

## Patience and Cleanness

The intent of the Gawain poet in Patience and Cleanness has long been seen as primarily didactic, straightforward and divorced from the mainstream of the affairs of the world, originating far from the tumultuous events of the late fourteenth century in far off Cheshire. Some recent scholarship has, for really the first time since early this century, reopened the investigation of the interaction between the religious events of the time and the poetic output of the Gawain poet. Although the opinion that the Gawain poet has nothing to say about religious and political argument is undergoing much needed revision, the major thrust has remained unaltered. The consensus view seems to be that if the Gawain poet has a view on religion or politics it is unlikely to be controversial.

Elaborate speculation on the identity of the Gawain poet continued until the early part of this century (Wellek 8) and in the search for the poet his theological preoccupations were explored. Speculation, for example, that the Gawain poet had expressed heretical views in Pearl (Brown 140), were refuted for reasons including the “obvious” orthodoxy of Cleanness (Fletcher 17). Wellek in the 1920s responded to the scholarship of this era with the comment that:

All these debates, we feel, about dialect, authorship, elegy versus allegory, theology, symbolism, etc., though they have been almost the only occupation of scholarship, say very little about the Pearl as a work of art (28).

Since then, removal of consideration about the nature of the author seems to have led much of the criticism of the Gawain poet's work to act as if his poetry was somehow untainted by its origin in the fourteenth century (Bowers "The Politics of Pearl" 420), and hence little concern has been shown for the idea of a Gawain poet involved in religious debate.

There is, however, much in these works which suggests an alternative viewpoint. As the most superficially homiletic and straightforward of the Gawain poet's poems, Patience and Cleanness would seem to offer less opportunity to diverge from orthodoxy than the multilayered dream vision of Pearl or the strange adventures of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Yet there is a dissenting voice audible in these retellings of bible stories quite in tune with other voices of protest from the late fourteenth century. In Patience, I would argue, the Gawain poet has created a masterpiece in the best tradition of the dissenting views of his source in Hebrew Wisdom literature. His odd exploration of patience as exemplified by the story of Jonah brings in other Old Testament influences and analyses them with respect to the Beatitudes and the Church. He finds much to question in his God and much to criticise in the Church. In his dealing with the progress of people from creation to annihilation in Cleanness, the Gawain poet reveals the unreasonable nature of God's demands upon men if they are to avoid his wrath and attain the Beatific vision. Where Cleanness goes further than its shorter companion piece in its rhetoric against the Church, is in the inclusion of specific antifraternel concerns.

In late fourteenth century England the criticism of the Church that appeared in the literature of Chaucer, Gower and especially Langland reflected at a popular level the concerns which had emerged in more strictly religious and intellectual guise

from the works of Wycliffe. His views on the priesthood, the place of the laity and the nature of the Eucharist, while indicating an origin of dissent in a university environment, are linked with the decidedly political spread of dissent and such events as the Peasants' Revolt. The heretical grouping known as Lollards took their impetus from Wycliffe, and it is amongst this party that I would place the thought of the Gawain poet. Although Lollardy never had a stable platform, its characteristic emphases were the centrality of scripture, anticlericalism, antifraternality, and concern for morality. The movement's intellectual basis succumbed to "oversimplification and distortion" (Kendall 15) perhaps due to the lack of a literate critical mass at the time and was eliminated eventually by opposition from the established Church and Lollardy's association with botched coup attempts.

My argument will suggest that the Gawain poet is in a position somewhat analogous to Wycliffe, albeit in an anonymous poetic form, as an agitator for reform who was either a Lollard or a sympathiser. He represents dissent in an embryonic stage in which he hurls unanswerable questions at God, dismisses the Church of his day and begins the search for both an alternative view of God and an accommodation with the inevitable marginalisation of his style of thought due to the resilience of the orthodox Church. He finds models for such a task within the prophetic and Wisdom sources of Patience and Cleanness.

Patience: Job

The Gawain poet takes the Jonah story which had been filleted by Christian commentary into a negative example on the one hand or, via Matthew, as a type of Christ on the other, and revivifies the rebel soul of that strand of Wisdom literature that has always stuck in the gullet of orthodox exegesis. The point is not patience but the cause of suffering. The Gawain poet hides his attack on the inadequate answers of the Church beneath conventional pieties and sparkling narrative and while he has no more answer to the central question of suffering than God, he dares to complain in the then new spirit of religious dissent. Evidence for this can be found in the poet's novel choice of material with respect to his subject, which invites speculation over orthodox responses.

The traditional view of Patience has been that it is a homily:

Both it and its predecessor in the MS...share basically the same homiletic structure: the recommendation of a particular viewpoint by arguments which are then reinforced by the use of illustrative exempla (Stokes 354).

Some of the most recent generation of critics has increasingly found more to the poem than moral instruction. The genre of the poem is by no means clear, however, and has alternatively been suggested to be that of a consolatio, a mashal, a sermon, or even to have been a warning against excessive apocalypticism (Bloomfield 41, Williams 128, Prior "Patience - beyond Apocalypse" 337). The source material in Jonah has provided Biblical scholars with like problems in genre with elements of parable, mashal and prophecy all present but none wholly explanatory (Landes 146-7). Such ambiguous elements within the source material

have allowed the Gawain poet to question his God as if his genre was Wisdom and pronounce doom against the Church as if it were prophecy, all under the cover of a seemingly conventional lesson.

For a student of Patience it is essential to note that there is a book in the Old Testament in which the hero rails against God, expresses the wish to hide from God, wishes for death, which includes a sea-monster that obeys God's commands and has a vine that withers. And it's Job. Notwithstanding God's appearance at the end of the story complete with special effects but completely avoiding and obscuring the issue, the concern of this Wisdom book is the observation that the innocent suffer and God is at best astonishingly arbitrary in his distribution of life experience, contrary to the smug assurances of Job's friends and the conventional piety of the empowered. This aspect of Wisdom is that typified by Ecclesiastes, rather than the more reassuring sayings of Proverbs:

The good...receive the treatment the wicked deserve; and the wicked the treatment the good deserve. (Eccles. 8.14)

The blessings of Yahweh are on the head of the virtuous man, premature mourning stops the mouths of the wicked. (Prov. 10.6)

The aspect of Jonah that can be viewed as of the sapiential tradition mines this same ore and uses many of the same motifs and complaints. As source materials for the Gawain poet, the books Jonah and Job share much in the way of story and genre. This link may well answer Fowler's question, "what has Jonah to do with patience?" (186-7) Since regarding patience, the book of Job is seen as the "biblical locus classicus for the demonstration of this virtue," (Bennett Middle English Literature 218) a book like Jonah which shares so much of the same attitude could

also be linked to the virtue. The joke for the Gawain poet is that neither of the characters Job nor Jonah could be said to be a paragon of patience.

The strange thing is that many who celebrate Job have only a faint understanding of what the book is about. This ignorance is clearest amongst those who refer to the “proverbial patience” of Job (see James 5:11). In the popular mind, Job is a model of piety — a man who patiently and serenely suffered...without losing his faith... The main part of the book is in poetic form, and here Job is anything but a paragon of patience. (Anderson, The Living World of the Old Testament 548)

Job appears in his dialogues with his friends to be as rebellious as Jonah and, worse, insists on his blamelessness. This makes Jonah a more suitable protagonist for the purposes of the Gawain poet who is greatly oppressed by the distance between God and man. Jonah at least knows he has sinned. The suggestion I am making is that the Gawain poet has read his sources critically, and finds the man Jonah to be very like Job. Now Job may well be an odd consort for Patientia (Bennett Middle English Literature 218) but if Jonah is unsuitable then it is for all the same reasons! As a character, Jonah also has the novelty of no traditional link with patience and no happy ending in the source text to ameliorate his suffering. Their shared mantle of the sage who takes God to task allows the subject matter of patience to be shared as well.

The rebellion in the book of Job comes as the suffering man argues with his orthodox friends. Job’s arguments are countered by Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu in alternating speeches which serve to highlight Job’s rebelliousness. The Gawain poet uses the same technique in Pearl in which the “errors” of the jeweler are rebutted by the perfect knowledge of his daughter. Jonah can’t really get a decent argument going with God in Patience, so much of the rebellion is within and

under the surface orthodoxy of the tale. It allows a more cautious approach than if he had used the more traditional character of Job for the virtue of patience.

The key to a re-evaluation of Patience is the understanding that the Gawain poet has seen Jonah with all his flaws as one who is as heroic as Job in his rebellion. His defiance of God in the face of its futility is a courageous, delirious, abandoned gesture, even if ultimately delusive. Seeing him as a man rather than a type for Christ is quite a feat in the context of traditional medieval views of Jonah. To see him in a positive light as a man becomes possible only for one who is learning to dissent.

Matthew's use of Jonah has distorted his character as much as James's had Job:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees spoke up. "Master," they said "we would like to see a sign from you." He replied, "It is an evil and unfaithful generation that asks for a sign! The only sign it will be given is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. On Judgment day the men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation and condemn it, because when Jonah preached they repented; and there is someone greater than Jonah here." (Matt. 12.38-41)

The effect of such authoritative commentary is to accentuate the sacrificial and missionary aspects of Jonah's story. The Gawain poet has not found much in his source that is Christlike, and as Freidman has noted tends to accentuate the "un-Christlike" aspects of the man (100). Further, the Gawain poet explicitly rejects Jonah as a figure of Christ as Jonah laments his fate "Thagh I be nummen in Nunnive and naked dispoyled, / On rode rwly torent with rybabaudes mony." (95-6). Spearing underplays this as "almost shocking" (Patience and the Gawain Poet 314) but satire on crucifixion retains the power of shock even to our own century; witness Life of Brian's travails. Matthew contains the obvious point that Christ is

greater than Jonah but encourages the association. For the author of Patience the typological association is such a given, that only vicious attack can undermine it sufficiently to allow Jonah's humanity to be accentuated.

Allowing Jonah to be human is not to say a negative view of him must be maintained. The alternative to the Christ typology approach to Jonah was to see the man as a bad example, but part of the genius of Patience is that this too is declined. Diekstra lists the commentators' critiques of Jonah from Tertullian in the third century to Pierre Bersuire in the fourteenth, in which his wrong behaviour is mined for corrective morals (212-4). But as Benson points out Jonah is here presented as not all that bad, and while the Gawain poet does spend time making him look foolish, he also presents him as displaying "moral courage and spiritual insight" (154). So Jonah is neither a forerunner of Christ nor a complete imbecile who does stupid things for the sake of a simple moral. The Gawain poet allows him to be human and once that happens the reader can identify with his situation.

In Patience as a whole, the comedy of human impotence is all the more effective because it is set against the grandeur of divine omnipotence; and this is not by any means made absurd or quaint. (Spearing, The Gawain-Poet 90)

The Gawain poet is frequently concerned with "a confrontation between a human being and some more than human power" (Spearing, "Patience and the Gawain Poet" 306). Jonah becomes, like Job, a type for man in contact with God in an unavoidable interaction in which man not only can't know the rules of the game, but in which the otherness of God and the incompatibility in scale and outlook doom the relationship eternally.



Patience: Adam

Jonah also functions as a type of Adam, and it is through this device that the Gawain poet further explores the human predicament with respect to his creator. By linking Jonah with Adam in narrative, as with his sources' links to Job and Ecclesiastes in genre, the Gawain poet gives his protagonist a past. That he attempts psychological explanations for Jonah's behaviour which are not found in the source, indicates a willingness to see Jonah's side of the story. By the connection with other Biblical figures, he can give the impression of an aged prophet weary of the ways of God and capable of making a rational decision to try to avoid him. Just as the Job tradition allows for the questioning of God, and the pessimism of the preacher of Ecclesiastes evokes the world weariness and reification of death, the Adam typology allows the whole question of the cause of suffering to be raised.

The extraordinary degree of frustration shown by the Gawain poet's Jonah over his treatment by God needs to be taken seriously. As with the predicament of Pearl's jeweler, Jonah's problem demonstrates the very human tragedy of a God-given glimpse of paradise which is unsought by the victim, but once experienced, becomes the source of an unbearable loss.

The Gawain poet identifies Jonah with Adam by his confession as to his role in the cause of the storm and the words of the mariners:

'I leve here be sum losynger, sum lawles wrech,  
That has greved his god and gos here amonge uus.  
Lo, al synkes in his synne and for his sake marres. (170-2)

Alle this meschef for me is made at thys tyme,  
For I haf greved my God and gulty am founden. (209-10)

The rebellion of Jonah is linked to the defiance of Adam as a type for original sin as “sin entered the world through one man and through sin death.” (Rom. 5.12) The sailors, although not in any way to blame for Jonah’s flight, risk death at God’s hand in the same way that all are damned by original sin even without consideration of their own sins. The Gawain poet amplifies the difficulty this puts the sailors in, as the callous murder of Jonah may offend this difficult God as well. Rather than just rougher seas as in the source, the sailors have to contend with lost sails and shattered oars in their attempt to avoid being God’s instrument of correction, which is not unlike Jonah trying to avoid correcting the Ninevites. Wisely these seaman not only ask for absolution from the murder of an innocent as in the source, but pray for “grace to greven hym never” (226). Once the original sin motif is noted, the disinclination of Jonah and the sailors to get caught up in this cosmic drama suggests that the poet is commenting on the lack of proportion original sin involves. Beyond any consideration of fault is the dissonance of scale between the God who creates all, and a speck of his creation who wants to be left alone.

That wyte I worchyp, iwysse, that wroght alle thinges,  
 Alle the world with the welkyn, the wynde and the sternes,  
 And alle that wones ther withinne, at a worde one.  
 Alle this meschef for me is made at thys tyme (206-9)

The details of the majesty of God’s creation in the source material have been augmented, probably from Job 9, in a way which accentuates the contrast between God’s big ticket items: “alle thinges” “alle the worlde” and “alle that wones”, and the small beer of Jonah’s crimes, “alle this mischef for me.” By adding God’s hounding

of him to the list of God's accomplishments, he plays on the ridiculous nature of God's offense at one man in the scheme of the whole universe.

The most striking parallel with Adam is the episode of the Woodbine. In it the Gawain poet blames God for suffering in a way that would raise the ire of Langland's Dame Study:

I have yherd heighe men etyng at the table  
 Carpen as thei clerkes were of Crist and of hise myghtes,  
 And leyden fautes upon the fader that formede us alle  
 And carpen ayein clerkes crabbede wordes:  
 "Why wolde Oure Saveour suffre swich a worm in his blisse,  
 That bi[w]iled the womman and the [wye] after,  
 Thorough whiche wiles and wordes thei wente to helle,  
 And al hir sees for hir synne the same deeth suffrede?" (X 103-10)

The Woodbine incident has been traditionally interpreted as an indication of Jonah's need to learn his place and to appreciate God's mercy in sparing Nineveh (Nicholls 83). Much has been made of Jonah's extravagant joy at the Woodbine's creation and especially his supposed overreaction to its destruction (Prior "Patience - beyond Apocalypse" 346).

These views would seem to exclude what appears to be a clear allusion to Eden. Pohli has noted a link to a postlapsarian Adam in the Woodbine (9) and Spearing the "childish pleasure" that Jonah displays in the Woodbine, (The Gawain-Poet 89). Jonah's Woodbine had become in some traditions "a prophetic image of the Christian paradise" (Romer 262) and the paradise-serpent allusion is clear. If the Woodbine parallels Eden and the worm has its usage as serpent, Jonah then becomes justified both in his delight and anger. Further the worm is explicitly sent by God:

Whil God wayned a worme that wrot up the rote,  
 And wyddered was the wodbynde bi that the wyve wakned. (467-8)

As in the prologue to Job, God is implicated in the suffering of man and Jonah having glimpsed paradise only to have it removed, quite reasonably asks to die (488).

For a medieval Christian looking at the introduction to Job, in contrast to the audience for the Hebrew original, Satan is not just one of God's angels but is evil personified, the "falce fende" who leads humanity astray (Cleanness 205). The Satan which God allows to terrorise Job is for the Gawain poet and his audience the same fiend that God allows to bring down Adam's paradise. The tempting angel of Job's prologue is the source of Job's complaint, just as the tempting serpent of the garden becomes the focus of the Adam-figure, Jonah. Inevitably the worm in the Woodbine would be linked to the Devil, and God's decision to allow evil beings to introduce suffering into human's lives is highlighted.

The Woodbine pericope not only alludes to Satan, but explicitly works him into a difficult to translate passage in which it usually passed off as an exclamation:

So blythe of his Woodbine he balteres therunder  
That of no diete that day—the devel haf!—he roghte. (459-60)

Line 460 is glossed in Cawley and Anderson as "That he takes no thought for food that day—to the devil with it!" (153) Vantuono sees no need for the punctuation, and posits the meaning of the line, taking "diete" as journey rather than food, as "Because the devil would he have cared for any day's journey that day!" (37) While the sense of the line remains obscure, reading the Woodbine as a figure for Eden and reading "diete" as meaning measure, allows a sense in which the devil is not an exclamation but that to which Jonah does not give a thought while in his paradise, that is: He is so pleased, hobbling under his Woodbine/ That he took no measure of the devil in his thought that day.

In the Woodbine, hidden from God, Jonah is happy. Similarly in the boat the relief felt in the illusion of escape from God is exhilarating:

Was never so joyful a Jue as Jonas was thenne,  
That the daunger of Dryghtyn so dearly ascaped,  
He wende wel that wyy that al the world planted  
Hade no maught that mere no man for to greve. (110-4)

Eldredge adds the sojourn in the whale as the third shelter in which Jonah is apart from God (121), and certainly Jonah in Patience finds a relative respite from the filth in a nook in the fish (290). The imperative to hide from God is the second thing which concerns Adam and Eve after the Fall, after dealing with their nakedness. Jonah has as much chance of avoiding God in the world as Adam and Eve have of not being found in the garden, but the compulsion to hide from a dangerously grieved God is overpowering. The Gawain poet makes it clear that Jonah is deluded and that God won't let him escape, but it is the sensation of separation from God that makes Jonah happy and the presentation of Jonah as not wholly wrong raises the question as to what sort God needs to be hidden from.

I suspect patience became strongly emphasized in the latter part of the Middle Ages just because the nominalist and other philosophers became more and more emphatic about the power and irrationality of God. With such a God one needs all the patience one can bring to bear. (Bloomfield 44)

The picture of God derived from nominalist philosophers is targeted by the Gawain poet's rebellion. The poet longs for justice and mercy and receives only unrelieved suffering. His Jonah's best hope is the illusion of shelter from such a God.

Patience is often the story of a God who makes up the rules as he goes along. This is a God who from the outset treats his prophet cavalierly, recalling the prophet to duty as he does with rough words (64). In essence the threat he makes Jonah

pass on to Nineveh fools the people into repentance. It is the same tactics used by Yahweh to fool Ahab into marching to his death (I Kings 22.22) when a lying spirit is given to the King's prophets. Just as then, God puts a lying spirit into Jonah, which explains Jonah's odd reaction to the success of his evangelism. God's mercy to the Ninevites means Jonah is no different to Ahab's prophets and fails the test of a true Hebrew prophet. By law he deserves to be killed (Duet. 18.22, 13.6).

God's belittling of penitence in this poem is rather shocking given the medieval emphasis on this aspect of Christian life. The penitence of the Ninevites wins their forgiveness from a God who is made satisfied by such extremes of fasting as to involve the starvation of babies and the external show of tearing clothes. It is inconsistent then for this same God to be so concerned with the hungry babes of Nineveh (510) and to lampoon those who tear their clothes (525-6). His concern for the dumb animals, babies and witless women, who all seem to be exempt from the stain of sin, which holds his destroying hand, is notably absent in the stories of destruction of cities retold in Cleanness (969-70, 1247-80). In Patience the inhabitants of the doomed city are spared, but the reader's empathy for the suffering of the contrite Ninevites is undermined by God's strange ambivalence to their penance.

The Gawain poet uses the Jonah story in relation to the history of God in the Old Testament to accuse God of being the prime cause of suffering. What seems an act of mercy toward the evil Ninevites, is merely the action of a God who no longer knows what to do with his fallen creation and has to trade on his reputation for violence to achieve results. Pointedly, the Gawain poet does not send Jonah to Nineveh as a Christ figure who could save them through grace, but as Adam, fallen

and dodging God's foibles as much as his targets for reform. In the face of this God, Jonah shows himself willing to die if God won't leave him alone, both during the storm and after the Woodbine, but God denies him even that. Jonah hasn't got a chance if God won't even let being eaten by a fish finish him.

Patience: Blessings

The relationship between the poet's two sources, the Jonah story and the Beatitudes, while not obvious from a thematic point of view (Happy are those eaten by sea monsters), has resonances in genre which make apt connections. Beatitudes as a form were generally of Wisdom provenance (Bornkamm 75) and while the Kingdom of Heaven concept is most prominent in the Synoptic record it too finds a past in worldly Hellenistic Judaism (Lattke 73), which was heir to Jonah's outwardly looking adventures amongst non-Israelites (Limberg 35).

The inclusion of all the Beatitudes in contrast to his economy in their use in Cleanness is noteworthy, as his twisting of the first and last would have been sufficient for a work on patience. Using the Beatitudes en masse has been seen as introducing the merciful God that spares Nineveh in the narrative section (Williams 132). If the poet's view of his God is not so confident as I suggest, however, the transition from the ideal world of the Beatitudes to the hassles Jonah has with life is one of complete antithesis rather than just a retreat "to a less idealistic...basis for a rational life in God's universe." (Williams 132)

Repeatedly, Jonah's predicament is seen as undermining the validity of the sentiments of the Beatitudes. Strikingly, Jonah in Patience sees God:

'Oure Syre syttes,' he says, 'on sege so hyghe,  
in his glowande glorye, and gloumbes ful lyttel  
Thagh I be nummen in Nunnive and naked dispoyled, (93-5)

Thay ar happen also that arn of hert clene,  
For thay her Sayvyour in sete schal se with her yyen. (23-4)



The version of the sixth Beatitude in Patience is firmly linked with Jonah's lament by the poet's addition of God's throne to his Matthean source. This connection throws up disturbing reverberations. This lamentation is not found in the Gawain poet's source and gives Jonah the dubious "blessing" of having seen God in a way which only emphasises the clumsiness of God's understanding of his creation. Working back from Jonah to the Beatitudes suggests that perhaps Jonah has earned this sight of God by being pure of heart, an odd situation if Jonah is to be merely a negative example. Further, it is not at all clear that the reward for being pure of heart is anything other than a terrifying discovery that God can only be seen as distant, uncaring and unchangeably "other". The God on high motif recurs in the belly of the whale (261) when the God who put him there in the first place "succours" him by not allowing him the death for which he has volunteered. The extent of God's concern is shown by Jonah's situation: "Lorde, colde was his comforte, and his care huge." (264) God's comfort is indeed cold and it is possible that the huge care means not only a lot of trouble but hints at the disproportionate way God lumbers about in the mortal world.

Peaceful, meek Jonah does not wish to "venge" God upon Nineveh (71) and his reward should be, according to the Beatitudes, to inherit the earth and be a son of God. Jonah doesn't even inherit the Woodbine. His mourning for its loss leads not to comforting, but a lecture on how he did not contribute to its construction (498). This refusal of God to see through his created's eyes, who are unable to do anything but inhabit their creator's world and hope to stay out of his way, further exemplifies the problem of God being so "other" as to be uncaring. Jonah has

rejected a role as the son of God and would not want the reward for the seventh Beatitude, again throwing the desirability of this Kingdom of God into doubt.

The third Beatitude has undergone a change of emphasis at the hand of the Gawain poet:

Happy those who mourn:  
they shall be comforted. (Matt 5:4)

Thay ar happen also that for her harme wepes,  
For thay schal comfort encroche in kythes ful mony. (17-8)

Cawley and Anderson translate “harme” as sin (133), but Vantuono gives it as misfortune (7). Especially when taken in the latter sense, this saying relates to Jonah’s second speech in the whale in which he laments his “cares” (305). The addition of comfort in many lands is not only ironic in its relation to Jonah’s misery in many lands from Samaria to Nineveh, but also relates to one of the Gawain poet’s additions to the speech in the whale:

The barres of uche a bonk ful bigly me haldes,  
That I may lachche no lont, and thou my lyf weldes:  
Thou schal releve me, renk, whil thy right slepes... (321-3)

Rather than comfort in many lands, Jonah can’t even reach land. He prays for deliverance as he has no other option but realises God’s justice sleeps.

Thay ar happen also that hungeres after ryght,  
For thay schal frely be refete ful of alle gode. (19-20)

With hatel anger and hot heterly he calles:  
‘A, thou maker of man, what maystery the thynkes  
Thus thy freke to forfare forbi alle other?  
With alle meschaf that thou may, never thou me spares. (481-4)

Jonah, having been coerced into God’s service in the matter of Nineveh’s “vilanye and venym” (71), hungeres after justice as a good prophet of an aggrieved God.

God’s fluid morality mocks him for his gullibility in his service, then withdraws the

reward of being satisfied demanded by the fourth Beatitude. The sense of being isolated for service to God, the mocking reserved for the office of a prophet, is expanded upon in Psalm 69 which provides material for the speech in Jonah and more of a past for Jonah:

Save me, God! The water  
is already up to my neck!...  
Do not let the waves wash over me,  
do not let the deep swallow me  
or the Pit close its mouth on me. (Ps 69:1,15)

Interestingly, the satisfaction required here for the miseries of the prophet is:

Vent your fury on them,  
let your burning anger overtake them;  
may their camp be reduced to ruin,  
and their tents left unoccupied...  
Then, seeing this, the humble can rejoice. (Ps 69: 24-5,32)

This is how God behaves in Cleanness but not in Patience leaving the humble, that is the poor in spirit, uncertain.

Thay arn happen that han in hert poverté,  
For hores is the hevenryche to holde for ever.

Thay ar happen also that con her hert stere,  
For hores is the hevenryche, as I er sayde. (13-4,27-8)

Happy are the poor in spirit:  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:3,10)

A key emendation here is the change from spirit to heart so that the first and last are “fettled in on forme” (38) having the same reward and referring to the same organ.

The poet’s personifications link the ability to govern your heart to Dame “Pacyence” (33) and hence back to the opening lines of the poem. What is displeasing in this

sense for Jonah is that he is not allowed to steer his heart. He must be patient with a willfully clumsy and duplicitous God.

Having stated his take on the Beatitudes, the *sine qua non* of realised eschatology, the Gawain poet casts immediate doubt on its practical application with his own beatitude, “He were happen that hade one” (34). Then the poet’s narrator, by slyly fudging his beatitudes with Luke’s generic poverty rather than Matthew’s spiritual poverty, picks a blessing which requires no effort because he is already poor, and tags on patience as a means of coping with poverty.

The culmination of his little dissertation on the Beatitudes is to state his major thesis that “he mot nede suffer.” (44) Having stated this, lending weight to the opening line being translated “Patience is appointed,” (Moorman “Some Notes on Patience and Pearl” 67) he goes on in the narrative to suggest that it is appointed by an uncaring God. Davis notes that contrary to the Beatitudes being an ascending ladder of blessings, as propounded after Augustine, there is for the Gawain poet a cycle involving gaining knowledge and returning to suffering and illustrates this from Pearl:

The garden in Pearl is as Edenic a spot as the postlapsarian world offers, but by the end of the poem it has become a garden of quiet and lonely suffering, where the Dreamer accepts his bitter fate for the sake of the final things. It more nearly resembles Gethsemane. (269)

Jonah does not give in so quietly as the Dreamer or Christ, but like Christ would rather, if God would just change his mind on this issue, avoid the whole suffering process.

The Gawain poet is not alone in linking the Beatitudes to the notion that God is the cause of suffering. Friedman notes that the mass the narrator hears is

likely to be that of All Hallows which uses the Beatitudes (Freidman 102).

Collections of sermons used by Wycliffite priests exist and the sermon for All Hallows uses the first Beatitude to illustrate God's will as the cause of suffering:

How that God wole ordeyne for his seruant other do or suffre, he holduth hym wel payed, sith God is a ferour and he is his instrument, redy wher God wole makon hym hamour or tongus or a stythie, to suffre however that God wole. (Gordon 321)

The Gawain poet shares the same pragmatic realism in his view of God, viewing Jonah as belted by God's hammer. A characteristic of nonconformist Christianity beginning with the Lollards was an emphasis on the inevitability of struggle (Kendall 19). If patience is suggested as a way of life by the Gawain poet, it is not for any high spiritual reason (Wilson 53), but sheer pragmatism:

For quo-so suffer cowthe syt, sele wolde folwe,  
And quo for thro may nought thole, the thikker he sufferes.  
Then is better to abyde the bur umbestoundes  
Then ay throw forth my thro, thagh me think ylle. (5-9)

The Gawain poet sees the way the world works as exemplifying a God as cavalier with his creation as King Arthur is with his knight, Sir Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, who, having avoided the beheading game, is confident Gawain will "byden the bur that he schal bede after" (374). Not being privy to the workings of the game, Jonah, like Gawain, is simply "unable to choose not to suffer" (Stokes 359).

Patience: Church

If the poet is unsure about how to take his God, he also has great reservations about the established Church of his time. Apart from finding reasons for patience from life experience rather than Church teaching or thought of reward, there are many hints from the text that the Gawain poet is coming from a Christian milieu outside of strict orthodoxy.

From the outset the poem identifies its narrator as being among the poor. Fowler wonders why he brings up the topic at all, as the Jonah story has nothing to do with poverty as such. His suggestion (188) that the Gawain poet refers to a “poverty of circumstances” which requires patience, is I think unnecessary. The narrator at least purports to be giving an instructional talk based on a biblical subject, in short a sermon. For the sermoniser to count himself as poor is to make a statement against a church whose leaders were among the rich of the Cheshire district in which the Gawain poet has been placed (Bennett Community, Class and Careerism 135). More generally it is to tap into the dialectic between the poverty of Christ and the obscene riches of the papacy and the established church.

The narrator’s explication of patience by his story of an errand to Rome is more than a further example of finding forbearance the easiest path:

Other yif my lege lorde lyst on lyve me to bidde  
Other to ryde other to renne to Rome in his ernde,

What graythed me the grychchyng bot grame more seche?  
Much yif he me ne made, maugref my chekes,  
And thenne thrat moste I thole and unthok to mede,  
The had bowed to his bode bongré my hyure. (51-6)

The Gawain poet links his narrator and his reluctant errand to Rome with Jonah's unsought mission to Nineveh, as noted by Moorman:

the trials of the harassed preacher, going somewhat reluctantly and certainly unthanked about God's business, leading quite naturally to the parable of the unwilling prophet of the Old Testament. ("The Role of the Narrator in *Patience*" 93)

Moorman goes on to suggest the narrator had something to be upset about but declines to speculate on the matter. The parallel set up between narrator and Jonah, and Rome and Nineveh, flatters neither Rome nor the Roman Church. If the narrator is a reluctant visitor to Rome it suggests that Rome needs a hellfire sermon and repentance, and this Herculean task is cause for complaint. The feeling that God has chosen you to tell the established Church its flaws is a poison chalice and likely to get you burnt or worse in a medieval context. The disillusion Jonah feels over the forgiveness given to Nineveh would neatly fit with one who despaired over God's failure to destroy his corrupt Church.

The identification of the whale with hell is clear enough, the monster's stomach "savoured as helle" (275) and Jonah prayed from a "hellen wombe" (306). The whale is also, by contrast, identified with the Church as Jonah's entry into the whale is described "as mote in at a munster dor" (268). Along with the brilliant evocation of the problem of scale between Jonah and God's heavy handedness, there is here the outrageous suggestion that the entrance to a Cathedral leads to hell. The explanation by Andrew for this observation that "it is in the womb of hell that Jonah turns to God" ("Patience: The Munster Dor" 166) avoids the possibility that the Gawain poet may not be seeing the Church in a wholly favourable light. Linking the Church with hell by the Gawain poet is not isolated to Patience. In Sir Gawain and

the Green Knight the Green Chapel is portrayed as the site of a black mass (2192) and yet it is here that Gawain is confessed and absolved by the Green Knight (2319).

In his additions to the second prayer out of the whale, the Gawain poet has Jonah sound a note of defiance against the learned men of the Church:

I haf meled with thy maystres mony longe day,  
 Bot now I wot wyterly that those unwyse ledes,  
 That affyen hym in vanyté and in vayne thynges,  
 For think that mountes to noght her mercy forsaken. (329-32)

Apart from further linking Jonah to Job and his battles against the well-meaning religious men bringing him “comfort”, being critical of an approach in which much effort is expended in consideration of nothing sounds like a complaint against the schoolmen. It is also a challenge to their teaching authority in the spirit of the prologue to a Wycliffite Bible:

But wite ye, worldly clerkis and feyned relygious, that God both can  
 and may, if it lykith hym, speede symple men out of the universitee,  
 as myche to kunne hooly writ, as maistris in the universite. (quoted  
 in Kendall 31)

The *sitz im leben* of this reading of *Patience* puts it in a dissenting tradition in which individual interpretation of the Bible is allowed. It is a seeking tradition in which the problem that God appears so distant is debated but not resolved. The distance between God and man was to become a preoccupation of Lollard discourse (Kendall 22). Neither is the problem of suffering resolved here, but the act of participation in the suffering of the poor depicted in *Patience* points towards the participation in suffering by the Christ child in *Cleanness* (1097). Concern for the poor was one of the issues which provoked dissent with the Church. Lollards are described as having “wished to redistribute Church wealth and sharply criticized the religious orders and the upper clergy” (Lambert 237).



The conventional nature of the surface moral of Patience need not exclude the possibility of an origin in Lollard thought. Coleman has noted that it was a commonplace of Lollard expression to put their ideas into more approved stories (211). The need to avoid suspicions of heresy obviously was a consideration. Such endeavours were assisted in that:

Lollard heterodoxy was not at all easily distinguishable from orthodox texts, which offered traditional, and at the same time increasingly realistic, complaints about current social practices and institutions. (Coleman 211)

The choice of Jonah was an obvious one for the reformers in this time. The Lollards saw themselves in the mould of Old Testament prophets who drew “their truth and calling directly from the deity. And they, too, had often assumed their mantles of prophecy with reluctance” (Kendall 34). No prophet was more reluctant than Jonah and his choice suits a Lollard agenda well. A contemporary of the Gawain poet who had similar complaints about the priesthood, Bishop Brinton, specifically thought of himself preaching to the Ninevites as Jonah (Ingledew 279). Wycliffe himself preached against his fraternal enemies as the generation of sign seekers (Szittyá 155) using the text which refers to Jonah from Matthew (12.38-42). The lack of success of the Lollard agenda in reforming the Church may find its expression in Patience in Jonah’s upset at the sparing of Nineveh.

Bowers attributes the near loss of the Gawain poet’s work to the loss of favour enjoyed by Cheshire men with the demise of the court of Richard II ( “Pearl in its Royal Setting” 153). An alternative reason may well be more religious than strictly political, in that the ideas in the works of the Gawain poet were suspect. His work may well have been too nearly Lollard for the orthodox and too cryptic to ensure preservation by the Lollards as their intellectual base eroded, such that if it

was not deliberately destroyed, few would have made the effort to preserve it.

Whether by chance or design the Church silenced its critic.

Cleanness: Outcast

Cleanness has suffered critical death as the unreadable poem amongst the Gawain poems, standing accused of being “excessively didactic and poorly constructed” (Bennett Middle English Literature 226), “monotonous and discursive” (Gollancz in Kelly and Irwin 232) and even “somewhat distasteful” (Prior 52). While it can be structurally linked to contemporary university sermons (Brzezinski 166) as a sermon on “cleanness”, its defects are alarming. The apparently unifying concept of purity, especially sexual purity, is twisted to fit all sorts of transgressions and the treatment seems diffuse to the point of irritation. The pattern of Beatitude/Parable/Exempla is clear enough but the stories are not particularly illustrative of purity, more the lack of it. What is mainly depicted is God having serious difficulties with the progress of history. Having allowed the rot to start by giving his creation a free will, God is revealed as unable to deal with this self-imposed blow to his omnipotence. If it weren’t for the fact that purity is only on the surface of many layers of meaning in Cleanness, the poem would perhaps be as much a failure as has been reasoned.

Prior, with merit, sees the theme as “the nearly hopeless relationship between a terrifying, angry Creator and his repulsively wicked creatures” (53) and on those grounds the poet works on similar territory to his approach in Patience. Just as in his approach to the Beatitudes in Patience, in Cleanness there is comment on the conflict between reality and ideal in the Kingdom of God in his treatment of the parable of the wedding feast. I do not think the Gawain poet meant to be taken at

face value in his version of this feast. His concern is not with cleanness as such but with ideal and reality in the concept of the Kingdom of God, particularly as it illustrates that there's just no pleasing God. The Gawain poet achieves this in his presentation of the parable by luring the reader into identification with the "wrong" character in the story.

The conventional meaning of the parable is reiterated to the point where it seems likely that the verse borders on farce. It can't have been necessary to labour the internal/external purity motif to the extreme used here and its likely function is to effect a recognition that there are further meanings to be found:

He is so clene in his courte, the kyng that al weldes,  
 And honeste in his houshold, and hagherlych served  
 With angeles enouled in alle that is clene  
 Bothe withinne and withouten, in wedes ful bryght. (17-20)

Forthy hyy not to heven in hateres totorne,  
 Ne in the harlates had and hands unwaschen.(33-4)

With rent cokres at the kne, and his clutte trasches,  
 And his tabarde totorne, and his totes oute, (40-41)

Wich arn thenne thy wedes thou wrappe the inne,  
 That schal schewe hem so schene, schrowde of the best?  
 Hit arn thy werkes wyterly that thou wroght haves;  
 And lyned with the lykyng that lyve in thyn hert, (169-72)

Such a motif is also used by this poet in Patience (341-2) with commendable lightness of touch and no hint of a need for the battering given here. With his clothing motif both a commonplace and already implied and exemplified in the poem, lines 169-72 are either appallingly obvious sermonising or a pointer to something strange going on in this parable.

Much of the ambiguity of the parable stems from the poetic interplay between the two very different treatments given to the biblical Q source by the

Gawain poet's sources in Matthew 22.1-14 and Luke 14.15-24. Though only Matthew is cited by the poet, it is the inclusive spirit of Luke's message that is in the ascendant. Of the two accounts, Luke's is more specifically in tune with the eucharistic concerns of Cleanness (14.15). Luke provides the poet with the excuses of the guests and the three detailed gatherings of wedding guests. Only the first half of the quotation "many are called, but few are chosen" from Matthew (22.14) is retained by the poet (162), again in sympathy with the spirit of the Lucan parable. Luke's story is one of acceptance, of favouring the downtrodden over the empowered and much in sympathy with the concern for the poor expressed in the prologue to Patience. Having shown which of the evangelists most closely matches his outlook, the Gawain poet shocks the reader by including the Matthean expulsion of the incorrectly attired guest.

Luke pointedly omits, as does the Gawain poet, the destruction of the ungrateful guests and the burning of their lands. For Luke this may well be downplaying the vengeful aspect of God. For the poet, with his choice of companion material this is not an option, and to leave out the punishment of the privileged while leaving in the punishment of the wretch gives a fair reckoning of the way things often are in the realised Kingdom of God.

The linking of the ideal Kingdom of God to the real world of sorrow is here achieved by directing our sympathy, and more painfully our empathy, to the outcast from the feast. That the Gawain poet can go straight from condemning the outcast to constant sorrow in a dungeon, ostensibly to teach him courtesy, to "Thus comparisunes Kryst the kyngdom of heven" (161) indicates that he sees Christ searching for fairness in the mind of God with no evident success. The injustice of

the treatment of the wretch that exists along with the allegory has been noted by Spearing with artful delight:

From the point of view of a rational morality of intention, the guest is not blameworthy: He has come to the feast only because he has been press-ganged by the lord's officers, and it is hardly his fault if he is wearing working clothes - soiled, likely enough, by the relentless agricultural labour necessary to produce the food eaten at the feast. For all the officers knew, it might have been Piers the Plowman himself whom they forced to fill a place at the lord's table! (Readings in Medieval Poetry 181)

The obvious extension to Spearing's outrageous suggestion is that Christ himself could find himself unwelcome and cast out at such a feast. Wallace finds further layers to the poet's guile as he deposits the reader into the filthy clothes of the outcast (99). Suggesting that the reader answer the poet's question on whether poor attire should be cause for outrage at a lord's table in the affirmative prior to the parable (35-6), the Gawain poet then shows in the parable that the reason such things occur is outside the control of those who cause offense. Wallace suggests that the Gawain poet makes us, the reader, complicit in the judgment, then turns it on ourselves (99), dropping us in a "siege perilous", under the ruthless, rejecting gaze of the Lord of the feast.

The identification of the reader with the man in filthy clothes allows further uncomfortable allegiances with the rest of those destroyed by God. Schreiber (142) finds links between the outcast's inability to find words to reply to his accuser (152) and the unheard cries of the drowning in Noah's flood (393) and the ignored outcry from the doomed of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Rydelles wern tho grete rowtes of renkkes withinne,  
When thay wern war of the wrake that no wywe achaped;  
Such a yomerly yarm of yellyng ther rysed,  
Therof clatered the cloudes, that Kryst myght haf rawthe. (969-71)

Again it appears the poet is trying to make the reader feel the threat of a God out of control; for while Christ might have mercy, this God does not. Schreiber also links Belshazzar with the wretch, but in the inverted logic of the last feast in the poem, it is Daniel who is forced to the feast by the King's men and then praised and richly clothed by the "filthy" ruler, and therefore Daniel is the more likely parallel. Belshazzar, rather, is to be linked with the priests who are outwardly clean and inwardly filthy (14), not with the outwardly filthy peasant whose inward condition is ambiguous, because the poet makes it belong to the reader.

Cleanness: Wrath

Having moved the reader from observer to participant in God's adventures with his creation, which is after all inescapable, the Gawain poet then catalogues the results of God's wrath. He highlights God's lack of control, lack of proportion, lack of pity and the hypocritical willingness of God to employ the despised evil nature of man for his own destructive purposes.

Interestingly, in considering whether the Gawain poet is concerned with the religious controversies of his time, the stories found in Cleanness seem to come from a sequence used in 2 Pet. 2 as a warning about false teaching (Wilson 96). This passage includes the same sequence of destruction as Cleanness and the identification is strengthened by the parallel between 2 Pet. 2.20-1 and 1133-44 concerning God's abhorrence of those who learn holiness then go back to evil.

God's failure to come to terms with his creation is highlighted in his private chat to Noah after the flood:

'Now, Noe, no more nel I never wary  
 Alle the mukel mayny-molde for no mannes synnes;  
 For I se wel that hit is sothe that alle segges wyttes  
 To unthryfte arn alle thrawen with thocht of her herttes,

And ay has ben and wyl be yet fro her barnage;  
 Al is the mynde of the man to malyce enclyned.  
 Forthy schal I never schende so schortly at ones  
 As dysstrye al for manes synne, dayes of this erthe. (513-20)

This God's anger is revealed as pointless. Unless he removes free will his creation is going to cause him grief and he admits a kind of defeat and the poet develops pity for a being which seems to lack it:



Hym rweð that he hem uprerde and raght hem lyfode,  
 And efte that he hem undyd, hard hit hym thoght;  
 For quen the swemande sorwe soght to his hert,  
 He knyrt a coveñaunde cortaysly with monkynde there,  
 In the mesure of his mode and the methe of his wylle...

That ilke skyl for no scathe ascaped hym never;  
 Wheder wonderly he wrak on wykked men after, (561-5, 569-70)

As with Patience, a major concern in Cleanness is the lack of proportion in God's actions. While the Gawain poet mentions moderation in God's response to man's sin after the flood (565) the poet then demonstrates God's complete lack of it. With merit, Vantuono makes line 570 the end of a section in terms of the sense of the passage (120-1), with the poet's distinctly odd suggestion that God was so saddened by his own destructiveness that he was going to be moderate in the way he "wonderly" attacked men in the future.

Despite God's promise (514) not to condemn the whole world over sin, original sin retains its force, indeed it is identified with the evil intent of men. The same technique of calling God measured in his response to man and then showing that he is most certainly not so, is shown in the Gawain poet's dealing with the sin in the garden of Eden:

The defence was the fryt that the freke towched,  
 And the dom is the dethe that drepes uis alle;  
 Al in mesure and methe was mad the vengiance, (245-7)

The poet, as he does in Patience, plays with proportions, comparing the trivial nature of a piece of fruit with the enormity of everyone's doom and then saying it was a measured response. He then tops that in the following lines presaging the flood as the sort of apocalypse that occurred when God got really angry with "malys mercyles and mawgr— much scheued." (251)

The crime which causes this particular outburst is hard to pin down in the poem. The Genesis account suggests general wickedness (6.5) but the Gawain poet firmly links it with the preceding obscure passage (6.1-2) concerning “sons of God” and their wickedness in having sex with human women. The links between this group and religious orders will be looked at later, but in this context it seems men are being punished for a generalised disarray in God’s creation rather than specifically human crimes.

This God has only so much pity : “his mercy was passed, / And alle his pyt— departed fro the peple that he hated” (395-6). Abraham explores this deficiency in his bargaining over Sodom. With his knowledge of the way God acts when he’s angry, Abraham, dismayed at the prospect, suggests very very discretely, that his wrath might hurt the innocent:

Al sykande he sayde: ‘sir, with yor leve,  
Schal synful and sakles suffer al on payne?

Wether ever hit lyke my Lorde to lyfte such domes,  
That the wykked and the worthy schal on wrake suffer,  
And weye upon the worre half that wrathed the never?  
That was never thy won that wroghtes uus alle. (715-20)

The Gawain poet, like the author of Ecclesiastes, would say that in the normal course of events the worthy would indeed suffer, and entirely due to God’s absence of pity. That last line is a piece of desperate flattery on Abraham’s part that ignores God’s track record. The bargaining which follows involves appealing to God’s gentle spirit (728), his goodness (733), his mild wrath (746), and his generosity (750). It is not unlike an extended version of Jonah’s ironic speech to God:

Wel knew I thi cortaysie, thy quont soffraunce,  
Thy bount— of debonert—, and thy bene grace,  
Thy longe abydyng wyth lur, thy late vengauce;

And ay thy mercy is mete, be mysse never so huge. (417-20)

Jonah as a reluctant instrument of God's vengeance knows the destruction God is capable of, just as Abraham does, yet they both are needfully economical with the truth with respect to God's behaviour.

As portrayed in these stories of destruction, God has no qualms about using the evil nature of man which he professes to abhor when it suits his purposes. The same fluid morality that saves Nineveh in Patience, allows the extremely violent and pitiless Nebuchadnezzar to be God's agent of destruction against Zedekiah (1175). The ruthlessness of the starving innocents all being put to the sword (1243-6) is worthy of the sponsorship of a God that destroys indiscriminately by flood and fire and is justified in his name: "Now se! so the Soverayn set has his wrake" (1225)

Cleanness: Vision

The hathel clene of his hert hapenes ful fayre,  
 For he schal loke on oure Lorde with a loue chere. (26-7)

The sixth Beatitude is straightforward in its application to the parable and exempla which follow it in Cleanness only if the poem is only about purity. If it is nothing of the sort, then the Beatitude carries the same contradictory resonances as it has in Patience. The blessing of seeing God is by no means a positive gift if God is terrifying in his wrath. The guise in which the Beatific vision becomes desirable is only represented in the poem when the nativity is dealt with. All the same the standard required for the blessing is one in which the unknowable mind of God seems to make success a distant prospect. The gulf between the absolute standards required and the flaw in design of man that makes these impossible is great enough, but is thrown into ludicrous disarray by a God who is presented as having contradictory stances on exactly what version of morality would constitute cleanness of heart.

The Beatific vision was linked to the Kingdom of God and this may have been a factor in the choice of the parable of the wedding feast (Brzezinski 169). If the Beatific vision of the blessing is to be gained, the standards set by this God are not going to be easy:

For is no segge under sunne so seme of his craftes,  
 If he be sulped in synne that syttes unclene,  
 On spec of a spot may spede to mysse  
 Of the syghte of the Soverayn that syttes so hyghe. (549-52)

Working out this God's will is not easy either as his relativistic approach to morals allows the praise of violence and the abhorrence of it, and also the enthusiastic praise of sex (697) and the forceful espousal of virginity (1071). Yet his catalogue of sins (177-92) is concrete and extensive enough to make life difficult for any sinner, although the particular nature of the sins may mean the poet has more specific antifraternals targets for his condemnation.

The promise of the Beatific vision impacts on the Old Testament exempla chosen by the Gawain poet, in that they involve the awesome appearance of God and the reaction of his creation. Their visual confrontations are either God with man, God's messenger with man or interactions which provide analogues for the Beatific vision (Stanley 106-7). The earliest chronicled reaction to living within God's sight in the poem is Lucifer's, who takes a considerable risk to get away from God (205-34). Adam's vision of God is implied in "ordaynt to blysse / Ther pryvely in Paradys his place was devised," (235) but cannot survive independent action by the created. Noah who is fated to be the only one "ryghtwys" (294) enough left to receive God's call receives "Wylde wrakful wordes" (302) (reminiscent of the "roghlych rurd" (64) in God's message to Jonah) giving Noah sad news and immense tasks. The meagre blessings attached to the Beatific vision here are the promise of eventual relief from original sin for Adam (248) and a shelter from God's explosive wrath for Noah.

As the history of desolation unfolds, God becomes more distant but no less dangerous. Abraham sees "wlonke wyyes thrynne," (606) but it is clear from his greeting them "as to God" (611) and their unified speech that these are to be taken as the three persons of the trinity (Wilson 100). Lot only has indirect contact via the

two handsome angels visiting him indicating the increasing distance of God from his creation. Zedekiah, as leader of the Jews who have rejected God, gets his punishment via an earthly enemy, further indicating distance from direct vision, and by the time of Daniel, even that devout man has no direct recourse to God, but like a good Protestant relies on the written word of God (1725-40).

The only hopeful vision is that of the Christ child. Unlike the God of the Old Testament who seems the stern master of evil fate in the world, the visual representation of the nativity (1065-1108) in the midst of the Old Testament stories reminds the reader of the tradition in which God becomes one with his creation: “For loke, fro fyrst that he lyght withinne the lel mayden” (1069).

The poverty of his birth is glorified (1074), celebrated in music by angels (1080-1) and his purity established. Instead of wanting to expel the unclean, the Christ child reaches out with grace and healing.

That alle that longed luther ful lodly he hated;  
By nobleye of his nature he nolde never towche  
Oght that was ungoderly other ordure was inne. (1090-3)

These lines do not indicate Christ echoing God’s inability to tolerate uncleanness, but are a description of his inability to be unclean. His perfection is then contrasted with the diseased and the dead who are brought to him whom he heals: “For what-so he towched also tyd tourned to hele.” (1099) Clearly the point is not that Christ hates sinful man, he merely shares a disdain for sin with the God with whom he is contrasted by the Gawain poet. The difference is the acceptance of the sinful nature of man and the possibility of reconciliation for those who “called on that cortayse and claymed his grace.” (1097)

This interlude suggests the ideal the Gawain poet searches for in vain in the Church and in life. He finds God revealed by the Church as the stern Old Testament judge and destroyer who rejects sinful creation. Only in the story of the Christ child is there understanding and tolerance. Everywhere else in the poem the awesome God of destruction and death which thrives on fear and ignorance is in the ascendant. As a phenomenon, it is a characteristic of nonconformist sects from Montanism to the present day to reject the established Church and appeal to the spirit of Christ (Tillich 40). The persecuted early Church is a role model for the religiously marginalised and in the Gawain poet's England such a position belonged to the Lollards (Kendall 42).

Cleanness: Friars

Cleanness like Patience can be seen as a work of protest against the Church. It shows this in the same way as does Patience in general suggestions of discontent, but also concerns itself with topical antifraternial and even heretical thought of the late fourteenth century.

The riches of the Church are condemned by implication in the praise of the humble origins of Christ: “Ne no schroude-hous so schene as a schepon thare ” (1076). The Gawain poet may even reveal a hint of iconoclasm: “ Lovande theron lese goddes that lyf haden never, / Made of stokkes and stones that never stury moght.” (1719-29)

Balshazzar’s feast with its desecration of the vessels of the temple drawing God’s wrath, is pure wishful thinking for God’s wrath to strike the Roman Church, in a long standing tradition of anti-papist polemic (Ingledeu 268). The general distaste for the papacy, seen in the episode of Belshazzar, may well be more specifically directed against the Avignon court. Avignon, like Rome, was characterised by opponents of the Papacy as the new Babylon; and Lucifer has been interpreted as setting up his domain “tramountayne,” (211) which indicates a place across the Alps like Avignon (Ingledeu 272).

Just as Jonah rejects the great thinkers of the Church, the failure of the Babylonian clerics to decipher the word of God indicates lack of faith in the authority of the scholars of the Church to do so (1554-81). Further, the fact that Daniel is not among the wise sages of the kingdom (1575) yet understands the



writing of God due to the action of the Holy Spirit within him, can be seen as supporting lay access to scripture free of the teaching authority of the Church:

‘Hit is tolde me bi tulkes that thou trwe were  
Profete of that provynce that prayed my fader,  
  
Ande that thou has in thy hert holy connyng,  
Of sapyence thi sawle ful, sothe to schawe;  
Goddess gost is the geven that gyes alle thynges, (1623-7)

As noted previously, Daniel parallels the pariah from the wedding feast in the “mass” held by Belshazzar. Daniel is the true prophet amongst all the sages of Babylon and prophesies destruction of the city. The possible implication arises that the Gawain poet sees himself in a persecuted group in possession of God’s true revelation looking for the overthrow of established Church. He could count himself such if he had been a disciple of Wycliffe who said that:

[I]n te court of Rome is te heed of anticrist. And in archebishops &  
bisshopis is te bodi of anticrist. But in tise cloutid sectis as mounkis  
chanouns & freris is te venymous taile of anticrist. (quoted in  
Kendall 35)

Cleanness is not among the English poems generally regarded as having antifraternal themes (Szittyá 191). However, there are considerable indications that the friars are a feature of the Church toward which the Gawain poet has considerable antipathy. The first judgment in Cleanness in which God goes into annihilation mode is the flood. The direct cause of his rage is the sexual union of women with the cryptically named “Sons of God” (Gen. 6.2). The Gawain poet calls them “fende” (269) and suggests that their sexual relations with women were against nature. Emerson traces the tradition in the Middle Ages that the “Sons of God” were to be identified with the sons of Cain, from Beowulf to Piers Plowman, and finds in Cleanness an example of the association being used by the Gawain poet:

The peculiarity of this allusion is that there is no direct reference to Cain, by name at least, but there can be no doubt, in the light of medieval interpretation, that the poet understood his “degther of the douthe” as the daughters of Seth, and the “fende” as the evil descendants of the first murderer (901).

Sons of Cain was a medieval term for friars in general use in the middle ages indicating their wandering and their position outside the traditional order of life (Szittyá 230). More specifically in Wycliffite usage the initials of the fraternal orders of the Dominicans (Jacobins), Franciscans (Minorites), Augustinians and the Carmelites are found within the name Cain itself as:

an anagram[sic] that appears only and often in Wycliffite literature. The founder of the friars... is revealed in the first letters of the names of the four major orders, the Carmelites, Augustinians, Jacobins, and Minorites: C-A-I-M, the Middle English spelling of Cain, the first and most treacherous *frater*. (Szittyá 196)

In choosing for God’s particular vengeance and blame the persons from Genesis who are called sons of Cain and therefore identified with friars, the Gawain poet manages to deliver an antifraternial message available to those who understand the analogy, especially those of a Wycliffite persuasion. Further, it seems likely that those episodes in Cleanness for which God reserves his full vengeance, the sins of the flesh (Kelly and Irwin 240), might profitably be examined as being directed at the vices of the religious orders and priests. The particular sin of sodomy which so enrages God in Cleanness, was understandably leveled against communities consisting exclusively of males. Lollards specifically spoke out against sodomy between members of religious orders in the Lollard Conclusions’ condemnation of celibacy: Here it is postulated:

that the law of continence enjoined on priests, which was first ordained to the prejudice of women, brings sodomy into all the Holy Church, but we excuse ourselves by the Bible because the decree says

that we should not mention it, though suspected. Reason and experience prove this conclusion: reason, because the good living of ecclesiastics must have a natural outlet or worse; experience, because the secret proof of such men is that they find delight in women... A corollary to this is that private religions and the originators or beginning of this sin would be specially worthy of being checked, but God of his power with regard to secret sin sends open vengeance in His Church. (Bettenson 175)

This joining of condemnation of homosexual acts and acceptance of the need for a “natural outlet” is paralleled by the Gawain poet’s choice of the Sodom story highlighting a condemnation of homosexual acts and his extraordinarily frank praise of sex in its God-created form:

The grete soun of Sodamas synkkes in myn eres,  
And the gult of Gomorre gares me to wrath...

Thay han lerned a lyst that lykes me ille,  
that thay han founden in her flesh of fautes the werst;  
Uch male mas his mach a man as hymselven,  
And fylter folyly in fere on femmales wyse.

I compast hem a kynde craft and kende hit hem derne,  
And amed hit in myn ordenaunce oddely dere,  
And dyght drwry therinne, doole alther-swettest;  
And the play of paramores I portrayed myselven (689-90, 693-700)

Antifraternal attacks are also contained within comments upon leaven. The dangers of “leaven” are exemplified by Lot’s faithless wife in the Sodom pericope of Cleanness. The Gawain poet links leaven with salt then blames her for the addition of salt to the bread as a sign of her faithlessness (997). Leaven was linked with the Pharisees as a sign of their hypocrisy: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees □ that is, their hypocrisy” (Luke 12.1) Pharisees was a common abusive term for friars in English poetry. In The Romaunt of the Rose (6893) the application of the woes of Christ upon the Pharisees (Matt. 23) is used directly against the activities of the friars (Szittyá 201). To preach against the evil of “leaven”

may well have been another coded antifraternality attack. Interestingly, the Roman, which influenced much antifraternality poetry in England, provides an enigmatic quote for the Gawain poet in Cleanness (1059-64) containing a rather odd juxtaposition of worldly wisdom and spiritual truth (Brzezinski 178-9).

The idea of an unsuitable sacrifice before God is considered in frequent eucharistic references throughout the poem. The meal of the wedding feast and its parallel feast of Belshazzar suggest the Eucharist and the poem opens with a complaint over sinful priests serving at God's table:

For wonder wroth is the wyy that wroght alle thinges  
 Wyth the freke that in fylthe folwes hym after,  
 As renkes of relygioun that reden and syngen  
 And aprochen to hys presens, and prestes arn called.

Thay teen unto his temmple and temen to hymselfen;  
 Reken with reverence thay ryche his auter;  
 Thay hondel ther his aune body, and usen hit bothe.  
 If thay in clannes be clos, thay cleche gret mede,

Bot if they conterfete crafte and cortaysye wont,  
 As be honest utwyth and inwith alle fylthes,  
 Then ar thay synful hemself, and sulped altogeder  
 Bothe God and his gere, and hym greme cachem. (5-16)

Such references have been seen as unexpected (Wilson 74), but are not inconsistent with concerns of the time over the nature of the Eucharist, which was central to Wycliffe's differences with the Church. Additionally, Lollard anticlericalism had a Donatist strand with concern over the fitness of clergy and therefore their sacraments (Lambert 244). Ingledew has gone so far as to state that the uncleanness the entire poem relates to, is that of the priesthood of the time, finding reference to ordination and particularly Eucharist throughout the work (247).

The doubtful sacrament of the priests is contrasted with the perfect sacrifice of Christ in the nativity interpolated between Sodom and Babylon. Having established Christ's willingness to be with the poor and diseased in their suffering (1093-8) in contrast to the stereotypical friar who in the Roman will not bother with any but the rich nobility (6859-64), the Gawain poet then depicts a perfect sacrament:

Forthy brek he the bred blades wythouten,  
 For hit ferde freloker in fete in his fayre honde,  
 Displayed more privyly when he hit part schulde  
 Thenne alle the toles of Tolowse moht tyght hit to kerve. (1105-8)

The immediately subsequent praise of Christ as exemplifying purity and perfection (1109) is likely then a challenge to those who perform mass, lamenting "Nou ar we sore and synful and souly uchone." (1111) As the site where St. Dominic began his movement of preaching friars, the allusion to Toulouse (1108) may also serve as another antifraternial attack.

The feasts of Belshazzar and the wedding are both examples of problems with the priesthood and the Church. The marriage feast is improper by virtue of its treatment of the ill clad guest, that is, because it is a Church that has lost the spirit of Christ and therefore is unable to serve a proper mass. The abuse of the holy vessels in the "mass" of Belshazzar is a more overt critique of the Church, suggesting the destruction awaiting profane priests.

Finally the Gawain poet who has such concern for those forsaken and drowning in the flood, delights in violent wordplay describing the deaths of the religious at the hand of righteous Nebuchadnezzar:

Prestes and prelates thay presed to death  
 Pulden prestes bi the polle and plat of her hedes,

Dighten dekenes to dethe, dungen doun clerckes,  
And alle the maydenes of the munster maghtyly hokyllen (1249,  
1265-7)

The last line to ensure the nuns weren't let off no doubt.

## Wisdom and Prophecy

The anonymity of the Gawain poet has meant that whatever conjecture has been attempted about his life has been taken from internal evidence. All this needs revision if he is not the simple storyteller with ethical purposes. These two poems have been read, if read at all, as solemn, moral and other worldly. Reading them otherwise reveals a mind engaged and excited by the religious controversies of his time. The use of Old Testament sources avails the poet of Old Testament personae. In Cleanness, he acts as a Jeremiah, pronouncing woes upon the Church. That the established Church sustained little real damage in the poet's time requires the resigned response of the Wisdom tradition of Job or that of the philosopher who wrote Ecclesiastes. In Patience he uses Jonah to shout his desperation at God, about his suffering creation and a Church which provides no refuge from a God that seems all too oppressive.

The Gawain poet has many parallels with Lollard thought although a direct link to the dissent of his contemporaries flounders on his anonymity. However, Patience and Cleanness can be read as revealing the questing mind of the Gawain poet who rejects simple solutions and, atheism not being an option, is left with a tragically unfulfilled hope in the spirit of Christ and an unrealisable dream of a Church that lives in this spirit. The Gawain poet may well be a missing piece in the religious controversies in which the Lollards participated.'

## Bibliography

- Anderson, Bernhard W. The Living World of the Old Testament. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1978.
- Anderson, J.J. "The Prologue of Patience." Modern Philology 63 (1966): 283-7.
- Andrew, Malcolm. "The Diabolical Chapel: A Motif in Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." Neophilologus 66 (1982): 313-9.
- . "Jonah and Christ in Patience." Modern Philology 70 (1973): 230-3.
- . "Patience: The 'Munster Dor.'" English Language Notes 14 (1977): 164-7.
- . "The Realizing Imagination in Late Medieval English Literature." English Studies 76 (1995): 113-28.
- Bennett, J.A.W. Middle English Literature. Ed. and completed by Douglas Gray. Oxford: Clarendon, 1986.
- Bennett, Michael J. Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Benson, C. David. "The Impatient Reader of Patience." Blanch 147- 61.
- Berlin, Normand. "Patience: A Study in Poetic Elaboration." Studia Neophilologica 33 (1961): 80-5.
- Bettenson, Henry. ed. Documents of the Christian Church. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1963.
- Blanch, R.J., Miriam Youngerman Miller, Julian N. Wasserman. Eds. Text and Matter: New Critical Perspectives of the Pearl-Poet. Troy, NY: Whitston, 1991.
- Bloomfield, Morton W. "Patience and the 'Mashal'." Medieval Studies in Honor of Lillian Herlands Hornstein. Eds. Jess B. Bessinger Jnr. And Robert R. Raymo. New York: New York UP, 1976. 41-9.
- Boitani, Piero. English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. trans. Joan Krakover Hall. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982.



- Bornkamm, G. Jesus of Nazareth. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960.
- Bowers, John M. "Patience and the Ideal of a Mixed Life." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 28 (1986): 1-23.
- . "Pearl in It's Royal Setting: Ricardian Poetry Revisited." Studies in the Age of Chaucer 17 (1995): 111-55.
- . "The Politics of Pearl." Exemplaria 7 (1995): 419-41.
- Brady, M. Teresa. "Lollard Sources of The Pore Caitif." Traditio 44 (1988): 389-418.
- Brown, Carleton F. "The Author of The Pearl, considered in the Light of his Theological Opinions." PMLA 19 (1904): 115-45.
- Brzezinski Potkay, Monica. "Cleanness's Fecund and Barren Speech Acts." Studies in the Age of Chaucer 17(1995): 99-109.
- Brzezinski, Monica. "Conscience and Covenant: The Sermon Structure of Cleanness." JEGP 89 (1990): 166-80.
- Cairns, Francis. "Latin Sources and Analogues of the M.E. Patience." Studia Neophilologica 59 (1987): 7-18.
- Calabrese, Michael and Eric Eliason. "The Rhetorics of Sexual Pleasure and Intolerance in the Middle English Cleanness." Modern Language Quarterly 56 (1995): 247-75.
- Cawley, A.C. and J.J. Anderson. eds. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience. London: Dent, 1976.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Riverside Chaucer. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Gen. ed. Larry D. Benson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Clark, S.L. and Julian Wasserman. "The Pearl Poet's City Imagery." Southern Quarterly 16 (1978): 297-309.
- Coleman, Janet. Medieval Readers and Writers: 1350-1400. New York: Columbia UP, 1981.
- Davis, Adam Brooke. "What the Poet of Patience Really Did to the Book of Jonah." Viator 22 (1991): 267-78.
- Diekstra, F.N.M. "Jonah and Patience: The Psychology of a Prophet." English Studies 55 (1974): 205-17.

- Edden, Valerie. "Devils, Sermon Stories, and the Problem of Popular Belief in the Middle Ages." Yearbook of English Studies 22 (1992): 213-25.
- Eldredge, Lawrence. "Sheltering Space and Cosmic Space in the Middle English Patience." Annuaire Mediavale 21 (1981): 121-33.
- Emerson, Oliver F. "Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English." PMLA 21 (1906): 831-929.
- Fletcher, Jefferson B. "The Allegory of the Pearl." JEGP 20 (1921): 1-21.
- Fowler, David C. The Bible in Middle English Literature. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1984.
- Friedman, John B. "Bald Jonah and the Exegesis of 4 Kings 2.23." Traditio 44 (1988): 125-44.
- Friedman, John B. "Figural Typology in the Middle English Patience." Levy 99-129.
- Gilligan, Janet. "Numerical Composition in the Middle English Patience." Studia Neophilologica 61 (1989): 7-11.
- Glenn, Jonathan, A. "Dislocation of "Kynde" in the Middle English Cleanness." Chaucer Review 18 (1983/4): 77-91.
- Gradon, Pamela. ed. English Wycliffite Sermons: Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.
- Hanna, Ralph III. "The Difficulty of Ricardian Prose Translation: The Case of the Lollards." Modern Language Quarterly 51 (1992): 319-40.
- Harbus, A.J. "The Doctrine of Grace in the Work of the Gawain-Poet." Diss. U of Queensland, 1986.
- Hill, Ordelle G. "The Audience of Patience." Modern Philology 66 (1968):103-9.
- Hudson, Anne. ed. Selections From Wycliffite Writings. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978.
- Ingledeu, Francis. "Liturgy, Prophesy, and Belshazzar's Babylon: Discourse, and Meaning in Cleanness." Viator 23 (1992): 247-79.
- Johnson, Lynn Staley. "Patience and the Poet's Use of Psalm 93." Modern Philology 74 (1976): 67-71.

- . The Voice of the Gawain-Poet. Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1984.
- Jones, Alexander. ed. The Jerusalem Bible. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974.
- Kelly, Ellin M. "Parallels Between the Middle English Patience and Hymnus Ieiunantium of Prudentius." English Language Notes 4 (1967): 244-7.
- Kelly, T.D. and John T. Irwin. "The Meaning of Cleanness: Parable as Effective Sign." Mediaeval Studies 35 (1973): 232-60.
- Kendall, Ritchie D. The Drama of Dissent: The Radical Poetics of Nonconformity, 1380-1590. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1986.
- Kirk, Elizabeth D. "Who Suffereth More Than God?: Narrative Redefinition of Patience in Patience and Piers Plowman." The Triumph of Patience: Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Ed. Gerald J. Schiffhorst. Orlando: University Presses of Florida, 1978. 88-104.
- Kittendorf, Doris E. "Cleanness and the Fourteenth Century Artes Praedicandi." Michigan Academician 11 (1979): 319-30.
- Kowalik, Barbara. "Traces of Romance Textual Poetics in the Non-Romance Works Ascribed to the Gawain-Poet." From Medieval to Medievalism. Ed. John Simons. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992. 41-53.
- Lambert, M.D. Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus. London: Edward Arnold, 1977.
- Landes, George M. "Jonah: A M♠♠?" Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien. Eds. John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, W. Lee Humphreys and James M. Ward. New York: Scholars Press, 1978. 137-58.
- Langland, William. The Vision of Piers Plowman. Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. London: Dent, 1987.
- Lattke, Michael. "On the Jewish Background of the Synoptic Concept, 'The Kingdom of God'." The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus. Ed. Bruce Chilton. London: SPCK, 1984. 72-91.
- Leff, Gordon. Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent c. 1250-1450. 2 vols New York: Manchester UP, 1967.

- Levy, Bernard S. and Paul E. Szarmach. eds. The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1981.
- Limburg, James. Jonah: A Commentary. Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1993.
- Moorman, Charles. "The Role of the Narrator in Patience." Modern Philology 61 (1963): 90-5.
- . "Some Notes on Patience and Pearl." Southern Quarterly 4 (1965): 67-73.
- Nicholls, Jonathan. The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1985.
- Pohli, Carol Virginia. "Containment of Anger in the Medieval Poem Patience." English Language Notes 29 (1991): 1-14.
- Prior, Sandra Pierson. "Patience—beyond Apocalypse." Modern Philology 83 (1993): 337-48. \_
- . The Pearl Poet Revisited. New York: Twayne, 1994.
- Rhodes, Jim. "The Dreamer Redeemed: Exile and the Kingdom in the Middle English Pearl." Studies in the Age of Chaucer 16 (1994): 119-42.
- Robertson, D.W. Jnr. "The 'Heresy' of The Pearl." The Middle English Pearl: Critical Essays. Ed. John Conley. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1970.
- Romer, John. Testament: The Bible and History. London: Michael O'Mara, 1988.
- Schleusener, Jay. "History and Action in Patience." PMLA 86 (1971): 959-65.
- . "Patience, Lines 35-40." Modern Philology 67 (1969): 64-6.
- Schmidt, Gary D. "'[i]s Wrech Man in Warlowes Guttez': Imagery and Unity of Frame and Tale in Patience." Blanch 177-93.
- Schreiber, Earl G. "The Structures of Clannesse." Levy 131-52.
- Spearing, A.C. The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study. Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1970.

- . Readings in Medieval Poetry. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.
- . "Patience and the Gawain-Poet." Anglia 84 (1966): 305-29.
- Spendal, R.J. "The Narrative Structure of Patience." Michigan Academician 5 (1972): 107-14.
- Stanbury, Sarah. "In God's Sight: Vision and Sacred History in Purity." Blanch 105-16.
- Stock, Lorraine K. "The 'Poynt' of Patience." Blanch 163-75.
- Stokes, Myra. "'Suffering' in Patience." Chaucer Review 18 (1984): 354-63.
- Szarmach, Paul E. "Two Notes on Patience." Notes and Queries n.s. 18 (1971): 125-7.
- Szittyá, Penn R. The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986.
- Tillich, Paul. A History of Christian Thought. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968.
- Twomey, Michael W. "The Sin of 'Untrawte' in Cleanness." Blanch 117-45.
- Vantuono, William. ed. The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition. 2 vols. New York: Garland, 1984.
- Wallace, David. "Cleanness and the Terms of Terror." Blanch 93-104.
- Walls, Kathryn. "Saint Gregory's Moralia as a Possible Source for the Middle English Patience." Notes and Queries n.s. 39 (1992): 436-8.
- Wellek, René. "The Pearl." Studies in English (Charles University, Prague) 4 (1933): 5-33.
- Williams, David. "The Point of Patience." Modern Philology 68 (1970): 127-36.
- Wilson, Edward. The Gawain Poet. Leiden: Brill, 1976.