

THREE PATTERNS OF THOUGHT:
A METHOD OF CLASSIFYING THE MIDDLE ENGLISH LYRICS

A Thesis
Submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Léa M. Wood
April, 1974

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	i
CHAPTER I.....	1
CHAPTER II.....	21
CHAPTER III.....	49
CHAPTER IV.....	80
CONCLUSION.....	110
NOTES.....	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	123

ABSTRACT

Past criticism of the Middle English lyrics has tended to show them as diverse and unconnected. This thesis is an attempt to find a method of classifying the lyrics which excludes none and which reveals important relationships between them. In order to do this, the attitudes toward life expressed in the lyrics have been identified and set in the context of the thought of the period.

The history of thought shows that in the Middle Ages three distinct and mutually exclusive views of life resulted from the application of three ideals to the world of experience. The origins and development of these views can be traced through early European history. The first originated in one aspect of Christ's attitude toward the world, but became distorted when used as a guide for life. The second began in pagan times and continued, almost unchanged, into the Christian era. The third had its origin in a second, complementary yet conflicting, aspect of Christ's attitude toward the world, and was enriched in its working out in experience. The three attitudes are exemplified in the writings and to some extent in the lives of three groups of people who were influential in mediaeval England: the first in the homilists, the second in the troubadours and vagabond poets, the third in the mystics. On the basis of their writings, each view is examined in detail with regard to its various elements. Each has a characteristic vision of history, the natural world, and mankind.

The three views of life are seen to provide a system of classification for the lyrics, since each lyric reflects elements of a single view and none combines aspects of more than one attitude.

CHAPTER I

The Middle English lyrics are a group of writings by many poets, which stretch from the early thirteenth century to the late fifteenth, three hundred of the most interesting and important years in European history. Because they encompass so much time, and because the identity of many of the poets is unknown, much of the fascination which they hold for casual readers and scholars alike is due to their diversity. Some of the lyrics are great poetry, some are not; subject matter, themes, form, structure, images and technique differ greatly from one lyric to another; the variety of tone, ranging from serious to playful to satirical, suggests that the poets represented a wide spectrum of mediaeval society with regard to both personality and class. The lyrics are, then, in many ways, a pot-pourri, a fragmentary, if vivid, assortment of poems.

Faced with this fact, most critics have chosen to deal with the lyrics by discussing them according to arbitrary and limiting criteria: Gray discusses religious lyrics which contain particular themes and images;¹ Weber looks at those which reflect the form and structure of the Catholic liturgy;² Dronke attempts to fit the whole corpus of lyrics into a patterned chronological development.³ All of these approaches are valuable, and aid considerably in coming to an understanding of the complexity of artistry to be found in the lyrics. They fail, however, to show any real unifying theme in the lyrics.

Like all literature, the lyrics, while organic and self-contained

works of art which may be discussed according to the precepts of the New Critics, grew out of a particular time and place, and reflect the attitudes of their authors toward the world in which they lived, the people with whom they shared it, and the situations and events which shaped and defined it. These attitudes, or views, were formed by a combination of abstract ideals and worldly experience. Every man has an ideal according to which he lives and judges the world around him, an ideal which is strengthened, tempered or changed when applied to the world of experience. What view of life will result from the interaction of one particular ideal and one particular event cannot be predicted scientifically; many attitudes are possible, depending upon the class, personality and general tenor of mind of the person or persons who hold the former and react to the latter.

In each age, however, there are certain ideals which capture the imagination of a great number of people, and which, in combination with the political, social, theological and philosophical events which contribute to the history of the time, result in certain recognizable views of the world. Three such mutually exclusive views can be seen reflected in the Middle English lyrics. Each of these views is a development originating in an ideal vision, religious or secular, and in the striving of those who held it toward that ideal. The ideal of the first view was Christian. It saw the world as less perfect than heaven, but less perfect only in the sense of not yet having attained perfection; the world could, according to this ideal, be perfected and redeemed through the teachings and sacraments of Christianity. The second ideal was secular. It concerned itself with the workings and ends of the natural cycle, and aimed toward harmony between man and

this cycle. The third ideal, like the first, was Christian, but its aim was very different: it looked toward no less than complete union with the Godhead. Beside this goal, the world seemed a paltry thing, something to be used, or left behind, as the case might be, in order to rise more quickly to heaven.

Each of these ideals had some advantage to offer its followers. The first, while not denying the importance of ultimate salvation, sought to improve the quality of life on earth by ordering it according to Christian principles and by uniting individuals into a homogeneous Christian society. The second, totally unconcerned with the distant possibility of heaven, offered its followers fulfillment in the present by encouraging them to take what pleasure they could from daily life. The third, by attempting to rid the individual of the desire for earthly and bodily things, offered a freedom of the soul from the body which would enable it to reach more easily up to God.

The ideals, then, are quite straightforward and easily differentiated from one another. The Middle English lyrics were not, however, the works of men concerned with codifying abstract ideals; they were expressions of the thoughts and emotions of men who were caught up in the process of living, men whose ideals had been affected, whether in a positive or a negative way, by the events around them and by the practical demands of daily life. When the three ideals discussed above were used as guides for life, they underwent changes, in some cases so radical that the resulting views of life almost totally obscured the original ideals. It is therefore necessary to trace the development and changes in the ideals as they were taken out of the realm of the abstract and put into that of concrete experience.

It must also be noted that, because these three views developed and co-existed at the same places in the same period of time, there occurred among them a certain amount of interaction, both conflicting and cooperative. Each view can be seen, in some instances, to be a reaction against one of the others, and each also shares some characteristics with the others. These differences and similarities serve to define each of the world views more completely, and contributed to the complexity of their origins and development.

In order to follow the ideals through their complicated transformations into the views of life seen in the lyrics, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of mediaeval society as a whole--the types and classes of people of which it was constituted, its main institutions, and the chief movements and conflicts which formed it. The views both affected, and were affected by, the events of Western history: they were held by people in power, and can therefore be seen reflected in many policies and movements which were important in the shaping of political and religious structures; but they can also be seen in the reactions of the powerless men who were affected by these policies. The early history of Western Europe was, in a sense, the working out of three ideals in the world of politics, economics, morality and religion; in this working out, the effectiveness of each ideal was revealed.

Western history up to the Middle Ages may be seen as falling into three main periods: from the death of Christ in 33 A. D. to the disappearance of the Empire in the West in 476; from 476 to the crowning of Charlemagne in 800; and from 800 to 1350. In each of these periods, the three ideals discussed above were present and developing, and a

short survey of these developments provides a basis for understanding the state of affairs, as regards the three views of life, in the Middle Ages.

The appearance of the first ideal can be traced back to Christ himself, according to G. B. Russell:

Jesus was ambivalent in his attitude toward the world, sometimes appearing to accept it with the hope of reforming it, in the tradition of orthodox Judaism, and sometimes appearing to reject it utterly, in the tradition of dualism. From the former attitude derives the spirit of order and the notion that Christ came to found a Church that would bring about Christian order in the world; from the latter comes the spirit of prophecy and the determination to cast down and shatter the illusions of this world in order to penetrate immediately to the Kingdom of God.⁴

The former attitude, which Russell calls the spirit of order, was the basis for the first ideal to be discussed here. Christ endorsed this ideal when he chose for himself twelve apostles, and appointed Peter head of the Church. This early ecclesiastical structure was carried on and expanded later, when deacons and other Church functionaries were appointed.

The early Church arose in the Roman empire, and its structure very closely approximated the Roman civic structure.⁵ Because of this, Romans came to see Christianity as a political rival, and "the government . . . invoked the ban against unlicensed associations in order to subject them to more or less continuous persecution, a mere 'confession of the name' being accepted as tantamount to treason."⁶ These fears had some basis in fact:

It is, indeed, true that Christianity never preached or advocated the forcible overthrow of the Roman order. None the less, it regarded that order as doomed to extinction by reason of its inherent deficiencies, and it confidently anticipated the period of its dissolution as a prelude to the establishment of the earthly sovereignty of Christ.⁷

Christianity was not alone in its belief that the tyranny present in Roman government must end:

For, vital as had appeared the earlier differences between Christianity and Classicism, both were agreed in asserting, in some sense, the indefeasible rights of personality. Accordingly, in their common opposition to the new despotism, the Church and what was left of the older republicanism discovered at last the basis of a possible rapprochement. And in Constantine they found a champion who was prepared to exploit their hostility thereto.⁸

Constantine's Edict of Milan of 313 A. D. revoked all persecutions of the Christians, and gave them full citizens' rights. This signalled a new period in the Church--one of new power, but also of new problems.

Human aspirations and hypocrisy had always been present within the Church, but they became more evident and important when Christianity gained social acceptance. They took two basic forms: the lust for wealth and the desire for power. When the Edict of Milan gave the Church status as a corporation, allowing it to accept legacies and gifts, some of the clergy, reflecting Judas' concern for money, set about acquiring it in irregular and immoderate ways:

In order to maintain themselves and to raise money for charitable purposes, the clergy had traditionally conducted small business enterprises; but now, owing to the immense expansion of their revenues, they had evidently begun to invest on a considerable scale, and a canon of the Nicene Council . . . threatened to unfrock any ecclesiastic found guilty of usury.⁹

The problem of power and authority, which had also existed in the early Church, also became a central concern. It had been the basis of the

quarrel among the Apostles over who would be chiefest among them in the Kingdom of Heaven. It could also be seen in the rivalry between Constantinople and Alexandria regarding the control of the temporal Church, and in the refusal of Montanus, in the second century, to accept the authority of the bishops. Now, however, authority became an external, as well as an internal, problem. Under Constantine, it seemed possible for the first time that Christianity could, rather than necessarily standing outside politics, be instrumental in reforming them and establishing a Christian commonwealth. This was not as easy as it seemed in theory. Politically, the alignment of the Church with Constantine resulted in "that peculiar mixture of pagan humanitarianism and Christian sentiment which goes by the name of Christian socialism, a compound in which the real virtues of either element are largely neutralized by the other."¹⁰

Constantine, while sincere in his ideals, interpreted Christ's teachings quite loosely in an attempt to preserve as much as possible of the Roman social structure. The practical result was that the Church became more secular, rather than society becoming truly Christianized. In 476 A. D., the Church reacted to this situation and dealt with some of its internal problems as well. Cochrane clearly develops the social implications of the Council of Nicaea:

. . . with a characteristic disregard for the logic of the situation, [Constantine] undertook the functions of a Christian Pontifex Maximus, a pagan title which he continued to hold--the part, in fact, which he had endeavoured to play in relation to the Donatist schism. With the rise of the Arian controversy, however, he was to be apprised of specific features of Christianity which distinguished it from any pagan cult, at the same time giving to it a peculiarly intractable character. These developments were to occur in connexion with the Council of Nicaea, the deliberations of which served to

indicate that, in the organized Church, the empire was confronted not merely with a 'corporation', a creature of the state, but with a co-ordinate, if not superior, spiritual power.¹¹

After the Council of Nicaea, the Roman empire began to decline seriously. Constantine's attempt to save imperial authority by allying it with Christianity did not succeed in checking the internal decay of the empire, and it was unable to withstand the attacks of the barbarians. The Goths had been evangelized previously by Ulfilas, so that their victory did not signal a loss of influence on the part of the Church. Quite the opposite, the Church Christianized the barbarians, educated them, and imposed upon them Classical ideals of government.

During this same period of time, the second, or pagan, ideal existed alongside the Christian ideal of order. While there was a general repudiation of heathen beliefs made by the early Church fathers like Origen, Tertullian and Clement, many "Christian" sects still existed which advocated practices and beliefs strongly indebted to paganism. Under Constantine, these sects, as well as Roman paganism, were condemned as heresies and made illegal. These measures did not have the desired effect, for in many cases, the conversion to Christianity necessitated was outward only. Eusebius commented upon this:

'The most conspicuous quality of Constantine', he declares, 'was that of benevolence. On this account he was frequently imposed upon by the violence of rapacious and unprincipled men who preyed upon all classes of society alike, and by the scandalous hypocrisy of those who wormed their way into the Church, assuming the name, without the character, of Christians.'¹²

Paganism still existed, if only under the social cover of Christianity.

Also present was the third ideal, which Russell calls the spirit

of prophecy, and which, beginning with Christ, led to the "determination to cast down and shatter the illusions of this world in order to penetrate immediately to the Kingdom of God."¹³ It was this ideal which can be seen in the desire of the Apostles to hide away from society in a room before Pentecost. St. Paul, in his "preaching the kingdom",¹⁴ was also aware of the discrepancy between the world and the Kingdom of God, as can be seen in many of his words:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit which is from God¹⁵

and

But with me it is a very small thing that I should
be judged by you or by any human court. I do not
even judge myself. . . .It is the Lord who judges me.¹⁶

By the second century, the Kingdom of God had become a totally eschatological idea for many Christians, who saw their only hope as coming after death. Tertullian spoke in this way during the time of the persecutions of Christians:

'For, if we think of the world itself as a prison, we
realize that to enter Caesar's prison is to become free.
. . . To you, who are outside society, it is of no
consequence what you are in society.'¹⁷

The third ideal resulted in the origin of Christian monasticism in the third century by St. Anthony. While Anthony was responding to Christ's words, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me",¹⁸ others may have had different reasons for following Anthony's example:

This movement, which had already begun in the later third century, was to attain enormous proportions during the fourth, its growth having no doubt been stimulated by the desire of earnest men to escape from the projected Caesaro-papism of the New Republic.¹⁹

With the decline of the Roman Empire in the West, the Church also found itself subject to lay influence in many areas:

Monasteries and bishoprics were founded, and bishops and abbots were appointed by lay rulers without hindrance or objection; councils were summoned by kings; kings and bishops legislated for their local churches about tithes, ordeals, Sunday observance, penance; saints were raised to the altars--all without reference to Rome. Each bishop acted as an independent repository of faith and discipline. They sought whatever advice was available from scholars and neighbouring bishops, but in the last resort they had to act on their own initiative. The legal complications which were made for their guidance were the work of local compilers. The majority of papal letters during this period simply confirmed and approved what others had done.²⁰

In reaction to this diffusion of its power, the Church attempted, like Constantine, an alliance between Christian and temporal authority, by crowning Charlemagne, the strongest of the barbarian kings, as Emperor. The idea of the Emperor as the vicar of Christ, which sprang from this event, made the competition for spiritual power more complicated than ever, and the Church was several centuries in establishing its supremacy over secular rulers.

Meanwhile, the pagan ideal continued to survive within a spreading Christian empire. If Constantine did not succeed in quelling heathenism, neither did his successors. Theodosius carried on a severe campaign against heresies of all kinds, in which heretics and apostates were made intestable and lost all personal privileges. But as before, "while . . . under governmental pressure, the empire rapidly shed the trappings of secularism to assume those of Christianity, it remained at heart profoundly pagan and was, to that extent, transformed merely into a whited sepulchre."²¹

Wherever possible, the Church attempted to convert pagan buildings

and rites to Christian uses; many pagan temples, for example, became Christian churches, and pagan festivals were celebrated on the nearest Christian holiday. These practices resulted, especially in Northern Europe, in a survival of the pagan nature worship within Christianity.

While the first and second ideals were thus becoming enmeshed with one another, the monastic life quietly developed. Sts. Honoratius and Columbanus founded monasteries, but St. Benedict (c.480-c.547) was to have the greatest influence upon the development of the third ideal. His rule for monastic life became the standard for all European monasteries. Its great impact was largely due to Charlemagne's ambitious, though ultimately unaccomplished, scheme to unify all of the monasteries in his domain by applying the Benedictine rule universally.²²

At first, monasteries were basically places where religious men led a hermit-like existence, and they provided a refuge for those who held the third ideal in a half-pagan, half-Christian world. Between the time of Benedict and that of Charlemagne, however, the function of monastic life underwent a change:

. . . monks, from being a class of non-social individuals, became a class of 'twice-born' Christians, interceding for the rest of mankind with God and representing the only clear way of salvation. The majority were now in orders, at least by middle life, and were on the way to becoming a branch of the clerical estate. . . . The liturgy was greatly increased in bulk and in solemnity, as the monks adored God vicariously for contemporaries 'in the world'. The 'monastic centuries' had begun.²³

By 800 A. D., Europe was full of large monastic centres, and out of these was to come the new spiritualization of Christianity in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

During the final period, the struggle for supremacy between the Church and secular authorities developed and came to a head. The battle began in earnest in 1075, when Gregory VII began the famous Quarrel of Investitures by stating in his Dictatus Papae that the Pope was no longer to be chosen, either directly or indirectly, by those in secular power, but that the Pope had authority to depose an Emperor. He justified this on the grounds that the Church took its authority from a higher source: "kingly power was invented by human pride; the power of bishops is established by divine compassion."²⁴ Later, Innocent III took the idea even further, stating that the Pope was "above all princes, since it belongs to him to judge them."²⁵ His successors, Innocent IV and Boniface VIII, said that Christendom ought to be, and must be, a theocratic society--that the Church must have the final word in both religious and secular matters.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, the papacy had won the battle in theory, but the victory was very shallow in practice:

The primitive rulers of Europe before the twelfth century had depended on their almost unrestricted control of ecclesiastical appointments for many advantages. . . . Naturally they viewed with apprehension the loss of these privileges. But by a slow process of adjustment they discovered that they had been unnecessarily alarmed. . . . more than ever before they could use ecclesiastical wealth to finance the growing activity of secular government. . . . Certainly there was nothing very corrupt in what had happened during these years, but secular motives were everywhere uppermost and everywhere prevailed. We can understand why many contemporaries were beginning to think that the church was a conspiracy between secular and ecclesiastical authorities for the exploitation of ecclesiastical wealth, and that the pope as the head of this conspiracy was in fact anti-Christ. These views were not yet very influential, but they were disturbing. And they were destined to grow.²⁶

The Church's involvement in secular life gave rise, therefore, to a

view of the world as corrupt and corrupting. The attempt by the Church to follow the first ideal, to redeem the world through and for Christ, had resulted in a view of the world very different from--in fact, the exact opposite of--the ideal out of which it had sprung.

The second ideal, on the other hand, did not experience such radical changes, partly perhaps because it was much less complicated and adaptable to begin with. For the pagan, life was a striving after joy rather than after virtue, and happiness itself was seen as the supreme good. Nature ruled over the pagan world, and men sought to follow her laws, just as the Christian strove to obey those of his God. The values and ends of the powers were very different: whereas the Christian was most concerned with the spirit, morality, future reward for man, and salvation, Nature offered the body, amorality, present joy and fertility. As a result, the two ideals were opposed.

In practice, however, there was a great deal of contact between them in the lives of mediaeval men. The nominal Christianity which had begun in the Roman empire was still present in the Middle Ages. Even in church, people often could not wholly forget profane interests and occupations,

Sometimes . . . [the people] . . . say to the priest, "Let us out of church quickly, because one of our friends is having a banquet, and we have to rush off thither!" If, to be sure, a sermon, which concerns the soul's salvation, is due to be given, they strive to prevent it, with various excuses, saying, "The day has gone!" . . . and such like, or, at least, they are annoyed. In truth, if by no possible means they can escape from staying a brief hour in the church, then they spend the short time there in empty gossip, and unprofitable chattering, heedless that the House of God is the House of Prayer. But afterwards, away to dinner and the tavern; no hurrying in this fashion there. Rather do some spin out the rest of the day, even far into the night, eating and drinking, as though celebrating a feast.²⁷

The church often served several secular functions: lovers met there, ladies and gentlemen showed off their newest clothing, people slept before and after bouts of drinking, and others listened to the sermon only in the hope of hearing the preacher make a mistake which they could "repeat . . . again and again with glee."²⁸

Such a lack of respect for the clergy, although deplorable, was understandable in the light of the example which they set for the people. Some of the clergy went themselves to the pub²⁹ and the brothel after their religious duties were over for the day, and the people were aware of this. Yet these same priests could be found in the pulpit on Sunday, preaching to their congregations against sinful desires. They were clad in rich robes, yet preached holy poverty. This kind of hypocrisy bred dissatisfaction and cynicism in the people, as can be seen in a political poem of the period:

Ye poope-holy prestis full of presoncion,
With your wyde furryd hodes, voyd of discrecioun,
Unto your owyn prechyng of contrary condicioun,
Which causeth the people to have lesse devocioun!³⁰

Even those who could forgive such behaviour on the part of the clergy, and who still clung to the truths of their religion, had other problems:

. . . by the end of the seventh century, ordinary uneducated people no longer understood Latin; and the ignorance of many priests was such that they were unable not only to understand but even to recite the words properly. . . . Further, the growing wealth and prestige of the clergy persuaded them to emphasize the separation between them and the people. . . . In large churches, a choir and even a choir screen separated the congregation from the altar, rendering the service sometimes invisible as well as unintelligible.³¹

So dissatisfied did the people become with the situation as it was, that during a sermon by Berthold of Ragensburg, in which he was berating his parishioners for their poor behaviour, one woman cried out, "Yea,

Brother Berthold, but we understand not the Mass, and therefore can we not pray as we had need, nor may we feel such devotion as if we understood the Mass."³² Such dissatisfaction and cynicism might, and did, breed revolt; some people, realizing the falsity of some of the clergy, began to doubt even the teachings of the Church, and saw in the second view of life, if not more answers to ultimate questions, at least more integrity.

The profane view of life was not, however, merely a reaction against the first view; it existed separate from it, and was an alternative to it rather than an offshoot from it. The secular life of the Middle Ages was full and varied, and much of it was geared toward providing fun, relaxation and entertainment. There was a love of sports and gaming of all kinds:

Every year . . . at Shrovetuesday, . . . the schoole boyes do bring Cockes of the game to their Master, and all the forenoone delight themselves in Cockfighting: after dinner all the youthes go into the fields to play at the bal. . . . Every Fryday in Lent a fresh company of young men comes into the field on horsebacke, and the best horsm[a]n conducteth the rest. . . . In the holy dayes all the Somer the youths are exercised in leaping, dancing, shooting, wrastling, casting the stone, and practising their shields: the Maidens trip in their Timbrels, and daunce as long as they can well see. In Winter, every holy day before dinner, the Boares prepared for brawne are set to fight, or else Bulls and Beares are bayted.³³

Festivals were held as often as possible. Many of these were celebrations of pagan events--Mayday, midsummer's eve, harvest, the New Year--but others, as seen in the above quotation, were Christian. No matter what the reason for a festival, pagan or religious, it was anything but sober, including such pastimes as drinking, gambling, and intimate and rowdy dancing. Since people who held the pagan view saw

this world as ultimate reality, nothing was too sacred to be the excuse for fun.

By and large, then, the pagan ideal changed little in its application to the world because it was itself born out of the world. The secular view reacted against the insistence of the first view on seeing the world as corrupt, and in its less seemly aspects seemed to confirm the ideas of those who held the first view. Such interaction with the first view, while defining the second, did not, in any real way, transform it. Both views continued throughout the mediaeval period to exist side by side in the minds of men with very little open conflict. The presence of both did, however, set up a kind of tension: men seemed to need both natural and religious life, and so needed both views; yet because the views conflicted basically in so many ways, the man who tried to accommodate both usually ended up doing justice to neither. The union of opposites could not be achieved until it was seen that each pole contained, within itself, a little of the other pole, that the opposites were really complementary. This synthesis was to be found in the third ideal.

The third ideal, as exemplified in the monastic orders, came gradually to have a great deal of influence in Europe. Especially important was Cluny:

If Cluny as a body was uncommitted in the contest between empire and papacy, she undoubtedly controlled the greatest volume of spiritual influence in eleventh-century Europe, and as such stood on the side of the reformers in the matters of simony and clerical celibacy.³⁴

The Cistercians soon came to share this influence, and even the crusad-

ing castles followed the rule of St. Benedict and the Cistercian customs.³⁵

By the middle of the twelfth century, however, many of the monastic orders had been spoiled by too much success. Although they had begun with ideals of poverty and other-worldliness, they had become rich and business-oriented.³⁶ This inconsistency became obvious to men both within and outside the monasteries, and it was seen that a massive reform was necessary. While this was accomplished, "medieval monasticism became a static rather than a dynamic spiritual power. . . . Dynamism passed to the friars."³⁷ The friars exemplified the poverty and simplicity which the monasteries must recapture, and each of the two first orders, the Franciscan and the Dominican, made important attempts to unify religious and secular concerns on both the personal and the social levels.

The Franciscan practice could be summed up in the word "measure". Poverty and bodily renunciation were to be practised in order that the friars not be overly concerned with the flesh, but both could be overdone, and Francis was the first to note this: when one of the friars almost died from starvation because of severe and prolonged fasting, he gathered the order together and said,

. . . as we are bound to beware of superfluity of eating, which harms body and soul, so also must we beware of too great abstinence, nay, even more, since the Lord will have mercy and not sacrifice. . . . I will command you that each of our brethren according to our poverty satisfy his body as it shall be necessary for him.³⁸

The aim of fasting was to free the soul, not to destroy the body; so also with renunciation of the world. Francis saw all creation as a holy reflection of God's beauty and love, and as something to be loved

in return: he considered fire, water, sun and moon his brothers and sisters. What he renounced was man's immoderate love of natural things and his desire for them on their own merits rather than on their merit as evidence of God. Beauty and good food were not evil in his eyes, but must be appreciated because they were gifts of God. Only the purest of men were able to achieve this perfect balance, so Francis, always conscious of his role as an example before all men, practised poverty and simplicity at all times.

As Francis and his followers showed that there was no necessary separation between the natural and the divine, and that the pagan view need only be set in the order of God to be raised up to a new, more complete level, so the Dominicans sought to establish harmony between mysticism and the active religious life which had developed into the first view of the world. While living according to the same rules of poverty and mendicancy as the Franciscans, they entered the world of education, in order to be able to quell such enemies as the Catharists with words of truth rather than with violence; they brought to the universities a new immediacy because their concern was with the religious experience rather than with its theory; they took religious education to the masses, making it the right of every man to understand, as well as obey, the teachings of the Church; and most importantly, they took the mystical, antimaterialist spirit into the highest ecclesiastical circles, in 1276 achieving the surest sign of their success in achieving this new union when a Dominican, Innocent V, became Pope.

Although both the Franciscans and Dominicans failed often to live up to the objectives of their founders, and their failures provided

much material for literature, nevertheless they had a great positive effect upon the society of their times:

Simple, austere, and poor, living on such alms as they received, they made a deep impression on the common people. . . . It is difficult to say just how far their ideal of poverty influenced society. Gustave Schnürer affirms that it 'checked the undue growth of a materialistic civilization' and that 'the Church in the thirteenth century received from them a timely warning not to concern herself with temporal questions to the point of forgetting her divine mission.' The work of the mendicants was no less fruitful in the field of charity. The 'Great Devotion' of 1233, when Dominicans and Franciscans made a concerted effort on an international scale, brought about spectacular results in the way of reconciliation between families, clans, and cities.³⁹

Each order also established an order of nuns and a Third Order which was made up of lay people who, while not wishing to leave public life, wanted to live according to the rules of the orders.

The success of this attempt to unify active social life with the monastic ideals of poverty, mysticism and concern for individuals can be seen in men like St. Louis, the great king and mystic of the thirteenth century. Louis, King of France, was also a member of the Franciscan Third Order, and he managed all his life to be faithful and responsible to both occupations:

Despite the crushing burdens of office, he found time each day to recite the liturgical hours, to search the Scriptures, and to read the Fathers. He confessed often, and his penitential practices included fasting as well as the discipline and hair-shirt. His diet was frugal, his dress simple--except when the duties of his rank obliged him to wear ceremonial robes.⁴⁰

As well as being a fine king and a religious, he was also a knight who so exemplified the ideals of chivalry that it has been suggested that the Sir Galahad of the Arthurian legends was modeled after him. Louis' principles of kingship and religion were the same; he once said to his

subjects,

My friends and trusty subjects, we shall be unconquerable so long as we are united in charity; I am not King of France, I am not Holy Church; it is you who, because you are all the king, are Holy Church.⁴¹

The third ideal, then, could be applied to life on all levels and in all classes without losing its integrity and purity. It could effect a harmonic relationship with the first two views of the world, embracing nature in its love of God, and humanizing the bureaucratic Church. The religious orders, which took the ideal into the world and which embodied the view of the world derived from it, almost singlehandedly effected a religious rejuvenation based upon

. . . a new conception of the Church and of her function in the world: a Church in whom the brilliance of feudal power would give place to interior prestige; the Church of the missions, and of the universities wherein human thought was to make notable advances; a Church in closer sympathy with the aims of an enlarged society.⁴²

The three views of the world discussed above were present throughout mediaeval Europe. During the time in which the lyrics were written, the views were all in full flower in England, affecting and being affected by the society of the period. In each of the following chapters, one of the views will be discussed in terms of its presence in England and in the Middle English lyrics.

CHAPTER II

The mediaeval view of life which saw the world as corrupt and corrupting had a complex origin. In Chapter I, it was seen that when the first Christian ideal, that which considered the world as redeemable, came to be applied to everyday experience, it resulted in corruption among the clergy. The Church had entered the political arena in an attempt to establish a theocratic Christian society in which all men would be sons of God. In order to succeed in this, it needed secular power and financial means. Once it attained them, however, the Church seemed to confuse the means and the end, and tended to desire power and wealth for themselves. Although this was not true of all the clergy, it was quite widespread and evident both in Church policy and in individuals within the clergy.

The desire of some of the clergy for riches and ease was satisfied in part by the wish of lay Christians to give their best to God. Huge cathedrals were built and filled with precious artworks, and the clergy clad in rich robes. The physical beauty of the church and the Mass served to uplift men's hearts to contemplation of the glory of God, but it seemed to have the opposite effect upon many of the clergy. They became accustomed to this luxury, and desired it outside, as well as within, the church; and they capitulated to other worldly desires as well. On the basis of his extensive research into the situation, Owst says,

So unanimous and unqualified . . . is the verdict
of all sections against what a simple vernacular

preacher calls "the lewidnesse of many personys and vikaris," that it is no longer possible to doubt its accuracy.¹

In spite of the fact that their riches came from the people, some of the clergy began to consider themselves an élite, even while indulging in the basest occupations. The Mass, because of the continued use of Latin and the distancing of the altar, became intelligible only to the clergy, and the common people who had laboured and made sacrifices in order to build the churches came to feel left out of their Church, as

the institutionalization of Christianity encouraged the Church gradually to recognize the existence of the profane (the marketplace) and to distinguish between it and the sacred (the church or the monastery).²

In spite of the corruption of some of the clergy and their lack of concern with their parishioners, most mediaeval Christians continued to support and attend the Church. There were several reasons for this: men were able to separate the truth of Christianity from the hypocrisy of some of its clergy; the beauty of the liturgy and of its physical accoutrements--the jewelled crosses and chalices, the statues and stained glass which turned a church into a "huge casket of stone"³--also drew many. But perhaps the chief reason for the continued attendance and obedience of the parishioners was the fear instilled in them by the homilies they heard.

Much of the preaching of the period tended to paint the world as a corrupting, tempting place. Good, sincere clergymen, while realizing the value of inspiration, were also aware that fear was a great tool for reform, when used with love, for if a proper fear of evil and punishment were instilled in a sinner, he might give up his sinful ways. Fear was also used, however, by the corrupt clergy for different

ends. Even though, or perhaps because, much of the clergy was corrupt, the Church's empire had to be maintained, and a congregation which saw the Church as its only hope of salvation was likely to support its clergy well.

The fear-instilling preaching of the clergy was lent credence by the fact that in the Middle Ages death was familiar and often horrible. The death-rate due to natural causes was high, and plagues, which brought about ugly deaths, were common. Such deaths proved that the things of this world do not last, and provided an image of the soul's corruption by the world. In order to protect himself, then, man should not become too attached to the world and its goods.

All of these situations and attitudes contributed to a view of life in which the world was seen as corrupt. The homilies of the period show the various ideas which combined to form it. The lyrics will also be seen to reveal aspects of this conception of the world.

The View of History

The universe, according to the homilists, was the work of God and was governed by Him. Their God, however, was the God of the Old Testament rather than Christ, who, while part of the Trinity, functioned mostly as a courier of the Father. The Holy Spirit was seldom mentioned. The Father was a distant God, unassailable in His glory. He governed man according to the principle of justice, expecting perfection of His creatures, and punishing them for lapses.

Two central events in history according to this view showed the relationship between God and His world. The first was the fall of Adam giving rise to the Original Sin. Adam's disobedience to God had great

ramifications: he and Eve were expelled from Eden and were forced to rely upon themselves for everything. Their difficulty in living on the earth both revealed their weakness when separated from God, and served as a punishment which would be followed by the even greater torment of Hell. Since then, all men, being sons of Adam, had been doomed to the same punishments, especially since, in their weakness, they had also sinned. In the Poema Morale, a twelfth century verse homily, the relationship between Adam's sin and the sins of later men is discussed:

Hore sunne and ec ure azen sare us mei of-pinche.
purh sunne we libbeð alle in sorze and in swinke.
Suððen God nom swa muchele wrake for are misdede.
We þe swa muchel and swa ofte mis-doð. we muzen eðe
us adrede.
Adam and his of-sprung for are þare sunne.
Wes fele undret wintre an helle pine and an unwunne.
þa þe ledden hore lif mid unriht and mid wrange.
buten his godes milce do ho sculen bon þer wel longe.

For their sin, and also our own, we may sorely grieve;
Through sin we all live in sorrow and in toil,
Since God took so great a vengeance for one misdeed.
We who so much and so often sin, we ought easily to be
in fear.
Adam and his offspring for one single sin
Was many hundred winters in hell-fire and in misery.
Those who lead their life with unright and with wrong,
Except God have mercy upon them, shall be there full long.⁷⁴

According to the principles of justice and vengeance, God's association with man should have ended with the Fall. God, as Russell points out,

. . . is obliged to do nothing for us. He made a contract with Adam that Adam should be happy as long as he obeyed God; since Adam did not fulfill his obligations, the contract is consequently void. Hell is separation from God, and it is not God who has condemned man but man who has condemned himself. Yet God is not only just but merciful, and he wills to redeem us. He gives us a second chance. Since man cannot save himself, it is incumbent upon God to save him.⁵

The "second chance" which God granted weak mankind was the Incarnation.

In the birth of Christ there seemed to be hope for a new Eden, but

before His kingdom was even established, men showed their inheritance of Adam's weakness and crucified Christ. In doing so, they committed the sin which was the second central historical event. This sin was even worse than Adam's: he had only disobeyed God, while the Jews had killed His Son, and mediaeval men, every time they sinned, recrucified Christ. God did not have to take mercy upon man at all, so Christ's Incarnation was a gift to all men. When a man did not show a corresponding charity to his fellow men, he was, in effect, rejecting Christ:

Ne scal neure eft crist polie dep for lesen hom of
deape.

Enes drihten helle brec his frond he ut brochte.
him solf he polede de^x for him. wel dore he hom
bohte.

Nalde hit mei do for mei. ne suster for bro^xer.
nalde hit sune do for fader. ne na mon for o^xer.
Vre alre lauere for his prellles ipined wes a rode.
vre bendes he unbon[d] and bohte us mid his blode.
We zeue^x une^xde for his luue a stuche of ure brede.

[Christ shall never again suffer death to deliver them
from death.

Once our Lord broke into hell and brought out his friends;
He himself suffered death for them; very dearly he
ransomed them.

Kinsman would not do it for kinsman, nor sister for brother,
Not the son for his father, nor any man for another.
The Lord of us all, for his thralls, was tortured on
the cross;

Our bonds he loosed, and bought us with his blood.

We give for his love scarcely a single morsel of our bread.⁷⁶

History, then, according to this view, was a series of failures on man's part to live up to God's expectations, with each failure moving man further away from God, and further downward toward Hell. The logical and just culmination of this movement was the Last Judgment, at which all sinners would receive their final punishment. It was a fearful prospect, yet there seemed nothing man could do to avoid it, and when it came, he would have no defense:

. . . wi hwat scal us to rede.
 We pet brokeð godes hese and gulteð swa ilome.
 hwet scule we seggen oðer don et pe muchele dome
 þa pe luueden unriht and ufel lif leden.
 Wet sculen ho seggen oðer don: þen pe engles bon of-dred.
 hwet sculen we beren biforen us mid hom scule we
 iquemen.
 þo pe neure god ne dude pe hounenliche deme[n].
 þer sculen bon doule swa fole pet wulleð us forwreien.
 And nabbeð hi naping forzetten of al pet ho [ere] isezen.
 Al pet we misduden her: ho hit wulleð kuðe þere.

[. . . What shall avail us
 We who break God's behests and sinneth so often?
 What shall we say or do at the great doom,
 We who loved unright, and an evil life led?
 What shall we say or do, when the angels shall be in dread?
 What shall we bear before us, with what shall we make
 peace-offering,
 We that never did good, to (please) the heavenly Judge?
 There shall be so many devils who will accuse us;
 And they have not forgotten anything of all that they
 previously saw,
 All that we did wrong here they will make it known there.]⁷

The clergy, some perhaps in all sincerity but many out of a desire to profit from the people's fear, preached that the day was close at hand. They were aided in their purpose of instilling fear in their congregations by the fact that the Middle Ages were full of catastrophes which seemed much like those prophesied in Revelations: earthquakes, fires and plagues:

. . . how frequent and many infirmities raigneth:
 we see dayly infections of pestilence, pockes great
 and smale, & these newe burninge agues, and in-
 numerable others, more then the Phisicions haue
 written of in thier bookes. . . . And what cor-
 ruption and infection of maners commeth to the soule,
 by euill example, ill wordes, and suche other oc-
 casions, it were to long to be spoken of now. . . .
 The comon sterilitie and barennes of the grounde,
 the great scarsitie of all maner of vitall and of
 fruites of the earth, we feele it so many times to
 our great paine and discomfort, that it nede not be
 declared.⁸

All of this, the preachers said, was punishment for the sins of men,

and showed that the Judgment was coming. The Middle Ages were the last corrupt writhings of a dying world and a damned mankind.⁹

Some of the lyrics share these beliefs and echo them almost point for point. God, in some, is seen as the all-powerful creator, and is addressed with awe:

God, þat al þis myhtes may,
in heuene & erþe þy wille ys oo;¹⁰

His power is fearful: "For-soþe, þis was a lord to drede."¹¹ This fearfulness comes from the fact that, because of men's sins, God has every reason, in justice, to use His power against them, and to take "þe grete vengauce & wrake/ þat schulde falle for synnes sake." (CB14/113-187; 60-61) So justified is this that man can only submit to it:

of myne deden fynde y non god,
lord, of me þou do þy wille.
(CB13/88-157; 23-24)

The punishment is correct because man himself has caused the separation between him and God. Had God's wishes been obeyed, Eden would still be a reality. Since the Fall, the mortality of Adam has been passed on to all men:

Of erth & slame als was adam maked to noyes & nede.
Ar we als he maked to be, whil we þis lyf sal lede.
(CB14/81-96; 3-4)

It is present even in the youngest and purest child, as one mother sings in her lullaby:

deth ssal com wiþ a blast vte of a wel dim horre,
adam-is kin dun to cast, . . .
.
deþ þe sal be-tide wiþ bitter bale in brest.
Lollai, lollai, litil child, þis wo adam þe wrozt.
Whan he of þe appil ete, and eue hit him betacht.
(CB14/28-36; 27-8, 34-6)

As every man shares in the Original Sin, he also shares in the guilt of those who crucified Christ. Several of the crucifixion lyrics are constructed as Christ's words to man from the cross. In these complaints, the voice of Christ is as accusing as those of the preachers, and is obviously meant to increase man's sense of guilt by stressing the fact that in committing this sin man hurt not only himself but also God. In one poem, Christ cries:

Vnkinde man, take hede of mee!
Loke, what payne I suffer for the.
sinfull man, to the I crie.
only for the I die.¹²

Man's responsibility having been stressed, Christ's wounds are enumerated and described in detail, almost as if they were being inflicted at the present moment by the reader:

beholde, the bloode of my handis downe renneth,
not for my gilte but for your sinnes,
fote and hande with nailes so ben faste,
that sinoes & vaines alto-berste.
The blood fo myne hert rote,
Loke, how hit stremyth downe by my fote. (CB15/104-158; 5-10)

This almost morbid description is a common technique,¹³ and is intended to encourage fitting remorse:

Loke to pi louerd, man, par hanget he a rode,
and wep hyf po mist terres al of blode.
(CB14/2^b-2; 1-2)

As well as the physical wounds, Christ suffers spiritual anguish because of man:

Ouer all theeis paines pat I suffer so sore,
With myne herte hit greuith me more,
pat I vnkindnes finde in the.
(CB15/104-158; 11-13)

This pain, much worse than the bodily hurt, is caused by men's sins. One poet recognizes that "of pe werkes pat ich ha wroht/ pe beste is

bittrore þen þe galle." (CB13/88-156; 11-12)

Although these Crucifixion scenes are often presumably meant to induce remorse, and through it rehabilitation, they really give a feeling of separation and hopelessness. Especially effective in doing this are the complaints from the cross, which come out of the tradition of the impropria used by the Church during the Lenten season. There are several of these poems.¹⁴ In one, Christ asks man,

Mi folk, nou ansuere me,
an sey wat is my gilth;
wat mitht i mor ha don for þe,
þat i ne haue fulfilth? (CB14/72-88; 1-4)

He goes on to enumerate the blessings God has given to men, following each with an instance of man's cruelty to Christ; for example,

Alle þi fon i slou for þe,
& made þe cout of name;
& þu heng me on rode tre,
& dedest me michil schame. (CB14/72-88; 25-8)

During the eight such stanzas, the impression is one of growing separation between man and God; God's goodness seems to grow in contrast to man's meanness, and vice versa. Also, in several of these lyrics, it is made to seem as if all that came out of the Crucifixion was pain and death. One poem, after describing Christ's wounded body, ends with the judgment that if man should

Begin at his molde and loke to his to,
ne saltu no wit vinde bute anguisse and wo.
(CB14/2^b-2; 11-12)

All that man can do is to feel sorry; he cannot stop Christ's suffering any more than he can change the course of nature. This point is beautifully and poignantly made in the famous Sunset on Calvary:

Nou goth sonne vnder wod,--
me reweth, marie, þi faire Rode.

Nou goþ sonne vnder tre,--
me rewep, marie, þi sone and þe. (CB13/1 - 1)

Christ's death is like a sunset, slow but inevitable; so is the history of man a movement into darkness, but man's fall will not have the dignity of Christ's. The writers of some of these lyrics see the end of the world approaching with great speed, and see it foreshadowed in the catastrophes of the period. One lyric in particular, Verses on the Earthquake of 1382, (CB14/113-186) shows that this idea was current and important in the fourteenth century. For this poet, as for the preachers, the cataclysm is seen as the ultimate punishment of man for his sins--it will be God's "vengaunce." (CB14/113-186; 10) The signs of its nearness are "þe Rysing of þe comuynes in londe,/ þe Pestilens, and þe eorþe-quake--." (CB14/113-186; 57-8) The lyric speaks of the corruption and disorder which is rampant, making divine punishment just and necessary. Although the end cannot be avoided, the individual man can prepare for it by repenting of his sinful ways and by doing good works, but the main point of the poem is that there is little time left in which to effect these changes. Each stanza of the lyric ends with the admonition that God is giving man a "warnyng to be ware." (CB14/113-186; 8) The repetition six times of "be ware" in the last stanza suggests, however, that the end is approaching so quickly that nothing more can be said.

The sense of frantic haste with which the lyric ends reveals a great fear of the cataclysm, a fear related less to the physical end of the world and life than to the judgment which will follow it. At this judgment man will be faced with his sins; he will be asked to answer not only for his personal sins but also for the Crucifixion:

on erþe þou come for oure nede,
for ous sunful were boht & solde.
when we bueþ dempned after vr dede
a domesday, when ryhtes bueþ tolde,
when we shule suen þy wounde blede,
to speke þenne we bueþ vnbolde. (CB13/88-157; 35-40)

Man will be unable to speak because it will be obvious that he deserves punishment, and God will say to him and his fellows, "'Goð, apariede gostes, feondes ifere,/ In-to berninde fur; of blisse 3e boeþ skere/ For 3e opre sunnen of þisse þorldebere.'" (CB13/28^b-44; 38-40) The sinner will descend into Hell, which is described in horrifying detail:

A domes-dai to a bittre bacþe we sule bo nakit,
Of brimston & of piche wellinde imakit,
þer-inne sathanas þe feind us rent wid is rake,
& soþin us wole firsuoleuen þe fundene drake.

þau al þat fur of þis world to-gedere were ibrouȝt,
A-gain þisse hete nere hit rist nout.
Ac we is him aliue þat þer-inne is ibrouȝt!
Alle þes ilke pines þou us hauist wouȝt. (CB13/29-48; 73-80)

Both the homilies and these lyrics, then, view history as a process of disintegration, a series of recapitulations of the separation between God and man seen in Adam's fall and the Crucifixion. Individual men may, by extreme piety and faith, escape damnation, but the world as a whole is beyond saving--even Christ's Incarnation, which had as its purpose the recreation of harmony between God and the world, was not ultimately successful, in this view, because of Christ's death. All that the future can bring is further separation, unhappiness, suffering, and ultimately, the Last Judgment and Hell.

The View of the Natural World

The natural world was a frequent topic of the preachers because

of the important part it played in the life of man. Every Christian man must live on earth and manage to keep his body alive and well while also attending to his spiritual needs. Depending upon his understanding of the relationship between God and the world, it could be relatively easy or very difficult to achieve a balance between these two pursuits. For those who agreed with the preachers, it was very difficult, for inherent in their view of life was a strong dualism.

This dualism has already been seen in the attempts of the clergy to keep the common people at a distance from the mysteries of the liturgy, to separate the marketplace from the Church. It was at the base of the belief that history was a movement away from God and toward Hell. It can be seen also in the attitude toward the natural world, in relation both to God and to man.

According to the Bible, nature was created as a dwelling-place and source of pleasure for man in Eden, but after the Fall, nature no longer provided food and shelter unless man worked for it. There could be two ways of understanding this change: either this toil was an opportunity for penance leading to atonement, in which case nature was God's handmaiden who aided man, or the work was a punishment with no constructive goal, and nature, like man, was fallen. This second was the belief, or at least the teaching, of many of the clergy. In the Fall, they claimed, nature had completely changed its allegiance. Whereas originally it had followed God, it now followed Satan, and whereas man had ruled and ordered it, it now sought to overcome man with disorder. This belief is clearly stated in numerous sermons where the three enemies of man are discussed:

Elc cristen man anon se stepð up of þe funte wer he ifulled his. ipicches he maceð him þri ifon. for þan þe hit is iwrite. Nemo potest duobus dominis seruire. Nan ne mai twan hlaforde þe wransehte bien samod þowie. þas þri ifon beð. Se forme is se defoel. and his igeng. Se oðer þes middennard. Se þridde is wel nieh þe cristen men. þat is his azon flesch. þas þri fihteð agen elcen ileafful man also longe se we iðese westen of þesser woruld wandrið. also þre reaferes.

Each Christian man, so soon as he steppeth out of the font, where he is baptized of his sins, maketh to himself three foes; for it is written, Nemo potest duobus dominis seruire--No man can serve two masters who are at enmity together. These three foes are--the devil and his host, the second is this earth, the third is very near the Christian man, that is, his own flesh. These three, like three robbers, fight against each believing man as long as we wander in the wilderness of this world.¹⁵

The third of these enemies, the body, will be discussed later. For the time being, it is important merely to note that the earth is believed to cooperate with the devil, and that their campaign against a man is never ended as long as he is alive. Just as the devil appears in many forms, so does worldly temptation, and man must not be deceived by beauty or seeming innocence. He must always be on his guard, for "wheresoever Beauty shows upon the face, there lurks much filth beneath the skin."¹⁶ The simplest enjoyments of nature are seen as sins, especially, according to Owst,

. . . the coming of spring. The rigours of Lent now give place to the rejoicing of Eastertide; and the thoughts of men and women turn to the open, the merry greensward, May-games and revelry, whither they will go with heads rose-garlanded for the feasts and shows. But for the preacher it is a season of gloom. All the good work of Lenten shrift and sermon threatens to be undone. For, the Devil, like a king seeing his subjects rebel at Lent, collects his army to recapture them at Easter.¹⁷

All enjoyment is weakness, and all admiration is blindness, for "'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all

is vanity and vexation of spirit', saith the Preacher. His influence . . . upon the rising generations was almost invariably morbid."¹⁸

The proper attitude toward the world, in this view, is to be unimpressed with it, or bored. Men are advised by the preacher to

. . . consider with yourselves how troublesome is this present life, how fragile and wearisome; how full it is without distinction of every affliction and stumbling block, how fading, miserable, deceitful, guileful and fraudulent it is.¹⁹

Even when not actively evil, the world shows its baseness and vanity in its transience. In the following quotation from a mediaeval sermon, transience is the cornerstone of the dualistic argument:

Ne mei nan mon habben al his wil. and blissien
him mid þisse wordle and ec wunian a wið crist on heofene.
þah þu liuedest of adames frumðe þet come þes
dei and þu ahtest al weorld iwald. and alre
welene mest. þenne þu scalt of þisse liue nalde
hit þe þinchen na mare bute al swa þu ene un-
prizedest mid þine ezen forðon nis nawiht þeos
weorld al heo azeð on ane alpi þraze. . . .
Soðliche al heo a-gað. and þa wrecche saule hit
scal abuggen.

¶ . . . No man may have all his will and rejoice
himself with this world, and also dwell for
ever with Christ in heaven. Though thou hadst
lived from Adam's time until this day, and thou
possessedst all worldly power, and hadst the greatest
of all riches, when thou shalt depart this life
it would appear to thee no more than as if thou
hadst but once uncovered (it) with thine eyes.
Wherefore this world is nought. . . . Truly it
will all pass away, and the wretched soul shall
bitterly suffer for it.²⁰

If nature is not with God, it must be against him, so that if man wishes to avoid suffering forever, he must not enjoy himself in the world.

Restrictive and negative as these teachings may seem to the modern reader, lyrics which contain them again and again suggest that they were widespread.

There are many references to man's three foes in the lyrics, and at least one lyric in each of the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries has these enemies as its theme.²¹ In each of these lyrics, and in others, the falseness and transience of the world and its goods are stressed:

þis world wileþ þus, y wat,
þurch falsschip of fair hat;
Where we go bi ani gat
 Wiþ bale he ous bites.
.....
Now geten, now gan--
Y tel it bot a lent lan,
When al þe welþ of our wan
 þus oway wites. (CB14/27-32; 17-20, 29-32)

Any happiness which man can get from the world is not worth the effort, for pain will inevitably follow:

þu lickest huni of þorn iwis,
þat seist þi loue o werldos blis.
 (CB13/46-78; 35-6)

Any joy must be seen as a loan, not as a gift:

Presume nocht gevin þat god has done bot lent--
Within schort tyme the quhiche he thinkis to crave.
 (CB15/167-260; 7-8)

The transience of the world may lead, as above, to the picture of a God who takes joy from man as soon as he has it, but more usually the poets see the world as divorced from God's concern. Because it would be unthinkable to criticize God, joy comes to be seen as subject to an erratic cycle much like that of fortune:

Ne tristou to þis world, hit is þi ful vo,
þe rich he makip pouer, þe pore rich al so;
Hit turnep wo to wel and ek wel to wo--
Ne trist no man to þis world, whil hit
 turnip so.
Lollai, lollai, litil child, þe fote is in þe whele;
þou nost whoder turne to wo oper wele.
 (CB14/28-35; 19-24)

This movement from joy to sorrow is completely unreasonable and unfair, since not all men seem to be subjected to it in the same way:

Weole, þu art a waried þing,
vn-euene constu dele;
þu yeuest a wrecche weole y-nouh,
noht þurh his hele.
Wyþ freomen þu art ferly feid
wiþ sauhte & make heom sele;
þe poure i londe naueþ no lot
wiþ riche for to mele. (CB13/40-65; 1-8)

The world is unfair, changeable and cruel, but the most convincing argument against becoming attached to it is that which shows that not only is joy transient, but life is also. Nature's beauties and the corresponding solaces of the social world--riches, ease, even friendship--cannot forestall death, and in the face of death they seem to have no meaning:

Wen þe turuf is þi tuur,
& þi put is þi bour,
þi wel & þi wite þrote
ssulen wormes to note.
Wat helpit þe þenne
al þe worilde wne? (CB13/30-54; 1-6)

and

þanne lyd min hus vppe min nose,
off al þis world ne gyffe ihic a pese.
(CB13/71-130; 21-2)

The natural world then, is for the homilists and the lyricists either evil or ridiculous. It retains no part of the goodness of Eden, but has become its opposite. Most important, it is an enemy of man, seeking to lead him into mortal sin or at least to make him forget his position as a sinner and a mortal being. It must be battled or, if possible, ignored.

The View of Mankind

The great gap between God and the natural world in this view puts man in a very difficult position. He has bodily needs and desires, but at the same time he is afraid of eternal damnation, and he must try to act in such a way that neither concern is disregarded. As if this were not enough, the sense of duality does not stop with God and the world, but is echoed in all human affairs on different levels.

The mediaeval clergy, for instance, were constantly drawing man's attention to the great difference between what he had been and what he now was. Adam had been God's supreme creation; his life in Eden had been easy and perfect, and even eternal as long as he was obedient to God. Adam's sin was a choice, an act of free will; but his will could not restore him to Eden. Without the cooperation of God, all his actions seemed to lead him further into sin and further from God. This was because, in committing the Original Sin, Adam rejected not only God but also a part of himself.

Within man there were two parts or faculties, the soul and the body.²² The soul was spiritual; it was made in the image of God, and sought to reach up to him. The body, on the other hand, was natural; it was made like those of the beasts and sought to wallow, like them, in the earth. In Eden, the soul, which was in harmony with God, ruled the body. But when he gave in to the enticements of Eve and ate the apple, Adam denied the soul's supremacy and followed the dictates of his body. Once the body had taken control of his being, man no longer had the capacity to reach up to God--the most he could do was long for him.

The vileness of the body was stressed by the preachers. In

The Ancren Riwele, there is an extended meditation upon this topic:

þenc hwat tu hauest of þi sulf. þu ert of two
dolen! of licame, ⁊ of soule, ⁊ in eiðer beoð
two þinges þet muwen swuðe muchel meoken þe,
zif þu ham wel biholdest. I þine licame is
fulðe ⁊ unstrencðe. Nu, kumeð of þe vetles
swuch þing ase [is] þerinne. Of þine flesches
vetles hwat cumeð þerof? Kumeð þerof smel of
aromaz, oðer of swote healewi? Deale. Of te
driue sprintles bereð winberien? And breres
bereð rosen, ⁊ brien, ⁊ blostmen? Mon, þi
flesch, hwat frut bereð hit, in all his openunges?
Amidden þe meste menkes of þine nebbe, þet is, þet
feirest del bitweonen smech muðes ⁊ neoses smel,
ne perest tu two þurles, ase þauh hit weren two
priuē þurles? Nert tu icumen of ful slim? Nert
tu mid fulðe a ifulled? Ne schalt tu beon wurmes
fode?

Consider what thou hast of thyself. Thou art of
two parts--of body and soul, and in each are two
things which may greatly humble thee, if thou
rightly apprehendest them. In thy body is
uncleanness and infirmity. Now there cometh out
of a vessel such things as it contains. What
cometh out of the vessel of thy flesh? Doth the
smell of spices or of sweet balsam come thereof?
God knoweth. Do dry twigs often bear grapes?
And do briars bear roses, and berries, and flowers?
Man, what fruit doth thy flesh bear in all its
apertures? Amidst the greatest ornament of thy
face; that is, the fairest part between the taste
of mouth and smell of nose, hast thou not two
holes, as if they were two privy holes? Art thou
not formed of foul slime? Art thou not always full
of uncleanness? Shalt thou not be food for worms?¹²³

This disgust with the body extended into a belief that it was only
through the senses that sin became attractive to man, and that it was
through them that he committed sin. A preacher warns that

We turn our eyes to vile and vain sights, through
multifarious occasions to sin. We often use our
ears to listen to detractions and empty words. We
catch with our nostrils scents, aromatic odours, the
fragrance of wines, and perfumes of balsam. For our
mouth we prepare sumptuous food, seasoned with various
spices. The tongue utters the greatest wickedness, it
sows discords and quarrels between friends.²⁴

Such attitudes explain why the body was classified as one of man's three foes. It was not merely an accomplice to the devil and the world, but equal with them in evil. One preacher even went so far as to say that "this bodye is the greatest enemye that man hath, and sonest dothe brynge man vnto dampnacion."²⁵

One of the chief ways in which the body led man into sin was sexual. The Original Sin had had sexual overtones, because Adam received the apple from a woman, and because both he and Eve were ashamed of their naked bodies when their eyes were opened. Since then, woman had been cast as Eve in the eyes of the preacher:

Where healthy human nature seems to demand some positive doctrine of sexual happiness, [the preachers] speak only . . . of sin and temptation, of forbidden pleasures and lusts, of needful fears and repressions, haunted by the same old shadow of Original Sin. . . . Woman's chief glory--not merely her little foibles and excesses--is by them accounted a snare and a delusion, her greatest field of activity little better than a wilderness of briars and pitfalls.²⁶

Like Eve, every woman is a minion of the Devil:

þeos wimmen þe þus luuieð beoð þes deofles musestoch iclepede. for þenne þe mon wule tilden his musestoch he bindeð uppon þa swike chese and bret hine for þon þet he scolde swote smelle. and þurh þe sweote smel of þe chese he bucherreð monie mus to þe stoke.

[These women that thus live are called the devil's mouse-trap, for when a man will bait his mouse-trap he binds thereupon the treacherous cheese, and roasteth it so that it should smell sweetly; and through the sweet smell of the cheese he entices many a mouse into the trap.]²⁷

Any love, even within marriage, was presented as a temptation to lewd desires. At any rate, love itself was a revelation of weakness; it allowed another person to have power over a man, power which could be used to lead him to damnation. No man gave, or should give, of himself for another. Therefore, men were advised,

ne lipnie na mon to muchel to childe ne to wiue.
þe him solue forzet for wiue ne for childe:
he scal cumen in uuel stude bute him God bo milde.

.....
Ne lipnie wif to hire were. ne were to his wiue
Bo for him solue ech. Mon. þe hwile þet he bo aliue.
Wis is þe to him solue þench þe hwile þe mot libben.
For sone wule hine forzeten þe fremede and þe sibbe.

[Let no man trust too much neither to child nor to wife
(women);
For he who forgetteth himself for wife or for child,
He shall come into an evil place, except God be merciful
to him.

.....
Let no wife trust to her husband, not husband to his wife,
Be every man for himself, the while that he is alive.
Wise is he who thinks of himself the while he may have
life,
For soon will he be forgotten both by strangers and by
kin.¹²⁸

Proof that the body was evil, and that hence sensual and sexual
enjoyment were to be forbidden came, as it had in the discussion of the
world, from the "transience" argument--God was eternal and good; the
body was not eternal, therefore it could not be good.²⁹

Since death was the only certainty in an uncertain world, any
strong attachment to life seemed absurd:

Lat þem be þi mirroure þat be dede & passed oute of
þis worlde, and þere þou shall vndirstond what þou art,
& what þou shalt be; for beaute, fayrnes, wisdom,
frendeship, riches, delites, honours, dignyties &
all suche be toke from þe in þi dethe. For þi body
is but stynking careyn þat from þe erthe it came, and
to the erthe it shall turne ageyn.³⁰

Death was seen as a grotesque, obscene thing, and the preachers gave
long, detailed descriptions of the decomposition of the body:

This fayre bodye of thyn that thou makeste somoche of,
that thou dekkest so preciously, that setest somoche by,
itt shall awaye, itt is butt terra & cinis, puluis &
esca vermium. It is but earthe, ashes, duste & wormes
meate. Serpentes hereditabunt illud. Serpentes shall
enheryte thy bodye as thou doest naturally thy fadre
his landes. Euen so serpentes wormes and toodes shall

gnawe, eate and deuoure thy beawtyfull face, thy fayre nose, thy clere eyes, thy whyte handes, thy gudly bodye.³¹

These morbid considerations of death were extremely common in the mediaeval homilies, and became deeply imbedded in the consciousness of the times:

Some popular piety, indeed, became very grotesque. The obsessive preoccupation with death is visible in its personification in art, and even more in the ghastly mementos of decay that appeared everywhere. It became common, for example, to decorate tombs with representations of the dead being eaten by worms or toads. A favorite device was to sculpt a tomb on two levels: on top, an effigy of the dead person clothed and recumbent in peace; underneath, often behind a grille, a representation of the same person rotting, or as a skeleton.³²

Death became even more horrifying when it was placed in the context of eternity, for the physical decay was only a pale reflection of the spiritual decay which was in all men, the physical death only a reflection of the spiritual death of hell.³³

Man was then, according to the preachers, surrounded by evil--it was in the world, in other people, in his own body and in the world to come. Evil had an existence and a substance of its own, it was a positive being. This being was personified as the Devil, who was described as having the most fearful attributes imaginable. Only his naked being was ugly, however; he could, and did, assume the most pleasing shapes in order to draw man unknowingly to his own destruction.

The most frightening thing about Satan in this view was that he was considered to be a force opposed to God. Once he had fallen from heaven he had taken all earthly and physical forces to his side against heaven and spirit. He had been the serpent who convinced Eve to eat the apple and to share it with Adam. Since then he had captured most

men and his will was done all over the earth. By the time of the Crucifixion, his power was so great that, working through the Jews, he succeeded in vanquishing the powers of good in Christ:

Vre drihten wes iled to sleze al swa me dede a scep and
he nefre þa ne undude his muð ne nedde he na
þet heðene folc to his cwale ac þe deofel heom tuhte to
þan werke and god iþeafede þet to alesendnesse alles
ilefulles moncunnes. and þe deofel ablende heore heortan
þet heo ne cunnan icnawen ure helend þe wes imong heom.

Our Lord was led to the slaughter as one doth a sheep,
and he never then opened his mouth. . . . he did not
compell the heathen folk to put him to death, but the
devil instigated them to the work, and God permitted
that (it) for the redemption of all faithful men;
and the devil blinded their hearts so that they could
not know our Lord who was amongst them.¹³⁴

If even Christ seemed like a sheep before the powers of evil, an ordinary man had little chance to overcome them himself, yet there seemed to be nothing and no-one to whom he could turn for help. The preachers taught that man was too weak to do anything good, that his life was a mere meaningless movement toward the horror of physical death and the worse death of the soul.

This view of mankind, then, was one of separation from God and loneliness within the world. There seemed to be no real happiness to be found in this life, and no hope for eternal happiness after death. Sin tainted the world and men to the point where they seemed to have no value or virtue. To accept these ideas was to become obsessed with evil, sin and death, and many of the lyrics reveal just such preoccupations.

In the lyrics, there is an awareness of the separation between God and man, and a strong sense of personal sin. Each man shares in the sin of the Fall and the Crucifixion not only because he is descended

from Adam and so shares in the sin of his ancestor, but because he has himself chosen, once or many times, to reject God. Every sin constitutes a choice against God and for evil, and recapitulates the two central sins. In The Rich Man's Farewell to the World, the speaker sees his life as another Fall:

þe more for þe lasse y haue for-lore;
y-cursyd be þe tyme þat ych was bore!
y haue lore for-euer heuun blys,
and go now þeras euer sorow & car ys.
(CB15/160-253; 3-6)

Sin is due to man's inconstancy. He realizes that God is good and that his allegiance should be given to Him, but is easily led astray by earthly things. Even fear often has only a passing influence upon him--the earthquake of 1382 produced only temporary piety:

And also, whon þis eorþe qwok,
Was non so proud, he nas a-gast,
And al his Iolite for-sok,
And þouzt on god whil þat hit last;
And alsone as hit was ouer-past
Men wox as vuel as þei dude are.
(CB14/113-186; 33-8)

God, the poet says, chose an earthquake as his warning about the coming cataclysm because it symbolizes the character of men's souls:

þe Meuyng of þis eorþe, I-wis,
þat schulde bi cuynde be ferm & stabele,
A pure verrey toknyng hit is,
þat Mennes hertes ben chaungable:
(CB14/113-186; 49-52)

Such changeability is frequently blamed upon the body and its desires. In one lyric, Shroud and Grave, the speaker is the soul of a dead man. It chastizes the body for its imprisonment:

þenne sait þe soule to þe licam,
Wey þat ic ever in þe com!
þu noldes friday festen to non,
Ne þe setterday almesse don,
Ne þen sonneday gon to churchē,
ne cristene verkis wrche. (CB13/20-31; 13-18)

In many other lyrics, when a man swears to amend his ways, his past sins are usually those caused by bodily lust and greed for sensual comforts and goods:

To ofte ich habbe yn myne lyue
y-senzed wit my wittes fyue,
Wit eren yhered, wit ezen syzt,
Wit senfol speche dey & nyzt,
Wit cleppinges, wit kessenge also,
Wit hondes yhandled, wit fet ygwo,
.
Wit al my body euele ywrozt; (CB14/87-109; 9-14, 16)

and

my flesh fast swetyng
my paynys to Renew,
my body besely boylyng
with hetys--lord Ihesu,
This haue I full surely
for that I was vniust
to god, the sune off mary,
and leuyd after my lust. (CB15/139-213; 5-12)

In agreement with the homilists, one lyric states that as the flesh is inconstant, so are women:

For hy biswikeþ euchan mon
þat mest bi-leueþ hem ouppon.
þey hy ben milde of chere,
Hoe beþ fikele and fals to fonde,
Hoe wercheþ wo in euchan londe;
Hit were betere þat hy nere. (CB13/52-101; 19-24)

Their nature as temptresses has been the same since Eve:

I take witnesse of adam,
þat wes oure furste man
þat fonde hem wycke and ille. (CB13/52-101; 70-2)

They are almost personifications of the world and the body, with their debasing effect upon men: "hy bringeþ moni mon to grounde." (CB13/52-101; 137) Even in married and family life there is no security:

Al þe blis of þese liue
þu salt, man, enden ine wep--
of hus and hom, of child and wiue.
sali man, nim þar-of kep! (CB13/46-78; 11-14)

This situation leaves man in a terrible position. He feels incomplete on his own and feels the need for companionship. If this can not be found safely in a heterosexual relationship, friendship between men seems to provide an answer to the problem. Even there, however, there are difficulties:

Wel wer hym þat wylt
To wam he myzt tryste,
bote þat ys in a wyre,
ffor offte men but holde chere;

(CB 15/174-268; 1-4)

If not all men could be trusted, the characteristic reaction of a person who held this view of life was to trust none of them:

Fremschype faileþ & fullich fadeþ,
Feiþful frendes fewe we fynde,
But glosers þat vche mon gladeþ
.....
But let a mon ones be cast be-hynde
and with þis world turmented & tenet,
He schal ful sone ben out of mynde--
.....
þi lessun loke þat 3e leore,
Whon 3e haþe soþe souzt and seid:
Trust on non such frendschup here--

(CB14/104-155; 1-3, 5-7, 65-7)

Even should a man find a true friend, death would soon carry him away, and the pain of separation was worse than never having had a friend. Death, in fact, makes concern for love ridiculous:

Al mon als was, to powder passe, to dede when þow gase,
A gryselý geste bese þan þi breste, in armes til enbrase.
. . . syker þou be þare es nane, I þe hete,
Of al þi kyth wald slepe þe with, a nyght vnder schete.

(CB14/81-96; 33-6)

The delight taken by the preachers in describing the process of physical death is also seen in the lyrics, where the speaker often contemplates his own death in great detail:

. . . mine lippes blaken,
and mi muþ grennet,
and mi spotel rennet,

and min her riset,
and min herte grisiet,
and mine honden biuien,
and mine ffet stiuien. (CB13/71-130; 6-12)

In Shroud and Grave, where the soul blames the body for its sins, the soul gleefully refers to death as the body's punishment:

Neir þu never so prud
of hude & of hewe ikud,
þu salt in horþe wonien & wormes þe to-cheuen
& of alle ben lot þat her þe vere lewe.
(CB13/20-31; 19-22)

This punishment is the equivalent of that dealt out to the soul:

þenne seit þe sole wid sorie chere:
'Awei! wrechede bodi, nou þou sal to bere,
& i sal for pine sunnen habben fendes to were.
Ac wey þat þu euere to monne yscapit were!'
(CB13/29-46; 9-12)

After the judgment, the soul will come, in hell, face to face with Satan, who is described in terms much like those used to describe the dead body of a man:

Hornes on is heuet & hornes on is cnoe,
.....
He gonet wid is mouþe & staret wid is eyen,
Of is neose-þurlis comet starke leyen,
þat fur bernit & springit ut at uche breye;
Wose loke him on, for drede he moste deyen.
(CB13/29-46; 82, 85-8)

As the innocent man has been made in the image of God, it seems that a damned man's dead body takes on the image of Satan.

The strength of Satan is such that he completely controls the sinner, who must say of his life that "hyt ys All synne." (CB15/55-85; 11) Even if the sinner desires to reform and attempt to reach God, it is impossible, for in return for the earthly happiness which Satan gives to his followers, they owe him their souls:

God wiht hise aungeles i haue for-loren,
Allas! 3e while 3at i was boren.

To sorwe and pine i bringe at eende
Man zat me louet, i schal him schende.

To ze fend i owe fewte,
Truage, homage, and gret lewte.

(CB14/54-68; 1-6)

No amount of good intention is enough to save a man, and once he has sworn fealty to Satan, God can not be expected to do anything to save him from damnation.

Passages from the lyrics show, then, the elements which make up the first view. There are, as well, many lyrics which combine several elements. The Latemest Day (CB13/29-46) shows life as fleeting. Death and the afterlife are fearful: physical death is seen as the punishment of the body for its sins, and hell as the soul's punishment. Both the progress of bodily decay and the appearances of hell and Satan are described in frightening detail. Man can not hope to escape these things unless God will be his shield. Lollai litel child whi wepistow so sore? (CB14/28-36) is a lullaby in which a mother tells her child what to expect from life. The fleeting and sorrowful life she predicts for her child is because of Adam's sin, and every man, as Adam's kin, must share his guilt. She warns her child not to become too attached to the things of this world because, being made of dust, he will return to it. The Tower of Heaven sums up the attitudes on which the first view is based:

Euen, it es a rich_z ture--
wele bies im pat itte may win--
of Mirthes ma pan ert may think
and pa iois sal neuer blin.
Sinful man, bot pu pe mend
and for-sak pin wikkid sin,
pu mon singge hay, 'wailaway!'
for comes pu neuer mare par-Inne.

(CB14/50-66; 1-8)

The speaker knows that heaven exists, and he wants to attain it.

"Wailaway" is the song which man must sing throughout life on earth. He desires peace and joy after death, but according to this view of life, he has little cause for such hope: man finds it impossible to escape Satan on his own, as seen above, yet he must "mend" if he hopes to reach the "iois" of heaven. Salvation is a faint possibility, but it is far from probable.

One group of the Middle English lyrics, then, was shaped by a view of life which saw the world as a corrupting temptation, man as a weak sinner, God as an angry Judge, and life as a painful ordeal with no good purpose.

CHAPTER III

Although the Church was a central element in the life of the Middle Ages, not everyone accepted its teachings uncritically, for there were forces at work in the society of the time which began gradually to change men's opinions of themselves:

Between the years 1050 and 1350 the stability of the feudal system underwent constant change. . . . A movement originating in Italy early in the twelfth century, and known as the 'urban revolution,' was connected with a phenomenal growth of free towns. . . . All these places became nests of individualism, of liberty, and of law as against the authoritarian feudal hierarchy which relied on force.¹

This movement and the industrialization which accompanied it, while striking out against feudalism, also qualified the view of life which had been fostered by the Church. The descending order of authority began gradually to change into something more democratic. Industrialization meant that the old class structure could be changed, so that people in the lower classes could hope to rise in status both socially and financially, something which had not been possible in the feudal system. The individual had more freedom and dignity, and his wishes had importance.

Thus, while the Church continued to preach submission, damnation and the evil of worldly endeavour, many men, desiring both worldly and otherworldly happiness, managed to fulfill their religious duties while at the same time being concerned with the affairs of this world. This was not always a thought-out decision, but, quite the opposite, was often a purely spontaneous reaction to the sombreness of the church:

"it was with the peasant as with Dr. Johnson and his old friend Edwards. Though the parishioner, at moments, might 'try to be a philosopher', yet . . . cheerfulness was always breaking in.'"² Such cheerfulness could not take the Church's dualism seriously, and the man who possessed it would often devise his own mixture of what the Church considered two mutually antagonistic pursuits. Other people, more serious by nature, were not able to accept the morbidity and inhumanity of some of the clergy, and in reaction against it, embraced those very things it condemned.

In any case, secular life flourished in the Middle Ages. This life was based on a view very different from that of the Church, but either in spite of, or because of, this, it was very widely espoused in the period. The pagan ideal discussed in Chapter I gave rise, when applied to mediaeval life, to two distinct movements. Each was secular and had enjoyment, rather than the power which so preoccupied the Church, as its central concern. Many of the basic assumptions of the pagan ideal were held in common by the proponents of these two movements, but their means and goals were somewhat different.

The two movements are best exemplified by the vagantes³ and the troubadours.⁴ Both groups were writers who lived according to, and wrote about, their particular views of life. The vagantes, who were also called goliards, jongleurs and joculars, lived among and catered to the lower classes of society. They were often men who had belonged to the upper echelons of the political and religious hierarchies, but who had left their professions and become wanderers. Of their relationship with the Church Zeydel says,

In spite of their critical attitude toward their own

circles and their looseness of living, the vagantes were not avowed enemies of established religion and of Christianity. To them the Church, with all it stood for, was an integral part of their lives, as it was for every European of that day. So firmly were they rooted in their faith that they dared to take a detached position toward it. . . . Ignoring their own times, they delighted in treating secular, profane matters quite apart from the world about them. . . . They did not reject Christianity; they laid it aside for the time being to indulge their other soul.⁵

They were the "cheerful" people discussed above, who lived two separate lives at once, and who somehow managed to keep them separated.

The troubadours, who wrote of courtly love, came from, remained in, and catered to the upper classes. They were therefore involved in society and could not achieve the detachment of the vagantes. They too, while being Christian, were attracted to the pagan ideal, but it was not enough for them to seek the rewards of each view separately--they attempted to develop a scheme which would make their secular, sensual pursuits acceptable in the eyes of the Church, or at least in the eyes of Christian society. Andreas Capellanus may be mocking the view expressed by one of the characters in The Art of Courtly Love:

"I believe . . . that God cannot be seriously offended by love, for what is done under the compulsion of nature can be made clean by an easy expiation. Besides, it does not seem at all proper to class as a sin the thing from which the highest good in this life takes its origin and without which no man in the world could be considered worthy of praise."⁶

Nevertheless, he is probably articulating an attitude reflected in the lives, if not in the words, of many. The attempt to achieve a synthesis between the two views while standing firmly on the pagan side necessitated a loose and selective reading of Scripture, and was ultimately to prove unsuccessful, as will be seen later. Nevertheless, courtly love was extremely influential and popular in the Middle Ages.

The view of life which the troubadours and vagantes embraced can be seen reflected in aspects of mediaeval life, and in many of the lyrics.

The View of History and the Natural World

The world of the pagan ideal was ruled, not by a male God, but by two female figures, Nature and Fortune, both of whom governed according to cycles. Nature ruled the whole universe, ordering and harmonizing the planets, the seasons and the life in the world; her cycle was usually regular and predictable. Fortune ruled only the sphere of mankind, which she often threw into seeming chaos. Every pagan man was placed on the rim of Fortune's wheel at birth, and was subject to her decisions all his life. To be high on Fortune's wheel was to have riches, happiness and fame, while to be at the bottom meant poverty, sadness and obscurity. The cycle of Fortune was not regular and sympathetic like that of Nature, but was completely erratic and inscrutable. Nature and Fortune, then, were complementary opposites--the light and dark sides of the earth-woman.

Because Fortune's movements were unpredictable, men wondered about her constantly. There was, among the vagantes, an ambivalence in their consideration of Fortune, for in spite of the fact that she inflicted pain upon men, they loved to play her game. The tone of this vagante poem is rueful rather than desperate:

Sors immanis	Fate so mighty,
Et inanis,	Fate so flighty,
Rota tu volubilis,	Like a wheel that must revolve,
Status malus,	Drives me mad,
Vana salus	Ah, I'm sad,
Semper dissolubilis,	Everything will soon dissolve;
Obumbratam	Under cover
Et velatam	All draped over,
Mihi quoque niteris;	Fate comes toward me for attack,

Nunc per ludum	To her lash
Dorsum nudum	Playful brash
Fero tui sceleris.	I must bare my feeble back. ⁷

The courtly attitude was much simpler. Because the followers of the troubadours belonged to the highest classes, they accepted many of society's values. Perhaps the most central of these values was the desire for order and permanence, a motive, as has been seen above, in the Church's attempts to gain political and financial power. Order and permanence, however, were not to be found under Fortune's rule. The courtly lover, therefore, often rebelled against Fortune and her frequent irrational changes, loving her only during a period of happiness. Whereas for the vagantes, men and Fortune were players in a cosmic game, for the troubadours man was at war with Fortune--sometimes ruling her, but more often being quelled by her superior power.⁸

Nature and her cycle elicited a much more straightforward response from both groups. Nature was herself all of life in its slow cyclic movement from life, to death, and back to life. She was the mother who bore and raised all living creatures, and man could find true harmony only when he remained a part of her order. History, which was seen as simply the movement of Nature through time, had no real beginning and no end, but was a succession of springs and autumns.⁹ There could be no central events or ultimate aims, as there were in the first view--every birth was balanced by a death, every success by a failure.

Because Nature had no ultimate aim, man needed none either; and because Nature made no moral judgments, man should also be free of restricting morality. Life, like history, was an aimless gambol through Nature's seasons searching for enjoyment. For the vagantes, enjoyment meant wenching, gambling, drinking and singing songs; for

the troubadours it consisted of the successful wooing of a lady. Each of these, ideally, should be pursued with the same amorality and lightheartedness with which beasts went about living and loving. The vagante sings,

Struunt lustra quadrupedes	Four-footed beasts prepare their lairs
et dulces nidos volucres,	And birds build cozy nests in pairs,
inter ligna florentia	In forests green with vegetation
sua decantant gaudia.	Birds chirp their songs in exultation. ¹⁰

and of the troubadour, Valency says,

The joy of love was the joy of life, a genial and enthusiastic surge of vitality which could be felt throughout the whole of creation. In man it was felt most potently in the joy of courtship, the affirmation of man's youth and virility. It might be felt in every season, but in spring most potently, and it was in his desire to share in this universal joy that the lover turned to the loveliest of creatures.¹¹

The vagante almost always succeeded in maintaining this gay abandon, but the courtly lover moved from it to the certainty that the world should never have winter or disappointment. Transience, therefore, was the point on which they really differed.

Transience did not much bother the vagante. If his life had its ups and downs, they merely served to keep things interesting, and even if he himself was going to die, the cycle of Nature would go on beyond his death. The troubadour, however, sought to make joy, or at least anticipation, permanent, and because of his dissatisfaction with the transience of happiness and of life, he was often unhappy.

Both groups, then, saw the same Nature and Fortune, but reacted in different ways to them. Their reactions reflected those of many people throughout English society, and affected the secular lyrics of the period. The lyrics divide very naturally into vagabond and courtly types, and the attitudes expressed in each parallel those of the original

Latin vagantes and French troubadours.

Many of the Middle English lyrics reveal the way in which the followers of this second view of life saw the Church. For many people, the church seems to have been a place where they could catch up on a week's gossip with their neighbours. This careless attitude toward the sacred things of Christianity drew indignant words from one lyric poet:

Tutiuiillus, þe deuyl of hell,
He wryteþ har names soþe to tel,
ad missam garulantes.

Better wer be at tome for ay,
þan her to serue þe devil to pay,
sic vana famulantes.

þe[s] women þat sitteþ þe church about,
þai deþ al of þe deuelis rowte,
diuina impedientes.

But þai be stil, he wil ham quell,
Wiþ kene crokes draw hem to hell,
ad puteum autem flentes. (CB15/179-277; 1-12)

It was also a trysting-place for lovers:

Go, litull bill, & command me hertely
Vnto her þat I call my trulof & lady,
be this same tru tokynnyng
that sho se me in a kirk on a friday in a mornyng,
.....
to the kirke she comme with a gentilwomon;
euen by-hynd the kirk dore
thay kneled bothe on the flore,
& fast thay did piter-pater--
I hope thay said matens togeder!¹²

This secular use of the church extended into the use of prayer as well. Whereas prayer should ideally be used to petition God for spiritual blessings, it was quite often directed toward more worldly concerns by secular men. This is made evident in some of the lyric charms:

Helpe, crosse, fayrest of tymbris three,
In braunnchys berynge bothe frute & flowr!
Helpe, banere beste my fon to doo flee,
Staf & strencthyng full of sucowr! (Rob/61-58; 1-4)

and

To the holy goste my goodes I bequeth
that in this place be set,
To the father & the sone
all theves for to lett.
And if any theves hyther come
my goodes away to fett,
The holy goste be them before
and make them for to let. (Rob/63-59; 1-8)

So entangled did the religious form and the secular purpose become,
that the Christian God and the pagan powers were at times prayed to
together:

I coniour hem . . .
.
In the vertu of the holy trinitie--
.
In the vertu of erbe, gras, ston, & tre--
And in the vertu that euer may be. (Rob/62-58; 1,6,9-10)

Religion, in many cases, lost its sense of awe-inspiring mystery
and became a natural way of solving everyday fears. It became less a
matter of God and more a matter of man. This secularization of reli-
gious forms allowed a real sense of familiarity, and at times the secu-
lar man even used religion in order to structure a joke. One young
swain, supposedly very sincere, confesses to a priest and then, at the
end of the poem, reveals the whole purpose of his confession:

My gostly fadir, y me confesse,
ffirst to god and then to yow
That at a wyndow (wot ye how)
I stale a cosse of gret swetnes,
Which don was out avisynes;
But hit is doon, not vndoon, now--
.
But y restore it shall dowlles
Ageyn, if so be that y mow;
And that, god, y make a vow,
And ellis y axe foryefnes-- (Rob/185-183; 1-6, 9-12)

This lighthearted lack of seriousness about religious matters may have developed out of a lively awareness of the human foibles and foolishness of some of the clergy. Jolly Jankin, as well as being a poor example at his prayers, is a lecher:

Iankyn crakit notes an hunderid on a knot,
& 3yt he hakkyt hem smaller þan wortos to þe pot.
k[yrieleyson.]

Iankyn at þe angnus beryt þe pax brede,
he twynkelid, but sayd nowt, & on myn fot he trede.
[kyrieleyson.] (Rob/27-21; 13-18)

In another lyric, a pregnant maiden reveals that the ends of the clerics are sometimes far from spiritual--this particular clerk uses his skills to his own sensual advantage:

þis enþer day I mete a clerke,
& he was wyllly in hys werke;
he prayd me with hym to herke,
and hys counsell all for to layne.

I trow he coud of gramery,
I xall now telle a good skylly wy;
for qwat I hade siccurly,
To warne hys wyll had I no mayn.

qwan he and me browt un us þe schete,
Of all hys wyll I hym lete;
Now wyll not my gyrdyll met--
a, dere god, qwat xal I sayn? (Rob/24-18; 1-12)

In none of these ironic poems, however, is there any really cutting satire. Most, as Zeydel said of the vagantes, merely stand back a little from the religion and see its inconsistencies and weakness, without condemning it utterly.

Religion became, for many, a series of formulas which could be used for secular ends, and in this way lost much of its compelling power over the secular man. Nature and Fortune, however, were always immediate in their effects and influences upon man, and were seldom

discussed with detachment.

Where the liturgy might leave many unmoved, the coming of spring, which was Nature's greatest celebration, set all of creation singing and dancing in joy:

Svmer is icumen in,
Lhude sing cuccu!
Groweþ sed and bloweþ med
and springþ þe wde nu.
Sing cuccu!

Awe bleteþ after lomb,
lhouþ after calue cu,
Bulluc sterteþ, bucke uerteþ.
Murie sing cuccu!
Cuccu, cuccu,
Wel singes þu cuccu.
ne swik þu nauer nu!

(CB13/6-13; 1-12)

and

dayes-ezes in þis dales,
notes suete of nyhtegales,
vch foul song singeþ.
.....
þis foules singeþ ferly fele,
ant wlyteþ on huere wynter wele,
þat all þe wode ryngþ.

þe rose rayleþ hire rode,
þe leues on þe lyhte wode
waxen al wip wille.

(CB13/81-145; 4-6, 10-15)

Her world is one of harmony and joy, and man can share in these things by imitating Nature and by responding to her seasons. The response of the secular man is easy and exuberant:

Bytuene mersh & aueril
when spray biginnip to springe,
þe lutel foul hap hire wyl
on hyre lud to singe.
Ich libbe in louelonginge
for semlokest of alle þinge;

.....
An hendy hap ichabbe yhent,
ichot from heuene it is me sent--
from alle wymmen mi love is lent,
& lyht on Alysoun.

(CB13/77-138; 1-6, 9-12)

Even human beauty and fertility at their best are outgrowths of Nature. In Love in the Garden, the garden is the lover's body, and the giving of the shoot is intercourse. In spite of the clarity of the metaphor, the tone of the poem is one of almost Edenic innocence and delight. There is no sense of shame or secretiveness as the gift of love is given in Nature's timeless garden:

I haue a new gardyn,
 & newe is be-gunne;
swych an-oþer gardyn
 know I not vnder sunne.

In þe myddis of my gardyn
 is a peryr set,
& it wele non per bern
 but a per Ienet.

þe fayrest mayde of þis toun
 preyid me,
for to gryffyn her a gryf
 of myn pery tre.

quan I hadde hem gryffid
 alle at her wille,
þe wyn & þe ale
 che dede in fille.

& I gryffid her
 ryȝt vp in her home;
& be þat day xx wowkes
 it was qwyk in her womb. (Rob/21-15; 1-20)

In another lyric, the maiden is a rose:

Al nist by þe rose, rose--
 al nist bi the rose i lay;
darf ich noust þe rose stele,
 ant zet ich bar þe flour away. (Rob/17-12; 1-4)

The most harmonious of human moments, then, come when man most closely approximates Nature.

In the courtly tradition, the relationship between man and Nature is much the same. Nature is the sovereign of beauty, and she has created man to love beauty:

ffor weill I'wet þat natur hes me wrocht
to wirschep hir abone all erdlie wicht,
(Rob/132-130; 22-3)

The beauty of woman is made up of fragments of Nature's bounty:

Her heer is yelou as the gold,
.....
Her rudy is like þe rose yn may
with leris white as any milk,
.....
Her nek is like þe holly flour
Replete with all swete odour;
(Rob/127-120; 19, 26-7, 37-8)

and

hur lyppes ar lyke vnto cherye,
with tethe as whyte as whalles bone,
hur browes bente as any can be,
with eyes clere as crystall stoune.
(Rob/129-124; 13-16)

The perfect woman is, in fact, the "rowte of gentylnes,/Bothe true and trusty stok of all nature" (Rob/198-200; 1-2) and the "gronde of nature." (Rob/198-200; 10) The effect of her beauty upon man is natural: "my hert will melte as snowe in reyne." (Rob/205-209; 16)

The melting or opening of the heart before beauty is the way in which man can become closest to Nature. In all of the descriptions of this activity there is a tone of delight mingled with peacefulness, a sense of the eternal growth of beauty and union which can be found in the natural cycle.

There was, of course, pain and disruption in life as well as joy and peace. The seasons of the year might roll slowly by, but within each season, a man might be successively happy and sad many times. These variations were the work of Fortune.

For the vagabond, Fortune was something to accept in all her aspects. In a short lyric called Lady Fortune and her Wheel, the

speaker describes the way in which Fortune works:

þe leuedi fortune is boþe frend and fo,
Of pore che makit riche, of riche pore also,
Che turnez wo al into wele, and wele al into wo,
No triste no man to þis wele, þe whel it turnet so.

(CB14/42-56; 1-4)

Man cannot expect his happiness to last, yet there is no negative judgment passed upon Fortune. In fact, the pun upon "wele" and "whel" gives the poem an almost humorous tone. As long as a man does not hope for constant ecstasy, he will not be hurt badly when sadness comes. With this attitude the vagantes could accept either state with equanimity.

It is here that the courtly lover, although still basically pagan in outlook, breaks company with the vagante. He cannot give himself up to Fortune and flow with her tides. For him, sadness seems to be contrary to Nature and to separate man out from the natural realm:

Foweles in þe frith,
þe fisses in þe flod,
And i mon waxe wod.
Mulch sorw I walke with
for beste of bon and blod. (CB13/8-14; 1-5)

The lover wishes for gratification, and believes that he cannot live without it: "ffor y may not my lady ffynd,/y wot y dey ffor greffe and wo." (Rob/158-151; 7-8) If Fortune does not make him happy, then, according to the lover, she has purposely willed his death. Fortune, for him, ceases to be a necessary cycle of life and becomes a disinterested or malevolent power who sends men pain out of sheer wilfulness. The lover therefore can complain of her cruelty: "a-lace ffortwne, þou art on-kynd!/why ssuffrys þou my hart to brek yn two?" (Rob/158-151; 5-6) Given this view of Fortune as cruel, the lover may begin to feel sorry for himself; this leads easily to the idea that he is right and Fortune is wrong, and this is morality, which has

no justifiable place in the pagan view. The lover cries,

A! Mercy, fortune, haue pitee on me,
And thynke that þu hast done gretely amysse
To parte asondre them whiche ought to be
Alwey in on; why hast þu doo thus?
Haue I offendyd the? I, nay ywysse!
Then torne thy whele and be my frende agayn,
And sende me Ioy where I am nowe in payn.
(CB15/170-262; 1-7)

He has turned Fortune into something which rewards good behaviour and punishes bad, almost like the just, moral God of the preachers. In reality, it is the courtly lover's insistence upon permanence in the world, and not the mere presence of Fortune, which has separated him from the peace of Nature.

The View of Mankind

Man, in the secular view, was a small part of the world, a moment in its movement in time. As a part of Nature's large cycle, he was bound by its direction, and was also subject to the whims of Fortune. Although his life was not predetermined, its events were decided by the movements of Nature and Fortune, while his reactions were open. As well as being part of a larger cycle, man's life contained smaller cycles of health and sickness, happiness and sadness, wealth and poverty.

The vagantes accepted this situation, and did not attempt to alter or deny it. A vision of man as one cycle surrounded by greater and lesser cycles was not one which fostered personal pride; all that defined a man were his choices and reactions, and these were dependent upon what Fortune had brought him, so no one man could judge another's actions. Life, since it had no ultimate aim or development, was not a learning or improving process.¹³ Also, since each man was a separate

cycle, only slight and temporary meetings could be expected, so life was a solitary state. Because of this, self-preservation and self-centredness were necessary and acceptable things. Each man should do those things which gave him pleasure--should this involve hurting someone else, he ought not to feel guilty:

That the unrestrained loving of which he often sings
may have evil consequences does not disturb the
vagabond. If need be, he deserts the girl . . .¹⁴

The game of love, the game of dice and the game of Fortune are the same to the vagante; in order to play them, a man must play hard and be willing to take the consequences. It does not matter whether a man wins or loses, or even whether he plays fairly, so long as he takes part in the game.

The view of mankind espoused by the troubadours was quite different. Because courtly love was an ideal for those in the upper classes, it necessarily reflected some of society's values. The social hierarchy, like that of the Church, had originated in the idea that man had importance and that order could improve his situation. The troubadours, on essentially pagan grounds, agreed with this. In believing that positive development was possible, they were introducing morality, which is based on a judgment upon greater and lesser goods, into what was originally an amoral view.¹⁵ Also because of their societal outlook, relationships with others were important; every man, while one being, was also a member of a community, and his wishes must not be fulfilled if they upset the harmony of the community. Courtesy, or concern for the other, was far more valuable to the troubadours than was self-interest. Life was not a game, but a commitment, and its goal was not to play but to improve oneself and to

achieve a goal.¹⁶

Both the vagantes and the troubadours considered love an important part of life, but their concepts of love differed according to their concepts of man. The vagante appreciated enjoyment and freedom above all else, and each of these was enhanced by the presence of the other. In his search for enjoyment, the vagante made no distinction between body and soul--a spring day enlivened both, hunger dampened both, and a maiden satisfied both:

The love whose praises these poets sing is sensual love. The object of their affection is often a peasant girl, Her physical attractiveness, sometimes described in detail, her laughter, singing, and dancing, as well as her kisses, arouse her swain's passion among the wildflowers of a warm spring day. Never does he look for intellectual qualities in his beloved; he hopes rather to find voluptuousness.¹⁷

Human love is best, in the eyes of the vagante, when it is exuberant and temporary, when it involves no commitments and no regrets--it is a source of true enjoyment only if it does not threaten his freedom.

The vagante loves a maiden, not as a person, but as one of Nature's beautiful gifts to man. She is not alone in this position--the world contains many sources of enjoyment, and the vagante loves them all in the same way. Gambling, singing and drinking are all, in their own way, as important as love, and each of them is less restrictive than love can sometimes be. If there is one of these occupations which is central to the vagantes, it is drinking. Alcohol is an aid to men, helping them both to forget pain and to enjoy themselves:

Bacchus lenis, leniens
Curas et dolores
Confert iocum, gaudia,
Risus et amores.

Gentle Bacchus, softening
Grief and doleful care,
Offers jest and joy and love,
Laughter debonair.

Istud vinum, bonum vinum,	O this wine, this wine so good,
Vinum generosum	Wine of purest gold,
Reddit virum curialem,	Gives a man a courtly touch,
Probum, animosum.	Makes him sound and bold. ¹⁸

The love of the vagante, then, is free and indiscriminate. It has no purpose except temporary enjoyment, and involves no giving of the self.

The love of which the troubadours sang was very different. The goal of courtly love was not the physical union of the lovers but the spiritual growth and improvement of both, especially the lover. Usually the lady was of a superior social stature, and was also, at least in the eyes of her lover, the paragon of all earthly beauty and goodness. Humbled by her perfection and desirous of her approval, the lover wished only to serve her forever, with any sign of her noticing him--even a smile or a chance glance--coming as an unexpected, if constantly hoped-for, bonus.¹⁹

Ideally, then, courtly love was not primarily physical in nature. In some ways, it approximated a kind of earthly religion:

. . . what, in general, the True Lover expected of his beloved was not a temporary physical appeasement; it was a perpetual benediction; he looked to his lady not for satisfaction but for blessedness. This blessedness proceeded from the unique psychic exchange which love brings about, that mutual acceptance which makes two hearts beat as one,²⁰

There are a variety of opinions regarding the courtly convention's view of the physical side of love. All agree that it should not be immediately consummated. It is sometimes suggested that love should never lead to intercourse. Valency says,

Adultery involved the commission of an illicit sexual act: the True Love of the troubadour, while it remained "pure," did not go so far. It

was nonetheless an extremely sensual love that the troubadours celebrated. Although the True Lover set a bound to his desire, this very fact involved a heightening of sensuality. . . .²¹

Therefore, while "true love makes the impression of an erotic cult so highly disciplined that it savors of the monastic",²² its discipline may also have been an attempt to maintain indefinitely the fever pitch of anticipation which characterized early love, and part of what the troubadours sought was just this kind of permanence.

In any case, the lack of any expectation of a tangible reward for his servitude was to make the love of the suitor completely disinterested and unselfish, so that it approached, in theory at least, the love of the angels as closely as was humanly possible while still celebrating Nature. Nature had, of course, by this time, been purified almost out of existence by the troubadours, as had the physical desire of the lover. Also, because he never received his lady's full favours, the lover could never be sure that she was really committed to him in love, or that she ever intended to favour him--she might merely be leading him on in order to show others that she was desirable.

This situation resulted in fear and anxiety in the lover, and should his fears be correct, he experienced great pain. By allowing the lady to wield so much power, the lover made her into another Fortune, whose merest whim could give him new life or lead him to death. Troubadour songs, therefore, are full of complaints against the cruel lady which echo the tone of the Fortune complaints.²³ Always present in these complaints is the belief, although sometimes unstated, "that love is an evil . . . because it makes one suffer."²⁴

Even when both people involved in a courtly love affair were

sincere and committed, the ecstatic peace which was its goal was difficult to reach and harder to sustain:

The ghostly figures excluded from the paradise of true lovers . . . haunt[ed] it . . . , and even in fancy a thousand obstacles obtruded themselves between the lover and the lady. Invisible eyes observed their every movement, malevolent tongues whispered everywhere. There were constant misunderstandings. There was great need of patience and self-restraint, many tears. The joy of love surpassed all understanding, but this joy had to be won, like all forbidden things, with infinite pain and at greatest cost, and it was not a thing that could be long retained.

So few of the troubadour songs celebrate a successful courtship that one is tempted to conclude that the concept of true love was not framed to include success. The true lover . . . made it as hard for himself as he could.²⁵

There is, then, no happy ending, and this is reflected by a very interesting fact noted by Valency:

. . . the lack of a terminal principle distinguishes troubadour practice rather clearly from the melodic habit of later times. Except for those melodies which employ the major, the end of a troubadour song . . . [has] . . . the effect of an indefinite suspension in space rather than of a firm descent to the ground.²⁶

Just as in their music, the troubadours very seldom found, in their love, the satisfaction and peace of a perfect cadence.

Because of the tensions which the ideal of courtly love caused, many lovers could not bear to follow its tenets perfectly. In the corpus of troubadour songs, many speak quite frankly of physical desire and of sexual satisfaction within the relationship. These, Perella says, represent an off-shoot of courtly love, called "mixed" love.²⁷ Gilson, however, rejects any attempt to see courtly love as a spiritual emotion marred by the presence of bodies, as an imitation of divine love. On the contrary, he sees it as primarily physical and pagan,

and says that even if the spiritual element was really intended to purify the love, what it most often accomplished in reality was a heightening of sexual excitement to an almost unbearable point with no hope of release. In fact, it was not really a love at all, but merely a passion, since the mere experience of it was not its own completion:

Courtly love, even when rewarded, is a thing distinct from its reward, it is other than the joy that crowns it; gathering this up like a fruit of love, it does not confuse it with the love itself.²⁸

Courtly love, then, was incapable of joining Nature to an ordered spiritual discipline. Ultimately, it remained a passion much like that of the vagantes, in spite of the fact that it aspired to greater heights.

Whatever the limitations and problems inherent in them, the visions of man and love held by the vagantes and the troubadours found great currency in the Middle Ages. Many of the Middle English lyrics express the lively vagante attitude, and still more are based upon the conventions of courtly love.

Like the vagante, the English minstrels led a wandering life. They saw this life as a symbol of their freedom, not only to do what they wished, but also from unwanted responsibilities:

In all þis world nis a meryar lyfe
þan is a 3ong man withovtyn a wyfe,
for he may lyven withovzten stryfe
In euery place whereso he go.

In euery place he is loved ouer all
Among maydyns gret & small--
In dauncyng, in pypyng, & rennyng at þe ball,
In euery [place wherso he go.]

.

þan sey maydes, 'farwell, lacke,
þi loue is pressyd al in þi pake;
þou beryst þi loue behynd þi back,
In euery [place wherso þou go!'] (Rob/8-6; 1-8, 13-16)

The vagabond wants a girl who will let him go when he has had his pleasure with her, and his only real love is the feel of the pack on his back as he leaves another town behind.

With no responsibilities, and living for every moment as it comes, the vagabond is as free with his money as he wants his women to be with him:

Spende, and god schal sende;
spare, and ermor care;
non peni, nan ware;
non catel, non care.
go, peni, go. (Rob/60-57; 1-5)

His money is often spent on drink, and he often desires more liquor than he could afford, so he composes a clever verse with which to beg another pint:

ffrende, and we ar ferr yn dette
for your fyne gode wyne, god watte,
A short gynt hase a pynt potte;
I drank onys, I wold drinke yette. (Rob/6-5; 5-8)

Liquor, unlike most other things in life, seems to bring only pleasure. In a drinking song, Bring Good Ale, all other food is rejected for the sake of ale, because each has an important flaw. It is almost as if in turning these things away, the vagabond is rejecting the symbols of ordinary life which, while healthy, has little of the joy which is to be found in his own happy, if impractical, life:

Bryng vs in no befe, for þer is many bonys;
but bryng vs in good ale, for þat goth downe at onys,
& bryng vs in good ale.

.

bryng vs in no mutton, for þat is ofte lene;

Nor bryng vs in no tryppys, for þei be sylldom clene,
but bryng vs in good ale.

Bryng vs in no eggys, for þer ar many schelles;
But bryng vs in good ale, & gyfe vs noþing ellys,
& bryng vs in good ale.

(Rob/13-9; 4-6, 10-15)

Love, like liquor, was to be indulged in as often as possible,
and with the same gusto. Sundays and holidays were especially conducive
to love-trysts, because on those days the farm girls and house maids
did not have to work. Even Christian holy days became identified with
drinking--"holiday cheer" was less pious joy than social relaxation.
One Christmas lyric begins by invoking the spirit of the Yuletide, and
ends with an order to all present to

Mende the fyre, & make gud chere!
ffyll þe cuppe, ser botelere!
let euery mon drynke to hys fere!
thys endes my caroll with care awaye.

(Rob/3-3; 17-20)

Such celebration was loved by mediaeval people, and took place
whenever there was an excuse, whether Christian or pagan. Wherever
there was liquor, music and dance, loving was not far away:

Ladd y þe daunce a myssomur day;
y made smale trippus sob fore to say.
iak oure haly watur clerk com be þe way,
.....
& he trippede on my to, & made a twynkelyng;
euer he cam ner, he sparet for no þynge--

.....
as we turndun owre daunce in a narw place,
Iak bed me þe moup;

þout y on no g[yle.] (Rob/28-22; 1-3, 8-9, 13-15)

The call of springtime especially summons young men and maidens to love.
The maidens in the vagabond verse are very seldom hesitant to give
their favours:

O Lord, so swett ser Iohn dothe kys,

at euery tyme when he wolde pley;
off hym-selfe so plesant he ys,
I haue no powre to say hym nay.

(Rob/26-20; 1-4)

When she does delay, the purpose is often just to tease her lover and thus to make her capitulation more exciting. Little pretty Mopsy (Rob/32-28) has mastered this technique, and by the end of the poem she has her lover completely within her control.

In spite of the fact that even vagabonds were usually Christians, religious scruples seem to be quite rare, and when they do appear, they are quickly rationalized away, as are social problems. In De Clerico et Puella, the lady tells her lover that

'pou art wayted day & nyht wip fader & al my kynne.
be pou in mi bour ytake, lete pey for no synne
me to holde, & pe to slon; pe dep so pou maht wyne.'
(CB13/85-152; 18-20)

But after hearing his unfearing pleas, she no longer cares for the consequences, and says,

'pou semest wel to ben a clerc, for pou spekest so scille;
shalt pou neuer for mi loue woundes pole grylle.
fader, moder, & al my kun ne shal me holde so stille
pat y nam pyn, & pou art myn, to don al pi wille.'
(CB13/85-152; 33-6)

Another maiden realizes that "we haddun yserued pe reaggeth deuel of helle!" (Rob/28-22; 33) but this does not bring her to stop dallying.

There are times, however, when even vagabond love seems less than perfect enjoyment. The maiden who is left pregnant in The Wily Clerk, for example, has to deal with social consequences which love made her forget to consider. Also, some maidens became more attached to their lovers than this attitude allowed, and when deserted, sorrowed:

The man that I loued Al-ther-best
In Al thys contre, est other west,

to me he ys A strange gest;
What wonder es't thow I be woo?

when me were leuest that he schold duelle,
[he maketh haste fro me to go;]
he wold nozt sey ones fare-well
wen tyme was come that he most go.
(Rob/22-16; 1-8)

The old man, also looking back upon pagan love, achieves an awareness of its limitations:

I-wiss, I-wiss, I remembre me
Wher-off, In trowth, of tyme I-past . . .
A, I counsell yow, lett that be--
ffor all preuys butt fantesyys at last.
Why is loue no more stedfast:
Now in trowth what remedy?
(Rob/175-164; 1-6)

Yet he will not, like the preachers, censure it. He realizes that the need for freedom and variety is a part of being young, while old age is the season for security and peace:

Prese forth, in youth be no a-gast.
Why plesyth not age with novelry?
(Rob/175-164; 7-8)

The joy of free young love, even if it makes no provision for old age, is valuable in itself--its limitations are part of its beauty.

The same is true, for the vagabonds, of women. The most common womanly faults, fickleness and mercenary designs, were often noted in satirical lyrics. In one titled When to Trust Women, the author lists as conditions a series of nonsense occurrences:

Whan netills in wynter bere Rosis rede,
& thornys bere figges naturally,
.....
Whan sparowys bild chirches & stepulles hie,
& wrennes Cary Sakkes to the mylle.
(Rob/114-103; 1-2, 15-16)

Another advises Against Hasty Marriage and says that all women, no matter what their status in life, will cause men trouble:

Wyuys be bope stowte & bolde,
her husbondes azens hem durn not holde;
& if he do, his herte is colde,
howsoeuere þe game go.

Wedowis be wol fals, I-wys,
for þey cun bope halse & kys
til onys purs pikyd is,
& þey seyn, 'go, boy, goo!'

Of maydenys I wil seyn but lytil,
for þey be bope fals & fekyll,
& vnder þe tayl þey ben ful tekyl;
A twenty deuel name, let hem goo!
(Rob/41-37; 5-16)

Whether or not these complaints are sincere, they are seldom serious. Women must be accepted as they are, and even their most degrading actions are described with a sense of humour. In Old Hogyn's Adventure, a young woman repays her old lover for his sexual incompetence in the most insulting way possible. Yet the tone of the lyric is light and dance-like, and Hogyn is made to seem more at fault than the lady, since he expected good treatment from her:

Whan she hym at þe wyndow wyst--
Whan she hym at þe wyndow wyst,
She torned owt her ars & þat he kyst,
hum, ha, trill go bell--
She torned owt her ars & þat he kyst,
hum, ha, trill go bell. (Rob/36-33; 25-30)

Women, like Fortune, must never be trusted fully, and love is no more stable and permanent than life itself. Both games, however, are worth playing in spite of the occasional losses they may bring about.

Courtly love, however, does not wish to accept the idea that love is transient and degrading. Its goal is "lufe and trewth with lang continwans," (Rob/132-130; 1) a love which will never change:

Nowþir for joy, nor scherp aduersitie,
nor for disdane, dreid, danger, nor dispair,
ffor lyfe, for deth, for wo, for destany,

ffor bliss, for baill, for confort, nor for cair,
for chance of fortoun turnand heir and pair.

(Rob/132-130; 8-12)

Because of this aim, the lover searches for a lady who possesses spiritual, as well as physical, loveliness, a beauty "which passith reson & nature." (Rob/127-120; 11) This kind of beauty is based upon virtues, "in vertu, benevolens, & trowthe wythe-oute vayriaunce" (Rob/198-200; 7), and upon the social graces:

Ffresshe lusty beaute Ioyned with gentylesse,
Demure, appert, glad chere with gouuernaunce,
Yche thing demenid by avysinesse,
Prudent of speche, wisdam of dalyaunce
Gentylesse with sommanly plesaunce.

(Rob/131-129; 1-5)

This excellence in the lady is contrasted with the inferiority, both social and spiritual, of the lover, who says, "I recomaunde me to your rialnesse/As lowely as y can or may," (Rob/205-209; 5-6) "Gretting hir wull with hwmyll continuaunce,/In termes rud, but zit with esporaunce." (Rob/196-197; 4-5) The lover is completely humble, and asks only to be allowed to see his lady and to obey her every command:

To be hir seruand fassit ay but slycht;
Hir fresche effeir and Hevinlie bewty bricht
To consididir and for to discrif,
And for to luf hir leill in all my life.

(Rob/132-130; 25-8)

This servitude often takes the form of a complete loss of selfish desires and pride:

yf I doo yow dyspleyse, I wyll abyde your correction,
lyke as the master yn the scole techys the chylde,
To doo your commandemente I wylbe meke & mylde and styll.

(Rob/130-126; 30-2)

In many of these lyrics, the metaphor of master and slave is extended until the lover is vassal and the lady his king, "myn soueraigne lady, myn hertis princesse." (Rob/140-142; 14) The lover even

addresses his lady in the formal, impersonal language of the court:

Honour and Ioy, helth and prosperyte,
Be vnto yow, my hartys souuerayn!
In humble wyse I lowly Recommend me
Vnto your good grace, . . .
(Rob/191-192; 1-4)

Taking advantage of their power, some ladies deny their love to these sincere suitors. Thus the love-life of a courtly lover is seldom calm. If he has not been accepted by his lady, he suffers pain; and if he has been accepted, he must always fear that she, like the rest of the world, may change. His only real joy is found in dreams:

Whan Reste And slepe y shulde haue noxiall,
As Requereth bothe nature and kynde,
than trobled are my wittes all;
so sodeynly Renyth in my mynde
youre grete bewte; my-thynketh than y fynde
you as gripyng in myn armes twey--
Bute whan y wake, ye Are away!
(Rob/190-190; 15-21)

Generally, however, he lives in a sort of no man's land between two states, "Entirmet with woo And gladnes,/bothe Ioye and sorowe in woo memorall." (Rob/19--190; 22-3)

This unfulfilling situation in which a man hopes for something for which he is told he cannot hope, is reminiscent of that in which the pious man of Chapter II found himself in relation to God. In fact, the courtly beloved is often described in godlike terms: her beauty was "Hevinlie . . . bricht" (Rob 132-130; 26) and "cellestiall;" (Rob/196-197; 22) the granting of her love is the bestowal of "grace," (Rob/163-154; 27) which, in Sore I Sigh, is prayed for with a formula often used to ask for the mercy of God:

for Iesus sake pat bought vs dere,
& his moder, pat meyden clere,
helpe to comforte my carefull chere,
& lett me neuer spyll. (Rob/130-126; 33-6)

Should the lover displease his lady, he suffers a "penaunce." (Rob/163-154; 11) The lady has been idealized to the point where she seems to have no concern for her lover--she is, like the God of the homilists, glorious but distant, and severe.

With the lady so elevated and powerful, the lover suffers constantly, and his pain is such that nothing can cure or hide it:

I ne haue Ioy, plesauns, nor comfortt,
In yowre absenss, my verrey hertes quene.
What other men thynk Ioy or disportt,
To me it nys butt angyr or tene;
Yff þat I lawgh, yt ys butt on þe splene.
thus mak I a gladfull sory chere,
(Rob/159-151; 1-6)

Yet in spite of this pain, the lover cannot stop loving his lady:

Alas, I lyve to longe;
my paynes be so stronge,
for comfort haue I none!
God wott I wold fayne be gone,
for vnkyndnes haith kyllyd me
And putt me to thys payne;
Alas, what remedy
That I cannott refrayne!
(Rob/206-214; 33-40)

Unable to find any pleasure in his own love, he, almost with a touch of masochism, tries to console himself with the fact that "Mi sorow to her is sum plesur,/And theof am I gladde." (Rob/127-120; 62-3)

Ultimately, the situation in which the courtly lover finds himself is less fair than that of the sinner of the first view, or of the vagabond. The separation, pain and fear experienced by man in the first view was deserved because of his sins, and the vagabond, because he has hurt others often, cannot complain when Fortune hurts him. The courtly lover, however, has sacrificed his own wishes for those of the lady, and has sought to grow in virtue in order to become worthy of her, so, in a moral sense, he deserves her love.

If he seldom gains it, this is because the troubadours do not ultimately succeed in uniting the physical to the spiritual, the real to the ideal. That this is true is seen in The Ten Commandments of Love. The title of this lyric suggests that the lyric achieves a metaphorical union between religion and human love, and this appearance is continued into the first half of the poem. The first five commandments are much like Christian ones: the lover is exhorted to have faith, good intention, discretion, patience and secretness. These virtues should not be mutable, for love can only thrive if "eche belive other as true as the Gospell." (Rob/177-165; 17) Yet the lyric accepts the fact that some ladies will be cruel or inconstant, and in order that the lover keep his pain to a minimum, he is counselled,

Set not your loue in soe feruent wise,
But that in goodly hast yee may refreine
If yur louer list you to dispise.
Romaunce, min authour, would you this aduise:
Ty slacke yur loue, for if you doe not soe,
That wanton list will turne you into wo.
(Rob/177-165; 51-6)

It is impossible to follow both commandments--that of the spirit (faith), and that of the body (prudence)--at once. The physical can only be made permanent and painless in art, and the attempt to make love into a work of art must result, instead, in making it lifeless:

This ys no lyf, alas, pat y do lede;
it is but deth as yn lyves lyckenesse,
Endeles sorow assured owte of drede,
Past all despeyre & owte of all gladenesse.
Thus well y wote y am Remedylesse,
for me nothyng may comforte nor amende
Tyl deith come forthe and make of me an ende.
(Rob/165-156)

That there are elements of the vagabond and courtly love traditions in the Middle English lyrics, and that these elements, seen separately,

can be combined to form coherent pictures of the two traditions, has been seen above. It remains, however, to analyze entire lyrics which are based upon each of these traditions. A Carefree Life (Rob/8-6) could almost be called the theme song of the vagabond school. The speaker's life consists of dancing, playing and making love to village girls. He says that a more settled and respectable way of life results only in the loss of one's wife to vagabonds such as himself. His chief glory lies in his freedom, both from marital responsibility and to go where and when he wishes. What Love is Like (CBL3/53-107) lists many of the attributes of love, pointing up the fact that for every good time love provides, there will be a correspondingly bad time. Love is seen to be full of changes and even contradictions, but this is not seen as a detriment. Its glory lies in the constant variety and grandeur of its changes, because, through them, love encloses everything: "loue is lif, loue is dep." (l. 23) This poem states clearly the central aspect of the vagabond attitude toward fortune: man must not become so dependent upon happiness that its absence destroys him. He must accept, and even celebrate, those things in life which are beyond his understanding.

The determination of the troubadours not to accept these limitations is seen in The Beauty of His Mistress, II (Rob/129-124). Although the lady is described in symbols borrowed from nature, the lover is not content with the transience of natural love. He explains his suffering in terms, not of nature, but of spiritual improvement, and also dwells upon the spiritual virtues of his lady. In the same way, while he hopes for "good fortune," (l. 40) he also prays to Christ for help. The speaker is neither completely pagan nor completely Christian.

A Lover's Distress (Rob/167-156) shows that in spite of the lover's attempts to lift his love into the spiritual realm, it is still subject to Fortune. Fortune has taken his lady away from him, yet the lover still swears to love her until he dies. It becomes obvious that the only stable part of courtly love is the lover himself.

The pagan view of life, which grew out of an assumption that this world was ultimate reality and that man could build his life upon it alone, had two branches: the vagabond outlook, which refused to take life or love very seriously, and which prized fun and freedom above all else; and the troubadour outlook, which sought to find some permanence and meaning in this world by raising love onto a spiritual plane. As we have seen, there are Middle English lyrics which reflect both of these outlooks, and also the view of life which lay behind them.

CHAPTER IV

The view of life which saw the world as reflecting, and partaking in, the Divine, grew out of the monastic and mystical movements which developed in the Christian Church. As has been seen in Chapter I, the first ascetic movement was that of the Fathers of the Desert. Their example was followed when, in the early thirteenth century, mysticism flowered all over Europe and many influential religious orders were founded and renewed: the Franciscan, the Dominican and others. By the fourteenth century, these orders had spread into England and greatly influenced the religious spirit of that country.

Monasticism had had a long history, and had performed many functions. By the Middle Ages, its function was largely social:

The central purpose of monasticism was prayer, and this was conceived as a public duty. The monks prayed for the welfare of the entire world and believed that in so doing they were performing a social function more important than any other. . . . the monasteries came to fulfill social needs in other ways as well. From the fifth to the tenth century, when Europe was beset by internal dissensions and decay and by frequent barbarian assaults from without, the civil and ecclesiastical structure of authority was badly weakened. In this situation the monasteries stood as islands of relative tranquillity and order. In the midst of economic decline and the reversion of land to waste, the monks cleared and tilled and rendered fields productive. In time of famine they fed the poor. They provided the only care for the sick available in most areas. They cared for penniless widows and orphans and provided shelter for those who traveled on the unsafe highways. And in the seventh and eighth centuries they became centers of education and learning.¹

Because of this, monasticism had a great effect upon society. As educators, the monks and friars made literacy available to greater numbers of men in all classes. In England, as more people learned to read, a need developed for books written in English:

Treatises and prayer-books written in Latin and French were translated into English, and the vernacular was used increasingly for original work. . . . it was a distinctive note of the first great decades of Middle English literature that the writings were intensely personal and were directed for the most part either to unknown individuals or to the lower levels of the literate public.²

This is very true of the writings of the English mystics of the fourteenth century. Although Rolle wrote in Latin as well as in English, he says, in the prologue to his Incendium,

. . . I offer this book to be seen:
not to philosophers nor wise men of this
world, nor to great divines lapped in
infinite questions, but unto the
boisterous and untaught, more busy to
learn to love God than to know many
things.³

The common people were encouraged to believe that they were capable not only of learning, but also of true religious experience, because, of the four most influential mystics of the period--Walter Hilton, the author of The Cloud of Unknowing, Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich--not one is known to have belonged to an organized religious order before his or her mystical experience began.

The works of the mystics were of different kinds. The three men wrote guides to the contemplative and mystical life, while Julian wrote an exposition of the divine visions she had received. All were widely read and influential among lay people, partly because they spoke in such a simple, direct manner. In this way, the third view

of life spread from the mystics to people all over mediaeval England, who, because of their increased learning, were sometimes able to record their attitudes. Many Middle English lyrics, which were the works of just such people, reflect these attitudes again and again.

The View of History

As in the first view, the Ruler and Creator of the universe was the Christian God. He was, however, seen in a different way by the mystics--no longer as distant judge but as compassionate lover. This change came about because of a concentration upon the New Testament rather than the Old, and upon Christ rather than the Father. For Julian of Norwich, in fact, the idea of Heaven was nothing without Christ:

Then had I a proffer in my reason as [if] it
had been friendly said to me: "Look up to
Heaven to his Father." . . . I answered
inwardly with all the might of my soul, and
said: "Nay; I may not: for thou art my
Heaven." . . . For I would liever have been in
that pain till Doomsday than to come to Heaven
otherwise than by him.⁴

Christ was not more important than the Father, but He was God's way of showing Himself to, and communicating with, man. Hence, He was man's only way to God. It was Christ who made the approach to mystical experience possible. Helen Gardner, in her discussion of Walter Hilton,⁵ notes that in the first book, which discusses man's situation in the world, he concentrates upon a theocentric view of the universe, whereas when he begins to guide his reader through the steps of the contemplative discipline, he shifts to a Christocentric approach.

The central events in history, according to this view, were the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The Crucifixion was, of course, also central in the view of life discussed in Chapter II,

but in this third view its meaning changes radically because of the interpretation given to the other two events.

The Nativity was seen by the mystics as a sign of God's love for man, and as a symbol of the unity possible between God and man. At the Nativity, God bent down to the level of men by assuming a double nature, both divine and human:

For soothly it is the most joy that may be, as to my sight, that he that is highest and mightiest, noblest and worthiest, is lowest and meekest, homeliest and most courteous: and truly and soothly this marvellous joy shall be shewn us all when we see him.

And this willeth our Lord, that we seek for and trust to, joy and delight in him, comforting us and solacing us, as we may, with his grace and with his help.⁶

By becoming man, Christ raised humanity into something worthy once more of union and joy with God.

Since Adam's sin, of course, "we deserve pain and wrath,"⁷ but Christ's Incarnation and Crucifixion relieved men of this punishment:

for the oneing with the Godhead gave strength to the manhood for love to suffer more than all men might suffer. I mean not only more pain than all men might suffer, but also that he suffered more pain than all men of salvation that ever were from the first beginning unto the last day might tell or fully think.⁸

Christ's death was seen not as a failure but as a victory which saved not only those on earth but also the patriarchs and prophets who had died since Adam and gone to Hell.

Just as the meaning of His death was transformed in the eyes of the mystics, so was the meaning of Christ's suffering. The physical torment described by the preachers of the first view was still seen as part of the Crucifixion, but its meaning was not in itself. Each physical aspect reflected a spiritual one:

Therefore the same desire and thirst that he
had upon the Cross . . . the same hath he yet,
. . . which is lasting in him as long as we
be in need, drawing us up to his bliss.⁹

This thirst to draw man to Him was believed to be revealed in Christ's
stance on the Cross, which was one of open-armed embrace. It was His
great love, in fact, which caused Christ's worst suffering:

A, Lord, þe sorewe þat fel to þi herte,
whan þou on þi modur caste þine eyen.
þou saw hyre folewe af[t]er among þe
gret prees. . . . þe sorewe þat he[o]
made and þe mykel dool agreggyd manyfold
alle þin opere peynes, so whan heo wyste
þat it so was, þan was hyre wel wers,
and þou also for hyre wepyst. . . . as
þe love was makeles, so þe sorewe was
perelees: it stykyd at 3owre hertys os
it were deth.¹⁰

The most important fact about the Crucifixion as seen by the mystics
was that, along with pain, Christ experienced an inexpressible joy
which made the pain seem unimportant:

Then said our good Lord Jesus Christ: "Art
thou well paid that I suffered for thee?" I
said: "Yea, good Lord, gramercy. Yea, good
Lord, blessed mayst thou be." Then said Jesus,
our kind Lord: "If thou art paid, I am paid:
it is a joy, a bliss, and endless liking to me
that ever suffered I passion for thee; and if
I might suffer more, I would suffer more."¹¹

The main reason for the change of attitude toward the Crucifixion
in this view was that it was not seen as the end of Christ's mission
on earth. While those who held the first view of life were aware of
the Resurrection, their attitude was not formed by it. For the mystics,
however, the Resurrection was the true end, which revealed the whole
purpose of the Incarnation. When Christ rose from the dead, He raised
the patriarchs and prophets out of Hell with Him, and by conquering
death, He gave all of mankind the hope of being able to do the same.

Heaven became a real possibility for the man who desired it.

The movement of history was seen as comic. It began at the high point of Eden, then fell with the Original Sin. An upward movement began, however, with the Nativity and culminated in the Resurrection. Since this event, history was moving toward the Second Coming, which would recapitulate the Incarnation and culminate in the Resurrection of the Dead. There was little fear about the Apocalypse in this view. The readiness of each individual for his own personal judgment was more important than preparation for the end of the world. This readiness could be undertaken in real hope, for the possibility of salvation existed, and each man's life could restate the structure of history.¹²

This forward- and upward-looking attitude is reflected in the title of Hilton's book, The Scale of Perfection, and Rolle describes the movement toward God as a ladder; every man, by gaining in goodness, is seen as climbing a ladder up to God:

[I] wyll þat þou be ay clymbande tyll
Jhesu-warde, and ekand þi luf and þi
servys in hym; noght als foles doos:
þai begyn in þe heyest degre, and coms
downe till þe lawest.¹³

This new optimism can be seen echoed in the lyrics, where the shift of emphasis from Father to Christ signals a change from justice to love:

Iutel wot hit anymon
hou loue hym haueþ ybounde,
.....
he seh his fader so wonder wroht
wip mon þat wes yfalle,
wip herte sor he seide is oht
whe shulde abuggen alle;
his suete sone to hym gon clepe & calle,
& preiede he moste deye for vs alle.
(CB13/90-161; 1-2, 15-20)

The Father is wrathful and vengeful, and only Christ's wish to buy man's return to the Father's good graces gives man his second chance. Christ's mission begins with the Nativity, in which His divine nature humbles itself and is enclosed in humanity. In the lyrics, this is a source of great wonder:

pou kyng of woele and blisse,
louerd iesu crist,
pou uaderes sone of heuene,
pat neuer ende bist,

pou, uor to sauue monkunne
pat pou haddest whrout,
A Moeke maydes wombe
pou ne shonedest nouht; (CB14/22-24; 1-8)

and

pu pat were so sterne & wild,
Nou art be-come meke & mild. (CB14/59-80; 2-3)

Christ achieves a complete union of "god an man." (CB14/33-49; 3)

For every man, this means that, as Christ says,

if pou will luf vnto me schaw
For my brother I will be know.
What may I do be mare? (CB14/47-60; 10-12)

Christ's love for mankind is the reason for the Crucifixion, and each of his wounds is a prayer for man to God:

pu pad madist alle pinc,
mi suete fadir, hewene kinc,
Bi-sue to me pad am pi sone,
pad for monkinge habe fles ynomin.
.....
po flod of min rede blod
Al owir-weint min purlit fod.
Fadir, pau monkinge ab idon folie,
Mid mine wondis for hem mercy ic be crie.
(CB13/33-61; 1-4, 11-14)

Throughout the Crucifixion, "He hadde vs euere in mynde/In al his harde prowē." (CB15/95-140; 15-16). He shows his love with the way in which His body is placed on the Cross:

Man, folwe seintt Bernardes trace
 And loke in ihesu cristes face,
 How hee lut hys heued to þe
 Swetlike for to kessen þe,
 And sprat hise armes on þe tre,
 Senful man, to klippen þe.
 In sygne of loue ys open his syde;
 Hiis feet y-nayled wid þe tabyde.
 Al his bodi is don on rode,
 Senful man, for þyne goode. (CB13/69-128; 1-10)

Seeing her son crucified causes Mary much suffering. It seems almost as if the pain of his death is making up for the ease of his birth:

þenne þu loch ah nou þu wep,
 þi wa wes waken þat tenne slep--
 childing-pine haues te nou picht.
 (CB13/4-8; 10-12)

Christ suffers even more when He sees His mother's pain, and tries to convince her to

'Stond wel, moder, ounder rode,
 Bihold þi child wiþ glade mode,
 Moder bliþe miȝt þou be.'
 (CB13/49^a-87; 1-3)

In spite of his physical pain and his sympathy for Mary, this is his prevailing mood:

For þi lufe bath boght & salde,
 Pyned, nayled, & done on tre--
 All, man, for þe lufe of þe.
 Lufe þou me als þe wele aw,
 And fra syn þou þe draw,
 I gyf þe my body with woundes sare;
 And þare-to sall I gyf þe mare,
 Ouer all þis I-wysse,
 In erth mi grace, in heuen my blysse.
 (CB14/77-93; 22-30)

In this view, the Cross becomes a symbol of joy for both God and man:

Steddefast crosse, inmong alle oþer
 þow art a tre mykel of prise,
 in brawnche and flore swylk a-noþer
 I ne wot non in wode no rys.
 swete be þe nalys,

and swete be þe tre,
and sweter be þe birdyn þat hangis vpon the!
(CB14/40-55; 1-7)

This attitude toward the Crucifixion was not new--the above lyric is a translation of a Latin poem by Ventantius Fortunatus (c.569)--but the Middle English poets who held it were inspired by past expressions of it.

The central reason for joy at the Crucifixion is that Christ's death resulted in new life:

On leome is in þis world ilist,
þer-of is muchel pris;
a-risen is god & þat is rist
from deþe to life. (CB13/24-34; 1-4)

The Resurrection is the culmination of the movement which began with the Incarnation; Christ's two natures were both needed for it:

Till lastand lyf for I suld ga,
þe ded he tholed in his manhede;
When his will was, to lyf all-sa
He rayse ogayne thurgh his godhede.
(CB14/48-61; 77-80)

It is God's ultimate triumph:

This day, with hie mangnificence.
The Lord Is rissin fra deth to Life.

The sing triumphand of þe croce
Schew, to confound þe feindis feid.
(CB15/133-179; 7-10)

After Christ rises from the dead, death is no longer anything to fear:

"Lyf was slayne & rase agayne, in faire-hede may we fare;/And dede es
brought til litel or noght, & kasten in endles kare." (CB14/83-99; 45-6)

In overcoming evil and death, and raising Adam's kin from Hell, Christ has made salvation possible for all men:

Ihesu, make me þan to ryse
From deth to lyue, on such a wise
as þou rose vp on estre day,
In ioy & blisse to lyue aye. (CB14/91-114; 151-4)

The future now holds promise for every man who believes in, and follows,
God:

And þou þat art in errour dirkit,
ffollow thy Lord--the way Is plane--
And off his futsteppis be nocht Irkit
That tuke þi gidschip with sic pane.
Quhen þow gois wrang, retyrne agane
And with þi ransoner rewife.
Lang in syn þou ly not plane,
Bot Ris with him fra ded to life.

(CBL5/113-179; 25-32)

The View of the World

The world, as seen in this view, had much greater value than it had in the view of life discussed in Chapter II. This is basically because, in this view, God is not seen as distant and separate. He is, most simply, all being. The author of The Book of Privy Counsel says that "whatever else you say about God, all of it is hidden and preserved in this little word 'Is'."¹⁴ As "Is," God has created the universe:

Also in this he shewed [me] a little thing, the quantity of an hazel-nut, in the palm of my hand; and it was as round as a ball. I looked thereupon with eye of my understanding, and thought: "What may this be?" And it was generally answered thus: "It is all that is made." I marvelled how it might last, for methought it might suddenly have fallen to naught for little[ness]. And I was answered in my understanding: "It lasteth, and ever shall [last] for that God loveth it." And so all thing hath the Being by the love of God.

In this Little Thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it: the second is that God loveth it: the third, that God keepeth it.¹⁵

The world, then, was still loved by God even after Adam's Fall, and "all kinds that he hath made to flow out of him to work his will shall be restored and brought again into him by the salvation of man through

the working of grace."¹⁶ Nature, for Julian, although too weak to combat the effects of man's sins alone, had always worked in cooperation with grace,¹⁷ and had always given its allegiance to God.

The attitude of all the mystics toward the world was greatly affected by the importance of Mary in their thought. That there began in the twelfth century a cult of Mary has long been accepted. Owst suggests a reason for its beginning:

. . . as time went on and the art of the chanson courtoise developed, it is clear that . . . praise of the Queen of Heaven in homily and sacred poem was definitely fostered--by the Mendicant in particular--to counteract the popularity of the trouvere's secular love-themes. The sacred love-passion itself only waited for a touch of genuine mysticism . . . to kindle it into the ecstasy of song and peroration.¹⁸

The cult may not have begun entirely from a sense of competition with the troubadours, yet, in many ways, Mary was, for the Christian, the equivalent of the courtly lady--she was Christianity's link with nature. This connection was easily made: Mary was the earthly being in whom Christ had become human, or, more simply, she was the earth which had received the Seed of God. Ultimately, because she had accepted God's will and borne the divine, she was assumed into Heaven. Before Mary, the world had been a reflection of Eve, but, "as Christ was the new Adam, so Mary was the new Eve, who brought forth salvation on the earth as the old Eve had brought forth ruin."¹⁹ As Eve was the mother of all sinners, so Mary was the mother of all redeemed men:

For in that same time that God knitted him to our body in the Maiden's womb, he took our Sensual soul: in which taking he, us all having enclosed in him, oned it to our Substance: in which oneing he was perfect Man. For Christ having knit in him every man that shall be saved, is perfect Man. Thus

our Lady is our Mother in whom we are all enclosed and of her born, in Christ: (for she that is Mother of our Saviour is Mother of all that shall be saved in our Saviour.)²⁰

Christ had not been too proud to enter Mary's womb, so man must not be too proud to accept his earthly nature.

The mystics did not, however, overlook or deny the transience of the world. For Hilton, transience caused pain, and pain could not be a part of mystical union with God, so

. . . man must withdraw his mind from the love of all earthly creatures, from vain thoughts, and images of all sensible things, and from all self-love.²¹

Rolle agrees:

For al erthly lufe es passand, and wytes
sone away. If pou be covetose after
gode, luf hym, and pou sal have al gode.
. . . Bot al þe delytes of þis world er
faynt and fals and fayland in maste
nede; þai bygyn in swettnes, and þair
endyng es bitterer þan þe gall.²²

For Julian, however, the transience of earthly things was merely another way of seeing eternity, and because nature cooperated with grace, she believed that man must love it.²³ The movement of individuals and eras toward physical death were nothing compared to the cosmic movement toward the Second Coming, in which the bodies and the souls of the good would be taken into glory, and become eternal.

This new closeness of the natural and the divine is also seen in many of the lyrics. A lyric entitled In One is All states that God is present in all Creation:

Off one I syng, & wil not spare,
þat made al thynges both lest & most;
.
In hym es alle & alle he is,
god & man he es to be calle.

(CB15/52-82; 9-10, 13-14)

Mary, as in the view of the mystics, is seen as God's means of uniting nature and grace:

she is enprentyd in ych degre
With yftis of nature in-explycable,
And eke of grace incomparable. (CB15/46-75; 19-20)

She is able, while still fully human, to enclose many paradoxes which are beyond human understanding, because God works through her:

pou wommon bouthe uere
byn oune uader bere.
Gret wonder pys was
pat on wommon was moder
To uader and hyre broper--
So neuer oper nas.

pou my suster and moder
And by sone my broper--
Who shulde poenne drede? (CB14/16-18; 1-9)

Mary has undone the work of Eve, and established a new feminine role on earth:

Al pe world it wes fur-lorn
poru eua peccatrice
to-forn pat ihesu was iborn
ex te genitrice;
porou aue, e wende awei,
pe pestri nist ant com pe dai
salutis,
pe welle springet out of pe
uirtutis. (CB13/17-24; 28-36)

Her bearing of Christ, far from being described in high, abstract terms, is expressed in many lyrics as a natural occurrence. Through Mary, Christ has become related to nature:

Nv yh she blostme sprynge,
hic herde a fuheles song.
a swete longinge
myn herte purephut sprong,
pat is of luue newe,
pat is so swete and trewe
hyt gladiet al my song; (CB13/63-120; 1-7)

At times, Mary is a garden and Christ a tree:

I passud þoru a garden grene,
I fond a herbere made full newe--
A semelyour syght I haff noght sene,
O ylke treo sange a tyrtull trew--
There-yn a mayden bryzt off hew,
And euer sche sange, & neuer sche sest:
Thies were þe notus þat sche can schew,
Verbum caro factum est. (CB15/78-115: 1-8)

At other times, she is a tree and He her fruit: "Owre lorde is the frwte, oure lady is the tree;/Blessid be the blossome that sprange, lady, of the!" (CB15/127-194; 8-9) In any case, Mary, in giving birth to Christ, has shown that nature is capable of union with the divine. She is the world's "wyndow of hewen mirth." (CB14/41-55; 24)

The topic of worldly transience is common in the lyrics which reflect this third view of the world, perhaps because those who held the first view of life seemed so concerned with earthly corruption and temptation. The attitude toward transience is, however, substantially different. Some lyrics, echoing the attitudes of Rolfe and Hilton, see the world as barely worth being concerned about. This is not because earthly things are evil, but because they are less valuable and lasting than the things of the spirit:

Nu ask i noþer gra ne grene,
Ne stede, scrud, ne lorein scene,
Ne purperpall, nee pride o pane,
Ne riche robe wit veir and grise;
O werlds aght ask i na pris,
Ne castel mad o lime and stane.

Bot stedfast hope and trout right,
And ert clene and eien sight,
Opir gersum ask i nan. (CB14/29-37; 61-9)

A sense of disgust with the world is prevented by the awareness that Nature is a gift to man from God, and that man is meant to love and enjoy it:

Al eorþli þing I zaf to þe,
Boþe Beest and fisch & foul fleoyng,

And tolde þe hou þat charite
And Merci passeþ alle þing. (CB14/95-125; 69-72)

Man must neither depend upon the world nor deny it. The answer to
this problem lies in measure:

To litill or to gret excesse,
Bothe arne wike and vicyous
And greue god bothe, as I gesse,
ffor bothe þe partise arne perillouse;
(CB15/186-286; 17-20)

By taking from the world only as much as he needs, man will avoid the
pain which comes when, after wealth, severe poverty strikes. The best
prayers are those for moderation:

And sende men frutes of erdely foode,
As eche man nedyth to hys degre.
(CB15/64-98; 35-6)

and

Cryste, gyffe me grace, off mete & drynke
This day to take mesurably. (CB15/129-195; 17-18)

Such measure and temperance, while it may seem like a sacrifice to
others, is easy and desireable for the man who exercises them out of
love for Christ:

how softe in hard cloþes to slepe.
.....
Whan I am lowe for þy loue
þan am I moste at myn aboue,
Fastynge is feest, murnynge is blis,
For þy loue pouert is richesse.
þe hard here shold be more of pris
þan softe sylk or pelur or bys;
Defaut for þi loue is plente,
And fleishely lust wel loth shold be.
(CB14/91-114; 108, 113-120)

In this view, then, it is possible to achieve harmony between earthly
needs and religious fervour.

The View of Mankind

As the distance between God and nature became less in this view, so did the distance between man and God. In fact, as God was not regarded as a stern Judge, there ceased to be any necessary distance at all:

. . . Man's Soul [is] made by God and in the point knit to God. . . . And therefore it is that there may nor shall be right naught atwix God and man's Soul.²⁴

and

Sooth it is our Lord is within all creatures, but not on that manner as a kernel is hid within the shell of a nut, or as a little bodily thing is holden within another mickle. But He is within all creatures as holding and keeping them in their being, through subtlety and through might of His own blessed kind and cleanness unseeable.²⁵

Man had sinned, and would sin again, but God did not concentrate upon these lapses. He was concerned with a man's intentions more than with his actions: "For not what thou art, nor what thou hast been, seeth God with his merciful eyes, but what thou wouldst be."²⁶ Mercy had completely replaced justice:

For the ground of mercy is love, and the working of mercy is our keeping in love. . . . for mercy worketh, keeping us, and mercy worketh turning for us all things to good. Mercy, by love, suffreth us to fail in measure.²⁷

Because of mercy, even when man felt unworthy, God was with him and loving him, so he need never fear. He would never be alone.

In this view, as in the first, man was believed to have two aspects---the physical, or natural, and the spiritual, or divine. Ideally, the spiritual part should be allowed to guide the natural, and full cooperation was possible. Because this perfect balance was

difficult to achieve, God had given man Christ as an example: Christ was all man and all God, and both natures were real, but His divine nature directed the entire course of His life. The ideal state recommended by the mystics could be summed up in the words of St. Augustine where he defined virtue as "the setting of love in order."²⁸

Although they believed all men to be capable of mystical experience, the English mystics agreed that there were different levels in the approach to God, and that some men were meant to stop at one level while others proceeded further. The highest state, they believed, could only be reached by intense, solitary contemplation. This was achieved by only a very few people. Others were meant for a more active life, or for a mixture of the two. In each way of life, man could glorify God:

In the active or mixed lives love for God is often best indicated by charity towards fellow Christians, and in the contemplative life, in which worldly cares do not figure, love is best indicated by constancy in devotion to God alone.²⁹

Many men, as long as they acted according to their spiritual beliefs, could be happier and more productive leading an active life than leading a contemplative one. Rolle was of the opinion that the mixed life, because it was a temperate balance between the two others, was the most desirable:

Truly if any man might get both lives, that is to say contemplative and active, and keep and fulfil them, he were full great; that he might fulfil bodily service, and nevertheless feel the heavenly sound in himself, and be melted in singing into the joy of heavenly love.³⁰

The concepts of sin and evil held by the mystics were related closely to the belief that the universe was built upon order and love. Evil was, for them, that which occurred when this order was lost. It

was not an entity in itself:

But I saw not sin: for I believe it hath
no manner of substance nor no part of being,
nor could it be known but by the pain that it
is cause of.

And thus pain, it is something, as to my
sight, for a time; for it purgeth, and maketh
us to know ourselves and to ask mercy.³¹

Because it worked this good, it could not be a negative force which
opposed God with strength almost equal to His, as it was seen to be in
the first view. On the contrary, in the third view, evil was seen as
something which God had allowed to exist, and which served His purpose:

For it is his will that we wit that all the
might of our Enemy is taken into our Friend's
hand; and therefore the soul that wotteth
assuredly this, it shall not dread [any] but
him that it loveth.³²

Each man's experience of evil was his opportunity to share in the
suffering which Christ experienced on the Cross, so that he might also
share in the Resurrection. Both Julian and Rolle repeatedly begged
God to allow them to feel Christ's pain undiluted:

. . . I was cause pereoffe, and he
gylteles, os þe dere woundes were myn
owne ryzt -- gete me, for þi mercy, on
of hem alle, a prikke at myn herte of
þat ilke peyne, a drope of þat rewthe to
folewe hum with.³³

The pain of the Cross was also seen as the pain of all life, so that
"we be now, in our Lord's meaning, in his Cross with him in our pains
and our Passion, dying; and we, wilfully abiding in the same Cross with
his help and his grace unto the last point, suddenly he shall change
his Cheer to us, and we shall be with him in Heaven."³⁴

Like the Cross, all pain would end, and as Christ overcame the
powers of darkness and evil upon the Cross, so every man could be con-
fident that if he suffered willingly for God, he would also triumph:

And right as in the first word that our good Lord shewed, meaning his blissful Passion -- "Herewith is the devil overcome" -- right so he said in the last word, with full true secureness, meaning us all: "Thou shalt not be overcome."³⁵

By suffering the pain of the Cross, man shared not only in Christ's ultimate triumph but also in His all-encompassing love. For Rolle and Hilton, who were pursuing the life of solitary contemplation, love of men was of little interest in terms of close personal relationships. They would never have close friends, so their love for others necessarily remained quite theoretical. They wrote to others, and to the public at large, to teach them how to attain the highest point in mystical contemplation. In this state there was no need, or even desire, for human love:

Undoubtedly such solitude is most acceptable which has no association amongst men. He is the more ravished inwardly to joy as he is less occupied with outward things. . . .³⁶

For Julian, however, there was, and could be, no separation between the love of God and the love of mankind:

. . . he that loveth generally all his even-Christians for God, he loveth all that is. .
. . For in man is God, and God is in all.
And I hope by the grace of God he that beholdeth it thus shall be truly taught and mightily comforted, if he needeth comfort.³⁷

Her love for mankind, like that of Rolle and Hilton, was a continuation of her love for Christ, but it was not, like theirs, detached. Every Christian, she believed, was a part of her, and she was a part of him; her visions were not given to her alone, but to all men through her:

In all this I was greatly stirred in charity to mine even-Christians, that they might see and know the same that I saw: for I would

it were comfort to them. For all this Sight
was shewed general.³⁸

They were not a reward for her superior virtue:

Because of the Shewing I am not good but if
I love God the better: and in as much as ye
love God the better, it is more to you than
to me.³⁹

Although the three mystics saw human love somewhat differently,
they all agreed completely upon the love between man and Christ. This
love was seen to be beyond all reason, and based on faith alone:

. . . we cannot resign us unto the blissful
beholding of God as we should do. And the
cause of this is that the use of our reason
is now so blind, so low, and so simple, that
we cannot know that high marvellous Wisdom,
the Might and the Goodness of the blissful
Trinity.⁴⁰

Rolle and Hilton believed that Christ's love was the reward given to
those who purified and prepared themselves properly through prayer and
contemplation: they saw "iiij states of Cristens mans religioun . . .
the first in penaunce, þe toþer in rightwiswmes, þe thrid in lovyng
of endeles lyf."⁴¹ Julian, on the other hand, believed that God's
love was given to all men, sinners and saints alike, and that it was
the first step in, not the culmination of, the process of salvation:

For that same eternal Goodness . . . maketh
us to see our need with a true dread, [and]
mightily to seek unto God to have forgiveness,
with a gracious desire of our salvation.⁴²

The love between God and man was described by the mystics in different
ways. Rolle called the soul the spouse of Christ:

It is said that the nightingale is given to song and
melody all night, that she may please him to whom
she is joined. How mickle more should I sing with
greatest sweetness to Christ my Jesu, that is spouse
of my soul⁴³

For Julian, Christ's love enclosed all kinds of earthly family love:

And in the Second Person in wit and wisdom we
have our keeping as anent our Sensuality: our
restoring and our saving; for he is our Mother,
Brother, and Saviour.⁴⁴

The person who entered into a love relationship with Christ had
to rise above the world and the flesh. Rolle said,

Truly he that rejoices in thee is soon lifted to
joy above earthly joy. Thou dost enter boldly
into the bedchamber of the everlasting King. . . .⁴⁵

Such experience was so much above normal human experience that "I
scarcely live for joy and I nearly die, for I cannot bear the sweetness
of so great a majesty in this corruptible flesh."⁴⁶ On earth, man
could bear only faint glimpses of true union with Christ. Life was
a betrothal period for the marriage which could take place only in
heaven:

. . . we may never cease from willing nor from
longing, till we have him in fulness of joy:
and then we may no more will.

For he willeth that we be occupied in
knowing and loving till the time that we shall
be fulfilled in Heaven.⁴⁷

Because of this, death became not only a release from the pain
and limitation of life, but also, and more importantly, a movement into
divine unity and peace. Both Rolle and Julian not only accepted but
even longed for death, and had no fear,

. . . for luf es stalworth als þe dede, þat slaes
al lyvand thyng in erth, and hard als hell, þat
spares noght till þam þat er dede.⁴⁸

In this view, because death was seen as the gate to heaven, life was
seen as a preparation for salvation. The world and the body were not
man's enemies but his allies, and he loved them as reflections of God.
Despair was not possible, because even when man's reason could see no

hope, the love and mercy of Christ assured him that "'I may make all thing well, I will make all thing well, and I shall make all thing well; and thou shalt see thyself that all manner of thing shall be well.'"⁴⁹

The lyrics provide much evidence of a view of life which sees mankind as potentially good and noble, and as beloved of God. The union possible between God and man is seen, in one lyric, in metaphorical terms:

Swete ihesu, mi soule bote,
In min herte þou seete a rote
Of þi loue þat is so swote,
And wite hit þat springe mote. (CB13/50-91; 9-12)

Man does not always provide a steadfast ground for Christ's root, and is often conscious of his failing. As in the first view of life, seen in Chapter II, the sinner must place his only hope in God's mercy:

O me es noght bot sin and sake,
Lauerd, bot þi merci it mak
Vnworthi am i, wel þou wast,
And al vnredi for to rise
On domesdai be-for iustise,
þar all es casten on a cast.

þar santes sal þe dute and drede,
And all sal se þin wondes bled,
Mi hope es in þi merci mast;
(CB14/29-37; 73-81)

The difference between the two views lies in God's reaction to such a plea. In one lyric which speaks from the viewpoint of the third attitude, there is a consciousness of the first view, but a certainty that it is no longer valid because of a different understanding of God:

Man, þe erthe I can do qwake,
for al þis word is in my hande;
Vengans also may I take,
qwere me luste, one watur or lande.

Be synus, tokunus & spekyng to,
my luf al-way þu lyghte a-spye;
And for þu schulduste take hede þer-to,
I lefte my myghte & toke mercy.

(CB15/107-164; 57-64)

This mercy has been granted even to the greatest of sinners
against Christ:

Write in my hert with speches swete,
Whan Iudas þe traytour can þe mete--
That traitour was ful of þe feende,
And yit þou caldest hym þy frende.

.

Bot sethen þou spake so louely
To hym þat was þyn enemy,
how swete shulle þi speches be
To ham þat hertely louen the.

(CB14/91-114; 9-12, 15-18)

Any man who repends can be sure of God's mercy; this assurance is
given to man by God:

Man, my byddyng þu breycus al day,
as holy kyrke wyl þe schewe;
.
Ȝyt leue þi synnus, & turne to me,
& for þi gylte be þu sory,
And now as welcum schalte þu be
as he þat nedud neuur any mercy.

(CB15/107-165; 89-90, 93-96)

Man's salvation depends upon his repentance; in fact, in this view,
union between God and man is dependent entirely upon man. Christ begs
man for his love, rather than vice-versa:

Vndo þi dore, my spuse dere;
Allas! wy stond i loken out here?
fre am i þi make.

(CB14/68-86; 1-3)

Mercy and the love of God make heaven a possibility for all men,
something of which they may be certain if they love Him in return.
A plea for mercy becomes a song of joyful expectation:

Mercy es al my socoure,
til lede me to þe land of lyght,
And bring me til þe rial toure
whare I mai se mi god sa bryght.

God of al lorde & keyng,
I pray þe, ihesu, be my frende,
Sa þat I may þi mercy syng
in þi blys with-owten ende. (CB14/82-98; 29-36)

The anticipation of heaven and the knowledge of God's love transform even the Fall into a positive event:

Adam lay I-bowndyn, bowndyn in a bond,
fowre þowsand wynter þowt he not to long;
And al was for an appil, an appil þar he tok,
As clerkis fyndyn wretyn in here book.

Ne hadde þe appil take ben, þe appil taken ben,
ne hadde neuer our lady a ben heuene qwen;
Blyssid be þe tyme þat appil take was,
þer-fore we mown syngyn, 'deo gracias!'
(CB15/83-120; 1-8)

As the Fall is seen as fortunate, its results also come to be seen as good. Man's physical nature is seen as a gift of God, rather than as a punishment:

ȝit lorde almȝt, blessed mote þu be!
ffor many are þe benefetys þat þu haste yeuene to me,
ffor riȝt wittys and riȝt lemys, my lyfelode also,
ffull many oper vertues and ȝiftes many moo.
But sori may I be, if I spend not deuli
All thise ȝiftes ȝeuen to me freli.
(CB15/142-217; 25-30)

The body must be used "deuli", for it has limitations, as has reason, which is man's mode of natural knowledge. Reason is not sufficient to reach an understanding of religious mysteries, and must not be expected to do so:

A god, and Can he die?
A dead man, can he live?
What witt can well replie?
What reason reason give?

God, truth itselfe, doth teach it;
Mans witt senckis too farr vnder
By reasons power to reach it.
Beleeve and leave to wonder!
(CB15/120-187; 5-12)

Like the body, reason has its purposes, but it must be ruled by faith, which brings man closer to God:

Witte hath wondir that resoun ne telle kan,
How maidene is modir, and God is man.
Leve thy resoun and bileve in the wondir,
For feith is aboven and reson is undir.

(CB15/119-186; 1-4)

Faith may often lead a man into actions which are not rational, and may earn him the scorn of worldly people, but it will bring him a much greater knowledge:

O Ihū, lett me neuer forgett thy byttur passion,
That thou suffred for my transgression,
ffor in thy blessyd wondes is the verey scole
That must teche me with the worlde to be called a fole,
O Ihū, ihū, ihū, grauntt that I may loue the soo,
pat the wysdom of the worlde be cleene fro me A-goo.

(CB15/98-148; 1-6)

This union in belief is sometimes made impossible by man's sin. In such a case, man suffers for his sin. He is not punished by God, however, and need not be, for the absence of God is punishment enough:

Suete ihesu, king of blysse,
myn huerte loue, min huerte lisse,
pou art suete myd ywisse--
Wo is him pat pe shal misse! (CB14/7-7; 1-4)

Evil, then, consists of turning from God. There is no devil, except as he lives in the minds of men, and therefore, he is overcome merely by deciding to return to God:

Honnd by honnd we schulle ous take,
& ioye & blisse schulle we make,
for pe deuel of elle man hazt for-sake,
& godes sone ys maked oure make.

(CB14/88-110; 1-4)

Pain, however, does exist, and must be experienced by all Christians. Some, like the mystics, pray in the hope of being allowed to share Christ's crucifixion agony:

I wolde ben clad in cristis skyn,
þat ran so longe on blode,
& gon t'is herte & taken myn In--

(CB14/71-88; 3-5)

When a man feels and sees Christ's pain, he is so strongly affected
that he turns forever from evil:

Trewe turtyl, corounyd on hylle,
þat heyzest art of kynde,
þy loue chaungyþ my wille,
Whan þu comyst in my mynde.
þe fend I forsake anon.

(CB15/95-140; 41-5)

Mary's suffering, when shared, can also bring about a purifying change:

Vor ðe muchele seorup ðet pas o ðine mode
þo þu er ðe deaðe him bi-uore stode,
þet tu me makie cleane piðuten & eke pið-innen,
So þet me ne schende none kunnes sunne.

(CB13/3-3; 89-92)

Both pain and sin, then, are a part of God's plan, and can lead to
union with God in heaven. Just as the Fall becomes fortunate, so sin
can be turned to good advantage:

Merci abid an loke al day,
Wan man fro senne wil wende away.
zef senne ne were, merci ne were non;
zef merci be cald, he comet a-non;
Merci is redi þer senne is mest,
& merci is lattest þer senne is lest.

(CB14/61-81; 1-6)

Sin allows God to show his love and mercy in all their glory.

God's love is behind everything He has done:

Loue me brouthte,
& loue me wrouthte,
Man, to be þi fere.
Loue me fedde,
& loue me ledde,
& loue me lettet here.

Loue me slou,
& loue me drou,
& loue me leyde on bere.
Loue is my pes,
For loue i ches,
Man to byzen dere.

(CB14/66-84; 1-12)

This all-encompassing love is strong enough to heal all of the hurts which man has received from sin and worldly love: "he heleþ alle luue wunde." (CB13/43-68; 156) It binds man in a marriage which is completely spiritual:

Better bote es nane to me
Bot to his mercy trewly me take
þat with his blod boght me fre,
And me, wryche, his spouse wald make.

(CB14/48-61; 105-108)

Mary also loves and is loved by man. She is, above all, his mother, but at the same time she is his lady, who far surpasses any other:

Vpon a lady my loue ys lente,
With-owtene change of any chere,
That ys louely & contynent
And most at my desyre.

.

Therfor wyll y non opur spowse,
Ner none opur loues, for to take;
But only to here y make my vowes,
And all opur to forsake.

Thys lady ys gentyll & meke,
Moder she ys & well of all;

(CB15/48-78; 1-4, 9-14)

Man is surrounded by divine love, both parental and marital, from both God and Mary.

Beside the love of these heavenly beings, human love may seem a paltry thing, something which should be avoided in order to open the self more completely to spiritual things. There is no distaste for earthly things and love per se, as there was in the view seen in Chapter II, but merely a sense of their limitation when compared to God.

All erthly lust byttur sall be
Bot þine allane withouten lesyng.

(CB14/48-61; 3-4)

Even family love may seem so inferior as to be almost worthless, when a man has the love of Christ:

þan 3ef i litel of kith or kyn,
For þer is alle gode. Amen. (CB14/71-88; 7-8)

Yet as God has shown love for mankind, every man who would be like God must love others with mercy and charity:

'Al eorþli þing I 3af to þe,
Boþe Beest and fisch & foul fleoyng,
And tolde þe hou þat charite
And Merci passeþ alle þing.
.....
Whon 3e seze ouþer Blynd or lame
þat for my loue asked 3ou ouzt;
Al þat 3e duden in myn name,
Hit was to me, boþe deede & þouzt.'
(CB14/95-125; 69-72, 97-100)

Because a Christian, through imitating Christ, will share in His victory, the Resurrection of Christ on Easter has taken the fearfulness out of death:

Lyf was slayne & rase agayne, in faire-hede may we fare;
And dede es broght til litel or noght, & kasten in endles
kare;
(CB14/83-99; 45-6)

Physical death is really the door to true life in heaven with Christ, so it should be anticipated with joy:

Thynk & dred noght for to dy,
syn þou sall nedis þer-to;
Thynk þat ded is opynly
ende off werdes wo;
Thynk als so, bot if þou dy,
to god may þou noght go;
Thynk & hald þe payed þer-by,
þou may not ffile þer-fro. (CB15/163-256; 51-8)

For the man who holds the third view, both life and death have new meaning and value. Bodily life is a beautiful preparation for an even more beautiful life with God in heaven. There are many lyrics which combine several aspects of this view. A Springtide Song of the

Redemption (CB13/54-108) shows that all of life has been transformed by the fact that Christ rose from the dead. Man's bonds of sin have been broken and the gates of hell opened; as Christ now sits in glory, so will all Christians rise to heaven after the judgment. Even the natural realm has been enlivened by the Resurrection: birds are singing with new happiness, and a permanent summer of the spirit has replaced the winter of the fallen world. An Orison to the Blessed Virgin (CB14/16-18) reveals the attitude toward Mary of those who hold this view. Mary is seen as embodying several paradoxes in her relationships to God and to man. Most importantly, however, the speaker is concerned with her humanity; because Mary was human, she owes men a debt of kin, and because she is Christ's mother, she has the right to ask favours of Him. Therefore, she can ask Christ to save any man whose prayers to her have been effective. Mary is seen as the strongest possible link between man and God, joining them in a bond of family love. In Measure is Best of All Things (CB15/186-286), the basic guidelines of this view with regard to love of the world and of the body are set forth. God, it says, made the world according to an order, and man must attempt to keep this order stable in his own life. Rejection of the world and body will not lead to heaven, for this would be an extreme reaction; only by balancing earthly love with love for God will man achieve the necessary harmony which results in salvation and unity with God.

Many of the lyrics, then, can be seen to reflect, both in its separate aspects and as a whole, the third view of life in the Middle Ages--a view which saw the natural world as good and beautiful, the body of man as something to be cared for and appreciated, God as

immanent and loving, life as a movement toward union with God, and death as the final door opening into that union.

CONCLUSION

The Middle English lyrics discussed in this study are by definition separate and organic entities, and are scattered throughout many manuscripts. When considered in terms of mediaeval thought, however, they can be seen to group themselves into three classes, each reflecting one of three contemporary views of life. The first was a view which saw nature as corrupt and corrupting, man as fallen and weak, God as distant and vengeful, and life as a journey toward damnation. The second view saw nature as the beautiful embodiment of ultimate reality, man as a natural creature subject to fortune, and life as an all-too-short opportunity for enjoyment. The third saw nature as a reflection of the divine, man as the image of God, God as immanent and loving, and life as a process of salvation. There were times from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries when many of the lyrics written reflected only one or another of these three views, and the other two were correspondingly less evident. This was the case, for instance, during the English mystical revival in the fourteenth century, when the religious love lyrics of Rolle's school were widely imitated. Yet although each had times when it rose or fell in popularity, all three views can be seen reflected in lyrics written throughout the period under study.

The creativity of the individual poet who held one of these views was not limited by it. Poems which reflect the same attitude toward the world may deal with any number of specific topics or concerns, and

even poems expressing the same attitude toward a topic may differ greatly in form, approach and artistic merit. This is the case with the Middle English lyrics. For the lyric poets, their views of life seem to have been related to their poems more as sources of inspiration and ideas than as arbitrary limitations upon theme or method. Their views of life determined their artistic expression only so much as a musical theme can be said to determine the variations which many composers of varying genius and personality may develop from it.

The recognition of the three mediaeval views of life may prove a valuable tool in arranging the Middle English lyrics in a more coherent way than has hitherto been achieved. The New Critical approach, in which each poem is read on its own merits, has given no sense of the lyrics as anything more than a scattered, unconnected group of poems. The approach which has used topic or subject matter as the basic grouping principle has, while attempting to impose some kind of structure upon the lyrics, resulted in a sense of their diversity and individuality. With an understanding of the three views of life, however, it is possible to see each lyric as an interaction between the lyric form and a given view of life, to see close affinities between poems reflecting one view, and to relate them, through contrast, to those reflecting other views. The lyrics gain, in this way, a sense of connectedness, and the entire corpus can be seen as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

It is possible that, along with manuscript date, location, dialect, diction and other evidence, the view of life reflected in a lyric may be used to suggest or repudiate common authorship with other poems. Although a poet might, should he discover a clever literary device,

be so taken with it as to write a poem using it to express an idea which did not accord with his basic view of life, this would be a relatively rare occurrence. Any attempt to determine the authorship of lyrics would have to take such possibilities into account, but if view of life was only one of several criteria being used, the chances of error in such matters would be reduced.

More practicable, perhaps, would be an attempt to understand the collectors of certain manuscripts in terms of the viewpoint or viewpoints of the lyrics which they chose to include. For example, the English lyrics in British Museum MS. Harley 2253 fall, without exception, into two groups, one reflecting the pagan view of life seen in Chapter III, and the other the mystical view seen in Chapter IV.¹ There are none at all which echo the stern view of the homilists discussed in Chapter II. This would suggest that the collector for the manuscript did not find that view of life appealing, and that he did not respond to it. The presence of two other groups of lyrics may have several reasons. A man who held the mystical view would undoubtedly be more indulgent toward the innocent joys of nature and society than would one who held the first view of life; in fact, the mystical type of Christianity encouraged the love of nature as a reflection of God. It would be possible, therefore, for a man who interpreted the teachings of the mystics rather loosely to feel little inhibition about including, in his manuscript, poems both religious and secular, which discussed both divine and human love, both heaven and nature. It may also be that the collector was a pagan who felt socially compelled to include some religious poems, or who may even have had, upon occasion, searchings of conscience in which he felt

that perhaps Christianity did have something to offer him. In either case, a mystical love song to Jesus or Mary would appeal to him much more than a de contemptu mundi poem. Whether primarily a pagan or a mystic, the collector of these lyrics was not a pessimistic man, and he did not see heaven and the world as necessarily alien to one another. In Jesus College Oxford 29, there are only religious lyrics, most of which reflect the view of life preached by the homilists as seen in Chapter II. There are a few poems which reflect the more optimistic view of mysticism, but the tone of the manuscript as a whole is quite dark by modern standards. The collector may have been attempting to balance the two Christian views in a collection of lyrics which would not only edify but also encourage the reader.

The fact that neither of the above-mentioned manuscripts contains exclusively lyrics which reflect one view of life, may indicate one of three things: that more than one person had a hand in collecting the lyrics for the manuscript; that a man who held one view could see aspects within the other views which appealed to him and which he appreciated seeing in poetry; or that, at times, aesthetic values were deemed more important than philosophical content in the choice of poems.

It has been seen that the Middle English lyrics, when understood as reflections of the three views of life current in mediaeval England, gain in unity and coherence as a group. Each poem is enriched in meaning by its relationship both with other poems and with the thought of the society and the period which produced it.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

- ¹Douglas Gray, Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).
- ²Sarah Appleton Weber, Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric: A Study of Sacred History and Aesthetic Form (Ohio State University Press, 1969).
- ³Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1968).
- ⁴Jeffrey Burton Russell, A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), p. 13.
- ⁵Charles Norris Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 219.
- ⁶Ibid., pp. 220-1.
- ⁷Ibid., pp. 177-8.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 182.
- ⁹Ibid., pp. 208-9.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 196.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 209.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 208.
- ¹³Russell, loc. cit.
- ¹⁴Acts xx, 25.
- ¹⁵I Corinthians ii, 12.
- ¹⁶I Corinthians iv, 3-4.
- ¹⁷Cochrane, op. cit., pp. 213-4.
- ¹⁸Matthew xix, 21.

- ¹⁹Cochrane, op. cit., p. 268.
- ²⁰R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), pp. 96-7.
- ²¹Cochrane, op. cit., pp. 336-7.
- ²²David Knowles, Christian Monasticism (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 44.
- ²³Ibid., p. 39.
- ²⁴H. Daniel-Rops, Cathedral and Crusade: Studies of the Medieval Church, 1050-1350, trans. by John Warrington (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1957), p. 183.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 185.
- ²⁶Southern, op. cit., pp. 130-1.
- ²⁷G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, c. 1350-1450 (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), p. 179.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 185.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 250.
- ³⁰Cited in Owst, ibid., p. 213.
- ³¹Russell, op. cit., p. 98.
- ³²G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama Vol. I. Foreground: Society and Institutions (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1961), p. 220.
- ³³Cited in G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama Vol. II. The Horizons of Thought (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1961), pp. 238-40.
- ³⁴Knowles, op. cit., p. 51.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 84.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 89.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 113.
- ³⁸Ernest Rhys, ed., "The Little Flowers" & the Life of St. Francis with the "Mirror of Perfection" (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1910), pp. 207-8.
- ³⁹Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 163.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 291.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 294.

⁴²Ibid., p. 166.

CHAPTER II

¹Owst, op. cit., pp. 35-6.

²Russell, op. cit., p. 84.

³Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴Richard Morris, ed., Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868), Poema Morale, ll. 203-210, pp. 171, 173.

⁵Russell, op. cit., p. 57.

⁶Morris, op. cit., Poema Morale, ll. 182-9, p. 171.

⁷Ibid., ll. 90^b-99, p. 165.

⁸Cited in J. W. Blench, Preaching in England in the late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: a Study of English Sermons 1450-c.1600 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), p. 232.

⁹Ibid., p. 230.

¹⁰Carleton Brown, ed., English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), Poem 88, p. 156, ll. 1-2. All subsequent references to this edition will be made in the form: CB13/88-156; 1-2, and will be made parenthetically in the text of the thesis.

¹¹Carleton Brown, ed., Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), Poem 113, p. 187, l. 41. All subsequent references to this edition will be made in the form: CB14/113-187; 41, and will be made parenthetically in the text of the thesis.

¹²Carleton Brown, ed., Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), Poem 104, p. 158, ll. 1-4. All subsequent references to this edition will be made in the form: CB15/104-158; 1-4, and will be made parenthetically in the text of the thesis.

¹³See also: CB13/88-156, CB14/1-1, CB14/2-2, CB14/72-88.

¹⁴See: CB14/3-2, CB14/4-3, CB14/15-17, CB14/47-60, CB14/51-67, CB14/72-88, CB14/126-225, CB14/127-227, CB15/102-151, CB15/103-156, CB15/104-158, CB15/105-159.

¹⁵Morris, op. cit., pp. 241, 243.

- ¹⁶Cited in G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: a Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1961), p. 48.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 393.
- ¹⁸Ibid., pp. 54-5.
- ¹⁹Cited in Blench, op. cit., p. 232.
- ²⁰Morris, op. cit., pp. 33, 35. Parallel translation on pp. 32, 34.
- ²¹See: CB13/75-134, CB14/27-32, CB15/145-229.
- ²²See quotation from The Ancren Riwe, below.
- ²³James Morton, ed. and trans., The Ancren Riwe; a Treatise on the Rules and Duties of Monastic Life (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1853), p. 276. Parallel translation on page 277.
- ²⁴Cited, in modernized form, in Blench, op. cit., p. 233.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Owst, Lit. and Pulpit, p. 377.
- ²⁷Morris, op. cit., p. 53.
- ²⁸Ibid., Poema Morale, ll. 22-3, 31-4, p. 161.
- ²⁹Blench, op. cit., p. 232.
- ³⁰Cited in Blench, ibid., p. 229.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 234.
- ³²Russell, op. cit., p. 188.
- ³³A man's death was thought to reflect his fate after death. For one example of this, see Blench, op. cit., p. 236.
- ³⁴Morris, op. cit., p. 121.

CHAPTER III

- ¹Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 19.
- ²Coulton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 112.

³Basic sources for the discussion of the vagante movement are: Helen Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, 7th ed. (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1934).

Edwin H. Zeydel, trans. and ed., Vagabond Verse: Secular Latin Poems of the Middle Ages (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966).

⁴Basic sources for this discussion of courtly love and the troubadours are:

Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. by John Jay Parry (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1959).

H. J. Chaytor, The Troubadours and England (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1923).

Nicolas James Perella, The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretative History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

Aldo D. Scaglione, Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

Maurice Valency, In Praise of Love: an Introduction to the Love-Poetry of the Renaissance (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958).

⁵Zeydel, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

⁶Capellanus, op. cit., Bk. I, Dialogue 8, p. 111.

⁷Cited in Zeydel, op. cit., pp. 46-7.

⁸Fortune and the courtly lady were alike in their inconstancy, and complaints against the latter reveal the attitude of the lover to the former. For a more extended discussion of this idea, see p. 66.

⁹Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), pp. 9-10.

¹⁰Cited in Zeydel, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

¹¹Valency, op. cit., p. 159.

¹²Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), Poem 194, p. 195, ll. 1-4, 12-16. Subsequent references to this edition will be made in the form Rob/194-195; 1-4, 12-16, and will be made parenthetically in the text of the thesis.

¹³See Robert S. Briffault, The Troubadours (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 85. Although the main topic of this book is the troubadours, Briffault devotes some time to the vagabond poets as well.

¹⁴Zeydel, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁵Valency, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

¹⁶This ideal was not, however, in any way religious. The distinction between courtly and religious love is best made in Etienne Gilson, The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard, trans. A. H. C. Downes (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), Appendix IV, St. Bernard and Courtly Love.

¹⁷Zeydel, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁸Cited in Zeydel, ibid., pp. 88-9.

¹⁹Valency, op. cit., pp. 60, 167.

²⁰Ibid., p. 26.

²¹Ibid., pp. 28, 188.

²²Ibid., pp. 143-4.

²³Ibid., pp. 171, 177.

²⁴Gilson, op. cit., p. 180.

²⁵Valency, op. cit., p. 160.

²⁶Ibid., p. 140.

²⁷Perella, op. cit., p. 101.

²⁸Gilson, op. cit., p. 183.

CHAPTER IV

¹Russell, op. cit., p. 61.

²David Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), p. 46.

³Richard Rolle, The Fire of Love or Melody of Love and The Mending of Love or Rule of Living, trans. Frances M. M. Comper (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1914), p. 13.

⁴Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love Shewed to a Devout Ankress by Name Julian of Norwich, ed. Dom Roger Hudson (London: Burns & Oates, 1952), p. 36.

⁵Helen Gardner, "The Text of The Scale of Perfection", Medium Aevum, V (1936), pp. 11-30.

⁶Julian, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷Ibid., p. 82.

⁸Ibid., p. 36.

⁹Ibid., pp. 54-5.

¹⁰Hope Emily Allen, ed., English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 22.

¹¹Julian, op. cit., p. 40.

¹²Allen, op. cit., p. 119. See also Hudleston, p. 99.

¹³Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁴Cited in Eric Colledge, The Mediaeval Mystics of England (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 167.

¹⁵Julian, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁸Owst, Preaching, p. 17.

¹⁹Russell, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁰Julian, op. cit., pp. 117-8.

²¹Cited in Knowles, op. cit., p. 106.

²²Allen, op. cit., p. 75.

²³Julian, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁴Ibid., p. 108.

²⁵Walter Hilton, The Scale of Perfection, cited in Joseph E. Milosh, The Scale of Perfection and The English Mystical Tradition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 97.

²⁶The Cloud of Unknowing, cited in Knowles, op. cit., p. 98.

²⁷Julian, op. cit., p. 86.

²⁸St. Augustine, cited in Coulton, vol. II, p. 158.

²⁹Hilton, cited in Milosh, op. cit., p. 74.

³⁰Rolle, op. cit., p. 95.

³¹Julian, op. cit., p. 49.

³²Ibid., p. 135.

³³Allen, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁴Julian, op. cit., p. 39.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 140-1.

³⁶G. C. Heseltine, trans., Selected Works of Richard Rolle, Hermit
(London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), p. 139.

³⁷Julian, op. cit., p. 17.

³⁸Ibid., p. 16.

³⁹Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 56.

⁴¹Allen, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴²Julian, op. cit., p. 88.

⁴³Rolle, op. cit., p. 190.

⁴⁴Julian, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴⁵Heseltine, op. cit., p. 140.

⁴⁶Ibid.,

⁴⁷Julian, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴⁸Allen, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴⁹Julian, op. cit., p. 53.

CONCLUSION

¹N. R. Ker, intro., Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253,
EETS 255 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. ix-xvi.
Lyrics which reflect the second view of life are, as numbered by
Robbins, numbers 29, 36, 43, 44, 52, 81, and 93. Lyrics which
reflect the third view are numbers 45, 50, 51, 53, 60, 61, 67,
73, and 92.

²Robbins, op. cit., pp. xxiii-iv. Lyrics which reflect the first view of life are: Sinners Beware, Weal is Cursed, Death's Wither-Clench, A Prayer of Penitence, Doomsday, The Latemest Day, The Ten Abuses, Why Serve We Not Christ, Signs of Death, Three Sorrowful Things. Those which reflect the third view of life are: Poem on Annunciation, Five Blissess, Thomas Hales' 'Love Ron', Song of Annunciation, Orison to our Lord.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Hope Emily, ed. English Writings of Richard Rolle. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931.
- Belfour, A. O., ed. Twelfth-Century Homilies in MS. Bodley 343. EETS 137. London: Oxford University Press, 1909.
- Blench, J. W. Preaching in England in the late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: A Study of English Sermons 1450- c. 1600. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964.
- Boyd, Beverly, ed. The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin. San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1964.
- Briffault, Robert S. The Troubadours. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.
- Brown, Carleton, ed. English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.
- _____. Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924.
- _____. Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.
- Burch, George Bosworth, trans. The Steps of Humility by Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux. Notre Dame: University of North Dakota Press, 1963.
- Campbell, Jackson J., ed. The Advent Lyrics of the Exeter Book. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959.
- Campbell, Joseph. The Masks of God: Creative Mythology. New York: The Viking Press, 1968.
- _____. The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology. New York: The Viking Press, 1964.
- Cantor, Norman F. Church, Kingship, and Lay Investiture in England 1089-1135. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.
- Chaytor, H. J. The Troubadours and England. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923.

- Cochrane, Charles Norris. Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- Colledge, Eric, ed. The Mediaeval Mystics of England. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.
- Comper, Frances M. M. The Life of Richard Rolle, Together with an Edition of his English Lyrics. London, 1928.
- Coulton, G. G. Medieval Panorama, vol. I. Foreground: Society and Institutions. London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1938.
- _____. Medieval Panorama, vol. II. The Horizons of Thought. London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1938.
- Cutts, Edward L. Parish Priests and their People in the Middle Ages in England. New York: E. & J. B. Young and Co., 1898.
- Daniel-Rops, H. Cathedral and Crusade: Studies of the Medieval Church, 1050-1350. trans. John Warrington. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1957.
- Dargan, Edwin Charles. A History of Preaching, vol. I. From the Apostolic Fathers to the Great Reformers, A.D. 70-1572. New York: Burt Franklin, 1905.
- Dronke, Peter. Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-Lyric. I: Problems and Interpretations; II: Medieval Latin Love-Poetry. Oxford: Clarendon Press, I -- 1965, II -- 1966.
- _____. The Medieval Lyric. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1967.
- Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. trans. Willard Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Fiske, Mother Adele M. "The Survival and Development of the Ancient Concept of Friendship in the Early Middle Ages." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fordham University, 1955.
- Frankis, P. J. "The Erotic Dream in Medieval English Lyrics." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 1956-58, pp. 228-237.
- Gilson, Etienne. History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages. New York: Random House, 1955.
- _____. The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard. London: Sheed and Ward, 1955.
- Goldin, Frederick. The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.

- Gradon, Pamela, ed. Dan Michel's Azenbite of Inwit or Remorse of Conscience. vol. I: Text. EETS no. 23. London: Oxford University Press, 1866.
- Gray, Douglas. Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.
- Hanford, James Holly. "The Progenitors of Golias." Speculum, 1, 1926, pp. 38-59.
- Harrison, Frank Ll. Music in Medieval England. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958.
- Heseltine, G. C., trans. Selected Works of Richard Rolle, Hermit. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930.
- Hodgson, Phyllis. Three 14th Century English Mystics. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1967.
- Horstman, C., ed. Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers, vol. II. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1896.
- Howard, D. R. The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Huizinga, J. The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries. London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1924.
- James, Bruno Scott, trans. The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. London: Burns & Oates, 1953.
- Jemielity, Thomas. "'I Sing of a Maiden': God's Courting of Mary." Concerning Poetry, II, Spring, pp. 53-59.
- Julian of Norwich. Revelations of Divine Love. trans. Clifton Wolters. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst. The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Ker, N. R., intro. Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253. EETS 255. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Knowles, David. Christian Monasticism. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969.
- _____. The English Mystical Tradition. London: Burns & Oates, 1961.
- _____. The Evolution of Medieval Thought. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1962.

- Knowlton, Sister Mary Arthur. "The Influence of Richard Rolle and of Julian of Norwich on the Middle English Lyrics." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1961.
- Kuriyagawa, Fumio, ed. Walter Hilton's Eight Chapters on Perfection. Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1967.
- Leclercq, Jean. The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture. trans. Catharine Misrahi. New York: Fordham University Press, 1961.
- Lewis, C. S. The Four Loves. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960.
- Manning, Stephen. "'Nou goth Sonne vunder Wod'." Modern Language Notes, 74, 1959, pp. 578-81.
- _____. Wisdom and Number: Toward a Critical Appraisal of the Middle English Religious Lyric. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1962.
- Milosh, J. E. The Scale of Perfection and the English Mystical Tradition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- Misyn, Richard, ed. The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living of Richard Rolle. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896.
- Moore, Arthur K. The Secular Lyric in Middle English. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951.
- Morris, R., ed. Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, from the Unique MS. B.14.52. in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. EETS 53. London: N. Trübner & Co., 1873.
- Morton, James, trans. The Ancren Riwe: A Treatise on the Rules and Duties of Monastic Life. London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1853.
- Newman, F. X., ed. The Meaning of Courtly Love. Papers of the first annual conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968.
- Owst, G. R. Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1961.
- _____. Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, c. 1350-1450. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965.
- Patterson, Frank A. The Middle English Penitential Lyric. New York: Columbia University Studies in English, 1911.

- Perella, Nicolas James. The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretative History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Person, Henry Axel. Cambridge Middle English Lyrics. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962.
- Reiss, Edmund. The Art of the Middle English Lyric: Essays in Criticism. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972.
- Rhys, Ernest, ed. "The Little Flowers" & the Life of St. Francis with the "Mirror of Perfection". London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1910.
- Rickert, Edith. Chaucer's World. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.
- Robbins, Rossell Hope., ed. Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.
- Rolle, Richard. The Fire of Love or Melody of Love and The Mending of Life or Rule of Living. trans. Frances M. M. Comper. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1914.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968.
- Scaglione, Aldo. Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.
- Sidgwick, Frank and E. K. Chambers, eds. Early English Lyrics: Amorous, Divine, Moral and Trivial. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1907.
- Southern, R. W. Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970.
- Tawney, R. H. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926.
- Valency, Maurice. In Praise of Love: An Introduction to the Love-Poetry of the Renaissance. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958.
- Weber, Sarah Appleton. Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric: A Study of Sacred History and Aesthetic Form. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969.
- Wells, John Edwin. A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1400. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926. Revised by J. B. Severs, 1967.
- Wenzel, Siegfried. The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

Wimsatt, James I. Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature. New York: Western Publishing Company, Inc., 1970.

Woolf, Rosemary. The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Zeydel, Edwin H., trans. Vagabond Verse: Secular Latin Poems of the Middle Ages. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966.