

Learning from Langland: theo-poetic resources for the post-Hind landscape

Submitted by Helen Mary Burn, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Research in Theology, June 2011.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Abstract

In the last ten years the Church of England has tried, by means of two reports leading to what I term the ‘Hind settlement’, to re-configure its provision of theological education. The tensions generated by the attempt to hold together different discourses and to impose regional re-organisation in the context of complex developments both in higher education and in patterns of lay and ordained ministry form the basis of my critique of Hind. I argue that Hind’s recourse to the image of the ‘body of Christ’ in the service of an instrumentalist model of ministry exposes inadequacies of a theological anthropological, Christological and ecclesiological nature. I identify a medieval text, *Piers Plowman*, as a conversation partner which offers a different way of negotiating an analogously difficult set of issues around learning, discipleship and power. My hermeneutical approach to the poem sees its primary impetus as arising from the constant interplay between the experiences of daily life and the attempt to work out a personal and social understanding of salvation.

By comparing the ways in which Hind and Langland explore learning as measurable progress, and lay and clerical models of learning, I propose that *Piers Plowman* offers some valuable resources to the next stage of the Hind process. Not only does the poem foreground the chaotic co-existence of multiple voices in a marketplace of competing definitions of learning, and acknowledge the recalcitrance of communities when presented with opportunities to change, but it also, in the figure of Piers, hints at the possibility of going beyond the lay/clerical impasse. The poem’s recognition of sin and the need for repentance, in contrast to Hind language of management and effectiveness, and its requirement of the reader to participate in the making of new meaning, present an ongoing challenge to a culture of ‘learning outcomes’.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
ABBREVIATIONS	8
INTRODUCTION	9
CHAPTER ONE: THE HIND SETTLEMENT	15
INTRODUCING HIND	15
CHURCH OF ENGLAND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING PAST AND PRESENT	16
THE HIND SETTLEMENT: REGIONS	18
THE CHALLENGE TO THE HIND REGIONAL SETTLEMENT	20
THE HIND SETTLEMENT: HIGHER EDUCATION	22
THE CHALLENGE TO THE HIND HE SETTLEMENT	26
THE WIDER HIND CONTEXT: CHANGES IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND	29
THE HIND SETTLEMENT: 'LEARNING CHURCH'	30
THE CHALLENGE TO THE HIND 'LEARNING CHURCH' SETTLEMENT	31
READING HIND: RHETORIC AND RESPONSE	32
THE LANGUAGE OF EFFECTIVENESS	33
'EFFECTIVENESS': A THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE	35
EFFECTIVENESS, COMPETENCE AND THE DISCOURSE OF HIND ONE	38
SUMMARY	41
CHAPTER TWO: <i>PIERS PLOWMAN</i> AS CONVERSATION PARTNER	42
PIERS PLOWMAN: INTRODUCING THE POEM	42
THE PROLOGUE: LEARNING, POWER AND LANGUAGE	47
LEARNING IN FOURTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND: MONASTIC AND SCHOLASTIC APPROACHES	53
BEYOND THE MONASTIC/SCHOLASTIC DIVIDE	60
'PIERS PLOWMAN' AND THE MONASTIC/SCHOLASTIC DIVIDE	63
CONCLUSION	67
CHAPTER THREE: LEARNING AND PROGRESS	69
INTRODUCTION	69
HIND: ACCREDITED AND MEASURABLE LEARNING OR FORMATIONAL JOURNEY?	70
HIND: MEASURABLE LEARNING	73
HIND: FORMATION	76
LEARNING AND FORMATION: A SUMMARY	79
PIERS PLOWMAN: LEARNING, PROGRESS AND 'DOING WELL'	82
'DOWEL' AND THE ROLE OF STUDY	87
DOWEL, DOBET, DOBEST: A SUMMARY	94
WILL'S PROGRESS	96
THE 'KYNDE KNOWYNGE' DEBATE	102
BEYOND THE 'KYNDE KNOWYNGE' DEBATE	109
THE HERMENEUTICAL JOURNEY OF THE LEARNING SELF	110
EXPERIENCE IN PERS PLOWMAN	116

KYNDE: A BRIDGING CONCEPT	120
AN EXEMPLARY FIGURE: TRAJAN	122
THE INTERNAL HERMENUTICAL DYNAMIC OF THE POEM	126
THE REFLECTIVE CYCLE: HEARING THE VOICES OF EXPERIENCE IN PASSUS 19	129
SUMMARY	135
CHAPTER FOUR: LAY AND CLERICAL LEARNING	138
INTRODUCTION	138
THE HIND CONTEXT: ECCLESIOLOGICAL MODELS FOR LAY AND ORDAINED IDENTITY	140
HIND, THE 'LEARNING CHURCH' AGENDA AND LAY LEARNING	149
HIND: RHETORICAL FEATURES	156
HIND: THE CLERICAL PARADIGM	158
HIND: A TOP DOWN APPROACH	160
HIND: BEING 'PROFESSIONAL'	162
LAY AND CLERICAL IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES	165
LAY LEARNING AND DISCIPLESHIP IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE	167
LAY LEARNING: NEGATIVE APPRAISAL	169
LAY LEARNING: THE POSITIVES	173
VERNACULAR THEOLOGIES	175
MYSTICISM AND LAY LOVE AND LEARNING	178
LOLLARDS, LAY PEOPLE AND LEARNING	180
PIERS PLOWMAN: CLERGIE	185
CLERGIE: THE PERSONIFICATION	187
CLERGIE: THE IDEA AND PRACTICE OF LEARNING	194
CLERGIE: POSITIVE FORCE WITHIN THE POEM	197
CLERGIE: OF LIMITED USE	199
CLERGIE AND THE CLERGY IN PIERS PLOWMAN	200
THE FIGURE OF PIERS: BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES, EMBRACING THE TENSION	206
THE DEVELOPMENT OF PIERS: A SUMMARY	207
PIERS AS PLOUGHMAN	216
PIERS AND CHRIST	218
PIERS/PETER	220
THE IMPORTANCE OF PIERS	224
CONCLUSION: LANGLAND, HIND AND 'THE CLERKLY CALLING'	226
CHAPTER FIVE: LEARNING AND THE BODY OF CHRIST	230
INTRODUCTION	230
LEARNING, THE BODY OF CHRIST AND HIND: THE RHETORIC OF THE EFFECTIVE BODY	231
LAKOFF AND JOHNSON – BY WHAT METAPHORS DOES HIND ONE LIVE?	233
HIND BODY LANGUAGE: CONTEXT AND HISTORY	237
THE ORGANISATION AS BODY	240
SCRIPTURE AND THE BODY	243
EMBODIMENT, GENDER AND POWER	247
HIND TWO: THE FOLLOW-UP	251
A WAY FORWARD: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BODY METAPHOR	255
LEARNING, THE BODY OF CHRIST AND PIERS PLOWMAN	257
MEDIEVAL ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST	259
REAL BODIES, REAL PEOPLE: PIERS PLOWMAN AND THE EMBODIED SUBJECT	262
THE PLOUGHING OF THE HALF-ACRE: EMBODIED PILGRIMAGE	263
HAUKYN: THE INESCAPABLE NATURE OF EMBODIMENT	267
REAL BODIES, REAL PEOPLE: HIND	275

ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE BODY	278
THE SICK BODY	280
FROM BODY TO PILGRIMAGE: FORGING A NEW METAPHOR	285
HIND, PIERS PLOWMAN AND THE SICK BODY	289
THE BODY OF JESUS: CHRISTOLOGICAL RESOURCES	291
HIND'S JESUS, LANGLAND'S JESUS	295
JESUS IN <i>PIERS PLOWMAN</i>	296
SUMMARY	304
<u>CHAPTER SIX: LEARNING IN THE MARKETPLACE</u>	<u>306</u>
INTRODUCTION	306
LEARNING, MONEY AND THE MARKET	308
THE CHALLENGE OF MEED	309
SUMMARY	319
<u>CONCLUSION: TAKING CARE OF OUR LANGUAGE</u>	<u>321</u>
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES OF LEARNING	324
CONVEYING AND TRANSFORMING THE COMPLEXITY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE	327
CULTIVATING ATTENTIVENESS	329
RETRIEVAL AND RECOVERY: SOME FINAL HINTS FROM PIERS PLOWMAN	330
SUMMARY	332
FROM BODY TO MARKET AND BEYOND	333
THE END OF LEARNING	335
<u>CHURCH REPORTS</u>	<u>337</u>
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	<u>338</u>