun to displace those of the older feudal economy; and the writers of that time, not fully comprehending what was happening, reacted with alarm.

The displacement of the feudal economy by a money economy, along with other associated changes, occurred over a number of centuries. However, a brief comparison of feudal and late medieval economic practices may help to explain one source of medieval

alarms. According to Anna Baldwin, the feudal system "was characterized by stability, control, and a low emphasis on monetary relations. The lord gave the use of land whether a barony or a few half-acre strips; his 'man' responded with customary services . . . . Each side was bound in mutual contract . . ." ("Historical" 69). Emphasis on monetary relations was so low that, as Lester Little explains, "payments were in fact more likely to be made in goods and services" (16). Little also stresses the importance of the gift in the feudal economy, labeling it a "gift economy." The value, in feudal times, set on services or goods, such as protection, salvation, and military services or food, specie, and cloth was qualitative and personal in an economy characterized by gift-giving. "The keystone of feudal government was the *personal* agreement between lord and vassal . . ." (Little 29 [italics mine]). In other words, "prestige, power, honor and wealth"—all the vestiges of authority—were perceived in terms of the ability to give, and the purpose of acquisition in a gift economy was to be able to give bigger and better gifts than the other man (Little 4). Consequently displays of wealth became important. How could anyone know that a lord was capable of giving to his companions, if they could not see the wealth the lord possessed? How could others recognize the esteem in which a vassal or servant was held, if they could not literally see the evidence of his wealth?

By comparison, as the feudal system lost ground so did the importance of mutual exchanges in the form of gifts of property and service or products. Payments of money or specie for goods, services and property eliminated the need for an "identity of wills" beyond the terms of the contract, and acquisition became an end in itself. This development was protested repeatedly in late medieval English literature. Gower is perhaps most eloquent in condemning the acquisitiveness of both lords and servants. "The

man who renders you service ought to be your servant, and not the worthless fellow who is eager for gold . . . . A noble king ought not to be the slave of avarice, a king's character ought to be liberal in everything" (Gower 238, 239). Clearly the feudal tradition of the gift given in mutual respect was the literary standard for rightness in economic relations.

The feudal exchange of gifts took place at all levels of master and servant relations. Unquantified items, when passed from servant to master, represented the servant's gratitude to and affection for his lord. When passed from master to servant, such items represented the lord's valuation of his servant as a representative part of the lord. The lord's *worship*—his dignity—was commensurate with his ability to give worthy gifts and to care for his servants. As long as the giving of gifts and attendant *worship* was reciprocal, the relation was considered to be *right*. As trade and safe travel increased, the gift became less representative of the gratitude, affection, and worship between master and man and more representative of the extent, exact nature, and quantity of items, services and protection exchanged between master and man. Eventually, the gift became little more than a metaphor for payment. As the gift came to represent less and less the "worship" of giver and receiver, the effective will—what we today might term power—of the servant in the master and servant relation also decreased.

We see the interplay and complexity of the gift and the identity of wills illustrated most clearly in *The Clerk's Tale*. In that tale, Walter gives Griselda a variety of gifts: clothing—a standard gift of provision from lord to servant; status—again a standard gift from lord to vassal and husband to wife; authority—not a standard gift from lord to servant but common enough and usually given to further the goals of the lord; and children—in the Middle Ages, regardless of the reality of the situation, children were

frequently referred to as a gift from husband to wife. In exchange for these gifts, Griselda gives her promise repeatedly that her will is identical to Walter's—"But as ye wol youreself, right so wol I" (*Clerk's Tale* 361). The exchange is far from equal in the modern sense, but it is reciprocal. When Walter begins to doubt Griselda he begins to withdraw his gifts. Eventually everything Walter gave to Griselda is taken away. Yet Griselda holds firm to her promise. Griselda, the metaphorical servant, never withdraws from the identity of wills or the acts of service which represent that identity. Walter, on the other hand, withdraws completely and even abuses the lordly authority given to him by Griselda's compliance with his will.

By the end of the tale it is obvious to the clerk and his listeners, to anyone who held with the philosophical tradition that supported the doctrine of submission, that Griselda is the substantive authority of the story, whereas Walter represents merely the form of authority. The clerk uses Griselda's actions, her service to Walter, to illustrate her part in the feudal relation of lord and servant. Walter's part in that same relation is vested in the gifts he gives to Griselda. Had Walter not taken back his gifts, the relation would have been a classic example of the Aristotelian lord and servant relation. But Walter does withdraw his gifts and by that withdrawal calls into question the rightness of his authority and his relation to his subject, Griselda. Discussion of that rightness must be deferred to another chapter. What is pertinent here is that the question of "payment" never arises. Griselda does not receive nor expect a wage for her services. The entire relationship between Walter and Griselda is represented not in terms of a monetary economic exchange but in terms of a feudal economic exchange.

Yet feudal economic practices were not the only signifiers of relations. Relations were also reflected in reciprocal exchanges of oaths and promises. As Marc Bloch noted long ago, "To be the 'man' of another man: in the vocabulary of feudalism, no combination of words was more widely used or more comprehensive in meaning. In both the Romance and the Germanic tongues it was used to express personal dependence *per se* and applied to persons of all social classes regardless of the precise legal nature of the bond" (145). A primary example of the promises exchanged between master and man was the oath of fealty.

> And when a free tenant shall swear fealty to his lord, let him place his right hand on the book and speak thus: "Hear thou this, my lord, that I will be faithful and loyal to you and will keep my pledges to you for the lands which I claim to hold of you, and that I will loyally perform for you the services specified, so help me God and the saints." (Ogg 218)

Upon receiving a man's oath of fealty the lord would invest the man with lands, position, or revenues or some combination of these. A corresponding oath from the lord to the newly sworn vassal, while not always required, might take a form similar to the following: "'And I receive you and take you as my man, and give you this kiss as a sign of faith . . .'" (Ogg 219). The exchange of oaths enacted the notion expressed by John of Salisbury's identity of wills in which "each [participant] believes what is to his own advantage to be determined by that which he recognizes to be most useful to others" (*Policraticus* 126). As with gift-giving, the exchange of oaths became more and more a pro forma exercise used to establish the extent of a man's authority over a particular geographic area or

estate—usually following the death of the previous authority—rather than signifying the purposeful linking of two wills, those of master and man.

Literary works often dramatized the identity of wills, or the lack thereof, by the exchange of oaths and promises. Gower frequently laments unfulfilled promises and oaths empty of meaning: "Wickedness [the failure to keep faith with knightly oaths] on the part of the knightly estate harms and offends all other classes of society by its unseemliness" (Gower 434). Certainly the dispute over promises exchanged between master and servant in the *Pearl*-poet's version of the parable of the vineyard represents a significant lack of identity in the wills of the two parties concerned. Understanding the feudal context of these literary oaths and promises is vitally important, especially in view of the philosophical tradition—stemming from Boethius—that distinguishes between the form and substance of right relations. That distinction may explain why literary representations of hierarchical relations often seem at odds with what we know about actual relations between lords and servants in the later Middle Ages.

The literature illustrates a doctrine of behavior that paradoxically dictated submission as a pre-requisite for authority. That doctrine had its basis in the divine example of Jesus, who, by an act of will, became subject to the flesh and its trials. To be like Christ was one of the most frequent exhortations to the faithful in the Middle Ages. One of the principal charges against the clergy was that they claimed to be like Christ but behaved in very un-Christlike ways. Gower and Langland are especially vocal on this point. They produce virtual catalogues of the ways in which the clergy fail to imitate Christ. For those who fail to conform substantively to the example of Christ, there can be no right relation. This *imitatio Dei* or likeness to God was the literal and behavioral

avowal of the doctrine of submission illustrated in late medieval literature. Christ's willing submission is the action that when imitated by all men confirms their relations as *right*.

The *imitatio Dei*, the identity of wills, gift-giving, and the exchange of promises—all were supported by a feudal context. However, these ideals were difficult, if not impossible, to maintain as the feudal system came into conflict with more modern, values and economic systems. As Little puts it, "The spread of monetary transactions, previously very restricted, into most types of relationship and most areas of activity brought distress to individuals and institutions alike" (19). The tension caused by the systemic changes in the late Middle Ages can be observed in the response of the survivors of the Black Plague. Peasants, Baldwin notes,

> began to leave their manors legally or illegally and to roam the country in search of higher wages. The Statutes of Labourers, enacted between 1349 (the year following the first devastating outbreak of plague) and the end of the century, attempted to control wages and prices, to enforce the keeping of contracts, and to make the idle work . . . . They attempted, in short, to transfer the feudal principles of 'truth' into a wage-economy, but they achieved only partial success. ("Historical" 70-71)

Clearly the philosophical tradition that had guided human relations was more and more at variance with social reality, and painful recognition of this fact is observable in the works of those late medieval poets who wrote in search of *right* relations.

Six poets and their search for *right* relations are examined in the following chapters. *Piers Plowman* (the C version) elaborates at some length on the right relation.

Gower's *Vox Clamantis* was greatly influenced by the peasants' revolt of 1381. Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* gives a careful representation of late medieval social structures and demonstrates the discourse of the right relation between a lord and a servant who become husband and wife. *Pearl* focuses on the right relation between God and man, as does Julian of Norwich's parable of the lord and servant. The Middle English prose translation of Deguileville's *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode* provides an explicit treatment of Aristotle's category of relation.[4] Together these works represent a variety of the genres and styles available in late medieval English literature: dream-vision, confession, biography, debate poem, courtly love literature, estates satire, quest poem, and homily. Stylistically these works represent prose and verse, Latin and vernacular, court poetry and the more popular works of the alliterative revival. Comparison of these works provides an excellent opportunity to examine the philosophical tradition of the right relation and to answer some of the questions raised by the formel eagle's refusal to serve.

For purposes of comparison, Chaucer and Gower make a natural pairing as friends and court poets. Significantly, both comment on the social hierarchy of the later Middle Ages. The work of these two authors shows significant differences in their quest for the right relation. *The Clerk's Tale* takes an approach that dramatizes the doctrine of submission in the characters of Griselda and Walter. The philosophical issues of concern in the right relation are illustrated in an intensely personal relation between two

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[4] Deguileville wrote his Anglo-Norman poem around 1330-1331. The Middle English prose translation is used as a source text because of its similarity of language and its production in the late fourteenth century. Lydgate's poetic adaptation is too late to be truly useful for this dissertation.

individuals, the relation of marriage. The marriage between Griselda and Walter, like the choice of the formel, is a marriage that has significant public ramifications in its contexts. Thus the marriage of marquis and peasant undergoes significant and ambiguous public scrutiny. Gower's *Vox Clamantis*, on the other hand, deals with the problem of right relation in less personal but no less public relations. Gower approaches the right relation by scrutinizing the problems in relations between the three estates—peasants, clerics, and knights. In contrast to Chaucer's version of the Griselda story, a courtly love tale told in the vernacular and a single piece extracted from the over-arching discussion of various relations that occurs in the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Vox Clamantis* is a work of extended length, written in Latin. The issue of the right relation is so intricate a part of the *Vox Clamantis* that extraction of any single section is nearly impossible. Interestingly enough both works arrive at similar conclusions about the right relation. Both point clearly to the *imitatio Dei*, the spiritual right relation, as the source for secular right relations.

Julian of Norwich's parable and *Pearl* both focus more directly on the spiritual right relation between God and man. As parable and dream-vision the two works are similar in genre. Yet like Chaucer and Gower these two authors present radically different approaches to the search for the right relation. The voice of Julian's parable is personal and intimate, whereas the voice of *Pearl* is didactic and confrontational. Both works dramatically illustrate the doctrine of submission, yet the figures in whom that authority is seated—the lord and the *Pearl*-maiden—represent opposite extremes of the traditional medieval hierarchy. The resolution of the spiritual relation is less comforting in *Pearl* than in Julian's parable. Still both works convey the same message about relations between

God and man—a message that emphasizes reciprocation and is supported by the philosophical tradition derived from Aristotle.

The examination of works by Chaucer, Gower, Julian of Norwich and the *Pearl*-poet all address the right relation indirectly through the example of their separate narratives. By contrast the works of Langland and DeGuileville address the right relation directly in discussions of the *predicamentum ad aliquid* by allegorical personifications. These two works, *Piers Plowman* and *Þe Pilgrimage of þe Lyfehood of Man*, illustrate most clearly the union of the secular and spiritual spheres in the right relation. Both works are dream-vision, quest poems. Indeed, in the very similarities of these two works the importance of the right relation for medieval audiences is most readily apparent.

The literary search for the right relation marks a response by authors and audiences to the changes occurring in the later Middle Ages. England especially was at a crucial point in the transition from a feudal to a more modern form of society. By the late fourteenth century it had become obvious to all that the transition, though barely understood, posed a mortal threat to the cherished values embedded in the older social and economic structures and backed by centuries of religious and philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, certain feudal practices and ideals persisted. Oaths of fealty continued to be administered. The relation between a lord and his "commended" men survived in the King and his council. And, most important to my argument in the following pages, many of the feudal premises underlying the paradoxical relation between submission and authority are re-valorized in the literature of the period.

CHAPTER I: CHAUCER AND GOWER

"Since every liege is subject," *Vox Clamantis*

At the nominal bottom of the secular medieval hierarchy stood the laborer, in literary sources usually a plowman. Whether this laborer tilled the fields, tended sheep, picked crops, apprenticed in a trade—such as smithing, brewing, milling and others—or raised children and tended to the physical needs of men and women, the laborer was the person whose *sweat* and *swynke* and *suffering* produced the food and goods upon which the entire secular hierarchy depended. Langland's plowman is situated at this point on the secular version of John of Salisbury's "ladder of virtue," sharing that position with such figures as Chaucer's Griselda, and Gower's Crying Voice. Each of these figures, in his or her laboring condition, exemplifies the weak and powerless, those whose only available asset seems to be a servile submission to all the more insensitive authority figures standing ahead of the weak in the secular hierarchy. Yet Piers, Griselda, and the Crying Voice are all among the most powerful literary figures produced in Middle English. How is it possible for such powerlessness to convey a sense of great authority? Is it merely that centuries of readers admire these figures for their Job-like perseverance in the face of overwhelming cruelty and sin? Hardly. While discussion of *Piers Plowman* must wait for another chapter, note should be made here that Piers' character has been found to be inconsistent and textually inadequate. The critical history of Griselda is riddled with

denigrating commentary that perceives her as almost evil in her submission to the cruel and unusual demands of Walter. Gower's Crying Voice has been perceived as morally pompous and inaccessible to modern readers. Yet the difficulties these figures seem to present are the direct result of a modern failure to understand the right relation and the doctrine of submission in late medieval English literature.

The first words the Clerk speaks in his prologue are redolent of the oath of homage. "'Hooste,' quod he, 'I am under your yerde; / Ye han of us as now the governance, / And therfore wol I do yow obeisance, / As fer as resoun axeth, hardily'" (22-25). Despite his humble words, the Clerk clearly has some authority as teller of the tale. Similarly, the moral uttered at the close of his tale invokes the language of fealty, "But for that every wight, in his degree, / Should be constant in adversitee" (1145-1146). In the face of such textual evidence few may doubt the influence of the doctrine of submission and the identity of wills or the impact of the right relation in Chaucer's rendering of Griselda. S. K. Heninger Jr. observes that in the *Clerk's Tale* "the most overt statements of order are additions by Chaucer," and further that "obedience [or submission] was a prime requisite in such social order . . ." (382, 383).

In Chaucer's clerkly version of the Griselda story one can scarcely avoid bumping into some aspect of the medieval dialogue concerning the right relation of authority and submission. John P. McCall points out, citing R. M. Lumiansky, that "submission to authority is a rich and pervasive theme that goes far beyond the ties of Walter and Griselde" (262). The potential for misunderstanding this theme is great. According to McCall, "the Clerk is not at all concerned with the servile and, therefore, disconcerting

subjection of one human being to another." Instead the Clerk develops the theme "that by the free and total submission of the human will, the will itself becomes sovereign . . ." (261).

The *Clerk's Tale* begins with the hierarchical sovereign of the story, the Marquis Walter. Walter has emerged as one of Chaucer's most problematical figures. For Walter seems to embody at one time all that is best and worst in a secular authority. John McNamara argues that Chaucer's variations on the Griselda story work to make "Walter quite unsympathetic. . ." (185). However, "unsympathetic" is not an entirely accurate descriptor. The lines in the *Clerk's Tale* that introduce Walter portray him with true ambiguity.

> A markys whilom lord was of that lond,
> As were his worthy eldres hym bifore;
> And obeisant, ay redy to his hond,
> Were alle his liges, bothe lasse and moore.
> Thus in delit he lyveth, and hath doon yoore,
> Biloved and drad, thrugh favour of Fortune,
> Bothe of his lordes and of his commune.
> Therwith he was, to speke as of lynage,
> The gentilleste yborn of Lumbardye,
> A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,
> And ful of honour and of curteisye;

> Descreet ynogh his contree for to gye,
>
> Save in somme thynges that he was to blame;
>
> And Walter was this yonge lordes name. (64-77)

A ruler who is portrayed as young, strong, attractive and well born, who is both beloved and dreaded, who is full of honor and courtesy, who governs discretely, and who is nevertheless to blame in some things is, at the least, ambiguously drawn.

The ambiguity of Walter's initial portrait becomes even stronger, if we note the juxtaposition, in line 72 above, of *gentilleste* and *Lumbardye*.[1] Phillipa Hardman explains that *Lumbardye* was commonly associated with tyranny. "This phrase 'tyraunts of Lumbardye,' has a proverbial ring to it: Chaucer clearly expected that it would be immediately familiar to his audience. It is the phrase commonly used by historians to describe the Signori, the despots of Northern Italy in the later Middle Ages, families like the Visconti of Milan" (172).[2] The tyranny associated with Lombardy is a type of government not normally characterized by *gentillesse*, and the contrast confirms ambivalence in the portrayal of Walter. Of this contrast, Hardman notes that

> the allusions within the tale provide two extreme models of lordship: the divine pity of the King of kings on the one hand, and on the other, the

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[1] The medieval concept of "gentilesse" includes both "nobility of birth or rank" and "nobility of character or manners" (*MED*).

[2]The phrase is Chaucer's. Spoken by Alceste in her speech on proper government in the Prologue to *Legend of Good Women* (G 353-5).

> cruelty of a tyrant of Lombardy. Walter, of course, stands at neither extreme: we see in Chaucer's characterization of him and in his behaviour an imperfect mixture of pity and tyranny. (175)

Hardman is not alone in her assessment of Walter. Robert Stepsis recognizes that Walter "does remain, on some level of the story, simply the figure of a human husband and a mortal man . . ." (141). And even McNamara, citing the Epistle of St. James, emphasizes that Walter "like everyone is tempted by being drawn away and enticed by his own passion" (188). If anything, the initial ambiguity of Walter's portrait makes him a very *human* being and, thus, draws sympathy to him.

Although characterization of Walter as "unsympathetic" may be based on his cruelty toward Griselda, which does indeed divorce the reader's sympathies from Walter, the early ambivalence with which Walter is portrayed is essential to understanding how his cruelty is possible. However, as Hardman notes, Walter is neither the God-figure nor the devil-figure that readers have made him out to be, but simply the figure of a man (175).[3] He is a figure whose failings are exaggerated—but not impossibly so—because of his fictive nature, his position as a ruler or hierarchically superior human being, and by comparison with the hierarchically inferior but morally superior peasant he marries.

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[3] McNamara points out that "Walter is not a devil , but he stands in the same relation to Griselda as the devil does to Job" (192). Hardman actually states that Walter "stands at neither extreme" of lordship (175).

The ambiguity of Walter's characterization is illustrated throughout the story. His greatest failing, as a character and a leader, is to be guided by his own desire. "I blame hym thus: that he considered noght / In tyme comynge what myghte hym bityde, / But on his lust present was al his thoght," says the narrator (78-80). Walter's wrongful submission to his own desire, his willfulness, shows itself as a niggling and private compulsion to evaluate Griselda's constancy to her vows (451-460, 619-623). That compulsion eventually becomes a public scandal and spectacle (785-791, 890-896). Thus, Walter has both of Griselda's children taken from her secretly, refusing to counter rumors of infanticide. By refusing to acknowledge gossip, Walter is making a somewhat wise choice, for it is better that a lord be guided by his own self-will than that he subject himself to rumor. The fickleness of his people proves Walter's wisdom in this case, for they seem to forget the supposed murders in the excitement and glamor of a new bride and a new wedding. Walter's wisdom is consistently inconsistent, for he continues to try Griselda, by setting her aside for a younger, more beautiful, better born bride and by compelling Griselda to act as handmaid to her successor.

Walter's subjection to desire increases progressively. Whereas wisdom had earlier guided Walter's will toward his people correctly, he eventually becomes so ruled by willful desire that he begins to doubt Griselda more rather than less.

> This markys wondred, evere lenger the moore,
> Upon hire pacience, and if that he
> Ne hadde soothely knowen ther bifoore

That parfitly hir children loved she,

He wolde have wend that som of subtiltee,

And of malice, for crueel corage,

That she hadde suffred this with sad visage. (687-693)

The nature of the doubt, unfortunately, is such as to compel Walter to try Griselda further. The extent to which Walter is ruled by desire makes it doubly difficult for him to comprehend Griselda's total subordination of her own will to his. She is human, female, and peasant-born; must she not be subject to desire as he is? When will her human sinfulness reveal itself? How much will she take? The questions, doubts, and trials are all indicative of Walter's inability to locate the right relation of lord and subject when he sees it.

Walter's *un-rightness* is at work not only in his testing of Griselda but also in his relationship to his people. However, Walter is no completely self-willed tyrant, for he occasionally listens to the counsel of his lords. Walter's lords request that he bow his "nekke under that blisful yok / Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse, Which that men clepe spousaile or wedlok" (113-115). Walter responds, "But nathelees I se youre trewe entente, / And truste upon your wit, and have doon ay; / Wherefore of my free wyl I wole assente / To wedde me, as soone as evere I may" (148-151). Ever contrary, Walter assents only to part of their counsel, refusing the suggestion that his lords find him a suitable wife, "Born of the gentilleste and of the meeste / Of al this land . . ." (131-132). Walter not only refuses this portion of the lords's counsel but also charges them that

What wyf that I take, ye me assure
To worshipe hire, whil that hir lyf may dure,
In word and werk, bothe heere and everywheere,
As she an emperoures doghter weere.
And forthermoore, this shal ye swere: that ye
Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve. (165-170)

Once again the ambivalence of Walter's character as a ruler is demonstrated; his refusal to be guided totally by counsel from a recognizably authoritative source is in direct opposition to the identity of wills that should, in a right relation, guide his actions. Nevertheless, Walter's refusal of guidance, at least in this one instance, is grounded in a wisdom rarely demonstrated in Walter's actions. "And for he saugh that under low degree / Was ofte vertu hid, the peple hym heelde / A prudent man, and that is seyn ful seelde" (425-427). Walter shares identity of wills with his people only occasionally. Nevertheless, his will and theirs is the same often enough to prevent Walter from being classified as a thorough-going tyrant in the mold of Lombardy.

Although Chaucer's Walter cannot be classified a tyrant, neither can he be considered a consistent example of a lord whose relations with his subjects is right. The relation of lord and subjects in the *Clerk's Tale* contrasts sharply with other such relations in Chaucer's works. Specifically, Chaucer describes the right relation of lord to servant in Alceste's words on "ryghtwyse lordshipe" from the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* (*LGW*) and Prudence's words on counsel from the *Tale of Melibee* (*MEL*). These two tales cast considerable light on the ambivalence of Walter's portrait.

Alceste's words demonstrate that "ryghtwyse lordship," unlike Walter's un-right lordship, is the result of a careful balancing act between justice, mercy, compassion, and equity; that is, as the doctrine of submission dictates, a balance between what the lord owes the liegeman and what the liegeman owes the lord (366, 390, 376, 384). "He [the lord] moste thynke it is his liege man, / and that *hym* oweth, of verray duetee," (359-360 italics mine). These lines are, delightfully if not deliberately ambiguous, leaving the referent for *hym* suspended between liege and man, since both are of necessity obligated to serve each other in order to achieve the right relation that enacts the doctrine of submission and the identity of wills (360). Alceste's words also make clear that tyranny or bad lordship is willful, cruel, foul, and not lordship at all (355, 357, 388, 386). "For, sire, it is no maystrye for a lord / To dampne a man withoute answere or word, / And, for a lord, that is ful foul to use" (386-88).[4] Walter represents aspects of both the ryghtwys lord and the tyrant; hence he can truly be neither. Walter is conscious of what he owes his people—security in the form of a valid succession and the right to give counsel. He also knows what his people owe him—submissive obedience and advice. However, he is not conscious of what he owes Griselda—security in her marriage and the right to give counsel. And he denies Griselda's debt of counsel to her lord while he continually questions what Griselda owes, and gives, him—submissive obedience in the identity of her will to his.

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[4] Alford summarizes the argument by Aquinas that any law that does not conform to either "divine, natural, and positive" law is "by definition not law at all but an abuse of law" (946-947).

Alceste's speech acknowledges that a good lord should "heren here excusacyouns, / And here compleyntes and petyciouns, / In duewe tyme, whan they shal it profre" (362-364). By demanding Griselda's obedient submission and silence, Walter denies her a very real opportunity to provide a service that she in all duty and loyalty owes him (351-357). Melibee attempts much the same thing when he protests against hearing Prudence's counsel. Significantly, Prudence, unlike Griselda, is able to point out to Melibee that

> ye seyn that if ye governe yow by my conseil, it sholde seme that ye hadde yeve me the maistrie and the lordshipe over your persone./ Sire, save youre grace, it is nat so. For if it so were that no man sholde be conseilled but oonly of hem that hadden lordshipe and maistrie of his persone, men wolden nat be conseilled so ofte./ For soothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free choys wheither he wole werke by that conseil or noon. (1081-1083)

In denying, Griselda the voice to proffer him counsel, Walter denies himself the exercise of his *reason*, since he cannot choose counsel that he refuses to hear. As a result, he can only remain subject to the desire that caused him to silence Griselda in the first place. This *unreason* leads Walter progressively deeper into subjection, until little hope seems to remain that he will ever recognize the right relation of lord and subject.

When the *Clerk's Tale* turns to the governed to examine the subjects' stance in relation to their master, Walter's subjects, with few exceptions, show themselves to be no better than Walter himself. Although generally obedient and submissive, they "grucche"

and complain enough to make clear that their will is not identical to Walter's. As the previous discussion of the people's fickleness demonstrates, [5]

> The role of the people, when extracted from the body of the narrative, becomes characterized by constant turbulence, by varying degrees of discontent. It becomes all too apparent that popular homage to Walter (in both a feudal and a religious sense) is written upon the knees and lips and not at all upon the heart. Obedience is merely grudging acceptance rather than "perfect liberty of service." The diatribe leveled at their faithlessness is doubly significant as no hint of it appears in Chaucer's sources for the tale. (Johnson 19)

The diatribe to which Lynn Staley Johnson refers is a significant narratorial evaluation of the people's characterization as inconstant and as lacking in the right relation of master and servant.

> O stormy peple! Unsad and evere untrewe!
> Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane!
> Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,
> For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!
> Ay ful of clappyng, deere ynogh a jane!

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[5] See page 23 above.

Youre doom is fals, your constance yvele preeveth;

A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth. (995-1001)

The exceptions to this diatribe who contrast strongly with the people and with Walter include Janicula, Griselda of course, and the sergeant. Although Janicula's part in the story is small, as Griselda's father, he is the exemplar of all that she is. When Walter asks Janicula "To take me as for thy sone-in lawe," Janicula responds as Griselda will respond to every request or order Walter gives her (315). "'Lord,' quod he, 'my willynge / Is as ye wole, ne ayeynes your likynge / I wol no thyng, ye be my lord so deere; / Right as yow lust, governeth this mateere'" (319-322). To modern audiences this response is submissive nearly to the point of obsequiousness. But to audiences who had close ties to the medieval doctrine of submission, Janicula's response, "my willynge is as ye wole," is the very essence of the "identity of wills" that characterizes the right relation of master and servant. When Walter sets forth the difficult terms of his proposal—Griselda is to obey his every desire, never to complain, always to agree with him and never frown or utter a negative word (351-357)—Griselda's response should not surprise us.

She seyde, "Lord, undigne and unworthy

Am I to thilke honour that ye me beede,

But as ye wole youreself, right so wol I.

And heere I swere that nevere willyngly,

In werk ne thoght, I nyl yow disobeye,

For to be deed, though me were looth to deye." (359-364)

Her words "as ye wole youreself, right so wol I" are mere variation on the theme taught by her father's example, "my willyng Is as ye wole," a variation that occurs repeatedly at critical moments in the tale.

One such moment occurs when Walter orders Griselda's daughter taken away, allowing Griselda to believe the child is to be killed. The thematic variation appears in Griselda's words.

> Ther may no thyng, God so my soule save,
> Liken to yow that may displese me;
> Ne I desire no thyng for to have,
> Ne drede for to leese, save oonly yee.
> This wyl is in myn herte, and ay shal be. (505-509)

The sergeant echoes Griselda's words by his actions when he comes to take her daughter. He offers only these words with their distortion of the "identity of wills." "That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned; / They mowe wel been biwailled or compleyned, / But men moote nede unto hire lust obeye, / And so wol I; there is namoore to seye" (529-531). The sergeant's mention of the ability to bewail and complain the lord's behest demonstrates that he understands the right relation of master and servant less well than he enacts it, for without comment he performs the task set to him by his master, Walter.

At a subsequent crisis point, when Griselda's son is taken in the same manner, the "identity of wills" variation appears again. "I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn, / But as yow list" (646-647). The narrator comments of Walter and Griselda after this incident

that "it semed thus: that of hem two / Ther nas but o wyl, for as Walter lest, / The same lust was hire plesance also" (715-717). The variation on the "identity of wills" occurs again when Walter sets Griselda aside as his wife and sends her back to her father. "'For sith it liketh yow, my lord,' quod shee, / 'That whilom weren al myn heretes rest, / That I shal goon, I wol goon whan yow leste'" (845-847). Griselda's final variation on the right relation of master and servant recalls John of Salisbury's definition of the "identity of wills" as an expression of love. Called upon to prepare the wedding feast and the new bride, Griselda replies to Walter,

> "Nat oonly, lord, that I am glad," quod she,
> "To doon youre lust, but I desire also
> Yow for to serve and plese in my degree
> Withouten feyntyng, and shal everemo;
> Ne nevere, for no wele ne no wo,
> Ne shal the goost withinne my herte stente
> To love yow best with al my trewe entente." (967-973)

Griselda's consistent compliance with Walter's will is exemplary, yet Griselda is no martyr. She certainly does not seem to consider herself as one. Rather, Griselda exemplifies the right relation of servant to master, aligning her will with that of her lord in whatever capacity he designates for her, be it peasant and laborer, steward and wife, or housekeeper and maidservant to her own successor. Certainly the doctrine of submission represented in Griselda is easy to perceive. The same cannot be said of Walter.

If Griselda represents the ideal servant, Walter represents the true, and far from ideal, human condition, for he represents the ideal neither in his ability to serve nor in his ability to lead. Indeed, he proceeds further and further from the ideal as the tale progresses, until Griselda's submission brings Walter back to right sovereignty.

> And whan this Walter saugh hire pacience,
> Hir glade chiere, and no malice at al,
> And he so ofte had doon to hire offence,
> And she ay sad and constant as a wal,
> Continuynge evere hire innocence overal,
> This sturdy markys gan his herte dresse
> To rewen upon hire wyfly stedfastnesse. (1044-1050)

For a lord to have mercy upon the suffering of innocence and steadfastness is truly *right* lordship.

Walter is unable to sustain the "identity of wills" on his own and requires the constancy of a Griselda to enable him to function. This need is hinted at when Griselda acts as ruler during Walter's absence (428-441). Indeed, narratively, as Walter submits increasingly to desire, his country is increasingly in need of the rulership Griselda's submission to her "sovereign yok" provides. Had Griselda's constancy with Walter's will failed at any point, Walter would have lost more than a wife; he would have lost his lordship completely. In order for Walter to retain his right relation in marriage and in the kingdom, he must submit to the rule of Griselda's example. McCall's assessment is a valid

one. Griselda, who freely submits her will, becomes sovereign, both literally in being restored to her status as Marquessa and figuratively since her submitted will is identical to Walter's will which is sovereign by narrative fiat, and by the authority of Griselda's willing submission.

Although the lessons of the Griselda story about power and paradox in the doctrine of submission are relatively easy to perceive, the performance of willing submission is close to impossible. The modern audience's negative perceptions of Griselda suggest the problems involved in enacting a paradox, even so desirable a paradox as the doctrine of submission. Clearly, if that paradox is not enacted, the rightness of the relation between lord and servant is in doubt. Gower's *Vox Clamantis*, like the *Clerk's Tale*, demonstrates the difficulty of establishing the right relation. And like the *Clerk's Tale, Vox Clamantis* suggests that the hope of establishing the right relation rests in the acceptance of the doctrine of submission throughout the secular hierarchy.

In the opening Epistle of *Vox Clamantis*, dedicated to Thomas Arundel, Gower characterizes the narrator of *Vox Clamantis* as a spiritually frail but eager laborer. "Therefore, Father, I beg that while I am laboring at my writings, you set the soul of a zealous spirit at rest" (Gower 47-48). Gower carefully establishes his narrative relation with Arundel, and other readers, upon a model that the Voice of One Crying will exclaim as the basis for all right relations, the sovereignty of submission and the identity of wills. As a servant, *Vox Clamantis*' humble laboring voice carefully enumerates the tasks he will

perform. He hopes to stimulate the mind, lament the suffering of Christ's law, provide a source of reflection, and make manifest the deeds of the world. In exchange Arundel is asked to provide rest for a zealous spirit, guidance for the servant's blindness, protection for his body, and guardianship in life and in death (Gower 48). Clearly, Gower wishes the narrative voice of *Vox Clamantis* to be perceived as sharing with Griselda a weak position within the secular hierarchy.

Yet as analysis will make clear, the narrator of *Vox Clamantis* has a unique power in that weakness. That power, unlike Griselda's, is apparent from the outset. The narrator's power is apparent in the confidence with which he proclaims the products of his labor and in the authority of textuality referred to at the opening of Book I. "Writings of the past contain fit examples for the future, for a thing which has previously been experienced will produce greater faith" (Gower 49). Although conceding by convention that *Vox Clamantis*' newer writings have less authority than those of the ancients, placement of this narrative within the tradition of textuality aligns it with the authority that all texts, all voices thus crying in ink, by their very nature share for the medieval reader. Like the paradox central to the doctrine of submission, the tension between weakness and power in Gower's text contributes to the density of Gower's work. Indeed, because the Crying Voice's authority is easily apparent, distinguishing the submissiveness that throughout *Vox Clamantis* authorizes power is often more difficult than in Chaucer's version of the Griselda story. *Vox Clamantis* appears to be relentlessly focused on nominally higher authority. That apparent focus serves to raise questions about who or what that higher authority is. In addition, the focus of *Vox Clamantis* prompts questions

about whether that authority is established by virtue of rank alone or whether some other basis, like the doctrine of submission and the identity of wills is required to validate secular authority.

Gower's Latin opus, labeled variously as class criticism and estates satire, is organized on a hierarchical basis that begins with the worst of the peasant classes and builds toward the ideal sovereign. The rebellious, bestial, and seemingly unparadoxical peasants in the opening visio of *Vox Clamantis* represent a clear antithesis to the kind of sovereign submission exemplified by Griselda. *Vox Clamantis*'s harsh treatment of these figures who subvert the divinely ordered hierarchy by remaining outside its governing paradox is well known. Maria Wickert states that the opening visio "one-sidedly condemns the insurgents as rebels against divine as well as human law. . . . His beast vision has the sole purpose of expressing with almost mathematical precision an easily intelligible, scathing value judgment" (7, 33). John Fisher explains that "the vision or the Peasants' Revolt which introduces the *Vox Clamantis* may be recognized as an exemplum of the fearful effects of rebellion against universal order" (170). Robert O. Payne implies that such an exemplum has an authenticating purpose for the narrative voice of *Vox Clamantis*. "[T]he voice we listen to . . . . has to be authenticated by a *persona* we can believe and trust because he is an experienced, scarred survivor of his own humanity" (253). As the critical commentary illustrates, the harsh treatment accorded the rebels is undoubted, but the purpose of that harshness in the context of *Vox Clamantis* is far from clear. That harshness is not simply the result of a distaste for the peasantry as a whole. "As a matter of fact, he [Gower] elsewhere expresses deep concern for the peasants in

their place and he here [*Vox Clamantis* I.991] voices his disappointment in the failure of the aristocracy to live up to its obligation to maintain order" (Fisher 173).

Fisher's phrase "in their place" highlights the issue that determines the narrator's empathy or antipathy for the peasantry or any of the various social classes who come under scrutiny in *Vox Clamantis*. "Gower does not criticize the principle underlying the political or social order, but the deviations from this principle of which individual classes are guilty" (Wickert 171). The Crying Voice reminds us throughout the visio that the rebelling peasants provide the most obvious examples of deviation from the doctrine of submission and the "identity of wills" that are the underlying principles of the social hierarchy.

The most compelling reminders occur in the visio's allegorical representation of Sudbury's death. "The peasant said to the nobles, 'We have great power, and from this time on there will be an end of respect for you.' . . . The flock of sheep pointed its sharp horns at the shepherd, and they grew wet, stained by the blood which poured from his heart. . . . The thistle destroyed the ears of grain . . . " (Gower 78). These metaphors represent an acknowledgment of seemingly powerful actions by the third estate. However, the gruesome actions of the peasantry have only the form of power, since their acts do not originate in submission. Thus, the rebels' place themselves in an unright relation and the Voice condemns them for it. "Since they feared neither God nor man, these men deserved to be enslaved to devils for their faults" (Gower 78).

The power that the peasants claim for themselves is not the paradoxical power engendered and exemplified by Griselda-like submission to nominal authority. The

narrator perceives those who defy the secular hierarchy as deserving of slavery, lacking even the power of their own reason, free-will, and humanity. The resemblance of the Gower's un-right peasants to Walter from the *Clerk's Tale* is striking. Gower's peasants, like Walter, exemplify the metaphorical inverse of the doctrine of submission in which the abuse of power and the desire for authority inherent in some other and higher place in the hierarchy overpowers and makes servile any who attempt it. Clearly for Gower, the rebels exemplify this desire; their lust for a higher place has, in the narrator's view, made *slaves* of them: they are a "slavish band," and "So great was the number of these slaves of perdition that scarcely any wall could contain them" (Gower 70).

But the rebellious peasants are not the only group in the visio who use power inappropriately, resulting in relations that are un-right. The knightly class comes under fire for its own inappropriate behaviors, specifically for not using the authority vested in the ranks of the nobility to serve as protection for others in the hierarchy. "The peasant attacked and the knight in the city did not resist . . . . Priam did not shine then with his usual honor, instead, the master put up with whatever the servant did to him . . . . The nobleman fled and wandered about, and there were no places quite safe either in the ramparts of the city or in woodland retreats" (Gower 71, 72, 76). However, the faults of the noble class go beyond inaction. The noble class too has misused the might that is its primary responsibility. This class too has shed the archbishop of Canterbury's blood.

The analogy drawn between the deaths of Becket and Sudbury suggests that Gower understood that "an extensive guilt, not an insignificant one, has with good reason

tainted us" (Gower 113). *Vox Clamantis* cries out against a pervasive and enduring moral disorder of the secular hierarchy.

> A knight was the chief culprit in shedding Thomas' blood; a peasant furnished the weapons for Simon's murder. Nobles who did not fear Christ's Church were the cause of the martyr Thomas' murder; and the peasant class, opposed to justice in the realm, brought about Simon's last day in the city. Thomas sank down in the bosom of his Mother, and Simon fell by the sword because of the turmoil in the midst of his children. The King could have saved Thomas, but the royal power was without influence in regard to Simon's life. Thomas' death was avenged, and now vengeance for Simon's death threatens daily outside the door. (Gower 73)

The implication that the peasants, in typical lower class fashion, imitate the actions of their betters, albeit from another generation, is clear, especially in view of the statement that, "The cause is dissimilar, yet there was one death for the two" (Gower 73). In both cases the right relation was destroyed. The parallel is further illustrated when Gower applies the same patricidal allegory to both deaths (I.14). "He who had been the protection of the soul had no protection, and the children whom the father cherished killed him" (Gower 73). The patricidal allegory intensifies the madness of social disorder that springs from the inverted doctrine of submission. And because of the familial metaphor, that inversion now wears the same intimate and spiritual face that John of Salisbury invoked as a metaphor for the right and loving relationship between any authority and subordinate.

The intimacy of this visionary interpretation of events in 1381 does not remain on the third-person level of narrative metaphor. The 16th chapter of book I illustrates the very personal involvement of the dreamer with the visio events. The first person now dominates the discourse rather than being restricted to the introductory portions of narrated events, and the dreamer himself is caught up in the madness engendered by social disorder.

> Then abandoning my own home, I ran away across alien fields and became a stranger in the wild woodlands. Lashed from behind by peoples' tongues, I often fell to the ground, and without any crime on my part I was often like a criminal. Thus wretched, I was arraigned in my absence, and although my cause was excellent, it perished since no one defended me. Tracing my weary steps along the upward path alone, I sought to find a safe road. Nevertheless, fear of this great madness added wings to my feet, and I was like a bird in my swift flight. (Gower 80)

The passage is a compelling one, and the narrative continues in much the same vein throughout I.16. What is striking about this passage, and I.16 in general, is its similarity to the madness topos found in courtly romance, where the sojourn in the wild wood is a primary trope, like solitariness, a disheveled appearance, indecision or confusion, hunger and deprivation, and emotional distress. The only trope from the romance madness topos missing in Gower's passage is the loss of clothing. Gower includes in his use of the topos all of the tropes that indicate the dreamer's similarity to the beastly peasants in the earlier

portions of the visio. The disorder of society and the dreamer's personal disorder mirror each other.

The resemblance is important for the simple reason that the dreamer, like the rebels, cannot in his mad fear establish any kind of right relation. Kurt Olsson, in a seminal article on *Vox Clamantis*, explains the dreamer's difficulty in the visio as

> a primary fault of misperception. Physical, external place and the moment dominate his thoughts. Remembrance and expectation are present in his mind, but he is still obsessed with the instant, trapped not only by time—the tyranny of the present—but by geographical place. . . . Though concerned with place, he has not discovered the place proper to him. (144-45)

Olsson further explains that the dreamer "must regain his sense of justice, of things standing in right relationship" (146). The re-establishment of justice, of right relations, at the personal and social levels occupies the remaining books of *Vox Clamantis*. However, re-establishment of the right relation proves quite difficult. Each estate is examined and found wanting in the justice or rightness of its relations, "no estate is pious as in days gone by," until the epistle to the king in Book VI demonstrates how justice originates in the right relation of the king to his subjects, to the law, and to God (Gower 113).

After examining the third estate, the cultors, and touching briefly on the knightly class in the visio, the next to come under the scrutiny of the Crying Voice are the clergy—the prelates, curates, rectors, and priests in that order. The list of offenses by the clergy is

extensive, although most can be categorized as hypocrisy, for the Voice cries out how the prelates fail to follow Christ's example: "Christ was poor, but they are overloaded with gold. He used to make peace, but they now wage war. Christ was generous, but they are as close as a money-box. Work occupied Him, but plentiful rest pampers them. Christ was gentle, but they are violent" (Gower 116). The list continues in the same vein and draws attention to the un-rightness of the clergy's relation to others in the secular hierarchy. "He suffered humbly, but they desire to be superior" and further "Christ refused whole kingdoms for Himself upon the mountain, yet nothing is pleasing to these men except worldly glory" (Gower 116-117, 118).

When *Vox Clamantis* deals with the place of the prelates within the hierarchy, the hypocrisy generalized in the list of offenses by the clergy is immediately apparent. Recalling Matt. 6:24, Gower writes:

> No honest man can serve two masters. Nevertheless, the prelate in office does serve two: he says he is the servant of the Eternal King, yet he serves an earthly king and waits attendance upon him. Peter was the bearer of the keys to heaven, but this fellow demands the keys to a king's treasure for himself. Thus it is that the "devout" man is [now] grasping and the "meek is haughty; and a man who is far too much attracted by this earth is "heavenly." (Gower 120)[6]

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[6] cf. Matt. 6: 24: "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (*Douay-Rheims*).

The inversion of the doctrine of submission observed in the bestial peasantry is once again apparent in the assessment of the clergy offered here, and *Vox Clamantis* makes clear the evil resulting from the actions of those who by seeking power deny the service that their place in the social hierarchy requires of them. The selling of indulgences and the fines levied in of the ecclesiastic courts are cited as examples of the clergy's hypocrisy and concern with worldly power and authority. "He serves Mammon for tainted money, but he does not help us to gain the kingdom of heaven" and "a purse of gold does not atone for such a crime; rather, a contrite spirit is the remedy" (Gower 122). This evidence compels the Crying Voice to assert that clergyman or prelate, he "who has given his all to the cherishing of this world cannot render any profitable service to his chosen God" (Gower 121). The clergyman whose relation is un-right, who seeks power outright rather than by submission, or who submits to the wrong lord, harms not only himself but also all who seek his service as a representative of God. In this, the clergy is very like the peasants who cause others to go hungry by refusing to submit to the labor that designates their place, as well as their function within the social hierarchy.

Following the extensive discussion of the relations right and un-right among the clergy, the Crying Voice returns to an examination of relations among the knights. Rather than beginning his scrutiny with the offenses of the knightly class, Gower's Crying Voice opens Book V with a review of the service knights provide in their rightful place. The knights

> are under obligation to assist and uphold temporal affairs . . . . It [knighthood] was first established for three reasons: first, it is to protect

> the rights of the Church; second, it fosters the common good; third, it is to uphold the right of the needy orphan and defend the widow's cause with its power . . . . knighthood is responsible for the general establishment of security for all other classes of society. (Gower 196, 206)

Since in the right secular relation the knight employs his might in the service of all others in the hierarchy, the knight who employs his might in the service of one individual no longer maintains a right relation. The examples given in *Vox Clamantis* of such un-rightness are the knight who fights for vain-glory and the knight whose amorous desire drives him to fight. "But if a knight makes war for the sake of vain praise, his praise is unwarranted, if it is granted under such a circumstance" (Gower 196). Among the metaphors used to describe the knight who fights for love are "a slavish prince, a subject queen and a destitute king" (Gower 198). All are arranged to emphasize the loss of power and privilege rather than its increase. Thus, Gower once again in his description and evaluation of un-right relations invokes the inverse of the doctrine of submission, previously identified in the peasantry and the clergy. In addition, the knights who operate in un-right relations, like the peasants and the clergy who also seek to master without serving, are harmful to the community at large, as the opening and closing lines to V.8 demonstrate. "Wickedness on the part of the knightly estate harms and offends all other classes of society by its unseemliness. . . . Thus their honor is empty, since it is without responsibility" (Gower 207, 208).

A return to the estate of cultivators rounds out the examination of the three traditional estates in *Vox Clamantis*. The third estate works as tillers of the soil and

providers of food. "They are the men who seek food for us by the sweat of their heavy toil, as God Himself has decreed" (Gower 208). But, as with the other two estates, something has gone wrong with the peasant class.

> Now, however, scarcely a farmer wishes to do such work; instead, he wickedly loafs everywhere. An evil disposition is widespread among the common people, and I suspect that the servants of the plow are often responsible for it. For they are sluggish, they are scarce, and they are grasping. For the very little they do they demand the highest pay. Now that this practice has come about, see how one peasant insists upon more than two demanded in days gone by. Yet a short time ago one performed more service than three do now . . . . They desire the leisures of great men, but they have nothing to feed themselves with, nor will they be servants. (Gower 208-209)

The peasants, here as earlier in the view offered by the visio, have inverted the doctrine of submission, attempting to become powerful without the authorizing submission required for true power. The relation of a serving class that does not serve is distinctly un-right and out of place in the medieval secular hierarchy. Yet once in disorder, the peasantry and the other estates are powerless to correct themselves. "It is not for man's estate that anyone from the class of serfs should try to set things right" (Gower 209).

The administrators of justice, the lawyers, bailiffs, judges, and ultimately the king are responsible for the social disorder and are the only earthly authorities who might

possibly set the secular hierarchy right again. "For it is right that everyone be governed by the justice of the law" (Gower 220). The Voice cries out that a just relation is a right relation. "But the one who devotes himself to the true law and honestly furthers the justice of his neighbor's complaint is, as the Psalmist sings a man most blessed" (Gower 220). Authority validated by submission to another's governance, whether to the local lord, the king, the law, or God, is just and right. This is the doctrine of submission, and this doctrine directs the focus of *Vox Clamantis* toward the highest nominal secular authority as demonstrated by the epistle to the king, beginning in Book VI.8.

However, before the epistle to the king, the first seven chapters of Book VI enumerate the abuses of the ministers of the law with specific reference to their motivating greed and avarice. The examples of the wrongs done by the lawyer are numerous. Among these examples the lawyer is compared to "the whore, who cannot love a man unless it be for a gift" (Gower 221). As seen throughout *Vox Clamantis* and other Middle English works the absence or misuse of love characterizes a relation as ***un-right***. The insistence of commentators, like John of John of Salisbury, on the presence of love characterized by willing submission in the relation between master and servant, lord and vassal, king and subject is axiomatic. And relations in which love characterized by willing submission is missing are ***un-right***. The closing passage to VI.1 metaphorically illustrates the consequences of the lawyer's greedy misuse of legal authority.

> The night owl is said to be sharp-sighted at night, and in the daytime tries to use less light. Those who are versed in the law imitate this bird, since they are engaged in the evils of darkness, and do not possess the benefits of

> the light. Quite often, however, the prey which it seizes is its death, since its inevitable end lies in secret for it. For the hawk is unexpectedly at hand, hungering to carry off the young fowls. Thus deceit often falls because of its own deceit, the captor is captured, he who devours is himself devoured; the poor [fish] loves the hook by which he is caught. (Gower 222).

Once again *Vox Clamantis* demonstrates that the desire for or use of power in the absence of submission is the un-right relation of the inverted doctrine of submission. But if even the ministers of the law are in disorder due to un-right relations, how is order, the right relation, to be re-established? "What is a people without law, or what is law without a judge, or what is a judge, if without justice?" (Gower 230).

The answer given by the Crying Voice paraphrases the answer given by John of Salisbury and others. "Therefore, all who govern kingdoms can see that the greatest part of our fate depends upon them. . . . If the leader loses the way, his followers among the people go astray, and the road by which they are to return is much in doubt" (Gower 231). The responsibility of the king is clear. He must submit himself to God, to the law, and to good counsel, in order to achieve the authority necessary to lead rightly. In the words of *Vox Clamantis*, "every liege is subject . . . . For the king who is willing to submit himself to the highest King will obtain everything asked for during his rule" (Gower 233, 244).

Following an established pattern, the Voice mixes illustrations of both right and un-right relations between the king, his subjects, his counselors, the law, and God. The

14th chapter of Book VI is typical and compares the king with the plowman.[7] "The people are a king's soil; the king is a tiller who tills the soil. If he tills it badly, it brings forth thistles. If he tills it well, it bears grain. He who wields a king's command well is king, but he who rules unjustly amidst corruption is a tyrant" (Gower 243). The allusion to the peasants of the visio whose rebellion and usurpation of authority resulted in the death of Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury, is unmistakable (Gower 78). And the consequences will be the same. Forced enslavement to the devil results from power exercised in un-right relations. The authority of God is given to the king who in a right relation willingly submits to God's justice as Christ did, and such a king invokes the *imitatio dei* as the exemplar of the right relation.

Having established that the king is the person responsible for the re-establishment of right relations in the secular hierarchy, the question remains how to achieve that re-establishment. Olsson maintains that the right relation is established in fear. In reference to an earlier passage of *Vox Clamantis*, Olsson states, "The person who maintains his rightful place in the hierarchy of God's creatures perceives the changeable nature of Fortune's goods. Proper fear impels him to give way to the true superior . . ." (147). The nature of proper fear is clarified in VI.14. "Not everyone who is afraid loves, but everyone who loves is afraid. People in love suffer both love and fear at the same time. Love conquers all things; love is a king's defense; his love for the people is an honor and glory to God on earth" (Gower 243). Proper fear then is that fear which all who love—

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[7] Langland makes a similar comparison in *Piers Plowman* (C.IV.143-145). See Chapter III following.

parents, children, men, women, clergy, layfolk, et cetera—experience at some time regarding the safety and well being of the beloved as well as the desire to be held in good regard by the beloved. Such fear is not that which results from or prompts tyranny or coercion. Proper fear "is now the affectus by which we arrange our inner life by a sense of place, ordering the body to its superior, the soul, and the soul to its superior, God. Such ordering is nothing less than the recovery of proper place . . . " (Olsson 156). So the king who fears God and loves God and fosters the imitation of that relation in all his subjects throughout the secular hierarchy should eventually be able to re-establish just and right relations in his kingdom.

If fear and love alone were sufficient to re-establish order and right relations, the epistle to the king would end at VI.14; however, the epistle does not conclude for another four chapters. These four chapters reiterate not only that fear and love are necessary for right relations to be re-established, but also the doctrine of submission must be obeyed. The Crying Voice instructs the king to "be subject to God, if you wish to conquer the world. He who serves Christ rules the choicest realms" (Gower 246). The idea of the secular sovereign's willing submission to God is repeated less clearly in the headnote that summarizes the closing of the epistle. "Just as a king shall strive to elevate himself through the prerogative of his privileged status, and hence rule magnificently in the eyes of the people, so shall he present himself as humble and just in the eyes of God, in order to sustain the burden of his governing with full justice" (Gower 247). Thus, in a right relation, power and authority are gained by willing submission to one's superiors and the requirements of one's place in the hierarchy. This concept is as evident at the close of the

epistle to the king as it was in the opening of the dedicatory epistle to Arundel. The recommendations to the king for re-establishing right relations and order in the secular hierarchy offer hope that the present disorder will eventually come to an end.

However, the closing chapter to *Vox Clamantis* is pessimistic in its tone and, unlike the close of the *Clerk's Tale*, offers little hope that the right relation will be established before the second coming. Nebuchadnazzer's dream of the seven ages of humanity is analyzed with depressing thoroughness. The golden age is gone.

> No glorious fame of a magnanimous man, a man whose renown is acceptable to both God and man, now wings its way throughout the world. No generous man now scatters his gifts among the needy, and the rich man scarcely feeds them at his table now. He scarcely clothes the naked poor with piety, or receives the wanderers who he knows lack shelter. No one remains who wants to take pity on those thrust into prison, and no healthy hand aids the sick. Amidst the discords at present there is no ancient bond of love which comes to restore us. (Gower 254).

The "ancient bond of love" is that "identity of wills" that throughout *Vox Clamantis* has been the missing ingredient in the lord and servant relation. The absence of that ingredient inverts the doctrine of submission, producing a relation in which the discord of struggles for power remains constant. The closing book of *Vox Clamantis* dramatizes Aristotle's warning that "where the relation of master and slave between them is natural they are

friends and have a common interest, but where it rests merely on law and force the reverse is true" (Aristotle, *Politics* 11).

What the *Clerk's Tale*, *Vox Clamantis*, and similar works of late medieval English literature offer readers is the vision of the right relation seen through the dark glass of human eyes and events. While the *Clerk's Tale* offers the clear hope of a re-established right relation, *Vox Clamantis* offers only the barest glimmer that achievement of the right relation is possible. Neither work suggests that the right relation will be established without considerable change throughout the spectrum of the secular hierarchy. And in both works the focus of that change is the nominal secular authority—Walter in the *Clerk's Tale* and the king in *Vox Clamantis*. Both works conclude with a narratorial caveat to the audience for the necessity of willing submission as the authorizing characteristic of true sovereignty. *Vox Clamantis* invokes the frightening image of the lordless ones, warning that England has become "lawlessly fierce" (Gower 285). The result, for the crying voice, is the inverted doctrine of submission, "she who rightly used to be higher than all on earth is herself almost enslaved, now that God is elsewhere" (Gower 285). Despite the sarcasm of the clerk's envoy, the caveat of the *Clerk's Tale* is more encouraging than *Vox Clamantis*'s dire warning. "And for our beste is al his [God's] governaunce. / Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce" (1161-1162). Yet here too, willing submission is the key to the right relation.

CHAPTER II: JULIAN OF NORWICH AND THE *PEARL*-POET

"He gef vus to be his homly hyne," (*Pearl* 1211)

We have seen how the example of Griselda's patient endurance and the "plaints" of the Crying Voice are both grounded in the doctrine of submission and these figures give vent to the medieval secular belief in *right* relations. Just so *Pearl* and Julian of Norwich's parable of the lord and the servant spring from the doctrine of submission and give voice to the medieval belief in the spiritual necessity of the *right* relation. Indeed both works distinctly spiritual. No doubt exists about the spiritual nature of Julian's parable, and Sister Mary Madeleva demonstrates how *Pearl* is ultimately concerned with a crisis of spirit.[1]

> The talk in the *Pearl* is always of a spiritual disease and a way of being rid of it, by patience, humility, abandonment to the will of God. This preoccupation with maladies of the soul, with the utter emptying oneself of one's own will, with acquiring the grace of God . . . . is part of the spiritual history of every religious; it is recorded in every spiritual autobiography

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[1] Many scholars, however, dispute Madeleva's interpretation of *Pearl*. For the most cogent opposing argument, see Ian Bishop's *Pearl in Its* Setting.

> and every authoritative book on the spiritual life; it is the conspicuous theme of *Pearl*. (149-150)

The disease that Sister Madeleva identifies as a central concern of *Pearl* is characterized by the absence of union or identity of wills between man and God. As Gower's conclusion to *Vox Clamantis* demonstrates, that crisis of the spirit—which Sister Madeleva labeled dryness or desolation—afflicted the secular as well as the spiritual medieval world. The concern with desolation or absence of union in both secular and spiritual medieval thought shows vividly the pre-occupation of both worlds with the *right* relation. Even more so, this common pre-occupation with the *relacoun rect* demands examination of that relation in spiritual as well as secular literature.

Scholars who study Julian rarely fail to comment upon the importance of the right lord and servant relation as a key to understanding Julian's showings in general and her parable in particular. Yet few of those scholars concur as to the exact nature of the right relation, as Julian expresses it. B. A. Windeatt explains that "the showings themselves are seen as instance of his [God's] homeliness (just as the incarnation itself was an instance of his [God's] homeliness towards mankind) which encourage reciprocal homeliness from us" (Glasscoe 64). R. Maissoneuve notes the same reciprocal quality, stating that Julian "contemplates the divine mysteries—the life of the trinity, the redemptive mission, the relationship of God to his creation in terms of reciprocal looking, from the Father towards the Son, from the Son toward the Father, from God toward his creature, from the creature toward God" (Glasscoe 90). Anna Baldwin identifies the importance of the relation in the

parable specifically, when Julian uses "the language of contract to prove that there are mutual obligations between God and Man" (Phillips 79). Sister Ritamary Bradley implies the universality of the right relation. "Mystics through the ages stress that their religious experience is an experience of inter-connectedness of all reality. Under a single perspective Julian communicates this inter-connectedness in a dynamic fashion" (Phillips 94). M. L. del Mastro suggests that Julian, after contemplating the lord and servant parable for twenty years "finds the key to the mystery [of salvation] in the simultaneous, multiple identity of the servant, and in his relationship to all men and to the Father" (87-88). Brad Peters notes that in her efforts to understand the reality of evil Julian is at one point denied a vision because "she is not yet ready to understand evil's reality. She must gain a more cogent sense of God's relationship to mankind" (197). Thus, Julian is shown the parable of the lord and the servant. Such varied commentary is evidence—if such is required—in support of A. M. Allchin's estimation that "Julian goes on to expound with her customary balance and depth the whole traditional Christian understanding of Man's relationship with God" (Glasscoe 79). Any attempt to define more specifically the relation between man and God, except on the most personal of levels, would be without doubt presumptuous. Such is not the purpose of this study. I want instead to illustrate that despite seemingly wide debate and radically different styles and genres the authors of late medieval English literature shared a common understanding of the right relation.

Julian's parable, like Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, presents the story of a lord and the servant who suffers almost unbearably in the lord's service. Like Griselda, the servant of Julian's parable reaps a reward far greater than expected at the reader's first encounter

with either the servant or Griselda. Unlike the *Clerk's Tale*, however, Julian's servant seems in some ways more human than the Clerk's Griselda. We can certainly note that Griselda never failed or faltered in her submission to her lord's will; nevertheless she suffered much. Nor can the lord of Julian's parable be accused with any certainty of the kind of cruelty and self will that Walter displays. Yet these two works convey a similar message about the right relation to their respective audiences.

Julian's parable concerns a servant and his zeal to do his master's bidding. "The servannt nott onely he goyth, but sodenly he stertyth and rynnyth in grett hast for loue to do his lordes wylle. And anon he fallyth in a slade, and takyth ful grett sorow . . . (514-515). The servant's eagerness and subsequent pain essentially prevent the servant from completing the task that the master gave him. His is an eagerness observed not so much in the Clerk's Griselda but in Gower's Crying Voice, and we will see later that in *Pearl* the dreamer's eagerness causes his fall back into the suffering world and the loss of the celestial vision. Sister Madeleva provides a wealth of evidence that the eagerness exhibited by the dreamer in *Pearl* is a signal characteristic of impending spiritual crisis or un-rightness in the relation between lord and servant. In the dedicatory epistle to *Vox Clamantis* Gower's Crying Voice indicates that the relational crisis was not unknown in the secular experience. Gower—and by extension his audience—was sufficiently familiar with the consequences of eagerness that his Crying Voice sought of Arundel protection from the consequences of zeal. "Therefore, Father, I beg that while I am laboring at my writings, you set the soul of a zealous spirit at rest" (Gower 48). Thus in both secular and spiritual works the zeal of a character is indicative of a relation about to go wrong.

In her parable of lord and servant, Julian metaphorically leads the reader through the entire process of establishing a right relation with God, from the initial desire for an identity of wills and definition of roles, through the lord's orders to his servant, the servant's eagerness and fall into un-right relation, to true submission and finally establishment of the right relation. Julian states that her beholding begins with the lord and the servant. She defines clearly the specific identities of the master and servant in her mystical vision. Nevertheless, we, like medieval readers, may take the message of the relations between Julian's lord and servant to be applied universally because Julian is telling a parable. Her definition of the lord is unequivocal. "The lorde that satt solemply in rest and in peas, I vunderstonde that he is god (521).[2] Julian's definition of the servant contains ambiguities absent in her definition of the lord, and she draws our attention to them: "In the servant is / comprehendyd the seconde person of þe trynyte, and in the seruannt is comprehendyd Adam, that is to sey all men. And therfore whan I sey the sonne, it menyth the godhed whych is evyn with the fader, and whan I sey the servannt, it menyth Crystes manhode whych is ryghtfull Adam" (532-533). Christ in both his humanity and his divinity provides the enactment of the right relation defined by the doctrine of submission.

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[2] The seated authority is a rhetorical trope easily recognized in the *Clerk's Tale* and *Pearl* as well as Julian's parable. The medieval idea of lordship as seated while all others stand contrasts sharply with modern conventions in which leaders stand either with or over their followers, as a gesture of respect and equality.

Julian's parable seems, on the surface, fairly straight-forward; initially no question arises as to who wields power and who submits. The exchange of service for provision is a fundamental of medieval lord and servant relations. That exchange establishes the circumstances around which the spiritual relation of lord and servant shifts from right to un-right and back again as Julian illustrates the varying concepts concerning relations between man and God. In respect to the exercise of power by the lord, Julian's parable resembles the Biblical parables used by early Christian missionaries to convert the pagans of the British Isles. Julian's parable depicts a lord whose power and authority are unlimited and unambiguous. The Biblical parables used by the early missionaries were interpreted to emphasize the power of the Lord without limit or paradox. That emphasis eventually hardened, supporting and strengthening the visible, worldly power of the church. Windeatt observes that

> For Julian the question of authority was peculiarly intense, since the validity of her experience of revelation underpinned her writing and—very probably—her commitment to the anchoress's life. But as she had meditated an alarming gap had apparently developed between the two supports of her world, the unique showings given individually to her and the general teaching of the Church. (Glasscoe 63)

However, in respect to the nature of the lord's power, unlike the missionary use of Biblical parables and—as Windeatt points out—contrary to the general teaching of the Church, Julian's parable concentrates on and emphasizes the companionship or love that John of

Salisbury and the *Pearl*-poet among others maintained was a requirement of any right relation. The parable identifies such companionship in acts of suffering, gift-giving, labor, and restoration.

Julian illustrates the Lord's part in the companionship of the right relation by using the images of "homlynesse," "stedfastnesse," and seatedness.[3] These images recall Bloch's definitions of the right master and servant relation expressed in the act of homage. Julian states, "And what tyme that he [God] of his goodnesse wyll shew hym to man, he shewyth hym homely as man, not with stondyng that I saw verely we ought to know and beleue that the fader is nott man" (525). As many scholars of Julian's work have demonstrated, in a right relation, the bond between man and God—servant and master—is reciprocal and inseparable; so much so that the master is "homely" to the man. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh translate homely as "familiar," citing I John 3:2 as the forerunner of the idea Julian expresses by her use of the word "homely."[4] However, as Sister Bradley notes, "For Julian all comparisons fail to convey how 'homely', how near, how much a part of life God's goodness is: it comes down to the lowest part of our need" (Phillips 93). As Sister Bradley's comment indicates, the sense of "homely" as familiar is

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[3] The *MED* gives the primary definition of "homli" as "Used at home, characteristic of a home . . . pertaining or belonging to a household . . ." as in "a household servant . . . members of one's family or household," Of "stedfaste" the *MED* gives the following: "Of a person: firm in purpose, belief, faith, etc., unwavering, resolute . . . unswerving truth; also earnest will."

[4] "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that when he will appear, we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is" (*Douay-Rheims*).

only partially satisfactory. The present day sense of familiar conveys little more than a degree of proximity and comfortable acquaintance with God. Julian's use of "homely" indicates a special sort of intimacy that occurs only as a result of the kind of paradox in which one or more of the entities involved contains and is contained in the other. The doctrine of submission is just such a paradox, and the "homelynesse" named by Julian is a representative aspect of that doctrine.

Julian also uses the image of "stedfastness" to illustrate the quality of companionship between master and man. She writes, "The blewhed of the clothyng betokenyth his stedfastnesse . . ." (526). Although this term occurs only once in the long version of the parable, the image is central to the idea of companionship in the right relationship.[5] Bloch cites Beaumanoir on the importance of loyalty: "'As much' writes Beaumanoir, 'as the vassal owes his lord of fealty and loyalty by reason of his homage, so much the lord owes his vassal'" (228). Beaumanoir's words demonstrate that the reciprocity of the right relation holds true even in the stedfastnesse of the lord. Later, Julian amplifies her usage of stedfastnesse with a visual example, "I saw hym heyly enjoye for the worschypfull restoryng that he wyll and shal bryng hys servannt to by hys plentuous grace" (527). This restoration is more than the establishment of status by the exchange of gifts and services. The "stedfastnesse" that Julian writes of here is that highly

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[5] We must note here that Julian's parable of the Lord and the servant does not appear in the short version of her revelations, presumed to have been written shortly after the experience. Also, I would like to thank professor Norman Hinton for his gracious assistance in verifying the rare occurrence of "stedfastness" in Julian's parable.

prized quality of loyalty so often exemplified between true friends that, without thought to self, rejoices at the advantage gained by or any benefit to the other participant in the relation.[6] Julian's illustration of friendship and loyalty signifies the ideal of the right relation, just as the gifts and services exchanged between the lord and servant of the parable signify the media through which the doctrine of submission is expressed.

Early in Julian's parable, the lord speaks of gift giving, bringing that signifier of the doctrine of submission to the attention of the reader in a way that stresses the degree of rightness in the relation.

> Then seyde this curteyse lorde in his menyng: Lo my belouyd servant, what harme and dysses he hath had and takyn in my servys for my loue, yea, and for his good wylle. Is it nott reson that I reward hym his frey and his drede, his hurt and his mayme and alle his woo? And nott only this, but fallyth it nott to me to geve hym a ȝyfte that be better to hym and more wurschypfull than his owne hele shuld haue bene? And ells me thyngkyth I dyd hym no grace. (517-518)

This is not just proper Christian behavior; the remarks of the lord quoted here represent the foundation of the right relation in which service and servanthood are recognized with an appropriate gift and the prestige of both lord and servant are increased by the act of

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[6] Julian's description of the Lord's "stedfastnesse" resembles closely the Pearl-maiden's descriptions of her own Lord.

giving. In the same respect, the services performed by the servant acknowledge the lord's status and define his power over the servant.

The gifts exchanged between lord and servant in Julian's parable are staples of Christian belief. The lord gives to the servant, "Hye ovyrpassyng wurschyppe and endlesse blesse," "worschypfull restoryng " and a dwelling place in the city of the soul (518, 527, 525). These benefits are given as reward for and as a direct result of the services performed by the servant, which include the servant's "good wylle," his "meekly suffer[ing]," the servant's labor as a "gardener," and most significant to Christians, the restoration of the city of the soul (517, 516, 530, 526).

The first two services performed for the lord are mentioned in connection with the action of the parable in which the servant's eagerness causes his own suffering. Although the servant was responsible for his own hurt and woe, Julian stresses the absence of blame resulting from the servant's good will, "I behelde with avysement to wytt yf I culde perceyve in hym ony defau3te, or yf the lorde shuld assigne in hym ony maner of blame; and verely there was none seen for oonly his good wyll and his grett desyer was cause of his fallyng . . ." (516). However, the absence of blame for suffering caused is a Christian spiritual ideal. Indeed, the servant's fall caused not only his own woe but also caused deprivation for the lord.

> He [the lord] made mannes soule to be his owne cytte and his dwellyng place, whych is most pleasyng to hym of all his workes. And what tyme man was fallyn in to sorow and payne, he was not all semely to serve of þat noble offyce; and therfore oure / kynde fader wolde haue dyght hym noon

> other place but to sytt vppon the erth, abydyng man kynde, whych is medlyd with erth, tyll that tyme by his grace hys deerwurthy sonne had brought agayne hys cytte in to the nobyll feyernesse with his hard traveyle (525-526).

The servant's actions deprived the lord of his dwelling place and of the services due the lord by the servant's consequent unfitness. In an unright relation, the servant's actions, to this point in the parable, merit punishment as much or more than reward. The Christian concepts of forgiveness and salvation must be in operation here, in order for the city of the soul to be restored and the relation made right. Janet Grayson illuminates the blamelessness of the servant's fall. "When Julian explains the servant's injury suffered in the fall as flesh and mortality inherited from Adam, she comprehends the moment when the fall is the very act that secures his salvation" (157). This is the very essence of the doctrine of submission; the servant submits himself not only to the will of the lord, but also to the servant's own limitations, for those limitations constitute the circumstances under which the will of the lord must be achieved. To refuse or alter the circumstances would create disparity between the will of the lord and the will of the servant, resulting in an un-right relation. The servant submits not only to his personal limitations or failings and the will of the lord but also to the suffering shared with the lord that was a consequence of the servant's failings. Anna P. Baldwin demonstrates the importance of this mutual suffering in the right relation. "There are then in the fourteenth century two different ways of teaching patience [or suffering] . . . . One is retributive, treating patience as a means to pay for sin or to buy heaven. The other more idealistic, showing patience to be the virtue

which most directly imitates Christ, and which transforms sin and death into love and life" (Phillips 76). Beyond the retributive power of suffering to merit reward, suffering's transformative capability enacts the doctrine of submission, achieving the right relation in the most literal manner possible.

Julian also stresses the increase in the reward that resulted from the suffering of the servant, "his grett goodnes and his owne wurschyppe, that his deerworthy servannt, whych he lovyd so moch, shulde be hyely and blessydfully rewardyd withoute end, aboue that he shulde haue / be yf he had nott fallen . . ." (518).[7] The reward for service rendered is very much a part of the right relation. Even an increase in reward for extraordinary suffering in the lord's service may have been warranted to maintain rightness. Certainly the late epics and early romances, in which all retainers are rewarded but the hero's portion is greater due to his greater suffering, provide evidence of increased reward for increased hardship. This type of reward gained through the retributive power of suffering, as implied by Baldwin, is warranted by the doctrine of submission.

The last two services rendered by the servant to the lord in Julian's parable, the servant's labor as a gardener and the restoration of the city of the soul—the lord's dwelling place—are the culmination of the action of the parable. Julian makes clear that the one is directly related to the other. In fact while presented separately, these two

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[7] The desire of the Lord here to reward his servant beyond what might be deemed appropriate in worldly terms has relevance for the debate between the jeweler and the pearl-maiden over the worthiness of her reward in heaven.

sevices are demonstrably similar. As the lord sits in the wasteland, without food, waiting for his servant, Julian,

> beheld, thynkyng what manner labour it may be that the servannt shulde do. And then I vnderstode that he shuld do the grettest labour and the hardest traveyle that is. He shuld be a gardener, deluyng and dykyng and swetyng and turnyng the erth vp and down, and seke the depnesse and water the plantes in tyme. And in this he shulde contynue his traveyle, and make swete flodys to rynne and nobylle plentuousnesse fruyte to spryng, whych he shulde bryng before the lorde, and serve hym therwith to his lykynk. And he shulde nevyr turne ageyne, tyll he had dyȝte this mett / alle redy, as he knew that it lykyd to þe lorde; and than he shulde take thys mett with the dryngke, and bere it full wurschypply before the lorde. And all thys tyme the lorde shulde sytt ryght on the same place, abydyng the servant whom he sent oute. (530-531)

As will be seen in later discussions of *Pearl* and *Piers Plowman*, Julian's earlier reference to the fruits of the servant's labor as "a tresoure in the erth whych the lorde lovyd" is noteworthy (529). For this reference combines service with treasure, the two media of exchange associated with the power of servant and sovereign positions in the doctrine of submission. Significantly, the lord sits awaiting the completion of the servant's labors, drawing a parallel with the lord's seated position while waiting for the restoration of the city of the soul "in to the nobyll feyernesse with his harde traveyle" (539). Like the seated

posture of the lord and the standing position of the servant at the opening of the parable, the lord's seated position here draws attention to two aspects of submission. Seatedness is representative of that type of submission exemplified in Griselda's patient acceptance of every sorrow that came to her. The upright posture anticipates and is representative of the servant's suffering through his own actions. Both are integral to right spiritual relation exemplified by Christ and expressed in the *imitatio Dei*. Thus, the seated posture of the lord and the use of the term "traveyle" in context with that posture makes clear that the treasured fruit of the servant's gardening and the restoration of the city of the soul are one and the same.

The preceding discussion should make clear that the alternation of the son-Christ and the servant-man pairs within similar contexts of Julian's parable emphasizes the importance of Christ's submission to the flesh at his father's will and imitation of Christ's submission by man. Man's right spiritual relation rests in patiently accepting and in working through his sojourn in the flesh, thereby enacting the *imitatio Dei*. The *imitatio Dei* is anticipated, in Julian's earlier reference to the soul as being made by the lord, "he made mannes soule to be his owne cytte and his dwellyng place, whych is most pleasyng to hym of all his workes" (525). This reference increases the paradox inherent in the doctrine of submission, in its enactment as the *imitatio Dei*, and in Christ's simultaneous roles as deity and man, for the city made by the lord is restored by the efforts of the servant who is such by the lord's will—that is, by the lord's creative act.

The aspects of the parable that characterize companionship in the right relation, "homlynesse," "stedfastnesse," and seatedness, that have been discussed thus far are

completely grounded in the doctrine of submission. Yet, Julian takes each concept beyond its doctrinal basis, layering each with additional meanings indicative of the re-examination of the roles of master and servant that was on-going in the church and spiritual activity of her time.

Julian does the same with the reconstructive aspect of the doctrine of submission, an aspect necessary for maintaining any right relation established under the doctrine of submission.[8] In Julian's vision, the fall and restoration of the city of the soul—exemplified in the person of the servant—increases understanding of the reciprocity of the right relation and its characteristically strong reconstructive aspects. The best known secular attempts to achieve a right relation among medieval men, vassalage and serfdom, resulted from western European responses to invasion and destruction of extended families. Vassalage and serfdom emerged from the need to protect, preserve, and reconstruct society in the interests of survival. At the most basic level this reconstructive aspect is also true of the right relation in Julian's parable. The entire purpose of the servant's fall was to reconstruct the soul of man as a fit dwelling place for God.

The actions that master and servant take on within a right relation acquire purpose when we understand this most basic effort to survive. Within Julian's parable the actions of the lord are all designed to enhance the survival chances of the servant. Those actions are many and varied. They include: sending the servant to do the lord's will, sitting in

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[8] The reconstructive aspects that I discuss in this chapter fall under the idea of "apocatastasis." Allchin's article presents a wider discussion of this topic.

peace and rest, having compassion for the pains and effort of the servant, rewarding the servant's efforts, waiting for the servant to act, and accepting and rejoicing in the fruits of the servant's labor (514, 516-517, 517-518, 526, 527). These actions achieve not only benefit to the lord of the parable, but also the goods necessary to the servant's survival by restoring the dwelling place that the master shares with his servant laborer. The reconstructive aspect of the doctrine of submission is not as esoteric an idea as its application to Christian belief makes it seem. The lord, in medieval society, was responsible for the provision and housing of each servant or vassal. The lord could and often did require the services of his servants and vassals in acquiring and maintaining both provisions and housing. Just so, under the doctrine of submission that governs Julian's image of the restored city of the soul, the lord shares with his servants and vassals the provisions and the shelter acquired through the efforts of those servants and vassals.

The actions of the servant in Julian's parable also serve the purpose of survival. The servants actions include: standing ready for the lord's command, serving the lord by doing his lord's will, suffering meekly any injuries incurred in that service, accepting the rewards of the lord, laboring and travailing, and participating in the power of the lord (514, 516, 518, 529, 542). The servant, in medieval society, owed obedience and loyalty to his lord. The servant's obedience and loyalty permitted him to share in the provisions and shelter of the lord, and by association, in the lord's power. This is especially true of vassals and servants who held offices of their lord in which they acted as his representative and could legally wield the lord's authority. Julian highlights this aspect of the right relation by illustrating the power exerted by Christ, the servant-son, in his labors. "And at

this poynt he beganne furst to show his myght, for then he went in to helle; and whan he was ther, than he reysyd vppe the grett root oute of the depe depnesse, whych ryghtfully was knyt to hym in hey hevyn" (542).

The exercise of lordly authority by a subordinate is a labor and a service that has as its purpose increasing the ability of the lord to exercise his responsibility for provision and shelter. The actual practice of designated authority, especially as commercialism gained ground, was far from the ideal illustrated in Julian's parable. That the ideal failed in practice does not preclude its success in Christian belief. Nevertheless, it is important to realize at this point that the reconstructive concepts in Julian's parable had basis in the ideal relation of shared power possible only in the uniting of servant and sovereign through the tension of paradox dictated by the doctrine of submission. In fact, the paradoxes inherent in the doctrine of submission almost ensure the success of power shared as power increased. Because in Christian belief, the lord, God, and the servant, Christ, are the same yet separate beings, the power of God must be the power of Christ both by the principle of equality and by lordly designation. The restoration of the city of the soul is ensured because the servant not only wields the lord's power as his representative, but in Christian belief, the servant is the lord and the lord is the servant. The right relation that ensures survival, whether it be the survival of the city of the soul or the survival of a secular society, is achieved by application of servanthood and lordship, through the *imitatio Dei*, founded on the doctrine of submission.

Scholars have identified several aspects of *Pearl* that are relevant to the medieval concern with right relation. Ian Bishop identifies "the necessity of submitting to Fate—or in Christian times to the Will of God" as a major topic of *Pearl* (18). Lynn Staley Johnson notes in *Pearl*, as we have seen in Julian's parable, the progressive nature of the spiritual right relation. "From the rotting body of the lost *Pearl* to the risen body of Christ, the poem traces a pattern of resurrection and transformation, of spiritual harvest" (Blanch 10). A. C. Spearing states most specifically that, "the whole force and poignancy of the poem derives from its basic structure as an encounter involving human relationship . . . ." (101). The issue of right relation is a central concern of *Pearl*. And the *Pearl*-poet makes the same point that Chaucer, Gower and Julian make, that sovereignty, lordship, and authority in any right relation can be gained only by submission in both will and action.

The dreamer's difficulty submitting to his spiritual lord in will and action is apparent from the outset of the poem. The poem opens in an "erber grene," and the wealth of sensory detail provided by the narrating jeweler as he mourns the loss of his "*Pearl*" draws attention to the strength of his attachment to the material world. Sarah Stanbury points out that "it is just this excessive attention to the pearl and its locus in the grave . . . that causes the jeweler to grieve out of measure" (148). As has been amply demonstrated by Chaucer's Walter, Gower's peasant rabble, and Julian's servant, being out of measure is symptomatic of an un-right relation. The narrator's obsessive grief is so all consuming that by the end of the fifth stanza of the poem he no longer stands upright but, like the servant in Julian's parable, lies prone, in as complete physical contact as possible with the object of his obsession (57-58). The dreamer's obsession with the

material is observable in his speech as well as his physical state. "The dreamer's courtly diction functions ironically, directing the attention of the audience to his over-attachment to the material world and above all to his inability to 'deme' correctly—the Middle English word means both 'to judge' and 'to speak'—concerning things of the spirit" (Gross in Blanch 79). The first five stanzas illustrate the beginning point for the narrator's visionary progression from un-right to right relation with God. In them, the *Pearl*-poet prepares the ground for "the progress of the dreamer to a vision of mystical union," a progress that is "mirrored in his relationship to space" (Stanbury 148).[9]

Jane Chance, in comparing the structure of *Pearl* to the tripartite structure of medieval sermons, states that "one might note the three figurative settings succeeding the literal arbor—earthly paradise redolent of the biblical Eden (as in Genesis), parabolic vineyard described in the New Testament (the Gospel), and Heavenly Jerusalem (as in Revelation)" (Blanch 38). Chance further explains that within each setting the dreamer confronts problems concerning the pearl and must accept the solutions taught by the pearl-maiden "in order to progress spiritually" (Blanch 39). Thus, as the dream progresses, so does the relation—both spatial and spiritual—of the dreamer within the subsequent settings of the poem. Just prior to the opening of the dream, he is fallen and horizontal, physically occupying and preoccupied with the ground of the world. The opening line of the dream draws anew the spatial and spiritual relationship, "Fro spot my spyryt þer

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[9] It is not my intent here to reproduce Stanbury's excellent analysis of visual and spatial relations, but rather to highlight and summarize her research in respect to the idea of "right relations."

sprang in space" (61). While the dreamer's body remains "on balke þer bod in sweven," his spirit, previously obscured by grief, is no longer horizontal and earth bound, but upsprung and aloft (62). The image and sensory perception is of floating, disconnected from and un-related to the surrounding environment, for at this point the upsprung spirit is neither self-propelled nor self-directed but "keste þer klyfe$_3$ cleuen. / Toward a foreste I bere þe face" (66-67).

Although the dreamer's spirit is no longer consumed by grief, neither has the dreamer's spirit lost its preoccupation with the world of the senses. "The adubbement of þo downe$_3$ dere / Garten my goste al greffe for$_3$ete" (85-86). The dreamer's visionary sight is first directed upward to the cliffs and the skies. However, it is the beauty, the adornment of the setting which draws his attention. So much is the dreamer's attention focused on the "schymeryng schene" of his surroundings that his formerly floating spirit literally becomes grounded, albeit the ground upon which the dreamer's spirit walks is the ground of a visionary setting and not the ground to which his body is bound. No longer cast and borne about, the spirit of the dreamer is now astride and connected to the sensory earth of his visionary perception, "Nis no wy$_3$ worþe þat tonge bere$_3$. / I welke ay forth in wely wyse" (100-101). Nevertheless, the dreamer still moves forward, the scene changing as he proceeds. "I wan to a water by schore þat schere$_3$; / Lorde, dere wat$_3$ hit adubbement" (107-108). Even at this early stage in the poem, some progress has been made in the restored ability of the visionary spirit to move toward a right relation.

However, much remains to be done beyond the restoration of spiritual movement and connection, for the connection with the visionary ground is insufficient to sustain a

right relation. The shifting of the dreamer's gaze and his comparison of the gems in the streambed with a starry sky shows the great degree of progress yet to be made. "In þe founce þer stonden stoneȝ stepe, / As glente þurg glas þat glowed and glyȝt, / A stremande sterneȝ, quen stroþe-men slepe, / Staren in welkyn in wynter nyȝt" (113-116). "By placing this splendour below the dreamer's feet, the poet causes the most exalted of spectacles that is visible from Earth to appear in the lowliest position in this realm of transcendent beauty. This simile taken from Nature is all the more effective for occurring in a passage where Art predominates over Nature" (Bishop 90). The passage is all the more ironic for the dreamer's inability to recognize and thus follow the example of the right relation given in his own simile, wherein the most exhalted has its locus in the lowliest. Instead the dreamer remains preoccupied with the physical splendour of his surroundings.

The larger portion of the poem is set beside the newly discovered stream (stanzas 10-97). Although the sight and the speech of the dreamer's spirit cross the stream repeatedly, the spirit itself remains on the bank it first approached. In addition, the visionary spirit is still restless, related to its surroundings only by the tenuous link of the visionary landscape. The narrator's initial obsession and his spirit's restless movement recall the eager, and inappropriate actions of the servant in Julian's parable. The medieval term for restlessness is 'unsittenden' an antecedent of the present day 'unsettled.' In this restless state of unright relation, the narrator arrives at the water, but he does not comprehend the meaning of the water. The dreamer perceives the water only as a barrier to closer inspection of a more beautiful landscape on the opposite shore. "More and

more, and ȝet wel mare / Me lyste to se þe broke byȝonde, / For if hit watȝ þe fayr þer I con fare, / Wel loueloker watȝ þe fyrre londe" (145-148). The narrator's longing for the visual wealth of the opposite shore begins to lead him in the same direction as his worldly longing for the lost pearl.

> Abowte me con I stote and stare;
> To fynd a forþe faste con I fonde,
> Bot woþeȝ mo, iwysse, þer ware
> Þe fyrre I stalked by þe stronde;
> And euer me þoȝt I schoulde not wonde
> For wo þe weleȝ so wynne wore. (149-153)

Fortunately for the narrator, as he gazes longingly at the unobtainable beauty of the opposite shore, he spies the pearl-maiden. "At þe fote þerof þer sete a faunt, / A mayden of menske, ful debonere" (161-162).

When first seen, the pearl-maiden, in contrast to the narrator's "unsittenden" spirit, is seated firmly upon the visionary ground against a backdrop of crystal cliffs. The medieval audience would be familiar with the figure of the seated authority. Indeed, the trope of the seated authority and the standing or moving servant has been used most effectively by Julian to contrast the lord's patience with the servant's fall. Chaucer employed the inverse of this trope to highlight Griselda's quiet acceptance with Walter's near murderous actions. Further, the pearl-maiden's seated figure brings into the poem the medieval concept of 'ryghtwysness' in both its senses as correctly positioned and as

good wisdom. As a metaphor for serenity and patience, the maiden's seated position, mirrors God and contrasts with the narrator who is both literally and metaphorically "unsittenden."

The narrator is struck by the pearl-maiden's purity and her gem-like qualities. Indeed, the poet's skillful manipulation of alliteration and hyperbole intensify the pearl-maiden's appearance so much so, that the dreamer's momentary sense of recognition (lines 164 and 168) is overwhelmed by his preoccupation with the physical details of her appearance. The audience is treated, in the poet's description of the *Pearl-maiden* to flights of poetic fancy that can distract readers from the author's underlying purpose (169-240). Thus the audience then shares that distraction with the Jeweler, who is distracted from the *Pearl-maiden*'s true worth and identity by the surface glamour of the *Pearl-maiden*'s outward show. His preoccupation with the physical details of the maiden's appearance prevent the narrator from immediately recognizing her and thus from establishing a right relation.

As the narrator stares, the maiden stands and strolls down the slope on her side of the river. The narrator fears that she is leaving. Metaphorically, his spirit remains in a state of loss. But instead of the anticipated departure, the maiden offers the narrator speech, " Ho profered me speche" (235). The use of 'profered' here emphasizes that the establishment of a communicating relation requires the narrator's willing acceptance of the *Pearl-maiden*'s offer. By accepting the offer of relation based on communication, the narrator makes another step toward a right relation. He is still overly concerned with sensory and material details, but he no longer wanders aimlessly, unattached and

unrelated. In his preoccupation and his fear, the narrator is typical of the medieval view of man in the un-right relation. "The subject," Johnson says of medieval narrative, "is man, but man undone and insufficient to the task at hand . . . ," man in distinctly un-right relations (*Voice* xiii). As such a man the dreamer is fortunate that the maiden embodies 'rightwysness,' for his inability to recognize her and the 'rightwysness' that she represents could easily have led him to accept an un-right relation, as his worldly, dreaming self had accepted a relation with grief that was out of measure.

At this point in the poem, the narrator's relation with the *Pearl-maiden* develops verbally in an exchange of debate, rebuke and instruction. The physical relations between dreamer and setting become, for the large part stationary. However, two other settings are introduced, and the narrator's relation to them is first aural and then visual. The poet may have had tropological motives for the focus on the aural and visual senses, based on Christ's allusion in Matt. 13:13 to the prophecy of Isaias. "Therefore do I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (*Douay-Rheims*). Yet the establishment of aural and visual connections with the settings introduced by the maiden marks another authorial paradox in the narrator's progress toward a right spiritual relationship. Because of the narrator's continued and "amazed dependence on his senses," no small portion of the poet's artistry rests in the subtlety of the maiden's using the narrator's senses to instruct him in the un-rightness of his relation to his senses as spiritual guides (Johnson, *Voice* 164).

During the course of her conversation with the narrator, the *Pearl-maiden* relates the parable of the vineyard from Matt. 20:1-16. The vineyard setting is a significant one.

Allegorically, the scene of agricultural cultivation represents fallen man's right relation with the earth, established in the admonition to Noah found in Gen. 9:1 to "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth" and contrasts sharply with the prone, inert, and unproductive position of the dreamer's sleeping body on the earth. Rhetorically, the vineyard is at a mid-point between the untouched Eden, or locus amoenus, of pre-lapsarian man and the reconstructed Jerusalem that is the seat of God. The dream narrator's relation with the vineyard is strictly aural, established throughout the audible words of the *Pearl-maiden*. Unfortunately, the narrator fails to hear the same meanings that the maiden's analysis of the parable conveys and provokes further debate—to be examined later—on the worthiness required to enter heaven.

Following the parable, in response to the narrator's query about where she lives, the maiden introduces the setting of the new Jerusalem. Her discussion of Jerusalem involves both the old, worldly Jerusalem and the new, spiritual Jerusalem. The dream narrator still can not hear the maiden's message; his pre-conceptions of the issues under debate continue to mislead him. So, when he asks to see the city of which the maiden speaks, he is shown it, thereby expanding his relation with that civic setting from a purely aural to a visual one as well. Upon viewing the holy city, the narrator is first awe-stuck and then inspired. Hope emerges for establishment of the narrator's right relation with God, a hope that, apparently, is to be dashed once again.

In spite of all the apparent progress the narrator has made toward a right relation and in spite of the maiden's express warning not to cross the stream, the narrator succumbs to personal longing once more. He submits not to the maiden, an exemplar of

"ryhtwyssness," but to his own mis-directed, self willed eagerness to be with the maiden. Johnson draws attention to "the fact that his [the drèamer's] emotional frenzy ends in loss of vision . . ." She states further, "The poem itself bears witness to the dangers of emotionalism, or of purely affective faith, in the dreamer's early despair, in his simple-minded reactions to the maiden's instructions, and in his futile attempt to cross the river alone. As the poem implies, emotion on its own is vulnerable to self-involvement, ultimately to despair; and the believer must learn to live by faith, not by touch" (*Voice* 174,175). These implications are all symptomatic of the un-right spiritual relation. Only upon waking, and rising from the ground upon which his body rests can the narrator recognize that of course he could not cross the stream and should not even have tried. His return to the setting of the world, after his visionary encounters, is that which provides the dreamer with the impetus and the resolve to do in this mortal world all that he can in order to establish a right relation with God. "Þe preste vus schewe3 vch a daye. / He gef vus to be his homly hyne, / Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay. Amen. Amen" (1210-1212).

The narrator's progress toward a right relation with God is marked in the dream not only by his relation to the settings of the dream but also by debate over the concepts of ownership, worthiness, service and reward in his conversation with the *Pearl-maiden*. These concepts arise because they are the indicators of rightness or un-rightness in relations and are the media for enacting both the submission and sovereignty governed by the doctrine of submission.

A lesson in ownership constitutes one of the narrator's small steps forward within the scenario of the debate. Bishop notes that "the use of the familiar lapidary formula

helps to emphasize the fact that Christ, and not the dreamer, has always been the pearl's rightful owner" (83). Although the narrator comes to recognize the similarity between the material *Pearl* lost on earth and the spiritual *Pearl-maiden*, he still fails to recognize the pearl-maiden for what and who she truly is. He had always failed at this, for even at the opening of the poem the dreamer had thought of the lost pearl as belonging to him. At the point where the narrator believes he has recognized the pearl, he asks,

> Art þou my perle þat I haf playned,
> Regretted by myn one on ny3te?
> Much longeyng haf I for þe layned,
> Syþen into gresse þou me agly3te.
> Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned. (242-246)

Although the jeweler's unreasoning possessiveness is not unlike the madness that obscured the right relation for Gower's Crying Voice, Chance explains that the jeweler's difficulty is pride. "This pride, a form of madness, the poet seems to be saying involves a loss of reason and is expressed by selfishness" (Blanch 41). This is precisely the point that the pearl-maiden makes when she rebukes the dreamer, emphasizing his madness over a gem that was never truly his and pointing out the un-rightness indicated by that madness.

> Bot, jueler gente, if þou schal lose
> Þy joy for a gemme þat þe wat3 lef,
> Me þynk þe put in a mad porpose,

And busye$_3$ þe aboute a raysoun bref,

For þat þou leste$_3$ wat$_3$ bot a rose,

Þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef.

Now þur$_3$ kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close,

To a perle of prys hit is put in pref. (265-272)

When the narrator protests, attempting to excuse himself, the maiden will have none of it and points again to the damage done by such unreason to the right relation.

I halde þat jueler lyttel to prayse,

Þat loue$_3$ wel þat he se$_3$ wyth y$_3$e,

And much to blame and uncortoyse,

Þat leue$_3$ oure Lorde wold make a ly$_3$e,

Þat lelly hy$_3$te your lyf to rayse,

Þa$_3$ fortune dyd your flesch to dy$_3$e.

$_3$e setten hys worde$_3$ ful west ernays,

Þat loue$_3$ noþynk bot $_3$e hit sy$_3$e. (301-308)

Bishop's comments on the *Pearl*-poet's thema, the parable of the pearl of great price found in Matt 13:45-46, are germane here. He explains that,

> The parable makes the points that the pearl [representing the kingdom of heaven] is unique and that it is supreme: it is the one object of supreme value, to obtain which the merchant is content to sacrifice all his

> possessions; it has monopolized his desires. Translated into philosophical or theological terms, what the parable exemplifies is the principle of the *summum bonum*. This is also the primary signification of the image of the pearl in the poem. But besides representing the concept itself, the pearl is applied to beings who participate in the Sovereign Good and in whom it is reflected, as well as to objects that are associated with it, that betoken it or proclaim it. This signification indicates the nature of the relationship between the various objects to which the poet applies the image. (93)

The narrator's erroneous presumption of ownership, originating in unreasoning pride, caused his grief and his un-right spiritual relation. The narrator's pride of possession, in a Pearl that did not truly belong to him but to God, ignored the maxim that the exchange not the gift is the true purpose of gift-giving. Thus the narrator prevented his own right relation with God. As a result, the narrator lost faith and succumbed to the obsession with sensory relations that plagues him throughout the poem.

The maiden warns the dreamer that unless he listens to counsel other than his own he may never be able to establish a right relation with God. "Er moste þou ceuer to oþer counsayl" (319). Still the dreamer protests against her advice upon the grounds that as a child she is not fit or capable, not worthy, of providing the wisdom she professes he needs. This issue of worthiness is central to the poem. Frances Fast notes that "the central condition of the poem is the ironic inferiority of a father to his very young daughter. The words of authority come from her mouth" not from the dreamer's (373). The maiden,

prompted by the narrator's questions about her circumstances, tries a straightforward explanation of the right relation between man and God.

> Maysterful mod and hyȝe pryde,
>
> I hete þe, are heterly hated here.
>
> My Lorde ne louеȝ not for to chyde,
>
> For meke aren alle þatwoneȝ hym nere;
>
> And when in hys place þou schal apere,
>
> Be dep deuote, in hol mekenesse.
>
> My Lorde þe Lamb louеȝ ay such chere,
>
> Þat is þe grounde of alle my blysse. . . .
>
> Bot my Lorde þe Lombe, þurȝ hys Godhede,
>
> He toke myself to hys maryage,
>
> Corounde me quene in blysse to brede. (401-408, 413-415)

The doctrine of submission is clearly in operation here; the submissive or meek one becomes sovereign or queen. As straightforward as the maiden's explanation is, the narrator takes her meanings almost too literally and questions the possibility that all who submit could reign even if all were equally worthy which he doubts. "The narrator's tainted, earthly understanding of rank interferes with his understanding of an allegorical rank" (Chance in Blanch 43).

Charlotte Gross defines the problem in general terms. "Although the idea of equality within hierarchy is illogical and paradoxical, the notion that heavenly bliss is

multipled and thus equalized by love is indeed a commonplace in medieval descriptions of heaven" (Blanch 87). The jeweler protests that the pearl-maiden presumes a position in heaven of which she is unworthy because she died young and did not earn her heavenly reward. By couching the narrator's protest in such terms at this point in the poem, the poet limits the debate to two indicators of worthiness: 1) the manner of service given to the lord and 2) the quantity of the reward for that service. These two indicators of worthiness are distinguished most clearly in the parable of the vineyard adapted from Matt. 20:1-16. "In her interpretation of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard the maiden seeks to justify to the dreamer the reward that she has received in Heaven" (Bishop 42).

From the first instance of hiring men, both the manner of service and the quantity of reward are identified as the media through which the lord and the laborers negotiate their relation. The service that the lord of the parable seeks to have completed is described as "labor"; no specific tasks such as picking or pruning are specified. Those tasks are presumed to be at the direction of the lord to whom the workers must submit themselves in order to be given their penny. For the poet to be more specific about the exact tasks rather than the manner of tasks would be to take attention away from on-going acts of submission and place focus on isolated actions that in regard to right relations are not relevant. The poet does focus on the manner of the tasks given to the workmen. "Wrythen and worchen and don gret pyne, Kerven and caggen and man hit clos" (511-12). This labor, in its difficulty, servility and painfulness, resembles closely the labor of suffering done by the Griselda, the Crying Voice, Julian's servant, and other similar

literary figures. The similarity is unmistakable and not accidental, for such labor is a hallmark of Christian spiritual feeling about what constitutes a sincere imitation of Christ. The parable makes clear that the sincerity of or willingness to do the work of suffering rather than the type or quantity of labor is the essential medium for expressing a right relation with God. The parable "illustrates the rewards of grace in exchange for spiritual diligence. Every laborer, whether he began work at the first hour or at the eleventh, will receive a penny as his wage. Like the rewards of heaven, the wages for labor are equal for all who work" (Johnson, *Voice* 185).

Even stronger than the message about the rewards for the labor of suffering is the parable's example of the consequences of dispute between lord and servant. "In fact, by quarreling over heaven's equality, we run the risk of focusing, like the narrator, on the equity of the workmen's wages rather than on the parable's message. The maiden uses the parable to illustrate the necessity for spiritual labor [of any kind] because man must work in order to deserve the 'peny'" (Johnson, *Voice* 186). When the workers first hired protest the equality of wages given to all the workers, the protest is couched in terms of quantity.

> And þenne þe fyrst bygonne to pleny
> And sayden þat þay hade trauayled sore:
> 'Þese bot on oure hem con streny;
> Vus þynk vus oȝe to take more.
> 'More haf we served, vus þynk so,

Þat suffred han the daye$_3$ hete,

Þenn þyse þat wro$_3$t not houre$_3$ two,

And þou dot$_3$ hem vus to counterfete.' (549-56)

No difference is described in the manner or type of labor done by the first, second and third groups of laborers hired; only the quantity of labor varies. The lord's responses to the protests over payment by the workmen first hired invokes the concept of 'accorde' in the sense of a powerful, binding agreement or covenant as well as the free identity of wills.

'Frende, no waning I wyl þe $_3$ete;

Take þat is þyn owne, and go.

And I hyred þe for a peny, agrete,

Quy bygynne$_3$ þou now to þrete?

Wat$_3$ not a pene þy couenaunt þore?

Fyrre þen couenaunde is no$_3$t to plete.

Wy schalte þou, þenne, ask more?

'More, weþer, louyly is me my gyfte,

To do wyth my quatso me lyke$_3$?

Other elle$_3$ þyn y$_3$e to lyþer is lyfte

For I am goude and non byswyke$_3$?' (558-568)

The first point of the lord's response stresses the power of his agreement with the workmen. The inviolability of the terms of the agreement has similarities to the

commitment inherent in the act of homage based on the doctrine of submission. The lord points out that he will make the agreed upon provisions, "a pene on a day," for his workers (510). The agreement between the lord and the workmen hired second is for a reasonable wage and illustrates the power of the lord to determine satisfactory provisions for his servants needs as well as the power to make available those provisions. "So sayde þe lorde, and made hit toȝt. / 'What resonabele hyre be naȝt be runne / I yow pay in dede and thoȝte'" (522-524).

The power of the lord to determine a reasonable wage is not only his prerogative but also his responsibility. His part of the doctrine of submission in establishing a right relation is to provide for the needs of his laborers. The medieval understanding of "paye" is significant here, as Jill Mann explains. "The word has two main branches of meaning: in the fourteenth century, as now, it meant 'payment' in the monetary sense, but there still survived also its older meaning of 'satisfaction'" (24). The separation of these two senses of "paye" results in dispute, for the workers first hired, like the dreamer, can see only the more modern of the two meanings, while the lord, like the maiden, comprehends both. This understanding is most clearly illustrated "in the maiden's [later] statement that everyone is 'payed inlyche' in the kingdom of heaven and makes it into a kind of pun: all are equally 'paid,' because all are equally 'satisfied'—that is, everyone has *enough*" (Mann 24). The motivation of the lord for paying each worker the same amount is based on the qualities of friendship or love and generosity that demonstrate the right relation. Thus the lord demonstrates the rightness of his relation with the workmen by dealing generously and sufficiently with all the workers.

Called to þe reve: 'Lede, pay þe meyny

Gyf hem þe hyre þat I hem owe,

And fyrre, þat non me may reprene,

Set hem alle vpon a rawe,

And gyf vch on inlyche a peny.

Bygyn at þe laste þat standeȝ lowe,

Tyl to þe fyrste þat þou atteny. (542-48)

The significance of "accorde" in the parable rests not only in the sense of "accorde" as a contract but also in its sense as the free identity of wills characteristic of the right relation. This sense of "accorde" is demonstrated in the terms "frende" and "meyne."[10] As has been demonstrated, the lord invokes the binding power of his "accorde" against the protest that the agreement had been breached. "And þou dotȝ hem vus to counterfete" (556). Nevertheless, his invocation of that power is framed in terms of a right relation's friendship. These two characteristics of the right relation are strikingly illustrated in Christ's quoted commentary, "For mony ben calle, þaȝ fewe be mykeȝ"

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[10] The *MED* gives us the primary definition of "frende": "A friend, a comrade, an intimate; often one who supports the same cause (or fights on the same side) as oneself, a comrade in arms, an ally, a confederate." "Meyne" or "meine" is defined as "A household, household servants and officers"; a "bord, a table other than the high table" and possibly by extension those who sit at said table, or "an accompanying group, retinue; a body or retainers; of a mayor; civic officials; of a king; his subjects" (*MED*). The connotations of "officiality" and "intimacy" in both these definitions draw attention to both the doctrine of submission and the identity of wills.

(572). The use of "myke3" here for the biblical "chosen" emphasizes the desirability of being among the friends "myke3" of the lord. The maiden, in her telling of the parable of the vineyard offers the dreamer an alternative to his obsessive, paralyzing and isolating grief. She offers "not a garden of loss, despair, and memory, but a garden of toil, activity, community and ultimately of fulfillment" (Johnson, *Voice* 187).

Like the parable, the rest of the poem describes, in a variety of terms, the manner of service enacted under the doctrine of submission, none of which name specific tasks. The terms of service most frequently used by the jeweler—wo, wraghte, sore, wothes, pensyf, payred, forpayned, dauger, serves, wrythe, werke, travayle—appear very sparsely in the vocabulary of the pearl-maiden and then usually in reference to God or Christ. These terms all emphasize the work of suffering and submission. The pearl-maiden's almost exclusive use of this vocabulary in reference to God and Christ emphasizes the paradox of the doctrine of submission wherein submission leads to sovereignty. In the exchange of service, the lord's caring, like the labor of the servant is ongoing and does not terminate as agreements and accords so often do.

A second set of terms connotes the manner of service that exists for the pearl-maiden, again without identification of specific tasks: *mekeness*, *trwe*, *tryst*, *danger*, *sydes*, *bond*, *accorde*, *meyny* and *servant*. Although both jeweler and pearl-maiden use these terms, by and large the maiden's voice is the one most frequently heard to use them. The words in this list indicate an attitude of endurance expressed by the medieval concept of "steadfastness" exemplified by Griselda and Julian's Lord, as already noted. In addition, these descriptors about the manner of work convey the mutual respect and

acceptance of the participants in the doctrinal ideal of submission. These attitudes of respect and acceptance are largely absent from the vocabulary of the jeweler who regrets the work of suffering at the same time that he insists on and quantifies that most Christian labor.

The vocabularies of Pearl and the jeweler represent concepts about the nature of service in a right relation and defined by the doctrine of submission that occur again and again. "The Parable of the Vineyard and the pearl-maiden's explanation of it illustrate the balance between grace and works. She ends by telling the dreamer that work is a duty but never sufficient, and only grace rewards the laborer after all" (Johnson, *Voice* 189). Service is to be difficult and sacrificial as in hard labor, to be bound or obligated in some fashion, to be performed without complaint in a spirit of friendliness and companionship, all in imitation of Christ.

Given these concepts as the media of expression for one's willing submission to the power of God, then in accordance with the doctrine of submission, service will result in sovereignty. Nowhere in *Pearl* does either the narrator or the maiden imply that service is to be performed without hope or expectation of reward. Indeed, reward for service to God is assumed; just as reward is assumed in both secular and spiritual relations. What *Pearl* makes clear is that neither a specific type of labor nor a specific amount is sufficient for a right relation without the laborer's loving submission of his own will to his lord's.

As with the complex concepts of service, the ambiguities of Christian reward are the focus of much of the debate between jeweler and pearl-maiden. The jeweler maintains that "In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte, / Þat speke3 apoynt determynable. / 'Þou quyte3 vch

on as hys desserte, / Þou hyȝe Kyng, ay pertermynable" (593-596). The maiden counters, "For þer is vch mon payed inlyche, / Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde; / For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche, / Queþersoeuer he dele nesch oþer harde" (603-606). This polarizes the positions into two camps that we could call un-right (jeweler) and right (pearl-maiden). However, the distinctions of reward are not quite as simple as the arguments of jeweler and pearl-maiden seem to make them.

The jeweler's talk of profit "dere adubement, tresor, mysse, and wele" is tied to quantifications and obligations typical of a secular and profit frame of mind (II, 15, 16, 17). Typifying this frame of mind are two of the link-phrases that the jeweler speaks while describing his sorrow before he encounters the pearl. The "dere adubbement" of stanza group II stresses the value of exterior adornment. "More and more" from stanza group III sounds the call of ever increasing concern with profit. Mann perceives that "it is the dreamer's desire for 'more' that governs the development of the dream in *Pearl*" (20).[11]

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[11] At the beginning of the poem the dreamer is represented in a state of deprivation, bereft of the pearl that was his highest treasure; he is at the "too little" end of the scale. Paradoxically, however, this first section of the poem simultaneously represents the state of deprivation [suffering] as a *good* thing; to be "wythouten spot," as the pearl is, is to enjoy complete perfection. That the pearl is without defect means that the potential beauty of its form is most fully realized. "Absolute deprivation is in this instance a condition of absolute perfection. The contrast between these two kinds of deprivation at the beginning of the poem is an intimation of the two extremes—human need, heavenly fulfillment—that the poem is will try to bring into relation; it is alto an intimation that the one may be mysteriously transformed into the other" (Mann 20).

The jeweler's preoccupation with "wele" and "tresor" is patent in his complaint to the pearl-maiden.[12] "My precios perle dotȝ me gret pyne. / What serveȝ tresor bot gareȝ men grete / When he hit schal efte with tenes tyne?" (330-32). The pearl-maiden is quick to inform the jeweler that "For dyne of doel of lureȝ less / Ofte mony mon forgos þe mo" (339-40). She urges him repeatedly to change his focus and his point of view, praising God rather than lamenting a loss.

Yet the jeweler occasionally uses a term or two regarding reward not clearly in the obligatory, quantified, un-right camp. One of these terms, to which he compares his suffering and loss, is *danger*. The jeweler's use of *danger*, while pejorative, carries a connotation of power and implies awareness of right spiritual positions and relationships.[13] Similarly *deme*, while its most frequent sense is that of *say* or *call*, retained, at the writing of *Pearl*, a sense of the judgment that was the lord's prerogative, power, and responsibility based on the secular adaptation of the *imitatio Dei*. The effect of *danger* and *deme* in this context is to show that the jeweler and the audience are not as ignorant of the spiritual applications of the doctrine of submission and the resultant right relation as they might at first seem. The contrast between the terms *peny* and *pearl* illustrates this understanding most explicitly. "The image of the penny, therefore, corresponds to the

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[12] The jeweler's focus on material *tresor* is all the more ironic when juxtaposed with the *tresor* of submission and service given by the servant in Julian's parable.

[13] C. S. Lewis demonstrates in his Appendix II to *The Allegory of Love* the relevance of the term "daunger," as a derivative of *dominarium*, to the subject of right relationship and the doctrine of submission.

earthly notion that to share something of value involves splitting it and sharing it out in quantifiable portions. Its replacement by the image of the pearl enables the reader to understand that the kingdom of heaven is not a divisible good of this [the penny's] sort—that heavenly bliss can be given only in its entirety or not at all" (Mann 27).

In contrast to the jeweler's largely un-right expressions, the pearl-maiden speaks a language of service and reward that is almost exclusively right in nature. "The maiden has no higher authority than the words of Christ and of Scripture, to which she constantly refers. But the maiden not only quotes Christ's words, she is the actual depiction of those words. She is the child like whom the dreamer must become if he is to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Fast 377). Using words such as *bote* and *meyney* in addition to many of the same terms that the jeweler used, the pearl-maiden colors her discussion of rewards differently than the jeweler; that is she speaks of equality and the discretion of the Lord, rather than individual earning power, appealing to that spiritual understanding of the right relation in the audience demonstrated by the jeweler's pejorative use of *danger* and *deme*. Despite the use of language specifically from both right and un-right camps, the pearl-maiden, like the jeweler, occasionally uses terms not clearly or specifically attached to either camp. She uses *deme* with equal frequency throughout but only uses *danger* once. She speaks of the souls saved by Christ as "quen other king" but on the paradoxical, sovereign and subordinate footing of the doctrine of submission.

> The court of þe kyndom of God alyue
> Has a property in hyt self beyng.

Alle þat may þereinne aryue

Of alle þe reme is quen oþer kyng,

And never oþer yet schal depryvue;

Bot vchon fayn of oþeres hafyng,

And wolde her coroune$_{3}$ wern worþe þo fyue,

If possyble were her mendyng;

Bot my Lady, of quom Jesu con spryng,

Ho halde$_{3}$ þe empyre ouer vus ful hy$_{3}$e;

And þat dysplese$_{3}$ non of our gyng,

For ho is Quene of Cortaysy. (445-56)

While the narrator understands the ambiguous "quen of cortayse" to mean queen *over* cortayse, the maiden, probably, means the phrase to be understood as queen *by* cortayse.

Manifestly, whether the author intended it or not, the effect in *Pearl* of the paradoxes inherent in the doctrine of submission as represented by the concepts of reward and service is to bridge the understanding of service and lordship. Just so, the jeweler's awakening in the same physical space upon his failure to cross the river to the holy city bridges his understanding of reward and service. "In the opening stanzas the mourner is discovered in a state of rebellious and despairing grief, but by the end of the poem he has arrived at a state of resignation to the Divine Will and reached a mood of assurance and hope" (Bishop 15-16). Early in his dream the narrator's concept of reward was limited. "As fortune fares, þeras ho fraynes, / Wheþer solas ho sende other elle$_{3}$ sore, / Þe wy$_{3}$ to wham her wylle ho wayne$_{3}$/ Hytte$_{3}$ to haue ay more and more"(129-132). By the end of

the poem, the narrator's concept of reward is vastly different. "He gef uus to be his homly hyne / Ande precious perles unto his pay" (1211-1212). According to Bishop,

> This statement is not just an ornamental periphrastic way of saying: 'May we all become inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom.' It has a profounder significance that involves an element of almost mystical thought. The Kingdom of Heaven or *summum bonum* cannot be obtained, in the way that a material object can, by exercising the acquisitive impulse. If he would purchase it, a man must undergo a subjective transformation into something that may be prized by God; *cupiditas* must give way to *caritas*. In order to obtain the pearl it is, paradoxically, necessary to become one. The author may be alluding to the text: 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' At the same time the notion of becoming pearls ourselves alludes to the restoration of the Divine image in man. (96)

Chaucer and Gower, poets who concern themselves largely with secular right relations, each point to man's right relation with God as the model for man's right relations with other men. The *Pearl*-poet, like Julian, furthers the understanding of the right relation between God and man by illustrating a variety of physical and spiritual positions in progression from wrong to right relations, positions that either culminate in or point toward the unity of man and God. The mourning jeweler remains in the same physical space, the erber grene, throughout the poem, so the change from wrong to right relation comes about spiritually. Yet readers often find the jeweler's final position in the

poem dissatisfying and ambivalent. Due to the jeweler's own spiritual impatience, readers and jeweler alike still suffer at the close of the poem, not from the loss of the pearl-maiden, but from losing the visionary opportunity to dwell with God. The jeweler has the wine and the wafer to bring the holy spirit within him, but he is, nonetheless, still in the world, still progressing toward a right relation with God, still learning how to become sovereign by means of submission.

CHAPTER III: DEGUILEVILLE AND LANGLAND

"Whan þat oon faileth, þat oþer faileth also." (*Pilgrimage*)

As the discussion of the right relation in *Pearl* suggests, the distinction between secular and spiritual is an artificial one. This distinction is difficult to maintain, since neither medieval literature in general nor the right relation in particular lends itself easily to such division. In discussing *Piers Plowman*, D. Vance Smith observes that in the medieval sense " Truth is the proper alignment of social [secular] and spiritual relations. These relations should be so intimately connected with "truth" that they recall it; they are a record of it" (134).[1] Nonetheless, the separation of secular and spiritual has allowed us to

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[1] We have seen elsewhere (and Smith himself calls attention to) the equation between right relation and "truth". In the Middle Ages truth was as much a state of being as the factual quality of a statement. The *OED* lists as rare or archaic the following definition of "truth" used between 893 and 1860 A. D. "The quality of being true (and allied senses). The character of being, or disposition to be, true to a person, principle, cause, etc.; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, constancy, steadfast allegiance."

observe the right relation from two very specific perspectives with which the twentieth-century reader, if not the medieval reader, is quite comfortable. However, if our goal is to understand the concept of right relation as it was shared by late medieval authors, then wemust examine late medieval works in which the twentieth-century separation of secular and spiritual is less easily achieved, indeed works in which such a distinction is nearly impossible without distortion of the works themselves. Such works include Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode* (*Pilgrimage*) and William Langland's *Piers Plowman.*

Both works describe the progression of the soul through the world toward right relations with all humans and God. By means of ambiguities and paradoxes overlaid on the allegorical framework of pilgrimage, each author conveys the union of secular and spiritual relations that ultimately was necessary for the right relation to exist. This union was aptly demonstrated in Julian's definition of Christ as both man and God. "In the servant is comprehendyd the seconde person of þe trynyte, and in the seruan*n*t is comprehendyd Adam, that is to sey all men (Julian of Norwich 532-533). However the *Pilgrimage* and *Piers Plowman* attempt to illustrate the union of secular and spiritual throughout the life of each human being, in a manner quite different from Julian of Norwich's vision. Rather than focusing on the exchange of labors and rewards, as Julian does, these two works focus on the progress of the soul in the world, commenting upon labor and reward as a portion of that progress. Relations of the primary characters in the *Pilgrimage* and *Piers Plowman* progress from *indirect* to *rect.* Both works show the

secular and spiritual in disagreement at the beginning of man's pilgrimage.[2] Smith translates Petrus Helias's definition of the indirect relation in grammar, "Indirect relation, indeed, is when a relative is unable to draw along with it the case to which it refers," although the relation of lord to servant involves more than the analogy with grammatical case suggests (146-147). Both the *Pilgrimage* and *Piers Plowman* demonstrate the difficulty of resolving the disagreement of secular and spiritual—restoring right relation—in the setting of the world. Yet both works ardently support the desirability of achieving the right relation, demonstrated in the union of secular and spiritual, as the ultimate goal of all human lives.

The theme and the purpose of the *Pilgrimage* is to illustrate the relation of secular and spiritual. Indeed, Rosemond Tuve comments, "The Pilgrim must assent to the radical doubleness of his will . . ." (170). That doubleness, the secular and the spiritual in human form, is the focus of this discussion of the *Pilgrimage*. Nowhere in the *Pilgrimage* is the union of secular and spiritual more evident than in Book I. The dreamer first observes the spiritual Jerusalem "in a mirour" (3.20). The mirror, like the *Pearl*-dreamer's river, represents the degree of humanity's separation from the desirable spiritual state. Yet the very fact of observation and knowledge of the spiritual Jerusalem (no matter how imperfect) implies a relation of some sort with God. Quite naturally, at the start of one's life-pilgrimage, the relation with God is not only indirect but perceivable only in the most

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[2] This disagreement is analogous to the disagreement in case illustrated by the indirect relation of the grammatical metaphor. Both Deguileville (18.715-735) and Langland (C.III.332-373) used the grammatical metaphor in their explanations of the right relation.

material of terms. Thus, in Julian's *Book of Shewings*, *Pearl*, *Pilgrimage*, and *Piers Plowman* the relation at the greatest remove from God is described in terms of material goods.

Later in this vision of Jerusalem, the dreamer-pilgrim observes that some who enter the city shed their clothing and replace it with the robes provided by the King (3.90-94). The metaphor of shedding an old, secular life for a new spiritual life is a commonplace, indicative of a change in the relation between man and God, and occurs frequently in Book I. The dreamer's observations inspire him, "þerfore [to Jerusalem] to go I meeved me, for þider I wolde be a pilgrime if I mighte elleswhere see as I mette" (5.104-106).

Before the dreamer-pilgrim has truly started on his journey, he encounters Grace Dieu. She introduces herself as "douhter to þe emprour þat is lord aboue alle ooþer" (4.154-155). In this introduction, and by her very name, Grace Dieu acknowledges her status as a subordinate before she ever acknowledges that she has any kind of power. In personifying this figure, Deguileville embodies not only the theological and spiritual attributes of Grace Dieu but also the doctrine of submission that requires service in order to achieve sovereignty. Grace Dieu has been sent specifically "into þis cuntre for to gete him [God] freendes: nought for þat he hath neede, but for þat it were him riht leef to haue þe aqueyntaunce of alle folk and þat oonliche for here owen profite" (4.155-158).[3] In this

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[3] The *MED* citation for 'aqueinta(u)nce' is remarkably similar to its citation for "frende". "Intimate acquaintance or association; familiarity, intimacy; companionship, fellowship, friendship." The restraint that characterizes the modern form of "acquaintance" is distinctly absent.

manner, Deguileville lays the foundation for the identity of wills and the exchange of service that right relation requires of its participants. Grace Dieu even illustrates the provision her lord has made by pointing out the raiment her Lord has given her and how that attire helps her to serve him.

After introducing herself, Grace Dieu describes her power and authority to the dreamer, concluding her description with a subtle offer of friendship: "Now þou miht wite withoute dredinge wheþer myn aqueyntance be good. If þee like it, sey it anoon, and let þi speche no lengere be hyd" (5.197-199). The dreamer is convinced of the benefit to be had by associating with Grace Dieu and begs for the acquaintance to continue: "Lady, I cry yow mercy for þe loue of God þat with yow ye wole aqueynte me and þat ye wole neuere leue me: þer is nothing so necessarie to me to þat þat I haue to doone. And gretliche I thanke yow þat goodliche ben come first to me for my goode. I hadde of nouht elles neede. Now ledeth me where ye wole: I pray yow tarieth nouht" (5-6.200-206). Although this conversation lacks the formality and the legality of an oath of homage, all the elements are present: friendship; the exchange of services between the lord (Grace Dieu) and the subordinate (the dreamer's newborn soul); and although implied, the desire for the same goal. Each element is an essential part of the right relation that Deguileville, like Julian and Langland, anticipates as the ending point for each man's journey to union with God.

At this point the dreamer is baptized and introduced to Reason who explains to the dreamer the sacraments that he observes being carried out in Grace Dieu's house by

Moses, her minister.[4] The dreamer watches the ceremony of ordination into holy orders in which Moses gives each man an unsheathed sword and a set of unbound keys. Upon asking to receive the same sword and keys given to others in the house, the dreamer becomes upset because he is given a sheathed sword and bound keys. The sheath and the binding are placed upon the dreamer-pilgrim's gifts in order to prevent accidents due to the dreamer-pilgrim's limited ability to perform the functions associated with the sword and keys.

Reason prefaces her explanation of the limitations placed on the dreamer's gifts with an important passage about the *predicamentum ad aliquid*: "Þilke predicament hath reward elleswhere þan to himself: he maketh his edifyinge upon ooþeres ground wol wisliche; al þat he hath, he hath of ooþere, and yit dooth wrong to no wight. If ooþere ne were, þer shulde nothing be of it, ne [ne] miht be" (18.715-719).[5] Smith cites Louis Althusser when suggesting that "the fourteenth-century realist theory of relation functions as a 'discourse that cannot be maintained except by reference to what is present as absence in each moment of its [the discourse's] order'" (quoted. in Smith 131). Presuming that the essence of relation within discourse is "absent," having only an ill-defined "other" to indicate its existence, the relation of the "one" to the "other" is an empty one. By extension of the metaphor, Smith finds, in his discussion of *Piers Plowman* that "Relation

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[4] Avril Henry's article on the structure of Book I of *PLM* explains the sequence of the sacraments in detail. See pages 129-131.

[5] Brackets indicate the editor's emendations.

itself is an empty category . . ." (136). However, such a finding ignores the paradox of reciprocation inherent in relation. Or, as Aristotle phrased it, "All relatives are spoken of in relation to correlatives that reciprocate" (*Categories* 18). In addition, relation cannot be "empty" merely by extension of the grammatical metaphor since the "other" of the metaphor serves a purpose similar to the mirror of the dreamer-pilgrim's opening vision of Jerusalem. The "other" allows us to conceptualize, albeit very imperfectly, that essence from which the meaning of the "one" is removed. Relation then is not an empty category but rather one of degree in which right relation is closest to identity or union and indirect relation is at the farthest remove from union.

Reason continues her attempt to illustrate the concept of relation by describing God both related and un-related to humanity.

> Ensaumple I wole take þee so þat þou mowe see þat at eye, cleerlich vndirstande, and wel lerne and withholde. Whan God had mad þe world, bifore þat man was foormed he was onlich cleped God (if Genesis ne gabbe). But whan man was foormed þanne was God cleped Lord, in tokne þat whan he hadde seruauntes he was lord and lordshipinge. Whan he hadde seruauntes þanne he was Lord, and yet he was neuere þe grettere. (18.721-725)

One cannot escape noticing that the meaning of God to each individual is multiplied by the naming of a relation. In light of relation, God is no longer simply "God" but also "Lord." Understanding of God as Lord would be impossible in the absence of "servant." The significance here rests not only in the relation under discussion but also in the specificity of

terms like "lord" and "servant" as opposed to the vagueness of terms like "one" and "other." Relation may be perceived as empty as long as "other" is held to have meaning only in regard to an absent "one," since, without "one," "other" has no meaning. However, the same cannot be said of "servant," for this particular "other" carries with it more than mere grammatical case. Indeed "servant" contains some portion of the meaning of its correlative "lord." The same is true of lord, that it contains some meaning of servant. The specific analogy of lord and servant is needed to demonstrate the fullness of the right relation that is too likely to be missed given only the grammatical metaphor's generic "one" and "other."

Reason concludes her discussion of relation by explaining how relations between individuals differ from relations between humans and God.

> But þe lordes of þis cuntre ben not swich, as me thinketh, for þe mo seruauntes þei haue so miche þei make hem þe grettere: Here seruauntes and here meyne yiuen hem lordshipe. Lordship was knyt in subgis and engendred, and if þe subgis ne were, lordshipes shulden perishen. Þat oon and þat ooþer Ad Aliquid may be seid as me thinketh, for þat oon hath his comyng out and his hanginge of þat ooþer: for whan þat oon is, þat ooþer is also; and whan þat oon faileth, þat ooþer faileth also. (18.726-735)

The difference between the relation of humans and God and the relation of one person and another emerges in the idea of degree, or as Reason's words give it, "greater." The human and God relation offers no increase to God, since being infinite God cannot be greater than he is. Both God and humans require servants in order to possess any degree

of lordship. But only individual persons, who are limited, can become greater than they were as a result of having more servants. Nevertheless, the relation of lordship and service is the same for both people and God, if "oon faileth, þat ooþer faileth also." Here then, in the midst of a late medieval English text, is the essence of Aristotle's category of relation.

> On the other hand, if that in relation to which a thing is spoken of is not properly given, then, when the other things are stripped off and that alone is left to which it was given as related, it will not be spoken of in relation to that. Suppose a slave is given as of a man . . . and strip off from man his being a master, a slave will no longer be spoken of in relation to a man, for if there is no master there is no slave either. (*Categories* 20)

However, Aristotle's *Categories* did not deal with the rightness or un-rightness of relation, merely the conditions necessary for relation to exist. Yet, the rightness of relation was of primary concern to medieval authors and audiences in general and Deguileville in particular. In commenting on another portion of the *Pilgrimage*'s Book I, Avril Henry observes, "The right relation between men and God is the very balance by which the stability of the cosmos is ensured . . ." (141).

Reason goes on to explain the significance of the *predicantum ad aliquid* for the dreamer and the gifts he received.

> Now vnderstond wel þis lessoun þow [þat] art in subiectioun, bihold wel þat þou art subiect to ooþer and þou hast no subiect. Þi souereyn,

> whateuere he be, hath jursdiccioun, miht and lordship ouer þee. But oo thing disceyveth þee: þou hast no subject as he hath; for þerbi þou has failed to haue þe faire sword vnheled, naked and vnsheþed—and of þe keyes also, to haue hem vnwounden and vnseled. (18.736-741)

Reason's explanation of the *predicantum ad aliquid* seems to contradict the doctrine of submission. Since the doctrine of submission requires that in order to wield authority a man submit himself to authority, the implication is that submission confers authority. Yet as Reason explains, the dreamer-pilgrim is not sovereign, has no authority, because he has no subjects. Reason points out the dreamer-pilgrim's position despite the fact that the dreamer-pilgrim has submitted himself to the authority of God, Grace, Moses, and Reason.

However, three factors qualify this apparent contradiction. First, the dreamer's dismay indicates an un-rightness in his submission to Grace Dieu. Second, the dreamer is still at the beginning of his journey toward right relation, and when his submission to God is in a formative stage, he cannot be expected to have achieved the sovereignty of union with God. Third, in the case of the relation between God and humanity, it is God who is sovereign by his very nature. The dreamer will not become sovereign until his own right relation completes the union with God toward which the dreamer progresses. The concept of the dreamer-pilgrim's subjectness is so important that Reason repeats herself, with one telling addition:

> If þou haddest subiectes [also], as he þou mihtest do: þi miht were Ad Aliquid; but þou has noone, as me thinketh, wherfore þou shuldest not

> abashe ne wrathþe þee, þouh þe swerd be taken þee sheþed, ne þouh þou haue þe keyes enseled, bounden, and wrapped. (19.770-775)

The significant addition here to Reason's earlier comments about the dreamer-pilgrim's subjectness is the conditional statement that, "If þou haddest subiectes [also], as he [he who has jurisdiction and lordship] þou mihtest do: þi miht were Ad Aliquid . . . ." In this masterful play on "miht" as both possibility and power, Reason points out that while the possibility of lordship is dependent upon having subjects, true power is derived from relation to the other, a*d aliquid*, not in one's self alone. As Reason stated earlier in her Aristotelian paraphrase, one cannot exist without the other. Neither lord nor servant can exist without its correlative. The relation, not its participants or constituent parts, confers authority or subservience, lordness or servantness upon those participants. The establishment of relation is dependent not upon one part or the other but upon interaction based on the identity of wills and the doctrine of submission. And in the later Middle Ages, the example of the Deity who submitted to the flesh becomes the ultimate enactment of right relation.

Accepting Reason's explanation, the dreamer next observes the sacrament of the Eucharist in which the communal bread and wine are transubstantiated, becoming the flesh and blood of Christ. For the dreamer this transubstantiation is literally "a gret wunder, to which þer is noon lich . . ." (19.282-283). The dreamer turns to Reason for an explanation of this great wonder only to be disappointed. Reason cannot explain. She exclaims, "Heere lakketh me myn vnderstondinge and my wit al outerliche . . . ." and that the whole

thing is "ayens nature and ayens vsage" (20.799-800, 806-807). In the face of her failure to understand the transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood, Reason departs.

Nature then arrives on the scene to debate with Grace Dieu about the rightness of the Eucharistic transubstantiation. Thus, the secular (Nature) and the spiritual (Grace Dieu) are again joined indirectly, in a way that resembles the state of the soul in the world and its relation in the world to God. Hence, the debate reveals that the entire journey of the soul through the world is geared toward the purpose of establishing a right relation between human nature and the human spirit. The debate quickly centers itself not over the Eucharist alone but over the relation between Nature and Grace Dieu. Which of these two personifications should have authority and to what degree? Grace Dieu is accused by Nature of overstepping the bounds of Grace Dieu's authority and usurping the authority of Nature. "Wennes cometh it yow for to remeve myne ordinaunces? It ouhte suffice [yow ynowh] þe party þat ye haue, withoute medlinge yow of myn, and withoute cleymynge maistrye þerof" (Deguilville 22.824-827). The impression is that Nature considers herself Grace Dieu's equal and that Nature finds her authority seriously challenged by Grace Dieu's actions. In defense of her belief, Nature states what she perceives as the limits of power for her realm and Grace Dieu's.

> Of þe heuene ye haue þe lordshipe, sterre turne and þe planetes varien, and þe speeres as ye wolen, laate or rathe, ye gouerne. . . . Bitwixe me and yow was sette a bounde þat divideth us so þat noon of us shulde mistake ayens ooþer . . . . I am maistress of þe elementes and of þe wyndes: for to make varyinges in fyr, in eyr, in eerþe, in see I lete nothing stonde stille in

> estaat. Al I make turne and drawe to ende. Al I make varye erliche and late. I make newe thinges come and olde to departe. (20-21.827-830, 834-836, 842-847)

Nature's concern over power in her initial question to Grace Dieu, "Whennes cometh it yow for to remeve myne ordinaunce?" is in direct contrast to the example given by Grace Dieu when she first appeared. Grace Dieu's introduction of herself as "douhter to þe emprour þat is lord aboue alle ooþer" makes clear that whatever power she wielded was hers to wield by virtue of her submission to the highest authority. While Nature does submit to that authority, she does not explicitly do so in this passage, and evidence of her submission is absent in her opening words. Indeed the authority that Nature finally invokes in the passage given below is Reason, and Reason is conspicuously absent, having denied any authority regarding the dispute between Nature and Grace Dieu. Nature and Grace Dieu must rely on the validity of their own authority to resolve their conflict.

Nature's description of her own lordship reveals her to be a surprisingly good governor:

> The eerþe is of my robes and in prime temps alwey I cloþe it. To þe trees I yeue cloþinge and apparamens ayens somer, and sithe I make dispoile hem ayen ayens winter for to kerue hem ooþer robes and kootes seemynge alle newe. . . . I am not hastyf, and al mutacioun þat is doon in haste I hate. And þerfore is myn werchinge þe more woorth: witnesse on Resoun þe wise. I slepe nouht, ne I am nouht ydel, ne I am not preciows to do alwey

> my deveer after my wit and my powere. . . . I am lady and maistress of al togidere. (21.847-851, 854-857, 860-861)

These actions are the actions of an excellent and generous lord. Such a lord provides for the needs of his servants, as Nature does by providing clothing. Nature perceives her power as work and duty to be performed without doubt or equivocation. She operates within the limits of her own power and even exercises that power in defense of her realm when she feels that realm is threatened. Certainly her behavior as a lord appears to fall within the ideal of the right relation, yet proper governance is only a portion of the right relation.

Nature gives only passing thought to the identity of wills and barely does more than imply her submission to an external authority, yet both are necessary to demonstrate the validity of her lordship. In the passage just cited, Nature calls on the authority of Reason to "witness" that Nature's lordship is "not hastyf." By her glancing submission to Reason's authority, Nature exemplifies the doctrine of submission; that is, Nature's lordship is right by virtue of her submission to reason. In addition, if we accept that for Deguileville, like the canonists "natura, id est, Deus," then Nature also complies with the identity of wills.[6] Nature's claims to authority are by all criteria right and valid. Thus, the conflict between Nature's rule and Grace Dieu's rule creates a very real relational dilemma. Indeed, Nature's grievance is directed at the possibility that she could be

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[6] Gaines Post comments on this maxim, "If God can be called *natura*, it is only a way of saying that God is the ultimate sosurce of the laws of nature" (522).

considered subordinate to Grace Dieu. "But me thinketh euele [for] þat for a wenche ye wolde holde me whan my wyn ye make bicome blood myn herte whan ye remeeven it [bread] into quik flesh, and nakenen me of my right" (21.861-863, 867-869). Nature's list of grievances continues to include the burning bush, the water changed to wine, and the virgin birth, all couched in terms that indicate Grace Dieu has violated Nature's authority.

However, Grace Dieu points out that Nature has erred in presuming that the two of them are equals and implies that the error has led Nature to excessive pride and anger. In doing so Grace Dieu draws a picture of Nature similar to Gower's rebellious peasantry in *Vox Clamantis*. "And drunken and wood ye semen wel, be þe grete ire þat ye shewen" (22.899-901). Grace Dieu then asks rhetorically of Nature, "God saue yow, of whom holde ye, and whennes cometh yow þat þat ye haue?" (22.913-914). She next points out that,

> I trowe ye knowe not me or elles ye deygne not to knowe me, for I am debonaire, and am no chidere. Openeth a litel discretliche þe eyen of youre vnderstondinge, for if ye vndo wel þe liddes, me for maistresse and yow for chaumberere ye shule fynde al apertliche: and þanne ye shule speke to me softeliche, and do to me homage of al þat ye holden of me. (23.919-925)

Grace Dieu's insistence that she is mild-mannered and that in homage Nature will speak gently is an indication of the identity of wills concurrent in the right relation. If the Aristotelian and Christian models of the late medieval right relation, discussed in previous chapters, are accurate, anger and scolding have little place in the right relation. Clearly

then, Nature's anger, in addition to her mistaken presumption about her status relative to Grace Dieu, place Nature in an un-right relation.

Grace Dieu continues to express the ideal that should have existed between her and Nature. "Sumtyme of my curteisye I took yow a gret partye of þe world for to ocupye yow with and to werche treweliche with so þat ye weren not ydel, and þat of al ye [yolden] to me [trewe] acounte, as chamberere shulde alwey do to hire maistresse" (23.925-929). These lines recall the point reiterated twice by Reason that those without subjects can participate neither in the power nor the potential of right relations. Grace Dieu's remarks add to those of Reason by pointing out that in a right relation Nature, or any lord, is not merely lord but lord by virtue of being subject..

When Nature persists in her complaints, Grace Dieu clinches her argument. Grace Dieu invokes the feudal concept of gift-giving as that which signifies relation and enriches both giver and receiver by the act of giving.

> And yowre argument, litel is woorth also youre murmur; and also a gret [filthe] me thinketh whan ye gon þus grucchinge of my yiftes and spekinge and murmuringe, for I shulde be euele serued if I mihte not yive of myn owen as wel to ooþere as to yow. It is not matere of wratthe; it shulde not hevy yow of nothing: for it is not good þat þe good go alwey on oo side, þat wite ye wel. It ougte suffice yow ynowh, þe miht þat ye holden of me, which is so fair þat neuere king mihte haue noon swich, neiþer for siluer ne ooþer avoir. (26.1056-1067)

Further, the last point made by Grace Dieu, "If I yive any special yifte to myne officalles, I looke þat of nothng ye leese . . . ," illustrates the limitless quality of the right relation. All others who serve Grace Dieu are included in the *ad aliquid* relation, demonstrating emphatically the fullness of the right relation (26.1067-1069).

As the debate ends, Nature is contrite, "I pray yow [þat] on me ye haue merci. . . . Ye ben my maistress, I se it wel: ouer alle I ouhte obeye to yow. Of nothing it should displese me of thing þat ye wol doo. I thinke neuere to speke but þat ye wolen at þis time foryive me all benigneliche, withoute witholdinge any yuel will" (26.1072, 1074-1079). With Grace Dieu forgiving Nature, the debate concludes and the right relation is restored between them.

The comparison of Reason's discourse on the *ad aliquid* with the debate between Nature and Grace Dieu is an important one, for it demonstrates the difference between right and indirect relations. The indirect relation, in which the dreamer-pilgrim finds himself as the poem opens, is characterized by the absence of qualities present in the right relation. In this type of relation power operates in only one direction. The dreamer-pilgrim is subject but not lord. He is at the farthest remove from his lord, lacking both the identity of wills and the doctrine of submission. And whether from inability—as is the case in *Pilgrimage*—or lack of desire, he cannot labor appropriately for his lord. The right relation demonstrated by Grace Dieu in her debate with Nature is characterized by power that operates in several directions and is increased thereby. All participants in the relation are both subject and lord in some respect that usually defines the degree of relation from un-right to right. Both as lords and as subjects, all who participate in right relations operate under the doctrine of submission characterized by the identity of wills

that cements the union of all concerned. In *Pilgrimage* Deguileville demonstrates the union of secular and spiritual allegorically in the personification of Nature and Grace Dieu and in the dreamer-pilgrim's desire to come to the spiritual Jerusalem despite his imperfect worldly understanding of the spirit.

Although Chaucer, Gower, Julian of Norwich, the *Pearl*-Poet, and Deguileville all exemplify the right relation in their works, only Langland offers an explicit definition. As we saw earlier, the right relation "'is record of treuthe . . . . Ac relacoun rect is a ryhtful custume . . . .'" and ultimately, the right relation is "vnite acordaunde" (*Piers Plowman* 343, 374, 394). In these essential definitions, Langland exhibits the same principles concerning the right relation and the unity of secular and spiritual that Deguileville illustrates in *Pilgrimage*. And the lord and servant relations of *Piers Plowman* provide extensive demonstration of those principles.

Langland's treatment of the right relation is diffused throughout three versions of *Piers Plowman*, and this poem, like *Pilgrimage*, is presented as a pilgrimage or quest. Mary Carruthers characterizes *Piers Plowman* specifically as the search for St. Truth. Truth had many faces in late medieval England. Justice, law, leute, mercy, reason, and right are just some of the facets of truth that readers have suggested are the goal of pilgrimage in *Piers Plowman*. The search for Truth in *Piers Plowman* is also expressed as the quest for the "relacoun rect," the right relation of master and man, lord and servant. This phrase "relacoun rect" appears only in the C version—four times between C.III.332-

373.[7] Yet from the number and variety of masters and servants whose relations are distinctly problematic and un-right throughout all three versions of *Piers Plowman*, one cannot doubt the importance of this concept in Langland's thought. Such problems between master and servant are rarely resolved unless the *relacoun rect* is found, and even then the resolution may be temporary. In the right relation each man knows his place—his vocation and degree—and performs his work in appropriate relation to others. This is the aspect of right relation that John of Salisbury refers to as the identity of wills, and requires that all men—even kings—acknowledge and submit to that which has mastery over them, be it another man, the needs of the body and soul, or an abstraction like truth or right. The importance of submission within the right relation suggests a purpose, beyond tradition, for Langland's choice of a plowman as the major character in the search for the right relation.

Piers enters Langland's poem "as a labourer in the service of Truth whose 'hire' is promptly paid by his master" (Stokes 128). Indeed, the narrative voice of Long Will presents himself, initially, as a follower or servant, not as a leader or lord. "Y shope me into shroudes as y a shep were; / In abite as and heremite, vnholy of werkes" (C.Prol. 2-3). Some lines later in the "feeld ful of folk," the opening tension of the poem is revealed in the juxtaposition of laborers who work, that is, who serve appropriately, and those who do not.

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[7]See Baldwin pages 18-10, and especially 53-55.

Somme potte hem to þe plogh, playde ful selde,

In settynge and in sowynge swonken ful harde

And wonne þat þis wastors with glotony destrueth.

And summe putte hem to pruyde, and parayled hem þer-aftir.

(C.Prol. 22-25)

The emphasis here, in the beginning of the poem and throughout, is not on authority and power but on submission and service. Where Langland does address issues of authority, mastery and power—and he addresses these issues frequently—he usually does so in reference to the purpose that power serves, in other words, to the service that power provides and the needs to which power must submit itself. The dialogue between submission and authority is prevalent throughout medieval literature, reaching a dramatic turning point in the fourteenth century where the forms of governing and social organization were changing from feudal to market driven. And Langland's poem deals with the relation of master and servant—authority and submission—in all its varied complexity. While the entire poem concerns issues of mastery and service in all aspects of life, it is in the opening vision of his poem that Langland deals most specifically with issues of secular submission and authority, represented in the legal and feudal hierarchies. The dialogue centers on a few much studied incidents.

One of Langland's most famous investigations of right secular governmental relations is the fable of tyrannically governed rats (C.Prol.165-216). The rats of the fable, aside from literally being some of the lowest creatures in the medieval hierarchy, represent

the commons at the very least and all the king's legal subjects at the very most. As implied in an earlier chapter, the king's authority was challenged frequently in the fourteenth century. Although Langland's allegory could be identified with any number of specific political incidents, the allegorized principles are of primary concern here. The contrast between the allegorized governmental policies voiced by the rats and those policies attributed to the cat seems to represent opposite ends of the governmental spectrum. What the text reveals is that the policies of the two parties are more similar than not. The cat's tyranny is willful, abusive, and completely thoughtless of the needs or will of the mice. "For a cat of a court cam whan hym likede / And ouerlep hem lightliche and laghte hem alle at wille. / And playde with somme perilously and potte hem þer hym lykede" (C. Prol. 168-170). Such tyranny is contrary to John of Salisbury's assertion that a just and good ruler "is obedient to law, and rules his people by a will that places itself at their service" (28). In the case of the kingly cat, the rats live in fear for their lives should the tyrant's displeasure be provoked. The rats' survival exists completely at the will of the cat.

Naturally, the rats wish to oppose this common threat to life and limb, but their desires do not stop at neutralizing the danger. They believe that "Myghte we with eny wyt his wille withsitte / We myhte be lordes a-lofte and lyue as vs luste" (C.Prol.174-175). Nothing in the discussion held by the rats indicates that they would happily serve the cat if he were less willful and abusive. The rats' only stated desire is to be lords in the same mold as the cat; willful, abusive, and thoughtless. Anna Baldwin, in her discussion of the C-text, finds it "impossible to feel much sympathy for the pretensions of creatures who are still clearly vermin" and points out that while "The rats' attempt to bell the cat may seem

at first sight to represent Parliament's attempt to control a cruel tyrant 'for . . . comune profyt" . . . . all they really want is to be 'lordes a-lofte' themselves" (17). The rats essentially propose nothing but the exchange of a known tyrant's will for another will of questionable nature, rather than the identity of wills that characterizes right governmental relations.

Critical perspectives and interpretations of the rat fable vary greatly. Myra Stokes says, "The rats and mice fail [to bell the cat]—but it is just as well they do, for without authority nature reverts to the anarchy of uncontrolled self-seeking" (74). Baldwin states, "If belling the cat is tantamount to bribing the executive or the judicature with fees and liveries, then the wiser mouse is obviously right to prefer his cat unbelled. However tyrannical the authority which executes the laws, it is better than one which has so lost its independence as to be no authority at all" (17-18). A. V. C. Schmidt writes, "The Rat Fable does not disrupt the vision of society, since its concern is not merely topical politics but the perennial issue of power in society and the need for a central authority to maintain social order" (xxv). Whatever the differences in perspective, most critics concur with Stokes's view that Langland's moral "is that any law, any authority, however vicious its representatives, is better than none. The human will requires government and rule; it cannot rule itself, for self-interest is too strong" (74-75).

Another set of events in which Langland focuses the search for the right relation centers upon Meed, whose presence overwhelms passus II through IV. Eight of the opening lines in passus II are dedicated to the description of a female figure whose outward splendor is powerful in detail. The figure is "Mede þe mayde." Holy Church identifies "Mede" as the woman who "hath niyed me ful ofte / And ylow on my lemman

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þat Leute is hoten / And lakketh hym to lordes þat lawes han to kepe" (C.II.19-21). The juxtaposition of Meed and Leute draws attention to the often difficult interactions between these two personified concepts, that, ideally, should serve Holy Church. Too often, in a market economy, the desire for reward undercuts loyalty between master and man. And this is precisely what happens when Meed, by seeking out other lords, belittles the loyalty owed the church.

Further on, Holy Church points out with some asperity that, in spite of Meed's rejection by Truth and her kinship associations with Falseness and liars, Meed is as privileged in the ecclesiastical courts as Holy Church herself.

> In þe popes palays she is pryue as mysulue,
> Ac soothnesse wolde nat so for she is a bastard.
> Oon Fauel was her fader þat hath a fykel tonge
> And selde soth sayth bote yf he souche gyle,
> And Mede is manered aftur hym, as men of kynde carpeth:
> *Talis pater, talis filia.* (C.II.23-27)

That Holy Church feels that Meed, in a relation distinctly un-right, is privileged beyond her degree is clear when Holy Church invokes the medieval hierarchy of heredity that subordinates the illegitimate child to the legitimate child. "Y ouhte ben herrore then she, y com of a bettere; / The fader þat me forth brouhte *filius dei* he hoteth, / That neuere lyede ac laughede in al his lyf-tyme, / And y am his dere doughter, ducchess of heuene" (C.II.30-33).

Setting aside Holy Church's indignation at this subverting of the hereditary hierarchy to her own disadvantage, the parallels between Meed and Holy Church are too disquieting to ignore. Not only are both privileged in the Papal palace, but also both are powerful female figures, from powerful allegorized ancestries. Both are destined, at this point in Langland's tale, to marry potentially powerful male figures who share traits with the authoritative patriarchal ancestry of the respective brides. Holy Church herself is not above a few belittling—if true—comments at Meed's expense. These similarities are only some of the disquieting factors in the forty-three lines of Holy Church's speech (C.II.19-52). Most disturbing in these lines is the emphasis on traits of power, rule, and authority to the near exclusion of the traits of submission and service requisite to allow any power complex to function rightly. In this Holy Church mirrors Deguileville's Nature and late medieval society where time after time the doctrine of submission came into conflict with the profit motive, creating either indirect or un-right relations.

Significantly the few allusions to submission and service that Holy Church does make in this passage are associated with warnings and rife with the paradox so characteristic of the doctrine of submission. Of the impending marriages, Holy Church makes the following comparison: "That what man me louyeth and my wille foleweth / Shal haue grace to good ynow and a good ende, / And what man Mede loueth, my lyf y dar wedde, / He shal lese for here loue a lippe of trewe charite" (C.II.34-37). Here the warning is clear. The lines state that the man whose loyalty is to Meed becomes nothing and loses all charity, and that is the love of God that the servant of Holy Church gains in heaven. The comparison illustrates in miniature the problem seen earlier in the rat fable,

inherent in the emphasis on power in Holy Church's speech, and implicit in the concept of right relation; that mastery is impossible in the absence of service.

Holy Church closes this speech with a caveat to the dreamer-narrator, "And acombre thow neuere thy consience for coueityse of mede" (C.II.52). Clearly Holy Church warns that one's conscience could lose authority, even become subject to "coueityse." Just as clearly the burden of reward in the form of obligation and submission is present in Holy Church's conclusion as it is elsewhere in her speech and throughout Langland's poem. However, in the lines given to Holy Church, the reader must labor long and hard to discover the doctrine of submission within the overwhelming emphasis on the complexes of power. The balance of lordship and service thus far in the poem is dissatisfying, and Langland continues to examine the relations of lords and servants in his search for the right relation.

The wedding of Meed and False continues the allegorical search for the right relation by describing the retinue who accompany False to the wedding. The list is so long and the numbers of retainers so great that the narrator "kan nouȝth rykene þe route þat ran aboute Mede" (C.II.62).[8] However, the particular attention Langland pays to Simony and Civil illustrates their sly, unbuxom behavior, in their machinations to manipulate Meed. From the start, these two subvert the feudal ideal of the submissive vassal who obeys his lord purely for the love that makes the will of lord and servant identical. Instead, Simony

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[8]The allusion to the route of ratons is unmistakable.

and Civil perform their feudal duty to False and Meed, acting as witnesses to the wedding, for silver alone.

The wedding is interrupted by Liar, who reads a charter granted by Guile that enfeoffs to Meed and Fals a number of lordships, from the Prince in Pride to the Lordship of Leccherie, including two Earldoms, a County and various other properties and privileges among which is a dwelling with the devil. The assignment of each feoff is accompanied by a description of the duties and responsibilities attendant thereon. In exchange, the charter states that Fals and Meed "After here deth þay dwellen day withouten ende / In lordschip with Lucifer, as this lettre sheweth, / With alle þe appurtinaunces of purgatorye and þe peyne of helle" (C.II.106-8). Thus, Fals and Meed, despite the great rout they command, are themselves vassals to Guile.

Without regard to the content of the charter, its form is a textbook example of charters of enfeoffment granted throughout England in the Middle Ages. The exchange is a typically feudal one in which goods—in the form of property—and services are granted for allegiance and provision. The doctrine of submission would be well and truly expressed and all relations right in this exchange were it not for the services promised in the charter and the principals involved. One cannot imagine Fals, Liar, and Guile holding to their word, given in the terms of the charter, any more than one can easily sympathize with vermin who are being tyrannized by a cat. The very natures of the principals, expressed in their names, and the sin and double-dealing for which the charter makes them responsible, are antithetical to the fulfillment of the so-called promises made. Langland has once again reached the seemingly irresolvable impasse of paradox, and redirects the

exploration of the doctrine of submission by means of Theology's interruption (C.II.116-154).

Up to this point in the wedding events Langland's use of master and servant relationships as representations of the doctrine of submission has been relatively straightforward, especially in regard to Meed. Her birth, degree, retainers, lord, and overlord are all clearly designated, as are the responsibilities of service and authority due to and from each. If Meed's compliance with the charter of enfeoffment and her association with Liar, Guile, Fals and his retinue appear to confirm the assessment of Meed's character given by Holy Church, Theology comes along and muddies the waters considerably. He admonishes Civil that the wedding of Meed and Fals may be illegal, since Meed is "mulier," that is, an honest woman.[9] Meed's status as mulier, or legitimate offspring, contradicts Holy Church's earlier assertion that Meed is illegitimate. The contradicting genealogies, Smith says,

> make the meaning of meed less fixed. The genealogies do suggest, however, that meed's history is an important aspect of its meaning: what the two genealogies have in common is an interest in tracing meed to particular historical, and usually institutional, roots. . . . The meaning of meed is determined by the circumstances under which the giving and receiving of meed begins. When meed is preceded by guile, it does become

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[9] The *MED* gives "Wedlock" and "legitimate, born in wedlock; also a person born in wedlock" as the meaning of "mulier".

Although the action of persuasion is clear from the use of "mery tonge" to accomplish the goal, the use of "amaistried" indicates a clear subversion of the feudal hierarchy or right relations supposedly in operation here. Civil and Simony are vassals of Fals, who is variously Meed's social equal or far below Meed in the social hierarchy. The latter case is the basis for Theology's assertion that a marriage between Fals and Meed would be illegal. In either case Civil and Simony are neither Meed's equals nor her superiors, and by virtue of their subordinate position, may offer counsel to a social superior, but may not with right manipulate the actions of that superior without undermining both the hierarchy and the doctrine of submission upon which it rests.

The consequences of the hierarchical inversion represented in the overmastery of Meed are observable in the preparations for the procession to London. The feudal services that various civil authorities provide in carrying forward the cause of Meed and Fals transform those authorities into beasts of burden. Once again, Langland's pursuit of the right relation demonstrates the high cost of coveting Meed not only in the heaviness of the burden, but in the loss of humanity visited upon those who try to master Meed and instead become subject to her. The actions of subordinates such as Civil and Simony, without question, do not promote the right relation, and the action of Langland's tale moves on to the king's court in London where the relation of Meed in society is debated at great length.

While a large portion of passus III concerns the debate between Meed and Conscience over the place and purpose of Meed in society, a few short passages can be taken as representative of their respective opinions on the topic. Meed's opinion is clearly stated in eleven lines.

> an avaricious force that disrupts social order. And unless meed is preceded by a willingness to honor bonds that have already been established, it rapidly gives rise to guile. (Smith 131-132)

The confusion over Meed's ancestry is never really cleared up. But Theology's assertion is sufficient cause to stop the wedding, particularly after Theology points out to Civil and Simony that the consequences to them, as witnesses of an illegal marriage, could be severe.

By manipulating Meed, in a distinctly un-right inversion of the doctrine of submission, Civil and Simony have placed themselves in an untenable position. They owe allegiance not only to Meed and Fals, but also to the king who would frown upon an illegal marriage. If they are to save their own skins, Civil and Simony must renege on the promised service to their immediate feudal lord, Fals, in deference to the service owed their mutual overlord. What is astonishing is not the behavior of Civil and Simony, but the fact that neither Meed nor Fals seeks retribution for the broken promise or return of the silver paid in advance to Civil and Simony for an action that the two never perform.

The deceit of Civil and Simony can be measured by the juxtaposition of their actions with those of Fauel and Fals Witnesse, who succeed in halting the marriage and persuading the bridal couple to proceed to London, without returning the money paid. But Langland does not use terms such as persuade and convince. Langland's words are at once more colorful and more sinister. Civil and Simony, through the agency of Fauel and False Witnesse, protect their own self interests by having "Mede amaystryed thorw oure mery tonge" (C.II.167). Donaldson translates "amaistried" as overmastered (II.154).

Hit bycometh for a kyng þat shal kepe a reume

To ȝeue men mede þat meekliche hym serueth,

To aliens and to alle men, to honoure hem with ȝeftes;

Mede maketh hym be byloued and for a man yholde.

Emperours and Erles and alle manere lordes

Throw ȝeftes haen ȝemen to ȝerne and to ryde.

The pope and alle prelates presentes vnderfongen

And ȝeuen mede to men to meyntene here lawes.

Seruantes for here seruyse mede they asken

And taken mede of here maistres as þei mowen acorde. . . .

Is no lede þat leueth þat he ne loueth mede.

(C.III.264-273, 281)

In this section, Meed has almost got the relation of lord and servant right. As has been noted, feudal master-servant relations that modeled the right relation were enacted with the exchange of goods and services, precisely as Meed describes them. Meed even has both elements, lords and servants, in their proper secular order and has assigned them their appropriate functions. She appears to make clear the benefits of the doctrine of submission to all masters and servants. However, Conscience counters that what Meed describes is not reward but measurable hire—simple *quid pro quo*—and as measurable hire, Meed's description of right, in the sense of benefit, is only half the equation, leaving the relation of meed to society at large unresolved. We still do not know whether Meed is

master or servant or both and if both what her relation is to the rest of society in each of these roles. Conscience attempts to clarify Meed's place in society.

> Ac ther is mede and mercede, and bothe men demen
> A desert for som doynge, derne oþer elles.
> Mede many tymes men ȝeueth bifore þe doynge
> And þat is nother resoun ne ryhte ne in no rewme lawe
> That eny man mede toke but he hit myhte deserue,
> And for to vndertake to trauile for another
> And wo neuer witterly where he lyue so longe
> Ne haue hap to his hele mede to deserue.
> Y halde hym ouer-hardy or elles nat trewe
> That *pre manibus* is paied or his pay asketh.
> Harlotes and hoores and also fals leches
> They asken here huyre ar thei hit haue deserued,
> And gylours gyuen byfore and goode men at þe ende
> When þe dede is ydo and þe day endit;
> And þat is no mede but a mercede, a manere dewe dette,
> And but hit prestly be ypayed þe payere is to blame,
> It is a permutacion apertly, a penyworþ for anoþer.
> As by the book þat byt nobody with-holde
> The huyre of his hewe ouer eue til amorwe:
> *Non morabitur opus mersenarii.*

And ther is resoun as a reue rewardynge treuth

That both the lord and the laborer be leely yserued. (C.III.290-309)

Conscience's words make clear the doubleness of reward, if not the exact nature of Meed. And the argument between Meed and Conscience remains unresolved.

The argument is summarized in Proverbs 22:9 of which Meed notes the first half.

'Loo! what Salamon sayth,' quod she, 'in *Sapiense*, in þe bible:

"That ȝeueth ȝeftes, taketh ȝeme, the victorie a wynneth

And much worschipe therwith," as holy write telleth:

Honorem adquiret qui dat munera.' (C.III.483-486)

Just as Meed argued only part of the right relation—the necessity of meed with the meaning of measurable hire—so Meed in summation cites only half of the relevant text. Pointing out the remaining portion of the text is left for Conscience, as he had previously been left to point out meed's doubleness.

So ho-so secheth *Sapience* fynde he shall foloweth

A ful teneful tyxst to hem þat taketh mede,

The which þat hatte, as y haue rad, and oþer þat can rede,

Animam aufert accipiecium.

Worschipe a wynneth þat wol ȝeue mede,

Ac he þat resceyueth here or recheth here is rescettour of gyle.

(C.III.493-497)

Both Meed and Conscience base their argument on the doctrine of submission that underlies right relations and directs that all men, regardless of degree, comply submissively with the requirements of their designated tasks and the orders of their social superiors. Under this deceptively simple doctrine even kings and popes have beings—the commons and God—and principles—law and faith—to which they must submit themselves. But if the relation is to be established and exist rightly then the beings and principles to which secular rulers are subject must not be such as to burden the rulers or their subjects unduly. And this is the point addressed by Conscience's rejection of Meed; as a guiding principle, Meed is simply too burdensome.

Despite Conscience's enlightening comments, the King, like many of Langland's readers, is overwhelmed by the argument and jangling of Meed and Conscience that has continued for over 300 lines. Passus IV opens with the King's attempt to resolve the argument by fiat, ordering Conscience to kiss Meed. When this attempt fails, the king sends for Reason, whose counsel in this matter the king promises to abide by. Since the search for the right relation no longer focuses on Meed specifically, but on the principles by which all men should be guided in their service, Langland's focus shifts from Meed herself to the trial of Wrong, although Langland gives Meed much to say in this matter as well.

Wrong is brought to trial on a bill of complaint made by Peace. The number and severity of Wrong's offenses against Peace are extensive. In this, Wrong represents the stereotype of the feudal lordless man, who owes no allegiance or service to any master and is guided by a will lacking in identity with any other will. Unlike the cat of the prologue's rat fable, Wrong is not a tyrant, because Wrong has no legal claim to authority over or

service from Peace, whom he abuses unmercifully. Wrong, in fear of Conscience, pays Wisdom for advice and submits himself to it. Following the advice he paid for, Wrong gets Meed to go bail for him. Since Meed proposes to the court that she will make amends for Wrong and guarantee his future good behavior, a large portion of the king's subjects—Peace included—cry to the king for mercy upon Wrong. The king does not yield to the pleading of his subjects but acts on the promise he made at the opening of the passus to be ruled by Reason. "Bute Resoun haue reuth on hym he shal reste in my stokkes" (C.IV.103). Reason's ruling is the same as the king's, "'Rede me nat,' quod Resoun, 'no reuthe to haue'" (C.IV.108).

Lest we miss the identity of wills here between the king and the principle he serves, Langland provides some similarity between the two refusals of *reuthe* by making each one conditional. The king refuses mercy unless Reason dictates mercy. Reason refuses mercy until "lordes and ladies louen alle treuth . . . " and "Whiles Mede hath the maistrie þer motyng is at barres" (C.IV.109, 132). Reason goes on to describe how he would rule were he king.

> Shulde neuere wrong in this worlde þat y wyte myhte
> Be vnpunisched in my power for perel of my soule
> Ne gete my grace thorw eny gyfte ne glosynge speche
> Ne thorw mede haue mercy, by Marie of heuene.
> For *nullum malum*, man, mette with *impunitum*
> And bad *nullum bonum* be *irremuneratum.* (C.IV.136-141)

He explains his example of a king's right relation with his subjects in terms redolent of the doctrine of submission. Reason names the judicial actions of the king "work" and labels the law administered by the king as a laborer. "And yf ȝe worche it in werke y wedde bothe myn handes / That lawe shal ben a laborer and lede afelde donge, / And loue shal lede thi land as the leef lyketh" (C.IV.143-145). The emphasis on labor, service and submission in Reason's ideal kingdom is unmistakable; for such a government to function, the subjects, the king, even the law must be as laborers for the benefit of all. The point is driven home in the last lines of passus IV.

'But ich reule thus alle reumes, reueth me my syhte,
And brynge alle men to bowe withouten bittere wounde,
Withouten mercement or manslauht amende alle reumes.'
'Y wolde hit were,' quod the kynge, 'wel al aboute.
Forthy Resoun, redyly thow shalt nat ryden hennes
But be my cheef chaunceller in cheker and in parlement
And Consience in alle my courtes be a kynges iustice.'
'Y assente,' sayde Resoun, 'by so ȝowsulue yhere,
Audiatis alteram partem amonges aldremen and comeneres,
And þat vnsittynge suffraunce ne sele ȝoure priue lettres
Ne no *supersedeas* sende but y assente,' quod Resoun.
'And y dar lege my lyf þat loue wol lene þe seluer
To wage thyn and helpe wynne þat thow wilnest aftur

More then alle thy marchauntes or thy mytrede bysshopes

Or Lumbardus of Lukes þat leuen by lone as Iewes.'

The kyng comaundede Consience tho to congeye alle his offeceres

And receyue tho that Resoun louede . . . . (C.IV.180-196)

Reason urges the king to rule without fines (mercement) or corporal punishment (manslauht). The king responds with ready willingness to follow the advice of Reason. Reason agrees with the proviso that the king promise not to over-rule Reason. Given the right relation that fulfillment of this promise will establish, Reason predicts that great riches will come to the king. The agreement between Reason and the king is obvious as are the benefits resulting from the king's submission and the identity of his will with Reason's will. All the voices acknowledge that the right relation seems about to be established and will remain so as long as the liege is subject to reason. That is as long as reason and the ruler share an identity of wills.

The identity of wills is a motif that runs throughout *Piers Plowman*. Significantly, the motif reaches its culmination during the concluding two passus of the poem in which the barn of unity is built and subsequently overrun by evil (C.XXI-XXII). Appropriately, before Piers can build the barn of Unity, Christ, the exemplar of spiritual unity on earth must be thoroughly explained. Langland does this by providing a lengthy passage on the various names, titles, and actions of Christ, in the voice of Conscience. Conscience's discussion of kingship demonstrates that the unity required for the right relation can only be achieved by adherence to the doctrine of submission.

Hit bicometh for a kyng to kepe and to defende

And conquerour of his conqueste his layes and his large.

And so dede Iesus þe Iewes: he iustified and tauhte hem

The lawe of lyf that laste shal euere,

And fended hem fro foule eueles, feueres and fluxes,

And fro fendes þat in hem was false bileue. (C.XXI.42-47)

The actions depicted here are classic examples of the service a lord does for his retainers. He literally keeps, or provides, for them. He instructs and judges among them. He defends them from all varieties of threat and harm both inward and outward, physical and spiritual. The echo in line C.XXI.42 of Meed's comments in passus C.III seems far from accidental, since comparison of the two passages illustrates an important point.

Hit bycometh for a kyng þat shal kepe a reume

To ȝeue men mede þat meekliche hym serueth,

To aliens and to alle men, to honoure hem with ȝeftes;

Mede maketh hym be byloued and for a man yholde.

Emperours and erles and alle manere lordes

Thorw ȝeftes haen ȝemen to ȝerne and to ryde. (C.III.265-270)

The lords in both passages give to their servants. However, giving is the only action performed by the lord described by Meed, whereas, Christ, Unity's exemplar, performs many services for those who serve him. Furthermore, the motives Meed attributes to the lord for giving are all self-serving in the extreme. Gifts, as Meed states, are given for the

purpose of getting something in return, whether that something is more gifts, honor, more men, or a kingly realm. The emphasis is distinctly un-right and completely opposed to the doctrine of submission. The words of Conscience that describe Christ as the exemplar of Unity at no point mention what the king might receive for all of his labor on the part of his servants. Conscience simply points out the appropriateness of naming such a hard-working king to be a conqueror.

> Ho was hardior then he? his herte bloed he shedde
> To make alle folk fre þat folweth his lawe.
> And sethe he ȝeueth largeliche all his lele lege
> Places in paradys at here partyng hennes
> He may be wel called conquerour, and that is Crist to mene.
> (C.XXI.58-62)

Much more is contained in C.XXI that comments on the right relation. Langland reiterates the un-right and indirect relations showing how closely they resemble the right relation and how easily these undesirables can be mistaken for their right counterparts. In a miniature satire of the estates, a brewer, a vicar, and a lord all find fault with the church and excuses for not serving the cardinal virtues that should rule people of all estates (C.XXI.395-465). These figures who exemplify the un-right relation are followed by a king, who exemplifies the indirect relation. Like Nature in *Pilgrimage*, this king administers his kingdom well. "Y am kyng with croune the comune to reule / And holy kyrke and clerge fro cursed men to defend" (C.XXI.466-467). Also like Deguileville's

Nature, this king is concerned less with the service he provides than with the power he accrues.

> Ther y may hastilokest hit haue, for y am heed of lawe
> And ȝe ben bote membres and y aboue alle.
> And seth y am ȝoure alere heued y am ȝoure alere hele
> And holy churche cheef helpe and cheuenteyn of þe comune
> and what y take of ȝow two y take hit at þe techynge
> Of *Spiritus iusticie*, for y iuge ȝow alle. (C.XXI.469-474)

Conscience, not the king, adds the qualifications that identify power in a right relation. "'In condicioun,' quod Consience, 'þat þou þe comune defende / And rewle thy rewme in resoun right wel and in treuthe, / Than haue thow al thyn askyng as thy lawe asketh" (C.XXI.476-478). With the exception of Conscience who stands outside the estates, these figures demonstrate "how self-interest challenges and may pervert the cardinal virtues . . ." (Pearsall 360). They also demonstrate how fine the line between un-right, indirect and right relations.

Like Deguileville, Langland gives an important place to *Spiritus Paraclitus*, or God's Grace, in the founding of the right relation. Unlike Deguileville, Langland's Grace participates in no adversarial debate. Grace in *Piers Plowman* is introduced as "Cristes messager" (C.XXI.207). And Consience asks those present "yf thow canst synge / Welcome hym and worschipe hym," so none are coerced or persuaded, but all willingly submit (C.XXI.209b-210a). Interestingly enough the song of welcome and worship is one

of supplication. "Helpe vs, god, of grace!" (C.XXI.212b).[10] Grace's purpose, as Christ's messenger, at this point in the poem is to give Piers and his fellow pilgrims gifts that will prepare them for the coming battle over Unity.

> 'For I wol dele today and deuyde grace
> To alle kyne creatures þat can his fyue wittes,
> Tresor to lyue by to here lyues ende
> And wepne to fihte with þat wol neuere fayle. . . .
> Forthy,' quod Grace, 'or y go y wol gyue ȝow tresor
> And wepne to fihte with þat wol neuer fayle.
> And ȝaf vch man a grace to gye with hymsuluen
> That ydelness encombre hem nat, ne enuye ne pryde.'
> (C.XXI.215-218, 225-228)

The gifts are purposeful and not excessive. These are no mere rewards for gain but appropriate and right lordly actions that provide for the needs of the servants. The nature of the gifts verifies the existence of the right relation. The gifts include not material goods but material actions: "labour of tonge," "craft of konnynge of syhte," "Laboure a londe and a watre," "To tulye, to þecche and to coke," "To deuyne and deuyde noumbres," and so forth (C.XXI.229-245). The purpose of these metaphorical "giftes" is to "cover not

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[10] "Helpe vs, god, of grace!" was a widely used, if mild, oath in the Middle Ages. However, its placement in C. XXI so near Consience's request is singularly appropriate as a verse of worship given the context of provision as a condition/signifier of right lordship.

only discipleship but the work of all men, religious and secular. . . . Langland returns to the world of the *Visio*, now seen as the Christian community living as Christ's Church. . . . The life of the Christian community (*ecclesia*) on earth has been Langland's concern throughout the poem" (Pearsall 350-351). And this purpose returns us to Conscience's discussion of Christ as the exemplar of Unity.

Given the example of Christ, Piers, at the urging of Grace, builds the barn of Unity in order to house the souls who have joined him throughout his pilgrimage. "'A3eynes thy graynes,' quod Grace, 'bigynneth for to rype, / Ordeyne the an hous, Peres, to herborwe in thy cornes'" (C.XXI.318-319). When Piers asks for Grace's help, she, like Deguileville's Grace Dieu, supplies the central figure of the poem with everything he needs to accomplish his task. The result of Piers's labor and carpentry is a house called "Vnite, Holy Chirche an Englisch" (C.XXI.329). Pearsall notes that, "The name "Unity" is used to suggest the union of God and man in Christ and through him in his church" (354). Hence, we see Langland making explicit the right relation between God and humanity, spiritual and secular.

However, despite the solid and specific imagery of grain and barn, labor and construction, Langland, in a conclusion to the poem that confounds expectation, shows that the Unity of secular and spiritual is not a permanent, impregnable, un-changing place. The battle that Conscience and his followers fight for the barn of Unity is a long and hard-fought one that nevertheless ends in defeat. So rather than concluding with the closure of a successfully established safe harbor, *Piers Plowman* concludes where it began with a pilgrimage that continues the search for Truth.

'By Crist,' quod Consience tho, 'y wol bicome a pilgrime,

And wenden as wyde as þe world regneth

To seke Peres the plouhman, þat Pruyde myhte destruye'

(C.XXII.380-382).

The conclusion to the poem is disquieting. I believe this ending is intended to disturb readers out of complacency. Conscience, still in the secular world, and defeated by the Antichrist and his forces, leaves on a pilgrimage. The secular life, the journey, is far from over. Having found and lost the right relation once, Conscience pursues the only course he knows that may bring him to the right relation again.

CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY

"To probe the source of a speaker's [literature's] authority is very quickly, as Foucault shows, to discover impregnable interlocking institutions which force expression into certain thoroughly architected places of confinement" (Lentricchia 198). As we have seen, the right relation is such a place, "architected" by the philosophical tradition and its intersections with the realities of late medieval life. Given samples of an identifiable late medieval English literature, the purpose of this study has been to question some of the sources of that literature's authority; that is to determine what intersections of culture, time, and philosophy might have met to create the nexus that was the right relation.

The philosophical elements contributing to the concept of right relation are numerous. From the Aristotelian tradition we note the importance of the reciprocity of relation to its very existence. Boethius underscored the value of the form and substance of a relation to its rightness. John of Salisbury gave eloquent expression to the need for the identity of wills in a right relation. With the notion of the *imitatio* Dei, Christianity added an identifiable standard of rightness to the philosophical tradition. Each of these elements is observable in the feudal practices of gift-giving and oaths of fealty. In the later Middle Ages, when plagues, uprisings and political policies all seemed to controvert the doctrine of submission, it was to those feudal practices of oaths and gifts that medieval authors looked in search of the right relation.

These practices, the philosophical tradition and the nascent commercial ideology converge in late medieval English literature to define the category of relation. In all likelihood, the confluence of ideologies marked in late medieval events also dictated that the expression of right relation in late medieval English literature would occur hierarchically, often in terms of relations between lords and servants. And, if we believe the evidence of late medieval English literature, the lord and servant relation was one that authors and audiences of the time held to be universal, as a model and a metaphor for all hierarchical relations.

Chapters I, II, and III showed that the nexus of meanings "architected" in the right relation, or juncture of feudal, market and Christian ideologies, expresses itself in late medieval English literature with ambiguity and paradox. The reader, like Walter in the *Clerk's Tale*, is left constantly to test each text, Griselda-like, for ideological weaknesses and variations. Such ambiguity compels Gower to conclude *Vox Clamantis* with a pessimism that regrets the passing of the golden age for the present age of clay. "Amidst the discords at present there is no ancient bond of love which comes to restore us" (Gower 225). And the envoy glosses the *Clerk's Tale* with commentary that seems to negate the tale. "But sharply taak on yow the governaille. / Emprenteth wel this lessoun in your mynde, / For commune profit sith it may availle" (1192-1194). The ambiguity expressed with each conclusion pushes the quest for the right relation beyond the secular into the spiritual.

The authors who explore the spiritual right relation treat both feudal and commercial ideologies ambiguously, as the *Pearl*-maiden's words demonstrate. "'Of more and lasse in Godeȝ ryche,' / Þat gentyl sayde, 'lys no joparde, / For þer is vch mon payed

inlyche, / Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde'" (601-604). However, Julian's parable shows that the feudal doctrine of submission dictates the expression of the right relation. "His [the lord's] deerworthy servannt, whych he lovyd so moch, shulde be hyely and blessydfully rewardyd withoute end, aboue that he shuled have / be yf he had nott fallen . . ." (518). Thus, the spiritual right relation is located in the city of the soul and is paradoxically forever beyond the reach of secular man. Only works like those of Deguileville and Langland treat the full range of the right relation. The right relation, as seen in these works, springs from the union of secular and spiritual that finds expression in the junctures of feudal, market and Christian ideologies. So the late medieval right relation is fraught with ambiguity and paradox, giving twentieth-century readers considerable difficulty with these texts and the characters who populate them.

The difficulties that modern readers often have with characters such as Piers, Griselda, the Crying Voice, the *Pearl*-poet's jeweler, Deguileville's dreamer and Julian's Christ-Adam are a consequence of the nexus of meanings—represented in the doctrine of submission, the identity of wills, and the *imitatio Dei*—that merge in and descend from the right relation. As noted in Chapter I, Chaucer and Gower describe the right relation and its correlative the un-right relation in the secular setting. Each author deals with the relation of individuals to each other. In the *Clerk's Tale* Chaucer focuses on the developing relation between a specific, albeit fictional, man and woman. Gower centers his discussion of relation on an encompassing and traumatic moment in history when all relations seemed un-right. Each poet, by his own method, makes clear that the social hierarchy was a framework within which the right relation could be recognized. The disparity of rank between Walter and Griselda draws attention to the importance of social

hierarchy in Chaucer's tale and its commentary on the right relation. The emphasis on the failed relations of the three estates demonstrates Gower's concern with the social hierarchy. These poets also make clear that the ruler's willing submission is the source of the secular right relation at all levels. The right relation is finally established in the *Clerk's Tale* only when Walter is able to restore Griselda as his wife by forgoing his own arbitrary desires. Because the king in *Vox Clamantis* fails to provide for the needs of his subjects, the right secular relation is never achieved in Gower's text. However, Gower leaves the impression that less rigidity and more justice on the part of the king would have resulted in the desired restoration of the right secular relation.

If the *Clerk's Tale* and *Vox Clamantis* can be taken as typical examples of late medieval thought about the secular right relation, then one might believe, given a quick reading, that the right relation is one in which the poor and weak are not only at the mercy of a potentially abusive powerful but are urged to submit themselves to the rule of the powerful no matter how benign or malignant that rule might be. This is, obviously, the case in the famous rat fable that Langland includes in the Prologue of *Piers Plowman*. From a twentieth-century perspective of free choice and individual empowerment such acts of submission are not only foolhardy but criminal. However, given a perspective emerging from feudal ideology, the acts of submission underwritten by Griselda's example and the Crying Voice's urgings can be seen as practical, safe, and right. Twentieth-century audiences are used to perceiving late medieval authorities—lords, rulers, husbands—as oppressive.[1] Certainly legislation such as the statutes of laborers and the

[1] It is not my intention here to argue that late medieval rulers were or were not oppressive. I merely observe that by twentieth century American standards late medieval rulers probably were oppressive.

poll taxes make the ruling classes of late medieval England appear like "tyrants of lombardye" to the twentieth-century audience. However such legislation was notoriously ineffective. As Putnam notes the statutes were "inoperative as to their avowed object . . . . to secure an adequate supply of labourers at the rate of wages prevailing before the catastrophe [the plague]" (4 and 3). Careful reading of works like the *Clerk's Tale* and *Vox Clamantis* demonstrates that one factor contributing to the failure of such legislation is that feudal ideology about right relations still held great sway in late medieval England. At the same time, commercial ideology about the right relation was acquiring significant, but not total, legislative influence.

The discourses of feudal and market ideologies meet at a number of points illustrated in late medieval literature. For example, feudalism perceives the similarity of goals, or identity of wills, as the guarantee of an oath sworn between lord and vassal. Griselda's promises to Walter expressed just this perception. A market economy perceives the guarantee of a contract as the potential and self-interested benefit to both parties involved. Walter's proposal to Griselda offered a marriage contract for just such mutual benefit. The juncture of oath and contract rests in the possessive language that expresses both. A similar juncture occurs in regard to gift-giving and profit making. Feudalism sees gifts as marks of prestige for both giver and receiver. Market ideology sees gifts as so much material profit for the receiver and so much material loss for the giver with the usefulness of the item rather than the act of giving as the determiner of value. The intersection of gift-giving and profit-making is in the act of exchange. This nexus is observable in *Vox Clamantis* where Gower castigates laborers, as he elsewhere does the clergy and the nobility, for seeking profit above personal honor. "For the very

little they do they demand the highest pay" (Gower 208). In commercial terms, the profit seeking in Gower's passage was merely good business. In feudal terms, the worth of men represented in the exchange had all but been annihilated.

From the junctures of feudalism and commercialism emerged a literature that links the two in a very different way from the legislation of the time. For late medieval English literature expresses a discourse that defines as un-right any lordly tyranny in secular relations. Alceste's gentle chiding of the Lord in the prologue to *LGW* shows precisely how un-right is tyranny in late medieval English literature. "For, sire, it is no maystrye for a lord / To dampne a man withoute answere or word, / And, for a lord, that is ful foul to use" (386-388).

If Chaucer and his contemporaries decry lordly tyranny in the secular right relation, they viewed tyranny on the part of the serving class as even worse. One of the very clear economic motives for the statute of laborers was to prevent production from being at the mercy of labor. As far as the tyranny of laborers is concerned, feudal thinking about the doctrine of submission was far from discontinuous with economic thinking about the benefits of a submissive and obedient labor force. Indeed, both feudal and market perspectives on the secular right relation spoke so strongly for the submission of servants that any assertiveness not linked with the will of the lord bore an un-right distinction. Hence, outright rebellion must have seemed like madness. What emerges from this confluence of feudal and market thought is that no amount of self assertion will lead to true authority and right relations but rather that willing submission alone has the unique and authorizing power to establish the secular right relation. This is what we find expressed about secular right relations in the literature of late medieval England.

In order to support a view of the secular right relation that abhors tyranny in all classes, Chaucer and Gower draw on the juncture of feudal and market ideologies of power thus giving density and tension to their work. This tension-producing juncture is evident in the confusion of labels given to the serving class. The difference between serf and villein seems largely one of economic opportunity; a difference attributable to the coercive, marketplace power or submissive, feudal authority of whatever ruler was involved. Yet because the circumstances that identified serf and villein as *not lordly* originate in the point where market and feudal ideologies of power meet, the confusion of labels seems inevitable. The same juncture of ideologies can be seen in what Gower writes of as the failures of the three estates. Profit-making continually rearranged the lines of the three estates that feudal practices had built up. Such intersections were perceived as failures, by a poet whose ideas about right relations were distinctly feudal.

If further evidence of the nexus of feudal and market ideologies of power is required, we need only to look at the depiction of eagerness or zealotry in all six of the works examined here. Zeal in each of these works is a kind of madness or error that inevitably leads to the downfall of the zealot. This form of power—and zeal is indeed powerful—fits neither market nor feudal ideologies concerning power. Little profit could be made from zeal in late medieval England, and zealotry was ungovernable, the antithesis of submissiveness. Hence, both feudal and market ideologies expect failure from zealots and reject those who are over-eager. One quality of zeal points to the reason for its importance to and its rejection in late medieval English literature. Zeal is, by definition, out of proportion, out of balance. The right relation from its earliest definition in Aristotle's *Categories* is typified by balance. Each of the works examined here tells the

story of a person or persons whose relations are at some point un-right, or out of balance. Each of the works gives some indication of how rightness or balance may be restored.

Thus, zeal is characterized by the absence of the right relation between ruler and ruled which, by virtue of its reciprocal quality, requires balance. That absence was caused by the decline of the identity of wills as an authorizing force and by the pursuit of coercive power most often seen in marketplace terms of direct personal benefit. Chaucer and Gower give us Walter and the rebellious peasantry as examples of coercive power produced in pursuit of direct personal benefit. Gower, at least, implies that the way to right secular relations lay in allowing fear and love to overcome the desire for direct personal benefit and to lead one into willing submission to one's superiors and the requirements of one's place in the hierarchy. But both Chaucer and Gower conclude that the secular right relation is dependent upon humanity's ability to imitate, in his relation with other men, the spiritual right relation of human beings with God, that was covered in Chapter II.

Julian of Norwich's parable of the lord and the servant and the Middle English *Pearl* represent a portion of late medieval English literature that locates the search for the right relation in the territory of the spirit. These works confirm the implication in the *Clerk's Tale* and *Vox Clamantis* that the relation between individuals and God must be right before the right relation can be found in the secular world. While the circumstances that give context to Julian of Norwich and the *Pearl*-poet's visions are significantly different than the *Clerk's Tale* and *Vox Clamantis*, the message about the right relation is strikingly similar.

Like Chaucer and Gower, Julian of Norwich and the *Pearl*-poet describe the right relation and its correlative in the images of feudal and market ideologies. Eagerness in pursuit of the spiritual right relation, like its secular version, indicates moral crisis and relations about to go wrong. Gift-giving and the exchange of provision for service represent recurrent discourses in both *Pearl* and Julian of Norwich's parable, as do ideas about private property, *worship* and reward. The result of these recurrent discourses is a strong emphasis on the reciprocity of the right relation. That emphasis culminates in Christ's enactment of the doctrine of submission, establishing the *imitatio Dei* as the strongest human expression of the right relation between man and God.

Significantly the work of Julian and the *Pearl*-poet impose Christian ideology upon the feudal and economic qualities that characterize the right relation. Julian's parable and the *Pearl* stress forgiveness and salvation, making clear that respect for human frailty and submission to suffering as well as to hierarchically superior beings is a pre-requisite of spiritual strength and power. No comment is made in Julian's parable or *Pearl* about tyranny. That behavior problem is left to the secular realm. The emphasis in the spiritual works is so much on the sovereignty and reward gained through service, submission, and suffering that tyranny becomes the very antithesis of the right relation, and has no place in discussions about the spiritual right relation.

The search for the spiritual right relation found in Julian of Norwich's parable and *Pearl* are indicative of the re-examination of the roles of master and servant that was on-going in the church and the spiritual activity of the time. This is not to say that the Julian of Norwich or the *Pearl*-Poet should be read as allegorizing the disputes between the

church and the crown. Such readings would unbearably flatten the meanings of both parable and *Pearl*.

Pearl also illustrates spiritual links between market and feudal ideologies that are evident in misunderstandings about the *imitatio Dei*. The misunderstandings often resulted in pride of place and neglect of the doctrine of submission. Such misunderstandings occur repeatedly on the part of the jeweler in *Pearl*. In his debate with the Pearl-maiden over her place in heaven, the jeweler demonstrates his erroneous presumptions about the spiritual right relation that spring from the idea of direct personal profit. The jeweler, motivated by the idea of profit alone cannot understand the authority of the Pearl-maiden's submission. Feudalism and the market economy both endorse the idea of gain. But the market economy's endorsement is for gain that is direct and personal, while feudalism endorses gain that is deferred and shared. Market ideology would never prompt a statement like Bernard of Clairvaux's assertion that "the knowledge of truth is to be found only at the summit of humility" (31). As understood in economic terms, "the summit of humility" would produce pride of place rather than willing and selfless submission to authority. Such submission to authority had been the feudal foundation of the medieval church hierarchy. In the face of an ecclesiastical hierarchy that was crumbling under the onslaught of profit making, feudal ideologies of the spirit retreated into hermeticism, mysticism and spiritual literature.

That spiritual literature, with its vivid portrayals of strength and authority emergent from human frailty and weakness, enters the late medieval debates over ownership, worthiness, service and reward. In *Pearl*, especially, we see a direct confrontation between feudalism and profit making. The confrontation is evident, when the jeweler

mistakes the Pearl-maiden for his lost pearl. The narrator's pride of possession in a pearl that did not truly belong to him but to God ignores the feudal belief that the exchange, not the gift, is the true purpose of gift-giving. A similar juncture of feudalism and the market economy occurs in the parable of the vineyard, as Mann's discussion of "paye" has demonstrated. "The word has two main branches of meaning: in the fourteenth century, as now, it meant 'payment' in the monetary sense, but there still survived also its older [feudal] meaning of 'satisfaction'" (24). Julian's parable expresses similar ideas, when discussing the rewards given to the servant by the lord. But Julian consistently expresses the idea of reward in the language of feudal, rather than market, ideology. The lord gives the servant "a ȝyfte that be better to hym and more wurshcypfull than his [the servant's] owne helle shuld haue been" (517-518). While the reward is personal, as commercial payment would be, it is neither direct nor prompted by self-interest. The reward is deferred until the work of suffering is done, and Julian never presents the servant as soliciting any reward from the lord. Additionally the feudal ideology of Julian's parable is upheld by naming the reward a worshipful gift rather than a monetary unit.

By the end of both Julian's parable and the *Pearl*-poet's dream vision, at least one of the implications of *Clerk's Tale* and *Vox Clamantis* is confirmed. The right relation between humans and God is the basis for the right relation between individuals. However, while Julian of Norwich and the *Pearl*-poet confirm this one implication, they also deny the accessibility of the right relation in the secular world. Both the parable and *Pearl* locate the right relation in the city of the soul, forever across the spiritual river from the secular world in which folk like the jeweler and the fallen servant live. If Julian of Norwich and the *Pearl*-poet were correct about the search for the right relation and the

locus of its final achievement, could Chaucer and Gower have been wrong about the locus of the secular right relation in the person of the ruler? If so, was recognition and achievement of a secular right relation impossible?

Chapter III shows that Deguileville and Langland do not seem to think that either the secular or the spiritual idea of the right relation is wrong. Rather, the works of these two poets demonstrate the necessity of both secular and spiritual in order to achieve truly right relations. *Þe Pilgrimage of þe Life of þe Manhode* and *Piers Plowman* do not illustrate the right relation in the ultimate city of the soul as Julian of Norwich and the *Pearl*-poet do, nor as Chaucer and Gower imply in the example of a specific ruler's submission to the needs of his subjects. For Deguileville and Langland the right relation appears in the progress of man's soul through the world, thus joining spiritual with secular. Both works open with a *dis*-junction of secular and spiritual in which the primary character's relations are un-right. Yet each character carries with him the juncture of spiritual and secular as he progresses toward right relation. That juncture is observable at those points where each story's visionary frame abuts the solidity of settings like house and field encountered by the pilgrims on their respective journeys.

Both Deguileville and Langland allegorize moments of the spiritual and secular juncture. Deguileville does so most vividly in the debate between Grace Dieu and Nature. The debate literally joins the spiritual, Grace Dieu, and the secular, Nature, in conflict. The conclusion of the debate links Grace Dieu and Nature in a right relation guaranteed by a feudal identity of wills. Nature's words are reminiscent of the feudal oath of homage. "Ye ben my maistress, I se it wel: ouer alle I ouhte obeye to yow. Of nothing it should displese me of thing þat ye wol doo. I thinke neuer to speke but þat ye wolen foryive me

. . ." (Deguileville 26.1072). The resemblance of the promise made by Nature to the promises made by Griselda in the *Clerk's Tale* are strong. But unlike the *Clerk's Tale*, *Þe Pilgrimage of þe Life of þe Manhode* links a secular personification with a spiritual personification by a willing act of submission.

Langland's allegorizations of the links between secular and spiritual are almost too thickly clustered to enumerate, but the one most parallel with Deguileville and most concerned with the right relation is the battle over Unity (Passus XXI). In this passus secular images of labor and construction are linked with a spiritual personification, Spiritus Paraclitus, by the acts of gift-giving, and provision. As another form of God's Grace, the purpose of Spiritus Paraclitus is to give to Piers and his followers gifts that will prepare them for the coming battle over Unity. "For I wol dele today and deuyde grace / Go all kyne creatures þat can his fyue wittes, / Tresor to lyue by to here lyues ende / And wepne to fihte with þat wol neuere fayle . . .(C.XXI.215-218).

Additional links between spiritual and secular are represented in Deguileville's portrayal of Nature and Langland's portrayal of Meed. Oaths of fealty and commendation are used, as they were in Gower and Chaucer, to give voice to the secular and spiritual feudal ideology of the right relation and its correlative the un-right relation. Nature's promise to Grace Dieu, discussed above, exemplifies the right relation. In *Piers Plowman*, the charter of enfeoffment granted by Guile to Meed and Fals presents a classic example of charters of enfeoffment granted throughout England in the middle ages, in which goods and services are granted for allegiance and provision. One difficulty with the charter from *Piers Plowman* is the character of the parties involved in the exchange. Meed's character is questionable at best, while Fals, Liar, and Guile are clearly ill spirits personified. If these

personifications were capable of fulfilling the promises made in the charter of enfeoffment, they would certainly present the form of obedience. But Fals, Liar, and Guile, by definition, invalidate the identity of wills that guarantees the oaths represented in the charter. The enactment of the right relation by parties who invalidate the guarantees that underwrite it subverts that relation. The subversion is purposeful if we note the lack of spiritual union with the secular in which the right relation ought to occur. Langland makes no mistake in having Theology interrupt the proceedings before the charter can be sealed. Thus, by using the feudal discourse of homage and fealty, the juncture of secular and spiritual is demonstrated, in both *Þe Pilgrimage of þe Life of þe Manhode* and *Piers Plowman*, to be vitally important in establishing the right relation.

Þe Pilgrimage of þe Life of þe Manhode and *Piers Plowman* share much with contemporary poems that concentrate more on the secular or spiritual than on both. However, Deguileville and Langland include direct discussion of the *predicamentum ad aliquid*, unlike the other late Middle English works examined here. By referring directly to the category of relation, Deguileville and Langland assert the importance and character of the right relation. This is perhaps more clearly seen in Deguileville's comments given to Reason than in Langland's, which are muddied by association with the debate over Meed. To summarize, Reason's discussion of the *ad aliquid* shows that relation is, by reference to Aristotle's definition, reciprocal. "All relatives are spoken of in relation to correlatives that reciprocate" (*Categories* 18). But Reason goes beyond Aristotle to show that relations of individuals and between individuals and God must be right. Emphasis on rightness is achieved by following the submissive example of the most powerful of human

beings, Christ. "If þou haddest subiectes [also], as he þou mihtest do: þi miht wer Ad Aliquid . . ." (Deguileville 19.770).

What emerges from the *ad aliquid* is that relation is a category of both potential, "mihtest," and potency, "miht," not of extremes but of degrees in which right relation is closest to identity or union and indirect relation is at the farthest remove from union. Thus, the relation, not its constituent parts, confers authority or subservience, oneness or otherness upon those parts. Yet the relation ceases to exist if either part ceases to participate. Both *Þe Pilgrimage of þe Life of þe Manhode* and *Piers Plowman*, like Julian of Norwich, recognize in Christ the embodiment of the right relation. He is lord and servant together in a single entity that is both secular and spiritual. But Langland and Deguileville argue that the right relation is accessible to secular man. The achievement of the right relation in the union of secular and spiritual actually occurs in *Piers Plowman* C.XXI. However, Langland implies that the unity of secular and spiritual is not a permanent, impregnable, unchanging place but that unity like the right relation continually emerges out of man's efforts to right his relations with others as the circumstance of his life change.

All in all, the nexus of meanings and discourses that is located in the right relation is marked by a small, but important, sub-set of the events and practices that identify what is commonly called late medieval English literature. The history of late medieval England confirms what the study of the right relation tells us about the confluences and dis-junctions of co-existent discourses in the literature of that time. Those co-existent discourses include far more than the few feudal, commercial, philosophical and Christian discourses examined here. Indeed, if taken as an example, the study of right relation in

late medieval English literature expresses a pattern of discourse that recurs throughout the history of human thought.

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