

Reginald Pecock, Vernacular, and a Vision of Humanism

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Reginald Pecock (c.1395-c.1461), bishop of Chichester, was a highly controversial figure of the late medieval English history. He was convicted of heresy for his vernacular theological writings, and obliged to resign his bishopric. Pecock attempted to communicate to the laity by way of his English theological writings, and it is often argued the fact that he wrote in English was more provoking to his accusers (Taylor 143).

This article is a sort of interdisciplinary approach from a historical perspective trying to grasp Pecock's sense of novelty with regard to his vernacular works.¹⁾ It is also to provide general historical backgrounds of the

1) Pecock's extant works can be categorized into two: one is directed against the Lollard heresy (*The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, and *The Book of Faith*); the other deals with vernacular theology for educating the laity (*The Reule*

English literature in Pecock's age. Pecock's works provide rich potentialities that can be rightly clarified as pre-humanist thoughts, even though the Scholastic syllogism was still employed to put forward his ideas. Here, Pecock's contributions will be considered in three different ways: first, Pecock's grasp of vernacular literature; second, historical criticism and a new understanding of tradition; and third, his discovery of human ability. Finally, a brief comparison of Pecock's thoughts with the Renaissance humanism will be followed in the conclusion.

I. PECOCK AND VERNACULAR LITERATURE

The church authorities in late medieval England played a positive role in the religious practices of the laity by providing pastoral handbooks for the parish priest to educate their parishioners in the Catholic faith and practices. Apart from such official instruction for the parishioners, lay popular devotion also seems to have been encouraged by the church. Nicholas Watson remarks that "in terms not only of quantity but of innovation the period 1340-1410 has as much right to be considered a 'golden age' of religious as it is of secular writing" (Watson 823). Texts were increasingly making their way out of Latin into the vernacular languages then current in England (von Nolcken 177).

Yet the increase in literacy in the fifteenth century opened the possibility

of Crysten Religioun, The Donet, The Poor Man's Mirror, an abbreviated version of the *Donet*, and *Folewer to the Donet*). The author, in another article on Pecock, "An anti-Lollard Narrative and the Fifteenth-Century English Church in Reginald Pecock's Vernacular Writings," *The Journal of Western History* 37 (2007), 33-68, investigated Pecock's narrative against the Lollards in the *Repressor* and the *Book of Faith*. This article is coupled with the previous one as this analyzes mainly the rest of his works on vernacular theology.

that religious instruction could move outside the church. In this regard, Lollardy was an unwelcome force in English church and society, challenging traditional religious values and culture, causing social unrest and appealing to the laity. The issue of the English language became a crucial issue in the history of Lollardy. Margaret Aston argues, "It was as a vernacular literate movement that Lollardy had gathered momentum and it was as a vernacular literate movement that it was suspected and persecuted" (Aston 207). Anne Hudson also characterizes Lollardy as an English language heresy, suggesting that the association of vernacular scriptures and heresy was made early, as early as the later 1380s.²⁾

Following the emergence of Lollardy, the church authorities' support for lay piety and encouragement of circulating vernacular literature became more cautious, and strict restrictions began to be introduced in regulating lay religion, culminating in the publication of the Constitutions in 1407 and 1409 by Archbishop Arundel.³⁾ The Constitutions limit on the discussion of theological questions in the schools and forbid anybody to make any written translation of a text of Scripture into English or even to own a copy of any such translation made since Wyclif's time without diocesan permission.

Appreciations about Pecock from a historical, theological, and political views have been severely divided, but there is an unanimous agreement with his contribution to the English literature. Aside from the contents of his vernacular works, the fact that he actively engaged himself in the vernacular writings with a clear intention to offer a counter narrative against Lollardy at a time when the use of English in expressing one's idea was heavily restricted must first be

2) Anne Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?," first published in *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982), 261-83, reprinted as chap. 9 of her *Lollards and Their Books* (London, 1985).

3) On the impact of the Constitutions on fifteenth-century English theology, see Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change," 830-34.

recognized highly. A.G. Greenword appreciates Pecock's efforts in writing English theological books: "Pecock had to find or make terms for conveying abstract ideas and philosophical distinctions. His wide command of terms is not that of a man conversant only with theological literature; many of his more unusual words are to be found in Chaucer or in *Piers the Plowman*, while others seem to be of recent importation and a few, even, of his own invention" (Greenword 294-95). Margaret Drabble too remarks Pecock's works as "a monument of Fifteenth-century English prose of considerable eloquence and lexical variety. His work has considerable importance from a literary viewpoint for its development of the English vocabulary" (Drabble 749).

It is important to note that Pecock recognizes the efficiency of English language, which was widely underestimated as the language of the laity that had never been used to deliver subtle doctrinal matters. He found the vernacular useful not only to refute heresy but also to provide instructions in the doctrines of Christian faith. This reflects the advanced awareness of Pecock with regard to literacy's function of transmitting information when society still relied to a great extent on memory and an oral culture.⁴⁾ Written in the language which most lay people used, Pecock's writings could secure a wide readership which might enhance the spirituality of the laity:

And þis, as y weene, is not yuel me to do, namelich siþen it is cleerly
proved in þe book cleepid þe 'beforecrier' þat preching to þe peple vpon þe

4) Pecock mentions Lollard memorization, which made illiterate people access to written texts by reciting them. But he limited its effectiveness, describing the Lollards as those "whiche nevere learned ferther in scolis than her grammer, kunnen suche textis bi herte and bi mouth." Reginald Pecock, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. Churchill Babington, Rolls Series, no. 19, 2 vols (London, 1860), 89.

seid vij maters schal neuer take his parfite effect, neiþer in ʒeuynge to þe peple sufficient and stable doctrine neiþer in prentynge into hem abiding deuocioun, wiþoute þat þe peple haue at hem silf in writing which þei mowe ofte rede or here oft rad þe substancial poyntis and trouþis whiche ben to hem to be prechid bi mouþe. (Pecock, *The Reule of Crysten Religioun*, 20)

One notable phenomenon in the fifteenth century is a concern for a social discourse between the church authorities and the laity through vernacular literacy, a common code for mutual communication (Somerset 3-21). Pecock observed that only communicating with and instructing the laity through their own language would succeed in restoring the damaged prestige of the clergy. For him, the use of the vernacular implies something more than a means of communication. His possible remedy for heresy is to encourage the reading of his various English works. Pecock explains clearly in the *Reule* why he uses the vernacular in his writings:

If eny man wole aske and wite whi þis present book and þe bookis to hym pertenyng y make in þe commoun peplis langage, herto y answere þat þis present book and alle oþere bookis to him longyng maad in þe comoun peplis langage, ben so maad principali forto adaunte, rebuke, drive down and conuerte þe fonnednes and þe presumpcioun of ij soortis of peple. Oon is of hem whiche holden hem silf so stiffly and so singularly, foolili and oonli to þe vce of þe bible in her modiris langage and namely to þerof þe newe testament, þat þei trowen, seien and holden boþe pryueli and as fer openly as þey daren, alle oþere bookis writun or in latyn or in þe comoun peplis langage to be writun into waast and not oonly into waste but into marryng and cumbring of cristen mennes wittis fro þe sufficient and necessarie leernyng which þei myʒten and ouʒten haue bi studie alone in þe bible or oonly in þerof þe new testament; and so all bisynes which men don forto

haunte scolis and forto leerne or to teche bi writing, in eny oþer maner þan bi redyng and studying in þe bible, þei holden remelyng aside fro þe riȝt wey and a deceit into which men ben led bi þe feend. For þei seien þus, þat what euer man or woman wole be meke in spirit and wole preie god helpe him, schal wiþoute faile vndirstonde ech partie of Holy Scripture. (*Reule*, 17)

Pecock's interest in providing religious books for the laity was derived from his conviction that reading and circulating orthodox religious books could play an important role in eliminating the harmful effects of heretical books. He believes that, since the problems arose from the works of English which had a bad influence on the laity, the remedy should also come from sound English writings which could reach the laity in the same manner. For this purpose, Pecock abandoned the academic and polemical idioms favoured by earlier critics of Lollardy (Bose 223). For Pecock, banning vernacular works could not be a sufficient way to prevent false teaching by the Lollards; only moderate and sound doctrine written in the vernacular could contribute to rooting out the influence of heresy over the laity. The vernacular in itself was neutral for Pecock, as long as it was used for good (Pecock, *The Book of Faith*, 111-12, 114-15). He identified a lack of books among the lay people as one cause of error and the proposals he made were directed at relieving this poverty in ways which would overcome the circulation and perpetuation of error (Scase 265). Pecock also stressed the merit of books as being less likely to be misinterpreted than sermons (*Reule*, 99). Hence he adopted the distribution of profitable literature to the laity, especially his own books which he believed to be the most effective for this purpose as a crucial way of both preserving them from the influence of heresy and of educating the laity to understand the orthodox faith (*Book of Faith*, 113-16).

Here, Pecock held a similar view to that of the Lollards regarding the position of the vernacular in religious discourses, discarding “the binarism of Latin vernacular,” which was, argues Rita Copeland, “the principal theme devolving from the governing categories of *clerici* and *laici*” (Copeland 6-7). This vernacular project of Pecock could be mistakenly regarded as that of a Lollard, for “in the absence of a clear and technical English vocabulary of orthodox theology, anyone trying to persuade or refute the heretics had to use a language identified as Lollardy” (Justice 304).

II. HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON TRADITION

Pecock’s syllogistic reasoning is an important point in assessing his novelty that led to the conclusions similar to the modern higher criticism. In particular, his questionings over the historicity of the Donation of Constantine, the Apostles’ Creed, and the biblical tradition are often viewed to assist Pecock’s modernity that went beyond the boundary of medieval Scholasticism. Yet, it is not decisive to conclude Pecock’s way of reasoning to be innovative. In fact, Pecock adopts ‘reason’ to confront the growing stress on the authority of scripture by the Lollards. He argues that, though scripture has great authority in matters of faith, it cannot fully take care of other things which relate to morality (*Repressor*, 21). In order to understand the lessons of scripture, for instance, it is necessary to have knowledge of moral philosophy:

No man schal perfitli, sureli and sufficienti vndirstonde Holi Scripture in alle tho placis where yn he rehercith moral vertues not being positijf lawe of

feith, but being such as mannys resoun may fynde, learne, and knowe, but if he be bifore weel and perfitli, suerli and sufficientli learned in moral philosophie; and the more perfitli, sureli, and sufficientli he is learned in moral philosophie the more able as bi that he schal be forto perfitli, sureli and sufficientli vndirstonde Holi Scripture in alle tho placis wheryn he spekith of eny moral lawe of God being no positijf lawe of feith. (*Repressor*, 43)

The power of reason should constantly be developed so that men could understand 'religious' things. Whereas the 'doom of resoun' is apparently crucial in Pecock's theology, it cannot be said that he places the role of reason above faith. Reason is important when Pecock uses it to rebuke the errors found in the ideas of Lollards concerning their biblicism, which had no room for reason. The use of reason is the inevitable choice to counter the argument of Lollardy that unless something was commanded in scripture, there was no need to follow church practices as required. If the laity raised objections to such practices in the church on the ground that they had no foundation in scripture, or if scriptural narratives seemed to contradict one another, this might undermine the basis of the Catholic community. But for Pecock, this entailed the same problem of the mutual contradiction among the early church fathers over certain topics (*Repressor*, 320). In his argument, the role of the 'doom of resoun' replaces that of the church fathers in solving this dilemma. Reasoning alone can cure the religious fanaticism rooted in the literal belief in scripture represented by the Lollards. Therefore, the earlier appreciation of Pecock's idea of reason needs to be reconsidered in terms of the context in which he was involved.

As far as reason is concerned, Pecock's emphasis on it should be interpreted in terms of its complementary role to faith in developing religious maturity. Faith is always provable by evidence in reason, argues Pecock (*Book of Faith*, Part II, Chapter 1). There is no basis on which Pecock gives an absolute

authority to reason. Things may be divided according to their attributes into those which could be solved by the action of reason and those for which a proper understanding could be reached by faith alone. For example, knowledge of the Trinity can be achieved only by depending on revelation in scripture, because its mystery is not susceptible to reasoning (*Reule*, 71-6). It seems clear that Pecock placed revelation above reason, acknowledging that some religious issues could not be solved by reason alone. In this point, Pecock admits the limitations of reason (*Reule*, 359-61). Faith and reason have characteristic spheres which cannot be infringed. On the one hand, there are matters for which people must depend on revelation in scripture, but on the other hand, reason has a final authority for all truths of scripture except those dependent on faith alone (Pecock, *The Folewer to the Donet*, 8-11). Pecock believed that, except for supernatural divinity, most scriptural and religious truths could be verified and sustained by the assistance of reason (*Folewer*, 166-68). He describes reason as an active eye of the soul which gives the true understanding of faith (*Reule*, 224-26). In a passage in the *Reule*, Pecock maintains that in heaven, matters of faith will be known by reason or by the senses (*Reule*, 84-5). In order to pursue his argument, Pecock attempts to proceed through “an other wey and in another maner and bi meene which the lay persoonys wole admitte and graunte ... that we owen to bileeve and stoned to sum seier or techer which may faile, while it is not knowe that thilk seier or techer theryn failith” (*Book of Faith*, 113).

However, Pecock’s reasoning against the Lollard Biblicism gave rise to a serious problem as it inevitably touched the very ground of scripture, the teaching of Catholic church and early church fathers. Pecock claims the incompleteness and unsuitability of the Mosaic laws (Pecock, *The Donet*, 142-45). From a historical viewpoint, he points out that even Jerome, Gregory

and Augustine made mistakes in their writings.⁵⁾ Other points to which Pecock raised objections were the authenticity of the Apostles' Creed and the Donation of Constantine, whose roles in sustaining the Catholic church no one dared deny (*Repressor*, 350-57).⁶⁾ For example, concerning the teachings of the Apostles' Creed, Pecock regards them as insufficient and groundless. Asked by his pupil about this in the *Donet*, the teacher answers that “þe crede of þe apostlis ben þe al hool noumbre of alle þo articlesto be bileuid which ben conteynyd wipynne þe writing of þe new testament, fro þe bigynnyng of þe newe testament into þe eende of þe newe testament and þefore þe ful and hool crede of þe apostlis is moche lengir þan ben þe xiiiije, xv and xvj chapitris of þe first party of þis present book” (*Donet*, 104).

How did Pecock try to reconcile this dilemma? He attempts to settle it by giving a new interpretation of Catholic church and tradition that is one of the critical factors in Pecock's thoughts. Pecock argues that the nature of the church was not rigidly fixed, but highly and positively receptive to better ideas (*Donet*, Chapters 5 and 6).

The example Pecock uses to support his argument that the church had developed its historicity by revising, modifying and accumulating knowledge is the imperfect nature of the Mosaic laws (*Donet*, 19-21). Noah lived at a time before the Old Testament was compiled and the Apostles lived without having the New Testament (*Donet*, 6). Once scripture had its shape, endeavors were ceaselessly made by the early church fathers, theologians and leaders of the church to clarify it. This implies that the church in Pecock's time should equally

5) For Pecock's challenge to Jerome's statement, see *Repressor*, 334-39; to Gregory, see *Book of Faith*, 145-52; see also *Folewer*, 11, 65-8, 151; *Reule*, 464-66.

6) For a full account of Pecock's historical criticism of the Donation of Constantine, see Joseph M. Levine, “Reginald Pecock and Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 20 (1973), 118-43.

be developing its doctrine and shape toward ever more complete knowledge.

This flexibility maintains the church despite many uncertainties and criticisms. Such an argument is also associated with his questioning of the justification of the church. Pecock admits that the church might have made many mistakes, but at the same time he insists that this did not excuse any kind of disobedience to its authority. Until the mistakes are proved beyond doubt, people should follow the teachings of the church (*Book of Faith*, Chapter 10).

If it is valid to assess Pecock in the overall history of Catholic church, one of his greatest achievements may be his subjective acceptance of tradition. He maintained that the church was subject to change. The ideal church, for Pecock, was not something to be embodied by returning to the apostolic church, but something to be brought about by continually changing according to the accumulation of activities which were accepted and practised by the masses, ratified by the church authorities and finally recognized as tradition.⁷⁾ This is the part of the process of ‘tradition’, and would prevent the church from being led astray. Pecock understands that the church is a dynamic organic body which takes shape in its present progressive form in consequence.⁸⁾

7) In *Book of Faith*, Pecock implies the indefectability of the church in arguing “y dare wel this seie and avowe and this reverence y ȝeve to the chirche in erthe, that whanne ever the chirche of God in erthe holdith eny article as feith, or hath determinedthilk article to be feith, every singuler persooone of the same chirche, how wise ever he be and hou digne and worthi ever he be, is bounden, undir peyne of dampnacioun, for tobileeve thilk same article as feith and so therynne forto obeie to the chirche; ȝhe, thou3 the chirche therynne bileeved or determined falsely or amys, but if he can, evydentli and openly without eny doute, schewe, teche and declare that the chirche bileeveth, or hath determined thilk article wrongly and untreuli, or ellis that the chirche hath no sufficient ground for to so bileeve or determine” (181).

8) This is illustrated in the *Repressor* while he advocates the hierarchical order of the church which is itself a “greet transmutacioun and change maad in and aboute the

Tradition has a definite meaning for every Christian, as it has been verified throughout the ages; so to preserve the tradition and to propagate the value of the tradition must have been an effective way of church reform. Although this observance is sometimes undermined as an enduring stereotype, it is a valid evaluation to argue that while the Reformation theologians put their authoritative reliance upon scripture only, the late medieval church appeals to both scripture and the church as its resources for authority. H.A. Oberman fittingly elucidates these as ‘Tradition I’ and ‘Tradition II’ respectively (Oberman, 361-93). According to Oberman’s division, ‘Tradition I’ treats Holy scripture as the sufficient and final authority in theological matters and, therefore, rejects the appeal to extra-scriptural tradition. By contrast, ‘Tradition II’ includes the written and unwritten apostolic message as approved by the church. Here the functions of the bishops are emphasized and ecclesiastical traditions are regarded as having the same degree of authority as scripture. Following this, Pecoock also can be placed in ‘Tradition II’ as advocating constant reform of the church in accordance with the transformations of tradition. His definition of Catholicism was that of a religion which relied on tradition because tradition was its most reliable feature (*Repressor*, 468-73). Tradition could be amended and built up according to circumstances.

III. A DISCOVERY OF HUMAN ABILITY

What is most striking in Pecoock’s ideas is in his novel understanding of human ability, especially of the laity. This is demonstrated in his claim that the laity can be participants of intercourse in theological matters. To Pecoock,

circumstauncis of politik gouernauncis” (107).

doctrine was no longer something to be kept back without a proper explanation; rather it was something to be explained to the laity to get proper respect. Without proper knowledge of theology, he argues, one cannot fully understand the truth of scripture (*Repressor*, 43).

Lay education was widespread, but normally there was a clear distinction between theologians and lay people in the teaching program. However, the spread of lay literacy in the late Middle Ages called upon a new relationship between the laity and the clergy, challenging the clergy's traditional monopoly on literacy.

The elevation of the status of the laity to be partners to the clergy in Pecock's mind means that the differences between two groups did not originate from their hierarchical inequality, but from their different duties. It was perhaps inevitable that communication between the two groups, though not made on a completely equal footing, should occur in an eclectic manner by downgrading the clerical myths and upgrading the ability of the laity. At a certain stage of Pecock's thinking, the difference between the clergy and the laity appears to be reduced to matters of their duty, not to that of level. The truth could not be confined within the clerical group and the laity must not be differentiated from them, since they also had the ability and the right to access the truth. The simplified and easily accessible version of highly important doctrines among the clergy and academics which Pecock intended to supply to the laity can be said to be the main character of his works. In his propaganda for lay theology, he adopts the same pattern as that taken by Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in explaining religious concepts such as the Trinity. Pecock's version of the Trinity is more accessible for the laity, making it easier to understand than those by Peter Lombard and other doctors.

Pecock writes:

Mored hardir doctrines and oþere consideraciouns vpon þe godhead and vpon þerynne þe persoonys þan þese writun from þe [viii] chapter hidirto ben writun al redy in þe sentences of pers lumbard and in writingis of ful manye doctouris þerupon, 3he suche doctrines and consideraciouns vpon god and upon þe trynste of persoonys and vpon longyngis þerto þat þey passen þe vnderstanding and þe receivabilnes of þe comoun peple and of clerkis being3onge bigynners in scole of divynete and of clerkis not leernyd moche in comoun philosophie, in metephisik and in þe hi3est party of divinite. Neuerþeles, to þe hi3est wittid men of þe lay party and to 3ong bigynners in scoles of divinite and to oþere clerkis of oþere faculties not hauyng tyme and leisour to studie in hi3est metaphisik and divinite, þis þat is here bifore tau3t vpon god and persoonys in godhead wiþ it þat is writun aftir in þis present book in þerof þe first trefy of þe second party, soþely is scole ynou3 for euer, þou3 þei neuer wole seche aftir more as for doctrine to be had vpon þis what god is and how he is in his persoonys, namelich into þis eende, forto bileeve into god and forto be stirid to love god and to haue fereunt wil forto serve god. (*Reule*, 86)

Pecock must have believed that reading hard books containing theological matters would develop lay people's minds, even if initially they seemed too difficult. This kind of thought and project was very challenging and demanding, given the environment in which the church and the laity were grounded. Thus, it may be said that Pecock's faith in the ability of the laity was regarded as revolutionary by the existing hierarchy.

The focal point of Pecock's argument is a new interpretation of humanity without distinction between the laity and the clergy. It might be considered a manifesto of the human being's non-dependence on one another before God,

given their equal opportunity and ability to deal with religious truths. As Pecock describes the human soul in comparison with the animal soul, he emphasizes that man's soul is independent of the body, with its role being to give him the ability to reason, saying "if þe hool body of a man or eny party of it were so nedisly required to resonyng and to willing þat if resonyng and willing schulde be wrouzt, þei muste nedis be wrouzt by taking þe hool body or eny party of þe body as an instrument whereby þe dede of resonyng and þe dede of willing muste naturali and kyndely be doon, in lijk maner as þilke party of þe body which is cleepid þe Iʒe is nedisly required to siʒt þat seyng kyndely and naturally bi þe Iʒe be doon. . ." (*Reule*, 114). As he believes that people, whether laity or clergy, have the ability to reason, he asserts that theological education could enable the laity to reach the highest religious knowledge. The perspective of the person with an ability to think and act independently is the starting point of Pecock's argument. Pecock regards literacy as the minimum condition to enable people to understand the truth independently. While "an oold symple widowe, or an oold sympleman" should obey the teaching of the curate (*Book of Faith*, 223-24), lay people who are literate should judge for themselves by the light of reason. Pecock writes:

And for as mych, sone, as þou art movid into opynyoun, bicause þou hast radde opire mennys writingis þerto according, certis, y seie to þee þus: If in euery mater which may be iugid bi resoun, þou schalt ʒue þi cleuyng consent to þe oon parti more þan to þe opir and oonli for as mych as þou redist so to be writun eer þan þou resolue and brynge þilk writing into his open ground of resoun whervpon he is euydentli founded. . . (*Folewer*, 33)

Given the usefulness of the vernacular, why did the church strictly supervise its use among the laity? It was a radical point for Pecock to argue that the

reason for prohibiting the vernacular in religious writings was not that it was naturally inferior to Latin for delivering the truth, but because the church authorities of the church wanted to keep the truth in their own hands without distributing it to the laity (Taylor 145). Pecoock points out four possible reasons why people rejected the writing of theology in English:

[F]Or as myche as in þe iije nexte bifore goyng chapters y haue writun and deluyered to þe lay peple certeyn maters and poyntis or conclusiouns which y cleepe þere þe xiiije trouþe and þe xv and þe xvj wiþ alle oþer trouþis or maters into þe eende of þe x chapter, A enȝ which delyueraunce so to be maad to þe lay peple y herde oon man oonys seie þat it were not so to be doon, it is now to be examined wheþer he feeliþ weel or no. ffor soþe if þilk man so feelid he muste haue sum cause whervpon he grounded his opynyoun and feeling and ellis he is not in þilk feeling to be herd, neiþer his feeling in þis mater is to be charged, but it is to be acountid as voluntarie wil ful vngroundid and feyned and þerfore it is to be leid aside. and y wote not why he was movid to so seie but if it were for oon of þese iije causis: þat is to seie as for þe first cause to be assigned, it seemed to hym peraventure þat alle þe bifore noumbrid trouþis ben of þe hiȝest and sutillist and hardist treuþis whiche divynys treten in scolis and in bookis vpon maters of þe trynte and þerfore hym þouȝte þei ouȝten not to be delyuerid to lay men; Or ellis for þe secunde cause to be assigned, it semed to hym þat þo bifore nounbrid trouþis were so harde to þe vndirstonding of þe lay peple in þat þe lay peple myȝte not conceive hem neiþer se cleer proofis of hem and so þe delyueraunce of þo trouþis to þe lay peple in her modir langage schulde be veyn and ydil; Or ellis as for þe þridde cause, it seemed to hym þat perel folewid þerupon, as peraventure þat þe lay peple wold sutele ferþer in her owne resonyng vpon þe leernyng and þe knowing of þo seid trouþis and go fer þat þei schulden erre and falle into summe fals opynyouns aboute matier of god and of þe trynȝte; Or ellis as for þe iiiiȝe cause, It seemed to hym it is no need þat þe lay peple haue so myche and

so hiȝe and sutil knowing of god in trynȝte of persoanys. Neuerþeles if þer be noon oþer cause þan oon or eny of þese iiiȝe now assigned to lette þe bifore noumbriȝ trouþis, we schulen do wel ynouȝ, ffor noon of þese iiiȝe causis may justly lette þe seid delyueraunce to be maad to þe lay peple, as y wole schewe openly to be seen of ech man hauyng eny notable quantite of resoun. (*Reule*, 87-88)

This reasoning seems to be based on the inferiority of the lay people to the clergy in understanding religious matters, on the one hand, and on the other, representing the exclusivism of the clerical group over the lay people in order that they might control them. This attitude could well have resulted in the outbreak of Lollard heresy among the laity, so Pecock took the position of dealing with the laity on a higher level, trying to teach and educate them in sophisticated matters which had not hitherto been thought appropriate for them, due to their lack of knowledge.

Besides the emphasis on the role of English in educating the laity, it should be noted that Pecock proposed a considerably different purpose in his educational program, which the existing scheme for educating the laity had not considered. This was to infuse sophisticated theological thought into lay people. One of the consistent assertions on lay education presented in Pecock's writings is the provision of a conceptual basis for the value of teaching theology to the laity. It might be said that, together with vernacular writings, theology is essential in challenging and winning over the minds of the lay people who are vulnerable to heresy. Pecock described the important aspects of religious knowledge which the laity, as well as the clergy, should understand so that they might reach the richness of Christian life. The fullness and completeness of religious life could be obtained by acquiring higher religious knowledge. In this regard, Pecock felt some confidence that his works would serve this purpose. In the *Reule*, the aim

and value of his writing is clearly revealed. The *Reule* teaches the Christian way of life more effectively than other books and it is also essential on the path to good, profitable and holy living. Pecoock had a strong conviction that the *Reule* dealt with all the matters that a Christian should know (*Reule*, 9-17).

Pecoock argues for the usefulness of meditating on his book as far as one can in order to live well:

And if it be seid to me ferþer þus, þat to þis purpos myȝte suffice myche lasse and liȝtir doctrine to be delyuerid bi writing þan is þe quantite of all þe now bifore rehercid bokis, y seie aȝen þat god is þe feest from which men rised wiþ relefis, after hem leeuving of more þan þei mowe take, in reward of þe feest fro which men rised hungry and desiren to ete more þan it is wherwiþ þei ben seruyd. Also y may seie þus, þat where plente of eny þing or mater is, þere sum man may take þerof what is to hym ynouȝ and he may leeuve what is to hym more þan ynouȝ for oþere men which ben of greeter capacite to take it þan is he which is þerof þe leuer; euen ri t asȝmen goyng to a comoun welle drawn of þe water how myche is to hem necessarie and leeuven al þe gretter deel for oþere men which wolen after hem make þerof her drawing. (*Reule*, 20)

The *Donet* and the *Folewer* are written to be supplementary to the *Reule* where the most difficult problems of theology are not discussed (*Reule*, 20-22). For those who were simple men and women, the religious knowledge taught in the *Reule* and the *Donet* was enough and “þe folewer to þe donet is no need and so forto putte þis present book in maner of a charge or of birþen vpon men, semeþ to be not good” (*Folewer*, 2). But those seeking a more detailed explanation of the knowledge of God’s existence and complicated theological questions should consult the *Folewer* (*Folewer*, 2).

Against those who argued that many of the themes which he dealt with in

his writings were too hard for the laity to understand, Pecock responds that they can indeed understand his works. Using the language of the laity, Pecock approaches them in a plain manner which the least learned men might understand. Pecock justifies his attempt to communicate with the laity on those theological matters which were not too deep for them by mentioning that lay people regularly deal with business and legal questions that are as hard as any questions in theology:

Lay peple muste nedis and schulen be drive to forto conceive herder and darker trouþis wiþ harder and darker evidences in plees of lond, in plees of dette and of trespance, in rekenyngis to be maad of receivers and rente gaderers in þe account of an audit, 3he in bargeyns making of greet marchaundis and in rekenyngis making þerupon, as a man schal soone wite if he take homlynes wiþ mercers of London, þan ben þe seid trouþis and her profis in þe place of þe þre next bifore goyng chapitris. . . (*Reule*, 93-4)

The concept of Pecock that religious knowledge is valuable for the laity cannot avoid desacralization to some degree, as he equates religious teachings with secular teachings such as business techniques. Pecock declares that “it schal be rizt profitable þat þis book [the *Reule*] wiþ hisse purtenauncis schulde be taken of all þi cristen peple into vse of ful bisy, ech day studyng, leernyng and comunyng and afterward þerupon remembering and if not in ech day, zitt in holy daies and þat as bisili as peple ben in werk daies y-occupied aboute worldis wynnyng” (*Reule*, 13).

At several points in his works, Pecock stresses that his books are fit to be read by lay people and he expects immediate attention for spreading his works from “prelates and othere mightymen of good’ who ‘have geet zele and

devocioun into the hasty turning of the seid erring peple” (*Book of Faith*, 117). Even when Pecock describes the difficulty for lay people of understanding his argument, he does not ascribe it to the inability of the laity in religious matters compared to the clergy, but considers it a common difficulty, since clerks also may experience problems in understanding some of the truths revealed in the Latin Bible which has nothing to do with the competence accorded to their religious status (*Folewer*, 7).

Instead of instilling in the laity hostility to the clerics, Pecock believed that teaching them the crucial Christian doctrines so as to enrich their religious sentiment was an appropriate resolution. He thought that if the laity began to understand Christian knowledge properly, they would soon be obedient to orthodox belief, as the clergy expected (*Book of Faith*, 111). While the laity were not the object of theological education for other bishops and clerics of his age, but merely the object of authority, Pecock held an opposing view: that the laity had sufficient ability to understand doctrinal matters and therefore, they should be given proper theological education.

IV. PECOCK: A RENAISSANCE HUMANIST?

Finally, let me briefly consider if Pecock can be possibly associated with English Renaissance humanism. The development of humanism in England had taken place in the late fifteenth-century, and after 1450 Oxford university introduced humanistic subjects into the curriculum (Nauert 114-17). Therefore, to link Pecock with the Renaissance humanism seems nothing but anachronistic.

However, as shown above, there are many points that can be considered in

Pecock's possible contributions to the rise of the English Renaissance humanism. It is generally agreed that one characteristic nature of the Renaissance humanism is its contribution to the development of vernacular literature. Of course, Pecock has no sense of Greek, nor did he seem to be aware of the continent Renaissance. However, it is his passion for books and vernacular that possibly influenced the Renaissance. Pecock was able to demonstrate the modern art of textual criticism in attacking the authenticity of the Donation of Constantine, as a contemporary Roman humanist Lorenzo Valla (1407-57) did.⁹⁾ The critical approach to documents was too disruptive of tradition to be accepted by the church authorities, and it causes his disgraceful fall.

Also Renaissance humanism inspired critical abilities and a new sense of history. Above all, the greatest contribution of the renaissance to the modern society is a discovery of human being. Pecock's plan to eradicate heresy and to plant sound Christian faith in the people of his day originated in an innovative view of human being, acknowledging their role, capacity and ability in the church. Pecock's novelty detected in many ways is enough to position him as a precursor of the English Renaissance humanism.

주제어: 레지널드 피콕, 롤라드, 속어문학, 추론법, 이성, 르네상스 휴머니즘

9) Levine, "Pecock and Valla on the Donation of Constantine," 133. See also 119, 122-24, 126, 132, 142-43.

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Reginald Pecock, Vernacular, and a Vision of Humanism

Abstract

Jong-Won Choi

In this article, a historical approach to appreciate Reginald Pecock's vernacular works has been made in three ways. First, Pecock was fully aware of the function of literacy, especially vernacular in transmitting ideas and elevating lay piety. In an age when the use of English is severely restricted by the authorities as hazardous to the unity of society, Pecock believed that, through vernacular literacy, the church authorities and the laity could be mutually communicated for a social discourse to restore society. This conviction made him write his own vernacular theological works with a clear purpose to instruct the laity sound doctrines. Secondly, in progressing the ideas, Pecock adopted scholastic syllogism, but his new philosophical attempt to use 'reason' as a crucial tool in understanding the truth is noteworthy. Pecock's reasoning led to the conclusions similar to the modern higher criticism. He questioned over the historicity of the Donation of Constantine, the Apostles' Creed, and the biblical tradition. Pecock believes that the church was subject to change toward perfection. The ideal church, for Pecock, was not something to be embodied by returning to the apostolic church, but something to be brought about by continually changing. This is his understanding of tradition that can make the church a dynamic organic body which takes shape in its present progressive form in consequence. Thirdly, what is most striking in Pecock's ideas is in his new understanding of human ability, especially of the laity. This is clearly demonstrated in his claim that the laity can be participants of intercourse in

theological matters. Pecock argues that the differences between the clergy and the laity did not originate from their hierarchical inequality, but from their different duties.

Over all, Pecock's passion for vernacular and books, ability to approach documents in a critical manner, and new perspective on the lay ability seem to be major components that can be associated with the coming English Renaissance.

Key Words

Reginald Pecock, Lollard, Vernacular Literature, Syllogism, Reason, Renaissance Humanism