

Kinsman as “Redeemer” in *Piers Plowman*, Passus 18

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Introduction

In *Piers Plowman* 18.378-411, William Langland (d. ca. 1385/86) has Christ imply that he will rescue all sinners from hell in a universal salvation. Belief in universal salvation, or *apocatastasis*, had arisen at times past in the Church. Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 215), Origen (185-232), Gregory of Nyssa (d. 385/386), and Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 325-389), and possibly also Diodorus of Tarsus (d. ca. 392) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428), had all enunciated such a view (Batiffel, paragraphs 1-7). The belief, however, had been opposed by Augustine (354-430) in his polemical works (cf. Augustine, *Proceedings*), then condemned by an edict of Justinian in 543 and officially anathematized at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 (Batiffel,

paragraph 6; Shahan, paragraphs 1-6; Watson 146; Hill 68; Ruud 15). Similarly, the Fourth Lateran Council affirmed in 1215 that there is no salvation outside of the Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*), an axiom included in the Bull *Unam Sanctam* of Boniface VIII in 1302 (cf. John Paul II, "All Salvation"; cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, n. 357; cf. Kirsch, "*Unam Sanctum*"). Langland would therefore have been well aware of the Church's official position. What might lie behind Langland's thinking that would motivate him to imply a position at odds with the Church?

Langland's Particular Emphasis upon Kinship

H. G. Ruloff points out that the discussion of universal salvation surfaces in the writings of Uthred of Boldon, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, and the "St. Erkenwald" text and also sometimes appears in debates between faith-grounded neo-Augustinians and works-oriented semi-Pelagians (Ruloff 1; cf. Ruud). Even Thomas Aquinas had allowed for a *fides implicita* that might allow prechristian, righteous pagans to be saved, which shows that salvation of the unbaptized was not unthinkable even among the doctors of the church (Whatley 344; cf. Ruloff 10; but cf. Ruud 16). Langland is thus hardly alone in wanting to extend God's saving grace, but I would like to focus upon a key element in his universalist thinking: kinship. As is widely known but perhaps not fully appreciated, Langland's argument in Passus 18 for universal salvation hinges upon the obligations of *kinship*, a fundamental if complex concept in the medieval period (cf. Hekala, pts. 1-7). Let us look at the entire passage from Christ's Harrowing of Hell that emphasizes Christ as mankind's kin:

For I who am Lord of Life, love is my drink
 And for that drink today I died upon earth.
 I struggled so I'm thirsty still for man's soul's sake.
 No drink may moisten me or slake my thirst
 Till vintage time befall in the Vale of Jehoshaphat,
 When I shall drink really ripe wine, *Resurrectio mortuorum*.
 And then I shall come as a king crowned with angels
 And have out of hell all men's souls.
 Fiends and fiendkins shall stand before me
 And be at my bidding, where best it pleases me.
 But to be merciful to man then, my nature requires it.
 For we are brothers of one Blood, but not in baptism all.
 And all that are both in blood and in baptism my whole brothers
 Shall not be damned to the death that endures without end.

Against thee only have I sinned, etc.

It is not the custom on earth to hang a felon
 Oftener than once, even though he were a traitor.
 And if a king of the kingdom comes at that time
 When a felon should suffer death or other such punishment,
 Law would he give him life if he looks upon him.
 And I who am King of Kings shall come in such a time
 Where doom to death damns all wicked,
 And if law wills I look on them, it lies in my grace
 Whether they die or do not die because they did evil.
 And if it be any bit paid for, the boldness of their sins,
 I may grant mercy through my righteousness and all my true words;
 And though Holy Writ wills that I wreak vengeance on those that wrought
 evil,

No evil unpunished etc.

They shall be cleansed and made clear and cured of their sins,
 In my prison purgatory till *Parce!* says 'Stop!'
 And my mercy shall be shown to many of my half-brothers,
 For blood-kin may see blood-kin both hungry and cold,

But blood-kin may not see blood-kin bleed without his pity:

I heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

But my righteousness and right shall rule all hell

And mercy rule all mankind before me in Heaven.

For I'd be an unkind king unless I gave my kin help,

And particularly at such a time when help was truly needed.

Enter not into judgment with thy servant. (18.378-416)¹⁾

Although kinship is the main emphasis in this passage, it is not the only theme, as we shall briefly see before returning to my central argument.

Langland has Christ allude to three reasons for showing mercy to all mankind. In lines 393-394, Christ cites common law:

It is noght used on erthe to hangen a feloun

Ofther than ones (18.380-381)

It is not the custom on earth to hang a felon

Oftener than once (18.393-394)

This custom was probably grounded in the old Anglo-Saxon judgement of the ordeal even though the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had forbidden using the ordeal to establish guilt or innocence (Langbein 75). Alsford notes that for criminals fortunate enough to survive being hung, "revival after being taken

1) Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from *Piers Plowman* are taken from: 1) Modern English Text: William Langland "The Vision of Piers Plowman," trans. E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, seventh ed., vol. 1., ed. Alfred David, et al. (New York: Norton, 2000); 2) Middle English Text: William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman (B-Text), A Critical Edition of the B-text based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Dent and Dutton, 1978).

down might lead to a royal pardon on the assumption that a miracle had occurred" (Alsford, pt. 5; cf. Ruud 14). The role played by a royal pardon might lie behind Christ's citation of his royal prerogative:

And if the kyng of that kyngdom come in that tyme
 There the feloun thole sholde deeth oother juwise,
 Lawe wolde he yeve hym lif, and he loked on hym. (18.382-384)

And if a king of the kingdom comes at that time
 When a felon should suffer death or other such punishment,
 Law would he give him life if he looks upon him. (18.395-397)

Of course, the two reasons for pardon differ. The prior argument appeals to the custom of pardoning one who has already survived an ordeal, whereas the latter argument appeals to the king's right to pardon one who has not yet undergone punishment (cf. Ruud 14). The two are linked here because Christ is speaking of his right to be merciful to mankind at the Last Judgement after the resurrection of all souls from the dead (cf. Langland, "Vision" 18.383 ff). The resurrected souls have thus already "survived" death in hell but stand in danger of being "damned to the death that endures without end" (Langland, "Vision" 18.391; Ruud 15). By analogy with two of mankind's legal customs, Christ justifies his right to forgive even those who have not undergone baptism.

Christ has, however, an even stronger reason for showing mercy: kinship to mankind that includes those not baptized (Ruud 15):

And my mercy shal be shewed to manye of my bretheren;
 For blood may suffre blood bothe hungry and acale,
 Ac blood may noght se blood blede, but hym rewe.
Auaivi archana verba que non iicet homini loqui.

Ac my rightwysnesse and right shal ruled al helle,
 And mercy al mankynde bifore me in hevne.
 For I were an unkynde kyng but I my kyn helpe—
 And nameliche at swich a nede ther nedes help bihoveth:
Non intres in iudicium cum servo tuo. (18.394-400)

And my mercy shall be shown to many of my half-brothers,
 For blood-kin may see blood-kin both hungry and cold,
 But blood-kin may not see blood-kin bleed without his pity:
I heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
 But my righteousness and right shall rule all hell
 And mercy rule all mankind before me in Heaven.
 For I'd be an unkind king unless I gave my kin help,
 And particularly at such a time when help was truly needed.
Enter not into judgment with thy servant. (18.408-416)

Although Langland has Christ first state that “And my mercy shal be shewed to manye of my bretheren,” the intrinsic logic would extend to all mankind, as implied by Christ’s conclusion that at the Last Judgement before God’s heavenly throne, “mercy [shall] rule all mankind before me in Heaven.”

Langland seems here to show Christ arguing for universal salvation by using an enthymeme—“I’d be an unkind king unless I gave my kin help”—to allude to what logicians call a *modus tollens* argument:

If p, then q.
 Not q, therefore not p.

Let us apply a *modus tollens* argument to Christ’s stated reason for mercy:

“I would be an unkind king if I did not give my kin help.”

Reverse the clauses, adding "then" for clarity:

"If I did not give my kin help, then I would be an unkind king."

"It is not the case that I am an unkind king." (I am, in fact, a kind king.)

Therefore:

"It is not the case that I do not give my kin help." (Thus, I do give my kin help.)

The *modus tollens* type of argument goes back to the Greek Stoic philosopher Chrysippus (280-205 BCE), whose inference schemata were further developed by other Stoics and recorded by the Roman writer Cicero (106-43 BCE) and the Greek writers Sextus Empiricus (2nd to 3rd centuries CE) and Diogenes Laertius (ca. 3rd century CE). Progress in this sort of logic was made by the Greek logician Galen (ca. 129-210 CE) and the Roman philosopher Boethius (ca. 480-525 CE). Later, medieval thinkers such as Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and William of Ockham (1288-1347), among others, contributed to its development (Klement, "Propositional Logic," pt. 2). The medieval scholastics, in fact, coined the expression *modus tollendo tollens*, or *modus tollens*. Since we can date Langland's death to around 1385/86, and know from his liberal use of Latin expressions and from his sophisticated religious knowledge that he was an educated clergyman, then he could easily have been aware of the principles of logic. Admittedly, the evidence is circumstantial, but even if Langland had not studied logic, he makes an intuitive appeal to a valid *modus tollens* type of argument to demonstrate that Christ must aid his kinsmen, i.e., mankind. A valid argument, yes, but its *soundness* depends upon two premises: 1) the obligations imposed by kinship and 2) mankind's kinship with Christ. Kinship is therefore the central concept in Langland's thinking that motivates him to argue for a universalist position at odds with the Church. But where does Langland get his view that mankind is Christ's kin, and why should this obligate Christ to show mercy? The following four sections of this paper will examine

the possible scriptural, theological, and cultural sources for Langland's emphasis upon kinship's obligations.

Harrowing of Hell in Early Christian Tradition and in the New Testament

Langland depicts Christ promising mercy to be offered at the Last Judgement but in a proleptic act also frees some of hell's prisoners in his harrowing of hell (Langland, "Vision" 18.423). Here, Langland draws upon a Christian tradition perhaps first officially affirmed in the Apostles' Creed:

Descendit ad inferos. (Symbolum Apostolicum)

He descended into hell. ("Apostles' Creed")

The creed may date in part to the second century CE and may have influenced the Nicene Creed (325 CE), though this later creed lacks the clause affirming Christ's descent into hell, as well as the Athanasian Creed (ca. 4th century CE), which contains the clause. Langland would surely have known of these creeds, but the details in his depiction of hell's harrowing come from other literary treatments of the tradition (cf. Izydorczyk, *Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*). Given his good knowledge of Latin, he may have been familiar with a Latin version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, containing Christ's descent into hell, and which may imply universal salvation through the words spoken by *Infermus* (Hell personified) (James 136-137; Hill 73; Ruud 17). At any rate, the apocryphal story was well known, being found in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (731), Aelfric's *Homilies* (ca. 1000), the anonymous

Cursor Mundi (ca. 1300), and various mystery plays (Foster, *Sir Owain*, note to lines 1045-1050).

Behind these texts and that tradition lie particular New Testament passages (1 Peter 3.18-12, Ephesians 4.8-10, Luke 23.43, and Matthew 27.52-53) that can suggest a descent by Christ into hell to free at least some of the damned (Foster, note to lines 1045-1050). The clearest of these passages is 1 Peter 3.18-22, which states:

For also, Christ suffered once for sins, a righteous man on behalf of unrighteous men, so that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in spirit, in which he went (and) made a proclamation to the spirits in prison who had disobeyed back when God had waited patiently in the days of Noah, when the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. So, also, baptism—prefigured (by this)—now saves you, not through removal of dirt from the body but (through) the pledge of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him. (*Greek New Testament*; translation mine)

This passage, which strongly suggests a descent into hell, was supplemented by Ephesians 4.8-10:

Therefore, it is said: "When he (i.e., Christ) ascended to the height, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to people." Now, as to "he ascended," what is (this) other than (to say) that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? The one who descended is himself also the one who has ascended far above all the heavens so that he might fill all things. (*Greek New Testament*; translation mine)

In the harrowing-of-hell tradition, this passage has sometimes been interpreted to mean that Christ freed some of those trapped in hell and led them to heaven. Luke 23.43 is then interpreted as Jesus promising to free from hell one of the criminals being crucified with him, and Matthew 27.52-53 is interpreted as showing some of those freed from hell leaving via their tombs. None of these passages, however, appear to base liberation from hell upon kinship with Christ.

New Testament Passages Relevant to Kinship

Yet, kinship with Christ is a major theme in the New Testament. The first two chapters of Hebrews are particularly suggestive in the context of this article's investigation. Hebrews 1.8-9 quotes Psalm 45.6-7, applying it as a messianic prophecy of Christ's heavenly enthronement in language consistent with the elevation of Christ in the passages quoted above:

And to the Son (God the Father says), "Your throne, O God, (is) forever and ever, and the scepter of the righteous (is) the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Because of this, God—your God—has anointed you above your companions with the oil of gladness."
(*Greek New Testament*; translation mine)

The only kinship mentioned here is Christ's divine sonship, but merely a few verses later, in Hebrews 2.5-15, the writer proof-texts the Old Testament within a larger argument that can appear to include all of mankind within the family of God:

For not to angels did he (God the Father) subject the world to come, about

which we are speaking. But someone has testified somewhere, saying: "What is man that you remember him, or the Son of Man that you are concerned about him? You made him for a short time lower than angels; you (then) crowned him with glory and honor. You subjected everything under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, he (God) left nothing unsubjected to him. But now, we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we see Jesus, who had been made lower than the angels for a short time, crowned (now) with glory and honor because he suffered death in order that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone. For in bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting for him (God)—on account of whom all things (are) and through whom all things (are)—to perfect the founder of their salvation through sufferings. For both the one sanctifying and the ones being sanctified (are) all from one (Father). On account of which reason, he (Jesus) is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying: "I will proclaim your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation, I will sing hymns to you." And again: "I will put my confidence in him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God gave me." Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he (the Son) likewise shared in the same things (flesh and blood) so that through death, he might destroy the one holding power over death—that is, the Devil—and free all of these (who) all their lives were subject to slavery through fear of death. (*Greek New Testament*; translation mine)

This passage can be read as implying that all of mankind shares kinship with Christ and that his incarnation gives this kinship a special significance.

An even more explicit assertion of the fatherhood of God, with all mankind being his offspring, occurs in Acts 17.28-29, where Paul, standing before the Areopagus in Athens, approvingly quotes a Gentile Greek poet in an attempt to convert a pagan audience that included both Epicurean and Stoic philosophers:

As also some of the poets among you have said: "For of him, we too are offspring." Therefore, being offspring of God, we ought not to think that an

image formed with gold, or silver, or stone by a person's skill and thought is like the deity. (*Greek New Testament*; translation mine)

Significant here is that Paul is presented as affirming the universal fatherhood of God, for this entails that even nonbelievers share in the relation of kinship with God, an inference that Langland himself would heartily affirm.

Excursus: The Biblical Tradition of the Kinsman-Redeemer

In the Old Testament scriptures, from which Langland quotes liberally, we find the concept of the kinsman with the duty to redeem (Hebrew: *ga'al*) and therefore called a kinsman-redeemer (Hebrew: *go'el*). In Israelite custom, a kinsman-redeemer was a prominent male relative with responsibility for an extended family:

The Hebrew term designates a male relative who delivers or rescues (Gen 48.16; Exod 6.6); redeems property (Lev 27.9-25) or person (Lev 25.47-55); avenges the murder of a relative as a guiltless executioner (Num 35.9-34); and receives restitution for wrong done to a relative who has since died (Num 5.8). The unique emphasis of the redemption/salvation/vindication associated with the kinsman-redeemer is the fact that this action is carried out by a kinsman on behalf of a near relative in need. (Bramer, "Kinsman-Redeemer," paragraph 2)

Leviticus 25.47-48 sets out the law for a kinsman-redeemer to follow in redeeming an enslaved kinsman:

Now, if an alien or temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of

your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien residing among you or to a member of the alien's clan, redemption (*g'ullah*) remains (possible) for him after he has sold himself. One of his kinsmen may redeem (*g'ale*) him. (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* [BHS]; translation mine)

The concept of the kinsman-redeemer also has a theological aspect, for God is often portrayed as Israel's *go'el* (e.g., BHS: Job 19.25; Psalm 19.15; 103:4 Jeremiah 31.11), a father who will redeem them (*ga'al*) from the consequences of their sin (Bramer, paragraphs 3-4; Hubbard 18-19). We see something similar applied to Gentile Christians in 1 Peter 1.17-19:

Now, if you invoke as Father the one judging impartially according to each person's deeds, (then) conduct (yourselves) with fear during the time of your exile (from God). You know that you were redeemed (*elutrothate*) from your futile manner of life handed down from (your) fathers not by perishable things, (such as) silver or gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of an unblemished and unspotted lamb. (*Greek New Testament*; translation mine)

Although not made explicit, Christ here implicitly acts as a kinsman-redeemer for those Gentile Christians who invoke God as Father. Worth noting is that the *Vulgate Bible*, which Langland often quotes from, uses the same Latin verb for "redeem" in Leviticus 25.48 (*redimi, redimet*) and 1 Peter 1.18 (*redempti*). One should perhaps then note that Langland uses the Latin word "*redempcio*" in having Truth prooftext the *Vulgate's* Job 7.9 to demonstrate that there is no redemption in hell (Langland, *Vision* 18.149). The figure of Truth turns out to be mistaken, for ten verses after Christ's statement that he would be an unkind king if he did not give his kin help, Langland borrows from a medieval hymn (Langland, "Vision," p.345, n7) to have the angels sing:

Culpat caro, purgat caro, regnat Deus Dei caro. (18.409)

Flesh sins, flesh purges, flesh reigns as God of God. (translation mine)

Langland, shortly before the passage on kin helping kin, also has Christ inform Lucifer that he does:

by right and by reson raunsone here my liges. (18.350)

by right and by reason here ransom my liegemen. (18.360)

The translation given here for “raunsone” is “ransom,” but Mayhew and Skeat offer “redeem” as another possibility (Mayhew/Skeat, *Concise Dictionary*). Either way, the term lies within the semantic field proper to the Old Testament concept of the kinsman-redeemer. Did Langland intend this? The evidence is merely circumstantial—as befits an *excursus*. Perhaps this excursion overinterprets the evidence, but as Umberto Eco has noted, even an “overinterpretation is fruitful” (“Reply” 143).

Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* (1098)

A potential shortcoming of the kinsman-redeemer hypothesis is that it seems to presuppose that Christ paid the devil to release mankind, whereas Langland—despite his use of the ambiguous term “raunsone”—has Christ argue that mankind was illegally taken, literally stolen:

And seide to Sathan, “Lo! here my soule to amendes

For alle synfulle soules, to save tho that ben worthi.
 Myne thei ben and of me—I may the bet hem cleyme.
 Although reson recorde, and right of myselve,
 That if thei ete the appul, alle sholde deye,
 I bihighte hem noght here helle for evere.
 For the dede that thei dide, thi deceite it made;
 With gile thow hem gete, ageyn alle reson.
 For in my paleis, Paradis, in persone of an addre,
 Falsliche thow fettest there thyng that I lovede.
 Thus ylik a lusard with a lady visage,
 Theffliche thow me robbedest; the Olde Lawe graunteth
 That gilours be bigiled—and that is good reson:
Dentem pro dente et oculum pro oculo." (18.328-341)

And he said to Satan, "Lo, here's my soul in payment
 For all sinful souls, to save those that are worthy.
 Mine they are and of me—I may the better claim them.
 Although Reason records, and right of myself,
 That if they ate the apple all should die,
 I did not hold out to them hell forever.
 For the deed that they did, your deceit caused it;
 You got them with guile against all reason.
 For in my palace Paradise, in the person of an adder,
 You stole by stealth something I loved.
 Thus like a lizard with a lady's face
 Falsely you filched from me; the Old Law confirms
 That guilers be beguiled, and that is good logic:
A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye." (18.337-350)

Although we have seen in the previous section that Christ does speak of ransoming his liegemen, Donaldson's translation of "here my soule to amendes" by "here's my soul in payment" is quite misleading. Better would be "here's my

soul to amend," for payment is not hinted at here. The point of this entire passage is that the sinful souls are in hell because of deception (Ruud 7-8). They have been stolen, not legitimately obtained—a point that even some of the demons concede (Langland, "Vision" 18.295-303, 318-324; *Vision* 18.285-293, 308-314).

The ransom theory of the atonement was held by the Church for nearly a millenium. According to this view, which was based on such biblical passages as Mark 10.45 and 1 Timothy 2.6 but which began in the second century C.E. with Irenaeus (ca. 130-202 C.E.) and was given fuller expression by Origen (185-254 C.E.), God paid a ransom to Satan through the death of Christ to free mankind. This theory found expression even in Augustine (Kent, "Doctrine of the Atonement," paragraphs 6-7). Anselm (ca. 1033-1109), however, debunked it:

Sed et illud quod dicere solemus, deum scilicet debuisse prius per iustitiam contra diabolum agere, ut liberaret hominem, quam per fortitudinem, ut cum diabolus eum, in quo nulla mortis erat causa et qui deus erat, occideret, iuste potestatem quam super peccatores habebat amitteret, alioquin iniustam uiolentiam fecisset illi, quoniam iuste possidebat hominem, quem non ipse uiolenter attraxerat, sed idem homo ad illum se sponte contulerat: non uideo quam uim habeas. (Schmitt, ed., *Cur Deus Homo*, bk.1, ch.7)

I do not see the force of that argument, which we are wont to make use of, that God, in order to save men, was bound, as it were, to try a contest with the devil in justice, before he did in strength, so that, when the devil should put to death that being in whom there was nothing worthy of death, and who was God, he should justly lose his power over sinners; and that, if it were not so, God would have used undue force against the devil, since the devil had a rightful ownership of man, for the devil had not seized man with

violence, but man had freely surrendered to him. (Deane, trans., *Cur Deus Homo*, bk. 1, ch. 7)

Both Anselm and Langland reject the assumption that Satan had any legitimate right to mankind, and Langland perhaps borrowed from Anselm since he lived some 200 years later. James Simpson notes this parallel here between the thought of Anselm and that of Langland (Simpson 209; Ruud 9). Sean Taylor argues that Langland also drew on Anselm's "satisfaction theory" of the atonement, "that Christ's sacrifice is meant to demonstrate the love of God for mankind" (Taylor 155). If Langland did draw upon Anselm, he went further in extending God's saving love to the unbaptized.

Another interesting parallel between Langland and Anselm exists. John Bossey has argued that Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement required a special axiom concerning kinship:

[I]n the commission and resolution of offences those who are related to the offender by generation are involved. They inherit the breach of relations with the party offended, and the debt of satisfaction which is owed to him; by the same token they may substitute themselves for the offending party in offering satisfaction, and if the satisfaction offered is adequate to the offense, there is an obligation on the party offended to accept it. (5)

To accomplish this, "the Son had taken upon himself to be born among the generation of Adam and Eve and to offer spontaneously to the Father the death to which he was not subject in due satisfaction for the offence of his kin" (Bossey 4). It would be interesting to know if Anselm drew upon Hebrews 2.5-15 as well as upon the kinsman-redeemer scriptural passages (though he would have objected to any *ransom* interpretation of those passages). At any

rate, if Taylor is correct that Langland knew and used Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement, then Langland also likely knew and used Anselm's ideas on the role of kinship.

Anglo-Saxon Assumptions: Blood is Thicker than Water?

Yet even if Langland was borrowing from Anselm, he seems to have drawn more radical implications. For Langland, as we have seen, blood-kinship imposes overriding obligations. Let us remind ourselves:

And my mercy shal be shewed to manye of my bretheren;
 For blood may suffre blood bothe hungry and acale,
 Ac blood may noght se blood blede, but hym rewe.
Auaivi archana verba que non iicet homini loqui.
 Ac my rightwisnesse and right shal rulen al helle,
 And mercy al mankynde bifore me in hevene.
 For I were an unkynde kyng but I my kyn helpe—
 And nameliche at swich a nede ther nedes help bihoveth:
Non intres in iudicium cum servo tuo. (18.394-400)

And my mercy shall be shown to many of my half-brothers,
 For blood-kin may see blood-kin both hungry and cold,
 But blood-kin may not see blood-kin bleed without his pity:
I heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
 But my righteousness and right shall rule all hell
 And mercy rule all mankind before me in Heaven.
 For I'd be an unkind king unless I gave my kin help,
 And particularly at such a time when help was truly needed.
Enter not into judgment with thy servant. (18.408-416)

Note again how the mercy "shewed to manye of my bretheren" becomes mercy for "al mankynde" on Judgement Day—implying the universal salvation remarked upon earlier in this article. Blood-kinship might not be "thicker" than water-baptism, but it appears just as effective for salvation. In this, Langland goes beyond Anselm and beyond the limit fixed by the Fourth Lateran Council, which affirmed in 1215 that there is no salvation outside of the Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*).

This raises anew the question posed at the beginning of this article: "What might lie behind Langland's thinking that would motivate him to imply a position at odds with the Church?" Whatever the other influences that may have operated upon Langland, he was an Anglo-Saxon, unlike, e.g., Anselm, who was born in the Italian Alps city of Aosta on the border of Lombardy in what was then the Kingdom of Burgandy (Williams, "Saint Anselm," Section 1). Although Anglo-Saxon society acknowledged conflicting ties of loyalty to kin, kith, and king (cf. White, "Kinship and Lordship"), Langland's emphasis upon blood-kin is consistent with long Anglo-Saxon tradition. In the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, perhaps composed in the mid-eighth century (David and Donaldson, "Preface to *Beowulf*" 29), killing a kinsmen constitutes one of the most heinous of sins, a crime for which the hellish clan of Grendel has been accursed since the time of its clan-founder, the fratricide Cain (Savage & Law, ed., 102-114).² Likewise, Unferth, who killed his own kin, will suffer damnation in hell for his atrocity (Savage & Law, ed., 587-589). Thus, the good king Beowulf, fast approaching death, avers that:

2) Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from *Beowulf* are taken from: 1) Modern English Text: *Beowulf*, trans. Francis B. Gummere, Harvard Classics. vol. 49 (New York: P. F. Collier and Sons, 1910); 2) Old English Text: *Beowulf*, ed. for online website by Anne Savage and Ben Law (2005).

for ðam me witan ne ðearf waldend fira
 morðorbealo maga, þonne min sceaceð
 lif of lice. (2741-2743)

From the Ruler-of-Man no wrath shall seize me,
 when life from my frame must flee away,
 for killing of kinsmen! (2741-2743)

Some 600 years later, the medieval poem *The Simonie*, composed in either 1321 or 1327, measures the sordid depths of evil by the metric of those in the times of King Edward II:

That nolde spare for kin that o kosin that other (Dean, *Simonie*, line 429)

Who would not for kinship spare one relative or another. (Dean, line 429, n64)

Rather than spare even their own kin, they would instead murder them, as the poem goes on to describe and decry.

Thus is the killing of kin starkly condemned in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and lesser degrees of aggression against kin are also strongly forbidden. Indeed, such aggression was considered against nature. In John Lydgate's *Troy Book*, written about 1420, Hector and Ajax halt their vigorous battle when they mysteriously sense that they are kin:

For naturelly blod will ay of knde
 Draw unto blod, wher he may it fynd. (*Troy Book*, 3.2071-2072)

For naturally blood will always draw toward blood
 Of its own kind, wherever it may find it. (translation mine)

Not only should kinsmen not fight each other, they are obliged to actively aid one another in battle. Thus does the character Wiglaf come to the aid of Beowulf during the latter's fight with the dragon as the other thanes flee in fear, for he feels the imperative call of kinship:

Hiora in anum weoll
sefa wið sorgum; sibb æfre ne mæg
wiht onwenden þam ðe wel þenceð.
Wiglaf wæs haten (2599-2602)

But the soul of one
with care was cumbered. Kinship true
can never be marred in a noble mind!
Wiglaf his name was (2599-2602)

Driven by ties of kinship and loyalty, Wiglaf seizes his sword and shield (Savage & Law, ed., 2609-2610) and goes forth to fight alongside Beowulf against the fierce dragon (Savage & Law, ed., 2660-2662). Is it then any wonder that Christ, impelled by the blood kinship that he shares with mankind, should do much the same in coming to mankind's aid at the Last Judgement to save them from suffering in hell? Perhaps we should be more surprised if he did not.

Conclusion

We are now ready to return to the original question concerning what might lie behind Langland's thinking that would motivate him to imply a position at odds with the Church's *official* teaching of limited salvation. A man like Langland has more influences than just his own culture, and at least three things

may hold relevance for his views on kinship. The kinsman-redeemer concept found in the Bible perhaps offers one strand. Langland often supplies biblical quotes, from both the New *and* Old Testaments, so he could easily have been influenced by such passages as Leviticus 25.47-48, Jeremiah 31.11, Hebrews 2.5-15, Acts 17.28-29, or 1 Peter 1.17-19. Yet, these alone would not account for his views, for Langland rejects the view that the devil had any sort of legitimate right to mankind, such that God would be *obliged* to pay a ransom to the devil for liberating them. In rejecting the ransom *theory* of the atonement (though he does not excise the term *ransom* itself), Langland would seem to owe a theological debt to Anselm. Like Anselm, he not only charges the devil with the illegitimate possession of mankind, he also emphasizes Christ's kinship with mankind by virtue of the incarnation. Langland, however, goes beyond Anselm by implicitly affirming universal salvation. For this, Langland seems indebted to his Anglo-Saxon culture. As did both the Bible and Anselm's writings, Anglo-Saxon culture emphasized the significance of kinship in salvation. Anglo-Saxons, however, stressed the *obligation* of kinship to a degree that surpassed both scripture and Anselm, for a relative who sees a kinsman threatened by death is obliged to come to the kinsman's aid. For this reason, Langland has Christ affirm that he will show mercy to all mankind at the Last Judgement because he would be an unkind king if he did not give his kin help when such help is truly needed. Given the kinship demands of Anglo-Saxon culture, Christ's intention to offer universal salvation for all of his blood-kin is not particularly surprising (cf. also Jebson, ed., *Junius Manuscript: Christ and Satan*, 420-440; Kennedy, *Christ and Satan*, 9). Indeed, his not doing so would be the surprising thing. The Anglo-Saxon cultural factor thus seems to provide the essential key to understanding Langland's belief in *apocatastasis*. Of course, for Langland's vision of universal salvation, there may be a whole host of

influences. As with much dream imagery, literary symbolism, and historical phenomena, a person's beliefs are very often overdetermined. Yet of the various possible influences on Langland, these three remain: biblical, theological, and cultural. But the greatest of these is cultural.

주제어: 그리스도, 구원, 성육화, 친지, 왕, 혈족, 세례, 앵글로 색슨

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Kinsman as “Redeemer” in *Piers Plowman*, Passus 18

Abstract

Horace Jeffery Hodges

In Passus 18 of *Piers Plowman*, William Langland implicitly affirms universal salvation. The paper investigates what might lie behind Langland's position, which contradicts the Church's *official* teaching of limited salvation. At least three things may influence his views on kinship: the biblical concept of the kinsman-redeemer; Anselm's theological opinions on salvation; and Anglo-Saxon culture's emphasis upon kinship *obligations*. The third influence seems the strongest, for Langland has Christ implicitly affirm universal salvation because all of mankind are his blood kin. The Anglo-Saxon cultural factor would therefore appear to provide the key to understanding Langland's belief in universal salvation.

Key Words

Christ, redeemer, salvation, *apocatastasis*, incarnation, kinsman, kinship, king, blood, baptism, Anglo-Saxon.