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Chaucer on Modernity

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PART I

I

In Chaucer's writings there are two phases, good and bad, chivalrous and amorous, heavenly and worldly. Viewed from the ideal Christian standpoint, Chaucer seems to praise what is good, and at the same time does not criticize unfavourably what is bad. He loves bad as much as good. However good and bad are almost wholly separate. He, as usual, recognizes "the newe world" and "the doctrine of olde wyse" as independent ideas, and refuses to bridge the gap of these conflicting ideas. He pays regard to "olde aproved stories" and at the same time shows an interest in the things which "men han seen with yē." In the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, he acknowledges the truth of what is said about heaven and hell, and yet he confesses to some skepticism at this revealed truth: "wot I wel also, That ther nis noon dwelling in this contree, That either hath in heven or helle y-be, Ne may of hit non other weyes witen, But as he hath herd seyde, or founde hit writen; For by assay ther may no man hit preve." And in the *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer, true to conventions of courtly love, holds the god of Love in reverence, and eulogizes courtly love. The Knight says of himself that he did homage to the god as his lord: "I have ever yit Be tributary, and yiven rente To love hoolly with goode entente, And through plesaunce become his thral, With good wil, body, herte, and al. Al this I putte in his servage, As to my lorde, and dide homage." The Knight describes his "gode faire WHYTE" as everything that the lady should be: "For certes, Nature had swich lest To make that fair, that trewly she Was hir cheef patron of beautee, and cheef ensample of al hir werke." Nevertheless, he plans on going to the House of Fame, suggestive of Edward III's court, to hear love tidings, most presumably of the "loves folk" who were unfaithful to courtly love. It is not known what degree the ideals of courtly love was in actuality practised. After telling us part of the story of Dido on the picture which he saw painted on the walls of the Temple of Venus, he condemns as faithless famous lovers, such as Demophon, Achilles, Paris, Jason, Hercules, and Theseus. The lines read: "welaway! the harm, the routhe, That hath betid for swich untrouthe, As men may ofte in bokes rede, And al day seen hit yet in dede, That for to thenken hit, a tene is." The problem of love tidings which Chaucer brought forward in the *House of Fame* is a vague problem, which can be interpreted variously. It may be supposed, in a sense, that, in view of the stories of faithless men, this is resolved in the love of Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer, in defiance of the god of Love's law, wrote faithless Criseyde who forsook her lover together with the translation of the Romance of the Rose told of heresies against the religion of Love in the words of the deity of the *Legend*. Viewing the matter in this light, it is not impossible that Chaucer composed for the purpose of mocking at the love divinity the legends of the good women "trewly in lovinge," such as

Dido, Phyllis, Medea, and Ariadne. Of course, he was a court poet; he ostensibly wrote the *Legend*, presumably in the hope of finding favour with King Richard II and Queen Anne. Queen Alceste of the Prologue to the *Legend*, for whom Queen Anne is supposed to be a historical counterpart, commands the fictitious Chaucer to tell of the women saints of Cupid as a penalty for his sins against the god's law. But it may be that the reverse is the case. Satire may be concealed in the saints' legends of the pagan god and of God as well. The saints of the *Legend* suffered martyrdom for their love for false lovers, to say, Aeneas, Demophon, Jason, and Theseus. It is from the women's point of view that Chaucer tells of the legends of these saints in the *Legend*. He humorously admonishes his lady audience of the danger of trusting men except him: "Be war, ye women, of your sotil fo, Sin yit this day men may ensample see; And trusteth, as in love, no man but me." It is sure to prove that few were men faithful in love in the Court. Theseus of the *Knight's Tale* remarks with deep emotion that he who serves Love is a fool. In almost every love poetry, Cupid or Venus is given the attributes borrowed from Christian worship. So, the god or goddess of Love and God or the Virgin can be interchangeable. In keeping with his skepticism noted in the Prologue to the *Legend*, Chaucer's questioning about the religion of Cupid is related to his disbelief in the unseen. Chaucer removes from the G version of the Prologue the characteristics of the lady given to the daisy, which reflect the cult of the Virgin. Lines 84—96 are omitted in the revision of the F Prologue: "She is the clernesse and the verray light, That in this derke worlde me wynt and ledeth, The herte in-with my sorowful brest you dredeth, And loveth so sore, that ye ben verrayly The maistresse of my wit, and nothing I.... Be ye my gyde and lady sovereyne; As to myn erthly god, to you I calle, Bothe in this werke and in my sorwes alle." These lines have a definite analogy with the Christian adoration of the Virgin. Chaucer's translation of the hymn to the Virgin, called *An ABC* reads: "Almighty and al merciable quene, To whom that al this world fleeth for socour, To have relees of sinne, sorwe and tene, Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour, To thee I flee, confounded in errour! Help and releve, thou mighty debonaire, Have mercy on my perilous langour! Venquished me hath my cruel adversaire." Besides omitting the analogy to the Christian adoration of the Virgin, the passages of adoration which are a retraction of the G Prologue, says "Hele and honour To trouthe of womanhede, and to this flour That berth our alder prys in figuringe! Hir whyte coroun berth the witnessinge!" In his *Tale* Chaucer's Knight describes Emily as possessing divinity and humanity as well. Palamon pedestals her for a goddess; Arcite, on the other hand, regards her as a flesh-and-blood woman. Arcite says to Palamon: "Thou shalt...be rather fals than I; But thou art fals, I telle thee utterly; For par amour I loved hir first er thou. What wiltow seyn? thou wistest nat yet now Whether she be a womman or goddesse! Thyn is affeccoun of holinesse. And myn is love, as to a creature; For which I tolde thee myn aventure As to my cosin, and my brother sworn." The statement of Theseus proves this conclusively. Theseus promises to mate Emily with a winner, whichever wins a game at jousts, Palamon or Arcite. In courtly love convention, the concept of marriage is rejected as a sin against the god's law. Andreas declares: "It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry." The art of courtly love is modelled on the doctrine of Andreas. Chaucer's Merchant who is rich enough to be ranked with a knight celebrates married joys. He is, as the poet says, a "worthy" knight, but his sense of knighthood is low. He is of civic morality. Chaucer shows him to be an old man who is concerned with

sensual love and mutual agreement, although his young wife May is not in love with her husband. The Merchant says of mutual love that "The blisse which that is bitwixe hem tweye Ther may no tonge telle, or herte thinke. If he be povre, she helpeth him to swinke; She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a deel; Al that hir housbonde lust, hir lyketh weel; She seith not ones 'nay,' whan he seith 'ye.' 'Do this,' seith he; 'al redy, sir,' seith she. O blisful ordre of wedlok precious, Thou art so mery, and eek so vertuou, And so commended and appreeved eek, That every man that halt him worth a leek, Up-on his bare knees oghte al his lyf Thanken his god that him hath sent a wyf." The morality of the Merchant corresponds to that of the *Ménagier de Paris* in that, aside from sensual love, *Ménagier* makes of matrimony sacred and of mutual love splendid. Contrary to his praise of conjugal love, nevertheless, Chaucer is positive in denying married joys in *Lenvoy de Chaucer a Bukton*. He humorously advises Buckton to free himself from the bondage of married life, begging of him to read the Prologue to the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. We can not imagine that Chaucer's married life was happy. His wife Philippa was a court lady of John of Gaunt's second Duchess Constance whom the Duke, Chaucer's patron, had compassion on. To be sure, Chaucer may have spoken by the mouth of his Merchant an ideal of marriage he deemed worth defending. Yet, his good counsel to Buckton reverses the Merchant's praises of marriage. In view of Chaucer's words for the "wo that is in mariage" (he can find no authority for it), it seems unlikely that he believed that when God took Eve from Adam's side, He meant her for his companion. Says Chaucer: "And if that holy writ may nat suffyse, Experience shal thee teche, so may happe, That thee were lever to be take in Fryse Than eft to falle of wedding in the trappe." It seems possible to conjecture that he could not believe anything to be truths except for what he saw, heard and experienced. An early question to arise is whether to accept the chivalric and celestial ideals of love or to employ them for critical purposes. Which subject did he go for, ideal love conception or empirical knowledge? It is hard to say which.

In the *Parliament of Fowls* Chaucer maintains that he detaches himself from matters of love, by saying that he himself knows nothing of love except Love whom he read in old books. His claim is that he serves Love and knows well the art of courtly love to be practised. In like manner, he, again, claims the same thing of his loyalty to Love in the *Troilus*, Book I, 15ff.: "For I, that god of Loves servaunts serve, Ne dar to Love, for myn unlyknesse, Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfor sterve, So fer am I fro his help in derknesse; But nathelees, if this may doon gladnesse To any lover, and his cause avayle, Have he my thank, and myn be this travayle!" This detached attitude of his towards love recalls his love service as expressed in the *House of Fame*. The Eagle refers to Geoffrey's humble devotion to Love as follows: "Although that in thy hede ful lyte is—To make bokes, songes, dytees, In ryme, or elles in cadence, As thou best canst, in reverence of Love, and of his servants eke, That have his servise soght, and seke; And peynest thee to preyse his art, Although thou haddest never part." In seeking the tidings of love, presumably some scandal, of the court, however, he betrays his loyalty to Love. His avoidance of taking sides is another example of this kind of indifference to a question of love. His impartiality is a mere pretense; it is used as a device. Immediately after having put forward the claim that he was Love's servant, Chaucer acted contrary to his own claim of loyalty to him in the *Parliament*, 13—14: "I dar not seyn, his (love's) strokes been so sore, But God save swich a lord! I can no more." In line 160, he again says, by the mouth of Africanus, of himself that he ceased to be preoccupied

with love: "thou of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse." By contrasting the different ideals of love held by both "gentils" and "commons," he pretends to be a narrator. His *Parliament*, though drawn from sources like *Owl and the Nightingale*, is the birds' debate in which he is thought to have had any intention of making a fool of these two views on love. The standpoint of waterfowls, who stand for the merchant class, in "love of kinde," is of such a kind as to elude the understanding which the aristocratic audience gains of love. So, Chaucer puts into the mouth of the "gentil tercelet" the opprobrious words: "Now fy, cherl!... Thy (the goose's) kind is of so lowe a wrechednesse, That what love is, thou canst nat see ne gesse." The courtly audience for whom Chaucer composed his poems was composed of the members of the court and at the same time of the middle-class men who had been knighted. Many newly knighted men seem to have been incapable of appreciating the courtly ideal of love. They were sordid; their way of thinking was realistic. In his *Tale*, Chaucer's Franklin, having an understanding of the courtly ideal of love, praises the conjugal love which the code of courtly love rejects as ashamed. From the standpoint of the middle-class men, therefore, an unrequited love appears absolutely foolish and unbelievably absurd. As to divine love, Chaucer adopts both a sincere and at the same time skeptical attitudes to it. He brings up the problem of an after life in the Prologue to the *Legend*, doubts revealed truth by saying that no one has seen heaven or hell. But he states that he believes in what the Church teaches. In confirmation of his orthodoxy the Queen refers to his religious writings, such as "the Lyf of seynt Cecyle" and "Origenes upon the Maudeleyne," and to his translations, such as "Boece" and "of the Wreched Engendring of Mankinde." By analogy with the legends of God's saints, he composed those of Love's saints. In the G Prologue, however, he omits most of his adoration of the daisy analogous to the Christian worship of the Virgin. And the Queen suggested that he might be a renegade. To be sure, it can easily be imagined that Chaucer grew to doubt the ideal of love, whether courtly or religious. But in almost every case, when he introduces "vileins thoghtes" and "vileins kinde" into his poems, he speaks insidiously about them by the mouth of his characters, and he adopts an attitude of a narrator or an observer. In the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, he claims to be a reporter by saying that he must tell his readers what he saw or what he heard as he did it. He went, in a sense, beyond the limits of the conventions of ideal love, and came in contact with the human world of actuality. Indeed, he put himself among the Canterbury pilgrims, and depicted men and women of various classes of society. Nevertheless, he seems to put his distance from the real. Apart from the flesh-and-blood pilgrims, it seems likely that consideration is given to some pilgrims, such as the Knight and the Squire, the Clerk of Oxford and the Parson, the Yeoman and the Plowman. We cannot conceive of Chaucer's telling of them as they appeared to him. Those "good" pilgrims are not so much the very embodiments of the ideals of the classes of society to which they belong as human beings. Notwithstanding his claim of impartiality to his pilgrims, these idealized characters never seem to be the honest description of men of the actual world who are identical with these pilgrims. Thus, the kind of his favourite device of impartiality demands the social background of those ideals of love, courtly and divine alike.

II

Mary is adored as a source of chivalrous virtues. She inspires respect in gentle folk. Whether or not Edward III bore himself well hoping to stand in some lady's grace at the battles, land and sea, which he gained brilliant victories over his enemies, he had reverence for the Virgin from whom "gentillesse" is believed to come. In 1350 he founded the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary Graces to celebrate victories by land and by sea. He is said to have been in love, at that time, with Joan (later Joan of Kent), and he instituted the Order of the Garter in association with the old story which told how the King picked up a garter of Joan who dropped off at a ball in Calais, and how he bound the blue ribbon round his knee. His son Edward, the Black Prince, was known as a lover who was devoted to the same Joan and taken her to wife after her husband, Sir Thomas Holland had died in 1360. There is no evidence to show that his love for her is considered to have heightened his bravery in successful battles. Conspicuous for their courtesy which was extended to the enemy are both King Edward and his son the Black Prince. Aided by Queen Philippa in a plea for mercy, the King dealt leniently with the people of Calais, when the French, after having stood a siege of nearly a year, surrendered the town to the English. Much is written by Froissart in praise of his hospitality to enemy prisoners. It seems likely that the Black Prince was less courteous to his enemy prisoners, yet he offered the hospitality to the Spanish prisoners taken at Najera, although Peter the Cruel, an ally of the Black Prince, had ordered many of them to be executed. Praise is bestowed on his brother John of Gaunt who fought nobly in the victorious campaign of Najera. But he did not surpass, it is said, the Black Prince in his war-making ability. It is certain that in the latter half of the war with France, when he went on an expedition to France, the English was fighting losing battles, and he could not distinguish himself in the war. It is unknown that some lady like Blanche inspired Gaunt with courage. Like Edward III and the Black Prince (it is said that young Edward III was voted to Philippa and took her into marriage), Gaunt must have loved Blanche, have done her honour and served her, and so she seems to have taken him for "hir housbonde," giving him "al hooly the noble yift of hir mercy." A marriage for love was thus the characteristic of courtly love in the English court. Marriage was reconciled with courtship. For Blanche who was devoted to Mary Chaucer is said to have composed his *ABC*. The Duchess Blanche, "goode faire White," must have been a lady from whom "every man may take of light Ynogh." But Gaunt would hardly have viewed her as a living god. The wife of the Black Knight is referred to as "My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf, Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blisse, My worldes welfare and my lisse." Gaunt makes a pass at any lady; he was also full of resources. Gaunt's conduct gave rise to scandals. Rumour was prevailing in court ladies that, immediately after having married Constance of Castile (1372), he openly maintained Katherine Swynford, Chaucer's sister-in-law, who cared for his daughters, and on a formal occasion he was accompanied by her, not by his wife. He is said to have made a favourite of a woman that attracted man. In 1396, when his second wife Constance died, and he married Katherine, it was noised abroad that he married with left hand. He made his children he had had with her legitimate. Therefore, it is not altogether without reason to suppose that the reason why Chaucer left his *House of Fame* unfinished was that the love tidings of court were concerned with the scandal of this kind. He is said to have poisoned a sister of his first wife Blanche for the purpose of seizing her

inheritance. His conduct raised a doubt as to his royal birth. He was open to suspicion. The story on the subject of his birth was invented, it is said, by William Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, who was Gaunt's episcopal opponent. At the Black Prince's inspiration, he had a preponderating influence in the government until 1371. After about 1362 King Edward indulged in pleasure, entrusted clerical ministers with the affairs of the realm. Viewed from national benefits, on the other hand, Gaunt, conservative as he was, objected to the clerical administration. Clerical ministers headed by the prelates like Wykeham and Thomas Brantingham, Bishop of Exeter, had amassed their wealth at the expense of the King. The clergy had never shared in the expenses of French war. Nevertheless, the clergy, both monastic and secular, accepted the papal taxation. The Commons, who wished to continue to supply for the war, chiefly by reason of their trade and commerce, in support of the Lords' claim, declared the clergy's share in war expenses, although their share was not fulfilled till 1381. The King paid his army for his wars; both knights and soldiers fought at daily wages. The knights of the day had already ceased to render knight service to their lords in return for land tenure. As the knights already came to devote more of their time to manorial administration and hunting, the rich landowners and the wealthy merchants were knighted and used for public offices in place of knights. Their wealth enabled them to rank among the knights Langland says of the rich landowners, franklins, as follows: "To make lordes of laddes· of londe that he wynneth, And fre men foule thralles· that folweth nought his lawes. The luwes, that were gentil-men· Iesu thei dispised, Bothe his lore and his lawe· now ar thei lowe cherlis. As wyde as the worlde is· wonyeth there none But vnder tribut and taillage· as tykes and cherles. And tho that bicomme Crysten· by conseil of the baptiste, Aren frankeleynes, fre men· thorw fullyng that thei toke, And gentel-men with Iesu· for Iesus was yfulled, And vppon Caluarye on crosse· ycrouned kynge of Iewes." Sir Robert Knolles, who distinguished himself in French war, is said to have come of the humblest stock. In spite of the unstinted praise given by Froissart to King Edward and the Black Prince, it was rather their paid yeomen archers who had been recruited from husbandmen that battled against heavy odds and brought the French cavalry to submission, at the battles of Crecy and Poitiers. King Edward instituted the Order of the Garter, and on the other hand, encouraged the people to archery as well. Archery was not a knightly accomplishment. The ideal of chivalry, feudal and religious, on which based the ideal of courtly love, was on the decline. Far from aiding the common people in sowing and reaping, the knights were aided by them with money and war potential. Again, they were not far from defenders of the Church, they were aggressors. Even the Black Prince made a raid into Limoges, and massacred the whole townsfolk, turning a deaf ear to women and children who pleaded for mercy for him and spoke in praise of his knighthood. Thus, Langland persuades, presumably the neglectful knight to do his duty: "I (Piers) schal swynken and sweten· and sowen for us bothe, And eke labre for thi loue· al my lyf-tyme, In couenaunt that thou (a knight) kepe· holi chirche and my-seluen From wastors and wikkede men· that wolden vs destruyen." The decline of knighthood was hastened by the rise of the middle classes whose ways of life and of thinking were contrary to those of the upper classes. The bourgeois based their ideas on the real conditions. Their practicality gained them distinction. The merchants and franklins were sordid and very calculating even if they aspired to chivalrous ideas. The merchant, like Chaucer's Merchant, preoccupied with "thencrees of his winning," must have sold, bought, and lent

money at an usurious rate of interest; as is seen in Chaucer's Franklin, the franklin also seems to have respected the value of money and sensual pleasure. These sordid bourgeois supplied the King with what he needed. The King got from wealthy merchants the loan of the huge amount of money with which the King hired an army and trading vessels. The English warships of the day comprised the mercantile marine which merchants put at the King's service. In 1378, when the English coast stood on the brink of an enemy raid with the result of Gaunt's unsuccessful naval campaign off Malo, Sir John Philpot, a prominent grocer of London, equipped a fleet at his own money, captured a Scottish pirate named John the Mercer and fifteen French and Castilian ships. He recaptured all the English vessels lost on Scarborough and the Isle of Wight. The King again obtained from franklins a constant supply of soldiers recruited from among counties. Such men of the middle classes as these were rewarded with various monopolies and governmental offices. A franklin like Sir John Bussy, a wealthy landowner of Lincolnshire, who was a model, it is suggested, for Chaucer's Franklin, served as justice of the peace, as sheriff, and represented his county in Parliament. The citizens and burgesses were rather reluctant to sit in Parliament, but were as influential as any of knights and franklins. The Commons, who were franklins and citizens, as the century progressed, obtained the floor. The wealthier merchants, especially, whose co-operation the King needed, accommodated him with money and exercised considerable influence in national and municipal affairs. Of the "chyuesauce" of money and dishonest commerce Langland says: "Ich (Repentance) have ylent to lordes and to ladies· that lovede me neuere after. Ich have mad meny a knyght· bote mercer and draper, Payede neuere for here prentishode· nauht a payre gloues; That chaffar· ed with my chyuesauce· cheuede selde after. . . . With false wordes and wittes· ich have wonne my goodes, And with gyle and glosynge· gadered that ich haue, Meddled my marchaundise· and mad a good moustre; The werst lay with·ynne· a gret wit ich let hit." William de la Pole, a wool merchant of Hull, bought the rank of knighthood, and his son Michael became Earl of Suffolk. Their wealth raised the Earl to chancellery in 1383-1386. Richard Lyons, a wool merchant of London, advanced large sums to King Edward. He could afford to buy the office of the Calais staple. Likewise, Nicholas Brembre, a wealthy London fishmonger, and William Walworth, a prosperous London grocer, rose to attain the mayoralty and collectorship in the service of King Richard. Chaucer was acquainted with Brembre and Walworth at the Customs. Wealthy men of the kind are thought to have counted among Chaucer's audience. King Richard seems to have deemed the courtly ideal of love worth cherishing and uplifting. It is doubtful, however, to what degree such courtiers as these who are said to be "unsad and ever untrewē," and "Ay undiscreet and chaunging as a vane" could appreciate the courtly ideal of love by its high standard. In 1394 Froissart revisited King Richard court at the remembrance of the happiest days in King Edward's court (where Queen Philippa maintained him as her secretary), but he observed that chivalry was not the same now as in the times of King Edward and Queen Philippa. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the city aristocrats who were in good circumstances and human in thinking were able to see or guess what love was. As is shown in the *Parliament*, they must have taken love as a passion for the other sex, not as an act of ennoblement of the mind. Actuated by the justification of his physical gratification, Chaucer's Merchant took May as a wife. Chaucer's Franklin also possesses a bourgeois ideal of the mutual love in a married life; this thriving landholder whose "twenty pound worth lond" enabled him to rank

among the knights has no relish, as he says, for the gay science, although he expects from his son, presumably a squire the "gentillesse" which the Squire learned and acquired. Ancestrally inherited "gentillesse" is nothing to be proud of; "gentillesse" can be acquired through good manners and good morals. Says Chaucer's Franklin: "fy on possessioun But-if a man be vertuouus with-al." To do good deeds brings men nearer to God. It is considered to come from Him as is said in *the Wife of Bath's Tale*: "gentillesse cometh fro god allone; Than comth our verray gentillesse of grace, It was no-thing biquethe us with our place." But the religious and courtly ideal in manners and morals was too lofty; it could scarcely be realized. Moreover, its decadence was caused by the ideal of the material prosperity of the sordid bourgeois men. It seems likely, therefore, that rich men as these were many of them unbelieving in "auctoritees," and "trouthe." As Gower complains: "Car bien scievont, qui multiploie En ceste vie de monoie Il ad au meinz du corps l'onour: Dont un me disoit l'autre jour, Cil qui puet tenir la doulcour De ceste vie et la desvoie, A son avis ferroit folour, Q'apres ce nuls sciet la verroure, Quen part aler ne quelle voie."

The prosperous middle-class men came to wield an influence over men of every class of society. Money worked a lot of influence with men. *Money, Money!* says: "Aboue all thing thou arte a kyng, and rulyst the world over all; who lakythe the, all Ioy, parde, wyll sone then frome hym ffall." Men like Langland and Gower consider the rich men to exert terribly baneful influence upon men. Viewed from a moral standpoint, as a matter of course, they denounce the merchants as the faithless. Langland, following the medieval ideal of the basic orders of society, is strict with the merchants who brought about a new social order: "Marchauntz in the margyne· hadden many yeres, Ac none a pena et a culpa· the pope nolde hem graunte, For thei holde nought her halidayes· as holi cherche techeth, And for thei swere by her soule· and 'so god moste hem helpe,' Agein clene conscience· her catel to selle." For lack of knights, the King paid his army the money he borrowed of wealthy merchants for the French war. The knights of the day were reluctant to perform knight service, civil or active, in return for land tenure. The king adopted the indenture system. The knights on active service were paid at the rate of 2s a day. They, if bannerets, received 4s a day. They fought so long as they were paid. The chivalrous feudalism degenerated into a bastard one; the pride of warriors was no longer confined to the knightly classes. The farm labourers, free and bond, took part in the chivalrous glory won by the knights like Edward III or the Black Prince. It is not too much to say that the soldiers recruited from the husbandry formed the main force of the King's army. The soldiers of various types, consisting of the yeomen archers, mounted and dismounted, the lightly armed men and the foot men, when judged according to G. Wrottesley's estimate, numbered more than 11,000 out of about 14,000 men who were joined in the battle of Crecy. The tactical combination of the archers and the men-at-arms proved of service to the French cavalry charges in the successful battle of Crecy. Exceptions are made as when men like Sir Robert Knollys or Sir Thomas Dagwarth, who gallantly fought on battlefields, were ranked with knights. It seems possible that the agrarian soldiers took merit to themselves for their exploits "as a lyon on to loke and lordeliche of speche" in the words of Langland. *Piers the Plowman* says: "Baldest of beggeres· a bostour that nought hath, In towne and in tavernes· Tales to telle, And segge thinge that he nevere seigh· and for soth sweren it: Of dedes that he nevere dyd· demen and bosten, And of werkes that he wel dyd· witnesse and seggen— 'Lo! if ye leve me nought· or

that I lye wenen, Axeth at hym or at hym· and he you can telle, What I suffred and seighe· and some tymes hadde, And what I couth and knewe· and what kynne I come of.'” The peasant conditions of life were rapidly changing; the war with France and the Black Death caused great changes in the peasantry. A shortage of agricultural labour was followed by the repeated visitations of the pestilence. Many of the bondmen who were bound to the soil came to work the demesne-lands in return for money wages. And they demanded higher wages. These free labourers demarcated serfs; many serfs were transformed into free labourers. From the Church's point of view of servitude Langland finds it matter for complaint that labourers were trying to demand higher wages: “but-if he (a labourer) be heighlich huyred· ellis wil he chyde, And... greueth hym ageines god· and gruccheth ageines resoun, And thanne curseth he the kynge· and al his conseille after, Suche lawes to loke· laboreres to greue.... Ac I warne yow, werkemen· wynneth while ye mowe, For Hunger hiderward· hasteth hym faste, He shal awake with water· wastoures to chaste.” Men who were to be delivered by churchmen from sins were less blamable, but the servants of the Church who had to save the secular world from sins were past redemption. Many of churchmen themselves committed the sins against which they warned men. The priests and prelates were too busily occupied with sinful worldliness to “be in devocion of preinyng,” and to think “of hevenely thingis, and of here owene synnys and othere mennys, and studie and prechyng of the gospel, and vityng and confortyng of pore men in here discisis and lordischipis.” They accumulated their wealth; they took delight in pleasure. They were a subject for satire. They cared nothing for their spiritual duties. Some of them served the King as administrators and did not attend to their dioceses. They were no better than lay lords. Langland complains: “Bisshopes and bachilers... lye in Londone· in lentene, and elles. Somme serueu the kynge· and hus seluer tellen.” Not parish priests are protection from his complaint: “Persones and parsheprestes· pleynede to the bisshop, That hure parshens ben poorre· sitthe the pestelence tyme, To haue licence and leue· in Londone to dwelle, And synge ther for symonye· for seluer ys swete.” Many parsons of the day went to London to take an easy employment in the chantries established by noblemen and wealthy merchants. Indeed, avarice was the root of all evils. Langland calls for the performance of churchmen's spiritual duties on old Church line: “A medecyne mote ther-to· that may amende prelates, That sholden preye for the pees· possessioun hem letteth, Take her landes... and let hem lyue by dymes. If possessioun be poysoun· and inparifit hem make, Good were to dischargen hem· for holicherche sake, And purgen hem of poysoun· or more perile falle· Yif presthod were parfit· the peple sholde amende, That contrarien Crystes lawe· and Crystendome dispise.”

(昭和45年9月30日受理)