A PROPER DYALOGE BETWENE A GENTILLMAN AND A HUSBANDMAN: THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

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Readers aware of both Henry VIII's doctrinal conservatism, despite his break with Rome, as well as his sporadic attempts to control the spread of Protestant tracts in England (see, for example, the early chapters in Dickens) will not be surprised that both editions of a controversial Protestant/Lollard book entitled *A proper dyaloge betwene a gentillman and an husbandman*, published in 1529–30 (STC 1462.3) and 1530 (STC 1462.5), should have been printed and circulated without any indication of author. Very briefly, *A proper dyaloge* sets out to demonstrate essentially two claims about the traditional church: the first – found in both editions – is that clerical greed, manifested in the take-over of lands formerly and rightly belonging to the laity, is gradually impoverishing the citizenry and ruining the country. The second – found only in the second edition – is that the church has no business preventing sincere Christians from having and reading the Bible in the vernacular. The first of these two concerns is articulated in the tract initially by two speakers, a gentleman and a husbandman, who express their own personal and economic distress in dialogue form; each shows how the appropriation of lands and farms by the clergy is ruining his life. Their complaints are given a historical pedigree through the addition to this dialogue of a fourteenth-century Lollard prose tract which cites the Bible and other authorities to demonstrate that the

2 STC= *A short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 1475–1640, eds A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave (London, 1926); second edition eds W.A. Jackson and F.S. Ferguson; completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91). The first edition of *A proper dyaloge* has neither colophon nor date of publication. It is my best guess, based upon one piece of internal evidence, that this edition was published either in late 1529 or early 1530. On signature A8v both speakers refer to the so-called Reformation Parliament whose first meeting was held on 3 November 1529 (S.E. Lehmberg, *The Reformation Parliament 1529–1536* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970). Neither speaker seems aware of the outcome of this session, and one of them even feels that nothing good will come of it. Their various speculations suggest that this first session of Parliament could not have been sitting for very long when this work was published.
clergy has no right to lands designed by God for the laity alone.3 Thus ends the first edition of *A proper dyaloge*. However, the second edition, published, like the first, in Antwerp by Hans Luft, reprints the contents of the first edition but adds to it an important tract, possibly Lollard inspired, on the history of the Bible in the vernacular and the importance of allowing Christians the opportunity to read the Bible in their own language,4 a proposition not welcomed by the traditional church as evidenced in the public burning of Tyndale's English New Testament in 1526 under orders from Cuthbert Tunstal, bishop of London.5 These two editions of *A proper dyaloge*, one made up of a dialogue and one Lollard prose tract, and the second comprised of the first's contents plus a second prose tract on the value of a vernacular scripture, were both in the public domain by 1530 and no doubt smuggled into England for popular consumption amongst those with reformist tendencies.6

Based on what we know about its reception, it is evident that *A proper dyaloge* was seen by the traditional church and the authorities as a subversive and dangerous document worthy of suppression. Foxe cites 'A Proclamation for the resisting and withstanding of

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3 This prose tract, whose author has not been identified conclusively, is published by F.D. Matthew (The English works of Wyclif hitherto unpublished, ed. F.D. Matthew (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1880 EETS; rpt Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint, 1973)). Only a portion is found in *A proper dyaloge* and the husbandman who first mentions it claims that he only has a 'Remenant' (B3v). However, Matthew publishes the complete text in his book under the title 'The Clergy May Not Hold Property' (358-404). See Anne Hudson's comments on the relationship between the printed text's incomplete version of this tract and the various medieval manuscript versions of it (Lollards and their books (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1985), 233-4). All references to *A proper dyaloge* in my essay are to the complete second edition (STC 1462.5).

4 This tract, originally written around the beginning of the fifteenth-century, was edited by a sixteenth-century reformer (possibly William Tyndale) and published by Luft in 1530 under the title *A compendious olde treatise shewyng howe that we ought to haue the scripture in Englysshe* (STC 3021). The original English tract, printed in Deanesly (Margaret Deanesly, The Lollard Bible (Cambridge: University Press 1920; rpt. 1966), 437-45), and by Bühler (Curt F. Bühler, 'A Lollard tract: on translating the Bible into English', *Medium Aevum*, 7 (3) (1938), 167-83) is significantly different from and shorter than the English edition published in 1530. The tract that appears in *A proper dyaloge* is based on this latter text. Foxe published the sixteenth-century version in his *Acts and monuments*, ed. Revd George Townsend, vol. 1 (London 1843-94; rpt New York: AMS Press, 1965), 671-6). Authorities are not in agreement as to who wrote this tract in the first place. Deanesly states that it was John Purvey, but Hudson claims that there is no proof for this and suggests the name of the orthodox Richard Ullerston ('The debate on Bible translation, Oxford 1401', *English Historical Review*, cccliv (1975), 1-18). See my forthcoming critical edition of *A proper dyaloge* (University of Toronto Press) for further commentary on authorship and other matters pertaining to the bibliographical and historical significance of this tract.


most damnable Heresies'7 issued by Henry VIII in 1530 and mentions a number of books 'restrained and forbidden', among which are 'A Disputation between the Father and the Son', a work usually attributed to William Roye and published in 1526–27 in Strassburg by Johann Schott;8 'the burying of the Mass', published in 1528 by Schott in Strassburg and also known as Rede me and be nott wrothe, attributed to Jerome Barlowe and William Roye;9 a number of Tyndale's works, and, significantly, this work, A proper dyaloge entitled 'A.B.C. against the Clergy', so named for the rime royal three-stanza poem on its title page. Foxe again mentions the work or a part of it in a section of Acts and monuments entitled 'Prophecies and Proverbs of the Church of Rome'10 and reprints the three-stanza poem, entitling it 'The A,B,C, against the pride of the Clergy'. He wrongly attributes it to William Thorpe which leads Arber to conclude erroneously that 'The A.B.C. to the spirituallte must be distinguished from The A.B.C agesthe Clergye prohibited at Paul's Cross on Advent Sunday, 3d Dec. 1531'.11 In fact, the two works are the same since the three-stanza poem quoted by Foxe (IV 259), although entitled 'The A,B,C, against the pride of the Clergy', is identical to the poem entitled 'An A.B.C. to the spirituallte' published as a three-stanza acrostic in the printed texts.

The work is mentioned again in Foxe in connection with a list of 'Persons Abjured in the Diocese of London'. One John Me1, of Boxted, A.D.1532' is cited 'For having read the New Testament in English, the Psalter in English, and the book called "ABC"'.12 We hear of it again, with yet another twist to its title, in Richard Bayfield's answer to the heresy articles brought against him in 1531.13 In a

7 Foxe, IV, 676.
10 Foxe, IV, 259.
12 Foxe, V, 38.
13 Rupp states that Bayfield was 'one of the most active agents of the society' called the Christian Brethren. As regards this organization he adds that 'it subsidized scholars, ordered the translation and arranged the printing, transportation and sale of forbidden books and employed agents in an adventurous traffic which passed to and from the Rhine and the ports of the Low Countries to the ports of London, Lynn and Bristol, and from there to the Universities and to certain large religious houses like Reading and Bury St Edmund's' (198). It was this organization which doubtless was responsible for getting A proper dyaloge into England. The fact that Bayfield admitted that he had read it suggests that he knew it well and may have been the one involved in smuggling it into England.
response to a question about which heretical books he might have read, Bayfield ‘confessed that he had read “The Obedience of a Christian Man” and the “Sum of Scripture” among company, and also, “The Dialogue betwixt the Ploughman and the Gentleman”, among company, as he thought...’. And finally, in a list of books prohibited in 1542, drawn from Bishop Bonner’s Register, we once again see the book entitled ‘The ABC agaynst the Clergy’.

Much like another reformist dialogue published in 1528 and called variously The burying of the mass and Rede me and be nott wrothe, this tract seems to have had some difficulty over the years establishing a firm identity based upon a fixed title. And occasionally the criticism of our own day has not made the issue of the title any less complex. Commenting on books smuggled into England from abroad during the 1520s, the editor of Volume 9 of The complete works of St Thomas More lists the following titles which he attributes to Jerome Barlowe: a ‘Proper Dialogue between a Gentleman and a Husbandman and the ABC to the Spirituality in two editions’ (xxix). Not only does this statement falsely lead one to conclude that the one work with two titles is two separate works, but it also suggests that the latter of these two works (which, in fact, is the same as the former but with a different title) was issued in two editions and that the former was not. Clebsch also manages to confuse matters. At one point he refers to A proper dyaloge betwene a gentillman and an husbandman as a work attributed to either Roye or Barlowe (236–8); but later in discussing the battle against Protestant books waged by the church, he refers quite specifically to Roye’s Dialogue of the Gentleman and Ploughman (265) without stating that the two are in fact the same work.

Throughout the course of this essay, I will call the text under discussion A proper dyaloge betwene a gentillman and an husbandman — regularly shortened to A proper dyaloge — since the ABC titles found in contemporary records — ‘ABC against the Clergy’ or ‘A.B.C. to the spiritulate’ or ‘ABC of the Prelacy’ or simply ‘ABC’ — refer, in fact, to only the three stanza poem at the beginning of the

14 Foxe, IV, 683. 
15 Foxe, V, Appendix X. 
16 Rupp had no patience with those who refer to The burying of the mass under its other title: ‘it is high time this title “Rede me and be nott wrothe” went the way of Senlac Hill and other misnomers . . . ’ (55). In the revised first edition of The English Reformation, A.G. Dickens refers to those who use the title ‘Rede me and be not [sic] wrothe’ as ‘misguided’ (469). However, in the second edition he seems to have had a change of heart and omits the word ‘misguided’ (404). I chose the title Rede me and be nott wrothe for my critical edition and gave reasons for doing so (4–5).
17 It may be that the editor who made this mistake is less culpable than at first appears since in Bishop Stokesly’s sermon preached at Paul’s Cross in 1531 at which the bishop named thirty heretical books, two works, Dialogue of the Gentleman and Plowman and ‘A.B.C. against the Clergy’ are mentioned as if they are two separate works (cited in Clebsch, 266–7).
work in the printed text, and since the other contemporary title, *Dialogue of the gentleman and ploughman*, has no textual justification at all, apart from the fact that the term ‘ploughman’ was probably synonymous with the word ‘husbandman’. Although the title *A proper dyaloge* does not capture the essence of the entire tract, since in its final version it is an amalgam of three separate documents and not simply a dialogue, it does, nevertheless, better serve our purposes than any of the ABC references because it both contains the latter, and also appears in large black-letter type on the title page of both the 1529–30 and 1530 editions.

As mentioned earlier, neither edition of *A proper dyaloge* gives any indication of author or authors, although the second edition has the colophon ‘Emprented at Marborow in the lande of Hessen / by me Hans Luft / in the yere of oure lorde.M.CCCCC.and.XXX’ and was probably based upon the earlier text also, no doubt, printed by Hans Luft (i.e. Johannes Hoochstraten), a printer who may have published as many as eleven English Protestant books between 1528–30. In the brief introductory material to the Bodleian copy of the first edition, the work initially is attributed to William Barlow, Bishop of St Asaph and of Chichester, although only a few lines later it is tentatively attributed to ‘W. Roy’, that is, William Roye, one of the probable authors of *Rede me and be nott wroth* (1528) and another dialogue entitled *A brefe dialoge / bitwene a Christen father and his stobborne sonne* (1527), called “the first Protestant theological tract in England”. Somewhat surprisingly, the revised STC lists *A proper dyaloge* under William Barlow’s name too, although it adds William Roye's name as possible author in its notes to this edition and further adds Jerome Barlowe's name as possible collaborator in the ‘Addenda and Corrigenda’ to volume I (613). The attribution of the first edition of *A proper dyaloge* to William Barlow can be dismissed since it is probably based on the equally mistaken theory that this Bishop Barlow (rather than Jerome Barlowe and William Roye) was the author of *Rede me and be nott wrothe*, a theory once proposed by Koszul and the editors of the *Dictionary of national biography*, but subsequently disproved by Rupp, whose views are upheld by both Hume and McLean. The

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18 Hume, ‘English Protestant books’.
19 The complete works of St Thomas More, 11, xxviii. The STC number of this work is 24223.3 and mention of it is made is Clebsch, 232–3 and Hume, ‘English protestant books’, 1069.
21 Rupp, 67–73.
degree of confusion surrounding the authorship of this tract is not only evident in the revised STC covering all the bases by listing it under William Barlow's name and then adding Roye and then Jerome Barlowe to the list of possible authors, but in conflicting commentary in the Yale edition of *The complete works of St Thomas More* where three of its volumes make contradictory comments on Gordon Rupp's statements about the confusion over William Barlow and Jerome Barlowe. In volume 6, for instance, the editors state correctly that Rupp 'concludes, tentatively, that [Jerome Barlowe] was not that William Barlow who later became Bishop of St Asaph's and St David's (6, part 2, 683). Comments in volume 7 are in accord with this claim (275). However, in volume 8, the editors, obviously misreading Rupp, state that 'William Barlowe is not to be identified with the Franciscan Jerome Barlowe, friend of Roye and collaborator with him on the *Burial of the Mass* [i.e. *Rede me and be nott wrothe*]. Rupp's suggestion that the two are the same man has been effectively refuted by Anthea Hume . . .'(8, part 3, 1249). Those who attributed *A proper dyaloge* to William Barlow were no doubt confounding him with Jerome Barlowe, but probably also sensed similarities between *A proper dyaloge* and *Rede me*, a work, as we have seen, that was at one time attributed to the William Barlow. Although they are right to detect a relationship between these two works, their attribution of authorship is incorrect since, in my view. *A proper dyaloge* was probably written, or better perhaps, written and edited by one or both of the actual authors of *Rede me and be nott wrothe*, namely Jerome Barlowe and William Roye. 23

Even though we cannot be entirely certain what part Barlowe and Roye may have played in the production of *Rede me and be nott wrothe* – indeed, some critics maintain that Roye had the idea and that Barlowe was responsible for the execution, whereas others claim that Roye had no part at all in the authorship and that it was Barlowe’s work totally – it is my view that both men to some degree were involved in it and that *Rede me* was, finally, a work of joint authorship. 24 I also believe that both men–probably were involved in the composition of the two editions of *A proper dyaloge*, although the exact degree of involvement is impossible to determine. Certainly Barlowe's participation is definite and without question; in his

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23 What little we know of Roye and Barlowe's lives has been outlined in my edition of *Rede me and be nott wrothe*, and in the studies of Hume, Clebsch, Rupp and Arber. Comments on the two men by their own contemporaries or near contemporaries can be found in More and Foxe, *passim*.

24 Even the scholarly *Complete works of St Thomas More* seems baffled by the problem of authorial attribution to the point where the editors, ignoring Thomas More himself, who attributes the work to both Barlowe and Roye in *The supplyacyon of soulys* (7, 161), contradict themselves: in three instances the work is attributed to Jerome Barlowe (6, part 2, 683; 8, part 2. 1070; 9, xxvi), but in four others it is seen as the work of Barlowe and Roye (8, part 3. 1160, 1249. 1466. 1632).
recanting letter to Henry VIII in 1533, he confesses to having 'made certayn booke, and [having] suffred them to be emprynted', naming 'the Treatys of the Buryall of the Massse' [Rede me], [and] 'a Dyaloge betwene the Gentylman and Husbandman', this latter doubtless being A proper dyaloge. Clebsch also mentions that Rupp attributes both Rede me and A proper dyaloge to Barlowe alone, but he himself seems less certain and adds that Rupp 'exhibited a marked animus against Roy'. Hume feels that A proper dyaloge is Barlowe's work although she is less assertive than Rupp, and Aston, muddying the already murky water, adds that the dyaloge 'was by Jerome Barlowe working for William Roye'. In light of these conflicting opinions Clebsch is doubtless correct when he states that 'The association of Roy and Barlowe seems impervious to all attempts at disentanglement'. The perceptive reader has perhaps noticed that critics seem unable to agree even on the spelling of the two putative authors' family names. Some leave both without a terminal 'e'; others give both the final 'e'; while some reserve it for one (but not necessarily the same one) and not the other.

Near the conclusion of the prefatory letter to Rede me and be nott wrothe, the correspondent, writing from the continent to his colleague in England, assures him 'that the fyre which Christ cam to kyndle on erth, cannott butt burne'. However, to insure that this fire will not go out, he encourages his friend to send him any 'smale stickes [that] come vnto youre hondes, which ye shall iudge apte vnto the augmentacion of this fyre...yf in englonde they maye not be publishshed . . .'. The correspondent wants these 'smale stickes' so that he might arrange for their publication on the more reformist continent and have them smuggled into England for the greater edification of the population. It is altogether possible that Barlowe and Roye in 1528, the date when Rede me and be nott wrothe was

25 Quoted in Clebsch, 236.
26 Clebsch, 236.
27 'English protestant books printed abroad', 1076.
28 Margaret Aston, Lollards and reformers: images and literacy in late medieval religion (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), 233. Aston's comment leaves the door open to a number of possibilities. 'Working for' Roye could mean that Roye hired Barlowe to write the work for him, or it could mean that Barlowe served as Roye's amanuensis, and that Roye himself was responsible for the work. The same problem of determining parts played in the composition of a work is evident in the critical commentary surrounding Tyndale's New Testament. Critics know that William Roye worked with Tyndale on the new testament, but no one seems able to agree on the part Roye played or the nature of his contribution. Tyndale's own comments on Roye's contribution in the "Preface" to the Parable of the wicked mammon are subject to various interpretations (Doctrinal treatises and introductions to different portions of the holy scriptures by William Tyndale, ed. Rev. Henry Walter (Cambridge: University Press, 1848, rpt. New York and London: Johnson Reprint, 1968), 37–8).
29 Clebsch, 237.
30 Parker, Rede me, 14–8.
31 Parker, Rede me, 150–3.
published, were preparing their readers for the appearance of yet another 'stick' which, in fact, turned out to be *A proper dyealoge* published on the continent about one year after the appearance of their comments in the prefatory letter to *Rede me and be nott wrothe*. Rupp speaks briefly butknowledgeably about the traffic in contraband books travelling from the continent into England or within England itself through the agency of the Christian Brethren or the Brethren in Christ – one of whom was Richard Bayfield mentioned earlier. This group worked to insure the dissemination of the tracts of the 'known men' or Lollards. Rupp adds that 'It is significant that when William Roye, as Tyndale said, “gat him new friends”, he was engaged with Jerome Barlow in an enterprise which included the reissue of two fragments of Lollard tracts from the preceding century'.\(^{32}\) Although Rupp does not mention the title of the two fragments and later denies Roye any part in the writing of *A proper dyealoge* which, he claims, is Barlowe's work and 'much inferior' to *Rede me and be nott wrothe*\(^{33}\) it is possible that the ‘two fragments of Lollard tracts’ Rupp has in mind are the two pieces from an earlier era that end up forming central components of *A proper dyealoge*.

There are some striking similarities between portions of *A proper dyealoge* and *Rede me and be nott wrothe* which suggest that either the authors of both works are the same or that someone very familiar with the latter work used it to write the dialogue section of the former. Both works open with three rime royal stanzas directed against offending clergy. *Rede me*’s attack against Cardinal Wolsey is made through an exegesis of the cardinal’s escutcheon, appropriately modified to emphasize Wolsey’s cruelty; *A proper dyealoge*’s is a direct attack against the church hierarchy in general. On *Rede Me*’s title page the authors claim that ‘With confusion [Wolsey] shalt have a fall’ (6) and in the first stanza of *A proper dyealoge*’s three-stanza attack, the authors predict that the clergy ‘Dangerously [be] lyke to haue a fall’ (A1r). The authors of both works must have known that their predictions were rather timid prognostications, since Wolsey’s fall occurred in 1529 and was imminent in 1528 when *Rede me* appeared, and since by 1529–30, the dates of the appearance of both editions of *A proper dyealoge*, the clergy was fighting a rear-guard action against a plethora of reformist writings generated by English reformers and published on the continent.

Following the prefatory letter and the thirteen-stanza rime royal dialogue between ‘Author’ and ‘Treatous’ in *Rede Me* in which the treatise complains that it will not be believed when it brings its

\(^{32}\) Rupp, 9.

\(^{33}\) Rupp, 59.
various charges against the traditional church, is another rime royal segment in which a priest laments the death of the mass because of the consequent lose of privileges traditionally associated with it. The corresponding sections in *A proper dyaloge* are found immediately after the three-stanza acrostic directed against the clergy. In the first ten-stanza rime royal segment, the authors direct the 'Christen reder' not to judge hastily or rashly what they say or to dismiss it as untrue. In the last stanza in this section they reiterate their concern that they will be misunderstood when they bring charges against the clergy and once again exhort the reader to have 'pacience'(A2v). This segment is not unlike that part of *Rede me* where the treatise fears being misunderstood and, consequently, written off by readers for the claims it makes against the clergy. Additionally the parallel is strengthened since both works bring each of the stanzas in this section to a conclusion with a refrain.

*Rede me's* rime royal lamentation finds a parallel in *A proper dyaloge's* rime royal stanzas of complaint put into the mouth of the gentleman, one of the two principals in the dialogue. Although the priest's lament in *Rede me* is ironic—we are to rejoice at the losses he incurs because of the death of the mass – and the gentleman's is meant to be seen as legitimate and truly regrettable, both sections in each work lament major losses resulting in a substantial reduction in the standard of living of both complainants. And again the parallel between the two works is strengthened in this section because, as earlier, each stanza concludes with a refrain.

It would be stacking the cards in favour of my argument, namely, that the authors of *Rede me* were also responsible for *A proper dyaloge*, to list thematic parallels between the two works since most of the reformist literature of the period focuses on a limited number of themes which are repeated time and again in all of these proto-Protestant, pro-Lutheran, Lollard inspired texts. More convincing, in my view, are the shared verse forms and linguistic echoes which carry the common themes in both texts. The authors of *A proper dyaloge* are as adept at doggerel as those of *Rede me*. Once the preliminary material in both works is completed and the dialogue itself begins, rime royal in both works gives way to a new verse form that is used to convey the conversation and points of view of each of their two speakers. Both *Rede me* and *A proper dyaloge* work in six line units rhyming aab ccb. The pattern is so strictly adhered to that even when rhyming units are divided between the two speakers in each work, the rhyme scheme is never violated.

There are also striking linguistic parallels between the two works. In the opening three-stanza segment of *A proper dyaloge* we hear the authors complain about the clergy 'Sekynge the lust / of [their] godde / the belly' (A1r), a phrase reminiscent of *Rede me's* similar attack on clerical greed expressed in the phrase 'their god
which is their belly' (3665). In a section of the tract where the husbandman is exposing how the clergy forces men of his occupation into poverty, he states: 'We tourmoyle ourseleves nyght and daye / And are fayne to dryncke whygge and whaye / For to maynteyne the clargyes facciones' (A6r). In Rede me Ieffraye, one of the speakers, complains in a similar vein about the harm the clergy does to farmers: 'Pover cilly shepperdes they gett, / Whome into their fearmes they sett, / Lyvynge on mylke, whyg, and whey' (2812-14). Focusing once more on how the clergy deprives the farmer of what is rightfully his, the authors of A proper dyaloge complain:

But nowe their ambicious suttlete
Makyth one fearme of two or thre
Ye some tyme they bringe .vi. to one.
Which to gentillmen they let in farmage
Or elles to ryche marchauntes for avauntage
To the vndoynte of husbandemen echone.
Wherby the comones sufferinge damage
The hole lande is brought in to rerage

(A6v)

And in Rede me Ieffraye states:

A newe waye they do invent,
Lettynge a dosen farmes vnder one.
Which one or two ryche francklynges,
Occupyinge a dosen mens lyvynges
Take all in their owne hondes a lone.

(2789–93)

A few lines later we read:

And even as they do by farmage,
Brynge the londe into a rearage,
Contempnyng the state temporall

(2864–65)

And finally, in the brief poetic introduction to the second tract published as part of the second edition of A proper dyaloge, the comment made by the treatise – 'Enemyes I shall haue / many a shoren crowne With forked cappes and gaye croosys of golde'–(C8r) finds an echo in Rede me's comment on its enemies addressed as follows in these metonymic lines: 'Com hither monkes: with brode shaven crownes' (134) and 'A due forked mitres and crosses of golde' (164).

Even though common themes are off limits for the purposes of this comparison for reasons given above, the articulation of these themes through similar examples in both works is striking and worthy of note. Both works, for example, mention that the clergy
refuse to come to the support of their king or prince in times of need by citing their spiritual duties as an excuse (Rede me 2488–93; A proper dyaloge A7r); both criticize the fact that clerics refuse to perform manual labour (Rede me 1621–35; A proper dyaloge A7v); both refer to Cuthbert Tunstal’s burning of Tyndale’s New Testament in 1526 (Rede me 702–20; A proper dyaloge B2r); and both stress throughout the economic hardship under which the country labours as a result of the selfish actions of all levels of the spiritual hierarchy. Both works as well tinker or play with historical events in order to depict the traditional church in the worst light possible. In doing this, they subscribe to what Aston calls the ‘Tudor propensity to make history a moral hunting ground’.

Finally, the relationship between the speakers in both dialogues is not dissimilar. In both, speakers take turns disabusing their interlocutors of misguided opinions or informing them of facts of which they seem to be ignorant. Such devices vivify the dialogue and sustain the sense of dramatic action. In Rede me and be nott wrothe for example, leffraye and Watkyn, the tract’s two major characters, each possesses areas of knowledge unknown to the other. Watkyn’s expertise is in religious events that have occurred on the continent; leffraye’s on the state of England under an oppressive and corrupt church. In A proper dyaloge both the gentleman and the husbandman know what effects the traditional church and clerical greed have on their lives, and the gentleman seeks to justify his class’s apparent hard-heartedness towards husbandman by pointing out that gentleman have been forced to behave as they do because of the clergy. The husbandman sees his state as worse than the gentleman’s and the dialogue’s dynamic is in part sustained as each makes clear his plight to the other. The fact that two extremes of the social hierarchy – gentlemen and husbandmen – share a common plight, shows that the authors, Barlowe and Roye, here and in Rede me and be nott wrothe, are convinced that the pernicious practices of the clergy run the entire social gamut and deleteriously affect its members spiritually, economically, and socially.

Naturally there are major differences between the two tracts. Rede me, in one sense at least, is a more original tract and does not call upon outside assistance, as A proper dyaloge does when it invokes tracts from another era to support its claims. Most significantly, I think, Rede me is, in the strict sense of the term, a more heretical tract than A proper dyaloge. It does not shrink from attacking church doctrine: it not only excoriates the clergy, but also the mass, auricular confession, the veneration of the saints, pilgrimages, and the doctrine of purgatory, to name a few. On the

4 Aston, 222.
other hand, *A proper dyaloge*, in its dialogue sections at least, is eager to emphasize the economic hardship brought on by the greed of the clergy as it obtains, one way or another, on an increasing number of temporal possessions which belong properly in the hands of the secular order. Church doctrine, as, for instance, that of purgatory, comes under fire only insofar as it contributes to the proliferation of this abuse. To this extent at least, *A proper dyaloge* is a far more focused text than *Rede me*, but for this very reason, perhaps, a far less interesting one as well, since if fails to give a broad, if distorted, picture of pressing reformist concerns.

Based upon this analysis of similarities between the dialogue section of *A proper dyaloge* and *Rede me and be nott wrothe*, an extended dialogue of some 3,500 lines, I think it is clear that the two works were the brain-children of the same authors, Jerome Barlowe and William Roye. My hunch is that the authors, keen on disseminating pro-Lutheran-Lollard tracts, worked to ensure that such works reached the general public with dispatch. Exiled on the relatively safe continent (although both Roye and Tyndale would die as Protestant martyrs there in the 1530s), they would have been aware of the growing importance of Protestant literature in England and the church’s struggles to suppress it. By 1526 Tyndale’s New Testament had been printed and summarily condemned and burnt, and by the time *A proper dyaloge* appeared, Tyndale’s influential *The parable of the wicked mammon* and *The obedience of a Christian man* had also been published. By this time as well Roye had written his *Brede dialoge bitwene a christian father and his stobborne sonne* to say nothing of the work for which both he and Barlowe are best remembered, *Rede me and be nott wrothe*. But perhaps what served as their strongest motivation for issuing the hybrid *A proper dyaloge* was the appearance of Simon Fish’s notorious but influential pamphlet *A supplicacyon for the beggers* printed by Johannes Grapheus of Antwerp early in 1529. The importance and popularity of this work was out of all proportion to its size. Fish’s scurrilous attack on clerical possessions and greed and the sacrosanct doctrine of purgatory gave rise to Thomas More’s prolix response, *The supplycacyon of soulys* in 1529.36 *A proper dyaloge* which, in my view, relies upon Fish’s tract as a partial source and puts Fish’s complaints against the church in dialogue form, was probably conceived as early as 1528, when *Rede me and be nott wrothe* was being written, and quickly put together late in 1529 by Barlowe and Roye to capitalize on the popularity of Fish’s supplicacyon and to give its complaints, through the inclusion of a vintage Lollard document which expresses the same concerns, a

35 STC 10883; reprinted in *The complete works of St Thomas More* vol. 7.

36 More, vol. 7.
Doubtless the authors would not have been shy to borrow from Fish but also from their own earlier work, especially *Rede me*, to get their reformist opinions into the public domain as quickly as possible. This as much as anything, I feel, explains the various echoes of *Rede me and be nott wrothe* in *A proper dyaloge* and supports my view that the authors of the former also wrote the latter.

37 For a further discussion of this notion see John N. King, *English Reformation literature: the Tudor origins of the protestant tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).