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Introduction: tradition and the new anticlericalism

Anticlericalism was as important for the reading as for the writing of *Piers Plowman*, if we may judge by the notes and comments medieval readers recorded in the margins of the manuscripts. Readers were interested in the full range of the poem's anticlerical satire. Attacks on friars attracted a great deal of notice. The Great Doctor of theology, enjoying a hearty meal while the Dreamer and Pacience look on hungrily, was evidently not to be missed. Besides using *nota*s to catch the reader's attention, annotators commented 'be war of fals freris', 'contra fratres', and 'Doctours of freris'. One manuscript even includes a picture of a friar.[1] Early readers also enjoyed the encounter between Mede and her friar. We find notes in the margins of this sequence such as 'how freris shryuen folk', 'nota de frerys þat beþe confessours', and 'a comfessour as a frere comforted Mede and sayde as 3e may rede'.[2] Sire *Penetrans domos*, the friar who stupifies Contricion in the final passus, attracted notes such as 'ffrere flaterer' and 'ffrere leche'.[3]

It was not just the antifraternal satire which medieval readers thought worthy of notice. Attacks on the higher ranks of the clergy also attracted comment. 'Lo lordis and prelatis', wrote a medieval reader beside a passage in which clerics are instructed to preach against the feasting of harlots, while with 'beth war bischoppis' an annotator endorsed criticism of bishops who ordain unworthy priests.[4] Criticism of abuses among the parish clergy was also relished. Conscience's threat that benefices shall be removed from priests and parsons who hunt with anything but *Placebo* provoked 'nota huntynge curatis' in one manuscript. Neglect of the parish of another kind, among priests and parsons who prefer rich chantries in London, attracted 'nota de persones and preechours' and 'here preieden persons and parische preestis of leue to dwelle at Londoun'.[5] Medieval readers showed keen interest in satire against the endowed religious orders. 'Religioun' alerted readers to a passage against outriding monks, and the same annotator wrote 'war munkes and chanouns' beside the injunction 'Whoso wole be pure parfit moot possession forsake' (B XI 276).[6] We may note a certain amount of inference here, for the passage does not specify monks and canons. Specific inferences like this are not uncommon, though generalisations are perhaps more usual. Anima's attack on avaricious clerics specifies many different offenders: priests, preachers, summoners and clerical executors, but an annotator saw a general implication for the clergy and a warning for the laity, commenting 'beth war

of þis lered and lewed'. In another manuscript, Anima's simile of corrupt parsons, priests and preachers as the rotten root of a leafless tree was taken as generally anticlerical: 'exemplum contra clericos'.[7]

Medieval readers were engaged by more than the poem's witty or biting anticlerical satire; they were also interested in the associated theoretical questions raised in the poem. Anticlericalism raised the question of the state of poverty proper to the clergy, of whether clerics should own property – either personally or communally – and whether they should beg, or work. Readers were alert to treatment of the issue in the poem; for example, one annotated the encounter between Nede and the Dreamer, where the question of mendicancy is raised, with 'nota de nede hath no lawe', and 'nota de ned'.[8] Antifraternalism involved the question of abuse of the sacrament of penance, thus 'Schrifte' was noted beside the antifraternal passages of B xx. In the same manuscript, the note 'De potestate regis' at the end of B xix highlights the question of the king's power to tax the clergy and the laity.[9]

These examples of medieval commentary remind the modern reader of the range and importance of anticlericalism in *Piers Plowman*, and suggest that the liveliness of the issue was not confined to the poem itself; that it was a matter of concern for medieval readers also. However, despite the fact that it was very much a contemporary issue, scholars have viewed the anticlericalism of *Piers Plowman* generically and genealogically, rather than considering it from the perspective of the *Piers Plowman* period.[10] Critical studies dealing with anticlericalism in this poem, or in other contemporary English literature, have taught us a great deal about the origins and antecedents of anticlerical writing, but rather less about the characteristics of anticlericalism in the *Piers Plowman* period itself.

Previous studies have identified in *Piers Plowman* and other writings various traditions of satire and polemic against clerics. Yunck, for example, in *The Lineage of Lady Meed*, researched the ancestry of this satire in a curial tradition of Latin writing against clerical venality. The thesis of Jill Mann's important study, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, was that the traditions of satire against the clerical estate accounted for the clerical portraits in the *General Prologue*, and incidentally, for anticlerical satire in other contemporary writings such as *Piers Plowman*. Bloomfield's *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* was an attempt to place the poem in a tradition of monastic writing. Bloomfield argued that monastic literary traditions of polemical history, of prophecy and of antifraternalism, were revived in the *Piers Plowman* period by monks, as a means of defending themselves against the friars, whose claims to perfection rivalled their own. Bloomfield's perspective was not wide enough to permit him to see the use of monastic material in the poem as anything other than traditional, yet despite this limitation, his book made an important contribution by showing the relevance to *Piers Plowman* of contemporary writings for and against the monks.

Antifraternalism has been the most studied of all the anticlerical traditions.

Introduction: tradition and the new anticlericalism

Studies by scholars such as Williams, Fleming, Adams and Szittya have taught us a great deal about the origins and characteristics of that stream of medieval writing against friars which includes *Piers Plowman*. The major study in this area is Szittya's *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*. Writings issued during a conflict between the secular clergy and the friars at the University of Paris in the middle of the thirteenth century have been identified by historians of antifraternalism as the source of the tradition. While the friars rivalled the monks as religious orders with a claim to perfection, they rivalled the secular clergy as priests and preachers. The immediate cause of the dispute at Paris seems to have been the friars' claims to the status of master – in other words, to the right to teach students at the university – but the controversy ranged over the wider areas of conflict, as the secular clergy challenged the friars' role as preachers and confessors. For the seculars, the major disputant was William of St Amour, whose fierce polemics against the friars have been regarded as the main source of the antifraternal tradition. The best known of his writings, then as now, was *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*, a tract on the perils of the last days, issued in 1256. It is a polemical interpretation of 2 Tim. 3, which implies and develops an identification between the hypocritical self-lovers predicted in the biblical passage and the friars. A longer exegetical polemic, the *Collectiones Catholicae et Canonicae Scripturae* (1265–6), was probably meant as a reply to two of the friars' defenders, Thomas Aquinas and Thomas of York. Besides writing these wide-ranging polemics, William considered individual issues, such as mendicancy, in *quaestiones* against the friars. It has been established that many of William's writings were known in England in the following century; sometimes, Szittya has shown, excerpts circulated in encyclopaedic works such as the *Omne Bonum*.[11] After the Paris conflict, there were recurrences of the quarrel between the secular clergy and the friars, most notably when the seculars were defended by John de Pouilli in the 1320s and by Richard FitzRalph in the 1350s. Historians and literary scholars have seen the literature associated with these later phases of the conflict as part of a tradition inaugurated in William's writings.[12]

Studies of anticlerical traditions have taught us a good deal, but this perspective has also led to some distortions and imprecision in accounts of the anticlericalism of *Piers Plowman* and other Middle English writings. For example, in studies of antifraternal literature by Williams, Fleming and Szittya, antifraternalism has been treated as a tradition whose origins are the key to its meaning. Such studies discover continuities with the past, but are less able and likely to discover adaptations for the present. This approach has not provided a satisfactory basis for identifying what is characteristic of later fourteenth-century anticlerical writing, and for relating it to contemporary debate. Williams and Fleming, for example, illustrated Chaucer's antifraternal writing using as sources the literature from much earlier conflicts, without establishing the meaning of the tradition in the later fourteenth century. Williams argued that Chaucer had put into poetic form the charges

made against the friars by William of St Amour, and repeated by later polemicists such as FitzRalph. Fleming, writing of Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, argued that Chaucer also had a debt to the propaganda of the Franciscan Spirituals, who split from the order on the question of poverty in the early fourteenth century.[13] Szittya argued that late Middle English antifraternal writing had a 'symbolic dimension' carried over from William of St Amour's polemics. Szittya applied this argument in his reading of the antifraternalism of *Piers Plowman*, arguing that in the poem the 'traditional predisposition to see the friars symbolically' had been exploited for poetic purposes.[14] The limitations of this kind of account as a basis for detailed comparisons and contrasts are apparent in a study by Nicholas Havely of friars in Chaucer and Boccaccio. Havely wrote informatively about the traditions to which these two writers were heirs but, describing antifraternal satire as 'densely populated with traditional stereotypes, allusions and accusations', had no convincing basis for his 'specific suggestions about the ways in which their representation of friars could be compared'.[15] For example, Havely found that Chaucer's friars are given to wrath and envy, like those in *Piers Plowman* but unlike those in the *Decameron*, but he could offer no assurance that this is a significant difference, nor any explanation of it.[16] Szittya's chapter on *Piers Plowman* in *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* also shows the limitations of this approach. Acknowledging that identifying traditional features in the poem does not by itself provide an adequate account of antifraternalism in *Piers Plowman*, he turned to 'the poem itself' for the 'answers'; thus his extensive researches into earlier and contemporary antifraternal texts become curiously peripheral in this chapter.[17] Again, noting that a full study of the antifraternal aspects of *Piers Plowman* had never been made, and considering the conclusions of his own and Szittya's earlier work, Adams speculated that such a study would lead to the finding that there are 'more basic affinities between Langland and the Parisian seculars of the previous century than between Langland and FitzRalph'.[18] The present study does not confirm Adams's speculations.

The liveliness of anticlericalism as an issue in the poem, and among the poem's medieval readers, might lead us to expect some independence and innovation: discontinuities with the past, adaptations of traditions, new uses for conventions, new meanings for old satires and, if liveliness also implies conflict between clerics and anticlericals, then we might also expect that such new uses and new meanings would be a focus of conflict, that they would be contested, would sometimes fail to become established and would all the time be subject to refinement, to change and to revision. But the historical perspective has been much obscured in studies of anticlerical 'traditions', since they emphasise, inevitably, continuity with the past, and the importance of origins as the key to meaning. Such studies have largely ignored the continuations of the theoretical debate, and the changes in the political circumstances affecting the clergy which occurred after the traditions were first established. Medieval readers, we saw, were alert to the treatment in the

poem of theoretical issues, and also to the wide range of attack on clerics; for them, the meaning of the poem's anticlericalism does not seem to have been simply the meaning of long-established, disparate, literary traditions. To understand the anticlericalism of *Piers Plowman*, we must remedy our failure of perspective.

There are ample sources for reconstructing the drama of the anticlericalism of the *Piers Plowman* period, for identifying and explaining its characteristics, and hence for understanding its literary implications. The parties to the previous conflicts may still be distinguished in the later fourteenth century, from their own points of view, at least, although definitions and identities were, as later chapters will show, increasingly fluid and controversial. As we have seen, the secular, or parish, clergy, were old enemies of the friars, and the friars were, in addition, long-standing opponents of the monks and other endowed clergy. These antagonisms reflected, traditionally, fundamental differences in their ways of living, based on philosophies which could hardly be reconciled. The secular clergy, as they saw it, derived their income from tithes and oblations in return for providing pastoral care in the parishes, such as preaching, hearing confessions, conducting baptisms and burying the dead. The monks, by contrast, derived their income from their holdings of property and land. As contemplative religious orders, they were not committed to pastoral work, as were the parish clergy; they were, however, theoretically prepared to undertake manual labour if necessary, although during this period, despite some financial strains, their property income seems to have been substantial enough for manual labour to remain part of the theory. The friars, like the monks, were members of regular orders, but while the monastic rules provided for property and manual labour, the friars professed to get a livelihood from begging. They eschewed both ownership of property and manual labour, for they were committed to spending their time on the spiritual labour of pastoral work. Consequently, they looked to the alms of the faithful for support. There was thus an underlying incompatibility between the friars and the secular clergy, and between the friars and the monks. As beggars with a pastoral ministry, the friars competed with the secular clergy for the wealth and pastoral work of the parishes. As members of religious orders who rejected as imperfect living on property or manual labour, they brought into question the claims of the monks. The underlying incompatibility between the seculars and the friars erupted first as a serious dispute in the Paris conflict of the 1250s; clashes between the monks and the friars can also be documented from this period.[19]

We cannot understand the later fourteenth-century eruptions of these debates simply from the perspective of tradition; we must consider also their contemporary implications.[20] A variety of new pressures at this time combined to widen and increase interest in the rights and obligations of the clergy. Claims asserted by one clerical group against another were supplemented by, and became the objects of interest among, outside parties. The laity, the crown and the papacy all had, in this period, a particularly intense

interest in clerical questions. For the crown and the papacy, the clergy were an important source of revenue, via such mechanisms as taxation and subsidies. For the laity, the clergy were a drain on resources, as recipients of alms and tithes, as able-bodied who did not contribute their labour and as fellow-taxpayers who did not appear to pay a fair share to the crown, or who diverted much-needed resources abroad to the papacy. These concerns were particularly acute during the *Piers Plowman* period, as a result of a combination of natural and political difficulties and disasters. The virulent and deadly bubonic plague which broke out in 1348, and again in 1361–2 and 1369, brought high mortality rates to parishes and a labour shortage, both of which had implications for clerics who financed spiritual work from the tithes or alms of parishioners.[21] Pressures from natural disaster were exacerbated by unusually heavy fiscal demands on the national purse. Gregory XI began, from the 1370s, to press demands for financial assistance from the English clergy, in order to fund wars in the Italian states.[22] Edward III was committed to contesting his claim to the French throne; the protracted and intermittent military campaign was the reason for a series of tax-raising efforts directed at both clergy and laity during this period.[23] These pressures made the political position of the clergy complex and unstable, as well as having implications for their internal strains and disputes. The laity's interests were served by an anticlerical, antipapal, stance: their burden of finance for the French war would be the lighter as the clergy's was made heavier; moreover, competition from the papacy for the clergy's wealth was to be resisted.[24] It is not surprising that, when the Peasants' Revolt took place in 1381, the rebels' wrath was extended to the clergy, who indirectly increased the laity's burden of taxation, as well as to the lay lords who had been favoured directly by the novel imposition of a poll-tax.[25] But less obvious were the best positions for each of the factions of the clergy, and for the crown, to adopt. For example, the aggressive papal demands on the English clergy which characterised the 1370s were, predictably, met with hostility on the part of the crown; when the papal demands clashed with his own need for war finance in 1373 Edward III prevented delivery to English prelates of the letters which set out the demands, yet in 1375 negotiation of a truce with France coincided with agreement to a papal subsidy, in return, most plausibly, for the appointment of royal favourites and allies to some important English benefices; a grant to the pope seems to have been traded for a gain of greater compliance from the clergy at home.[26] The clergy's attitudes to the competing claims on them of crown and papacy varied, shifted and were confused; the old internal rivalries were exacerbated, made more dangerous and transformed by these external pressures. At stake was the issue of the relation between temporal and spiritual powers: to deny the pope, though that was tempting, was to endorse the lordship of the king over the clergy. On the other hand, it was easier to resist the papacy than the crown.[27] Support for the crown's demands was attractive to the friars, as long as they could channel the consequences against the endowed clergy, and away

from themselves. We find Austin friars arguing the anticlerical case in a parliament of 1371, and a Franciscan supporting the king in a Great Council held at Westminster to discuss papal demands, in 1373.[28] But certain of their enemies from among the secular clergy also had an interest in anticlericalism, as a weapon against those they considered more favoured than themselves. The Wycliffite secular cleric Nicholas Hereford put forward the argument, in a sermon delivered on Ascension Day 1382, the year after the Peasants' Revolt, that the king would not need to burden the laity so heavily with taxation if monks, friars and other wealthy clerics were reformed.[29]

May McKisack, writing of the anticlericalism of the 1370s, remarked: 'Denunciations of ecclesiastical riches were not, of course, new; what was new was the attempt to find a metaphysical basis for anti-clericalism and at the same time to translate it into terms of political action'.[30] But this account of the 'newness' of anticlericalism in this period leaves out the internal clerical politics and their history. There were implications for the long-standing divisions among the clergy; the new circumstances regenerated and transformed the old conflicts. When we examine the careers and writings of anticlerical polemicists and of clerical apologists, and the disputes in which they were engaged, in the *Piers Plowman* period, we do not find simply a repetition of the earlier clashes, but debates modified by the new, wider, less stable, less predictable, more dangerous implications the old differences now had for all clerics.

During the period many subjects were debated, but the fundamental issue was now that of clerical dominion, or lordship. This was the question of the authority by which powers and property were held. Debate on the old issues, such as poverty and pastoral care, continued, as we shall see, but debate now took place within the wider context of the dominion controversy. This shift of perspective was the intellectual consequence of the widened political implications of the old debates. A major source for the arguments involved was the writings of Richard FitzRalph (d.1360), the Archbishop of Armagh who defended the secular clergy against the friars in the middle years of the fourteenth century.

FitzRalph has been treated as a 'traditional' antifraternal polemicist, who owed much to the antifraternalism established by William of St Amour. His own time, however, seems to have considered him an innovator, for his works were widely copied, studied and used by later polemicists. From Katherine Walsh's biography, *A Fourteenth-Century Scholar and Primate: Richard FitzRalph in Oxford, Avigon and Armagh*, we know much about FitzRalph's career, while there are several narrative accounts of his dispute with the friars.[31] However, although his efforts and writings have long been recognised as important for polemicists in the later part of the century, there has been little detailed study of his thought and strategies, and of the nature of, and precise reasons for, their later importance. This is perhaps because FitzRalph has been thought of as 'traditional', but it is no doubt also because few of his works have been edited in modern times.[32] An exception to have

escaped the general neglect is his *proposicio* on the problem of the friars' privileges, *Unusquisque*, which he delivered at Avignon in 1350, and which has been edited by Hammerich.[33] FitzRalph's major theoretical work, a treatise on dominion cast in the form of a dialogue, *De Pauperie Salvatoris*, was partly printed by Poole as an appendix in his edition of Wyclif's *De Dominio Divino*, because he considered it a source for Wyclif's own theory of dominion. Poole printed only half of the eight books which make up the treatise, and the complete work was not widely available even in medieval times.[34] The treatise was produced, FitzRalph tells us in the Prologue, in response to a request received while he was at Avignon (probably in 1349–50) from Clement VI. Clement commissioned him to investigate questions of dominion and poverty currently controversial among the mendicant orders.[35] The result was evidently of interest beyond curial circles. The first seven books were circulating in Oxford at least by 1356–7, and the large number of extant manuscripts testifies to their wide circulation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as, of course, does their use by later writers, such as Wyclif.[36] The eighth book, *De Mendicitate Fratrum et eorum Privilegiis*, was added c.1359.[37] Here the implications of the theoretical books for the friars' privileges and property are explored in more detail. This final book seems to have had a more limited circulation than the rest of the work. The leading Benedictine monk Adam Easton had a copy of the entire treatise made before 1381, but there are few complete copies extant. However, there is some evidence that the eighth book circulated separately from the rest of the treatise as a pamphlet.[38]

Some of FitzRalph's other writings against the friars circulated even more widely than the *De Pauperie Salvatoris*. On the basis of numbers of extant manuscripts, the best known of his polemics was the *Defensio Curatorum*, a Latin *proposicio* delivered at Avignon in 1357, and soon well known in Oxford. Most modern readers who know the work have used the English translation made by John Trevisa in the later fourteenth century.[39] This translation is itself testimony to the wide interest FitzRalph's polemics attracted in the later part of the century. Fowler's attempt to identify Trevisa with the author of the B-text of *Piers Plowman* has little evidence to support it, and has rightly therefore not been generally accepted.[40] But Fowler's work on Trevisa has revealed a figure whose interests and career are indicative of a strand of late fourteenth-century culture of importance for the anticlericalism of the *Piers Plowman* period. Fowler has shown that Trevisa was a secular priest critical of the regular clergy, possibly associated with Wyclif at Oxford, engaged in turning into English texts relevant to the relations of church and state: Higden's *Polychronicon*, pseudo-Ockham's *Dialogus*, as well as, at an unknown date, FitzRalph's *Defensio Curatorum*. Translation of Latin polemic into English in itself implies a certain change of use; and it may even be that readers of contemporary English poetry were also Trevisa's readers; certainly, the work of Doyle and Parkes has shown that in terms of manuscript production, Trevisa was associated with Chaucer, Gower and

Piers Plowman.[41] Also of interest to later readers were FitzRalph's sermons, records of which survive from the period 1344–59. In several manuscripts these records take the form of a sermon-diary. The four which survive from a series of antimendicant sermons delivered in London during 1356–7 were much copied, especially the fourth, on Eph. 5:6, *Nemo Vos Seducat Inanibus Verbis*. These London Sermons, although originally delivered in English, survive in a lengthy polished Latin form, evidently intended for publication, but whoever acted as FitzRalph's literary executor clearly thought that the brief notes from the sermon-diary were worth preserving as well, perhaps because here too many of FitzRalph's characteristic themes are to be found.[42] Besides manuscript circulation, quotation by later writers also indicates the importance of the sermons. Examples of quotation are in the *Omne Bonum*, in Wyclif, and in the Wycliffite compendium *Rosarium Theologie*.[43]

An approach to FitzRalph's thought has been made in an important article by James Doyne Dawson, 'Richard FitzRalph and the Fourteenth-Century Poverty Controversies'. Dawson, however, dealt in detail only with *De Pauperie Salvatoris*, and did not pursue the implications of his findings for understanding FitzRalph's other polemics, which he considered traditional ('not very original anti-mendicant preaching'), or for understanding the later importance of FitzRalph's writings.[44] Yet there is a great deal of material to enable us to reconstruct something at least of the circumstances within which FitzRalph was working, and thus to understand better his strategy and thought, and much too for later debates influenced by his writings, to help us to understand the course of the dominion issue in the context of the new pressures on the clergy. For the FitzRalph affair, there is much documentary material; a particularly important source is Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College MS 64, in which are preserved documents drawn up by the friars, as well as FitzRalph's own writings.[45] Especially useful are treatises produced by the friars themselves, too often neglected in studies which emphasise the 'traditional' perspective. We have these from the FitzRalph period, and from the later debates. The writings of Geoffrey Hardeby, an Austin friar, are especially revealing, since they link the earlier and later periods. Hardeby published *De Vita Evangelica*, a defence of the friars' profession, in 1385, probably as a result of Wyclif's attack on the friars. Significantly, though, although published late in the century, the treatise includes rebuttals of FitzRalph's arguments in *De Pauperie Salvatoris* and the *Defensio Curatorum*. It is reasonable to accept Walsh's proposal therefore, that parts of the treatise originated in disputations at Oxford in the 1350s, and that revision and publication had become appropriate when FitzRalph's arguments were revived by Wyclif.[46]

Roger Conway was another of FitzRalph's opponents. This Franciscan friar defended his order against FitzRalph at Avignon. He died soon after FitzRalph, but was long remembered as a principal defender of the friars, and his writings, like FitzRalph's, were used as sources by later polemicists, sometimes in preference to, or as a result of confusion with, the works of his

more illustrious forebears. At the papal court in Avignon in 1359 he issued his *Defensio Religionis Mendicantium*, in reply to a tract by FitzRalph on the pastoral question, *De Audientia Confessionum*. Conway's treatise became, however, associated with FitzRalph's *Defensio Curatorum*, and thus circulated widely in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, because it was often included in the same codex as the well-known treatise by FitzRalph.[47] Three of Conway's *quaestiones* on the poverty issue also survive; they are thought to have been composed at Avignon c.1358–9, in reply to FitzRalph's *De Pauperie Salvatoris*.[48] Conway was not just widely read by later polemicists; he became an authority for the pro-fraternal cause. John Erghome, the Austin friar, possessed a copy of his *Defensio Religionis Mendicantium*, and the Carmelite friar Richard Maidstone used him as an authority in his defence of the friars.[49] His fame continued into the fifteenth century, when his work was still copied. Three *articuli* by Bonaventure were mistakenly attributed to his authorship in one manuscript, such was his fame.[50]

The Hardeby and Conway writings help us to understand the dimensions of the FitzRalph conflict, and to measure its influence in the later period. The writings of Richard Maidstone, who used Conway, were new in the later period, emerging from a later dispute, although precise dating is problematic. The Carmelite friar's opponent was John Ashwardby, vicar of St Mary's Church in Oxford. Nothing of Ashwardby's polemic survives, beyond what Maidstone reports. Maidstone's surviving polemics are the *Protectorium Pauperis*, and a related *determinatio* against Ashwardby. Arnold Williams, editor of the *Protectorium*, dated that work 1380, and the *determinatio* slightly later, 1380–2.[51] However, this dating should be treated with caution. Williams based it on a scribal note in one of the two manuscripts (Bod. Lib. MS e. Mus. 86, the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*), a late manuscript (1439), wrongly dated by Williams as late fourteenth-century; this may have influenced his acceptance of the scribal dating, but it is called into question by the fact that Ashwardby did not become vicar of St Mary's until 1384.[52] It is however clear that the *arguments* attacked and defended in Maidstone's works were in circulation in the early 1380s. Similar opinions to Ashwardby's were attributed to an unnamed Wycliffite in Knighton's *Chronicon* entry for the year 1382 while W. R. Thomson, Wyclif's bibliographer, compared arguments in one of Wyclif's polemical sermons (probable date 1383) with the views Maidstone was attacking.[53]

It may be that the Maidstone–Ashwardby dispute was in part at least a revival of another Oxford conflict of the early 1380s, when Wyclif's follower Nicholas Hereford preached the controversial Ascension Day sermon which related high taxes to clerical abuses. The Wycliffite whom Knighton preferred not to name may have been Philip Repingdon, one of Hereford's allies.[54] Maidstone had looked to FitzRalph as a source for pernicious antifraternal views; Hereford looked to FitzRalph as an authority, although, as we have seen, he widened his attack beyond the friars to include other clerics. Hereford's sermons have not survived, but we know something of