

## A Medium for Christian Instruction:

### Latin Proverbs and *Proverbial* Quotations in *Piers Plowman*\*

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*Piers Plowman* uses an extraordinarily large number of Latin quotations, both biblical and non-biblical. Most of these Latin quotations are translated into English, sometimes verbatim and sometimes with spiritually dramatised explanations. It is also noteworthy that Langland inserts proverbs, some derived from the Bible and some from ancient and medieval writers, into structurally appropriate passages.<sup>1</sup> Anne Middleton has argued that ‘Langland’s uses of several [proverbs] show his familiarity with the “artistic” principles as well as the referential’.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Langland often uses biblical quotations as proverbs, so that they function in the poem not only as biblical quotations but also as a medium conveying his own instruction on Christianity, which is not necessarily identical to the quotations’ meanings in the biblical sources. This paper will refer to such quotations as *proverbial* Latin quotations (as distinct from proverbs proper) and scrutinise several interesting examples of Latin quotations, including both proverbs proper and *proverbial* Latin quotations, revealing how the *proverbial* Latin quotations represent authority and serve as a medium conveying Christian instruction in the poem.

Scholars have attempted to define the meaning of a proverb in the Middle Ages in a variety of ways. Barry Taylor attempts to deal with the proverb as a genre, defining it as ‘an authoritative truth concerning conduct’, referring to ancient and medieval grammarians or lexicographers such as Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Isidore of Seville, John of Garland and Papias.<sup>3</sup> In the biblical tradition, the proverb shares a function with the

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<sup>1</sup> There are some Latin quotations derived from canon laws like ‘*Nolite mittere falsam in messem alienam &c.*’ (B.XV.528), but they are not discussed in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Middleton, ‘Dowel, the Proverbial and the Vernacular: Some Versions of Pastoralia’, in *Medieval Poetics and Social Practice: Responding to the Work of Penn R. Szittyá*, ed. by Seeta Chaganti (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), pp. 143–69, (pp. 158–59).

<sup>3</sup> Barry Taylor, ‘Medieval Proverb Collections: The West European Tradition’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55 (1992), 19–37.

*exemplum*, a moral anecdote often used in sermons and forms a cluster of wisdom.<sup>4</sup> Medieval preachers also regarded proverbs, which they often quoted from preacher's manuals and reference books known as *distinctiones* and *florilegia*, as an essential tool for reaching their 'lewed' audiences since proverbs were brief and memorable.<sup>5</sup> Brevity as a necessary characteristic of a proverb, however, is derived from the classical tradition. *Rhetorica ad Harennum*, formerly attributed to Cicero but now of unknown authorship, states in Book IV that 'the brevity of the statement has great charm'.<sup>6</sup> Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi*, an influential preaching textbook from shortly after 1200, also recognised the power of the proverb and recommends that preachers use proverbs as one of seven ornaments in composing a sermon.<sup>7</sup> Although it possesses certain properties such as brevity, the proverb, like the *exemplum*, sometimes also proves metaphorical when conveying its meaning. As Anne Middleton points out, 'the proverb as the idiomatic form thought best for ready recall by the notionally "lewed" [has] limitation[s] as a tool of instruction'; in other words, the medieval use of proverbs gathered from throughout biblical literature was as likely to lead the audience towards misunderstanding as it was to captivate them.<sup>8</sup>

B. J. Whiting defines proverbs as 'popular in the sense that they were originally passed on by word of mouth', sentences as 'literally in the sense that they were originally passed on by

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, 22; see also 26–28 and 32–34. On preacher's tools such as *distinctiones* and *florilegia*, the Rouses' studies are comprehensive and significant: Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, 'Biblical Distinctions in the Thirteenth Century', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 41 (1974), 27–37; Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies and Texts, 47 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979); Richard H. Rouse, 'Florilegia and Latin Classical Authors in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Orleans', *Viator*, 10 (1979), 130–60.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, 21–22. Dave L. Blad analyses the relationship between the medieval proverb and *ars poeticae* in his 'The Use of Proverbs in Two Medieval Genres of Discourse: "The Art of Poetry" and "The Art of Preaching"', *Proberbium*, 14 (1997), 1–21 (3–4). He points out that 'the Venerable Bede carries on this tradition and places the "rhetorical colours" into two categories: figures and tropes' in his article, n. 13. The quotation from *Rhetorica ad Harennum* is taken from *Rhetorica ad Harennum*, trans. by Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 289.

<sup>7</sup> Blad, 6–11. For the influence of *Forma praedicandi* and a summary of this text, see J. James Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 344–55. English translation of Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi* by Leopold Krul is available in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, ed. by J. James Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 109–215.

<sup>8</sup> Middleton, pp. 147 and 149.

writing' and proverbial phrases as 'even less describable than are the other two'.<sup>9</sup> Cameron Louis, however, points out that Whiting's distinction between proverbs and sentences is not found in earlier times and offers instead an alternative definition of the medieval proverb from ancient and medieval literary sources.<sup>10</sup> Louis, like Taylor, refers to ancient writers—Cicero, Livy and Quintilian—then divides medieval proverbs into two categories: the 'folk proverb' and the 'learned proverb'. By medieval times, the former had been passed down for generations 'through oral and written transmission'; these were, in Chaucer's phrase, the 'comoune prouerb[s]', which were brief and often ambiguous because of their use of metaphor, rhyme, or alliteration.<sup>11</sup> These literary devices were easily recognised by audiences and offered pragmatic wisdom and thus were beneficial for preachers who were aware of the power of the folk proverb when composing vernacular sermons.<sup>12</sup> The latter category, the 'learned proverb', was often 'of extended length with specific explanation' and attributed to *Disticha Catonis* or Books of Wisdom such as Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus.<sup>13</sup> In this paper I will follow these definitions of the medieval proverb and also classify proverbs, which are not distinguished from sentences, maxims and aphorisms, into two categories: the 'comoune prouerb' and the learned proverb. Furthermore, a phrase that is literally a biblical quotation but functionally a proverb is here termed a *proverbial* Latin quotation. This type is most similar to the learned proverb and works as a medium conveying an instruction essential to the passage. In other words, this type of Latin quotation is closely related to the immediate context, mostly religion-moral but sometimes pragmatic.

In his thought-provoking article, Alastair Bennett takes '*Brevis oratio penetrat celum*' (A short prayer pierces heaven) as a useful example of the 'comoune prouerb' in *Piers Plowman*:

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<sup>9</sup> B. J. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. xi (and xiv).

<sup>10</sup> Cameron Louis, 'The Concept of the Proverb in Middle English', *Proberbium*, 14 (1997), 173–85 (173). His other articles on the medieval proverb are also important: Cameron Louis, 'Authority in Middle English Proverb Literature', *Florilegium*, 15 (1998), 85–123; Cameron Louis, 'Manuscript Context of Middle English Proverb Literature', *Mediaeval Studies*, 60 (1998), 219–38.

<sup>11</sup> Louis, 'The Concept of the Proverb in Middle English', 174–75. Geoffrey Chaucer uses the phrase 'comoune prouerb' in, for example, the *Tale of Melibee* (VII.1135), in which he quotes the sentence 'he that soone deemeth, soone repenteth' from Publius Syrus's *Sententiae*, 32. The quotation from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. By Larry D. Benson with a New Foreword by Christopher Cannon, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Louis, 'The Concept of the Proverb in Middle English', 175 and 179.

<sup>13</sup> Louis, 'The Concept of the Proverb in Middle English', 174–75.

Lewed lele laboreres and land-tulyng peple  
Persen with a *pater-noster* the plaeyes of heuene  
And passen thorgh purgatorie penaunceles for here parfit bileue:  
*Brevis oratio penetrat celum.* (C. XI. 293-95)<sup>14</sup>

This phrase was circulated widely in late medieval England and had a great influence on the lay understanding of Christian dogma and prayer.<sup>15</sup> Referring to other contemporary Middle English and Latin texts—*The Cloud of Unknowing*, John Mirk’s *Festial*, *Dives and Pauper* and *Fasciculus morum*, he speculates on whether the phrase ‘*Brevis oratio*’ is simply elided from a biblical phrase or was a kind of ‘comoune prouerbe’, arguing that some texts, in fact, deal with these phrases as ‘interchangeable alternatives for one another [and associate] the phrase “*Brevis oratio penetrat celum*” with scriptural authority’, while others use it as a ‘comoune prouerb’.<sup>16</sup> The elided sentence has some variations and coexists with spiritually dramatised explanations, mostly in English. The phrase ‘*Brevis oratio*’ used as a ‘comoune prouerbe’, on the other hand, is detached from a specific biblical text (Ecclesiasticus 35:21) and ‘assigned a different status’.<sup>17</sup> In the case of *Piers Plowman*, however, John Alford explicitly notes that the phrase ‘*Brevis oratio*’ is a ‘comoune prouerb’ based on Ecclesiasticus 35:21—‘*Oratio humiliantis se nubes penetrabit*’ (The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds) and its related expression is found in St Bernard of Clairvaux—‘*Oratio iusti penetrat coelos*’ (The prayer of the just man pierces heaven).<sup>18</sup> The passage containing ‘*Brevis oratio penetrat celum*’, which is spoken by Rechelesnesse, is a part of Langland’s pastoral instruction that the ‘lewed’ could pass through purgatory more

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<sup>14</sup> The quotation from C version is taken from William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Alastair Bennett, ‘*Brevis oratio penetrat celum*: Proverb, Prayers and Lay Understanding in Late Medieval England’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 14 (2012), 127–63.

<sup>16</sup> Bennett, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Bennett, 132.

<sup>18</sup> John A. Alford, ‘Some Unidentified Quotations in *Piers Plowman*’, *Modern Philology*, 72 (1975), 390–99 (390–91). The development of this proverb is summarised in John A. Alford, ‘*Piers Plowman*’: *A Guide to the Quotations*, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 77 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), pp. 70–71. All quotations from *Biblia Vulgata* are taken from *Biblia sacra juxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. by M. Tweedale (1598 [2005]) <<http://vulsearch.sourceforge.net/html/>> [accessed 13 September 2019]. All translations from the Vulgate Bible are taken from *Douay-Rheims Bible + Challoner Notes* <<http://www.drbo.org/index.htm>> [accessed 13 September 2019].

easily than the clergy could.<sup>19</sup> Clerical knowledge sometimes encumbers the laity's faith because it tends to be arcane and prolix, finally causing ignorant people to become 'so foule and so depe in synne as clerks of holly kirke' (C.XI.301-2). This passage, which is nearly the culmination of C version Passus XI, centres on Langland's pastoral instructions given through succinct and recognisable Latin phrases, although there is some risk of distorting its meaning; hence it is reasonable to posit that, as its proper meaning shows, the phrase '*Brevis oratio penetrat celum*', is used here as a 'comoune prouerb'.

Another example of the 'comoune prouerb' is found in Passus IV:

I seye it by myself', quod he [i.e. Reason], 'and it so were  
 That I were kyng with coroune to kepen a reaume,  
 Sholde nevere Wrong in this world that I wite myghte  
 Ben unpunysshed in my power, for peril of my soule,  
 Ne gete my grace thorough giftes so me God save!  
 Ne for no mede have mercy, but mekenesse it made;  
 For "*Nullum mallum* the man mette with *inpunitum*  
 And bad *Nullum bonum* be *irremuneratum*." (B. IV. 137-44)<sup>20</sup>

This proverb '*nullum mallum inpunitum, nullum bunum irremuneratum*' (no evil unpunished, no good unrewarded) (Walther 39079c) is widely attested in the penitential manuals and other writings in the penitential tradition.<sup>21</sup> According to Alford, it is derived from Innocent III's *De Miseria Conditionis Humane (De Contemptu Mundi)*, 3:15:<sup>22</sup>

Ipse est iudex, fortis et longanimis, qui nec prece, nec pretio, nec amore, nec odio declinat a semita rectitudinis, sed via regia semper incedens, *nullum malum praeterit impunitum, nullum bonum irremuneratum relinquit*. Hunc ergo nemo potest corrumpere, juxta quod dicit Psalmus: 'Tu reddes singulis secundum opera

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<sup>19</sup> See David F. Johnson, "'Persen with a Pater-Noster Paradys oþer hevene": *Piers Plowman* C.11.296-98a', *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 5 (1991), 77-89.

<sup>20</sup> All quotations from B version are taken from William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B-Text*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmid, 2nd edn (London: Dent, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> The number in parentheses indicates Hans Walther's item number in Latin proverb list: Hans Walther, *Proverbia Sententiaequae Latinitatis Medii Aevi: Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters in alphabetischer Anordnun*, 6 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963-69).

<sup>22</sup> Alford, '*Piers Plowman*': *A Guide to the Quotations*, pp. 42-43. He notes that W. W. Skeat detected this proverb in Innocent III's *De Contemptu Mundi*. See also *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman in Three Parallel Texts Together with Richard the Redeless*, ed. by W. W. Skeat, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press), 2:59.

sua' [*italics mine*].

He himself is the judge, strong and long-suffering, who neither by prayer, nor by gift, nor by love, nor by hatred departs from the path of rectitude but always advances on the royal way; he passes over no evil unpunished and leaves behind no good unrewarded. No one can corrupt him, just as the Psalm puts it: 'you will render to each according to his deeds'.<sup>23</sup>

This phrase also emerges in some Latin texts including Paul of Hungary's *De Confessione*, Hostiensis' *Summa Aurea*, Peter the Cantor's *Summa*, Alan of Lille's *Liber Poenitentialis* and Robert Courson's *Summa*. In addition, English versions, often translated verbatim or often paraphrased, are also found in several Middle English texts—the thirteenth-century lyric 'Worldes Blis', 'Ne wort ne god þer understonde / ne non uuel ne worth unboukt', *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, '[T]here is no good dede done but that it shalle be guerdonned / No none euylle done but that it shal be punysshed'.<sup>24</sup> Langland omits two verbs, *praeterit* and *relinquit*, from the original Latin sentence and inserts the proverb into this passage macaronically. This reconstruction of the original Latin phrase directs the audience's attention not towards its literary aspect but rather towards its dramatic properties and simultaneously adapts it to *metria gratia*. Reason personifies *Nullum mallum* (No Evil) and *Nullum bonum* (No Good): the former meets with *inpunitum* (no punishment) and requires that the latter be not rewarded (*irremuneratum*). Andrew Galloway mentions that these personifications 'recall the word-play in a tradition of Latin satire' and emphasise not the authority that the phrase carries but the effectiveness of its usage in the 'rhetorical climax of Reason's denunciation of courtly and ecclesiastic abuse of wealth and privilege'.<sup>25</sup> Although

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<sup>23</sup> The quotation from *De Miseria Conditionis Humane* is from *Patrologiae cursus completus: series latina*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1844–64), 217:746. English translation is taken from Arvind Thomas, *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> Nick Gray, 'Langland's Quotations from the Penitential Tradition', *Modern Philology*, 84 (1986), 53–60 (55–56). The lyric 'Worldes Blis' is quoted from *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), pp. 80–82 (p. 82). *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* is quoted from *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, trans. by William Caxton, ed. by M. Y. Offord, Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series, 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 158.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on 'Piers Plowman', Vol. 1: C Prologue-Passus 4; B Prologue-Passus 4; A Prologue-Passus 4* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 411–412. Derek Pearsall also annotates this proverb as 'a personified allusion to a widely quoted apophthegm'

it is nothing more or less than a quotation from *De Miseria Conditionis Humane (De Contemptu Mundi)*, this proverb in *Piers Plowman* acquires centripetal force through the dramatised personification in the immediate context, and therefore can be construed as a ‘comoune prouerb’ on account of its role as a brief and memorable medium with personifications as well as a phrase widely circulated in the Middle Ages.

The learned proverbs in *Piers Plowman*, on the other hand, are often quoted from classical authors, for example, Juvenal’s *Satires* (B.XIV.304a)—‘*Cantabit paupertas coram latrone viator*’, and from medieval school textbooks such as *Auctores Octo* and *Disticha Catonis*. Focusing on the *Disticha Catonis*, here, two interesting examples are provided. The first example combines Cato’s Latin text with *Historia scholastica*, an influential twelfth-century textbook written by Peter Comestor that offered literary interpretations of the Bible:<sup>26</sup>

Beggeres ne bidderes ne beth nocht in the bulle  
But if the suggestion be sooth that shapeth hem to begge:  
For he that beggeth or bit but if he have nede,  
He is fals with the feend and defraudeth the nedy,  
And also he gileth the gyvere ageynes his wille;  
For if he wiste he were nocht nedy he wolde [that yyve]  
Another that were moore nedy than he—so the nedieste sholde be holpe.  
Caton kenneth men thus and the Clerc of the Stories:  
*Cui des videto* is Catons techyng;  
And in the Stories he techeth to bistowe thyn almesse:  
*Sit elemosina in manu tua donec studes cui des.* (B.VII.64-73)

Cato’s Latin text is quoted from the Prologue to *Disticha Catonis*, sententia 17: ‘*Cui des video*’ (Consider well to whom to make presents).<sup>27</sup> ‘Clerc of the Stories’ is attributed to Petrus Comestor, but as John Alford notes, the Latin phrase is not found in *Historia scholastica*; furthermore the link between this Latin text and Tobit 4:7—‘*Ex substantia tua fac eleemosynam, et noli avertere faciem tuam ab ullo paupere: ita enim fiet ut nec a te*

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in his edition of C version, p. 107, n. 140 and 141. See also James Simpson, *Piers Plowman: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> For its making, see Mark J. Clark, *The Making of the ‘Historia Scholastica’, 1150-1200* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Wayland Johnson Chase, *The Distichs of Cato: A Famous Medieval Textbook Translated from the Latin, with Intruductory Sketch* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1922), pp. 12–13.

*avertatur facies Domini* (Give alms out of thy substance and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee) is also dubious, albeit W. W. Skeat's notes.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, *Historia scholastica* generally seems to have been regarded as equivalent to the Bible, especially given that it was already included in 'the monastic core curriculum' in thirteenth-century England.<sup>29</sup> Thus it can be said that Langland attempted to imbue the polemic on almsgiving with the authority of both the secular and more proverbial Cato and the learned Petrus Comestor. As Wendy Scase also argues that the polemic on almsgiving 'became important in the late fourteenth century', it can be said that Langland's uses of these Latin quotations as learned proverbs are designed to prompt a significant discussion on almsgiving among both the laity and the clergy.<sup>30</sup>

Another example of the 'learned' proverb provides us with quotations from Cato and the Scriptures. Dame Studie argues that studying theology afflicts her bitterly and she cannot construe it and do well without love (B.X.182-90). The power of her *intellectus* cannot deal with the faith, thus the way of mastering theology is through love, or *affectus*. Nevertheless, in the following passage, she refers to *Disticha Catonis* (1.26):

In oother science it seith—I seigh it in Catoun—  
*Qui simulat verbis, nec corde est fidus amicus,*  
*Tu quoque fac simile; sic ars deluditur arte:*  
 Whoso gloseth as gylours doon go me to the same,  
 And so shaltow fals folk and feithlees bigile—  
 This is Catons kennyng to clerkes that he lereth.  
 Ac Theologie techeth noght so whoso taketh yeme;  
 He kenneth us the contrarie ayein Catons words,  
 For he biddeth us be as bretheren and bidde for oure enemys,  
 And loven hem that lyen on us, and lene hem whan hem nedeth,  
 And to do good agein yvel—God hymself it hoteth:  
*Dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum ad omnes,*  
*maxime autem ad domesticos fidei.* (B.X.191-199a)

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<sup>28</sup> Alford, *'Piers Plowman': A Guide to the Quotations*, p. 54. See also Skeat, 2:212.

<sup>29</sup> James H. Morey, 'Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase and the Medieval Popular Bible', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 6–35 (31).

<sup>30</sup> Wendy Scase, *'Piers Plowman' and the New Anticlericalism*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 72–73 (p. 72).



Cato teaches that ‘Him who is smooth in speech, but false in heart, in his own coin repay, with art for art’ (1:26).<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the scripture recommends working towards the good of everyone. In this passage, Dame Studie gives an English explanation to Will before the Latin quotation, which is a device for making the biblical source clear: ‘*Dum tempus habemus operemur bonum ad omnes maxime autem ad domesticos fidei*’ (Galatians 6:10). As Louis mentions, both *Disticha Catonis* and the Scripture were ‘well established as pedagogical tools’ and the two Latin quotations in this passage can be regarded as learned proverbs.<sup>32</sup> Langland here contrasts a secular book with a religious text; this co-occurrence of Cato and scripture is unique.<sup>33</sup> Cato’s textbook was not only widely used in medieval schools but also ‘interpreted in the light of received Christian truth’; hence, the secular book of wisdom, *Disticha Catonis* and the scripture equally represented practical precepts and authority in the Middle Ages.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the learned proverb carries with it the authority of the original sources, both biblical and non-biblical, unlike the ‘comoune prouerb’ which owes its authority to the proverb itself.

The Latin quotations analysed above are all proverbs, as their name implies, yet the ‘comoune prouerb’ and the learned proverb have different functions. Both are widely found in other Middle English and Latin texts in addition to *Piers Plowman* and claimed authority either by their own nature or through their literal sources. The following two examples seem to have been regarded as literally equivalent to biblical quotations, although they function as media conveying crucial dogmas and are inseparable from their contexts. All Latin quotations are quoted in full sentences and constitute significant instructions in the poem; hence they are functionally identified as *proverbial* Latin quotations.

The first example is inserted into the appropriate place among Middle English lines in Passus IX; Carmeline Sullivan classifies this Latin quotation among the ‘Latin quotations syntactically articulated with the text’.<sup>35</sup> Wit teaches Will that Dowel lives in the body and

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<sup>31</sup> Wayland Johnson Chase, *The Distichs of Cato: A Famous Medieval Textbook Translated from the Latin, with Introductory Sketch* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1922), pp. 20–21.

<sup>32</sup> Louis, ‘The Concept of the Proverb’, 181. See also Chase, pp. 3–6.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, 31. On Christianisation of Cato, see Richard Hazelton, ‘The Christianization of “Cato”: The *Disticha Catonis* in the Light of Late Medieval Commentaries’, *Mediaeval Studies*, 19 (1957), 157–73.

<sup>35</sup> Sister Carmeline Sullivan, *The Latin Insertions and the Macaronic Verse in ‘Piers Plowman’* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1932), p. 29. In her doctoral dissertation, she divides all Latin quotations into three categories: (1) “Latin quotations extraneous to the text”, (2) “Latin quotations syntactically articulated with the text” and (3) “The macaronic lines”. According to Alford, this

discusses God as Creator and of Inwit. In the following passage, Wit exhorts Will to be an almsgiver:

‘To alle trewe tidy men that travaille desiren,  
Oure Lord loveth hem and lent, loude outhere stille,  
Grace to go to hem and ofgon hir liflode:  
*Inquirentes autem Dominum non minuentur omni bono.* (B. IX. 105-8)

The Latin quotation ‘*Inquirentes autem Dominum non minuentur omni bono*’ (but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good) is quoted from the latter half of the original source Psalm 33:11: ‘*Divites eguerunt, et esurierunt; inquirentes autem Dominum non minuentur omni bono*’ (The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good).

The next example is one of the anticlerical passages, in which Dame Studie denounces the friars who ignore God’s commandment—‘*Frangere esurienti panem tuum &c* (B.X.84a)’ (Deal thy bread to the hungry)—and indulge themselves in cupidity.<sup>36</sup> Then, she refers to Tobit, rebuking the friars for their adhesion to money while emphasising God’s words:

Tobyte techeth yow noght so! Taketh hede, ye riche,  
How the book Bible of hym bereth witness:  
*Si tibi sit copia, habundantrer tribuel si autem exiguum,  
illud imperitiri libenter stude.*  
Whoso hath mucche spende manliche—so meneth Tobyte—  
And whoso litel weldeth, loke hym thereafter,  
For we have no lettre of oure lif, how long it shal dure.  
Swiche lessons lordes sholde lovyte to here,  
And how he myghte moost meynee manliche fynde—(B.X.86-93)

In this passage, unlike the passage above, Dame Studie quotes the Latin phrase ‘*Si tibi sit copia, habundantrer tribuel si autem exiguum, illud imperitiri libenter stude*’ (l. 88a) as a complete verse, although her version is slightly different from the original passage in Tobit

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categorisation is the basis for the line numbering in later editions of *Piers Plowman* but is often incorrect. See Alford, ‘*Piers Plowman*’: *A Guide to the Quotations*, pp. 3–9.

<sup>36</sup> This Latin quotation is from Isaiah 58:7: *frangere esurienti panem tuum, et egenos vagosque induc in domum tuam; cum videris nudum, operi eum, et carnem tuam ne despexeris* (Deal thy bread to the hungry and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked, cover him and despise not thy own flesh). This is a typical Latin quotation itself, which members of the clergy generally used in preacher’s manuals and handbooks.

4:9: *'Si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter tribue: si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude'* (If thou have much give abundantly: if thou have a little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little). Moreover, she translates the Latin phrase into English almost verbatim and offers the lesson to the laity in her own words with a familiar example (ll. 89-93). She rebukes not only the friars but also the laity who cannot have an unfaltering faith due to the friars' arrogant preaching. Through this English translation, therefore, the quotation from Tobit conveys the lesson, 'save the poor', to the laity.

As Traugott Lawler insists, Langland's English translation ensures that his audience will understand; as a tutor, his decision whether to translate Latin quotations depends 'upon the dramatic situation, not upon their inherent difficulties for interpretation.'<sup>37</sup> Langland, in fact, does not translate Cato's Latin texts analysed above because of their inclusion in medieval schoolbooks, where they featured in the curriculum of the basic grammar of Latin and seem to have presented little inherent difficulty; in short, the Latin quotations from *Disticha Catonis* seem to violate Langland's translation principle.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, this scene emphasises the Christian doctrine of 'almsgiving to the poor' through Dame Studie's words in a kind of sermon mode. If we consider this scene as one belonging to the anticlerical tradition as mentioned above, it is plausible to assume that Langland dramatises Dame Studie's speech with the assistance of the *proverbial* Latin quotation as the medium conveying the lesson and intends that the audience will understand his Latin phrases in the context of the poem.

While the 'comoune prouerb' using brief and figurative words enables the audience to understand and memorise a lesson easily and represents a kind of secular and pragmatic authority in itself, the learned proverb makes the source clear and represents the authority through its authoritative source, which can be either biblical or non-biblical as in the case of *Disticha Catonis*. Langland deliberately uses proverbs in the dramatic passages of his poem. He also uses some biblical quotations as *proverbial* Latin quotations to convey Christian teachings in dramatised situations. Langland's use of this medium is the *ars poetriae* by which he communicates an authoritative message in a more comprehensible way via a specific vehicle.

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<sup>37</sup> Traugott Lawler, 'William Langland', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Vol. 1: To 1550*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 149–59 (pp. 151–52).

<sup>38</sup> See Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 10–11. See also Hazelton, 161–64; Lawler, p. 151.

