

**THE VISION OF
WILLIAM CONCERNING
PIERS THE PLOWMAN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649119363

The vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman by William Langland

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WILLIAM LANGLAND

**THE VISION OF
WILLIAM CONCERNING
PIERS THE PLOWMAN**

Clarendon Press Series

PIERS THE PLOWMAN

SKEAT

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
LONDON, EDINBURGH
NEW YORK AND TORONTO

Clarendon Press Series

THE VISION OF WILLIAM

CONCERNING

PIERS THE PLOWMAN

BY

WILLIAM LANGLAND

(OR LANGLEY)

ACCORDING TO THE VERSION REVISED AND ENLARGED BY THE AUTHOR
ABOUT A. D. 1377

EDITED BY THE

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Ninth Edition, Revised

Oxford

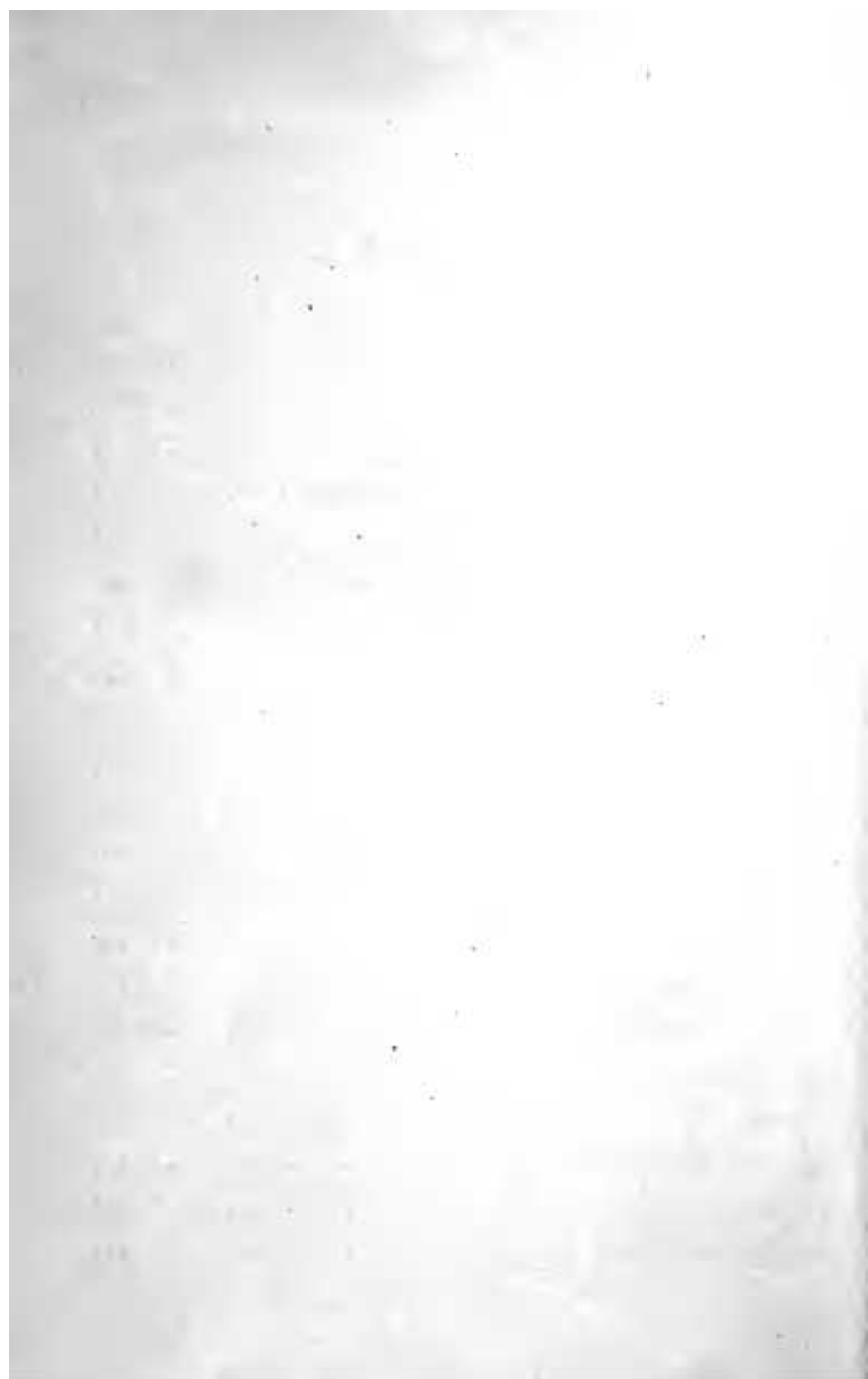
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1906

OXFORD
PRINTED AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
BY HORACE HART, M.A.
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION.

THE title 'Piers Plowman,' or, as I prefer to write it, 'Piers the Plowman,' is one which has been frequently misconstrued and misunderstood by many authors, and concerning which many text-books have blundered inextricably. It is most important that the reader should have a clear idea of what it means, and as it is rather a difficult point to explain accurately, I must ask him to give me his best attention; and I cannot refrain from adding the hope that, if he succeeds in mastering the explanation of it, he will abstain from using the phrase in future in the old slovenly way.

The difficulty is three-fold, as originating in a three-fold error. The three mistakes commonly made are these. First, *Piers Plowman* is used as though it were the name of an *author*^a; secondly, two poems which are quite distinct, and the respective titles of which are familiarly expressed as *The Vision of Piers Plowman* and *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, have been frequently confounded together; and thirdly, the name of 'The Vision of Piers Plowman' is commonly given to what is really the 'Liber de Petro Plowman,' of which the 'Vision' forms only about a third part^b. I must ask the reader to bear in mind that, in what I am now going to say, I make no reference whatever to the *Crede*, and do not make any assertion about it till I again expressly mention it by its full title. Unless this be remembered, our chance of arriving at the truth is much lessened.

Just as Christian is not the author of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but only the subject of it, so Piers the Plowman is not the author of the *Vision*, but the subject of it; he is the personage

^a This mistake occurs, for instance, in 'Chaucer's England,' vol. ii. p. 230, by Matthew Browne; who should have known better.

^b It was Crowley who originated this error, but I do not see why it need be perpetuated.