

War and Peace in the Works of Chaucer and his Contemporaries

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I. Point of departure. Results of research

Even today the concept of the Middle Ages in scholarship and research is marked by one-sided viewpoints. This is particularly true in the case of war and peace, knightly combat, and the ideals of chivalry. Numerous publications claim that a proper understanding of the Middle Ages must proceed from the basic premise of a naive and unreflected, fundamentally positive attitude towards war and armed conflict. An author like Gerhard Nebel may well represent an extreme position in this respect: with regret he casts a nostalgic look back at an age in which men were always running about, weapon in hand, on the lookout for a possible opponent, while modern man has become a mollusk (that is a spineless soft-bodied animal).¹⁾ Cornish is certainly nearer to the consensus of opinion prevalent in this century when he characterizes the essence of medieval warfare in the following way: »...the game of war, thus played, is a noble sport, which encreases the dignity of humanity.«²⁾

Particularly in the study of medieval literature, the concept of knightly combat has become a controversial focal point. Of course there were critics who stressed the negative aspects of medieval chivalry, as for instance, the glorification of war for its own sake, love of bloodshed, disregard for the suffering of the poor, and moral degeneration. As a rule, however, it was the positive aspects which were emphasized. This is already recognizable from the titles of the books. Thus the very influential work of Prestage on chivalry deals according to its subtitle with »...its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence.«³⁾

But whenever authors of work on chivalry and war during the Middle Ages have tried to determine the exact historical influence and result of chivalric ideals, they have run into difficulties. That is why there are such widely varying hypotheses concerning the »Golden Age« of chivalry. Nearly all the periods from the early 12th to the late 15th century have been suggested. The net result will inevitably be that there never was a Golden Age of chivalry. The ideal knight is only to be found in fiction, that is in literature, which, however, as we can read even in modern standard works, bears the stamp of the ideals of courtly chivalry from 1100 to 1300, in England naturally with the well-known retardation.

Recent research on medieval Arthurian literature,⁴⁾ however, leads me to suggest that at least one medieval English work of literature does not belong to the »mainstream« thus described: The work in question is the so-called *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, a poem written in alliterative long-lines. It deals with the rise and fall of King Arthur. Nearly all the common stereotypes of King Arthur and his career are discarded by the poet. Even at the beginning of his career, Arthur is confronted with the question of whether or not he should wage war against the Roman Empire. A kind of royal council convenes with the task of counselling the King in this important matter. This is a recurrent feature of later medieval poetry: Who and which are the proper persons to give counsel to the King in the vital question of war and peace? And what importance should be attributed to such counsel?

In the *AMA*, only the King is at first prudent and cautious; he emphasizes the necessity of weighing the arguments *pro* and *con*. The assembled aristocracy, however, clamours for war, most of them offer their help and a contingent of troops. Arthur takes up the campaign against Rome, but is betrayed by his illegitimate son Mordred. He returns to England and falls in battle — along with the best of his knights.

Nearly all the usual motifs of Arthurian literature are missing; Lancelot plays a very subordinate role, and not a word is said about his love for Guinevere. Instead, the terrible con-

sequences of war are portrayed in detail. Towns and entire stretches of the countryside are reduced to ruins and ashes, and women and children are massacred. Arthur leaves nothing but »scorched earth« behind. In a very similar way the author describes the spiritual consequences of war: Arthur and his knights degenerate morally through their abuse of power and thus incur their own doom. The work as a whole is an illustration of the scriptural passage which states, »He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword«.

The author of the *AMA* adopts a position which bears comparison with the radical opinions expressed by the Lollards, according to whom every type of warfare is criminal, whatever the causes or motives.⁵⁾

In order to test the validity of this thesis, I propose now to look at some of the contemporaries of the *AMA*-poet, so as to establish what their opinions were with regard to war and peace. Only after having collected this material can we decide the question of whether contemporary opinion during the fourteenth century took a well-argued and logical stand against war as such, not merely an emotional and affective one against the general suffering engendered by war.

II. The fourteenth-century view of war and peace

Contingencies of space oblige me to confine my discussion to Chaucer and his milieu, but I should at least point out that numerous writings by other authors could profitably be discussed, in so far as their opinions about war coincide with those of Chaucer himself. Of course, it is no wonder that authors whose whole lifespan was shadowed by the Hundred Years War spoke out negatively or even with strong revulsion against the ends of war. Every author in the 14th century must have suffered under the terrible consequences of war in one way or another — the French even more than the English. But all too often, these very same authors had their reservations about peace too — »it leads to softening of the sinews of the country«, as the Earl of Essex put it⁶⁾ — and before him, quite a few heroes in Arthurian literature, such a Sir Cador in the *AMA*.

But even if we count only those clear-cut theoretical statements which damn war, we find a surprising number. Nearly all the Lollards have taken a strong stand against war,⁷⁾ many of them going far beyond the original tenets of Wyclif. But even Wyclif may have been far more important for the course of discussion on the *pros* and *cons* of warfare than has hitherto been supposed. Frequently he stressed the importance of councillors for the final decision to wage war. Thus he asks himself how it was possible for councillors of the king to reconcile their consciences with the obviously unjust invasion of France.⁸⁾ In so doing he describes a scene which became a literary topos which was to remain extremely popular down to Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

»Moral« Gower speaks out even more emphatically against murder, manslaughter and war than did Wyclif and his followers. In conclusion to an impressive assault on the baseness of *slawhte*, the *Amans* asks: »Is it lawful, to cross the great sea in order to fight against the Saracens?«⁹⁾ And the *Confessor* answers:

Sone myn, 2490
 To preche and soffre for the feith,
 That have I herd the gospels seith;
 Bot forto slee, that hier I noght.

....
 Of hise Apostles wente aboute 2499
 The holi feith to prechen oute,
 Wherof the deth in sondri place
 Thei soffre,...

...
 Fro first that holi cherche hath weyved 2509
 To preche, and hath the swerd received,
 Wherof the werres ben begonne,
 A gret partie of that was wonne
 To Cristes feith stant now miswent.¹⁰⁾ 2513

(My son, I have heard that the Gospel commands us to preach the Faith and to suffer for it, but nowhere have I read that we are to kill for it. The Apostles were commanded to preach the Faith, and many have suffered death for it. Only since the Church has stopped preaching and turned to the sword, do wars prevail. And much has been lost through the sword that was previously won through the Word.)

Even more to the point is Gower's poem on *Peace*, which was addressed to King Henry IV. The background of these impressive stanzas is the war against France, which had become very unpopular by the turn of the century. Gower, however, makes use of the historical situation only as a point of departure for comments which would today be called »pacifist«:

The werre is modir of the wronges alle;
 It sleth the prest in holi chirche at masse,
 Forlith the maide and doth hire flour to falle.
 And werre makth the grete citee lasse,
 And doth the lawe his reules overpasse.
 There is no thing wherof meschef mai growe
 Which is noght caused of the werre, y trowe.¹¹⁾

(War is the Mother of all Evil; / it slays the priest in Holy Church at the altar, / beds the maid and robs her of her innocence. / War reduces great cities / and abolishes the rules of law. / There is nothing in this world which brings forth mischief / which is not caused by war, so I believe.)

III. Chaucer's attitude towards war

Gower has been styled »an openly avowed pacifist« by Muriel Bowden, because he denounces »dedly werre« as a »foule horrible vice«, forbidden both by God and »Nature«.¹²⁾ Chaucer, according to Bowden, is not such a pacifist. After a casual look into Chaucer's *Melibeus*, however, she is haunted by nagging doubts — as were some of her predecessors. Should this work be Chaucer's »own voice in a grave moment?«¹³⁾ The tenor of what she says about the knight and the tentative character of her question make it clear that Bowden — very much like all her predecessors — regards the knight of the *Canterbury Tales* as the embodiment of chivalry, and the story told by the knight as »a prototypical *romance of chivalry*«.

Thanks to Terry Jones' revolutionary, if somewhat overstated or even partially erroneous work, we now know that the knight may well have been a mercenary, who sold himself for money even to the enemies of the Christian Faith. Jones has also argued convincingly that the story of the knight is an exemplary representation of a dark and cold world dominated by fear, oppression, and death — the product of a degenerated form of knighthood which had made itself a tool of tyranny and destruction by betraying the ideals upon which it was founded.¹⁴⁾ Even in the light of this startling new concept, a fresh investigation of Chaucer's attitude towards war and peace seems justified, indeed necessary. Of course it is very difficult to distil the essence of Chaucer's position out of the words, actions and comments of main figures. It is hardly necessary to emphasize that the ideology and world view of Chaucer's characters are seldom if ever identical with those of Chaucer the poet. It is therefore imperative to differentiate between character, narrator and the poet or author.

But such reservations should not be carried to extremes.¹⁵⁾ In respect to Chaucer's point of view, there are many clues in the works themselves, and taken as a sum they convey a relatively clear picture. Thus there are some works in which war und peace, revenge and punishment are central or at least important issues. The point of view represented is relatively uniform, contrary to, e.g., the so-called *marriage debate*. Particularly in regard to the theory of war, we can recognize a clear-cut attitude which is almost certainly that of Chaucer himself.

IV. The translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is of prime importance in this respect. It is this work which accompanied Chaucer throughout his adult life and which never lost its appeal for him. Chaucer apparently felt something like spiritual kinship with the *Consolatio* and the philosophy of Boethius, which have left an indelible mark on *Troilus and Criseyde* and parts of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Chaucer translated Metre No. 5 of Book II in a very convincing way in his rendering of the *Consolatio*. But a second time he paraphrased it more freely and with additions which strike us as a kind of commentary.

In the prose translation we read of the Golden Age:

»Tho weren the cruele clariouns ful hust and ful stille. Ne blood ischad by egre hate ne hadde nat deyed yit armures. For wherto or which woodnesse of enemys wolde first moeven armes, whan thei seyen cruele wowndes, ne none medes be of blood ishad? I wolde that our tymes shold torne ayen to the oolde maneris!«¹⁶⁾

(Then the cruel clariouns were completely still and hushed. No blood shed by eager hate had yet dyed the armour. To what end or what (blind) rage of enemy should move to arms, when they see cruel wounds and nothing of reward (to be won) by shedding blood. If only our times would turn back again to the old ways!)

In *The Former Age* the poet is even more explicit:

Unforged was the hauberk and the plate;
The lambish peple, voyd of alle vyce,
Hadden no fantasye to debate,
But ech of hem wolde other wel cheryce;
No pryde, non envye, non avaryce,
No lord, no taylage by no tyrannye;
Humblesse and pees, good feith, the emperice,...¹⁷⁾

(Unforged was the hauberk and the plate;
The lambish people, devoid of all vice,
Had no mind for conflict,
But each of them used to cherish the other;
No pride, nor envy, nor avarice,
No lord nor tax by no tyranny;
Humility and peace, good faith, the empress ...)

Boethius and Chaucer do not stop with a mere nostalgic review of things past. Both are at bottom concerned with the motives of human behaviour, and of the scale of values behind it. The mischievous, criminal and evil should not be blotted out, on the contrary they deserve our pity. The reason for this lies in the fact that the crime is its own punishment. Thus the evil-doer is much more to be pitied than censured; he is much worse off than his victim. From this it follows that it is not the sword of justice that is called for, but pity, because even the power of the evil-doer becomes all the more its own punishment the longer it endures, and it would make them suffer infinitely if it lasted forever. Thus the hardest punishment they can incur is to feel that their deeds have gone unpunished. Boethius explains the reason for this in a way that sounds modern to our ears:

»for no wyght nil haten gode men, but yif he were overmochel a fool, and for to haten schrewes it is no resoun...; and so as we ne deme nat that they that ben sike of hir body ben worthy to ben hated but rather worthy of pite...«¹⁸⁾

(for no one would hate good men, unless he were overmuch a fool, and there is no reason to hate the wicked ...; and even as we think that they who are sick of body are not worthy of hate, but rather of pity...)

The grand climax of this portion of the *Consolatio* and, in my opinion, a kind of *nucleus* of medieval pacifism is Metre 4 of Book IV:

»What deliteth yow to exciten so grete moevynges of hatredes, and to hasten and bysien the fatal disposicioun of your deth with your propre handes (*that is to seyn, by batayles or contek*)? For yif ye axen the deth, it hasteth hym of his owene wil, ne deth ne taryeth nat his swifte hors. And the men that the serpentz, and the lyoun, and the tigre, and the bere, and the boor, seken to sleen with hir teeth, yit thilke same men seken to sleen everich of hem oothir with swerd. Lo, for hir maneres ben diverse and discordaunt, thei moeven unryghtful oostes and cruel batayles, and wilnen to perise by entrechaungynge of dartes! But the resoun of cruelte nis nat inowh ryghtful. Wiltow hanne yelden a covenable gerdoun to the dissertes of men? Love ryghtfully goode folk, and have pite on schrewes.«¹⁹⁾

(Why do you delight in exciting such great movings of hatred, and in hastening and bringing about the fatal arrangement of your death with your own hands (*that is to say, by battles or conflict*)? For if you seek death, he will make haste of his own accord, nor will death tarry his swift horse one bit. And those same men, whom the serpent, lion, tigre, bear and boar seek to slay with their teeth, seek to slay each other by the sword. Behold, their manner of behaviour is diverse and discordant, they raise unjust armies and wage cruel battles, and they intend destruction by the interchange of arrows. But the reason for cruelty is not rightful enough. Do you desire to have acquitted the merits of men with a suitable reward? Love good folk rightfully and have pity on the wicked.)

V. Chaucer's *Melibeus*

Chaucer the Pilgrim contributed to the entertainment of his fellow travellers through two stories, the tail-rhyme *Romance of Sir Thopas*, which is rudely interrupted by the Host Harry Bailly, and the subsequent *Tale of Melibeus*.

Similar to the *opus magnum* of Boethius, the source of *Melibeus* is called *Liber consolacionis et consilii* (written by Albertano of Brescia in 1246). Chaucer used the French translation of Renaud de Louens, made in 1336. There are also similarities in content.²⁰⁾

Of course, only a very few aspects of this complicated and sophisticated work can be dealt with here. Questions concerning the integration of the *Melibeus* into the narrative frame of the *Canterbury Tales*,²¹⁾ its political and historical allusions, the relationship of didactic and religious allegory, and so on, though highly interesting, will have to be passed over in the following discussion.²²⁾

The main crux of the story consists in the fact that the three enemies of Melibeus — and thus of man — are the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is, of course, absolutely necessary that man fight against them if he wants to lead a Christian life, pleasing to God Almighty. And yet Prudence is only very half-hearted on this question. She doesn't know why God permits man to be put to such a cruel test:

»Now, sire, if men wolde axe me why that God suffred men to do yow this vileynye, certes, I kan nat wel answere, as for no sothfastnesse. For th'apostle seith that the sciences and the juggementz of oure Lord God almyghty been ful depe; ther may no man comprehende ne serchen hem suffisantly. Nathelees, by certeyne presumpciouns and conjectynges, I holde and bileeve that god, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this bi-tyde by juste cause resonable.«²³⁾

(Now, Sir, if men should ask me why God allowed men to do you this villany, for certain, I cannot answer well, for no truth. For the apostle says that the knowledge and judgments of our Lord God Almighty are deep indeed; no man can comprehend or fathom them sufficiently. Nonetheless, through certain assumptions and conjectures, I hold and believe that God, who is filled with justice and righteousness, has suffered this to happen by just and reasonable cause.)

What Prudence says here is a somewhat helplessly formulated *theodicy*, that is, the justification of evil in the world by reference to God's perfection; the ultimate source is in all likelihood Boethius himself. True to the major tenets of the *Consolatio*, Prudence insists on *temperantia*. Revenge and even punishment are strictly rejected. Prudence offers only two alternatives in cases of conflict: submittal to the authority of a Court of Law, or reconciliation with one's enemies.

No less clearly than in the verse romances, as for instance the *AMA* and *Mum & Sothsegger*, is the role of the royal councillors stressed. The first part of *Melibeus* consists of a Council of War much like that of the *AMA*. Conflicting views determined by age and profession clash; and while the young men clamour for war, a wise old councillor rises, and with deep feeling argues against war. In the context of the Council his is a lonely voice crying in the wilderness:

»Lordynges«, quod he, »ther is ful many a man that crieth 'Werre! Werre!' that woot ful litel what werre amounteth. / Werre at his bigynnyng hath so greet an entryng and so large, that every wight may entre whan hym liketh, and lightly fynde werre; / but certes what ende that shal therof bifalle, it is nat light to knowe. / For soothly, whan that werre is ones bigonne, ther is ful many a child unborn of his mooder that shal sterve yong by cause of thilke werre, or elles lyve in sorwe and dye in wrecchednesse. / And therefore, er that any werre bigynne, men moste have greet conseil and greet deliberacion...«²⁴)

(»Lords«, he said, »there is many a man who cries 'War! War!' who knows very little what war amounts to. / War at its beginning has so great an entrance and so large that every one, if he so desire, may enter and easily find war; / but for sure, what outcome shall ensue is not so easily known. / For truly when war is once begun, many a child not yet born of its mother shall starve young in wretchedness. / And therefore, before any war is begun, men must take great counsel and deliberacion.«)

In contrast to the *AMA*, the *pros* and *cons* are fully discussed, and the weight to be attached to individual councillors is critically expounded, whereby the criteria of a good council are explained: openness, reversability, adaptability to new developments are prerequisites for »every conseil«:

»And take this for a general reule, that every conseil that is affermed so strongly that it may nat be chaunged for no condicioun that may bityde, I seye that thilke conseil is wikked.«²⁵)

What Prudence wants to say is that every wise human being should be interested in allaying discordance by means of open discussion, rather than obstinate vengefulness or stubborn insistence on one's rights. Thus Prudence does not deny the right of self-defence. It is permitted, »...whan the defense is doon anon withouten intervalle or withouten taryng or delay, / for to defenden hym and nat for to vengen hym« (V. 1530—1533).

In *Melibeus* this position seems like a kind of deferential bow to the animal weakness of man, who always reacts instinctively when faced with extreme situations. The general rule of rational man should be to avoid war and conflict, even if only for pragmatic reasons. Similar to a great number of other medieval works which deal with war, among others also the *AMA*, the outcome of war is seen as completely uncertain in *Melibeus*. In the romances many authors symbolize this risk through the figure of the Goddess Fortuna, who is particularly unreliable in matters of war.²⁶) Prudence refrains from conjuring up Fortune, nevertheless the essence of her arguments is very much the same: »Victorie of a bataile comth... from oure Lord God of hevене... for as muchel as there is no man certain if he be worthy

that God yeve hym victorie, (*ne plus que il est certain se il est digne de l'amour de Dieu*), .. therefore every man sholde greetly drede werres to bigynne.« (V. 1657—1665)

(Victory in battle comes from our Lord God of Heaven ... in so far as there is no man who can be certain whether he is worthy that God give him victory, (... *ne plus que il est certain se il est digne de l'amour de Dieu*), ... therefore every man should greatly dread beginning a war.)

This is also true of wars of defence. In general, Prudence demands that peace be made with the aggressor. He who takes his destiny into his own hands, he who relies upon his own judgment and his own power, is guilty of *Hybris* and of vanity. The most important task of man consists in submitting oneself to God's will, to make one's peace with God. (V. 2904 ff.)

Thus Prudence demands reactions from man which are mutually exclusive. On the one side, she blames Melibeus for not having defended himself properly against the inroads and temptations of his enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil («...thou hast suffred hem entre in to thyn herte wilfully by the wyndowes of the body,/and hast nat defended thyself suffisantly agayns hire assautes and hire temptaciouns,...«; V. 2613—2616).

(Thou hast suffered them to enter into thy heart wilfully through the windows of the body,/and hast not defended thyself sufficiently against their assaults and their temptations, ...)

On the other hand she imperiously demands that Melibeus make peace with his enemies and live in accord with them («I conseilte yow that ye accorde with youre adversaries and that ye have pees with hem«, V. 1673—1675).

The two mutually exclusive positions of Prudence, which could be easily documented through more quotations from the original, cannot be disposed of by means of hermeneutic sophistry.²⁷⁾

It might be asked whether this *aporia* of Prudence is not that of the author of the original source, or even that of Chaucer the translator. It cannot exactly be called »pacifist« because Prudence says explicitly, if only by way of quotation, that it is against reason to surrender to one's enemies: »... by a strengre resoun he (= Salomon) deffendeth and forbedeth a man to yeven hymself to his enemy«, (V. 1760—1762). The warning against a war of aggression is explicit and unequivocal; her position in the question of self-defence is wavering and uncertain. In the long run, it is a question of whether we should unreservedly adopt the pacifist view and, as to the consequences, place our full trust in God who always provides; or whether, as rational human beings, we should carry the burden of responsibility for our own fate. Chaucer lets both positions come to word, but does not yet take sides.

VI. Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*

Chaucer tells the tale of Melibeus *in propria persona*. But this does not mean that the doctrine and the underlying dilemma it presents are necessarily those of Chaucer. We must not forget that only very shortly before, he had begun the *Tale of Thopas*, a story whose triviality is not only seen by Harry Bailly. Chaucer calls it, tongue-in-cheek, »the best rym I kan«, but lets himself be persuaded to fulfill the general wish for another story with »som murthe or som doctryne«.²⁸⁾

These two stories mark the extreme poles of the poet's range. *Thopas* must be attributed to pure and trivial *delectare*, while *Melibeus* is undiluted *prodesse*.²⁹⁾ Between these two poles is suspended the entire spectrum of poetical possibilities, whereby all the genres contained in the *Canterbury Tales* find their respective and proper place. Chaucer is not at all interested in turning the spotlight on himself and his views nor does he claim a special authority for his own opinions. Perhaps it lay in his intention that the *Parson's Tale* should be the last; it is definitely the longest and deals with the most serious matter.

Also, as far as war and peace are concerned, the Parson marks the definite position which now no longer oscillates between these two poles. He wants to point the way to the Celestial Jerusalem, to show what this »parfit, glorious pilgrimage« should be like; among other things he teaches in no uncertain terms how to deal with one's enemies. His doctrine is unequivocal and uncompromising. It is only by means of patience that you can overcome your enemy. »If thow wolt venquysse thyn enemy, lerne to suffre.«³⁰) Thus the Parson quotes »the wise man« = St. Jerome?, and in so doing lists all kinds of misdoing and crime down to murder. We should bear them with patience or even resignation as Christ did before us.

Chaucer gives the Parson's pure ethics of peace the last word in the *Canterbury Tales*, and thus once again relativizes the doctrine of Melibeus, a position which would in modern terminology be called teleological as it comprises the final goal of peace, as well as the readiness for self-defence. The position of the Parson, however, is indubitably that of the Sermon on the Mount and does not admit any kind of counterviolence whatsoever.

But is it not possible that the *Parson's Tale* is only the voice of one of the pilgrims? Are the Parson's views on moral ethics and peace only one contribution to a long discussion? Perhaps we should allow the poet himself the final word. Chaucer concludes the *Canterbury Tales* with a *retractatio* in which he explicitly distances himself from all his previous literary works »that sownen into synne«. But he thanks God for the translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione*, for the »bokes of moralitee« (*Melibeus*) and »devocioun« (*Parson's Tale*). This is the poet's last word. We should take it seriously.

NOTES

- 1) G. Nebel, *Die Not der Götter. Welt und Mythos der Germanen* (Hamburg, 1957).
- 2) F. Warre Cornish, *Chivalry* (London, 1901), »Conclusion«.
- 3) Edgar Prestage (ed.), *Chivalry. A Series of Studies to Illustrate its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence* (London, 1928), S. 27 ff.
- 4) Cf.: Karl Heinz Göller in co-operation with R. Gleißner and M. Mennicken, »Reality versus Romance. A Reassessment of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*«, in: *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. by Karl Heinz Göller (Cambridge, 1981), p. 15—29, here: p. 28—9.
- 5) The tenth of the *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards* (nailed to the doors of Westminster Hall during the Parliamentary sessions of 1395). Printed in Anne Hudson, *English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 28:
 »þat manslaute be batayle or pretense lawe of rythwysnesse for temporal cause or spirituel withouten special reuelaciun is expres contrarious to þe newe testament. þe qwiche is a lawe of grace and ful of mercy. þ is conclusiun is opynly proud be exsample of Cristis preching here in erthe. þe qwiche most taute for to loue and to haue mercy on his enemys, and nout for to slen hem... And knythis þat rennen to hethnesse to geten hem a name in sleinge of men geten miche maugre of þe King of Pes; for be mekenesse and suffraunce ower beleue was multiplied, and fyhtteres and mansleeris Iesu Cryst hatith and manasit. Qui gladio percutit, gladio peribit.«
 (That manslaughter by battle or by a pretense of lawful justification for temporal or spiritual reason without special revelation is expressly contrary to the New Testament, which is a law of grace and full of mercy. This conclusion has been openly proven by the example of Christ's preaching here on earth, which taught most of all to love and to have mercy on one's enemies and not to slay them ... And knights that rush off to heathen countries to gain themselves a name through the slaying of men win much in despite of the King of Peace; for by meekness and by patience our faith was propagated, and Jesus Christ hates and threatens fighters and slayers of men.)
- 6) Paul A. Jorgensen, »Theoretical Views of War in Elizabethan England«, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13 (1952), 469—81.
- 7) See *Sixteen Points on which the Bishops accuse Lollards*, (composed in late fourteenth century), (Hudson, p. 23): »Also we graunten þat it is leueful to sle men in dome and in batellis, if þo þat doun it han autorite and leue of God. And if þei sleen any man, cristen or heþen, aþens þe autorite

of God, þei ben acursed and breken þe comandement of God. And so it is like þat fewe or none ben nowe slayne be þe autorite of God.«

(Thus we grant that it is lawful to slay men through judgment and in battles, if those that do it have the authority and permission of God. And if they slay any man, Christian or heathen, against the authority of God, they are accursed and have broken the commandment of God. And thus it is likely that few or none are now slain by the authority of God. :) These two passages point out the theoretical possibility (by 'special reuelaciun' or with the 'autorite and leue of God') of just manslaughter, but indicate its virtual impossibility in practice. The taking of life, for whatever reason, is unequivocally opposed in a later Lollard document, the *Confession of Hawisia Moone of Loddon, 1430* (Hudson, pp. 34—7): »Also þat it is not leful to slee a man for ony cause, ne be processe of lawe to dampne ony traytour or ony man for ony treson or felonie to deth, ne to putte ony man to deth for ony cause, but every man shuld remitte all vengeance oonly to þe sentence of God.«

(Also that it is not lawful to slay a man for any cause, not to damn any traitor or any man for any treason, or any felon to death, by process of law, nor to put any man to death for any cause, but every man should submit all vengeance only to the judgment of God.)

- 8) L. J. Daly, *The Political Theory of John Wiclif* (Chicago, 1962), p. 140.
- 9) G.C. Macaulay (ed.), *The English Works of John Gower*, Vol. I, »Confessio Amantis«, III, 2363—2484 (Oxford, 1969).
- 10) Ibid., V. 2489 ff; with my translation.
- 11) J.A.W. Bennett (ed.), *Selections from John Gower* (Oxford, 1968), p. 124, V. 106—112.
- 12) Muriel Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (New York, 1949), p. 69.
- 13) Ibid., p. 68 f.
- 14) Terry Jones, *Chaucer's Knight. The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary* (London, 1980), cf. p. 216.
- 15) Dieter Mehl, *Geoffrey Chaucer. Eine Einführung in seine erzählenden Dichtungen* (Berlin, 1973), p. 155—6. Mehl emphasizes the plurality of different viewpoints and their equal validity.
- 16) F. N. Robinson (ed.), *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London, 21957, Boece, Book II, Metre No. 5, p. 336, V. 22—30).
- 17) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, The Former Age*, p. 534, V. 49—55.
- 18) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Boece*, Book IV, Prosa 4, p. 366, V. 289—296.
- 19) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Boece*, Book IV, Metre No. 4, p. 366, V. 1—18.
- 20) See e.g. the *Mainzer Reichslandfriede* of Emperor Frederic II (1239) which prohibited private vengeance: »Wir setzen und gebieten, daß niemand den Schaden in irgendeiner Sache, der ihm widerfährt, selbst rächen darf...«, in: *Propyläen-Weltgeschichte. Eine Universalgeschichte*, ed. Golo Mann, Alfred Heuß and August Nitschke. 12 Vols. (Berlin, 1961—65). Here Vol. XII: *Bilder und Dokumente der Weltgeschichte*, p. 345.
- For the relationship of Chaucer's *Melibeus* to its sources cf.: J. Burke Severs, »Source of Chaucer's *Melibeus*«, *PMLA*, 50 (1935), 92—99; »The Tale of Melibeus«, in: *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W.F. Bryan and G. Dempster (Chicago, Ill., 1941), p. 560—614; Diane Bornstein, »Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* as an Example of the *Style Clergial*«, *ChauR*, 12 (1978), 236—54.
- 21) Cf. Glending Olson, »A Reading of the *Thopas-Melibee* Link«, *ChauR*, 10 (1976), 147—53.
- 22) Major secondary works on Chaucer's *Melibeus*: J. Leslie Hotson, »The *Tale of Melibeus* and John of Gaunt«, *SP*, 18 (1921), 429—52.
- V. Langhans, »Die Datierung der Prosastücke Chaucers«, *Anglia*, 53 (1929), 236—43.
- J. Burke Severs, »Source of Chaucer's *Melibeus*«, *PMLA*, 50 (1935), 92—99.
- W. W. Lawrence, »The *Tale of Melibeus*«, in *Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown* (New York, 1940), p. 100—10.
- Gardiner Stillwell, »The Political Meaning of Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*«, *Spec.*, 19 (1944), 433—44.
- Paull F. Baum, »Chaucer's Metrical Prose«, *JEGP*, 45 (1950), 38—42.
- Margaret Schlauch, »Chaucer's Prose Rhythms«, *PMLA*, 65 (1950), 568—89.
- D.W. Robertson Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, 1962).
- Bernard Huppé, *A Reading of the Canterbury Tales* (Albany, N.Y., 1964).
- Margaret Schlauch, »The Art of Chaucer's Prose«, in: *Chaucer and Chaucerians*, ed. D.S. Brewer (London and Birmingham, Ala., 1966), p. 163—66.

- Paul Strohm, »The Allegory of the *Tale of Melibee*«, *ChauR*, 2 (1967), 32—42.
- Robert A. Christmas, »Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*: Its Tradition and its Function in Fragment VII of the *Canterbury Tales*« (University of Southern California dissertation, 1968).
- Charles A. Owen, »The *Tale of Melibee*«, *ChauR*, 7 (1973), 268—80.
- Glending Olson, »A Reading of the *Thopas-Melibee* Link«, *ChauR*, 10 (1975), 147—53.
- Diane Bornstein, »Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* as an example of the *Style Clergial*«, *ChauR*, 12 (1978), 236—54.
- 23) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, The Tale of Melibee*, p. 178.
- 24) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, The Tale of Melibee*, p. 169, V. 2227—2236.
- 25) *Ibid.*, V. 2421—2425.
- 26) Cf. Anke Janssen, »The Dream of the Wheel of Fortune«, in: *The AMA. A Reassessment of the Poem*, ed. Karl Heinz Göller, p. 140—152 and p. 179—181 (with a bibliographical list).
- 27) Cf. Owen, »*Tale of Melibee*«, p. 274—280.
- 28) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Sir Thopas*, p. 167, V. 935.
- 29) Cf. Olson, »*Thopas-Melibee* Link«, p. 151.
- 30) Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, The Parson's Tale*, p. 249, 660.