

Patterns of Wisdom
in the
Old English Solomon and Saturn II

by
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A thesis presented to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
Ottawa, Ontario
1991



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ISBN 0-612-15772-5

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ABSTRACT

The Old English Solomon and Saturn II has received virtually no extended critical commentary since Robert J. Menner's 1941 edition of it and its companion piece, Solomon and Saturn I. The few brief attempts made to explain the poem, moreover, have been without reference to the body of OE sapiential thought to which it belongs. This thesis offers a close structural and thematic reading of SS II as it appears against the background of general notions and concepts belonging to the body of OE wisdom.

The thesis begins with a review of the poem's history and related literary criticism. Lexical and thematic material is then selected from the entire OE corpus to present those aspects of OE wisdom that bear on an understanding of SS II. The thesis addresses the conceptual and intellectual formulations of wisdom in the Anglo-Saxon period, rather than simply its literary forms, and it takes into account both pre-conversion and Christian views on human and divine wisdom.

The thesis then illustrates how SS II reflects certain patterns that exist in the general OE wisdom tradition. The narrator's framework establishes a metaphysical context for the whole poem that is consistent with the Christian Anglo-Saxon concept of divine Wisdom. The epistemological premises of the debate itself, as well as a core of beliefs and implicit assumptions shared by the opponents, Solomon and Saturn, reflect the tensions and harmonies that appear in

the broad view of OE wisdom.

The interaction between Saturn and Solomon - the one a travelling Chaldean noble, the other the Old Testament King, is examined next. The competition between an epic rhetorical model, namely, the visit of a roving hero to the court of an established king, and the Christian typology that surrounds the wise King Solomon, is arguably a significant source of meaning in the poem. The tension between literary and figural patterns provides an interpretive matrix against which the audience can follow the discourse of the two men.

Finally, the thesis turns to the structure of the SS II dialogue and demonstrates that far from being a simple contest of wit and "wisdom," the poem is a sophisticated process of education through dialogue whose central concern is the emancipation of the mind from the illusions of language. The dialogue shares several "habits of thought" with Boethius' Consolation Philosophiae and Augustine's Soliloquia in the process by which it restores to Saturn's infirm and misguided mind its natural wisdom and its power of interpretation.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Charles R. Steele,
of the University of Calgary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my very warmest thanks to my ever cheerful, always helpful, thesis director, Professor Raymond St. Jacques. I am also grateful to the staff at the Interlibrary Loan Department, University of Ottawa, and to the staff at Corpus Christi College Library, Cambridge University. Finally, I thank Scott Tiffin, Lynn Fairey, and all my student colleagues in the Department of English, University of Ottawa.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM	<u>Annuale Medievale</u>
ApT	<u>The Old English Apollonius of Tyre</u> . Ed. Peter Goolden. London: Oxford UP, 1958. Cited by page and line number.
ASC	<u>An Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</u> . Ed. E. Classen and F. E. Harmer. Manchester: 1926. Cited in DOE 187. Cited by year, page and line number, microfiche number and page.
Assmann	B. Assmann. <u>Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben</u> . Bib. ags. Prosa 2. 1889. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964. Cited by page and line number.
Bately	<u>The OE Orosius</u> . Ed. Janet Bately. EETS SS6. London: Oxford UP, 1980. Cited by page and line number.
Belfour	<u>Twelfth-Century Homilies in MS. Bodley 343</u> . Ed. A. O. Belfour. EETS 137. 1909. London: Kegan Paul, 1962. Cited by page and line number.
Bethurum	<u>The Homilies of Wulfstan</u> . Ed. D. Bethurum. Oxford: UP, 1957. Cited by page and line number.
Carnicelli	<u>King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies</u> . Ed. Thomas A. Carnicelli. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1969. Cited by page and line number.
ChrodR	<u>The Old English Version, with the Latin Original, of the Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang</u> . Ed. A. S. Napier. EETS O.S. 150. 1916. London: Oxford UP, 1971. Cited by page and line number.
CP	Boethius. <u>De Consolatione Philosophiae</u> . Ed. H. F. Stewart. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978. Cited by book, section, page and line number.
Crawford 1921	<u>Exameron Anglice or The Old English Hexameron</u> . Ed. S. J. Crawford. 1922. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968. Cited by line number.
Crawford 1922	<u>The Old English Version of the Heptateuch</u> . Ed. S. J. Crawford. EETS 160. London: Oxford, 1922. Cited by page and line number.

- Cross and Hill The Prose Solomon and Saturn and Adrian and Ritheus, Ed. James E. Cross and Thomas D. Hill. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982. Cited by page and question number.
- DCD Augustine. De Civitate Dei. PL 41:13-804.
- DDC Augustine. De Doctrina Christiana. PL 34:15-122.
- De Lib Arb Augustine. De Libero Arbitrio. PL 32:1222-1310.
- De Mag Augustine. De Magistro. PL 32:1193-1222.
- De Trin Augustine. De Trinitate. PL 42:819-1098.
- EH The OE Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Ed. Thomas Miller. EETS OS 95-96. London: 1890). Cited by book, page and line number.
- Förster Die Vercelli-Homilien: I.-VIII. Homilie. Bib. ags. Prosa 12. Ed. Max Förster. 1932. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964. Cited by page and line number.
- Fowler Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar. Ed. Roger Fowler. EETS 266. London: Oxford, 1972. Cited by page and line number.
- Godden Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. Ed. Malcolm Godden. EETS SS5. London: Oxford: 1979. Cited by page and line number.
- Harsley Eadwine's Canterbury Psalter. Ed. F. Harsley. EETS 92. 1889. London: Oxford UP, 1973. Cited by page and verse number.
- MÆ Medium Ævum
- Menner The Poetical Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn. Ed. Robert J. Menner. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1941.
- MF Venezky, Richard L. A Microfiche Concordance to Old English. Cited by microfiche number and page.
- Morris The Blickling Homilies. Ed. R. Morris. EETS O.S. 58, 63, 73. 1874, 1876, 1890. London: Oxford, 1967. Cited by page and line number.
- Napier Wulfstan. Ed. A. S. Napier. Sammlung englischer Denkmäler 4. 1883. Berlin: 1967. Cited by page and line number.

Neophil	<u>Neophilologus</u>
NM	<u>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</u>
Norman	"Admonitio ad filium spiritualem." <u>The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Hexameron of St. Basil.</u> Ed. H. W. Norman. London: 1848. Cited in DOE 195. Cited by microfiche number and page.
Orosius	<u>The Old English Orosius.</u> Ed. Janet Bately. EETS SS6. London: Oxford UP, 1980. Cited by book, chapter, page and line.
Peterson	P. W. Peterson. "The Unpublished HOMilies of the Vercelli Book." Diss. New York U, 1951. Cited in DOE 196. Cited by microfiche number and page.
Pope I, 11	<u>Homilies of Elfric. A Supplementary Collection.</u> 2 Vols. Ed. John D. Pope. EETS 259. London: Oxford UP, 1967. Cited by page and line number.
Robertson	<u>Anglo-Saxon Charters.</u> 2nd Ed. Ed. A. J. Robertson. Cambridge, 1956. Cite in DOE 197. Cited by microfiche number and page.
Sedgefield	<u>King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius' "Consolatio Philosophiae."</u> Ed. W. J. Sedgefield. 1899. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968. Cited by page and line number.
Sisam	<u>The Salisbury Psalter.</u> Ed. Kenneth Sisam. EETS 242. London: Oxford UP, 1959. Cited by page and verse number.
Skeat I, II	<u>Elfric's Lives of Saints.</u> 2 Vols. Ed. W. W. Skeat. 1881-1900. EETS 76 & 82, 94 & 114. London: Oxford UP, 1966. Cited by page and line number.
Sweet I, II	<u>King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care.</u> 2 Vols. Ed. H. Sweet. 1871. EETS 45, 50. London: Oxford UP, 1958. Cited by page and line number.
Thorpe I, II	<u>The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church. The Sermones Catholici or Homilies of Elfric.</u> 2 Vols. Ed. Benjamin Thorpe. London: 1844-46. Cited by page and line number.

- Warner Early English Homilies from the Twelfth-
Century, MS Vespasian D. XIV. Ed. R. D.N.
Warner. EETS 152. 1917. London: Oxford UP,
1971. Cited by page and line number.
- Wildhagen Karl Wildhagen. Der Cambridge Psalter.
Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft,
1964. Cited by page and verse.
- VH Vercelli Homily

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

It is an odd fact that the Old English Solomon and Saturn II, 327 lines of intriguing lore and commentary, and the only incontestable poetic dialogue-debate in the corpus, has, apart from its editions, remained virtually untouched by any exhaustive critical commentary. Even as recently as 1983, in a survey of the "main elements" of Anglo-Saxon literature, SS II could still be dismissed with a two-line aside as "pious verse" overlapping "with the large category of moral and wisdom literature."¹ Of those critics who have considered the poem at all, most have referred to it only in passing as an example supporting an otherwise unrelated argument. Few have wanted to engage with it on its own terms. Whatever the reasons for this situation, boredom, surely, cannot be one of them. SS II is a vivid and lively poem; unlike much OE wisdom, which has sometimes been accused of either a tedious sententiousness or an unpoetic heterogeneity, it is easily recognized as a coherent work, one full of wit, bold tones, and an immediacy and humanity -- or humaneness -- that bring it oddly close to the dramas of the later mystery cycles.

This thesis offers new insights into SS II through a close reading of the text and a full-length explication of its structure and themes. Specifically, the purposes of the

¹ Michael Alexander, Old English Literature (London: Macmillan, 1983) ix, 156.

thesis are, first, to examine the poem against the background of a selection of major ideas about wisdom in Anglo-Saxon England; second, to identify the typological and literary patterns that make up its interpretive context; and finally, to trace its dialogic pathway, or gradus, from the false wisdom of the world to true Christian understanding.

Modern scholarship places the composition of SS II around the end of the ninth century.² But Solomonic debates stretch as far back from that date as the first few centuries before Christ; indeed, prototypes of the Biblical Solomon stories can be found even earlier in Tibetan Buddhist and Persian tales.³ Biblical versions dating from around the sixth century B.C. in the Books of Kings and The Chronicles, provide only the most laconic accounts of Solomon's debates. These briefly mention the arrival of the Queen of Sheba at Jerusalem to test Solomon with hard questions and the visit of King Hiram of Tyre, a story that Josephus later fleshes out toward the end of the first century A.D. with reference to a contest of wits in the correspondence between the two kings.⁴ It is from Rabbinic

² See Robert J. Menner, The Poetical Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn (New York: MLA, 1941) 18-21. Menner, following James, puts MS. A (CCCC 422) in the late tenth century (1). Early West Saxon features push the poem's date back to King Alfred's time. Citing examples of Anglian phonology, morphology, and especially vocabulary, Menner posits an Anglian author, one who might have lived in the relatively untroubled West Mercia, or who, like Wærferth, came to the court at Wessex from Mercia.

³ Moncure Daniel Conway, Solomon and Solomonic Literature (1912; New York: Haskell House, 1973) 12-23.

and later Arabic traditions, however, that Solomon's contests, particularly with demons, develop into the flamboyant legends that eventually find their way to medieval Europe. A Gelasian decree of probably the sixth century condemns a certain Contradictio Salomonis, or Interdictio Salomonis.⁵ One wishes the decree had been less efficiently carried out; no trace of the work remains. Only SS II, and its companion pieces, SS I (of later date and authorship) and the prose dialogue, remain to us as the earliest European Solomon debates.⁶ After the tenth century, these debates become wilder and more ribald. Notker Labeo (d. 1022) complains of "fair words without truth" in certain uncanonical dialogues of Solomon and Marcolf.⁷ In Latin and vernacular dialogues and romances from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, an insolent Marcolf parodies Solomon's proverbs, and various tales are told that reflect rather badly on both characters.⁸ In 1521, a farcical version of a

⁴ See I Kings 10: 1-3; II Chronicles 9:1-3; II Chronicles 2. See also The Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. William Whiston (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1854) 8,5, 257-58.

⁵ See Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems (New York: Columbia UP, 1942) lvii; Menner 24.

⁶ The poetic SS I is found in Menner 81-9. The prose passage separating SS I and SS II is reproduced in an appendix, 168-71. On the relationship between the two, see 8-10. For the catechetical prose dialogue, see James E. Cross and Thomas D. Hill, The Prose Solomon and Saturn and Adrian and Ritheus (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982).

⁷ Cited in Menner 28.

⁸ See e.g. E. Gordon Duff, ed., The Dialogue of Communing Between the Wise King Salomon and Marcolphus (London: 1892). This is a copy of a 1492 English translation of the Latin

debate between Solomon and Marcolf comes to the German stage. In 1591, Hans Sachs composes a comedy along the same lines. Even as late as 1832, a Greek version of an 1800 Italian comedy is available.⁹

Solomonic dialogues have ranged as widely in space as they have in time. The Tibetan and Persian prototypes mentioned above converged in the Near East with Hebrew, Arabic and Greek material, and the hybrid legends that resulted, such as the Greek Testament of Solomon, were carried to Slavic countries, to Byzantium and Russia, and to Western Europe.¹⁰ The "extravagance of expression" in the OE Solomon and Saturn I suggests that the Solomonic dialogue was alive in the Celtic imagination of pre-tenth century Ireland before it got to England.¹¹ After the time of the Old English works, the dialogues appear in the Netherlands, Denmark, Iceland, Poland, Wales and Italy.¹²

Widespread and long-lived as it was, the apocryphal and legendary Solomonic dialogue appears not to have been in the literary mainstream. The indictment in the Gelasian decree

dialogue, together with a good introduction and a valuable list of editions of Salomon and Marcolphus from the fifteenth century on (34-46). See also Menner 26-28; Vincenti 14-25.

⁹ See John M. Kemble, The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus, with an historical introduction (London: The Elfric Society, 1848) 15-104.

¹⁰ See Chester Charlton McCown, The Testament of Solomon (New York: G.E. Stechert & Co., 1927) 52-68.

¹¹ Menner 25, 42-43.

¹² Kemble 96-104.

suggests that the demonology and fantasy of these works was, as far as the Church was concerned, a dangerous attraction. Still, while the prototype of the dialogue is the Biblical accounts of royal visits and letters to Solomon's court to test his wisdom, it is Solomon's apocryphal discussions with demons that play an important role in maintaining creative and popular interest in the Solomon debates over the centuries. That the OE works exist at all is certainly due to their roots in exciting tales of Solomon's magical powers in word and deed over his demonic companions. It is possible, however, that SS II, with its solemn tone and systematic revision of mythology, was an orthodox attempt to rehabilitate the Solomon legend, or perhaps to defuse its strong appeal to the magic-minded. The poem successfully mutes its apocryphal content with orthodox notions about Solomon from the exegetical tradition. While it indulges in the charm of the Solomon legends, as a whole it is less interested in the king's magical feats than in the ecclesiastical and patristic view of him as a figure of Jesus Christ and herald of Christian wisdom.

In the modern period, the OE SS II came to light first in 1705, when MS. A, CCCC 422, containing SS I, SS II, and the intervening prose dialogue, was described by H. Wanley in George Hickes' Thesaurus.¹³ The first edition of the poem had to wait until 1848, when John Kemble drew it together

¹³ Menner 1n1.

with a prodigious amount of historical information on the Solomon debates. Not long after Kemble's production, German interest in the poem gave rise to textual commentaries and a few fragmentary editions that were largely based on Kemble's work.¹⁴ Just after the turn of the century, A. R. von Vincenti's still indispensable historical introduction to the poem appeared.¹⁵ In the late 20's, Robert Menner's work on the perplexing Vasa Mortis passage signaled a new (but short-lived) interest in the poem's sources. Menner's second article elucidated the Weallende Wulf episode so thoroughly and convincingly that no one since has had the temerity to challenge him.¹⁶ Menner's 1941 edition of the poem is considered definitive, but it did little to inspire further studies of the poem, apart from a few textual notes.¹⁷ Only in the late 60's did SS II come in for some elementary thematic analysis, in Thomas Hill's studies of selected

¹⁴ These are conveniently listed in Menner 73.

¹⁵ Arthur Ritter Von Vincenti, Die Altenglischen Dialoge von Salomon und Saturn. Mit Historischer Einleitung, Kommentar und Glossar, Ertser Teil (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf, 1904).

¹⁶ See Robert J. Menner, "The Vasa Mortis Passage in the OE Salomon and Saturn," in Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber, ed. Kemp Malone and Martin B. Ruud (Minneapolis, U of Minneapolis P, 1929) 240-53; and "Nimrod and the Wolf in the OE Solomon and Saturn," JEGP 37 (1938) 332-54.

¹⁷ See L. Whitbread, "Adam's Pound of Flesh: A Note on OE Verse Solomon and Saturn (II), 336-339," Neophil 59 (1975) 622-26; Robert Hopkins, "A Note on Solomon and Saturn II, 449 (Menner Edition)," NQ 204 (1959) 226-27.

images and their possible patristic sources.¹⁸ Around that time and since, SS II received cursory attention in various surveys of OE literature.¹⁹ In 1980, Joseph Dane made the first attempt, though on a small scale, to find a "logical framework" for the poem.²⁰ T. A. Shippey and, more recently, Elaine Tuttle Hansen have made substantial contributions to the study of OE sapiential literature, and both have devoted several pages to SS II in their surveys.²¹

As this summary shows, criticism of SS II, while scanty, has followed general trends in Old English scholarship. We are indebted to Kemble and Vincenti for amassing related Solomon stories, and to the Germans for their meticulous textual readings. Menner and Hill have provided useful insights into legendary and patristic sources for many passages in the poem. Hansen's work on OE wisdom has shown how SS II reflects the literary forms of that tradition. The one question remaining, which so far only Dane has tried to answer, is the central one: why has

¹⁸ Thomas D. Hill, "The Tropological Context of Heat and Cold in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," NM 69 (1968) 522-23; "Two Notes on Solomon and Saturn," ME 40:3 (1971) 217-21; and "The Falling Leaf and Buried Treasure," NM 71 (1970) 571-76.

¹⁹ See e.g., C. L. Wrenn, A Study of OE Literature (London: George G. Harrap, 1967) 161-63.

²⁰ Joseph A. Dane, "The Structure of the OE Solomon and Saturn II," Neophil 64 (1980) 592-603.

²¹ T. A. Shippey, Poems of Wisdom and Learning in OE (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1976) 21-8, 86-103, 136-39; Elaine Tuttle Hansen, The Solomon Complex: Reading Wisdom in OE Poetry, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1988) 147-52.

the material in this particular poem been put together in the way that it has? The answer requires a full analysis of SS II, not as bundle of sources and vestigial stories, nor as a faceless reproduction of formal conventions, but as a coherent work of literature that, while it participates in a tradition, is arranged according to its own internal logic.

In its treatment of the poem as literature, this thesis is addressing a number of assumptions and findings in past criticism. Two methodological issues in particular require consideration here, as they have played an important role in the design of, respectively, the first two and the last two major chapters of the thesis. First of all, we need to reexamine the generally held supposition that SS II is a clear-cut debate between a "pagan" and Christian. Menner, for instance, states that "Saturn's questions are natural to a pagan acquainted only with Oriental and Germanic beliefs."²² Dane argues that all of Solomon's replies to Saturn are a re-interpretation of the latter's knowledge in terms of a Christian metaphysic, so that Christian hierarchy replaces a pagan dichotomous view of existence.²³

²² Menner 49. See also Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel Calder, A New Critical History of OE Literature (New York: New York UP, 1986) 274. The most extreme view is B J. Timmer's, who remarks in a footnote dismissing SS II from a discussion of Wyrd that "as Saturn is a heathen who is going to be converted by Salomon, it is to be expected that in this tenth-century poem the word wyrd actually refers to the heathen goddess of Fate." "Wyrd in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry," Neophil 26 (1941) 226n1.

²³ Dane 600.

Besides leaving "paganism" undefined, especially in terms both of what it signified to the Anglo-Saxons and of how modern critics intend it as a descriptive term for Saturn, these assumptions draw a line both too bold and too superficial between pagan and Christian, as if the poet held a modern distinction in his mind between the two, and constructed his poem from a perspective beyond both. Such views suggest that whatever is clearly pagan in SS II cannot possibly be Christian and that the views of the debaters are always consistent with their positions as pagan and Christian. The evidence of the poem, however, contradicts the inference that Saturn is a thorough-going heathen about to be trounced by the unmistakably orthodox Solomon. About a third of the way through the debate, for instance, Saturn asks Solomon:

Saga ðu me, Salomon cyning, sunu Davides,
hwæt beoð ða feowere fægæs rapas.
333-34²⁴

Solomon's answer may refer to the Christian idea of the fetters of sin, but its diction seems to reflect an indigenous Germanic concept:

Gewurdene wyrda
ðæt beoð ða feowere fægæs rapas.
334-35²⁵

If Solomon here draws on what seems a pre-Christian point of

²⁴ Although Menner's is the definitive critical edition of SS II, it is not easily available. For convenience therefore, all citations of SS II are taken from Dobbie's edition in ASPR VI, 38-48.

²⁵ See Menner's notes on these lines 132n325a.

If Solomon here draws on what seems a pre-Christian point of view, Saturn elsewhere speaks from a decidedly Christian perspective. In one riddle, he describes a book that will bring its reader up

ðæt þu þære gyldnan gesiehest Hierusalem
weallas blican and hiera winrod lixan,
soðfæstra segn.

235-37a

Some critics overlook the fact that the pagan-Christian pattern does not fit precisely with these and other speeches; others have more or less acknowledged it but have deflected attention to other aspects of the poem.²⁶ In any case, the question that arises here is what mode of analysis will enable us to explain why "opposing" characters in SS II share one another's perspective to the extent that they do.

A central conviction of this thesis is that SS II can best be understood not strictly as a debate between a Christian and a "pagan" but as a dialogue that both draws from and responds to the very traditions of wisdom to which it is related. In other words, the discontinuities of the poem's content are embedded in a prior body of syncretic ideas that is itself neither consistent nor fully self-conscious. The poem mirrors and also creatively develops the

²⁶ Blanche Williams, for instance, does not consider who is speaking when she analyzes the pagan and Christian content of the poem. Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon (1914; New York: AMS, 1966) 65-67. Hansen's study of the poem concentrates only on its dialogic structure (147-52). Shippey, however, astutely notices that while Solomon stands generally for a Christian world-view, Saturn stands "not for paganism exactly but for doubt." Old English Verse (London: Hutchinson U Library, 1972) 62.

tensions and contradictions that exist in OE wisdom in general.

Most discussions of OE wisdom are primarily concerned with matters of genre, form and historical development.²⁷ Of equal importance, however, to the study of SS II, is a consideration of substance and meaning in AS wisdom expression generally. Chapter Two, therefore, while it recognizes the usefulness of a formal approach to wisdom, seeks the perspective of intellectual history, selecting for discussion specifically those notional aspects of wisdom existing within the range of reference of SS II that will inform the reading of the poem that is proposed in later chapters.

Of course, no systematic account of sapiential thought exists from the AS period. We do, however, have a body of poetry and prose in which a number of themes concerning man's conduct and the nature of reality appear with enough consistency to be classified as the content of a generally disseminated view. Chapter Two is based, naturally, on those works traditionally regarded as wisdom literature, but it draws as well on more general and sometimes incidental reflections on wisdom found, for instance, in contemporary sermons and chronicles. Source material for Chapter Two is gathered from a review of the relevant OE prose and poetic

²⁷ Some of the best insights into wisdom, some of which are cited at 19n1, are embedded in formal and historical studies of proverbs and maxims.

texts as well as from a survey of the two words (and some of their derivatives) that most frequently appear in the OE lexicon of wisdom: snotor and wisdom.²⁸ As stated earlier, the outdated idea of competing and conflicting heathen and Christian elements in OE wisdom is carefully avoided, but the assumption is held that pre-Christian formulations of wisdom, even at later dates, contribute substantially to the foundations of recorded OE sapiential thought. The discussion draws at times on the work of Bauschatz, tentative though it is, to offer some suggestions as to the importance of pre-Christian Germanic notions of time and materiality in the Anglo-Saxon formulation of wisdom. The discussion also moves from OE to patristic and other Latin sources to establish continuity with the broader Christian tradition, but it does not dwell on general patristic notions of wisdom.²⁹

²⁸ Both words are found widely throughout the literature of the Anglo-Saxon period. The source for the lexical survey was Antonette diPaolo Healey and Richard L. Venezky, A Microfiche Concordance to OE, DOE Project, Centre for Medieval Studies (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980). The sources include, in order of word frequency, homilies and sermons, together with saints lives, "educational" works like Alfred's translations of Gregory and Boethius, Biblical glosses, particularly on the Psalms and the Gospels, collections of sentences and maxims like the Liber Scintillarum, monastic rules such as the Benedictine, liturgical works, prayers and hymns, historical, legal, scientific and medical texts, a number of miscellaneous pieces such as prose fiction, and glossaries.

²⁹ For an overview of patristic ideas about wisdom as they relate to OE poetry, see Catharine Ann Regan, "Wisdom and Sin: Patristic Psychology in OE Poetry," diss., U of Illinois, 1966; and Robert Kaske, "Sapientia et Fortitudo as the Controlling Theme of Beowulf," SP 55 (1958) 423-57.

Chapter Two presents first a schematic model that breaks the notion of wisdom down into its constituent parts: the epistemological, the ethical, and the union of these in the mind of man. A second section makes the important theological distinction between human and divine wisdom. Finally, the schematic and theological paradigms are used to structure a discussion of those content and conceptual patterns in OE wisdom that have been selected for their relevance to SS II. Although general questions of form are omitted from the discussion, one exception is made for the wisdom dialogue, a form which, insofar as it conveys meaning through a union of structure and content, has an important bearing on the argument and design of SS II.

The basic method of Chapter Two is eclectic, drawing on linguistic, historical and cultural evidence for a descriptive survey. A comprehensive and chronological study of the whole of OE wisdom, however, would be neither feasible nor useful; indeed, I isolate for discussion only those recurring broad patterns of language and thought in OE wisdom that will help to substantiate my reading of SS II. The sensitivity of this approach is not, moreover, sharp enough to distinguish the development of ideas over the OE period; rather, it depicts a static concept of wisdom while tacitly recognizing the inevitable flux that typifies any set of notions in a period of transition. Finally, most of the material adduced here, both primary and secondary, is

well known; my purpose is to reformulate it into a framework of general observations and conclusions, one that is necessarily broad but that does provide a perspective on OE wisdom in which SS II can be placed.

Chapter Three assumes that SS II, like the OE wisdom tradition described in Chapter Two, is not a dialectic between heathen and Christian values, but a heterogeneous formulation of experience that informs the perspective of both characters, and indeed that of the narrator. This chapter turns to SS II itself and identifies imagistic and thematic patterns that give structure both to the poem as a whole and to the debate. Drawing on the contextual background introduced in Chapter Two, it examines the narrator and his introduction as a framing device that represents the theological verities in which the poem is embedded, and then explores the epistemological premises that underlie the debate itself. SS II is shown to reflect a tension between metaphysics and experience, in which expressions of faith in a transcendent order are pulled towards and sometimes absorbed by the most fundamental observations of mundane reality.

While Chapters Two and Three are a response to an habitual critical distinction between pagan and Christian in SS II, the next two chapters of the thesis challenge the more recent critical tendency to favour the meaning of a work's form over its content. Hansen applies this as a general principle to SS II, claiming that the subject of the

work as a whole is "the broad speech situation itself."³⁰ Hansen makes much of the narrator's introduction to SS II as an indication that the specific information of the poem is unimportant in comparison with the foregrounded scenario of the wisdom discourse. While it may be true that SS II belongs with other wisdom poems under the rubric of a broad speech situation, analysis at this level of generality clarifies only the most implicit and universal structure of the poem, and masks those factors that set it off from other OE sapiential poems. Surely what sustains the audience's interest in the poem is, in addition to the verbal display, its content: its adventures and oriental magic, its dramatic movement and intellectual challenges. We do not do justice to the poem until we recognize the function and significance of its content. While the thesis assumes the general validity of Hansen's argument then, it regards SS II in terms that are more apposite to its unique arrangement of content within dialogue than to the generic category of wise discourse to which it belongs.

For the purposes of analysis, the thesis breaks down the "broad speech situation" of SS II into two categories: the conventions that govern the relationship between the two speakers, Saturn and Solomon, and those that govern the dialogic structure of the whole poem. Chapter Four is concerned with the first of these. I have maintained that

³⁰ Hansen 147.

the arrangement of non-Christian and Christian material in SS II reflects not the explicit positions of the debaters but the contours of the general tradition. This chapter, therefore, inquires into how the two debaters are distinguished, and by what means we are prepared for the Christian victory with which the debate ends. As Chapter Three shows, the answer is found in the multivalent relationship between Solomon the king and his visitor Saturn. The Christian argument exists not so much in the content of the individual speeches, which are not consistently Christian or pagan, as in the interpretive clues that lie in the interplay of rhetorical and typological characterizations of the two men. This chapter, then, studies the personae and histories of the debaters, the formal or literary patterns of their relationship, their typological connections, and also their literal and affective interactions.

Chapter Five explores the second aspect of the "broad speech situation," the dialogic processes of wisdom instruction in SS II. Here, the concern is not with the history or generic characteristics of the dialogue, such as flyt, the catechetical altercatio, and riddling contest, but rather with the way these various discursive modes are brought together to reflect Saturn's progress from the wasteland of fraudulent speech and specious wisdom to the home within his own mind of truth and real understanding. This chapter recognizes the dialogue itself as a self-

conscious instance of the instability of human forms of expression in a world after Babel. In recreating and reinterpreting Saturn's experience, the language of the dialogue rewrites itself. Saturn's moral vision is clarified in a purifying movement through language from solipsism to the translucency of a Christian hermeneutic. Chapter Five demonstrates a sophisticated working together of several dialogic traditions to create a meaningful and systematic induction into wisdom.

Two final notes on terminology. First, SS II consists of a narratorial introduction and conclusion and a debate. The premises and themes of the debate are sometimes distinct from those of the poem, and I have therefore reserved the term "debate" specifically to refer to the dialogue between Solomon and Saturn that begins at 202b. Second, a large number of quotations appear in the thesis. In order to help readers distinguish how these are being used, I have designated them in the following way. Character-like forces that are called by their OE names are treated as ordinary capitalized English words; hence, Mod, Yldo, Wyrð. Latin words and brief phrases that are used as themselves in the text are italicized (i.e. underlined), as are OE words; e.g., *acedia*, *boca caga*. For convenience, I have labeled some individual sections of the poem by their first few words.³¹ These are also italicized. Parenthetical OE or

³¹ The relevant sections named in the poem are as follows: itinerary: 186-201; *oððe ic swigie*: 202-11; *Weallende Wulf*: 212-24; *Dol bið*: 225-29; Book riddle: 230-46; *Vasa Mortis*:

Latin examples and also longer quotations are placed in quotation marks.

247-81; Yldo riddle: 282-301; Snaw passage: 302-08; gnome: 312-13; Lvtle hwile: 314-22; Sona bið: 323-26; Swa bið: 327-31; Four ropes: 332-36; question and answer series: 340-63; Twins: 364-90; Hwæt! Him mæg: 391-93; Water: 394-99; Light: 400-25; Full oft: 426-36; Wyrð bið: 437-50.

CHAPTER TWO

ANGLO-SAXON WISDOM:
AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONCEPTUAL MILIEU
OF SOLOMON AND SATURN II

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In his 1966 essay, "Understanding Old English Poetry," Morton Bloomfield briefly opened a window on the complex field of Anglo-Saxon wisdom literature, noting in particular its kinship with literature of wisdom throughout the world. Bloomfield remarked that even those genres in OE poetry that are generally recognized as wisdom, namely the riddles and maxims, have mostly been studied in isolation, and "their affinity with a broader category of writing and activity has been more or less ignored."¹ The cross-cultural aspects of

¹ "Understanding OE Poetry," in Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1970) 71. Originally published in AM 9 (1968) 5-25. The earliest important full-length study of OE poetic wisdom is that of Blanche Williams. See also Sealy Ann Gilles, "Lyric and Gnome in OE Poetry," diss., City U of New York, 1985; Thomas Dana Hill, "OE Poetry and the Sapiential Tradition," diss., Cornell U, 1967; Joseph E. Price, "Some Aspects of the Gnostic Elements in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," diss., U of Tennessee, 1965; T. A. Shippey, Poems of Wisdom and Learning in OE (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976); Hansen, Solomon Complex. Several surveys of OE literature contain a chapter on wisdom, such as Wrenn's Study 161-75; Greenfield and Calder's New Critical History 253-379; Barbara Raw, The Art and Background of OE Poetry (London: Edward Arnold, 1978) 69-81. Other studies deal with specific poems as wisdom literature, such as Kathleen E. Dubs, "Guthlac A and the Acquisition of Wisdom," Neophil 65 (1981) 607-13; James Earl, "Maxims I, Part I," Neophil 67 (1983) 277-83; Stanley B. Greenfield and Richard Evert, "Maxims II: Gnome and Poem," in Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Freese (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1975) 337-54; Karma Lochrie, "The Structure and Wisdom of Judgement Day I," NM 87 (1986) 201-10; Kemp Malone, "Words of Wisdom in Beowulf," in Humanoria: Essays in Literature, Folklore, Bibliography, ed. W. D. Hand and G. O. Arlt (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin, 1960) 180-94; T. A. Shippey,

wisdom literature are not the principle concern in this overview of the local notions about wisdom that underlie SS II. In having connections, however, not only with Anglo-Saxon but also with Latin Christian, Greek and possibly Oriental traditions, SS II exemplifies very well the point that Bloomfield makes, namely, that both the poem and its context may properly be viewed in a global perspective. It is appropriate then, to introduce the sapiential background of SS II by reflecting a little further on the generic and even historical relationships between Anglo-Saxon sapiential literature and that found world-wide.

OE wisdom may be viewed first of all as part of a general human endeavour. As early as 1914, Blanche Williams remarked that gnomes "are very common in early literatures," and "probably occur among all peoples."² Williams drew attention to the formal similarity (though not a historical relationship) between Anglo-Saxon gnomic verse and those wisdom classics of ancient Persia, India, China and Egypt that list rules of conduct and etiquette. More recently, Jeff Opland has drawn illuminating formal parallels between the oral tribal poetry, much of which belongs to wisdom, of

"Wisdom and Experience: The OE 'Elegies'," in his OE Verse 53-79. OE prose wisdom has received much less attention. See Hanspeter Schelp, "Der Geistige Mensch im Wortschatz Alfreds des Grossen," diss., Göttingen, 1956; Pamela Jo Clements, "The Prose Maxim in OE: Elfric and Wulfstan," diss., U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984.

² Williams 8. See also H. Munro Chadwick and N. Kershaw Chadwick, The Growth of Literature, 3 Vols. (1940; Cambridge: UP, 1968) 3:xxiii-iv.

the Bantu-speaking tribes of South Africa and that of the Anglo-Saxons.³ Lynn Remly has used the terms of comparative religion and the work of Ernst Cassirer to characterize the relationship of OE gnomic poetry to universal mythic thought.⁴

Second, OE wisdom belongs within a Northern European sphere of influence. Most "original" Germanic wisdom, largely gnomic and proverbial, has, of course, been lost. As Loren Gruber points out, the wisdom of, say, the Maxims, is already in a state of transition under the influence of Roman and then Christian culture from "archaic initiatory utterances of an absolute, religious nature" to philosophical assertions and statements of Christian faith and ordinary ethics.⁵ But the roots of certain conceptual structures and linguistic formulations of OE wisdom have been identified in pre-Christian and non-classical European traditions by Paul Bauschatz in his work on the mythological systems of the pre-medieval Germanic north.⁶ Bauschatz

³ Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980) 19-27, 70-73.

⁴ "The Anglo-Saxon Gnomes as Sacred Poetry," Folklore 82 (1971) 147-58. On wisdom thought as a universal category, see Hansen 28; R. B. Y. Scott, The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament (New York: Macmillan, 1971) 23-47.

⁵ "The Agnostic Anglo-Saxon Gnomes: Maxims I and II, Germania, and the Boundaries of Northern Wisdom," Poetica (Tokyo) 6 (1976) 22-47. Kenneth Jackson notes the common Germanic origin of Norse and Anglo-Saxon gnomes. Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry (London: Cambridge UP, 1974) 132, 135. See also the Chadwicks, Growth, 1:377-403.

⁶ The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture (Amherst: The U of Massachusetts P, 1982). Using a

systems of the pre-medieval Germanic north.⁶ Bauschatz illustrates how archaic Germanic concepts of existence and time form an ideological substratum in the literary record of Anglo-Saxon wisdom.

Third, there is the relationship between OE and classical wisdom. Ernst Curtius remarks on the countless lines of ancient auctores that "put a psychological experience or a rule of life in the briefest form" and were collected for purposes of pedagogy and edification by medieval writers.⁷ In Roman schools, students practised composition by paraphrasing fables, composing maxims ("sententiae"), and writing moral essays ("chriae") and character studies ("ethnologiae").⁸ Later, classroom

⁶ The Well and the Tree: World and Time in Early Germanic Culture (Amherst: The U of Massachusetts P, 1982). Using a multi-disciplinary method that combines linguistics, mythology and archeology, Bauschatz traces the notion of Wyrd back to a set of early northern myths whose iconography, the World Tree, Yggdrasil, and the wells into which its three roots extend, has clearly to do with the sources and acquisition of wisdom. (See especially 22-23, 28-29.) Although he regards his findings as provisional, Bauschatz has constructed out of a diverse body of data a tenable, if broad, view of the pagan Germanic stance towards existence, destiny, and time. See also Stephen P. Schwartz, Poetry and Law in Germanic Myth, Folklore Studies 27 (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973).

⁷ European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1953) 58-59. Such mnemonic verses, Curtius notes, were called apophthegms by Aristotle (Rhet. II, 21) and sententia by Quintilian (Inst. Orat., VIII, 5, 3).

⁸ James T. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: U of California P, 1974) 23. Clements gives a lucid overview of the lines of development of Anglo-Saxon wisdom expression from Aristotle, through Quintilian, Priscian, and Donatus to Bede (17, 26-40).

contests in which sententia served as weapons were intended to sharpen the wit and mental acuity of monastic pupils. From the seventh century on, Latin-Christian pedagogical practice in Anglo-Saxon England further disseminated the fruits of Mediterranean sapiential traditions. The Durham Proverbs and the OE Distiches of Cato, as well as the miscellaneous proverbs in Latin and OE found throughout the corpus, are evidence that literate Anglo-Saxons adopted this "treasury of worldly wisdom and general philosophy" as their own.⁹

Finally, OE wisdom shares in a religious culture that extends from biblical and patristic times. Bloomfield notes that much OE verse customarily assumed to be elegy is in fact a species of wisdom literature with strong affinities in form and spirit to not only classical but also Hebraic reflective poems.¹⁰ This resemblance to Old Testament sapiential writings has recently been explored by Hansen, who gathers evidence from Near Eastern records to establish a working generic definition of wisdom literature as a means to understanding the forms of OE wisdom.¹¹ The eleventh-century OE Liber Scintillarum represents a direct, if rather

⁹ Olof Arngart, "The Durham Proverbs," Speculum 56 (1981) 288-300; R. S. Cox, "The OE Dicts of Cato," Anglia 90 (1972) 1-42. Cox notes that Alcuin draws from the Latin Disticha in his Praecepta vivendi (3). The quotation is from Curtius 58.

¹⁰ Bloomfield 73, 78.

¹¹ Hansen 12-40.

late, transmission of biblical and patristic wisdom to England, while Christian wisdom of a general nature is liberally sprinkled over the entire OE corpus, chiefly in homiletic assertions of God's power and the conduct and ultimate fates of wise and foolish men.¹²

OE wisdom, therefore, finds interpretation within a number of anthropological and literary fields. It represents a local reflex of the universal human readiness to create in words lasting images and evaluations of experience. It is rooted in indigenous Germanic and European oral wisdom thought. And it undergoes its greatest literary and conceptual flowering when fertilized by the sapiential traditions of the classics, the Bible and the Fathers.

In addition to recognizing the place of OE wisdom within the global picture, Bloomfield pointed to the need to define its local extent and characteristics.¹³ OE wisdom expression is ubiquitous; it is found in homilies, collections of sentences, lists or inventories, didactic dialogues, poetic elegies, maxims, charms, riddles, and such reflective passages as appear in other works whose principal theme is not, or not entirely, wisdom. What defines these passages as a group, and what connects them with the larger, world-wide body of wisdom literature, is their concern,

¹² Defensor's Liber Scintillarum, ed. E. W. Rhodes, EETS 93 (1889; London: N. Trübner, 1973). On the use of the maxim in OE homilies, see Clements, especially Chapters 3 and 4.

¹³ Bloomfield 77.

explicit or implicit, to bring into relief a commonly agreed upon order in the universe that accounts for the unexpected as well as for the constant, and to pass judgement on the range of ethical and behavioural choices open to the individual as he encounters the exigencies of that order in everyday life. It is to these two pivotal issues in the wisdom tradition, right understanding and right action, and to their OE inflections, that we now turn.

2.2. MODERN AND MEDIEVAL MODELS OF WISDOM

Setting aside the fundamental relationship between wisdom and language, as well as the questions of genre and style, we can describe wisdom in abstract terms as an essential and functional union of knowledge, that is, cognition, and willed or consciously reasoned action.¹⁴ Wisdom is, in other words, a duality of two conceptually separate but structurally interlocked modes of consciousness: knowing and doing. There are many definitions of wisdom, too numerous fully to catalogue here. Most,

¹⁴ The general question of the kinship of "wisdom thought" and primary linguistic and mythological structures seems not yet to have broken the surface, except in a passing way, in studies of myth and language. Hansen briefly alludes to the parallel between the ordering properties of language and wisdom (33). Clements discusses anthropological and ethnolinguistic approaches to proverbial wisdom (22-24, 71-77). See also Nigel Barley, "A Structural Approach to the Proverb and Maxim with Special Reference to the Anglo-Saxon Corpus," Proverbium 20 (1972) 737-50. A useful introduction to a study of the relationship between linguistic and sapiential systems might be Ernst Cassirer's 1924 exploratory work, Language and Myth, trans. Suzanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1953) Ch. 4, "Word Magic" 44-62.

however, in both Anglo-Saxon and other contexts, refer either to knowledge about life or to behavioural guidelines, and usually to both of these.

Wisdom is, for instance, "the art of succeeding in human life, both private and collective. It is grounded in humanism, in reflexion on and observation of the course of things and the conduct of man."¹⁵ This kind of definition, which stresses the "knowing" side of wisdom -- observation and understanding -- may add that such knowledge can be obtained only from experience of the world over a long period of time.¹⁶ But wisdom is centripetal in the sense that that experience is organized, through the medium of language, in such a way as to mimic the conceptual patterns of the society to which it belongs and to recreate and rationalize its fundamental "existential" preoccupations. Wisdom language centres on human concerns, not on the external world in a scientific sense; indeed, it constitutes a filter between a society and all the multiplicity and unpredictability of the world around it.¹⁷ Language so used

¹⁵ H. Cazelles, "Bible, sagesse, science," Religious Studies Review 48 (1960) 42-43, qtd. in Hansen 29.

¹⁶ Gerhard von Rad, for example, defines wisdom as "practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world, based on experience." Old Testament Theology I, trans. S. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 418, qtd. in Hansen 29. In OE, the association of wisdom and age or maturity is encapsulated in the term *frod*. See e.g., E. Leisi, "Aufschlussreiche altenglische Wortinhalte," Sprache Schlüssel zur Welt, Festschrift für Leo Weisgerber, ed. A. T. Gipper (Düsseldorf, 1959) 315.

¹⁷ Bloomfield notes that wisdom controls life by some kind of order to reduce the area of the unexpected and sudden

may be seen as highly specialized and accessible only to selected initiates; this gives wisdom knowledge an arcane, esoteric quality.¹⁸ On the other hand, if the fallibility of language itself is recognized, wisdom inevitably includes reflections on the limitations of human knowledge.¹⁹

Other definitions of wisdom stress its prescriptive aspects, though these generally assume a cognitive component as well. Bloomfield regards wisdom as "a scheme of life in the broadest sense," concerned with "rules for conduct or control of environment or [with] information about nature and man."²⁰ Von Rad notes that OT instructions supply pragmatic, not theoretical knowledge; all wisdom texts are ethical, "in search of the rational rule or . . . reflecting on that rule."²¹ Archer Taylor defines wisdom as moral advice, again based on experience.²² The link between wisdom

¹⁸ Shippey, Poems of Wisdom 4. See e.g., Ps. 50.8 in Eadwine's Canterbury Psalter: "Eallenga witoplice soðfestnesse ðu lufodes ungewissa & ðæ dihlū wisdomes vel snitro þines þu gecyðdes me." Harsley 88:8.

¹⁹ See Hansen 11 and passim. On the theme of limitation in specific poems, see Greenfield and Evert 340; Lochrie 204.

²⁰ Bloomfield 71.

²¹ Gerhard von Rad, Wisdom in Israel, trans. James S. Martin (London: SCM Press, 1972) 289.

²² "The Wisdom of Many and the Wit of One," in The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb, ed. Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes (New York: Garland, 1981) 4. Taylor's central interest is the proverb. He and others regard the proverb as the definitive wisdom genre. Discussions of genre often reflect the knowing-doing paradigm. Williams' summary definition of the gnome specifies the epistemological and ethical or behavioural sides of wisdom (80). Clements suggests that proverbs give solutions to ethical problems,

and ethics has very deep roots. Graham Caie notes that while the etymon dom, the IE root substantive of wisdom, is morally neutral, dom in OE usage has a strong moral connotation and refers generally to the state of living, or having lived, an ethically perfect life.²³

Inherent in these definitions of wisdom is the distinction between perception and understanding on the one hand and judgement and performance on the other. Wisdom may thus be an epistemological matter concerned with knowledge and structures of knowing or an ethical one concerned with the execution of virtue. In the first instance, wisdom is the possession of an interpretative matrix of information that integrates divinity, nature and man. In the second, it is submission to a body of rules or a programme of action, derived from an authoritative reading of experience, for individual and social conduct.

The knowing/doing duality remains abstract and meaningless without a functional locus. The working centre of wisdom, where the intellectual and the ethical are indissolubly linked and actualized, is the "mind" -- in OE, the hyge, mod or sefa -- of the individual man. The wise ethical or behavioural sides of wisdom (80). Clements suggests that proverbs give solutions to ethical problems, while maxims provide "epistemological information about the nature of things" (70). Definitions of the proverb may provide, if obliquely, a definition of wisdom in the general, non-literary sense as the enactment of stated rules or beliefs in everyday life.

²³ The Judgement Day Theme in OE Poetry (Copenhagen: Nova, 1976) 29.

mind, moreover, is confirmed in behaviour. The intimate link between the inner man and his behaviour is suggested in Maxims I: "Hyge sceal gehealden, hond gewealden" (121) 'The mind should be restrained, the hand governed.' The wise man governs his thoughts ("hyge") according to the measure of the authoritative principles that shape and order his culture and he behaves ("hond") in a way that conforms to and reinforces those principles.²⁴

Wisdom is thus profoundly conservative, binding the individual to his group or to his environment through his adherence to a culturally sanctioned body of knowledge and rules. In a well-known passage in Beowulf, the narrator offers a sage piece of political wisdom in the example of Beow, who in his youth had distributed generous gifts to his warriors:

Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean,
 fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme,
 þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen
 wilgesipas, þonne wig cume,
 leode gelæsten; lofdædum sceal
 in maegþa gehwære man geþeon.
 20-25

These lines specify a model of conduct by which the fledgling prince may conform most profitably to the universal laws, implicitly recognized in the gnome, that regulate society and nature. To paraphrase P. B. Taylor's

²⁴ On the association of hyge, sefa, and mod with, respectively, intention and action, inspiration and wise speech, and moral governance and agency, see Michael Phillips, "Heart, Mind and Soul in OE," diss., U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1985, 30-35, 47-62, 181-90.

statements concerning heroic maxims, wisdom functions to contain and harmonize the individual and his society in three ways: it affirms the order and rituals of nature; it describes the requisites of the individual's role in his community; and it implies the relationship between universal laws of justice and conduct and the governance of society.²⁵

While wisdom is primarily an instrument of social or cultural cohesion, it is never an advocate of slavish conformity to social convention. Indeed, one of wisdom's defining characteristics is its insistence on the distinction of the exemplary man from his social group. Wisdom provides "a sense of an ideal order and an ideal ritual of human behaviour."²⁶ In doing so, it often points to the unfitting realities of human culture, to the community of the foolish, the low, the unthinking.²⁷ So large is this community that the sage is almost invariably one who stands out. He is a stranger, a traveller from afar, or he is distinguished in other ways, as older, or royal, sometimes unnaturally young, foolish, or blind. Like the

²⁵ P. B. Taylor, "Heroic Ritual in the OE Maxims," NM 70 (1969) 393.

²⁶ Taylor 393. See also T. A. Shippey, "Maxims in OE narrative: Literary art or traditional wisdom?" Oral Tradition Literary Tradition: A Symposium, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen et al (Odense, UP, 1977) 42.

²⁷ Examples are Precepts 67-75 and the Frisian wife passage in Maxims I 100-102. Taylor suggests that sceal-maxims (in contrast to bið-maxims) imply that ritual obligations are expected (ought to be) but may fail (389).

Wanderer, the wise man sits apart at his meditations.²⁸ While on the one hand a conservative and connective influence then, wisdom is at the same time a liberation from the world of folly and misdirection. Right thinking is not rote thinking, but active and discriminating observation and reflection. Right action is not slavish imitation of social practice, but the exercise of deliberate choice in light of consciously recognized governing principles that are themselves based on a reasoned interpretation of experience.

The knowing/doing paradigm is a generic, ahistorical model useful for defining OE wisdom and connecting it to the more or less universal features of wisdom thought. When an Anglo-Saxon lens is applied to this framework, however, we can discern the contours of contemporary and theological ideas of wisdom. Ælfric's comments on wisdom, for instance, can be broadly schematized as those that relate to epistemology, that is, to knowledge of a just creator and an ordered universe, and those that relate to ethics, to the requirement that man mirror in his deeds the harmony and justice of that divine order. But Ælfric's own statements refract the view offered by the knowledge/ethics model. Ælfric distinguishes the divine Wisdom of God that undergirds the created world from human wisdom, man's learned and rational understanding of the existence of God

²⁸ The Wanderer 111. Cf. Sedgefield 138:5-7: "Uton healdan unc þæt wit ne wenen swa swa þis folc wenð; gif wit þæs wenað ðe þis folc wenð, þonne forlæte wit ælce gesceadwisnesse & ælce rihtwisnesse."

and the correct behaviour that follows in light of that understanding.

Dare sawle wille is, þæt heo wisdom lufige, -- ne þene eorðlice wisdom, be þam ðe is iwritæn, Sapientia huius mundi stultitia est apud Deum; þæt is on Englisc, 'Disse middaneardes wisdom is stunnese ætforen Gode,'-- ac þene wisdom heo sceal leornigen, þæt heo lufie God & hine æfre wurðie on alle hire weorcum, & þa þing leornie, þe God liciæð, & þa ðing forlæten þe him laðæ beoð.²⁹

This passage demonstrates first of all the characteristic tendency of wisdom literature to segregate the wise man from the false wisdom of the everyday world. But Ælfric also makes the crucial distinction here between the Wisdom that is the transcendent object of the soul's desire and the wisdom that properly belongs to the soul, that is, to love God and honour him with a life of good works and to study those things that please him.

The contrast is more explicit in Alfred's version of Augustine's Soliloquia some hundred years earlier. Wisdom has asked Mod whether he thinks that Truth and that which is true are the same thing.

Ða cwæð ic: twa ðincg. me ðincð þæt hi sien swa swa twa ðing sint: oðer is wisdom, oðer is þæt þæt þer wis byð; and eft be clenness: oðer byð clennes, oðer, þæt þæt clene byð.

Ða cwæð heo: hweðer ðincð þe þonne betre, þe ðæt soð, þe seo soðfesnes?

²⁹ "In Natali Domini," Belfour 94:21.

Ða cwæð ic: soðfestnes. Forðam æall þætte soð byð,
byð of soðfestnesse soð; and ælc þara þe clene byð,
byð for clennessæ clene; and se þe wis byð, he byð
for wysdome wis.³⁰

Here, Alfred distinguishes God's righteousness, purity and wisdom from man's limited participation in and dependence upon those absolute attributes. This contrast between the sacred power (sometimes personified, as in Proverbs 8:23-31 and throughout the Wisdom of Solomon) that perpetually animates and governs the universe and the rational principle that, though limited by man's fallen nature, exists as a gift from God in the human mind, is a well-recognized feature of the Christian tradition. Augustine distinguishes the human mind ("sapiens mens") that has had to learn wisdom from a condition of ignorance ("non erat sapiens"), from the Divine Wisdom ("ipsa Sapientia") that stands immutable and above human nature.³¹ Gregory emphasizes the frailty ("infirmittatem") of human wisdom when compared to the immensity of God's majesty ("immensitatem supernae maiestatis").³² Elsewhere, Gregory states that men may be able to discover what wisdom is in themselves ("quid sit in nobis"), which is, simply, the fear of God ("timor Domini,

³⁰ Carnicelli 81:14-20.

³¹ DDC 1,8, PL 34:22.

³² Moralia 8,47, PL 75:31. Gregory continues: Flesh cannot grasp what Truth (Veritas) teaches about Itself, and the human spirit, even when raised up (sublevatus), is unable to sustain God's judgement (iudicium tolerare).

ipsa est sapientia") but their reason is insufficient to know the absolute Wisdom of God ("quid sit in se").³³

Elfric, quoting Scripture, states that "nis nan wisdom, ne nan ræd naht ongear Godes."³⁴ A passage in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle echoes this notion:

Nu we magon ongytan ðæt manna wisdom, and heora smeagunga, and heora rædas syndon nahtlice ongear Godes geðeaht.³⁵

An OE metrical prayer states that neither all the men ofer moldan (32) nor all the angels' wisdom ("snotra" 37) could ever know or declare ("areccean" 37) the greatness and nobility ("æðele" 34) of God.³⁶ This lovely prayer, which, incidently, is found in one MS. alongside other wisdom works, namely, the Adrian and Ritheus dialogue, several short gnomic passages and the OE Distiches of Cato, underscores the smallness of man and the magnitude of God. But it also depicts God's relationship to his world. He is its creator ("scippende" 43a), its governor ("ece waldend" 2b), its judge ("dema god" 1b), its healer ("læca" 6). Indeed, as the next section shows, many OE observations on

³³ Moralia 19,14, PL 76:104. See also Moralia 16,1, PL 75:1120: "In comparatione enim Dei Scientia nostra ignorantia est. Ex Dei namque participatione sapimus, non comparatione."

³⁴ "Natale Innocentium Infantum," Thorpe I, 82:14. Cf. Prov. 21:30.

³⁵ ASC 979.1.18. Cf. Ps. 146: "ne his snytru mæg secgean ænig, on þyssum ealdre æfre ariman." A poetic example is Christ and Satan 348-54.

³⁶ Prayer 30-8. See also 56-66.

wisdom turn on this intimate relationship between the omniscient God and his creation.

2.3. DIVINE WISDOM: PER SPECULUM IN AENIGMATE

2.3.1. Wisdom as Creatrix and Governor

Human reflections on the nature of divinity find a rich and varied expression throughout Old Testament wisdom and into the patristic period. Two main themes from this vast body of writings can be found in OE wisdom: the essential link between the all-wise Creator and his creation through the person of Christ, and the manifestation of the Creator's Wisdom in the beauty and order of nature.³⁷ Elfric's sermons show a strong preoccupation with the first of these. Elfric anchors his teaching about divine Wisdom in the eternal and creative Wisdom of Christ, the Word and power of God, and the Holy Spirit, who vivifies creation. The urgency of Elfric's teaching about God's Wisdom can not be missed:

Se ælmihtiga Fæder nis of nanum oðrum;
se gestrynde ænne Sunu of him anum acennedne,
& se wæs æfre wunigende ær anginne mid him
on his halgum bosme, & ðurh hine he gesceop
ealle þa gesceafta þe gesceapene syndon,
for ðan ðe he is se wisdom of þam wisan Fæder,
& seo micele miht of ðam mihtigan Fæder,
ðurh ðone þe he gedihte ðone deopan craft,

³⁷ See Leonidas Kalugila, The Wise King: Studies in Royal Wisdom as Divine Revelation in The Old Testament and Its Environment, Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series 15 (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1980). An overview of the treatment of divine Wisdom in relation to the natural world can be found in Clarence J. Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century (1967; Berkeley: U of California P, 1976) 150-208. See also Hansen 27-40.

& he ealle þing geliffaste þurh ðone lyfigendan Gast,
 se ðe is witodlice heora Willa & Lufu,
 him bam gemæne on anre Godcyndnyse,³⁸
 & on anum mægenðrymme anes gecyndes.

What Ælfric stresses here and elsewhere is the "vitality" of God, His palpable yet eternal existence, and the quickening and regulating presence of his Wisdom in creation. At the same time, Ælfric maintains a strong Christological emphasis; creation exhibits the Wisdom of God, but divine Wisdom exists substantially in the body of Jesus Christ. About the creative word and power of God in the Son Jesus, Ælfric states:

Se witega hine het stemne, forðan ðe he forestop
 Criste, þe is Word gehaten: na swilc word swa menn
 sprecað, ac he is ðæs Fæder Wisdom, and word bið
 wisdomes geswutelung. Ðæt Word is Ælmihtig God, Sunu
 mid his Fæder.³⁹

Christ I offers a poetic example of the same notion:

Du eart snyttro þe þas sidan gesceaft
 mid þi waldende worhte ealle.
 239-40.

Ælfric and the Christ poet represent the orthodox notion of divine Wisdom.⁴⁰ Yet this Christ-centred view appears

³⁸ "De Sancta Trinitate et De Festis Diebus Per Annum," Pope I, 471:201-12. Examples of this notion, particularly in Ælfric, are too numerous to list. See also "De Initio Creaturae," Thorpe I, 10:5.

³⁹ "Nativitas Sancti Johannis Baptistae," Thorpe I, 360.34. See also, among many other examples, "Passio Apostolorum Petri et Pauli," Thorpe I, 366:32; "Feria VI in Quarta Ebdomada Quadragesimae," Pope I, 325:278. For Ælfric on the Trinity, see "Feria IIII De Fide Catholica," Thorpe I, 292:19.

⁴⁰ See 1 Cor. 1:23-4: "nos autem praedicamus Christum crucifixum: Iudaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam, ipsis autem vocatis Iudaeis, atque Graecis Christum Dei virtutum, et Dei sapientiam." Cf. Moralia, 1,15, PL 75:534: "Atque haec ipsa Sapientia per Salomonem

relatively rarely in the rest of the OE wisdom corpus. What seems to have greater general appeal is the notion that the order of the created world is a reflection of the power of Wisdom.⁴¹ The lines of Psalm 103:24 must have been as familiar to Anglo-Saxon Christians as they are to churchgoers today: "hu gemyclude synd weorc Ðina ealle on wisdom Ðu dydest gefylled is eorþe gesetnesse Ðinre."⁴²

The idea of Wisdom as a principle of order in the created world is very old.⁴³ The Book of Proverbs and many Psalms celebrate, in Hebrew and Latin as in OE, God's creative Wisdom.⁴⁴ In his homilies, Elfric echoes these ancient sentiments. God created the world as he wished ("gescop gesceafte"); through his Wisdom ("wysedom") he made

dicit: Ego sapientia, habito in consilio, et eruditus intersum cogitationibus (Prov. 8:12). "Hus ergo terram inhabitat Job, quia Sapientia, quae pro nobis passionis dolorem sustinuit, corda vitae consiliis dedita sibimet habitationem fecit;" and Augustine, DDC 1,11, PL 34:23.

⁴¹ Schelp notes that in all his translations, Alfred never expressly mentions Jesus Christ as Wisdom (114). In the Soliloquies, Alfred in passing refers to ". . . drihten, Ðu Ðe æart se hehsta wysdom" (Carnicelli 5.21). The relationship between Wisdom and creation has roots in rabbinical wisdom commentaries on Torah, and extends, in the Christian period, to the reciprocity between sapiential and hexameral traditions. See e.g., Bede. "In Caput VIII Sapientiae," "In Proverbia Salomonis Allegoricae Interpretationis Fragmenta," PL 91:1064.

⁴² Sisam 221:24.

⁴³ See Glacken 150-208.

⁴⁴ As examples: Ps. 18.3: "dæg dæge rocctyð word & niht nihte geeacnað wisdom" (Wildhagen 38:3); Ps. 146:5: "Micel drihten ure & micel mægen his and wisdomes his nis gerim" (Sisam 280:5).

all things, and through his will he gave them life ("ealle geliffaste").⁴⁵

In a hymn to nature in Alfred's Boethius, we find (as in the original itself) a sense of awe before the oneness of God and, much more specifically than in Ælfric's sermons, His governance of the immutable orders of creation.⁴⁶ Alfred rejoices in the control that God exerts over his varied creatures. Seasonal change is a manifestation of his wise regulation of his universe, as is the social order of kinship and friendship. This passage, like Alfred's later adaptation of the O qui perpetua hymn, is a celebration of harmonized unity in diversity, of the command of God over the elements. Indeed, the beginning of Mod's return to wisdom is his acknowledgement of God's power to govern all creation and of the impotence of vain Fortune ("Þios slīpne wyrd") against his counsel.⁴⁷

The Order of the World is a representative poetic variation on the same theme. Like Alfred's Boethius, this

⁴⁵ "The Creation," Warner 1:11-14. See also: "Dominica in Media Quadragesime," Godden, 118:285: "Se ælmihtiga fæder gedihte ealle gesceafta þurh his wisdom. and se wisdom is his sunu. and he hi ealle geliffæste þurh ðone halgan gast. and on ðam deopan dihte stodon ealle þa ðing ða ða gyt næron;" and "Nativitas Domini," Pope I, 208:280: "Ðu sceawast þa heofonan & sunnan & monan; hi synd on þam cræfte, we cweðað nu swutelīcor, on þam Godes wisdom, þe is witodlice lif, & cann wyrcean his weorc be his dihte. . . ." Ælfric's Hexameron also celebrates the beauty and harmony of ða wundorlican gesceaftu (Crawford 1921, 54).

⁴⁶ Sedgefield 48:21-50:3. Cf. CP 2 m. 8; 227:1-130.

⁴⁷ Sedgefield 13:30: "nu ðu geliefæst þæt sio wyrd þurh hie selfe butan Godes geþeahte þas weoruld wendan ne mæge."

poem suggests that man can find his way to God through reflection on the natural order. The poem exhorts the listener to inquire of a wise traveller concerning the natural excellence ("cræftas" 5a) of the living universe, which every day through God's decree brings wonders to men. The poem's herespel is an account of the orderly motion of the heavenly bodies. Here, as in Ælfric and Alfred, we find examples of one definitive feature of sapiential thought: a confidence that the world reflects the just dispensation of a creative deity whose Wisdom sustains the orders of nature.

The concept of a creative and dynamic principle of universal order is not, of course, unique to Christian sapiential theology. It is of some importance to consider the place of the pre-Christian notion of Wyrð in the Anglo-Saxon concept of Wisdom. The OE words wyrð and wisdom can both be traced to roots meaning "objects laid down," or "that which is established," "a statute." OE dom, from which the abstract noun wisdom is formed, may mean, among other things, the legal concept of "what is laid down," i.e. judgement or a sentence; the notion of an externally imposed law, i.e. fate (or Wyrð); and the notion of one's own judgement; i.e. opinion, discernment and free choice.⁴⁸ In Caie's words, the concept of "statutes laid down" is given

⁴⁸ Caie 7.

material form in the myth of the Norns spinning the fate of the world by the Urðar-brunnar . . . therefore, Urðr 'fate' (one of the Norns, cf. OE wyrd) becomes synonymous with dömr.⁴⁹

Similarly, Bauschatz's inquiry into myths of Urth's well and the world tree Yggdrasil (whose roots lie in three wells that are the collective repository of wisdom), suggests that the pre-Christian Wyrd (a power whose name is etymologically and semantically related to the principle goddess of the three Norns, Urth) was probably a "rather positive" cosmic principle of universal order through which laws laid down in the primal past organized events in the present.⁵⁰

Caie and Bauschatz both show that etymological and mythological evidence links the notions contained in the words wyrd and wisdom. It is from the Well of Urth that the Norns draw the water of wisdom that nourishes the tree, Yggdrasil, on which middle earth is situated.⁵¹

The idea of wisdom is basic to everything that has been presented about the Well of Urth. The iconography locates wisdom in the well but imparts it to the tree through the reciprocal relationship between the two.⁵²

Wyrd is, therefore, the "welling up" of the wisdom and order of the past into the present world of the men who live on the tree. Wyrd, says Bauschatz, is the term

⁴⁹ Caie 16, 8.

⁵⁰ Bauschatz 25. Urth "lends her name to the common noun that expresses in general the activities of all the Norns (OE wyrd, OS wurd, OHG wurt, etc.) (15).

⁵¹ Bauschatz 15, 20-23, 27-29.

⁵² Bauschatz 23.

for the power of the past upon the present
 [and is] so firmly rooted in the consciousness and
 language of the people that the religious and
 temporal reorientation [of Christianity] did not
 supplant it quickly or easily."⁵³

Later Christian ideas of Wisdom cohere with these pre-conversion concepts in the general notion of a creative pattern that animates the universe, although substantial differences between the two also exist. Unlike Christian Wisdom, for example, Wyrd appears to be ateleological and devoid of any ontological moral status. Most importantly, Wyrd maintains an immanence in the created world that is not shared by Christian Anglo-Saxon Wisdom. This is a point to which I will return. The relationship between Wyrd and Christian Wisdom takes on greatest significance, however, when either is perceived to retract its influence or to fail to enact the rules and justice it proclaims.

Both Germanic and Christian sapiential traditions recognize that while Wisdom is revealed through material creation, it is also concealed behind it. In the former view, Wyrd was partially accessible to those wise men (or gods) who through memory, poetry, knowledge of the law, or their own model behaviour, could re-enact or recreate its exemplary laws and patterns.⁵⁴ Yet archaic wisdom myths show

⁵³ Bauschatz 154. Bauschatz acknowledges that the meaning of wyrd is ambiguous in the Christian period, at some times referring to God's will, at others to "something like Fortune (and, as such, subservient to God's will)."

⁵⁴ On the privileged position of the poet as the repository of wisdom, see Opland 27-39. On the recreation of ancient wisdom through exemplary behaviour, see Bauschatz 102-16.

both gods and men are subject to a power that is forever beyond their grasp and control.

[Wyrd's] force comes from beyond our world, as the myth clearly indicates, and our intelligences are too limited to grasp its workings fully. Man is touched by wyrd when he becomes involved in matters whose nature and origins extend beyond existence on earth.⁵⁵

In the Christian view as well, as already noted, man may attain, despite his wise belief or conduct, only a measure of divine understanding. In the OE as in the general Judaeo-Christian tradition, the hiddenness of Wisdom is often expressed in human terms as the inability of man to grasp its magnitude and supremacy. Thus Psalm 146:5 in the Paris Psalter:

Micel is ure mihtig drihten,
and his mægen is micel and mihtum strang;
ne his snytru mæg secgean ænig,
on Þyssum ealdre æfre ariman.

The grandiose promise early in The Order of the World to reveal more than the mind can hold soon falls flat with an assertion that it is impossible to grasp more than God wishes us to know.⁵⁶ The Fortunes of Men informs us that "God ana wat hwæt him weaxendum winter bringað" (8b-9). In

⁵⁵ Bauschatz 28. See also Schwartz 39ff. and H. R. Ellis Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964) 36-68.

⁵⁶

Ic þe lungre sceal
meotudes mægensped maran gesecgan,
þonne þu hygecræftig in hreþre mæge
mode gegripan.

23b-26a

Many other examples exist. See Christ and Satan 348-54; Maxims II 61b-66.

his homily on creation, Ælfric corroborates these poetic statements: "ne mæg na þing his wille wyðstanden, ne mæg nan gesceafte fulfremedlice smegen ne understanden ymbe God."⁵⁷ When wyrd is used in a Christian context as an event under or an agent of God's providence, as in Alfred's comparison of Wyrd to godcundan foreþonc, there is emphasis on man's inability to know it, its secretness and hiddenness, sometimes from sinners whose wickedness removes them further from understanding God's ways.⁵⁸

The inadequacy of human understanding, whether in relation to Wyrd or to God's providence, often carries overtones of skepticism and tragedy. Clements identifies a central irony in both OT and OE sapiential works: wisdom's "crucial necessity and its tragic inaccessibility."⁵⁹ Although the main stance of man before the magnam rerum constantiam is, from the Psalms through Basil and Ambrose to Ælfric, one of joy and pious inquiry, an awareness of the failure of universal rules, the tyranny of nature and the reality of evil also informs many sapiential works.⁶⁰ It is the basis of the monologue in Ecclesiastes and the dialogue in Job. The former considers the effects of "human ignorance

⁵⁷ "The Creation," Warner 1:9-10.

⁵⁸ Sedgefield 130:28ff. Cf. The Wanderer 5, 104ff; Andreas 601-16; Elene 536-46; 1095-1103; Juliana 32-35; Judgement Day I 114-47; Metres of Boethius 33-35.

⁵⁹ Clements 59.

⁶⁰ On Basil and Ambrose, see Glacken 193-96.

and divine inscrutibility" while the latter reflects upon the disorder caused by "divine caprice."⁶¹ Similarly in the OE, the Wanderer, despite his final reaffirmation of faith, responds mainly to the decline and decay of life: "Eall is earfoðlic eorðan rice, onwendeð wyrda gesceaft weoruld under heofonum" (106-7). The Ruin regards Wyrð (in whatever sense) as an agent of destruction.⁶² The random, rather amoral tone of The Fortunes of Men, with its list of men's fates, seems to suggest a lack of conscious justice in the universe, where one's life usually, though not always, crumbles in an unexpected death. In the OE Boethius, Mod grapples with those experiences that belie the power of Wisdom to contain the tensions of society:

Hwý þu la Drihten æfre woldest þæt seo Wyrð swa
 hwyrfan sceolde? heo þreat þa unscildigan & nauht ne
 ðreap þam scildigu. Sittað manfulle on heahsetlum, &
 halige under heora fotum þyrcað; sticiað gehydde
 beorhte cræftas, & þa unrihtwisan tælað þa
 rihtwisan.⁶³

The issue here is not so much the indeterminacy of Wyrð but its injustice. Man's seemingly undeserved suffering and the apparent freedom from punishment that the wicked enjoy seem to run counter to a universal scheme of justice and order.

In the face of the strange reluctance of both nature and man to conform to the justice that Wisdom promises, a conceptual bifurcation sometimes takes place between Wisdom

⁶¹ Hansen 35-36.

⁶² "oppæt þæt onwende wyrð seo swiþe" (24).

⁶³ Sedgefield 10:17-21. Cf. CP 1 m.5; 160:29ff.

and Wyrd, in which the two become polarized in a duality of good and evil. Wisdom, for instance, is often shown as a mighty force holding mutually opposing forces in a stable tension. Alfred's Boethius depicts God's creation less as a loving emanation from his all-wise and eternal mind than as the exertion of his power over conflicting tendencies among the elements of the created world.⁶⁴ The Order of the World develops the theme poetically:

Forþon eal swa teofanade, se þe teala cuþe
 æghwylc wiþ oprum; sceoldon eal beran
 stiþe stefnbyrd, swa him se steora bibead
 missenlice gemetu þurh þa miclan gecynd.
 43-46

The first lines of Christ and Satan are similarly devoted to God's miht and strengþo (2) in creation, while Andreas alludes to God's power, which binds the sea, established the heavens and governed the people.⁶⁵ At times, however, Wisdom recedes from view as the tensions in nature grow in significance. The focus becomes is a world of experience in which a principle of discord exists that is fundamental equally to wisdom. In Maxims II 48b-54a, elemental violence characterizes the mundane world below the stars, in contrast

⁶⁴ See Anne Payne, Alfred and Boethius (Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1968), but also Katherine Proppe, "King Alfred's Consolation of Philosophy," NM 74 (1973) 642-44; and W. F. Bolton, "How Boethian is Alfred's Boethius?" in Studies in Earlier OE Prose, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State U of New York P, 1986) 153-68.

⁶⁵ Christ 1-18; Andreas 518b-25. Timmer discusses the "ethical contrast" between Wyrd and God observed by some critics (26). The OE Orosius opposes "wyrda mægenum" to "godes gestihtunge" (Bately 62.10).

to the supremely governed heavens. In some works, nature itself is the agent of evil, as in The Wanderer 81-83, where the beasts of battle, along with war, bring about the death of the heroic world the anhaga once knew. In Maxims I 146-52, the animal world knows no rules; the wineleas wonselig man who is separated from the order of his community is prey for the wolf, se graga who, indifferent to any social imperative, will not mourn one man's death but only seek that of another ("ac hit a mare wille"). In Juliana 468b-99, men's unhappy fates are unified through the agency of the devil, the course of whose wickedness follows the time line of God's created order. The devil has wrought his evil "siþþan furþum wæs rodor aræred ond ryne tungla, folde gefæstnad ond þa forman men (497b-99).⁶⁶

While Wisdom normally maintains its positive and sometimes Christological aspects, then, Wyrð seems to become a defensive repository of concepts that both absorbs and diverts attention from Wisdom's apparent failures. The perceived weakness of divine Wisdom is, so to say, transmuted into the might of Wyrð, to whom is assigned the role of the unpredictable, often amoral, sometimes malicious, scrambler and destroyer. In its turn, human wisdom may reflect this ontological split between Wisdom and Wyrð, becoming a stoic recognition of Wyrð's radical lack of

⁶⁶ On the relationship between the devil and Wyrð, see Rosemary Woolf, "The Devil in OE Poetry," RES n.s. 4 (1953) 10-11.

concern with man, coupled, as in The Wanderer and Maxims II 54b-63, with a blind trust in the security of heaven.

Resignation 117-8 states:

Giet biþ þæt selast, þonne mon him sylf ne mæg
wyrd onwendan, þæt he þonne wel þolige.

Such thinking places man between two utterly unreconcilable extremes. On the other hand, Wyrd and Wisdom can be integrated successfully. As later chapters show, the seeming failure of Wisdom may be reevaluated against an awareness of human fallibility and become in fact the stimulus for an inquiry into the workings of Wyrd as a means to a better understanding of Wisdom.

2.3.2. The Spatial Locus of Divine Wisdom

It is a commonplace of Judaeo-Christian thought that one is not to see God Himself in nature but only the evidence of his Wisdom. This ubiquitous point is made concisely in the Moralia. Commenting on the famous passage on Wisdom in Job 28, Gregory states that we should look not for wisdom created ("creatum"), that is, the literal appearances of things, but for that Wisdom ("sapientiam") that creates ("creentem") and that appears allegorically through the literal world.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Moralia 18,61, PL 76:72. The New Testament locus classicus is Romans 1:20: "Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur: sempiterna quoque eius virtus, et divinitas." Cf. Augustine, "Enarr. in Ps." 39,8, PL 36:439: "Disce amare in creatura creatorem, et in factura factorem."

Underlying Gregory's view is the Judaeo-Christian rejection of idolatrous practice, or the ritualistic belief that "heavenly intelligences" are immanent in and "identical to the forces and realities they describe."⁶⁸ Both Wulfstan and Ælfric equate idolatry with mistaken notions of divine Wisdom:

Hie namon eac him 8a 8æt to wisdomes 8urh deofles lare
 8æt hy wur8edon him for godas 8a sunnan & 8one monan
 for heora scinendan beorhtnesse & him lac 8a æt
 nyhstan 8urh deofles lare offrodon & forleton heora
 Dryhten 8e hy gescop & geworhte.⁶⁹

The OE Daniel is similarly concerned with heathenism and idolatry as instances of ignorance of the transcendence of divine Wisdom. Nebuchadnezzar wants to be wise ("snytro on sefan" 84a) but his understanding of divine Wisdom, which is the condition of his own wisdom, is explicitly shown to be limited.⁷⁰ His inability, even with Daniel's help, to recognize God's revelation through a dream of how the world is governed ("wundrum geteod" 111b) is underscored by his immediate construction of an idol on the field of Dura.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Gruber 31.

⁶⁹ "The False Gods," Bethurum 221:17-21.

⁷⁰ nales 8y 8e he 8æt moste o88e gemunan wolde
 8æt he 8ara gifena gode 8ancode
 8e him 8ær to dugu8e drihten scyrede (85-87)

On the relationship between non-Christian and Christian in Anglo-Saxon England, see Henry Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England (London: B. T. Batsford, 1972) 22-30. For Wulfstan's injunctions against heathen practice in the tenth and eleventh centuries, see Fowler 4:16 and commentary 26n16.

⁷¹ Daniel 168-78a.

Both the homilists and the poet are concerned with the distinction between seeing God's Wisdom as a transcendental principle that permeates the natural world, instilling it with its own perfect order, and the attribution of divinity itself to the material world and its man-made "magical-artistic forms."⁷²

The question of conceptualizing divine Wisdom in space concerns not just the problem of idol worship, but has as well to do with the value accorded the material world in general, whether natural or man-made. The Christian valorization of the universe is formulated in the combination of an Augustinian hierarchy and the less dominant but still influential notion of contemptus mundi. In the former, Wisdom stands at the head of an order in which every created thing has the value that is its due, and nothing is without value at all. Augustine's teachings on Sapientia are based on this principle of hierarchy.⁷³ They are reflected in Alfred's Boethius, for instance, where

⁷² E. E. Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew U, 1979) 1:37.

⁷³ As living things are esteemed above non-living things, as life itself is set above those bodily forms which it animates, as sentient life excels insentient life, and as intelligent life lies beyond the merely sentient, so immutable life, which is Wisdom itself, is superior to the mutable life. See DDC, 1,8, PL 34:22. Although Augustine's entire theology lies within the larger context of sapientia, he never did set out a formal design of Christian wisdom. See Walter Principe, Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982) 82; Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine (New York: Random House, 1960) 123.

Wisdom (the character) portrays the conventional Christian chain of being with an analogy to a fountain and a river:

Forðy nan mon ne mæg oðsacan þæt sum good ne sieþæt
 hehste, swa swa sum micel æwelme & diop, & irnen
 mænege brocas & riða of. Forðy mon cwið be sumum
 goode þæt hit ne sie ful good, forðæm him bið
 hwæshwugu wana; & þeah ne bið ealles butan, forðæm þe
 ælc þing wyrð to nauhte gif hit nauht goodes on him
 næfð. Be þy ðy meaht ongitan þæt of þam mæstan goode
 cumað ða læssan god, næs of ðæm læssan þæt mæste, þon
 ma þe sio ea mæg weorðan to æwelme.⁷⁴

In contrast to this affirmation of Augustine's Christian Neoplatonism, contemptus mundi implies a devaluation of the created world to a greater or lesser degree when it is seen against the absolute Wisdom of the Creator. In Alfred's version of Augustine's Soliloquia, we read:

Ðu us wel lerdest þæt we ongeatan þæt us was fremde
 and lene þæt ðæt we iu we(n)don þæt ure agen were,
 þæt ys, weoruldwela; and þu us æac lærdest þæt we
 ongeatan þæt ðæt ys ure agen þæt we ieo we(n)don þæt
 us fremde were, þæt ys, þæt heofonrice ðæt we þa
 forsawon.⁷⁵

In the Boethius, Wisdom speaks of woruldsælða as signs of death ("deaðes tacnung").⁷⁶ The Seafarer demonstrates the idea very clearly:

Forþon me hatran sind
 dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif
 læne on lande.

64b-66a

Contemptus mundi is a familiar feature of OE literature, particularly, as here in The Seafarer, in the context of the

⁷⁴ Sedgefield 82:26-83:3.

⁷⁵ Carnicelli 52:5-9.

⁷⁶ Sedgefield 20:24.

transitoriness of creation.⁷⁷ Nature's inevitable cycles of birth and death are a sign to man that immutable happiness is of the spirit. Only rarely in the OE corpus, however, does the idea of contemptus mundi extend as far as moral rejection of nature itself.⁷⁸ Even in this example from The Seafarer, þis deade lif refers to the lifeless spirit of ignorant men, while the natural world is not the bearer of evil, but rather a reminder that time carries everything away and a stimulus to set out on a new adventure, whether literal or metaphysical. While OE religious literature frequently advocates a turning away from worldly pursuits, nature itself by and large remains a reminder both of God's gracious plenitude and a transient token of the spiritual home where nothing will die.

In these examples, divine Wisdom is a power that animates and regulates creation while preserving its own ontological independence from that creation. A substratum of

⁷⁷ As examples, Christ 1578-89; "Þisses middangeardes ende neah is" (Morris 112:33-115:21); Ælfric, "Admonitio," Norman 8:30, MF sol9:277: "Se snotera wer ne gewilnað þara woruld glenga ne þas lichaman wites ac gewilnað þære sawle forþam þe Crist gegladað on þære sawle godnysse and on hire wite, gewilna þu þes."

⁷⁸ Glacken states: "[It] is undeniable that there has been in Christian theology, especially in the exegetical literature, a contemptus mundi, a rejection literally of the earth as the dwelling place of man, a distaste for, and disinterest in, nature, opposition to a theologia naturalis, the belief that one can find in the creation the handiwork of a reasonable, loving, and beneficent creator" (162). Glacken later discusses the Christian synthesis of the chain of being and contemptus mundi (201).

pre-Christian thought can be discerned in Anglo-Saxon wisdom, however, whose effect is to check the infinite abstract extension of transcendent Wisdom beyond creation and to contain its power within the conceptual confines of the temporal and material world. Bauschatz shows that pre-Christian reasoning places a high premium on material objects as the bearers of history. In his words, "it is the greatest element of value of an heirloom that it carries with it its own past."⁷⁹ This is not the recent past, moreover, but a past which extends beyond the pale of human history into the well of archetypal origins. Finely crafted articles carry primordial significance, and the wielding of tools and weapons with skill becomes an expression of connectedness with the primeval wisdom that both inheres in the natural world and extends to the manipulation of that world by man. Such items carry historical events of surpassing importance in their very physical structure.⁸⁰

Maxims II shows another way in which the transcendent and the material may be conceptually united in Anglo-Saxon wisdom:

Treow sceal on eorle,
wisdom on were. Wudu sceal on foldan
blædum blowan. Beorh sceal on eorþan
grene standan. God sceal on heofenum,
dæda demend. Duru sceal on healle,
rum recedes muð.

31b-37a

⁷⁹ Bauschatz 98

⁸⁰ Bauschatz 98-101.

Here, the trees and woods, God's home in heaven, the good faith and wisdom of men, and the hall with its door are all on an equal rhetorical plane. Seen together within the confines of the poetic list (itself of significance as an organizer and container of experience) they are all participants as much in the divine as in the profane. Each element imbues the other with meaning as a part of the existential unity embraced by the poem.

Finally, the Charms, which use the potencies of language to summon the corresponding powers in the material and natural world, and even the personifications so typical of the Riddles, suggest a ritualistic involvement, whether actual or residual, in the material world as an embodiment of divine power, which is quite other to notions of Christian hierarchy, much less contemptus mundi.⁸¹ The transcendent power of the divine is never called into question in OE wisdom. It does seem at times, however, to be sidelined in works that draw the transcendent into the historical world, transferring the locus of its power to time and space and at the same time expanding the capacity of materiality to embody the primal archetypes of reality.

2.3.3. The Temporal Locus of Wisdom

As with its spatial conception, the Anglo-Saxon notion of Wisdom in its temporal locus may be traceable in part to pre-Christian as well as to orthodox habits of thought. In

⁸¹ On the charms as wisdom, see Bloomfield 75.

Christian Anglo-Saxon writings, divine Wisdom is frequently mentioned in connection with the Last Judgement. Certain prose pieces show a conceptual link between divine Wisdom and the Last Judgement, when human law and reason fall away and God grants the revelation of his Wisdom. A Vercelli homily refers to the Last Judgement as the day of true Wisdom ("soðes wisdomes").⁸² Ælfric, speaking of the reward of Wisdom in heaven, emphasizes the completion of wisdom after death for those who obey God now:

Her we behofiað lare and wisdomes. On ðam heofonlican
life beoð ealle ful wise, and on gastlicre lare full
gerade, þa ðe nu, þurh wisra manna lare, beoð Godes
bebodum underþeodde⁸³

As this passage also suggests, the chasm between divine and human Wisdom may also be construed in eschatological terms.

Judgement Day I begins:

Ðæt gelimpan sceal, þætte lagu floweð,
flod ofer foldan; feores bið æt ende
anra gehwylcum. Oft mæg se þe wile
in his sylfes sefan soð geþencan.
1-4

These lines imply a "comparison between the absolute and universal on the one hand, and the optional and personal on the other."⁸⁴ As a whole, the poem points to the contrast

⁸² "In Sabbato sancto," DOE transcript edited from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 340, l. 151, cited in DOE 105, MF W014:164.

⁸³ "Feria III de Dominica oratione," Thorpe I, 270:31. See also "Natale Innocentium Infantium," Thorpe I, 84:21: "ac hi arisað on þam gemænelicum dome mid fullum wæstmæ, and heofenlicere snoternysse."

⁸⁴ Lochrie 208.

between a person's own understanding and God's final judgement of him and all men.⁸⁵ This poem, like the prose, couples the Final Days with the revelation of Wisdom: "Soþ þæt wile cyþan þonne we us gemittað on ðam mæstan dæge" (103b-4). Truth cannot fully be known until Judgement.⁸⁶

These examples point to the future from a point in the present; their movement is forward in time toward an apotheosis of Wisdom. It is true that Wisdom creates the world and establishes its principles of order, but her consummation takes place in the future when the world and its order are terminated.⁸⁷ Some OE works, however, seem to resist the notion of an end to historical time. Caie has shown that Beowulf and OE eschatological poetry privilege the historical present over the future and eternal.

The precise nature of the reward in both Beowulf and the Judgement Day poems is not of great importance. The poets of both heroic and Christian didactic verse are interested only in the actions of man at the present time. Man can achieve immortality, the nature

⁸⁵ Lochrie 208. Cf. Moralia 17,41, PL 76:30: "perfecta aeternitatis scientia nulli tribuitur, quousque cursus iustorum iniustorumque finiatur."

⁸⁶ If these lines concern the revelation of God's truth, Christ III 1045b-60 shifts attention directly to the unmasking of the human heart when all is made known on the Day of Judgement.

⁸⁷ See e.g., Moralia 15,3, PL 75:1083: "Futurum in hoc mundo nihil est, quia nullum ad vitam vel brevissimum restat momentum. Ubi est ergo longum tempus quod inter initium finemque deprehensum ita consumitur, ac si nec breve unquam fuisset;" and 15,49, PL 75:1105: "omnis longitudo temporis vitae praesentis punctus esse cognoscitur, cum fine terminatur? Cum enim ad extremum quisque perducitur, de praeterito jam nil tenet, quia tempora cuncta delapsa sunt; in futuro nil habet, quia unius horae momenta non restant."

of which his finite mind cannot conceive, but all depends on this present actions which are continually judged and will determine his future state.⁸⁸

We have already noted how, in Maxims II, assertions of God's eternity in heaven are strikingly placed amid a welter of observations on material reality. Gilles observes that even with its apocalyptic visions of a ruined world, The Wanderer never really breaks imaginistically with a secular and temporal view of the heroic community.⁸⁹

Woriað þa winsalo, waldend licgað
dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal gecrong,
wlonc bi wealle.

78-80a

Doomsday evokes not reflections on eternity but eulogy for the past. Similarly, Judgement Day I is also preoccupied in places with the past as seen from a kind of future present; "what will preoccupy people in the future is the past."⁹⁰ The central interest in this poem is not the advent of eternity in the end of temporality, but the thoughts and deeds of men in historical time as determinants of their status at Judgement.

The concern with the individual's destiny as fixed by his actions in time is, of course, central to Christian

⁸⁸ Caie 45. Caie does not extend his analysis to concepts of temporality, but he cogently argues that the conflation of native and Christian concepts of dom and the concern of both traditions with ethical conduct as a means to glory anchors the concept of dom and the moment of judgement in the present rather than the future (4-5).

⁸⁹ Gilles 155.

⁹⁰ Shippey, Wisdom and Learning 45.

theology.⁹¹ But the Anglo-Saxon emphasis on action in past time, even in Christian works, and the tendency to blur the otherness of God and his eternity by placing them on the same rhetorical plane with material experience can perhaps be better understood as "reflexes of an older stratum of belief."⁹² Bauschatz has identified a Germanic habit of mind that tends to locate sacred law and its fulfillment in the past. On the basis of tense structure and mythic patterns, Bauschatz hypothesizes that Germanic temporality is governed by a sense of the past as it conditions and also assimilates the present.⁹³ The Germanic past is not one third of a past-present-future trinity, but

⁹¹ Caie 87. See e.g., Judgement Day II 86-87:

Glæd bið se godes sunu, gif þu gnorn þrowast,
and þe sylfum demst for synnum on eorðan.

Cf. John 5:25: "Amen, amen dico vobis, quia venit hora, et nunc est, quando mortui audient vocem Filii Dei: et qui audierint, vivent;" John 3:19: "Hoc est autem iudicium: quia lux venit in mundum, et dilexerunt homines magis tenebras quam lucem: erant enim eorum mala opera." Augustine explains that John speaks here not of the second resurrection of the body in the future, but "de prima, quae nunc est" (DCD 20,6,1, PL 41:665).

⁹² Schwartz 40.

⁹³ Bauschatz 20-21, 28. Norse myths do speak of an end to the world, and certain motifs on the Gosforth Cross and Sutton Hoo purse lid suggest the northern version of the Apocalypse. The differences between Ragnarok and the Christian Apocalypse are in any case more significant than their similarities. The former is not a myth of salvation and judgement; it includes the gods themselves in its destruction; and in certain versions of the myth, a new earth will arise and the cycle of life and death will continue. See Caie 73-77; Schwartz 39.

more accurately a realm of experience including all of the accomplished actions of all beings, men, gods, etc. It is ever growing, and it has a direct, nurturing, sustentative effect upon the world, which men experience as life, just as water from Urth's Well nurtures Yggdrasil. The relationship implies a continual, supportive intrusion of past upon present existence.⁹⁴

The archaic world-view, Bauschatz shows, is dominated by laws set down in primordial times that extend into and absorb the present. Exemplars of order and justice lie far in geardagum, and history is a fulfillment of these exemplars in human time and space.⁹⁵ Man's purpose is a life devoted to conformity to these primary models, and the measure of his conduct is the degree to which he succeeds in this.⁹⁶ At his death, his being, which is in effect all the deeds of his personal history, is absorbed back into the past. Perhaps this kind of thinking contributes to Mod's aspirations in Alfred's Boethius:

ic wilnode weorðfullice to libbanne þa hwile þe ic
lifde, & æfter minum life þam monnum to læfanne þe
after me wæren min gemyndig on godum weorcum.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Bauschatz 15-16. On the general notion of archetypal events, see Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 21-38; and Frye, Code 48.

⁹⁵ Bauschatz 104. Knowledge of history, through genealogies, for instance, or the recitation of tribal and individual exploits that reveal its exemplary forms, is a condition of wisdom.

⁹⁶ Bauschatz 104. The importance of Beowulf's actions "lies not only in what he performs -- this is but a small portion of its significance -- but in the extent to which these actions touch upon and are touched by other aspects of human activity from earliest times onward."

⁹⁷ Sedgefield 41:3-6. This idea is not in the original CP.

Gesceadwisnes' response to Mod here is of interest as it reveals a sharp contrast to Mod's point of view and to the formulations of Wyrd and time outlined above. Even he who wislice strives for good reputation ("hlisan"), says Gesceadwisnes, soon discovers how small ("lytel") and transitory ("læne") this is, and how bereft of all good ("bedaeld ælces godes").⁹⁸ We are reminded of Gregory, who states that all who conform to this present world (huic saeculo conformantur) through earthly habits of mind ("cogitatione terrena"), intend, by all they do, to leave a memorial of themselves ("sui memoriam"), whether in war or monuments ("altis aedificorum moenibus"). Such memorials, Gregory goes on, are mere ashes ("cinerem") carried quickly away by the breeze of mortality ("ventus mortalitatis").⁹⁹

This Christian view, in which present and past are of no intrinsic significance when seen against an absolute future point, required, Bauschatz suggests, a difficult and not entirely successful conceptual reorientation. Bauschatz overstates the case, but his summary is worth borrowing:

The temporal reorientation toward the future, which the Christian conception stresses so strongly, involved a 180-degree wrench away from the past toward a future that did not even exist prior to Christianization. The doctrine of salvation and the idea of a closed, fixed eternity must also have been difficult. Sin, repentance, and absolution must have seemed very strange at first. Repentance and absolution involve a moment in which the sins of the past are confronted, repented of, and, in effect,

⁹⁸ Sedgefield 41:16-19.

⁹⁹ Moralia 10,42, PL 75:972.

washed away. The absolved individual at this moment enters a state of grace; the past disappears, and he is born anew. How the Germanic peoples must have struggled with the idea that the past could ever disappear!¹⁰⁰

Divine Wisdom in OE writings, therefore, is conceived temporally in two directions, both as the source and foundation of the natural order and historical events, and as a teleological principle of absolute divinity whose complete revelation will terminate time and world history. The first coheres with the traditional Christian view of Wisdom as creatrix. If Bauschatz is correct, however, the Anglo-Saxon view also carries the weight of a powerful underlying ideology of history and personal and racial destiny, which runs counter to the second Christian position on the culmination of wisdom in the completion of history at the end of time. In a sense, Alfred's Boethius marks an important conceptual reconciliation of the two positions: Mod discovers that God is not only the beginning but also the end of Wisdom.¹⁰¹

2.4. HUMAN WISDOM: AD SCIENDAM SAPIENTIAM

2.4.1. Learning and the Status of the Sage

Human wisdom may loosely be classified as either natural or accidental. Natural wisdom, which is granted by

¹⁰⁰ Bauschatz 154.

¹⁰¹ Sedgfield 94:21-4: "Nu þu sædest þæt þu nystest ælcra gesceafta ende; ac wite nu þæt þæt is ælcra gesceafta ende þæt þu self ær nemdest, þæt is God; to þam fundiað ealle gesceafta."

God as an inherent part of every human mind, is located, in OE as in orthodox writings in general, in the rational soul.¹⁰² Augustine regards natural wisdom as the rational basis for the initial knowledge of God and providence. By means of this innate knowledge, the individual is urged to proceed to wisdom through faith by turning away from mundane attractions towards "God's immutable and necessary Ideas."¹⁰³ In his Boethius, Alfred approaches Augustine's argument that wisdom, though it may be occluded and misused through sin ("swærnes ðæs lichoman & þa unþeawas") so that it fails to shine as brightly ("beorhte scinan") as it would, nevertheless exists as a seed of truth within the soul ("soðfæstnesse sæd on þære sawle") as long as one lives. This grain of wisdom must be excited by inquiry and teaching ("aweht mid ascunga & mid lare") in order to grow.¹⁰⁴ A more popular version of the notion of natural

¹⁰² Schelp 98.

¹⁰³ Gilson 120. The many references to human wisdom in Augustine's works fall into three categories: natural, theological and contemplative. Augustine's primary interest was theological wisdom -- the wisdom of the baptized Christian -- particularly as it pertained to the pastoral activities of the church. DDC and De Trin, together with De Lib Arb contain his most important statements regarding wisdom in the context of theological inquiry (Principe 82). For Elfric's revision of Augustine's view, particularly with respect to the intellectual nature of the soul, see Malcolm Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," in Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: UP, 1985) 278-80, 285.

¹⁰⁴ Sedgefield 95:7-16. Gesceadwisness, when it means natural ratio, is shared by God, the angels and men, as an innate possession and the highest character of man's soul.

wisdom might be identified early in The Gifts of Men: God never ordains that anyone should be wholly without any excellence (or perhaps potency) of mind ("modes cræfta" 12) or power of action ("mægendæda" 12).¹⁰⁵ Without yet specifying any particular abilities, the poet affirms that within everyone there lies a possibility for wise or useful action.

Accidental wisdom is the skill or understanding which is innate in some but not all men or which is acquired in the course of life.¹⁰⁶ Ælfric works from this basic notion when he states:

He sylð his gife ðam ðe he wile. Sumum men he forgifð
wisdom and spræce, sumum god ingehyd, sumum micelne
geleafan, sumum mihte to gehælenne untruman, sumum
witegunge, sumum toscead godra gasta and yfelra;
sumum he forgifð mislice gereord, sumum gereccednysse
mislicra spræca.¹⁰⁷

In contrast to Ælfric's list, which emphasizes the spiritual and intellectual aspects of wisdom, The Gifts of Men gives a more popular idea of acquired wisdom. Here we may observe the influence of a native tradition that recognizes a different "curriculum" of wisdom, one more broadly secular and rooted in the everyday welfare of the community. The Gifts of Men, in listing various skills or aptitudes,

It provides knowledge of ideas and of God, and leads the way to eternity (Schelp 101-3).

¹⁰⁵ For the meaning of mod and mægen, see Phillips 188-200, 214, 217, and below.

¹⁰⁶ Schelp 98.

¹⁰⁷ "In Die Sancto Pentecosten," Thorpe I, 322:24.

suggests that many kinds of knowledge -- including eloquence ("gearuwyrdig" 36b), artisanship ("searocræftig" 58b), athletics ("on londe snel" 52b) and skill in judgement ("folcrædenne" 42a) -- belong in the general category of wisdom. Here, wisdom is not limited to intellectual or religious pursuits, but embodies all those skills that give one success in this life and that together function to maintain the material and cultural welfare of the group.¹⁰⁸ An extension of this idea is found in Alfred's gloss in the Boethius on Weland the Smith. While Fabricius, whom Alfred seems to have connected with the noun faber, is remarkable for the personal quality of honesty, the wisdom of the legendary Weland explicitly rests on his possession of the venerable craft of goldsmithy. Alfred's gloss suggests he was using a habitual association of the arts of design and fabrication with primordial wisdom to lend more weight to his Christian lesson, namely that death destroys all human wisdom.¹⁰⁹

Other works combine secular and spiritual gifts in delineating the accidental wisdom that is accumulated in

¹⁰⁸ See Geoffrey R. Russom, "A Germanic Concept of Nobility in The Gifts of Men and Beowulf," Speculum 53 (1978) 1-15; Douglas Short, "Leofocræftas and the Pauline Analogy of the Body in the Old English Gifts of Men," Neophil 59 (1975) 463-65.

¹⁰⁹ Sedgefield 46:16-21. See Bolton 151, 159; and Janet M. Bately, "Knowledge of Latin Literature in Old English," in Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture, ed. Paul E. Szarmach, Studies in Medieval Culture XX, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan U, 1986) 43.

study, reflection and practice throughout one's life. In Homiletic Fragment I, an alliterative link is made between snottor and searocraftig (42), and here the figure is turned to suggest "skillful in the counsel of his soul." Christ 659-82, the well-known "gifts of men" passage, lists both spiritual talents -- inspired eloquence, understanding of divine law -- and such secular gifts as navigation, tree climbing, and warfare. Instructions for Christians lists learning on lifes æ as one of four things that lead to eternal blessedness and later insists that one labour ("swincan" 150) using the vocational talents that Christ has granted him.¹¹⁰ As Hansen puts it, human wisdom in this poem mediates between the future ecan eadignesne of heaven and the now of pære woruldpinga.¹¹¹ Accidental wisdom, therefore, is a unity of spiritual and secular aptitudes that recognizes a transcendent reality as the ultimate source and reference point for the secular life but that anchors man's enactment of that reality in the everyday world. The ancient wisdom of the artisan, the orator, the warrior, and the king come together with the divine understanding of the believer, the healer, the counsellor, and the preacher. The sage, while he seeks true wisdom from God, can be a man of both worlds.

¹¹⁰ Instructions for Christians 4-9, 150-54. Lifes æ may refer to divine law, or to Biblical and patristic study. The poem is found in Anglia 82 (1964) 4-22.

¹¹¹ Hansen 113.

The learned man has, therefore, a position of considerable importance in OE wisdom. This appears to be true in both the pre-Christian and the Christian traditions. The learned appear as saints, kings, counsellors to kings, philosophers, men versed in ancient lore, fictional heroes, and men of science and the law. We find them in such works as Beowulf, The Gifts of Men, The Order of the World, Apollonius of Tyre, Precepts, Vainglory, Alfred's Preface to the Pastoral Care, Elene and Daniel. In the latter two works, the Chaldean and Jewish sages, as non-Christians, are ironically connected with larger themes of ignorance and sin. The formulaic elaboration and rhetorical weight of the descriptions of these men, however, work against our reading them in an entirely disparaging light as fools and sinners. A degree of respect is conferred upon these characters as representatives of a community of wisdom within the larger social group. In both poems, conventional formulas denote valued and ancient wisdom. We are given glimpses of wise men in meðelhegende, debating issues of importance to the community at large.¹¹² It is within the ranks of these sages, not of the people, that Christian truth is finally recognized. In Elene, Judas is the wisest of the wise men even before his conversion, and it is his knowledge of past lore which gives a critical direction to the narrative. In

¹¹²In Daniel 409-29, the cyninges ræswa is wis and wordgleaw. Elene 276-81 describes the men of Jerusalem as "þam snoterestum side ond wide . . . meðelhegende, on gemot cuman." Cf. The Gifts of Men 41-43; Riddle 86 2.

Daniel, it is one of Nebuchadnezzar's own men who recognizes the true God through the miracle of the fire. Even while Christian truths shed light on the false wisdom of the sages, these passages attest to an indigenous convention of respect for wise men as a crucial and powerful part of the community.¹¹³

Book learning in particular commands wide respect in Anglo-Saxon writings. Wulfstan hopes his readers will "boclarum hlystan swyðe georne and Godes beboda geornlice healdan and gelome wið witan wisdom smeagan."¹¹⁴

Instructions for Christians remarks that the study of holy books ("halgum bocum" 83a) improves the learned and teaches the unlearned, and has the salutary effect as well of gladdening, ennobling and liberating ("gefreolsað" 92b) the mind. As a whole, the collecting and copying of books in Anglo-Saxon England, the composition of chronicles, saints' lives, and exegetical works, and above all the development of schools and educational texts, all point to a generally positive view of literary proficiency as an adjunct to spiritual and moral growth.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Shippey speaks of a "native liking for the figure of the 'ancient sage'" in Daniel, Elene and Exodus and comments on the respect with which Bede treats the converted heathen Coifi. Despite his erroneous beliefs, the priest's position remained unassailable (OE Verse 61-62).

¹¹⁴ K. Jost, "Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical," Swiss Studies in English 47 (Bern), 1959; cited in DOE 193; MF W014:140.

¹¹⁵ See Peter Hunter Blair, An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: UP, 1977) 311ff.

Many OE books may be classified as scientia: treatises on the computus, for instance, various scientific texts such as Bald's Leechbook, tracts such as Aldhelm's or Bede's on grammar and the arts, and historical writings like the Orosian translation or Bede's History. More than the texts themselves, however, what confers wisdom on these works is the fact that their authors, or the authorities they cite, are regarded as wise men ("wis," "snottor"), that is, men (usually) whose intellectual pursuits are measured and given credibility in the context of their moral alliance with God. Christian thought generally favours secular knowledge, but it is deeply concerned with the intentions and moral awareness that one brings to the arts of learning. It insists on a distinction between the false wisdom held by men of the world and the true and saving knowledge of God. As Alcuin says of scientia:

Ærest ealre þingen æghwylce mæn is to secene, hwæt
seo se soðe wisdom, oððe hwylc seo seo soðe snytere,
for þan þe se wisdom þyssere wurlde is dysignysse
beforen Gode.¹¹⁶

The obvious pleasure and confidence in education, then, is tempered by the insight that knowledge has no salvific value in itself. In Christ and Satan we read:

Næs ða monna gemet, ne mægen engla
ne witegena weorc, ne wera snytero,
þæt eow mihte helpa, nimðe hælend god,
se þæt wite ær to wrece gesette.
489-92.

¹¹⁶ "De virtutibus et vitiis," Warner 91:25.

A Rogationtide homily echoes this sentiment: There is no man in the world so wise or learned ("ne snyttro ne gleawes") that he will be able to hide ("beladian") before the presence ("andweardnysse") of the Trinity.¹¹⁷ In a similar vein, Ælfric advises mistrust of one's own wisdom. The man truly wise turns from the devil's service ("deofles þeowdome") and abandons his sins. Have faith in God with all your heart, says Ælfric, and do not trust much in your own wisdom ("snoternysse").¹¹⁸

Ælfric and Wulfstan sometimes call human wisdom into question by linking it to sin and deception.

Ða worldmen cunnon þa worldcundan snoternysse,
and þa yfelan hocas þe se Hælend onscunað,
be þam is awriten þisum wordum on bocum:
Sapientia enim huius mundi stultitia est apud Deum:
Þissere worlde wisdom is stuntnyss ætforan Gode.

Se wisdom is, swa we ær cwædon, þæt halgan gæstes gifu, and se deofol sawð þærtogeanes unwisdom and swicdom and gedeð swa þurh tæt þæt unsælig man wisdomes ne gymeð ne wislice his lif ne fadað, and gyt eac gedeð þæt forcuðre is, þæt he talað þeh hwilum hine sylfne wærne and wisne, and bið eac for oft swa gehiwod licetere swylce wis sy, byð þeah smeagende oftor ymbe swicdom þonne ymbe wisdom.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ "Wednesday in Rogationtide," DOE transcript edited from CCC MS. 162, l. 57.

¹¹⁸ "De Oratione Moysi," Skeat I, 306:318. See also Sweet I, 203:13: "Ac ymb ða lytegan we sculon suiðe suiðe suincan ðæt hie ðone wisdom forlæten ðe him selfum ðyncð ðætte wisdom sie, and fon to ðaem Godes wisdomes ðe him dysig ðyncð;" and Sweet I, 273:8-16.

¹¹⁹ "Dominica X post Pentecosten," Pope II, 556:218; "De Septiformi Spiritu," Bethurum, 187:71-77. Cf. Sweet 30.203.19ff.

The relationship between human wisdom and sin in these passages reflects the general Christian wariness about the spiritual dangers of learning. Worldly knowledge is the instrument of the devil; in reality, it is foolishness and deceit. Knowledge of godcundra þinga on the other hand is both acquired and demonstrated, not in erudition, but in correct belief and virtuous conduct. All wisdom is of God, Elfric states, because God is himself Wisdom; "and ælc man bið eadig, þe hæfð þone wisdom, gif he his agen lif gelogað mid wisdom." Wulfstan echoes this when he states that he has wisdom who lives wisely ("wislice") and he has understanding ("andgyt") who always turns that understanding to his lord's will ("Dryhtnes willan") with good works ("godum weorcum").¹²⁰ The wisdom that does not turn to God is no wisdom at all, but merely self-deception and a plaything of the devil.

True wisdom is to be both sought for oneself and given to others. Numerous injunctions exist in OE sapiential writings that one pass on one's knowledge. Maxims I 45b-7 states that one must instruct ("læran") a young man until he is "tamed" ("atemedne") and in control of his own mind ("gewitte"). Elfric asks: "Hwanon sceolon cuman wise lareowas on godes folce, buton hi on iugoðe leornian?"¹²¹

¹²⁰ Elfric, "De Septiformi Spiritu," Napier 59:1, Wulfstan, "De Septiformi Spiritu," Bethurum 186:32-35.

¹²¹ "Elfrics Grammatik und Glossar," ed. J. Zupitza, Sammlung englischer Denkmäler 1, (1880; Berlin: 1966), cited in DOE 201; MFW014:175.

Elsewhere, the homilist cites a well known scriptural verse on the subject:

Ne se wita ne sceal his wisdom behydan,
 gif he ræd cunne, swa swa hit cwyð be þam:
Sapientia abscondita et thesaurus occultus,
quae utilita in utroque?
 Se behyddu wisdom and se bedigloda golghord,
 hwilc fremu is ænigum on aðrum þæra?¹²²

Instructions for Christians declares:

Ac þu scealt gelome gelæran and tæcan,
 ða hwile þe ðe mihtig Godd mægnes unne,
 þe læs hit þe on ende eft gereowe
 æfter dægrime, þonne þu hit gedon ne miht.
 Onlær þinum bearne bysne goda,
 and eac swa some eallum leoda;
 þonne þu geearnost ece blisse
 and æfter þisse weorlde weorðscipe mycelne.
 75-82

To attain wisdom is a gift from God; to hide it is to shun its bestower. As these examples show, the teacher instructs for the sake of both this world and the next, and for both his own salvation and the order of his society.¹²³ Alfred makes it very clear in the Preface that education is the moral foundation of the earthly kingdom.¹²⁴

Jesus Christ is the supreme and model teacher. As Ælfric states, Jesus teaches all the wisdom that stands in the holy books ("þone wisdom ðe on halgum bocum stent"); he

¹²² "Dominica post Ascensionem Domini," Pope I, 380:40.

¹²³ See also Crawford 1922, 74:1258-61: "Is swa þeah god weorc on þam godan wordum, þonne man oðerne læfð & to geleafan getrimð mid þære soðan lare, & þonne mann wisdom sprecð manegum to þearfe & to rihtinge, þæt God si geherod, se þe a rixað."

¹²⁴ Sweet I, 3:1ff. See Paul E. Szarmach, "The Meaning of Alfred's Preface to the Pastoral Care," Mediaevalia 6 (1980) 57-86.

instructed ("tæhte") the disciples, and through them established all Christianity ("þurh hi ealne cristendom astealde").¹²⁵ As for the human teacher, Precepts 21-26 tells us that the teacher must be carefully chosen. Gregory's concern with the conduct of the teacher is, of course, amply expressed in Alfred's version of the Pastoral Care.¹²⁶ Bede praises Whitby's Abbess Hilda of micelre snytro & wisdomes, who was sought out for lufan þæs godcundan þeowdomes not only by ordinary men, but by kings and aldormen as well.¹²⁷ Elfric describes the teacher with the exemplum of the two disciples whom Jesus sent after the ass before the entry into Jerusalem. These are the teachers that God sends to instruct mankind ("mancynne to lærenne"); that there were two indicates that the teacher must show both learning and exemplary behaviour ("lare and godre bysnunge").¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Elfric continues: "Se [Jesus Christ] bið ðin eage seþe þe wisdom tæcð, and on rihtne weg þe gebrincð." "Feria III de Dominica oratione," Thorpe I, 258:10; 274:4. Cf. Augustine, De Mag 11:38, PL 32:1216: "Ille autem qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus (Ephes. 3:16-17), id est incommutabilis Dei Virtus atque sempiterna Sapientia: quam quidem omnis rationalis anima consulit."

¹²⁶ E.g., Sweet I, 29:21: "Monige eac wise lareowas winnað mid hire ðeawum wið ða gasðlecan bebodu ðe hi mid wordum lærað, ðonne hie on oðre wisan libbað on oðre hi lærað." Cf. Moralia 23,8, PL 76:255, where Gregory outlines the characteristics, particularly the humility and self-awareness ("solterti cura se inspicit"), of the good teacher ("formam . . . boni praedicatoris").

¹²⁷ EH 4 334:13-16.

¹²⁸ "In Dominica Palmarum," Thorpe I, 206:23-30.

The "instructors" of several OE wisdom poems are men who in earlier days themselves sought knowledge from other wise men. In The Order of the World, the man who is instructed to inquire ("fricgan" 3) about creation and nature, is shown the example of the wise man reflecting ("hycgende" 10) on the utterances of those finest men who in former days debated the "web of mysteries." In Alfred's Boethius, Wisdom exhorts all "wisen men" to follow in the way of the examples ("foremæran bisna") of those good men who went before. Why, she asks the prisoner, do you not wish to inquire of those wise and honourable ("weorðgeornum") men who came before you, and once you do so, why will you not heed ("onhirian") them as best you can?¹²⁹ The Preface to the Pastoral Care venerates the wise men of earlier times ("hwelce wutan gio wæron geond Angellcynn") and laments that the line between their wisdom and the present has been sundered through neglect ("reccelease").¹³⁰

The reference to times past in these examples of the OE teacher-sage bears, I believe, a relationship to the temporal locus of divine Wisdom discussed in an earlier section.¹³¹ These and other works, such as Vainglory and Precepts, all posit, in the image of discourse in distant times, a continuous tradition of indispensable knowledge

¹²⁹ Sedgefield 139:5-7.

¹³⁰ Sweet I, 5:13-18.

¹³¹ See above, 56ff.

stemming from the deepest past through consecutive generations of wise men. The tracing backward of the acts of inquiry and understanding, as if through a series of rear-view mirrors, lends a self-reflexive quality to the process of learning. Hansen argues that poems with this feature have as their specific theme the structure of wisdom discourse.¹³² Hansen sets aside the content of such poems to concentrate on the self-consciousness of their structure. I would argue, however, that content and form can not so conveniently be separated. Wisdom is both knowledge itself and the moral act of seeking knowledge. In his turn, the sage must both possess ancient insights and generously offer these to future generations through his own exemplary conduct and through oral or literary discourse. The motif of discourse through time does not merely provide a self-celebratory framework around relatively unimportant content. As an image of primary truths descending through lines of sages, it materializes the linguistic and communicative properties of the collective human mind as a dynamic but stable repository of wisdom over time. It draws the individual listener out of the isolation of the subjective self into participation in a collective vision that bears both a primal authority and a functional relevance to the present. By tracing wisdom to its roots in the deepest past and by showing its reproduction through time, the sage-in-

¹³² Hansen 81.

discourse image signals a re-creation of formative and divine Wisdom in the student now. Discourse gives birth to wisdom in the individual; Wisdom is perpetually reborn in discourse.

2.4.2. The Meaning of Understanding

In many instances, wisdom in OE implies a deep penetration into and relationship with that which one studies. The emphasis is not on what is learned as much as it is on the psychological and spiritual actions of the mind as it synthesizes this information. Maxims II depicts the wise man who will always "hycgean ymb þysse woruld gewinn (54b-55a). Judgement Day I demands in its initial lines that man incorporate his knowledge that the Day of Judgement is inevitable into his ethical and active being through deep and prolonged reflection. "Oft mæg se þe wile in his sylfes sefan soð geþencan" (3-4). In this work, an opening statement of eschatological truth is followed immediately by the "gnomic correlative" that he who wishes may ponder that truth in his own heart.¹³³ The mental process suggested recalls monastic study practice, in which a verse by verse meditation on the Bible required not detailed study with the superficial goal of objective knowledge but reminiscence, association, internalization, and the transformation of

¹³³ Lochrie provides a convincing explication of Judgement Day I as wisdom literature, and I have borrowed her argument and her term "gnomic correlative" here (203). The three principal OE poems on Judgement, usually regarded as eschatological, can as easily be read as sapiential works.

knowledge into action.¹³⁴ The issue in Judgement Day I is knowledge of a specific and inevitable fact, and it is the moral quality of that knowledge that is important for salvation. The poem goes on to explore the spiritual condition of the angry, avaricious man and of the unthinking glutton, both of whom fail to see the moral significance of Doomsday. In contrast, the deep-thinking man ("deophydigra" 96) understands and dreads his destiny in the depths of his being. Here, knowledge is not merely cognitive; rather, it is a condition in which the mind, the emotions, the will, and the spirit work together in the moral act of interpretation.

Despite frequent advice to mistrust human understanding then, OE sapiential works often enjoin us to reflect upon and interpret what we learn of the world around us. Alfred's Soliloquies implies a confidence in the ability to do this: "gelef þinre agenre gesceadwisness, and gelyf Criste, godes sunu."¹³⁵ Many passages in Alfred's and other works carry an assurance that one's natural wisdom enables him to draw sound conclusions from whatever knowledge is garnered either in books or in experience, and that one's salvation depends

¹³⁴ See Jean Leclercq, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture (New York: Fordham UP, 1961) 89-92. Cf. Moralia 11,9, PL 75:957: "verba sapientiae, quae reprobi audiunt, electi non solum audiunt, sed etiam gustant, ut eis in corde sapiat quod reproborum non mentibus, sed solummodo auribus sonat."

¹³⁵ Carnicelli 64.12. Gesceadwisnesse here refers to the natural reason that can be relied upon to lead the willing soul to God (See Schelp, 72-3, 101-6).

in large part on a psycho-spiritual process in which the intellect and the will are actively brought to bear on that knowledge.

It is possible to trace this attitude to the fact that, in the early medieval period, a clear distinction between man's intellectual and moral faculties was not generally recognized.¹³⁶ Malcolm Godden has demonstrated how Alcuin, Alfred and Ælfric all hold to a belief in "the primarily intellectual character of the soul."¹³⁷ For Ælfric, "seo sawol is animus, þæt is mod, þonne heo wat. Heo is mens, þæt is mod, þonne heo understent."¹³⁸ The OE "mind" lexicon is, moreover, particularly sensitive to the subtle gradations of human mental and spiritual activity. Phillips shows how several OE words for the "non-transcendent soul" define various related fields of moral and intellectual activity.¹³⁹ Hyge, for instance, is close to being a

¹³⁶ Phillips 154.

¹³⁷ Godden 279. "The soul is not just a life-spirit but a rational and immortal spirit unique to man and created specifically by God for each individual, to endow him simultaneously with life and understanding. It is primarily an intellectual inner self, whose mental activity imitates God and distinguishes man from the beasts Soul and mind are thus very closely associated, although as a matter of terminology Ælfric prefers, at least when being careful, to call the intellectual inner self sawl, reserving mod for the locus or instrument of the soul's thought" (273). See e.g., Sedgefield 45:26-32: "Ac sio sawl færo swiðe friolice to hefonum, siððan hio intiged bið, & for þam carcerne þæs lichoman onlesed bið. . . Þonne þæt mod him selfum gewita bið Godes willan."

¹³⁸ "Nativitas Domini Nostri Iesu Christi," Skeat I, 20:184.

disposition of the soul, and refers generally to motivation and intention leading to action.¹⁴⁰ Sefa frequently glosses L. sensus, and is related to perception, but it is most closely connected to inspired eloquence. "The sefa is the place in man to which God sends inspiration and consequently is the place from which one utters wise speech."¹⁴¹ As well, it is to the sefa that God sends wisdom.¹⁴² Heorte refers to the innermost part of a person, and is associated mainly with moral action. The heorte may be where God dwells within one, or it may be the scene of spiritual events.¹⁴³ Finally, mod is the "generic" word used in OE to denote the non-transcendent soul.¹⁴⁴ What happens within the Mod determines one's salvation.¹⁴⁵ Mod's central action, perhaps its defining one, is that of an intellectual and moral/spiritual

¹³⁹ Phillips uses "non-transcendent" to refer to the soul that is the "seat of the intellect, emotions, and/or moral activity in this life," as opposed to the transcendent soul that departs to an afterlife after death (19). In his study of the spiritual man in the Alfred corpus, Schelp notes that the term mod captures the idea of an operative centre of wisdom. Mod is the active centre of man's conduct; the absolute spiritual agent and the origin of the mental events in man (84).

¹⁴⁰ Phillips 32ff.

¹⁴¹ Phillips 56.

¹⁴² Phillips 62; Cf. Beowulf 1725b-6.

¹⁴³ Phillips 122.

¹⁴⁴ Phillips 176.

¹⁴⁵ Phillips 181. Though it functions only in this life, Mod's superiority to the body at times places it semantically near to the transcendent soul-word sawol.

agent that governs the body.¹⁴⁶ Both thought and will are subject to Mod; its natural action is one of vigilance and active regulation of the body through its innate power.¹⁴⁷ Yet Mod must also be governed.¹⁴⁸ It can become weak or it can wander away, as in drunkenness. Without wisdom, it can become angry or bloated with pride. Ælfric's definition of anger captures this notion:

þæt is weamodniss, þæt se monn ne mæge his mod
gewildan, ac butan ælcum wisdomes waclice irsað and
mannslihtas gefremeð and fela reðnissa.¹⁴⁹

Lack of Mod means the absence of the executive faculty and loss of control over one's motivating powers.¹⁵⁰ This is perhaps the underlying meaning of the word ormod: "out-of-mindedness," the distress of a mind out of focus or control. Mod therefore signals a complex centre of emotional responsiveness, potency, and vulnerability within man, an executive power of action that can be weakened and dissipated by evil and turned to sin.

¹⁴⁶ Phillips 177-9.

¹⁴⁷ Mod is often linked syntactically to words denoting power, e.g., Beowulf 1705-6: "mægen mid modes snytttrum."

¹⁴⁸ Phillips 219.

¹⁴⁹ Phillips 184, 207. Crawford 1922, 3:162.

¹⁵⁰ Phillips 189. Cf. Sweet I, 273:10: "Forðæm nan wuht nis on us unstilre & ungestaððigre ðonne ðæt mod, forðæm hit gewitt sua oft fram us sua us unnytte geðohtas to cumað, & æfter ælcum ðara toflewð. Be ðæm cwæð se psalmsceop: Min mod & min wisdom me forlet."

Viewed together with the OE theological observations on the intellectual soul, these "mind" words show a complex interrelationship of moral action, cognition, perception, and emotional response. They point to a strong psychological, rather than mystical, interest in the workings of the inner self, where clarity of personal consciousness is a question of salvation.

2.4.3. The Union of Knowledge and Virtue in Discernment

In view of the emphasis on the active rather than the contemplative powers of the mind, the concern in OE wisdom with observation and discernment comes as no surprise. Wisdom as knowledge is frequently described as the ability to distinguish good from evil. Elfric tells his audience:

Bide þe sylfum æt Gode þæt he sylf þe forgife snotere
heortan and þurhwacol andgit þæt þu cunne tocnawan
þæs deofles costnunga and his swicolan facna þæt þin
fot ne bestæppe on his arleasum grinum þæt þu gelæht
ne wurde.¹⁵¹

Constant alertness is characteristic of the wise man. Pray to God, Elfric says, to give you a wise heart and wide-awake powers of discrimination so that you may be able to recognize the assaults of the devil and steer clear of his snares. The principle theme of Vainglory is the necessity of identifying good and evil in the deeds and comportment of men. Precepts similarly points to the need for accurate discrimination:

Ongiet georne hwæt sy god oþþe yfel,
ond toscead simle scearpe mode
in sefan þinum ond þe a þæt selle geceos.

¹⁵¹ "Admonitio," Norman 8,26, MF S019:283.

A þe bið gedæled; gif þe deah hyge,
wunað wisdom in, ond þu wast geare
ondgit yfles, heald þe elne wið,
feorma þu symle in þinum ferðe god.
45-51

This passage is an explicit statement of confidence in the ability -- indeed, the responsibility -- of the human mind honed with wisdom to read experience discerningly.

Hansen argues convincingly that the high degree of abstract sententiousness in OE poetic wisdom is related to the fact that such poetry is intended not to persuade the learner with specific recommendations, but "to construct a world of stable difference in which clear meaning and rational choice are possible."¹⁵² Hansen sees in wisdom poetry "a system of understanding that establishes . . . those relations of difference into which the 'total order' of experience can be structured."¹⁵³ Hansen's hypothesis holds as well for OE prose, where a similar vagueness of instruction and emphasis on exercising the faculties of discernment characterizes sapiential admonitions. The general term for such discernment is prudence, one of the four virtues embraced by the notion of wisdom. Prudentia, which Ælfric glosses as snotternysse, is the means by which one is to understand and love one's creator and to distinguish good from evil.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Hansen 48.

¹⁵³ Hansen 54.

¹⁵⁴ "prudentia. þæt is snoternysse. þurh þa heo sceal hyre scippend under-standan. and hine lufian. and tosceaden (sic)

This pragmatic concern with discernment and action accounts for what Hansen aptly calls the "foreclosure" that characterizes many OE wisdom works.¹⁵⁵ The knowing side of wisdom is not so much the exercise of the reason to discover truths that become the basis of good behaviour as it is the assent to a body of doctrine and the exercise of the obedient will in discerning the wise path. Much has been made of this point in discussions of Alfred's Boethius. In the original Consolatio, the innocent prisoner advances through intellectual argument to a correct understanding of the divine order in which all things and events, even those that to human understanding appear evil, have their purpose. In Alfred's version, however, the problem is "the correct orientation of the human will," which is self-activating in disobedience.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, Alfred is quite explicit on this point. Wisdom asks Mod why he thinks evil men abandon virtues and follow vices ("unðeawum"). Wisdom anticipates his reply: ignorance ("dysige") prevents them from distinguishing the two. But where does their ungesceadwisnes come from, she goes on: "hwy nyllað hy spyrian æfter cræftum & æfter wisdom?" Answering her own question, she asserts that it is a question not of ignorance, but of moral

god fram yfele." "Nativitas Domini Nostri Iesu Christi," Skeat I, 20:156.

¹⁵⁵ Hansen 174.

¹⁵⁶ Milton Mc. Gatch, Loyalties and Traditions: Man and His World in Old English Literature (New York: Pegasus, 1971) 109.

frailty, of wrænnas and ungemetfastnes. He who refuses to fight his vices is weak, a nothing ("unmehtig & eac ealles nauht").¹⁵⁷ Unmehtig here recalls the loss of power that above characterized the dysfunctional Mod.

We can find a similar tone elsewhere in OE wisdom. Elfric, for example, tends to put obedience before rational understanding:

Godes wisdom clypað. and cwyð to eallum mannum
mid fæderlicre lufe þus fægere tihtende.
Min bearn ne forgit ðu mine beboda and æ.
ac healde ðin heorta (sic) hi geornlice.
hi gelengað þin lif. and þu leofast on sibbe.
and mildheortnys and soðfastnys. þe soðlice ne
forlætað.¹⁵⁸

Here, Elfric moves directly from the call of wisdom to the necessity of obedience. In a homily of Wulfstan, wisdom assumes an even stronger ethical sense as it provides strength against the devil:

Ðarto he sceal beon snoter, þat he geglence þone
wisdom mid snotornysse and gemetgige þa snotornysse
mid þære strengðe, þat he wurðe wær wyð deofles
costnunge and wis wið his menigfealdnysse.¹⁵⁹

Wulfstan's notion of wisdom's battle against sin recalls the earlier cosmological concept of Wisdom exerting power over

¹⁵⁷ Sedgefield 108:29-109:17. This point is made in the original as well, but not with this degree of emphasis.

¹⁵⁸ "De Oratione Moysi. In Medio Quadragesime," Skeat I, 306:312. Cf. Carnicelli 63:25-28: "Ða cwæð heo: hweðer þu nu wilnige þat þu hine geseo and swytole ongyte? Ða cwæð ic: nys me nan willa ofer þæne. Ða cwæð heo: heald þonne hys bebodu."

¹⁵⁹ "Ammonitio amici, [þat ys freondlic mynecung]" Napier 247:19-22.

the discordant elements of nature. Human wisdom corresponds to these two aspects of the divine: it is both a principle of order, that is, accurate discernment and organization of experience, and a weapon against the moral fragmentation that leads to spiritual disease.

Despite the emphasis in Alfred and Ælfric on willed obedience, however, many OE lists of virtues reveal a notion of wisdom that recognizes more than assent and obedience. Taken together, these passages evince a wise "type" -- a man endowed, if not with the intellectual curiosity and perseverance of a philosopher, at least with the deeper virtues of character that enable him to reason and act effectively. These lists range from a brief statement of the four cardinal virtues to lengthy homiletic or monastic admonitions for wise conduct.¹⁶⁰ They refer to humility, chastity, almsgiving, kindness, steadfastness, modesty, sobriety (as opposed to drunkenness), simplicity and so on. Patience ranks very high.¹⁶¹ Various prayers ask for blessed thoughts, wisdom, constancy, temperance, peacefulness, mildheartedness, liberality, contrition, sense or understanding ("ingehid") and piety.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ For a hymnic list of virtues, see "Admonitio amici," Napier 247:11-19; and BM 200.8 on the four virtues; H. Gneuss, ed., Hymnar und Hymnen im englischen Mittelalter, Buchreihe der Anglia 12 (Tubingen: 1968) 123.2; cited in DOE 190. For a homiletic list, see VH 53:139 and 105:355ff in Förster. For a monastic list, see ChrodR 18:22ff.

¹⁶¹ E.g., Alcuin, Warner 97:23: "Ne byð nan mann wel wis, gyf he geðyld næfð."

In these catalogues of virtues (and sometimes of vices), Anglo-Saxon wisdom does not differ from the general Christian tradition. In several works, however, we may distinguish the moral and spiritual admonitions of the Christian wisdom tradition from the more pragmatic advice for social and political survival that typifies secular lists of the wise man's attributes. Some explicitly Christian works concentrate on deadly sins such as pride, deceit and adultery, while other pieces, like The Wanderer, seem to draw from a secular tradition and avoid mention of specific sins to avoid. Many works, however, combine the two, most notably, moral rules for kings.¹⁶³ Commenting on the critical tendency to recognize only Christian wisdom in the characterization of the good king Beowulf, Kindrick locates a context for Beowulf's (and others') wisdom within the "Germanic, non-Christian heritage."¹⁶⁴ Kindrick finds evidence for Beowulf's "secular" wisdom in his eloquence, statesmanship, restraint, and tactical cunning. While by no means ruling out the contribution of Christian views on rulership and eloquence, Kindrick draws on Tacitus and the ON Havamal to make a strong case for the syncretism of OE

¹⁶² See e.g., Jackson J. Campbell, "Prayers from MS. Arundel 155," Anglia 81 (1963) 110:6-18; 113:5-8 and H. Logeman, "Forms of Confession and Absolution," Anglia 11 (1889) 500.

¹⁶³ See Gilles 145-54; Clements 170.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Kindrick, "Germanic Sapientia and the Heroic Ethos of Beowulf," Medievalia et Humanistica n.s. 10 (1981) 3.

ethical values, remarking that "an understanding of Germanic sapientia may provide for more caution in ascribing Beowulf's wisdom to only Christian ideals and may give us a clearer view of the mixed ethical traditions with which the poet was working."¹⁶⁵

2.4.4. The Path to Wisdom

The fount of all wisdom is God. An Anglo-Saxon Charter states: "Al wisdom ge for Gode ge for werolde is gestaþelad on þam hefonlican goldhorde almæhtiges Godes."¹⁶⁶ Both Elfric and Wulfstan echo this idea:

Ðæs wisdom is awrytan on halgum bocum. and be ðam is þus gecwæden. Omnia sapientia a domino deo est. Elc wisdom is of gode.¹⁶⁷

Elc riht wisdom is cumen of Gode, forðam þe God sylf is se soða wisdom, & ælc man bið gesælig & eadig þe hæfð þæne wisdom þe of Godes agenre gyfe cymð & ðurh þæt his agen lif gelogað mid wisdom.¹⁶⁸

As these passages suggest, Wisdom also offers her wisdom as a gift.¹⁶⁹ Elfric elaborates on this familiar idea:

Ðæt soðe leoht is ure leofa Hælend,
þe is him sylf leoht & onliht ælc mann
þe his geleafan leoht on his life gehylt,
oððe on godum gecynde oððe on godcundum wisdom,
for þan þe ælc wisdom is of Gode sylfum,
we nan god nabbað buton of Godes gyfe.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Kindrick 14.

¹⁶⁶ "King Eadred to Ælfsige Hunlafing," Robertson, MF W014:140.

¹⁶⁷ "Nativitas domini nostri iesu christi," Skeat I, 24:231.

¹⁶⁸ "De Septiformi Spiritu," Bethurum 187:67.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Moralia 2:71, PL 75:588: "In electorum corde prior bonorum sequentium sapientia nascitur, atque haec per donum Spiritus quasi primogenita proles profertur."

Elfric sees the illuminated rational soul of the righteous man as the seat of wisdom, and it is here that the call and the gift of wisdom take place.

The common Old Testament axiom that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord is widespread in the OE corpus.¹⁷¹ Elfric and Alcuin mention it, as do many homilies. It is elaborated in a Vercelli homily:

Se egesa us gelædeð fram helwarum, & he us onfehð to þam uplican rice, & he drifeð fram us ælce ungleawnesse, & he us læreð geðeodscype & snyttro, & he us cenneð wisdom; he is se egesa.¹⁷²

The idea may be found in connection with the fear of Doomsday.¹⁷³ The fear of God that is the beginning of wisdom is, in Judgement Day I, instilled by the certainty of the Last Judgement. It lies in the recognition that man's own understanding of himself and God will inevitably be called into question as the absolute wisdom of God passes the final verdict on his actions. This is the sense of the passage in Vainglory, where the boaster thinks himself beyond reproach and better than other men. At the Judgement, it is implied, "Bið þæs oþer swice, þonne he þæs facnes fintan sceawað"

¹⁷⁰ Pope I, 210:330. Cf. Wulfstan, "De Septiformi Spiritu," Bethurum 186:32: "and witodlice se man hæfð wisdom þurh Godes gyfe þe wislice leofað & symle smeað hu he Gode gecweman mæge."

¹⁷¹ See e.g., Psalm (Vg.) 110:10; Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:17.

¹⁷² Peterson MF W014:124. See also Elfric, "Natale Omnium Sanctorum," Thorpe I, 550.1: "Godes ege is wisdomes anginn: and modignys is ælcere synne angin."

¹⁷³ Cf. Moralia 19,14, PL 76:104: quia tunc penetrare cor inchoat, cum hoc extremi iudicii pavore perturbat.

(31b-32). Once again, wisdom is closely connected with notions of temporality, and specifically here with the fear aroused in the recognition of the contingency of one's present and partial wisdom against the absoluteness of God's Wisdom revealed at the Last Judgement.

For Augustine, fear of God was the first step in the path to wisdom. De Doctrina Christiana outlines a "programme" to the attainment of wisdom based on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Beginning at Proverbs 1:7, Augustine states that the fear of God leading to reflection on our mortality and death, and which arises from the thought of God's judgement ("ille timor quo cogitat de iudicio Dei") is what turns us to a recognition of His will "so that we may know what He commands that we desire and what He commands that we avoid."¹⁷⁴ Augustine then lays out the steps to wisdom ("gradus ad sapientiam") that runs from piety and meekness, to hope in the knowledge ("scientia") of God's love, to fortitude, the counsel of mercy ("consilium"), the perfection of the self in love ("purgatio cordis"). What is remarkable in Augustine's scheme is the interweaving of wisdom as knowledge - pious belief, or scientia -- and wisdom as virtue -- the exercise of caritas -- as the student advances from the recognition of his mortality to enlightened faith.

¹⁷⁴ DDC 2,9-11, PL 34:39. For a discussion of this and other schemes by which Augustine describes the soul's ascent to wisdom, see Regan 13ff.

There is no OE prose discourse such as Augustine's that systematically traces a spiritual development from ignorance to knowledge and virtue. Despite the lack of an explicit theological analysis, however, Anglo-Saxon writings often use poetic and metaphoric expressions to describe the student's progress to wisdom. One such metaphor is that of healing. The close connection between psychological states and spiritual ones that we have been discussing suggests that wisdom is impossible in a diseased mind and, conversely, that only a mind with sound powers of judgement and discernment can be considered wise. In Alfred's Soliloquies, for example, Reason, after listing four steps towards seeing God clearly, employs motif of visual healing to describe the growth to wisdom. The man with unsound eyes gradually accustoms himself to brighter and brighter sights: first the wall, then gold, silver, fire, the stars, the moon, sunshine and finally the sun. "And swa ylce hit byð be þære oðerre sunnan þe we ær ymbe specon, þæt is, wisdom."¹⁷⁵

The metaphor of healing is sometimes found in connection with the physician who can treat the spiritual malaise that often initiates the wisdom quest. Alfred's Boethius, like the original, employs it with some regularity. Early in the work, Wisdom asks Mod if she may assess his fastradness for the purpose of determining how

¹⁷⁵ Carnicelli 78:16-17.

she may treat or cure him ("tilian").¹⁷⁶ Later, she compares their interaction to that of a doctor and his patient:

Genog rihte þu hit ongitst, & þæt is eac tacn þinre
hælo; swa swa læca gewuna is þæt hi cweðeð ðonne hi
siočne mon gesioð, gif hi hwilc ungefæglic tacn on
him gesioð.¹⁷⁷

Elsewhere in OE prose, the notion of wisdom as a physician appears in Ælfric, in the OE Chrodegang of Metz, and in a confessor's handbook.¹⁷⁸ Christ himself may appear as the physician.¹⁷⁹

While the OE record shows little in the way of analysis, relying rather on metaphoric language to describe the path to wisdom, the Latin writings of Augustine, Bede, Alcuin, Boethius, show a reasoned understanding of the subtle verbal processes by which wisdom may be acquired. Although the focus of this initial chapter has been mainly the vernacular evidence related to concepts of wisdom, it is useful finally to consider, if only briefly, in what ways these authors, and to a lesser extent, the OE Alfred and some OE poetry, link the ascent to sapientia to the effective exploitation of linguistic and dialogic forms.

¹⁷⁶ Sedgefield 12:12-14.

¹⁷⁷ Sedgefield 107:27-30. See also 121:8-14; 123:32; 132:6.

¹⁷⁸ Assmann 5:127-6:129; ChrodR 41:8-12; Fowler, "Handbook for the Use of a Confessor," Anglia 83 (1965) 27:317-28:339. Cf. Christ and Satan 588; Judgement Day II 66. See also Marcia Dalbey, "Soul's Medicine: Religious Psychology in the Blickling Rogation Homilies," Neophil 64 (1980) 470-77.

¹⁷⁹ As one example, in Judgement Day II, Christ the uplican læce (46a) will heal the aglidene mod (47a).

2.4.5. The Wisdom Dialogue

Hansen describes wisdom in general terms as "the product of verbal interaction between two parties."¹⁸⁰ The dialogue between, for example, counsellor and king, king and prince, father and son, abbot and monk, or between two sages, frequently provides the structural context for wisdom expression. Such discourse, with its widespread use of proverbs and its stylized patterns of submission, authority, competition and instruction, has a long history in pre-literate cultures, being integral to the processes of communication, decision making and education. Classical and Christian writers developed the wisdom dialogue into a potent tool for implanting and nurturing in the pupil a rationally coherent moral and spiritual perspective.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Hansen 83.

¹⁸¹ On classical and Christian wisdom utterance, see Clements 1-40. The literature on the general dialogue tradition is widely scattered among the introductions to modern editions of Latin and vernacular dialogues. The one book devoted entirely to the subject is Elizabeth Merrill, The Dialogue in English Literature, Yale Studies in English XLII (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1911). Also useful are the introductions to L. W. Daly and W. Suchier, ed., Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature and Literature 34:1,2 (Urbana: U of Illinois Studies P, 1939); James E. Cross and Thomas D. Hill, ed., The Prose Solomon and Saturn and Adrian and Ritheus, McMaster OE Studies and Texts I, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982). See also Francis Lee Utley, "Dialogues, Debates and Catechisms," in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. Albert E. Harting (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1972) 3:659-745; and George Norman Garmonsway, "The Development of the Colloquy," in The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickens, ed. P. Clemoes (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1959) 248-61.

Augustine, who is surely the most important Christian example, saw the dialogue form as a means not just to teach the rules of nature and culture, but also to exercise and raise the mind towards a transcendent ideal. Augustine's five dialogues composed at Cassiciacum late in the fourth century - Contra Academicos, De Ordine, De Magistro, De Beata Vita, and De Libero Arbitrio, recreate his own search for wisdom through dialogue. They show great sensitivity to the difficulties inherent in the kind of learning that makes emotional and spiritual as well as cognitive demands. In the later De Catechizandis Rudibus, Augustine is once again concerned with the use of the question and answer method to assess the student's motivations and capacity to learn as well as to teach the love of God and one's neighbour.¹⁸²

Bede and Alcuin pursue this interest in how wisdom is discovered through discursive language. Writing about the parable in the Super Parabolas Salomonis, Bede provides us with one of the most succinct contemporary definitions of wisdom. Solomon's parables, he says, were intended to teach wisdom: how to believe rightly ("quomodo recte credere"); what kind of life it is fitting to live ("qualiter se vivere oporteat"); how to know everyone in truth ("quemque veraciter didicisse"); how to order the impulses or

¹⁸² Augustine, De Catechizandis Rudibus, trans. Joseph Patrick Christopher, Catholic U of America Patristic Studies, vol. 8 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic U of America, 1926) 4, 24, 96 and passim.

intentions of the heart ("quo intentionem cordis dirigere"); and what it is becoming to bring forth in one's works ("quid operando gerere conveniat").¹⁸³

Bede discusses the meanings of parabola, similitudo, and proverbia as they inform the wisdom quest. He remarks that the Vulgate puts, instead of parabolis, the word paroemias, that is, proverbia.¹⁸⁴ To explain this conflation of proverb and parable, Bede states that because they are hidden, parables can also properly be called proverbs, which are, by definition, obscure.¹⁸⁵ The fact that wisdom is enfolded in the mysterious language of parables and proverbs makes it needful for the learner to exercise his mind in interpretation, using the enigma of the proverb to fracture his literal understanding and open his mind to spiritual meanings. As Bede puts it, Solomon's use of parabolae in his teachings indicates that we are to read according not to the letter ("non juxta litteram") but to that which is higher ("altius").¹⁸⁶

Bede also emphasizes the mnemonic value of the proverb, which can be "turned in the mouth of the speaker" and easily remembered.¹⁸⁷ The precepts of Solomon are gems of hidden

¹⁸³ Bede, Super Parabolas Salomonis Allegorica Expositio, PL 91:937.

¹⁸⁴ Bede, Parabolas, PL 91:937.

¹⁸⁵ Bede Parabolas, PL 91:937.

¹⁸⁶ Bede, Parabolas, PL 91:937. Indeed, Solomon anticipates Jesus addressing the crowd in parables (in quo Dominum significat per parabolas fuisse aliquando locuturum).

meaning that ought to be uttered ("in ore colloquendum versari") and remembered ("retineri") often.¹⁸⁸ Thus the proverb offers the student of wisdom both the opportunity of expanding spiritual insight, and the means to internalize the lessons of the wise through recall and repetition.

Bede quite clearly views the proverb/parable in the context of dialogue. There is no one so wise, he says, who he cannot increase his wisdom through hearing greater men speak.¹⁸⁹ With a reference to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's court, Bede then stresses the necessity of listening to wise men and of submission to the teachings of the elders. Commenting on the change in the form of address at Proverbs 1:8, ("Audi fili mi, discipulam patris tui"), he notes that while Solomon to this point argues ("disputat") metaphorically ("proverbialiter"), he now begins earnestly to advise ("admonere") the faithful so that they will prefer the teaching of divine law to the enticements of sinners.¹⁹⁰ For Bede, proverbs are natural to the wisdom dialogue, providing an epistemological exercise to purify the understanding that works in harmony with the exhortative precepts delivered from teacher to pupil to bring about ethical perfection.

¹⁸⁷ Bede, Parabolas, PL 91:937.

¹⁸⁸ Bede, Parabolas, PL 91:937.

¹⁸⁹ Bede, Parabolas, PL 91:938.

¹⁹⁰ Bede, Parabolas, PL 91:940.

While Bede treats the proverb and the precept as basic to wisdom instruction, Alcuin develops more systematically the linguistic basis of wisdom by connecting it to the seven liberal arts, and particularly, to the study of grammar.¹⁹¹ He does so, furthermore, by means of a dialogue. This is important because Alcuin is demonstrating as much through the discursive process itself as through its content how one is to situate the properties of language in relation to human and divine wisdom.

Two dialogues make up Alcuin's De Grammatica. In the first, Disputatio de Vera Philosophia, an unnamed Discipulus claims to have been inspired by his teacher's sayings to seek the most perfect happiness, Philosophia, and its highest doctrines ("huius magisterii summa").¹⁹² He wishes to know by what steps ("quibus gradibus") he might ascend to that knowledge that never deserts its possessor ("nunquam miserum se possidentem reliquisset").

The emphasis here is not on wisdom as such, but on the process of inquiry toward it ("indagationem"). A pupil who has already taken the first step of trusting submission ("Audivimus, o doctissime magister") is ready to enter into the work of spiritual education.¹⁹³ He acknowledges his

¹⁹¹ On Alcuin and the seven liberal arts as requisite to wisdom, and his Christianized image of Philosophia, see P. Courcelles, La Consolation de Philosophie dans la Tradition Littéraire (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes) 1967, 33-47.

¹⁹² Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:849.

¹⁹³ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:849.

youthful inability ("aetas nostra tenera est") and his dependence on his teacher. He employs metaphors of vision and light to give form to his quest: the sunlight of wisdom can be relied upon to illumine whatever comes before the eyes of the heart.¹⁹⁴ The magister praises the analogy ("comparationem") between the eyes and the mind. In fact, he is praising the pupil's imaginative readiness, his use of symbolic language as a means to understanding. He then amplifies the pupil's insight with a scriptural quote, thus anchoring the symbol, light, in the authority of the word of God.¹⁹⁵ The student for a second time concedes his infirmity and pleads that the course ("gressus) be adapted to his lack of strength until "aliquid fortitudinis accrescat".¹⁹⁶

Along with the structural metaphors of vision, infirmity, and strength, which define the student's goals and limitations, we find in Alcuin's introductory dialogue more global reflections on human nature. The light of knowledge is natural to man, but without a learned teacher to bring it out, it remains hidden like a spark in a stone ("quasi scintilla in silice latet"). All men desire good, though error leads them astray ("abducit").¹⁹⁷ The necessity

¹⁹⁴ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:850.

¹⁹⁵ "Sed qui illuminationem hominem venientem in hunc mundum." (John 1:9).

¹⁹⁶ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:850.

¹⁹⁷ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:850. Chase notes the "imaginative nucleus" of Alcuin's thought: a journey home from exile "the direction and milestones for which were

to abandon cupidity and reliance on worldly goods is then made plain by the teacher. The student repeats the idea: "Quis sanum sapiens haec esse transitoria ignorat?" He employs a metaphor of travel ("viatorem") and once again, the teacher offers an adage as a refinement on the idea: "Moderatus eorum usus adjuvat nimius gravat. Unde philosophiam cum illud valet elogium: Ne quid nimis."¹⁹⁸

To this point, the dialogue illustrates the ideal relationship between pupil and teacher: the pupil's submission is essential, but not blind. It is based on the teacher's ability to inspire him and to provide an edifying moral and scholarly example.¹⁹⁹ The teacher builds on his pupil's young enthusiasm with a discourse that oscillates between the symbolic and the rational, harnessing both levels of awareness to establish a spiritual and moral frame of reference for the ensuing discourse on grammar.

plotted by application to the study principally of the first three of the liberal arts, of scripture, and the father." "Alcuin's Grammar Verse: Poetry and Truth in Carolingian Pedagogy," Insular Latin Studies: Papers on Latin Texts and Mss. of the British Isles: 550-1066. Ed. Michael W. Herren. Papers in Mediaeval Studies I, (Toronto: PIMS, 1981) 143. Courcelles (37) argues that Alcuin constantly draws on Boethius' Consolatio for these and other recurring images.

¹⁹⁸ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:850.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:853: Da dexteram, magister, et nos ab humo imperitiae eleva, et in gradus sophiae nos tecum constitue, in quibus te ex morum dignitate, ex verborum veritate saepius consistere agnovimus, quo te rerum ratio pulcherrima ad ineunte, ut audivimus, aetate perduxit.

When the student expresses his readiness for the real work of education, the teacher begins by reminding him once more of his fallen condition - his desire to seek what does not properly belong to him ("aliena"), and questions him about what belongs to us, and what does not?²⁰⁰ The answer is succeeded by another question, by which the pupil is forced to identify his desire - felicitatem. A comment from the magister establishes the distinction between the happiness that flees ("fugientem") and that which stays ("manentem"). The remainder of the teacher's reply employs a series of rhetorical questions whose aim is to illustrate impermanence. All things become their opposite - light and dark, spring flowers and winter blight, bodily health and eventual decline, peace and discord. This presentation of opposites, the answering of light with dark, spring with winter, and so on, serves three functions. It establishes, as Alcuin himself states, a primary division in the study of wisdom: greater things and lesser things ("ut ex majoribus minora cognocatis").²⁰¹ Another purpose, as Hansen suggests in the comparable context of OE wisdom poetry, is to arrange "varieties of experience over time into a stable system based on the perception of difference."²⁰² Finally, seen in the context of the subject of Alcuin's work, grammatica,

²⁰⁰ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:851.

²⁰¹ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:851.

²⁰² Hansen 179.

this rhetorical list foregrounds the necessity of finding what was to Alcuin "the unavoidable connection between word and Word," of locating in language a coherence of structure that will enable true utterance to be heard above the shifting images and experiences of life.²⁰³

At the heart of one's understanding of these basic structures is grammar, the guardian of correct speech and writing, derived, as Alcuin explains in the second dialogue of the Grammatica, from nature, reason, authority, and custom.²⁰⁴ This dialogue is a friendly competitive question and answer exchange between Saxo and Franco, young students at Alcuin's school. Its stated purpose is to assist in the memorization of a few rules in the science of letters.²⁰⁵ Alcuin is asked to supply any necessary higher knowledge. The dialogue itself is its own starting point:

Et primum dicite [asks the teacher] unde vestram
convenientius disputationem esse artibramini
incipiendam? . . . vel magis primo omnium
interrogandum est, quibus modis constet
disputatio?²⁰⁶

The student guesses that the debate begins with letters, but Alcuin points out that prior to letters is the voice, for whose sake letters were devised.²⁰⁷ The letter, Saxo

²⁰³ Chase 144.

²⁰⁴ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:857.

²⁰⁵ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:854.

²⁰⁶ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:854.

²⁰⁷ Indeed, any debate consists of three elements: the facts or issue (*res*), which we perceive through the soul's reason; the meanings or discernment (*intellectus*) through which

correctly concludes, is the authority ("legitera") that shows the way to readers ("legentibus iter praebet").²⁰⁸ In this view, letters are the individual units ("individua") by which expression is formed from idea. Letters unite, as Alcuin says with an analogy, to make the literate voice ("litteralem vocem"), just as physical elements join to make the body.²⁰⁹ Later, he extends this analogy in a discussion of the vowels and consonants that links them explicitly with divine order:

Vocales sunt sicut animae, consonantes sicut corpora. Anima vero et se movet et corpus. Corpus vero immobile est sine anima. Sic sunt consonantes sine vocalibus. Nam scribi possunt per se; edici, vero vel potestatem, habere sine vocalibus nequeunt.²¹⁰

To Alcuin, then, letters are an authoritative power by means of which truth can be formulated in language. The natural division into vowels and consonants substantiates their power because it reflects the relationship of body and soul.

Nowhere in these texts does either Bede or Alcuin examine the internal dialogue. Alcuin is aware that wisdom and the true happiness we seek lies within us, but the idea of an inner discourse does not stand out in the

(quibus) we understand these things further (addiscimus); and the voices (voces) by which are revealed the things we understand. Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:854.

²⁰⁸ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:855.

²⁰⁹ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:855.

²¹⁰ Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:855.

Grammatica.²¹¹ Bede makes an oblique allusion to it when he speaks of a new type of speech ("novum locutionis genus") in which one seems to be speaking to himself alone through his reason ("ratiocinando").²¹² The search for Christian wisdom in dialogue with one's inner reasoning does appear in Augustine, who at times moves the arena of the wisdom discourse inward to reveal the capacity in the divinely illumined mind to pursue wisdom and truth. Augustine claims in the Soliloquia to have "invented a genre whose achievement was to internalize the process of dialogue by writing fictions of the mind in conversation with itself."²¹³ In De Magistro, the teacher skillfully exploits the dialogue itself to turn Adeodatus inward to the clarified mind where Christ alone teaches Truth.²¹⁴

Augustine's use of the dialogue in this way finds an analogue in Boethius' Consolatio, which shows the sound mind of the wise man taking shape through a self-reflexive and progressively internalized debate.²¹⁵ In Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of the Consolatio, where, significantly, the

²¹¹ "Quid igitur, o mortales extra petitis, dum intra habetis quod quaeritis? Alcuin, Grammatica, PL 101:851.

²¹² Bede, Super Parabolas, PL 91:1004.

²¹³ Seth Lerer, Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in the "Consolation of Philosophy" (Princeton: UP, 1985) 51.

²¹⁴ Lerer 55. De Magistro 12,40, PL 32:1217: "sic ergo quaerere oportuit, ut tuae sese vires habent ad audiendum illum intus magistrum."

²¹⁵ Lerer 47.

OE mind word Mod is used to replace the "I" of the original, wisdom is seen to lie in the divinely enlightened mind instructing itself. Here, the dialogue is an induction into inner wisdom; error and mental distraction are replaced by knowledge and centredness. Why, Wisdom asks Mod, do you seek around you the happiness ("gesælða") that divine Might has set inside you ("oninnan eow")? You do not know what you do; you are in error ("on gedwolan").²¹⁶ A similar awareness can be perceived as well in Alfred's version of Augustine's Soliloquia, and, as we have seen, in Alcuin's Grammatica.²¹⁷

Several OE poems use the dialogue, whether with one's own ratio, or with a separate persona, to explore the malaise of misguided thinking, the condition, perhaps, of ormod. The studied morbidity early in The Wanderer or The Seafarer reflects a problem of perception in the subject as he confronts life's experiences. At first, the experience of death and grief drains the mind as it activates a weary cynicism that issues in literal description without insight. It is through dialogue with a wise teacher, internal or external, that one gradually brings a higher level of mental activity to bear that illuminates the opaque world of experience from behind. The sufferer's personal and subjective interpretation -- or non-interpretation -- of

²¹⁶ Sedgefield 25:14.

²¹⁷ See also Szarmach, "The Meaning of Alfred's Pastoral Care," Mediaevalia 6 (1980) 57-86.

experience is abandoned when by means of guided debate, he discovers the Wisdom that shines through his afflictions.²¹⁸

Taken all together, Augustine's innovations, Bede's comments on the proverb, Alcuin's *Grammatica*, Alfred's versions of the inner dialogue, and the OE poetry of consolation reveal several possible patterns in the wisdom dialogue. First, the primary function of proverbs in the dialogue is to galvanize the inactive and unilluminated mind into spiritual awareness. Related to this is the teacher's role during the discussion of the mundane and literal to extend the field of reference to the spiritual through the use of additional proverbs and analogy. Moreover, the proverb operates as a complement to the precept, whose purpose is to teach moral behaviour. The teacher thus directs the dialogue back and forth between the epistemological and ethical domains.

A second point is the prime importance of refining one's use of language as a necessary step to discovering wisdom. Thus the discourse may draw attention to itself as an instance of language use. For all its slipperiness when misused by man, language still retains in its fundamental structures the mechanism by which truth is made intelligible. In Alcuin's optimistic view, a clear grasp of

²¹⁸ Shippey's comments on the Exeter elegies suggest a popular notion of attaining wisdom: one gains experience, is saddened by it, reflects upon it, whether internally or in a dialogue, and is comforted when his personal grief is dissolved in a general historical or metaphysical perspective. *OE Verse* 56-59.

grammar, that "constituent element of all the sciences" belonging to the realm of first principles, enables one to understand and arrange language properly to transmute truth faithfully into words.²¹⁹

Third, there are several noteworthy features in the relationship between student and teacher. Submission by the pupil to the teacher is critical, but only when the latter has clearly demonstrated his moral and intellectual integrity. Early in the discourse, the teacher places the learner's moral state of mind and degree of insight within the larger context of human fallibility. Having recognized his condition, the student assumes a humble readiness to learn. In addition, the two may trace the path to wisdom that lies ahead in imagistic terms, drawing on familiar topoi of infirmity, strength, wandering, light and vision. Infirmity and lack of fortitude in particular may be the motivating theme of the dialogue, the stimulus to the search for the wisdom that brings consolation. Finally, the dialogue may be designed to show the student his own inner wisdom. The teacher's words shift to become the voice of interior reason, and the student effectively uses his own resources to heal his malaise.

The objective of this long chapter has been to depict in broad strokes those notions about wisdom that are of

²¹⁹ Chase 139.

particular relevance to a reading of the OE SS II. A schematic distinction was established between the epistemological and ethical aspects of wisdom and between the medieval notions of divine and human wisdom. OE sapiential thought claims a Christological definition of divine Wisdom but in practice lays heavier stress on the revelation of this Wisdom as a principle of order in the courses of the natural world. Both pre-Christian and Christian thought recognize that the totality of a creative and ordering Wisdom lies beyond the grasp of man. A perceived failure of Wisdom may effect a conceptual polarization between Wisdom and Wyrð, in which Wyrð becomes a vehicle for the pessimism that often lurks below the surface of man's celebration of divine Wisdom.

Pre-Christian thought patterns may stretch the Christian conception of Wisdom into new dimensions. The question of Wisdom's transcendence and immanence in relation to the material world is made complex by competing Christian notions of hierarchy, contemptus mundi, and a pre-Christian outlook on materiality in which an almost symbiotic bond is seen to exist between the individual and those natural and man-made objects that represent racial values and history. In the area of temporality, OE thought sometimes hesitates to locate Wisdom in a timeless future or to conceive an apotheosis of Wisdom at Judgement that will coincide with an end to history.

Human wisdom is recognized both as innate in the soul and as acquired through study and experience. Learning in itself has no salvific possibility and in fact carries many spiritual dangers. On the other hand, many OE works exhibit a high degree of respect for learning and the learned, a respect having some roots in the indigenous culture, where the sage plays an important cultural role. The idea of a community of wise men often surrounds the persona of the sage, who is depicted in debates, councils, meetings, and instructional discourse. Many OE works show great concern with the sage as teacher and place heavy emphasis on the attributes of the good teacher, who must demonstrate both superior knowledge and exemplary conduct. Christ is the model instructor.

OE wisdom shows a pronounced ethical interest; indeed, good conduct is, in general, privileged over knowledge as both the means to wisdom and the manifestation of it. The "knowing" side of wisdom does not disappear, but is subsumed by ethical wisdom as intellectual assent to Scriptural authority, keen discernment of the moral implications of events, and obedience to God's law.

The path to Christian wisdom begins in the response to the gift of Wisdom that lies innate in man, beckoning him to God. The Last Judgement may instill a fear of God that motivates the student to seek wisdom. The way to wisdom is often traced in a dialogic process in which proverb and precept are deftly developed by a teacher who has proven

himself experienced in life as in letters. The dialogue may insist that correct language is a necessary element in the wisdom education. In some dialogues and pseudo-dialogues, motifs of healing make an explicit connection between a sound mind and a sound spirit. These show a progression to wisdom which is evinced in a shift in the mental attitude of the subject so that he reassesses the reality he has endured in light of higher principles of order.

CHAPTER THREE

SOLOMON AND SATURN II
AND THE OLD ENGLISH WISDOM TRADITION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

A number of structural and thematic characteristics unite SS II with the body of OE sapiential thought outlined in the previous chapter. Part One of the present chapter is concerned with the poem's introduction and shows how two features that typify so many OE reflections on wisdom constitute the broad structural and thematic framework of the poem. The first is the conscious use of the dialogue form to structure the quest for true expression and discerning moral insight. The second is the vivid sense of the intimacy between wisdom and time: the wisdom embodied in ancient occurrences rolls into the present on the waves of time, but Wisdom also surrounds that present as a constant reference for understanding one's life and one's final end. Part Two explores the dominant image patterns within the debate itself, together with the epistemological principles that these represent. It shows that, despite the recognition in the narrator's introduction of a transcendent Wisdom that provides an interpretive pattern for the whole poem, the fundamental issue in the debate is the nature and moral significance of man's relation to the orders of materiality. Analysis of relevant passages reveals a deep preoccupation with the laws that underpin and inhere in the material and historical world, and the degree to which man, who is

necessarily a part of that world, may yet through his own will to wisdom emancipate himself from its necessities.

3.2. DISCOURSE AND TRUTH IN SS II

SS II opens with a conventional formula that marks out the poem's structural and thematic boundaries:

Hwæt, ic flitan gefrægn on fyrndagum
 modgleawe men, middangeardes []
 [] [] [] ræswum,
 gewesan ymbe hira wisdom. Wyrð deð se ðe liehð
 oððe ðæs soðes ansæceð.
 179-82¹

These lines define the poem structurally as a formal debate that has taken place in the past between two wise men and is being repeated to the present audience from the memory of a narrator who has heard of the event. While the actual debate soon shows that it is not to be imagined as a foamy-lipped harangue over auroch horns of mead, the extent of the conflict implied in flitan and gewesan is unclear. Up to 182a, the diction suggests a serious contest of knowledge such as appears in the ON Vaforúðnismál between Odin and the giant.² In both the Scandinavian poem and SS II, two

¹ Despite my contention (along with Holthausen) that MS. ræswum is correct but that the scribe may have omitted a line (see n6), I am keeping to the line numbers of the poem as given in Dobbie's edition to avoid confusion when readers refer to their text.

² Wise art, wayfarer! welcome to bench!
 let us sitting on settle hold converse.
 Our heads be stakes, my hall within
 and wins he whose wisdom is greater.

important figures match wits over questions having to do with the divine and supernatural. In the former, the giant's life is what is at stake; in the latter, we assume, it is Saturn's salvation.

Several features, however, modify this view of the debate as a verbal duel with high stakes. The militance suggested in flitan is offset to a degree by gewesan, "converse" or "debate."³ The term modgleawe evinces the typical respect in OE wisdom for men of worldly knowledge.⁴ Returning ræswan to MS. ræswum reopens the possibility that deliberation and counsel, perhaps with a competitive but not an abusive edge, comprise the central dialogic activity of the poem.⁵ Ræswum, like gewesan, affords to the debate a

³ Menner remarks upon Anglian parallels to the use of gewesen as "converse" or "debate" (20, 21n19). He cites B-T: giwosa "conversatio" from the Durham Ritual, but also the more contentious gewesness "dissensio" from Bede, EH, IV, 4, (ed. J. Schipper, 369n44). Shippey (Poems of Wisdom 87) takes flitan as "to hold an argument."

⁴ See 65ff. A survey of OE gleaw-phrases suggests that the term denotes an observant, trained and practical intellect and an oracular eloquence. Although it assumes spiritual or moral rectitude, it seems primarily to indicate cognitive and vatic aspects of wisdom. Daniel, for instance, is "godes spelboda, gleawa geðances" (742); Andreas is "wundrum gleaw" when he addresses the "marmanstan" (1497). Aldhelm glosses sagacitate, sagax, industria, and curiositatem with gleaw-words. See "De laude virginitatis" (prose), in OE Glosses, ed. A. S. Napier, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Medieval and Modern Series 11 (1900; Hildesheim, 1969), cited in DOE 195. See also I. Weitelmann, "Die Epitheta in den 'Cædmonischen' Dichtungen," diss., Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen, 1952, 58.

⁵ The MS. is clearly ræswum. Both Kemble and Dobbie silently emend to ræswan. Menner also gives ræswan, despite the fact that the half-line is too long. Holthausen's suggestion (Anglia 23.124) that ræswum is part of a verse in a missing line strikes me as entirely possible, since ræswum begins a

sense of mutual inquiry and argues against the violence of the ON model. The phrasing and intention of SS II also recall Boethius' Consolatio, where Philosophia offers to "clash" ("collidamus") arguments with Boethius to uncover truth ("ex huiusmodi conflictatione pulchra quaedam veritatis scintilla dissiliat").⁶ Alfred translates this almost verbatim with an equally intense metaphor:

Ic wene þeah, gif wit giet uncru word tosomne sleað,
 þæt ðær asprunge sym spearca up soðfæstnesse þara þe
 wit ær ne gesawon.

The narrator's introductory conception of the poem as a "contention" ("flitan," "gewesan") on behalf of truth ("soðes") corresponds with the Boethian examples of a spirited interchange between individuals concerned with extracting wisdom from the practice of debate.

The image of dignified discourse in the opening passage is reinforced later in Saturn's speech beginning "Full oft ic frode menn" (426-36). The Full oft passage recreates for the audience the very debate in progress. The physical

new line in the MS. and the copyist's eye may have missed a line. For these reasons, I have arranged the lines thus:

modgleawe men, middangeardes [____]
 [____] [____], [____] ræswum,
 gewesen ymbe hira wisdom.

"...wise men, [kings?] of middle earth, [____] [____] [verb?] in counsel, conversing about their wisdom." It is, of course, also possible that the scribe intended ræswan, but he may have meant the verb "to consider" and not necessarily the noun ræswa (f.) "leader, king, counsellor," etc.

⁶ CP 3 pr. 12, 302:71-74.

⁷ Sedgefield 99.23-25.

description is both realistic and suggestive: men reclining, on couches perhaps, opening books on their laps, gesticulating and modulating their voices as they secggan and swerian (427a). The association of flitum (432b) with books and educated debate further reduces its combative sense; indeed, the content and spirit of the traditional flyt is wholly absent here.⁸ The peaceful setting and the presence of open books make the sincerity and thoughtfulness of the discourse unmistakable.

The introduction and Full oft passage together reflect the high regard in which the sage is generally held in OE wisdom. Until they are named, the two men have equal stature, as do the scholars meeting with their books. The sage's wisdom appears to be valorized independently of his moral standing within a Christian framework. If modgleawe (180a) and later, frode (426a) and witan (432a), limit his excellence to the narrower discipline of scientia, these terms in themselves bear no ironic suggestion of a corresponding moral deficiency. The poet will use other techniques to convey Saturn's shortcomings and the inadequacy of his wisdom against a Christian standard. In the opening scene, however, which is later reinforced by the Full oft passage, he uses the credible and familiar

⁸ For a "generic" description of the traditional flyt, see Ward Parks, "Flyting and Fighting: Pathways in the Realization of the Epic Contest," Neophil 70 (1986) 292-306; and "The Flyting Speech in Traditional Heroic Narrative," Neophil 71 (1987) 285-95.

structures of the serious wisdom debate and the conventional respectability of the sage both to foreground the grave importance of the dialogic process and to frame and contain the internal ironies of this specific debate.

The introduction also imposes a complex and significant temporal structure on the poem. Two degrees each of present and past are proposed in the opening lines: the past when the narrator learned his story and the earlier past when the debate between Solomon and Saturn took place; and the present of the narrator's poem and the universal present of God's eternity. If we set the two pasts against the general background of OE wisdom thought, we recognize two characteristic features: the awareness of a primordial Wisdom that extends from ancient times into the present, and the line of sages that serves as a channel for that wisdom. In SS II, in fact, the narrator acts as just such another sage, a liaison and a moral lens between the characters whose tale he has learned and the audience to whom he speaks. The narrator brings the Wisdom of the past into the present of the audience, demanding its intellectual and religious engagement in ancient truths.⁹

The gnome that follows positions the whole poem in two

⁹ The temporal structure of SS II has been understood alternatively as a distancing device that removes the audience from "direct contact" with the dialogue's content and foregrounds the "fictional and archetypal" situation of a wisdom debate. See Hansen 146. On the conventional introduction, see Ward Parks, "The traditional narrator and the "I heard" formulas in OE poetry," ASE 16 (1987) 45-46.

kinds of "presentness:" "Wyr̥s deð se ðe liehð oððe ðæs soðes ansæceð" (181b-2a). We may note in passing that the gnome refers first of all to the "rules" of the debate: he will lose who hides the truth or lies. The gnome thus anticipates an important moral theme of the poem: the fallen moral condition of the man who misuses words to occlude rather than reveal the truth. As Chapter Five shows, the wisdom of the two debaters ultimately depends upon how they use language to formulate and extract meaning from the experienced world.

The present tense of the gnome stands in direct contrast to the two pasts invoked in the lines immediately preceding. The gnome secures the present audience within the poem's field of meaning and anchors the moral implications of the debate in the everyday world. Its stern words reach out to the listener and his world, showing him that Saturn's lessons will also be his own. In addition, the narrator invites the audience through the gnome to join in passing judgement on the debaters against the standard of true speaking that the gnome insists upon. The audience is thus implicated in the poem both as fellow learners with Saturn and as fellow judges with the narrator.

Finally, the gnome mediates, through both its generalizing present tense form and its explicit reference to Truth, between the temporal structure of the poem and the transcendent world that contains it. The gnome introduces Truth as a metaphysical reference point, an interpretive

focus existing outside the poem's historical structure. This external moral standard unites the past debaters, the present narrator, and the present and future audience in a common quest for the highest good. Structurally, Truth provides the normative measure for evaluating the human processes of narration and debate in the poem. Thematically, it lies at the poem's centre as the goal of the debaters, the narrator, and the audience.

In appealing to a metaphysical Truth, the gnome anticipates the relationship of Solomon himself to the poem. The Old Testament King is rather laconically introduced in the passage that follows the gnome ("Salomon was bremra" 182b), but his familiar typological connection to Christ immediately alerts the listener to an absolute authority beyond the human and literary world of the poem.¹⁰ The figure of Solomon exists in the universal present both of the gnome and of the Truth it announces. Figurally, Solomon's wisdom is the Christological Wisdom of the Creator that *Ælfric* so often alludes to, the ænne Sunu in Whom God underpins and justly orders all existence.¹¹

Saturn's itinerary, which follows the narrator's introduction of Solomon, returns the listener to history, specifically to the past before the debate. Furthermore, the itinerary allusively culls up the individual history of each

¹⁰ On Solomon's typological significance, see below, 162ff.

¹¹ Hansen 11. See above, 36.

place listed in it, creating a bundle of many pasts prior to Saturn's exploits. The complex historical and temporal structure here, in which places and events in history interlace with Saturn's travels, has the rhetorical effect of foregrounding time itself, of giving dimensions to its movement. This juxtaposition of time frames in the itinerary differs from the melding of past and present in 179-82, where the ancient wisdom of sages emerges into the now of the poem. Seen in the context of Saturn's search for wisdom in earthly kingdoms, the itinerary's temporal network points to the instability of things in time that will become a dominant theme in Saturn's questions to Solomon, the constant flux of temporality that drags material reality with it into an endless succession of transformations.

In his introduction then, the narrator has drawn a conventional picture of learned men in a debate whose goal is Truth. This event and its moral implications are made immanent to the audience through the narrator himself, who, as a kind of sage, brings the wisdom of the past forward into the present. The poet places the Wisdom of Solomon and notion of an all embracing Truth as supra-historical points of reference for the interpretation of the poem, but the multiplicity of time planes in the introduction looks ahead to a debate that will be concerned primarily with events in historical time and with the nature and meaning of the human encounter with temporality.

3.3. MAN, NATURE AND DIVINITY

Like the narrator's introduction to SS II, the Weallende Wulf, Book and Vasa Mortis passages also recognize a metaphysical reality that encircles the historical world of the poem. From the Ylde riddle onward, however, the epistemological centre of the debate is consistently drawn into the experienced world of time and materiality, the world, in fact, of the itinerary. The principal issue becomes man's position within the coercive forces of temporality and death in the natural world. Like many other OE wisdom works, the debate's temporal point of reference is the Apocalypse, but that event is itself only the grand finale in the continual termination of the physical world in the course of historical time. The confrontation with a time that is both a terminus on the level of individual creatures and a relentless advance to the end of the created world finds its metaphor in the spatial and concrete, in a world opaque, absolute, and confined.

Physical images of binding dominate the debate.¹² This at first suggests that SS II is another OE meditation on the "contingent and context-bound" nature of human knowledge and the frailty of human systems that attempt to organize experience.¹³ Some such works move imagistically between

¹² On binding imagery in OE and some of its patristic sources, see Thomas Rendell, "Bondage and Freeing from Bondage in OE Religious Poetry," JEGP 73 (1974) 497-512.

¹³ Hansen 11. See above, 32ff.

visibilia and invisibilia, showing that a limitless, if incomprehensible, vista exists beyond the confined perspective of human awareness.¹⁴ As a whole, SS II also recognizes a real Truth beyond the constructs of human thought and discourse. In two important ways, however, the poem, particularly in the controlling images and structure of the debate, diverges from this normative pattern.

First, spiritual reality in the debate is conceived neither as wholly other to the limited physical world nor as its eternal template, but as an upward extension of that world. The rules that govern nature have no limits; they reach to invisibilia as much as to visibilia. This is not to say that the poet would have denied the existence of a metaphysical universe, but to point to a resistance, grounded, as Chapter Two showed, in conceptions of Wyrð and time, to the idea of an eternal present in which the past is obliterated. While not at all denying their existence, SS II hesitates to represent spiritual orders of reality emanating downwards into the material and temporal creation. Emphasis remains throughout the debate on the ordering processes existing within natural movements. In one important way, the poem exempts the redeemed soul from these processes, but, as this section will later show, the terms in which this is achieved are themselves rooted imagistically and

¹⁴ In the flight of his soul, for instance, the Seafarer, while caught in the grasp of the material world, catches a glimpse of an eternal patria. Greenfield and Evert find such a movement in Maxims II (340).

epistemologically within that order. As they develop, the poem's imagery and diction show the natural world materially expanding to embrace its own supersession.

Second, SS II differs from other works about the boundaries of human knowledge in its confidence in its own method. In The Order of the World, for example, the poet draws a clear line between what man can and cannot know.¹⁵ SS II, however, seems to ignore what man cannot know and implicitly argues that wise discourse is a sure means to sufficient understanding. At the end of the debate, Saturn rejoices ("ahlog" 178) to have learned where he stands both existentially and morally as a reasoning creature in relation to time and all the orders of nature. Despite its rootedness in a material world chained inside its own rules, the debate's intention is that of the book in the riddle: to cheer the mind ("amyrgað modsefan" 241) with reassurance that its innate capabilities, if cultivated with wisdom, can survive the destructive infiltration of temporality and bring the soul to Jerusalem.

Structurally, this insight is revealed through a chiastic arrangement of images. Near the beginning, the debate shows a thick network of material events, signifying death-in-life, that bears down on a humanity aware only of its own powerlessness and suffering. Gradually, man's will is identified and separated from the natural order. As self-

¹⁵ The Order of the World 27-37.

consciousness develops, lexical ambiguity becomes an image of the mind's independent power of interpretation and moral choice. Images of opposition within nature evolve into images of opposition between nature's fatal power and the human will. At the end of the debate, the empowered will escapes the clutches of materiality to the extent that it can consciously seize the ability to choose its course and, stabilized by a moral alliance with God, to respond actively and effectively to fated events.

It is these points -- the poem's confidence in the powers of the discursive mind both to find a place in the temporal world and to maintain itself above the exigencies of that world, and the essential materiality of the metaphysical vision of SS II -- that characterize its concern with the relationships among nature, divinity, and man and distinguish it from other sapiential reflections on human knowledge. I turn now to the text itself as illustration, beginning at the Yldo-snaw sequence.

Taken as a unit, the two questions about Yldo and Snaw set up, by means of a dense network of imagery, a compelling poetic statement of the epistemological problem that occupies the debate. Saturn's riddle proceeds thus:

Ac hwæt is ðæt wundor ðe geond ðas world fareð,
 styrennga gæð, staðolas beateð,
 aweceð wopdropan, winneð oft hider?
 Ne mæg hit steorra ne stan ne se steapa gimm,
 water ne wildeor wihte beswican,
 ac him on hand gæð heardes and hnesces,
 micles and mætes; him to mose sceall

gegangan geara gehwelce grundbuendra,
 lyftfleogendra, laguswemmendra,
 ðria ðreoteno ðusendgerimes.
 282-91

The images of unrelenting advance and of beating on foundations, the impersonal, almost mechanical him on hand gæð, and the suggestion of indiscriminate devouring all give Saturn's wunder a monstrous, inhuman quality.

Solomon answers in kind, but shifts the imagistic context to warfare and binding. Yldo casts her chains wide; with her hiðendre hildewræsne (293b) she fells anything she wishes. She destroys the trees in her path and afterwards, she devours

wildne fugol. Heo oferwigeð wulf,
 hio oferbideð stanas, heo oferstigeð style,
 hio abiteð iren mid ome, deð usic swa.
 299-301¹⁶

The wolf and the bird, normally associated with battle scenes, are themselves overcome by the greater war waged by Yldo, as are the instruments of war, steel and iron. Yldo is a Grendelian brute against which every sword is a Hrunting.

The evidence of the rest of the poem strongly suggests that Yldo, that is, the passing of time and the aging process that leads to death, is synonymous with Wyrð. Even in this early passage, Yldo shows characteristics that are

¹⁶ There has been debate about the word order at 299-301. Menner suggests that there may be "a more radical error" in the MS., but his emendation (following Rieger) seems more drastic than necessary and destroys the logic of 296-99 and the parallelism of 299b-301a (130n284b-90). I have adopted Dobbie's punctuation and word order here.

elsewhere (in OE poetry and in SS II) associated with Wyrð: its inexorable advance, its alliance with death, its association with time moving forward out of past into present, its connection with the battlefield, its impersonality.¹⁷ Later discussions of Wyrð in the poem build on the puzzling destructiveness that we find first in the Ylðo riddle.

The generalizing verbs that describe Ylðo's march suggest that this wundor is a principle, not a tangible entity. The impersonality of Ylðo is underscored by the explicitness of the list of her victims. The magnitude of her power is shown not only in the number of things she destroys ("Þria þreoteno þusendgerimes" 291) but as well in the significance of the items that are named. Ylðo ingests things of beauty (bright gems, stars, living things) and destroys things of utility (trees, rock, iron, and steel) -- things not simply of beauty and utility in fact, but things in their inchoate form, raw materials that are the primal stuff of human creativity. When we consider the significance of material goods in Germanic culture, the violence of Ylðo is all the more striking; the items listed are intimately connected not just with the processes of fabrication, but with action -- swords with battle victories, gems with

¹⁷ See G. V. Smithers, "Destiny and the Heroic Warrior in Beowulf," in Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honor of Herbert Dean Meritt, ed. James L. Rosier (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 69; Timmer 25; Lochrie 206ff; Bauschatz 20-23.

rewards for deeds, and trees with halls, weapons and religious practice. Overall, the Ylðo riddle and reply place the power of Ylðo prior to the natural world, while the manifestation of that power and the rhetorical interest of the passage lies in Ylðo's destruction of the world of human experience, the world of beauty, invention, and action.

The imagery of binding that dominates Solomon's reply to the Ylðo riddle is picked up again in Saturn's next question, where snow binds and strangles the earth and its flora. Like Ylðo, Snaw goes boldly forth, shackling, tying, covering, bridging over water, and, significantly, breaking down those ties with which man encloses and protects his community -- the town gates ("burga geat" 307a). But while in the Ylðo riddle we are confronted with a force that is external and prior to nature, here we have almost a homology; the fatal processes of binding are inherent in the material world itself.¹⁸ Snaw's function, it would appear, is to enact the confining and destructive mandate of Ylðo.¹⁹

Four aspects of the Ylðo-snaw sequence, then, confine the terms of the debate within the horizons of lived historical reality: the rhetorical emphasis on the physical victims of an immaterial force; the resonance given to these

¹⁸ On homologies in nature, see Gruber 29-30.

¹⁹ This progression from the external and impersonal forces of time to seasonal images that locate that force within the material world is not uncommon in OE literature. Maxims II, e.g., moves from "wyrd bið swiðost" to "Winter bið cealdost" (5ff).

physical things by their association with culturally significant activities, (fabrication, war, art); the subsequent placement of the might of Ylðo -- the more awesome because introduced as an abstraction without limits -- in the visible world; and finally, the existence of a tension in the relationship of nature to Ylðo, in which nature is both victim and collaborator. This last factor, the dual subjection and agency of nature in relation to Ylðo, produces a tension that ironically anticipates the later designation of the human will as both existentially subject to and morally distinct from the forces of nature and death.

The terseness of Solomon's phrase deð usic swa (301b) belies its significance as the climax of the list of things that are outlasted by time. The king specifically lays a finger here on the fact of man's subjection to time and nature. But the moral issue behind this fact has already subtly been hinted at in the Ylðo riddle. Saturn uses the phrase staðolas beateð (283b) to describe the action of ðæt wundor (282b). Fred Robinson has clarified the meaning of staðol in the Book-moth riddle: it denotes the "foundation on which the words [in the book in the riddle] stand - i.e., the manuscript," but it is also used "in the abstract sense to refer to intellectual foundations or to the content of a thought or an argument."²⁰ Robinson calls attention to the

²⁰ "Artful Ambiguities in the OE "Book-Moth" Riddle, in Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C.

related words gestaðelian and staðolfæstne in Solomon's answer to the Book Riddle in SS II: "Gestrangað hie and gestaðeliað staðolfæstne geðoht" (240). But he does not mention the staðolas in the Ylðo riddle. In light of the earlier gestaðeliað and staðolfæstne, Saturn's description of Ylðo suggests not only geological or architectural foundations, but as well the intellectual underpinnings of human consciousness. Thus Ylðo beats relentlessly at the mind of the reasoning man, at the bedrock of his belief or understanding. The relationship between the staðolas of the mind and Ylðo is made in terms of aggression and struggle in Saturn's question ("winneð oft hider" 284b), and this and the parallel metaphors of combat in Solomon's reply look ahead to the later contest of Wyrd and Warnung who "winnað oft mid hira ðreamedlan" (429-30).²¹

The Ylðo-Snaw passage affords us only a glimpse of man, but what we do see, in the midst of unrelenting assaults by an Ylðo whose ultimate victory is assured, is human consciousness reflecting feebly on itself. Rhetorically almost submerged in the catalogue of nature is a generalized humanity whose grip on itself is correspondingly slight and who, despite its achievements in the arts of war and civilization, imagines itself enclosed and fettered within

McGalliard, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1975) 357.

²¹ See below, 145.

the physical world, destined to be carried from the battlefield in chains along with everything else.

One of the several frustrations of working with SS II is that the Snaw passage breaks off in mid-plunder. An entire leaf, about 54 lines, is missing. The text resumes with something that is much mightier than "cunning war" ("swipra nið" 309b) that will lead man into (one assumes) hell ("laðan wic" 310b) amid the terrible company to the joy of the fiend, presumably Satan.²² It seems rash to assign any specific noun to the enigmatic adjectival phrase swiðor micle (309a), but the image of the man being led to hell (310-11) and the apocalyptic themes that soon follow make it seem certain that the subject has turned in the intervening lines to the Last Judgement.²³ In the following gnome (312-13), Saturn unites night and darkness, Wyrd and need, sorrow and the sleep of death in a summarizing nexus that puts into

²² Menner suggests that the enemy greater than "cunning war" is death, since death is mentioned by Saturn in the following passage (130n299-300). One wonders how death could be greater than something that leads men to hell, but the overall tone of the poem seems too skeptical, especially at this point, to suggest that God's mercy is mightier than death.

²³ Dane suggests that Solomon is replying here to the Snaw question (596). Unless that sequence lasted fifty-five or so lines, which seems unlikely, we may assume that the snow issue has been resolved and at least one new topic embarked upon. Possibly, the missing passage is homiletic, with its reference to sinners being led off to hell, and thus is not unlike the Lytle hwile passage. Perhaps a series of gnostic utterances preceded it, as the existing ones precede the Lytle hwile lines. That some parallel exists between the missing text and Lytle hwile can be seen in the resemblance of theme between "mid ða fræcnan fyrd feonde to willan" (300-2) and "on fastenne feondum to willan" (311).

sin ("lifiað him in mane" 318b) in the devil's power ("on fæstenne feondum to willan" 320). The wanhogan (321a), whose foolishness locks him in an inevitable course to death, will finally, like the leaves that are dead forever, be rejected by God ("wenað wanhogan ðæt hie wille wuldorcining, ælmihtig god, ece gehiran" 321-2). Solomon's target here is the irresponsible man who perceives no need of personal action to transcend the exigencies of nature, the man who, either in complacency or despair, disregards the divine scheme for his ultimate destiny. Humanity, who appears in earlier passages as a feebly cognizant fellow victim in nature's continual death, has now been separated from the material world by his moral stance and been handed the responsibility for his salvation.²⁶

The apocalyptic references that frame the Lytle hwile passage (309-11 and 321-26) enlarge the significance of the falling leaves image to encompass Doomsday. In this context, the leaves represent the wicked who will wither and drop to hell on the Day of Judgement (317-22). This alignment of nature, Doomsday, and man's sin is both affirmed and developed in the following two speeches (323-31). Saturn regards Doom as an inevitable event in the natural order. He ignores, or is ignorant of, its moral implications:

²⁶ Cf. Carnicelli 52:22-26: we ofercumað þone dwolan þara þe wenað þæt manna sawla næbben nan edlean æfter þisse worulde heora gearnunge, swa godes swa yfeles, swæðer hi her doð. þu þe us alysdest of ðam þeowdome oðera gesceafta, ðu us simle gearwast æce lyf, and us æac gyrwast to þam æcan lyfe.

Sona bið gesiene, siððan flowan mot
 yð ofer eall lond, ne wile heo awa ðæs
 siðes gewican, sioððan hire se sæl cymeð,
 ðæt heo domes dages dyn gehiere.
 323-6

The impersonal and unalterable quality of Saturn's Doomsday is contextually linked to the machine-like advance of death presented in the Yldo riddle.²⁷ We may compare the phrases in the Yldo and Sona bið passages: "stýrnenga gæð" (283) and "ne wile heo awa ðæs siðes gewican" (324b-5a); "geond ðas worold færeð" (282) and "yð ofer eall lond" (324a). Both Yldo and domes dæg are mechanistic and inexorable; Doom is, for Saturn, an extension of Yldo's processes of death-in-life.

An interest in time dominates the lines in the Lytle hwile and Swa bið passages (314-331) and suggests that in many ways, Solomon's view corresponds to Saturn's. There are, throughout, many words and phrases of temporality: Lytle hwile, ðonne, ær, lange læstað, ece; Sona bið, siððan, awa, sioððan hire se sæl cymeð, domes dages, lengest, lænan gesceafte, and the historical Old Testament reference beginning with Ieo (328b). Both debaters are clearly preoccupied with this transitory world as it advances to an ineluctable day of Judgement. Both emphasize the certainty

²⁷ Commenting on the introductory phrase "ðæt gelimpan sceal," Lochrie notes that the impersonality of the statement "lends the prophesied event the force of something which is preordained and which lies outside man's control, understanding, and experience" (202). Lochrie claims this impersonality is unique in OE Judgement Day accounts, but it very strong here in SS II as well.

of domes dag, which Solomon regards as the anti-type of God's destruction of the Tower (328b-9).

The King is also concerned, however, with the choices man must make in light of the inevitable day. In other words, he establishes the moral correlative of the fact of Doomsday. Saturn's "wisdom" is only knowledge, but Solomon's knowledge, while it keeps the epistemological focus on the historical world, extends to its moral significance for man. His reply to Saturn's Doomsday speech varies the Lytle hwile passage. While the Swa bið lines restate the alliance between inevitable natural forces and the fate of iniquitous men (327-8a), the admonition to Saturn not to run into that foolishness ("inwitgecyndo" 331b) reaffirms the fact that man can choose not to sin.²⁸

The debate has by now advanced to a new way of representing the fatal forces that batter man during his short and difficult life on earth. The potency of Yldo, first an abstraction of frightening proportions (the Yldo riddle) and then concentrated in the material world (the

²⁸ The MS. is clearly Swa. This is upheld by Schipper. Menner, following Kemble and Grein, and also Shippey, emend to Wa without comment. Wa, of course, does make sense in this passage. But MS. Swa marks these lines as a contextual and lexical parallel to the Lytle hwile passage. The movement of ideas is from a concrete statement of natural fact, "Lytle hwile . . ." to its moral interpretation "Swa ðonne feallað . . ." and an allusion to God's punishment. This pattern is repeated in "Sona bið . . ." and Solomon's answer: a natural observation, a moral interpretation, and God's punishment. We may note the lexical parallels between the passages: "lange læstað, lifiað him in mane" (318), "mid mane lengest lifiað" (327b-8a), and "swa ðonne gefeallað" (317a) and "Swa bið ðonne" (327a).

Snaw question) is now assimilated into an explicitly Christian apocalyptic vision. Both men's statements about the Last Judgement posit an end to nature's seemingly endless tyranny, at which time the problem of mutability will be solved in a great and final mutation. This event provides, however, not an opening into eternity so much as a point of reference for life in this world, an immutable and absolute moment that rivets the attention of the wise man, provoking him to seek the self-awareness and moral power that will free him from Yldo's grip.

The debate now shifts from the absolute tyranny of Yldo to man's status in relation to Wyrð. Saturn asks about the man doomed to Wyrð's forces. Imagery of binding persists:

Saga ðu me, Salomon cyning, sunu Davides,
hwæt beoð ða feowere fægæs rapas.

Gewurdene wyrda,
ðæt beoð ða feowere fægæs rapas.

332-35

Paleographical and contextual difficulties in this corrupted passage make Solomon's reply obscure, but it would seem that the doomed man is bound by irrevocable events ("wyrda") that have been accomplished or completed ("gewurdene").²⁹ Are

²⁹ Menner cites the collocation of wyrð and (ge)worden in Daniel 470, 652 (132n325a). As Timmer states, wyrð in both instances is parallel with wundor and thus suggests a miracle or wondrous event and rules out any association with a pre-Christian, i.e. a mythological or personified, conception of Wyrð (140). Menner, however, posits that the image of the doomed man roped by accomplished fates "may go back ultimately to the Germanic belief that the doomed warrior is fettered on the battle-field by such goddesses as the valkyrs or idisi" (132n325a). The battle chain images in the answer to the Yldo riddle vaguely suggest the Valkyries who bind the doomed, though I do not feel that the

they his own evil deeds that bind him, or does the indifferent power of Wyrð carry him in its sweep to death? The alliance between the course of nature and the fate of the sinful man proposed earlier suggests both answers.

This interpretative problem is cleared up in the next sequence:

Saturnus cwæð:
Ac hwa demeð ðonne dryhtne Criste
on domes dæge, ðonne he demeð eallum gesceaftum?

Salomon cwæð:
Hwa deað ðonne dryhtne deman, ðe us of duste
nengend of niehtes wunde? geworhte,
336-39a

The question here concerns the position and authority of Christ at the final moment of history. Saturn's question implies that he thinks Christ is subject to the same four ropes as the doomed man. Solomon's quick and rather testy reply is that the Saviour is not subject to judgement, but is altogether beyond the authority of Wyrð. Taken together then, the two question sets establish unequivocally for the first time the radical separation of man, doomed ("fates")

Valkyries, or even explicitly pagan beliefs, are being invoked here to oppose a Christian view. Solomon, the Judaeo-Christian king, is likely using pre-Christian vocabulary to describe a Christian Anglo-Saxon world-view. In addition, the common Christian idea of the fetters of sin may be the point here. Menner cites Ælfric's scriptural quotation in "In Dominica Palmarum," Thorpe I, 208: "Anra gehwilc manna is gewriðen mid rapum his synna." I feel both indigenous and Christian fields of meaning unite here. The connection of man to the workings of Wyrð and the alliance of Wyrð and the Last Judgement in temporal inevitability bring together a vital element in the pre-Christian cultural consciousness and a moral and theological vision that is equally compelling.

to experience the forces of Wyrð, from God ("Dryhtne"), who created the universe from dust and is exempt from Wyrð.³⁰

Christ is not only the Creator standing outside the created universe, but he is also the Saviour ("nergend"), the one who can extract man from night's wound, that is, from the eternal darkness of sin.³¹ This allusion to Christ's transcendence and his power to rescue man from sin is the first suggestion in the debate that man, by believing in the saving power of Christ, can also escape the chains of Wyrð.

Passing over the next sequence (339b-363), which will be examined in Chapter Five, we come to the Twins passage (364-71). Saturn has so far been concerned with evil and death in nature and with man's existence in the shadow of Judgement; he turns now to birth and the origins of human destiny.

³⁰ Cf. God and Wyrð in the Maxims I 8b-10: "God us ece bið: ne wendað hine wyrða ne hine wiht dreceð adl ne ylðo ælmihtigne." The distinction is clear here between God's eternity and the transitory but death-bringing Wyrð.

³¹ The vexing nergend of niehtes wunde (339a) has received much commentary. The MS. is very obscure. Menner reads wunde, assumes a scribal error for wombe or wambe and translates "the womb of night" (133n330a). Menner lists other suggestions, such as Kemble's sunde for "the flood of night," and Holthausen's wunde for "wounds of hostility or evil." Dobbie offers "wounds of night" (167n339). Leslie Whitbread reads punde and translates "of eight pounds" (622-26). John P. Hermann suggests wunde and translates the "wound of darkness" from which Jesus Christ saves us. "Solomon and Saturn (II), 339a: Niehtes Wunde," ELN 14:3 (March 1977) 161-64. Like Menner's other suggestion, "wounds of sinful state of darkness," this seems most probable to me; thus "Who would dare to judge him who created us from dust, who saves us from the wound of night?"

Ac hu gegangeð ðæt? gode oððe yfle,
 ðonne hie beoð ðurh ane idese acende,
 twegen getwinnas, ne bið hira tir gelic.
 Oðer bið unlæde on eorðan, oðer bið eadig,
 swiðe leoftæle mid leoda duguðum;
 oðer leofað lytle hwile,
 swiceð on ðisse sidan gesceafte, and ðonne eft
 mid sorgum gewiteð.
 Fricge ic ðec, hlaforð Salomon, hwæðres bið hira
 folgoð betra?
 364-71³²

There are two questions here. The first is a general one: why, when a good man and an evil one are born as twins, is their glory not alike? Saturn's associations with Chaldean wisdom allow us to assume he is referring to astrology.³³ If twins are born at the same time and are thus subject to the same destiny according to the position of the stars, why does one become good and the other evil? In other words, what controls men's good and evil, if not the stars? Solomon's answer (372-87) seems most appropriate to this question. A mother has no way of knowing, when she delivers her children, how their lives will turn out. If astrology is the issue, then Solomon has summarily discounted its validity. Saturn's rephrasing of the question (371), however, seems to be asking something else: which of the twins has the better destiny? Is Saturn speaking of morally evil men, as he seemed to be in the first question, or is he speaking of the luck or fortune of men in this life?

³² I have adopted Dobbie's punctuation here, over Menner's. Ac hu gegangeð ðæt? maintains the parallelism of the earlier Hu geweorðeð ðæt? (343b) and hu gesæleð ðæt? (350b).

³³ Menner raises this point in a note, citing Cicero, and also Augustine's remarks on Jacob and Esau (135n357a).

The whole question is ambiguous. As such it resembles the Four Ropes passage, where both willed action and the forces of Wyrd seem to bind men's destinies. The anecdote of the youth in Solomon's answer to the Twins question also suggests both a wrong path willfully chosen ("slideð geneahhe . . . unlædan agen hlaford" 380b-84) and a predestined path over which he has no control ("ðæt is eald gesceaft" 387b). Saturn's next question (388-90) is equally ambiguous. Is he asking why a man will not choose wisdom of his own volition or why it is fated that a man will not choose wisdom? Solomon's reply (the Hwæt! passage) does not make the situation any clearer:

Hwæt! Him mæg eadig eorl eaðe geceosan
 on his modsefan mildne hlaford,
 anne æðeling. Ne mæg don unlæde swa.
 391-93

These passages seem intentionally to blur the distinction between one's willed actions and the status that one is destined to possess. Eadig and unlæde here, as in the Twins question, can here mean either earned virtue or folly, or the fated condition of being lucky or misguided. The very ambiguity of these words, however, becomes an image of the central position of the will in determining, not one's destiny in a prophetic sense, but the moral choices that one can make in the face of the events that confront one throughout life. The bi-valent sense of unlæde and eadig reflects the idea that a blessed man will, because he is blessed, seek that by which he will become blessed, while

the misguided man's choice only launches him into greater misguidedness.³⁴ Whether the young man has fallen into despair because he has chosen the wrong lord, or because he has displeased the right lord is not clear. The man in the Hwæt! passage, however, is blessed because he chose the right lord and that lord himself shows the quality of mildness. In each case a singular lord ("agen," "anne") reflects in his behaviour the wisdom or folly of his follower; the first turns from him, the second is mild. The misguided young man, like the more general unlæde man of the second reply (393b) is unable either to choose the right lord or to obey the lord he does choose. As in a man's relation to his fate, so in his relation to his superior, he both chooses and is governed by his choice. The reasoning sounds circular, but I believe that these passages of involuted meaning make a deliberate use of linguistic circularity to draw a circle around the mind -- the perceiving and acting mind -- as capable of interpretive decisions. The state of being unlæde or eadig, like the possession of a harsh lord or a mild one, are both causes and effects; the mind that recognizes this also recognizes that its own spiritual condition both causes and is caused

³⁴ Cf. Wisdom's remark to Mod in Alfred's Boethius: "Ðæt bið tacn wisdomes Ðæt hine mon welnige wisdom geheran & ongitan" (Sedgefield 118:11-12).

The second phrase that shows the individual bound to Wyrð through the material world is eald gesceaft (387b). Gesceaft is used six times in SS II, three times referring to creation (328a, 340b, 370a), twice to destiny (387b, 395a), and once to created things (337b).³⁸ The etymological link between destiny and the created world suggests a homological one between the power of Wyrð and the material universe, just as gebyrd links the concepts of biological birth and destiny, and as the Snaw question earlier showed the force of Wyrð to be inherent in the seasonal cycles of nature.

The second part of the sequence, on the young man choosing a lord, retains, in eadiq and unlæde, the paradox that man both determines and is controlled by his destiny, but, in contrast to the Twins passage, the focus here is man's decision-making power. Why, Saturn asks, will a young man not wish ("nele") to walk in wisdom and struggle after snvtro (388-90)? In spite of its ambiguity, and perhaps because of it, Solomon's answer is reassuring. The blessed man can easily choose ("eaðe geceosan" 381b) a mild lord. The evil man may not. As Menner suggests, mildne hlaford,

fell on gebyrd at battle. Here too, gebyrd is used in the context of family and fate.

³⁸ Eald gesceaft is found in Alfred's Boethius, where it is opposed to chance: "Ac þæt ungestæððige folc wundrað þæs þe hit seldost gesiehð, þeah hit læsse wunder sie, & wenað þæt þæt ne sie eald gesceaft, ac se weas geworden niwane" (Sedgefield 126:21-24). We may note here another instance of a staðol-word: ungestæððige "unstable people."

anne æðeling here (392b-3a) is likely a reference both to a human lord and to Jesus Christ.³⁹ The initial Hwæt! signals the importance of this statement and captures the audience's full attention. By stressing the ability of man consciously to act upon his destiny, the answer empowers the audience. Even while it seems to conflate Wyrð's power and man's will, this climactic sequence turns the line of reasoning from the strictures of Wyrð to the possibility of freedom and redemption through Christ. Wyrð may be powerful, but Solomon has identified a new locus of activity, the mind ("modsefan" 382a), where man can contemplate his final destiny and choose the right Lord.

This passage lies at the centre of the chiasmic structure of the debate's imagery. Wyrð, which began in the ascendent position over a helpless man, gradually lost its potency as the mind came into clearer focus. In the present passage, Wyrð and human will are pitted against each other. In the Twins sequence, it is Wyrð who seems to have the upper hand; but in the Hwæt! answer, the balance shifts decisively from the might of destiny to the capacity of the mind for willed action.

Saturn now returns the debate to the natural world, but the fresh interest in liberation and redemption is retained.

Ac forhwam winneð ðis wæter geond woroldrice,
 dreogeð deop gesceaft? Ne mot on dæg restan,
 neahtes neðyð, cræfte tyð,
 cristnað and clænsað cwicra manigo,

³⁹ Menner 137n381ff.

wuldre gewlitigað. Ic wite ne cann
 forhwan se stream ne mot stillan neahtes.
 394-99

Coming as it does after an allusion to the possibility of human choice in the face of eald gesceaft, this passage fittingly introduces Christian imagery of grace and redemption. The words cristnað and clansað suggest baptism, while the fire images that follow, together with the allusion to the Holy Spirit, extend the Christian connotations.⁴⁰ Water's functions here are all salutary, in marked contrast to the earlier destructive powers of Yldo and Snaw, and in particular of the apocalyptic seas that inaugurate Doomsday. At the same time, however, the poem resists an explicitly metaphysical conception of water. Water's significance is rooted in its literal existence. Wholly engaged in its own actuality, it follows the primordial laws ("deop gesceaft" 395a) that contain and direct its turbulent power. It is not permitted to rest during the day, and at night it must venture forth with boldness and power.⁴¹

Saturn's specific question is why the current must not rest at night. Perhaps he is referring to the notion of choice introduced in the previous question and answer. If nature follows her own course, why is man unable to? This

⁴⁰ On the Pentecost allusion, see below, 230ff.

⁴¹ The MS. has neahtes neðvð, which Menner emends to neðeð, giving "at night it fares boldly" (137n386a). Dobbie notes other possible emendations (168n396). All of these except one are consistent with the idea that water moves with great force. The alliteration in 396b is incomplete.

problem is familiar from Alfred's Boethius, where Wisdom laments the inability of man to turn to the Good as the rest of creation does.⁴² But the last part of Saturn's question might be related to water's subjection to natural law: if everything else rests at night, why does water not follow the normal cycle of day and night. Imagery of day and night occurs frequently in the poem, both in a literal sense, and metaphorically as life and death. Because water is not still at night, Saturn reasons (perhaps), it must have a different appointment, one that cuts across the rhythmic opposition of day and night. The positive virtues of water, its sacral qualities of cleansing, together with its contravention of natural law, signal a degree of exemption from the governance of Wyrð. In the cleansing waters, we discover a natural element that does not follow all the dictates of the familiar "natural" order.

Another unfortunate lacuna, this time of some 58 lines, eliminates the reply to this suggestive question.⁴³ The dialogue resumes with a new set of images: the devil and his company laid low, wise men gathered together, light, a mysterious crumb with spiritual power, and fire. This passage has had short shrift in critical discussions of SS II, but it is arguable that it not only fulfills the themes

⁴² Sedgefield 10:19-27.

⁴³ The lacuna must also contain at least one other question from Saturn. See Menner 137n389b and Vincenti 75-77.

conceived in the preceding Water passage, but makes as well the next major point on which the debate will turn.

The passage begins in the middle of a discussion of light.⁴⁴ Just as water followed its own destiny ("deop gesceaft 395a"), so light is ever obedient to its teacher ("Simle hit bið his lareowum hyrsum" 400b). The noun lareowum introduces a metaphoric link between leoht and the idea of human learning and discipleship. It is the first of several hints that what Saturn and the audience are to learn about light has implications for man. Accordingly, the next lines focus on a meeting of wise men, where the light illuminating their discourse humiliates the devil's troop ("dugoð" 401b).

The seamless coupling of fire and light throughout this passage suggests that the literal reference here is to a torch lighting up a room where wise men are seated in debate or where monks are either eating a meal or listening to the reading. This latter hypothesis is strengthened by the possible connection with a monastic custom, noted in the Magistri Regula, attributed to Benedict of Aniane, of eating the crumbs from a meal before the end of the reading.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This assumption is made on the basis that light (Hit) is the subject of the rest of the speech.

⁴⁵ See Ad Monachos Magistri Regula, PL 88:994. Menner, following Holthausen, states that this reference is to the superstition that a bit of food, when dropped, becomes the Devil's property, and must therefore be blessed before being eaten (137-8n393). Menner also posits an allusion to the Eucharist in the one morsel ("seo an snæd") that is better than seven days feasting (138n396-399). But I offer the monastic crumb custom as a more convincing source for this

These crumbs were believed to be more sacred than other food, and this notion corresponds well with the situation in SS II, where light is used to find a lost crumb that, if blessed and eaten in the proper manner, is more nourishing than seven days of feasting. In addition to the concrete allusion to sacred crumbs found by torchlight, subtle spiritual associations between light and the Wisdom of Christ are made in the scene of the wise men gathered together, a scene which recalls the Biblical "Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum" (Matt. 18:20). This is affirmed a few lines later in the explicit association of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and light: "Leoht hafað heow and had haliges gastes, Cristes gecyndo" (410-11a). These lines also resonate with the many Biblical instances in which Christ is connected with light, such as: "Erat lux vera, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum" (John 1:9).⁴⁶ The wisdom of men, illuminated by Christ, whose presence and whose Wisdom are announced as Light, can defeat Satan and his company.

The diction and imagery of this passage pursue the idea

odd little excursus, because of parallels not only in the Magistris Regula, but also in a brief parallel allusion in the Progelomenon to the Life of St. Odo, second abbot of Cluny, written by his student, John (PL 133:56-7). See also Vincenti's suggestions, 76-77.

⁴⁶ See also John 1:4-8; 3:19-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5. Cf. Elfric's "Nativitas Domini," Pope I, 208:282-335, especially 330-33: "Ðæt soðe leoht is ure leofa Hælend, þe is him sylf leoht & onliht ælcne mann þe his geleafan leoht on his life gehylt."

of a metamorphosis in the will from helplessness to potency. Yldo binds the universe, and man is tethered in the ropes of Wyrd, but fire-light escapes its hæftum (413) (when an ignorant man lets it go), and advances to the roof ("ðurh hrof wædeð" 413b).⁴⁷ With a violence that recalls the Yldo riddle, firelight breaks and burns ("bryceð and bærneð" 414a) as it hangs in the heights of the building, striving to reach its true home ("eðle" 418a). Light's impulse is to climb according to its nature ("on gecyndo" 416a, cf. "Cristes gecyndo" 411a) towards its origin, the court of the father whence it came ("fæder geardas . . . ðanon hit æror cuom" 417-18). The use of frumsceaft for origin provides a contrasting verbal reminder of gesceaft, destiny and nature, and reiterates the distance between God as the source of all being and the created universe to whose rules all beings are subject. At the same time, the light's desire to reach its origin implies the yearning of the wise man to bridge that gap, to extend his soul upwards where its true home lies. In the image of torch light, the potency and driving energy of the mind -- the wise mind -- flashes into view. The man who is able to partake of the Lord's torch ("ðam ðe gedælan can dryhtnes ðecelan" 420) is released by the Wisdom of Christ the Light from nature's chains, just as fire is liberated upward and also as the water in the earlier passage runs its course against the order of the physical world.

⁴⁷ Recalling that "the wisdom of God is foolishness before men," we might guess that unwitan is intended ironically.

Although it may at first seem that man, like fire, can break through the confining roof of Wyrð, the imagery does not indicate that man is wholly free from the compulsion of nature. Spiritual aspiration remains a function of the natural order. The images are concrete and earthly. Water flows according to its destiny, light moves according to its instructor, and fire according to its nature. Light makes known through its heow and had its affinity to the Holy Spirit. Man too has a destiny, atonement; an instructor, Christ; and a natural destiny, the search for His Wisdom. Man is just as bound to his nature as water and light, but that nature is a spiritual as well as a physical one. Saturn is being asked to reinterpret, or rather to expand his view of the natural world to include the metaphysical, and to incorporate the natural aspirations of the human spirit into his concept of man's place in creation.

The passage ends with Solomon's definitive rebuttal to the power of Ylðo and Wyrð:

forðon nis nānegu gecynd cuiclifigende,
 ne fugel ne fisc ne foldan stan,
 ne wāteres wylm ne wudutelga,
 ne munt ne mor ne ðes middangeard,
 ðæt he forð sie fyrenes cynnes.
 421-25.

The catalogue of living and inanimate things that cannot match the power of fire recalls again the Ylðo riddle and its answer. The passage states with conviction that everything in material nature ("gecynd cuiclifigende") is subordinate to the mind imbued with the fire-light of

Christ's true Wisdom and the power of the Holy Ghost. Like light, the wise mind naturally strives upwards to God, the source of its being. In its spiritual appetite it supersedes all other living things.

The battle is, therefore, no longer between two unequal partners, as it seemed to be when Yldo beat at the staðolas of the mind and destroyed humanity along with the rest of creation. Saturn's next inquiry arises from the insight that man's mind can become sufficient to counter Wyrd's strength.

hwæðer ware twegra butan tweon strengra,
 wyrd ðe warnung, ðonne hie winnað oft
 mid hira ðreamedlan, hwæðerne aðreoteð ær.
 428-30⁴⁸

At first, this seems to be a question about authority. What governs the course of the men's lives: their fated destinies or their free will? The meaning of the words wyrd and warnung and the nature of their opposition is notoriously difficult to pin down. Menner claims that the question is not one of Boethian fate and providence, nor is it one of Augustinian predestination and free-will. He states without elaborating that it is between Germanic destiny and foresight.⁴⁹ Underneath the question and its answer, however, we may perceive a view that is characteristic of the debate as a whole, namely, that conflict and violence

⁴⁸ On ðreamedlan, see T. J. Gardner, "Deaniedla and ðreamedla: Notes on Two OE Abstract in -la(n)," NM 70 (1969) 255-61.

⁴⁹ Menner 138n419a.

are inherent in creation.⁵⁰ The tension between wyrd and warnung is conceived as a compulsive and absolute struggle ("ðreamedlan" 430). Indeed, Saturn does not imply that either wyrd or warnung governs the universe. His phrasing suggests that the two exist in a continual tension, often ("Oft" 429b) embraced in their necessary struggle, and that one may have the edge over the other. This was precisely the point of the word-play on unlæde and eadig: the human will is in constant confrontation with Wyrd; the two are participants in a never-ending contest. Saturn must learn how to win the contest by exercising his free will to choose the liberation of obedience to the creator over the bondage inherent in his creation.

Wyrd, here and elsewhere in the debate, represents the force of destiny inherent in the material world that sweeps all created things out of the past through the present to certain death.⁵¹ Warnung, on the other hand, seems to stand for the steadfast readiness and resistance of the human mind in the face of Wyrd's advance.⁵² Although it is nowhere directly glossed as prudentia, the use of the word does suggest caution and readiness. Elfric opposes warnung to

⁵⁰ See above, 45.

⁵¹ See above, 39ff.

⁵² E. G. Stanley notes that the sense of wyrd & warnung appears in the Fairie Queene Book III, iv, 27: "Who can deceive his destiny, or ween by warning to avoyd his fate." The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1975) 92. The usage here suggests that the antithesis is used proverbially.

foolishness: "Wisdomes bigspell and warnung wið disig & hu
man selost mæg synna forbugan, & þone weg gefaran þe
gewissað to Gode;" while Wulfstan admonishes his listeners
with "rihtlic warnung and soðlic myngung ðeode to ðearfe,
gyrne se ðe wille."⁵³ An OHG gloss noted by Bosworth and
Toller gives munimentum, defensio, and monimentum.⁵⁴ The
word is nearly always used in the context of wisdom. It
suggests alertness, the kind of defensiveness we would
expect in a poem so concerned with assault and conflict, and
also the reserve and skill in judgement characteristic of
the wise man. Thus the opposition is not really between fate
and the ability to deter or prevent events, but between the
onslaught of Wyrð and the man who strives to protect himself
and his staðolas against it.

Solomon's answer corroborates this reading of wyrð ðe
warnung. In lines that recall Ylðo in its tear-awakening,
spirit-rending offensive, Solomon acknowledges the tyranny
of Wyrð (437-39). The wissefa (440a), however, is he who has
the gift of warnung. With prudence ("modes gleaw" 441b) and
faith, seeking help from the divine spirit ("godcundes
gæstes" 443a), such a man moderates the impact of every fate
and minimizes Wyrð's inflictions upon his own spirit ("gast"

⁵³ Elfric, "Letter to Sigeweard," Crawford 1922, 495;
Wulfstan, "Evil Rulers," Bethurum, 2.

⁵⁴ Bosworth and Toller give two meanings for warenung
(warnung, wearnung,e): I. a taking heed, caution; II. a
putting on guard, a warning, admonition. An Anglo-Saxon
Dictionary, (1898; Oxford: UP, 1954) 1169, s.v. warenung.

439a). The gast-godcundes gastes pair (439a, 443b) rhetorically unites the spirit of man to the divine, further weakening Wyrð's power over him. Through wisdom, one is unfettered spiritually from the material world, and can moderate ("gemetigian" 441a) its assaults through an alliance with the Holy Ghost.

Saturn pushes on to a burning philosophical question: why does Wyrð punish mankind so brutally?

Ac hwæt witeð us wyrð seo swiðe,
eallra fyrena fruma, fæhðo modor,
weana wirtwela, wopes heafod,
frumscylda gehwæs fæder and modor,
deaðes dohtor? Ac tohwan drohtað heo mid us?
Hwæt! Hie wile lifigende late aðreotan,
ðæt heo ðurh fyrena geflitu fæhðo ne tydre.
444-50

This passage makes a sophisticated play on the sexual and familial associations of Wisdom the mother of virtue. In the Bible, the familiar Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22 is prior to Creation. As the consort and companion of God, she is the mother and nurse of all creation.⁵⁵ In SS II, a demonic mirror image of Wisdom reveals a perverse Wyrð, the mother of conflict, the hermaphroditic father and mother of every original sin, the daughter of death. We note in these familial metaphors and in the later wop eaca (461b) a

⁵⁵ Cf. Sedgefield 21:10-11: "Eala, Wisdom, þu þe eart modor eallra mægena, ne mæg ic na wiðcweðan ne ansacigan þæt þe þu me ær sædest, forþon þe hit is eall soð." Cf. Ecclus 15:2: "Et obviabit illi quasi mater honorificata, et quasi mulier a virginitate suscipiet illum." On OT figures of wisdom see Jean Laporte, "Philo in the Tradition of Wisdom," in Wilken 114ff. On possible legendary sources of the parody, see Conway 13, 46.

continued association of Wyrð with birth and offspring and the suggestion in the term lifigende that Wyrð's reality is within the bounds of time and space.

Solomon's answer to the question of Wyrð's origin and purpose extends Saturn's metaphors of perverse reproduction. The devil, whose apostasy and fall are the ultimate source of hostile Wyrð, achieves his initial rebellion through insceaft (457a). This hapax legomenon "internal generation" likely refers to the "creation or propagation within Lucifer's own order of rebellious angels."⁵⁶ The paleographical problems of the line immediately preceding have been clarified by Pope, who suggests: "Propagate for himself with the tenth part until he should know no end of his spite (?) through internal generation."⁵⁷ There is an incestuous sense to this passage that corresponds with the unnatural and evil procreation of Wyrð.

In associating procreation with evil and with the natural courses of life, SS II evinces the contemptus mundi theme to an extraordinary degree.⁵⁸ Whereas in the Lytle hwile passage, man was only aligned to nature's deathly

⁵⁶ Menner 140n446, 447a.

⁵⁷ Given in Menner 140n446.

⁵⁸ These lines suggest a radical contemptus mundi. SS II only just barely resists the complete identification of evil with nature. Both Vincenti (77) and Dane (600) raise the question of Manichean influences in SS II. Dane suggests the poem has roots in Christian-Manichean debate literature, but he claims, incorrectly I think, that Saturn represents a Manichean dualism that Solomon rectifies with an orthodox, hierarchical view of reality.

courses through his sin, here, Solomon's reply is that Wyrð's evil is prior to man, originating in the Fall of the Angels and tainting the world with its effects. Natural events themselves seem to some degree to bear the blame; imagery throughout the poem has shown that nature is, sometimes but not always, an accomplice in Wyrð's criminality. There is no account of the Fall of Man. In fact, while there is some emphasis in the poem on actual human sin, the idea is developed largely through the figures of the wise and unwise man. Even he who is led away to hell at the end of the debate (490-506, 170-4) is not so much a sinner as someone who has fallen for the wrong lessons. Man's position towards the world around him, therefore, is restated in a new way: evil exists as a force in nature. Its origin is the apostasy of Satan and its manifestation is Wyrð, who exercises her destructiveness within the natural world. Man is not accountable for this physical and universal evil, but it is incumbent upon him to exercise wisdom against it.

This notion of wisdom against evil (or Wyrð, or Yldo) is rhetorically amplified in the use of the word craft at four points in the poem. At 243b, boca craftas refers to the power of books, which transfer their power to whomever tastes of them, and give him courage. At 396b, the might of water is expressed as cræfte in a positive context evoking baptism and beautification, whatever the emended prefix

might be.⁵⁹ At 293, Ylðo is described as being powerful over everything ("æghwæs cræftig"). The connotation here is decidedly negative, as it is at 453b ("dierne cræftas") where the devil, through secret arts or powers, makes arms for his battle with God. Two powers are at work in the poem, a positive one born of wisdom (books) and religion (baptism), the other associated with fate (Ylðo) and the forces of evil (Satan).

The fundamental opposition in the poem between the two cræftas, or between Wyrð and religious wisdom, takes its definitive form in Saturn's final question. The MS. has:

Is ðonne on ðisse foldan fira ænig
eorðan cynnes, ðara ðe man man age,
deað abæde, ær se dæg cyme
ðæt sie his calencwide * * * arunnen
and hine mon annunga ut abanne?
477-81

Again, paleographical and logical problems have resulted in divergent and sometimes confusing readings. On the basis of Dobbie's emendation, I translate this: "Is there anyone on earth . . . of those who are sinful who may ward off death before the time comes that his life history ("calendcwide") is completely finished and he is suddenly called forth?"⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See Menner 137n386b; Dobbie 168n396.

⁶⁰ The MS. has ðara ðe man man age. Menner emends man man age to a manige, and translates: "Is there any man of earthly race in this world who may ever claim death, compel it, before that day shall come when the calender of his life has entirely run out and he be suddenly summoned forth?" Among other suggestions, Dobbie's seems to make the most sense on the basis of the simplicity of its textual emendation, the elimination of one man and the insertion of the relative ðe in 479a (169n478).

It seems possible, given the earlier association between Wyrd, death, and Doomsday, and the allusion in this passage to being summoned forth as if to a reckoning, that Saturn's question here refers not simply to biological death, but to death with all its attendant and frightening implications of Judgement. Solomon's implied answer to the question is "no," but his actual answer spells out the options open to man despite his inability to avoid the coming doom. Solomon does not shrink from the fact that the mind of man necessarily exists in a world of compulsive rhythms, where the fiend lures man to his evil ways ("on ða wyrsan hand" 500b). But in the image of an internal debate ("Ðonne hine [the mind] ymbbegangað gastas twegen" 487) he shows the mind endowed with the possibility of choosing to transcend Wyrd through willed obedience to the Creator. The final lesson is a simple one: use wisdom while you still live on this earth ("mid ðy ðe hit dæg bið" 486b) to assert your spiritual nature and power against the necessity inherent in a radically fallen world, heed the good angel and "grow greedy" ("grædig growan" 485a) for God's will.⁶¹

In the final lines of the poem (175-78), the authority of Solomon, magnified through the allusion to David, provides an end bracket to the debate and returns it to the larger metaphysical context in which the narrator had placed it during his introduction. Saturn's laughter, moreover, is that of a man whose heart has been healed. Phillips notes

⁶¹ For grædig, see Dobbie 170n482-85.

that the soul-word ferhð, though it appears not to undergo moral change, is associated with comfort in affliction and is often used in connection with staðolian and related verbs.⁶² The laughter in Saturn's ferhð (178b), therefore, signals the consolidation -- and consolation -- of his mind against the battering forces of Yldo that once left it so hopeless and small. The promise of the Book riddle, to make the mind merry and to confirm its powers against ðreamedlan ðisses lifes (242), has been fulfilled, not through bookish study exactly, but through the discourse with wise King Solomon, figure of Christ the Word.

The form and content of SS II are shaped amid the tensions and thought patterns that characterize much OE wisdom. This chapter has demonstrated how the narrator recreates a traditional serious debate between two wise men, drawing on the conventional format and, to guide our interpretation, establishing lines of authority outward into the world of absolute metaphysical Truth that surrounds the poem. The debate itself, in a chiastic structure of images, tackles the difficult problems of immanence and transcendence in the courses of nature, the meaning and value of time and materiality, and the status of man within the natural order. It begins with mighty Yldo (Wyrd) and a frail and vulnerable humanity caught in its chains. At

⁶² Phillips 73, 78.

roughly the mid-point of the poem, from the Twins question to the Hwæt! passage (355-82), our awareness shifts from the submergence of personal destiny in Wyrð to man's ability to exercise choice in lifting himself away from Wyrð's material power. The debate moves thereafter towards an affirmation of man's power to resist Wyrð with wisdom and to achieve salvation through willed acts of obedience to the right Lord. While always a part of and subject to the fallenness of the sublunary world, man's self-governing mind, like water and firelight, is endowed with the power to transcend its own necessary being.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE KING AND HIS VISITOR

4.1 INTRODUCTION

One crucial difference between SS II and other OE wisdom works in which dialogue is an explicit structural element is the extent to which the moral significance of the poem is unfolded in the characterization of the two debaters. In Precepts, to take a contrasting example, the speakers are anonymous; the generic relationship between teacher and student is structurally important, but the personal identity of these two individuals is not critical to the wisdom lesson. Maxims I begins with a request to join with the narrator in dialogue (1-3), for gleawe men sceolon gieddum wrixlan (4a), but the personae in the conversation soon disappear behind the poem's content.¹ In SS II, on the other hand, the speakers play clearly defined roles as themselves, Solomon, the wise Old Testament king, and Saturn, the visitor from Chaldea. As this chapter will show, the use of the conventional literary motif of the established king and challenging visitor to contain Solomon and Saturn's relationship creates a number of expectations in the audience as to who will have the upper hand in the debate. In addition to their literary relationship, however, the two characters interact as known figures of legend and Christian history. As such, they bring an extra-textual

1 On Maxims I A as a dialogue, see Gilles 39ff.

sphere of interpretation to their discourse; the meaning of their exchanges is to a large degree a function of the typological perspectives from which they are shown. Finally, as well as playing their literary and typological roles, the king and his visitor come forward at critical points in the poem as individual persons. They are not, of course, the rounded and self-conscious characters of modern novels and drama, the psychological origins of whose actions have a determinative role in the narrative.² But neither are they mere mouthpieces for preconceived moral and epistemological positions. The poet's occasional technique of drawing an affective relationship between Solomon and Saturn enlivens their typological representation and draws them together with the audience into a common community, creating a deep personal response to the process of wisdom instruction.

This chapter regards the Solomon-Saturn dyad as an instance of creative characterization within the formal OE traditions of wisdom discourse. Specifically, it illustrates how this characterization develops, particularly in the first half of the poem, in a tension between the conventional moral and religious archetypes represented by the two opponents and the demands made upon them by the literary design -- the motif of the king and the challenging

² Warren Ginsberg, The Cast of Character: The Representation of Personality in Ancient and Medieval Literature (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1983) 3.

hero -- that is used to structure their relationship.³ In five important passages of SS II -- Saturn's itinerary, the oððe ic swigie passage, the Weallende Wulf episode, Solomon's gnomic reply to this, and the Book riddle -- the interweaving of religious symbolism with the rhetorical patterns of the men's relationship prevents the poem from dissolving into the unilinear didactic address between narrator and audience that typifies other OE wisdom works. Rather than serving merely an introductory structural purpose like that of the father and son in Precepts or the anonymous participants in Maxims I, the Solomon-Saturn dyad is foregrounded throughout the poem to become an important and consistent source of meaning.

At the heart of the relationship between Solomon and Saturn lies a simple plot: the transmission of wisdom from a king to a noble visitor who has come to his court with a challenge. As noted in Chapter One, the prototype of this pattern is the biblical account of the visit of the Queen of Sheba and other kings to Solomon's court to test him with hard questions.⁴ The early passages of SS II amplify this fundamental pattern -- the exchange of wisdom between a king in a court and a challenging guest -- with several elements belonging to a theme commonly found in epic poetry: the

³ The inspiration for these ideas came from Ginsberg, esp. 1-6, 71-97.

⁴ See above, 2n4. The story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba is well-known. See e.g., Ælfric, "In dedicatione ecclesiae," Thorpe II, 584:7ff.

encounter between a settled ruler and an independent hero.⁵ This embellishment of the visit to Solomon's court with devices adapted from the literary epic throws into relief the relationship between the two characters and gives rise to certain expectations in the audience. The placement of Christian typology against this rhetorical pattern, in which, conventionally, the visitor has the advantage, makes new claims on the audience's powers of discernment, pushing it towards a fresh awareness of the Christian truths that Saturn and Solomon stand for as learner and teacher and as sinner and figural saviour.

Little argument is needed to make the point that SS II is not an epic. The differences in genre, intention, and overall structure of the poem from the epic are as important as isolated similarities. The progress of SS II, however, does turn on a number of themes and motifs that are normally connected with the epic and that justify an application of the hero-king motif to the relationship of Saturn and Solomon. The scale of the debate as a whole, for instance, is suggestive of the "encyclopedic range" of the epic.⁶ SS II is concerned with noble and quasi-divine beings, with loyalty to man and God, with beginnings and endings, with the stability of the cycles of an impersonal nature and the

⁵ W. T. H. Jackson, The Hero and the King: An Epic Theme (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) vii.

⁶ Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: UP, 1957) 318.

tragedy of men caught in her web. It reflects upon conflict and victory and the means by which the individual can triumph over the massive forces that afflict and ultimately consume him.⁷

In particular, the quest of a hero for personal glory, a theme integral to the concerns of the Classical and Germanic epic, dominates several episodes in the poem.⁸ It lies behind Saturn's challenge to Solomon in a scene that, although cut short by manuscript damage, is reminiscent of the flyting that accompanies many epic tales.⁹ The Weallende Wulf episode, to which a later section of this chapter is devoted, is a kind of miniature epic, revealing both the valour and the tragedy implicit in the genre, where even the greatest of heroes fall and die.¹⁰ The glory quest appears in small in the story of the wild-minded young man of the Modor ne radeð passage, who seeks fame in a way that brings only misfortune upon him. Finally, the rebellion of Satan is the epitome of the glory quest, while the resulting fall of the angels, twice told in the poem, not only has the cosmic dimensions and divine mediation characteristic of the epic,

⁷ Frye, Anatomy 319ff.

⁸ H. Munro Chadwick, The Heroic Age (1967; Cambridge: UP, 1912) 325 ff.

⁹ See Carol Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferð Episode," Speculum 55:3 (1980) 444-65; and Parks, "Flyting and Fighting" 292.

¹⁰ For tragedy in the epic, see Frye, Anatomy 319, and M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981) 51-52.

but as well the inevitable and archetypal denouement of the pursuit of personal glory.

The poem's thematic borrowings from the epic and the presentation of the debaters as king and challenging visitor make it reasonable to study the characterization of Solomon and Saturn in light of the epic hero-king theme. The salient features of this theme as described by W. T. H. Jackson can readily be summarized here. Typically, the theme involves, first, the entry of an outsider into an established administration that has for one reason or another become unstable or debilitated. Because he evinces more power than the ruler, the outsider must be placated or suppressed if he is not to gain complete mastery.¹¹ Second, the outsider is usually, for any number of motives -- treachery, emigration, personal lust for adventure or gain -- an exile from his homeland. He is also an exile in the sense that he is independent of the ruling authority.¹² Third, in many cases, the intruder makes the weakened court dependent on him through his exceptional prowess. He may also bear alien notions that challenge the power or wisdom of the king or of the established social order.¹³ Fourth, the marginal and confrontative position of the outsider may be related to his

¹¹ Jackson 4, 111-12.

¹² In Jackson's words, "There is no major epic in which the hero is not in some sense an exile" (5).

¹³ Jackson 15.

brash, egotistical, often unreasonable and violent character.¹⁴ Finally, the theme as a whole bears an "inside-outside structure," in which "a central passive court [is] surrounded by a moving and not very predictable hero."¹⁵

The theme of the intruder-hero and the settled king is fundamentally concerned with the transfer of royal power from a weakened monarch to a fresh upstart.¹⁶ It carries conventional expectations: the old, fixed court will be permanently transformed, for better or for worse, by the challenger; possibly, the king's authority will be transferred to the arriviste. In SS II, of course, these expectations are confounded. The stable Christian world represented by Solomon is vindicated; Saturn's philosophical challenges to Christian wisdom fail, and Solomon remains the master of the debate. Saturn acknowledges the power of Solomon and willingly becomes his spiritual subject.

In the first part of this chapter, Saturn's itinerary, the oððe ic swigie passage, the Book riddle and the Vasa Mortis passage are examined to show how the characterization of Saturn within the epic pattern is falsified by the application of Christian typology, in particular, by the paired figures of Jerusalem and Chaldea. In the second part, the Weallende Wulf passage is examined to show how the hero-

¹⁴ Jackson 14, 120-23.

¹⁵ Jackson 132. In the course of the narrative, the outsider may become an insider, and vice versa.

¹⁶ Jackson 132.

king motif is further pulled from its moorings as Saturn's glory quest, so typical of that of an intruder hero, emerges in the light of Christian wisdom as a false and foolish endeavour. A third section demonstrates how the conventional religious and political motifs of the rex iustus and the rex iniquus are used to overturn the hero-king paradigm once and for all. In each of these instances, the audience is forced to recognize not only the significance of Solomon and Saturn as moral types, but to extract meaning as well from the competition implicit in their speeches between the spiritual realities they represent and the rhetorical models through which they are presented.

4.2. THE PRESENTATION OF THE DEBATERS

The introduction of the two opponents as individual characters, from 182b to 210a, conforms to the epic motif in which a strong itinerant rival comes to the court of an established authority. King Solomon is briefly introduced. As the itinerary indicates, his court is at Jerusalem. Solomon's long-standing authority in matters of wisdom, already well-known ("bremra" 182b), spans both the fictional world of the poem and the historical world of the audience, who are familiar with Solomon as the ideal wise king and type of Christ.¹⁷ Saturn, the bearer of many keys to

¹⁷ The wise King Solomon is a familiar figure in OE writings. Wisdom calls to us through ðone snoteran Salomon, says Elfric, who later devotes an entire sermon to the king and his significance. "Dominica III. Post Pentecosten," Thorpe II, 378:1; "In Dedicatione Ecclesiae," Thorpe II,

knowledge ("boca cæga," "leornenga locan" 184b-85a), is the challenger to Solomon's authority, as the king himself says:

Wat ic ðonne gif ðu gewitest on Wendelsæ
ofer Coforflod cyððe secean
ðæt ðu wile gilpan ðæt ðu hæbbe gumena bearn
forcumen and forcyððed.

204-7b

These lines reinforce the point that Saturn is a foreigner, specifically from Chaldea, and that he has presented himself as an intellectual threat to "the sons of men."

One of the features of the king-hero theme is a formal recognition scene between the newcomer and the established court.¹⁸ The lacuna so close to the beginning of SS II deprives us the first meeting of the two men when Saturn enters Jerusalem. It is reasonable, however, to assume that the lacuna contains the formalities of introduction. The lines just after this omission suggest that challenges and boasts have been exchanged.

Nowhere in the rhetorical presentation of Saturn is he shown to be unworthy of the challenge he offers Solomon. His leadership is noted ("bald breosttoga" 184a) in the context

576-94. See also Exodus 389-96. The figurative relationship of Solomon to Jesus Christ is a commonplace of Christian typology. See Bede, Super Parabolis Salomonis, PL 91:937; and Wulfstan, "In Dedicatione Ecclesiae," Bethurum 247:66-248:69: "Leofan men, se earðlica cyning Salomon getæcnað þæne heofenlican cyning, þæt is, Crist sylfne; & þæt an hus þe he arærde Gode to lufe of eorðlican antimbre, þæt getacnað þa halgan ecclesiam þe Crist getimbrode of gastlicum andweorce."

¹⁸ The outstanding OE example to which Jackson gives some attention is Beowulf's arrival in Denmark and his speech before Hroðgar (30).

of his excellent command of books and learning.¹⁹ The length and detail of the itinerary, though it gives the impression of restless exile, contributes to the image of Saturn as a man grown wise through the experience of many places and many times. The fact of his sea-going is implicit in his itinerary, and perhaps explicit in Indea mere and water Mathean.²⁰ He is a venturer to a number of kingdoms and wealthy halls, as at home in forests and along cliffs as in

¹⁹ Most editors give bald breosttoga a military translation. Menner's glossary gives "chieftain" (147). Shippey posits that the military sense, as in heretoga and folctoga, is being underplayed here (Poems of Wisdom, 136n1). Comparison to Exodus 524-26 suggests that breosttoga refers to someone excellent in heart, mind or thought, a leader in wisdom or knowledge. On the other hand, Saturn's associations with the warlike Philistines, Chaldeans, Weallende Wulf, and the theme of conflict informing his questions, suggest that we may be justified at least retrospectively in reading this epithet in a military context. Bald breosttoga perhaps unites the ideas of fortitudo (bald) and sapientia (breosttoga). See Kaske 269-73.

The phrase boca caga, and its variation, leornenga locan raises two interesting possibilities. The Excerptiones Patrum, Collectanea, Flores ex Diversis, Ouaestiones et Parabolae, attributed to Bede, mentions the four keys of learning: wisdom and industry in reading; diligent questioning; honour towards the teacher; and humility (PL 94:541). Parts of SS II show formal resemblances to this collection and others of its type; perhaps this commonplace of educational theory was in the poet's mind. A second more remote possibility is that this is an ironic reference to the Clavicula Solomonis, on which see: St. John D. Seymour, Tales of King Solomon (London: Oxford UP, 1924) 58-59; "Solomon," Jewish Encyclopedia, 1964, 444. See also Stanley Greenfield's comments on this passage in "Of locks and keys -- line 19a of the OE Christ," in his Hero and Exile: The Art of OE Poetry, ed. George H. Brown (London: The Hambledon Press, 1989) 215-17. Greenfield emends locan to loca and makes leorninga loca parallel to the boca to which Saturn has the keys.

²⁰ The MS. readings for mere (177a) and water (184b) are probable but not certain. See textual notes in Menner 90.

centres of learning. This theme of wisdom accumulated through travel is familiar from other passages of OE poetry. Hansen draws an analogy between Saturn and Widsið in their wayfaring.

This conventional feature of the wise persona not only implies the universality of his function and appeal, but also locates the source of his wisdom in experience, a point made in Widsith as a whole as well as in Hrothgar's sermon and the elegies.²¹

Saturn is not a Widsið (though he may be something of a Wanderer), but that his character is to be closely tied to his expeditions is clear at the close of the poem, where he is summarily identified only as a Chaldean eorl who had come from afar ("se ðe of siðe cwom feorran gefered" 504b-5a). But the convention of the well-travelled man of wisdom and indeed that of the rival intruder that contains it are subverted in SS II by the figural significance of the various points on Saturn's itinerary and by a number of typological associations that throughout the poem call his "wisdom" into question.

This subversion of the literary pattern by the typological one begins in the first half-line of the itinerary passage. The words inform us that Solomon was the more famous of the two, but only that. The rhetorical energy of the passage belongs, as we have seen, to the roving, inquisitive Saturn, whose prestige lies in his figuration of the clever wanderer coming to challenge an established

²¹ Hansen 90.

authority. The brevity of the litotes Salomon was bremra (182b), however, belies the weight of this character's authority, which comes not from within the literary and epic structures of the poem but, as we have seen, from the metaphysical reality that exists outside the poem and that in fact substantiates its authority.²² In other words, Solomon's authority, the divine Wisdom that transcends time and literary forms, underscores by contrast the artificiality of the merely rhetorical authority that characterizes Saturn. The bald metaphysical truth that Salomon was bremra refers the authority of the poem out beyond the rhetoric and the debates of middangeard.

Ernst Curtius has remarked upon the frequency with which India, sometimes coupled with Thule at the western extreme of the medieval map, denotes, pars pro toto, the whole world.²³ The itinerary, with its first location, Indea mere, suggests that Saturn has travelled the world, and most critical remarks on the itinerary assume that its purpose is merely to suggest "Saturn's wide academic experience."²⁴ A closer look at the itinerary, however, reveals a careful colouring of physical geography with figural suggestiveness. The world from India to points west, south and north, which in its length boosts Saturn's credentials as a wise and

²² See above, 113.

²³ Curtius 160-61.

²⁴ Dobbie 164n186ff.

experienced traveller, figurally represents the fallen world of man.

The itinerary lists several kingdoms that are notable for sin, death, and destruction: Ninevah; Gilboa, where Saul was killed in battle with the Philistines; Egypt, the corrupt kingdom from which the Israelites fled; Philistia, bested by David against Goliath; and Jericho, whose walls came tumbling down amid the sound of Joshua's trumpets. Together, the locations on the itinerary are the geographical reflex of the fallen world in all its strife and iniquity. In an ironic reworking of the epic formula, the kingdoms visited by Saturn and from which, one assumes, he garners his wisdom are the exemplars of the depravity and instability of the world of men. Not only do these typological meanings counter Saturn's prestige as the strong and wise intruder-rival, but they also epitomize the moral and physical decay of the fallen world that will dominate Saturn's later questions to Solomon.

Saturn has come from Chaldea, home of the Tower and the topic of the first historical allusion of the poem (198b-201a).²⁵ The itinerary names three synonymous destinations, Ninevan ceastre, Marculfes eard and Caldea

²⁵ Knowledge of and interest in Chaldea were common in Anglo-Saxon England, as the numerous poetic and homiletic allusions to Nebuchadnezzar and Chaldea, to the Tower legend, and to the false wisdom of the Chaldean wizards make clear. See e.g., Batley 10:10-11; Elfric, "In dedicatione ecclesiae," Thorpe II, 576:6ff. It was well known that the fourth age of the world extended from David's time to the Babylonian captivity. See Elfric, "Dominica II. Post Aepiphania Domini," Thorpe II, 64:32-68:20. The traditional

(188a, 189b, 194b), whose redundancy hints at their figural significance. When, in the oððe ic swigie passage (202b-10a), Saturn's wicked ancestry and his Chaldean homeland are specified, the typological importance of these repetitions becomes explicit. The references to Babylon throughout the remainder of the poem, together with the multiplicity of names in the itinerary itself, recall the division of tongues that resulted from God's punishment of the proud builders of the tower. Both Saturn and Chaldea are figures not only of fallen humanity, but also of language itself in its fallen and unstable state, of which even the poem itself is an example. The references to Saturn's Chaldea illuminate the falseness of the rhetorical patterns of epic hero, wise wanderer, and challenging rival on which the poem, as a literary artifact, must rely in order to characterize Saturn.

By its figural significance, therefore, Chaldea thwarts the expectations of the hero-king motif; it associates Saturn with defiance of God, the discord of the post-lapsarian world, and the corruption of language.²⁶ Solomon's

association of Babylon with wizardry is also found in OE works. See ApT 6:10; Elfric, "Passio Chrisanti et Dariae Sponse Eius," Skeat II, 388:175-79. On the non-biblical tradition, see Vincenti 100ff; and Scott 23-47. Apart from the Solomon dialogues, most OE references to Saturn are to the classical god. See e.g., Elfric, "De Falsis Diis," Pope II, 686:176-80; Sedgfield 115:27-28. In another tradition, however, Saturn is connected to the Chaldeans astrologers. See Menner, "Nimrod and the Wolf" 332-54.

²⁶ P. J. Frankis notes the large number of OE references to the legend of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. "The thematic significance of 'enta geweorc' and related imagery in The

Holy City represents another figural challenge to the rhetorical pattern. Jerusalem stands in typological opposition to Chaldea and to the world of the itinerary. While Saturn's home and itinerary signify the world's discord, Jerusalem, the Visio pacis of the Fathers, is a beacon of peace, radiating its glory, as the Book riddle soon tells us (235-7a), over the earthly world. If the audience is following Saturn's journey on a mental map, Jerusalem's geographical position at the centre of the known world creates a double impression. The rhetorical power of the itinerary lies, we have seen, in the long list of states visited; in being surrounded by so many places at which the rival Saturn has gathered his wisdom, Jerusalem at first seems to be under assault from every direction. The figural significance of Jerusalem and the city's climactic position at the end of the itinerary, however, reverses the epic motif of the unstable state assaulted by an outsider. The City of Peace is not a vulnerable centre, but the fixed and

Wanderer," ASE 2 (1973) 261. Bede describes Babylon as the proud glory of this world ("superbam huius mundi gloriam") and refers to its fall, citing Daniel 4:30 and Rev. 18:2. Bede repeats the usual literal interpretation of Babylon and Jerusalem as, respectively, confusio and visio pacis, "the one symbolizing the mutability of earthly glory, the other the peace of eternity." See Frankis 263, and Bede, "Hexameron," PL 91:117-18, 126-29. Elfric says of Babylon the Chaldean city that it is rightly called confusion ("gescyndnys"). "Seo getacnað helle, on þære beoð symle gescynde þa ðe hire to cumað. Ferusalem is gecweden 'visio pacis,' þæt is 'sibbe gesihð.' Deos Hierusalem hæfde getacnunge þære heofonlican Hierusalem, on ðære is fulfremed sibb, to ðære we sind gelaðode, and we ðider cumað untwylice, gif we hit on andweardan life geearniað." "Dominica II Post Aepiphania Domini," Thorpe II, 66:22-28.

ultimate goal of human aspiration, a lodestar in the wayward wanderings of misguided men.

Not only is Jerusalem the metaphysical mooring of Saturn's fallen world, but at the same time it anagogically comprehends and incorporates that world. The passage introducing the two men is framed by Solomon, whose name begins it (182b) and whose city ends it (201b).²⁷ Saturn, who from a geographical point of view is an outsider threatening a fixed central authority, is, metaphysically, an insider: in travelling through lands that are the reference points of Christian history, he himself is implicated in that history; Saturn's experience takes place entirely within the stable Christian order, even as he both challenges and seeks that order.

In the Book riddle, Jerusalem is again the culmination of a search and the seat of a Wisdom that embraces all reality. The subject of his riddle, Saturn says, has seven tongues, each of which has twenty points. Each point has the wisdom of an angel

ðara ðe wile anra hwylc uppe bringan,
 ðæt ðu ðære gyldnan gesiehst Hierusalem
 weallas blican and hiera winrod lixan,
 soðfæstra segn.

234-37a

If it seems incongruous that it is Saturn who asks this riddle, as though he already knows that visionary knowledge

²⁷ One assumes on logical grounds that Hierusalem concludes the itinerary. Page 13 of the MS. ends with hierusa, and page 14 has been erased and replaced with a twelfth-century excommunication. See Menner 2.

awaits the student of holy books, the significance of this passage perhaps lies in the broad notion of a pathway to wisdom. The allusion to Jerusalem in the Book riddle draws a specific parallel between the metaphor of a geographical route to wisdom, suggested in the itinerary, and the notions of scholarship and the study of holy books.²⁸ In uniting the notions of journey and holy study, the Book riddle is a reminder that Saturn's terrestrial path through centres of human wisdom has, for all its depravity, brought him to the gates of the metaphysical, to the visionary city, the fixed point where material and historical reality merges with spiritual truth. Despite their negative typological overtones, Saturn's journeys also signify a sincere quest for true wisdom.

A further look at the itinerary reveals that it runs in roughly a chronological order from Old Testament to New Testament locations, suggesting a path towards grace and salvation.²⁹ In the riddle, where the physical Jerusalem from the itinerary is realized in its spiritual glory (235-

²⁸ On the idea of the way to understanding as a physical or geographical route, see e.g. Baruch 3:23: "Filii quoque Agar, qui exquirunt prudentiam quae de terra est, negotiatores Merrhae et Theman, et fabulatores, et exquisitores prudentiae et intelligentiae, viam autem sapientiae nescierunt, neque commemorati sunt semitas eius."

²⁹ The first part of the itinerary names such OT places as Persia, Ninevah, Galboa, Egypt and Philistia. Towards the end, the itinerary turns to the world of Jesus and Paul: Bithnia, Pamphilia, Cappadocia, "Christ's homeland," and Galilea. Dane makes the interesting observation that nine place names in the itinerary occur in Acts 2:5ff (593).

7a), we perceive not Saturn the intruder, not Saturn the type of earthly corruption and false wisdom, but Saturn the human being earnestly following that path to truth through study. The later Full frode passage, despite its ironic reference to the Philistines, reinforces in its peaceful and serious tone this sense of a search in good faith for the foundations of wisdom.³⁰ The itinerary has shown us, therefore, not only the corruption of Saturn, of all mankind, and of language, but also, in its chronological reflection of Biblical history and in its inevitable destination, Jerusalem, a pathway through time and the material world to the salvation that has been provided by God for Saturn as for man. In his Book riddle question, Saturn evinces the human longing, born in the recognition of a moral alienation from God, to flee the wicked world towards divine Wisdom in the Holy City.

It is for this reason that the introduction, at least as we have it, takes care not to mark Saturn too closely with the absolute wickedness of his ancestors. An intrusive adventurer he may be, a descendent of an evil and warring generation perhaps and a threat to Christian order, but in his arrival at Jerusalem, where, as he himself concedes, he will see the longed-for cross ("winrod" 236b), standard of the righteous, Saturn becomes accessible to the audience as a common seeker after wisdom. His interest in and knowledge

³⁰ See above, 110.

of Jerusalem affirm that he is not so corrupted that he has lost all spiritual aspiration.

The Vasa Mortis story builds on the typological framework that has already been established. Here, it is the Philistines who are in the limelight, both as friends of Saturn and as commonly recognized enemies of Israel.³¹ Rather than striving against God, however, the Philistines' problem is their ignorance. The Philistines hold faulty beliefs: "wenað ðæs ðe naht is" (258). Their error, in addition to the implicit one of fighting against God, is that they are unable to recognize the power that Solomon exercises. They expect that a hostile people will loosen what Solomon has bound and that the Vasa Mortis will be taken from their keep. Reacting to imagined and unfounded fears, they patrol the demon with two hundred guards every night. The Philistines are, by extension, ignorant of the divine sovereignty over the devil that Solomon typologically represents. Like their countrymen in the Full oft passage, these Philistines are notable more for their ignorance than for their sin.

Saturn, however, is not explicitly identified with the wickedness of the Philistines. Through the almost parenthetical "wenað ðæs ðe naht is," both Saturn and the audience are excluded from their number: the Philistines do not know what we know to be true. As in the delineation of

³¹ Logically, the story is obscure, but it is clearly related to legends of Solomon's adventures with demons. See Menner, "The Vasa Mortis Passage" 240-53.

Saturn's relationship with Chaldea, he and the audience are exempt from the polarization that distinguishes the good from the evil. They remain in a tentative position, able to turn to good or evil as they choose. By refraining from overly vilifying Saturn in the Book riddle and the Vasa episode, the poem sustains, amid the literary and typological interplay, a line of sympathy with Saturn, allowing the audience to identify with him both as a fellow sinner and as a fellow seeker after divine wisdom.

4.3. THE WEALLENDE WULF EPISODE

Three passages make up the Weallende Wulf episode. Solomon's "preface" to the episode is, once again, the oððe ic swigie passage with its historical allusion to Chaldea and including this time the Sage me question (202b-11). The second is the Weallende Wulf story itself (212-24).³² This is told unwittingly by the very individual, Saturn, to whose moral shortcomings it analogically refers. It is left to the audience to recognize this ironic reflection of the hero on himself. The audience is assisted in this by Solomon's "preface" and by a third passage, Solomon's gnomic reflection on the tale (225-29), which completes the interpretive envelope around Wulf's pursuit of glory.³³ All

³² Menner traces the historical roots of this passage with a convincing hypothesis. See "Nimrod and the Wolf" 332-54 and other comments in his edition 61ff.

³³ Menner dismisses these lines as shedding no light on the Wulf story (334).

together, the three passages are a critique of the pursuit of earthly renown in light of the Christian ideal of a humble quest for the wisdom that assures eternal life. They mark a central theme in the relationship between the two debaters, the one a vagabond-prince looking for worldly celebrity, the other a wise king representing the source of true glory.

We have already noted the portrayal of Saturn in the oððe ic swigie passage as a man proud, boastful, and competitive for his own fame, whose characteristics correspond to the self-vaunting figure of the hero-intruder as Jackson describes him.³⁴ The use of the flyt motif here (and probably in the missing portion, where we can assume that the visitor talks up his intellectual prowess) further accentuates Saturn's interest in his own glory. As Ward Parks shows, it is above all the desire for personal honour that motivates the contestants in a flyt.³⁵ The poem here relies upon this connection between flyting and the desire for fame to foreground Saturn's glory quest, and to characterize him as the descendent of a race whose self-aggrandisement and defiance of God resulted in their downfall.

³⁴ Jackson 120-23.

³⁵ Parks notes that "this orientation towards personal honor rather than intellectual or ideological issues helps to differentiate flyting from other forms of adversative exchange, such as debate." "Flyting and Fighting" 294.

Solomon's response to Saturn's self-vaunting further shows that the flyt motif has been used here to mark Saturn as the typical hero-intruder of the epic theme for whom the typological pattern provides a falsifying counterweight. In the normal flyt, the opponents exchange insults and boasts, each trying to best the other verbally while predicting his own physical superiority as well.³⁶ Insofar as he invokes the ancestry of his opponent in order to highlight his negative aspects, Solomon collaborates in the conventions of the flyt. Perhaps the lacuna contains something of a boast, since the words oððe ic swigie (202b) suggest a formulaic challenge.³⁷ But in his prefatory description of the character and fate of the Chaldeans, Solomon calls into question the principle motivation of the flyt: glory through boasting and battle. Solomon identifies three vices of the Chaldeans that resulted in their downfall: boastfulness in war ("guðe ðæs gielpne" 208a); avarice ("goldwlonce" 208b) and pride ("mærdæ ðæs modige" 209a). Of these, only avarice

³⁶ Parks examines five "movements or acts" that characterize the flyt: the identitive, retrojective, projective, the attributive-evaluative, and the comparative. The retrojective aspect of flyting assumes that "a hero's present state of honor derives from his past and extends into the future. The retrojective act tries to establish what a man is by 'casting back' and summoning into the homeostasis of the present that man's past deeds and ancestry." "The Flyting Speech" 287ff.

³⁷ R. I. Page has been able to piece together 202 as: "oððe ic ðe sadie, oððe ic swigie." See "A Note on the Text of MS CCCC 422 (Solomon and Saturn)," *ME* 34 (1965) 36-39. This further substantiates the possibility of a challenge exchange.

is, by heroic standards, a vice, and even pride in gold is not necessarily an evil, any more than is pride in one's heroic exploits. But Solomon construes these deeds of Old Testament history in Christian terms, pointing out to Saturn the folly of boasting, the emptiness of worldly glory, and God's verdict on those who pursue it with violence.

Solomon's Sæge me question, while focussing on the ignominy of Saturn's ancestry, also begins a new rhetorical pattern. It signals the beginning of the debate proper and establishes its conventions. Obviously a translation of the Latin Dic mihi that features in monastic catechetical question and answer series, Sæge me introduces a format for a question and answer lesson or game rather than for a vitriolic contest with violent overtones. By passing a Christian judgement on the desire for glory and by adjusting the "etiquette" of the debate, Solomon has effectively attenuated the rhetoric and motivation of the flyt and fixed the perspective from which the audience may interpret Saturn's story of the land where no man may tread.

The brevity, allusiveness, and elliptical quality of the Weallende Wulf tale gives it something of a eulogistic quality. We might even suggest that, as a tale of one of Saturn's ancestors, it is related to the praise song of early Germanic culture.³⁸ The tale concerns a hero whose deeds, power, and influence, though unfavorable, extend

³⁸ See Opland 40-58. See also Curtius 168.

beyond his death and are of important general significance. Its final climactic image -- Wulf's grave and his shining weapons -- attests to the magnitude of the hero's legacy (223-24).

The story itself corresponds to the tragic epic of Germanic tradition. Wulf's exploits and fate bear some comparison to the Beowulf narrative: Wulf comes by sea to a land where he slays dragons before he himself is slain, whereupon evil days ensue; a memorial to his heroism remains at his barrow. The difference from Beowulf is that Wulf's friendship with Nimrod the tyrant (214) colours the tale with the theme of the rex iniquus: Wulf seems more like a Heremod than a Beowulf; he has plenty of fortitudo (assuming that to slay twenty-five dragons at dawn is a good indicator of this) but, like his ancestor Nimrod, lacks sapientia.³⁹

For Saturn however, Wulf remains a legitimate ideal of heroic moral conduct. After all, he concludes, Wulf's sword still shines by his barrow (223-24). Saturn is unable to see where Wulf, because of his connections to corrupt kingship (connections that Saturn himself shares), fails to achieve the nobility of a Beowulf. Saturn's vain fixation with worldly might is further clarified in the light cast by Solomon's introductory allusion to the glory-proud Chaldeans, which Saturn has failed to recognize as a reflection on the rash exploits that are also Wulf's

³⁹ See e.g., Augustine, DCD 16:3,1, PL 41:479-80.

downfall. For just as the Chaldeans' sin was punished in the field of Shinar when language was "poisoned" as an admonition against their sin ("moning" 209b), so did Wulf's "heroism" unleash the evil brood whose venomous breath goes forth ("ingang rymað" 222b) to sully the land.

This double irony, Saturn's view of Wulf as a hero in good standing and his unwitting use of a context that from a Christian point of view is an outstanding historical instance of evil, creates a hopeful expectancy in the audience: will Solomon vindicate our awareness of Saturn's folly? Solomon does not disappoint. He identifies precisely the sapientia that Wulf, and, by extension, Saturn lack.

Dol bið se ðe gæð on deop wæter,
 se ðe sund nafað ne gesegled scip
 ne fugles flyht, ne he mid fotum ne mæg
 grund geræcan; huru se godes cunnað
 full dyslice, dryhtnes meahta.

225-29

Dull-witted is he who enters into rash exploits without the necessary equipment or skill. Full foolishly does such a man tempt the power of God. Solomon's phrase "ne he mid fotum ne mæg grund geræcan," which refers to the waters of life, echoes his earlier "ðær nænig fira ne mæg fotum gestæppan" (211), which refers to Shinar, to form a stylistic and thematic envelop around the Wulf episode. The evil world of Shinar becomes the deep waters of life, where one can move safely only when equipped with wisdom. Solomon has established a figural perspective on Wulf's exploits and on Saturn's situation as a citizen of a world alienated from

God: without wisdom, one will perish both physically and spiritually in the deep waters of this fallen world. The burden of later passages of the poem will be the education of Saturn in precisely that wisdom which will enable him both to live rightly amid the world's corruption and also to transcend that corruption.

4.4. REX IUSTUS AND REX INIQUUS

Connected to the Jerusalem-Chaldea pattern and the Christian theme of false glory and contributing to the typological challenge to the formal structure of Solomon and Saturn's relationship is the familiar medieval duality of the rex iniquus and the rex iustus. It is difficult to judge how much weight the poem places on notions of kingship. It is usually assumed that Saturn is a Chaldean prince, though in the itinerary he seems more like an independent adventurer than a ruler, and he is never referred to as a ruler or prince.⁴⁰ The poem itself, moreover, has little directly to say about governance or kingship.⁴¹ Through his association with wisdom and with peace, however, Solomon conventionally represents an ideal of kingship, one that, as it happens, appears with new vigour in Western Europe in the two hundred or so years surrounding the composition of SS

⁴⁰ See note on ræswan, 109n2.

⁴¹ There are only the brief allusions to lordship and choosing one's lord at 384, 391-93.

II.⁴² Solomon was in fact the principal model of medieval kingship, whom religious tradition represented as "the ideal king, known for his wisdom and magnificence, and who prefigured in the Old Testament the Christ of the New."⁴³

The Vasa Mortis passage magnifies our regard for Solomon's earthly power. Coming soon after the Wulf episode, which is an exemplum from legend, the Vasa episode is an exemplum from Solomon's personal experience.⁴⁴ The king's account of his own exploits, the Vasa Mortis story underscores Solomon's status as a wise man of experience.⁴⁵ Solomon has authority not only over the Vasa itself but also over the Philistine leader, Melot's son. The tale contrasts with the adventure of Wulf, who succumbs to the very dragons

⁴² On the "heightened ethical prestige" of kingship in the eighth century, and the concept of the holy king, elaborated by both Bede and Ælfric, see Edward Peters, The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970) 57-73. On the rex iniquus and in particular Ælfric's use of the Pseudo-Cyprian Tract, De octo vitiis et de duodecim abusivis, see P. A. Stafford, "Church and Society in the Age of Ælfric," in The OE Homily and its Backgrounds, ed. Paul. E. Szarmach (Albany: State U of New York P, 1978) 26. See also J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent (Oxford, Clarendon) 1971, 48-49.

⁴³ Menner 22. Menner refers to Augustine, Enarr. in Psalmum, 126 PL 37:1668; Isidore, Allegoriae, PL 63:113. On the concept of royal wisdom from Egypt to Mesopotamia and Israel, see Kalugila 132 ff.

⁴⁴ Hansen has identified three types of narrative illustration in OE poetry: "one from legend or 'history,' one from hypothetical or fictional material, and one from personal experience" (62). In SS II, the hypothetical exemplum is the wild young man (374-84).

⁴⁵ Cf. Hroðgar's sermon in Beowulf 1770-73.

he fights because of his lack of wisdom. Unlike the creatures of Shinar, the Vasa is locked up and made powerless at Solomon's command. As a kind of sequel to the Wulf story, the Vasa passage is an exemplum of wise action, enhancing Solomon's credibility and pointing to his sapientia and fortitudo.

Solomon's epithet as Prince of Peace is a commonplace of exegetical writings.⁴⁶ Solomon is not a warrior king. The mention of his father David in the poem however, just at the points where Solomon has outdone Saturn (175, 332), recalls his military prowess. Solomon's peaceful reign does not reflect a philosophy of absolute pacificism; rather, it accrues from David's victories over the nations that threatened Israel. Solomon's "peace" is the peace of the church that is achieved through victory over evil, whether on the historical, moral, or eschatological plane.⁴⁷ This justifies Solomon's participation, remarked upon earlier, in the introductory flyt. While Saturn flyts for his own glory, Solomon flyts with man's sin by denouncing that vain

⁴⁶ Apart from his wisdom, Solomon's significance in the eyes of the church lay in the peacefulness of his reign. See Elfric, "In dedicatione ecclesiae," Thorpe II, 578:31-34: "Soðlice Salomon is gereht Gesibsum, forðan ðe he and ealle his leoda wunodon on fulre sibbe þa hwile ðe his dagas wæron, þæt wæron feowertig geara." On the importance placed upon peaceful kingship in the eighth and ninth centuries, see Wallace-Hadrill 48ff, Stafford 26ff, and Sarah Glenn DeMaris, "King Solomon in the German Medieval Sermon," diss., Princeton U, 1983, 8ff.

⁴⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 48-49.

endeavour. If he cannot satisfy Saturn ("sadie" 202), he will not concede, but only remain silent, for Saturn will eventually be the loser when human evil is trounced once and for all by the King who returns to judge.⁴⁸ At that time, Saturn soon hears, men who lived long in sin ("lifiað him in mane" 318b) will fall like leaves; indeed, this fact had been made known even to Saturn's ancestors ("leode" 328b), though they did not heed it.

In opposition to the figure of the ideal and peaceful king who vanquishes the wicked is that of the tyrant.⁴⁹ The identification of Saturn as a bald breosttoga may suggest military leadership.⁵⁰ Though skill in war is not consistently associated with Saturn in the poem, this phrase does begin to distinguish him from Solomon, rex pacifer, and it hints at the pugnacious quality that is soon brought out in his close association with the Chaldeans. The angry defiance and warmongering of Saturn's ancestors, far from being just, are the cause and the consequence of their sin against God and emblems of the degeneracy of all evil peoples. Saturn's boasts, moreover, and those of his ancestors invoke Christian views on pride and humility, a

⁴⁸ On sadie, see above, 176n37.

⁴⁹ See Wilfred Parsons, "The Mediaeval Theory of the Tyrant," Review of Politics 4 (1942) 129-43.

⁵⁰ See above, 164n19.

Ne sceall ic ðe hwæðre, broðor, abelgan; þu eart
 swiðe bittres cynnes,
eorre eormenstrynde. Ne beyrn þu in ða
 inwitgecyndo!
 327-331⁵²

When Solomon, implicitly characterized as the rex pacifer, admonishes Saturn not to "run into" ("beyrn") the depravity of his ancestors, he is identifying the belligerence that typifies those nations and those kings that wage war on each other out of depravity. This is not the rightful war of the Church against evil but the savagery unleashed when men defy God's law and elevate themselves in vainglory. Solomon's peacefulness and his own just opposition to sin become immediately apparent here in his conciliatory gesture and admonition to Saturn. Not wishing to invoke Saturn's famous anger, he backs off from what could become an insult, diplomatically rescuing the debate from a potentially hostile encounter. He urges Saturn to turn from the ways of his people and to reject the anger that both causes and accrues from disobedience to God. Solomon invites Saturn the challenging rival to join his kingdom and to submit to the just governance of the wise king who is, on another plane of interpretation, Christ himself.

A further reading of this passage uncovers an important instance of characterization in which the relationship of Solomon and Saturn temporarily escapes the structural authority of the hero-king theme and the interpretive circle

⁵² On MS. Swa see above 129n28.

Before a newly attentive audience, Solomon now turns directly to the sinfulness of Saturn's ancestors and punctuates the typological relationship between the punishment of the Chaldeans and doom of all who defy God.

Ieo 8æt 8ine leode gecyðdon;
wunnon hie wið dryhtnes miehtum, forðon hie 8æt
 worc ne gedegdon.

328b-29

Solomon holds Saturn's countrymen up as an exemplar of wickedness, but he refrains from depicting his opponent as a figure of complete depravity. The audience, caught in a moment of uncertainty regarding its own future, aware of the transgressions of its own past perhaps, but wishing to be saved, regards Saturn as one of its own, a man before a wise judge, confronted with his own capacity for evil.

This is one juncture where the possibility seems real that SS II is a work of drama.⁵³ One imagines Saturn's face swelling red with anger and defensiveness at this reference to his evil background. Perhaps he recoils a little and turns sullen. But Solomon is not a vengeful or angry king; his battle is with evil, not with men. Refusing to contend on Saturn's terms, the king cordially, even mercifully, reveals to Saturn his capacity to choose not to sin, while underscoring his inherited predilection to iniquity:

⁵³ This idea is discussed by Marie Nelson, "Solomon and Saturn I and II: Contexts for Performance," unpublished paper, U of Florida, 1988.

Ne sceall ic ðe hwæðre, broðor, abelgan; ðu eart
 swiðe bittres cynnes,
 eorre eormenstrynde. Ne beyrn ðu in ða
 inwitgecyndo!
 330-31

The familiar broðor and the concessive tone suggested in hwæðre, (perhaps also some dramatic gestures of constraint or conciliation) indicate Solomon's willingness to forgive and gently to guide Saturn towards the grace that will incline him to the love and obedience of God.

This transitional passage (327-31) confirms the double characterization of Saturn that we have observed in the itinerary, the boasts, the Wulf and Vasa episodes, and the Book riddle. Saturn is both a spiritually blind citizen of a world corrupted and set against God, and a man already wise in the awareness of his limitations, who seeks Jerusalem, and whose salvation will be to tread that fallen world with wisdom. The audience identifies with Saturn in an awareness of its own fallen condition, but like him, now discerns mercy and hope.

The expectations of the literary pattern of the hero-king are reversed with finality here where typological and eschatological truths become immediate and personal. Solomon's authority rings out in the Swa bið passage to embrace all times and all planes of significance. The upstart challenger Saturn immediately and humbly accedes to "Solomon cyning, sunu David" (332), and the tone and content of the debate shift dramatically. The Swa bið passage in fact marks an attenuation of the hero-king motif; it is

recollected only briefly at the end of the poem.⁵⁴ As the rhetorical design recedes, the abstract typological framework also appears to relax. Saturn takes on the equivocal moral status of the individual human being prone to sin but not yet totally doomed, and Solomon becomes both the merciful judge and the familiar friend who invites us to the love of God. The individuation of the characters in this way is not done for its own sake, like a modern exploration of personal psychology. Rather, it distills from the abstract design of typology and rhetoric a vivid, almost three-dimensional image of a wise teacher guiding a somewhat recalcitrant student out of the dark shadow of past crimes into the light of true knowledge.

In summary, the structure and motifs of the epic hero-king theme enable the poet to establish the relative positions of Solomon and Saturn as authority and challenging outsider, to highlight the quest for glory as a principle moral theme of the poem, and then to manipulate the audience's expectations through competing motifs of Christian sapientia culled from familiar typological associations of Solomon and Saturn. The conventional hero-king motif -- the unstable central authority assaulted by a powerful rival -- is inverted by the typological order that

⁵⁴ Hæfde ða se snotra sunu Davides
 forcumen and forcyðed Caldea eorl.
 Hwæðre was on sælum se ðe of siðe cwom
 feorran gefered.

surrounds the poem. In its light, the rhetorical structures of Saturn's prestige falter, and his status as a wise man is diminished. The Weallende Wulf tale further shows the insignificance and futility of Saturn's heroism. Although it is uttered by Saturn, the legend is glossed by Solomon in terms the more illustrative because they are antithetical to its premises. Seen against the Christian wisdom implied in Solomon's preface to the Shinar question and his gnomic answer to it, Wulf's exploits represent merely the vanity of fallen men. Finally, the rex iniquus theme, while subordinated to the general notion of the corrupt state, further challenges the literary paradigm of the weak king and the strong rival and demonstrates the supreme power of the Christian authority, figured in the rex iustus Solomon, that circumscribes the poem. The audience must work throughout these passages to discriminate between religious and rhetorical patterns, while its response to the affective relationship of the two men reinforces its own cognitive, aesthetic, and religious involvement in the poem.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WISDOM OF THE DIALOGUE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four, our subject was the characterization of Solomon and Saturn through the interplay of literary and typological models of representation. We became familiar with the rhetorically weak but metaphysically authoritative king and with the blustering hero bent on stealing prestige through a showy display of wisdom, which the audience recognizes through typological cues as false and corrupted. Characterized in this way, the two men have their significance mainly in the literal, allegorical and anagogical modes, as figures of history, as types of Christ and fallen Adam, Jerusalem and Babel, and Judge and sinner.

Wisdom discourse, however, ultimately must speak through the abstract perspectives of typology directly to everyday human beings. Whether it appears in gnostic, homiletic, or, as in SS II, dialogic form, its concern is the moral education of real people.¹ This fact is dramatized in that moment of reproof and reconciliation in the Swa bið passage (327-31). Solomon admonishes Saturn for his ancestry and then responds to his visitor's mounting anger by soothing him with gentle, man-to-man advice to avoid his ancestors' evil. The audience perceives Saturn through

¹ I use the term "dialogic" in its simplest sense to denote a work whose themes and narrative progress unfold within the structure of a conversation between two individuals and in which shifts in this structure signal important shifts in meaning.

Solomon's speech as an individual who, though descended from a hostile race, can nevertheless exercise a personal option to shun wickedness and submit to God's authority. Saturn the figural character assumes before the audience (perhaps with the help of non-verbal gestures) the dimensions of an individual consciousness, emotional, willful, mired in false wisdom, and in need of consolation, healing, instruction and admonition. In this poem of wisdom, whose central concern is the transformation of the individual's centres of thought and action, tropology is necessarily the dominant plane of signification. The audience sees in Saturn an image of itself, at once both flawed and gifted, and can follow his progress to wisdom with its own transformation. Saturn and the listening audience, both creatures of corruption and possibility, are the principal subject -- and object -- of the poem as a whole.

Saturn arrives at Jerusalem with an experiential wisdom; that is, his knowledge is acquired passively through the senses. He holds the position of a mere observer -- of historical events, of Yldo, Snaw, and so on -- and he regards these powers somewhat despondently as being outside himself and beyond his control. Saturn leaves Jerusalem, however, with an active and metaphysical wisdom. This is knowledge discovered through an act of interpretation learned through the "practice" of the dialogue, in which the reasoning mind exerts itself upon experience, reading and reformulating it in light of a higher intellectual order.

The dialogue with Solomon is the means by which Saturn claims his own power to structure and understand his existence.

This new active and correct interpretation of experience is dependent upon soundness of mind. Augustine uses metaphors of vision and healing to describe this condition of psycho-spiritual health in the Soliloquia.² It is, moreover, contingent upon virtue. This is a familiar idea from Chapter Two: the mind of the wise man is wholly imbued not merely with knowledge but with virtue that is born in psychological clarity. Saturn's intellectual advance from experiential to metaphysical wisdom, therefore, interlocks with a progressive internalization of that knowledge on a psycho-moral level. In addition to showing Saturn's growing conceptual skills, the dialogue also charts his recovery from a psychic malaise and a corresponding ethical disorder along a path from pride and passive despair, through anger, to humility and hope, and finally to confidence in God's friendship and in the free will to choose or reject His grace as the determinant of his salvation.

² "Oculi sani mens est ab omni labe corporis pura, id est, a cupiditatibus rerum mortalium jam remota atque purgata: quod ei nihil aliud praestat quam fides primo Quod enim adhuc ei demonstrari, non potest vitiis inquinatae atque aegrotanti, quia videre nequit nisi sana, si non credat aliter se non esse visuram, non dat operam suae sanitati . . . Sine tribus istis [faith, hope and charity] igitur anima nulla sanatur, ut possit Deum suum videre, id est intelligere." Augustine, Soliloquia 1,12; PL 32:875-76.

In its concern with returning the individual's mind to a state of acuity and confidence, where he can see through his experience to the higher design that gives it order and purpose, SS II has an affinity with Boethius' Consolatio. And like the Consolatio, the poem is a dialogic chronicle of this return. But while the Consolatio develops the dialogue in the terms of classical argument and philosophical discourse, SS II structures its dialogic pathway with two related Biblical images, Babel and Pentecost, that anchor the poem in the religious context of fall and redemption. This typological framework of language fallen and redeemed unites the moral design of the poem with its form; indeed, the dialogic structure of SS II is cognate with Saturn's spiritual growth. Solomon's visitor moves from the belligerence and vainglory of the flyt, to the empty ambiguity of the riddle, to the sad and limited vision of the gnome. In the question and answer series, he begins to activate his intellect in search of an authority that subsumes the game of words. He debates with his host the abstract questions of choice and evil and he is granted, in the story of Satan's Fall, an authoritative metaphysical narrative. As the arena of discourse is transferred to Saturn's own consciousness and his mind grows strong in conviction, the dialogue assumes a tone of interiority. A final exhortatio confirms Saturn's freedom to choose his destiny and urges him once more to take possession of his power of interpretation and action. The dialogic method in

SS II is, to adopt Seth Lerer's words, "a moral activity; in the mastery of technique lies an awareness of truth."³ Saturn as a user of language finds redemptive wisdom in a linguistic process that purifies itself as it heals its user.

This chapter explores how an essential correspondence between dialogic and sapiential pathways enables Saturn not merely to gain intellectual understanding or a superficially correct moral stance, but to make true wisdom immanent in his sylfes sefan.⁴ The discussion does not pursue the formal relationship of SS II to the riddling or flyt traditions or to other medieval dialogues such as the altercatio. It explores, rather, the poem's internal logic and how the poet creates a consistent and progressive wisdom dialogue out of the multiplicity of forms at his disposal.⁵ At times, illustrative comparisons are made with texts that reflect the use of dialogue to achieve the precise goal of educating or edifying a student or listener. Specifically, I allude to Augustine's Soliloquia, Boethius's Consolatio, and, less often, Alfred's translations of these as sapiential texts

³ Seth Lerer, Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in the "Consolation of Philosophy" (Princeton: UP, 1985) 177.

⁴ Judgement Day I 4.

⁵ SS II participates in a variety of popular and learned traditions, such as the question and answer dialogue, the flyt, and the riddle. The general history of the dialogue form, however, is used here only rarely as an adjunct to the arguments.

that are also explicitly concerned with problems of language and dialogue. I am not making comprehensive comparisons between SS II and these other works, nor am I arguing for influences. Certainly, the rhetorical sophistication of the Latin dialogues is missing from SS II. Still, I believe a general movement can be discerned in SS II that reflects the habits of thought, if not the disciplined methods, that appear in Augustine and Boethius.

5.2. THE JOURNEY THROUGH LANGUAGE

We begin, once again, with Saturn's itinerary, by now familiar as a prefatory literal journey to centres of partial or false wisdom and as the contrasting prefigurement of the spiritual journey on which Saturn embarks once he reaches Jerusalem. While the journey motif in SS II works effectively within the narrow range of Saturn's moral character and motivation, however, it is also a key metaphor for the poem as a whole. SS II may be seen as a dialogic journey, a gradus or via to knowledge through discourse.

As Lerer shows, the use of the gradus image in connection with the processes of argument is common from the classical period onward; it also serves as a "commonplace metaphor for the struggle through life or education."⁶ Lerer defines gradus in Boethian writings as "a system of study of

⁶ Lerer 98 and 98n10. Lerer notes that via is a key term in all classical definitions of correct argument." Cicero in the Tusc Disp (1, xxiv, 57) uses gradus in a specifically dialogic context (107).

language and the process by which that study leads to understanding." In the Consolatio, he notes, gradus is used to symbolize a path toward knowledge through public argument.⁷ The debate in SS II is a long way from the rigorous discourse of classical or Boethian dialogues, but it is impossible not to see in the former that the image of the journey unites the notions of a spiritual and a dialogic pathway.

In its progression from Old to New Testament places and from places of folly to the wisdom of Jerusalem, and indeed in its very wordiness, the itinerary anticipates the dynamic structure of the dialogic in the debate. The dialogic via advances through a series of rhetorical "locations" -- consecutive linguistic formulations of existence and morality that, while offering partial answers, are limited by the ambiguity and obscurity inherent in the very language they play upon. Just as the typological associations of the itinerary call into question the grandeur of Saturn's accumulated wisdom, so do Solomon's responses to Saturn's riddles, gnomes, and hard questions show the moral insufficiency not only of Saturn's views of life, but also of the conventions of expression he employs for construing his views.

Throughout the poem, metaphorical relationships between the geographical and the moral journey are reinforced. The

⁷ Lerer 99.

nations named in the poem -- the Chaldean (328b-29) and the Philistine (255ff, 432) -- appear first in the itinerary (189, 192, 194). The later references recall Saturn's voyages and the false wisdom that he must transcend in the pursuit of the wisdom of Jerusalem. In another image of travel, Solomon's exemplum of the young man turns the glory quest into a lonely sojourn in a literal and spiritual wilderness. This negative image of the boy misled into the wrong path by worldly temptations is picked up again towards the close of the poem, where the wicked angel seduces an unnamed man to wander geond land (496). Finally, the close of the poem once more recalls the journey:

Hwæðre was on sælum se ðe of siðe cwom
feorran gefered, næfre ær his ferhð ahlog.
177-78

These lines recapitulate Saturn's journey; the Caldea eorl has come from afar -- both morally and geographically -- to Jerusalem, the final hyðe (246a). Unlike the destinations of the wild youth and the misled man, the Holy City has offered to Saturn both a path to truth -- discourse with wise Solomon -- and its goal -- the assurance of the Christian narrative and that home within the self where one knows God and can turn, in that knowledge, from the evil and vanity of the world. While Jerusalem represents the beginning of Saturn's final steps to truth then, it also stands for the goal of that quest. To undertake the path to wisdom is

itself to be wise.⁸

Saturn's dialogic journey begins with the boastfulness of the flyt and Solomon's Sage me formula (202-11).⁹ The flyt, we have already seen, is cast in the moral light of Christianity: the Chaldeans' boasts correspond with the self-vaunting implicit in the flyt. Solomon minimizes this kind of verbal match with an allusion to the folly of Saturn's ancestors. He then restructures the debate to conform to the monastic question and answer dialogue.

Another purpose, however, is served by these lines when they are taken together with the subsequent Wulf-Dol bið passages. In identifying Saturn's pride and that of his ancestors, and in predicting his behaviour in the unlikely event that he should overcome him in debate, Solomon can be compared with other wise figures in dialogue whose first concern is the moral condition of their pupil. Early in the Consolatio, Philosophia castigates the Muses as the poison that enfeebles the already sick prisoner, and in Metrum 2, she bewails ("conquesta est") the prisoner's spiritual disintegration.

Heu quam praecipiti mersa profundo
Mens hebet et propria luce relictā
Tendit in externas ire tenebras,
Terrenis quotiens flatibus aucta
Crescit in inmensum noxia cura.¹⁰

⁸ See above, 135n34.

⁹ See above, 175ff.

¹⁰ CP 1 m. 2, 134:26ff; 136:1-4. Similarly, Alfred's Wisdom grieves for Mod's decline: "Pa ongan se Wisdom hreowsian for

Philosophia has insight into her pupil's mind, recognizing in him what he himself does not yet see.¹¹ In a similar way, Solomon immediately recognizes his visitor's affliction, of which, like the prisoner, he himself is also unaware. Solomon correctly perceives Saturn as a man whose vision is limited to the world of angry conflict, avarice and empty pride. His world is opaque; his wisdom relates only to the visible and corruptible. Saturn's Chaldean connections symbolically reflect his roots in the material world of heredity, not that of the spirit, and his striving is devoted to the same world as that of his ancestors. In both the Consolatio and SS II, it is up to the wise teacher to expose the poverty of the pupil's "wisdom."

Towards the end of Book One of the Consolatio, Philosophia asks a few questions in order further to diagnose the prisoner's condition:

Primum igitur paterisne me pauculis rogationibus
statum tuae mentis attingere atque temptare, ut qui
modus sit tuae curationis intellegam?¹²

What Philosophia finds is a crack in the strong wall ("hiante valli robore") of her student's mind, into which has entered a morbid perturbation ("perturbationum morbus

þæs Modes tydenesse. & ongan þa giddian and þus cwæþ. Eala on hu grundleasum seaðe þæt Mod drigþ. Þonne hit bestyrmaþ þisse worulde ungeþwærnessa" (Sedgfield 6:9).

¹¹ Lerer 102.

¹² CP 1 pr. 6. 167:40-44.

inrepserit").¹³ In a similar way, Solomon invites his disputant, in the Sage me question, to give his own version of the Shinar story as a means of uncovering his biases and ignorance. His reply to Saturn's tale uses a journey metaphor to suggest that his visitor has foolishly ventured on deep water (225b) without the proper equipment.

Both the Consolatio and SS II reveal the wise teacher naming and investigating the source of their pupil's malaise, and both draw on motifs of exile and wandering to characterize that malaise.¹⁴ In addition, both works raise, in their opening sections, the crucial issue of interpretation. Philosophia is relatively unconcerned with the material reasons for the prisoner's distress; rather, she recasts his problems in a spiritual framework as forgetfulness ("oblivione") of the end of all things ("finis rerum").¹⁵ Similarly, in the Dol bi8 passage, Solomon readily identifies Saturn's difficulty as a lack of inner

¹³ CP 1 pr. 6, 168:21-4. In Augustine's Soliloquia as well, Reason cannot begin the more complex parts of the discourse until she has assessed the soundness of Augustine's condition: "Sed quid moramur? Aggredienda est via: videamus tamen, quod praecedit omnia, utrum sani simus." Before long, Augustine acknowledges his spiritual malaise: "Ita conclusisti quasi prorsus non sentiam quantum sanitas mea promoverit, aut quid pestium recesserit, quantumque restiterit. 1,16, PL 32:877-78.

¹⁴ Cf. CP 1 pr. 5, 162:6: "Sed tu quam procul a patria non quidem pulsus es sed aberrasti." It is curious that while Philosophia sees the prisoner in more intellectual terms as an exile from his spiritual homeland, Solomon regards Saturn as a man who has failed to bring wisdom with him on his journey through life.

¹⁵ CP 1 pr. 6, 168:40-45.

wisdom by pointing to Wulf's spiritual deficiencies. First, he identifies in Wulf the physical instability of the unwise man who goes on water without being able to stay afloat. Then, by invoking God's might in a contrastive alliterative line ("full dyslice, dryhtnes meahta" 229), he exposes the spiritual instability of the man who, like Saturn, ventures into life depending only on worldly power and glory. In restating Saturn's fundamental problem here, Solomon demonstrates an act of interpretation in which literal experience -- Wulf's exploits and water travel -- is made transparent to allow a symbolic moral truth to appear. In so doing, the king shows himself to be a skilled and exemplary interpreter.

Solomon's interpretive work on Wulf's deeds is developed in the Book riddle. The precarious state of the man in the water is now seen against the stability of mind ("staðolfæstne geðoht" 240b) afforded by books of wisdom. Solomon concludes the passage with a nautical metaphor of coming to harbour, thus rounding out the sea journey motif with the hope of safe landing:

Sige hie onsendað soðfæstra gehwam,
 hælo hyðe, ðam ðe hie lufað.
 245-46

On the surface, the Dol Bið passage and the Book riddle simply rewrite Saturn's and Wulf's seafaring in the light of Christian wisdom as instances of foolish reliance on worldly glory and knowledge. Oddly, however, that very voyage -- roundabout and based on a foolish hope in worldly wisdom --

brings Saturn to Jerusalem, just as books bring the wise seeker after knowledge. Indeed, the journey motif here, like the terms eadig and unlæde discussed earlier, becomes itself the object of interpretation.¹⁶ It has two points of reference: aimless wandering through a wilderness of false wisdom, and a purposive search, parallel to the study of the holy Word, leading to the port of true stability, the heavenly Jerusalem. This riddling quality in the travel image is not merely another instance of the medieval enjoyment of the fact that words have the power both to construct and destroy.¹⁷ It is anchored rather in a crucial moral issue that permeates the poem: the extent to which the tainted medium of language holds the key to wisdom and salvation.

The typological patterning of the Wulf episode, that is, the desolation at Shinar, and the scattering of evil creatures over all the world ðurh attres oroð (222a) complements the association of Saturn with Chaldea. In suggesting that the dispersion of languages gave rise to the strife and confusion that attracted Saturn's protagonist, Wulf, to battle, it anchors Saturn's tale telling, and indeed, his subsequent speeches, in the context of the familiar Babel story. Just as the flyt, with its quarrelsome

¹⁶ See above 137ff.

¹⁷ Cf. SS 37 in Cross and Hill 30: "Saga me hwæt ys betst and wyrst betwinnan mannon. Ic þe secge, word ys betst and wyrst betwix mannon."

and boastful words, is foregrounded in the previous passage, so here the question of linguistic expression in general is placed in the context of the sin of man against God.

The true meaning of the Book riddle has its origins in this typological structure in the Wulf episode. Inasmuch as it belongs to the same family as several book riddles in the Exeter manuscript, the SS II riddle reflects a general delight in the personification and punning associated with the idea of the book.¹⁸ Together, however, the Wulf episode and the Book riddle recreate man's moral descent through sin into the corruption of language and elevation back through language into grace. The combative language of the flyt, the sin of the tower building Chaldeans, and the resulting emanation of a bitter race through attres oroð (222a) all indicate the impurity of language through the sin of man. Solomon's reply to the riddle shows, on the other hand, the healing properties of language:

Bec sindon breme, bodiað geneahhe
 weotodne willan ðam ðe wiht hygeð.
 Gestrangað hie and gestaðeliað staðolfæstne
 geðoht,
 amyrgað modsefan manna gehwylces
 of ðreamedlan ðisses lifes.
 238-42

¹⁸ Like the subject of Riddle 26, e.g., which is taken to be the Bible, the book in SS II brings victory, emboldens the heart, cheers the mind, and brings love and grace. Like the Bible in Riddle 67, it has no mouth and is adorned with gold. Like the book in Riddle 92 (if that is the correct answer), which is a foundation of joy for men (weres wynnstapol 3), the SS II book confirms the foundations of the mind ("gestaðoliað staðolfæstne geðoht" 240).

Chaldea, Jerusalem, books, and spoken language are multivalent elements along the path to divine wisdom. The enigma of salvation through the fallen medium of the word finds formal expression in the riddle itself, which binds typology (Jerusalem) and linguistic ambiguity (the mute one with seven tongues) into a self-referential and paradoxical commentary on the tools and processes for acquiring wisdom. The Book riddle in SS II is a riddle about the riddling that inheres in language as a result of the punishment of God upon men for their defiance of him. It is also an affirmation: one can use language as a passageway to that spiritual state where human language is no longer required.

As well as uniting the themes of journey, language fallen and restored, and the moral requisites of interpretation, the Book riddle explicitly introduces the important notions of spiritual disease and healing to the dialogue. In describing the curative powers of books, Solomon effectively identifies an "attitude problem" that besets Saturn and that must be resolved before the dialogue can move on. This is the sin of acedia, or sloth. As Siegfried Wenzel shows, the ancient idea of acedia comes in the medieval period to signify an extension of the sadness which arises from wrath.¹⁹ Alcuin describes acedia as a

¹⁹ Siegfried Wenzel, The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1967) 21, 34-42. Wenzel traces the evolution of the notion of sloth from its roots in the Bible and its overt appearance among the 4th century desert monks (3).

disease ("pestis"), a torpor that robs a man of the joy in his labours ("otiosus homo torpescit in desideriiis carnalibus, nec in opere gaudet spiritualis"). The mind so afflicted wanders ("discurrit") all over ("per omnia"). Alcuin lists some of the moral shortcomings to which acedia in its turn leads: "somnolentia, pigritia operis boni, instabilitas loci, pervagatio de loco in locum, tepiditas laborandi, taedium cordis, murmuratio et inaniloquia."²⁰ To judge from his roving, his anger, his empty boasts, and the lack of a moral anchor in his early questions, Saturn seems to have at least a borderline case of acedia.

The curative process must reverse the movement: one is to erase acedia, then tristitia, then ira.²¹ The therapeutic meditation on the Word in the Book riddle anticipates the cure for his acedia that Saturn will undergo in the course of the dialogue. Alcuin specifically names studium lectionis as a cure for acedia.²² The demoralized soul, dispirited and without direction, will be revived. Books, says Solomon, will fortify the mind, confer power and boldness, and give the victory of salvation to those who love them. Solomon's

²⁰ Alcuin, De virtutibus et vitiis, PL 101:635. Alcuin's views of acedia, which he considers to arise with ira and tristitia in the irascible part of the soul, are derived from Cassian. See Luitpold Wallach, "Alcuin on Virtues and Vices: A Manual for a Carolingian Soldier," Harvard Theological Review 48 (1955) 188-89.

²¹ Wenzel 21.

²² PL 101:635. For Gregory, the vice of acedia, or taedium cordis is driven away if heavenly goods are meditated upon (cogitentur). See In Primum Regum Expositiones, PL 79:364.

assurance that books will make merry the mind ("amyrgað" 241a) of every man who is troubled by the distress of this life ("ðreamedlan ðisses lifes" 242a) looks ahead to Saturn's exultant laugh that closes the poem. Saturn himself recognizes that acedia will be replaced by its opposite, fortitudo.²³ Books, he says, will embolden those who taste their power (243-44). The lassitude of the foolish man who set out on deep waters without the power of swimming will be made right by the strengthening effect of holy reading.²⁴

Both Saturn's acedia and his tristitia are more fully developed in the themes of hopelessness and loss that set the tone of his riddles and questions about Wyrð. The man who places all his confidence in worldly goods and glory inevitably will discover them to be undependable. Beneath Saturn's proud confidence in his own glory lies his vulnerability to despair when honour, wealth, and valour fail. This distressing reality is in fact the burden of much

²³ Wenzel 20.

²⁴ Leclercq's discussion of the monastic meditatio portrays it as a process of reading which "implies an affinity with the practical and even moral order." While one reads about a religious or Biblical topic, one desires it, prefigures it in the mind, fixes it in the memory and establishes the intention of practising it. Like chanting and writing, the exercise of reading (out loud) requires the participation of the entire self (20). This is the sense, I believe, implied in ðam ðe wiht hygeð (239b) and in the verbal metaphors of physical strength -- gestrangað, gestaðeliað staðolfastne geðoht, and later, onbyregeð boca cræftes 240-43). One's desired path to wisdom, God's purpose appointed to man, is found in books by him who meditates in this "holistic" sense. Such a man harnesses the body, the will, and the mind in an endeavour to follow a path to wisdom. See above, 79ff.

of his subsequent inquiry into the destructiveness of Wyrð, as Chapter Three has shown at length. Finally, at the root of Saturn's disorder, of course, is his ira, a central moral problem of the debate. As the rebuke in the Swa bið passage and Saturn's resulting humility will soon show, overcoming ira constitutes a major psychological and moral hurdle for the hero.

If the dialogue seems disconnected between the Book Riddle and the Vasa Mortis tale, it is at least typical of the conventional question and answer exchange from which the form of the poem is derived. On the other hand, the shift in tone reflects an improvement in Saturn's relationship to his host. His curiosity will remain piqued, Saturn says, until God grants ("geunne") that a wiser man ("snoterra monn") will set him straight ("geseme") about this creature (247-52). The debate shows signs of becoming a method of inquiry after truth rather than an open challenge to authority.

Solomon replies to Saturn's request:

Soð is ðæt ðu sagast; seme ic ðe recene
ymb ða wrætlican wiht. Wilt ðu ðæt ic ðe secgge?
253-54

As in the Swa bið passage, we see here once again the possibility of drama. Solomon gestures perhaps, and Saturn leans forward on his couch as Solomon offers him an explanation. The exchange is cordial. Saturn recognizes the authority of Solomon; Solomon acknowledges the readiness of his pupil.

The Vasa narrative itself has several functions, of which entertainment cannot be discounted as too trivial. In the Consolatio, for example, Philosophia creates numerous poetic diversions to delight and refresh her beleaguered pupil.²⁵ The Vasa story similarly provides a colourful interlude as well as an answer to the question that has long been nagging Saturn. Our concern with the passage, however, is the use of imagery to pursue the notion of verbal ambiguity as it relates to the procedures of the debate.

The central image of the Vasa passage is binding.²⁶ The demon itself is introduced as elaborately bound and guarded. Solomon's own role in the story is first to discover the demon and then to order him bound. Binding is rhetorically emphasized in a double command:

Nyste hine on ðære foldan fira ænig
 eorðan cynnes, ærðon ic hine ana onfand
 and hine ða gebendan het ofer brad wæter,
 ðæt hine se modega heht Melotes bearn,
 Filistina fruma, fæste gebindan,
 lonnum belucan wið leodgryre.

274-79

Perhaps this feature of the tale represents a conflation of two stories; in any case, it serves in the debate to introduce the notion of wisdom binding evil. The repetitions of the diction compound the idea and reflect its multiple

²⁵ See e.g., CP 4, pr. 6, 370:206. "Sed video te iam dudum et pondere quaestionis oneratum et rationis prolixitate fatigatum aliquam carminis expectare dulcedinem. Accipe igitur haustum quo reffectus firmior in ulteriora contendas."

²⁶ For further remarks on the pervasive image of binding, see above, 122ff.

references. First, the episode prefigures the binding of Satan by God in the Fall story and the final binding of Satan by Christ (prefigured by Solomon) beyond the poem at the end of time. Second, it sets an interpretive standard against which these later images of binding are to be read. It ironically anticipates the binding powers of Wyrð, which are the subject of the subsequent Ylðo-Snaw sequence. As well, the exemplary Solomon binds the demon, and this act becomes a moral example for others who wish to be wise: one must bind one's sins. In doing so, one is, paradoxically, unfettered. In the later climactic passage on light and fire (412-18), this theme finds another expression. The flame held without chains is a metaphor for the soul released from the bonds of this world, flying upwards to its home.

Like the bi-polar image of the itinerary, which is either an aimless wandering or a purposeful advance, binding represents two contrasting acts, either the binding of the self by Wyrð, or the use of wisdom to bind evil, whether one's own sins, or the evil forces of Wyrð. The interpretive burden for the audience in the Vasa passage is to recognize that Saturn's own fetters of worldly curiosity will fall away as he perceives in his growing wisdom that spiritual realities are the only true knowledge. The crucial phrase here is geomrende gast (250a). This may refer either to Saturn's curiosity or to the demon about which he is inquiring. In any case, the geomrende spirit of Saturn's question is lexically linked to the mourning ("gilleð

geomorlice" 268a) of the bound Vasa Mortis. Just as the miserable Vasa is bound inside the Philistines' golden walls ("geap gylden weall" 257), so Saturn is shackled within the flashy but false walls of earthly wisdom. The ironic glance back at the golden walls of Jerusalem (235-36) reinforces the contrast between the true wisdom that liberates and the false wisdom that binds.

A series of at least two riddles continues the dialogue.²⁷ These have already been discussed extensively.²⁸ A few points remain to be made concerning their role as self-conscious verbal constructs. Compared to the Book riddle, the Yldo riddle is remarkably plain. Apart from a straight-forward third person personification of its subject as a savage and hungry traveller, it lacks the subtle lexical ambiguity of the earlier one. Its central paradox is that it is death which keeps death alive. Nourished by all living things, age alone ultimately outlives life. There is no reassurance of God's control over this destructive power; indeed, nothing in the imagery or theme of the poem exists to moderate the power of Yldo.²⁹ The only thing that can contain the savagery of Yldo is the metaphoric structure of

²⁷ The lacuna of about 60 lines leaves plenty of room for more riddles, before the topic switches to the Last Judgement.

²⁸ See above, 119ff.

²⁹ In this way, SS II contrasts with other riddles in OE, which often end with reassurance of God's control. See Hansen 137.

the riddle itself. This suggests an implicit confidence in the power of language to bind and control experience, as well as to describe it. Throughout the debate, lexical connections between the Yldo riddle and the descriptions of Wyrd and fire, the frequent repetitions of single words such as wopdropan, staðolas, winneð, and of motifs such as travel, light, water and eating reveal a trust in the power of language to bind experience into a unified system. This trust is tacitly reaffirmed here in the Yldo riddle, where language alone is the sole controlling mechanism in a world of inexorable forces.

The riddle also demonstrates the element of fictiveness in a linguistic construction of the world. The riddling "container" reveals the spurious quality of words, their tendency to occlude or exclude as much as to reveal. In calling the structures of language into question, the riddling form opens the awareness out from the literal (and the literary) to the truth beyond words, a truth which is ultimately inexpressible in words and opaque to the unlearned or foolish.

It is important, however, to distinguish between general and implicit assumptions about riddling language and Saturn's specific intention in this riddle. Clearly, while he is challenging Solomon to play a riddle game, his interest is not, or not wholly, in whether Solomon can get the right answer to his question. Rather, the contest lies in the ability of his competitor to deliver a repartee that

meets the stylistic standards and thematic demands of the question. It is possible that this passage represents a type of philological contest noted by Curtius in which one contestant recites a verse to which the other must respond with a quotation on the same idea.³⁰ The point of the debate here seems to be that contestants supply metrical rejoinders to the riddle question.³¹ Solomon's reply is admirable for its pithy restatement of Yldo's savagery. He pursues the metaphor of travel into the battlefield and through the forest, and gives a more vivid picture of Yldo's destruction in a lively catalogue of vegetable, animal, and mineral. His answer surpasses in vigour and intensity the question of his challenger. Just as his interpretive skills were shown to advantage in the Dol bið passage, so here, Solomon's deft handling of language reinforces his authority.

In the half-line deð usic swa (201b) however, Solomon overturns and destabilizes the riddling metaphor. Until this final phrase, the subject of the riddle has been described by an omniscient observer. Yldo is conceived by the human riddler in metaphoric terms as a monster or a chain-wielding war-fiend. Yldo has, in other words, been confined to the artificial world of the metaphor. Solomon shifts this point

³⁰ Curtius 58. The demands of the contest could be rigorous.

³¹ Nigel Barley states that the riddle's "essential characteristic is that [it] should be rescannable in terms of the correct solution when it is offered." "Structural Aspects of the Anglo-Saxon Riddle," Semiotica 10 (1978) 154. Cited in Hansen 132.

of view: deð usic swa. The observer of Yldo is suddenly its victim, subsumed not only by the literal Yldo, but also by the very metaphor in which it conceives Yldo. Solomon unleashes the fact of death from the safety of a riddling metaphor into the actuality of human experience. Saturn is faced with the fact that the debaters themselves, indeed all men, are caught in a net of material destruction. The implications of this stretch far beyond the playful challenge of a riddle.

Lerer has identified a tension in Boethius' Consolatio and in Augustine's De Magistro between a word game ("ludus") and "a process grounded in a formal method and directed towards a vital truth."³² In De Magistro,

Augustine must make clear to Adeodatus that the playful or taunting appearance of his questions is a systematic prelude to the more difficult form of investigation While it may seem that they are playing a game, Augustine shows his son the importance of their goal and the validity of their method He entreats Adeodatus to follow their course, as argument becomes a praeludo, and not a ludus, which exercises the mind and develops the reason.³³

In SS II, the issue of play and seriousness is far from this explicit. But the understated and vague deð usic swa at the end of a crescendo of explicit metaphors of overpowering, outlasting and biting collapses the riddle structure and situates man literally in the face of death. A challenge in

³² Lerer 149.

³³ Lerer 150-51.

word play has evolved into a primary and absolute proposition.

The Snaw passage that follows, therefore, is not really a riddle at all, but a hard question: why does the snow fall and hide the earth? Saturn has moved from a playful challenge with a well-known riddle to a more serious question on the cycles of nature and the destruction they seem to require. While its theme follows naturally from the Yldo riddle, the Snaw question is in fact formally connected to the Shadow question, which also inquires, as does the later Water question, into the rhythms of the natural world. Faced with an absolute proposition, Saturn has abandoned the sportiveness of riddling word-play.

Other riddles in SS II can also be shown to initiate serious discussions such as that which follows deð usic swa. The Book riddle, for instance, introduces a serious exchange on the value of books. Later, as we shall see, the Four Ropes question - perhaps a riddle - leads, to an abortive line of questioning, while the Sun-Shadow riddle is the starting point of an inquiry into the hierarchial arrangement of good and evil. This pattern, in which a riddle is followed by serious discussion suggests an important dialogic principle: the search for wisdom must begin in discernment, even if, indeed especially if, what is discerned is couched in ambiguity and contradiction. The despair implicit in the notion that the world forever remains an enigma is countered by pushing the dialogic

process past the riddling stage. The riddles in SS II are not statements of the limits of human knowlege as much as they are an initiating signal to pursue the hidden meanings of things. From a primary observation of the riddling world, the mind growing in wisdom proceeds to interpret that world, and in doing so will find the order that ordinary, thoughtless experience will miss. As Lerer puts it, "ambiguity becomes a goad to interpretation." ³⁴

Saturn's use of words as a game is being guided by Solomon into an appreciation of the fact that he must go beyond the self-limiting language of ordinary perception to find the epistemological and moral implications of what he experiences. The riddle as an instrument of dialogue shows itself to be useful in establishing the tenuous nature of all verbal expression, but it specifically demonstrates the necessity and importance of interpretation as a moral act. The ludus becomes, retrospectively, a praeludus, as subsequent dialogic developments compel the pupil to incisive intellectual and moral discriminations.

The lacuna at 308 prevents further conclusions about the progression from word-play to serious discourse. But it is clear from the attenuation, somewhere in the lacuna, of the riddling form and the commencement of a new form of debate, that the riddle has lived out its usefulness. The debate will move now to explore other forms of linguistic

³⁴Lerer 218.

expression until Saturn is prepared to experience the Divine Narrative and moral injunctions that close the poem.

. If the riddles teach Saturn the moral necessity of interpretation, the gnome-Lytle hwile passage assists him in developing the skill to do this by presenting two methods, the one rooted in experience and metaphor and the other rooted in metaphysics and similitude. In the gnome, wisdom is based on the connections between things that experience has taught.³⁵ As in other forms of experiential or declaratory wisdom, relationships among things are not made logically, but linguistically. Metaphoric links are taken as real; the authority of the gnome lies in its linguistic formulation. Such wisdom is rooted in experience. It is profoundly empirical. Things are what they seem, and the explanations for them can be found both in themselves and by analogy in other entities that can be expressed the same way. The disadvantage of this kind of wisdom is its circularity, its self-referential quality that traps meaning within its vehicle. The gnome clings to its own form for authority, like the man who abides in sin by clinging to the world, hiding his treasure in it (319).

It is precisely this circularity that Solomon addresses in his response to the gnome. We may notice first the form of this homiletic reply. Adverbial constructions ("Lytle hwile," and other adverbs of time) give a temporal movement

³⁵ William R. Schoedel, "Jewish Wisdom and the Formation of the Christian Ascetic," Wilken 181.

that contrasts with the stasis and certainty, the "is" of the gnome. The explicit comparison (Swa 317) of the man living in sin with the leaves on the tree replaces the parataxis of the gnome. The certainty of the gnome gives way in the response to a focus on mistaken belief and tentativeness. The man is in error, the king implies, if he thinks God will hear him (321-22). The future aspect removes the context from the sureness of actual experience to possibility. In the light of the lytle hwile passage, the gnome becomes a linguistic instance of both erroneous and sinful thinking.

Solomon formally breaks open the circular gnome, then, fracturing the metaphoric and paratactic relations between things. The authority of his answer resides in external and metaphysical constructs that confer similitude. This "is" of the gnome is now only a "seems." In the exhortative and metaphysical wisdom of Solomon, connections are intellectually conceived. They direct Saturn's mind outward from his experience to a metaphysical unifying order. If the green leaves and the sinful man are only like one another, then these two must be unified at a higher level. Solomon's answer demonstrates to Saturn a new habit of thought, one that depends not on the authority of language as a source of unity and meaning, but on the ability of language used another way to open the mind outward from the confines of the material world to God. The worldliness that has been associated with Saturn from the beginning of the poem

manifests itself in his gnome as a dependence on observation and material experience. Solomon, however, here offers to him an intellectual order that is apprised through spiritual awareness. He seeks to develop Saturn's interpretive skill by teaching him to distinguish form -- how things appear and how they appear in language -- from truth -- how things are.³⁶

Saturn is left with the proposition that nature need not entrap man and that man's condition at Judgement lies in his ability to read his experience correctly by refering it outwards to God. As Lerer says, "to learn a method of interpretation is to engage in a moral activity."³⁷ The effect of the passage is thus to provide Saturn with a new habit of mind and an ethical choice by which he might extricate himself from the destructive forces of the natural world. In moving Saturn from gnostic to metaphysical wisdom, Solomon has transformed mere observation into a code of interpretation.³⁸

Saturn's ira in the Swa bið passage can be seen as a direct result of this important shift in perspective. We have already noted that Saturn's violent nature reflects the debate's pervasive view of nature as vicious and warlike.

³⁶ Lerer identifies a similar movement in the Consolatio, though here the path is through "the excesses of rhetoric to the limitations of dialectic" to philosophical demonstration" (96).

³⁷ Lerer 130.

³⁸ Lerer 130.

Through his bellicose and sinful ancestors, Saturn is symbolically implicated in all that is harsh and discordant in life. We have seen ira too as part of the acedia with which Saturn is afflicted. In the Swa bið passage in particular, however, Saturn's ira also represents an important psycho-moral event that grows naturally out of the processes of the dialogue. Reason lays her finger precisely on this issue in the second book of Augustine's Soliloquia. Truth is best sought through asking and answering ("interrogando et respondendo"); there is no one who is not ashamed at being bested in debate ("pudeat convinci disputantem"). Often, when a matter is well set up for discussion ("ad discutiendum"), a disorderly and obstinate clamour will explode it ("inconditus pervicaciae clamor") and wounded spirits will sometimes be dissimulated, at other times openly expressed ("aperta").³⁹ This is something that Boethius' *Philosophia* also knows:

Taliam sunt quippe quae restant, ut degustata quidem mordeant, interius autem recepta dulcescant.⁴⁰

Reason and *Philosophia* would both recognize that the process of psycho-spiritual restoration that Saturn is undergoing has made him emotionally unstable. Not only has Solomon scored a point against Saturn's challenges, but he has begun to effect an internal remedy in Saturn as well, upsetting his emotional balance by compelling him to concede to his

³⁹ Augustine, Soliloquia 2,14, PL 32:891

⁴⁰ CP 3, pr. 1, 228:13.

authority and to abandon a habitual but morally infirm mode of thought. Solomon's kindness to Saturn ("Ne sceall ic ðe hwæðre, broðor, abelgan" 330a) shows his sensitivity to the pains of spiritual healing.

The Swa bið interchange thus marks an important turning point in the dialogue. From the Sæge me question until this point, the formal preoccupation has been with linguistic expressions of knowing. The section begins and ends with an allusion to the Tower and the dispersion of tongues. Within that frame, the value of holy study has been confirmed, and the riddle and the gnome have been subject to a critical, if largely metaphoric, examination. Interlocked with these linguistic themes is that of Saturn's psycho-moral awareness. While the Book Riddle addresses Saturn's acedia and the Ylðo-snaw sequence his tristitia, the Swa bið passage focusses on his iracundia. The linguistic biasses and the psycho-moral blocks that Saturn brings to the debate are cleared away in these passages, making room now for a new and truer method of inquiry. Saturn now possesses a habit of thought that interprets sensory impressions of existence -- experiential wisdom -- in a moral-metaphysical light that directly implicates his own present and future.

Saturn's new style of inquiry is immediately apparent in the following sequence:

Saga þu me Salomon cyning, sunu Davides,
hwæt beoð ðe feowere fægæs rapas?
332-33

In the earlier question on the Vasa Mortis, Saturn showed some skepticism about Solomon's authority. But the king has proven himself to be both an adept user of language and, as the Lytle hwile passage shows, a sound moral authority as well. Solomon's ability to bind the Vasa Mortis has demonstrated his exemplary mastery over the demonic and his effective command over men. Chastened by the rebuke "Ne beyrn þu in þa inwitgecyndo" (322b) and confident in the king's authority, Saturn now submits himself once and for all to Solomon's seniority. The Saga þu me passage evinces his new respect for Solomon's authority not only in the type of questions it will ask but also in its humble form of address.

The question series bears a resemblance to the catechetical question and answer tradition.⁴¹ Its distinguishing feature here, however, is an unusually high degree of logical relationship between consecutive questions. A pathway can be traced that suggests a serious, almost philosophical inquiry into universal order, God's justice, and man's moral status. The voice of honest doubt and inquiry is heard, even behind the slightly sportive tone that characterizes the typical monastic question and answer convention.

⁴¹ In their jocular and riddling quality, they resemble the Pseudo-Bede Excerptiones Patrum, Collectanea, Flores ex Diversis, Questiones et Parabolae, PL 94:539ff; See Daly and Suchier 12-19 and Cross and Hill 7ff.

The Four ropes question, with its central image of bondage, has already been examined. Saturn's next question exposes a serious doctrinal error. He suggests that even Jesus Christ is subject to Wyrð. The discussion falters. Saturn has leapt too far ahead, assuming he understands Christ's nature before he has followed the requisite intellectual pathway that will lead him to proper perception. A similar scene takes place in Augustine's Soliloquia, where in Book Two Augustine speeds ahead of Ratio's discussion of truth and falsehood to give a reply both premature and off the mark.⁴² Ratio must counter his leap with another explanatory example, to which Augustine can reply only with silence. In a rather more authoritarian way than Ratio's, Solomon rebukes Saturn for his haste and impudence in assuming to know divine matters. There is no way of telling if Saturn's response to Solomon, like Augustine's to Ratio, is one of silence, but it is of interest that Solomon readily seizes control of the inquiry and asks the next question without giving Saturn any further opportunity. Perhaps, if we read the poem as drama, we might expect a pause here as Saturn sits back on his couch in silence and Solomon cocks a friendly but admonitory eyebrow.

The king returns the dialogue to its proper beginning in observation and interpretation of the natural world: "Ac sæge me hwæ næron ðe wæron" (339b). The question is clearly

⁴² Augustine, Soliloquia, 2,7, PL 32:888. See Lerer 50.

a short, punning riddle that, like earlier riddles, prefaces a more serious discussion.⁴³ Saturn (unlike his modern audience) catches on at once and replies with a counter question about why the sun does not shine evenly on all creation, but casts shadows on mountains, moors, and waste places (340-43). The remainder of the questions in the series are an inquiry into the order of man's experience and a quest for an authority that stands outside the world of difference and conflict. The questions progress from observations on the natural world, to the experience of happiness and sorrow, to the principles by which God orders his heavenly kingdom, to the vexing question of universal justice.

The question of weeping and laughter receives what at first glance appears to be an almost unfair answer.

Saturnus cwæð:
 Ac forhwan beoð ða gesiðas somod ætgædre,
 wop and hleahtor? Full oft hie weorðgeornra
 sælða toslitað; hu gesæleð þæt?

Salomon cuæð:
 Unlæde bið and ormod se ðe a wile
 geomrian on gihðe; se bið gode fracoðast.
 348-52

⁴³ MS. hwæt nærende wæron is fairly clear, but does not make much logical sense. Menner's long note summarizes the suggestions of various critics (133n330b). Menner's own proposal, which is accepted here, is that the question belongs to the "Quid est, quod est et non est?" group of riddles. In Alcuin's Disputatio Pippini cum Albino, the answer is an echo, but in the Strassburger Rätselbuch, it is a shadow. Saturn's answer (340-43) implies this answer.

To the simple question of why men's joy is persistently shattered by sorrow, Solomon rebukes the man who mourns too much as displeasing to God. The reply is, however, more subtle. Saturn's speech suggests that weeping and laughter exist as objective entities in opposition. Solomon, however, implies that mourning is an action of the mind and as such is subject to control by the will. The king seems, moreover, to be establishing a cause and effect relationship between mourning and the condition of misguidedness and mental dejection and despair. What is hateful to God is not simply the mourning man, but the fact that excessive grief does not, indeed cannot, exist in a wise mind. The misguided ("unlæde" 351a) man fails to understand that good and evil exist under the authority of God and he therefore falls into dejection and grief. A similar idea exists in The Wanderer, where a weary mind can not withstand its fate or provide help against it:

Ne mæg werig mod wyrde wiðstondan,
ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman.
15-16

The deleterious effect of despair are given expression as well in Alfred's Soliloquies:

Nat ic þe nanne betran reð þonne þu ær cwæde. Ac læt
beon þone wop and þa unrotnesse, and beo gemætlice
bliþe -- þu were ær to ungemætlice unrot -- forðam
seo unrotnes derað ægðer ge mod ge lichaman.⁴⁴

Solomon denotes this damaging kind of despair so characteristic of acedia with the term ormod: the state of a

⁴⁴ Carnicelli 80:12-14.

wandering, misguided mind that has not the confidence and perseverance to stand firm in its fate. Perhaps nowhere more than in this passage is one's spiritual condition a question of the stability of one's centre of judgement and activity. The wise man is focussed and in possession of himself. The despondency of the man hateful to God is both a cause and a consequence of a wavering and alienated mind.

The notion of mourning in the Unlade bið passage recalls Saturn's mourning spirit ("geomrende gast" 250a) (whether his curiosity or the Vasa Mortis) and the terrible lamentations of the Vasa Mortis itself ("gilleð geomorlice and his gyrn sefað" 268a). At the same time, the echo of the despair of the bound demon suggests both the idea of man bound by fate and the ability of wise Solomon -- and by extension, the wise man -- to bind the demon of despair. The notion of misguidedness and being "out-of-mind" resonates with the imagery of Saturn's aimless travel and also with the unleashing in the Wulf episode of deadly poisons that swell through the earth. The mourning mind has been loosed from its moorings because, paradoxically, it has been bound by fate. Evil despair must, like Vasa Mortis, be bound, and to do so will release the mind so that it can soar -- like the fire and light of the later passage -- upwards to its true home. Saturn's path to wisdom is transmuted into a symbolic interplay of binding and unbinding.

In the sequence of short questions and answers (340-63), Saturn seeks a connection between an external design

and the seeming disparity in the men's fates. Solomon shows Saturn how to interpret experience in terms of an ultimate division of good and evil that is foreshadowed in neutral natural oppositions such as cold and heat ("fyres feng, forstes cile," "snaw," sunne" 346-7). The locus of good and evil, Saturn learns, is in man. The division of souls at Doomsday will reflect not a natural opposition, but the morality of human deeds. We will not all go to heaven together because moral opposities, just like natural ones on earth, cannot be mingled.

The question and answer series has opened into philosophical questions about the disposition of good and evil in the world and man's ability to control his destiny. The remainder of the debate is characterized by long and more elaborate questions from Saturn and even longer replies from Solomon. The riddle, gnome and the question and answer forms are abandoned. The epistemological ground of the discourse has shifted from observation of the experienced world in its duplicity and enigma, to the discriminations of the reasoning mind in its power to choose its good or evil destiny.⁴⁵ Where is the control over one's destiny, Saturn goes on to wonder in the Hu gegangað ðat? passage, if it does not lie in an external, perhaps astrological reality? Solomon replies that one's destiny has no source in anything outside to the self. The exemplum of the wild-minded young man who leaves his mother to make his way in the world

⁴⁵ See above, 136ff.

illustrates that no one but the individual ("an æfter anum" 387a) has charge of his future.

This is the third exemplum in SS II. Unlike the Wulf story, which is historical, and the Vasa tale, which is a personal account demonstrating Solomon's power, this one is fictional or hypothetical. Here, while Solomon creates a tale to show a mother's inability to predict her son's success in the world, he also recapitulates earlier themes of despair, sadness, wilfulness or defiance, and the final rejection of the foolish man by his lord. The images of travel ("færeð" 378b), a misguided mind ("wilde mod" 379a), spiritual loss ("werige herotan, sefan sorgfullne" 379b-80a), and sin ("slideð geneahhe" 381b) are given concrete expression in the terms of the heroic code. Like Wulf, the youth is wilfully and foolishly bent on making his own glory; like the geomrende Vasa, he mourns ("higegeomor" 382a) his entrapment in the hall far from his people. This fictional exemplum successfully objectifies and rewrites Saturn's own earlier condition and demonstrates that man brings about his own destiny through his moral stance.

Saturn's next question indicates that he has achieved this insight. Why, he asks, do men not choose the wise path in their youth? If each individual bears his own fate, as Solomon's reply had indicated, then why will a young man not wisely seek renown for his deeds. But while Saturn has grasped that man's future is his own responsibility, his phrasing resurrects an earlier issue in the poem. Saturn's

frame of reference is mundane -- wisdom is a question of wholesale involvement in earthly nobility. Solomon's reply must lift Saturn's perspective from its mundane trap. After fixing the locus of choice in the mind or heart ("modsefan" 392a), Solomon exchanges Saturn's zeal for bold deeds and worldly wisdom with submission to a mild and noble lord. The issue of authority thus extends both to the power of the individual over his own life and to the lord whom he chooses for himself. Knowledge, Saturn discovers, does not lead to ethical conduct but is predicated upon the initial choice of a leader who will ensure the acquisition of true knowledge.

The effect of all these insights -- into authority, interpretation, and ethical responsibility -- is radically to transform perception itself. Far more than a comforting platitude, punctuated by Hwat!, the climactic statement of man's ability to choose his own lord precipitates a dramatic reversal in Saturn's perspective. The Water question that follows reveals that Saturn now reads and interprets his experience anew. The passage repeats words and phrases from earlier questions: winneð, geond woroldrice, deop gesceaft. The conditions of interpretation, however, have changed significantly. Water, formerly the inexorable seas of doomsday, and before that the stuff of ice and snow and the metaphor of the waters of life so dangerous without wisdom, now pursues its path throughout the world, christening, cleansing, beautifying the land. That it keeps to its course even at night suggests its mastery of the forces of darkness

and death. Seen anew, through eyes no longer dulled by the despair of acedia, and made confident by a knowledge of the power to choose, nature contains in its earthly movements beautiful intimations of spiritual hope. Saturn has learned that to pursue nature's riddles unencumbered by despair is to discover that it contains in its structures not only the instruments of doom for foolish and misguided men who remain embroiled in its limited and material concerns, but much more importantly, the figure of salvation for the wise who read it as a signpost to a transcendent reality.

The resumption of the MS. beginning with his lifes fæðme at 390a continues the theme of redemption in revealing the natural world as an emblem of spiritual hope. The passage starts with an allusion to light as obedient ("hyrsum" 400) to its teacher and able to lay low ("gehnægeð" 401) the devil's company. The power of light and fire in enabling men to find redemptive nourishment (403-9), its association with Jesus Christ (410-11), and its physical movement inside the building is (413b-416), are together, as Menner suggests, an allusion to the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.⁴⁶ This typologically fulfills the Babel story, pointing to the unification of language through the redemption of man by Christ.

This passage is the longest in the poem; indeed, it may be even longer than it seems, depending on where it begins

⁴⁶ Menner 138n400. Cf. Acts 2:1-4 and Ælfric, "Sermo in Aepiphania Domini," Thorpe II, 44:2-32.

in the lacuna. As in Solomon's long answer to the Twins question, Saturn's role here is largely one of silent listening. In this respect, the passage corresponds to the dialogic processes of the Consolatio. The prisoner's movement from a "physical reliance on impressions of his eyes and ears" to "a spiritual awareness granted the mind" is paralleled in SS II by a dialogic evolution from the challenge and doubt of the riddle and hard questions to an authoritative lecture-statement on spiritual truth delivered by a teacher to a student. Solomon's replies assume the status of "argument granted" rather than discussion.⁴⁷ The fallenness of language, its riddling ambiguity, and even its discursive forms recede as Solomon utters, amid Pentecostal symbolism, an authoritative and liberating narrative to which Saturn can respond only with silence. The epistemological shift is from perception, in all its fertile but tricky ambiguity, to "true discernment."⁴⁸ What distinguishes this passage dialogically is its mode of address: an authoritative disquisition, punctuated metrically by extended lines, to which Saturn submits without challenge. In effect, Saturn has done precisely what Solomon advocated only lines before: he has taken for himself a new lord, a new authority, from whom he will learn spiritually to assimilate unarguable truths. In doing so, a

⁴⁷ Lerer 167.

⁴⁸ Lerer 174.

Pentecostal light has illuminated his mind, clearing it, almost, of the argumentative impulses of fallen discourse.

Just as the water passage rewrites the natural world in terms that liberate rather than trap man, so the Full oft passage that follows this Pentecostal reflection rewrites the entire dialogue. Saturn takes the initiative to reset the terms and purpose of the debate by recreating the setting of wise men gathered for a reasoned inquiry through books and discourse into an abstract subject, the relative authority of Wyrd and human prudence. Gone are the riddles and challenging questions so concerned with material reality. The dialogue, cleansed, proceeds to abstract, intellectual issues.

If it seems odd that in his reply to the question on why Wyrd afflicts us, Solomon twice recounts Lucifer's fall but does not mention man's fall in Eden, the explanation lies in the nature of the debate, where fallen man himself is the subject and object. That he must seek wisdom at all attests to his fallen condition. Saturn is seeking the fundamental causes of man's condition, the spiritual forces that impinge on him through the medium of the material world. The burden of Solomon's reply is not man's fall as such, but the point of juncture between a metaphysical reality and the experienced world of man.

The fall of the angels is construed as the failure to hear or receive teaching from God ("heo leng mid hine lare ne namon" 463). The fate of those who refuse God's

instruction is analogous to that of the men addressed by the poem, who are too embroiled in the affairs of the world to heed their wise teacher. Lamentation ("heaf" 468a) wintre (469b), cold ("wælcealde" 469a), water (470) -- the depiction of hell in this account is a metaphysical extension of the material hell that, as the Ylde-Snaw and Dol bið passages show, envelops the foolish man in the throes of Wyrd on earth. Unwilling to receive wisdom, his worldly experience merely presages his ultimate fate. The Fall story thus substantially and imagistically unites the world of human choice to the Truth of the metaphysical drama.

While the Fall narrative establishes the long-sought link between the human world of experience and the metaphysical one of Truth, the diction of the following story of the two attendant spirits, the one golden, the other black, plants the cosmic drama in the individual mind. This final interiorization of the setting in SS II recalls the Soliloquia, in which, as Lerer shows, Augustine internalizes the dialogue, creating the scenario of the mind "in conversation with itself."⁴⁹ More specifically, the end of the debate recalls other works in which the student's lively dialogue evolves finally into silent contemplation of truths given in the teacher's monologue. Lerer discusses this features in De Magistro. For Augustine, the purpose of

⁴⁹ Lerer 51.

the dialogue was that Adeodatus could ask the questions that would later enable him "to teach himself through his inner power according to the measure of his ability."⁵⁰ Similarly, in the last book of the Consolatio, the prisoner is a mute listener while Philosophia plays the role of both teacher and student. After a disquisition on eternal time, for example, she mouths the prisoner's response while he listens: if you were going to say now ("hic") that what God sees as about happen, cannot not happen . . . I would confess ("fatebor") that this is most surely true⁵¹ As these works show, the successful dialogue leads the student inward to confront the workings of the argument within his own being.

The final passages of SS II show an evolution in dialogue similar to that found in the Augustinian and Boethian ones. The differences are the much heavier use in SS II of vivid imagery and a very strong moral imperative that accompanies the placement of the debate in the mind. Solomon returns the attention to the active thinking mind: the hyge (484b) that grows greedy for God's will; the spirit who mourns ("murnan") for His glory ("ðrym" 486a). The surrounding of the man by two spirits (487) creates an isolated image of the mind alone with its power to choose to become eadig or unlæde. Earlier mundane experiences

⁵⁰ Lerer 55.

⁵¹ CP 5, pr. 6, 428:94-100. See also 430:139: "'Sed si in mea," inquires, "potestate situm est mutare propositum.'"

mentioned in the debate are transmuted into interior conditions. The man who was once, in his poverty, greedy or anxious for goods (346a), now becomes greedy or anxious for God's will ("grædig growan in Godes willan" 485). Through the teaching of the black spirit, the angry Chaldeans are reborn in the man who sees evil thoughts ("misgemynda"), whose mod (495b) is incited to evil and whose eye is filled with æfðancum (497b). Steel hard hell ("stylenan helle" 490b), the home of the dark spirit, rhetorically moves inward to become the steel stone ("stylenne stan" 506a) in the hardened heart of the sinner. The notion of being seduced through the land recapitulates the geographical wanderings of Saturn, transmuting them into the condition of the mind led astray ("lædeð," "spanneð" 496) and echoing the unlade mind of the grieving man, the unlade state of the youth, and the unlade man who can not choose the right lord.

The conversation between the mind and two competing spirits recapitulates that between Solomon and his visitor. Just as Solomon wisely instructed Saturn in the love of God and the counsel of a good lord, the good spirit advocates a love of God's mercy and the advice of kin. Unlike Solomon, whose mission was to clarify and strengthen Saturn's perception and interpretation, the evil spirit leads the mind into the same vagrancy that characterized both Saturn's earlier condition and human language after Babel. The evil spirit who counsels wrong ("on tæso læreð" 493b) muddles the mind, transporting it geond land (496b) to misery and anger.

The path to sin takes three steps: through suggestio -- the showing of evil ("tyhteð" 493a, "yweð him and yppeð" 494a) delectatio ("and ðurh ðæt his mod hweteð" 495b) and a kind of consentio in which the mind is hardened in evil and anger ("oððæt his ege bið æfðancum ful" 497, "ðurh earmra scyld yrre geworden" 498).⁵² But the path taken by the seduced man also in a general way retraces Saturn's steps backwards from wisdom to misguided thinking to misery and to anger. The dialogue between the evil spirit and the man, therefore, is also a parodic recapitulation of the earlier one between Solomon and Saturn.

The locus of wisdom has moved from active dialogue in a social setting, to a contemplative receptivity to an external authority, to an internal dialogue between man's spirit and the personification of alternatives for action. Like Adeodatus and Boethius' prisoner, Saturn remains utterly silent in this last speech, in which Solomon articulates an inner discourse between the two spirits and the mind. As if one with the king's words, he remains mute until the close of the poem, only to burst out with the heartfelt laugh of the man who has seen the Truth and has no more words to utter.⁵³

⁵² See Thomas Hill, "Two Notes on Solomon and Saturn," ME 40:3 (1971) 218-20.

⁵³ See Laura Ruth McCord, "A Study of the Meanings of hliehhan and hleahor in OE Literature," diss., U of Missouri-Columbia, 1979.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps one reason why SS II has not received the critical interest or acclaim that it has deserved is that it does not display so much of the classical diction, the "fine stitching," that so attracts the OE scholar to, say, Beowulf. Neither does it consistently bind emotional intensity with tightness of expression in the way of The Dream of the Rood or The Seafarer. The excellence of SS II lies elsewhere, however, and to recognize it is to appreciate the potency of wisdom literature at its best.

The immediate appeal of the poem, then as now, must be the abundance and vivacity of its images, the muscularity of its dialogue, and the eclecticism of its tales. These add colour to its more conventional sapiential features: the presence of the sage, the admonition to right thought and right action, and the emphasis on discernment and interpretation. The exotic appeal of tales from the east is united with traditional wisdom thinking in SS II as an attempt is made to reconcile faith in the creator's divine Wisdom with the experience of the mutability that inheres in a world created and fallen.

The conviction that Truth exists lies beside the understanding that human cognition is inherently unstable. But an exploration of that very instability becomes in SS II a means of breaking the chains of a mind too attached to the world. The poem recounts the human search for a divine Wisdom that, while it remains elusive, standing, even at the

close of the poem, just beyond the horizon of man's sight, seems all the closer because of a happy rupture in the net that traps the mind within nature's cycles of change and decay.

Woven into the familiar structures of wisdom thought and the fabric of allusion and verbal challenge of SS II is a thread, much bolder than usual, of subjective awareness. Mental and spiritual states are named and renamed throughout the poem: ormod, staðolfest, eadiq, unlade. There is a strong emotional presence: Saturn is in turn boastful, angry, humble, joyful. As well, the audience, in being summoned both to judge and to learn, and in being addressed at the close of the debate, is recalled to its own affective and spiritual response to the debate. The poem's various conditions of mental being are, furthermore, seen against the literal and metaphoric movements of the poem's imagery: poisons swarm, Yldo stalks the land, men travel, water flows, firelight leaps up, and above all, the Day of Judgement moves inexorably closer. In foregrounding a subjective centre against an ever changing external reality, SS II represents the self's experience of itself as it responds to its experience of earthly life.

If one theme of wisdom teaching is clear discernment, then SS II focuses on discernment of the organ or discernment itself. Maxims I and II gives the listener a system of categorization; The Seafarer tells him what to believe; Judgement Day I instructs him to think deeply.

SS II does all of these, but in addition, through the medium of the dialogue, it both reflects and reflects upon the process of profound inquiry, and in particular the state of doubt that must accompany it.

Indeed, the poem seizes upon doubt early on and it stays with it throughout, working with it, exploring and interpreting it. This is not doubt in the logical sense: indeed, on a logical level, SS II fails to satisfy. But the poem looks at experience not through the lens of logical verbal structures but through a prism that separates linguistic experience into a spectrum of value. One not only fixes experience with words in the act of naming and describing, one also dismantles and redefines experience in a self-conscious exploration of the symbolic function of the language used to describe it. This kind of doubt leads not to intellectual angst and logical argumentation; rather, it loosens and softens the linguistic fixations of the mind, enabling it to achieve spiritual insight from beyond the world of speaking men.

Solomon is the figure of Christ the Word, but his transcendence does not dominate the debate. The King never recedes into pure meaning. He stands on the border between experience and significance, always working with Saturn within the medium of language. Recognizing that learning begins in doubt, he begins to take apart Saturn's gnomes and his narrow view of reality with the Lytle hwile passage. Challenging Saturn's words with his own, he forces the locks

of learning ("boca cæga" 184b) by which Saturn is bound. Solomon, the binder of monsters, unbinds language and in so doing liberates the unwise mind from its verbal prison. The King leads Saturn upward step by step through his expanding consciousness, installing, finally, in his humbled and ready mind, the power to pursue meaning, to observe his experience with wisdom and decide upon his course of action in the light of his allegiance to God.

It is significant that the divine narrative does not end the debate. There will never again be for Saturn a single reading of experience. Wisdom is no longer a catalogue of inflexible responses to situations. Indeed, Saturn's laughter signals a new and profound awareness of possibility and responsibility, of the independence of the self from the categories of language. Everything must now be consciously observed, weighed, interpreted according to the divine standard beyond human words that exacts obedience but confers freedom.

Oddly, the history of SS II itself has a parallel theme. The non-native origin of the dialogue structure and the stories in themselves signal a receptivity to new forms of thought. We detect in this poem composed sometime in the last centuries of the millenium both a letting go and fresh exploration of structures of expression. In the brief but important dramatic moments of the debate, moreover, Solomon and Saturn are themselves released from the strictures of typology and rhetoric almost to become real

"consciousnesses." Indeed, at these points, they anticipate the parodic figures of the later dialogues. The OE SS II, however, remains the quintessential wisdom poem, an account of how an earthbound wanderer, whose illness is his illusion that things are as he says they are, rises above the mental confinements of the fallen world to submit to God and become a spiritual voyager into the well of infinite meaning.

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