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"Reading from Within": Nicholas of Lyra,
the Sensus Literalis, and the Structural Logic
of The Canterbury Tales

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
University of Ottawa, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Ottawa, Ontario
October, 1993



Rhonda L. Wauhkonen, Ottawa, Canada, 1993



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Abstract

Like certain of his more reactionary religious contemporaries (most notably, Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M., and John Wyclif), Chaucer concerns himself with critically reflexive literature. Through his various narrative and exegetical efforts, he produces--in The Canterbury Tales especially--what amounts to "Christian midrashim" or a literary targum as he, like Nicholas and Wyclif before him, directly addresses matters of textual and referential authority, of relational significances, and of the text's apparently intended personal effects. Reflecting the logic and concerns of the central Text of the age and apparently formulating their shared concept of the literal, of its signification, and of its function from Hebraic rather than Latin referential categories, each of these writers after his fashion and field calls for a return to ethical and social praxis based upon a responsible interpretation of the Divine Word according to its inherent logic and meaning. Being concerned to re-establish the pertinence of auctorite for the individual and the age, they thus present "right reading" as an intellectual endeavour under moral imperative. Involving both author and reader in the text, they clarify the sensus literalis (the essential significance of a text) as being not only "what the words signify" (Augustine), but what the words were intended to signify by their Author--as this is supported by the body of received ecriture and as it is accessible to those who approach the text in spiritual and moral readiness, prepared to engage actively the material (and its Author) by activating it in their own immediate experience.

My use of such terms as midrashim and targum from the Jewish tradition to describe Chaucer's unique contribution to Fourteenth century literature is quite intentional, for it foregrounds the seminal--and Semitic--source, semiotic, and structural logic that underlies the particular theory of the sensus literalis which Nicholas develops from a marriage of rabbinical and patristic sources, which Wyclif gives a distinctively English expression and application, and which Chaucer seems to adapt to poetic forms. Formulated from Hebraic rather than Latin referential categories, this concept of the literal encompasses far more than is allowed for in any naive literalism based upon a superficial understanding of the traditional four-fold method of medieval interpretation. It embraces the capacity of scriptura to validate itself in and through the vagaries of pluralistic exegetical practice as well as the life-transforming power of a coherent reading. Further, it foreshadows such "modern" theoretical concepts as the hermeneutical circle, parts and whole, Buber's theory of experience, Ricoeur's idea of participation, as well as such recently articulated notions as the essential "alterity" of texts and its always shifting "horizons." It also allows Chaucer to fashion a secular "pentecost" of sorts in The Tales as he permits the "diuerse langagis" of his individual parts to speak as they will: bringing the "multitude ... togidre" so that the reader, "astonyed and wondriden" asks, "What wole this thing be?" (Acts 2:4, 6, 11; WB II), Chaucer creates a "thing" which, like the medieval world and the Biblical Text it reflects and draws upon, "conteyneth alle thingis" (or representatives of them) and thereby "hath kunnyng of vois" (Wis. 1:7; WB II; used in the Mass of Pentecost, this verse seems a fundamental principle of Nicholas', Wyclif's, and Chaucer's compositions).

My thesis, attempting to deal in a fuller sense with such referential meaning generally and with the sensus literalis specifically, explores the ways in which Nicholas, Wyclif, and, after them, Chaucer approach the deeper significance of the literal. Specifically, this present work examines the ways in which the three writers explicate meaning (the reference of verbal symbols and their syntactic relations to the external world of real relations) and its affective value through "midrashic" forms. My central argument is that Chaucer, drawing heavily upon a Biblical sign theory and upon the exegetical principles of Nicholas and Wyclif, produces in The Canterbury Tales a work which approximates for secular literature the "mature grammar" of Scripture. That is, focusing on the ways in which these theoretical and technical concerns manifest themselves in Chaucer's text, I suggest that The Tales parallels the distinctive logic of Scripture: both texts demand a continual interaction of Author, Text, and reader; both foreground the ethical imperative as essential for every act of writing, reading or action; and both incorporate the concepts of divine paradox, of an almost quantum logic, and of a process of transformational meanings as their structuring principles. Further, I suggest that, as evidenced in The Tales, Chaucer's use of such a "grammar" allows him to reconcile various Scriptural, secular, and literary contradictions to produce from them an interactive, affective, and ultimately unified whole which is designed to elicit both an aesthetic and an ethical response from the reader.

To this end, Chaucer makes of himself a textual model for his reader through a self-identified narratorial persona. He adopts attitudes towards and a position in relation to the text which are much like those which Nicholas, Wyclif, and the traditions upon which they draw, urge upon Biblical commentators. Chaucer as narrator reads the text at different levels simultaneously without doing violence to its literal sense and synthesizes through himself the ultimate structure and significance of the work from its plethora of apparently contradictory voices, forms, and statements. Through his reciprocal engagement of both the literary and the textual "pilgrimages" he relates (he engaging the text, the text engaging him), he thus undergoes an interactive conversio (a teshuvah or metanoia) of sorts which progressively causes him to read his texts of life and literature "from within," as it were, according to their fuller sensus literalis (i.e. that which is referential, ethically affective, and in keeping with the apparent intentions of the Author). "Repenting" in "The Retractions" as he relocates himself as a responsible agent in relation to God and humanity, Chaucer as narrator thus becomes both an example and an indicator of the right and the good as his transformation invites a similar response from the reader. This present work outlines, then, one sign theory and one hermeneutic which seems to be formative as well as operative in both the structure and the effect of The Tales and which seems to underlie the textual invitation to the reader (medieval or modern) to "join the voices" of the text, to become not just a reader, but--like Chaucer the narrator--a reading of the work's intended and overarching literal sense.

Acknowledgements

This project would never have seen completion had it not been for the guidance, assistance, and even intervention of a small group of people. To these individuals I owe an unspeakable debt of gratitude. Certain of them, though, for efforts well "above and beyond the call of duty"--professionally or personally--merit special mention.

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My most earnest thanks, however, must go to my sister, Rachel, who has now seen me through two graduate degrees and who, though often carrying a heavy load herself, has more often than I had any right to expect found the time to laugh with me, to distract me, and to pick me up when I had let everyone else down: "hard and mervelous is that loue whych may nott nor wyll be broken for trespass" (Shewings 61.14). And, for her drawing me back to the principles of sisu, it is to her that this work is dedicated: so much for the "linguistically rich environment," Tae!

Lastly, I would like to thank all those who made my time at the University of Ottawa--especially the last year--so thoroughly "Chaucerian": what I have learned from the texts of your lives has gone into this work as surely as The Canterbury Tales itself. I thank you for what you have unwittingly and often inadvertently taught for, without my experience of you, much of the logic of The Tales would have escaped me. Consider this work my own "Retraction."

Abbreviations

Throughout this thesis, reference is made--via internal documentation--to a wide variety of texts, from the Classical, through the Hebraic to the Christian. As well, various critical opinions and reference texts are called upon as the occasion demands. In most cases, the titles of any texts with which the reader might not be conversant (e.g. talmudic tractates or rabbinical treatises) are spelled out in full for his or her convenience. Abbreviated references to such standard texts as the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (CT), House of Fame (HofF), or Troilus and Cressida (T&C) are also readily apparent. It may be helpful to the reader, though, if three particular groups of abbreviated references were spelled out before the text proper begins. These include some of the more significant Classical titles, relevant short-forms pertaining to Augustine's works, and--perhaps most necessarily--those items relating to Wyclif's writings.

The lists below, therefore, include the abbreviated and short titles for the major sources used in this present work.

A) Classical Reference (abbreviations and short titles):

Aristotle	
<u>NE</u>	<u>Nichomachean Ethics</u>
Boethius	
<u>Cons.</u>	<u>De consolatione</u>
Cicero	
<u>Tusc. dis.</u>	<u>Tusculanae disputationes</u>
Dvid	
<u>Am.</u>	<u>Amores</u>
<u>Cons.</u>	<u>Consolatio</u>
<u>Fast.</u>	<u>Fasti</u>
<u>Met.</u>	<u>Metamorphoses</u>
<u>Ep. ex Ponto</u>	<u>Epistulae ex Ponto</u>
<u>Trist.</u>	<u>Tristia</u>
Seneca	
<u>Agam.</u>	<u>Agamemnon</u>
<u>Const. Sap.</u>	<u>De constantia sapientis</u>
<u>De ira</u>	<u>De ira</u>
<u>Ep.</u>	<u>Epistulae</u>
<u>Hippol.</u>	<u>Hippolytus, or Phaedra</u>
<u>Med.</u>	<u>Medea</u>
<u>Nat. Quaes.</u>	<u>Quaestiones Naturales</u>

B) Augustine references (abbreviations and short titles):

<u>QCD</u>	<u>On Christian Doctrine</u> (Robertson's trans. of (<u>De Doctrina Christiana</u>)
<u>Conf.</u>	<u>Confessiones</u>
<u>De civ. Dei</u>	<u>De civitate Dei</u>
<u>De Gen. ad lit.</u>	<u>De Genesi ad litteram</u>
<u>De Mag.</u>	<u>De Magistro</u>
<u>De Sp. et Lit.</u>	<u>De Spiritu et littera</u>
<u>De Trin.</u>	<u>De Trinitate</u>
<u>In Johan. ev</u>	<u>In Johannis Evangelium</u>
<u>Ser.</u>	<u>Sermones</u>
<u>De mor. ecc. cath</u>	<u>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae</u>

C) Wyclif references (abbreviations and short titles):

<u>De loq.</u>	<u>De logica</u> (c. 1360)
<u>De univ.</u>	<u>De universalibus</u> (c. 1368)
<u>De ente pred.</u>	<u>De ente predicamentali</u> (c. 1369)
<u>De dom. div.</u>	<u>De dominio divino</u> (1373-1374)
<u>De civ. dom.</u>	<u>De civili dominio</u> (1375-1376) (<u>De dominio humano</u>)
<u>De ver.</u>	<u>De veritate sacrae scripturae</u> (1377-1378)
<u>De ecc.</u>	<u>De ecclesia</u> (1378-1378)
<u>De off. past.</u>	<u>De officio pastorali</u> (1379)
<u>De off. reg.</u>	<u>De officio regis</u> (1379)
<u>De pot. pape</u>	<u>De potestate pape</u> (1379)
<u>Dialog.</u>	<u>Dialogus</u> (1379) (<u>Speculum ecclesie militantis</u>)
<u>De apost.</u>	<u>De apostasia</u> (1380)
<u>De blasph.</u>	<u>De blasphemia</u> (1381)
<u>De euch.</u>	<u>De eucharista</u> (1380) (<u>Tractatus maior</u>)
<u>Op. ev.</u>	<u>Opus evangelicum</u> (1383-1384) (I, II: <u>De sermone domini in monte</u> ; III, IV: <u>De Antichristo</u> I, II)
<u>Misc. phil.</u>	<u>Miscellanea philosophica</u>
<u>Op. min.</u>	<u>Opera minora</u>
<u>Pol. Works</u>	<u>Polemical Work in Latin</u>

D) As well, it should be noted that in interests of contemporary context, I have used a Fourteenth century Biblical text throughout the thesis. The notation "WB II" refers to what is commonly (though inaccurately) referred to as "The Wycliffe Bible" (hence the "WB"). My quotations are from the 1850 edition edited by Josiah Farshall and Frederic Madden under the rubric The Holy Bible Containing the Old and The New Testaments with the Apocryphal Books in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers (4 vols. Reprinted 1982 by the Oxford University Press, Oxford). Unless otherwise indicated, I use the second of the two texts contained therein, largely for the reasons noted in Farshall and Madden's "Introduction": accuracy, smoothness, and a more certain provenance.

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Introduction

"That Which Containeth the Whole

Hath Knowledge of the Voice":

Chaucer and the Exegetical Tradition

O Socrates plains de philosophie
 Seneque en meurs et Auglus en pratique,
 Ovides grans en ta poetrie,
 Bries en parler, saiges en rethorique,
 Aigles treshaulz, qui par ta theorique
 Enlumines le regne d'Eneas —
 L'Isle aux Geans, ceuls de Bruth — et qui as
 Seme les fleurs et plante le rosier
 Aux ignorans de la langue Pandras,
 Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.

Tu es d'Amours mondians Dieux en Albie;
 Et de la Rose, en la terre Angelique
 Quid d'Angela saxonne est puis flourie
 Angleterre — d'elle ce nom s'applique
 Le derrenier en l'ethimologique —,
 En bon angles le Livre translatas;
 Et un vergier, ou du plant demandas
 De ceul qui font pour eulx auctorisier,
 A ja long temps que tu edifas,
 Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.

A toy pour ce de la fontaine Helye
 Requier avoir un buvraige autentique
 Dont la doys est du tout en ta baillie,
 Pour refrener d'elle ma soif ethique,
 Qui en Gaule seray paralitique
 Jusques a ce que tu m'abuveras.
 Eustaces sui; qui mon plant aras;
 Mais pran en gre les euvres d'escolier
 Que par Clifford de moy avoir pourras,
 Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.

L'envoy

Poete hault, loenge d'escurye,
 En ton jardin ne seroie qu'ortie:
 Considere ce que j'ay dit premier,
 Ton noble plant, ta douce meolodie.
 Mais pour scavoir, de rescripre te prie,
 Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.
 (Eustache Deschamps, c. 1386)

Chaucer in His Age

Celebrated in his age as "the noble philosophical poete" (Thomas Usk, Testament of Love 3.4, c. 1387) and the "disciple and ... poete" of Venus (Gower, Confessio amantis 8.2942), Chaucer was acknowledged even in his time as a writer of peculiar distinction, particularly in matters of wisdom and, more especially, in matters of love. Yet, the full distinction of the poet from others of his age seems to lie not only in what he said, celebrated, and wrote about--most, if not all, medieval poets had love of one sort or another as their primary theme. Rather, it seems that it is how Chaucer presents his material which makes him unique, for unlike most others of his time, he writes himself into his texts and invites his reader not only to observe, comment upon, and perhaps respond to his works by the moral dictates propounded, but to participate with him in the forming and, in effect, in the composition of his texts. Leaving several works open, ostensibly incomplete and unresolved, he thus invites active engagement, rather than mere assent, from his audience--similar to, but much more involved than, the response demanded by certain modern texts, such as "The Lady or the Tiger." Making himself not only the author of his text, but a participant within it and so an organic part of his composition, Chaucer invites the reader to join him in his creative endeavour, to become--by his or her response--a part of the text's form, logic, and meaning as well as being its audience. In so doing, Chaucer translates a new dynamic of text and reading to his time and, in the process, earns for himself acclaim from his peers and for his works immortality.

Certain likely sources for his innovative methodology as well as the ends and effects of these sources--both in the text and upon the reader--are

the primary concern of this present work. It traces through the fourteenth century the logic and grammar of a hermeneutic which has been largely neglected by modern medievalists, but which was readily available to Chaucer, which was considered excitingly innovative and socially as well as intellectually relevant in and to his age, and which is well able to account for many of the peculiarities in Chaucer's structural forms. Formulated through a marriage of Jewish and Christian texts and traditions, and disseminated through the most popular Biblical commentary of the late Middle Ages (after the Glossa ordinaria, of course; Wurtele 92, Rost 87), this hermeneutic was developed and articulated for the fourteenth century by Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M. (c. 1270-1349), a friar based in Paris whose primary concern was to interpret "Sacred Scripture according to the literal sense" ("Third Prologue" 92f.; see Appendix A for translations of his "First," "Second," and "Third Prologues"; line notations to the Prologues are made in reference to these translations). Reclaiming the Hebrew Scriptures for the Christian tradition through a study of the text in its original language and in the context of its Jewish commentators, Nicholas re-opened to the Christian West the peculiar logic and grammar of Scripture which, based upon a Semitic rather than an Indo-European semiotic, allowed for different definitions of text, meaning, and reading. These definitions --translated into philosophical terms and given an immediate and necessary social, political, and personal applicability by such seculars as John Wyclif (c. 1320-1384), an English theologian--became, arguably, the theoretical bases of Chaucer's unique literary efforts. What follows is a discussion of how, why, and with what effect Chaucer translates a Biblical hermeneutic into secular forms--and into his own enduring reputation.

* * *

Chaucer's Exegetical Concerns and Sources

It is now generally recognized that Chaucer, unlike most vernacular authors of the late Middle Ages, writes critically reflexive literature. That is, while availing himself of the customary modes and methods of writing common to his age (allegory, dream vision, etc.), he also challenges in his poetry conventional notions of authority, authorship, meaning, and responsible engagement of text. Attuned to the possibilities of language and literature as participatory and referential, he engages not only his subject matter, but also the very acts of composition and reading which go into the formation and reception of his work. Nowhere is this engagement more evident or more structurally significant than in The Canterbury Tales, the central creative text in the fourteenth century for the practical exercise of the critical impulse. In The Tales, Chaucer develops a multileveled, self-correcting narrative construct which, though ostensibly drawing the reader's attention to the process of writing and to the writer himself, in fact refers the reader through the polyphony of narrative voices to the one ultimate Author and Purpose behind the composition. Demanding from the reader acknowledgement of, participation in, and response to both the process and the Base of reference, Chaucer's work does not so much address as encompass the reader, placing him under an intellectual and moral imperative to complement the poem through interpretive involvement with its stories, its structures, and its truths.

Through such emphasis upon reference, authority, and reader participation in and with the text and its purposes, Chaucer distinguishes

himself from even his most lustrous secular (and literary) contemporaries, such as Gower and Langland, who write a poetry which is more blatantly didactic and less theoretically complex. Echoing instead the concerns of certain of his more reactionary religious contemporaries, Chaucer places himself and his work in a tradition which is as much explicitly exegetical, concerned with the end and methods of interpretation, as it is literary. In particular, he parallels most closely the theoretical work of Nicholas of Lyra and John Wyclif, who, though dealing with a different primary Text, similarly engage issues of composition, reference, reading, and response. Emphasizing the need for the Text to be re-centralized in both individual and communal experience and explicating the unique logic and grammar of Scripture by which the Divine Word signifies, both Nicholas and Wyclif underscore the practical ends to which Scripture is intended as well as the necessary moral preparation of the reader approaching the Text. In their shared hermeneutic, theory and praxis must develop concurrently from a careful reading of the Word in its own terms [1].

The "Textual" Hermeneutic of John Wyclif and Nicholas of Lyra

Of the two, it seems that the more immediate and obvious influence upon Chaucer would have been John Wyclif (c. 1320-1384), an English theologian and philosopher with whom Chaucer shared a number of friends, colleagues, and--it would seem--opinions, both academic and political [2]. Concerned with both the integrity and the efficacy of Scripture, Wyclif expounded a "textual" theory of reading in De veritate sacrae scripturae (completed 1378), in his Trialogus (1382-1383), and in several other works. Understanding the sign theory and logic of the Bible to be interactive and

demanding, he not only emphasized the need for the Text to be expounded according to its own unique grammar and manner of signification, but he also underscored the moral and spiritual preparation of the reader necessary for the reader before he or she might profitably (and rightly) approach the Text. Further, he explicated the practical ends to which such reader engagement was intended as he simultaneously directed reader attention to the Text itself and to the world in which its truth was to be realized. In practical terms, this double focus on theory and praxis allowed Wyclif to adapt and apply his "textual" hermeneutic to the political and religious crises of his time: as he attempted to re-establish Scripture as the norm by which the lives and actions of private individuals, governing officials (whether clerical or civic), and even the events of history might be measured, he, in effect, re-valorized Scripture as not only the central text but also the necessary, practical authority of and for the age.

Yet, for all this, Wyclif did not so much initiate or innovate as develop an already existing hermeneutic. Principally, he drew upon Augustine and Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M. (c.1270-1349), adapting especially the grammatico-historical exegetical theory and practice of Nicholas to the particular demands of the contemporary English situation. In effect, he made immediately and concretely relevant the reading theory pioneered by Nicholas in the Postilla literalis in vetus et novum testamentum (completed 1331). One of the most important medieval commentaries on the Bible, the volumes of the Postilla literalis were much contended for, even in Nicholas' lifetime, by "the most eminent theologians" (Hailperin 138), the text itself (or parts of it) being translated into French, German, Italian, and possibly Flemish before 1500 (Dictionnaire de theologie Catholique, 1926 ed. 9.1.1421). Even today, "the Postilla litteralis exists in several hundred

manuscripts, in whole or in part," with between twenty and twenty-four manuscripts being complete" (Kiecker 21). Through his adaptation of Nicholas' extremely popular and influential hermeneutic, then, Wyclif became an important theoretical intermediary, transmitting and popularizing to his nation and to his age the "textual"--though not, in any way, "fundamentalist"--methodology of Nicholas.

Such an initial distinction between "fundamentalism" and "textualism" is essential for a true understanding of Nicholas' hermeneutic, for it is in no way a naive, sola scriptura approach to text. Mary J. Carruthers, in The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, offers a useful differentiation:

Fundamentalism regards a work of literature [including Scripture] as essentially not requiring interpretation. It emphasizes its literal form as independent of circumstances, audience, author.... True fundamentalism understands words not as signs or clues but takes them as things in themselves Fundamentalism denies legitimacy to interpretation. Instead of interpreting, a reader is engaged at most only in re-phrasing the meaning of a written document, a meaning which is really transparent, simple, and complete--but which the detritus of history and linguistic change has temporarily concealed. Fundamentalism ideally should produce no gloss or commentary. (11-12)

"Textualism," on the other hand, is much more complex. It involves the reader in and with the text, not only allowing for, but demanding an interpretation which engages both the individual and the community. Carruthers writes, "this activity [i.e. interpreting] is not regarded as

something other than the text, but is a mark of textualization itself" (12). Such "textualization" thus includes both "the layers of meaning that attach as a text is woven into and through the historical and institutional fabric of a society" (12) and the process of personal internalization wherein "A work is not truly read until one has made it a part of oneself" (8). It is in this sense, then, that Nicholas' hermeneutic is "textual": it privileges not only a "physical artifact" (i.e. the book and the written words contained therein), but also "the social and rhetorical [and ethical] process that a text both records and generates, namely, the composition by an author and its reception by an audience" (11).

Nicholas, for his part and through his "textualism," introduced to the Christian West a distinctive alternative to contemporary forms of exegesis. Through his facility with the language and traditions of the Hebrew Bible, he "re-claimed" the earliest Scriptures for the Christian tradition. Privileging a distinctively Hebraic (rather than a Latin) semiotic, his hermeneutic gave unprecedented attention to the language and system of reference indigenous to the Hebrew texts. This renewed focus upon text and the corresponding shift from Latin to Hebrew categories of reference occasioned a re-definition of the prevailing notion of the sensus literalis, the traditionally primary level of textual engagement (see "First Prologue" 198ff.; Robert Grant, 119; cf. "Third Prologue" 41ff.). Re-adjusting the parameters of the "literal" to include not only the words of the text (and what these might signify directly, cf. QCD 2.1), but also the historical and literary contexts of those words, their typological significations, and--at least potentially--their demands upon the reader, Nicholas continually directed the reader back to the fullest ethical and affective meaning of the

text as it was originally intended by the Author. In contradistinction to the dominant contemporary modes of reading, both scholastic and meditative, this "textual" method was less inclined to use Scripture for pre-determined purposes--either doctrinal or contemplative. Rather, it attempted to reveal the inherent truth of Scripture directly, to involve the reader with it, and to re-establish an immediately "ethical or covenantal relationship between author-text-reader" (Handelman, Fragments of Redemption 345). In effect, it made the reading of Scripture not only active, but also interactive and morally demanding. This incorporated the human, as well as the literary and the linguistic, as essential elements of both the literal sense and the text's larger meaning.

As two of Chaucer's most influential contemporaries, Nicholas and Wyclif thus represent a significant change in the perception of critical reading and response as they advocate a hermeneutic based directly upon the grammar and logic of, as well as reader participation with, the text at hand. Such an approach to text stood in obvious contrast to the norm of the age, which was eisegetical rather than exegetical readings. The methods and effects of such "eisegetical" forms of reading as against Nicholas' own more textually grounded "exegetical" approach to Scripture can perhaps best be seen in the distinction he draws between the dominant contemporary methods of reading and his own. In his "Second Prologue," Nicholas writes:

... it should be known that the literal sense has often been obscured by the method of interpretation commonly handed on to us by some [i.e. the monastics], who, though they said many good things, nevertheless touched on the literal sense too little, and multiplied the mystical senses to such an extent that the literal

sense, trapped among so many mystical interpretations, is partially suffocating. Likewise they [i.e. the scholastics] divided the text into so many parts and introduced so many agreements to their proposition, that they partially confuse the understanding and the memory, drawing the soul away from the understanding of the literal sense. Therefore, proposing to avoid these and similar [faults], with the help of God I intend to adhere to the literal sense, and [I intend] to include very few, brief, mystical interpretations sometimes, though rarely. (50ff.)

Chaucer, echoing such exegetical concerns with the literal--with primary meaning and signification--in his own work, seems to make secular forms, genres, and narratives serve referential and affective moral purposes similar to those of Scripture as he too draws the reader into his composition through the words of his text and directs him or her through, rather than beyond, the texts to a higher Base of signification (e.g. in his "Retractions"). Reflecting the more radical "literary theory" of his age, then, Chaucer seems to make issues of composition, interpretation, and response--as textual rather than doctrinal matters--as central to a true reading of The Canterbury Tales as they are to the "Biblical" model of Nicholas and Wyclif.

Historical Criticism: Modern Critics on Medieval Theory

Insofar as most critics of medieval literary theory accept the premise that Biblical hermeneutics provide the exegetical principles and methods upon which medieval audiences modelled their reading and reception of texts [3], it seems not an unreasonable assumption that such models may also have

been applied to the composition or adaptation of secular texts. For a medieval author such as Chaucer to design his narrative in such a way that it reflects the logic and grammar of Scripture in order that it might serve the same primary referential function seems, then, to be a logical literary development--especially once the organizational principles of Scripture are amply expounded as they are by Nicholas and Wyclif. Given this likely exchange of purpose and influence, it seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that as the atypical, critically self-reflexive elements in the literary works of Chaucer seem to parallel those in the innovative exegetical works of Nicholas and Wyclif, The Canterbury Tales may, in form and effect, be understood as a "secular scripture" of sorts in both method and intent. Moreover, since this commonality seems to be mutually enlightening, a study of the unique theoretical characteristics in the "textual" hermeneutic of Nicholas and of Wyclif may well provide a deeper and more complete understanding of the structural logic of The Tales as well as of its likely intended referential function.

To make such an argument does not require the formulation of wholly novel principles or paradigms. Many critics, medieval and modern, have attempted to discern within or derive from Scripture and its exegesis the principles of a coherent literary theory. The particular contribution of this excursus, though, is two-fold. First, it examines the largely neglected hermeneutic of Nicholas of Lyra, one of the most significant writers of the late Middle Ages. Exploring the sources and principles of his hermeneutic, this present study attempts to delineate the particular effect of Nicholas' uniquely Judeo-Christian grammatico-historicism upon fourteenth century literary theory and thought, especially as it is

disseminated in England through Wyclif and, perhaps less obviously--though arguably more potently--through Chaucer. Second, through an understanding of Nicholas' synthetic mode of reading and his explication of Biblical logic, this thesis allows for a harmonization of key elements from several earlier and seminal modern studies of medieval literary theory, most notably the work of D. W. Robertson, Jr.; A. J. Minnis; and J. B. Allen.

Each of these modern critics working on medieval literary theory accepts and articulates the fundamental principles of a "historical criticism." Robertson, realizing that "the medieval conception of the meaning of things is not only important but a little difficult for modern readers to understand" ("Medieval Literary Theory" 58) [4], feels that "historical criticism" (by which he understands "that kind of literary analysis which seeks to reconstruct the intellectual attitudes and the cultural ideals of a period in order to reach a fuller understanding of its literature" ["Historical Criticism" 3]) is essential for literary studies. He writes that

The historical critic ... attempts to form a workable conception of the intellectual background of a period as a whole, so that the various ideals he has to deal with may be considered in perspective. Meanwhile ... shar[ing] the respect of the literary critic for the artistic integrity of the works with which he has to deal, ... he looks with some misapprehension on the tendency of the literary critic to regard older literature in the light of modern aesthetic systems, economic philosophies, or psychological theories (*ibid.* 3-4).

Minnis similarly notes that though "the [medieval] scholar is inclined

to adopt concepts from modern literary theory" since "many major aspects of medieval texts ... cannot be discussed adequately in the terminology and framework of those sources of medieval rhetoric and poetics which have to date enjoyed full scholarly attention," these "concepts ... have no historical validity as far as medieval literature is concerned" (Medieval Theory of Authorship 1) [5]. He asks, rhetorically, "Is it not better to search again, in a different range of medieval writings, for a conceptual equipment which is at once historically valid and theoretically adequate?" (1)--precisely the purpose of this present study of Nicholas.

Along these same lines, Allen states:

My work has been based on one obvious assumption: that the literary criticism of an age will, after an interval of time, cease simply to explain the texts to which it was addressed, and become evidence for the particular literary attitudes and presumptions which were, when it was made, satisfied with it Matters which medieval critics discussed with concern, I presume concerned them--matters which they ignored, dismissed, or seemed unable to see, I presume did not concern them, and did not need to concern them. I have felt obliged to construct my definition of medieval literary theory, therefore, out of what the critics said, and I have felt obliged to refrain from supposing what they should have said, had they 'really' understood poetry. (The Ethical Poetic, x, xi) [6].

Each of these modern critics thus attempts to locate (or, at least, to anchor) his critical work in the primary texts, theories, and thoughts of the age under scrutiny. In this, they are all essentially "historical" critics.

Further, each of these critics examines a particular and primary aspect of late medieval hermeneutics which helps contextualize the present exposition of Nicholas' model: Robertson outlines the unifying referential structure of medieval texts; Minnis examines the translatio auctoritas as well as the relationship between the author's intention and the literal sense; and, Allen explicates (almost inadvertently) a distinctively "semitic" medieval poetic through his study of the effective, participatory demands of the Averroistic Aristotle. This last contribution is of particular interest to the present study, for, resulting from his study of the Averroistic Aristotle, Allen's "semitic" medieval poetic reflects a major conceptual shift in referential categories not unlike that which is evidenced in the Postilla literalis--though Allen's referential shift is occasioned not, as in Nicholas' hermeneutic, by a move from Latin to Hebrew, but--in keeping with his Averroistic text--from Latin to Arabic. This shift is reflected most significantly in practical terms in Averroes' (and therefore Allen's) concern with consuetudo and credulitas rather than with plot and character, a substitution which is made without explanation, justification or apology (such abrogation and substitution of terms being an accepted practice of Arabic reading and composition, even when dealing with the Koran; cf. Koran 2.106, "When We cancel a message [or 'verse'] or throw it into oblivion, We replace it with a better one or similar"; see also Shafi'i, Risala 123-126; Ghazali, Mustasfa 1.125). The consequence of such a shift in terminology and focus is a much more personal, participatory, and effective reading theory--much like that developed by Nicholas in his bringing together of Jewish and Christian traditions. Available from 1256 (i.e. Hermann the German's translation of the Averroistic Aristotle), such

"Arabic" categories and methods of as well as purposes for reading facilitate the reception of Nicholas' later "Hebraic" model since, conceptually, the two "semitic" theories are largely cognate.

Working within the essential conceptual parameters established by these three critics, then, this study is intended not to supersede, but to complement their earlier efforts. It brings to the models of these critics an examination of a relevant, tributary tradition which was apparently unknown, unavailable, or inaccessible to them--at any rate, it was left unexplored. Finding in Nicholas' "Christian" adaptation of a heretofore neglected Hebraic semiotic a method of streamlining linguistic and spiritual forms, reference, and meaning, this present work thus offers an alternative contemporary model for late medieval hermeneutic practices to those developed by Robertson, Minnis, and Allen. This excursus suggests that Nicholas' fusion of traditions allows him to formulate a peculiar "literal sense" which permits a distinctively Christian reclamation of the language, sign theory, structural logic, and moral imperative of the Hebrew Scriptures. This reclamation, in turn, calls for and leads to a re-assessment of conventional categories and methods of reading and offers Chaucer, even as a secular poet, a uniquely comprehensive, affective, and compositional model.

D. W. Robertson and "Historical Criticism"

The theoretical bases, then, for this study originate with D. W. Robertson, Jr. Extending to literature the work of such historically oriented Biblical and Patristic scholars as Henri de Lubac, H.-I. Marrou,

Beryl Smalley, and Jaroslav Pelikan [7], Robertson first articulates the principles of a necessary "historical criticism" in the 1950s. He insists, fundamentally, that there must be "that kind of literary analysis which seeks to reconstruct the intellectual attitudes and the cultural ideals of a period in order to reach a fuller understanding of its literature" ("Historical Criticism" 3). In his own reconstruction of such ideals and attitudes, he draws upon the models, methods, and purposes of reading that he finds in the Church Fathers (especially Augustine) and in various Medieval commentators, such as Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1142), Peter Lombard (1100-1160), and John of Salisbury (1120-1180). His efforts lead him to define "the heart of medieval Christianity" as "the doctrine of Charity, the New Law which Christ brought to fulfill the Old Law so that mankind might be saved" ("The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens" 22). Though Robertson warns that "the specific elaborations and applications of this doctrine varied with the course of time, so that the historical critic finds it necessary to consider a given literary work in the light of contemporary theological developments" ("Historical Criticism" 5), he maintains that "the complex theological developments of the Middle Ages are essentially elaborations of the New Law" ("Some Medieval Literary Terminology" 68). Thus, in his perception, "For St. Augustine and for his successors among medieval exegetes, the whole aim of Scripture is to promote Charity and to condemn cupidity" ("The Doctrine of Charity" 22; "cupidity" being defined as "the love of one's self or of any other creature--man, woman, child, or inanimate object--for the sake of the creature rather than for the sake of God," "Historical Criticism" 5; cf. QCD 3.10.16; CT X.366ff.).

This all-encompassing tenet colours the rest of Robertson's theorizing: it influences his use of Augustine's sign theory; it dominates his

perception of the totum integrum of any given text; and, it taints his understanding of the value and function of the sensus literalis. Consequently, it also compromises his theory of reading in a "medieval" manner. For example, though Robertson quotes from Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor, giving various definitions for and uses of signs, his fundamental definition of "sign" remains relatively unsophisticated: it is "a thing--a word or object--which is used to signify something else" (Preface to Chaucer 295; hereafter, Preface; cf. OCD 1.2.2, De magistro Ch. 2). Though he distinguishes between "verbal symbols" or "figures" and "physical symbols" or "signs" ("Historical Criticism" 7) in a manner reminiscent of Augustine's early emphasis of "words signifying" and "things signifying" (OCD 1.2.2; cf. L. Kelly and R. A. Markus on Augustine's later shift of emphasis), Robertson does not maintain the distinction sufficiently to develop the coherent "literal" and "spiritual" differentiation which Augustine does (OCD 2.10.15). Instead, in Robertson's approach, the first merges into the second through an unclear separation of "ambiguous signs," "figurative language," and "figurative things" which are created by the words but which may function spiritually (Preface 295f.). In reading "The Maid of the Moor," for example, he takes the "signs" from the "literal" level of the poem--a level on which he insists the poem "cannot be said to make much sense"--and interprets them "spiritually" by "tak[ing] note of the figures and signs in it" ("Historical Criticism" 17). Transforming a delightful secular lyric into a statement of doctrine by translating (in both the linguistic and theological senses) the raw material of its "literal" signification into "signs" of the spiritual, Robertson argues:

The moor is the wilderness of the world under the Old Law before Christ came. The primrose is not a Scriptural sign, but a figure

of fleshly beauty. We are told three times that the primrose was the food of the maiden, and only after this suspense are we also told that she ate or embodied the violet, which is a Scriptural sign of humility. The maiden drank the cool water of God's grace, and her bower consisted of the roses of martyrdom or charity and the lilies of purity with which late medieval and early Renaissance artists sometimes adorned pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and indeed, she is the Maiden of the moor, the maiden who was at once the most beautiful of all women and the divinity whose humility made her the most accessible of all saints.

("Historical Criticism" 17-18).

Nothing in his interpretation is necessarily untoward. Yet, by dismissing the apparently primary meaning of the poem's words--its literal sense--in order to clarify the theoretical relationship between it and its supposedly "truer" spiritual sense, Robertson's reading as a whole seems to do violence to the poem on a most fundamental level.

Thus, while Robertson ostensibly distinguishes between the "literal sense" and the "spiritual" or "allegorical" sense of medieval texts on the basis of Augustine's categories, he often seems unable or unwilling to maintain a balance of relative value between the two. Even though he writes that "an interest in allegory does not imply a neglect of the letter" and that "We should be careful ... not to regard the letter and spirit as modern 'opposites' which are mutually exclusive" (Preface 304), in his own critical practice he argues for a simplistic, excessively "carnal," "literalistic" valuation of the "letter" which seems to include little else other than "what a text 'actually says'" (Preface 287-8). Indeed, regarding the "literal" as less "textually" based as well as less comprehensive than do

the medieval theorists he seeks to represent in general terms and of whom Nicholas is a prominent fourteenth century example, Robertson continually privileges the spiritual, placing little intrinsic value in the letter other than that it might lead "to spiritual understanding" (Preface 303)--a most traditional and orthodox position (cf. Lombard's glosses on Scripture). For example, Robertson tends to regard tropological and figurative values as "the simplest form of allegory ... alieniloquium" (Preface 287-88), whereas, for Nicholas at least, certain aspects of tropology are included in the literal sense insofar as they are part of the author's original intention for the words (see, for example, Nicholas' comments on Matt. 5:30). Quite consistently, Robertson reduces the "literal" aspect of the text to a mere "cortex" beneath which the "nucleus ... of Scripture" lies ("Medieval Literary Theory" 54): he maintains that this "nucleus" is that "lesson implicit under the cortex from the very beginning" ("Historical Criticism" 14) and insists that it is the "sentence"--that which "the text implies rather than that which it 'actually says'" (Preface 287)--that it is to be sought whenever "the message of the New Law is not apparent on the surface or in the cortex itself" ("Medieval Literary Theory" 54). Consequently, even though Robertson acknowledges that "The sententia or nucleus of a poem arises from the figures and signs it contains" ("Historical Criticism" 10), he locates the significance of these "figures and signs" not so much in the words which give them expression but in the "secondary meanings of words"--especially those derived from "exegetical works of various kinds" which may offer a "convenient shortcut to conventional [i.e. 'medieval'] interpretations" ("Historical Criticism" 10).

Significantly, while Robertson instances "the commentaries of Augustine, Bede, Gregory, and Rabanus" as "standard reference works

throughout the Middle Ages," and gives special mention to the Glossa ordinaria and the "exegetical writings of Peter Lombard and Hugh of St. Victor," he places "the exegetical work ... done by friars" in a special category, insisting that "fraternal commentaries should only be used in the study of literature influenced by fraternal orders" ("Historical Criticism" 10). In claiming Nicholas for the larger sphere of literary influence, this present study attempts to redress this oversight on Robertson's part.

Besides sometimes compromising the linguistic and artistic integrity of the text (and neglecting certain obvious influences as well as considerable interdisciplinary research), Robertson's single-minded theoretical insistence on a unilateral, trans-textual meaning based in charity often leads him away from the text itself into episodes of rampant, extra-textual allegorization. Compounded by his willingness to go considerably beyond the words of a text to make his case from its "signs," this concentration causes Robertson to develop an almost a-textual hermeneutic, one in which the true meaning of any text must be discerned beyond the surface of a passage (e.g. his reading of "The Maid in the Moor," above).

This theoretical extremism, however, is not wholly exclusive of the literal. Moderated considerably in Robertson's practice, even his theory allows that "When the passage being considered conduces to Charity without further interpretation, it ... contains littera and sensus" ("Medieval Literary Terminology" 67). Moreover, Robertson's efforts were never intended to eliminate the reading of medieval texts at the "literal" level. Rather, they were intended to balance the relative weight given to each of the two levels in scholarly work. As he writes, "Most modern discussions of medieval literature have been concerned only with the littera and sensus."

This is a restriction which would have been most unsatisfactory to the medieval reader" ("Historical Criticism" 10). It is, in fact, precisely to counter this restriction that Robertson attempts--through a consideration of medieval exegesis--to sensitize the modern reader to those nuances and subtleties of text which would have been readily apparent to a medieval reader. Focusing primarily upon the writings of Augustine and the teachings of the Augustinian tradition of the Twelfth century, though, he often over-emphasizes the probable, possible, and even unlikely spiritual interpretations of both religious and secular texts. This proclivity for the allegorical particularly mars Robertson's readings of later medieval texts, such as those of Chaucer, for it fails to account for certain essential developments in the literary theory of Chaucer's own day. Most notably, it overlooks the fourteenth century shift away from the allegorical towards a re-definition, a reclamation, and a re-valorization of the literal--such as is formatively articulated in a manner pertinent to Chaucer studies in the Postillae of Nicholas of Lyra as well as in De veritate and the Triologus of John Wyclif. This is not to suggest, however, that an understanding and acceptance of Nicholas' hermeneutic (or of Wyclif's development of it) requires the rejection of any of Robertson's readings out of hand (Nicholas does, after all, not only allow for, but engage in some rather wild allegorizations himself). Rather, it merely requires that many of these readings be acknowledged as eisegesis, as being external to and imposed upon that which is inherent to the sensus literalis of the text. This present study of Nicholas' fourteenth century method, therefore, should not been construed as a displacement of Robertson's work, but rather as a necessary augmentation of and corrective to it: it is Robertson's concept of a necessarily "historical" criticism which allows for the re-assertion of

Nicholas' textually based "literary theory"; as well, it is Robertson's concept of an ultimately unifying referential schema that makes both Nicholas' semiotic and his hermeneutic that much more comprehensible to the modern medievalist.

A. J. Minnis and the Authority of the Author

A. J. Minnis, though reluctant to admit that his work is in any way related to "The last major attempt to relate medieval hermeneutics (particularly Scriptural exegesis) to vernacular literature, led by D. W. Robertson" (Medieval Theory of Authorship "Preface" to 2nd ed., xv), builds upon Robertson's principles of historical criticism in his efforts to demonstrate that "scholastic Scriptural exegesis was a central force in the re-shaping of literary values in the later Middle Ages" (vii). He claims that "The central event [in the development of late Medieval literary theory] ... was the emergence (in Bible commentaries) of the view that the human author possessed a high status and respected didactic/stylistic strategies of his very own" (vii). Championing the "intentio auctoris, the intention of the author" (xiv) as the seat of textual meaning and privileging the human author over and beyond any possible relevance that a greater Author could have in medieval conceptions of meaning, Minnis advocates a moral relativism in reading and writing which makes the human element--both author and reader--the cornerstone of his argument: as he understands it, through scholasticism, "auctoritas moved from the divine realm to the human" (xiv).

Minnis also applies such a homocentric method of meaning to the reading (as well as to the composition) of texts. Though he admits that "Medieval

commentators were more interested in Truth than in the personal and subjective areas wherein we individualistic moderns are accustomed to seek the true intention of an author," he maintains that a truth which is "complex and pluralistic ... [is] ... less reducible to rule or 'normative array'" (xiv-xv). Resisting any "interpretive determinism," whether it be "pan-allegorization" or "pan-moralization," he argues that "medieval textual meaning was pluralistic in nature" (xv). Here, as so often, Minnis makes sloppy use of language. He confuses "meaning" and "signification." Signification (the expression or indication of something via signs) in the conventional four-fold method of interpretation and even in Nicholas' paradigm can, and often must, be "pluralistic": a passage can signify in various ways (e.g. literally, allegorically, tropologically, anagogically; cf. "First Prologue" 180ff., "Third Prologue" 19ff.). Meaning (that which is intended to be or actually is expressed or indicated, or the end or purpose being signified), though variously formulated and applied (e.g. "Littera gesta docet ..." etc.), remains ultimately unified. Completely disregarding such essential differentiations and setting the reader's preferred (rather than directed) interpretation against the text so that its meaning becomes humanly, rather than referentially, defined, Minnis writes: "the 'good men' in the audience (to echo Chaucer's Nun's Priest) can take the morality if they want to. But only if they want to," for "The fact that the moral understanding is the one which any wise man would adopt does much to recommend it but does not enshrine it as the one and only 'real' understanding" (xvi). In Minnis' understanding, therefore, meaning becomes wholly subjective: "A single text can have different kinds of meaning, depending on the kind of reader, or the kind of reading in which the reader is engaged at a given time" (xvi). Unwilling to grant any standard norm for

medieval meaning, he thus fails to account adequately for an Augustinian (or, for that matter, Scriptural) concept of reference in which various words, things, or signs--even those which "mean" differently--ultimately "mean" the same thing in that they direct one to a single Reality.

In many ways, Minnis' work is of greatest value to this study not for what it reinforces of the study of Nicholas and of fourteenth century hermeneutics, but what, in the spirit of the age, it misconstrues for its own purposes. Through its errors and confusions, Minnis' theory reveals the tidy simplicity and essential coherence of Nicholas' hermeneutic as a model for medieval readers and writers. Most important of such misformulated issues are Minnis' notions of relative authority and of the literal sense, both of which he defines in relation to the human: the first, relative authority, he sees as indicative of a naive, Twelfth century, allegorical method of reading (5); the second, the literal sense, he reduces to the "express[ion] [of] the intention of the human author" (73). Inherently related in and of themselves, the issues of auctoritas and of the sensus literalis are aligned (or rather, misaligned) by Minnis through a faulty understanding of inspiration and of Scriptural unity. Insisting that "Traditional techniques of textual commentary," had to be "altered to meet the special demands of divinely-inspired Scripture," Minnis maintains that pre-Scholastic literary theory was hampered by the "unique status" accorded to "the heavenly oracle" of Scripture (33). Because of this belief in inspiration, he maintains,

The [pre-scholastic] commentators were more interested in the similarities than in the differences [an interest which supposedly gave rise to 'allegorical' rather than 'literal' concerns]. After

all, did not all the books of the Bible have a single auctor, God? The undeniable fact of the great auctoritas of Scripture fostered belief in the indivisible unity of the Bible. Hence, technical terms derived from the study of the artes were often used to bring out various senses or levels of meaning, rather than the various qualities of individual texts. (72)

Here, as so often, Minnis seems to be setting the "literary" aspects of a work against its larger meaning. He fails to see that "the indivisible unity" of Scripture is composite, and well able to encompass both the literal and the allegorical. Thus, Minnis over-simplifies the efforts of pre-scholastic commentators, ignoring the fact that "various senses or levels of meaning" derive largely from the literal and literary "qualities of individual texts" which are the foundation for all other senses (a fact well-known to Jerome, Augustine, Aquinas, etc.; cf. Nicholas "Second Prologue" 11ff).

Minnis even goes so far as to claim that "highly articulate commentators," such as Nicholas of Lyra, used "literalistic Jewish exegesis" (terms which he never discusses or defines) to "make abundantly clear the high value which was being placed on the literal sense as the expression of the human auctor" (84)--a statement which conveniently side-steps the entire issue of the literal as God's essential meaning as well. It is in such casual use of terminology which is central and crucial to medieval discussions of reading that the primary difficulties of Minnis' theory lie. First, and most significantly for present purposes, despite what Minnis writes (the "intended meaning [of the human auctor] ... [is] the 'literal sense' of holy writ," 84), the "literal sense" as almost any medieval critics would consider it is far more than the "intention of the human

author" (5; emphasis added)--especially as it pertains to Scripture (cf. Nicholas' "First Prologue" 191ff; "Second Prologue" 143ff.). Few responsible medieval exegetes would arrogate to themselves as auctor the principle authority of the text or even of their own commentary on it, let alone reduce the essential truth of inspired Scripture to the intentions of such demonstrably fallible men as Moses, David, Solomon, or Peter. Rather, like those "twelfth century exegetes" whom Minnis attempts to de-legitimize, the vast majority of medieval writers would affirm that "the human writer of Scripture was important in proportion to the extent to which he had provided (perhaps unwittingly) part of the vast pattern of meaning supposed to lie behind the literal sense of Scripture"--it being "this pattern which the exegetes strove to describe, not the individual contribution of any human auctor" as "[d]iscussions of authorship hurried past personal factors to discover what riches God, the source of auctoritas, had hidden in the text" (72; cf. Nicholas' "First Prologue" 266ff.; "Second Prologue" 75, 87ff.). But, whereas for Minnis, this seems to be a negative feature, with "[t]he notion of an auctor as an agent engaged in literary activity [being] submerged" so that "the truth of the Bible was maintained at the expense of the human contributors" (72), for the medieval exegete, it is definitely a positive feature, with the truth being expressed not in spite of, but through, those same contributors.

Many of the weaknesses in Minnis' theory thus seem to stem from his inadequate definitions of key terms such as the "literal sense," "literalistic Jewish exegesis," and "auctor." Each of these requires a context which Minnis denies them: the "literal sense" must be defined in relation to the text, meaning, and the other senses; the "Jewish literal"

must be defined against "Christian" or other "literals"; and auctor must be defined in relation to some standard of auctoritas. Though Minnis occasionally seems to be a bit more comprehensive in his understanding of the "literal" (e.g. 73-74), he continually insists on setting the role of the human auctor against that of the divine auctor (as the latter operates via inspiration)--even though his own study of Nicholas of Lyra makes clear that the "distinction between the two efficient causes" of Scripture (God and the human author) "does not imply any disharmony between the intentions of the two auctores" (91). As well, Minnis completely rejects any referential significance for either the literal or the human auctor. For him,

the exegete has the task of sifting the literal sense of the human auctor, deciding when his meaning is expressed 'properly speaking' (proprie dicta) and when it is expressed figuratively (figurate) the fact of divine inspiration of Scripture no longer interfered with thorough examination of the literary issues involved. The roles played by the human auctores, and the literary forms and devices which they had employed in their works, were established as features of the literal sense, as facets of their personal purposes in writing. (74)

Such solipsistic homocentricism inevitably handicaps a reading theory meant to apply to a fundamentally referential literature.

Similarly, Minnis' unwillingness to engage the issue of the "Jewish literal," reflects his penchant for easy and glib dismissal of semitic influences, either Jewish or Arabic, in medieval reading theory. From Nicholas Trevet's work, Minnis concludes only "that the Jews were, and are, adept at expounding the words of the human auctor, even though they fail to

grasp the spiritual significance intended by the divine auctor" (86). As for the Jewish influence upon Nicholas of Lyra, Minnis makes only a few general comments as to Nicholas' "extensive use of rabbinic opinion" and to his complaint "that the sensus litteralis, the foundation of all other sense of Scripture, has been much obscured" (86). Minnis does not examine or even comment on the connection between the "Jewish" and the "literal" in Nicholas' or anyone else's work--though he does later twist Nicholas' reliance upon the rabbis to his own purposes, stating: "The opinions of the 'Hebrew doctors', functioning within the framework of the Aristotelian causes, encourage an emphasis on the identity of individual auctores" (92; emphasis added). Arabic scholarship likewise receives short shrift: note, for example, that Minnis attempts a study of Aristotelian influence in the Middle Ages from the classical text, rather than Averroistic Aristotle which was, in fact, more widely available and influential than the original text. In Minnis' assessment, though

The translation of Averroes' 'Middle Commentary' on the Poetica, which Hermann the German made in 1256, was certainly known to such schoolmen as Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas ... in general, it would seem that the Poetica was disseminated mainly through excerpt-literature, in the form of fragments; it was chopped up into sententious gobbets rather than assimilated in toto. (141)

For apparently personal reasons, he prefers to base his study on these fragments rather than avail himself of the more comprehensive, Averroistic text.

Such "extraneous" matters as adequately defined terms seem of little concern to Minnis, though, as he focuses on "the literary issues involved"

(74). From his point of view, all that seems to matter is the "literary" and the "literal" (in so far as it furthers the literary). For him, it is enough that "Thirteenth century schoolmen produced a critical vocabulary which enabled the literary features of Scriptural texts to be analysed thoroughly, and which encouraged the emergence in the fourteenth century of a more liberal attitude to classical poetry" (6). According to Minnis, "Scriptural auctores were being read literally, with close attention being paid to those poetic methods believed to be part of the literal sense; pagan poets were being read allegorically or 'moralised'--and thus the twain could meet" (6). In this, he both expounds and demonstrates just how precisely text-bound, academic, and "modern" rather than "medieval" his theory actually is.

Frequently, in reading Minnis' work, one gets the impression that he has at best a vague notion both of the "medieval sensibility" and of what is required of a "medieval" engagement of medieval texts. His principle (and paradoxical) deficiencies in this area seem to be suggested by the analogies he develops to explain his own critical endeavour. An early analogy, for example, that of a medieval window, reveals the awkward objectivity he attempts to maintain. Here, as elsewhere, Minnis reflects an uncertainty of intent and method. On the one hand, he insists:

that the strangeness (what some would call the 'alterity') of late medieval literary theory will to some extent free us from the 'blind modernism' which obscures our view of the past. We cannot understand how Chaucer exploited or reacted against the literary theory of his day until we understand what that theory was; his extensive 'defamiliarization' (notably of literary convention and

genre) cannot be appreciated until we know what was normal to him and what was not. (7)

Yet, rather than responding to the demands of either the literary theory or practice of the period, Minnis figuratively places between himself and his text "a window on the medieval world of books," a window which "To our gaze ... may seem small and its glass unclear and distorting, but these, after all are the characteristic feature of a medieval window, indications that it is genuine and historically right" (7). He mis-understands: medieval glaziers, like medieval theorists and writers, worked for light and clarity, not obfuscation. Any distortion or obscurity in their product was incidental, resulting from inadequacies of materials and methods. It was not intended originally and, therefore, ought not to be intentionally reconstructed as part of the "true view" of the Middle Ages.

Similarly, in the "Preface" to the Second Edition of his Medieval Theory of Authorship, Minnis develops an extended "mountain" analogy to account for the reader's engagement of text and the derivation of meaning. He ignores medieval and Biblical mountain imagery which is dominated by a single, defining mountain (e.g. Dante's mountain in The Divine Comedy; the Mount [singular] of Sinai, Zion, Olivet, etc.) and dismisses any such unified concept as being

in the spirit of certain forms of modern 'New Criticism', wherein interpretation of a text is envisaged as being rather like many people climbing a single mountain, confident that, on its sun-kissed summit, they will all meet, shake hands and reconcile their differences, discussing (often wryly, for some took wrong turns) the relative merits of the several routes to the top, but now united in the conviction that they share the secret of F6 (or

whatever) (xvi-xvii).

Instead, Minnis proposes that

medieval textuality seems to offer a veritable range of mountains which are very different in shape and size, and hence demand different strategies ... Any one of these mountains, moreover, may have several peaks, of varying or equal importance as the case may be ... Indeed--and here our metaphor breaks down completely--one often perceives a medieval reader/author making his own mountain in the very act of climbing. (xvii)

Like his first analogy of the window, this rationale for pluralism may sound plausible, but it is far from what the "medieval" texts themselves seem to suggest: the medieval reader, like the people of Israel, is called to "the mount of God," singular and referential, not to "the mountains of mammon" plural, solipsistic, and self-created (cf. Ex. 3:1, 24:13; Ps. 48:1f., 74:2, 78:68, etc.).

Resulting from and further compounding this unfortunate state of affairs, it seems that Minnis, in rejecting a unified, referentially based medieval schema, also confuses both his categories of reference and his own argument. On the one hand, in relation to Nicholas' work, he stresses that ... the relationship between analysis of finis and analysis of literary features was not merely one of non-interference. The former provided a theoretical basis on which the latter could rest. The efficient cause and the final cause were not alternative aspects of analysis which competed for the attention of the commentator: they were complementary, and the one supported the other within a hierarchial system of analysis. (93)

Yet, on the other hand, reacting against those same "twelfth-century exegetes" who supposedly held that "the truth of the Bible was maintained at the expense of its human contributors" (72), Minnis privileges, almost exclusively, the individual human auctor and the individual text as literary entity. His concern is with "authorial role and literary form," especially the "authorial role or function--sometimes termed the author's 'office' (officium)" as it "is manifest by two facets of the author's individuality ... his individual literary activity and his individual moral activity" (5). Failing to comprehend that the human auctor is part of "the truth of the Bible" and that individual "literary and moral activity" ought not to be separated from the text being engaged, Minnis attempts to deal with the text, reading theory, and medieval commentaries from a wholly uninvolved, objective position--even while granting to the human element (auctor and reader) subjective interpretative rights. The result is a confusing, unsatisfying, and dysfunctional account of an inherently significant influence in medieval literary theory.

The primary flaw in Minnis' work, then, that which keeps him from realizing the essentially referential and efficacious nature of the theories being propounded in many of the prologues he studies, seems to be two-fold, partly conceptual and partly methodological. In his sympathy for classical models, techniques, and categories, Minnis underemphasizes a fact that he quite clearly knows: that, for medieval scholars, "the authoritative text par excellence, the 'Book of Life' and the book of books, [was] the Bible" (4), not the prologues to it. In his celebration of the medieval use of the Aristotelian prologue, he seems to have forgotten that, for the medieval writer, the prologue was merely a tool, not an end in itself. Using "the

Aristotelian theory of causality" to account for what he perceives as "a new awareness of the integrity of the individual human author," Minnis thus mistakenly attempts to connect "the individuality of the human auctor and the 'literal sense' which he was supposed to express" (75). Misconstruing the role of the human auctor as well as the nature of the literal sense, Minnis wrests the "efficient cause" (the auctor or motivating agent of the text), from the Aristotelian schema of four causes, invests it with the significance normally reserved for the "final cause" (the auctor's ultimate end or objective in writing), and declares it the final repository of valid meaning for medieval texts. Perhaps as a corrective to his own mistaken notion that in conventional, medieval theories of exegesis, "an auctor as an agent engaged in literary activity was submerged" (72), Minnis attempts to reclaim the literal sense as the level of "literary" significance by detaching the text and its human author from their ultimate meaning and effect--the two poles of reality which, in fact, validate the work within a medieval schema.

However, though it is inappropriately author-bound and, if it is considered from a medieval point of view, excessively homocentric, Minnis' work is not without positive value for this present work. In both general and specific aspects, it offers much to the study and theory of authorship that makes Nicholas' contribution increasingly accessible. Most fundamentally, it emphasizes that "the prologues to ... commentaries are valuable repositories of medieval theory of authorship, i.e. the literary theory centered on the concepts of auctor and auctoritas" (1)--an idea of some import when much of Nicholas' theory of reading is articulated in his three "Prologues" to the Postillae. As well, Minnis explains the "duplex

causa efficiens" ("two-fold efficient cause") which argues for two levels of authorship in a text and which is "a useful formula for summary description of the inspired authorship of Biblical texts" (79). As Minnis explains it, God was regarded as the first auctor or the Unmoved Mover of such a book, whereas the human auctor was both moved (by God) and moving (in producing the text) (79). The corresponding implications of a double intent in a text make that much more comprehensible Nicholas' bringing together of the typological (that which God intends) with the historical (that which man includes overtly and knowingly in his text) under a comprehensive sensus literalis (e.g. Nicholas on Ps. 2; Appendix B.iv). It also has application to the study of a text like The Canterbury Tales wherein the authorship, the "efficient cause," of the text (both of the frame and often of tales) is not merely double, but multiple. From such an understanding, Minnis also unpacks something of the multiple signification as well as the multiple and referential process of composition which is possible within a schema of "double, treble and quadruple efficient causality manifest[ing] ... the essential unity and rapport of the roles of God and man in the production of Scripture" (81)--another important concept in Nicholas' bringing together of the historical and the referential, the human and the divine, in his unique duplex sensus literalis ("Second Prologue" 144).

Finally, Minnis expounds the "intellectual climate" of the age in which "a writer could justify his own literary procedure or forma tractandi by appealing to a Scriptural model, without in any way offending against the great auctoritas of the Bible" (167). He makes suggestions as to how this might apply to Chaucer. For example, he suggests that

When Chaucer justified his practice of speaking 'rudeliche and large' after the manner of the Canterbury pilgrims, he was able to

cite the precedent of a modus loquendi found in the writings of those auctores with the greatest possible degree of auctoritas, the Four Evangelists who recorded the life of Christ ... (167; cf. to CT I.739-40).

In so doing, Minnis himself brings his point back to Nicholas. He notes that to defend "his translation of Melibee on the grounds that it preserved the sententia of the original text, Chaucer could refer to the fact that, although the words of the Four Evangelists often differ, their profound meaning is single and uniform" (cf. CT VII.940-955), an idea for which "Chaucer need have looked no further than the general prologue to Nicholas of Lyre's commentary on the gospels" (167).

Yet, though Minnis contributes significantly (both negatively and positively) to the modern study of medieval literary theory, there is an irony in what he achieves. Reacting against the allegorical readings of "Robertsonianism," Minnis makes an error in judgment similar to that of Robertson: he attempts a one-dimensional explanation of the widely varied and multiform realities and functions of medieval literature. Unable (or unwilling) to engage the texts sympathetically in their own terms and within their own contexts (including the referential schema spelled out by Robertson), Minnis attempts to tie all the variety of textual signification to a single element, the human author. In rejecting Robertson's "otherworldly" readings, Minnis fails to grasp an essential aspect of medieval reading and referentiality: that the human element in the text (both author-agent and reader-participant) is interactively, effectively, and referentially an intrinsic part of the text's truth. Minnis' view of the human author as the repository of the text's intent and meaning is a

useful (if partial) exercise: it reveals much about a significant link in the referential process, the human writer being, of course, an integral aspect of any process which moves a human reader through a text to a divine referential base. Yet, though this idea is explicitly stated in Minnis' work, it is dismissed as "twelfth century" and out-dated by thirteenth century scholasticism: "In twelfth century exegesis," he writes,

the primacy of allegorical interpretation had hindered the emergence of a viable literary theory: God was believed to have inspired the human writers of Scripture in such a way which defied literary description. Twelfth-century exegetes were interested in the auctor mainly as a source of authority. But in the thirteenth century, a new type of exegesis emerged, in which the focus had shifted from the divine auctor to the human auctor of Scripture. It became fashionable to emphasise the literal sense of the Bible, and the intention of the human auctor was believed to be expressed by the literal sense. As a result, the exegetes' interest in their text became more literary. (5)

Despite such "literary" awareness, therefore, Minnis' contribution to the study of medieval literary theory is ultimately handicapped by his inability to see the reader through the text to its meaning. Whereas Robertson seems often unable to accept the text as it stands and is therefore forced to go beyond the literal sense in his search for its "true" signification, Minnis seems to reject that for which medieval texts stand and is therefore confined to the surface signification of the text. Both critics limit themselves by a too narrow conception of the literal which, being circumscribed by verbal signification (Robertson) or by human subjectivity (Minnis), compromises the meaning of the text's words.

J. B. Allen and the Ethical Poetic

The work of the third modern critic of medieval literary theory to be considered here, J. B. Allen, acts as an initial supplement and as a corrective of sorts to the type of error into which both Robertson and Minnis fall: both attempting to dominate the literature they engage, Robertson "dominates" the text by forcing the "meaning" of medieval texts into his own rigid paradigm, e.g. the "Maid in the Moor" ("Historical Criticism" 17), while Minnis makes the meaning of the text subject to human whimsy—for him, "'good men' ... can take the morality if they want to. But only if they want to" (xvi). Allen, on the other hand, more fully allows himself and his study to be led by the literature and the theory of the age. He readily admits that what he found in his study and where he found himself after it were far removed from where he started out and from his initial expectations. "My work began," he writes, "as an attempt to find, in the work of the late medieval critics, a theory of 'poetry,' properly so called. But the evidence was recalcitrant; no such theory could be found" (The Ethical Poetic 10):

I went to the medieval commentaries on literary texts, and to the manuals for writers, expecting to find a theory of poetry But I did not find what I expected My project, to trace the notion of poetry past the twelfth century, was a classic exercise in the history of ideas.

But the evidence refused to behave I was indeed surprised, and for a long time baffled, by the fact that the late medieval commentators refused to satisfy any of my three basic

expectations: for discourse from an Other, for a literary form defined by its text alone, even for a single category which might properly be called 'literature'.

What the evidence finally forced me to see was that, if I would give up 'literature,' I could have everything back, and in an even more powerful and admirable mode. This mode ... is the mode of the ethical.

In giving up the use of the motorcycle [Allen's "frivolous analogy" for poetry] for its own sake, one gives up nothing-- rather, one is forced to transform the practical by experiencing it, as such, by including a dimension whose content might, if taken separately, be called aesthetic. To do so does not abolish or omit the aesthetic. Rather it de-trivializes it by integrating it into the very essence of the real.

What the medieval critics asked me to do was give up literature, in order that I might get poetry back de-trivialized, delivered from that dismissal into which category 'literature' had put it. Poems, of course, in so far as they are objects, or instances of human behaviour, remained the same But under the definitions of the medieval critics, they enjoyed a different status, they benefit from a different ideology. They are not literature, but ethics; thus their presence to and in affairs we are pleased to call practical transforms the practical itself into something pleasing as well as useful. (xi, xii, xiii)

Accordingly, Allen considers himself an active part of the audience for a medieval text, an "audience which, paradoxically, under medieval standards, does not stand outside or over against a poem, but [which] ideally is

contained within it" (xvii).

Striving to re-approximate the medieval "reconciliation ... between the audience of poetry, and the content of poetry" (33) (that which makes texts immediately and truly effective), Allen attempts to engage texts in their own terms: he approaches medieval works in a "medieval" fashion and "proceed[s] from the category which contains poems [ethics]; through their external and internal features, to that which the poems contain" (xvii). In *accessus* after *accessus*, Allen finds one dominating principle: "Any text which has anything to do with human behaviour 'subponitur ethice' (6). As he notes:

Medieval critics insisted, both in their conventional classification of their texts as ethics, and in their tendency to moralize and make moral allegories, that their texts constituted no special, aesthetic, poetic category. Their awareness of the difference between a verbal art and the text which results from its practice, and their very occasional awareness of the fact that a text's content was theological, scientific, or speculative, have, indeed, a great deal of medieval doctrinal importance, but cannot be taken as proving the existence of anything like a modern definition of poetry.

Therefore, most fundamentally, Allen insists:

What needs to be emphasized first and above all is that all poetry--in fact, anything made of words--belongs to some branch of philosophy or other For the most part, texts we would call poems were, in general, conventionally classified as ethics. This fact means two complementary things. First, it means that in the later Middle Ages, there existed no intellectual category

precisely corresponding to the one we mean when we say 'poetry' or 'literature'.... On the other hand, all the features of the poem's textuality which we admire by the word 'poetry,' continue to exist--ostentation of formal strategies, material involving heightened decorum or attention to both, that assumption of self-importance which we label with such words as 'mythic' or 'archetypal.' These features continue to exist, but now not as qualities of poetry but as qualities of ethics (10, 11)

Such an understanding allows him to "get back poetry de-trivialized," and, in re-establishing poetry as an expression of ethics, "transforms [even] the practical itself into something pleasing as well as useful" (xiii).

Finding that "this centripetal procedure fits both the material ... and the ideal requirements of logic," Allen notes that it also "has the further advantage of leaving the audience, at the end, inside the material" (xvii). And, "if the poem's effect is a part of its content, then there is an absolute continuity between the people who read it and the people about whom they read. It becomes, or properly should become, impossible to tell or improper to ask where the world of the poem ends, and the world of the reader begins, or which is which" (33). Thus, "particulars of story" become "immediately exemplary"; "medieval theory achieve[s] a reality ... and a genuinely normative essence for daily life" (32). In such a "textual" reality, "If one wished to be a good man, he must behave as if in a story" (32). Though Allen's system of reading does not go so far as Nicholas' (or Chaucer's) in "reading" the reader back out of the text into the world as an expression of the text's essential truth, it does go farther than the works of other "modern medievalists": it privileges the fundamentally ethical and effective nature of medieval poetry and insists that the forms of a poem,

its conceptual and formal structures, are part of the ethical as well as the effective import of a medieval text. The two aspects of "the Aristotelian formal cause" which he defines principally are the forma tractanda (the "form of treatment") and the forma tractandus (the "literal outline"). "[U]nder the rubric of forma tractanda," he discusses "the medieval sense of those mental and verbal procedures by which a text is made" (72); under forma tractandi, "a critical concern for the unity of a work which is achieved by the ordering of its parts ...the form, of any single work" (72).

Thus, in bringing about "a unity between a private person's personal action and the various public and literary definitions it imitates and exemplifies" (33), Allen's presentation of medieval literary theory explicates both medieval life and reading as fundamentally "textual" exercises occurring within a category of art, reference, and action "which can only be designated 'ethics-hyphen-poetry'; which contains elements of both; and, which is distinctive by virtue of its existence as a single, self-consistent category" (13). Such a hybrid category, as a viable agent for analysis, arises from an awareness of the essentially unified nature of man's speech and actions, from the recognition that "the verbal act which makes a poem and the moral act which leads a life are the same" (13).

Due in large part to the "semitic" model of reading which Allen embraces through his use of the Averroistic Aristotle, such personal, effective, and referential consequences of textual engagement derive from Averroes' insistence that

consuetudo displaces action, or plot, and makes it unnecessary to specify as separate parts either 'actiones' or 'mores.'

Credulitas [the second essential aspect of the Averroistic Poetics], correspondingly, is the universal or general category of

which the mental postures of human beings in the face of the truth, by which they are made blessed, are instances and examples. As consuetudo comprehends actions in material reality, so credulitas comprehends acts of mind of which Truth is the measure and judge. Both of these terms, in practice, mean two things, in that they refer to the content of praise, and to the effect of it.

(26)

Emerging from "a morality [which is] always conscious of its audience; a way of being good as a human being which exists, unfolds itself, as an act of communication as well as an act which accomplishes whatever it intrinsically does" (21), the medieval aesthetic and the ethical are thus perceived as not only coming together, but as being complementary aspects of a single impulse. As in the hermeneutic of Nicholas, form, function, and effect become part of a unified continuum. Poetry being an ethical dimension of rhetoric and rhetoric itself being a way to find truth, the concept of poetry as an ethical exercise leads to practical results which are married to reference or "representation": resulting (ideally, at least) in delight, but also in "insight," poetry should also lead the reader to "honest customs," "laudable actions," and "beatifying beliefs" (24, 26). As Allen quotes from Averroes:

... all poetic language is divided into two: likening, and that by which likening is made ... and the aspects of fictional language according to which it is representative are two: for all representation either refers [literally, orders a place for itself] through the representation of its contrary and afterward it is changed to its proper intention (and this is the mode which is called among them 'indirection'), or it is representation of

the thing itself without making any mention of its contrary, and this they call signification ... And certainly it is representation or imitation which is the basis and foundation of this art because there is no delight in recalling anything one recalls without its representation, but the delight clearly occurs, along with insight, when the thing has been represented (24).

This personal and effective dimension whereby all aspects of the poem's form, content, and meaning serve a single end is perhaps the most distinctive feature of Allen's "ethical poetic." It redresses those forms of "Robertsonian" practice which fossilize the text as a single-purpose cultural artifact and counters that in Minnis' theory which would allow the text to be continually transformed according to individual fancies. Though using Arabic rather than Hebrew categories, its emphasis upon a universal truth underlying all texts which operates via the particular aspects of poetry for immediate human effect is not unlike the reading theory of Nicholas—or of the philosophy proposed by Wyclif. In fact, in differentiating between the "true" Aristotelian and the Averroistic Aristotelian categories of poetry, Allen lays out the essential philosophical distinction which underlies the unique work of both Nicholas and Wyclif:

The Aristotelian terms 'plot' and 'character' emphasize the particular; whatever universal quality or impression one may in the end reach, its essence is the existence and significance of a particular action, at a particular time, by particular persons. Averroes is just the reverse; whatever is particular in poetry is exemplary rather than essential. The real essence of the poem is

something universal. The particulars of which, empirically, representation must be made are instrumental, not absolute; their presence has normative overtones which they define but do not dominate. Thus the primary ontology of this poetry, qua words, tends toward or desires the philosophically realist, not nominalist. At the same time its modus procedendi is gross, typical, figural; what it literally contains, as material, can only be particular

... dependence on array, on the grouping of particulars which, as it were, triangulate a norm, is only to be expected in an age whose philosophical convictions tended to be more and more nominalist, but whose sense of God made it impossible for the normative, and even the philosophical realist, to be given up altogether. No medieval philosophical position is as nominalist, in absolute terms, as is the modern existentialism which centers our ethics and even our metaphysics. It is therefore impossible to suppose that medieval particulars would have been seen, as ours are, as indefinite, various, possibly absurd, simply existent. Medievally, what one knows, at the beginning, is particulars; but what one comes to know through them, by the aid of reason and faith, is truth. What the ars laudandi achieves, therefore, is the representation of the true, of the universal, as both enactable (consuetudo) and credible (credulitas). (27)

All three (Allen/Averroes, Nicholas, and Wyclif) preserve this particularity of the individual, "literary" elements of a text as the foundational "literal" reality of a work. At the same time, they see the higher reality of the text in that which it figures, or in that to which the particulars

direct the reader. Ultimately, as Allen notes, "Medievally, what one knows, at the beginning, is particulars; but what one comes to know through them, by the aid of reason and faith, is truth. What the ars laudandi achieves, therefore, is the representation of the true, of the universal, as both enactable (consuetudo) and credible (credulitas)" (27). Such a call to belief and action is the central concern of the late medieval, "textual" hermeneutic.

The Present Contribution

By outlining a logic of text and tradition which was likely available to Chaucer and which, I shall argue, was principally operative in his major work, this thesis offers the modern reader an opportunity to reclaim yet further aspects of medieval sign theory and, more importantly, something more of medieval meaning. Clearly, Robertson, Minnis, and Allen have delineated the essential parameters of an exegetical approach to medieval texts. But, the present study attempts to address certain of the theoretical lacunae made apparent through their work. Drawing predominantly upon primary (that is, principally medieval) texts rather than secondary works (especially, those modern and critical) to frame my argument, I attempt to read the structure of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales according to the logic of contemporary sources. And, because the full extent of Chaucer's reading--though recognized as vast--is perhaps ultimately unknowable in any definitive sense, it seems reasonable to practice an inclusive rather than an exclusive engagement of his literary milieu. Such an approach may well suggest viable contexts or influences other than (and complementary to) those conventionally received. As principally relevant to the present

study, this includes the Hebrew and Jewish contexts of Scripture as well as rabbinic scholarship. Specifically, considering that Hebrew approaches to Scripture were a current issue in the social and academic contexts of the time (see Smalley, note 8), my work attempts to provide, expound, and apply the Hebrew context which would have been operative in a fourteenth century formulation of the sensus literalis as well as in a "literary" theory of reading based upon it and upon its underlying semiotic (both being outgrowths of the late medieval pursuit of the "hebraica veritas" [8]).

Through my thesis, then, I attempt not to overturn but to complement, as a form of balancing correction, the work of Robertson, Minnis, and Allen. My work outlines an aspect of the medieval context with which these critics appear to have been unfamiliar and re-aligns their theories with Chaucer's practice of text as well as with his contemporaries' reception of it. Being as concerned as these critics with the process and consequences of "right" reading, this work thus represents a further inquiry into the formulation, the meaning, and the significance of wisdom and the ethical as it is represented and reflected in late medieval texts--specifically those of Chaucer and of his immediate theoretical milieu. Reading Chaucer within and against his Scriptural and exegetical precedents, this work purposes not only to broaden one of the "small ... unclear and distorting ... medieval window[s]" (Minnis 7) through which a modern reader might access a much earlier and intellectually as well as morally distinct age, but to draw the reader through that "window" after a fashion, inviting him or her--as does The Canterbury Tales itself--to participate in a narrative polyphony which embraces not only the varied tales, but the histories, sources, variations, and receptions of them as well.

The organization of the work as a whole is fairly straightforward. Section One, consisting of Chapters One and Two, examines the central elements of Nicholas' hermeneutic. It briefly delineates the sources and principles upon which Nicholas, as the principal synthesizer of diverse traditions, drew to expound his comprehensive and Judeo-Christian conception of the literal, his Hebraic notion of a polyphonous referential, and his articulation of a necessarily active, even interactive process of "reading from within" the language and logic of the text. Section Two, consisting of Chapters Three and Four, provides the theoretical development of his hermeneutic: first, as it was philosophically expanded and adapted by Wyclif for the particular demands of the contemporary English situation; second, as it was likely transmitted to and received by Chaucer. Section Three, consisting of Chapters Five and Six, explores the practical use that Chaucer seems to make of this hermeneutic as both a structuring principle for The Canterbury Tales as a whole and as the methodological origin of various exegetical exercises occurring within the text as well as within and across specific tales--two of the various textual levels on which the reader is engaged directly and vigorously in the process of interpretation. Thus, though much of this study is focused on the models and mechanisms by which an interactive, effective, and referentially directed engagement of even secular texts can occur, the work as a whole is designed to conclude in a close and critical examination of The Canterbury Tales as a structural and conceptual unity based upon wisdom, right reading, and ethical purpose as these seem to be undergirded by the Biblical, and specifically the Hebraic, semiotic available to the fourteenth century through Nicholas' work.

Notes

1

On Nicholas: C. V. Langlois, "Nicholas de Lyre, frere mineur," Histoire litteraire Francaise 36 (1927): 355ff.; H. Hailperin, Rashi and the Christian Scholars. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 1963. On Wyclif: H. B. Workman, John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926; K. B. McFarlane, John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity. London: English Universities Press, 1952; Beryl Smalley, "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma." Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes 24 (1964): 73-89; Smalley, "John Wyclif's Postilla super totam bibliam." The Bodelian Library Record 4 (1953): 186-205.

2

See David Lyle Jeffrey, "Chaucer and Wyclif: Biblical Hermeneutic and Literary Theory in the XIVth Century," in Chaucer and Scriptural Tradition, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1984), 109-114.

3

See, for example: J. B. Allen, The Friar as Critic. Nashville: Vanderbilt, 1971 and The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982; H. de Lubac, Exegese medievale. Paris: Aubier, 1959-61; A. J. Minnis, Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100 - c. 1375. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987 and Medieval Theory of Authorship. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1988; D. W. Robertson, Jr. A Preface to Chaucer. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962.

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Unless otherwise specified, all references to Robertson's essays are from the collection Essays in Medieval Culture. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.

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Unless otherwise specified, textual notes are from the First Edition of A.J. Minnis' Medieval Theory of Authorship. London: Scolar Press (1984); "Preface" notes are from the Second Edition (1988).

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Unless otherwise specified, textual notes are from J. B. Allen's The Ethical Poetic in the Later Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction. Toronto: Univerity of Toronto Press, 1982.

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The principle texts of these writers being: H. de Lubac, Exegese medievale: Les quatres sens de L'Ecriture. Paris: Aubier, 1959-61; H.-I. Marrou, Saint Aujustin et le fin de la culture antique. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1958; Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952; Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. vv. 1-4. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971-1984.

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See "Hebraica Veritas" in Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible

(Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952), pp. 329-355, for a survey of the work of Roger Bacon, Herbert Bosham, Gerard of Huy, William de la Mare, Nicholas Trevet, and other late medieval Christian Hebraists. See also: C. Spicq, Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exegese latine au Moyen Age (Paris: Vrin, 1944), pp. 335-42; H. Hailperin, "The Hebrew Heritage of Christian Biblical Scholarship," Historia Judaica 5 (1943): 133-134; and, Grabois, A. "The Hebraica veritas and Jewish Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century," Speculum 50 (1975): 613-624.

Chapter 1

"Adher[ing] to the Literal Sense":

The "Textual" Hermeneutic of Nicholas of Lyra

Heuēnes tellen out the glorie of God; and the firmament tellith the werkis of hise hondis.

The dai tellith out to the dai a word; and nyȳt schewith kunnyng to the nyȳt.

No langagis ben, nether wordis; of whiche the voices of hem ben not herd.

The soun of hem yede out in to al erthe; and the wordis of hem yeden out in to the endis of the world.

(Ps. 18:1-4 [V]; WB, II)

The "New" Hermeneutic of the Fourteenth Century

By the fourteenth Century, there were three principal ways of engaging Scriptural texts in Western Europe. Chronologically first and perpetually significant was the monastic "proof text" method. Dominant from the seventh to the eleventh centuries, it follows the pattern of allegorical readings established by Philo and Origen, respectively the greatest Jewish and Christian exemplars of the "Alexandrian" school of exegesis (in whom the "proof text" method found its favourite models; cf. Philo, The Creation of the World 69, The Migration of Abraham 89-93, Questions and Their Solutions on Genesis 3.16; Origen, On First Principles 2.11; 4.9-11, 15; Sermon on Numbers 23.4; Commentary on the Song of Songs, Prologue). Surviving in certain meditative drills, this approach to the Word views all of nature and literature as concealing and, when properly appreciated, as revealing spiritual truths which are immediately beneficial to the individual soul. Methodologically, it begins with a concept or passage drawn from Scripture or from one of the various auctoritates (or, as with St. Francis, with a scene or detail from nature; e.g. his hymns to "Sister Water," "Brother Wind," even "Brother Death") and proceeds associatively, being an inspirational, meditative "reading" of text (Scriptural, authoritative, or natural) that is directed primarily to the furthering of one's sense of worship and to the attainment of Christian perfection. Some of the best examples of this type of reading may be found in the sermons and meditations of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, especially on the Song of Songs (see Appendix B.i.a).

Coincident with the late medieval reshaping of intellectual life, there emerged a second major method of reading in the twelfth century. Developing

alongside monastic exegesis, the "summa" method, with its disputatio and the quaestio, became characteristic of the scholastics. Reading topically and analytically according to the logica moderna, this approach to Christian ecriture often subsumed both Text and topic under the technical terminology and conceptual apparatus of investigation by which the theologian attempted to demonstrate or substantiate previously established doctrine. Largely following the rigid, Aristotelian categories of "causes," this method focused on the meaning of a text through a process of division, sub-division, and definition. Advocates of this method composed compendia--systematized compilations of opinions, propositions, and reasoned expositions--of theology, philosophy, or canon law and read Scripture not for direct personal and spiritual edification, but to gain knowledge and to resolve theological controversies. This system of textual engagement is well exemplified in Peter Lombard's Sentences (c. 1155-1158) which is divided into four books according to topics (rather than texts discussed), his primary divisions being the Trinity, the Creation and Sin, the Incarnation and the Virtues, and the Sacraments and Last Things (for an example of his method see Appendix B.i.b). Thomas Aquinas, whose Summa Theologica superseded the Sentences as the standard textbook of Catholic theology in the thirteenth century, brought the method to its fullest expression. Attempting to make the method and its privileging of reason more immediately relevant to the Church, Aquinas' great work--divided in three parts--deals with God, with man's return to God, and with Christ as the way of man to God (for examples of his method, see Appendix B.i.c).

Arising largely as a "corrective" to these two ways of reading, a third method, the "textual," matured in the fourteenth century and re-focused exegetical efforts on the primary Text. Characteristic of certain

"reactionary" exegetes such as Nicholas of Lyra and Wyclif, this "textual" method propounded a hermeneutic in which Scripture is read according to its own inherent logic and its own implicit purposes (as these are understood within the community of faith). Methodologically, it argued for a continuous reading of the Text which emphasized the unity, the context, and the literal-historical foundation of Scripture. Re-centralizing the text, it made the process of reading once again an organic exercise: through engaging the text as a referential constant, the reader became able to be instructed both intellectually and morally as the text was studied in the form of running commentary (for examples of Nicholas' commentary, see Appendix B.i.c).

While each of these three forms of reading had advantages well suited to its particular purpose, the third allowed unique opportunities for the creative writer as well as for the literary critic. To the author bold enough to explore its practical implications, it offered a vital, comprehensible, and immediately viable model for artistic imitation through its clear exposition of the structural principles and method of meaning in Scripture. And its value is not limited to the fourteenth century. For the contemporary critical reader, it can advantage access to the otherwise sometimes perplexing logic which seems to govern The Canterbury Tales, one of the greatest secular texts of the period. Though most vernacular writers of the fourteenth century (such as Gower and Langland) preferred to continue in the normative allegorical mode of composition and did not avail themselves of the possibilities suggested by the self-explicating, internally validating hermeneutic of Scripture delineated by Nicholas of Lyra and developed by John Wyclif, Chaucer seemed to have embraced it readily and, while incorporating elements and examples of all three methods

of reading, to take this third, "textual" method as his own compositional prototype. Appropriating the reclamation of the Old Testament sign theory, patterns of logic, and purposes of composition and reading which characterize the exegetical theories of fashionable, if controversial, commentators such as Nicholas and Wyclif, Chaucer seems to have structured his Tales along the lines of their "textual" hermeneutic, presenting his work as a sort of "secular scripture" in form, intent, and effect.

The idea of a secular text having a form and function similar to Scripture is not unprecedented in medieval literary theory. Dante, for example, in the "Accessus" to his poem for Can Grande della Scala (and in the more certain Convivio, 2.2-6), not only explained the meaning of the Divine Comedy in terms typical of Scriptural exegesis, but used a Scriptural example to illustrate his point when he wrote of his text:

... the meaning of this work is not of one kind only; rather the work may be described as 'polysemous,' that is, having several meanings; for the first meaning is that which is conveyed by the letter, and the next is that which is conveyed by what the letter signifies; the former of which is called the literal, while the latter is called allegorical, or mystical. And for the better illustration of this method of exposition, we may apply it to the following verses: 'When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion' [Ps. 113:1-2]. For if we consider the letter alone, the thing signified to us is the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses; if the allegory, our redemption through Christ is signified; if the moral

sense, the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified; if the anagogical, the passing of the sanctified soul from the bondage of the corruption of this world to the liberty of everlasting glory is signified. And although these mystical meanings are called by various names, they may one and all in a general sense be termed allegorical, inasmuch as they are different (diversi) from the literal or the historical

His particularly exegetical approach to language and text being clear, then, Dante expounded the possibilities and implications of it for his Divine Comedy:

This being understood, it is clear that the subject with regard to which the alternative meanings are brought into play, must be twofold. And therefore the subject of this work [the Divine Comedy] must be considered in the first place from the point of view of the literal meaning, and next from that of the allegorical interpretation. The subject, then, of the whole work, taken in the literal sense only, is the state of souls after death, pure and simple. For on and about that the argument of the whole work turns. If, however, the work be regarded from the allegorical point of view, the subject is man according as by his merits or demerits in the exercise of his free will he is deserving of reward or punishment by justice. (Paget Toynbee, trans. The Letters of Dante. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920; see also Richard H. Green, 118-128; Peter S. Hawkins, 59-71; Robert Hollander, 19-136)

Auerbach, assessing Dante's stated theory (and his practice of it) comments:

Certainly they [Dante's earthly "signs"] are all set fast in God's order, [and] certainly a great Christian poet has the right to preserve earthly humanity in the beyond, to preserve the figure in its fulfillment and to perfect the one and the other to the best of his capabilities. But Dante's great art carries the matter so far that the effect becomes earthly, and the listener is all too occupied by the figure in the fulfillment. The beyond becomes a stage for human beings and human passions. (Mimesis 201).

Against such a model and effect, Chaucer's particular appropriation of the distinctive "textual" exegesis of the fourteenth century as his hermeneutical model stands well apart: unlike Dante's "Biblical" readings, Chaucer's concern is not only with the "figure in fulfillment," but with the "figure" itself--with what constitutes it, with how it works and how it means as well as with how it engages the reader directly. Most obviously, Chaucer's work is distinctive in that it produces a revolutionary and ostensibly novel approach to both the reading and the writing processes. Recentralizing the text as an active, effectual, and referential agent, the "new" logic of composition which he adopts not only engages the reader, but it privileges the reader's internal intention rather than a formal method. Moreover, it responds to and subtly directs that intention to shape it and to guide the reader through the text's "meaning" to a final, manifest realization of the author's own intention. (On such interrelations of reader and authorial intention, compare David Lyle Jeffrey, "John Wyclif and the Hermeneutics of Reader Response" and A. J. Minnis, "Discussions of the 'Authorial Role' and 'Literary Form' in Late Medieval Scriptural Exegesis"; see also Minnis, "'Authorial Intention' and 'Literal Sense' in the

Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralf and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval History of Biblical Hermeneutics"). This incorporation of the reader into the interpretive process makes reading a truly interactive activity and engages the reader with the text wholly and directly rather than just spiritually (as in monastic readings) or just intellectually (as in scholastic readings). Further, by making this participation with and in the text central, the "textual" hermeneutic emphasizes the necessary correspondence of theory and praxis in a "right" reading. That is, for a reader truly to engage a text "textually," he must not only understand it but act "within" and upon it, becoming in intent and action a reflection of that to which the text itself refers (see comments on J. B. Allen in the "Introduction" above; see also Edward Peter Nolen, Now Through a Glass Darkly: Specular Images of Being and Knowing from Virgil to Chaucer. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990).

"New" only in that it deviates from the contemporary conventions of monastic and scholastic hermeneutics, the participatory form of reading which Chaucer adapts to secular literature is actually, in many respects, as old as Scripture itself, finding its origins in the sign theory and hermeneutic inherent in the very formation and presentation of the Divine Word as well as in early theories of translation. Studied and preserved by the Church Fathers such as Jerome and Augustine as well as by Jewish exegetes from Ezra to Rashi and David Kimhi, this ostensibly "new" hermeneutic simply recalls the reader and his reading to the earliest principles, concepts, and expectations of Scripture as these are "literally" evident in the Text. Though expressed variously throughout the Middle Ages, the need for a clear and initial understanding of the literal in its most

basic sense is expressed best by Hugh of St. Victor in his De sacramentis christiane fidei. Denouncing those among his contemporaries who allegorize excessively, he writes:

They say, 'We read the Scripture, but we do not read the letter. We do not care about the letter; we teach allegory.' But how do you read Scripture without reading the letter? For if you take away the letter, what is Scripture? 'We,' they reply, 'read the letter, but not according to the letter. For we read allegory and we expound the letter not according to the letter, but according to allegory.' But what is it to expound the letter without pointing out what the letter signifies?

As long as you remain ignorant of the letter, do not go around boasting about your understanding of Scripture. For to be ignorant of the letter is to be unaware of what the letter signifies and of what is signified by the letter. For that which is signified by the first [i.e. the letter] signifies still a third thing. Since, therefore, those things which the letter signifies are signs for spiritual understanding, how can they be [this kind of] signs for you when they are not yet signified to you? (Chapter 12)

Given its most thorough definition and development in Nicholas of Lyra's rhetorical and doctrinal expansions of the sensus literalis, this literal "sensing" of the Text constantly refers the reader to the Author, encompassing and reflecting His intent through the words, events, and narratives of Scripture. As the primary sense of the Text, it is the key to reading "Biblically" or "textually" in a culture grounded in Scripture, and it is the only foundation upon which other readings and interpretations may

be added or developed to clarify and apply the basic Word of Scripture.

Nicholas of Lyra, drawing upon a "construction" metaphor from the Didascalicon, explains:

... all [interpretations] presuppose the literal sense as the foundation. Whence, just as a building leaning off [its] foundations is inclined to collapse, so a mystical interpretation disconnected from the literal sense is considered to be unsuitable and unfitting, or at least less suitable in other equal respects and less fitting. For this reason it is necessary for the person who wishes to be proficient in the study of Sacred Scripture to begin with an understanding of the literal sense. [This is] especially [true] since one can base an argument on the literal sense alone, and not on a mystical sense, in order to prove or to demonstrate anything doubtful ("Second Prologue" 11-20)

Demanding of the reader a personal reckoning with the sensus literalis in its fullest signification, the "textual" method therefore expounds the Word by returning it to its own logic and ends as both the Text and its exegesis call for a morally responsible, intentionally sound reading.

Biblical Reference and Chaucer's Practice of It

The differences between this "Biblical" method of reading, as it is expounded by Nicholas, and Chaucer's practice of it are evident primarily in matters of authority and in the immediacy of referentiality which each author ascribes to his respective text and reader. In Nicholas' understanding of Scripture, Christ (the Author-Participant-Reader whose presentation of the Text Nicholas sets forth when he explains the

"Christian" way of reading) is not only an author of and participant in the Text He is "writing," but He is the very Substance and ultimate Author of it as well. Expressed most frequently in theological rather than theoretical terms, this "certain union ineffable" (John Chrysostom, Homilies on St. John 11.2) of diverse natures in Christ is at the heart of both Christianity and Christian literary theory. It is also made central to the uniquely referential yet self-reflexive Christian sign theory as Christ, "the Priest who offers and the Sacrifice offered ... design[s] that there should be a daily sign of this in the sacrifice of the Church, which, being His body, learns to offer herself through Him" (Augustine, The City of God 10.20). The extent of this union is best given expression by Vincent of Lerins in the Comminitory, Ch. 13 (Migne PL 50.656):

There is one and the same Christ, God and man, the same uncreated and created, the same unchangeable of suffering, the same by experience with both change and suffering, the same equal to the Father and inferior to the Father, the same begotten of the Father before time (before the world), the same born of his mother in time, ('in the world'), perfect God, perfect Man. In God, supreme divinity; in man, perfect humanity. Perfect humanity, I say, forasmuch as it has both soul and flesh; the flesh, truly flesh; our flesh, his mother's flesh; the soul, intellectual, endowed with mind and reason. There is then in Christ the Word, the soul, the flesh; but the whole is one Christ, one Son of God, and one Saviour and Redeemer; One, not I know not what corruptible confusion of Godhead and manhood, but by a certain entire and singular unity of Person. For the conjunction has not converted and changed the one nature into the other (which is the

characteristic error of the Arians) [or 'allegory'], but rather has in such wise compacted both into one, that while there always remains in Christ the singularity of one and the self-same Person, there abides eternally the characteristic property of each nature; whence it follows, that neither does God (the divine nature) ever begin to be body, nor does the body ever cease to be body . . . in Christ, each substance will forever retain its own characteristic property, yet without prejudice to the unity of Person.

Therefore, as the Ultimate End to which both history (in which He as God "composes" time) and the Christ event (in which He as homo deus acts, enacts, and "reads" that which He has written) refer, He is, in effect, both the Source and the Final Referent of writing as well as reading.

Chaucer, though author, narrator, character, and reader of and in The Canterbury Tales, never pretends to anything even vaguely approximating such definitive authority or significance. He quite clearly draws himself, in each of his roles, as a referring agent of the same fundamental calibre as the other text(s), characters, and events that he offers in The Tales. He makes of himself, his creative work, and his reading what Hebrew exegetes call 'otot, referential "signs" (see Chapter 2), which direct the attentions of the external reader to God, to His perspectives, and to His expectations for a "right" and efficacious reading of these and all texts. In the "Retraction" with which he concludes The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer accordingly submits his work and himself to a referential "reading" by his audience, attributing that which is worthy in it (and in him) to the "Lord Jhesu Crist" and that which is faulty to his own fallible (though not necessarily wicked) nature:

Now preye I to hem all that herkne this litel tretys or rede, that

if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem, that thereof they
 thanken oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al
 goodnesse./And if ther be anythyng that displese hem, I preye hem
 also that they arrette it to the defaute of myn unkonnyng, and
 nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyde bettre if I hadde had
 konnyng (X.1081-82).

More significantly, however, Chaucer also interprets or "re-reads" his own
 life and works himself, surrendering both to the mercy of the ultimate Judge
 (X.1084): petitioning for forgiveness for his "giltes ... translacions and
 enditynges of worldly vanitees" (X.1085), he asks for time to become a purer
 expression of the Word he is supposed to be translating into the world "so
 that I may been oon of hem at that day of doom that shulle be saved"
 (X.1091). Ultimately, it seems, he sees his "writerly" life as an act of
 personal reference. Not even attempting to "mean" anything in and of
 themselves, he and his works thus defer to the greater Text and to the
 greater Reader, finding their authorization in the words and examples of
 Scripture and their meaning in both the process of referring and the Point
 to which they refer.

Though Chaucer's placing of himself and his text within the referential
 schema interposes a further level of mediacy in the process of Biblical
 reference, it occasions no fundamental deviation from the essential
 hermeneutic which Nicholas develops. It simply elaborates the referential
 mechanism by which the various 'otot or signa, "signs," function and involve
 the reader in the interpretive activity which ought to transform him (or
 her) and to direct him (or her) to God. The referential methods of reading
 "textually" in Scripture as well as in The Canterbury Tales thus remain

theoretically and functionally similar as both texts structure themselves upon the same sign theory, upon the same governing hermeneutic, and upon the same presence of the reader-participants. Only the immediacy and fullness of the personal value of each internal reading differs significantly, this being largely due to the varying natures of the primary readers who mediate between text and meaning: Christ, being fully God and fully man, Crafter, Participant, and Fulfillment of salvation history, makes, shapes, completes, and gives meaning in and of Himself to the reading process; Chaucer, being a fallible creature within time and within his own limited creation, can only hope to approximate in some vague sense the craft and referential reading represented by Christ, for Chaucer cannot, in himself, give any final significance to either his work or his life as author, narrator, or character. Yet, though Chaucer and his work must be directed to some larger Text which can provide them with a context as well as with a point of Reference, both may still avail themselves of the form and logic of Scripture for, like Christ, Chaucer both writes and participates in his own creation.

Expounding the kind of reading typified by Christ as Text and Reader, then, Nicholas' hermeneutic may provide a valuable point of access to the structural logic of The Canterbury Tales. Most likely made available to Chaucer via Wyclif's teaching, it may also suggest the referential context for such a structure, since Chaucer apparently intends his text to be read as a Biblically referential, "scriptural" form. In his "Retractions," after all, he does quote 2 Timothy 3:16 directly and for a second time: "'Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine,' and that is myn entente," he writes (X.1083; cf. VII.3441ff.). In doing this, he seems to invite the reader explicitly to approach his text as though it were an expression of

Scriptural truths--a not unreasonable expectation, given the referential hermeneutic in which Chaucer is arguably working, for as Wyclif, in an exposition of John, writes: "That which Christ teaches is not realized or served by the individual words alone, but rather in the full context of the Word before all words, the configuration of God's full discourse with humanity" (Sermones 1.210). Further, such comprehensive methods also find literary corollaries in the work of both John of Salisbury and Richard de Bury who write similarly edifying, but secular discourses which also and equally rely on Scriptural support (cf. The Policraticus 8.10, Philobiblion Ch.13; see Appendix B.ii). For each (Chaucer, Nicholas, Wyclif, John of Salisbury, and Richard de Bury), then, reading is inextricably linked with entente--that of the reader as well as that of the writer. Some familiarity with and understanding of Nicholas' theory of "right" reading, reference, and personal realization of the Divine Text may well, therefore, directly advantage the critical reader in deciphering the peculiar logic of form and meaning operative in Chaucer's Tales.

Nicholas of Lyra, the *sensus literalis*, and "Right" Reading

As a Christian scholastic familiar with the Hebrew language as well as with rabbinic interpretation, Nicholas of Lyra is the consummate textual exegete and synthesizer of traditions. Being textually aware ("Second Prologue" 22ff.) and seeing the Old Testament as foundational for the New ("Second Prologue" 11ff.), he brings together Biblical, Jewish, and Christian hermeneutics to re-establish for the fourteenth century a "textual" reading of Scripture. Privileging the literal sense without diminishing the spiritual and emphasizing the moral imperative of the Text

without undermining its theoretical construction, Nicholas delineates a literal and moral pattern of reading which is distinctively "Biblical" as he "go[es] back to the Hebrew codices" ("Second Prologue" 38) and draws heavily upon both the language and logic indigenous to the Text. His exegesis is based on two principles drawn from and reflecting the means and end of Scripture. First, structurally, he insists most fundamentally that "all [interpretations] presuppose the literal sense as the foundation" ("Second Prologue" 11f.). Second, functionally, he adds that "Sacred Scripture is explained [only] when it is interpreted in a true fashion and when it is used in a holy way ... so [that] by knowing the truth, and by doing what is good, it leads us to the blessed life ..." ("First Prologue" 250ff., 254f.). Through the hermeneutic developing from these basic tenets, Nicholas addresses the exegetical excesses of his time and re-focuses Biblical study from academic purposes to orthopraxic application. In doing so, he underscores the referential nature of both action and interpretation and presenting referentiality as not only a question of relation but also as a matter of authority. Attempting, in effect, to re-assert the integrity of the Text as well as the authority of the author in exegesis, Nicholas guides the reader through the complex of Scriptural signs to their essential Referent in, by, and through whom issues of conduct, self, and meaning may be resolved.

Accordingly, and because he considers Scripture to be an organic, vital force in its own right, Nicholas argues for an active, purposeful engagement of the Word which is based upon and validated by both the substance and the logic of the Text itself. Considering the true to be inseparable from the literal, "since one can base an argument on the literal sense alone ... to prove or to demonstrate anything doubtful" ("Second Prologue" 18ff.), and

believing that "whatever is clearly concluded from Sacred Scripture is judged true ... [and that] which opposes it is found simply to be false" ("First Prologue" 105ff.), Nicholas argues that, if one desires to attain "the knowledge of God, which is handed on in Sacred Scripture, [and which] is sought mainly for this purpose, that by it the person who speculates or contemplates is taken up into the love of the known object Himself, namely God, by loving Him above himself and above all other things" ("First Prologue" 85ff.), "it [is] necessary ... to begin with an understanding of the literal sense" ("Second Prologue" 17ff.). Read so that the reader might perceive the intended meaning of the Text and thereby transcend the self and attain something of the Author, the literal level becomes for Nicholas a primary source for both meaning and action.

Yet, for all his championing of the "literal sense," Nicholas is neither a "Judaizing" literalist nor a sola Scriptura Reformer. In both theory and practice, he is consistently orthodox, allowing for the "higher" senses, affirming the tradition of the Church, and "intend[ing] to say nothing assertively or determinatively except in so far as it pertains to those things which are clearly determined by Sacred Scripture, or by the authority of the Church ... submit[ting] everything stated to the correction of Holy Mother Church ..." ("Second Prologue" 84ff.). It is, in fact, in defense of this very orthodoxy that Nicholas gives priority to the literal as he attempts to correct the exegetical excesses of certain of his monastic and scholastic contemporaries, those among whom:

the literal sense has often been obscured ... by some, who, though they said many good things, nevertheless touched on the literal sense too little, and multiplied the mystical senses to such an extent that the literal sense, trapped among so many

mystical interpretations, is partially suffocating. Likewise, they divided the text into so many parts, and introduced so many agreements to their proposition, that they partially confuse the understanding and the memory, drawing the soul away from the understanding of the literal sense ("Second Prologue" 50ff.).

In privileging the often neglected literal, Nicholas restores rather than innovates: re-grounding all senses of Scripture once again in the Text, he returns exegesis to its earliest forms--those in which the divine Word is allowed to interpret itself as God, prophet, or exegete acts as mediator.

These efforts to re-centralize Scripture are most evident in the basis of differentiation Nicholas uses to distinguish between the literal and the mystical. Noting how a sense signifies rather than what it signifies, in effect using the mode of signification rather than the end of signification to distinguish between the two senses, Nicholas bases even his definition of the spiritual meaning of Scripture in the literal words of the Text ("Second Prologue" 12ff.). Drawing upon the "special quality" of Scripture wherein "one word contains many senses ... because the principal author ... God Himself ... has the power not only to use words to signify something--which even men are able to do, and do [in fact] do--but He also uses the things signified by the words to signify other things" ("First Prologue" 180ff.), Nicholas clarifies his understanding of the literal as that sense "signified directly by the words" (though his understanding of this is far more comprehensive than that of his contemporaries; see below) and contrasts it with "the mystical or spiritual sense, which is more hidden, because it is signified by the things signified by the words" ("First Prologue" 226ff.). This reduces the number of "senses" that Scripture may have to two: the

literal, that which is actually in the Text and which may be brought forth through exegesis; and, the spiritual, that which through judicious eisegesis may be reasonably imposed upon the literal to make a moral, doctrinal, or eschatological statement ostensibly from the Text. In this way, Nicholas ties his understanding of the Bible, in both its literal and spiritual meanings, directly to the Text itself. And, by subsuming the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses under the more general category of the "mystical" or "spiritual" meaning of Scripture ("Third Prologue" 21ff.), he elevates the Text, the literal, and the word (littera) to a position of primacy in the Medieval interpretative tradition.

Defining the Literal

To so concentrate on the literal sense of Scripture and still be intellectually and doctrinally responsible requires of Nicholas that he clearly define and fully develop within a distinctively Christian context precisely what it is that he includes under the term sensus literalis. He defines his particular understanding of the literal by echoing Rashi even while he makes direct reference to Augustine: though quoting the words of Augustine on signs (e.g. "Third Prologue" 18ff.; cf. OCD 1.2.2), Nicholas imitates Rashi in the formulation of his intent. Nicholas writes: "... with the help of God, I intend to adhere to the literal sense, and [I intend] to include very few, brief, mystical interpretations sometimes though rarely" ("Second Prologue" 59ff.). Rashi writes: "... I, however, am only concerned with the plain sense of Scripture and with such haggadot that explain the words of Scripture in a manner that fits them" (on Gen. 3:8). And again, he writes: "There are many haggadic midrashim, but my

purpose is to explain the spiritual passage according to its plain sense" (on Lam. 1:1). Both Nicholas and Rashi contrast the plain sense with the other (whether it be called the mystical, allegorical, or "haggadic") and suggest a comprehensive, textual meaning to their concept of the "literal." Joining Augustine with Rashi, Nicholas further complicates the mix by drawing on Aquinas as well. Specifically, he embraces that aspect of Aquinas' definition of the literal which privileges the entente of the author in composition and meaning: "that which the author intends" for a work, in effect (Summa Theologica 1.1.10; see Appendix B.iii). From this rather eclectic blend, Nicholas develops his own working definition of the sensus literalis and develops his theory and his exegesis upon an understanding of it which is informed by the connotations of the Hebrew peshat (the "primary, plain, natural" sense of the Text; see Chapter 2), by Aquinas' definition, and by the fundamentally christological demands of a historical faith.

The working definition of the "literal" that Nicholas arrives at thus reveals the interplay of traditions (Jewish and Christian) which he perceives as appropriate to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. What emerges from his marriage of ostensibly incompatible elements is a "textual" definition of the literal which appreciates the historical, contextual, almost "literary" meaning of each passage as it is revealed through the words. It is to such an understanding of the literal that Nicholas refers when he says of his exegesis, " ... with the help of God, I intend to adhere to the literal sense ... " ("Second Prologue" 60ff.). It is also this simple, natural, historical sense that he expands rhetorically and doctrinally to produce a functionally and "literally" viable reading of the Hebrew Scriptures as the Christian "Old Testament."

Nicholas' Expansion of the Literal

Rejecting naive, superficial literalisms which fail to account for the special demands of figurative or "literary" language, Nicholas first expands the commonly conceived notion of the literal to include metaphorical or "parabolic" language. Recognizing that in certain places in Scripture Augustine's definition of the literal is not adequate or applicable, Nicholas augments the conventional definition to account for those passages in Scripture which have "no literal sense properly speaking" ("Third Prologue" 48ff.). Nicholas illustrates this point with two passages from Scripture, one an Old Testament parable and the other a New Testament dictate couched in metaphoric language. He writes:

In some places, indeed, it [Scripture] has no literal sense properly speaking, thanks to the statement in Judges 4 [actually 9]: "The trees went to anoint a king over them." And [there is] Math. 5 [30]: "If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." For the literal sense is properly what is signified [by the words], as was said above, and such a sense is not present here, nor in similar places. For [if the literal sense were present here] it would follow that a sense of Sacred Scripture would be false, because trees never made a king over themselves, nor were they able to do so. Similarly the Saviour did not advise that a man should literally cut off his hand. But rather in these [words] there is only the mystical sense, which is understood by the things signified. For by "trees" are understood the inhabitants of the city of Sichen, who made Abimelech king

over themselves, as is explained there in the text. And by "cutting off the hand" is understood a friend, however close he might be, who becomes an occasion to sin. A man ought to cut off from himself the friendship of this person. ("Third Prologue" 48ff.)

In such instances, Nicholas extends the "literal sense" (in linguistic terms, the "pragmatic sense") to include the entire meaning of the passage intended by the Author, whether this be "parabolic," allegorical, or other ("Third Prologue" 47ff.). Concerning such texts, he concludes that "where there is no sense signified by words, the parabolic sense is first. And for this reason, generally speaking, it is called the literal sense, because the literal sense is first when there is no other sense there" ("Third Prologue" 65ff.). Significant particularly for passages written in figures and parables, or for passages which communicate through imagery or anthropomorphisms, this rhetorical expansion undermines the simplistic, conventional conception of the "literal" which is prevalent in medieval theories of reading. Moreover, by explaining why the "literal" cannot be restricted to the surface signification of words in a passage, it clarifies ambiguities within the Text, makes the Gospel that much more comprehensible and observable (e.g. Nicholas' comment on Mt. 5:30 above), and facilitates the application of exegetical theory to secular literature which is, of course, heavily dependent upon figures and metaphors.

It is in his second expansion of the sensus literalis, however, that Nicholas' most significant contribution lies. Insisting that the literal contains, through the Author's intention, not only that which it records as actually occurring, but also that which typologically prefigures the Christ,

Nicholas encompasses within his literal both history and typology (cf. Auerbach on Dante, among others). Both are considered as equally inherent in the literal level of the Text; neither are viewed as imposed upon it nor as subordinate to the other (cf. De Trinitate 15). Thus it is that in many Old Testament passages, Nicholas finds both history and Christ, inherently and simultaneously ad litteram. For example, in his introduction to the Postilla on Exodus 12, he writes:

... concerning the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb and the other sacrifices, two things are to be observed. One is of the immediate matter [the historical fact], that is to say, the condition of the people going out from Egypt. The second is the figuration of the lamb, which was (then already) designating the passion of Christ, which was prefigured in those (sacrifices)--because according to what the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 10:[11], All these things happened to them in figures. And RABBI SALOMON says, and (likewise) the ancient Hebrew doctors, that 'all the prophets prophesied only in respect of the days of the Messiah,' and therefore since Moses was the greatest prophet, all whatsoever he wrote, is ordained for Christ. And therefore in the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb, the meaning is twofold: One is, the condition of the people going out from Egypt, and is literal, and the foundation, and this I intend to follow at first; the other (meaning) is the prefiguration of Christ to suffer in the future, and this meaning I will touch on briefly at the end. Because although it be the last in execution, it is nevertheless the first in intention (translation Hailperin's; emphasis added)

Calling this uniquely Christian phenomenon the "double-literal sense"

("Second Prologue" 144), Nicholas expounds it in his discussion of Tyconius' third rule (Tyconius' principles being extremely influential in medieval exegesis through their appearance in Augustine's On Christian Doctrine, 3.30.42-3.37.55; Nicholas attributes them to Isidore of Seville [c. 560-636] who drew directly upon Augustine for his presentation of the rules):

The third rule is about the spirit and the letter, according to which the historical and the mystical sense are received under the same word, because the truth of history is retained and yet is directed to a spiritual understanding. In this way, this rule is usually interpreted. It can be explained differently, [however,] so that it is directed just as much toward the literal sense as toward the other. Concerning this it must be considered that sometimes the same word has a double-literal sense, thanks to the statement in I Paralipomenon 17[:13], where the Lord says of Solomon: 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.' This is understood of Solomon literally, in so far as he was the son of God by adoption in his youth. For this reason, Nathan the prophet called him 'Amiable to the Lord' as is found in II Kings 12[:25]. Yet the above-mentioned authority, 'I will be to him a father,' is introduced by the Apostle in Hebrews 1[:5] as spoken about Christ literally. This is clear from this [passage] because the Apostle introduces it to prove that Christ was greater than the angels. However, such proof cannot be made by the mystical sense, as Augustine says [therefore it must be meant literally] ("Second Prologue" 138ff.; emphasis added)

Though considering both of these aspects of the literal sense to be valid, Nicholas accentuates not the primary, historical meaning relating to

Solomon, but the chronologically later, christological signification, considering the application of the verse to Christ to be "more perfect." He writes:

For the above-mentioned authority was fulfilled literally in Solomon, nevertheless less perfectly, because he was the son of God by grace alone. On the other hand, [it was fulfilled] more perfectly in Christ, who is the Son of God by nature ... each interpretation may be simply literal ("Second Prologue" 155ff.; see Appendix B.iv for further examples of Nicholas' exegesis)

In suggesting such a necessary relationship between the historical and the typological, Nicholas is not doing anything novel, though he is re-introducing to his time concepts which had long been underemphasized. Commonly presented as representing a precursor and a fulfillment, the idea of the two "literals" has precedents throughout Church history and is depicted variously. Irenaeus, for example, in Against Heresies (4.26.1) uses the image of an enigma resolved:

For every prophecy, before it comes about, is an enigma and a contradiction to men; but when the time comes, and what was prophesied takes place, it receives a most certain exegesis. And therefore, when the Law is read by the Jews at the present time, it is like a myth; for they do not have the explanation of everything, which is the coming of the Son of God as man. But when it is read by Christians, it is a treasure, hidden in the field but revealed by the cross of Christ.

And, John Chrysostom, in On the Epistle to the Philippians, "Homily 10," presents it through an artistic metaphor:

The type is given the name of the truth until the truth is about to come; but when the truth has come, the name is no longer used. Similarly in painting: an artist sketches a king, but until the colours are applied, he is not called a king; and when they are put on, the type is hidden by the truth and is not visible; and then we say, 'Behold, the king.'

Nicholas, though, insisting that the two senses are not separate and distinct, but are one and the same, equally present, equally intended, and equally "literal," produces a new, "stereoscopic" understanding of the literal whereby the Text, to be read truly, must be read simultaneously through history and through the Christ event. In this, he expounds the first comprehensive and "Christian" sense of the literal and does away with the need for allegory, strictly speaking, to account for the relationship between Christ and the Old Testament since, according to his typological theory of the literal, Christ is in fact present and intended in the Hebrew Scriptures from their very inception (e.g. see Nicholas on Ps. 110 [V 109], Isa. 52:13, etc.). What is ironic is that such a unified "Christian" reading becomes possible in Nicholas' hermeneutic primarily because of his emphasis on the textual meaning of Scripture, a focus which is occasioned in his hermeneutic by the Hebraic and Jewish elements which he incorporates.

Plato, Aristotle, and the Hebrews: Reconciling Kiecker's Discrepancies

Representing a concern with language and a return to close textual reading reminiscent of and dependent upon the work of Augustine (OCD 2.10.15; 3.2, 3.5.9ff), Nicholas' approach to Scripture counters the late medieval monastic and scholastic interpretations which deviate from the Text

through speculation or through a dominating concern for systematic theology. Further, it reveals the necessity of dealing with the Text both in its original language and from within its native framework since it is only the indigenous narrative context which can provide the complete "literal" meaning and logic of Scripture. It is precisely this unique aspect of Nicholas' hermeneutic that James George Kiecker, in his dissertation on "The Hermeneutical Principles and Exegetical Methods of Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M. (ca. 1270-1349)," fails to engage effectively. Making an error common to those who attempt to study Nicholas without sufficient familiarity with the Jewish tradition, Kiecker argues that the shift in focus represented by Nicholas results primarily from the introduction of the "new logic" of Aristotle to the West:

Whereas Platonism directed one's thoughts from present realities to higher realities above--from the word to the meaning-- Aristotelelianism directed one's thoughts from heaven to earth--from the meaning to the word. Instead of acquiring knowledge by illumination of the mind, one acquired knowledge by the use of one's senses. The Aristotelian exegete would view the spirit of Scripture as something not hidden behind the text or added to it, but expressed right in and through the text. (256-7)

Concluding that "Lyra strove for a literal understanding of the text ... 'literal' in the way that Thomas Aquinas used the term, as the intention of the author ..." (271), Kiecker assesses Nicholas' hermeneutic as "transitional" (265), alternately attributing his interpretations to his "Aristotelian-Thomistic hermeneutic" or considering them "throwback[s] to Platonic-monastic thinking" (270).

Producing many perceived exegetical "inconsistencies," this polarity

develops largely because Kiecker fails to take into account that one element of Nicholas' hermeneutic, the Jewish, that derives most directly from the Text being returned to the forefront of exegesis. Though apparently recognizing "Lyra's interest in the Hebrew text ... [and] His interest in the Jewish interpretation" (272), Kiecker nevertheless does not factor these into his assessment of Nicholas' reading and of his understanding of the literal. He prefers, it seems, to privilege the Greek and Latin paradigms of influence instead. Consequently, though much of what Kiecker suggests is valid, his final assessment remains disfunctionally partial for, in characterizing the special achievement of Nicholas as an inheritance of Aristotle and Aquinas (274), he excludes the one unique and essential aspect of Nicholas' reading: the introduction, as Nicholas insists, of "not only the statements of Catholic doctors, but also of the Hebrews, especially of Rabbi Solomon, who among the Hebrew doctors spoke more reasonably in expressing the literal sense" ("Second Prologue" 67-70). These Hebrew and Jewish components of interpretation, as the context within which the Text was written and from within which Nicholas approaches the Scriptures, offer a potential resolution for many of Kiecker's "inconsistencies," for it is these more than Aristotelianism that Nicholas draws upon to help him explicate Scripture uniquely and accurately.

The Dangers of the "Hebrew Codices" for a Judeo-Christian Hermeneutic

In so embracing not only the Hebrew language and Scriptures, but the Jewish tradition as well, Nicholas openly challenges long-held, contemporary prejudices, for it was a popular Medieval conception that the Jews had altered the text of Scripture in order to deny or refute christological

interpretations. This idea finds an early formulation in the Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew by Justin Martyr in which the accusations are made that the Jews reject the interpretations of the LXX (71), that they have "cancel[ed]" passages from Esdras, Jeremiah, and the Psalms (72-73), and that they intentionally misattribute references to Christ (74; see Appendix B.v for Nicholas on a particularly contentious passage of Scripture, Isaiah 9:5). Nevertheless, though he is aware of these potential "dangers" in using the Hebrew sources--particularly "when it comes to passages ... which speak about the deity of Christ" ("Second Prologue" 39ff.)--Nicholas acknowledges the unique vision of the Old Testament as the necessary starting point for a true consideration of Scripture. Explaining the dependence of the Christian readings upon the Hebrew, he writes that while "the prophets ... read in the book of the foreknowledge of God ... By the vision of divinity which was imprinted on the[ir] minds ... and by the prophetic light apportioned to them [so that] they saw in their own way the truth derived from the science of God by revelation to them," "We ... who do not have such knowledge, and who are not illumined with prophetic light," must read "in the book of Sacred Scripture handed on to us by the prophets" ("First Prologue" 164ff., 176ff.). Accepting and endorsing the reading of the Old Testament and drawing upon both the Masoretic Text and the Targum of Onkelos, he advocates that for "those [passages] in which there is no likelihood that the Jews changed anything," one should not only return to the original Text, but should "adhere to the statements of the Hebrews ... insofar as they agree with reason and the truth of the text" ("Second Prologue" 48f., 70ff.), for "there seems no danger but rather safety in going back in doubtful cases to the Hebrew text, as in the original, in order to declare the truth of the text" ("Second Prologue" 46ff.).

By so embracing both the Hebrew Text and the Jewish "statements" for his presentation of the "literal," Nicholas draws upon not only the native sign theory and logic of Scripture, but also those "Jewish" methods and techniques of exegesis which develop from within the Text and the tradition which produces it. He incorporates into his hermeneutic both the Biblical tradition and those post-Biblical efforts at right reading, right interpretation, and right action which emerge once the Word is standardized as a written Text. This concept of standardization of a written text, or the instituting of "canon," is significant for the definition and role of the literal in that prior to such "fixing" of the Text, reading and interpretation may be much more fluid and informal. The "literal" may then be subject to immediate enhancement, explication, or even re-interpretation, if it appears at all problematic. The Biblical canon as it now stands is, in fact, a compilation of such "re-writings"--Deuteronomy re-writes the Law of Exodus, the Chronicles re-write the history recorded in Kings, etc. Once a canon is set, however, the "right" reading of a historically situated, diachronically distanced, and often linguistically alien Text becomes a matter for considerable concern and effort. Nicholas takes full advantage of this: he brings to his reading a renewed awareness of the narrative, exegetical, and experiential tensions depicted in and through the Text as well as a heightened sense of the polyvalency of the literal, particularly as it influences one's daily observance in the present world. Revealing a keen sensitivity to the peculiar logic and manner of proceeding in Scripture and believing "this Scripture [to be] well called 'a book written within and without': 'Without,' insofar as it pertains to the literal sense; 'within,' indeed, insofar as it pertains to the mystical sense hidden under the literal" ("Third Prologue" 10ff.), he attempts to interpret the "fiery" "law

of the Old and New Testaments" ("Third Prologue" 7f.) from within, "Jewishly," approaching all meaning from within the "literal" sense of the Word.

The Benefits of the "Hebrew Codices" for a Judeo-Christian Hermeneutic

Such a "Jewish" conception of the literal wherein both the ostensible, the internal, and the final levels of meaning may subsumed under the letter seems to be innate in the Hebrew language. Having one word, dabar, for both "word" and "thing," a Hebraic or Jewish hermeneutic is constitutionally unable even to suggest a dichotomy of representation such as Augustine develops (OCD 2.1.2, 3). Uniting the signifying functions of both the signa naturalia and the signa data, a reading theory based upon the Hebrew concept of word/thing representation through dabar must necessarily be unified, for it conceives of everything--words, objects, events, people, texts--as being fundamentally significant and referential in the same fashion and for the same purpose: to reveal the Author's intention and to point to Him. Though Nicholas seems to echo Augustine's dichotomy in his theory, his constant clarification and expansion of what exactly the literal signifies as well as his own practice of the sensus literalis in his exegesis reveals this Hebraic influence as he works to show how everything in the Text, at whatever level it seems to stand, is, in fact, part of the literal. This sense of a multilayered literal allows Nicholas to delineate the process by which the Text may be, indeed, must be, read from "within," if a truly "literal" reading is to occur. If, as a dabar theory of signification seems to indicate, everything in the Text directs one to the Author and if the Author's intention for one's reading is a transformed life which actualizes

the Word in the world through the reader, the process of reading the Text literally must be dynamic and two-fold. First, it demands a reading which follows the various aspects of the literal into the Centre of their signification. Second, it requires a re-reading of the Word which "reads" the reader out of the Text, translating through his or her person the demands of the Word. This process of re-reading the Word from within re-unites the act of reading not only with its language, its context, and its larger purpose (issues commonly conceived of as being within the domain of the literal), but with its implementation as well, with the concrete (rather than purely academic) realization of the Text's most basic purpose.

In revealing the Biblical norms of and expectations for an active and effective hearing (or "reading") of the Divine Word, the synthesis of theory and praxis which emerges from such a completed literal reading of Scripture indicates how the "literal" sense may be the external level of, yet somehow also lie within, the Word. Suggestive of the fundamentally paradoxical and referential nature of language, faith, and action that shapes the hermeneutic "whole" in which reading is undertaken both within Scripture and in the post-Biblical era, this sense of a necessary standing within the Text to read and be read by its literal meaning requires the reader to engage the Text directly, immediately, and personally in both its superficial and internal expressions. Nicholas' theory of reading explicates this process by directing the reader from outside the Text to inside it through a progressive engagement of the letter, the figures, the types, and finally the meaning. At each stage, the reader is drawn deeper into the "literal" sense of the Text until he or she realizes the Referent to which the work points. Once some comprehension of this Centre has been attained, Nicholas' hermeneutic directs the reader back through the Text to the world, to a

practical application of the meaning grasped through the words. In effect, having followed the signs of the Text to their Source, the reader returns from his or her textual encounter transformed and, to complete the process, must "read" or translate the truth of the Text through his or her life, into the world. Thus reading the Text literally tam facti quam animi ("as much in deed as in intention") brings together the beginning of one's reading and its end to synthesize it in and through both theory and praxis. Combining method and motive, the literal and the referential, this internalized and manifested reading of the Text constitutes the essence of Nicholas' "literal" exegesis.

In so choosing to base his hermeneutic upon such Hebraic concepts, Nicholas is thus free to encompass within his exegesis not only the Biblical and the Christian traditions of the literal, but the Jewish as well. To understand what is unique in his hermeneutic, therefore, requires some familiarity with the texts, tensions, and theories within the Jewish tradition that explain its particular sign theory of Scripture, its method of reading a text according to its internal logic, and its concept of Scripture as a participatory Text which affects reader, reading, and action. Molding the medieval Jewish readings of Scripture, these issues contribute to Nicholas' theory of exegesis and of the sensus literalis and, in turn, seem to affect the understanding of the structural and referential logic upon which Chaucer models The Canterbury Tales.

Chapter 2

"The Hebrew Doctors Spoke More Reasonably":
Biblical Sign Theory and the Jewish Literal

And now, Israel, what axith thi Lord God of thee, no but that thou drede thi Lord, and go in hise weies, and that thou loue hym, and serue thi Lord God in al thin herte, and in al thi soule;

and that thou kepe the commaundementis of thi Lord God, and the cerymonyes of hym, whiche Y commaunde to thee to dai, that it be wel to thee.

Lo! heuene is of thi Lord God, and heuene of heuene; the erthe and alle thingis that ben ther ynne ben hise;

and nethelless the Lord was glued [I, "ioyned"] to thi fadris, and loeude hem, and he chees her seed after hem, and you of alle folkis, as it is preued to dai.

(Dt. 10:12-15; WB, II)

The Sign Theory of Scripture and the Biblical Hermeneutic

The language and logic of Scripture which Nicholas factors into his hermeneutic as well as into his understanding of the literal develops out of the extensive system of referential signs inherent in the Text itself. These signs, termed 'otot (plural of 'ot, "sign") in the Hebrew Scriptures, function as dynamic indicators and connote values beyond themselves to which the objects or words acting as signs simply point. Often having an ethical end in Scripture, they not only distinguish one thing from another, but usually work to affirm or induce belief in something specific, such as God or His covenants (cf. Gen. 1:14, 4:15, 17:1; Dt. 13:1). Always an indicator of something else, an 'ot functions at various levels of reference and encompasses the signifying values of both signa naturalia and signa data (as these terms are used by Augustine; DCD, 2.1.2, 3). Corresponding to semeion in the LXX, an 'ot is significant less for what it is in itself than for what it indicates of the one who presents it and for the response that it evokes from the one who receives it (e.g. Gen. 9:12-13, 17; 17:11; Ex. 31:13). Usually having an ethical end, it has an external reality within history and so works from and within time, having present signification or pointing to something either past (e.g. Josh. 4:6) or future (e.g. Isa. 55:13) in order to evoke belief. Its function is dynamic, involving the receiver of the sign with the will of the giver through the 'ot. In the New Testament, semeion continues this sense of dynamic relationship with Jesus being presented as semeion antilegomenon, "the sign spoken against," by which "many in Israel" will "fall and ris[e] again" (Lk. 2:34).

Given a broader and typological significance in John as in the depiction of Him as the Passover Lamb (1:29), Jesus is also presented as the

semeion of the New Covenant. Being both the Sign and the Signified, the Revealer and the Revealed, He parallels and surpasses in Himself the sign theory of the Hebrew Scriptures and transforms it from an interpretive reading of God's works and words to an immediately interactive reading. Rather than merely presenting those signs or those interpretations of them which reveal who God is and what He wills, Jesus interprets the Word by and through Himself, reading both Scripture (e.g. Lk. 4:21; Jn. 3:14; 5:39, etc.) and His own actions (e.g. Jn. 5:19, 30; 8:28, etc.) in reference to Himself and the Father (e.g. Jn. 4:34, 5:17). In effect, He brings together in Himself the 'ot', what it signifies, and the right reading of it. These presentations of Jesus as an 'ot' corresponding to Old Testament 'otot', allow later Christian exegetes to develop an extensive pattern of typological significations which, centered in Christ, enable a reading of the Hebrew Scriptures through and in reference to Jesus as Son of God. Making possible a "theory of language as a system of signs," they have obvious implications for a "Judeo-Christian" hermeneutic as, extending the "natural" meaning of the Text to include typology, they bring "under one head, that of 'signs,' the two enquiries into the literal meaning and the figurative or typological sense of Scripture" (R. A. Markus, 60-83; c.f. J. McEnvoy, 38-39).

Because they develop out of and, in turn, shape the meaning and the reading of the Divine Word, these 'otot' require a "Biblical" exposition if they are to be interpreted "correctly." That is, for an efficacious determination of their true signification, the "signs" of Scripture demand a reading which expounds them in a manner corresponding to and consistent with the totum integrum of Torah. The concept of totum integrum, "a complete and unimpaired whole," suggests the necessity of reading the text--in this case, the Scriptures--and its signs in accord with the logic, form, and intended

function of their original presentations. Requiring both a contextualized and a contextualizing explication of the parts (the 'otot) and the whole (the Torah), such a reading should not only accurately reflect the intentions of the Author as expressed in the internal logic of the Text, but should also make intelligible and possible the realization of these intentions in the reader. This reveals a "correct" or "Biblical" reading to be one which is dynamic, interactive, and effective. Recognizing the importance of such complete reading as well as its intimate relationship with the form, reception, and effect of the Text itself, Wyclif writes of this logic of the "whole" of Scripture:

Nothing, indeed, is to be named as subtle in grammar, in logic, or in any other science but the same may be found in more excellence in Scripture It is no fault of the Scripture, if the heretic be found understanding it in a wrong sense. It is not subject to his judgment. On the contrary, it condemns him. The error of his understanding lies mainly in his pride, in his foolish confidence in his own logic ... the logic of Scripture itself is the most correct, the most subtle, and the most to be followed"

(Trialogus, 1.8; 3.30; cf. Minnis' statement: "'good men' ... can take the morality if they want to. But only if they want to," xvi).

For Wyclif, as in Scripture, the only "true" reading is one that, in keeping with the organic nature and affective significance of the Text itself, transforms the reader through his or her reading.

The Organic Word in Action: God and Man as Significant Readers

Patterns for such readings appear within Scripture itself as early "unfoldings" of the Word depict the entire Text as an organic development of the Author's Primary Utterances. Performed by the principal authorities responsible for the formalized Word, these initial textual engagements demonstrate "Biblical" models for communication, composition, and reading as they develop from and become part of the very substance and authority of the Text. One of these first "internal" readings of Torah is attributed to God Himself. Setting forth the Law point by point on Sinai (Ex. 20ff.) and grounding it in covenant history (Ex. 19:4ff.; ch. 21), He establishes as a primary pattern of reading Scripture a progressive, multi-leveled movement from general to specific and back again. Beginning with His own nature and actions, He interprets His Word for the people, extrapolating from the basics and moving from principles to precepts as He details the commandments which ought to govern human conduct (Ex. 20:1ff.). These commandments are then also "read" or expounded as He further interprets His dictates and provides for practical observance through particular laws which ought to govern life and worship (Ex. 21ff.). This process of unfolding the Word through a praxis-oriented reading of Torah is meant to reveal to, through, and in human actions and relationships the nature, workings, and intent of the Author. Consequently, God's reading of Torah and the ethical system which emerges from His reading of it (and in which man participates through the commandments) are essentially referential and teleological. Justified, summarized, and explained in the insistence that "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am Holy" (Lev. 19:2), even the most legalistic aspects of the Law therefore express and refer to His Name and His will, continually directing mankind's attention back to God as Author, but also as Reader. Established through God's directed, multi-leveled method of composition and

reading, the essentially referential office of this Torah, given by God and working through humans, is thereby confirmed: the laws become 'otot and reading becomes a process of reference, one in which the reader is invited to participate and to move, as God does, from level to level with understanding but also with action.

(Because much of Torah is first received and preserved orally, "reading" is here used in its broadest sense, akin to that of the Old English raedan, "to read, interpret, explain." For present purposes, therefore, "reading" means the application of one's self to the task of interpreting the nature, significance, and thinking behind the Text, regardless of the primary medium in which it first presents itself or the redactionary process by which it came to be a single, albeit composite, unity. For intra-biblical as well as early Jewish and Christian exegetes, the Bible represents the unified, coherent, inspired Word of God and is considered in that light here in order that their approach to the Text might be better understood--and that the parallels to Chaucer's own composite unity may be more readily accessible.)

By thus "reading" even legal minutiae in relation to Himself, God puts forth His nature and Name as the polyvalent hermeneutic "whole" within which Torah ought most judiciously to be considered. First making His personal, diachronic relationship with man the centre of Torah as well as of the hermeneutic circle, He extends this centre to include both the ethical substance of the Ten Commandments as well as His reading of it. This explication, by making the practical application of the Law obvious and relevant through the laws and by relating the people's observances of heart to the Divine Word, eliminates both pragmatic and theoretical ambiguity from

the precepts: the people not only come to know what, precisely, they are to do, but they also come to know why, as they learn to subordinate all action, reading, and response to the larger purposes of God (cf. Augustine's "Dilige et quod vis fac," In Epist. Johann. Hom. 7.8; Mt. 22:37ff.; Dt. 6:4ff., 10:12ff.; Vulgate, Dt. 6:5--"diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex tota corde et ex tota anima tua et ex tota fortitudine tua ..."). Providing a means by which an individual might physically and spiritually participate in the Torah as well as in the process of its explication, the detailed mitzvot, therefore, not only function as a practical corrective to humanity's post-Edenic impulses for fragmentation and chaos, but they also transform the race--corporately and as individuals --into a participating element of God's pre-existent sign theory. As the Torah and commandments are 'otot ("signs") directing attention from the world to God and back again in theory, mankind, by observing the laws, holds the potential to become an 'ot ("sign") in practice, thereby being even more fully referential than the Scriptures themselves, the constituent "words" of which are but "the memorial clues and traces of pre-existing truth" (Wyclif, De veritate 1.6). Thus, as individuals respond to the demands of the Word, they may become "signs" and function referentially, translating the Divine Word through themselves into the world in order to lead others to God (cf. Ps. 71:7, Isa. 8:18, Ezek. 24:24; the Hebrew term used in these verses, mo'pet, being a common synonym and parallel term for 'ot and meaning "sign," "symbol," or "wonder").

The Active Reference of Signs: Meaning Between God and Man

Within the broad and interactive sign system of the Biblical semiotic, then, the signs themselves (whether physical, verbal, or human) are

singular, linear, and unequivocal in their signification. Representative of a single verity, they constantly direct the reader through the particular sign to the one primary, unambiguous Referent underlying the entire system: God in relation to man. The simplest of these signs, such as the rainbow (Gen. 9:12) or circumcision (Gen. 17:11), though having an objective reality in themselves, receive their true significance only in the larger context of the covenant as they stand as testimony of the relationship between God and mankind. Each becomes a "token," a memorial, a sign of belonging (Gen. 9:ff., 17:10ff.), and has a direct one-to-one function within the relationship: when God sees the rainbow, He "remember[s] the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9:16); likewise, when He considers circumcision, it is as the evidence "in [the] flesh" of "the everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17: 13). The non-physical signs of the covenants, those which are verbalized and given final form in the Torah, are simply more complex and more representative of the sign system as a whole. Unlike purely physical signs which may be observed externally, these others require an active, not just a receptive, response by the reader: they demand that the reader appropriate and participate in the Word itself, in its sign system, and in the world in which it is manifest. Further, these more extensive signs assume several levels of practical and "literal" signification which, though uniformly directed, effect various levels of human experience and frame the Biblically referential system which defines itself between the poles of God and man.

The taryaq mitzvot ("the 613 Commandments" of the Torah) as individual signs, for example, serve not merely to refer humanity to God, but also to refer humans and their actions to the world of their fellows, for each injunction is both a self-contained element and a sign within a unified and

referential system. Though ultimately referring to a broader realm of meaning, each specific law has as its primary significance not its merely referential value but its applicability to some norm of human interaction. This initial significance constitutes the chief validity of each commandment in that it is the practical actualization of the law's surface sense, without deep or excessive analysis of its wording, that grants it meaning in the world. Deuteronomy 19:11, for instance, details the circumstances of willful homicide. Having an ostensible value which is complete in itself and which is "literally" significant and observable (e.g. one ought not to kill and if one does so premeditatively and with malice, he or she is to be delivered to "the avenger of blood" for execution, Lev. 19:12), the overt intent of this passage is blatant and may readily be complied with without belaboured interpretation. Consequently, though the verse itself may be indicative of a further sphere of reference, the injunction that it contains need not be compromised or lose its apparent practical significance. Similarly, the commandment which it elaborates, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13), demands both surface and signifying performance, being that it is itself an extension of a still more inclusive principle--that of "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18).

Given only "I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18) as its rationale, this principle further directs the reader to the still more comprehensive injunction that begins that chapter, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (v. 2; cf. Lev. 11:44)--a dictate which caps the referential schema of Biblical language and returns humanity's attention to the central and informative issue of human action, on each level of reading and observance, as a manifestation of God's will. In this way, the specific statute "Thou shalt not kill," as well as the detailed elaborations of it,

ultimately emerge from and reflect the nature of God (e.g. "I am the Lord," "I ... am holy"). Pertaining to both earthly relations and the spiritual reflection of the divine nature, they reveal the poles which define God's economy, the human and the divine, as well as the various aspects of the "literal" which develop between these poles as the Biblical sign system demands practical observance in relation to mankind even as it constantly refers the reader in his or her understanding and actions to God. Read in relation to the larger "whole" of Scripture, therefore, each particular command consequently becomes a dictate which has significance in itself insofar as it expresses an expectation for human conduct and which also functions as an 'ot, a sign, pointing through and beyond itself to both broader models of behaviour and to the Model Himself. Ultimately, the final Point of Reference is indicated, as the compounded "surface" meaning of the last level of signification is defined against the nature of God--the heart of the Biblical hermeneutic.

Read according to the Scriptural logic of such singularly purposed polyvalence, the "literal" sense of any passage becomes evident as that which pertains to the individual's relationship with God and with one's fellowman (e.g. Dt. 6:5, Lev. 19:18; cf. Mt. 22:37ff.). Constantly moving between these, the Text as a whole and its individual signs produce a variety of active, organic, but linear "literal" readings which comprise and are validated by the many layers of observance and reference evoked by the words themselves. The reader, placing him- or herself through his or her initial engagement of the Word in the middle of this textual movement from God to humanity, joins the course more or less in medias res: defining him- or herself at first by, rather than within, the commands, the reader finds

him- or herself in the middle of the continual progress from the world to God and back again via the Word. As he or she begins actively to engage the Text, the reader comes to participate in it and, like the "literal" meaning of Scripture, comes to discover personal significance in relation to both God and the world. Seeking and becoming an expression of Purpose and praxis, Author and action, the reader is thus incorporated into the stream of reference so that, though having initially approached the Text, its system and Author, from without, he or she becomes an embodiment of it, a translator in the world of the will and intent of its Author from within an experience of His work and will. In effect, such a reader becomes an 'ot in his or her own right, functioning like the luminaries (Gen. 1:4), the rainbow (Gen. 1:12), circumcision (Gen. 17:11), and the Torah itself as a referential sign, part of the extensive sign system by which God speaks to and through humanity, directing the attention of humans through the physical (or verbal) back to its essential Source.

Reading Scripture according to its own logic is thus methodologically similar to that reading which occurs within the classic hermeneutical circle of modern critical theory. As an engagement of the reader by the Text, it reflects the process of accommodation which occurs as the reader attempts to adapt his or her own "horizon" to that of the Text and, through this accommodation, to come to a more accurate experience of the Text in its own right. Textually, it also reflects a situation in which the whole is defined by its parts and the parts made intelligible by the whole (with the notable difference that the reader in the Biblical schema becomes one of the signifying parts, defining it through him- or herself and being, in turn, defined by the Whole). However, whereas a "Biblical" reading is

teleological, has its final Referent in the Author, and demands of the reader not only participation but transformation, modern critical models are less definite, less specifically directed, and less referential. Gadamer, for example, presents an indefinite and relative model of historically conscious reading which neither requires nor permits an ultimate point of reference for the process of interacting with a text. For him, "the meaning of a text goes beyond its author" (Truth and Method, 264) so that "Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way ..." (263).

Consequently, one's reading becomes rather subjective, occurring apart from any greater referential end: for Gadamer, "the horizon ... is always in motion" (271). Hirsch, on the other hand, attempts to re-establish for the act of reading some concept of a "standard" or referent beyond the text, the reader, and their self-involved "play." This he does by attempting to clarify and re-situate "meaning" and "significance" in terms of some larger context. Defining "significance" as the "textual meaning in relation to a larger context, i.e., another mind, another era, a wider subject matter, an alien system of values, and so on" (The Aims of Interpretation 2-3), he suggests that "The magic circle is breakable" (6) in that the "significance" of a work must be beyond itself. However, unlike a "Biblical" reading which clearly points the reader to the Author, Hirsch leaves open the nature of the final referent and rejects the concept of "privileged criteria" (144) by "deny[ing] a privileged status to any single kind of significance" (11) and insisting that "'significance' is [merely] textual meaning as related to some context, indeed any context, beyond itself" (3).

This lack of external or source referent in Gadamer (264) and the undefined nature of Hirsch's "standard" point up the primary differences between modern and "Biblical" hermeneutics. Though they may appear quite

similar in method, seeming to share some version of the hermeneutic circle as a model for the process of reading, they are essentially incompatible ideologically because of the differences in the concepts and contexts in which they consider the text, the efforts of the reader, and the uses to which these efforts ought to be put. Therefore, while many aspects of the models and the methodology of the moderns may be embraced by one desiring to understand Scriptural (and medieval) texts better, it must always be done with a clear consciousness of the essential alterity of ends which distinguish Scriptural (and medieval) texts and readings from those of the modern critical era.

The Biblical Hermeneutic of a Fixed Text: From Orality to the Written Word

This polyvalent but linear hermeneutic which allows for several--but always teleological--"literal" readings of a Text based upon the observance and performance it evokes remains normative throughout Scriptural history as Israel and individuals within her are chosen to "read" and to be "read" by the direct word of God for the purposes of activating the Divine Will in the world and of referring men to God. Possible as long as priests and prophets receive ever fresh direction from God to prevent mis-interpretation and mis-observance, this tightly focused and directly signifying understanding of Scripture allows Torah and history to be re-written continually to adapt the Law to contemporary needs and to highlight the retrospectively perceived spiritual significance in events. Thus, Deuteronomy, "the repetition of the Law," expands the Torah of Exodus, and Chronicles, the history of Kings. With the Exile (6th c. B.C.E.), however, new conditions develop: the prophetic voice gradually disappears from Israel and, as the bath kol

descends, the canon begins to be fixed, and a Written rather than an Oral Text becomes the norm. Consequently, the direct referentiality of primary 'otot, and even the secondary reference of physically and spiritually observable commands, becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. To meet these demands, a new hermeneutic of a fixed, but pluralistic, text develops. Introduced by Ezra during the Second Temple period (5th c. B.C.E.), the new "Biblical" hermeneutic allows for the stability of a received Written Text as well as for the increased human role in not only the activation but also the interpretation of Scripture. It does so, though, without compromising the essential Word given under the previous order.

This movement from an Oral to a Written Text is central to the shift that occurs in the hermeneutical methods which dominate Biblical, Jewish, and Christian models of interpretation and composition. The Biblical, being orally based, keeps the authority of the Word more immediate: it allows the composition, reception, and transmission of the Text to be more flexible; and it maintains the reading of the Word as more immediately contextualized. In effect, the fluidity of an Oral Text allows the reader to participate concretely, practically, and thoroughly in the process of reading as the Word, directly given and constantly adapted by the perceived Authority responsible for it, invites the reader to respond by directly actualizing in his or her life and actions the commands of the Law. In this way, the reader enjoins him- or herself to the Text and has him- or herself "written" into Torah as both a Covenant participant and a signifying element of the Covenant. Such participation with and "inscription" into the Text, however, is possible only when the Word is Oral, open, and sufficiently organic to fully absorb new elements. When the Word becomes fixed as an authoritative,

Written Text, the immediacy of experience is diminished and the reading of the Word, the interpretation of the Text rather than the primary performance (or "re-performance") of it, necessarily becomes the central activity. This fixity of the Text allows a perceived "orthodoxy" to develop as varying interpretations are placed side by side to be decided between, instead of being inclusively embraced, to make a richer, composite whole. Such is the case in certain Christian "readings" of the Word which, working from a fixed Text and a single interpretive Centre, seek to reconcile rather than merge uncomfortable dissonances which might appear in the Text or which occur within the interpretive tradition developing around the Text.

Falling between these two poles, the Jewish tradition of reading the Text appears as a sort of "hybrid" hermeneutic, combining elements of both orality and literacy. Though working from a fixed Text, it preserves the organic, oral impulse initiated through the method of communal derash ("interpretation") advocated by Ezra. Through the incorporation of an interpretive tradition which is itself oral, inclusive, and tolerant (e.g. midrash, "the Torah has seventy faces"), the Jewish hermeneutic develops a second level of orality, "the fence around the Torah" (Pirke Abot 1:1). This preserves the possibility of reader inscription through immediate and practical application of the Word, even while maintaining the appearance of a fundamental homogeneity of belief since all readings--oral and written--are based upon the Text. Able to espouse openly alternate readings and traditions of reading the same central Text, the Jewish hermeneutic therefore encompasses and is able to explicate both the Written Scriptures and the "real" Text within them for, though "oral society has faith in one type of text, literate society in another" (Stock), the Jewish tradition expresses faith in both. Initiated by Ezra through the reclamation and the

interpretation--rather than merely the presentation--of the Sacred Text, this definition of humanity and text as between orality and the written makes not just perception or reception of text, but response, paramount in right reading: within the new order, man reads truly and accurately only when he (or she) "reads" the Law through his (or her) observance of it.

The Engagement of Text for Observance: Ezra and the Interpretive Response

Incorporating elements of study and worship initiated in Babylon and radically altering the earlier method of exegesis while preserving its spirit, the new hermeneutic of fixed text returns the people again to the words of God for practical, moral, and spiritual guidance, but does so largely through a historically defined body of Scripture. Standing between the Biblical and the later, more strictly "Jewish" readings of the Divine Word, this new approach to Torah works through techniques of close reading and explication, foreshadowing those of later exegetes in that the Text is now understood wholly from within rather than through the assistance of a freshly received divine word. Revealing how "reading" is to be defined given the new Primary Source (i.e. a fixed written text), how such reading ought to be undertaken, and to what end it is intended, Ezra and the Levites (5th c. B.C.E.) "read in the book of the law distinctly, and [give] the sense and [cause] them [the people] to understand the reading" of it (Neh. 8:8). Their textually based method of expounding the Text is essential for understanding the shared concerns of strictly Biblical and later Jewish hermeneutics. Unfortunately, English translations of Nehemiah 8:8, the key verse for understanding this new method of reading, fall far short of the actual substance of the original with its rich connotations, its multitude

of derivative meanings, and its rich interplay with the language and events of earlier Biblical accounts. To understand something of what it means to "read rightly" according to the explication of Ezra, therefore, this verse's key terms must be defined and clarified within their native context—as far as this is possible within the constraints of English.

In Hebrew, then, Nehemiah 8:8 reads: "va'yik'r'u ba-sefer v'torat ha-elohim m'forash v'som sekel v'yabinu va-mik'ra'" (WB, II: "And they read in the book of God's law distinctly, either atreet, and openly to understand; and they understood, whanne it was read"). The first word of significance in this passage is yik'r'u, "read." Derived from the verbal stem kara' which has the double signification of both "to call, proclaim, invite, or read" and "to encounter" or "to engage," kara' signifies the articulation of a message which is usually addressed to a particular recipient and which is intended to elicit a specific response. It is the quintessential word for verbal engagement and includes connotations of naming, as in asserting authority over something or someone (Gen. 1:5, 2:19, 17:5, 32:28, etc.); of recognition of divine truths (Is. 7:14); and, of the calling of either God (Gen. 4:26, 12:8, Ps. 34:6, Zeph. 3:9, etc.) or man (Gen. 46:33, Ex. 2:7, Num. 16:12, etc.) to a particular task. However, it also connotes a physical engagement of two parties, often violent, always animated. These encounters may be positive, as when a host hurries out to meet a guest (Gen. 18:2, Jud. 4:18) or when the people meet with God (Ex. 19:17). Equally, though, they may be negative, as when Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh (Ex. 5:20) or when enemies meet for war (Josh. 8:22). Both usages retain the element of the confrontational and the sense of transforming encounter which alters the nature of at least one of the

parties involved. Used for Ezra's "reading," kara' conveys this sense of active involvement in and with the Text: it cannot be passively received, for the very reception of it actuates involvement, response, and change—the classic hermeneutical struggle, but again, with a clearly defined end.

The second word of significance in Nehemiah 8:8 for understanding the nature of its "reading" is m'porash, "distinctly." From the root parash, "to separate" (lit. "to disperse," fig. "to specify"; also, once, meaning "to pierce or sting," Prov. 23:32), m'porash has as its basic meaning "to make clear." This clarification, occasioning an almost Leibnitian sense of clear, may be by means of revelation, explication, or translation, though only the latter two are relevant here. And, if as seems to be suggested by a parallel term in the Aramaic of Ezra 4:18 (m'parash; Ez. 4:6–6:18 being written in Aramaic), m'porash refers to translation rather than explication, this instance of reading "distinctly" would be the first targum, a translation of Scriptures from the Hebrew into the Aramaic vernacular of the time. Finally and significantly for the marriage of reading and observance, this same root also provides the term Perushim, "the separated," the word which is the basis for "Pharisee." Though it is originally a term of abuse, the Pharisees embraced the label and took it in its alternate sense of "the interpreters" to define themselves as the principal expositors of Torah, both Oral and Written—a role validated by Jesus when he says, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ..." (Mt. 23:2f.). "Reading distinctly," then, in Ezra's terms may thus mean either producing an explication of the Text as one encounters it or converting it into the common tongue—both of which are expected to evoke an active and observant response.

With such an active and responsive reading behind it, the expression som sekel v'yabinu, "to give the sense and to cause to understand" the reading, is primarily significant for what it reveals about the method and end of yik'r'u ... m'porash, for it specifies the means and end of right reading. The first aspect of such an end is sekel, "understanding" which is derived from and is used similarly to the verbal sakal, "to act circumspectly." Practical in its orientation, it includes success (or "good understanding," Prov. 3:4), discretion and prudence (1 Chron. 22:12, 26:14; Ps. 111:10, Prov. 13:14), as well as good sense and wise policy (Dan. 8:25) --Abigail being a classic exemplar of sekel (1 Sam. 25:3). Referring to the intelligent use of reason, therefore, sakal is the process of systematically working through a complex of thoughts to arrive at wise, responsible, practical conduct (e.g. Neh. 8:13). Sekel inevitably involves one immediately in the issue being considered and provides insight into wise behaviour which, as in Jeremiah 9:23-24, involves conforming one's life to God's nature for referential purposes and in accord with the referential model. As the Lord says through Jeremiah:

A wise man haue not glorie in his wisdom, and a strong man haue not glorie in his strengthe, and a riche man haue not glorie in hise richessis; but he that hath glorie, haue glorie in this, to wite and knowe me, for Y am the Lord, that do merci and dom and riytfulnesse in erthe. For whi these thingis plesen me, seith the Lord (Jer. 9:23f., WB, II; cf. Luke 2:14, 17:15ff.; Jn. 7:16ff., Gal. 6:14, etc.).

Here, the wisdom (hokmah) of man covers the whole range of human experience, from skill in crafts, war, or government (Ex.28:3, 31:3, 6; Isa. 10:13, Dt. 34:9, 2 Sam. 14:20), to shrewedness and prudence (2 Sam. 20:22; Ps. 37:30,

Prov. 10:31). It is a wisdom of practical matters that is divine in origin and end, being derived from and leading to the one true God (Job 11:6, Prov. 2:6; Job 28:28, Prov. 2:2ff.), even as it is manifest in the everyday world. Properly subordinated to the understanding (sekel) and knowledge (da'at) of God (Jer. 9:23), this wisdom is defined as the practical medium of right reading (and with it right response) as Ezra "gives the sense" of Scripture to the people.

Bin, the root of yabinu and the second part of why one is to read, is often used in Scripture as a synonym for hokmah (e.g. Job 28:28). It is distinguished from sekel primarily in that bin refers to knowledge by discernment (cf. binah), especially between good and evil, whereas sakal operates less directly in the moral realm and suggests the more practically applicable features of wisdom such as prudence, policy, and sagacity--though these too may lead to an ultimately moral awareness. The virtue of both sekel and binah, however, can be acquired through som, through an interactive reading of the Text which "gives" the sense of a passage. Meaning in its most basic sense "putting something somewhere" (Gen. 2:8, 40:15), som includes connotations of "setting up or constituting" as in status, condition (Gen. 32:12; Josh. 6:18; 1 Sam. 8:5), or covenant (2 Sam. 23:5, Ps. 89:29); "establishing" as in a relationship (Jud. 1:28, Num. 6:27); or "bringing about a change" (Ex. 14:21; Is. 41:15, 18). Again, like sekel, it suggests involvement as when God tells Moses He will "put" (som) His words in his mouth (Ex. 4:15). It in no way suggests an inert or indifferent explication or reception of meaning: its essence is performance (on these etymologies, see the commentaries in Widmer, Die Kommentare von Raschi, Ibn Ezra, Radaq, zu Joll).

According to Nehemiah 8:8, then, one engages the Text properly through

active encounter, relationship, and transformation, and does so to acquire both theoretical and practical wisdom. Only such a total commitment of self constitutes the type of mik'ra, "reading," which is done by Ezra. Such a reading may also explain man's response to the Text in the Jewish hermeneutic as well as God's method and motive for speaking through it (cf. Augustine's Tractatus in Joh. 1).

Reading From Within: Intention and Process in Text

Emerging from the renewed focus on Scripture initiated under Ezra and resituating the reader hermeneutically, morally, and even physically in relation to the Text, the newly "Jewish" (as opposed to the purely "Biblical") approach to Scripture becomes increasingly characterized by polyvalence as it attempts through tradition and continual re-interpretation (the "fence" around the Torah, Pirke Abot 1.1, 3.13) to accommodate the now fixed Text to the changing circumstances of Jewish life and worship. With this "resituation" comes a heightened concern with the intention (kavanah) of the reader as he (or she) engages in the interpretive act, a concern which is perhaps most obviously manifest in the style, method, and meaning of prayer which emerges during the generations immediately following that of Ezra. Having during the Exile become a temporary substitute for sacrifice, prayer during the Persian period continues to mirror the ceremonies of the Temple but also comes to reflect a new attitude towards reading, the Text, and participation with it. As with the Temple ceremonies, the new worship centres on the Sh'ma, the basic statement of faith, history, and covenant in the Jewish tradition (Dt. 6:4ff.). Now recited by each man in Israel instead of by the priests alone, though, it announces the individual's

responsibility for understanding and fulfilling the commands. In the new liturgy, the Sh'ma is supplemented by passages of Scripture to be prayed rather than merely heard as well as by the Shemoneh Esrei (the "Eighteen Blessings"; see Appendix C.i). Considered the Tefillah, the prayer par excellence--since it expresses most completely man's relationship with God--the Shemoneh Esrei reveals the context of true reading in its first three blessings as the individual pays homage to God for His works in history, for His Omnipotence, and for the Sanctification of His Name. It also delineates the purpose for reading in the thirteen--originally twelve--supplications, beginning with stated desires for binah, "wisdom," da'at, "insight," a return to Torah (hashiybenu ... l'toratek), and teshuvah, "repentance." Finally, the prayer specifies the result of a proper reading in its last three blessings which centre on the performance of acceptable service as manifest in personal and communal righteousness, in the re-building of the Jerusalem (symbolizing social restoration in holiness), and in the ushering in of the Messianic age, with its concomitant salvation (cf. Berachot 34a).

Perhaps the one innovation which is singularly most suggestive of the distinctive kind of reading occurring in this period, though, is the incorporation of physical accessories into the process of prayer, especially the tefillin ("phylacteries"). Giving a concrete form to what had long been considered a metaphorical command (Dt. 6:8), the tefillin do not suggest an overly literalistic reading of the letter of Scripture. Rather, they represent the compounding of the levels and natures of discourse through which one might engage the commandments. In effect a reification of the Jewish conception of reading, they bind one's entire being to and in God's words and service (Dt. 10:18), contextualizing the obligation for active response and obedience by recalling history (Ex. 13:9; the leather straps of

the tefillin replacing the leather thongs of the Egyptian lash) and election. With and in the tefillin shel rosh, Exodus 13:1-16 is bound to the forehead as a perpetual testimony to the Israelites' status before God. Never covered when worn, the shel rosh, therefore, stands as a sign to the nations (Dt. 28:10) and reminds man that he stands daily in the presence of God. This sense of continual presence before and in the Words of God is still further reinforced in that one of God's names, Shaddai, is formed by the tefillin: the shin is on the hand or bayit of the shel rosh; the dalet is on the fingers or the knot on the back of the head; and, the yod is the knot next to the bayit of the shel yad or the strap of the shel rosh. Like the extensive commentaries on Scripture and the development of halakha which comes later, the tefillin is, therefore, essentially one personal and intimate aspect of "the hedge about the Torah," one way to protect its integrity while keeping it central and tangible in the lives of the people. In that it places the person who davens, or prays, literally within the confines of the commandments, the tefillin is thus an early physical manifestation of an interactive and internalized reading of Torah from within the Text--the method and purpose of a truly "Jewish" reading.

From within the experience of the historically conditioned written text, then, the reader is encouraged to read the Law anew for contemporary comprehension and practical observance. In this, he (or she) is assisted in the engagement of the Written Law (Torah she bih'tav) by the Oral Law (Torah she b'al-pe) which not only explicates the perceived "true" meaning of the Mikra for any particular generation (cf. Pirke Abot 1.1-5), but becomes itself eligible for further interpretation (cf. Berakot 1.1; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, "Introduction"). Granting the exposition of text equal

validity and authority with the original, written component of Torah, the new hermeneutic privileges diachrony in the interpretive act and legitimizes the explication of the Text as a complementary stratum of signification. This leads to a unique, polyvalent hermeneutic in which one Text is commented upon by another which in turn becomes the source for further discussions, making reading a polyvocal, horizontal endeavour as well as a multi-leveled vertical one. This method of reading results in an exegesis based upon the double logic of reference and association: ultimately pointing to God, it allows the study of any given passage to flow smoothly from topic to topic, issue to issue, perhaps coming to a resolution, perhaps not, as all sides of a dispute are presented for the reader's consideration. Exemplified in shakla ve-tarya, the give-and-take style of the Talmudic halakha, it attempts to activate the reader, drawing him or her into the discussion and carrying him or her from ruling to ruling as he or she learns halakha le-ma'aseh, "to do halakha," by becoming one with its process. Incorporated into an interpretive "whole" which retains much from the earlier, pre-Ezraic hermeneutic (most notably, God as the central and ultimate Referent for all reading and action), the human and interpretive element thus complements the concept of Torah and transforms the perception of revelation and reference from that of a causative progress to an organic process as a vital intimacy is produced among the exegete, his or her Text, and the Author, making each an active partner in the exegetical activity. So secure does Judaism become with its dynamic Torah and its collective (rather than individualistic), cumulative (e.g. dor le dor, "generation to generation"), and comprehensive understanding of interpretation that it develops a remarkable tolerance for complexity, subtlety, and even contradiction as it demonstrates that not only Torah, but its study as well,

is ultimately communal, participatory, and referential, involving mankind in and pointing the individual through the Text to God, even as God works through the Text with and on humanity.

Refining the Word: Midrash and Peshat

Throughout the history of Jewish hermeneutics, this fundamentally referential impetus for (and required participation in) the reading and living of Torah remains constant. The methodology, however, the techniques and the immediate goals by which the larger interpretive whole is expounded, undergoes a continuous refinement as exegetes attempt variously to read Scripture aright. Earliest efforts, from the time of Ezra (5th c. B.C.E.) to that of Hillel (1st c. B.C.E.), are based upon midrash, a term related to derash which means "to seek carefully" or "to inquire after diligently" (cf. Ez. 7:10). Broadly defined as an intellectual and imaginative working upon the Text from within to reveal latent meanings as a hammer upon a rock releases sparks (Sanhedrin 34b), midrash encompasses everything from close grammatical study to the wildest mystical speculations and considers that method of reading which is most thorough--not necessarily that which is most "accurate" in any modern sense--to be most true. Provided that all readings work for the honour of God and for the furthering of Jewish observance, there is little distinction made in midrash between that meaning which is actually present in the Text, that which is read out of it (exegesis), and that which is read into it (eisegesis).

In the First century B.C.E., however, exegesis becomes both more methodical and more textually oriented when Hillel, "the disciple of Ezra" (Sotah 48b), formulates seven middot, "rules," by which the Sacred Text may

be systematically analyzed and internally validated according to the principles of logic (Abot de-R. Nathan 37). In a technically abbreviated expression, these include:

(1) a fortiori [What applies in the lesser case will certainly apply in the greater case]; (2) analogy [where the same expression is used in two different verses, the same legal considerations will apply]; (3) deduction from one verse [where the same expression is found in a number of verses, legal considerations applicable in one will be applicable to all]; (4) deduction from two verses [a general principle can be deduced from a 'family' of at least two texts and be applied more generally]; (5) (inference) from the general and the particular and from the particular and the general [a general principle is limited by a particular instance or a particular instance is raised to the level of a general principle]; (6) similarity elsewhere [a problem in one text may be resolved by reference to another, even without the verbal similarities of (2) and (3) above]; (7) deduction from context [a meaning is established by its context]. (translation by Judah Goldin)

Each of these rules reveals an intense awareness of and concern for the Text itself and always uses one part of the Bible to clarify another, whether through deduction, analogy, or a consideration of context. Representing a move away from the undifferentiated midrashic readings which may have merely incidental connections to the Word, Hillel's work is symptomatic of a growing concern with the literal value of the Text as an internally coherent, logical, and imminently practical document. It also reveals a slowly reviving interest in the need to read the Text from within

academically as well as experientially. To balance both the academic and the experiential as well as to preserve the transforming power of the Law without compromising either the Text or contemporary observance, therefore, Hillel simultaneously accords respect to the essence of Torah, to human reason and dignity, to the rules of logic, and to tradition.

Laying the foundation for all later "textual" exegesis in the tradition, Hillel's middot and the implications of them for both the Text and exegesis are expanded and developed by his two most significant successors (or their schools), Akiba b. Joseph (c. 50-135 C.E.) and Ishmael b. Elisha (1st-2nd c. C.E.). Both attempt to explicate the "literal" sense of the Text through a focus on its intricacies and subtleties but, because they differ significantly in their considerations of Biblical language, they produce two distinctive systems of explication. These systems become, in turn, the sources of the two principal methods of reading Scripture in the Jewish tradition as those who follow Akiba tend, in effect, to move sharply away from the actual peshat (the "plain sense") of the Text while those who follow Ishmael tend to underscore it. Akiba, considering the Torah to be directly from God, attributes to every aspect of its language a unique and mysterious significance. In his understanding of the Text, nothing can be considered arbitrary: every jot, tittle, and ostensibly superfluous vav of the Text is invested with transcendent meaning (Sanhedrin 51b). This produces a rather "other-worldly" understanding of the Text which occasionally leads him into esoteric speculation which cannot be substantiated directly from the text (Menahot 29b). It also gives rise to the more "spiritual" or "allegorical" interpretations of Scripture, evidencing something of Philo's "Alexandrian" tendencies (e.g. Nachamides

[c. 1270 C.E.], Commentary on Genesis). Ishmael, on the other hand, bases his exegesis on the more earthbound statement that "the Torah speaks in the language of men" (dibra Torah b'lashon b'nei adam) and that it must therefore be considered in the same terms as other human languages (Keritot 11a, TJ Yebamot 8.8d, Nedarim 1.36c). More analytical and less speculative, his attention to the Text holds exegesis closely to the historical sense of Scripture and argues for a reading which is consistent not only with the letters of a passage but with the intent of its author as well as that of the Author as revealed in the larger contexts of chapters, books, and Scripture as a whole (e.g. Sotah 16a; Sanhedrin 51b, 74a). Building on Hillel's seven principles, Ishmael formulates thirteen "rules" for elucidating Torah, principles which became a standard feature of the Jewish liturgy (see Appendix C.ii). His work, in contrast to that of Akiba, thus provides both the stimulus and the method for those readings which are later distinguished as peshat, "according to the plain sense."

Early Medieval Readings of the Sacred Text: PaRDeS and the Karaites

The dichotomy between the hermeneutical methods of Akiba and those of Ishmael causes few problems from the second until the eighth centuries C.E., since during this period, Scripture continues to be read through midrash, a method which easily shifts between and encompasses both the approach of Akiba and that of Ishmael. Motivated by the same impulse to "read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and g[iv]e the sense," most post-Akiba and post-Ishmael exegetes believe themselves to be uniformly pursuing the "literal" insofar as they truly desire to discern the fullest meaning inherent in the Word. In practice, however, these exegetes may be crudely

divided into two classes, according to their actual treatment of the "literal": the darshanim, following Akiba, define the language of Scripture in relation to God and privilege senses other than the plain in their readings; the pashtanim, following Ishmael, define the Text in relation to human considerations and emphasize the original intent of the plain level of Biblical language. It is not until the Middle Ages that this basic division gives rise to a four-fold schema (with the inevitable sub-divisions) for reading Scripture. Paralleling the pattern of Medieval Christian interpretations ("Littera geste docet . . .," etc.; see Nicholas of Lyra's "First Prologue" 200ff. and "Third Prologue" 28ff.) and known by the acronym PaRDeS, the principal forms of medieval Jewish interpretation which emerge are: Peshat, denoting the "simple," primary, or plain sense; Remez (lit. "hint"), indicating the philosophical and theological interpretations derived from veiled allusions within the Text and including typological and allegorical readings as well as gematria and notarikon; Derash (lit. "interpretation"), referring to the homiletical applications of Scripture to contemporary conditions; and Sod (lit. "secret" or "mystery") referring to esoteric readings of a passage (see Appendix C.iii for Abraham Abulafia's [d. 1292 C.E.] summary of "The Seven Paths in the Knowledge of Torah").

Since no verse of Scripture can be removed from its literal meaning, regardless of what other readings it might receive (Yebamot 24b; cf. Nicholas of Lyra, "Second Prologue" 11ff.), all four of the exegetical possibilities--at least ideally--build upon and presuppose the peshat, "the plain sense," so that, at least in theory, Torah is first read for its peshat, for that which keeps Scripture closest to its own language and logic. In practice, though, moralizing and mysticism often dominated, causing scholars like Solomon b. Adret, for example, to warn the reader of

commenatries against those who

reduce the entire Bible to useless allegories ... trifl[ing] with
and pervert[ing] all the commandments ... and show[ing] that they
have no faith in the plain meaning of the commandments ... and
read[ing] the Law with their lips, but [because] their heart is
not sound inwardly ... they pervert it in seven ways.

(Letter to Provence, c. 1305).

The fragmentation of midrash into the various particularized methods of
reading and a re-assertion of the necessary primacy of the peshat was
initiated by the Karaites, an anti-rabbinic sect of the Eighth century which
reacts to the perceived Akibistic excesses of the late- and post-Talmudic
midrashim by taking the theories of Ishmael to the extreme. Jacob
Al-Kirkisani (Tenth century C.E.), a central proponent of Karaism,
elaborates the principle "The Torah speaks the language of men" to a full
and extremely literalistic hermeneutic. He writes:

Scripture addresses mankind in a manner accessible to their
understanding and about matters familiar to them from their own
experience; this is what the Rabbanites mean when they say, "The
Law speaks with the tongue of men" (Berakot 31b) ... when God
created His creatures and wished to address them with
commandments, prohibitions, promises, threats, and narratives, He
took into consideration the fact that their constitution could not
bear His natural speech because of its sublimity and exaltation
and its dissimilarity from their own language, and He fashioned
for them a speech akin to their own, near to their comprehension,
acceptable to their understanding, and bearable to their

faculties. This is comparable to our own procedure with animals and similar creatures, whose constitution is different from ours, whom we must govern and manage, to whom we must communicate our wishes, who do not know our speech, and whose sounds and utterances are not akin to ours. We therefore resort to signs, hints, and noises which make known our wishes ... [similarly] God addresses mankind in a manner adapted to their minds and accessible to their understanding. ("Principles" 14)

Denying tradition even a minor role in interpretation, he defines the Karaite interpretive centre entirely in relation to the Text itself and is "diligent in following the Biblical text strictly," making "deductions from it or from the results of inference based upon two premises and a conclusion" (Al-Kirkisani, "History of Jewish Sects" 16).

Further, he declares that

Scripture as a whole [must always] ... be interpreted literally, except where literal interpretation may involve something objectionable or imply a contradiction. Only in the latter case, or in similar cases which demand that a passage be taken out of its plain meaning--e.g., where a preceding or following passage requires it in order to avoid a contradiction--does it become necessary to take the text out of its literal sense. ("Principles" 12)

This absolute emphasis on the literal is meant to allow Scripture to police its own interpretations and is necessary because of the Karaite rejection of the diachronically accumulated normative tradition. Such an extreme step toward synchronicity is far beyond the textually based exegesis advocated by Ishmael, though, and is indicative of the distance that exists between the

Karaite and the true Jewish hermeneutical tradition—a tradition which is characterized by a fundamental dependence upon historically compiled, communal readings. Nevertheless, in investing the authority of the Text and its correct reading in the Work alone, the Karaites perform an important function for traditional hermeneutics: in hoping to avoid "tak[ing] a biblical passage out of its literal meaning without a valid reason for doing so" since "this would lead to the nullification of all accounts therein, including all commandments, prohibitions, and so forth, which would be the acme of wickedness" ("Principles" 12), they re-direct exegetical attention (through reaction if not response) to the questions of the actual "literal" significance of the Text and its necessary relation to the reader's life.

Ultimately reflecting a concern with right reading, observance, and goodness, therefore, their emphasis on the literal is neither a purely theoretical nor an inconsequential act. Like the Rabbis, they see in the individual's reading the source and motivation for his or her observance and are intensely concerned to correct any perceived errors in method or application. Accordingly, Al-Kirkisani's mention of "the necessary preliminary things pertaining to the explanation of the meaning of Scripture and the interpretation of its seeming ambiguities," is meant

to lay a foundation upon which to build further, when we shall demonstrate the perfection of the whole of Scripture in the way of account, address, statement, and question, relating to fact, metaphor, generalization, advancement, postponement, abridgment, profusion, separation, combination, and other of its usages.

("Principles" 10)

"Look[ing] to God for ultimate succor," these "preliminary things" are studied to remedy misconceptions concerning the Text and to ensure a "true"

reading and a "true" enactment of it ("Principles" 10).

Rejecting midrash in favour of peshat, the fundamentalist Karaites are in many ways traditional pashtanim. Advocating a theory of Scriptural language similar to that of R. Ishmael, their concern is with the grammatical, linguistic, and literary features of Torah. They are also innovative, though, in that they initiate a new age in Biblical exegesis through their introduction of a rationalistic approach to the language and logic of Torah. Performing an important and re-vitalizing, if inadvertent, service for normative Jewish hermeneutics through their exaltation of the role of human reason in the exposition of Scripture, they cause a backlash of reaction on the part of the more catholic exegetes. Yet, because their arguments are based on Sacred Scripture--the divine Authority--they are irrefutable from any other source. Consequently, to counter the Karaite extremism, later Medieval commentators, must also concentrate on textual and technical matters. Like the Karaites, these later exegetes realize that one's reading of Scripture intrinsically shapes observance. Therefore, they make every effort to determine the truest sense of Scripture as originally given to ensure that the Text receives its fullest expression through correct observance. Through this, they hope not only to counter Karaism, but to restore faith, praxis, and Torah to their original unity and effectiveness--a concern which was and is, after all, the ever dominant preoccupation of both Biblical and Jewish hermeneutics.

Historico-Grammaticism and The Role of the Rational: Sa'adia to Ibn Ezra

Sa'adia Gaon (882-942 C.E.), the first of the rationalistic pashtanim in the normative tradition, most directly draws upon and responds to the

arguments of the Karaites, developing their points of issue within the framework of mainstream Judaism, even as he attempts to balance their extreme, fundamentalistic literalism with the more catholic influences of Ishmael. More detailed than the Karaites in his explication of the literal, Sa'adia adds tradition to their system as an essential part of the divine sign theory by which Torah may be rendered comprehensible. "It was well-known to the All-Wise, exalted and magnified be He," he writes,

that His precepts and the accounts of His signs would in the course of time require transmitters, in order that these matters might seem as authentic to posterity as they did to the early ancestors. Therefore did He render the human mind susceptible to the acceptance of authenticated tradition and the human soul capable of finding repose therein, so that His Scriptures and traditions might be acknowledged as true. (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions 3.6)

Re-introducing the Divine as the primary Source and Referent for exegetical theory (rather than just His Sign, i.e. the Text), and believing the "authentic tradition ... to be based upon the knowledge of the senses as well as that of reason" (1.5), Sa'adia re-centralizes the Karaite evidence within an interpretive scheme that more closely resembles the Biblical and Jewish originals. Yet, still very close to the Karaites in his essential privileging of an earth- and man-based reading, he sees tradition and reason as mutually validating in that "[authentic tradition] verifies for us the validity of the intuition of reason ... [and] confirms for us the validity of knowledge inferred by logical necessity" (1.5). Arguing that, with Scripture, these constitute the "bases" of Judaism, the Bible being central with "One ... [being] anterior to it; namely, the fountain of reason [and]

the second [being] posterior to it; namely, the source of tradition" (3.10), he asserts that "Whatever ... we may not find in the Bible, we can find in the other two sources. Thus are the commandments rounded out quantitatively as well as qualitatively" (Beliefs 3.10). As Sa'adia articulates it, then, the Bible uses and works within not only the language, but also the logic, of man.

Applying these principles to the explication of Torah necessarily produces an emphasis on the literal, for, though many passages might be "susceptible of many different interpretations," Sa'adia "see[s] no necessity from the standpoint of reason, for rejecting the literal sense ... in order to make room for a figurative one" (7.2, variant text). Attuned to "the character of the Hebrew language and the style of the Bible" (1.3) and aware of "peculiarit[ies] of the usage of the language of Scripture" (2.13), he accordingly urges his reader to "accept in its literal sense and its universally recognized meaning whatever is recorded in the books of God that have been transmitted to us" (ibid.) More comprehensive than the Karaites in that he includes as part of the literal the Text's "universally recognized meaning," he allows a reading of Scripture to deviate from his understanding of the literal not only when the exceptions of the Karaites are present (when something "objectionable" or "a contradiction" occurs), but also when tradition would be violated:

The only exceptions to this rule [of a literal reading] are those instances in which the generally recognized and usual rendering would lead to one of the four [following] results: either (a) the contradiction of the observation of the senses, such as [would be presented] by the Scriptural statement about Eve: 'Because she was the mother of all living' (Gen. 3:20); or (b) the

contravention of reason, such as that which would be implied in the Scriptural remark: 'For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire' (Deut. 4:24); or (c) a conflict with some other Scriptural utterance, such as that which is occasioned by the statement of Scripture: 'And try me now herewith' (Mal. 3:10), coming as it does after the injunction: 'You shall not try the lord your God' (Deut. 6:16); or, finally, (d) a conflict with what has been transmitted by rabbinic tradition, such as we have in the Scriptural statement: 'Forty stripes he may give him' (Deut. 25:3), which clashes with the tradition according to which the penalty is thirty-nine stripes (Mak. 22b). (Beliefs 7.2, variant text; see Appendix C.iv for discussion of each exception.)

In the interest of fidelity to the literal, Sa'adia recommends initial attention to the language of the passages in question in order to resolve problematic cases. He advises the reader to "look for a rendering of the expressions [that are in doubt], which would be permissible in the usage of the Hebrew language and would make it possible for the contradictions to be reconciled" (7.2, variant text). If that fails, he suggests recourse to various devices of human language and logic such as metaphor, analogy, distinction, or approximation to uncover the plain sense of the passage as it is intended by its Author--an inclusion of figurative language within the definition of the literal which finds early precedents in the Hellenistic Targumim of Onkelos and Jonathon. According to Sa'adia, though, whatever solution is found must be within his carefully established pattern for, as he insists,

when no such necessity brought about by one of the four causes mentioned ... exists, it is not necessary, nay not even

permissible, to look for non-literal interpretations and allegorical renderings of verses ... so as to deprive them of their literal meaning. On the contrary, they must be left as they are, since God, who uttered them, is omnipotent and at the same time the One who made the promise. (7.2, variant text)

For Sa'adia, wanton variance from the "literal" meaning of Scripture (as in the plain, apparent, and historical sense of the Text) is so unthinkable that he considers it better to leave obscure matters untouched than to attempt to resolve them contrary to either reason or the peshat of the Text.

Such strict adherence to an "Ishmaelite" reading is equally evident in the work of Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164 C.E.). A development on Sa'adia's theories, it insists on the dominance of the literal sense of Scripture as humanly defined even as it shows a heightened awareness not only of the Text, but also of those people who practice what it considers to be a less than legitimate exegesis. In his "Introduction" to the The Book of the Righteous, for example, Ibn Ezra uses an image of a circle with truth as its centre to illustrate his assessment of the various methods of reading common to his time:

If we use the model of a circle and put truth at its centre, ... this method [the digressive which incorporates non-Biblical knowledge in its exegesis] operates on the periphery, going around and around only to end where it begins ... [Those practicing] the second [the Karaites] ... believe they have attained the very point of the circle but in actuality they do not have the slightest idea of where it is ... The third [Kabbalah] is the way of shadows and darkness. It is entirely beyond the circle ... The

fourth [midrash] is close to the point

The fifth, the method he engages in, is presumably that of the centre (see below). In effect re-centering the extreme "Ishmaelitism" of the Karaites, Ibn Ezra thus outlines not just the five possible approaches to Scripture, but the relationship between the theories and their practitioners. In the "Preface" to his Commentary on Genesis, he writes:

Those rabbis living among the Arabs connect the study of biblical exegesis with that of natural history and metaphysics. However, everyone who wants to learn these fields is better to study them in books devoted wholly to them alone. Others, such as the Karaites, try to explain all these [extra-Scriptural] areas from the Bible, and to establish them on and by what is found in the Text. A third class, the Kabbalists, grope in total darkness even as they think they discover symbols throughout the law. The errors of these are hardly worthy of a serious refutation, although they do have the one merit of asserting that all commandments are to be weighed in the balance of reason for in every heart there is a mind which reflects God's Spirit. When this mind cannot accept the literal sense [of a passage of] Scripture, then a deeper meaning must be sought, for reason is the angel, the messenger, between God and man. If, though, the plain sense of a passage is not contrary to reason, why look for any other? Nevertheless, there are [certain] phrases which contain both a literal and an allegorical meaning, for example, the terms circumcision and tree of knowledge. A fourth group read everything according to Haggadah without any regard for the laws of grammar ... Some of these explanations do have a deeper meaning

than what appears on the surface, but most are simply for mental leisure when the mind is exhausted by the study of Halakah. A fifth method is that which I follow. It is to first determine the grammatical sense of a passage, then consult the Targum of Onkelos (though this is often far from the simple meaning, especially in its poetical portions). Finally, for books of law, I call upon tradition (cf. Appendix C.iii).

Showing an interest in motivation, Ibn Ezra thus closely resembles the Biblical writers as he focuses not only upon the techniques of reading but also upon the reasons for it (and for one's choice of methodology) as well as upon the consequences and the referential context of both choices and readings.

As thorough as Sa'adia's arguments, Ibn Ezra's theory reveals in both content and form a more balanced view of how the literal should be considered. Further, it addresses somewhat the inequity of a too humanly centered reading of Scripture. For example, he makes an obvious effort to set his exegesis in relation to its true and ultimate Purpose by proclaiming "In the name of Great and Tremendous God, I begin to explicate the Torah" ("Introduction," The Book of the Righteous). Again, as if in justification of the method by which he reads, he later states, "My commentary is based on the ... method that seems to me appropriate before the face of the Lord. In matters of Torah, I will be wholly impartial for Him alone do I fear ... May the Lord God of Truth lead his servant in the way of truth" (*ibid.*; cf. Nicholas of Lyra, "First Prologue" 254ff.). Seeming to call upon not only human resources but also the divine standards for them, his theory moves back to the larger context in which Torah ought to be considered as he re-initiates the presentation of the Law in relation to the Law-Giver and

re-asserts the fundamental referentiality necessary for a correct understanding. And, though he, like most medieval commentators, stops short of directly determining praxis on the basis of his reading (their concerns being more academic and critical than practical), his condemnation of the Karaites (he refers to them as "Sadducees") turns less on their rejection of tradition, which was Sa'adia's principal objection, and more on the consequences of that rejection: "Each of these men," he writes,

interprets the Torah as he thinks fitting. This pertains even to the laws and the commandments. [Often, though,] these people even make grammatical errors because of their ignorance in the Hebrew language. Therefore, how can anyone depend on their rulings concerning the precepts? [And still worse], they change their minds constantly, going from extreme to extreme (*ibid.*)

--an activity with potentially dire consequences when the matter at hand is essential holiness. Suggesting a sensitivity to consequence not readily apparent in Sa'adia, Ibn Ezra thus attempts to direct his audience through right reading to a surer basis for halakha and, thereby, for practical observance.

What is most interesting about Ibn Ezra's assessment of these other techniques of reading Scripture, though, is not that he dismisses them and advocates a focus on the literal. Many, indeed most, pashtanim do that. Rashbam (R. Samuel b. Meir, c. 1085-1174, C.E.), the grandson of Rashi, for example, is intensely preoccupied with peshat--perhaps more so than any other medieval Jewish exegete. Often bold in declaring that "Whoever wishes to grasp the plain meaning of these verses should pay heed to what I am about to write, for my predecessors completely failed to understand them" (Commentary on Exodus 3:11-12), Rashbam makes his case for peshat in his

Commentary to Genesis 37:2. He writes:

Lovers of reason should understand it well that, as our Rabbis tell us, no Scriptural verse ever loses its plain meaning. Although it is also true that the main aim of Torah is to teach us laws, doctrines, and rules of conduct which are derived by hint or by use in Scriptural verses of superfluous words of by means of the thirty-two rules of Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbi Jose the Galilean or the thirteen rules of Rabbi Ishmael. In their piety, the early scholars devoted all their time to the Midrashic explanations, which contain, indeed, the main teachings of Torah. But, as a result, they became unfamiliar with the deeper aspects of the Text's plain meaning ... As a result of all this, they were not so familiar with the plain meaning of Scripture. As it is said in the Talmud: "I had reached the age of eighteen and by that time I was intimately acquainted with the whole of Talmud, yet I had not realized that no Scriptural verse ever loses its plain meaning."

Acknowledging that Rashi "set himself the task of elucidating the plain meaning of Scripture," Rashbam, having "argued it out with him," writes that "He [Rashi] admitted to me [Rashbam] that if he had time he would have written new commentaries in accordance with the fresh interpretations of the plain meaning which are thought of day by day" (ibid., Jacobs' translation). Rashbam's "deeper aspects of the plain meaning" and "the fresh interpretations of the plain meaning which are thought of day by day" constitute those aspects of the sensus literalis which are foundational for Nicholas' theory of the literal (see Widmer, Die Kommentare von Raschi, Ibn Ezra, Radaq, zu Joll).

Whereas Rashbam considers a proper hermeneutic to be a matter worthy of open and aggressive confrontation, so much so that he readily challenges even his revered grandfather in matters of exegetical difference, Ibn Ezra does not. Herein lies the primary distinction--and virtue--of Ibn Ezra's hermeneutic. Unlike many other pashtanim, he takes great care with techniques which are at variance with his own. He studies them and weighs their relative merits, explaining their short-comings and trying to account for the appeal of each to its practitioners. Yet, though highly revering tradition, Ibn Ezra does not hesitate to assess negatively the exegesis of even "great men" who have gone before him. For example, discussing the first "lengthy and unfocussed" method which, in his opinion, includes too much of the "external sciences," he mentions Sa'adia as one who "walks this path" by "incorporating the thoughts of others" and who therefore merits criticism on this point (The Book of the Righteous, "Introduction"). Such gentle integrity of assessment and exegesis reflects a growing parity of critical tendencies which, as the period develops and leads to the increasingly balanced readings of Scripture by Rashi and Kimhi. Like them, Ibn Ezra not only allows for figurative interpretations as part of the true "literal" meaning of the Text, but explains how they can be understood in term of reason, Sa'adia's ideal. By subordinating the value of figurative readings to reason, he is able to hold that "The words of Torah are never less than plain" (ibid.). Seeming to suggest that what is needed is not so much a different reading, but a better effort in the one at hand, he further asserts that "It may be that the meaning is not wholly apparent [immediately], but that it will become obvious when the wise man opens his eyes to look more deeply into the text" (ibid.).

Like Sa'adia, then, Ibn Ezra provides and champions the literal,

grammatical, and historical aspects of the Text in his commentaries. Like Rashi and Kimhi, however, he does so without either coldly condemning or wholly dismissing other approaches. In fact, though without endorsing them, the last three exegetes often include traditional, midrashic, homiletic, or even mystic readings of certain passages for the reader's consideration. In this, they represent the culmination of a long tradition which incorporates the science, history, philology, and philosophy of their own age with the blend of law and narrative characteristic of both Bible and Talmud. Given form and a tightly maintained, though subtly evident, control by the rationalistic impulse, this mix of forms comes to its highest, articulated expression in the commentaries of Rashi and Kimhi.

The Fullness of Text and Meaning: Rashi and David Kimhi

Preceding Ibn Ezra slightly in chronology but developing independently in France, Rashi (R. Sh'lomo b. Yitzak, 1040-1105 C.E.) nevertheless represents a more perfect expression of what Ibn Ezra attempts. Given the title Parshandata ("the Expounder of the Law"; also a pun on Est. 9:7), he concerns himself "with the plain sense of Scripture and with such Agadoth that explain the words of Scripture in a manner that fits in with them" (Rashi on Gen. 3:8, Silbermann's translation). Weaving an almost seamless web of methods, styles, sources, and materials, Rashi freely quotes, abridges, or paraphrases midrash to supplement his points. More significantly, however, he focuses on the peshat, the plain sense of the Text, to produce a lucid, accessible, less formal, less cryptic commentary on the Scriptures than those which antedate his. Though still somewhat privileging the literal in its human relation in that he rejects or counters

those midrashim which he perceives as contrary to the simple sense or the context, he nevertheless does include many midrashim and bases his criteria for any necessary exclusions in the Text itself, not in some externally validating (or invalidating) conception of reason. In his assessment, the Text itself--in its fullest sense as read in relation to both God and humanity--is primary.

Maurice Liber, assessing Rashi and his works negatively, writes:

... Rashi's works do not bear witness to great originality, or better, to great creative force. Rashi lacks elevation in his point of view, breadth of outlook, and largeness of conception. He possessed neither literary taste nor esthetic sense. He was satisfied to throw light upon an obscurity, to fill up a lacuna, to justify an apparent imperfection, to explain a peculiarity of style, or to reconcile contradictions. He never tried to call attention to the beauties of the text or to give a higher idea of the original; he never succeeded in bringing into relief the humanity of a law, or the universal bearing of an event ... In short, his horizon was limited and he lacked perspective (Liber 92).

As a possible explanation for this, Liber cites "a certain timidity." He believes that Rashi "sought to efface himself behind his text, and not let his own idea take the place of the author's, especially when the text was a religious law and the author the Divine legislator" (93). Considering the number of times the personal pronoun is asserted in Rashi's commentaries, the frequency with which his own opinions are openly and plainly stated, and his often demonstrated willingness to encounter, engage, and refute both the Talmudic tradition and the opinions of specific Rabbis, "timidity" seems an

unlikely attribute of Rashi. What is more reasonable is that as a Jew familiar with his tradition and intimately acquainted with the Work on which he writes, Rashi "joins the voices" as it were, adding his own to the harmony of those of both Text and tradition (see Appendix C.v for samples of his commentary in which he unites verses from diverse sections of Scripture, passages from the Rabbis, etymological data, and his own opinions into coherent and smooth flowing glosses). Reading Scripture in such a way that it allows him to "write" or explicate it from within through etymology or self-verifying cross references, Rashi truly does "efface himself behind the Text," but does so to understand it better and to participate in it from within instead of externally dominating Scripture, manhandling it to his desire, or otherwise imposing his will upon it externally. So effective is his gentle, internal reading in disclosing the true meaning and method of Scripture that it becomes a model not only for other exegetes, but, through them, for clergy and poets as they learn from Rashi how to work and write from within the Word.

Like Rashi, David Kimhi (1160-1235 C.E.) is a synthesist of sorts and is perhaps the best of medieval Jewish exegetes in that, seldom falling away from the demands of logic, he fully avails himself of all methods in his explication of Scripture and always reads to an overtly moral end. Explaining that the rabbis "only considered study greater because it leads to practice ... Study without practice is not beneficial but harmful both to oneself and others" (Commentary on Psalm 25:14; cf. Ecc. 12:12, 2 Tim. 2:15, James 2:17), Redak (R. David Kimhi) furthers Rashi's careful technical balance of the techniques of Akiba and Ishmael by re-extending the implications thereof back into the realm of the active as Hillel does.

Basing his exegesis on grammar, etymology, and reason, he explicates the plain intent of Scripture, the peshat, without being rigidly bound to the letter of the Text and without ambiguity as to what exactly his "literal" comprises. Following the examples of both his father, Joseph Kimhi, and Maimonides (See Appendix C.vi), Redak attempts to balance a passage's grammar with its context (its 'inyan) so that the plain sense reading (peshateha) is not presented as just the grammatical interpretation (dikdukeha) but, being based upon it, moves beyond the letter (the mashma'), to encompass all other suitable readings, including midrashim. As Talmage puts it, in Kimhi, "an exegesis of midrash alongside the exegesis of Scripture [is] a sort of literary lagniappe unanticipated by the reader" (131)--especially for a reader accustomed to Sa'adia or Ibn Ezra. The peshat for Kimhi, then, is not a reading simply "according to the letter" (dareshu bo ke-mashma), but one which combines the letter of the Text (masma'ut ha-mikra) with the rest of its primary meaning and intent (peshuto shel mikra).

This double awareness and acceptance of both language and meaning, reason and tradition, is further supplemented in his analysis by his appreciation of the "literary" sense of the literal. Again drawing on his father's teachings, Redak assesses and esteems in their own terms the many figurative expressions of Scripture, explicating them not naively and superficially, but with an acute sense of the truths they are intended to convey. Commending Scripture for its poetic elegance (derekh melizat ha-shir), he points out and analyzes examples of metaphor (hash'alah), alliteration (lashon nofel 'al lashon), hyperbole (haflaqah), exaggeration (quzma), and other rhetorical devices, showing how they are used to convey the sense which is intended by the Author but which the words used alone in

their strictest, denotative meanings could not support. Here, drawing on Ibn Ezra and deviating widely from an Akibistic reading, Kimhi emphasizes that the words of Scripture preserve the sense of God's intent--the words themselves being mere agents by which to direct man's attention to His intention (Commentary on Gen. 24:39; cf. Gen. 21:1, 32:10; cf. Ibn Ezra, "Introduction" to Commentary on Exod. 20: "Scripture preserves the sense but not the words"). Always, though, Redak orders his commentary by logic and context, to provide a detailed analysis of the words, language, figures, and intent of the original passage.

Being so comprehensive in his coverage and so broad in his scope, Redak easily incorporates within his exegesis all aspects of the literal, moving freely among and giving appropriate weight and consideration not only to textual matters such as context, etymology and definition, but also to more literary and spiritual matters such as analogy and eschatology. In his reading of Isaiah 11, for example, he brings together a consideration of history, language, and spiritual hope to explicate fully the "literal" sense of the passage in relation to both God and man in a reading rivaled not even by Rashi. He unfolds the passage as follows:

'And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow out of his roots.' Scripture places this portion, which speaks of the future Messianic age, next to the promises given to King Hezekiah mentioned in the previous chapter. This is to say [kelomar]: Do not be astonished that such a great miracle was performed in the days of Hezekiah, ... for an even greater miracle will be performed for Israel in the days of the Messiah, when the Israelites shall be gathered in from exile ...

Jesse is mentioned ... because the first king of the dynasty came from him. The meaning of hoteh ('shoot') is a shaft, as Jonathon translates it. The prophet here speaks of the 'stock' and the 'roots' to signify that the tree which has been cut down will renew itself to produce shoots from its stock and roots Since Israel has been exiled from its land for so many years and since its kingdom ceased, it is as if the tree had been cut down. But the stock and the roots remain in the soil so that the prophet declares his hope that the stock will renew itself. The prophet declares that from the roots of Jesse and from his stock another fruitful branch will emerge. Once again there will be a king of Israel as before and even more than before. And he continues: 'And the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord,' because it all comes from God ... 'Wisdom' refers to that which a man has studied and knows and can draw upon at any moment. 'Understanding' is man's capacity to derive by deduction things he has not studied from those he has already mastered. 'Counsel' refers to acquaintance and training in ethics and patterns of social conduct. 'Knowledge and the fear of the Lord' both refer to God, i.e., that he will know God and fear him. (Commentary on Isa. 11:1-2, Jacobs' translation)

Kelomar, "this is to say," is perhaps the most significant principle observed by Redak as he builds his own work around the Biblical text, interweaving text and commentary to leave the impression that the "commentator has withdrawn and the Bible has undertaken to explain itself" (Talmage 61). Effacing his own presence in the commentary, Kimhi, again

like Rashi, produces a reading of the Text from within itself so that he becomes just one component, and an ostensibly incidental one at that, in the conversation of Scripture.

More precise and scientific than anything Hillel could have achieved, more truly Text-bound than any reading of Akiba, and more spiritually informed than the work of Sa'adia, Kimhi's reading represents the best of the Akibistic and Ishmaelite traditions which, wedded to the late medieval fascination with reason, results in a truly synthetic and comprehensive exegesis of the literal. Willing to approach the Text from within not only through the words but also through both past and present history, through the promise for the future, and through the logic internal to the Text, Kimhi therefore represents the apex of the Jewish concern for the literal, exerting a continuing influence on later readings and theories of reading in both the Jewish and Christian tradition.

Conclusion: Toward a Judeo-Christian Hermeneutic

Though Nicholas of Lyra most frequently quotes Rashi from among "the Hebrew doctors," the other exegetes briefly discussed above are also significant for understanding the Jewish influence upon his work, for they clarify the source and nature of the "Jewish" reading that Nicholas appropriated. They reveal how the "literal" is to be read from within and how it may be--indeed, is expected to be--polyvocal and multi-layered. Drawing upon the sign theory of the Hebrew Scriptures and shaping his theory of reading on the Jewish tradition and the work of the medieval Rabbis, Nicholas thus seems to base his understanding of the "literal" or "historical" sense of Scripture (that which is "signified directly by the

words," "First Prologue" 225) largely upon a Jewish foundation of multivalency, polyvocality, tolerance, and a literally (rather than "spiritually") internalized reading. Inseparable from the history, the tradition, and the language of the Text, and demonstrating a careful appreciation of intention and motivation on the part of the reader as well as of the Author, the "Jewish" (or, perhaps more accurately, the "Judeo-Christian") method of reading advocated by Nicholas absorbs the reader into the process of interpretation and allows him to explicate Scripture not only from within the Text but also from within the experience of the Word. Building upon this and incorporating Christian typology to develop his unique "parabolic" sense," Nicholas fuses the Jewish literal with the Christian to expand the medieval understanding of the sensus literalis: he re-grounds it not only in the intention of the Author, but in the attitude and actions of the readers as they engage and respond to the Word.

Chapter 3

"Knowing the Truth and Doing What is Good":

Wyclif's Hermeneutic and the Logic of Scripture

The Lord seith these thingis, A wise man haue not glorie in his wisdom, and a strong man haue not glorie in his strengthe, and a riche man haue not glorie in hise richessis;

but he that hath glorie, haue glorie in this, to wite and knowe me, for Y am the Lord, that do merci and dom and riytfulness in erthe. For whi these thingis plesen me, seith the Lord.

(Jer. 9:23-24; WB, II)

Wyclif "Naturalization" of Nicholas' Method: The Pastoral Hermeneutic

As one of the most famous and most widely sought after Medieval Biblical commentaries, Nicholas' Postillae (and with them his hermeneutic and particular sense of the literal) receive wide dissemination throughout continental Europe in the late Middle Ages [1]. These texts also have a significant, albeit not unmediated, influence in Fourteenth century England, where they receive their widest publication through the works of John Wyclif (c. 1320-1384), an Oxford Augustinian, who provides extensive discussion and applied elaboration of Nicholas' theory of text. A philosophical realist, a Biblical scholar, and a solid proponent of the efficacy of Scripture, Wyclif finds in the hermeneutic of Nicholas a viable textual base upon which he might reconcile his philosophy with his theology, his realism with the peculiar "logic" and demands of the Sacred Text. He therefore incorporates Nicholas' "Jewish" conception of reference into his own metaphysic, fusing the French Franciscan's "literary" (and literal) theory of text with both a modified realist philosophy and a native English, "pastoral" tradition of reading Scripture derived from that intellectually comprehensive and personally affective tradition represented by such Englishmen as Grosseteste (c. 1175-1253), Duns Scotus (c. 1265-1308), Bradwardine (c. 1290-1349), and Fitzralph (c. 1295-1360). Fashioned by these and other secular, rather than cloistered clergy, the "English" hermeneutic which Wyclif embraces and marries to Nicholas' Continental Judeo-Christian synthesis is one which privileges Scripture (often in its original languages) as the standard for all theology and conduct. It "does not in fact deal with anything except the things which are contained in Scripture and with the things that can be drawn [elici] from these," the latter being "contained there potentially

[virtualiter]" (Duns Scotus Ordinatio pr.204, 123; cf. Wyclif, Triologus 3.31). Moreover, it does not limit its externally validating authorities to the dictates of the Church, but encompasses all areas of science and reason as tools relevant to the explication of Scripture, "demonstrating by reason what [one already] holds by an utterly certain faith" (Duns Scotus, De primo principio princ. 3; cf. Wyclif, Dialogus 93). The consistent efforts of this tradition, then, are to harmonize the respective truths of natural science and revealed religion according to the logic of Scripture.

Further, in the English tradition, the broad learning necessary to support such an endeavour as well as the particularly textual and rational explications of Scripture which it occasions are explicitly directed to practical effect and "pastoral" effect, particularly--as in the words of Grosseteste (a favoured authority for Wyclif)--to the tota cura officii pastoralis. As Pantin writes: "The most fundamental of Grosseteste's ideas is the supreme importance of the cure of souls; this is the key to all the rest" ("Grosseteste's Relations with the Papacy and the Crown," 179). Resulting in a closer relationship between exegesis and homiletics, this pastoral concern also demands a concordance between the study, teaching, and preaching of Scripture and the efficacious evidence of it in the life of the minister. As Wyclif writes, a pastor "ought to be so holy, so strong in every sort of virtue that he would rather desert every kind of human intercourse, all the temporal things of this world, even mortal life itself, before he would sinfully depart from the truth of Christ" (De off. past. 32). To Wyclif and to those in the tradition which produced him, both pastoral and intellectual excellence are required for true spiritual authority (De euch. 281): anything less nullifies a man's moral authority (cf. De blasph. 19, De euch. 328, De veritate sacrae scripturae 2.173

[hereafter De ver.; unless otherwise stated, translations of passages from De ver. 1 are from an unpublished translation by Jeffrey and Treskol]. The ideal in action for clergy as understood within this tradition seems, therefore, to be very much like that of Chaucer's Parson who is "riche ... of hooly thoght and werk ... a lerned man ... That Christes gospel trewely wolde preche ... That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte" (CT 11. 479-481, 497) [2].

From his compounding of Continental and native sources, then, Wyclif proposes a hermeneutic which is based upon the rationale indigenous to the Sacred Text (the so-called "logic of Scripture") and which accurately reflects the referential purpose and process of an integrated biblical (or ototic; see Chapter 2) and realist sign theory. Essentially, his hermeneutic reasserts the authority of the Text as a practical standard for faith and conduct and emphasizes praxis as the necessary result of Nicholas' method of engaging Scripture. In effect, it makes reality, Text, and the efficacious relationship of one to the other in the life of man the central issues of a truly "textual" hermeneutic.

Requiring accountability both to the static issues of Text and to the dynamic of the Text in action, this new "Wycliffite" version of Nicholas' theory places a great onus upon the reader. It argues that the reader must concern him- or herself not only with questions of correct form, appropriate matter, authorial intention, and ultimate referentiality, but also with consequent issues, such as derived authority (religious, civil, and textual), progressive and manifest reference, as well as reader intentionality and response (Triologus 3.31, De ver. 2.127). Enucleating the personal, communal, and religious demands of a textually responsible

engagement of Scripture (and of all its various "accidental" manifestations as particularized texts), this distinctively "English" version of Nicholas' hermeneutic allows Wyclif's philosophical Biblicism to become immediately applicable to contemporary conditions. It makes it possible, for example, for Wyclif to address--directly from the authority of Scripture--the many ecclesiastical and individual abuses and delinquencies of his age. And he did so. In a fashion reminiscent of Gregory the Great and Jerome, Wyclif makes practical matters, especially neglected areas of Christian duty, a principal concern throughout his works. And, though he addresses many facets of institutional abuse (corruption, endowment, "dominion," etc.), he perceives the many social problems of his age to be the direct consequences of not only institutional, but individual sin ("sin," for Wyclif, including any effort of the will in which one places anything before the love of God and thereby fails to order one's affections in correct accord with the referential schema of Scripture and a healthy Christian reason; cf. OCD 1.31-32). Therefore, the continual preoccupation of his "practical hermeneutic" is with individual moral shortcomings. For laymen and religious alike, he constantly reiterates the necessity of rightly ordering one's love and the consequences of not doing so. In one particularly sweeping denunciation of contemporary "idolatries," he writes:

It is clear as day that we so-called Christians make the creatures to be our gods. The proud or ambitious man worships a likeness of that which is in heaven (Ex. 20:4), because, like Lucifer, he loves above all things promotion or dignity in one form or another. The covetous man worships a likeness of that which is in the earth beneath. And although arrayed in sheep's clothing, we hypocritically confess that the highest of all our service is in

the worship of God. Yet, it would very well become us to inquire carefully whether we faithfully carry out this confession in our actions. Let us then search and examine whether we keep the first and greatest commandment and worship God above all. Do we not bend and bow ourselves before the rich of this world more with the view of being rewarded by them with worldly honour or temporal advantage than for the sake of their moral character or spiritual help? Does not the covetous man stretch out now his arms and now his hands to grasp the gold, and does he not pay court untiringly to the men who have it in their power to hinder or to help his gains? Does not the sensual man, as though he were making an offering to the idol Moloch, throw himself down with his whole body before the prostitute? Does he not put upon such persons worldly honour? Does he not offer to them the incense of purses of gold in order to scent the flow of sensual delight with the sweetest perfumes? Does he not lavish upon his mistress gift upon gift, until she is more wonderfully arrayed with various decorations than an image of the Holy Virgin? And does not all this show that we love the flesh, the world, and the devil more than God, in that we are more careful to keep their commandments than His? What violence do we hear of the kingdom of heaven suffering in our times (Mt. 11:12), while the gates of hell are bolted? But alas! broad and well-trodden is the way which leads to hell, and narrow and forsaken the way that leads to heaven! This it is which makes men, for lack of faith, love what is seen and temporal more than the blessings which they cannot see, and to have more delight in buildings, dress, and ornaments, and other

things of art and man's invention than in the uncreated archetypes of heaven. (Liber Mandatorum [Decalogus]: c. 15, fol. 136, col. 1; [Lechler 303-4]).

In relation to professing and practising clergy, Wyclif extends his concerns to the appropriate disposition of the minister's heart and to true preaching (or, more precisely, the lack thereof). He writes that a minister ought to "cleanse his own spring that it might not infect the Word of God" and that, as "The highest Pastor could not depart from righteousness in word or deed," "his life and moral example are, as it were, a vital spirit to be attended by individual Christians and especially by pastors who say they are vicars of Christ" (De off. past. 48). His constant insistence is that "Among all the duties of a pastor after justice of life, holy preaching is most to be praised" (ibid.) and one of his strongest charges against the friars is that "They do not preach the Word of God in sincerity" ("De ordinatione fratrum," Polemical Works 1.97). True spirituality, for Wyclif, must be practical, active, and evident. Thus developing the theological, social, and political implications of Nicholas' earlier Judeo-Christian theory into a coherent grammatico-historical and "pastoral" hermeneutic, Wyclif's distinctively "English" re-working thus simply transforms Nicholas' hermeneutic from an academic method of reading Scripture into a scholastically articulated framework for theology, thought, and life.

Wyclif's Essential Orthodoxy: Privileging the Historical Faith

This insistence upon an evidenced morality arising from a direct dependence upon Scripture is, in fact, a principal source of many of Wyclif's problems with the Church hierarchy. Wyclif, like Nicholas before

him, is never an advocate of anything approximating a Reformation-like sola scriptura position. He believes, again like Nicholas, in the necessity of Scripture being interpreted by the community of faith historically conceived (De ver. 1.201, 137, 277, 304; Dialogus 93). Indeed, he celebrates Augustine as the greatest of authorities, surpassing all philosophers--even Aristotle--in logic and metaphysics (De ver. 1.37ff.). What he does not accept, however, are arbitrary interpretations and sophisms (De ver. 1.137) or unscriptural and morally unsubstantiated arrogations of power by the pope, the bishops, and by all the Roman curia (De pot. page 14f., 32f.; Op. min. 264; De ecc. 353; Sermones 2.433f., 4.175ff.; Triialogus 329, etc.). As well, his continual privileging of the teachings of Scripture (and of "true tradition") over the contemporary dictates of the Papacy and his concomitant insistence upon Scriptural norms as the standards by which the moral and spiritual validity of priests, prelates, or popes might be judged contributed much both to his posthumous denunciation as a heretic as well as to his popular reputation as "The Morning Star of the Reformation." Ironically, Wyclif's writings reveal him to be so orthodox in belief (if radical in expression) that it sometimes seems a wonder that later Protestants dared embrace him at all.

His orthodoxy is particularly evident in his attitude towards the Bible and in his insistence that Scripture (as interpreted according to tradition) must be the ultimate ground for faith, doctrine, and conduct. Such a view is standard fare among the teachings of the Church Fathers. Vincent of Lerin's words on the matter, for example, could easily serve as a summary of Wyclif's own theory of Scripture:

I have often then inquired earnestly and attentively of very many men eminent for sanctity and learning, how and by what sure and so

to speak universal rule I may be able to distinguish the truth of Catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical pravity; and I have always, and in almost every instance, received an answer to this effect: that whether I or any one else should wish to detect the frauds and avoid the snares of heretics as they rise, and to continue sound and complete in the Catholic faith, we must, the Lord helping, fortify our own belief in two ways: first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and then, by the Tradition of the Catholic Church.

But here some one will ask, Since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the Church's interpretation? For this reason, because, owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another Therefore, it is very necessary, on account of so great intricacies of such various errors, that the rule for right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of Ecclesiastical and Catholic interpretation.

Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense 'Catholic' which, as the name itself and the reason of things declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we shall observe if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be

true, which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our holy ancestors and fathers; consent, in like manner, if in antiquity itself we adhere to the consistent definitions and determinations of all, or at least of almost all, priests and doctors. (Commonitory Ch. 2, NPNF 11.132; cf. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 4.33, ANF 1.508; Origen, On First Principles 1.Preface.2, ANF 4.239; John Chrysostom, Homilies on Second Thessalonians, NPNF 13.390; Jerome, The Dialogue Against the Luciferians ch. 8, NPNF 6.324; Augustine, Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental ch. 5, PL 42.176; etc.)

As Nicholas of Lyra submits his own work, "everything stated and what is being stated to the correction of Holy Mother Church" as well as "to anyone of wisdom, importuning the pious reader and the charitable editor" ("Second Prologue" 88ff.), Wyclif writes, "An appeal to Scriptural authority has no weight in and of itself for the passage must be taken in the sense that God demands. And what that sense is cannot be determined without drawing upon reliable sources, that is upon the witness of sound interpreters" (De ver. 1.2.363). For both Nicholas and Wyclif, such "reliable sources" include Augustine, the Church Fathers (especially Jerome and Gregory the Great), and such later exegetes as Bradwardine, "Anselm, Hugh of St. Victor, [and] Robert Grosseteste" (De ver. 1.2.38; cf. 1.15.386). In reasserting the historically sanctioned authority of the Bible, then, Wyclif attempts not to alter the teaching of the Church, but simply to recall the contemporary, institutional Body of Christ to the fundamental principles of engaging revelation truly and effectively.

Responsibility to and for the Text: Respecting the Demands of Language

While making Nicholas' Biblical theory more immediately applicable to life and faith, this "Englishing" of his synthesis also has general repercussions for reading theory in Fourteenth century England. Wyclif's individuation of responsibility for and to the text requires of the reader a double effort of intellect and will to derive true, efficacious instruction from a formally codified text. Initially, his theory argues, there must be an acute concern with the text as a linguistic phenomenon as the reader gives detailed attention to the language and "historical" context of the composition (the ordo temporis; cf. Misc. phil 74ff.; see also Jeffrey on the "doctrine of possibles" in "John Wyclif and the Hermeneutics of Reader Response," 279ff.). This allows a correct, complete, and coherent understanding of the text's inherent meaning. In addressing the hotly debated issue of the Eucharist, for example, Wyclif engages the problem from the textual and historical level of language. That is, he explicates the Biblical account of the Last Supper according to the grammatical and logical exigencies of the language with which Christ instituted the Sacrament. On the sacramental proposition "this is my body," he writes:

heretics have assigned various significations to this Scripture. In the first place, they say that the pronoun 'this' (in the proposition of the Sacrament, 'this is my body') denotes simply the body of our Lord and not the bread. Otherwise, according to them, the proposition would be more false.... The former of these pronouns denotes the bread which Christ took in his own hands, and the pronoun following it [denotes] the same thing which was before

denoted by the other. The subject, therefore, of the sacramental proposition refers to this same bread. How is the believer to comprehend that Christ took bread in his hands, blessed [it], broke it, and gave it to his disciples to eat, unless he [the believer] understands by the former pronoun 'bread'? For the sacramental words had not yet been uttered that it should cease to be bread ... from all this it appears either that the Author of Scripture gives us a false representation or [else] that the Apostles ate of the bread which Christ offered to them. From this same source, it is also plain that the second pronoun denotes the same bread which is made the subject of the sacramental proposition, 'this is my body.' Otherwise, the causal would be in every way absurd. And besides, Christ would have been deluding His Church.

This reasoning, founded on the object derived by the pronoun, ought to give the faithful great confidence. The words of Christ point out the object which the Apostles perceived. [But] it is inconsistent to make them denote the mere body of Christ in its proper nature. Our Lord's words, then, must denote something else and nothing can they denote more pertinently than the bread which Christ held out to them in his hand. If the mere natural body of the Lord is meant, then the signification of these words of Christ would be, 'This my body is my body.' But with this, the Apostles were acquainted before. And, it would be wrong and inappropriate, in connection with the injunction ["Take eat"], that they should eat of the bread.

Again, if the reference of the pronoun to the bread be out of

place in this wise, how can it consistently be taught that the transubstantiation of the bread, by virtue of the words pronounced at the Sacrament, is an accident without a subject and an innovation of Christ's body in place of the sacramental bread? This fictitious reference, which they ascribe to these pronouns, does away with the entire meaning of the sacrament.

This being admitted, the Catholic must pass over to the complex signification of the sacramental proposition, 'This is my body,' abandoning, as the height of heresy, the opinion that the Gospel, especially the words of Christ, can contain anything impossible or inappropriate. [But] since every word of Christ is true and in the highest sense of the term catholic, and [since] Christ has said that this bread is His body, it follows manifestly that this is true. However, it is about this point that heretics maintain their struggle: they cannot deny that the pronoun denotes bread and so they assign an extremely heretical compound, the three-fold signification ... O how abominable is that invention which would make it appear that it is not bread which is denoted by that pronoun [as is shown above]! (Triialogus 4.2)

To Wyclif, grammar and the logic of the language in its historical situation and "locatedness" must be the fundamental determiners of signification even (or, more accurately, especially) in spiritual matters, since God chose to reveal Himself through language and since He is able to use language most perfectly (cf. discussion in Chapter 2 of God's use of the language of men).

Thus, when the reader engages Scripture, he or she must maintain simultaneously a continual sense of and response to the larger purpose which lies behind the text and which directs the reader as the reading occurs.

This awareness should lead the reader both to recognize the referential significance of the Text and to actualize it in his or her life. In other words, for a "true" reading, the reader must initially interact directly with the language of the Text. Then, acknowledging and responding to the Author (that from which the Text originates and to which its language refers), the reader must act upon that which has been received via the Text and translate it through him- or herself into the world. Having read the Text (or, in the case of The Canterbury Tales, a text), the reader must become a "reading" of it for his or her encounter with the work to be complete: "one's first relationship with a text is [therefore] not [just] 'to encounter another mind' (or subdue it as one suspects sometimes) or 'to understand it on its own terms,' but to use it as a source of communally experienced wisdom for one's own life ..." (Carruthers 112).

By so recentring the Text in both the process of reading and the practice of that which is read, Wyclif expounds the practical precepts implicit in Nicholas' exegesis and redefines the issues of Fourteenth century critical theory. Challenging conventional notions and sources of authority through a direct appeal to ecriture (both in the form of Scripture itself and by an appeal to the earliest and most widely accepted proponents of the sensus catholicus--the Church Fathers and Doctors, especially Augustine), Wyclif establishes the issues of reference, response, and composition as foremost in contemporary critical debate. To address these issues, his hermeneutic privileges, first, a referential schema reminiscent of the Hebraic 'otot (see Chapter 2), wherein words and things are able to signify equally and similarly; second, a volitional, reciprocal, and fully participatory response on the part of the reader; and third, an ongoing

dynamic composition of self, society, and text in which each is continually defined in relation to both God and the world. Thus, Wyclif engages the reader not only in the reading of the text but also in the necessary re-configuration of it into the world through the personal realization of it into daily life. In so doing, he provides England and his age with a practical, naturalized, Judeo-Christian hermeneutic which demands a palliation of any disparity between true reading and right action.

Wyclif's Metaphysic and Sign Theory: Applied Universals

Necessarily so because of the rampant individual, intellectual, and institutional hypocrisy of his age, Wyclif's hermeneutic is founded upon a sign theory which makes the issue of appearances and reality central. Adapting the popular realism of his time, he formulates his preoccupation with the "true" (or the "real," i.e. the one underlying Referent for all things) in terms of "universals" (abstract ideas having an existence beyond their physical expressions) and "particulars" (the individual and concrete manifestations of the ideas). That is, Wyclif argues for the "reality" of those ideals which have an existence independent of and prior to their manifestation in particularized forms: he makes little distinction between what God knows as an object outside Him and what He knows as an idea since, for Wyclif, all is essentially within and present to God. Wyclif simply confines contingency to the realization of the particular individual species of an archetypal "being" which inheres in God eternally (Misc. phil. 1.229). Further, he declares "apparent" or "unsubstantial" those actual forms commonly perceived as veridical (De ente pred. 102). Therefore, in Wyclif's schema, the "real" truly is that which "is regarded as having an existence

in fact and not merely in appearance, thought or language, or as having an absolute and necessary, in contrast to a merely contingent, existence" (OED). Contrasted with this "real," "apparent" refers to that which appears "to the senses or mind, as distinct from (though not necessarily opposed to) what really is" (OED; emphasis added). Similarly, "unsubstantial" is here used in the sense of not "subsisting (having existence as a reality) in itself" (OED). In effect, subordinating appearances to their essences, this makes of "reality" an essentially spiritual issue and invests physical acts and objects with metaphysical signification as they function referentially, signalling a higher reality beyond themselves (De dom. div. 61, 194ff.; Triologus 86). Not content merely to direct man's attention beyond the physical, however, Wyclif goes further than most of his contemporaries in "Christianizing" these Platonic concepts: he follows the implications of the philosophy to their necessary conclusions and constructs a referential framework which attempts to reconcile realism with the logic and sign theory of Scripture. Because Wyclif closely associates ethics, Scripture, and signs with metaphysics, he comes to define issues of text and responsible reading against matters of time and eternity, of parts and the whole, and of signs and their Signified--all aspects of how temporal-spatial appearances reveal essential realities (cf. De ente pred. 43, 62f., 101f., 287f.; De dom. div. 179, Misc. phil. 1.77).

Arguing from the scholastic philosophical postulate that every recognizable thing possesses a fundamental essence willed by God that makes it what it is, Wyclif locates the final referentiality of all universals in the Divine (Misc. phil. 1.231). Further, he maintains that the eternal self-subsistence in God of all universals suggests that they partake of God's characteristic attributes (though not His essential nature) (De dom.

div. 179). In effect, he endows the ideals underlying individual forms with necessity, eternality, and, more importantly, intelligible being, giving them perpetual existence in God (De ente pred. 43, 62-3; Misc. phil. 2.170-4). This creates a newly centralized and teleological base for reference by establishing God Himself as the ultimate Source of all things, the Standard against which all things must be defined, and the End to which all things refer (De ver. 2.19.122). Though the particular manifestations of any given ideal may be "time-bound" (not apparently existing, then coming into humanly perceivable "being" at a particular point in time, perhaps only to pass ostensibly from our existence), the universals, the concepts behind the individualized forms, cannot pass away (Misc. phil. 1.74, 66-7; De ente pred. 293). Indeed, given the fact that an ideal is "intelligible" (i.e. able to be conceived and, therefore, eternally existent within the mind of God, De ver. 2.19.118), it can never not be—it must always exist, always have existed, and always will exist, eternally, in the perception of God (De ente pred. 288, 293; Misc. phil. 2.172ff.). The various evidences in the physical realm of these universals are, quite simply, particularized manifestations of the Idea extended into time.

The Time and Logic of God and Man

The juxtaposition of time and eternity through a realism that argues for a continuity between them creates a fundamental and, from the human understanding of it, an irreconcilable dichotomy between the temporal and logical perceptions of God and man. It occasions a double time scheme in which time as conventionally conceived is divided into two realms: chronos and kairos or tempus and duratio. Chronos or tempus represents what may be

formulated as "man's time"; kairos or duratio, God's time. Chronos is the time of historical events and moments which occur linearly and which, in and of themselves lack moral impact, spiritual significance, or the challenge of opportunity. Kairos, on the other hand, is far more than a mere succession of historically occurrent moments. It implies the moment of opportunity which, having the possibility of true accomplishment or significant action, is thus a season of great and often ultimate spiritual import. Generally, "the temporal (tempus)--particular or successive time as apprehended by man" is distinct from "duratio--God's time, in which all being is eternally present" (Jeffrey, "John Wyclif" 279). In the Christian concept of time, though, occasionally "God's time" (duratio, kairos) interposes itself upon "man's time" (tempus, chronos) as through theophanies and, of course, the Incarnation, the Incarnation being

such a moment ... in which the person of God whose being is in eternity is at once made known in time, and the fulness of time thus can constitute, for those who enter it by faith, not just a highly significant point in the tempus (or chronos) but a 'real' apprehension of the duratio (or kairos)--a time of meaning and ultimate interpretation. (Jeffrey, "John Wyclif" 282; see also 279-281)

As such a moment of trans-temporal interpenetration, this double temporal context for the real has immediate and significant implications for reading, interpretation, and meaning in Wyclif's hermeneutic in that the dichotomy can only be fully resolved in the "fulness of time"--a concept largely dependent upon Hebraic, rather than Greek or Latin temporal categories. Radically distinct from Western categories, the Semitic time frame is fashioned by the idea that "time is determined [and defined] wholly

by its content" (Boman 131), not by its movement. Thus, there is not so much a pattern of progression as a conflux of significant moments, dynamic windows of opportunity and response which are spiritually informed:

Instead of placing themselves at some point or other on an imaginary time-line [composed of past, present, and future], the Hebrews proceed from the time-rhythm of their own life. Relative time is then reckoned from the standpoint of the person speaking since they think of their lives and their history as something like a life journey. Therefore, the relative times, present, past, and future, become strictly relative because every connection with space (time-point, time-line, extent of time) is suppressed, and every movement of time is defined with the aid of our own life movement. One is so accommodated to another series of occurrences that one becomes contemporaneous with it and lives within it (Boman 145-146).

To understand the implications for a Christian hermeneutic of such a shift in temporal categories (from the Latin to the Hebraic), a basic understanding of the Hebrew perception of time--a dominant feature of Hebrew Scriptures--is necessary, for only then do the effects of the Wyclif's (and Nicholas') uniquely Biblical hermeneutic upon perception and reception of language and text become clear.

Hebrew Time: The Eternal "Now" and Judgment

The various terms for "time" in Hebrew each connote a more unified temporal reality than do the Greek and Latin terms. There is no dichotomy implied between God's time and man's time in Hebrew: it is all one. Mo'ed,

for example, is used for "time," "season," or "set feast" (also, for "sign" occasionally; even time in Hebrew can be referential). It designates a moment or period of action and event which may be natural (e.g. bird migration, Jer. 8:7), human (e.g. the time of child-birth, Gen. 17:21, 18:14, etc.), religious (e.g. festivals, Lev. 23:2; or solemnities, Dt. 31:10), or divine (e.g. moments of vision, Hab. 2:3). Pa'am similarly indicates a set moment of significant occurrence, often of divine origin, which is manifest in human results (e.g. Gen. 2:23, 18:32; Ps. 106:43). From the word "stroke" or "beat," 'et (another word for time) is also suggestive of the dynamic and rhythmical, rather than static, image of time in the Hebrew formulation. 'Et is also one of the most important temporal terms. A derivative of 'ana, "to answer, respond, or be occupied" (a corresponding term for kara'; see discussion of Neh. 8:8 in Chapter 2), 'et embraces moments of customary, recurring events (e.g. harvest, Jer. 50:16; mating season, Gen. 31:10; etc.) as well as the appropriate moment or appointed time for normal, non-recurring or irregularly occurring events (e.g. death, Ecc. 7:7; storms, Job 38:22). Inevitably with the use of 'et, there is the connotation of God controlling the times, not in a dictatorial fashion, but as the One who orders, arranges, and governs the world, the times, and human life (Ecc. 3:11, Prov. 6:14). As well with 'et, there is an implicit expectation that man will voluntarily order his own life in keeping with such times and such governance (Jer. 8:7). Failure to do so constitutes sin and results in judgment. In the broadest spiritual sense, then, it pertains to the state of completion and resolution--whether that be formulated as a time of judgment (Jer. 8:12), a point of consummation (Dan. 12:9), or some extended time of blessing (Jer. 3:17, 50:26; see The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament).

Such completion, however, is not merely eventual and ultimately definitive. It is perpetually being realized. 'Attah, an adverbial derivative of 'et, and 'ad (a further derivative) are principal terms for "now" in the Old Testament. Comprehensive and trans-temporal, 'et and its variant 'attah thus include, of course, that which is occurring at any particular given instant. However, they also and more frequently appear as v''attah, introducing consequential ("and now"; Gen. 26:22, Isa. 5:3) or adversative ("but now"; Isa. 1:21) acts or circumstances. Similarly, the terms can refer to either the present moment or a prophetic, future context (either imminent [Isa. 43:19] or distant [Isa. 29:22]). In effect, "'attah [a form of 'et] means ... the homogeneity of two time contents. When 'attah designates time, the [ultimate] emphasis is not on the moment of time, but on the situation" (Boman 147)--and, therefore, on mankind's participation in and with it, as well as his response to it.

Further, in the Hebrew Scriptures, specific units of such morally significant moments of opportunity are frequently expressed through the word yom ("day" or "time"), an expansive term which includes both a point in time and a sphere of time. That is, in any given usage, yom may refer to a particular instant, a particular period which is temporally segmented from that which precedes and follows it (e.g. a twenty-four hour "day," a season, a year), or some more vague "time" over which God has immediate control and in which humans must directly declare themselves through their actions. Articulated alone as "day, time, year," or in conjunction with other constructions such as b'yom (also 'ad-yom or min-yom) "when," ha'yom "today" (or "this day"), or yom 'asher "the day when," yom usually specifies a particular period in contrast to all other times (i.e. "this day" as opposed

to all others which constitute "that day" or "those days") and often connotes a spiritually significant moment of opportunity within the realm of redemptive time in which God acts and mankind ought to respond in order that the moment might be fully and efficaciously realized (Ps. 2:7, 95:7, 118:24). Each chronological formulation of yom thus directs the time-bound reader/participant to the "day" of eternity when, as foretold by Zechariah (14:6-10), all chronological distinctions and "days" (as well as all the "names of God") in the plural as humans observe them (sequential night-day units) will cease to be relevant and humanity will partake in God's "time" (and God's "one Name"). In this final "time," "the Ancient of Days" (Dan. 7:9) will once again bring all temporal referentiality to completion in Himself and will fully embody the value and eminence of yom. Such will be the "fullness of time" in which the temporal dichotomy of Wyclif's hermeneutic is reconciled.

Wyclif's Use of Hebraic Time

Wyclif, combining a scholastic and distinctively Western philosophical perception of time with this uniquely Hebraic conception of a content-laden, moral time, then, attempts to make the Word not only more immediately relevant to the reader, but more immediately affective as well. He uses the Hebraic models to cast each individual encounter with the text as an individual and affective transformative theophany--"not merely as a decisive moment in the tempus, but as an interpenetration of the duratio and the tempus such as reflects that which occurred at the creation (or will occur again at the conclusion) of the world" (Jeffrey, "John Wyclif" 279). In effect, he hopes to make mankind's encounter with the text eternally

transformative so that, by engaging the Word aright, the individual might experience, share in, and translate back into the world something of the Eternal--of that which cannot not be, the Cause of Truth who is synonymous with being (Misc. phil. 2.172ff., De ente pred. 287ff.).

For Wyclif, then, God, standing outside time and viewing both universals and particulars as omnipresent, is not and cannot be conceived to be bound by linear, causal, or "temporal" logic. To Him, time and space have already been closed: everything has already happened; all the texts have already been written, read, and lived. Knowing that eventually from the morass of human experience the truth will be known, God finds the artificial constraints of a sequential time order or logic unnecessary. Therefore, for Him, narrative sequencing, as it is conventionally understood, is not a major concern, regardless of whether it applies to history, texts, or lives. Free to move cross-dimensionally through a tale that is already told, God can avail Himself of a freer, more associative logic and allow His Text to violate humanly rational norms as it presents its truth elliptically. And, since the cumulative tale of time, history, and man is self-corrective (being told truly in the end despite, or perhaps because of, its innumerable digressions), Wyclif's God permits considerable latitude in the unfolding or "telling" of specific events and incidents: what has been conceived by God will be, for His will communicates both the need and the command to be what in the beginning He had first decreed possible and good (James 1:17, Jn. 3:7). The specific order and the particular temporal realization matters little, since both the contingency and the necessity of what must be rest upon God's will--God having eternally intended the existence of each particular to be realized in His time (De ente pred. 101f., Misc. phil. 66f., 74).

Humanity, however, is not so free. Operating within time, mankind sees time as always still unfolding; events as always still occurring; books as always still being written, read, and lived; and, individuals as always still in the process of engaging God, texts, and time as each seems to shape his or her own particularized expression of being through his or her choices and acts of will. For mankind, a comprehensible and causal logic is, therefore, not only desirable but essential as it helps the individual map his or her way through time, through history, and through his or her own life. This issue was a principal and personal concern for Hugh of St. Victor, a frequently quoted authority for Wyclif. As Grover Zinn writes:

Given the actual situation of man's present existence, qualified by the fact of sin and its fruits, it is only through history that man can begin to overcome the temporality, finitude, instability, and deathward movement of life. As a result of this conviction, Hugh's theology unites in an intimate manner that which is most inward, the renewal of the imago Dei at the innermost core of the human person, and that which is preeminently outer, namely the succession of deeds done in time (ordo rerum gestarum) which compromises the divine 'work of restoration.' ("Historia fundamentum est: The Role of History in the Contemplative Life according to Hugh of St. Victor" 136.)

Presenting Hugh of St. Victor's historical exegesis as the logical outcome of such a temporal perception and as the necessary first step towards a true understanding of the Text's "literal" sense, Zinn indicates how for Hugh (as for Wyclif) a student of Scripture must begin his reading of the Biblical narrative with an intention to understand the text as history, as the account of an ordered series of events (139; cf. Didascalion 6.3). Only

after the reader has examined the Biblical text from the particular point of view of history may he (or she) understand the possible extension of "history" to include "not only the recounting of actual deeds but also the first meaning of any narrative which uses words according to their proper nature" (Didascalion 6.3). It is, therefore, only through chronology, only through man's sequential understanding of history, that the true "literal" sense ("that which the author intends") may be broached, especially in the two-fold sense outlined by Nicholas of Lyra and adapted by Wyclif--even though the Author and the truth(s) of their texts are quintessentially trans-temporal.

Bridging the Gap Between God and Man

In "Platonic" terms, God is the universal and humanity is the particular (Gen. 1:26-27) and from man's point of view, "you can't get there from here," most certainly not without divine intervention or at least some form of rational direction. To bridge this gap between God and man, between the universals and their particulars, then, mankind perceives certain intrusions of the eternal upon the temporal being made at the discretion of God. These provide various points of access to the Divine logic, plan, and ethos (De ver. 1.10.205, 3.132). The first, and least direct means of such access is evidenced in the physical world, in "the Book of Nature," through which "signs" lead man to consider God (Ps. 19:1, Acts 14:17, Rom. 1:20). The second, and more direct, is conveyed through Scripture, "the Book of Life" (De ver. 1.3.44) wherein are written God's words (Isa. 34:16; Heb. 1:1) "for our learning" (Rom. 15:4), "for ensamples ... and ... for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11). The third, the most immediate and complete, is

"the Word of God" itself, the Truth and the Christ, whom the Scriptures reveal (Lk. 4:21, 24:44; Acts 26:22-23) and by whom God speaks directly to man (Heb. 1:2-3). Because the referentiality of these operate within a progressive "divine" logic (the reference of natural "signs" being subtle in comparison with that of the divinely contrapositive logic of reference characteristic of the Incarnation), the accurate decoding of the meaning behind these "texts" requires man to re-assess his intellectual categories, re-orienting them to the non-linear, non-causal, non-temporal standards of God (De ver. 1.6.115-116, 1.7.152, 1.15.380-382).

Wyclif, recognizing this divine logic as dominant throughout Scripture, draws on Nicholas of Lyra and his understanding of the Hebrew language, text, and metaphysic to explicate the rationale of Scripture and to effect a reconciliation between it and his scholastically rational realism (e.g. De ver. 1.12.274-275). Grasping the "trans-temporal" logic of Scripture, Wyclif grounds his reading of the Text in "the Christ event 'in which the boundless eternity of God enjoins all time, past and future' [De benedictione incarnatione 111]" (Jeffrey, "John Wyclif" 283). This reading through Christ (Jn 1:1, Heb. 13:8) acknowledges its "temporal" norm as that of God's eternity--an eternity not of boundless linear time or of a self-contained sphere of divine existence distinct from man's time, but of God's all-encompassing consciousness which embraces all man's history, actions, and responses and imbues each with supernal significance. Being reinforced by the peculiar verbal construction of Hebrew (the language in which God's actions are initially conveyed and which is unum dei verbum with the New Testament, De ver. 1.10.218ff., 2.19.112-114) which makes little differentiation between tenses and moods, such a reading makes objective,

impersonal, linear, or even interpositive time per se virtually a non-factor in the narrative: what matters is not the chronos defined against a kairos, tempus contrasted with duratio, or "man's time" set against "God's time," for in the logic and language of the original Scriptures, there is no such distinction, nor any categories for it (see above). Defined in terms of both God's consciousness and actions as well as man's response to them, the Hebrew terms for time (yom, 'et, mo'ed, pa'am, etc.) are subjective and relative, distinguishing only between that which is "now" (a multiform designation in its own right) and that which is not "now."

Allowing for numerous and varied "nows" to be operative simultaneously in the symphonic rhythms of dorot (the "generations"), the Hebrew or Biblical notion of time thus complements the comprehensively "'ototic" system of reference which enables diverse signs to signify a single Referent, just as diverse "times" establish a single, eternal moment of action and response--as in "the dai of visitacioun" (Is. 10:3; WB, II), "the dai of the strong veniaunce of the Lord" (Ezek. 7:19; WB, II), or, more happily, the "dai acceptable to the Lord" (Is. 58:5; WB, II), or "the dai of helthe" (Is. 49:8; WB, II). Together, these concepts present Wyclif with the principle elements necessary for his formulation of the trans-temporal grammar of Scripture. From the Judeo-Christian expression he finds in Nicholas' work, then, Wyclif delineates an order of language, action, and being which transcends humanly "logical" norms to articulate an economy "in which something apparently may be that which it is not, or may be many things at the same time" (Jeffrey, "Chaucer and Wyclif" 118). In the unique reality introduced through this "mature grammar," narrative syntax is freed from sequentially differentiated temporal constraints, being required only to cohere "in the context of the Word before all words, the configuration of

God's whole discourse with man" (Sermones 1.210; trans. in Jeffrey, "Chaucer and Wyclif" 381). Accordingly, prophecy, typology, and their fulfillment become as much a part of the "literal" as the original incident or object related is. As well, the various tellings and retellings of and within Scripture (e.g. the two presentations of the Law in Exodus and Deuteronomy or the variant histories of the Two Kingdoms recorded in Kings and Chronicles) are reconciled in the overarching Truth which underlies and overrides all idiosyncratic recounting of details: each retelling, after all, is simply a re-articulation of the eternal "now," a further opportunity for man to respond to God and, in so doing, to become (through his life, his history, and his actions) an 'ot, a part of God's greater referential system.

For God and His Word as understood by Wyclif, then, time per se is simply not a restrictive issue: there is only eternity, Truth, and the unity and wholeness which comes with them. Consequently, for humanity to engage these through the Text, the individual must acknowledge him- or herself as a part of this unity and relinquish the illusion of independence and objectivity. He or she must read through the Eternal, transcending his or her own temporal boundaries to access the intelligibles, the universals, which, as located in God, are the ground of reference. In effect, mankind, though locked in time, must nevertheless read eternity when any text is engaged--if the individual truly desires to "read rightly." Fusing the Biblical and realist schemes of reference to produce a single, coherent referential order which operates in the eternal "now" (cf. Augustine, Confessions 11.7, 8, 11), Wyclif identifies these universals not as intrinsically "universal" but as secondary expressions of that ultimate and

essential Reality which is Christ. Based upon Christological premises extrapolated from his philosophy, Wyclif makes of Christ the ultimate Universal who is manifest in and who works efficaciously through the peculiar logic of Scripture. He postulates that Christ, as the ever-existent Truth, the Word of God (Jn 1:1ff.), and the Wisdom of the Father (Prov. 8:22ff; cf. De ver. 1.2.32), is the ultimate subject of the Bible in all its parts (De ver. 1.15.392, 396). He maintains "that Christ, the head of the Church, speaks everywhere in Scripture" (De ver. 1.3.55) and that "in Scripture [the written expression of Christ] stands the salvation of the faithful" as well as "the basis of every catholic thought" (De ver. 1.1.1). Finally, locating its essential reality in Christ, he argues that this Scripture has a unique form, function, and authority which is evidenced in its self-validating logic (De ver. 1.3.49-50). Referring to Scripture as verbum domini, verbum dei, or lex Christi, he insists that "every Christian ought to study this book because it is the whole truth" (De ver. 1.6.109) and he makes the Text so central to the life of the believer that "To ignore the Scriptures is to ignore Christ" (De ver. 2.21.170).

Wyclif thus sees Christ as present throughout the Hebrew Scriptures in all the various "signs" (see Chapter 2, 'otot') which function referentially, directing individuals to God even under the "Old Law." He writes:

... in respect to signs, it appears to me that Christ approves of the use of signs, though he condemns their abuse ... For Christ, in his own person, is a sensible sign, and as it seems to me, the Sacrament of Sacraments, since the definition of a sacrament applies to him in the highest degree: for as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and all who had been stung by the serpents were healed on looking up to that serpent, as is

said, Num. 21, so Jesus our living serpent, having the likeness of sin upon him, though he could not possibly sin, was suspended on the cross, that those who are stung by the poison of that old serpent, sin, may become spiritually whole. Christ therefore approves of signs, both under the New Law and in the Old, but is opposed to their abuse. You must mark, then, that the mystical body of Christ, during the time of the Old Law, was like a child, to be instructed in many ways by such sensible signs. But, as the church grew in age under the Law of Grace, signs of this nature are not so much to be regarded ... the signs of the Old Law ... according to the decisions of the apostles, should now cease, as appears from Acts 15 and the epistle to the Galatians. And this is specially the case with regard to signs denoting objects which have passed away, for consistency should require that those who observe the signs should look to the objects of which they are consistent ... (Trialogus 4.10).

Historically bound objects (such as the serpent), events, narratives, and dictates in Scripture thus constitute the physical forms in time and text which point individuals through themselves to those truths, temporal and eternal, which compose the wisdom of Scripture and which, as such, inform both Scripture itself and salvation history. This wisdom, in turn, leads the reader to the Ideal, to Christ as Word and as God, in whom all truth is inscribed (Trialogus 3.31).

As well for Wyclif, the Bible as the Word of God becomes that quintessential intrusion of the eternal upon the temporal by which all humans in all ages can access the Divine. As a form having its ultimate essence in being with God, it shares those eternal attributes of the Word in

esse, which existed in posse in the Old Testament as the Incarnation and in actu in Jesus himself during the thirty-three years of his earthly life. Even before having received expression in actu in the Christ event, the bodily realization of the Word of God was necessary and could never not be, for its essence, the Word, was and is eternal (precluding its non-existence). After Christ, the Word also continues its manifest existence, simply finding alternate expression through the New Testament, through the Apostolic teachings of the Church (the earthly continuation of Christ's spiritual body), and through the life of the individual believer (the most particular articulation of Christ's ideal sonship to God). One's reading of this dynamic Scripture within the chain of referentiality suggested by Wyclif's metaphysic must therefore be consequential at each level of reference-- Scripture, the Church, and the Christian must all accurately reflect the ideal from which they are derived as well as the ultimate Truth which even that Ideal conveys. Further, identifying time as the arena in which such "secondary universals" are manifest, Wyclif establishes as referential both time and those ideal entities from which particulars are derived. Thus, he privileges the process of reference throughout the progression of reference, continually investing primary significance not in specific forms and events (regardless of whether they be particular or universal), but in that from which they derived and that to which they direct the reader.

The Resolution of the Paradox in Christ

For man reading within time, this presents some of the many paradoxes which permeate a Biblical hermeneutic (for example: time as a distinct

category does not exist, yet it is the arena in which signification occurs; things, both particular and universal, signify, but particulars contain in their "nowness" all the significance of universals; universals themselves are not "universal" after all, but are referential agents that function similarly to particulars; etc.). Yet, rather than rendering it incomprehensible, this type of paradox reveals the subtle, associative, and trans-Aristotelian logic which ultimately governs the Text. Being in its very essence a juxtaposition and a reconciliation of two distinct orders of being and conception--the human and the divine--Scriptural logic can readily make and uphold as simultaneously true even such apparently contradictory statements as in "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Mt. 10:39) and "many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Mt. 19:30). Though they are fundamentally irreconcilable by nature (Isa. 55:8-9), these statements are mediated by Scripture and become potentially reconcilable in Christ, the homo deus who, of the same species as both the offender and the Offended, makes satisfaction for sins against God (De ver. 1.11.260, 1.13.306). As Wyclif writes:

it was necessary that the Word should be made flesh because it was necessary that the human race should be saved in their first progenitor ... this salvation was impossible unless Christ was made flesh ... for since Adam so exalted himself as to imply that he had attained an equality with the Deity inasmuch as he consented to the temptation that he needed not obey the divine command, it is plain that it was proper that the Person who would make satisfaction to descend from as high a degree of exaltation as would be the equivalent to the proud exalting of himself which

Adam had attempted.

But how was this to be obtained unless that as a man who was not God had presumed to arrogate to himself equality with God, so a man who was God should descend from his equality with God to the low estate of man ... (Triálogo 3.25).

Indeed, "the satisfaction for the sin of the first man would not have been adequate [without the Incarnation]" (Benedictione incarnatione 6, 13)--the quintessential trans-temporal interpenetration of God into time--for a mediator was needed to stand between the principal poles of human experience, the poles against which Wyclif's hermeneutic is defined and which, like all referential points, are brought together in God.

For Wyclif, then, the primary order of meaning that one reads and is read into and that he or she comes to understand, therefore, is that of the divine Author. This humanity perceives as investing all essences, created and ideal, with significance through their relationship to Himself. It is God's intention, separate from mankind, that is seen as informing the Text, issuing forth in the Christ, and making possible reconciliation. The second order, that of humanity, both individually and as a society, is seen as the recipient of, and the one who engages, the external forms, tracing them back through their various levels of signification to the final Referent. It is this human reader, ostensibly, who is drawn into the text, who is transformed by it, and who is returned to the world as an extension, translation, and newly formed signifier of the Author. Between these two, between Meaning and the world, between God and man, then, humanity perceives that Truth which is conveyed through the physical text. As the intermediary, He is understood to provide a medium for the interpenetration

and interaction of the two realms. Or, in the more Hebraic formulation, it is this Truth which constitutes the unity of existence which humans artificially fragment into realms, dimensions, etc. even though there is, in fact, only the one Truth encompassing all, in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28; cf. Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:3). Yet, this Truth, defined by Wyclif as Christ (De ver. 1.15.390), is that Word, Text, and Reader who, by being both God and Man (being in one substance both "A" and "not A"), violates in Himself the most fundamental principles of human, Aristotelian logic. He makes possible the operation of the "divine" logic, the logic of Scripture and of Wyclif's mature grammar, which unites the hermeneutical participants and which establishes a dynamic continuum of interpretation and signification between that which mankind perceives as the poles of God and the world. Party to this composite order, Wyclif thus presents the physical manifestations of reality as merely one aspect of (rather than one terminus in) the process of reference from universal to particular, with the final, most comprehensive aspect being that of the ideals in God.

(An interesting point of consideration as to the nature of termini in Wyclif's biblical schema is that one of the Hebrew words commonly translated "end" or "terminus" is 'ad, a root for both 'et, "time" [see above] and 'attah, "now." Meaning "finishing point, point of destination, terminus ad quem," 'ad ought not to be construed as an "end" with any connotations of finality. In keeping with the dynamic nature of the language and the sense of active entirety operative in the Hebrew conception of time (and having, therefore, rather interesting implications for Wyclif's conception of the "end" of a Biblically referential process), 'ad suggests an end of [not to] advancements. Or, perhaps better, it suggests perpetuity, duration, and

eternity; frequently, it appears with 'olam ["time immemorial and eternal"]. It is, in effect, a "terminus" of unceasing, dynamic activity, "world without end" [as it is translated in Isa. 45:17, KJV; "in to the world of world," WB, III.)

Appearing static, Wyclif's categories for being are in actu, in posse, and in esse. Yet, for the concept of "being" to have any validity at all in relation to a Hebrew text, particularly the Hebrew Scriptures, it would have to be an active being, or, at the very least, a referential being such as Wyclif suggests (but does not explicate or insist upon). The language permits no less: "motionless and fixed being for the Hebrews is a non-entity; it does not exist for them. Only 'being' which stands in relation to an inner relation with something active and moving is reality to them. This can also be expressed: only movement (motion) has reality" (Bowman 31). Thus, to accomodate the notion of "being" (an essentially static Platonic category) to the Hebrew logic of Scripture, Wyclif of necessity has to establish at least its ultimate relation to an active, dynamic Referent. Identifying the ideal and intelligible with that multileveled being which is Christ grounded in God, Wyclif encompasses within a single, coherent, eternal order all time, all particulars, all universals, and each level of reference--Wyclif's "time," on the one hand, referring to the temporal order commonly perceived as it allows for the existence and expression of "significant" objects, events, etc.; on the other, including those Hebraically significant moments in time which a person is called to a decision and response, the action of the individual at that moment also having the potential to function and to be read as a sign of (rather than "for") that which is eternally true. Differentiating among

actual being, potential being, and intelligible being, Wyclif thus makes all being and all forms of it related and progressively referential emanations of the Divine. Suggesting that each type of being directs the reader or observer to the level beyond itself until the final essence and being of each is recognized as it stands in God, he argues that everything inheres in a continuous and a contiguous reality so that the hierarchy of signification is an organic process, not a static pattern of differentiated strata of representation. For Wyclif, the essential difference between an object and its being, or a "sign" and its final "signified," becomes largely a matter of perception, a distinction between that which man sees in time and that which God eternally means through it. Carrying the implications of his Christian realism and scholastic methodology to their logical conclusions, Wyclif thus produces a unified conception of reality and representation which easily accomodates and reinforces that 'ototic theory of signs and signification which is inherent in Scripture and which is fundamental to Nicholas' "Jewish" hermeneutic. In effect, by adapting scholastic categories to Biblical notions of reference, Wyclif extends Nicholas' "literal" sense of text to include the entire progressive and referential process of reading and response. As well, he encompasses with his theory the principles by which a reader may discern all that the Author intends him or her both to comprehend and to do. Thus, Wyclif brings together language, text, and philosophy in a hermeneutic which is ultimately defined by the moral economy of God.

Applying this schema practically, the manner in which one approaches a given level of "reality" (whether universal, particular, or "textual") or defines one's self in relation to that reality has inevitable ramifications

for one's relationship with both God and man. Since all manner of engagements occur continually along a spectrum of reference defined by God as Source on one end and God as humanity and text on the other, the ethical becomes inseparable from the logical and the practical becomes inseparable from the theoretical in such a referentially united universe. And, since Wyclif views Scripture itself as the clearest expression of God's Word and will in the world and as the "sign" which continually directs man to the greater Reality, the necessity of an appropriate response to and engagement of the spectrum of reference is nowhere more pronounced than in his theory of text. Accordingly, maintaining that the text has various levels of referential "reality" in every part of which the true "Word of God" is "written" or "inscribed" (De ver. 1.6.108ff.), Wyclif privileges the right perception of its reference and the right response to its demands as the primary duties of the Christian. Fundamentally an issue of rightly ordering one's love, this "right perception" of reference and response is another expression of Augustine's doctrine of use and enjoyment (OCD 1.3ff.).

Berating the people for both general and specific perversions of a properly directed love, Wyclif returns to the problem repeatedly. Many of his more specific assaults on such abuses read like a litany of those contemporary sins which are addressed in the poetry of both Langland and Chaucer. So fundamental to his hermeneutic is this concept of related and necessarily responsible referentiality that wrong thinking about it can only result in sin. Thus, Wyclif writes in De universalibus: "Intellectual and emotional error about universals is the cause of all sin that reigns in the world" (3.162-5). For Wyclif, right thinking, particularly in the engagement of Scripture, must necessarily lead to virtue, manifest first in right reading and, then in turn, in right living.

The Principles of Scriptural Logic and "Right Reading" as Moral Imperative

Within such an actively referential framework, the events and objects of daily life (including Scripture) become indicators of a higher reality (though, the world remains the only arena and one's actions therein remain the sole medium by which one might meaningfully engage any aspect of the world, the Text, or the Divine). For a textual hermeneutic to be the source of true spirituality in any significant sense, therefore, it must demonstrate precisely and explicitly how it may be applied effectively and referentially to the conditions and needs of the human realm. For Wyclif's hermeneutic, this process involves a necessary re-assessment of the sources and signs of authority, of the expression and administration of valid forms of it, and of the individual's responsibility to and for it. Meaning not "tyranny" but "rightful jurisdiction," the authority Wyclif appeals to is that which, like his universals, is grounded in God and which is derived from His being (De ver. 1.15.390ff). Within his order of reference, this includes only those forms (texts, individuals, or powers) which through their physical manifestations reveal characteristics and behaviour reminiscent of and consistent with the nature of God. Suggestive of a pure and unperverted derivation, such particulars alone are worthy to be obeyed as exemplars of conduct and belief. Those which do not measure up are not only not to be obeyed, but are to be supplanted in favour of the truer representatives. This belief shapes much of Wyclif's theory of dominion as well as other of his doctrines. Principally, his belief is that because "the law of the Gospel is sufficient by itself without the civil law, or that called canonical, for the perfect rule of the Church militant" (De civ.

dom. 1.121) and because this "law of Christ is an adversary to the sinner" (De ecc. 226), "no-one who is in mortal sin has naturally a right to the gift of God" (De civ. dom. 1.1) in any expression, particularly that of jurisdiction over the just. Positively, this means that, at least in theory, "Every righteous man is lord over the whole sensible world" (ibid. 1.96). Arguing that the Pope, as head of the Christian Church should live a life "of the greatest possible virtue and ... conversation, like Christ" (De pot. pape 80), Wyclif therefore concludes "that no man should be Pope unless he is a son of Christ and of Peter, imitating them in deeds" (ibid., 215; emphasis added). When this ideal is violated, Wyclif declares, the resulting papacy (or other power) is null and void since it violates the truth of Scripture (ibid. 14) and shapes the Church in a way which is not consistent with its universal esse intelligible in Christ as ever-existent Truth (De ecc. 106). Given the widespread corruption in the Church and state in the Fourteenth century, such a practical and practicable hermeneutic dependent upon moral validation in the world readily became a foundation for reform with far-reaching consequences.

Above all else, Scripture and its logic are, for Wyclif, inclusive, comprehensive, and authoritative. Believing that "Scripture's logic includes every kind of goodness--and especially that of truthfulness" (De ver. 1.3.54)--Wyclif insists that "Scripture itself is the highest authority and the first rule" (De ver. 1.3.48). The truth of Scripture which is to be upheld, however, is only that to which the whole testifies. Every word in the text contributes to this truth, but all parts must be taken together and within the context of the whole for the truth to be discerned and for the text's true authority to be expressed (De ver. 1.4.79, 1.2.27, 1.15.392,

396). Such a comprehensive truth includes "every kind of logic [so that] ... every kind of people ... upholds Scripture's logic in every act of speech," "our human logics [being] the more precise the more similar they are to Scripture's" (De ver. 1.3.49). Further, Wyclif declares that "all knowledge abounds in Scripture ..." and (quoting Augustine) that "although someone might find there all the knowledge that he had learned elsewhere, he will also find with still greater abundance those things which are taught nowhere else but in the astonishing nobility and the astonishing humility of the Scriptures [OCD 2.42.63]" (De ver. 1.2.22). Being a scholastic, Wyclif extends this inclusivity to his own philosophy and particularly specifies that "Aristotle's logic is generally correct, and as such it is Scripture's logic" (De ver. 1.3.47). Yet, recognizing that the great philosopher is not infallible, Wyclif argues that

Aristotle's philosophy ... would become completely sound and cleansed of all its errors if it were revised and corrected throughout by means of Scripture's philosophy. As long as this is not done, it remains incomplete. For Scripture alone gives it its full completion. It is impossible for secular bodies of knowledge not to be deficient when from their inception they have lacked the formative principles that the knowledge contained in Scripture provides. So when a Christian who is studying philosophy works rigorously through the books of Aristotle, he does not do so as if philosophy belongs to Aristotle. He does so with the understanding that it belongs to the authors of Holy Scripture, and that consequently it also belongs, in a certain way, to himself. (De ver. 1.2.29).

Regarding "Christ our God" as "the greatest philosopher" ("Indeed, [as] ...

sophia herself," De ver. 1.2.32) and all philosophy as truth (De ver. 1.2.31), Wyclif's philosophical comprehensiveness of Scriptural logic thus reinforces the "academic" as well as the "Biblical" authority of his hermeneutic.

Wyclif further argues that this broadly inclusive and authoritative logic operates through a self-validating, "mystical equivocation" (De ver. 1.1.14) wherein "Scripture itself teaches us how to understand Scripture" (De ver. 1.2.37). Working through the uniquely referential "literal" sense defined by Nicholas and inherent to the Bible, Wyclif's "logic of Scripture" produces a similarly self-expounding and continual "movement between the literal [the 'textual'] and the mystical [the 'referential'] meaning" (De ver. 1.3.42). Encompassing figurative language, typology, analogy, and "relative meaning" (De ver. 1.1.14-15), this "movement" is able to reconcile and to account rationally for apparent contradictions of both logic and image. As an illustration of the peculiar logic of Scripture whereby a Biblical statement may be "not true" on one level while still being ultimately true, Wyclif quotes an example from Augustine's Forty-seventh homily and discusses its logical ramifications:

You must realize that Christ the Lord is both a door and a shepherd. He is a door in that he opens himself, and he is a shepherd in that he leads the way through the opening that he himself has made. But the role of being a shepherd he also gives to his members. For Peter and Paul were shepherds and so were the other apostles; and good bishops are shepherds too. No one else, however, calls himself a door; this role he kept for himself alone.

By his own unique property Christ called himself a door, just

as he also called himself a foundation stone; Augustine shows this from 1 Cor. 1 and 3. For Augustine's text continues: 'for the sake of the two flocks of sheep, or, so to speak, the two walls, he was made a cornerstone; and so he is both a door and a cornerstone.' So if the person who makes this objection would reflect on Augustine's words and logic he would understand very clearly that Christ is a door just as much as he is not a door. The same applies to the other designations. Accordingly, on the basis of the evidence from Augustine's words, Christ is not a door. Therefore, he is not a door. But on stronger evidence from his words, Christ is a door--and Scripture upholds him in this. Therefore he is a door. So Augustine clearly and distinctly makes both statements. But our faith sets forth the affirmative statement. For in John 10:7 Truth, who cannot lie, says, 'I am the door.'

Now when Augustine makes two such seemingly opposed but logically coherent statements he establishes himself upon the authority of Scripture and upon this well known logical principle, that in the equivocal use of a term there is no contradiction
(De ver. 1.1; emphasis added)

Similarly, Wyclif illustrates the logic of Biblical imagery through an explication of one instance of Scripturally "true" figurative language. He writes:

... If Christ is a lion it follows that Christ has the property of being a lion--even though he could only have this property in a mystical sense, since he himself is the only being to which he can be compared. For inasmuch as it is his property to be chief lord

of his kind and to be strong and mighty in battle so also it is his property to be a lion--but only in that mystical sense. And since those leonine properties are supremely his own, the property of being a lion is also supremely his own. But the conclusion that follows from this contradicts those godly teachers who say that Christ is not really a lion because he is a lion figuratively and metaphorically. The same conclusion would apply to other statements that mystical theology makes about the nature of Christ

I reply that in one sense Christ has the property of being a lion and that it is supremely his own, and that in another sense he does not have it. In order to understand this, we need to realize that in the use of figurative language the notion of having or lacking a property applies to two different things in two different ways. It applies to the figure one way and to the thing figured in another. Now Christ does not have the property of being a lion in the sense of having the property of a four-footed wild beast that goes about roaring [this is, after all, the "mystical" quality of the devil; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8]. So when we speak of the figure, that is the lion, and those properties belonging to it that do not correspond to Christ, Christ is not really a lion. And yet when we speak of the one who is figured as a lion, that is Christ, and the leonine properties that are analogous to him, he really is a lion. For as it is said in Rev. 5[:3ff.], 'No one is worthy in heaven and earth to open the book and loose its seven seals except the Lion of Judah who was slain.' So to say that Christ is a lion and yet that this same Christ is not a lion does not set up a disagreement. Both

these statements are in harmony with Scripture and the teachings of the saints.

In the Forty-seventh homily on the Gospel of John, Augustine clarified this way of thinking, whereby the two statements that Christ really is a lion and that he is not really a lion are equally in agreement with one another. For who could explain his thought in any other way when he said that Christ is really a door and he keeps the property of being a door to himself alone, not sharing it with others in the way that he makes the property of being a shepherd common to himself and to all those who serve in his place. 'None of us,' Augustine says, 'calls himself a door; this is his own property to keep to himself.' So it follows that it is his property as well as it is not his property. (De ver. 1.3.; cf. Nicholas of Lyra on the presence of Christ ad litteram in the Hebrew Scriptures, e.g. see Appendix B.iv and v for Nicholas on Ps. 2 and Isa.9:5).

And, since "Scripture's logic could hardly be called sufficient ... unless it sufficiently and completely taught every mode of speech" (De ver. 1.3.53), the equivocating logic upon which these movements are based is also multivalent: it contains within its words "multiple information" (De ver. 1.2.27) and, though there is "no self-refutation in the words of the Lord and what follows from them," it includes "many, diverse modes of logic" (De ver. 1.3.50). Constantly evidencing the truth that "Scripture does have a pattern and category of mystery" (De ver. 1.1.10), this equivocal logic forces the reader to receive and to engage the Text according to its own rules and to re-define himself in relation to the text and to the Meaning behind it. The reader who accesses this logic must participate in and with

it, using it with a discretion shaped by "the rules of charity." As Wyclif writes:

... the Catholic Church should adhere to one and the same logic. But it should adhere to no logic but Scripture's. Accordingly everyone in the Church should adhere to this logic. The major premise is established by the charge to uphold unity and conformity of speech whether in a state of innocence or fallenness Undoubtedly it is good and advantageous for us to express our thoughts to one another in a spirit of unity and concord rather than with disdain for one another. The minor premise is established by the understanding that when a logic ... differs from Scripture's, even though it is chosen and approved by others, [it] must be rejected because it is not a good thing to have. For Scripture's logic has a unique position and must be accepted on Scripture's supreme authority. To do otherwise would be to set divine authority aside, which would be impiety.

It is important, however, to realize that Holy Scripture has many, diverse modes of logic. So even though everyone ought to use Scripture's logic in their speech whenever they express something to their neighbor, it does not follow that a person is allowed to use just any of its modes of logic in every situation. Instead, he ought to use one mode of logic here and another there, depending on what the spirit of counsel and the rules of charity instruct him to do. When he is explaining Scripture's mystical theology, he should use plain logic. And when he is speaking with those from whom the mystery of the faith should be concealed, he should use Scripture's mystical logic. (De ver. 1.3).

Further, Wyclif maintains that the same logic demands that the reader come to the text "prepared to learn as a child learns," coming "to Scripture as a beggar asking for an understanding of that equivocation" (De ver. 1.1.11). "Realiz[ing] that there is an equivocation, and ... learn[ing] how it works," Wyclif's wise reader thus must become willing to be shaped by the Text, "tak[ing] it and speak[ing] in conformity to it" (De ver. 1.2.23).

So considering the logic of Scripture to be an active force in the life of the reader, Wyclif regards it as necessarily referential, useful, and efficacious. "[L]ead[ing] us straight through itself" (De ver. 1.3.51), it is viewed as an expression of charity (charity being the "Scripture's intention and urging at every point throughout its whole," De ver. 1.2.21) which as "a leader and guide ... opens the way to discovering truths that are hidden from the world" (De ver. 1.3.55; cf. OCD 1.3-5). These truths and "every instance of logic contained by Scripture [are] set there with the purpose of pointing out a mystery for Scripture's disciples to imitate--and that is especially so with the instances of logic that the fool finds contradictory" (De ver. 1.2.23). Emphasizing that "This logic is not something for enjoyment because it is not God, man or virtue" and is therefore not an end in itself, Wyclif declares that it was rather "given to all the faithful for them to use and derive benefit from" (De ver. 1.3.51). This "benefit" is potentially both communal, assisting the Church (De ver. 1.2.28-29) and personal, "being indeed a helpful and profitable good, because its logic is the shortest route to attaining beatitude" (De ver. 1.3.55). In itself, therefore, "[i]t is all the logic a pilgrim needs in his journey through the world, because if anyone kept wholly to it he would not sin with his tongue and would doubtless be a perfect man" (De ver. 1.3.51). Thus, the conclusion Wyclif arrives at from his study of

Scripture's peculiar logic is, like so much of his teaching, practical: he insists that "Everyone, therefore, ought to imitate [the logic, form, and purpose of Scripture]" (De ver. 1.3.51), in word, but also in deed since "deeds ... have more credibility than words alone" (De ver. 1.1.5). Read in relation to God, such logic (and any text which utilizes it) cannot help but be efficacious as it leads man to God and manifests God to man.

The Pastoral Application of Wyclif's Logic

In expounding this affective logic of the Scriptural text, Wyclif adapts the methods of scholasticism to his own pastoral purposes. Moving step-by-step, from premise to deduction to application, from general to specific and back again, he demonstrates how intimately connected and vitally important are such diverse issues as ideas, grammar, and moral action. For example, in articulating a reasoned concern with man, both as a species and as a social entity, Wyclif begins with an identification of man in terms of universals and particulars: "in the same essence," he writes, "there inheres both being a man and being this man. And being a man is common to every man, and this formally universal, while being this man is restricted individually to this essence" (De universalibus 1). Since, in accord with Augustine's notion of use and enjoyment (OCD 1.3.3-4), one's practical obligation must ultimately be to man in esse as an expression of God, Wyclif emphasizes the active commitment of referential love which is necessary between individuals:

What everyone must principally love in his neighbour is that he is a human being, and not that he is his own son, or someone useful; for according to Augustine, it is being a man which is what is

common and is in an especial manner the work of God, since it preceded every particular human being, while being your son, or your mistress, is something you have brought about yourself.

(De universalibus 3; emphasis added)

For the efficacious manifestation of such a love, Wyclif argued, one's will must always be activated in relation to the universal which underlies the particular and to which, in that it is more directly an expression of God, one's higher responsibility is owed (De universalibus 11).

Wyclif does not, however, leave the command to love one's neighbour for his universal significance vague or undefined. Uniting his philosophy and his hermeneutic immediately with his social and political concerns, he draws practical and immediately relevant conclusions from his theory:

Thus, if proprietors who are devoted to particulars were more concerned that a well-ordered commonwealth should thrive, than that their relatives or their family or the people linked to them by locality or some other individuating condition should prosper, then beyond doubt they would not press, in the disordered way they do, for their own people to be raised to wealth, office, prelacy, and other dignities. (De universalibus 3)

That is, if a right ordering of love prevailed in man's daily concerns and affairs, social chaos would be eliminated through an appropriate manifestation of particulars.

Because for Wyclif actions and ideas are organically related, unjust preferment and nepotism are as much "metaphysical" matters as is the differentiation between generic and specific man. He considers the right-- or in the case outlined above, the wrong--manifestation in the physical world of relationship and reference to be indicative of one's spiritual

status. Since such manifestation is the product of one's engagement with "signs," the manner in which one conducts one's self can be understood to be a direct revelation of how one stands in relation both to a given universal and to the Christ and God who underlie all universals. This makes of all action, especially reading (the process by which one most explicitly engages signs), an immediate matter of reference and morality. For Wyclif, Scripture (in its Reality) truly is "the primary and essential model required for total human perfection" (De ver. 1.2.39). It is meant to "instruct the Church fully in both moral behaviour and in the logic of verbal communication" (De ver. 1.3.53). Recognizing that "knowledge is distinct from behaviour" (De ver. 1.2.28) and revealing his fundamentally pastoral concerns, Wyclif therefore maintains throughout his works that while "Scripture's form of speech is the pattern for each and every form of speech," the imitation of it must transcend the verbal realm and be translated into "a practical philosophy of living as Scripture teaches" (De ver. 1.1.5). "Right" reading or a true understanding of reference becomes, then, less an option and more an imperative, essential if one is to attain the "good" and to respond to it appropriately.

Thus, in Wyclif's hermeneutic, a text is not static in esse--even though it appears in actu as a form bound by both the time and the forms in which it is composed. Nor is it rendered fixed by the necessarily linear reading which occurs as the reader passes from one line in the present to the next in the future and beyond the previous in the past. Rather, it is dynamic, associatively referential, and effective, continually directing the reader through the historical presentation of the text to the eternal truth which it reveals and through which it transforms the reader. Ultimately within such a schema, the process of reading (as a correct and personal

realization of universals) becomes consequential, affecting the individual as well as the society at large.

Intellectual and Personal Requirements for "Right Reading"

Implying that the reader has a moral responsibility to the text both before and after the reading as well as during it, the expected "practical philosophy of living" (De ver. 1.1.3) which is to result from true reading pertains to both the preparation and response of a reader. Paralleling the philosophical and spiritual framework of Wyclif's hermeneutic, both become vital aspects of a true reading. Intellectual, moral, and spiritual, they involve every aspect of the reader in the engagement of text. First and foremost, Wyclif emphasizes a necessary preliminary knowledge of technical and philosophical matters. Carefully legitimizing the use of reason, both that which is deduced from and "manifest to the Christian from the simple evidence of his senses" (Triologus 3.30) and that which is articulated through a more rigorously formulated method of reasoning, Wyclif insists that the author of all truth (including rational and pagan truth) is God (De ver. 1.11.238, 12.298) and that an awareness of the nature of being is necessary to understand the eternality and referentiality of Christ. Thus, he advises the well-intentioned reader to master the rules inherent in the particular "logics" of both Scripture and his modified realism, since "experience in studying philosophy ... inform[s] one's attention" (Jeffrey, "John Wyclif" 273; cf. De ver. 1.9.198-201). For his own philosophy, this includes an understanding of the following: universals, the nature of time and of accidents as related to a subject, the omnipresent existence of all things both in God and among men, the intelligible and eternal being in God

of the ideals of all things, and the knowledge that material essences are perpetual (Triologus 3.31; De ver. 1.8.167-174).

Michael Tresko (in "John Wyclif's Metaphysics of Scriptural Integrity," 153-196), considers De veritate sacrae scripturae 1.8.167-174 as an explication of one of Wyclif's "five-fold schemes that correspond to the hierarchy of Scripture," the "scheme [that] describes the soul's intellectual conditio" (182). Explaining "all five parts of the armour [i.e. the five necessary intellectual criteria, a reference to Wyclif's use of the 'Pauline metaphor of the Christian's armour']" as "the means of relating the fragmented particularity of words back to this divine unity of truth" (182f.), Tresko gives the five aspects of Wyclif's "conceptual armour" as follows. First, the reader must be able "to regard the Ideas as co-eternal with God and to understand that they remain with him and were the exemplary forms through which he created the universe"; this "enables one to understand the Scriptural account of creation in its relation to the divine reality" (Tresko 183; cf. De ver. 1.8.167-168). Second, the reader must "regard the universal ontologically above and beyond the individual thing, which is merely a sign of that universal ... to understand the unity within the diversity of any class of creatures ..." (ibid. 184; cf. De ver. 1.8.169). Third, he or she must "understand the fundamental unity of all being ... that it stands together as one universe under one creator. This conception asserts that differences of time, place, and species, do not constitute a disunity within the created order" (ibid. 184-185, cf. De ver. 1.8.169). Fourth, he or she must grasp "the conception of the unity of time in the presence of God ... the exalted metaphysics ... a real unity of time [as] ... God ... has all time before him in a real way";

This metaphysical conception ... enables one to understand ... the relationship between necessity and contingency ... and enables us to believe, on the one hand, that creatures successively follow upon one another as time changes and, on the other hand, that God in the unchangeability of eternity stands before the past and the future all at once. This ... thus comprehends and reconciles all time. (*ibid.* 185-186, cf. *De ver.* 1.8.171, 174).

Fifth, according to Tresko's reading of Wyclif, the reader must comprehend truly "the principle of equivocation ... the means by which one applies the other metaphysical conceptions to the reading of the text in order to resolve its difficulties and elucidate its meaning more fully" since "The logic of equivocation ... is itself the form of Scripture, not the immediate appearance of the words" (*ibid.* 186-187, cf. *De ver.* 1.8.174). Only such technical preparedness, Wyclif insists (and Tresko explicates), is able to open to the reader the true nature of Scripture's unity and authority.

Beyond such rational and technical expertise, however, Wyclif also insists that a right understanding of Scripture requires both a willingness to respond to the text (*De ver.* 1.7.158; 2.20.141-144, 147-149) as well as a "conditioning [of] one's internal awareness to Scripture's truth" (Tresko 188). He emphasizes that the Text itself is more than an intellectual or traditional artifact: it is a moral Book, placing moral demands upon the reader and upon his or her readings (*De ver.* 1.12.273, 14.344). As Wyclif understands it, the

logic [of Scripture] does not operate simply in the soul's intellect. It operates more fundamentally in its will and in its love. For ... the understanding and practice of equivocation

demands humility and honesty as opposed to pride and arrogance. And this moral orientation derives ... from a pure love of Christ [De ver. 1.8.174] ... [I]ntellectual categories are not themselves sufficient for the true reading of Scripture. They operate within the larger operation of pure Christian love [caritas]. (Tresko 187-188)

Accordingly, "Wyclif argues that one who would interpret Scripture in pursuit of divine 'authorial' intention needs ... a sound moral disposition, informing one's affections ... and ... the actual practice of virtue" (Jeffrey, "John Wyclif" 273; cf. De ver. 1.9.198-201). Contending that a volitionally motivated "internalization" and acting out (or "writing out") of the Truth of the Text through the individual's life is "the right end of interpretation," Wyclif insists that "the good reader of Scripture will become ... only as effective an interpreter of texts as he or she is already a 'translator' of the text in personal life" (ibid. 274; cf. Tresko 188ff., De ver. 1.14.341, 2.148-152). Wyclif's moral and textual "literalism," therefore, is essentially one wherein the reader engages and participates with Scripture, the Bible being the measure of all knowledge and conduct, and its cumulative effect being a personal "writing out" (on the various levels of signification and experience) of the Person or Ideal of Christ. Always, in every stage of reading, there is to be "honor [for] God's Scripture [and] honor [for] God's word" as the reader accepts and submits to its function to "train ... and form [him or her]" (De ver. 1.3.60) in the pattern of the One behind the text.

Conclusion

Insofar as his work is thus a philosophical and practical elaboration of the central aspects of Nicholas' Biblical theory, Wyclif is largely, though not solely, a theological "middle man." Conveying and adapting Nicholas' hermeneutic to a new culture and to new circumstances, Wyclif's rendering of Nicholas' crisis of Biblical, rabbinic, and patristic traditions of signification and the literal mediates to Fourteenth century England an actively referential hermeneutic which both re-centralizes the text and re-defines the role of the reader as part of the textual process. More explicit and more immediately pragmatic than many of the dictates rendered by the academic readings of Nicholas, the theological hermeneutic of Wyclif allows later writers such as Chaucer to extrapolate and to demonstrate "secular" and literary correlatives of the same, textually "Biblical," principles and precepts that Nicholas articulates. Chaucer, one of the first and most significant of Wyclif's contemporaries to pick up on his theoretical work, extends the practical and pastoral implications of Nicholas' theory even further than Wyclif himself does, broadening its scope beyond the immediate contexts of Church and government. Juxtaposing sundry readers and readings in The Canterbury Tales to produce a logomachy of textual theories similar to that found in the Bible, Chaucer moves the principles of Nicholas (and Wyclif) into the more immediately human realm of the literary. Exploring the structure and moral significance of Scriptural logic as he goes, he foregrounds questions of authority and reference (which for Nicholas are fundamentally textual and which for Wyclif are essentially doctrinal) as the primary critical issues for Fourteenth century English literary thought.

Notes

1

M. Fischer, "Des Nicolaus von Lyra postillae perpetuae in Vetus und Novem testamentum in ihrem eigenthumlichen Unterschied von der gleichzeitigen Schriftauslegung," Jahrbucher fur Protestantische Theologie vol. 15, pt. 3: 462; Herman Hailperin, Rashi and the Christian Scholars. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), 138-9; H. Labosse, Etudes Franciscaines 19 (1909): 47, 49, 163, 172, 368.

2

See Pantin, "Grosseteste's Relations with the Papacy and the Crown," In Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop, ed. D. A. Callus. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955; G. V. Lechler, John Wycliffe and His English Precursors. trans. J. Lorimer. London: Religious Tracts Society, 1884; J. A. Robson, Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the 'Summa de ente' to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961; S. H. Thomson, "The Philosophical Basis of Wyclif's Theology," Journal of Religion 11 (1931): 86-116.

Chapter 4

"Led by All Things Created":
Chaucer and Nicholas' Hermeneutic
in Fourteenth Century England

For as heuenys ben reysid fro erthe, so my weies ben reysid fro youre weies, and my thouytis fro youre thouytis.

And as reyn and snow cometh doun fro heuene, and turneth no more ayen thidur, but it fillith the erthe, and bishedith it, and makith it to buriowne, and yyueth seed to hym that sowith, and breed to hym that etith,

so schal be my word, that schal go out of my mouth. It schal not turn ayen voide to me, but it schal do what ever thingis Y wolde, and it schal haue prosperite in these thingis to whiche Y sente it.

(Is. 55:9-11; WB, II)

Introduction: From Nicholas to Chaucer

The uniquely Judeo-Christian hermeneutic which Nicholas of Lyra re-claims for the fourteenth century and which John Wyclif develops philosophically for application to contemporary English problems does much to re-center the truth of Scripture as the principal authority for the age. Their work leads many exegetes of the period, schoolmen and Lollards alike, to champion afresh the truths and techniques of Scripture as the "new" norms for life and reading. Throughout much of the period, though, their method remains largely academic, a primarily intellectual and spiritual means of reading, responding to, and commenting upon a carefully defined sacred text. For a full re-clamation in actu of the original sign theory and the transformative significance of the veritas Hebraica, there was yet needed both a translation of the reading theory into a writing theory (so that the individual might actively participate in the process of signification) and an expansion of the text being read from that of canonical ecriture to the text of the world, that which was created verbally by and which spoke of God in its every part--the text of which the Psalmist writes, "the heavens declare [enarrant] the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth [adnuntiat] his handywork" (Ps. 19:1 [V 18:1], see also vv. 1-4; cf. Ps. 33:6ff., 75:1; 148, etc.; CI I.3005ff., VII.453ff.). Chaucer, apparently continuing Wyclif's adaptation of such Scriptural sign theory to contemporary circumstances, effects just such an expansion and translation in The Canterbury Tales: he gives the visible signs of the world, "the thing is that ben made" (Rom. 1:20; WB, II), a distinctively medieval cast, drawing upon the diversity of his society for the forms, material, and tellers of his tales; and, he writes himself into his text as a model reader, writer,

and participant in and with the world of signs. In the process, he fashions a text which signifies, which engages and affects the reader, and which fashions itself aesthetically and morally according to Nicholas' duplex sensus literalis (see Chapter 1; Nicholas' "Second Prologue" 144ff.).

The Availability of Nicholas' Hermeneutic To Chaucer

Like most literate and politically aware Englishmen of the fourteenth century, Chaucer had Nicholas' hermeneutic readily available to him through several, complementary sources. First, and most obviously, he may have read Nicholas' commentaries themselves: the Postilla literalis was readily available in manuscript editions in a number of libraries to which Chaucer had access, most notably those at Oxford (including Merton College, with which Chaucer is frequently associated), Lambeth Library, and St. Augustine's Abbey (Wurtele 97). Even failing a first-hand familiarity with the actual texts of Nicholas' commentaries, though, it is highly unlikely that "that commentary most in demand by what we should call 'scientific' scholars" in the late Middle Ages (Deansley 175) would have escaped Chaucer's attention. A man as evidently well-read as he, with his demonstrated vast knowledge of both Scripture and authorities renowned and obscure, could not have been unfamiliar with Nicholas' work: the Postilla literalis, after all, was considered "the universal text-book for scholars in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (Deansley 175); "next to the Glossa ordinaria itself," it was "the most influential and widespread Biblical commentary in the later Middle Ages" (Wurtele 92). That Chaucer would have been unfamiliar with either it or the unique methodology that put it so much in demand is, therefore, virtually inconceivable.

Yet, Nicholas' essential concerns were textual, not social or, in any way, more broadly "practical": he was, after all, principally "an exegete; he does not produce summae. One does not examine his Postillae for the philosophical methods and conclusions, for his purpose is evidently to produce a closer and more special work" (Hailperin 251). Originally intended as neither a mandate for social reform nor a guide for literary composition, Nicholas' hermeneutic was therefore largely academic in focus, its purpose being primarily to provide a coherent means of accessing the truth and underlying methodology of the central, fixed, and historically validated text of the age. Any intended significance beyond the textual was strictly personal: used correctly, his method should guide the reader through the truth of Scripture to "the good" and, thereby, to "the blessed life" ("First Prologue" 254ff.; see Chapter 1). Before his model could provide more than a literary guide to reading for Chaucer, therefore, it remained for someone to adapt Nicholas' model, to draw out the practical and political implications of it. This was done by John Wyclif who, in following and advancing Nicholas' theory, not only made the truth of Scripture available to the reader, but also openly championed the ethical demands of this truth as the inviolable norms by which to measure, to address, and to call for the redress of the many religious and civil abuses which so traumatized the age (see Chapter 3). His efforts were especially significant in regard to such issues as authority, affective meaning, and consequent responsible conduct (of institutions as well as of individuals) before God and towards man. Believing "all law, all philosophy, and all ethics are in Holy Scripture" (De ver. 1.22), Wyclif held that "the law of the gospel is sufficient by itself without the civil law, or that called

canonical, for the perfect rule of the Church militant" (De civ. dom. 1.21), and that adherence to this central law was so essential that everyone, from peasant to pope, should be bound by Scripture's (and Christ's therein) examples and dictates (e.g. De pot. pape 215, De ecclesia et membris eius 4).

Historical evidence suggests that Chaucer may well have been familiar with the distinctively practical and "English" expression given to Nicholas' hermeneutic by Wyclif. Though definitive evidence directly connecting the two men is lacking, Chaucer's familiarity with Wyclif's teachings (if not with the man himself) is arguable from their shared social network: not only did both have John of Gaunt as their patron, but they also had numerous other connections as well, both social and intellectual. Principally, "Wyclif had important sympathizers at court, and ... central among these were some of Chaucer's closest courtly friends, men with interests in ecclesiastical reform, peace, a renewed chivalry, and, not incidentally, a taste for literature" (Jeffrey "Chaucer and Wyclif" 112). Such "sympathizers" included Richard Sturmy, Lewis Clifford, Thomas Latimer, William Neville, John Montague, and John Clanvowe (ibid. 110f.; Deansley 277). As Jeffrey writes: "That Chaucer, as a co-protege of Gaunt and associate of all these men, should not have been aware of Wyclif's major positions, even if only from the perspective of the court, is virtually impossible" (112).

The likelihood of such apparent mutual familiarity is further reinforced by the fact that Wyclif and Chaucer also shared academic and literary acquaintances (and, therefore, further points of likely intellectual contact). Most notably, they had a close friend in common in Ralph Strode, the poet and philosopher from Merton College whom Wyclif

referred to as "reverend master and dearest friend" (Opus minorum 197) and to whom, along with Gower, Chaucer dedicated Troilus and Criseyde (T&C V.1856-1857). Strode, though often opposing Wyclif's views, was nevertheless familiar, even conversant with them and, as such, he may well have been another source of Wycliffite teaching for Chaucer. Other academic connections between Wyclif and Chaucer have also been proposed: for example, it has been suggested that Chaucer's "lost years" (1360-1367) may have been spent as a student at Oxford (Williams 156-157; Gardiner 136-137; Rickert 20-31) where he could well have heard Wyclif lecture (Workman 1.94). Any definitive evidence for such direct contact or influence between the two, however, remains elusive, leaving the issue somewhat open as a matter of speculation.

Yet, even though the nature of the evidence directly connecting Chaucer with Wyclif, and therefore with his unique articulation of Nicholas' hermeneutic, is somewhat circumstantial, it is worthy of note that "'tradition,' venerable hearsay," and apparently shared opinions on matters of "ecclesiastical polity" do seem to "place the two men squarely in the same camp on a fairly wide range of issues" (Jeffrey "Chaucer and Wyclif" 114)--a number of which bear striking similarity to matters of central concern to Nicholas. Jeffrey, listing nine topics of "close correspondence between Chaucer's apparent thinking and Wyclif's expressed opinions and convictions" (114), includes several that reflect, rather blatantly, both Nicholas' hermeneutic and the likely effect of his work upon Wyclif (and arguably, through him, upon Chaucer). These include: "Wyclif's approach to grammar and logic" (cf. Logica 11.1-5, De ver. 2.69, De mand. div. 5); his "central preoccupation with proper method in the interpretation of texts (especially with respect to authorial intention)" (cf. De ver. 1.42-44,

2.20; Op. ev. 1.276, 281; Sermones 6.2.37; Triologus 1.107-113); his "views on the role of reader intention in interpretation" (cf. Op. ev. 2.28.1; Triologus 3.31.241-243; De ver. 1.60, 1.44-45, 273; Sermones 2.277, 279; De euch. 162); his "conviction concerning the relationship between matter and form in interpretation" (cf. De dom. div. 179, Triologus 3.31.238-239, De ver. 2.137); and, his "arguments concerning truth and time, the use and value of historical authority" (cf. De ente pred. 101-102, 116-117; De dom. div. 61, Triologus 1.86, Misc. phil. 1.75-77). Each of these issues receives considerable explicit attention in the work of both Nicholas and Wyclif, shaping, to varying degrees, their methodologies and conclusions (cf. Fitzralph, De pauperie salvatoris 1-4). Each issue is also evidenced in The Canterbury Tales, perhaps most pithily in the "Retractions," as Chaucer the narrator presents and defends his "entente" in relating the work, as he appeals to the reader's "entente" in engaging the work, as he attempts to direct the reader's interpretation of his efforts, and as he re-situates himself and his work within the continuum of time and eternity (CT X.1081ff.).

Whether directly from the commentary itself, indirectly through Wyclif's teachings, or--more likely--from some combination of the two, it does seem reasonable, then, that Chaucer had ample opportunity to draw upon the work of Nicholas. Almost certainly, he was familiar with the principles behind it and with the possible applications--textual and social--that could be made of it. While Wyclif's "English" version of Nicholas' teaching may well have held a particular appeal for Chaucer who, as a court-poet, concerned himself with matters social and ethical, the more likely two-fold mediation of the method suggests a richer influence and accounts for much

more, particularly structurally, within Chaucer's own works: whereas a direct study of Nicholas' commentary may have given Chaucer some direction as to how to order his texts to create an interactive and referential structure similar in form and effect to that of Scripture (the greatest and most truly significant anthology of genres; see Peter Auriol's Compendium litteralis sensus totius Scripturae for a near contemporary systematization of Biblical books into their respective orders and genres), a knowledge of Wyclif's development of Nicholas' principles would have not only formalized the social and ethical applicability of the textual hermeneutic, but also provided Chaucer with a contemporary precedent for expanding spiritual truths into the secular realm. Together, the two versions seem to have exercised an almost irresistible attraction as linguistic, critical, and ethical models for Chaucer in his own creation of a "secular scripture."

The Popular Appeal of Nicholas' Hermeneutic To The Fourteenth Century

That Nicholas' Postilla literalis was as popular as it was, and that Wyclif and, later, Chaucer were able to adapt his hermeneutic to the problems of the age suggest that the immediate appeal of the theory was not simply "academic," in any strict sense. Intellectually based and personally affective, Nicholas' comprehensive sign theory and his duplex sensus literalis did much more than simply postulate a new method of reading. In addressing itself to the concerned and committed reader, it--in effect--made a bridge between moral and dogmatic theology. It insisted that the text be truly and accurately engaged, not for itself, but in order that the reader, "by knowing the truth, and by doing what is good," might be led "to the blessed life, which [we pray] He might grant us, who lives and reigns

without end" ("First Prologue" 254ff.; emphasis added). Demanding not only the right reception of text but an accurate and concrete moral response to it as well, this ostensibly new hermeneutic required of the reader that he or she not only know the truth, but act upon it, "doing what is good." It also insisted that this response be made not in a social or conceptual vacuum, but within a clearly defined, teleologically referential context, the parameters of which were delineated by the grace, nature, and rule of the Divine. In so relating human behaviour as shaped by the text directly to the expectations of the Divine, and in turning the attentions of the reader back to the teachings and moral demands of Scripture, Nicholas' process of "right reading" held great practical appeal for many in the fourteenth century who were overwhelmed by natural and political disasters, who were disillusioned by the conditions of Church and State, and who found no pertinent guidance or relevant instruction in the words of their leaders, either spiritual or civil.

Re-privileging the truth of the sacra pagina, Nicholas' reclamation of Biblical signification offered a means of reforming the contemporary hermeneutical practices of excessive focus on secondary texts (the Sentences, etc.) or on extra-textual quaestiones at the expense of actual Biblical study (cf. "Second Prologue" 50ff.). Not reversing, but re-balancing the relative values of text, gloss, and commentary, it provided a means by which an individual might engage the text of Scripture itself rather than the various "authoritative" statements on it. The reader, long accustomed to the mediation of either the auctoritas ecclesiae or secondary texts, commentaries, and teachers between himself (or herself) and God's Word, could once again engage the depths of text directly, learning from Scripture itself an efficacious and referential means of and reason for

understanding Biblical truth and for directing his (or her) life in accordance with it. Insisting that the reader be directly responsible to the demands of that truth, this "new" method of reading, in effect, made the verbum Christi and its Author once again both the centre and circumference of human life: drawing the reader into relation with the Text and its Truth, it restored God's Word as the primary authority of the age and taught the individual again how to participate in his or her own salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12f.).

The appeal of Nicholas' reading theory, however, was not merely personal. It could and was made to apply to institutions--specifically, to the corporate "Body of Christ," both civil and ecclesiastical, as manifest in society. Accordingly, many of Chaucer's contemporaries--exegetes and others--eagerly embraced Nicholas' hermeneutic not only for themselves, but for its relevance in establishing an inviolable standard of faith and conduct for the Church universal in its every expression. In Nicholas' method, they found a means of definitively determining the literal and therefore the supposedly intended truth of Scripture, a truth which foregrounded the ethical as a practical expression of Augustine's charity by confirming that:

To seek the highest good is to live well; to live well is nothing else but to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind; hence, it is obvious that this love must be preserved whole and uncorrupt, which is the part of temperance; it must not be distracted by difficulties, which is the part of courage; it must serve nothing else, which is the part of justice; it must be vigilant in discriminating among things lest falseness or fraud

steal in, which is the part of prudence (Augustine, De moribus ecclesiae catholicae 1.3.6)

In effect, from a true reading of text, it taught, purity of life and conduct. Those, such as Wyclif, who realized the pragmatic potential and immediate implications of Nicholas' method used it to extrapolate practical and political points from the teachings and principles of God's Word. Applying its moral demands to the rulers and institutions of the age, both secular and ecclesiastical, they called man corporately as well as individually to ethically responsible conduct. The popular attraction of such a demand was, no doubt, historically conditioned for, in every age, there have been individuals who have sought the truth of the Word for personal reform: only during a period when all external sources of authority have been undermined, seemingly debauched by their own self interests, is it likely that an appeal for widespread reform based upon direct and unmediated access to the one self-validating, historically sanctioned authority available might meet with good success. Such were the circumstances (and much of the appeal of Nicholas' work) in the fourteenth century.

The Crisis of Authority in the Fourteenth Century

Throughout the late Middle Ages, Europe generally and England especially were in desperate need of some new and functional model of meaning and order. Wracked by famine, plague, civil and social unrest, as well as by political and ecclesiastical corruption, medieval society seemed in imminent danger of complete disintegration. Its very foundations appeared to be crumbling as Church, State, and even, it appeared, the

natural world failed to provide consistent or convincing evidence of God's supposedly concerned governance of His creation. The Great Famine ravaged the Continent; the Black Death struck repeatedly, killing well over a third of the Christian populace. Everywhere, it seemed, political life--both civil and religious--was characterized by immorality, by rampant ambition, and by personal over-reaching. The century began with Boniface VIII attempting to appropriate temporal power to the papacy through a carefully contrived allegorical reading of "the two swords" in his Unum sanctum (1302; cf. Lk.22:28-39; Wyclif, De off. reg. 13, 142; De civ. dom. 1.328). Political maneuvering by Philip IV of France led not only to Boniface's death as a prisoner in the Vatican (1303), but also to the "Babylonian Captivity," a period which made a mockery of any professed unity and force behind papal utterances. A later two-year vacancy in the papal seat (1314-1316), the wide-spread abdication of pastoral duties and the breakdown in moral and ethical conduct by religious leaders at all levels, as well as the proliferation of unscrupulous churchmen such as pardoners and summoners, and finally the Great Schism (beginning in 1378) all seemed to hasten the collapse of religious authority in the fourteenth century.

Such disorder in the religious realm was paralleled by unprecedented disorder in the secular sphere. Wars, social upheavals, even regicides seemed to be the order of the day--again, nowhere more so than in England. There, near interminable involvement in both the Hundred Years' War (beginning 1337) and the on-going Anglo-Scot wars, the domestic turbulence concerning Edward II and Isabella (1326-1327), the untimely death of the Black Prince (1376), and the ascension of a child king (1377) undermined the strength of the regency. Compounded by the ever increasing power of Parliament to curtail the monarchy's authority, by the Parliament's refusal

to pay feudal dues to the pope (1366), and by the Peasant Revolt under Wat Tyler (1381), the political chaos of the time was perhaps best symbolized by the two regicides which framed the century for England--that of Edward II in 1327 and that of Richard II in 1400. Indicating far more than simply a change of government, the execution of monarchs struck at the very heart of the political, and indirectly, the spiritual order: being an almost mystical entity sanctioned by God, the corporate body politic with a king at its head was, at least in theory, a central feature of divine order. Efforts not only to reform it, but to kill the one who ruled by "divine right" were thus indicative of a widespread loss of faith in the ability of man--in whatever designated capacity--to rule reasonably and rightly. Everywhere, it seemed that public confidence in both Church and State had been destroyed as institutions and individuals appeared to have relinquished their God-given mandates to govern in favour of private quests for power.

Against such a background, Nicholas' theory may well have gained much of its popularity because it offered an ostensibly a-political means of contextualizing, streamlining, and resolving--at least ideally--many of the problems of the period. His concerns with sign theory and right reference, especially, were able to provide a common ground to many of the specific issues of the age. The problem of authority or rather "authorities" in the fourteenth century, for example, might be "read" as an essential failure of individuals and institutions to recognize their rightful positions and functions in God's sign system. Ideally, within a Christian context, both the sacred authority of the popes (auctoritas sacrata pontificum) and the power of kings (potestas regum) were to be exercised for the temporal and spiritual benefit of the laity, those whom the "rulers" were appointed to

serve (cf. Mt. 20:25-28; Gelasius I, "Letter to Anastasius"). These "powers" were to hold delegated and vicarious authority only. They were to guide humanity to its Source and End in God, not exploit it as an end in itself. Within this context, the crises of the fourteenth century could easily be rendered as a single matter of reference: though intended to be representative and efficacious signs of the regnum Christi, certain "authorities," both civil and religious, seemed to have misconstrued their role; fancying themselves and their rule as the regnum itself, and not as mere signs of it, they lost sight of their true function and perverted the uses and ends of their authority. Such a reading of contemporary circumstances--possible through the "new" theory of reading the world and the Word which again understood man and his history as signs within a larger system--offered a reasonable response to these problems. Championing neither Church nor State against the other, it called both to a renewed accountability to their function as signs and to the truths of the one true, fixed, inviolable, and self-validating authority: to the verbum Dei as evidenced in Christ and Scripture.

Nicholas' hermeneutic thus extended the challenge of text and contemporary reading theory beyond mere intellectual or spiritual exercises to a renewed practicality which became almost "popular" in its appeal and potential. Making the best of the growing individualism of the age, it offered to the general reader a comprehensible, effective, and referential means of and reason for understanding and realizing God's Word in his or her life: essentially, it called individuals to accountability to the truths of Scripture. At the same time, in clarifying the personal and affective nature of Biblical reference, Nicholas' theory also made available a historically validated model by which to understand the workings of God and

man in the world--a model which, in the hands of Wyclif and others, became a norm for measuring the workings of institutions in society. Making both rulers and individuals aware of their responsibilities to their Authorizer as well as to their charges, Nicholas' theory thus opened once again to the age an unimpeachable moral and spiritual standard by which to measure individual actions and those of the institutions. Re-centering the truth of Scripture as the primary authority of the Christian community, it thus re-cast the problems of the age as "textual" ones, revealing the issues of auctor, auctoritas, authorization, and representation as central to man's true reality. In effect, it offered to an age devoid of authority a renewed means of access to and understanding of the auctoritas divinae scripturae as this, in turn, conveyed the auctoritas Christi.

Chaucer's Accomodation of Crisis, Text, and Reader

Unlike many of his age who produced blatantly didactic or overtly directive statements, creative and doctrinal, Chaucer is unusually sensitive to the crises of faith and society occasioned by contemporary concerns over issues of authority and the authoritative. Attempting to defuse rather than compound the prevailing tensions, he acknowledges and defers to his readers' scruples, using the creative process to engage rather than dictate to his audience. Accordingly, Chaucer creates literary symbols, forms, and texts which allow his reader a considerable degree of critical and creative autonomy. Presenting his reader with narrative options, he demonstrates his respect for the reader's right to participate, to choose wisely or not as he or she will: in effect, he leaves his reader "in the hond of his [or her] counsel," able to "dresse [his] hond to that, that [he] wolt," so that, with

many options, "that, that plesith hym, schal be yyouun to him" (Sir. 14ff., WB, II; cf. Dt. 30:15ff., Is. 7:15). Not often directly stating the significance of his works (or even some reasonable sense of it), Chaucer only suggests it through that which is present in the text, leaving the reader to arrive at his or her own conclusions and resolutions through a right and active exercise of will and intellect. Seldom producing either an unequivocal plan for his texts or a definitive point of closure in them, Chaucer thus depends heavily upon his audience's ability to "read for the absences," to extrapolate the (or, more frequently, a) likely meaning of the whole from the interactions of the narrative components provided. This participatory model is especially relevant for the reading of those works which may be technically deemed "unfinished," for in those texts particularly, the reader must rely upon his or her understanding of the parts and of their relations to each other to discover the meaning and direction of the whole.

This is not to suggest, however, that the meaning of Chaucer's composite works is either arbitrary or wholly subjective. As a Christian writer of secular texts, Chaucer usually has some clearly moral and broadly comprehensive end in view, whether this be personified in the "man of gret auctorite" of "The House of Fame" (2158) or presented through the more individualized conversion of the narrator in "The Retractions" (CT X.1081ff.; cf. Augustine, Conf. 1.20). Inevitably referential, this greater meaning tends to be clearly ethical, immediately concerned with man's life, actions, and meaning. In fact, once recognized, the ultimate "meaning" of the text often reveals the work itself to be an ethical exercise as Chaucer, his persona, his characters, and even his reader are seen to be involved in the process of attaining truth through their engagement of his created

signs.

To discern how Chaucer lays this meaning into the text and how its parts work together to create and to reveal its larger truths, the reader must understand the peculiar logic of a dynamically composite structure as well as the methods by which Chaucer uses his forms to bring his audience into the text--both of which are textual matters having their roots in Scripture and being expounded through Nicholas' Judeo-Christian hermeneutic (see Chapters 1 and 2). Such understanding is especially relevant in a consideration of The Canterbury Tales, for it is in this work particularly that Chaucer most develops his unique literary method of interactive forms that attain their primary expression through the transformative relationships of parts as well as through the participation of the reader with those parts. In The Tales, he creates a complex and composite narrative which attains its full, primary (or fully "literal") expression less through the story and stories that the text tells, and more through the transformative relationship of parts that it presents, through the forms and structures that arise from these relations, and through the effect of both facts and forms upon the reader (fictive or external) who actively engages the work entire. Balancing his regard for his work and his audience, Chaucer thus responds formally to the central crisis of his age, accomodating both the prerogative of text and the will of the reader in his literary articulation of trans-textual meaning.

The Form and Effect of The Affective Sign Theory in The Tales

Chaucer's appropriation of Nicholas' methodology (particularly Wyclif's adaptation of it) seems readily evident as The Canterbury Tales reveals

itself as a primary fourteenth century example of the practical working out of the critical impulse. In creating and combining secular texts within a complex and interactive narrative structure, Chaucer transfers the sign theory discerned by Nicholas within Scripture from the realm of reading to that of writing. Demonstrating a theory of communicative language indirectly similar to that suggested by the Hebraic concepts of kara, 'otot, and dabarim (see Chapter 2), Chaucer thus invests his fictional constructs with referential meaning, causing them to function as signs or, perhaps better, symbols. These meaningful indicators direct the reader through themselves to the author's intended purpose and, through him, to his Author's intent. In this way, Chaucer turns Nicholas' hermeneutic back upon itself: Chaucer does not simply avail himself of the methods available through a right understanding of the duplex sensus literalis to decode the truths of an already existing authoritative Text; instead, he uses the methods of meaning inherent in the language and logic of the Text in all its fullness to re-encode its same truths into a new format, drawn from and composed of contemporary elements.

In so creating such a comprehensive, organic, and referential narrative from recognizable, secular forms, Chaucer has, first and most obviously, to expand the store of referentially significant signs into the secular world. He does so by creating a literary text that is almost encyclopedic in its human representation. Encompassing the moral and social diversity of his own society, he includes in The Tales characters who are human and animal, male and female, adult and child, virtuous and corrupt, religious and lay, of all classes and of all estates. Literarily, he reinforces this sense of conglomerate humanity with generic, thematic, and historical variety: his tales includes nearly every popular genre (romance, fabliau, beast fable,

saints' life, treatise, sermon, among others); they touch upon almost all universal themes (love, salvation, Fortune, pleasure, pride, meaning, etc.); and, they span the widest variety of temporal and spatial settings, from the early history of Troy to the eternal realm of "Jerusalem celestial" (X.79), from the worlds of Livy, Seneca, Cicero, and the Hebrew prophets to that of his present day Southwerk and the road to Canterbury. To order this multifarious body of material without undermining its protean vitality, Chaucer sketches his pilgrims, their tales, and the tellings of them as dynamically interactive elements: he brings together, often juxtaposes, narrative elements and tales with differing or even conflicting moral, aesthetic, and critical views, and he allows them to work upon each other, complementing, correcting, subverting, even contradicting visions presented elsewhere in the work. In doing so, Chaucer permits his parts to forge a single, moral, and referential whole which is far greater and more effective than the sum of its parts. In effect, he creates a comprehensive organic narrative which works upon principles of engagement, transformation, and catholic signification--principles quite similar to those identified by Nicholas as inherent to Scriptural meaning (see Chapter 1).

Given all this, it is not just the rich content and interactive order of its parts which distinguishes The Canterbury Tales from the linear, less critically demanding texts of Chaucer's contemporaries. Perhaps more significantly, there is also the effect of such structural considerations upon the reader. Rather than being merely directive or overtly didactic (as are such texts as Piers Ploughman and Confessio Amantis), the whole that grows out of the relations of parts in The Tales is engaging and mutual: it draws the reader into itself, making him or her part of the telling as it is

left to the reader to make explicit the many connections and conclusions only suggested, hinted at, or implied through the positioning of the parts. Continually directing the reader into and through the processes and results of textual relations, this necessarily participatory understanding of both the individual and composite meanings leads the reader not only through the parts, but also through the whole, to the greater signification underlying The Canterbury Tales and, arguably, all texts (as Chaucer reiterates: "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine," X.1082; cf. VII.3440-3443, 2 Tim. 3:16, Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:11). Ideally, such a movement should be accompanied by a growing awareness of one's responsibility to the increasingly evident, all-encompassing truth. It should also evoke an active response to this truth such that the reader, like Chaucer the narrator in the "Retractions," perceives the matters of sign and text not merely as cold theoretical issues or as matters of broad social concerns, but as an intensely immediate and personal matter that requires accountability for all that is said and done.

Such an intimate process of moving from outside the text, through participation with and in it, to its deeper and transformative significance is left neither theoretically ambiguous nor practicably unclarified in The Tales. It is demonstrated for the reader through Chaucer's persona who, as narrator and character, writes himself into his organic order and submits himself to its fictive forces. Through his narrator, Chaucer thus provides a pattern of increasing moral responsibility for the process of reading and writing. His persona begins in the morally passive role of observer (I.725-746). Called into the text actively by his own creations (VII.695ff.), he becomes a participant and teller who is, at least derivatively, responsible for the substance if not the form of his telling

(VII.961-964). Finally, speaking in his own voice, the narrator becomes wholly accountable for his creative acts, willingly and penitently assuming full responsibility for the content, forms, and effects of "the tales of Caunterbury" (X.1085, 1087; cf. James 1:5, 17:3:17)--an accountability which he expresses referentially, defining both himself and his works in relation to "oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al goodnesse" (X. 1080; cf. 1087ff.). Foregrounding the ethical as imperative for all reading, writing, and acting, the narrator thus provides a practical and personal model for the reader to follow in realizing ultimate spiritual truths in his or her own life. Advocating a type of "Biblical" reading which brings the reader into relation with the true Author of all texts and which, in doing so, approaches truth from within, Chaucer creates in The Canterbury Tales a text which works upon principles similar to those of the Hebrew Scriptures as recently expounded by Nicholas. Giving a contemporary expression to many of the same forms, types, and truths as the Sacred Text, his work thus completes the process begun by Nicholas and elaborated by Wyclif: he returns the truth and meaning of God's Word efficaciously to His world and to His people through familiar forms and for purposes of practical import.

Chaucer's Use of Dynamic Structures

Reflecting the comprehensive Hebraic sign theory of Scripture, then, Chaucer first presents a compelling case for the ubiquitous presence and comprehensive nature of effective signs, whatever their particular form (human, objective, or narrative): in his understanding, "al that writen is,/To oure doctrine it is ywrite," even such "folye" as a "tale ... of a

fox, or of a cok and hen" (VII.3441-3442; 3438-3429; cf. Augustine's concept of "Egyptian gold," QCD 2.40). Next, arguing for the social validity and complementary significance of even ostensibly negative "signs" as part of the working out of a greater and good whole, he allows the parts to work upon each other to bring out the inherent corporate value of that whole as the various tales sharpen each other's truths. Thus, for example, all the various characters--even the angry Reeve, the drunken Cook, the bawdy Shipman, and the openly corrupt Pardoner--have something to contribute (something of "murthe" or "solaas"). Not one is excluded from the company of the ostensibly more worthy pilgrims. Rather, each is continually reconciled to the whole, to the company of pilgrims, by efforts on the part of the community (e.g. VI.960ff.). Even the most reprobate, despite their failings, are continually re-joined to the one with a "hooli cos," as it were (1 Pet. 5:14, WB, II; "kiss of charity," KJV; cf. VI.965ff.), for all are seen as essential to the human compact and to the greater meaning of the text, of society, and of the Christian community and quest. All the parts, therefore--positive and negative--are integral to the form, function, and significance of the whole.

Finally, Chaucer insists that the individual teller (and reader) must both participate in and respond to the signs of the text, not in judgment of the other significant elements in it, but through a humble recognition and acknowledgment of one's own status in the process of signification and, ultimately, in relation to the greater Ground of all meaning (X.1080ff.; cf. Jas. 2:1ff.). Presenting his persona as a model for the reader to follow in this, Chaucer completes the apparently intended process of reading The Tales in his "Retractions" as he, as narrator and sometime character in the work, reads, responds to, and repents of much of his text and "sign-making"

--specifically, those texts that "sowen into synne" (X.1086). Understanding his works to have an affect upon both his reader and himself, he realizes the necessity of true humility before his Maker: putting off his use of a self-deprecating and responsibility diverting humility topos (e.g. I.925ff, 3171ff., etc.), Chaucer--via the narrator--accordingly assumes full, personal responsibility for his own creations, both negative and positive. Making him more fully aware of his culpability (cf. Rom. 7:7; the Law itself being a similar sign; see Chapter 2), the accompanying awareness of the affective and referential significance of his "syns" also leads him to a personal salvation as he, "for custom han wittis exercisid to discrecioun of good and of yuel" (Heb. 5:14; WB, II), "riyli tretinge the word of treuthe" as manifest in both (2 Tim. 2:15; WB, II; cf. VII.940ff., X.1081ff.).

Such a meditative approach to self and text as signs, the value of which are shaped and clarified both by immediate and broader contexts in The Tales, leads Chaucer as narrator and character (and, it seems to be expected, the reader as participant following Chaucer the narrator's example) to repentance, right action, and right thinking--in effect, to a translation of the text's ultimate Truth through the self into the world. By creating and engaging in its own terms one aspect of the world's text, and by being engaged and, in effect, being created by it in turn, Chaucer thus seems to renew fully for the fourteenth century the process of practical and personal translation of Biblical sign theory. In and through his narrator, he demonstrates the transforming power of God's truth realized in the world through text and reader. When applied practically to the text, such a personal, participatory, and effective rationale allows Chaucer to use his narrative creations as dynamic, interactive symbols to produce a series of structures which, in turn, themselves become significant and

effective as part of the text's truth--a point and purpose very much in keeping with the spirituality (and sign theory) of the Psalms (e.g. see Ps. 19:1-4 in epigraph to Chapter 1; see also Ps. 8, 19, 148, etc.; cf. Augustine, "Man, this part of your creation, wishes to praise you. You arouse him to take joy in praising you, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you," City of God 1.1).

The Principles of Transformative Structures

Rather than being wholly cumulative and mutually reinforcing in any purely linear sense, though, many of the significant structures of The Tales operate according to commutative and associative principles. That is, the relationships of the parts contributing to the structural forms and the operative effects of those relationships are often largely independent of any formal groupings which the tales might be given and of the formal order in which the tales or internal components appear. Working upon the almost quantum principles of complementarity and transformation, the arrangement of the tales in the various authoritative manuscripts or even within the various fragments thus becomes almost incidental to the greater significance of the text. What matters more is the relationships that appear amongst the tales wherever points of commonality occur, for it is the interactions of various handlings of any particular topic, theme, image, or term--rather than any single presentation of it--that create the process of Chaucer's text and allow it to develop meaning (through the participation of the reader) rather than merely reveal it (as is typical of more conventional, linear, and allegorical texts). Such interactive "symbols" are evident on many levels within The Canterbury Tales. Individual words, images,

character types, plots, or themes may be read within and across their various contexts to become more fully meaningful within the text as a whole as a single term or form profitably undergoes multiple transformations. The position, orientation, even the initial and ostensible signification of any given value may, in this way, be translated from one context to another, from one genre to another. Enlarging, diminishing, reflecting, contradicting, stretching, or shearing the original component as each new context may require or allow, such transformations reveal further aspects of a given motif's inherent, multi-dimensional, and, ultimately, referential truth.

The love triangle, for example, appears in a number of the tales, ranging generically from the epic romance of "The Knight's Tale" and the domestic romance of "The Franklin's Tale," to the raunchy fabliaux of the Miller and the Reeve. Each presentation of the motif differs, but its basic substance is not essentially altered. What occurs, instead, is that aspects, facets, and dimensions inherent in but concealed by the original expression are revealed in newly significant forms. For example, the almost metaphysical love of Palamon for Emelye heightens the gentle humanity and romance of Arveragus and Dorigen even as the carnality of the fabliaux contrasts with these ideal presentations, stripping them of anything even remotely transcendental. At the same time, though, the fabliaux complement the image of human love in the romances by restoring the physical component to human relationships. Considered in relation to each other as well as to other expressions of love in The Tales, each of these diverse tales may thus be seen not merely to contradict, but to work upon the others to forge an ideal which, while relevant to all relations, human and divine, exists only beyond the bounds of the text's parts or of its entirety in some abstract

form of experience. Remedying the abstract ideal, then, each internal form may be seen as providing but one further dimension of a truer and still transcendental reality which happens to be "grounded" by the fabliaux. By being so brought into contact with other, equally partial, but vastly divergent expressions of its own ultimate truth, each presentation of a symbol or narrative discovers its truly invariant aspects through the interaction that results and is thus better able to suggest the greater significance lying behind it and behind the work as a whole.

The Complex Literal: Narrative Meaning, Context, and Reception

Such multifarious meaning does not exist only on the broad level of The Tales as a whole: each of Chaucer's stories has a similarly complex literal value. As with each independent presentation of the love triangle, each tale has some overt "historical" or "narrative" meaning which, when taken independently, is complete in itself and has some point (or points) to make and/or some specific event to recount. Thus, "The Clerk's Tale" is an account of "patient Grisilde," "The Prioress's Tale" that of a child saint, and "The Physician's Tale" that of a virginal purity undefiled. Each, ostensibly, presents a variant expression of a sacrificial ideal. Yet, when taken in relation to each other or to the larger text, the meanings of even these common "narrative" values may be radically altered: being revealed as but parts of a truer story, or parts of the greater truth concerning a truly meaningful life of sacrifice, each acquires a new significance in relation to the whole. Each tale of sacrifice, for example, suggests an alternative dimension of personal virtue and modifies the implicit claims of the others as definitive. Only when they are taken together in the context of a whole

can a higher, more complete and more comprehensive, image of virtue and personal oblation be fashioned from the absence delineated by the various models (see, for example, the discussion of Griselda's virtue in Chapter 6).

Similarly, the surface narrative value of a tale may be altered by its reception within The Tales as a whole or within the immediate context of its fictional audience. "The Clerk's Tale," for example, becomes more than just an exemplum admonishing "that every wight, in his degree,/Sholde be constant in adversitee/As was Grisilde" (IV.1145-1147) when the Host wishes that his wife might have heard it (IV.1212ff). It becomes a dangerous example, in the "Marriage debate," of a husband's maisterie--a reading and a context reinforced a few lines later by the Merchant's complaint about his own wife (IV.1222ff.). Though explicitly stated in the tale itself that "This storie is seyed nat for that wyves sholde/Folwen Grisilde in humylitee,/For it were inportable, though they wolde" (IV.1142-1144), once in the broader contexts of the pilgrims' "reality" and of the topics of earlier tales (e.g. the issue of rightful sovereignty in marriage), its meaning easily becomes something other than the Clerk or his source, "Fraunceys Petrak" (IV.31) evidently intended (cf. Petrarch's "Letter XVII.3 To Giovanni Boccaccio," De Obedientia ac fide uxoria mythologia). The "right," or true "literal" meaning of any part of The Tales, therefore, requires a continual consideration of the work in context, with the reader always working to discern generic, conceptual, and thematic connections across, between, and among the various tales and their different components.

Precisely because each independent aspect of The Tales is so affected by many other narrative factors, the fullest literal sense of any one tale (or any part of it) cannot be definitively discerned from a reading of that one tale alone. It must be considered in its various contexts: as it

appears to have been intended by its teller; as it is received by its fictional audience; as it sharpens, repudiates, or expands the truths of another or other tales; and as it affects the narrator, both immediately and ultimately. This secondary, dynamic, and contextual meaning (like Nicholas' Christocentric signification of many Old Testament passages; see Chapter 1 and Appendix B.iv) seems to be that which was intended for it by the author, apparently suggesting its ultimate significance (cf. Auerbach on figura; Mimesis 156ff., 194ff.). Shaped by the interaction of the parts and, in turn, fashioning the meaning of the whole, it is this larger, active significance which, in fact, reveals the more complete truth of the parts and of the whole. On its own, then, the meaning and effect, literary and moral, of any given, self-contained poem or narrative in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales may well be unified and coherent, conceptually and structurally. Yet, its greater, truer, and intended meaning may well exist beyond it, recognizable only progressively, as each new context or variant re-casts the original in a new light, or retrospectively, as it is considered in terms of all that has gone before it.

Independent and Contextual Meaning: "Sir Thopas" as Instance

This interaction of the parts is not simply thematic or conceptual. It also pertains to matters of structure and form, aesthetic as well as ethical. "Sir Thopas," for example, is at least the beginning of an independent story with its own inherent values and significances (however trite). It may well be read apart from anything else that is known of the narrator, separate from the other romances in The Tales, and distinct from any other articulations which may be given to "myrthe" (VII.706) elsewhere

in the work as a whole. Read as a discrete entity, the surface merit of "Sir Thopas" is, even by Harry Bailey's estimate, minimal: Harry declares it "rym dogerl ... drasty rymyng ... nat woorth a toord!" (VII.925, 930). And, in fact, "Sir Thopas" does seem to be yet another example of a weak, tedious, late medieval popular romance. It is told in jog-trot verse; its descriptions are taken to outrageous and absurd extremes of picayune detail (cf. VII.724ff, 857ff.); it contains little meaningful action; and, it has no apparent point to make, moral or otherwise. Conveyed through a narrator who declares "oother tales certes kan I noon" (VII.708), "Sir Thopas" thus seems to be rightfully dismissed within the text as Harry charges that it is but "drasty speche" that "despendest[is] tyme" and as he requests in its stead a tale "in geeste/ Or ... in prose ... In which ther be som murthe or som doctryne" (VII.925, 931, 933-935).

Seen only against "The Tale of Sir Thopas" itself, such comments seem not only accurate but mercifully forthright and effective in that they bring the bobbed, tail-rhymed stanzas of Chaucer's budding interlaced romance to an end. When considered in the broader context of the work, however, especially in relation to the narrator (as both the Chaucer of "The Man of Law's Tale," II. 46ff. and the repentant, but prolific, author of the texts listed in the "Retractions," X.1081ff.) and in relation to The Tales as a whole (e.g. "Sir Thopas" against the other romances, against thematically similar texts, against the other literary accomplishments of its teller, etc.), the meaning and even the function of the original tale--and of the comments on it--are transformed. They guide the reader to a deeper "literal" significance both of the text itself and of Harry's "reading" of it. Told by the same narrator, the same "I" (VII.697) who ostensibly transmits the "wordes and ... cheere" (I.728) of all the other pilgrims,

what first appears to be simply "doggerel" becomes, in the context of what is known of the narrator and of his ostensible purport of The Tales (to "speke hir wordes properly," I.729) evidence of the poet's mastery of even vulgar literary forms. "Sir Thopas" becomes much more than a merely irritating bit of doggerel included for the sake of comprehensiveness or as part of some professed humility topos. It stands as an ironic testimony to the author's true inclusiveness, of genres as well as character types, in his creation of symbolic forms. Further, it presents a scathingly effective parody of the worst in courtly traditions, both conventional and literary. And, it offers an ironic counter to the "murthe" and "solas" of the other tales, both raucous and edifying.

A minor tale in its own right, "Sir Thopas" thus demonstrates the workings of Chaucer's two-fold structural logic according to the duplex sensus literalis which underlies both the aesthetic and ethical ordering of his Tales: it demonstrates that all parts and all forms in the work are significant (whether positively or, in the case of "Sir Thopas," negatively) in and of themselves as well as referentially, in the context of the whole and in relation to the author's apparent intent. Keeping the structure of The Tales open, active, and potentially affective, it allows the text to work upon itself and upon its reader in much the same way as Scripture expounds its own essential truths (e.g. the 613 mitzvot of the Law being an expansion of the Ten Commandments which are, in turn, an expansion of Lev. 19:2; see Chapter 2) and works upon its reader for good (e.g. Ps. 19:7-11; Nicholas, "First Prologue" 254ff.). First, it leaves space for and, indeed, draws the reader into the text as he or she explicates from points within the work the logic and purpose which connect the parts to each other as well as to the whole (cf. I.3176ff.; Mt. 12:3ff., Mk. 12:24ff.). It also

involves the reader directly with the efforts of the author as he or she tries to fathom the conclusions and consequences suggested by and through the relations of the parts (cf. I.3167ff., 3182ff.; Lk. 10:25ff., Mt. 19:16ff.). And, through the persona of Chaucer as narrator, it offers a model for right and effective reading as he writes himself into the text, undergoing in the process a transformation from observer, to participant, to responsible moral agent (I.35ff., 725ff; VII.708ff.; X.1081; Jas. 1:22ff., Lk. 6:47ff.)—a path and pattern, it seems, that the wise reader is to follow (cf. VII. 3438ff., X.1081ff.; cf. Is. 7:15, Heb. 5:14).

With such multiplicity of signification an essential principle of Chaucer's structure, the same forms, even the same words, images, or tales may easily have two (or more) literal, literary, and even moral significations depending upon which aspect of their "literal" value is privileged, the independent or the contextual. Continually called into relation with the whole, the once independent text accrues additional significances which intensify, alter, or even contradict outright its autonomous import from its larger contexts—whether by reinforcement, ironic juxtaposition, or complementarity. At no point, however, does either the independent part or the larger whole cancel the truth of the other. As Chaucer writes of the diversity of the Gospels, each apostle:

Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth;
 But nathelees his sentence is al sooth,
 And alle acorden as in hire sentence,
 Al be ther in hir tellyng difference.
 For somme of hem seyn moore, and somme seyn lesse ...
 But doutelees hir sentence is al oon. (VII.945-949, 952)

For his reader to harmonize these several meanings of his diverse narratives, then, Chaucer challenges him or her to adopt preliminary attitudes towards the text which are much like those that Nicholas and Wyclif urged upon scholastic Biblical commentators: first, a willingness to read the text at different levels simultaneously without doing violence to its literal sense; second, an ability to synthesize the ultimate structure and significance of the work from its apparently contradictory voices, forms, and statements.

The Structural Logic of The "Linear" Frame of The Canterbury Tales

In The Canterbury Tales most broadly, this multi-layered reading is both created and facilitated by Chaucer's unique combination and engagement of conventional and experimental structuring techniques. First, he envelops the text with a conventional, linear, and narrative frame which consists of the pilgrimage to Canterbury. Set up by the "General Prologue," this primary (ostensibly "literal") signification of the work is continued through the various head- and tail-links, and remains, strictly defined, open or unfinished--the company apparently gets no closer to Canterbury than the Blean Forest (IX.3) or the "thropes ende" of an unknown village (X.12). Yet, within this initial and narratively based frame, Chaucer develops a second principal structure, an internal, ethical "skelton" for the work that does achieve a closure of sorts. Based not so much upon progressive narrative as upon evolving concepts, it is formed by the interrelations of the three longest tales in the collection--"The Knight's Tale," "The Tale of Melibee," and "The Parson's Tale." This internal structure is more associately progressive than strictly linear. That is, each key tale is

neither directly linked with nor inherently derived from the others. Instead, each presents an ostensibly self-contained, but successive stage of humanity's moral, cognitive, and semiotic development. In so doing, each contributes to a temporally defined referential pattern for the work's unfolding. Together, these three tales trace man's varying conceptions of the right, the good, and the ethical from Classical to Christian articulations. Forming a "wisdom frame" of sorts, they advance the poem from the philosophical to the spiritual, from the abstract to the practical as the work's internal structure moves the reader from the darkly experiential wisdom of "The Knight's Tale," through the learned and learnable wisdom of "The Tale of Melibee," to the revelatory wisdom of "The Parson's Tale."

Complete in itself, this secondary frame leads the reader to not only a practical but also a deeply and affectively personal engagement of self, world, and God. In this way, it prepares for the "Retractions," the point of narrative and conceptual closure for the Tales. Though the "Retractions" does not explicitly complete either the primary narrative frame or the internal conceptual structure (it neither takes the pilgrims to Canterbury nor advances the study of historical expressions of wisdom), it does bring the entire work to a smooth and logical close, uniting the broadly consecutive structures with the various internal and more disjunctive forms. How it does so and to what effect suggest to the reader the peculiar logic which seems to govern the significances and relationships of the rest of the tales, both to and among each other as well as in relation to the over-arching structures of the Tales.

Based upon the premise of a dynamic text composed of interacting and

mutually defining elements to be engaged (rather than merely static and self-sufficient discrete components to be perceived), the logic of the most internal structure (or, better, structures) of The Canterbury Tales seems to parallel the comprehensive Hebraic method of reference in which words and things (dabarim) can function equally and effectively as signs ('otot; see Chapter 2). Deeply affecting the recipient of them, these signs directly refer the reader to the single, Final Referent of all things and demand of him or her practical and personal accountability to that Referent. Such a logic functions according to principles of transformation rather than progression. That is, each new element which occurs in the cumulative text does not merely add to the emerging central idea of the work or simply advance its singularly defined purpose. Instead, each new element acts upon those which have gone before, and upon those which follow after, producing via the engagement something which is greater than the sum of its parts. In effect, it produces a significant absence which in turn becomes an unmentioned presence in the text, affecting the reading of all the present parts as well as, ultimately, the present whole.

This transformative, operational effect influences even the clearly linear forms in The Canterbury Tales. Most obviously through the interaction of the pilgrimage story with the wisdom frame of the Tales, the two linear forms of the work are mutually transformed from a discrete fictive narrative structure, on the one hand, and from a distinct historical-conceptual structure, on the other, into an ultimately comprehensive, organic, and personal structure which tells the story, not just of a group pilgrimage to Canterbury, but of Chaucer the narrator's personal pilgrimage into self and accountability. This broad story and structure, nowhere stated or made explicit in its own right, appears in

retrospect to be the principal "linear" structure of The Tales. Evident only when the interaction of the two linear frames is complete, it culminates in the narrator's assumption of responsibility for his various created texts (X.1081-1083), in his prayer for forgiveness for those acts and creations which are "worldly vanitees" or which "sowen into synne" (X.1084-1085), and in his ascribing of all good in his work to its rightful source ("oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al goodnesse" X.1081). It develops, again as can be seen only retrospectively, through the narrator's various disclaimers and qualifiers of his art (I.725-746, VII.943-965, etc.). And, it has its origins in his first presentation of self as in, but not of, the company of pilgrims, as a reporter of rather than participant with them (I.32, 35ff.).

This internal story--an essential subtext or significant absence in The Tales--develops as the narrator, the ostensible initiator of the primary narrative frame, is drawn into his creation. As he becomes not just a reporter, but first a character in his work and then a teller of a key text in it, Chaucer accomplishes in and through his persona a unique accouplement of the two linear forms, the narrative and the conceptual. Being the point at which they are brought together, Chaucer the narrator thus becomes the focus of their converging structures as well as of the ostensible purposes of each. As such, he functions also as the expression of their transformed values--that is, of the values which emerge from the two forms being brought into relation: he incorporates the experience of both the pilgrimage and the tale-telling contest as well as the teachings of the various "wisdom tales" into his own movement toward personal accountability to self and God. In so doing, he allows his personal development to become, in effect, the new, trans-textual, and ultimately linear structure of The Tales.

Representing the closure of Chaucer the narrator's personal progress, the "Retractions" are, therefore, the logical conclusion to the fundamental and truly "literal" linear structure of The Tales entire--they conclude both the pilgrimage motif (albeit on a personal level) as well as the wisdom frame (also on a personal level) as Chaucer realizes through himself an affective knowledge of the good. Created in absentia through the interaction of the two overtly presented linear forms, the structure of The Tales fashioned by Chaucer's presence in the text via his persona thus reveals itself as the most fully "literal" sense of The Tales. Literal in a sense that Nicholas would recognize (active, effective, fulfilling the intentions of the author, and leading to "the good"), it leads Chaucer the narrator through his fictional world--his world of created signs--to a recognition of self in relation to God and to a response occasioned by that recognition--a response which, in effect, constitutes the true pilgrimage of mankind.

Chaucer's Signs and Reader: Reading the Signs of Pilgrimage

The process and end of Chaucer's interactive, associative, and transformative logic is thus laid into The Canterbury Tales early, with the first introduction of his persona (I.20ff.). And, even before this, the pattern and effect of active and referential signs are outlined in the prelude to the "General Prologue" (I.1-18). Summarizing the method of active signification in The Tales, these lines seem to echo the logic of a Scriptural semiotic: the "signs" of the world (e.g. of nature and spring; I.1-10; cf. Ps. 8, 19, 148, etc.) direct "folk" (I.12) to a thankful awareness of and response to the source of spiritual blessings (i.e. saints and shrines, symbols of God's working in the world; I.14ff.; cf. Ps. 111:2,

143:5, Job 38-40, etc.), much as the rainbow, circumcision, and the Law direct man's attention to God in Scripture (Gen. 9:12, 17:11, Lev. 19; cf. Chapter 2). Further expounded in "The Knight's Tale," this model of signification, from object to meaning, is broadly inclusive of physical "signs": Theseus refers to "the ook," "the harde stoon," "The brode ryver," "The grete touns," and even "man and womman" as examples of explicit revelators which should prompt awareness and understanding of greater truths (I.3017ff.). All the works of God, of man, and even of humanity itself within this framework seem able to assume significant value in The Tales, pointing beyond themselves to deeper and transcendent truths: as spring leads man to thankful worship (I.16ff.), so also may stones and rivers, towns and humanity lead to philosophical truths (I.3020ff.).

Yet, this process of effective signification requires more than signs. It also requires response. Just as in Scripture people must not only hear but obey (e.g. Deut. 27:10), so also in The Tales truths must not only be seen, but participated in and responded to. Thus, when in Scripture or The Tales, mankind is presented as standing between nature (human and earthly) and the supernatural (cf. Gen. 1:26, 28; Ps. 8:5; I.11f.), humanity appears intended to heed the promptings of the first to enter into relations with the second (e.g. Gen. 9:12; I.12; see Chapter 2). As participant in a continuum of sign and meaning, mankind is to be an active, willing, and faithful part of and a conduit for something greater than itself (e.g. Jer. 6:16; X.75). Accordingly, Chaucer does not simply present a collection of signs. He follows his signs not only to, but through, the response they evoke to reveal their greater meanings and effects. He makes accountability to and appreciation of spiritual things the explicit end of a participatory signification. Spring urges "folk" to go the shrines, not arbitrarily, but

to acknowledge and to respond to representatives of the Divine for mercies received (I.18ff.). Similarly, in "The Knight's Tale," humans come to recognize the "prince and cause of alle thyng" (I.3036) through their experience of physical signs. And, following the cumulative signs of the text, even the "pilgrimage" (I.21) of Chaucer's own persona ends not in "Caunterbury" (I.16), a centre of derivative significance, but in an immediate relation with "oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene" (X.1089). As in Scripture, the process moves from sign, through reception, to reference and response.

As an apparent model for the reader's own response, Chaucer gives principal articulation to such necessary responsive efforts through his first-person narrator. Through his persona, he translates the general concept of pilgrimage into a personal, transformative experience (see above), narrowing the focus of The Tales from mankind to a man, from the abstract to the concrete: he makes the general effects of nature immediate and specific so "that in that seson on a day," his "I," "with ful devout courage," begins a personal "pilgrimage" in "Southwerk" (I.19-22). Though introduced as an observer, a recorder of tellers and tales (I.35ff., 723ff.), this narrator is part of the fictive audience as well as a participant in the "compaignye" (I.32). Yet, through his retrospective accounting of the whole, he creates a distance which renders him uniquely susceptible to the affective logic of the text. Re-telling, rather than telling, the tales (since, ostensibly, he first experienced them on the road to Canterbury and now relates them a second time for the benefit of the reader; e.g. I.34, 715ff.), the narrator is from the first subject to the effect of the composite entirety. The interplay of signs, of forms, of

meanings (to which the external reader is only gradually introduced), therefore, works upon the narrator from the beginning of the text, from the "General Prologue" forward, slowly transforming him as The Tales unfold. Through a dynamic interaction of text and reader, the apparently a-moral conveyor of narratives (cf. I.725ff., 3171ff., etc.) is thus made a teller of tales himself (VII.693ff.) and, ultimately, an exemplar of right mediation of sign, symbol, and experience (X.1080ff.).

As the sole intra-textual respondent to the work as a whole, Chaucer as narrator thus comes not only to perceive his accountability for it (X.1084ff.), but to interpret its parts penitently as he comes to see the tales, his role in their telling, and himself in a referential and trans-textual context. This brings Chaucer the narrator and Chaucer the participant together again with Chaucer the writer, the composer of "translaciouns and enditynges of worldly vanitees," of "the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame; the book of the XXV. Ladies; ..." etc., and of "the tales of Caunterbury," especially "thilke that sownen into synne" (X.1084-1085; cf. II.45ff.). Seeking, submitting to, and thanking in the end not "The hooly blisful martir" (I.17), but "oure Lord Jhesu Crist" (X.1081, 1089), the source of even St. Thomas' virtue, Chaucer the narrator thus completes in himself the actual linear pilgrimage of The Tales by reaching beyond the work itself to the actual world and its source (see above). His true pilgrimage is thus not that of "a compaignye/Of sondry folk" to Canterbury (I.24-25, 16), but ultimately that of a true and effective referentiality as it is sketched in the prelude and in which "alle that herkne [to] this litle tretys" are invited to participate if they will (X.1080-1083).

Conclusion

Deriving its ultimate and essential authority from the one Author of the popularly conceived "double text" of world and Word, Chaucer's work--like Nicholas' before him--brings together these two realms of signification, giving the Truth a single articulation through a carefully constructed multifid fiction based upon the meaningful diversity of his and, ultimately, God's world. Signifying not secondarily as in the service of the Word, but primarily as immediate expressions of that Word, Chaucer's fictional constructs, his "signs" and their structures, are direct, albeit partial, statements of that which is a truly composite and transcendental reality. If, as the saying goes, "the Torah has seventy faces," each of Chaucer's tales is, in effect, like one of those faces, being an expression of "Torah" or truth in its own (admittedly fragmentary) right. Alone and together, all of Chaucer's signs (his narratives, his characters, his own persona as narrator, and the reader as he or she is brought into the text) do not simply point to some greater truth: they are parts of it, in essence and expression. Such a formulation allows Chaucer to use the raw material of his own age and society to articulate the Truth of God's Word as everywhere manifest. Making the greater Truth of Chaucer's text accessible, comprehensible, and practicable to his audience, this secular rendition of sacred truths completes the translation and renewal, from text to world, of the Biblical end and method of meaning and effect which was first articulated for the Fourteenth century by Nicholas of Lyra.

Chapter 5

"True Faith Formed By Love":
Ethical Reference, Relation, and Response
in Chaucer's Wisdom Tales

Welde thou wisdom, welde thou prudence

Forsake thou not it, and it schal kepe thee; loue thou it, and it
schal kepe thee.

The bigynnyng of wisdom [gloss: "that is, to get wisdom"], welde
thou wisdom; and in al thi possessioun gete thou prudence.

Take thou it, and it schal enhaunce thee; thou schalt be glorified of
it, whanne thou hast biclipped it.

It schal yyue encresyngis of graces to thin heed; and a noble coroun
schal defende thee.

(Prov. 4:5-9; WB, II)

Introduction: Interactive Signs and Structures in The Canterbury Tales

In his secular rendition of sacred truths, Chaucer demonstrates the process of transformative reading and reference. As outlined in Chapter Four, he allows his narrative components to work upon each other, suggesting through their complementarity, or even their contradictions, meaningful absences which draw the reader into the work and place upon him or her the onus of formulating some greater significance from the interactions of the parts. Attempting to forge a more comprehensive, and therefore "truer," vision of the source, manifestations, and ends of experienced and efficacious Truth, Chaucer engages dynamically the many terms, themes, and concepts throughout his text. He pursues affective interactions on every level, from words to structures and exploits fully the textual possibilities of each, drawing upon etymology, connotations, allusions--indeed, any available aspect of meaning to coax the words into a fuller and more complete signification. "Cosyn" and "cosynage," for example, assume telling interrelations across such diverse tales as "The Knight's" (I.1131ff.) and "The Shipman's" (VII.36ff.). In the fourteenth century, the terms had the connotations not only of "cousin" as in "kinship," but also, from the French, of "cozen" and "cozenage" as in "to cheat or to swindle." Chaucer uses these seemingly contrary connotations to the fullest: through semantic juxtaposition, he relates the experiences of professed familial love and loyalty, which "cosyn" suggests in human relations, to the notion of feigned love for personal benefit--whether of reputation, of finances, or of personal pleasures. In doing so, he allows the slippery linguistic value and depths (what Cooper calls "the semiological slither") of the terms to evoke parallels between the tales which share the terms, so that each

glosses the other through an eerie sharing of verbal and emotional relations. Thus, "cosyn" and "cosynage" in The Tales come to indicate a particularly insidious and brutal form of exploitation or betrayal of another--often in the name of God or the good--such as is possible only when the betrayer has first and adamantly declared, outright or by allusion, unfailing support and love for another such as befits true, social, and spiritual "family" (e.g. I.1129ff.; cf. Ps. 55:12f.). Extended to the process of reading, signification, and reference through a line such as "The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede" (I.742; cf. IX.208), such a "loaded" verbal construct subtly compounds the text ethically and theoretically, making stated relations of word and deed, or sign and effect, suspiciously protean and often recreant.

Similarly, a concept (rather than a mere term) such as gender relations may also provide an instance of progressively interactive and reflective textual intricacy on the level of theme or motif. The idealized notion of love, for example, as it is presented in the epic romance of "The Knight's Tale" does not long remain intact. Immediately juxtaposed with the fabliaux of "The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" and later set into even broader contexts with the additions of "The Wife of Bath's Tale," "The Merchant's Tale," and "The Franklin's Tale" on similar themes, the original presentation of young love is transformed as various considerations, generic and social, work upon it. The later variations refine the original not by annulling it or through progressive emendation (the "love" of Nicholas, I.3270ff., is hardly to be preferred to that of Palamon, I.1096ff., or even of Arcite, I.1115ff.), but according to a pattern of complementarity. Nicholas' passion as well as Aleyn's (I.4193) and John's (I.4228ff.) add a component of overt physicality, hitherto absent, to male-female relations.

Likewise, the old hag contributes a spiritually referential notion of "gentillesse" to such relations (III. 1109ff.; cf. 1 Cor. 13), and the gentle love of Dorigen and Arveragus adds new dimensions of respect, equality, and mutuality (V.1551ff.). Each artfully transforms the other composite visions and, in doing so, conditions the reader to look beyond that which is given at any one point to anticipate deeper developments--both progressive and retrospective--of each concept as the work unfolds.

Wisdom As Internal Structural Construct in The Tales

Perhaps most significant for the total structure of the text, though, is the development throughout The Tales of one primary ideational construct: that of wisdom. An age-old figure of the good and the holy (e.g. Nichomachean Ethics [hereafter NE] 6.13, Prov. 8), wisdom refers to perceived ideal systems for the accurate accumulation and appropriate application of the knowledge of ultimate truths to the governing of self. Assuming that true knowledge is not just intellectual, but practical and affective as well (Augustine, De Trin. 12.15.25), wisdom becomes specifically manifest in the world through referential virtue. As Augustine writes, "God's knowledge is also His wisdom; and what is His wisdom is also His essence or substance; because in the marvelous simplicity of His nature, it is not one thing to be and another to know, but to know is the same as to be" (De Trin. 15.13.22). Accordingly, it is in the active and volitional exercise of the known good that one becomes and is shown to be wise. Where knowledge indicates to the subject that which is right or wrong, true or false, wisdom pertains to the subject's response to the difference as he or she chooses the right and works to realize the good (as he or she perceives

it) in the world. As such, wisdom constitutes the effort to define the "true," practically and referentially, in every area of mankind's existence: cosmic, communal, and personal. Uniquely encompassing idea (source and purpose), action (response), and ends (relations and effect), it functions as both sign and meaning for humanity as well as for The Tales: governing matters of reference, response, and relation of parts, that which is perceived as "wise" in any given formulation reveals the understood source and end of being which, in turn, measures and determines ideal conduct within a particular frame of reference.

Such an actively affective wisdom punctuates The Canterbury Tales structurally. Providing an ordered internal forum which works to effect with the enveloping story (see Chapter Four), The Tales' "wisdom frame" emerges from the interaction of the text's three longest tales: "The Knight's Tale," "The Tale of Melibee," and "The Parson's Tale." The beginning, roughly the middle, and the end of the tellings, these tales establish a determinate set of moral norms, within and against which other (often morally skewed) visions of supposedly wise, good, and right conduct and belief may receive expression. Accurately reflecting the diversity of traditions available to Chaucer and his age, these distinct, but complementary, demonstrations of wisdom in action guide the reader from Classical, through Hebraic, to Christian conceptions of the wise as they affect human relations, earthly and divine. Read not just sequentially but commutatively, in concert, their historically defined and culturally circumscribed wisdoms transcend exclusive moralities and ideals as the truths and details of each tale inform and colour those of the others to create a rich, comprehensive, and inclusive ethical context for The Tales entire. As the text and reader move from the many voices of "The Knight's

Tale," through the dialogue of "The Tale of Melibee," to the personal instruction and private response of "The Parson's Tale" and the "Retractions," the process of interaction thus unfolds a context of meaning in which a mature, affective, almost "Biblical" grammar is realized in the deeper and significant structures of the text.

The Wisdoms of "The Knight's Tale": "To maken vertu of necesitee"

The first normative wisdom exercise in The Canterbury Tales, "The Knight's Tale," begins the tellings in the Classical era, drawing upon Boethius and Aristotle for its philosophical and practical wisdoms. Clearly indebted to Boethius in the lengthy speeches of Arcite, Palamon, and Theseus (e.g. I.1251ff., Boece 3.pr2; I.1303ff., Boece 1.m5; I.2987ff., Boece 2.m8, 4.pr6, 3.pr10), the tale is more subtly, but arguably more pervasively, influenced by the practical wisdom advocated in the Nichomachean Ethics (translated by Grosseteste and readily available in the fourteenth century). Though aware of the gods, the cosmic realm, and final ends, both "The Knight's Tale" and the Nichomachean Ethics are primarily concerned with specific matters in the realm of the earthly: the actions, means, effects, and ends they present are human, as are the virtue and "blessedness" which they depict humanity as aspiring to and striving to exemplify. In both texts, "human good turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting excellence" (NE 1.7)--the highest excellence being virtue or the "state of character which makes a man good ... which makes him do his own work well" (NE 2.6), and "which is in accordance with right rule ... the right rule [being] that which is in accordance with practical wisdom" (NE 6.3). Being "the quality of man concerned with things just and noble and good for man," wisdom and

the virtue it expresses are thus, in the Aristotelian sense, practically manifest as well as ultimately referential, "for virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means" (NE 6.12).

Emphasizing the ideals and practical expressions of this system (e.g. referential and rational processes, NE 1.4; the golden mean, NE 2.6; active virtue, NE 1.8; and the political good, NE 1.2), "The Knight's Tale" sets out the essential "wisdom agenda" for the tales which are to follow. Narratively expounding Aristotle's teachings on the right, the wise, and the good through the actions of its characters, this first tale reflects both ultimate ends and practical means as normative for wisdom in The Tales. Theseus, for example, personifies ideal, mature, and wise virtue as the highest expression of the soul and as the best expression of the good in the life of "man and womman" (I.3027). That such wisdom is, and is acquired through, an ongoing process is suggested through the development in the tale of the two younger versions of the wise and mature knight. Arcite and Palamon (youths on the same "career path" as Theseus, but as yet without the benefits of his experience) point up those aspects of Theseus' wisdom which are unique to a useful maturity through their own, youthful--and therefore often "immature"--and certainly unuseful indulgences of passion. Set against these two stages and models of active wisdom and providing a poignant counterpoint to both is the particular wisdom of Egeus. An old man no longer involved in the practical life, he endorses a passive wisdom apparently appropriate to one no longer concerned with politics or reputation. Advocating a philosophic wisdom of resignation and of referential ends rather than relational means, Egeus seems to suggest an ideal of contemplation to which man might rightly, but hardly realistically, aspire (cf. NE 10.7). Yet, though Theseus emerges as the preferred norm in

"The Knight's Tale," each of the several variations on reference and relation contained in the tale contributes to and further refines the paradigm he exemplifies, working to delineate more precisely the parameters of the first wisdom in The Tales and to lay the foundations for the structural colloquy of "wisdoms" which is to follow.

Theseus: Wisdom as Acquired Mean

Most fully exemplifying the particular wisdom of "The Knight's Tale," then, Theseus embodies the standards of The Nichomachean Ethics and sets thereby the first manifest standard of practical wisdom in The Tales. A man of maturity, he knows through experience both "first principles" (NE 6.8) and "particular facts" (NE 3.8), his "practical wisdom [being] concerned with the ultimate particular" (NE 6.8). A man "of superior refinement and of active disposition," he identifies "happiness" or "blessedness" with honour, not for honour's sake alone, but for the virtue it reveals which, with honour, is "the end of political life" (NE 1.5). Having earned "an eye ... to see aright" (NE 6.11), he "see[s] what is good for [himself] and what is good for men in general" (NE 6.5). An exemplar of the golden mean, he avoids excesses and defects (NE 2.2); he is active in the exercise of virtue and finds pleasure in doing virtuous acts (NE 2.3); and, he effectively uses his reason and perception to determine mitigating circumstances which, through justice or mercy, should colour his responses (NE 2.9). A character of judgment, understanding, and intuitive reason in every way (NE 6.11), Theseus thus appears as a Classical paragon of practical and political wisdom. He is presented in the tale as a mature agent of referential virtue who actively seeks out the good through an

effort of will and according to the rational principle (NE 3.6) and who, having once realized it personally, works to actualize the good in the world through his actions (NE 2.3).

In the use and management of his anger (a central measure of one's internal state; NE 4.5; cf. Seneca De ira 1.1), for example, Theseus is able to be both just and merciful as the situation demands. A man of "good temper" as Aristotle defines it, Theseus becomes "angry at the right things, and with the right people ... as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought" (NE 4.5), his anger working to correct the wrong and lasting not longer than is necessary. Thus, when Creon commits atrocities against the bodies of the dead and the widows appeal to Theseus to avenge them and to retrieve the bodies (I. 931ff.), he immediately goes against Creon and Thebes, to do vengeance and to right the wrong which would not be otherwise cured:

He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght
 Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke
 That al the peple of Grece sholde speke
 How Creon was of Theseus yserved
 As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.

(I.960ff.; emphasis added)

Theseus' violence is "righteous" within the Classical moral register, for he acts not for himself, for his own reputation, or for his own good, but for the greater social good, for the benefit of others, and for the restoration of social harmony via the elimination of a "tiraunt" (I.961), or wrongful ruler—a point of no small contemporary relevance to Chaucer's England. Even Seneca who takes exception with Aristotle on many points concerning the experience and expression of anger would assent to such a remedy (e.g. De

ira 1.9, 17; 2.13; 3.2), for he too considers that it is "Sometimes the truest form of mercy [misericordia] to kill," especially a "mind incurable" that "links crime with crime" (De ira 1.16).

Further, in keeping with the Aristotelian principle that a "good-tempered man is not revengeful, but rather tends to make allowances" (NE 4.6), Theseus restrains his anger when he encounters Palamon and Arcite fighting in the grove (I.1696ff.). "[T]hough he first for ire quook and sterte" (I.1762), he again quickly responds to the petitions of the women (I.1748ff.), and

... considered shortly, in a clause,
The trespass of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
Yet in his resoun he hem both excused
(I.1762ff)

Working from evidence of experience (I.1766ff.; cf. I.1815ff.), from positive and immediate emotion (I.1770ff.), and from a consideration of particulars (I. 1775ff.) as well as of the implications of his actions for his own being (I. 1773ff.), Theseus allows his anger "at the laste [to be] aslaked" (I.1760) with the result that "his ire is thus agoon" (I.1782). "[D]epend[ing] on the particular facts and on perception" (NE 4.6), he makes a wise and rational, rather than a passionate and perhaps cruel, decision (I.1845ff.). Rightly governing his responses with reason and "pitee" (I.1761), he demonstrates his greatness of heart and nobility of mind by doing that which is not only just (stopping the battle "Withouten juge or oother officere" and arranging that their quarrel be resolved publicly, I.1712, 1845ff.), but good as well (cf. Ovid, Trist. 3.5.31-32): he pardons the young knights (I.1818ff.) and allows them liberty to fight for the hand

of his sister (I.1855ff.). By so working to preserve the public and personal dignity of those who had offended him--even to the point of opening his family to them, and this after the trespass--Theseus exemplifies that very dicrete of wise governance which he urges upon Emelye: he allows "gentil mercy" to "passen right" (I.3089).

Ultimately, Theseus accounts for such moderate conduct, for such careful perception and deliberation (NE 3.3, 6.9), and for his overall governing principles of mercy in referential terms. Reflecting the fact that "the originating causes of the things that are done consist in the end at which they are aimed" (NE 6.5), Theseus links humanity's quest for "moost honour," "goode name," and "worthy fame" (I.3047, 3049, 3055) with "The Firste Moevere" (I.2987). Through man's "experience" (I.3001) with the natural "ordre" (I. 3003), he presents the knowledge through "experience" of the "faire cheyne of love" (I.2988) as being reinforced by observable facts: he admits "dayes and duraciouns" (I.2996) and "speces of thynges and progressiouns" (I.3013) as revelators of the true nature of reality, and includes as such all things within creation, since "every part dirryveth from his hool" (I.3006)--the ultimate "hool," of course, being "The Firste Moevere of the cause above" (I. 2987). Theseus suggests that such derivative and referential "signs" or significant indicators are available to mankind in the world so that humanity "maystow understonde and seen at ye" (I.3016). For Theseus, all things are embraced by a single sign system: "the ook," "the harde stoon," "[t]he brode ryver," "[t]he grete tounes," even "man and womman" and their quests for honour each bespeak something of a larger truth (I.3017ff.). As "The Knight's Tale" understands it, then, the "prince and cause of alle thyng" does, indeed, convert or translate "al unto his propre welle/From which it is dirryved" as all things find and

reveal their essential source in God's all-encompassing order, nature, and will (I. 3036ff.; cf. Boece 4.m6) .

Knowing "each thing [to be] defined by its end" (NE 3.7), therefore, Theseus (and the tale as a whole) advises the exercise of virtue with that End in mind: he advises humanity to "gruccheth" not, since "whoso gruccheth ought ... dooth folye,/And rebel is to hym that al may gye" (I.3045f.). Significantly, though (and unlike Egeus), Theseus does not see the true end of right perception and response as passive endurance and static reference. Rather, he includes in his understanding of "wysdom" an explicitly dynamic and practical dimension: a truly wise individual, according to Theseus and after his example, is not simply to "take it weel that we may nat eschue" (I.3043), but is "[t]o maken virtue of necessitee" (I.3042; emphasis added)--"maken" being an active verb suggesting productive construction, if not actual creation (cf. 'asah', Gen. 8:6, 33:17, Ex. 25:10ff., Ps. 86:9, 95:5, 96:5; bara', Gen. 1:1, Ex. 34:10, Ps. 51:10, Is. 4:5, 41:20, etc.). Accordingly, Theseus addresses himself to the practical task of humanity as a consequent response to observations about the referential order of things. "Thanne," he concludes, "is it wysdom" (I.3041), first, to act honourably in this life on the personal level, to live in such a way so as to "dye in ... excellence," "siker of ... goode name," without having "doon his freend, ne hym, no shame" (I.3047ff.). Secondly, having outlined an individual's responsibility to self and personal honour, Theseus moves outward in his assessment of referentially responsible action to the necessity of individual effort for the peace and well-being of the community: "I rede that we make of sorwes two/0 parfit joye, lastynge everemo" (I.3071f.), he says, as he reacts to and acts positively upon the present circumstances he and his community find themselves in (rather than merely waiting for some

divine intervention). Arranging for "the bond/That highte matrimoine or mariage" (I.3094f.) between Palamon and Emelye (I.3073ff.), Theseus thus actively facilitates some small aspect of "blisse" (I.3102) on earth through his wise and mature conduct which is both referential and relational. Like "pale Saturnus the colde,/That knew so manye of adventures olde," Theseus "Foond in his olde experience an art/That he ful soone hath plesed every part" (I.2443ff.) and brings peace where immaturity had brought only "strif and rancour" (I.2784).

Arcite and Palamon: The Wisdom of Process

The practical wisdom that allows such positive social effect and that Theseus embodies personally is presented in "The Knight's Tale" as the result of growth and development, as something which is attained through acquired knowledge and "experience" (I.3001). For Aristotle, and as exemplified in Theseus' actions, the knowledge necessary for such practical wisdom includes (cf. Wyclif's criteria for intelligibility, Triologus 3.31; see Ch. 3 of thesis): "scientific knowledge" ("when a man believes in a certain way and the starting points are known to him," NE 6.3; cf. I.2987ff.); "intuitive reason" ("grasp[ing] the first principles," NE 6.6; cf. I.3003ff.); and "philosophical wisdom," which is "intuitive reason combined with scientific knowledge" for "truth about the first principles" (NE 6.7; cf. I.3041ff.). Familiar only through long experience, "the[se] first principles" are "concerned not only with universals but with particulars" (NE 6.8)--"for it is particular acts that have to be done" (NE 7.3). "[T]ruth in practical matters," consequently, "is discerned from the facts of life" (NE 10.9), usually through "length of time" (NE 6.8)--though

age alone is no guaranty of maturity (cf. NE 1.3, I.3224ff., IV. 1248ff.)--and through the accurate study "in the light of experience" of what happens and has happened in various instances (NE 10.9). Quite reasonably, then, young men--lacking sufficient "length of time" for relevant experience by the very fact of being young (NE 6.8)--are seldom wise "for [they are] inexperienced in the actions that occur in life" (NE 1.3).

Accordingly, though young men (or men immature in character, NE 1.3) may "use the proper language" (NE 6.8) which suggests a semblance of wisdom, ultimately the "language that flows from [mere] knowledge proves nothing ... for it [i.e. knowledge] has to become part of themselves [to be efficacious] and that takes time" (NE 7.3). Knowing the words, but "hav[ing] no conviction" about "the first principles ... [which] come from experience" (NE 6.8), youths, at best, use what they know superficially, not efficaciously. Arcite, for example, takes no comfort from the Boethian truths he, himself, affirms (I.1251ff.). Knowing "we goon wrong ful often" (I.1267), he does not redress his error, but indulges it, dramatically declaring, "Syn that I may nat see you, Emelye,/I nam but deed; ther nys no remedy" (I.1273f.). He, like most men characterized by a youthful nature, cannot "see what is good for themselves ... what is good for men in general," or "the originating causes of the things ... [that] consist in the end at which they are aimed (6.5). Like many youths, he is "in a situation [of passionate excess] like that of drunken men," "owing to the growth that is going on" (NE 7.14). "Pursu[ing] each successive object [they encounter] as passion directs" (NE 1.3), he and they seek "their own pleasures and the means to them" (NE 10.9), rather than effectual knowledge (NE 1.3). Not surprisingly, in this passionate quest for pleasure, youths "commit many

errors" (NE 4.9), even in the rule of themselves. Inexperienced and immoderate, they are thus inherently and effectively "unwise," being seldom competent in the management of self, let alone fit to govern others or the state (again a point of some relevance to Chaucer's age, given that a child king was on the throne).

Significantly, though, the "unwise" characteristics of youth are not universally proscribed in the Classical context of wisdom established by Aristotle and represented by Theseus. Recognized as natural (NE 2.5), the passions and actions of the young are considered not as "evils" in themselves, but as more or less neutral features of humanity (NE 2.6), susceptible to abuse through indulgence certainly (NE 7.6), but ultimately necessary for true human happiness and the fullest exercise of virtue in the world (NE 10.8). What is censured is only the excesses and extreme expressions so often granted these natural impulses by the young (NE 10.9)--certain passions even being praiseworthy in the young which would be wholly inappropriate, even disgraceful in the mature man (e.g. NE 4.9).

In "The Knight's Tale," then, Arcite and Palamon typify young men subject to unrestrained passions of every type--desire, anger, envy, pride, etc. Representative of Theseus' youth, the young knights suggest something of the distinction between the perceived "wisdom" of youth and the actual, practical, political, and merciful wisdom of maturity. As they develop, these characters also reveal something of the process necessary to move from one form of "wisdom" to the other within a Classical schema. Initially, for example, they are naturally susceptible to both the whims and excesses of passion. Each desires Emelye immediately upon seeing her (I.1077ff., 1112ff.) and, though their expressed rationales differ (I.1155ff.), neither

desires her moderately or rationally (I.1096ff., 1120ff.; 1172ff.). Without regard to consequences or ends, personal or social (I.1129ff., 1167ff.), each becomes enraged with the other's thwarting of his will and feeds his appetites through self-indulgence (cf. NE 7.8) to the end that community and personal peace are undermined (I.1187). Throughout the tale, each young knight also repeatedly demonstrates consistently poor judgment in practical affairs, especially in his management of himself, his situation, and his relations: Palamon (and later Arcite) bewails his birth, his present state, and the role of the gods in the life of man (I.1070ff., 1223ff.); Arcite gives himself over first to love-sickness (I.1361ff.) and later to be "caytyf" and "thral" to his "mortal enemy" (I.1552f.); both jeopardize their freedom and their lives by surrendering to their "ire" and fighting openly in the grove (I.1665ff.). Yet, as the tale unfolds, each young man gains experience, both directly and under the example of Theseus, and moves towards a more mature state of being, action, and practical wisdom. Each gradually directs his passions to right (or at least better) ends, and eventually works for the harmony of the state, ultimately becoming an exemplar of reason and a positive human sign of the true order and the right (social) end of man (I.1233ff.).

Arcite, most like Theseus in his youth in that he too worships Mars (I. 2368, 1682) and suffers greatly from immoderate anger, the particular "sin of Mars" (I.1997; cf. Servius on Aeneid 6.714), provides a useful example of the process of wisdom which culminates in Theseus. Arcite begins as a rash young man, given to fits of passion (I.1112ff.). "[S]elf-indulgent," he "has no regrets ... [and] stands by his choice[s]" (NE 8.8; cf. I.1152ff.). An unabashedly passionate moulder of philosophical clichés (I.1084ff.),

whose "knowledge" is cerebral not experiential (cf. NE 6.8), he gradually develops into a man of some wisdom able to understand particulars, to see "alle circumstances trewly" (I.2788) and "To speken ... proprely" in even the most dire of circumstances (I.2787). Along the way, he experiences the pain of his passions and choices (I.1268ff.), recognizing the "middleness" of man and his consequent inability to see truly (I.1251ff.). Using the image of a drunk mouse who "woot wel he hath a hous,/But he noot which the righte wey is thider," he acknowledges that "We witen nat what thing we preyen here" (I. 1260ff.), a philosophical insight which, ideally, should direct him towards true knowledge rather than rash action. As with Aristotle's youths, though, only the words are correct: the knowledge they represent has not yet "become part of" Arcite (cf. NE 7.3). Only with time and when in absolute extremis, can he finally understand at all, it being on his death-bed that some of the words he had once so glibly spouted (e.g. I.1984ff., 1223ff.) take on new meaning for him: he comes to know truly the inappropriateness of the "strif and rancour" (I.2784) which his passions have occasioned and both recognizes as well as acts upon the need for social harmony to supersede the lusts of the individual.

Having gained some experience with and some deeper understanding of particulars (I.2787), he thus attains to some small aspect of practical wisdom at his end: he does not merely "endure" his pain (I.1091), but makes positive response to the situation, commending Palamon to Emelye for all the right reasons--for "trouthe, honour, knyghthede,/Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kyndrede,/Fredom, and al that longeth to that art" (I.2789ff.; cf. I. 43ff.). Demonstrating an acquired virtue of passion as well as a practical activation of it (NE 3.1), Arcite finally performs a positive political act and thereby attains, in his last moments, to the ultimate good

of man--as it is conceived within a Classical construct (i.e. NE 1.2). Having acquired something of true knowledge, he is able to read his situation "from within," as it were. He does not rest in the surface meaning of the words or even in their referential significance, but responds to their true and affective import, working to restore his own honour and to make the world he leaves behind a better, more harmonious place: "Departed ... with duetee and honour" (I.3060), Arcite leaves his friends the means by which "they mowe hir lustes ... amende" (I.3066). Post-humously assessed by Theseus as "of chivalrie flour" (I.3059), Arcite accordingly dies with "goode name" (I.3049; cf. NE 1.10) and evidently with some measure of political maturity and practical wisdom as these are defined within the context of "The Knight's Tale."

Egeus: A Wisdom Too High for Man

Such final effort for an active expression of practical wisdom seems not to be a criterion for the contemplative wisdom of Egeus. An alternate version of the wise and the good, Egeus' wisdom is passive, content with acknowledgement of ends and submission to the inevitable. Beginning with the same observable facts that Theseus notes (i.e. all men die, I.2843ff.; cf. I. 3027ff.), Egeus makes more somber, less clearly referential, and almost non-relational conclusions: death, for him, is not an opportunity for final honour (cf. I.3047f.), but "an ende of every worldly soore" (I.2849); "we" might "been pilgrymes" as he sees it, but with no clear shrine, simply "passynge to and fro" (I.2848); and, man's primary function in this "thurghfare ful of wo" (I.2847), in his judgment, seems to be only a timely death according to "this worldes transmutacioun[s]" (I.2839). Means

and actions, particularly of response and relational responsibility, seem to weigh little in Egeus' ideal. His wisdom, therefore, is of little effect in the world of humanity. For example, after Arcite's death, Emelye, Palamon, "olde folk ... folk of tendre yeeres," and Theseus are deeply affected by it (I. 2837ff.; cf. I.2817, 2827ff., 2837). Egeus, not much moved by it (or, apparently, by much else), attempts to comfort them with cold reason: he relates "ensamples and likenesse ... To this effect, ful wisely to enhorte/The peple that they sholde hem reconforte" (I.2842, 2851f.). The effect is minimal: though Theseus, "with al his bisy cure," prepares the bier (I. 2853ff.)--a practical action--he continues to mourn for Arcite, weeping so "that pitee was to heere" (I.2878). Egeus, unable to feel with the people, is unable to comfort them: his contemplation and spiritually defined ideals, being "divine," avail little in the face of humanity's "composite nature" (NE 10.7).

Aristotle, though commending the life of reason and contemplation which Egeus seems to be advocating (NE 10.7), nevertheless recognizes both its inherent limitations and its impossibility as a practical course of action in the world for, distinct from the "practical" and the "productive," the "contemplative" operates wholly in the realm of the intellect. "Intellect itself," however, "moves nothing, but only the intellect which aims at an end and is practical" (NE 6.2). Man, therefore, rightly requires "the virtue of the two parts" [i.e. reason and desire] for "good action" (NE 6.2). Further, Aristotle notes, while contemplation might be most blessed (NE 10.7), "such a life would be too high for man," for, it does not take into account the "composite nature" of mankind (NE 10.7). "[D]ivine in comparison with the human life," the life of contemplation is a wholly

referential state to which humanity may strive, but which it can never fully attain (NE 10.7). Even if it could be attained, though, it would not be the proper end for man in this world, for such contemplative wisdom demands a life which is neither practical nor oriented towards the social good: the philosopher, being self-sufficient, "can contemplate truth" when he is alone and "the better the wiser he is" (NE 10.7); "[j]ust and brave acts, and other virtuous acts," on the other hand, are done "in relation to each other, observing our respective duties with regard to contracts and services and all manners of actions with regard to human passions"--all of which are "typically human" (NE 10.8).

Being separate from the "virtue of character," then, which is "in many ways bound up with the passions" (NE 10.8), contemplation fails to credit the right use of man's nature (including the passions) as an act of virtue. A life of passive and stoic contemplation such as Egeus advocates similarly encourages a deficiency of passions, a deviation from the mean which denies the full, active, and "composite" nature of man (NE 10.8, 2.6). Privileging a "defect" which is "characteristic of vice" in the moral schema of practical wisdom (NE 2.6), such an ideal separates an individual from the community and from the shared experience of humanity. Thus, while Egeus may be rationally correct in both his observations and his conclusions (both of which are at least partially echoed later by Theseus; cf. I.3027ff), in failing "to feel [passions and 'in general pleasure and pain'] at the right times with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right ways ... both intermediate and best" (NE 2.6), he does not participate in the common moral virtue. Making no emotive response, his contemplative "blessedness" can, therefore, be evidenced only negatively (being seen in non-acts of non-virtue or non-vice). As such, it

is no human virtue at all (but "divine," NE 10.7), since human "virtue in the strict sense ... involves practical wisdom" (NE 6.13) and "practical wisdom is concerned with action" (NE 6.7)--"the work of man [being] achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as with moral virtue" (NE 6.12).

In terms of The Tales as a whole, then, Egeus' order seems to be that of the transcendent, a prototype of "spiritual" wisdom removed from the exigencies of daily life and therefore ostensibly more "perfect" than the practical wisdom advocated and exemplified by Theseus (cf. NE 10.7ff.). Celebrated in certain later tales such as "The Clerk's" and "The Physician's," such an ostensibly high wisdom privileges the referential but non-relational, supposedly locating the individual in right relation to that which he or she knows, without requiring of him or her any responsive or responsible action in the world. Such "wisdom," however, is not the norm presented in and endorsed by "The Knight's Tale" as a whole nor is it that wisdom personified by Theseus. In fact, considered against the Aristotelian standard of Theseus, Egeus' ideal is something very distinct from a true and practical wisdom. Serving to point up the active, effective, referential and relational nature of Theseus' model, Egeus' is essentially a contrapuntal foil for the first normative wisdom of The Tales: it both enhances the tapestry of Classical norms for The Tales and lays in an early base of refutation for those later, apparently ideal expressions of virtue which fail to partake of practical wisdom. "Wisdom," according to the ideal of "The Knight's Tale," must be both referential and relational: individuals must "maken vertu of necessitee" (I. 3042), not by passive submission to that which appears to be, but by working for the peace,

harmony, and order of self and society in accord with that which is and cannot be other.

The Wisdoms of "The Tale of Melibee": "Lord God, conscience, and good name"

Providing the second normative model in the "wisdom frame," "The Tale of Melibee" advances The Tales' preliminary ideal (Theseus) by introducing its own exemplifications of wisdom manifest (Prudence), wisdom acquired (Melibee), and, uniquely, wisdom renewed (the transgressors). Adding textual authority, primarily from Jewish texts, to that of experience endorsed by Theseus, it delineates an ultimately integrated, interactive universe of moral action which is predicated upon referential relations, practical and personal, with and through an involved Deity as well as with man. It amplifies "the good" and the "excellence of soul" enacted in "The Knight's Tale" by emending the passive view of wisdom wherein an individual may effectively signify cosmic truths through the mere fact of being mortal (and, therefore, a natural sign of the "stablisthed ... ordre," I.2995, 3003). While still cultivating the criteria of wisdom laid into the text by the Classical emphasis upon order, honour, and observation, this second wisdom tale, in effect, re-casts the ideals of "The Knight's Tale" into a more immediate, active, and reactive context. Through the wise counsel of Prudence and the moral growth both of Melibee and of the more obvious transgressors, the tale articulates a wisdom based directly upon reciprocal responsibility, personal accountability, and a moral imperative.

Considering humanity's ultimate as well as social and physical ends, this wisdom is distinctively teleological, especially in contrast to that of "The Knight's Tale" (cf. I.2847ff., 3033). Keeping "the Lord God" and

Judgment at the fore (VII.1457ff., 1625ff., 1714ff, etc.), it advocates a continual translation of one's own hopes for the end into present action (VII.1881ff.). Framed by "Jhesus Crist" who "of his mercy wol han hym in his proteccion and been his soveryn helpyng at his nede" (VII.1301) as opposed to an impersonal "prince and cause of alle thyng" (I.3036), "The Tale of Melibee" directly invokes the moral categories of a just God and introduces "contraries" (VII. 1289) where "The Knight's Tale" has only comparative degrees of better and worse, more or less honourable (I.3047ff.). Accordingly, the mature wisdom of "The Tale of Melibee" becomes not just a late stage of development or an organic continuum beginning with folly and immaturity, but a significant and acquired state in its own right, wholly distinct from that of folly and wickedness and requiring not just growth, but change of perception, reference, and response to be realized aright (i.e. a teshuvah, metanoia, or conversio). This change, arising from a continual and consequential referentiality, ideally and in turn effects a personal and effectual transformation, bringing about just, gentle, and merciful relations with others (even in their folly) for the sake of self and God. In "The Tale of Melibee," then, the standards of the wise become not only the noble, but also the referentially defined and actively manifest good.

Wisdom Manifest: Prudence as Sign and Signifier of Divine Virtue

In "The Tale of Melibee," such good, active, and efficacious wisdom is most fully exemplified in Prudence. Her very name indicates the precise nature of her wisdom as one capable of exercising sound judgment in practical matters, especially as they concern personal interests.

Fulfilling the Classical ideal and more, her wisdom is personal, political, and referential. In all things, even feigned anger (VII.1706), she acts according to informed reason and the rules of the mean. A responsible wife and counsellor, trained in texts of tradition and tested by experience (VII.1087ff.), she does her work well, continuing the line of "goodly women" by being "ful discret and wis in conseillynge" (VII. 1097ff.; cf. VII.1050ff., 1707ff.; cf. Prov. 31:10ff.). Even when faced with offense or error, she does not advise, condemn, or forgive unreasonably. Aware of causes, ends, and means (VII. 1393ff. 1850ff.), she does not simply judge and dismiss wrong-doers, but becomes a willing, magnanimous agent for moral transformation, as equally with obvious transgressors (VII.1732ff.) as with her husband (VII. 1870ff.). Though in Aristotelian terms she errs on the side of deficiency, expressing no outrage at the affront which so maddens Melibee and which, in fact, touches her more directly (she is "betten" in the assault upon their home, VII.971; Melibee is simply emotionally distressed and wounded in reputation, VII.973, 1461; cf. NE IV.5), throughout the tale she remains moderate, rational, and gracious in her words and actions. Being practically and referentially wise, she continually and effectively mediates the mercy and grace of the Divine to the wayward, guiding the young or foolish through their failings to an earned and efficacious wisdom, social as well as metaphysical (VII.1707ff., 1849ff.).

Most obviously, Prudence systematically educates Melibee, counselling him to sue for peace for his own good and for that of the community (VII.1714ff.). Concerned not only with her husband's honour (VII.1688ff.), though, but with justice as well, she also engages his enemies with the same care (VII.980, 1051ff.; 1726ff.)—though Melibee, resistant to reproof

because of his self-righteousness and his perceived (and professed) public virtue, requires more aggressive and extended instruction than those trespassers who readily acknowledge their sin (e.g. VII.1055ff., 1427ff., etc.). Accordingly, Prudence confronts both with ends and errors (VII. 1053f., 1241ff.; 1728ff.); she directs each in the ways of the wise (VII.1114ff; 1730, 1759ff.); and, "ful debonairly and with greet pacience" (VII.1064; cf. X.654ff.), she effects broad change for good as she leads both Melibee and the "trespassours and repentyng folk" (VII. 1801) through the experience with her to deeper truths (VII.1112; 1735, 1739f.). Not wanting vengeance (whether punishment or public rebuke), but, at the same time, not dismissing too lightly the crimes against her family, she does, of course, point up sin and the harm caused. Yet, truly believing in the efficacy of grace, instruction, and "repentaunce" (VII.1731), she pursues "the pees and the reconsiliacioun" which she earlier preaches (VII.1690) and advises even Melibee's foes as to how they might salvage themselves and renew their name (VII.1729f.; cf. 1846). Acting full wisely in the world of man for the honour of God and for the good of the body politic, she thus guides the foolish (whether proud and self-righteous or criminal) to a transformative knowledge of the good.

Through her kind temperence and "goodliche wordes" (VII.1733), then, Prudence does more than bring about social good. An exemplar of the highest virtue in the tale (rational and referential mercy), she functions as a true, not feigned, sign of God's mercy (cf. Melibee's imagined "virtue" of wounded pride and right of vengeance; VII.1429ff., 1460ff.). Referentially (rather than merely intellectually) informed by the effectual truths of that which she knows, she reveals through her words and actions a near perfect

balance of concern for "oure Lord God, conscience, and good name" (VII.1625; 1744ff.) and makes "the dreed of the Lord" the "bigynning of [her] wisdom, with "prudence ... the kunnyng of [her] sentis" (Prov. 9:10, WB,II; cf. Ps. 111:10, Prov. 1:7; VII.1116ff., 1300ff., 1396ff., 1714ff. etc.). In effect, Prudence indicates through herself the Divine as not just a fact, but a factor in human affairs. In doing so, she communicates a context and an occasion for referential response on the part of those who hear her instruction. She calls them to a renewal of reference, relation, and responsible conduct before an Authority greater than their own fears, desires, and concerns for reputations (VII.1282ff., 1404ff.). Directing the foolish (Melibee included) from the evil "text" of their own desires and actions, through the wise "text" of her words and conduct, to those texts which inform her life and actions (e.g. VII.112ff., 1735ff.), she thus guides her audience to an aquired wisdom so that they might not be "desherited ne destroyed thurgh [their] folye" (VII. 1751)--barring forgiveness, a likely end on earth for the transgressors and, in heaven, for Melibee (VII.1881).

In so engaging her listeners directly in that which she signifies, Prudence does not merely reveal the will and way of God through her personal goodness. An interactive as well as indicative sign, she provides secondary opportunities for significant action as well. Most obviously, she presents the offenders with an opportunity to translate their change of heart into a change of life. Through Prudence's guidance, her respect for the courage of open repentance, and her belief in the efficacy of such a repentance (VII. 1752ff.), the transgressors dare acknowledge their sin and, submitting to her judgment, attain the good and become wise through an actualized renunciation of their wicked ways (VII.1741ff.). Melibee is also given a

similar opportunity as Prudence's kind words and example invite him to exercise something of a forgiving virtue for his own ultimate good. Responding reluctantly to her words and to her ideals of grace and mercy, he too becomes at least apparently wise after a fashion and with some practical effect through his half-hearted transcendence of self and of his vested interests (VII.1867ff.). Through her engagement of these other characters, then, Prudence, the fullest intra-textual expression of wisdom in "The Tale of Melibee," extends the practical effect of attained virtue in the tale. Through her instruction and her own informed and realized grace, her instructive "signification" both leads the other characters to and creates opportunity for the expression of two distinctive and complementary wisdoms which are, also, both active and interactive: that of the transgressor and that of the offended. The intra-textual significance of her wisdom is thus immediately active and affective, but also creative and restorative as well.

The Wisdom of the Transgressor: The Sign of Reconciliation

While Prudence is the ideal, the most distinct aspect of this tale's composite wisdom is "the wisdom of the transgressor." Developing from the moral categories and interactive referentiality occasioned by a personal God, this unique wisdom is an explicit wisdom of process: it has clearly defined negative as well as positive aspects with true wisdom being the movement from one to the other. Positively, it admits social good and inner re-direction. Negatively, it embraces social as well as moral folly. As such, a "wicked wisdom" includes any action performed well in itself, but with disregard for the referential context in which mankind is rightly to live. Privileging the self above all, it places private pleasures, desires,

or needs before the duties incumbent upon humans as creations of God and as members of a social compact. Classically, such "folly" may be ascribed to immaturity, with little distinction made between the "young in years or [the] youthful in character" (NE 1.3). And, while something of this morally neutral, progressive view is continued in Melibee, a "yong" man (VII.967) hasty of heart though given less to action than to paralyzing emotion and vehement vituperation (VII.1001, 1008), the "folly" of not knowing the path of the right has a second negative face as well in "The Tale of Melibee": that of "sin." Relevant only within a teleological schema of moral absolutes, "sin" or "wikkednesse" (VII.1289) refers to the actions of characters who are not only unlearned or inexperienced, but also active agents of skillfully executed harm.

In "The Tale of Melibee," the trespassers first appear as the embodiment of such folly. "Wys" and efficient in the ways of sin, they commit a near perfect crime for which Melibee might not reasonably avenge himself (VII. 1213ff., 1526ff., 1649ff., etc.). Well performed and accomplishing the ends intended, their house-breaking and assault may, in some limited sense and independent of any referential context (Classical or that of "The Tale of Melibee"), be termed "wise," albeit wickedly (cf. the diverse applications of the term "wys" in the "General Prologue," e.g. I.68, 309, 405, 569, 755), for what the trespassers do, they do well: "the sones of this world ben more prudent [KJV, "wise"] in hir generacioun than the sones of liyt" (Luke 16:8; WB.II). In the context of a perceived moral order defined by the relationship of Creator, creation, and creature, however, these same actions can only be understood as violating essential precepts derived from the nature of God--or, more concisely, as sin. Thus, in "The Tale of Melibee," such actions, and the characters who perform them,

are not presented as merely foolish (as Arcite is and as Melibee seems to be): they are set forth as willfully "wikked," their deeds standing as witness to their intentional rejection of the good, and their adroitness at sin being evidence of their consummate wickedness. Yet, because of the active and affective nature of gracious wisdom in the tale, such "evil" is not presented as hopeless. Though the height of folly, it lays the ground-work for a transformation to a more positive wisdom and, if appropriately acknowledged and addressed, may mark the beginning of wisdom. Properly developed, it may even lead to a further affective wisdom, the responsive "wisdom of the offended."

In "The Tale of Melibee," it is the "goodly" instruction of Prudence (VII.1731) that effects such a transformation for the housebreakers. Responding to a self-sacrificial good, they become rightfully wise through repentance, moving from disgrace, through manifest and practical evidences of grace, to a higher moral, social, and spiritual status than they had held before their crime. Directly engaged by an exemplar of referential grace, the transgressors forsake their evil and determine to do better because of the example of merciful good in action that they experience: "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6). Drawn through Prudence's mature direction to "the blessynge of swetness, after the sawe of David the prophete" and to "the science and konnyng of Salomon" (VII. 1735, 1739ff.), the repentant trespassers--once symbols of a broken social harmony as "olde foes" of Melibee (VII.970)--thus respond to a merciful justice and even dare hope for peace, since Prudence, "of [her] grete goodness," offers to mediate for them (VII.1766f.). In this, they experience a relational re-alignment initiated by correct

reference--the process summarized Biblically as: "Whanne the weyes of man plesen the Lord, he schal conuertr, yhe, hise enemys to pees" (Prov. 16:7; WB, II).

Becoming first recipients and then signs of gracious restoration, therefore, the trespassers trust themselves to Prudence's goodness and work with her to re-establish themselves within the personal, relational, and referential order of their society: they willingly own their sins and their resulting unworthiness before others (VII.1736ff., 1817ff.) and place themselves "al outrely in the arbitracioun and juggement and in the myght and power of [their] enem[y]" (VII.1752f.)--apparently hoping that he, too, is rightly positioned in relation to a greater context of reference (VII. 1746ff., cf. 1848ff.). Such transformative submission is, in effect, evidence of a true change of heart (i.e. teshuvah, metanoia, conversio). Made only after a personal encounter with an active and compassionate agent of virtue, it demonstrates the distinctive wisdom which is uniquely the domain of one who has committed an open offense: the wisdom of the transgressor (cf. Marlowe's Dr. Faustus: "Though thou hast now offended like a man,/Do not perseuer in it like a devil," V.i.39f.). And, eventually received and (albeit reluctantly) forgiven by Melibee, the "olde foes" are thus able--through their repentance and petition for mercy--once again to become part of the community which they had offended.

Transformed, informed, and restored by the goodness they receive through Prudence's instruction, the offenders do not simply gratefully receive her ultimately referential grace, but they become an extension of it as well, posing through their repentance the opportunity for others to manifest their own virtue. Significant, if indirect, vehicles of grace

themselves, then, the repentant transgressors become effective signs of God's working in the world as they defer to the compound authority of Prudence's actual and Melibee's supposed moral superiority. Quite obviously, their response to Prudence renders them indicative signs as they manifest her transformative influence and referential virtue through their changed lives. In their own, later, actions, though, they also become, at least in posse, a vehicle for further actualizations of the divine: doing a "hard thyng and right perilous" (VII. 1752), they approach him who takes greatest offense at their deeds (not, note, the one who is most affected by it; she, magnanimously, approaches them). Doing so not from arrogance or "hoomlynesse" (VII.1686), but from a true and humble (if somewhat self-interested) desire for peace and reconciliation (VII.1816ff), they make themselves an occasion for significant response from him whom they have offended--just as Prudence, more charitably, makes herself an occasion for response from those who have wounded her and her family. They petition Melibee for forgiveness (as Prudence approaches them for repentance), becoming interactive (as well as indicative) signs in their own right. Thus, through their repentance, they extend to Melibee Prudence's signification of the good and give him an opportunity to participate in that signification as well through a gracious and forgiving response similar to that of Prudence.

In their public confession, then, the transgressors not only ask for mercy, their crimes notwithstanding, but they lay out in detail both the rationale and means of the third principal wisdom of the tale (that of the offended) by positioning it in relation to the second (that of the transgressor)--which, in turn, is occasioned and informed by the first (that of practical, referential, and merciful virtue). Coming before Melibee:

the wiseste of hem ... answerede for hem alle and seyde,/ 'Sire
 ... we knowen wel that we been unworthy .../For we han so greetly
 mystaken us, and han offended and agilt ... agayn youre heigh
 lordshipe/But yet, for the grete goodness and debonairetee
 that al the world witnesseth of youre persone,/we submytten us to
 the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe,/and
 been redy to obeie to alle youre commandementz,/bisekyng yow that
 of youre merciabile pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentaunce
 and lowe submyssioun/and graunten us foryevenesse of oure
 outrageous trespas and offense./ For wel we knowe that youre
 liberal grace and mercy stretchen hem ferther into goodnesse than
 doon oure outrageouse giltes and trespas into wikkednesse,/al be
 it that cursedly and dampnablely we han agilt agayn youre heigh
 lordshipe (VII.1816ff.).

Calling upon attributes which Prudence assures them are inherent to Melibee (VII.1759) and of which Melibee fancies himself well-possessed, the transgressors thus create through their repentance an occasion whereby that practical, effective, and referential wisdom which Prudence exemplifies and to which Melibee (the ostensibly righteous man horribly aggrieved) aspires might again be manifest through them and in relation to their sin. Evidence of efficacious mercy themselves, they extend a similar and higher opportunity to him whom they have offended, with potentially "Biblical" ramifications (cf. Luke 7:47, 17:3f.; cf. Mt. 18:23ff., Luke 18:9ff.).

Requiring a re-definition of the good and the wise as not only that which is well-done and which is personally and socially expedient, but that which is ultimately referential, the double wisdom of the transgressor

(repentance remedying a well-accomplished evil) adds an immediately referential moral context to the tale. It effects a moral chiaroscuro by which the nature of "the good" and the truly wise is sharpened as it plays off evil, adding depth to the ideal presented in Prudence. Clarifying "the good" (and the wise as a means to the good) not just as a mean of conduct but as a contrast to, and cure for, evil, this two-fold wisdom complements that of Prudence. It also creates an occasion for the practical expression of Melibee's acquired wisdom (see below). In terms of The Tales as a whole, it prepares for the third major and normative wisdom, that of the penitent in "The Parson's Tale." It also provides a counter, measure, and model for the reader's assessment of and response to the arguably "evil" characters in other tales. And, of course, it has significant implications for the final, reprobate (and external) sinner(s) who hear(s) the Parson's tale and who "read(s)" the work as a whole: it presents a norm of right action and redress; it indicates a path of true signification; and, it outlines the obligation as well as the limits of personal responsibility within a referential context.

Thus, that Melibee, within himself, resists the petition of the offenders to forgive freely and must be coerced into proper response by Prudence's wise words and forewarnings of bad name and eternal damnation (VII.1836ff.; cf. Mt. 18:23ff.) does not at all undermine the validity and effect within the text of that wisdom particular to the wise and repentant transgressors. As acknowledged and public offenders and as recipients of, respondents to, and indirect agents of divine grace, they are and can be accountable only for their own responses to the good and for their effective exercise of it. Their wisdom requires only that they receive, respond to, and extend the grace that they themselves benefit from. The reaction of

Melibee, his continuing angry and self-righteous folly, even his hypocrisy (as he seems to acknowledge their repentance, feigns to "assente and conferme" a desire for peace, VII.1773ff., and acts publicly towards them with "benignitee" VII. 1826, even while holding in his heart an ardent desire for "vengeance," VII. 1833) are not significant matters within the peculiar moral domain of the offenders, for their wisdom lies in the turning from sin to the good and in the effects of that turning. As an offended man of authority, Melibee's wisdom arises from different circumstances and must, therefore, be appropriate to his position. In relation to the transgressors, it ought ideally to be responsive, completing their efforts at communicative and referential signification by granting "pardoun and foryifnesse" to those "that exuseth nat his synne/but knowlecheth it and repenteth hym, axing indulgence" (VII.1774). Whether Melibee deigns to grant it or not, however, their repentance--and, with it, their acquired wisdom--becomes complete in itself through their open petition to him for mercy.

The Wisdom of the Offended: Melibee's Reluctant Compassion

Both "wijs anentis [him]silf" and "prudent anentis [him]silf" (Prov. 3:7, Rom. 12:16; WB, II), Melibee is not, of course, eager to receive the repentant sinners and renew relations with them. Having set himself up as judge over them and thrilling to his own sense of righteous woundedness, he prefers punishment to restoration, wanting "to desherite hem of al that evere they han and for to putte hem in exil for evere" (VII.1835). In this, Melibee may be read as both a negative signifier in his own right and as a sinner for, in the name of the good, he desires hurtful folly. Having, like

Prudence, a precedent in "The Knight's Tale," Melibee--a "yong" ruler "myghty and riche" (VII.967)--shares the natural vices of Arcite and others young in years or in compassionate maturity (cf. NE 1.3). Rash and given to anger, he seems, like Arcite, not necessarily evil, but unlearned in the ways of wisdom. With too little experience in life to make even those texts with which he is familiar effectively a part of him, Melibee, again like Arcite, knows only the words, not the efficacious meaning, of many dicta. Often, as a result, he turns wise counsels to his own ends through too hasty consideration of both texts and circumstances (VII.1282; cf. I.1164ff.). But, speaking where Arcite acted, Melibee complements him, revealing the internal workings, rather than the physical manifestations, of an immature mind. For example, he too tends to "get angry quickly ... and more than is right" (NE 4.5; cf. I.1596ff., VII.1009f.). "[S]leem[ing] to listen to argument to some extent, but to mishear it," he "springs to take revenge," belying reason by responding to provocation with a desire for vengeance rather than compassion (NE 7.6; e.g. VII.1002ff.). But, where Arcite fights (I.1596ff.), Melibee weeps or rages, bewailing--to all who will listen--the evil done to him and his family (VII.973ff., 1009ff.). The first wisdom he must acquire, therefore, is that of the Classical norm (i.e. self-restraint and moderation). And after many good words from Prudence, he does acquire certain basic personal skills, learning to examine his life and to redress anything that is not "best for his profit" (VII.1120). Eventually, he even learns to petition God and to submit himself to the Divine in matters of social consequence (VII.1116f.; 1867ff.).

Yet, this learning of self-governance for social benefit is but a minor aspect of the wisdom Melibee, a man in authority, must acquire within a moral universe informed by a personal and merciful God: Arcite on his

deathbed does as well and more readily (I. 2765ff.). Melibee's true contribution to the composite wisdom of the tale (and The Tales) lies in that he is not just an angry young ruler, but a man of authority grievously hurt in his pride, reputation, and self-sufficiency. A professedly innocent victim in the universe of a just God (cf. VII.1408ff.; Prov. 26:2), Melibee, uniquely, must demonstrate a more fully referential and more relational wisdom than that of Arcite. Melibee must not merely forgive a "cosyn" who, for personal considerations, has betrayed him and whom he, in turn, has similarly betrayed: he must extend mercy to those who were his open foes through willful offence (cf. Mt. 5:43ff., Lk. 6:27ff.). Initially, to Melibee, such a wisdom of practical virtue seems to require that he sue for peace to social and moral inferiors, to sinners (VII.1682)—unlike the acquired wisdom of Arcite which allows him to defer to an equal (I.2786ff.). In actual fact, though, the wisdom of "The Tale of Melibee" demands much more. It requires true self-understanding and, with it, conduct which is worthy of a wise ruler of both self and others and which is appropriately indicative of the ultimate Lord who is supposedly represented by an individual of authority (cf. Mt. 18:32ff.). In practical terms, it requires that Melibee acknowledge his own flawed, sinful nature (VII.1409ff., 1850), not just intellectually, but affectively (VII.1867ff.) and, that he, from this awareness, forgive those who offended him, for their mutual long-term benefit as well as for effective referential signification (VII.1874ff.). Deriving from and leading to a higher good than that of society or of the individual, such a wisdom brings its practitioner to a fuller referentiality as well as to purer and more productive relations with mankind. And, though slow to understand and to acquire the actual wisdom of a referentially moral order, and slower still to effect it through himself into the world, Melibee

does eventually express through his actions something of this unique, divinely informed, and self-redeeming wisdom of the offended: he forgives the trespassers that his good name and prosperity might be preserved (VII. 1840ff.; cf. Ps. 130:4; I Kings 8:38ff.) and that he himself might receive mercy in the Last Day (VII.1867ff.; cf. Mt. 6:12ff, Mk. 11:25f., 2 Cor. 2:7).

Much of what hinders Melibee in his acquisition of true wisdom and which, therefore, constitutes his essential folly is that, from the earliest moments in the tale, he perceives himself to be wholly in the right. Confident of his own virtue, he seems to understand that he functions within a moral universe, but he sees himself as a master of it, as a judicious judge of wrongs who, in his opinion, does only the good (or the excusable). Yet, quick to condemn his foes, he does not properly consider his own actions, reactions, and self-assessment wherein he sins grievously both in degree and in context: he weeps more than would be appropriate were his daughter dead (VII.979ff.); he likens himself in his immoderate weeping to "Jhesu Crist, oure Lord" who "wept for the deeth of Lazarus hys freend" (VII.986ff.); and, he exercises no restraint in the public expression of his passions (I.1008ff.). Further, accepting no responsibility for any of his negative actions, he continually excuses them, pointing to social or constitutional conditions or pleading extenuating circumstances as he resists Prudence's counsel (VII. 1055), misinterprets advice (VII.1279f.), argues for right of vengeance (VII. 1429ff., 1461ff., 1540ff.), and even pardons his immoderate desire and emotion (VII.1518ff., 1698ff.). As part of his perceived, self-righteous virtue, he readily "troweth lightly harm of every wight, and lightly troweth alle bountee in hymself" (VII.1174)--

Prudence's definition of a fool (from Cicero, Tusc. Disp. 3.30.73).

Melibee's initial, professed, and ostensible wisdom, then, amounts in fact to the very basis of his folly (cf. Rom. 1:22). Indeed, indulged, it seems to have potential to lead him into cruel, sinful judgments wholly against the nature of the good (VII.1836).

Melibee's feigned wisdom, however, is not wholly without basis. Seeing as "good" only that which benefits him and as "evil" only that which thwarts or harms him, he finds justification for his desires in one reading of the "contraries" (VII.1279ff.). Yet, as Prudence indicates, his understanding of the "contraries" is, in fact, a misreading which, mistaking one limited surface meaning of the word for its full and ethical import, belies the very nature of the moral order the contraries actually express. As Melibee understands it from "the phisiciens" formulation (VII. 1280ff.; 1017), a "contrarie" is something "wrong" (VII.1281), an offense to be "cured" by vengeance: "as they han doon me a contrarie, right so sholde I doon hem another./For right as they han venged hem on me and doon me wrong, right so shal I venge me upon hem and doon hem wrong;/and thanne have I cured oon contrarie by another" (VII.1281ff.). To Prudence, however, "contrarie" does not mean primarily an offense, but an opposite as in "good and wikkednesse" or "vengeaunce and suffrance" (VII. 1289). Therefore, to her, logically, practically, and according to the full meanings of the words,

wikkednesse is nat contrarie to wikkednesse, ne vengeaunce to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong/therfore o vengeaunce is nat warissshed by another vengeaunce, ne o wroong by another wroong,/ but everich of hem encresseth and aggeggreth oother./... certes, wikkednesse shal be warissshed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth ... (VII.1285ff.).

Melibee, failing to see this deeper signification of both the term and the concept of "contrarie," also fails to see the true virtue in "pees and accord" (VII.1297). Desiring only vengeance, wanting only to discipline and punish those who have offended him, he--in his "virtue" (as with his linguistic skills and reason)--is more "enclined to his owene desir and to his owene pleasaunce" (VII.1283) than to efficacious truth--at least initially.

Until his grudging assent to Prudence's pleas for mercy, then, Melibee both resists seeing his sin and is protected from a forced public owning of it by Prudence's concern for his reputation (VII.1779ff.). Though guilty of pride and wrath, capital sins against God, self, and man (in light of which, the crimes of the transgressors against reputation and property pale), he, having been offended, believes himself justified in all that he does thereafter: in his public vituperation of his enemies; in his self-righteous indignation; and, in his continued desire for vengeance--even after Prudence's instruction and the transgressors expressed and accepted repentance. For Melibee to move from such an artificial participation in the true dichotomy of good and evil (wherein he is the unimpeachable good and the transgressors are once and for always evil) to an actual engagement of and accountability to the good, he must, therefore, come to a deeper knowledge of terms and signs, linguistic and human--himself included. Even to receive instruction, he must first undergo a change of perception, acknowledging the essential virtue and validity of Prudence as a wise wife whose counsel is "rype" (VII.1198; cf. 1155, 1169)--something he gradually does (VII.1055ff., 1112ff., 1232ff., 1427ff., etc.). Through his deeper understanding of her, of that which motivates her, and of that which she

effects, he must also come to understand the true nature of efficacious signification and affective good and, in the process, recognize the inadequacy of his own "virtue." Yet, while responding well intellectually, he resists the personal connotations of his knowledge and attempts to preserve to the end the harsh judgments of his own virtue (VII.1832ff.). Ultimately, then, Melibee must realize in himself the deeper and transformative meaning of a truly good wisdom derived from a Creator and a Saviour God. As he assents to each step towards an affective wisdom, therefore, he moves deeper into the process of reference, correcting his error as surely as the repentance of the transgressors corrects theirs--though, because his self-professed virtue makes him somewhat resistant to instruction and to the gracious spirit of wisdom which his wife embodies, his spiritual tutoring is much belaboured and fraught with recurrent set-backs.

What must occur, then, for Melibee to be a true sign of the wise and the good is a personal re-contextualization of himself in relation not only to his society, but to a fair, just, and merciful God. He must submit himself (along with the transgressors) to the judgment and wisdom of the Lord God who "knowist the herte of alle the sones of men" (1 Kings 8:38; WB, II; cf. VII. 1115ff., 1885ff.). In effect, he must surrender his image of himself as wholly innocent and unjustly aggrieved, placing his sense of wounded righteousness in perspective and in context (VII.1408ff.) and acknowledging his disproportionate response to the affront (VII.973, 982). And, addressing his own needs for forgiveness, mercy, and grace both in the world and for eternity (VII.1418ff.), he must recognize his own essential kinship with the more obvious transgressors (VII.1885ff.; note the first

person plural). Melibee must thus rise to true wisdom not by simply acquiring a new understanding, but by first stripping away a faulty one: he must first conquer not his enemies, but himself, and, in the process overcome his pride, anger, self-righteous indignation, and a perceived right of vengeance (VII.1858f.). Placed under a moral and spiritual imperative to forgive the offense and the offenders for his own sake as a matter both of response (to the repentance of the trespassers) and of relation (as he wishes to stand before God) (VII.1876ff.), Melibee is thus called upon to apply his acquired knowledge of good relations not only actively (as Theseus does against "the tiraunt Creon," I.961), but compassionately and self-interestedly also, both to obtain a good repute and to keep himself from God's harsh judgment (VII.1841ff.).

Ultimately, to be effectively wise to the fullest extent of his own unique potential as an offended ruler, therefore, Melibee must read the world and himself aright in relation to God. Not only understanding, but acting upon the deeper truths his wife embodies, he must proceed from the surface meaning of such gracious wisdom to its deeper, affective, and transformative "literal" significance. Acknowledging the truths and Source of his wife's wise counsel and responding to the occasion presented by the repentance of the transgressors, he must respond truly, expressing through himself the nature of the Referential Base that Prudence represents and fulfilling the referential duties incumbent upon him not only as a human recipient of the mercies of God, but as one in authority over others. Only then can he attain to and surpass the practical wisdom of the Classical world (I.1773ff.; cf. VII.1773ff.) and approximate something of the forgiving wisdom of the higher morality which governs Prudence's actions as a truer sign of God in the world.

Thus introducing to The Tales a compound ethos of merciful restoration, "The Tale of Melibee"--through the respective wisdoms of Prudence, the transgressors, and the offended--depicts an ideal of compassionate human wisdom operating for spiritual as well as social ends within a dichotomous and actively referential moral context. It makes individuals personally accountable before God as well as before man, thereby encouraging a reciprocal as well as a referential responsibility. Within its framework, human agents are to work with and upon each other not solely for their own personal honour or as a mere exercise of their rights (something discouraged even within a Classical context; I.3089), but to assist each other to a greater good (cf. Col. 3:12, James 5:9, 1 Pet. 3:8f., etc.). Making wisdom and the good immediately effective, the tale thus offers a responsive model of reading and re-reading narratives (of self and others) to complement the indicative model of "The Knight's Tale" (wherein humans signify passively). Transformatively engaging the wise, the trespassers, and those in authority in the process of meaning (rather than in a merely static assessment of facts), the tale invites its characters to participate in moral signification, to become willed and active manifestations of the good. While not negating a concern for reputation, the tale's wisdom transcends it, privileging ultimate referentiality and advocating as part of its affective wisdom a search for final intentions, deeper meanings, as well as an understanding of self and others as mutually corrective and complementary signs. Ideally, as in Prudence's efforts, such an interactive wisdom occasions a charitable context of mercy on the part of offenders and offended alike to "this ende that God of his endelees mercy/wole at the tyme of oure diyngge foryeven us oure giltes that we han trespassed to hym in this

wreched world" (X.1884; cf. VII. 1881ff.).

Wisdom in "The Parson's Tale": "The siker wey" of "Dure sweete Lord God"

"The Parson's Tale" continues such concerned referentiality, but further clarifies the nature of the God who frames the moral context, the practical role of the individual in that order, and the internal developments which must accompany external manifestations of the wise and the good. Shifting the focus even further from public or social concerns, this third normative expression of wisdom in The Tales privileges the spiritual and the most immediately personal aspects of right reference, right relation, and right reading. Bringing wisdom, sign theory, and meaning together most intimately, it provides the final and most comprehensive model in The Tales for active and effectual relations with God and man. It engages dispositions of heart as well as manifest words and deeds. It considers actions in relation to past and future, as well as to the present. And, in detailing right conduct, it includes both positive and negative actions, discussing not only what should and should not be done, but the spiritual reasons, motivations, and social repercussions of doing or not doing them. As the most explicit statement of "the siker way" of mercy and grace (X.94, 1070ff.), "The Parson's Tale" may thus be read as a personal handbook for becoming a responsible and efficacious expression of God in the world. And, insofar as the task of man as created being is one of efficacious signification, the tale may equally and simultaneously be considered as a discourse on the semiotics of a Christian wisdom leading to "That highte Jerusalem celestial" (X.51; cf. X.80).

Closing the tellings, "The Parson's Tale" reduces the voices and wisdoms of its text to one, that of yet another exemplar of wisdom--this time, of an individual of wholly focused and practically manifest referentiality (I. 477ff., X.35ff.). Yet, though expressing a conventional morality immediately oriented to the ways of God, the tale and its teller do not provide the definitive word on matters of the good and the wise in The Tales. They are and remain but partial signs within the textual order they help delineate. By the Parson's admission, both he and his words are of relative authority, instructive but not definitive or exclusive: even before he begins his tale, he willingly puts both himself and his "meditacioun" under "correccioun" (X.55ff.)--not unlike Nicholas of Lyra who "submit[is] everything stated ... to the correction of Holy Mother Church, and to anyone of wisdom, importuning the pious reader and the charitable editor" ("Second Prologue" 88ff., emphasis added; cf. X.1081ff., Vincent of Lerins Commonitory Ch. 2). Acknowledging that "Manye been the wayes espirituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesus Crist," the Parson advocates his preferred path of "Penitence" not as the only way, but as "a ful noble wey and a ful covenable" option, as "the siker wey" within his understood frame of reference (X.55ff.). Further, suggesting its partial rather than definitive value within The Tales, "The Parson's Tale" stands explicitly and by entente in a relative position: generically and as told by the Parson, it is handicapped in the "game" of tellings in that it expounds only "som vertuous sentence" (X.63) when what is called for in the match is "tales of best sentence and moost solaas" (I.798; emphasis added).

Because the Parson, forswearing "fables and swich wretchednesse," refuses "to sowne draf out of my fest, /Whan I may sowne whete" (X.33ff.), he and his tale omit an aspect vital to both the internal mandate of the game

and to overall, independent and efficacious signification. In separating significant substance from pleasant form, message from medium, the teller and his tale forgo the complementary possibilities of "sowing" wheat and chaff together, a pairing as necessary for a fully successful "harvest" as good ground, since a seed, sown without a husk, will fail to germinate or bring forth fruit regardless of the soil—or of the soul (cf. Mt. 8:5ff.). Since it is in "threshing" (i.e. exposition, to continue the analogy) that the two are best separated, the "draf" only then becoming worthless to the wheat, it seems that the Parson somewhat mistakes his intra-textual task, "threshing" where he should "sow." Though telling a tale wholly appropriate to his character and one which, in the complete context of The Tales and the pilgrimage performs an essential didactic task, his tale—if considered independently—falls short of the intra-textual ideal, becoming but one more aspect of the greater textual organism which is The Tales, one more particular contribution to the wisdom frame of the text, and one more partial expression of that truth to which the text entire directs the reader.

"The Siker Wey" of Christian Wisdom

Fulfilling Harry Bailey's "sentence" (X.17), "The Parson's Tale" does not supersede, but complements earlier wisdoms. Explicating a personal ethos of referential transformation and being told through a single, morally exemplary voice of unambiguous intent (I.477ff., X.35ff.), this last text is simply the most explicit of the tales in its concern for right reference, relation, and response. Defining its Source and End as a more intimately involved God than occurs in the other wisdom tales, "The Parson's Tale"

casts its Deity not only as the "Creatour" and the "Fader celestial," but as "hym, that with his precious blood hath delivered us fro the bondes of synne, and fro the crueltee of the devel, and fro the peynes of helle" (X.75, 131ff.)—providing, in effect, a gloss (in the full medieval sense of the word) on the other tales (particularly those of the wisdom frame). Further, the principal medium for wisdom in "The Parson's Tale" is also more explicitly identified with a referential and communicative sign than it is in the other wisdom tales: Prudence, even by her name, is associated with one specific aspect of wisdom, calling individuals to circumspect moral conduct, but the Parson is invested with the greater task of "the prophete," of calling the people back to God through the "olde sentences" (X.74ff.). And, through the agency of the Parson, the tale more directly engages the reader than do other tales which instruct by narrative or dialogue: expounding for "yow" (X.95) "the goode wey . . . of which man sholde gladly herken and enquire with al his herte" (X.77, 81), the Parson addresses directly an unspecified but inclusive audience and demands of it an assessment of every thought, word, and deed in terms of movement towards or away from "the knowleche of hym" and "the blisful lif that is perdurable" (X.80; 111; cf. Nicholas of Lyra, "First Prologue" 254ff.).

Beginning his "meditacioun" (X.55) with a verse from Jeremiah, the Parson thus calls for a return to the "olde pathes" (X.77), but breaks off his quotation before the incriminatory repudiation by the people of the prophet's advice (Jer. 6:6b: "But they said, we will not walk therein"). So implying rather than stating the essential nature of human folly (i.e. an unwillingness to observe rightful, reasonable, and referential governance), the Parson focuses on that good which is yet possible to man, offering as a

counter to the consequences of such obstinacy the intent of "Oure swete Lord God of hevene," who wills and engages humanity that "no man ... perisse but ... that ... [they] comen alle to the knoweleche of hym and to the blisful lif that is perdurable" (X.76; 2 Pet. 3:9). The Parson thus establishes in the first two sentences of his tale the poles between which his particular wisdom unfolds: the foolish arrogance of man and the mercy of God. In the next seven lines, he sketches the parameters of a practical wisdom which is mutual, responsive, and possible as he lays out the reconciliation possible through Penitence. Refining the referential wisdom of earlier tales, he depicts a love-informed and fully participatory, rather than merely responsive, standard of grace and the good. For example, where Theseus urges Emelye to receive Palamon on general principles (I.3075ff, esp. 3039), and where Prudence advises Melibee to forgive the repentant transgressors, if for no other reason than for his own reputation and salvation (VII. 1769ff. 1836ff.), the Parson encourages his listeners both to repent and to forgive, not just for general or self-interested reasons such as for the sake of honour, good name, or personal salvation, but for the higher, altruistic, even divine purposes of the pure and unfeigned love of God (X.381ff.).

The Parson's wisdom, truly informed by the love and will of God, thus places upon his listeners a moral obligation, even a sacred duty, to forgive and to restore, not for themselves or their own pleasure, but because

thus commaundeth us oure Lord Jhesu Crist to do to oure enemys./

For soothly ... oure enemys han moore nede to love than oure

freendes; and they that moore nede have, certes to hem shal men

doon goodnesse;/and certes, in thilke dede have we remembraunce of

the love of Jhesu Crist that deyde for his enemys./And in as muche

as thilke love is the moore grevous to parfourne, so muche is the moore gret the merite; and therefore the lovyng of our enemy hath confounded the venym of the devel. (X.426ff.)

Requiring of man a self-sacrificial exercise of that same mercy which Christ manifests, the Parson's wisdom is therefore uniquely relational as well as referential, positive as well as negative: "he were ful wys," says the Parson, who not only "ne sholde nat thanne in al his lyf have corage to synne," but who would "yeven his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, and therzof doon hym homage" through loving engagement of others as well as through religious obeisance (X.1043, 1045f.; James 1:25ff.)--knowing that "oure sweete Lord Jhesu Crist hath spared us so debonairly in oure folies" through his "pitee of mannes soule" (X.314f.; cf. John 13:34, 15:12f., with emphasis on "as Y louede you"). Comprehending the individual within the love of God, the Parson's wisdom thus makes man responsible--in duty if not in heart (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17)--to his Lord, to and for his fellows, and for himself.

So placing mankind between the example of Christ and the needs of other, the Parson engages the reader in the "middleness" of the human condition as he develops through his tale an increasing awareness of mankind as moral agent and signifier. Engaging his reader through both himself and his text in a unique process of signification, the Parson leads the reader through an assessment of self to a greater, trans-textual reality which informs both work and reader. He also writes himself as a responsive sign into the text so that he too must be considered in context, in relation to that to which he responds as well to that which he effects: uniquely and immediately responsive to God through vocational and volitional submission,

the Parson tells his tale not only at the behest of Harry Bailey, whom all the pilgrims willing accept as their "governour" in the game (I.813), but also with an awareness of a personal and spiritual mandate (X.31ff.): before he begins, he petitions "Jhesu, for his grace" to inform him that he might properly "shewe yow the wey .../Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage" (X.48ff.). His narrative function is thus not simply response (as it is for most pilgrims), but also explicit mediation, for he is under a greater behest: that of "Crises gospel" (I.481). Living between a text and the world (I.496ff.), the Parson thus becomes an effective sign in his own right, an "ensample" (I.505f.), drawing "folk to hevene" (I.518ff.) through "his techyng discreet and benygne" (I.515ff.). Active, efficacious, and participatory, he works to signify through himself that Which makes man and to Which man is best directed.

His narrative likewise reinforces a sense of the significant middle-ness of humanity. It begins and unfolds in medias res with a sense of time passing and a necessary time of judgment approaching: the day is passing (X.2ff.), the pilgrimage is reaching its end (X.12), and the pilgrims' "pley" is soon done (16ff.). Showing not the end of the "glorious pilgrymage" (i.e. "the Jerusalem celestial," X.80; cf. 1 Cor. 2:9), but "the wey" to it (X. 49ff.), the Parson's "myrie tale in prose" (X.46) expounds the means by which the pilgrims, through wise action and right response to an involved Deity, may prepare for and realize something of the final end while yet in this world. Outlining not some metaphysical miracle, but a rational, spiritual, and systematized process of daily wisdom, right relations, and true referentiality by which a receptive listener may attain manifest salvation, the tale details theoretically and illustrates practically each step of "the siker wey" of penitence. To inform, it tells

what and whence penitence is, its functions and varieties, as well as those things which lead to or from its development; to guide practically, it offers precise amplifications of each aspect of penitence, considering possible courses of action and recommending that which seems best within the referential and relational context it privileges; and, to effect change, it calls for a practical, personal, and internal response which will both inform and transform the listener, making him or her a rightly ordered and efficacious referential agent in his or her own right.

"The Tree of Life": A Figure For Efficacious Christian Reference

To figure this complex of active and effective signification, the Parson uses the image of a tree as a model for Penitence, the preferred means of re-establishing right referentiality within his moral schema. He identifies the fruit of a tree with "Satisfacioun," that aspect of Penitence which is open testimony to others of the working of God in a life (X.115f.; cf. Prov. 11:30, Ezek. 47:12; Prov. 3:18, 15:4). The branches and leaves he aligns with "Confessioun," the early evidence open only to the priest of the transformation occurring in one's heart (X.113, 318ff.; cf. Ps. 1:3, Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 22:2). And, he associates the root of a tree with "Contricioun," that evidence within an individual of a change of "entente" as, with "verray sorwe ... in his herte for his synnes," one repents "with sad purpos to shryve hym, and to do penaunce, and neveremoore to do synne" (X.129; cf. Prov. 12:3, 12:12; Ezek. 31:7; Rom 11:16). The path of indicative signification from the individual heart to the perception of his or her fellows is thus quite clear: from root through branches and leaves to fruit, internal experience becomes manifest in word and deed.

What the changed life bears witness to, though, is not of its own making, just as the tree springs ultimately not from the root, but from that which precedes and engenders it. Its fruit, indeed, even its boughs, foliage, and root are simply evidences of some other agency working through the tree.

The Parson, identifying this primary agency as the grace of God, portrays it as the seed from which contrition springs and which, presumably, the mature tree may engender for and in others through its fruit (X.117). The "mooder of sicknesse" made "egre and host" by "the love of God and the desiryng of the joye perdurable" (X.116, 120), this seed of grace--through the tree--may be doubly significant and effective, both bearing witness and inviting response: it may lead to an open repentance manifest in the world as a testimony to God's efficacious power and, thereby, it may "draweth the herte of a man to God" (X.121; cf. Augustine, De sp. et lit. 34.60). Grace accordingly becomes both the affective medium as well as the transformative motivation of man's moral and significant "middleness" in the referential schema of the Parson, being able to translate Christ's love and will through once sinful individuals to still sinful others, drawing them to God. Beginning his tellings as a sign of such active grace and thereby "in the middle" of signification himself, the Parson thus calls his listeners to a similarly effective middleness. He declares, "Penaunce is the tree of lyf to hem that it receyven, and he that holdeth hym in verray penitence is blessed" (X.127). So blessed himself (as evidenced in his kind and consistent external virtue, even when dealing with the reprobate; I.479ff., 515ff.; cf. Wyclif De apost. 15, 44; De dom. div. 151; De off. past. 32, 48), the Parson explains the specific means by which his listeners, too, might "receyven" the blessing of penitence and become such "trees of righteousness" in their own right (cf. Ps. 1:3, Isa. 61:3, Jer. 17:8).

Concerned throughout with moral, not just metaphysical instruction, Chaucer's Parson thus instructs for understanding and for response. He defines penitence, for instance, by expounding in practical terms the authoritative definitions which he quotes to reveal the true and affective as well as the obvious meaning of the texts (X.84ff.). Explaining the "pleynyng" of man for his sins, the Parson emphasizes less the supposed present evidence of repentance, the weeping (X.90; cf. I.227ff.), in favour of that which the "wepyng" is to be a sign of: the necessary change of heart which occasions penitence. In "verray repentance," he says, an individual "shal be verray penitent," bewailing the sins certainly, but also "stidefastly purposen in his herte" to act, in word and deed, for "satisfaccioun," through good works and through a truly intended end to wilfull sin lest "his repentance may nat availle" (X.85ff.). His focus thus extends beyond the present experience and expression of "sorwe ... for ... giltes" done in the past (X.86) to a necessary, present, and ongoing true "entente" to remedy one's conduct in the future. Quoting John the Baptist (though attributing it to Christ), the Parson invites his hearers to "Dooth digne fruyt of Penitence" (X.115; cf. Mt. 3:8, Luke 3:8), to cultivate practically the virtuous fruit of repentance and right reference in their own lives, but from a change of heart, because they "haten [their] synne" for the love of God, not from any desire for personal advantage (X.121).

Continually marrying theory and practice, end and means, the Parson thus amplifies the import of sign and effect beyond that of either "The Knight's Tale" or "The Tale of Melibee." Expounding the essential and personal functions and functioning of an effectual sign theory, he examines closely humanity's role as an active sign "in the middle" as mankind is to

mediate through wise perception and response between God and his fellows, between past and future, between creation and judgment. Whereas Theseus is a passive sign like any other creation and advises a wisdom not requiring direct engagement of either God or man, and whereas Prudence engages only man directly, recommending what amounts to a self-interested (though spiritually aware) morality, the Parson alone brings a fully significant process of practical referentiality and relation to bear upon internal human nature. Not negating the virtues of the earlier wisdom models, he--as a fully informed spiritual sign himself (I.477ff.)--places the issues which all the wisdom tales address within a fully interactive and truly consequential context. Making the process of signification both immediately engaging and completely transformative, he therefore predicates true referentiality and right relation not only upon right response and right action, but upon right entente as well. For the Parson, the path to true signification is thus effected in the heart, evidenced through the mouth, and manifest in the deed--each step being a further indication of God's working in and through individuals and a further invitation to effective response by others as well.

Practicing "The Siker Wey": The Pragmatic Wisdom of "The Parson's Tale"

Just as the Parson does not leave his semiotic or its ethical connotations vague, abstract, or theoretical, but makes the path and end of right reference clear and detailed so that they might be readily comprehensible and accessible to his audience, so also does he itemize the practical application of them in his discussion of that which conduces to wise conduct and that which detracts from it. Seeing the full love of God

as the one context in which man might safely act, the Parson clarifies the best and most efficacious wisdom as that which causes one to act "in swich manere that al that evere he dooth is in the love of God and for the love of God verrailly" (X.383). Against this, he sets two alternate degrees of love for God, variations of it which result in sin: "deedly synne" being that which is manifest "whan the love of any thyng weyeth in the herte of man as muchel as the love of God, or moore" (X.367), and "venial synne" being "the love of every thyng that is nat biset in God, ne doon principally for Goddes sake, although that a man love it lasse than God" (X.366). Love and sin being the poles of his practical wisdom (a commonplace in spiritual writers of the time), the Parson delineates that which is wise as that which increases the manifestation of one's love and decreases one's exercise of sin. The result is an explicit practical wisdom which is at once the most morally demanding and yet the most effectively compassionate of any in The Tales.

The rigour of the tale's morality is readily apparent in its detailing of and inclusion as sin not only those overt actions which obviously hinder one's relations with an all-good Deity and which clearly destroy social harmony, but also many "smaller" non-referential or counter-relational acts which in another context might be construed as immature ("The Knight's Tale"), ill-advised ("The Tale of Melibee"), or simply annoying. Using the example of a ship inundated by huge wave or flooded by "smale dropes of water, that entren thurgh a litel crevace into the thurrock" (X.363), the Parson makes his essential point: "although ther be a difference bitwixe thise two causes of drenchynge, algates the ship is dreynt" (X.364). Whether one "sin boldly" as do the trespassers in "The Tale of Melibee" (and as Luther advises: "Esto peccator et pecca fortiter . . .," Epistolae M.

Luther 1.345; cf. Seneca, Agamemnon 150) or sin subtly and under the guise of righteousness as Melibee does, in the Parson's schema, both are equally sunk by sin if they do not repent, just as both may be equally saved if they do repent: "For certes, God almyghty is al good, and therfore he foryeveþ al or elles right noght" (X. 301).

Insisting on purity of thought, word, and deed, then, "The Parson's Tale" may seem almost severe in its morality. Told by a virtuous (if somewhat humourless) man "riche ... of hooly thoght and werk" who first lives, then teaches "Cristes gospel" (I.479, 497f.), the tale seems to advocate nothing less than the moral standard of Hebrew "holiness" (ME "hooli"; Heb. kodesh, cf. Lev. 19:2; see Chapter 2) and of the New Testament "perfection" (Gk. artios, "complete, sufficient," 2 Tim. 3:17, ME "parfit"; teleios, "mature," Jas. 1:4, ME "perfit and hole, faile in nothing"; cf. Latin maturus, as in Wyclif's "mature grammar"). In fact, this is, indeed, its norm. Modulated by its constant awareness of God's provision of and man's need for divine intervention, though, this seemingly impossible virtue becomes an attainable wisdom of glorious possibility if the signs of God are read and responded to aright for "the passion of Jhesu Crist is moore strong for to unbynde than synne is strong for to bynde," such that "as ofte as he falleth he may arise agayn by penitence. And though he never so longe have leyn in synne, the mercy of Crist is alwey redy to receiven hym to mercy" (X.1072f.). All that is required of humanity, then, is acceptance of, response to, and a life in accordance with the nature of the Divine to realize "the endelesse blisses of hevene" where the contraries introduced by Prudence will no longer keep mankind from "the sighte of the parfit knowynge of God" (X.1076ff.).

The practical wisdom of the tale by which mankind might achieve such

bliss consists, therefore, in a daily working out in the life of individuals of the will and love of God. Expounding the means by which an individual might best "yeven his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, and therof doon hym homage" (X.314), the Parson details in the third part of his tale the primary moral "problem areas" of mankind: the seven capital sins; the spiritual, social, and personal consequences of these; and, the spiritual and practical remedies for each. Drawing upon Classical, Hebraic, as well as Christian sources, he lists each sin, indicating its relations to other sins, large and small; he expounds some of the more subtle variations of specific sins; and, he sets forth the appropriate virtue, conduct, and/or referential concepts which may correct a particular proclivity. Walking the audience through each sin as a particular manifestation or "sign" in its own right of personal error, the Parson considers the referential and relational context and consequences of each sin as well as its remedies, attempting to re-situate his audience incrementally in relation to the Divine in much the same way as Dante's progression through Purgatory leads one to Paradise by fully addressing one evil inclination, one sin, before moving on to the next.

Anger as Touchstone of Wisdom: Reference, Relation, and Self-governance

One of the principal sins that the Parson discusses is "ire" or anger (X. 533ff.). Conveying one aspect of The Tales' practical wisdom, ire is defined by the Parson "after the discryvyng of Seint Augustyn" as a "wikked wil to been avenged by word or by dede" and "after the Philosphre" as "the fervent blood of man yquyked in his herte, thurgh which he wole harm to hym that he hateth" (X.535f.; De civ. dei 14.15.2; Aristotle, On the Soul

1.1.24, Seneca, De ira 2.19.3). This "sin of Mars" (I.1997) and destroyer of "good conseil" (VII.1121) brings together natural and volitional impulses, the irascible and the rational, passion and intent. In practical terms, an individual or character feeling anger is placed in a position of referential and relational opportunity for good or for ill: knowing the good according to his or her own perceived eternal order (whether "the faire cheyne of love," I. 2988, or the "oldes pathes," X.77), an individual demonstrates when angry his or her actual rather than professed fidelity to higher truths (cf. Jas. 4:17). Therefore, regardless of any will to vengeance or any emotional upset, momentary or momentous, that may be cited as extenuating circumstances, it is the extent to which a person or, in The Tales, a character sustains personal exemplification in word, deed, and heart of the harmony, truth, and ideals endorsed that reveals the true degree of an individual's or a character's mature wisdom and efficacious goodness (or lack thereof; I.3058ff., VII.1468f., X. 515ff.). Characters like Theseus, who feels the anger but controls it with reason (I. 1762ff.), and like Prudence, who shapes her response from compassion and by calling upon heart rather than head knowledge of spiritual texts, exemplify a true virtue. Those who rant, rage, vituperate, and act out (e.g. Arcite and Melibee) exemplify a telling lack of such virtue and its informing wisdom (cf. Ps. 34:12ff., Jas. 1:26, 1 Pet. 3:8ff.). Within The Tales, such emotional control (or the lack thereof) coincides in all three wisdom texts as a criterion of virtue (or vice). In the wisdom order of each, the ideal daily demeanour of the truly wise is one of "mansuetude, that is debonairetee" and "patience or suffrance" (the Parson's "remedie[s] agayns ire") which is informed by "resoun" and "grace" for Christian and pagan alike and which "maketh a man lyk to God" (X.653ff., 661; cf.

VII.1493ff.)--Christ, mankind's practical model of God, often being depicted mediievally as the consummate gentleman: in Old French, for example, he is frequently referred to as Ber (accusative, Baron).

As common ground for the significant wisdoms, Classical to Christian, of The Tales, therefore, ire in man is much more than a sin in The Tales (Biblically, in God, it is often a tool of healing; cf. Ps. 72 [V 73]): it is sign and occasion for the expression of the more inclusive wisdoms which function in and through the texts, giving specific and local expression to the structural and conceptual relations which frame The Tales as a whole. Though not "the general roote of alle harmes" (X.388), it is uniquely relevant as a manifest sign of active wisdom in the process of signification for it is both sign (of Envy and Pride, X.533f.) and source of other signifiers (emotions and actions which are themselves evidences of anger, X.562ff.). While there are many intra-textual "signs" that could be used as a focus for a study of the referential and affective nature of "the wise" in The Tales, "the synne of anger" (X.533) is thus particularly suitable as it engages many matters central to the narratives, meanings, and structural logic of Chaucer's text through the interplay of responses it evokes: it demonstrates the dynamic of an active sign communicating through and being forged by experience; it helps define the tales' differing moralities; and, it leads the reader through and beyond the individual moralities to a consideration of the composite wisdom of the frame tales and of that wisdom which underlies and ultimately transcends the text itself as that "wit and goodnesse" which proceeds from "oure Lord Jhesu Crist" (X.1081).

As a feature of both admirable and less than admirable characters in the tales, anger or ire is also, perhaps, the most wide-spread immoderate

emotive response in The Tales as a whole. In the wisdom frame, for instance, Palamon and Arcite become sworn enemies through anger and even engage in near mortal combat because of it (I.1187ff., 1576ff.), while Arcite, young, passionate, and a servant of Mars (I.1997) becomes immoderately and unreasonably wroth on several occasions and always with disastrous consequences (e.g. I.1596ff.). Similarly, anger causes Melibee to rage irrationally both outwardly (VII. 1008f.) and inwardly (VII. 1698ff.), and it makes him want to avenge himself unmercifully upon his enemies even after his wife's good counsel (VII.1834f.). Theseus, on the other hand, demonstrates a righteous wrath against "the tiraunt Creon" (I.960ff.) as well as a justifiable, but moderated anger against Palamon and Arcite (I.1762ff.), while Prudence, like the Parson (I. 521ff.), feigns anger for good effect (VII.1687ff.). Figuring prominently in many of the minor tales and characters' descriptions as well (e.g. the Reeve's, the Summoner's, even "The Man of Law's Tale"), ire thus encompasses not only many aspects of humanity's nature and situation, but even something of its remedy: as the Parson indicates, and as both he and Prudence demonstrate (I.521ff., VII.1706ff.), there exists a "goode Ire" which is "wrooth withouten bitterness; nat wrooth agayns the man, but wrooth with the mysdede of the man," and which, being gracious ("with debonairetee"), may lead to man's healthful correction (X.539f.; cf. I.521ff., X.625ff.).

"A philosopre ... greetly amoeved": Mercy Rejoicing Against Judgment

In discussing "ire" as a principal sin, the Parson considers both aspects, commending the first and condemning the second as a "cursed vice" which "bynymeth from man his wit and his resoun, and al his debonaire lif

espiritueel that sholde kepen his soul" (X.559)--reason being a significant predicator of true order and right lordship (X.260ff.). Yet, in keeping with his theory that no sin is unforgivable and that every sin may be redeemed through penitence (X.1072ff.; excepting, of course, the unpardonable sin, 1 John 5:16), the Parson does not simply condemn anger or leave its remedies vague, undefined, and exemplified only in the perfect Son of God (663ff.). Instead, he advocates practical and possible manifestations of "suffrance" (X.663ff.) and closes his discussion of ire by illustrating how even a professedly wise man might better read himself, his circumstances, and his behaviour in a truer fashion for more rightly referential and relational ends. Through a story of a master and an offending student, the Parson parallels both Theseus' encounters with the young knights and Melibee's responses to the transgressors (I.1742ff., VII.1806ff.). Advancing the rationales of the earlier wisdom tales for the restraint of justifiable anger and for forgiveness into a fully Christian context (I.1773ff., V.1876ff.), the Parson demonstrates a unique instance of "gentil mercy" passing right (I.3089; cf. Jas. 3:13b) through which he subtly reinforces the ultimate referentiality of all individuals, the need for all of humanity to fulfill the mutual function of instruction, and the necessary effect of right reading and right response to self as well as to others as significant, though perhaps erring, signs in the broad order of Christ's love.

Telling his story to reinforce his instruction, then, the Parson--who, for the most part, provides the moral commentary of The Tales--completes the process of story and meaning by glossing his own exposition with a narrative. He recounts a tale of a "philosophre upon a tyme" who, "greetly amoeved" for the "grete trespass" of "his disciple," intended to beat the

youth (X.670). On the surface, such a response seems at least as legitimate an action as Theseus' and Melibee's rages with their respective offenders. A "maister," after all, stands in loco parentis, teaching and directing the student, thereby making himself responsible for not just the student's successes, but his (or her) indiscretions as well; and, a student, having submitted to the authority of a teacher, should therefore conduct himself (or herself) accordingly. If the student falters or errs, it would seem, then, that it is not unreasonable for the said master to chasten him (or her)-- especially given the fact that the student's misdeed not only undermines his (or her) own moral development, but brings disrepute upon the teacher, giving the master a personal as well as a professional stake in the pupil's conduct. Correction should, therefore, be for the student's benefit (with the good of the teacher being an incidental by-product)--at least ideally.

Thus it is in the Parson's story that the philosopher states, in response to the youth's fearful "What thenke ye do?," that he intends a "scour[ing]" for good, for the pupil's "correcioun"--as, apparently, a form of pedagogic "tough love" (X.671). Yet, the Parson also suggests that the anger of the teacher (an excess of emotion from injured self-interest), and not his feigned concern for his charge arising from a pure love of Christ (the only acceptable motive for good action in the Parson's order, X.365ff.) may be the motivation for the master's particular "correcioun" of his student. It seems that even in light of the student's great misdoing, the master's response is inappropriate, both against the "paciencie" of Christ and against the models of "the olde payens" (X.663ff., 669). Indicating, perhaps, a Melibee-like self-righteousness and self-assurance in his own moral superiority through his position as an offended authority figure, the

master's anger thus seems to cause him to misread the deeper and more personally affective spiritual truths and consequences of the situation, so that he makes to punish where he ought to guide. As Scripture specifies in 2 Timothy:

it bihoueth the seruaunt of the Lord to chide not; but to be mylde to alle men, able to teche, paciente, with temperaunce repreuyng hem that ayenstonden the treuthe, that sum tyme God yyue to hem forthenkyng, that thei knowen the treuthe, and that thei rise ayen fro the snares of the devel, of whom thei ben holdun prisoneris at his wille. (2 Tim. 2:24ff., WB, II, emphasis added; cf. Gal. 6:1, Tit. 3:2)

At the very least, then, in his haste to punish the offender (rather than truly to affect him for good), the master clearly fails to exercise his spiritual virtues, especially "pacience"--that "vertu that suffreth swetely every mannes goodnesse, and is nat wrooth for noon harm that is doon to hym" (X.659).

In his brief embedded tale, then, the Parson suggests that such lack of "pacience"--especially in one holding authority--is not a light thing in a referential and relational order supposedly informed by the love of God. Rather, it seems to be indicative of much more serious matters: seeing "pacience" as a necessary precursor to obedience ("Of pacience comth obedience," X.673), the Parson seems to imply that if a man does not have practical and demonstrable "pacience" in his dealings with others (especially with his subordinates over whom he has power), he is not and cannot be "obedient to Crist and to alle hem to which he oghte been obedient in Crist" (X.673), for "Obedience generally is to parfourne the doctrine of God" (X.676; a doctrine elsewhere identified as love and "pitee," X.124,

888), the correct love of God being that manifest by one who loves God "in swich manere that al that evere he dooth is in the love of God" (X.383, emphasis added; cf. 1 Cor. 13). Accordingly, one who has not "paciencie" with and for an offending underling, or an individual who is not willing to "suffreth debonairely all the outrages of adversitee and every wikked word" (X.559f.), seems--in the Parson's referential schema--to evidence a compromised love for God and, therefore, to be in sin himself, as much in need of "correccioun" for the good of his soul as the offending youth (X.365ff.; cf. discussion of Melibee above). Returning to the Parson's example of the sinking ship, "although ther be a difference bitwixe thise two causes of drenchynge, algates the ship is dreynt" (X.364; see above): offending youth and angry, offended "maister."

Illustrating a Classical truth quoted by Prudence and demonstrated in Theseus' speech which allows instructive signification not only to lesser animate beings (VII.1071ff.), but even to rocks and towns (I.3021ff.), the Parson has the wayward youth in the story instruct the teacher, reminding the man in authority of the proper order of things wherein a master is expected to exemplify more fully and more practically than his pupil the precepts, love, "paciencie," and other virtues that a privileged philosophy and a "philosophre" profess. Like the transgressors in "The Tale of Melibee," the youth, through his wrongdoing and his recognition of it, creates an opportunity for his master to demonstrate a Prudence-like virtue of initiating reconciliation. When, under the distress of the offense, the teacher proves inadequate to the task of living the philosophy he espouses, the student becomes not just a passive occasion, but an explicit, engaging expression of that which his master teaches. Not excusing his own deeds,

but fearful for his safety, he calls his master into question concerning his intentions. He becomes, in effect, an engaging and fully communicative sign in word and deed--even in his folly--of that which is right and true in a sense fuller than mere justice. Drawing his master to a practical exercise of the good through a coerced "paciencie," the youth engages his master almost confrontationally from his desperation: "'For sothe,' quod the child, 'ye oghten first correcte youreself, that han lost al youre paciencie for the gilt of a child'" (X.672; see discussion of kara' as an actively engaging signification in Chapter 2).

The master, self-righteous but not recalcitrant, proves willing to learn from a youth and to be instructed even by a wrongdoer. He responds to the words and example of his pupil, receives the rebuke to his profit and acts upon it, both to redress his own error within himself and to restore his authority as a worthy model for his student, as one to whom the youth might be "obeisaunt in all rightwisenesse" (X.676, emphasis added; the question of morally valid authority being a central matter in the Fourteenth century, see Chapter 4): "'For sothe,' quod the maister al wepyngge, 'thow seyest sooth. Have thow the yerde, my deere sone, and correcte me for myn inpaciencie'" (X.673). That is, the master submits himself to the underling he would have punished, for the "correcioun" of the anger that prevented him from "suffr[ing] swetely alle the annoyaunces and the wronges that men doon to man outward" (X.656). Going beyond the "mercy" of either Theseus or Melibee, the master of the Parson's story seems to recognize that, as a man in authority and a professed exemplar of moral virtue through his role as teacher, his was the greater sin (cf. Lk. 12:48, Jas. 3:1f.). Accordingly, the "maister" takes to himself the punishment he had been so hasty to mete out to his offending student. Regaining through repentance and

"satisfacion" that which he had lost through anger and "inpacience," the master thus corrects his own moral lapse "gladly and hastily, with good herte entirely" (X.675) and so returns to "parfit" obedience, right relations with God and man, and regained personal governance. And, with this renewed state of virtue, he also regains the moral authority he had effectively relinquished through conduct unbecoming a man of professedly mature virtue.

Using this short narrative of the offended teacher and an offending student, the Parson reinforces for The Tales the principle of universal signification which was introduced in "The Knight's Tale" and which was extended to transgressors in "The Tale of Melibee." He also expands the potentially significant value of a wrongdoer by indicating how he or she, too, may be an occasion, passively and actively, for the growth in truth of his or her superiors--however ironic this might seem to those who are supposedly spiritually advanced (cf. 1 Cor. 1:25ff., esp. vv. 27f.). Further, the Parson places upon each individual, regardless of social or moral status, the same measure of wisdom: that of the forgiving and longsuffering "pacience," love, and of the example of Christ (X.663ff.). And, he emphasizes again the importance of a true and referential reading of self and circumstances, warning of the dangers of hasty judgment and of moral self-exaltation in hindering true perception of deep and affective spiritual realities. Making self-governance and right relations once again an explicit means to and evidence of one's right (or wrong) reading and reference, then, the Parson depicts his wisdom (or, at least that one small aspect of it having to do with anger, "mansuetude," and "pacience") as a wholly referential and immediately significant expression of the heart of

man in relation to God and, ideally, as an invitation to others to participate in that relation and That which informs it.

"The Parson's Tale" thus brings wisdom, signification, and practical, responsive morality together in a more explicit fashion than, but to the same end as, the other tales of the wisdom frame. Yet, though a privileged voice in that it is the last of the tellings and a statement of the conventional morality of the period, "The Parson's Tale" does not seem intended as an exclusive moral code or as a definitive end of The Tales. Certainly, it directs both Chaucer the narrator and the reader most explicitly in the ways of wisdom, shaping final responses (intra- and extra-textual). But, though the way of wisdom that "The Parson's Tale" expounds is "ful convenable" (X.80), it remains, nevertheless, only one of many ways of wisdom presented in the tales (at least three of which appear authoritative), simply expounding much of what the others illustrate. What it most contributes, then, as the last intra-textual amplification of a normative wisdom context for the work, is the encompassing, active, and demanding law of an explicitly involved and loving Creator God who truly desires and works for the salvation of all. Beginning and ending with such a God, the wisdom of this last tale is intended to be effective and hopeful: its end is restoration, in this life and the next (X.1076ff.); it provides a detailed instruction for the process and an introduction to the One who is ready to assist in it (X.1072ff); and, its logic, from Source through means to End, is informed by a personal, affective, and transformative law of love and "pitee" (X.124, 889). "The Firste Moevere" (I.2987), "oure Lord God of hevene" (VII.1106), "the curteis Lord Jhesu Crist" (X.246), as well as their respective moralities and patterns of signification, thus come together in

the wisdom of this final tale, developing both the complementary and increasingly affective schemas of reference and signification of The Tales as a whole.

Conclusion: Responding to the Wisdom

Realizing in each of its tales certain fundamental similarities (such as a rationalistic foundation and form, a referential ethic derived from and directing both character and reader to the Divine, and a dependence upon established authorities for argumentation and support), the wisdom frame of The Tales suggests the defining moral parameters for the work as a whole. It argues that, while the apparently intended moral meaning of The Tales entire is not contained in toto by these three tales, together they provide adequate points of reference by which the reader might discern a pattern of moral development and triangulate the likely moral intent of the author for the work as a whole, both by following the model of response provided by Chaucer the narrator in the "Retractions" and by effecting a personal synthesis from the various truths privileged in each of the central tales. Though individually refracting the Truth through their own peculiarities of genre, speaker, and philosophy, these tales--when read together--thus seem to provide a comprehensive, transformative, and referential moral context and framework for the complete and composite text. What is left for the reader, then, is to bring these three visions of morality together. He or she must construct from his or her interrelations a synthesis of the broader, almost trans-textual ethos which incorporates the particular truths inherent in each central tale while, at the same time, responding to the cumulative and corporate demands of that Truth which is always greater than

the sum of the parts.

The movement of the wisdom frame itself gives some direction to the reader in this as it moves him or her from the multitude of voices in "The Knight's Tale," through the dialogue in "The Tale of Melibee," to the monologue of "The Parson's Tale." Each of these encapsulates a distinctive, successive, and complementary social, cultural, and historical context for man's efforts to understand, respond to, and actualize something of a higher, referential, and affective truth in his life. As such, the tales assume a significance greater than that of mere tellings. They become not only stories or "signs" in their own right, but key aspects of an underlying and significant pattern. Inviting response, they provide the reader with a structural frame necessary to decode the moral meaning of The Tales as a whole. Providing one, primary example of The Tales' transformational logic, they work together towards the unfolding of a single, comprehensive, and affective vision of wisdom. And, through the final response they evoke from Chaucer the narrator, they provide a model after which the reader might fashion his or her own response to and participation in The Tales' structure and meaning. In effect, they ask for and illustrate the necessary "encoding" of one's own understanding of the text's truth and wisdoms into one's life and through one's actions to arrive, ultimately, at the text's final end.

Chapter 6

"Interpreted in a True Fashion and Used in a Holy Way":

The Structures of Combative Complementarity

For why my thouytis ben not youre thouytis, and my weies ben not
 youre weies, seith the Lord

For ye schulen go out in gladnesse, and ye schulen be led forth in
 pees; mounteyns and litel hillis schulen synge heriynges before you, and
 alle the trees of the cuntrei schulen make ioie with hond.

A fir tre schal grow for a firse, and a mirte tre schal wexe for a
 nettil; and the Lord schal be nemyd in to a signe euerlastynge, that
 schal not be doon awei [I, "and the Lord schal be named in to an euer
 lastende tochne, that shal not ben don awei"].

(Is. 55:8, 12-13; WB, II)

Introduction: "Every Part Dirryveth from his Hool"

Were The Canterbury Tales to consist only of "The General Prologue," the wisdom tales, and the "Retractions," it would still easily stand with other contemporary texts such as Confessio amantis and Piers Plowman for it brings the principal cultural influences of the age together in a complementary whole and effectively marries didacticism with narrative. Like these other texts, a partial, morally weighted Tales would spell out the teachings of sanctioned authoritates and direct the reader towards final ends through familiar moral norms. An adequate indicative sign after the manner of Augustine even without its more "myrie" elements, the work would convey the right and the good as the word bos leads from an ox to the care of an evangelist (OCD 2.15; see Chapter 2). The form, logic, and effect of The Tales entire, though, are not so facile. Seeming to depend less on the simple, linear signification of conventional norms than on the complex, associative, and efficacious sign theory and logic of the Hebrew Scriptures as expounded by Nicholas of Lyra and made contemporarily relevant by John Wyclif, The Canterbury Tales does not only instruct but, like Scripture, engages and transforms its reader. Accordingly, The Tales does not just state its ideals and assume them to be accepted on the authority of its teller. Rather, it presents within its normative frame internal tales--pieces of a moral puzzle, as it were--which deviate variously from the ideal, according to the reader both the privilege and the responsibility of aligning them meaningfully.

Through the intra-textual structural and conceptual relations such diversity occasions, The Tales challenges, refines, even contradicts its own ostensible norms, trying the very wisdom principles its frame propounds.

Not explicitly resolving the apparent contradictions that arise, the text simply poses possibilities for its parts: it leaves their precise relationships as well as their intended final effect open, an invitation to the reader to complete them as he or she will. Noting a related commonplace of reader response theory when he comments on the plethora of possible meanings for The Tales, Minnis writes: "A single text [in The Canterbury Tales] can have different kinds of meaning depending on the kind of reader, or the kind of reading in which the reader is engaged at a given time" (xvi; emphasis added). He goes on, however, to resist (to the disadvantage of his own reading of The Tales) that which is absolutely essential to an appropriately medieval theory of reader response: the one, normative End to which texts are directed. Missing (or rejecting) this point, he misreads the very element of Chaucer's structure which allows the diversity of tales and of meanings in interaction to convey, together and ultimately, one single, preferred, and intended meaning. Correctly observing the method, he nevertheless neglects the intended end and effect of it. Consequently, he misconstrues the text's direct engagement of the reader as an open invitation to total subjectivity when, in fact, it is intended to guide the reader to and through an affective, referential unity of composite truths for referential good. Fashioned by active and catholic signification, this unity and good are, in turn, under the discreet direction of the wisdom frame of the text, which itself forms a contained moral imperative that also invites the reader to discern, articulate, and respond to its truths. Thus, in noting but disclaiming the explicit command to "Taketh the moralite, goode men" (CT VII.3440; Minnis xvii), Minnis seems to discount wilfully the value of normative wisdom. He suggests that while a wise man might "Taketh the fruyt" (VII.3443), that does not mean that he or anyone necessarily

should or must (xvi)--an interestingly modernist approach to a distinctively medieval text. Chaucer's open structure, of course, allows for such willful "folye"--as do his Classical, Jewish, and Christian models (NE 1.3, Dt. 30:19, Sir. 15:16f., I Cor. 6:12, 10:23). What Chaucer's text does not do, however, is recommend it. And, a reading of The Tales according to such willful rejection of the good as well as of the text's own direction concerning it will, inevitably, fail to find the work's unified truth: it will leave the parts, like parables and other partial signs, seemingly without a coherent context or effective literal meaning in and of itself (cf. Nicholas of Lyra, "Third Prologue" 48ff.).

For instance, the practical relevance of right reference for wise conduct and true meaning is progressively delineated in the wisdom frame (see Chapter 5). Yet, the tales contained by the frame often negate it (fabliaux), use it to social advantage (romances), dismiss it (tales of compound form, i.e. "The Nun's Priest's," "The Friar's"), or depict it as encouraging fanaticism (e.g. tales with heavenly-minded characters of little earthly good, i.e. Griselda, Nicholas). Assaulting the norm that contains them, such variants aggressively undermine formulaic articulations of the right and the good--conventional dimensions of wisdom--and demand re-assessment of key concepts, such as reference, in light of diverse environments. Given such internal conflicts of signification and the lack of overt resolution by the author, the reader may seem free to accept and endorse any such partially dysfunctional reading which is in accord with his or her predilections and with some surface literal meaning of the text. Thus, a reader might argue from "The Miller's Tale" alone that Chaucer was a hedonist, delighting in cheerful a-morality. Or, he or she might determine

that Chaucer thought it right to oppress women ("The Clerk's Tale") or men ("The Wife of Bath's Prologue") and to vilify Jews ("The Prioress's Tale") or Turks ("The Man of Law's Tale") all in the name of God. A reading of The Tales according to its unique "mature grammar" and logic, however--as with such a reading of Scripture--would seem to advise something quite other.

Nicholas' reading of Matthew 5:30, for instance, suggests that sometimes the apparent surface sense of a passage is far from its true, literal meaning: according to Nicholas, purity of association, not personal mutilation, seems to be the literal sense of Jesus' words ("Third Prologue" 63ff.). Similarly, in regard to the nature of true reference in The Tales, the wise reader does not simply grasp one part of a story as "the truth." Rather, he or she makes organic associations among the tales, allowing the rationale of the text to unfold, developing as it does so a coherent truth which accounts not just for one or another simple variation of an ideal, but for the total intent of the author as discernible from the complex significations of all contained signs--from the sundry demands of relations, human and divine, to the pleasures of flesh and wit. Developing as much from these peccant variants as from the norm itself, The Tales' full meaning and referentiality thus embrace both the diversity of the tales and the reader's encounters with them to become an ethically rich, affective impetus and end for the text entire. Dependent upon an ongoing synthesis of text and response, then, "right reading" in The Tales--as in Chaucer's more Biblically oriented predecessors--is eminently referential, revealing the total meaning of the work to be consistent with, but greater than the truths of the frame as it encompasses both the interaction and the effect of the diverse parts working together within an organic whole for ultimate and transformative signification.

Combative Complementarity: Text and Context

Such combative complementarity of parts for effective higher ends arises largely from the compound structures created for each text by the peculiar logic of The Tales as a whole. Juxtaposing diverse forms within a defining frame, this logic is organic, based upon and growing from the active, equal signification of all signs, regardless of configuration. It accounts for all truths, however limited or oblique in articulation, as part of and revealing something of the greater Truth which engages and evokes response from its recipient. Allowing that these signs may convey more than one, limited truth as they act to reveal the larger Truth and depending upon the variety and complexity of their contexts, such logic permits each tale to convey or be part of several equally valid meanings at once, each expressing that which the author seems to intend for a text in a given context. Such compound "literal" truths include: that of a tale alone; that of a tale in intra-textual composites; that of a tale in relation to the wisdom frame; and, from these, that of a tale within the whole. Each such contextualized meaning is firmly located in the narrative of The Tales: all that is necessary for its signification is present in, or explicitly suggested by, the tales themselves, rather than some extra-textual authority, tradition, or interpretation. Each further literal meaning of any one tale thus emerges structurally from within the work, developing from a shift of intra-textual context, not from a shift of conceptual realm (i.e. to the allegorical, tropological, or anagogical).

Furthering the development of The Tales' total meaning, then, the several literals of each tale may be read as fleshing out the moral contours

as well as the process and end of the frame's practical wisdom without violating basic textual forms. The first truth of "The Miller's Tale," for instance, is that of a bawdy story told by a "cherle" "in his manere" (I.3169ff.). Generically and independently, the tale suspends conventional morality as it tells "harlotrie" for "game" (I.3855ff.). But, when it is taken with other tales, the textual environs of "The Miller's Tale" are re-cast and its meaning and morality become contingent upon the contexts in which the tale is considered. Against the other fabliaux in The Tales, for example, the tale is "a noble tale for the nones" (I.3126). With the romance that it "quite[s]" (I.3127), it is "nyce case" against a "noble storie" (I.3855, 3111). And, with any tale of "gentillesse ... moralitee and hoolynesse" (I.3179), it seems decadent, of ethical value only in the moral chiaroscuro it effects (i.e. Fragment I). Yet, even at the highest level of context and signification--that of the wisdom issues--the tale demonstrates an oddly positive moral value which is wholly predicated upon its genre and narrative truth. Engaging concerns of self in a serviceable (if self-indulgent) fashion, this "cherles tale" presents the joys of flesh and wit as a central feature of the human condition, as vital as right reference for balanced, practical wisdom. In effect, it adds a "wisdom of the flesh" to the mix of The Tales as a whole, demonstrating (albeit carnally) a figure in the flesh of such promised delights of heaven and pains of hell as the blessing of "freendes" and love "in the prosperitee of this lyf" (cf. X.199, 203). Its essential and literal truth remaining that of a fabliau throughout the course and structure of The Tales, then, the generic form and function of "The Miller's Tale" is never belied or "allegorized" by the shifts in contexts which it undergoes. Rather, it is continually transformed and translated to higher ends. Under the workings

of The Tales' unique structural logic, the tale is thus not so unlike (though considerably more bawdy than) the Song of Songs: it is variously, literally, and at once a-moral, immoral, and functionally moral (if partial), while at the same time a constant--if indirect--sign of the higher good as it tells a story, catalogues carnality, and celebrates the self.

The Several Literals of The Tales: Genres, First Truths, and Re-castings

Defined by genre and teller, the textual or narrative truth of any tale is thus essentially whole and complete in itself. The principal vehicle of the tale's initial meaning, this truth remains literally true despite any contextual permutations it may undergo. Even when the tale is read with other texts, then, this independent signification is not negated, but merely re-cast, becoming part of a larger truth rather than a partial, self-contained whole in its own right. With such re-casting, though, a tale's ostensible valuation may undergo either subtle or radical alteration as tales of the same genre refine, enhance, or redress its narrative signification, and as tales of other genres treat its first meaning more roughly, controverting, rather than complementing its form and meaning. When ultimately re-cast as a contributory aspect of the entire work, the tale may even assume a value in context which seems wholly other than its initial meaning--though often within the context of the wisdom frame the intrinsic aspects of a tale's first signification is (perhaps oddly) re-affirmed (see the study of "The Clerk's Tale" below). Within each new textual circumstance, then, a tale's literal meaning undergoes a transformation, assuming different significations as it serves unique functions in various textual relationships. Such intra-textual relations

serve to essentialize a tale, to strip away its generic comparisons, as they expose its moral or literary insufficiencies and reveal more clearly its immanent truths, using them--with those of other tales--to triangulate a more encompassing, and therefore truer, meaning.

In The Tales, the initial, generically determined values of the parts fall mainly into three principal classes: those of the religious tales, those of the romances, and those of the fabliaux. Cultivating the tripartite form of The Tales' wisdom, these categories dominate the work's internal structure, moralities, and wisdoms as each genre tries the limits and tests the applications of one dimension of the frame's truths: the religious tales, accentuating the referential, concern themselves primarily with ends and motivations; the romances, emphasizing the relational, focus upon the responsive and manifest; and, the fabliaux, celebrating the wiles and delights of flesh and wit, privilege matters of the self. Each contributes something--whether by refinement, reinforcement, equivocity, or, more often, carefully constructed absences, negative examples, and subtle permutations of an ideal--to the logic and meaning of the whole. And, through every such presentation or interaction, each tale also directly engages the reader, working to reveal the essential unity of thought, structure, and moral vision discernible in and effective through The Canterbury Tales as a whole. Specifically, the tales, independently and together, call upon the reader to receive their texts, to discern their essential verities, and to reconcile their disparities for more comprehensive moral ends. In effect, the tales in action invite the reader to respond to the intellectual and moral demands occasioned by each text in its various contexts and final, as well as stated, ends.

Illustrating one of these principal genres, "The Clerk's Tale" is a superb example of the several literal meanings that can arise from a single text according to the logic and end of The Tales. Told by an idealized Clerk, well-versed in classical "logyk ... longe ygo" (I.285ff.), it "reads" its audience into its narrative through its teller, genre, and story. In the process, it engages the reader with its form, meaning, and effect, making the reader--through his or her response--part of its composition and initial literal meaning. In turn, the tale leads the reader back out into the broader work through its various contextualized values, involving him or her not only in the tale, but in the shaping, expression, and effect of the larger text and its truths as well. This chapter examines the method and nature of the often surprising contributions made to higher truths and ends through this and other tales. Briefly outlining the relationship of independent meanings to the structure of The Tales entire, it explicates the textual and contextual significations as well as the structural interactions and implications of individual tales' literal meanings (the chapter also includes an examination of "The Knight's Tale," an exemplar of the relational aspect of wisdom characteristic of the romances). As a principal expression of wisdom, "The Knight's Tale" is dealt with extensively in Chapter 5, but the tale merits consideration here as well for its specifically contextual value not only as a romance, but as a wisdom tale interfacing with internal tales. The reading of "The Knight's Tale" in context demonstrates that even the tales of the wisdom frame are part of, and not simply a context for, the organic and affective structure shaped by the interactive, literal narratives.

Concluding with a examination of the moral and effective structure of "The Nun's Priest's Tale," a structural microcosm of The Tales, this last

chapter is thus a practicum for a reading of The Tales "from within," according to the work's apparently inherent transformational logic of parts as well as its almost "Scriptural" form and apparent intent (cf. VII.3441ff., X.1083; Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:11; Nicholas "Third Prologue" 10ff.). Concerned primarily with example rather than explication (the proper matter of earlier chapters of this thesis), this chapter attempts to demonstrate something of the narrative, moral, and structural effect of the catholic signification and the "mature grammar" operative in The Tales by demonstrating some of the compositional principles and rules of engagement which involve the reader and shape the text for a morally efficacious effect. Followed by a brief epilogue considering the popular reception of Chaucer's works in his age (as well as the moral and literary response which even his early, less mature, works evoked among his contemporaries) and in our own, this chapter closes the thesis with a synoptic comment on the author's likely intent for his work as evidenced in his use of the peculiarly encompassing sign theory and logic available to him through the Biblical work of Nicholas of Lyra and John Wyclif.

"The Knight's Tale" in Context: The Complementary Development of an Ideal

First in The Tales, first in the wisdom frame, "The Knight's Tale" is also the first of the text's interactive internal components. As a wisdom text, though, "The Knight's Tale" may seem beyond the intra-textual development discussed above. It is, after all, a normative conceptual "buoy" for the entire work. Yet, as seen in Chapter Five, its wisdom is subject to advancement, both within the text itself and in relation to the other wisdom tales. Being the conceptual and moral foundation for the frame

as well as the first of all tales, then, "The Knight's Tale" not surprisingly establishes many of the issues central to later versions of the wise, the good, and the right. Particularly, it depicts a classically grounded wisdom of acquired personal honour, merciful human relations, and effectual awareness of the referential as fundamental to practical wisdom and necessary to all good acts, true signs, and rightly read meanings. These concerns link "The Knight's Tale" inherently to the rest of the tales as each tale expounds, positively or negatively, something of such matters. By far, most of the intra-textual relations are positive as many internal tales, and certainly the other romances, explicitly reinforce the practical ideals of social wisdom touched upon or suggested by, but perhaps not much developed by, the Knight. Such ideals include freedom ("The Man of Law's Tale"), gentillesse ("The Wife of Bath's Tale"), trouthe ("The Franklin's Tale"), and pitee ("The Parson's Tale"). "The Knight's Tale" being acclaimed by all as "a noble storie/And worthy for to drawn to memorie," particularly by "the gentils everichon" (I.3110ff.), thus provides many of the essential concepts in germe of expressed wisdom and virtue later amplified throughout the text.

Even tales that seem to contradict the virtues of "The Knight's Tale" do not in fact undermine its truths, but simply re-cast them variously. "The Miller's Tale," for example, seems to celebrate physicality against the Knight's ideal of spiritual love. Its gleeful carnality, however, is no more perverse than Arcite's early words and actions. "[H]ende Nicholas" declares to Alisoun "Ywis, but if ich have my wille,/For derne love of thee, lemman, I spille" (I.3277f.): this is but a more graphic, experiential, and "punny" variation on Arcite's adaptation of sanctioned authority as he quotes "the olde clerkes sawe" about "who shal yeve a love a lawe?" as

he glosses the proverb with a personal reading that justifies breaking "positif lawe and swich decree" since, after all, "A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed;/He may nat fleen it, though he sholde be deed" (I.1164ff.; cf. I&C 4.618). Both responses are equally far removed in essence from the intent and context of Boethius' words ("Quis legem det amantibus?/Maior lex amor est sibi," Cons. of Phil. 2.3.5), from those of Chaucer's own translation of Boethius ("... what is he that may yeven a lawe to loveryes? Love is a grettere lawe and a strengere to hymself thanne any lawe that man mai yyven," Boece 3.m12.52-55), and from the greater truth concerning law and love ("love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes," Boece 2.m8.24-25). Not unlike Arcite's growth into wisdom, then, the Miller's delight in the flesh may also be read as reinforcing (albeit less directly) the ultimate principles of right ends, expressions, and effects, for Arcite and the lovers of "The Miller's Tale" share an initial and essential motivation--love, however misdirected--though the paths of their respective "virtues" differ considerably.

Thus, Arcite, a passionate young man, is led by experience and a man of informed wisdom to realize, prefer, and contribute to a social harmony in accord with the natural order of "the faire cheyne of love" (I.2987ff.; cf. Aquinas, "The end of every law [regardless of medium or articulation] is to make men just and virtuous," ST 1/2. quaes. 107, art. 2). The lovers of "The Miller's Tale," on the other hand, are also passionate, but--lacking both guide and experience--have their actions planned by conniving, lustful youths and end their "aventure" in a boorish, but benign, comic scene. Because of the obvious wisdom influence, Arcite's actions eventually--though somewhat circuitously--lead to an explicit accord with the "law of love": though by forfeiture rather than choice, his love does eventually "halt

logidres peples joyned with an hooly bond, and knytteth sacrament of mariages of chaste loves" (Boece 2.8.22ff.; cf. CT I.3094ff.). The love in "The Miller's Tale," on the other hand, lacks an overt wisdom component and seems to lead to the little more than a pleasurable cuckolding (I.3652ff.), personal insult and injury (I.3730ff.), and public humiliation for the carpenter (I.3840ff.). Yet, "The Miller's Tale" also leads to a harmony of sorts. Closing not with "matrimoine ... blisse and melodye" (I.3095ff.), but with a "frontier justice" appropriate to a "cherles tale," it--like "The Knight's Tale"--restores the status quo, ending in just deserts and goodwill all around: though John is confused and becomes the local butt, he is little harmed and, apparently, Alison's continued marriage to John is punishment enough for her (I.3840ff.)

Happily actualizing what Arcite wrongheadedly pursues in anger, "The Miller's Tale" is thus a celebration of one limited--but nonetheless valid--aspect of love, the physical. As such it is an ironic, if base, complement to the good of "The Knight's Tale" and it concludes with a blessing much like the Knight's (I.3854, 3107f.) which brings the telling of tales back to the same higher ends as its more noble predecessor--though, as is suggested by the variation in wording of their shared blessing (e.g. "rowte" vs. "compaignye"), "The Miller's Tale" presents a rougher, more earthy version of it. As a distinct, cultural, and generic "quyting" of "The Knight's Tale," then, "The Miller's Tale" may be read as a social adaptation, rather than a simple contradiction of certain of the Knight's ideals--an extension, in effect, of one aspect of its virtue, if not its full and affective wisdom, into the realm of the "cherl."

In most of the internal tales, though, the re-contextualization and elaboration of the ideals of "The Knight's Tale" are less subtle. Most tales, including those of the frame and other religious texts, openly support conventional aspects of the wisdom and meaning delineated by "The Knight's Tale," advancing or sanctifying them as their genres or textual proclivities dictate. The tales of its own genre, though, deal most positively with the truths of "The Knight's Tale," for the romances form perhaps the least aggressive context in which a tale may be read: reflecting the usually gentil nature of their tellers, they--as the Franklin says of himself--"wol ... nat contrarien in no wyse" (V.705), even as they work truths cross-textually. Thus, unlike other genres such as the fabliaux or even the religious tales which interact more rigorously, the romances in The Tales engage and adapt intra-textual significations through open complementarity or equivocity rather than contradiction, contrast, or violent juxtaposition, preferring to reinforce and develop, rather than undermine. Such gentle interactions are perhaps best exemplified by the Franklin's seque from "The Squire's Tale" to his own. Commending the Squire's poetic skill and promise of eloquence, the Franklin comments not on the tale, but on the man: he celebrates the Squire's "discrecioun" and potential, even as he makes explicit note of the boy's youth as a mitigating factor in the (obviously relative) merit of his telling (V. 685, 675). The principle of the romances seems to be, say something nice (or something difficult under positive guise) or say nothing at all.

While requiring and delivering curteisie of engagement, this principle in no way hobbles the tales' development or amendment of earlier concepts--interactions which, after all, are as necessary to the meaning of

the parts, romances included, as to the whole. In "The Wife of Bath's Tale," for example, the hag's exposition of gentillesse occasions a new consideration of the wisdom of "The Knight's Tale." Altering the valuation of humans within the sign system of the universe, "The Wife of Bath's Tale" contributes an amplified sign theory, explicitly informed by God and demanding expression, to the original paradigm of wisdom. It depicts "man and womman" not as indicative signs in "the feire cheyne of love," like unto trees and stones and rivers in signification (I.3017ff.), but as volitional signs, able to act and mean in ways consistent with or contrary to the nature of creation. On this point, the hag draws a most tellingly unfavourable contrast between human and natural signs, such as fire, which automatically and invariably perform the "operacioun" for which they were created (cf. OCD 2.1): "genterye," she says, "Is nat annexed to possessioun,/ Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun/Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde" (III.1146ff.; the "burning bush," Ex. 3:2ff., notwithstanding). As more appropriate to observed human nature (III.1150ff.), therefore, she makes not the mere fact of being created, but an individual's chosen conduct, "Pryvee and apert" (III.1114), the agency of human signification. She specifies that human signs must be active, reading the signs of self and others rightly to discern true virtue from "Swich arrogance ... nat worth an hen" (III.1112ff.). She states that they must be specifically referential, acknowledging the Source of all manifest worth (III.1163f.). And, she insists that they must be responsive, "writing" out that which informs them through deeds, for according to the hag (and her sources; cf. Seneca Ep. 44.2ff., Boece 3.pr4), he or she alone "is gentil that dooth gentil dedis" (III.1170; cf. Convivio 4.1.101f.). For the hag, practical wisdom as an expression of the good thus becomes more a function

of a properly activated will than of maturity--Aristotle's primary criterion (NE 6.8). And, making humanity more responsible as sign and agent, she imposes upon it a moral and significant mandate which assumes deeper personal, spiritual, and social dimensions.

Effectively re-casting the nature and consequences of social folly from an issue of youth versus maturity to a matter of willful sin against chosen virtue, "The Wife of Bath's Tale" in relation to "The Knight's Tale" thus creates a new context of signification which "re-reads" the literal value of the first narrative from that of a comprehensive whole, sufficiently moral in its own right, to that of an important, but contributory part of a greater whole with a distinctive, composite significance--much as occurs when the Hebrew Scriptures become "The Old Testament": the words, stories, and essential truths remain the same, but their meanings assume new dimensions in light of the second text (cf. Rashi and Nicholas of Lyra on Ps. 2). While the textual repercussions of such a translation from whole to part are many, its effect upon the literal signification of the first text is most pronounced. For "The Knight's Tale," it re-contextualizes both virtue and metaphysical context, juxtaposing the organic, evolutio process of "The Knight's Tale" whereby a youth grows into wisdom with the more absolute conversio understanding of "gentil" and "churlish" as opposites in "The Wife of Bath's Tale." The new context seems to read the movement from folly to wisdom, as represented by the young men and Theseus, not as an experiential continuum, but as a complete change of conduct: "Thanne am I gentil," says the Wife's hag, "whan that I bigynne/To lyven vertuously and weyve synne" (III.1175f.). Yet, the second tale, effectively a commentary on the first, fails to account for all that is in "The Knight's Tale," for

Theseus once worshipped the several gods of the youths, and still does both Venus and Mars a homage of sorts: something of his youthful nature or, as the hag would seem to have it, his "churlishness," remains in his present expressions of wisdom and goodness, being a factor even in his mature, evidently wise, and "gentil dedis," such as building the temple for the tournament (I.1302ff.).

Inconsistent with the totality of "The Knight's Tale," then, is the hag's lack of regard for morally "gray areas." Though allowing for some equivocation, her strict tying of "gentil dedis" to God, Christ, and grace would seem to preclude noble deeds done for other, less absolute purposes. In "The Wife of Bath's Tale," it seems, one is either gentil or not, exemplifying conduct appropriate to the grace of God or not. There can be no shadings of the experience: one rejects "shame and vieleyne" (III.1151) and, by performing "gentil dedis," becomes "gentil" (III.1170). The contrast between the two states seems absolute. According to such a reading, Arcite is not simply a younger, more impulsively passionate version of Theseus, holding the same promise to be a great, noble, and wise leader if given sufficient time and experience. As evidenced by his self-serving conduct, he is a "cherl," who, being dumped on his head after the tournament, in the face of death decides to act wisely. With such a decision, his social effect is immediate and his reputation is assured: his "gentil dedis" of commending Palamon to Emelye occasion Palamon's own conversion to wise conduct and eventually restore harmony to the society (I.2783ff.; Boece, 3.m12.50ff.).

Yet, the new reading of "The Knight's Tale's" narrative occasioned by the juxtaposition of the two tales, cannot simply be a reading of the first story by the standards of the second tale. The Tales as a whole in no way

privileges the second tale, calling for a total superseding of the wisdom and apparent meaning of the one by the other. If anything, "The Knight's Tale," as the first tale, as part of the wisdom frame, and as an exemplification of Aristotelian ideals would seem to have intellectual and structural precedence, despite any apparent moral priority on the part of the hag's reasoning. Rather than simply reading one tale by the other, then, the creation of a new, composite context for the two tales must take advantage of the equivocation inherent in both Theseus' pagan wisdom and the unspecified nature of "gentil dedis." The new reading which is called for must partake of, but transcend the limitations of both options by engaging as textual a third component, the reader. Presenting two apparently irreconcilable truths, the text draws the reader into the composition, inviting him or her to mediate the structural transformation suggested by the organic logic of the The Tales as a whole. Called upon to read the literal sense of the "The Knight's Tale's" narrative within the context created by the two tales, then, the reader must discern a composite significance consistent with, but somehow beyond, that which is suggested by the surface sense of both limited readings. In the case at hand, that means reconciling an evolutio with a conversio to effect a true reading of Arcite's significance--and his acquired wisdom--in the two tale context.

Such an expansion of conceptual context extends the moral parameters and significance of the text beyond the Classical morality of the narrative to the realm of an informing Christ (III.1117). In effect, it makes a Classical story capable of conveying a Christian, or at least spiritual, message--and without allegorization or moralization. It introduces to the literal value of "The Knight's Tale" a further dimension of the duplex

sensus literalis: without compromising any essential elements in the narrative's primary form, genre, or story, it re-casts the wisdom of "The Knight's Tale" as more immediately and personally referential and affective (cf. the first stanza of the Rosy sequence: "Jesu dulcis memoria ..." etc.). Establishing a link of reference, imagery, and means not only between the two romances, but between the first and last tales as well, it thus also draws a hopeful wisdom connection between young fools and penitent sinners. Naming the Source for "verray gentillesse of Grace" as God or Christ, the hag's exposition connects gentillesse, too, to the seed of contrition which is also given its grace by God (III.1163, 1117; X.117), thus locating the moral context of both--in fact, of all three--tales in one Moral End. And, of course, the suggestion of folly as sin, establishes common ground between the tales, making spiritual renewal via a conversion an essential feature of spiritually, rather than naturally, acquired wisdom. Referentially, then, "The Wife of Bath's Tale" not only glosses and transforms the meaning of "The Knight's Tale," but it links it with that of "The Parson's Tale" through its explication of God as source of and context for true renewal and gentillesse. In so doing, it suggests a further, triple context for the tales in which various aspects of Classical wisdom and nobility might be considered intra-textually and spiritually.

Reading Across the Tales: Structural Safeguards

In effect, then, the juxtaposition of "The Knight's Tale" with "The Wife of Bath's Tale" transforms the initial, narrative signification of the wisdom of "The Knight's Tale" to a more encompassing, more responsive and more responsible literal sense. Developing the meaning of the first tale

through complementarity and equivocation, the interaction of the two occasions a moral transformation of parts in which the value of one aspect of "The Knight's Tale's" paradigm (that of Theseus' wisdom) remains fixed while others (e.g. the youths' folly) undergo a translation into an alternate referential order introduced and mediated by the reader through the more elaborate sign theory and definitional commentary of the second context, i.e. of "The Wife of Bath's Tale." This second tale, sharing a referential framework, imagery, and standard of personal management with a third and extra-generic text, i.e. "The Parson's Tale" (which most fully exemplifies the new order suggested by the second) also acts as a moral as well as a signficatory bridge between "The Knight's Tale" and "The Parson's Tale." In this, it reflects the transformations which occur in the larger shared context of the tales, i.e. the wisdom frame; it foreshadows the repentance of the "Retractions"; and, it suggests something of an all-pervasive unity of form, logic, and effect underlying the total structure of The Tales.

Indicating one small part of the complementary interrelations and mutual illuminations of sign, meaning, and moral effect possible through a largely open structure based upon a system of catholic signification and compounding of literals, this consideration of but one aspect of the "The Knight's Tale" against one passage of one contained tale--and that in its same genre--gives but the briefest illustration of the complexities of the logic underlying the mature grammar of The Tales. As will become clearer with the study of "The Clerk's Tale" below, such logic permits any number of possible arrangements of parts and of partial wholes composed of various tales. The nature of Arcite's folly, for example, could equally well be read against the exercise of trouthe in "The Franklin's Tale," the

unrestrained passion of the Wife of Bath presented in her "Prologue," or the discussion of "Lecherie" in "The Parson's Tale." Each re-contextualization would reveal a further aspect of Arcite's deeds, relative virtue, and significant wisdom, both referential and manifest. And, without undermining the essential wisdom of "The Knight's Tale," each would ratify some further dimension of The Tales' unified, larger meaning and effect as well.

While ultimately finite, the number of possible combinations and their contributions to the reader's understanding of Arcite's folly--one small aspect of the progressive, normative wisdom of but one of the frame tales--is staggering. A truly complete consideration according to this transformational logic of all aspects of all intra-textual interactions and their significations for all the tales would seem to embrace an almost infinite diversity of infinite combinations. Yet, contrary to what Minnis seems to suggest with his argument for subjectivity of interpretation (xiv), this pluralistic logic is not a licence for wholly personal readings. Total freedom in aligning the parts would make the text as a whole effectively meaningless: any opinion could be supported by a careful selection of parts. Seeing the potential for such abuse of Scripture (a compositional model for Chaucer's structure and the source of Nicholas' hermeneutical principles), the Church Fathers made the totum integrum of the text the necessary first context for all readings, with tradition and the authority of the Church body as supplementary safeguards (e.g. Irenaeus Against Heresies 4. 33, MG 7.1077, Vincent of Lerin Commonitory, Ch. 2, ML 50.639). While able to avail himself of the principle of the totum integrum, Chaucer, writing a secular text, does not have the option of direct appeal to authority to validate it. Besides, it is arguable that his entire

structural effort, seemingly occasioned by a suspicion of contemporary powers (see Chapter 4), represents a movement away from blind dependence upon self-proclaimed authority, towards a personal and rational engagement of facts and of the truths to be derived from them.

Yet, to preserve the integrity of his text for those readers prepared to engage his forms and meanings fully (i.e. he or she "that hath eeris of heryng"; cf. Mt. 13:43; Dt.31:28, Ps. 78:1; Wyclif, De ver. 1.9.198, 1.11.241; De euch. 169; CT VII.3440), Chaucer requires some intra-textual and self-validating aegis equivalent to the Church's sanction of tradition to ward off arbitrary, capricious, and self-indulgent readings (or rather, "misreadings") of the truths of the parts for the truth of the whole. Therefore, Chaucer builds both structural and thematic safeguards into his text, making the composite wisdom, morality, and referentiality of the frame tales (as well as the presence of a self-identified persona who ultimately repents) the models and implicit guides for his reader. With these, his broad and ostensibly open-ended text is subtly controlled. With one clear end testified to by both the structure of the text and the narrator's experience of it, Chaucer can allow his organic structures as well as his readers the freedom to engage, define, and be defined variously by the parts, for he has established a primary, encompassing context for his text's true, unified, and coherent meaning. The structure and the logic of The Tales itself thus respond to Minnis' declaration of open pluralism: form and persona affirm that any perceived relation or reading of parts which directs the reader to the moral and referential ends sanctioned by the iotum integrum, which is consistent with the composite wisdom of the frame, and which is in keeping with the effect of the text upon the author-as-narrator has inherent textual validity. Any readings that do not are somehow

compromised, other than textual and not literally true within the context and structure of the text as a whole. Since that which the author provides changes little, and since the intra-textual relation of parts is wholly textual, based upon the fixed material expression of the author's signs in context, the flawed element in any false reading of the text must therefore be found in the third component of transformative textual engagement: the reader who, with ears to hear, hears not (Ez.12: 1).

The Deep Literal of "The Clerk's Tale": Griselda's Insidious Folly

One tale which seems straightforward enough to read and which even includes its own commentary for those offended by the narrative is "The Clerk's Tale." A religious tale privileging a self-sacrificial devotion (by definition, an act of reference), "The Clerk's Tale" is a deceptively comfortable point of access to the structural complexities of The Tales' internal logic. Seemingly straightforward, it offers its story as an ideal of referential engagement: for the love of her lord, a wife of impeccable "paciencce" endures great trial, proving herself throughout as more than worthy of his honour. This meaning seems validated by the moral authority of the tale's teller and his source: an ideal Clerk (IV.1ff., I.285ff.) tells a tale "Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,/As preved by his wordes and his werk"—"Fraunceys Petrark, the lauriat poete" (IV.26ff.). Quoting Petrarch, the Clerk allows that the marital devotion of the story is "inportable" (IV. 1144) and suggests an alternate meaning for it: that Griselda's life and referentiality are best taken as indicative or exemplary signs of what may be achieved spiritually by "every wight, in his degree" (IV.1145ff.). Though told in a secular setting, the story thus assumes a

blatantly referential application: to teach that "sith a woman was so patient/Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte/Receyven al in gree that God us sent" (IV.1149ff.). Both genre and allusion seem to support this: the Host calls the tale a "legende" (IV.1212d), the designation of a saint's life or tale of martyrdom; the teller parallels Griselda's humble beginnings with Christ's (IV.206f., 291) and her "pacienc" with Job's (IV.932). Throughout the tale, then, text and teller seem to endorse the story as an appropriate, if extreme, exercise of that wise referentiality sketched in the wisdom frame of The Tales entire. Though comprised of story and commentary, rather than story alone, the narrative literal meaning of the tale and the nature of its particular wisdom seem clear: self-sacrificial devotion and "pacienc" lead to admirable virtue.

The First Truth of the Text: "Petrak's" and The Clerk's

Yet, the tale itself also suggests that the path of the wise advocated in "The Clerk's Tale" is perhaps other, and less ideal, than it seems. For instance, Walter--young, self-involved, and given to arbitrary, even wanton, testing of his wife's virtue (IV.73ff., 451ff.)--is hardly an acceptable type of the Divine (cf. IV.1153ff.), yet it is to him that Griselda, as an apparent figure for "every wight" (IV.1145), repeatedly vows herself and her devotion (IV.359ff., 501ff., 644ff.). Further, her virtue is remarkably ineffectual. It does not draw either her husband or the people to a greater good; it does not bring about harmonious relations in society or in the family; and, it does not cause her to endure her sufferings joyfully. Such passive, inert "virtue" is not consistent with the effectual virtue of other, less morally ambiguous religious tales. In both "The Man of Law's

Tale" and "The Second Nun's Priest's Tale," unlike in "The Clerk's Tale," faith and reference are active and efficacious agents. Through "Custances mediacioun," for example, Hermengyld, "The kyng--and many another in that place--/Converted was" (II.684f.), among others. Cecile also effects the salvation of others--Valerian, Tiburce, and Amalchius' "ministres". Moreover, she suffers persecution and martyrdom not stoically, but joyfully, boldly, and vocally (VIII.414ff.). Not only does Griselda's supposedly virtuous "pacienc" not conduce to such a joyful spirituality, but--if it has any effect at all--it serves to undermine existing goodness: it does nothing to discourage Walter's wicked trying of his wife, and thereby permits him to slide deeper into wickedness; it removes Griselda from governance over the people, and thereby causes them to grieve about their master, giving them occasion to prove themselves "stormy .../ Unsad and evere untrew" (IV.995f.); and, it breaks down natural relations of love between husband and wife, thereby creating both a moral and a social rupture in the civil fabric. For Griselda personally, it deadens natural delights: whereas when "tendre .. of age" (IV.218) she is "ful innocent," curious enough to stop and watch the Marquis' entourage "with othere maydens" (IV.274ff.), and as a newlywed, she cares for matters of the community "whan the cas required it" (IV.430), under Walter's testing she becomes emotionally and relationally inert, showing such lack of response that even Walter is amazed (IV.687ff.).

Such overt moral irregularities within the tale are compounded by more essential, though more subtle, lapses on Griselda's part--most notably, the nature of her submission to Walter. When Walter proposes marriage, she does not simply "assente or .. avyse" (IV.350): she submits to him completely, acquiescing a priori to all he might determine for her (IV.362ff.). In

this, she does not yield rationally to a lawful authority, reserving the reason, right, and ability to discern good from evil (cf. Wyclif, Dialogus 93: faith and reason must confirm rightful authority). Rather, she surrenders totally, absurdly, to a highly suspect power (spiritual as well as intellectual excellence being the true test of authority; cf. Wyclif, De euch. 281, De pot. pape 80, 215): she gives herself, in "werk" as Walter asks, but also in "thoght" as he does not (IV. 351ff.), into the dominion of a creature well-born (cf. III.1119ff.), but "yong in age," for whom "his lust present was al his thoght" (IV.80)--an unfit ruler in Wyclif's terms since, through his passionate desire to test Griselda, Walter becomes "a deceitful man bringing pollution into his glorious soul" (De off. reg. 29). In her eager submission to such a man, Griselda even adds that, having left "wyl" and "libertee," she is willing to die if that be his "lust" or "pleasance" (IV.656ff.): "I wol no thyng," she says, "But as yow list Deth may noght make no comparisoun/ Unto youre love" (IV.646f., 666f.). Through her wholly compliant "pacience," she completely abdicates rational authority and social responsibility for herself. For Walter, she abandons her life and children (IV.687ff.); she loses a once positive role in the community (IV.985ff.; cf. 407ff., 435ff.); and, she relinquishes all power to act--even declining to advise her husband, a primary role of the virtuous wife (VII.1097ff.). "Do unto me as you will," she says in effect, "but 'axeth no reed at me'" (IV.645ff.). Thus, in her complete commitment to Walter, she endures all, but as her devotion is inappropriately focused, she becomes unable to act or respond, for either her own good or for that of others.

The details of the text, then, suggest that Griselda's virtue, her

wisdom and significance, as well as the stated meaning of the story are quite other than what they seem. Though perhaps adequate for Petrarch's entente, these details are at odds with both the total truth of the tale and the teller's varied use of it. Petrarch may have intended the story of Griselda as a witness to Jamesian verities, but the Clerk adapts it as well to more "murie" purposes (IV.9ff., 1163ff.): in opening his commentaries on the story by telling what the tale is not told for (IV.1142), the Clerk creates two distinct intra-textual possibilities for the tale and its truth: first, with the spiritual reading of the tale, he allows for an intra-genre study of right reference and true effect; second, with his "But o word" (IV.1163), he invites cross-genre, thematic study of relational issues, specifically participating in the so-called and long studied "marriage debate." Mediating these separate truths, the Clerk is the first determiner of the tale's active and manifold signification and, as such, central to the tale's initial meaning: as a virtuous clerk, he seems to endorse the spiritual reading of the tale; as one who "unto the pley assente[d]" and put himself under the Host's "yerde ... as fer as resoun axeth" (IV.11, 22, 25), he seems to re-cast the story to give it a relational--not referential--value (IV.1173ff.). The initial literal sense of the tale is thus not just that of its narrative, but that of the narrative variously considered in referential or relational contexts. Within each distinct cross-textual context that the tale is considered, therefore, both of these "first" literal senses are subject to transformation. For present purposes, the tale is considered in relation to the largest intra-textual context possible, that of the wisdom frame and, specifically, of the concepts, expressions, and consequences of the referentiality it endorses.

In the Company of The Wise: "The Clerk's Tale" Against the Wisdom Norms

That Griselda is far from adequate as a spiritual sign of true and efficacious referentiality becomes readily apparent from even a cursory consideration of "The Clerk's Tale" against the wisdom frame, for the tales of the frame depict true wisdom as a balance of true reference, right relations, and responsible self-governance. And, upon first consideration, "The Clerk's Tale" may seem to be a positive, if one-sided, reinforcement of at least part of this model--the referential--as Griselda, in willing obedience to her "lord," defers her "libertee" to Walter's every whim and "lust" (IV.645ff.). Yet, upon closer examination, both Griselda and "The Clerk's Tale" seem not so much to reinforce the referentiality of the wisdom frame as to contradict its basic principles and purposes. Griselda's total devotion to Walter, which at first seems an admirable, if excessive, evidence of love, is quickly revealed to be an almost idolatrous worship of an immature, most un-Godlike creature, rather than the Creator (IV.659ff.). In submitting herself to him, she demonstrates not superlative spirituality, but at least venial, and quite possibly "deedly," sin (cf. X.366ff.). Further, in that she effects no change for good in herself, her husband, or those around her, she proves ineffectual at best and complicit at worst in matters of grievous social and spiritual mismanagement. And, surrendering her "thoght" and "wyl" to another (IV.363, 656), she reveals an inexcusable lack of concern for personal honour, social harmony, and the natural order--essential ideals propounded by each of the wisdom tales in turn (cf. I.2987ff., 3041ff., 3094ff.; VII.1286ff., 1687ff.; X.261ff., 562ff., 674ff.).

When read for contextual signification against the individual wisdom

tales, Griselda undergoes even more radical devaluation for, as the reader compares her virtue against that of other exemplars of wisdom, she appears to be almost a non-factor in the morality of The Tales. More like Egeus than Theseus in her world view, she does not attempt to "maken vertu of necessitee" (I.3042), but surrenders herself to circumstances which she resignedly determines cannot be other (IV.645ff., cf. I.2843ff.).

Increasingly losing active engagement in the social realm, she stoically endures hardships, silently observing the workings of the world and society, occasionally making a comment upon it (IV.1137ff.), but, for the most part, working for neither good nor evil. By such volitional surrender of her reason and will--faculties intended for use in the right response to and effect in society according to the order of nature--then, she effectively relinquishes her position in the divine order and neutralizes herself as a sign. Consequently, she bears less testimony to the referential ideal that the tale seems to profess than do even the rocks or the "ook" of Theseus' speech (I.3017ff.): she endures, but no more. Such inertia has, of course, social repercussions: she suffers more abuse; her children are taken from her; she loses her status in the community; and her husband suffers from loss of reputation. But, because of her supposedly virtuous "paciencie," she seems unconcerned (cf. Egeus' response to Arcite's death, I.2836ff.).

This last matter is a point of significant relational interface with "The Tale of Melibee," for Prudence, like Griselda, is a wife noted for her "paciencie" who also has a morally wayward husband (VII.1064ff.). As good women and good wives, both Prudence and Griselda have the potential to check their husbands' folly. Prudence, of course, takes full advantage of every opportunity to guide her husband back to the good. Submitting not even to a verbal rebuke by Melibee if it be unjust, she rallies the full force of

reason and authority against his error, not to defend her own name, but because she loves his "honour" and "profit" as her own and, as a good wife, tries to keep him from folly--with more than ample Biblical precedent (VII.1688, 1098ff.). Prudence's "pacience," then, is active, best manifest in response. For example, after Melibee rejects her "conseil, for many causes and resouns" (VII.1055), she listens politely and "Whanne dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with greet pacience, hadde herd al that hir housbonde liked for to seye, thanne axed she of hym licence for to speke, and seyde in this wise ..." (VII.1064). Hearing him and his folly out, she proceeds--with Melibee's permission--to annihilate thoroughly and systematically his comments, reasons, and readings. Rallying a range of authorities from Classical to Christian, she applies them to experience and to their contemporary circumstances, and instructs Melibee in the ways of the right, the true, and the good--and does so always "by [Melibee's] leve" (e.g. VII.1164ff., 1088), so as not to undermine the authority of his position (if not of the man).

But, whereas Prudence avails herself of every opportunity, even feigning anger to instruct Melibee (VII.1706ff.), Griselda refuses to engage Walter at all. She does not so much reject, as ignore the ideal represented by Prudence's simple principle of wifely responsibility in marital relations: "ye asken conseil to do wikkednesse;/and if ye wole werken wikkednesse, and youre wif restreyneth thilke wikked purpos, and overcometh yow by resoun and by good conseil,/certes youre wyf oghte rather to be preised than yblamed" (VII.1091ff.). Being unwilling to check Walter's folly for either his good or her own, Griselda abdicates her responsibility as a good wife and misses the opportunity to lead him, and indirectly his people, to God and the good. She and her "pacience" thus appear inadequate

before the example of Prudence's wifely virtue, both in general conduct and specific response (cf. Prudence's words above with IV.359ff., 501ff., 645ff., etc.). Such social failure is further enhanced through Griselda's sorry contrast (as both wife and religious figure) to such truly saintly characters as Custance and Cecilia. Whereas Prudence shares with such virtuous women both an essential, active, and efficacious referentiality which transforms their husbands as well as others in their societies, Griselda shares with them little but gender: not herself actively virtuous, she does not effect the reformation or salvation of even one character, and she does not bear testimony in word or deed to either the love of God or the joy of salvation (cf. VIII.537ff.).

And, in terms of the Christian ideal generally, Griselda's stoic "paciencce" is far removed from the positive and redemptive "paciencce or suffrance" which "The Parson's Tale" advocates (X.654ff.). Though she does indeed "suffre ... alle the anoyaunces and the wronges that men doon to man outward," she does not do so "swetely" (X.656), but dully and stoically. Similarly, that which should make her "lyk to God," that should "disconfiteth thyn enemy" (X.661), and that should lead her to obedience "to Crist and to alle hem to whiche [s]he oghte to been obedient in Crist" and "in alle rightwisnesse" (X.674f.) leads her instead to a misdirected and self-punishing obedience to an unlawful authority who is governed by personal desire rather than by a true sense of public and spiritual duty. In fact, the disparity between the actual and ostensible virtue of righteous submission to sanctioned powers regardless of merit makes "The Clerk's Tale" in relation to this passage from "The Parson's Tale" a scathing commentary on unwitting (in every sense of the word) deferral to authority for authority's sake: without considering the moral worth of the authority to

whom she bows, her personal accountability before God, or her responsibility to self and fellows (especially her children), Griselda simply submits to Walter as her lord and master, right or wrong (IV.359, 652f.)--apparently on the basis of his station (IV.358ff., cf. II.1109ff.). Though within "The Clerk's Tale" pertaining to marriage in the most limited sense, such matters of right and lawful authority--and right and lawful obedience--also had broader social and contemporary relevance to Chaucer and his age (See Chapter 4). Carefully conveyed via a safe, spiritual narrative whose surface meaning provides an irreproachable moral cover endorsing unconditional submission to the powers that be, the tale--in one intra-textual context at least, and that of the most overtly Christian text in the collection--has a more potent and wholly contrary social significance, a literal truth of righteous rule apparent only in the context of a tale told by a supposed "Lollere" (II.1173). Apparently, the true Christian ideal of "pacience" could have potentially revolutionary--or, at the very least, reforming--effect if rightly read: like the early Gospel message, it could "mouen the world" (Acts 17:6; cf. Acts 16:20; 1 Kings 18:17f.).

Righteous Wrath: Anger as Measure of Virtue in "The Clerk's Tale"

In specific terms, Griselda's flawed "virtue" and her inefficacy as a sign of the good may be measured against a common moral deviation evidenced in many of the tales, that of anger. Common also to the wisdoms and effects of the frame tales (see Chapter 5), anger is specified in "The Parson's Tale" as that vice which is curable by "pacience" (X.654), Griselda's supposed primary feature. It would thus seem a reasonable gauge to her

virtue and her value. Yet, at first, anger does not seem to be a factor in the tale: Walter acts calculatedly, not passionately; the people are hardly choleric; and Griselda, assessed by Walter as being of "vertu, passynge any wight/Of so yong age, as wel in chiere as dede" (IV.240f.), seems wholly devoid of passion of any sort. Such total exclusion of anger is, however, a moral flaw in its own right for, as seen in "The Tale of Melibee" and "The Parson's Tale," wrath, real or feigned, is sometimes necessary--especially for a wife (VII.1706ff., X.538ff.). Griselda, by disallowing even that ire which is justified, useful, and good, commits herself to a passivity which, under the guise of referential virtue, tolerates unreasonable abuse and dishonour as she fails to act. In terms of the wisdom frame, her lack of anger thus ironically reveals her "virtue" to be evidence not of wisdom, but folly. As the fixed point in a transformative interaction with the tales of the wisdom frame, then, anger and Griselda's lack of it lead to the re-casting of the tale not as a testimony of high devotion, but as an attestation to irrational, misdirected, and extremist surrender of self and will.

Most fundamentally, in the Classical terms of Aristotle, Griselda's deficiency of anger is, quite simply, a vicious deviation from the mean (NE 2.7). Despite grievous provocation, she fails to become angry at "the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way" (NE 2.9) as she allows Walter to abuse her unchecked, to seem to kill her children, and thereby to compound his own corruption and dishonour with the people (IV.729ff.). Evidencing no anger at all at anything which is done to her, she is, therefore, by the Classical standards which inform "The Knight's Tale," "blameworthy" and falls short of both virtue and goodness "in a high degree" (NE 2.6,9; 4.5), since "with

reference to anger we stand badly if we feel it too weakly" (NE 2.5; cf. Ps. 4:4 [V], Eph. 4:26; X.540). Void of vitality and efficacious excellence, Griselda's "virtue" thus does not declare an aspect of The Tales' ideal referentiality, but rather a stultification of soul devoid of personal accountability, social responsibility, and ultimately, transformative referentiality: her acclaimed wisdom of endurance, of inaction in the name of the right, becomes ironically the determiner of the tale's negative literal signification in relation to Classical virtue. It is, after all, one thing to be "not revengeful, but tend[ing] to make allowances"; it is quite another to not "be angry ... [as] the rule [logos] dictates" (NE 4.5): true virtue requires virtuous activity (NE 1.8), not merely endurance.

The Positive Signification of "Good Bad Examples"

Yet, considered on their own within a medieval context, Griselda and the tale in which she appears may not be dismissed automatically as mere forms of folly. Indeed, given the high status granted to Griselda's "paciencce" by the Clerk, "Petrark," and the various marriage tracts of the age, she is, in one context, an exemplification of ideal wifely virtue and, allegorically, of spiritual submission as the Host, Merchant, and Clerk point out respectively (IV.1212cff., 1223ff., 1142ff.). The logic and structure of The Tales, however, alters both the conventional and immediately textual context of the tale, making any such facile or superficially literal reading of silently suffering "virtue" unreasonably partial by writing Griselda into contexts of alternate virtues and wisdoms. The literal, narrative meaning of "The Clerk's Tale" in relation to the wisdom frame, for instance, is not that of an ideal exercise of

conventional, if disproportionately referential, "paciencia" as the tale itself seems to imply. Instead, in the broader context, the tale reads as a profoundly and insidiously distorted travesty of this ideal. It provides not a true exemplification of highest reference, but a subtly antithetical commentary on referential and effective morality. Dealing negatively with issues of self-governance, social responsibility, and the dangers of compliance with unreasonable and unrighteous authority, the tale and its protagonist thus seem to contribute most to the moral significance of The Tales by contradiction rather than exemplification, being "good bad examples," of reference gone awry through their uniquely misbegotten and misconstrued "paciencia."

A wholly, if wrongly, referential character, therefore, Griselda provides but one voice in a colloquy of referential and, in fact, wifely wisdoms which, motivated by love of God and man, work variously to clarify efficacious signification. That her "wisdom," taken in context, is actually a folly simply serves to define true wisdom further: in that Griselda is passive, the tale in context emphasizes the need for action; where she perceives the best ends in terms of another creature, the larger contexts privilege the Creator; and, where she neglects personal, familial, and social responsibility as well as relational effect, the other tales grant them varying degrees of value, working towards a balance which transcends the limits of text. Thus, though predicated not upon a balanced, practical, and significant wisdom, but upon a particularly insidious version of passive folly disguised as virtue, and though contrasting markedly with the ideals of the wisdom frame as it neglects responsible relations and rational self-governance in favour of a false, man-centered reference, "The Clerk's Tale" ironically still reinforces The Tales' normative wisdom. Through the

very inefficacy of Griselda, the tale reveals what not to do and thus negatively reaffirms the normative criteria for both true wisdom and true signification.

"The Nun's Priest's Tale": Right Reading, Ends, and Effects

All such follies--of wives and husbands; of self and society; of meanings, means, and ends--seem to come together in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" as, indeed, do many aspects of of The Tales' relative wisdoms. Yet, unlike other representative texts considered in this chapter, "The Nun's Priest's Tale" makes no overt pretense of dealing with highest issues whether spiritual, social, or intellectual. Of all the tales, though, it is thematically and structurally most like The Tales as a whole. It conveys a balanced concern for reference, relation, and self-governance. It deals with folly as, at least potentially, a path to wisdom--provided a timely and appropriate conversio (teshuvah or metanoia) is experienced. And, it presents wisdom as something not only to be known, but to be experienced and translated into practical response and action as well. Further, being a "parable" of sorts it most readily lends itself to consideration within Nicholas of Lyra's Biblical hermeneutic wherein parables have "no sense signified by words," so that "the parabolic sense is first"--that, then, being "the literal sense, because the literal sense is first when there is no other sense there" ("Third Prologue" 66ff.). Being overtly concerned with signs and significations, base and textual through Chauncicleer's dream, through his own and Pertelote's reading of it, as well as through the inclusion of other texts and readings, this tale most fully engages the issues of reading and effect. And, being a structural microcosm of the work

as a whole, it most completely mirrors the textual, as well as moral, means and ends of the larger text, using its central narrative as well as its embedded texts to engage its reader in both the process and effect of these embeddings.

Generically, "The Nun's Priest's Tale" seems to demand a reading which is referentially "literal" in the sense spelled out by Nicholas of Lyra. A beast fable, it is an obvious "parable," having, in effect, "no sense signified by [the] words" (Nicholas of Lyra, "Third Prologue" 66): despite the Nun's Priest's explanation that "For thilke tyme ... Beasts and briddes koude speke and synge" (VII.2880-81), the tale remains factually only as "trewe" "As in the book of Launcelot de Lake" (VII.3212-13)--that is, quite clearly not true, or merely a fable. According to conventional definitions, then, in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" "there is ... only the mystical sense, which is understood by the things signified" ("Third Prologue" 58f.). Like the story of the trees in Judges 9 (cf. "Third Prologue" 49ff.), therefore, the story of Chauncicleer and Pertelote has only a sensus parabolicus, or a "parabolic sense," and requires a right "recche," a right interpretation, which is both true to the tale's entente and responsible to the consequences of its telling for its sensus literalis to become clear. In form and content, the tale is thus admirably suited to a reading of it according to Nicholas' hermeneutic model: it makes the reading of and within the tale as much a concern as its "story" and engages the reader directly, placing upon him or her personal responsibility for a correct realization of the tale's "significacioun" which is in keeping with both its "sentence" and its "solas" (VII.2579). Texts themselves, how they are read, what and how they mean, as well as how they affect the reader are thus as critical in this

tale alone as they are for The Tales entire.

The tale's interest in such matters is first made manifest through the character of Chaunticleer who, having had a disturbing dream (a "text" or "tale" in its own right), is convinced that it must mean something dire. Concerned that his "swevene" be "recche aright" (VII.2896), his concerns are those of wisdom, both referential and practical: he wants to know what his dream means and he wants to know what to do about it. His desire, therefore, is for a reading of his text which will be both valid and useful. This places the rooster immediately in the essential quandary of the human as communicative vehicle: situated between an unspecified author and his creation, or sign, of the dream text, Chaunticleer finds himself compelled to translate the text he has received from the realm of dream to that of actuality. Under the onus of reading rightly and concretizing the experience of his text appropriately, he--as reader and experiencer--stands, in effect, between ultimate ends (meaning) and present needs (effect). A sign and reader, he must align himself correctly within a viable context and, considering ends and effects, discern the most relevant of possible significations. As with The Tales as a whole, the reader--in this case, Chaunticleer--has various possible readings to choose from and, being properly motivated by personal concern, he makes an initially referential appeal for personal effect: "'Now God,' quod he, 'my swevene reche aright/And kepe my body out of foul prisoun'" (VII.2896f).

Juxtaposed against his belief in the inherent significance of his dream-text and the importance of reading it aright, though, is the "carnal" attitude of his wife, Pertelote. Directly responding to, engaging, and belying Chaunticleer's given and textually experienced truth, she dismisses

his prophetic dream, his "text," as "vanitee ... engendren of replecciouns" (VII.2922f.). To her, the entire experience is without meaning other than its obvious narrative value (and even that she denigrates). She considers the entire experience but a psychic aberration caused by certain physical excesses: Chaunticleer, in her opinion, has fallen victim to a "greete superfluytee/Of rede colera ..." (VII.2927f.) and merely needs to "Tak som laxatyf" for all to be well (VII.2943). Without belief in the divine origin or efficacious signification of dreams as texts or signs, she sees no need to "read" or interpret Chaunticleer's dream in relation to either the world or some larger referential context. Textually "earthbound" and a-referential, Pertelote limits herself to a superficially literal reading of the dream. Unable (or unwilling) to look for a fuller entente--a greater design, plan, or meaning--which the dream itself might signify, she would have Chaunticleer also dismiss his experience, his own personal "text," and simply "Be myrie" (VII.2968). In effect, her "wise" and wifely counsel is that he settle for the solas and abandon any effort to discover the sentence of the dream (cf. Prudence, Constance, Cecile, Griselda). At most and in terms of the various literal significations, she advises that her husband should accept the dream for its generic and surface signification, considering it a night-time narrative circumscribed in meaning by the moment of occurrence and having no extra-textual implications. In effect, she advises, Chaunticleer should read the story and move on, without concerning himself over possible meanings, effects, and consequences.

Chaunticleer, however, is not prepared to do so--at least, not initially. So immediate and personal is his encounter with his dream-text that he is at first driven to discover its deeper significance. To ferret out the meaning of his experience, he turns to authorities, to "olde books,"

and to "many a man moore of auctorite/Than ever Caton was" (VII.2974ff.; most likely Disticha Catonis). Appropriately, he engages in the process of text and meaning: he considers contrasting contexts of interpretation (VII.2974); he establishes his theoretical parameters of signification in relation to both ultimate meaning and present effect (VII.2978ff.); he re-contextualizes his own "experience" against both authoritative and narrative texts, from Classical, through Biblical, to Christian times (VII.2884ff.); and, he declares on the basis of his various considerations that his text does, most certainly, have an essential and effectual significance: "Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,/That I shal han of this avisioun/Adversitee" (VII.3151ff.). Blatantly rejecting Pertelote's trivialization of his dream, he also rejects her suggestion of "laxatyves," supposedly in favour of his just stated conclusion about the inevitable effect of his text (VII.3153ff.).

Up until this point, Chaunticleer's engagement of signs--his own and those of the authorities--has been appropriate and responsible as he acknowledges the validity of the sign given him, responds to it, and aligns his text with similar texts, attempting to draw meaningful conclusions from the intersections of his own and historical experience. From "swich ensamples olde" as he finds, Chaunticleer even tries to teach Pertelote "That no man sholde been to recchelees/Of dremes," for "many a dreem ful soore is for to drede" (VII.3106ff.). Though he has little success with his instruction of her, he does amply demonstrate his own intellectual facility with texts and traditions. At the crucial junction between reading and translation, between engaging the text and being engaged by it, however, Chaunticleer falters. Failing to fulfill the process of responsible reading by translating the truths of his given text through his life and his

actions, Chaunticleer does not follow his intellectually discovered meaning through to practical effect: having noted the true, he fails to do the right and the good. Refusing to activate his will for a "spiritual" response to the literal truth of his dream, he prefers and consciously chooses that "o thyng" (VII.3159) of God's grace which is empirically evident and physically pleasurable (Pertolote's beauty) to that which is referentially revealed and personally distressing (the threat in the dream). Chaunticleer thus chooses solas over sentence (an inversion of the Parson's later stated preference), surrendering his efforts at right reading for carnal delights: "I am so ful of joye and of solas," he declares, "That I diffye both sweven and dreem" (VII.3170f.).

The practical consequences of such a repudiation of a full and effectual reading are immediately evident and progressive. Chaunticleer first errs in word, misinterpreting in the name of sentence, confusio for "joye ande ... blis" in his rendition of a Latin proverb: he translates "In principio,/ Mulier est hominis confusio" as "Womman is mannes joye and al his blis" (VII.3162ff.). Next, he sins in deed, giving himself to "Venus, that ... goddesse of Plesaunce" (VII.3332ff.) as he engorges himself on physical rather than intellectual pursuits (VII.3172ff.). Finally, with a heart "ful ... of revel and solas" (VII.3203), he denies the dangerous reality represented by both the fox's appearance and substance (VII.3276ff.), preferring the smooth flattery and lying words of Daun Russell to the hard, practical truth of his own prophetic text. What follows provides an opportunity for an editorial comment by Chaucer, the court poet, on the dangers of flattery--an interpolation which again demonstrates not only the complex, cross-referential interplay of structure within the Tales as a whole, VII.3325ff., but the equal engagement the text

may have with historical reality as but another text to engage (cf. the relevance of "The Clerk's Tale" to the contemporary crisis of authority; see above). And, of course, Chaunticleer's ensuing brush with death allows the Nun's Priest to warn his audience of the consequences of faulty reading, of being "reccheless/And necligent ..." (VII.3436f.)--"reccheless" being a word that connotes both "recklessness" (as in "a disregard of one's sense of duty") and "without proper interpretation or exposition" (recchen being the term for "to take heed" as well as "to interpret or expound"). Drawing the reader back to the practical realm both intra- and, with the social comment, extra-textually, the text thus allows opportunity for a redress of errors--a repentance of sorts--through Chaunticleer's final realization of the importance both of activating the will and of acting--aspects of reading which are as vital as a comprehensive sense of reference to true perception, reception, and reponse of and to the various literal senses of signs in action.

Though Chaunticleer neglects such practical and responsive aspects of meaning in the first reading of his dream, he quickly acknowledges them after his experience not just of a sign, but with the actual situation his text depicts. Upon escaping from the fox's mouth, Chaunticleer denounces any reading that stops short of active awareness and responsibility: "For he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,/Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee" (VII. 3431f.), he declares. And, through a carefully constructed, morally pregnant "reading out" of the tale, the reader is told that the tale in hand ought not to be dismissed as "folye," nor should it be held as having no signification other than that "of a fox, or of a cock and hen" (VII.3438f.). Rather, as Chaunticleer learns to do through hard and practical experience,

the reader is instructed to "Taketh the moralite ... For seint Paul seith that all that writen is,/To oure doctrine it is ywrite ... " (VII.3440ff.). And, in accord with his own command to the reader to "Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaff be stille" (VII.3443), the Nun's Priest does not leave his text or his conception of reading as an intellectual endeavour alone--to do so would be to commit the same error that Chaunticleer does. Instead, he locates reading and the purpose of it between earth and heaven, placing it in the same referential schema established by Nicholas for the reading of Scripture: "Now, goode God," says the Nun's Priest, "if that it be thy wille,/As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,/And brynge us to his heighe blisse.! Amen." (VII.3444ff.)--a prayer and conclusion which is echoed more personally and in more detail by Chaucer in his "Retractions" (X.1089ff.) as well as by Nicholas in his conclusion to his "First Prologue" (255f.).

Structural Reinforcements of Moral Signification

As with The Canterbury Tales as a whole and as with Scripture as Nicholas expounds it, then, "The Nun's Priest's Tale" consists of an ostensibly "real life" frame (the pilgrimage and the story-telling context, the human journey through time to the spiritual in actu and narrative respectively). Within this carefully circumscribed reality, a teller fashions a series of internal tales, some embedded within others, some complementary or contradictory, and some representing the supposed actual experience of the teller(s). Each further level of story or "fiction" draws the reader deeper into the created construct, making him or her increasingly a participant in the multivalent and polyphonic narrative as he or she

reads, responds to, and makes associative connections between the various parts being presented within an ever more complex whole. Effectively, each level of text, whether the whole be Chaunticleer's, Chaucer's, or Scripture's, both constructs and relates the teller's story in progress and moves the reader through the various self-contained, yet related "fictions" towards a centre which will eventually provide the "truths" for the entire tale. For example, the first 335 lines of "The Nun's Priest's Tale," in effect, "read" the audience into the text as each level of fictional "reality" gives way to the next. The reader is first led from the "reality" of the pilgrimage and the story-telling game to that of the widow's "yeerd." From here, he or she is directed to the animal reality of the beast fable which in turn surrenders to the reality of the anecdotes in which the travellers present further, "truer" realities, both those experienced and those of their respective dreams. This process of sequential truth ultimately delivers the reader to a realm where God is presented as the final Referent against which actions are measured (VII.3050ff.) and where dreams are clearly depicted as "texts" of the "actes of sondry remes" which, when "rede," reveal "many a wonder thyng" (VII.3136f.).

Throughout this process, each previous and subsequent level of the text remains equally and simultaneously true and valid—given the particular constraints of the fictional frames established around each level of truth by the characters, by the Nun's Priest, and by Chaucer himself. All levels are, therefore, also fully, equally, and simultaneously "literal" in Nicholas' sense of duplex sensus literalis: each is true to the entente of words which combine to tell its story even as each fiction (a "thing" composed of words) functions referentially, directing the reader beyond (or better, through) itself to a central and unified "reality" which underlies

and ultimately invests with meaning each particular expression of a textual truth. And, since each level of fiction is sufficient in itself and in what it signifies, no level of text in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" requires "allegorization" (though, undoubtedly, several can and do sustain limited allegorical readings; cf. Spiers, Huppe, Levy and Adams, Dahlberg; Hotson). Fully capable of moving the reader into the heart of its signification, this tale's structure is also thus technically complete in and of itself. Yet, for the structure and "literal" signification of the tale to be truly complete by Nicholas' standards, it must also prove efficacious: the tale in question must be responded to, acted upon, and actualized by a "reading out" of the text's meaning through the reader's active response to the truth found at the heart of the tale. Both Chaunticleer and the fox read themselves out of the text through their proverbial conclusions which have practical, extra-fable application (VII.3430ff.): Chaunticleer determines that "he that wynketh whan he sholde see,/Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!" (VII.3456ff.); the fox comments "God yeve hym meschaunce,/That is so undiscreet of governaunce/That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees" (VII.3433ff.)--both truths of textual as well as extra-textual importance application. The Nun's Priest, for his part, reads himself and his immediate audience out of the fable through a gloss on the words of the fox and the rooster, making more apparent the intended historical as well as the moral, literary, and spiritual significance of their words:

Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees
 And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
 But ye that holden this tale a folye,
 As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
 Taketh the moralite, goode men,

For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
 To oure doctrine it is ywrit, ywis;
 Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.

(VII.3436-3443)

Ending his reading with the "wille" of "goode God" and the process of "alle goode men ... to his heigh blisse" (VII.3444ff.), the Nun's Priest presents through his recommendation a model of the best reading of and response to the "parabolic" tale (VII.3438ff.). Though this truth is read back into the fiction of the story-telling match by Harry Bailey through his bawdy glosses and stated preference for "murie" tales (VII.3449ff.), it yet offers to the external reader another option: to read the meaning of the tale not just back into the game, but back into the work as a whole, responding to its "moralitee" and extra- as well as intra-textual effect in much the same manner as Chaucer the narrator responds to the collection of tales in his "Retractions"--with a responsible, referential humility and a change of heart and life.

Chaucer as Signifier and Christ Signified: The Author and Authority of Text

Since the structural significations of both "The Nun's Priest's Tale" and The Canterbury Tales carry so much of the texts' meaning, and since the structure and sign theory on which these two seem to be based is so much like that of Scripture, certain similarities are, not surprisingly, evident among the forms, meanings, and ends of each. In fact, the differences between the Biblical method of reading as it is expounded by Nicholas and Chaucer's practice of it as evidenced in both "The Nun's Priest's Tale" and The Tales at large are less pronounced than one might assume, being evident

primarily in matters of authority and in the immediacy of referentiality which is ascribed to the respective texts and readers. Most notably, Chaucer--though author, narrator, character, and reader of and in The Tales--never pretends to any kind of definitive authority or significance. He certainly never arrogates to himself anything even remotely approaching the status granted by Nicholas or Wyclif to Christ (the quintessential sign, the Author-Participant-Reader par excellence whose presentation of and authority in relation to the Text is set forth when Nicholas explains the "Christian" way of reading). In contrast, Chaucer quite clearly draws himself, in each of his roles, as a mere referring agent of the same fundamental calibre as the other text(s), characters, and events that he offers in The Tales. Effectively, he makes of himself, his creative work, and his reading equal 'otot, referential "signs," which ultimately direct the attentions of the external reader to God, to His perspectives, and to His expectations for a "right" and efficacious reading of this and all texts.

Not even attempting to "mean" anything in and of themselves, then, he and they (that is, Chaucer and his creations) continually, albeit subtly, defer to the greater Text and to their greater Reader. They find their authorization in the words and examples of Scripture and their meaning in both the process of referring and the Point to which they refer ("quia intelligere Dei est res intellectas perficere, et intelligere nostrum est ipsum a rebus intellectis perfici," Michel de Marbais, Summa de modis significandi, Paris BN MSU Lat. 16222 f9r2; cf. Albert Magnus ST 1.60.4, Aquinas ST 1.4.8). Intensely personal, directly concerned for relational effect, and immediately as well as ultimately referential, the entente expressed by Chaucer the narrator for his writings in the "Retractions" is thus essentially that of Scripture: "Al that is writen is writen for oure

doctrine," he declares, "and that is myn entente" (X.1083; cf. VII.3441ff.; 1 Cor. 10:11, Rom. 15:4). Throughout his texts, though, Chaucer writes not as a Christ-figure ultimately shaping the history of which he is the center, but more like the Psalmist, celebrating the creation of which he is an active, but constituent--rather than creative--part. Through his comprehensive and varied collection of human signs--including himself--all of whom ultimately serve to delineate an essentially moral and referential vision, Chaucer seems to be writing a lengthy "psalm of praise" much like that of Psalm 8 and with the same essential message and components, means and ends:

Lord, thou art oure Lord; thi name is ful wonderful in al erthe.
For thi greet doying is resid, above heuenes.

Of the mouth of yonge children, not spekyng and soukyng mylk,
thou madist perfitli heriing, for thin enemyes; that thou destrie
the enemy and avengere.

For Y schal se thin heuenes, the werkis of thi fyngris; the
moone and sterris, whiche thou hast foundid.

What is a man, that thou art myndeful of hym; eithir the sone of
a virgin, for thou visitist hym?

Thou hast maad hym a litel lesse than aungels; thou hast
corouned hym with glorie and onour,

and hast ordeyned hym above the werkis of thin hondis.
Thou hast maad suget all thingis vnder hise feet

Lord, thou art oure Lord; thi name is wondrousful in al erthe.

(Psalm 8:1-6, 9; WB, II; see Appendix B.vi for an alternate

Fourteenth century version of this passage)

Through the recognition of his own condition as a mortal man (as

opposed to--in the translation of the Wycliffe Bible--specifically the man), more than "a little lower than the angels" (cf. X.1081ff.), then, the fictional narrator of The Tales seems to bridge the gap between the fabular and the actual. He applies the "doctrine" of the text, ultimately written by another though expressed through his hand, to his own life, appropriating both the writings and the moral responsibilities of the historical Chaucer. Qua Chaucer, the narrator therefore makes himself a fully accountable agent for all that is written, referring the reader to "our Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al goodnesse" (cf. James 1:17, 3:17) for "any thyng in it that liketh hem" and repenting of all else, citing "the defaute of myn unkonnyng and nat ... my wyl" as the cause of his moral lapses. Certainly, he assures the reader, he "wolde ful fayn have seyde bettre if [he] had konnyng" (X.1081ff.)--a continual refrain through Chaucer's works as he presents himself as a naive, somewhat bumbling, but well-intentioned teller of tales and experience who, much like the Prioress (I.124ff.), does the best he can with what he has.

Accordingly, though Chaucer's placing of himself and his texts within the referential schema interposes a further level of mediacy and signification in the process of Biblical reference, it does not alter either the ends or the means of the essential hermeneutic which Nicholas develops. Rather, it simply elaborates the referential mechanism by which the various 'otot, "signs"--whether rocks, humanity, time, texts, or the heavens--function and involve the reader in the interpretive activity which ought to transform and to direct him or her to God. The referential methods of reading "textually" in Scripture as well as in The Tales remain theoretically and functionally similar: both texts structure themselves upon an analogous sign theory with all levels of the texts pointing

eventually to God; both are governed by a common hermeneutic of plural and multivalent "literal" representations; and, both reveal a corresponding presence of reader-participants who provide both texts and provisional readings. Since Chaucer seems to intend that his text be read "Biblically," as a referential form active in the world, Nicholas' hermeneutic (and Wyclif's socio-cultural adaptation of it) provides one point of access not only to the structural logic of "The Nun's Priest's Tale," but also to the referential context for The Canterbury Tales as a whole. In terms of the signifiatory process, it seems to provide something of the impetus for Chaucer's forms while leaving the stylization of its secular expression wholly to the discretion of the author. Some familiarity with and understanding of Nicholas' theory of the literal, of "right" reading, reference, and personal realization of the Text, therefore, may well assist the critical reader in deciphering the peculiar logic of Chaucer's works as well as in making sense of their contemporary reception and effect.

Conclusion: Process and Ends of the duplex sensus literalis

As each instance of Chaucer's narrative or exposition unfolds within a concert of contexts, then, the reader must read its tale-specific wisdoms, their corresponding logics, and the particular contexts in which they operate as mutually enlightening, as embedded and ever truer "literals" within and across the tales. He or she must see the complex moralities and often conflicting wisdoms as suggestive of the larger truths that inform both the work and the world it represents. In effect, the reader of The Tales must approach Chaucer's fictions in much the same way as Nicholas of Lyra and Wyclif demand one read Scripture according to its "mature grammar"

of the true and affective duplex sensus literalis (see Chapters 2 and 3): first, with a willingness to read the text at different levels simultaneously without doing violence to any aspect of its literal sense, independent or contextual; second, with an ability to synthesize the ultimate structure and significance of the work from its many and often apparently contradictory voices, forms, and statements. Engaging the parts and the whole actively, the reader may then properly respond to the textual variations that work together and upon each other to suggest both the process and ends which underlie and unify the seemingly disparate elements and apparently episodic structure of The Canterbury Tales as a whole.

Conclusion

"Importuning the Pious Reader":

Chaucer in His Age and Modern Medievalists

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveilous
 Is in this large world ysprad--quod she--
 For noght oonly thy laude precious
 Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
 But by the mouth of children thy bountee
 Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng
 Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.

Wherefore in laude, as I best kan or may
 Of thee ...
 To telle a storie I wol do my labour

Help me to telle it in thy reverence!

(CI VII.453ff., 460f., 463, 473)

Chaucer in His Age: To Read Medievally

Drawing the reader into the text and shaping the greater meaning of it, the structure of The Tales demands not only an exegetical, but a compositional engagement as well. It requires both its parts and its reader to explicate, respond to, and participate in the meaning of the text as the work as a whole unfolds. As Chaucer the narrator and even Chaunticleer do, the external reader of The Tales must, therefore, follow the exigencies of textual form, working through error and partiality to discern the true and complementary significance of all signs—including those ambiguous, unfortunate, carnal, or even wicked ones supposedly better ignored, dismissed, or destroyed for the sake of virtue. Acknowledging personal responsibility for the selection and reception of any element wrongly read or deemed untoward (I.3176ff., X.1084ff.), the reader must refer all things to the greater Truth informing the text and, in so doing, must respond to the moral demands conveyed through the mosaic of signs and their interactions. Participating in the composition of the work's total meaning, the reader becomes—through right reading and like the signs of the text—an agent of practical wisdom and the good for higher purposes. A sign in his or her own right, he or she is thus made part of the text's structure and literal significance, being an expression of that full, affective, and transformative meaning reserved for those who approach the text willing to engage and be engaged by the demands of the text. And, as in "The Parson's Tale," only the humble and penitent pass.

When the external reader is modern rather than medieval, the complex structural dynamic of The Tales seems almost infernally compounded by such

moral, rather than purely textual, factors. Yet, the writer's entente for The Tales entire and, therefore, the response and method of engagement demanded for a full and coherent reading of it remains much the same for the modern as for the medieval: while certain surface or partial truths can be accessed by a reluctant reader who holds him- or herself apart from the effect of the text, the essential unity of the work can only be realized through interaction with it. Like a medieval reader, then, the modern must both intellectually and, at least to a certain degree, personally assent to the principles implicit in The Tales' referential, relational, and responsible morality if he or she wishes to understand its intimate workings, interrelated meanings, and subtle effects. What seems daunting from the modern perspective is that not only the individual tales or parts of the text, but the reader as well as his or her perception of the text must be, as far as possible, re-cast historically, conceptually, and effectually back into the original contexts of the work's composition. And, since both individual assent to and the academic reclamation of medieval environs is far from complete (being only partially possible at best as various aspects of the age's intellectual, social, and popular milieu are reconstructed gradually through historical research), the exercise often remains somewhat lubberly as the reader submits only partially and, even then, somewhat reluctantly to expounded contemporary parameters.

"The Noble Philosophical Poete": Chaucer's Contemporary Reception

The modern reader, however, is not entirely left to his or her own devices nor is he or she wholly subject to the circumstances of historical reclamation to discern the appropriate reception of and response to both the

forms and truths of Chaucer's works. Chaucer himself provides one model through his narratorial persona in The Tales--a practice he parallels with his "Geoffrey" in "The House of Fame" (729) and with a suspiciously Chaucer-like dreamer in both "The Book of The Duchess" (44ff.) and in "The Parliament of Fowls" (15ff.). His contemporaries also provide a template for the received response of his works in his age: Thomas Usk, Gower, and Deschamps each fashion a response of sorts to Chaucer in their own poetry, and do so well before his compilation of The Canterbury Tales, thus permitting a response, in turn, from Chaucer had he felt their readings, responses, or assessments were faulty, unfair, or that one of these poets had somehow "missed the point." That nowhere in The Tales is there such a rebuke suggests that each had, indeed, read the early Chaucer rightly and that Chaucer himself approved--or at least did not condemn--their assessments of him and his texts. As models of appropriate contemporary response to Chaucer's truths--albeit in earlier manifestations--the comments of each of these writers may be helpful in seeing the process of participatory composition through to completion as it was realized in the fourteenth century.

Where the "Retractions" and the model of "The Nun's Priest's Tale" leave off, then, the responses of Usk, Gower, and Deschamps pick up the process of reading and effect the translation of Chaucer's forms and truths into his world and into his age. As such, they become not simply part of the process of interactive, referential, and relational reading, but also representative guides and instructive models for the modern reader who would approach Chaucer's texts in intellectual as well as moral readiness. Thus, though the structure of The Canterbury Tales and Chaucer's hermeneutical models seem the most engaging guides for the reception of his works, the

modern reader may also benefit from these local assessments of his poetry, for, though few in number, they help locate the reader in relation to Chaucer's apparently intended and approved means, ends, and effects.

Common to the extant fourteenth century assessments of Chaucer is a depiction of him as a contemporary factotum of Love ("Love" being a broad term embracing the "twin loves" of Ovid, Fasti 4.1, as well as the caritas and cupiditas of Augustine, OCD 3.10.16). Perceived as a poetic vehicle of such Love "in witte and in good reson of sentence" (Thomas Usk, Testament of Love 3.4), then, Chaucer was an acknowledged active agent for the working and rule of God in the world (cf. CT X.125, OCD 3.10). Called "the noble philosophical poete in English, whiche evermore him besieth and travayleth right sore [Love's] name to encrease" (Usk 3.4), Chaucer seems to have been understood as working to realize Love's "name" in the world through his works as well as through his own nature. Even "moral Gower" (T&C V.1856) honoured Chaucer's efforts as a "disciple and ... poete" of Venus (again, both in bono and in malo; cf. Plato Symposium 180-181, Lucretius De rerum natura 1.1ff., 4.1058ff.), describing him as her "owne clerk" commissioned by her to "make his testament of love" (Confessio amantis 8.2924, 2954f.). And, commended as fit to receive "worship and reverence bothe" from "al that willen [Love] good" (Usk 3.4), Chaucer was considered both an adequate indicative agent and appropriate recipient of responses to Love in and for his age.

"Bries en parler, saiges en rethorique": Deschamps on Chaucer

The most laudatory, comprehensive, and useful contemporary assessment

of Chaucer, however, is not by an Englishman, but by Eustache Deschamps. In a ballade (c. 1386) preceding The Tales by some years, Deschamps celebrates the "Grant translateur, noble Geoffroy Chaucier," comparing him to Socrates, Seneca, Aulus Gellius, and Ovid as the poem delineates in figure the essential parameters of Chaucer's reputation and thought, the referential nature of his wisdom, the rational self-governance which is so fundamental to it, its necessary practical and relational manifestations, as well as its motivation and effect. Portraying him as "d'Amours mondains Dieux en Albie" (11), the poem depicts Chaucer as an "Aigles treshaulz" who, illuminating "le regne d'Eneas" through his "theorique" (5f.), does considerable "planting" in the island--a metaphor of some significance given the later development of the germinative figure in "The Parson's Tale" (X.112ff.). According to Deschamps, the "Grant translateur" sows "les fleurs" and plants "le rosier/Aux ignorans de la langue Pandras," establishing "un vergier" and "noble plant" along the way--a garden in which Deschamps acknowledges himself but an "ortie" (8f., 17, 32ff.). Most important for present purposes, though, are Deschamps' comparisons of Chaucer with the Classical masters of "philosophie," "meurs," "pratique," and "poetrie" (1ff.), for through these are suggested the one particular feature of Chaucer most relevant to both the wisdom developed via the structure of The Tales as well as to the sign theory underlying it: the virtue of being "Bries en parler, saiges en rethorique" (4)--"rhethorique," of course, being not only a literary and ethical discipline, but (and most importantly) a primary way to truth as well.

The most telling model presented by Deschamps for the essential, that is the referential, nature of Chaucer's particular wisdom is the first,

Socrates. Though having a great reputation for wisdom, Socrates understood it as being wholly "the property of God" and he considered "human wisdom" to be of "little or no value," except insofar as one is aware of one's own ignorance (Apology 52). Perceiving himself as having "no claim to wisdom, great or small," he understood the Delphic oracle's proclamation of his great wisdom not to refer to the literal Socrates, but to be using his "name as an example," as a model for true wisdom (50). Responding to the word of the oracle, Socrates thus became a "spokesman" for it and set out on "a sort of pilgrimage," "interviewing everyone who had a reputation for knowledge" in order to "establish the truth of the oracle once and for all" (51f.). As Chaucer does in several works (e.g. "The House of Fame"), but most notably in The Canterbury Tales, Socrates found many and varied self-conceived wisdoms, but also finding them everywhere deficient, he set about directing men away from their illusions of virtue. As Chaucer tries the merits of wisdom through his narratives, Socrates probed the value of his contemporaries' wisdom through his questions, intending not to anger and humiliate (that was incidental), but to help move the supposed wise men of his age from their vain falsehoods into truth. An active exemplar of a responsive, engaging, often even paradoxical wisdom which strove to attain the good, the true, and the wise through an interactive process, Socrates thus appropriately figures the referential and effectual "philosophie" which Chaucer builds into the structure of The Tales.

Also like Socrates in that he makes a professed folly his primary vehicle of invitation and engagement, Chaucer often indulges in an explicit self-deprecation, casting himself as the bumbling fool whose "wit is short" (I.746), who "kan but lewedly/On metres and on rymyng craftily" tell tales "in swich Englissh as he kan" (II.47f.), and who composes the "drasty

speche" and "rym dogerel" of "The Tale of Sir Thopas" (VII.923ff.). Yet, he never permits such exercises of a humility topos to cloud either his referential meanings or his essential deferral to informing authority. In both the "Retractions" to The Tales and other works, he privileges concern for sentence over that of "maistrye" or even of "craft," appealing in "The House of Fame," for instance, to "Appollo," "God of science and of light," as well as of "deveyne virtue" for guidance and effect (HofF 1091ff.).

Through the description and experience which follow, "Geffrey" (729) provides his reader with neither a merely amusing indulgence of self-deprecation nor a celebration of the glories of "tidynges." Rather, he leads his reader through the cacophony of tidings to the "man of gret auctorite" who closes the poem and who promises resolution of the crises therein (1091ff., 2158). In doing so, the narrator makes of both himself and his texts explicitly referential "signs" rather than authorities in their own right. In the "Retractions," of course, this deferral of personal abilities and achievements is much more complete: Chaucer the narrator wholly revokes his "enditynges of wordly vanitees" and, apparently naming the "man of gret auctoritee," attributes "any thyng ... that liketh hem" to "oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and goodnesse" (X.1085, 1981). Such explicit dismissals of his own achievements for greater ends seem to lead Chaucer to a wisdom and "philosophie" which is much like and has much the same effect as Socrates'. It also offers a perhaps not so unreasonable reading of Deschamps' first designation of Chaucer as a "Socrates plains de philosophie" for their shared age (1).

Deschamps' styling of Chaucer as "Seneque en meurs et Auglus en pratique" (2) is even more straightforward and more directly applicable to

the wisdom of The Tales than the referential and informing "philosophie" of Socrates: particularly in the Middle Ages, both Seneca and Aulus Gellius were noted for their practical, ethical virtue--the Seneca received by medieval authorities being the Seneca of the Epistulae morales (rather than the dramatist privileged by later humanists) and, as such, having been a prominent source for the medieval formulations of morality and uprightness. Aulus Gellius having defined those disciplines which constitute true paideia and humanitas, Deschamps' reference to him more or less delineates the realms in which Chaucer, in life or writings, was an effective agent and in which he suggests relational wisdom must be manifest: i.e. poetry, eloquence, history, philosophy, ethics, politics, and economics (Noctes Atticae 13.7) More than complemented by the "meurs" of Seneca, the practice of Aulus Gellius arose from the internal virtue cultivated by a Stoic concern with natural law, with the right use of reason, and with efficacious mercy--all central issues in each of The Tales normative wisdoms. Figured by Seneca, such internal virtue included complete governance of self, gentle regard for one's fellows, and a contented receipt of and response to that which comes in life.

Seeming to represent those aspects of Chaucer's teachings on wisdom and affective signification which are realized in "The Knight's Tale" and, perhaps even more so, in "The Tale of Melibee," Seneca's morality began internally with a right understanding of self in the world, as the soul learns to live virtuously with circumstances (Ep. mor. 101.15 10.5; Nat. quaes. 1.praef.7). Such peaceful self-governance in Seneca's understanding extended the effect of this internal stability outward to others both generally ("let us cherish humanity," De ira 4.43.5) and specifically, intersecting most directly with the wisdom of The Tales in matters such as

anger and judgment. Consider, for example, Melibee's "virtue" against the following statements by Seneca: "Reason wishes the decision it gives to be just; anger wishes the decision it has given to seem the just decision" (De ira 1.18.1; emphasis added); "He who has judged aught, with the other side unheard, may have judged righteously, but was himself unrighteous" (Medea 199). In both Seneca's words and "The Tale of Melibee," then, the entente, not the deed, determines true virtue—a fact which becomes even more explicit and consequential in "The Parson's Tale." Therefore, requiring that "the wise man's feeling toward all men" be not just superficially, but in actu, "that of the physician toward his patients" (De const. sap. 13.1), Seneca's "meurs" and that which Chaucer develops in The Tales see hope for fallen individuals through their positive acts of the will (voluntas) as well as through positive reception of them by other individuals in the social body (Ep. mor. 25.1, 48.10). Thus, in statements not so different from those of "The Tale of Melibee" and "The Parson's Tale," Seneca writes: "The wish for healing has ever been the half of health" (Hippolytus 249) and "Only he who is awake can recount his dream, and similarly a confession of sin is a proof of sound mind" (Ep. mor. 53.8; cf. CT VII.1770ff., X.85ff.). Like Chaucer, his concern is for awareness and restoration, not harsh and "righteous" judgment, discipline, and punishment.

Bringing together all possible compliments by praising Chaucer as "Ovides grans en ta poetrie" (3), Deschamps thus includes not simply poetic skill, but the full range of ethical and moral motivation and effect—Ovid being primarily concerned with love in its various expressions (e.g. Fasti 4.1). Ovid is perhaps the most "Christian" of the thinkers listed as complimentary comparisons to Chaucer, for his principal concern was

specifically love--the Biblical, if not the actual or practiced "kingis lawe" for the Christian faith (James 2:8, WB, II; KJV, "royal law"; cf. Mt. 5:43ff.; John 13:34ff., 15:12, 17; 1 Thes. 4:9, etc.). Deschamps' comparison of Chaucer with Ovid thus indicates Deschamps own understanding of the broadly as well as ultimately ethical context Chaucer intended for his works, his wisdom, his sign theory, and, indeed, for his age: Ovid, stipulating a basis for all action in love--understood in the Middle Ages as the primary nature and expression of God (Amores 3.11.33; see Nicholas of Lyra, Glossa Ordinaria on 1 John 4:7, 16; 1 Pet. 1:22, 1 John 3:11, etc.)--framed a heaven-oriented referentiality much like Chaucer also developed (Met. 1.85ff.; CT I.2987ff.). Embracing the instructive signification of even subjectively evil agents (Met. 4.428), Ovid reinforced the comprehensive nature of signs which is so essential to Chaucer's complex and interactive structure (CT I.3005ff.). Further, he made the will a deciding factor in virtue (Met. 7.19ff., Amores 3.17) and privileged the function of the individual in developing personal wisdom (or not) from a right reading of as well as a right response to that which is perceived. And, in his principle that "It is a royal deed ... to help the fallen" (Ep. ex ponto 2.9.11), Ovid exemplified the highest possible manifestations of the good evidenced and expressed in each of the normative wisdom texts of The Tales. His vision corresponds to Theseus' experience of "pitee renn[ing] soone in gentil herte" (I.1761) as well as his concern that "gentil mercy oghte to passen right" (I.3089). It also accords with Prudence's early and willing engagement and forgiveness of the transgressors as well as with Melibee's later (and somewhat reluctant) reception of them, largely for his own sake (VII.1726ff., 1859ff.). And, it foreshadows "the mercy of God ... evere ready to the penitent, and ... aboven alle his werkes" (X.699ff.) that, in

"The Parson's Tale," is continually available to man through "the mercy of Crist" which is "alwey redy to receyven hym to mercy ... as ofte as he falleth ... And though he never so longe have leyn in synne" (X.1073). In Deschamps' brief celebration of and response to Chaucer's expressed and literary wisdom, then, the modern reader may find Chaucer's textual truths essentialized and contemporarily re-cast as an intellectual and moral invitation to the reader to, as Augustine says, "Dilige et quod vis fac": to "Love and do [or read] as you will" (In epist. joann. Hom. 7.8)--love being the source, expression, and effect of "saigesse en rethorique" (4).

Conclusion: To Read as a Modern Medievalist

Both the peculiar logic of the tales and the reception of Chaucer's work in his age, then, seem to suggest that before the modern reader of medieval texts generally and of Chaucer's works specifically can fully as well as accurately discern the relative meaning of even the text's parts, he or she must learn and at least tentatively acquiesce to the intellectual frameworks of the age. He or she must understand the complementary functions of text and reader in shaping meaning. And, he or she must realize that, for a medieval writer as well as for his contemporary audience, literature per se is an essentially and ultimately ethical exercise by both intent and genre--these matters being the principal concerns of such modern medievalists as Robertson, Minnis, and Allen respectively. It seems also that both the text and the historical context from which it arises demand that the reader--as far as possible--participate morally in the intellectual truths presented, responding actively to that which they reveal as to signs of a greater and affective good, for only from

a position effectively "within" the text (or, at the very least, within the tradition) may the reader, modern or medieval, truly engage the text's whole and affective truths. Without such conscious empathy, willing participation in the logic and conceptual order of the text, as well as a resulting sympathy for the work's peculiar "grammar" of signification, the reader remains effectively untouched by and beyond the moral pale of the work. As Wyclif put it in relation to Scripture, one must be at home in Biblical logic to know its truths rightly (De ver. 2.16.20). Only then might one know and respond appropriately and profitably to the one Truth underlying, informing, and shaping the multi-form text in all its parts (De ver. 2.19.112ff.). Beginning with an understanding of a text's grammar, terminology, and the working of parts and whole together, then, the rational and responsible reader of medieval texts must, therefore, respond to the text being engaged, almost consciously modeling his or her thought after its total truth to realize something of its author, text, and meaning in his or her own life (e.g. De ver. 1.3.6, 1.60; cf. De pot. page 215).

As a contemporary of Chaucer, Deschamps seems to have desired something of this "translation" of self through text (or literary influence). In celebrating Chaucer and re-casting him into the moral context of glorious historical predecessors, Deschamps responds to Chaucer's early work and tries to write himself into "le jardin," or sphere of influence of the poet--albeit as a mere nettle--as he reads both himself and Chaucer's accomplishments against the cumulative philosophy, history, mythology, and literature relevant to the age, topic, and material at hand. Modern medievalists working with an awareness of historical locatedness do much the same--though more clumsily, given that even the best intentioned modern

response to a medieval text is conditioned by a much greater temporal, but also conceptual, remove. The principal benefits of such work as Robertson's exegesis of "the law of love," Minnis' reclamation of the prologue tradition, and Allen's exposition of the "ethical poetic" is, therefore, not so unlike (if much less celebratory) that of Deschamps: essentially re-articulating medieval parameters and contexts to clarify a distinctive moral and intellectual environment and to assist in the reader's acclimation to the times, the text, and its meaning, each formal response to Chaucer's works re-casts modern reception of medieval texts to frame the reader's concept of a given text with a historicity which is as fully informed as possible. That the perspectives that each attempts to open for the modern reader through their respective "small ... unclear and distorting ... medieval window[s]" (Minnis 7), differ in no way invalidates their individual contributions. Rather, like the conflicting wisdoms of the contained texts in The Canterbury Tales, the very differences invite the reader of medieval texts and of modern medievalists to enter the critical discourse personally, contributing to it his or her own informed perspective on the age as well as his or her own experience with the text at hand.

This present work is intended as one such contribution. Expounding a hitherto largely neglected, but viable contemporary model for Chaucer's compositional method and ostensible entente, it offers to the modern reader a further and textually validated means of accessing The Tales' own definitions of truth. It invites the reader--as the tales themselves do--to participate in and respond to the relative truths of the text in order to realize something of its broader wisdom and moral effect. Growing out of the work of Robertson, Minnis, and Allen and, it is hoped, delineating further areas for future reclamations, this study attempts its own

re-casting of both the reader and the structural logic of the The Tales back into the text's natural, historical, and organic context. It expounds the process and effect of text in terms of masters such as Rashi, Nicholas, Wyclif, and Chaucer himself with his polyphony of pilgrim voices, so that the modern reader, perceiving something of the medieval invitation and onus to be mastered by, rather than mastering the text at hand, might willingly "join the voices" as it were, "effac[ing] himself [or herself] behind [the] text, and not let[ting] his [or her] own idea[s] take the place of the author's" (Liber 93). It is, in effect, yet another invitation to read and be read aright.

**Academic Apparatus:
Appendices, Works Cited, and
Works Consulted**

The wordis of wise men as prickis, and as nailis fastned deepe,
whiche ben youun of a scheepherde bi the counsels of maistris ...
seke thou no more than these; noon ende is to make many bookis
.... (Ecc. 12:11-12; WB, II)



APPENDIX A: Translations of Nicholas of Lyra's Prologues

Below are translations of Nicholas of Lyra's three "Prologues": the "First" and "Second Prologues" being from the Postilla literalis (1331); the "Third Prologue," from the Postilla moralis (1339). Based upon the texts in PL 113, col. 25-36, these translations were done by James George Kiecker in his unpublished dissertation, "The Hermeneutical Principles and Exegetical Methods of Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M. (CA. 1270-1349)," Marquette University, 1978. Some small editorial work has been done by the present writer. These texts are included for the convenience of the reader and to offer something of Nicholas' work to those who might otherwise not have access to it.

i) "The First Prologue"

1 In the name of the Holy Trinity, here begins the Prologue of the venerable father, Friar Nicholas of Lyra of the seraphic Order of St. Francis, concerning the praise of Holy Scripture in general.

 "This is all the book of life," Ecclesiasticus 23 [actually 24:32]. As St. Gregory says in Homily Thirty-five on the Gospels, "Temporal life, compared to eternal life, should rather be called death than life." Indeed, the sciences, handed on by the philosophers, are ordered to an end to be attained in the present life, because the practical sciences, handed on by them, are ordered to civil well-being, by speaking of the civil affairs of the present life. Similarly, the speculative sciences are ordered to contemplative well-being, by speaking of contemplation which can be had in the present life, and by way of nature, which depends on imagination. Whence it says in De anima, Book 3, that "for us who are understanding beings, it is necessary that imagined things be at the same time visualized [speculari]." And, about such visualization, it says in the same place that "in us the understanding is corrupted when something is corrupted inside [us]." Sacred Scripture, however, is ordered to the well-being of the future life, about which philosophers knew nothing, as St. Jerome says in his letter to Paulinus, concerning all the books of Sacred Scripture: "This, learned Plato did not know; this, eloquent Demosthenes was ignorant of." From this, one concludes that the books written by the philosophers, concerning sciences ordered to the end to be only naturally attained in this temporal life, if compared to the books of Sacred Scripture, which are ordered to the end of eternal life, are rather to be called the books of death rather than of life. But the book containing Sacred Scripture—which, though divided into many individual books, nevertheless is contained in one book—which by general name is called the Bible, is properly named the Book of Life, as was stated in the passage above, "This is all [the book of life]."

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 In this phrase, Sacred Scripture is described in four ways, according to the four excellencies [excellencias], by which it surpasses every other writing. For first, it is described as having singular eminence [eminencia singularis], which the singular pronoun denotes, when it says "this." Secondly, it is described as having general content [contentia generalis], which the universal word shows, when it says "all." Thirdly, [it is described] as having visible intelligence [intelligentia specularis], which the condition of being a book denotes, when it says "book." Fourthly, [it is described] as having saving

40 efficacy [*efficacia salutaris*], which the attainment of the intended end shows, when it says "life."

About the first [of these four excellencies], it should be known that one science is more eminent than the other, or more honourable, for two reasons, as stated in *De anima*, Book 1. One reason is because it is about a more worthy subject. The other reason is because it proceeds in a more certain manner.

For both reasons, Sacred Scripture, which is properly called theology since this is the only text of this science, surpasses all sciences. [This is so], first, because it has God for [its] subject, who is at the summit of all worth. Because of this, it is called
50 theology, that is, "a word about God." [This is so], secondly, because it proceeds in a more certain manner. For other sciences, humanly acquired, proceed by the investigation of human reason. In this process, although certainly there is no error insofar as it pertains to knowledge of first principles which are known by themselves--as it says in the *Metaphysica*, Book 3: "who will fail in the entrance?"--nevertheless, it can err in the deduction of conclusions from principles, especially insofar as it pertains to conclusions far from first principles. Whence, in such a process, all philosophers,
60 depending only on human investigation, are found to have erred.

For this reason, about the singular eminence of this science, it says in Deuteronomy 4[:6]: "This is your wisdom, and understanding in the sight of nations." For that science is properly called wisdom which considers the highest causes, as is found in the *Metaphysica*, Book 1. Indeed, Sacred Scripture has God for [its] subject, as was said, who is plainly the first cause of everything, and for this reason, it [i.e. Scripture] is properly called wisdom. But fittingly, "your" is added to distinguish the wisdom of the saints or of Catholics, which is Sacred Scripture itself, from the wisdom of the philosophers. This [is]
70 especially [true] in two respects, namely, in the properties known about God, and in the goal of [this] knowledge. For though philosophers had knowledge about God, still this was only insofar as it pertained to properties which can be concluded about him through the investigation of reason, proceeding from creatures, as the Philosopher in the *Metaphysica*, Book 12, proves God's unity and, in the *Physica*, Book 8, [proves] the infinity of [God's] power, and so on about similar things. But the prophets and the holy apostles, who handed on this Scripture to us by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, had knowledge about divine properties transcending the investigation of reason, as [for example]
80 about the plurality of persons, their distinction in the unity of essence, and the like. Likewise, the philosophers did not order the knowledge of God which they had toward any other goal, but sought it only for the sake of speculating about Him, insofar as He is the perfection of knowledge itself. On the other hand, the knowledge of God, which is handed on in Sacred Scripture, is sought mainly for this purpose, that by it the person who speculates or contemplates is taken up into the love of the known object Himself, namely God, by loving Him above himself and above all other things. Therefore, the Savior says in Matthew 22[:40], "on these two commandments dependeth the whole law and
90 the prophets." The Apostle [says] in 1 Timothy 1[:5], "The end of the commandment is charity, from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith." Because the philosophers, depending on their own sense, did not attend to this goal, for this reason they erred.

Therefore, their wisdom is called foolishness in Romans 1[:21-22]:
 "That when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

But since Sacred Scripture not only surpasses other writings insofar as it is about a more worthy subject, but also insofar as it proceeds in a more certain manner, namely by divine revelation which cannot be false, for this reason there is added in the authority cited before, "and understanding in the sight of nations." For the understanding is properly called a habit of principles, in connection with which there is no error, as was already said. Therefore, that which is concluded directly from these principles is judged simply to be true. And [that] which is found to oppose them is judged simply to be false. So, in a similar way, whatever is clearly concluded from Sacred Scripture is judged true. On the other hand, [that] which opposes it is found simply to be false. For this reason, Sacred Scripture is not only
 100 called wisdom, but with this, also understanding, whence it says in Ecclesiasticus 15[:5]: "[He] shall fill him with his spirit of wisdom and understanding." And, [it says] in Colossians 1[:9]: "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Thus, the first [of the four excellencies] is explained.

About the second [of the four excellencies], it should be considered that, when one considers any science, not only is the subject included, but also those things which are attributed to it, as in the Metaphysica, Book 4. For example, when one considers medicine, not only
 120 is the health included, or a healthy body, but also urine, insofar as it is the indication of health, and drink, insofar as it is the cause of health, and diet, is so far as it is the preservation of health, and so on in other matters.

Moreover, all created things are attributed to God Himself, who is the subject of this science. Therefore, when one considers this science, in a certain sense one considers all science. In this way, the general content of this [science] becomes apparent, which is denoted by the word in the passage at the beginning when it says "all."

From this can be explained what it says in Wisdom 1[:7]: "That which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice." The sense is:
 130 "That," namely the volume of Sacred Scripture--which, though it is divided into many individual books, still these are taken together into one volume which is called the Bible--"containeth all" because, when one considers this science, in a certain sense one considers all science. "Hath knowledge of the voice." It is the property of a voice that it signifies a word, and this is especially [true] of Sacred Scriptures since it is the expression of the Divine Word, according to what is clearly found in John 1[:1]: "In the beginning was the Word." Because all things were made by this Word, as is added in that passage, for this
 140 reason all things are included when one considers this science--not, however, under the proper reasons of singulars, because this pertains to particular sciences and inventions of humanity, but rather insofar as we are led from all things created by hand into the knowledge and love of God by true faith which is formed by love, to which the consideration of this science is ordered, as was said before. This is what Augustine says in De Trinitate, Book 14, Chapter 1: "I assigned to this latter knowledge not anything that a man can know of human affairs, a great

part of which is matter of superfluous vanity or harmful curiosity, but only that by which the most wholesome faith that leads to true
 150 blessedness is begotten, nourished, defended, and strengthened." Whence also in John 16[:13] the Savior, speaking about the Holy Spirit, by whose revelation this Scripture was handed on, says: "He will teach you all truth." The gloss adds, "necessary to salvation." Thus, the second [of the four excellencies] is explained.

About the third [excellency], which is visible [specularis] intelligence, and which is denoted when it says "book," it should be considered that a book is like a mirror. For just as in a mirror sensible forms are apparent, so in a book, intelligible truths are reflected.

160 Whence also divine foreknowledge, in which all truths are reflected, is called a book. In this book, the holy apostles and prophets--who handed on this tradition--read. This is what it says in the gloss on Esaias 38[:11]: "Take order with thy house." The gloss [says]: "The prophets were able to read in this book of the foreknowledge of God, in which all things are written." However, that [statement] is not to be understood as though the prophets saw the very essence of God, which is present at the same time with His foreknowledge, because prophetic foreknowledge--since it sees in a dark manner--is put
 170 away in such a vision, as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians [:8, 10, 12]. But rather, for this reason, the prophets are said to have read in the book of the foreknowledge of God, because by the vision of divinity which was imprinted on the minds of the prophets, and by the prophetic light apportioned to them, they saw in their own way the truth derived from the science of God by revelation to them. Just so, the potential understanding--by virtue of the light of active understanding--views in visions received from imaginations truths proportionate to itself. We, however, who do not have such knowledge, who are not illumined with the prophetic light, are not able to read in the said book, but [we read] in the book of Sacred Scripture handed on to us by the prophets.

180 However, this book has this special quality, that one word contains many senses. The reason for this is because the principal author of this book is God Himself, who has the power not only to use words to signify something--which even men are able to do, and do [in fact] do--but He also uses the things signified by the words to signify other things. For this reason, it is common in all books that words signify something, but it is special in this book that things signified by words signify something else. Therefore, according to the first signification, which is by the words, the literal or historical sense is acquired. Then, indeed, according to the other signification, which is
 190 by the things themselves, the mystical or spiritual meaning is acquired, which is generally three-fold. If the things signified by the words are intended to signify those things which are to be believed in the new law, the allegorical sense is thus acquired. If, on the other hand, [the things signified by the words] are intended to signify those things which are to be done by us, the moral or tropological sense is thus [acquired]. If again [the things signified by the words] are intended to signify those things which are to be hoped for in future blessedness, the anagogical sense is thus [acquired]. This word comes from anage which means "lift up." Whence the verse:

200 The literal teaches what happened;
 Allegory is what you believe;

The moral is what you do;

Anagogy is where you are heading.

- An example of these four senses can be furnished by this word "Jerusalem" which, according to the literal sense signifies a certain city which was once a metropolis in the kingdom of Judaea, first founded by Melchisedech and afterwards enlarged and fortified by Solomon. Then, indeed, according to the moral sense, Jerusalem signifies the faithful soul, according to which sense Esaias speaks in chapter 52[:2]: "Arise, sit up, O Jerusalem." Then, indeed, according to the allegorical sense, Jerusalem signifies the Church militant, according to which sense it says in Apocalypse 21[:2]: "I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Then, indeed, according to the anagogical sense, Jerusalem signifies the Church Triumphant, according to which sense it says in Galatians 4[:26]: "But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free: which is our mother." As an example is furnished by one word, so it can be furnished in one statement, and as in one, so also in others. Accordingly, it is stated in Ezechiel 2[:9-10] about this book containing many senses under one word: "Behold, a hand was sent to me, wherein was a book rolled up: and he spread it before me, and it was written within and without." And, [it says] in Apocalypse 5[:1]: "I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without." Outer Scripture is the literal sense, which is clearer, because the literal sense is signified directly by the words. On the other hand, inner Scripture is the mystical or spiritual sense, which is more hidden, because it is signified by the things signified by the words, as was said. And thus, the third [of the four excellencies] is explained.
- About the fourth [excellency], by which is denoted saving efficacy when it says "life," it should be considered that, as was said at the beginning, no other writing but this leads directly to the blessed life which alone is true life, because it knows no death. For this reason, the Savior, in John 5[:39], speaking about the effect of this Sacred Scripture, said to the Jews who were skilled in the law: "Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting." About this [statement], it should be known that this phrase, "you think," which introduces the thought of falsehood or at least the doubt of truth, does not refer to Sacred Scripture itself--which contains no falsehood, as is clear from what was said above. Nor does it even [introduce] doubt because [Scripture] directs us toward the blessed life, since it is a kind of instrument for leading us to eternal well-being, as is clear from the words of St. Augustine cited above. But rather, [this phrase, "you think,"] refers to those men skilled in the law who interpret Sacred Scripture badly, and who live evil lives, on account of which they are rightly kept from attaining eternal blessedness, which is the goal of this science--although, without doubt, they pursue it, thinking soberly and living piously in accord with their sober thinking, as it says in Ecclesiasticus 24[:31]: "They that explain me shall have life everlasting." On the other hand, Sacred Scripture is explained when it is interpreted in a true fashion and when it is used in a holy way, because this Scripture, just as it is more eminent than all [other writings], contains the perfections of practical and speculative science. And so, by knowing the truth, and by doing what is good, it leads us to the blessed life, which [we pray] He might grant us, Who

- lives and reigns without end.
 ii) "The Second Prologue"

1 The Second Prologue, concerning the intention of the author and his manner of proceeding.

 "I saw in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne a book written within and without," [reads] Apocalypse 5[:1]. As was said within the proceeding Prologue, this book is Sacred Scripture, which is said to be written "without" insofar as it pertains to the literal sense and "within" insofar as it pertains to the mystical and spiritual sense. Though this [latter sense] is generally divided in a three-fold manner, as was said before, and though in connection with
 10 each one of these a host of mystical interpretations can be made specifically, nevertheless all [interpretations] presuppose the literal as the foundation. Whence, just as a building leaning off [its] foundation is inclined to collapse, so a mystical interpretation disconnected from the literal sense is considered to be unsuitable and unfitting—or, at least, less suitable in other equal respects and less fitting. For this reason, it is necessary for the person who wishes to be proficient in the study of Sacred Scripture to begin with an understanding of the literal sense. [This is] especially [true] since
 20 one can base an argument on the literal sense alone, and not on the mystical sense, in order to prove or demonstrate anything doubtful, as Augustine says in his letter against Vincent the Donatist.

 Furthermore, it must be considered that the literal sense from which, as was said, one must begin, seems in modern times to be very uncertain. Partly, [this uncertainty] is the fruit of copyists who, on account of the similarity of letters in many places, wrote something other than the text actually has. Partly, [the uncertainty is due to] the lack of skill of some editors, who put [vowel] points in many places where they should not have been, and they began or ended verses where they should not have been begun or ended. By this, the thought of the
 30 text is changed, as will be explained in those places below where this occurs, the Lord willing. Partly, [the uncertainty results from] the manner of our translation, which in many places has something different from what is in the Hebrew, as Jerome says in [his] book De Hebraicis quaestionibus and in many other places. Other interpreters of Scripture, in lecturing or writing, say the same thing. Nevertheless, as Jerome [says] in his second prologue on Genesis, and in many other places: in order to get at the truth of the text contained in the Old Testament Scripture, one must go back to the Hebrew codices. In doing this, nevertheless, a strong caution is in order when it comes to the
 40 passages of the Old Testament Scripture which speak about the deity of Christ and about the things pertaining to this. Some of these passages the Jews have corrupted to defend their errors, as in part I declared in a particular quaestio on the divinity of Christ. I will say more about this when such passages occur, the Lord willing. On the other hand, in those [passages] in which there is no likelihood that the Jews changed anything, since they did not have a reason for doing this, there seems no danger, but rather safety, in going back in doubtful cases to the Hebrew text, as to the original, in order to declare the truth of the text, as St. Jerome said.

50 Furthermore, it should be known that the literal sense has often been obscured by the method of interpretation commonly handed on to us

by some who, though they said many good things, nevertheless touched on the literal sense too little, and multiplied the mystical senses to such an extent that the literal sense--trapped among so many mystical interpretations--is partially suffocating. Likewise, they divided the text into so many parts and introduced so many agreements to their proposition, that they partially confuse the understanding and the memory, drawing the soul away from the understanding of the literal sense. Therefore, proposing to avoid these and similar [faults], with
 60 the help of God I intend to adhere to the literal sense, and [I intend] to include very few brief, mystical interpretations sometimes though rarely.

Similarly, I intend to introduce not only the statements of the Catholic doctors, but also of the Hebrews, especially of Rabbi Solomon, who among the Hebrew Doctors spoke more reasonably in expressing the literal sense. I will also include, though very rarely, other statements of the Hebrews which sometimes are very absurd--not that I hold to them or follow them, but so that in this way the great blindness which has a hold on Israel might be apparent, as Paul the Apostle said
 70 in Romans 11[:7]. Furthermore, because of this, one should not adhere to the statements of the Hebrews except insofar as they agree with reason and the truth of the text.

Likewise, having omitted prologues, I will begin at the beginning of Genesis, because otherwise I do not believe the rest of my life is sufficient to interpret all of Sacred Scripture, and for that reason, I do not wish to die while interpreting the statements of St. Jerome or some other doctor--whoever he might be. Furthermore, the words of a prologue accomplish too little towards understanding the books which follow, as it seems to me. Nevertheless, I interpreted the prologues of
 80 some of the books upon which I wrote, before I began with the book of Genesis.

Lastly, because I am not so skilled in Hebrew or the Latin language, but rather I am deficient in many respects, for this reason I declare that I intend to say nothing assertively or determinatively except insofar as it pertains to those things which are clearly determined by Sacred Scripture, or by the authority of the Church. Indeed, all other statements may be accepted if stated scholastically and in a disciplined manner. For this reason, I submit everything stated and what is being stated to the correction of Holy Mother Church,
 90 and to anyone of wisdom, importuning the pious reader and the charitable editor.

However, before I get down to the interpretation of the text, I set forth seven rules for interpreting Sacred Scripture which Isidore touches on in [his] De summo bono, Book 1, Chapter 20. These rules are called "keys" by some, because by them the understanding of Scripture is opened up in many ways.

The first [rule] is about the Lord Jesus Christ and His mystical body, which is the Church. Because of the connection of the head to the body, Sacred Scripture sometimes speaks of both in a single context, as of the same person, passing from one to the other, thanks to the statement in Esaias 61[:10]: "For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation: and with the robe of justice he hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels." When it says, "as a bridegroom," this is understood of Christ, and when it adds, "as a bride," this is understood of the Church. Similarly, in
 100

the Song of Songs 1[:1], [it says]: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine." For when it says, "let him kiss me," this is the statement of the bride desiring to derive enjoyment from the bridegroom. When it adds, "for thy breasts are better," this is the statement of the bridegroom praising the bride. 110 Whence, when such connections are thus made, the careful reader, for the reason mentioned before, ought to notice what is fitting for the head and what [is fitting] for the body.

The second rule is about the true and the false body of the Lord. For the Church, which is the mystical body of the Lord, as was said above, is like a fishnet not yet drawn to shore. For this reason, it has evil people intermingled with good people until the Judgment, when the former shall be separated from the latter. And for this reason, sometimes in Sacred Scripture the evil are praised with the good with 120 whom they have intermingled, as in Osee 11[:1]: "Israel was a child, and I loved him." On the other hand, sometimes the good are blamed with the evil, as in Esaias 1[:3]: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood." Sometimes, even in the same text, there is expressed that which pertains to the good and that which [pertains] to the evil, as in the Song of Songs 1[:4]: "I am black, but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon." These are the words of the bride who, on account of evildoers in the Church, says, "I am black." However, on account of the good [people] in the 130 Church, she adds, "but beautiful." And what is added by way of example, "as the tents of Cedar," refers to the evil. For "Cedar" was the son of Ismael, as is found in Genesis 25[:13], from whom are descended the Saracens. However, what is added, "as the curtains of Solomon," refers to us. For here, by Solomon, God Himself is understood, according to Catholic and Hebrew interpreters. And, for this reason, his "curtains" are mentioned, with which the tabernacle was enclosed in which the good [people] worshipped God.

The third rule is about the spirit and the letter, according to which the historical and the mystical sense are received under the same 140 word, because the truth of history is retained and yet it is directed to spiritual understanding. This rule is usually interpreted in this way. It can also be explained differently, so that it is directed just as much toward the literal sense as toward the other. Concerning this, it must be considered that sometimes the word has a double literal sense, thanks to the statement in 1 Paralipomenon 17[:13], where the Lord says of Solomon: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." This is understood of Solomon literally, insofar as he was the son of God by adoption in his youth. For this reason, Nathan the prophet called him "Amiable to the Lord" as is found in 2 Kings 12[:25]. Yet, 150 the above mentioned authority, "I will be to him a father," is introduced by the Apostle in Hebrews 1[:5] as spoken about Christ literally. This is clear from this [passage] because the Apostle introduces it to prove that Christ was greater than the angels. However, such proof cannot be made by the mystical sense, as Augustine says against Vincent the Donatist as was cited above. For the above mentioned authority was fulfilled literally in Solomon, nevertheless less perfectly, because he was the son of God by grace alone. On the other hand, [it was fulfilled] more perfectly in Christ, who is the Son of God by nature. Though, however, each interpretation may be simply

160 literal, nevertheless the second one, which is about Christ, is accordingly spiritual and mystical insofar as Solomon was a type of Christ.

The fourth rule is about species and genera, or about the parts and the whole, since [something] from one carries over to the other and vice versa, as in Esais 13[:1ff.]. First, it speaks about Babylon specifically [i.e. as a species] when it says: "The burden of Babylon." Then, it goes on to understand the word ["Babylon"] as applying to the whole world in general [i.e. as a genus], by what is added [Esaias 13:5]: "From the end of heaven: the Lord and the instruments of his
170 wrath, to destroy the land." Afterwards, the passage goes back to speaking against Babylon specifically [i.e. as a species] when it says [in Esaias 13:17]: "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who shall not seek silver," because Darius the Mede, with Cyrus his son, captured Babylon and killed Balthasar the king of Babylon, as is found in Daniel 5[:30].

The fifth rule is about times. This rule has four parts. First, there is synecdoche, when a part of a time period stands for all of it. An example of this is in the Gospel where it says that Christ lay in the grave for three days. However, the first and third days were not full
180 days. Secondly, there are the little periods of time, which sometimes are counted in Scripture, and sometimes are omitted. For example, Sacred Scripture, speaking in many places about one or another number of years, sometimes puts more years in one place by adding those little periods of time mentioned above. In another place, indeed, it puts fewer years, omitting those stated little time periods. Thirdly, there is the fact that the computation of years in one place begins at the beginning and in another place at the end. For example, [God] said to Abraham in Genesis 15[:13]: "Thy seed shall be a stranger ... four hundred years." And in Exodus 12[:40], it says about this sojourning:
190 "The abode of the children of Israel that they made in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years." This is because this computation of this greater number begins at the time when God said to Abraham in Genesis 12[:1]: "Go forth out of thy country." On the other hand, the computation of the smaller number begins at the birth of Isaac, which was thirty years after the departure of Abraham from Haran, as is more fully seen below, in Exodus 12[:40]. Fourthly, there is the fact that Sacred Scripture speaks about the future as if it were already past. For example, in Esaias 9[:6], it says: "A child is born to us." This is said to denote the certitude of prophecy, where an event of the future
200 is as certain as if it were already past. And this is said on account of the certitude of divine foreknowledge, from which the revelation was made to the prophet. It should be noted, however, that such a manner of speaking has no place except in a prophecy of predestination, which is when something happening in the future is revealed to the prophet in a way which is in accord with the foreknowledge of God, which infallibly intuits future things just as present and past things. Indeed, in a prophecy of a threat, it has no place, which is when some penalty to be inflicted upon a people is revealed to the prophet, or to some other person, not according to what is in the foreknowledge of God, but
210 according to the order of secondary causes, as is natural in accordance with the faults of men. For example, there is the prophecy in Jonah 3[:4]: "Yet forty days and Nineve shall be destroyed," for the sins of that city merited this destruction. Nevertheless, because such a cause

is changeable, for this reason sometimes the effect does not follow. So it was in his case, because the Ninevites did penance, and so the Lord did not inflict the threatened penalty.

The sixth rule is about recapitulation and anticipation. For in Sacred Scripture, the things which happened are not always written in the order in which they happened. For this reason, when things that happened later are placed earlier, this is called anticipation. On the other hand, when things that happened earlier are placed later, this is called recapitulation. For example, it says in Genesis 10[:5] about the sons of Noe: "By these were divided the islands of the Gentiles in their lands, every one according to his tongue." And later in the same chapter, [it says in 10:31]: "These are the children of Shem according to their kindreds and tongues." And afterwards in chapter 11[:1], it says: "The earth was of one tongue and of the same speech." From this, it is clear that that which was said earlier about the division of tongues is said by anticipation. Similarly, in Genesis 2[:4], after Moses had described in chapter 1 the creation of heaven and earth and their distinction and, in part, the adornment of the world, it says: "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, in the day in which they were created." From this, it is clear that this is said by recapitulation.

The seventh rule is about the devil and his body. For, as St. Gregory says in Homily 10, "Certainly the devil is the head of all iniquities, and all iniquities are members of this head." And for this reason, on account of the connection of the head to the members, Scripture [when] speaking about one goes on to speak about the other in the same context. For example, Esaias in chapter 14[:4], speaking about the king of Babylon who was a member of the devil, goes on to speak about the prince of devils when he adds there [14:12]: "How thou art fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning?" And Ezechiel in chapter 28[:2], speaking about the prince of Tyre, goes on to speak about the devil when he adds [28:13f.]: "Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God."

Therefore, having set forth these rules or keys for interpreting Sacred Scripture, with confidence in divine assistance, let us get down to the literal interpretation.

iii) "The Third Prologue"

1 The Prologue of the same Nicholas of Lyra on the moralities of the Bible.

"I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without," Apocalypse 5[:1]. Sitting on the throne of glory is the glorious and sublime God, ruling the universe, in whose right hand is Sacred Scripture, divinely given, as it is said in Deuteronomy 33[:2]: "In his right hand a fiery law." For the law of the Old and New Testaments is well called "fiery," since it was inspired by revelation of the Holy Spirit, who is called the divine fire. And this Scripture is well called "a book written within and without": "Without," insofar as it pertains to the literal sense; "within," indeed, insofar as it pertains to the mystical sense hidden under the literal. For God, who is the author of this Scripture, not only uses

words to signify something, but also [uses] the things signified by the words.

And thus, the deeds of the Old Testament signified those deeds which happened in the New Testament, as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 10[:11]: "All these things happened to them in figure."

20 Therefore, the sense which is signified by the words is properly called literal. That sense, indeed, which is signified by things is called mystical. And this [mystical sense] has three parts. If by such means, something is signified which pertains to belief, it is called allegorical. If, however, [something is signified which] pertains to action, it is called moral. If, however, [something is signified which pertains] to what is hoped for in future blessedness, it is called anagogical: anagogikos, that is, mystical, leading us upward. Whence the verse:

30 The literal teaches what happened;
Allegory is what you believe;
The moral is what you do;
Anagogy is where you are heading.

An example [is contained] in this name "Jerusalem," which according to the literal sense signifies a particular city situated in the land of Judah. Since this city was chosen by God for divine worship, as is found in 3 Kings 14[:21], which worship is carried on in the soul of a just man and in both the Church militant and triumphant, for this reason, Jerusalem according to the moral sense in Sacred Scripture signifies the faithful soul. According to the allegorical sense, [it signifies] the Church militant. According to the anagogical sense, [it signifies] the Church triumphant.

40 However, it should be known that, though Sacred Scripture has the above-mentioned four-fold sense, nevertheless this is not [the case] in every part [of Scripture], as is said in the Collationes Patrum, collatio 8. For in some places, it has only a literal sense: for example, Deuteronomy 6[:4]: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." For in these [words] and in similar [words], a mystical sense is not required.

In some places, indeed, it has no literal sense properly speaking, thanks to the statement in Judges 4 [rather, 9:8]: "The trees went out to anoint a king over them." And [there is] Matthew 5[:30]: "If they right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." For the literal sense is properly what is signified [by words], as was said above, and such a sense is not present here, nor in similar places. For [if the literal sense were present here], it would follow that a sense of Sacred Scripture would be false, because trees never made a king over themselves, nor were they able to do so. Similarly, the Savior did not advise that a man should literally cut off his hand. But rather, in these [words], there is only the mystical sense, which is understood by the things signified. For by "trees" are understood the inhabitants of the city of Sichen, who made Abimelech king over themselves, as is explained there in the text. And, "by cutting off the hand" is understood a friend, however close he might be, who becomes an occasion to sin. A man ought to cut off from himself the friendship of this person.

60 On the other hand, some doctors say that the parabolic sense is the literal sense. This is understood generally speaking because where there is no sense signified by the words, the parabolic sense is first.

And, for this reason generally speaking, it is called the literal sense, because the literal sense is first when there is no other sense there.
 70 And to signify this, these doctors say that the parabolic sense is contained under the literal sense. And, in this manner of speaking, I have called the parabolical sense in many places the literal sense, when writing on the books of Sacred Scripture.

In some places, indeed, Sacred Scripture has both a literal and a mystical sense. For example, in Genesis [16-21], it is said that Abraham had two sons, namely Isaac and Ishmael. This is true both according to the literal sense and likewise according to the mystical sense. For, by these sons, allegorically, were signified the two
 80 Testaments, as the Apostle says in Galatians 4[:24]. In the same way, morally, the spiritualities of a single prelate can be signified by the two sons, one of which acts positively, and the other of which acts negatively. And, anagogically, the angels who remained steadfast and [the angels] who fell [can be signified by the two sons].

Again, as was said, the mystical sense is what is signified by things, and, subjectively, there are many real and sometimes very diverse properties of every single thing. For this reason, one thing--subjectively--sometimes signifies many diverse things mystically. For example, a lion signifies Christ by the property of steadfastness in
 90 Apocalypse 5[:5]: "Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah ... hath prevailed." By its voraciousness, [a lion] signifies the devil, as in 1 Peter 5[:8]: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour."

However, after I interpreted Sacred Scripture according to the literal sense with the help of God and [as] God gave me length of life, trusting in the aid of God, I [now] propose to interpret it again according to the mystical sense, as the Lord will let me. Nevertheless, I do not intend to write all mystical senses, nor to say everything possible on a particular word, but rather [I intend] to handle one or
 100 another of them briefly, to which interpretations the readers of the Bible and the preachers of God's Word will be able to turn to whenever it will seem useful to them. Do not be surprised if I omit many things in the mystical interpretation, for I will do this for the sake of brevity, and also because past interpreters did this. Even Christ in Matthew 13[:8] and in Mark 4[:8], in explaining the parable of the sower, says at the end: "They brought forth fruit, some a hundred fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold." He left it unexplained. In the interpretation of other parables, Christ did the same thing.

Therefore, in the name of Jesus Christ, I will begin at the book of Genesis, and I will go through the others that follow, as long as the
 110 Lord by his grace will give me life.

APPENDIX B: Christian Texts and Traditions

i) Monastic, Scholastic, and Textual Readings

The radically different formats, methods of engaging the text, and effects of each of the three ways of reading can best be appreciated when samples of each are set against one another:

- a. A "monastic" reading - Bernard of Clairvaux's on the Song of Songs ("Sermon 45"):

How the soul speaks to God, the Word, and how the Word speaks to the soul!

'How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves' (S. of S. 1:15). For the Word to call a soul 'beloved,' and to say, 'How beautiful you are,' is to pour on it the grace which enables it to love and to know that it is loved. In the same way, when the soul speaks of the Word as her beloved and speaks about him being full of beauty, she is referring to the grace that she has to love him and to be loved by him. She admires his condescension and wonders at his great love. His beauty comes as a result of his love and his love is greater than any other love because he was the first one to love. 'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins' (1 John 4:10). For this reason, the bride cries from the depths of her heart and with all the strength of her strongest affections, that she is bound to love her beloved. She will do this even more ardently because he first loved her.

So the speech of the word is an infusion of grace and the soul responds by giving thanks and glory to the Word. The bride loves more and more ardently because she feels that the love of her beloved surpasses her own. Her love is greater because her beloved's love preceded her own. That is why the bride is not content to say just once that her beloved is beautiful. She repeats her praise of him, 'How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!' (S. of S. 1:15), in order to heighten her praise of him through this repetition.

Another reason why this phrase is repeated may be because it refers to the two natures of Christ; in one we see the beauty of nature and in the other we see grace. How beautiful you are to your angels, O Lord Jesus, you are in the form of God, in your eternal nature, begotten before the morning star, shining with splendour in your saints, you are in the form and splendour of the Father, in whom the glory and brightness of eternal life are ever resplendent! How august you are also to me, O my Lord when I contemplate you in your glorious state! Even when you emptied yourself of your glory, when you set on one side the rays of splendour that correctly belong to your unfailing light, even then your kindness shone more brightly, your love was more conspicuous and your grace more radiant. O star of Jacob, how beautiful you are to me as you rise. O branch springing out of the stem of Jesse (see Is. 11:1), how bright is your flower. O dayspring from on high, in what wonderful light you have visited me, who sat in darkness (see Luke 1:78).

Christ is the object of wonder and adoration even to the heavenly

beings, in his conception by the Holy Spirit, in his birth by the virgin Mary, in his sinless life, in the flowing streams of his teaching, in the glistening brightness of his miracles and in the mysteries which are revealed in his sacraments! Sun of righteousness, you arise in a blaze of glory from the heart of the earth, after your setting! King of glory, you return to heaven in resplendent clothes! At the sight of all these marvels I do nothing else than cry. All my bones shall say, Lord, who can be compared to you?

The movement from verse to verse, impression to impression, text to emotion is smooth, fluid, and easy. The text per se seems to be less of a focus for St. Bernard than the holy emotion and worship which it evokes.

- b) An early "scholastic" reading - Peter Lombard on Sacraments (Sentences 4.1.1-2):

ON SACRAMENTS

The Samaritan who tended the wounded man (Luke 10:30-37) applied to his wounds the dressings of the sacraments, just as God instituted the remedies of the sacraments against the wounds of original and actual sin. Concerning the sacraments, four questions first present themselves for consideration: what a sacrament is, why it was instituted, wherein it consists, and how it is performed; and what the difference is between the sacraments of the Old and New Covenants.

WHAT A SACRAMENT IS

"A sacrament is the sign of a sacred thing" (as Augustine says). However, a sacred mystery is also called a sacrament, so that a sacrament may be (both) the sign of something sacred and the sacred thing signified. So (as Berengar of Tours says), "a sacrament is the visible form of an invisible grace." ...

HOW A SIGN AND A SACRAMENT DIFFER

Furthermore, "some signs are natural, as smoke which signifies fire; others conventional" (as Augustine says); of those which are conventional, some are sacraments and some are not. For every sacrament is a sign, but the converse is not true. A sacrament bears resemblance to the thing of which it is a sign. "For if sacraments did not bear a resemblance to things of which they are the sacraments, they could not be properly called sacraments." For a sacrament is properly so called because it is a sign of the grace of God and the expression of invisible grace, so that it bears its image and its cause. Sacraments, therefore, were not instituted merely to signify something, but also as a means of sanctification. For things which were instituted only to signify are signs only, and not sacraments; such were the sacrifices of the flesh and the ceremonial observances of the Old Law, which could never justify those who offered them, because, as the Apostle (Paul) says: "The

blood of goats and of oxen and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh " (Heb. 9:13), but not of the spirit. Now this uncleanness (referred to in the Old Law) was the touching of a dead body These legal observances also cleansed sometimes from bodily leprosy; but no one was ever justified by the works of the Law, as the apostle says (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16), even if he performed them in faith and charity. Why? Because God has ordained them for servitude, not for justification, so that they might be types of things to come, wishing that these offerings should be made to Him rather than to idols. They therefore were signs, yet [not] sacraments, although they are often called so incorrectly in the Scriptures, because they were rather signs of a sacred thing than availing anything themselves. These moreover the Apostle calls the "works of the Law," which were instituted only to signify something, or as a yoke.

OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW SACRAMENTS

Now it remains to note the difference between the old and the new sacraments, since we call sacraments what anciently they called sacred things, such as sacrifices and oblations and the like. The differences between these Augustine indicated briefly when he said, "because the former only promised and signified salvation, while the latter gave it."

OF THE SACRAMENTS OF THE NEW LAW

Let us now come to the sacraments of the New Covenant, which are baptism, confirmation, the blessing of bread, that is, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination, marriage. Of these, some offer a remedy for sin and confer a helping grace, like baptism; others are merely a remedy, like marriage; others strengthen us with grace and virtue, such as the eucharist and ordination. If indeed we are asked why these sacraments were not instituted immediately after the fall of man (through Adam's sin), since in them are justification and salvation, we say that before the coming of Christ, who brought grace, the sacraments of grace could not be granted, for they derived their virtue from his death and passion. Now Christ was unwilling to come (into this world) before man was convinced that he could find help in neither natural or written law.

(Trans. E.F. Rogers, "Peter Lombard and the Sacramental System," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1917)

- c) A later "scholastic" reading - Thomas Aquinas on (1) the literal and figurative causes of the ceremonial precepts of the old law, and (2) the law of fear and the law of love:
 - (1) Question 102, article 2: Whether the Ceremonial Precepts (of the Old Law) Have a Literal Cause or Merely a Figurative Cause?
 - First: It would seem that the ceremonial precepts have not a literal, but merely a figurative cause. For among the ceremonial

precepts, the chief were circumcision and the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. But neither of these had any but a figurative cause because each was given as a sign. For it is written: "You shall circumcise the skin of your foreskin, that it may be for a sign of the covenant between Me and you" (Gen. 17:11); and of the celebration of Passover it is written: "It shall be a sign in your hand and as a memorial before your eyes" (Ex. 13:9). Therefore, much more did the other ceremonial precepts have none but a figurative reason.

Second: Further, an effect is proportioned to its cause. But all the ceremonial precepts are figurative, as stated above. Therefore, they have only a figurative cause.

Third: Further, if it is a matter of indifference whether a certain thing, considered in itself, be done in a particular way or not, it seems that it has not a literal cause. Now there are certain points in the ceremonial precepts which appear to be a matter of indifference, as to whether they are done in one way or in another: for instance, the number of animals to be offered, and other such particular circumstances. Therefore, there is no literal cause for the precepts of the Old Law.

On the contrary: Just as the ceremonial precepts foreshadowed Christ, so did the stories of the Old Testament; for it is written that "all (these things) happened to them in figure" (1 Cor. 10:11). Now in the stories of the Old Testament, besides the mystical or the figurative, there is the literal sense. Therefore, the ceremonial precepts had also literal, besides their figurative, causes.

I answer: As was stated above, the reason for whatever conduces to an end must be taken from that end. Now the end of the ceremonial precepts (of the Mosaic Law) was twofold, for they were ordained to the divine worship for that particular time as well as to the foreshadowing of Christ Accordingly, the reasons for the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law can be taken in two ways. First, in respect of the worship of God that was to be observed for that particular time; and these reasons are literal, whether they refer to the shunning of idolotry, or recall certain divine benefits, or remind men of the divine excellence, of point out the disposition of mind which was then required in those who worshiped God. Secondly, their reasons can be gathered from the point of view of their being ordained to foreshadow Christ; and thus their reasons are figurative and mystical, whether they refer to Christ himself and the Church, which pertains to the allegorical sense, or to the morals of the Christian people, which pertains to the moral sense, or to the state of future glory, inasmuch as we are brought thereto by Christ, which pertains to the anagogical sense.

To the First: Just as the use of metaphorical expressions in Scripture belongs to the literal sense, because the words are employed in order to convey that particular meaning, so also the meaning of these legal ceremonies (like circumcision and Passover) which commemorated certain divine benefits because of which they were instituted, and of other similar ones which belonged to that time, does not go beyond the order of literal causes. Consequently, when we assert that the cause of the celebration of Passover was its signification of the delivery from Egypt or that circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham, we assign them a literal cause.

To the Second: This argument would avail if the ceremonial precepts had been given merely as a figure of things to come and not for the purposes of worshipping God then and there.

To the Third: As we stated when speaking of human laws, there is a reason for them in the universal, but not in regard to the particular conditions, which depend on the judgment of those who frame them. So too many particular determinations in the ceremonies of the Old Law have no literal cause but only a figurative one; whereas, considered universally, they have a literal cause. (*Summa Theologica* 1/2.ques. 102, art.2; Ed. Anton Pegis, 2.862ff., 1954; emphasis added)

- (2) (In one respect) the New Law is not distinct from the Old Law because they both have the same end, namely, man's subjection to God; and there is but one God of the Old and of the New Testament, according to Romans 3:30: "It is one God that justifies circumcision by faith and uncircumcision by faith." But from another point of view, the New Law is distinct from the Old Law because the Old Law is like a pedagogue of children, as the Apostle (Paul) says (Gal. 3:24), whereas the New Law is the law of perfection, since it is the law of charity, of which the Apostle says that it is "the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14)

All the differences assigned between the Old and New Laws are gathered from their relative perfection and imperfection. For the precepts of every law prescribe acts of virtue. Now the imperfect, who as yet are not possessed of the habit of virtue, are directed in one way to perform virtuous acts, while those who are perfected by the possession of virtuous habits are directed in another way. For those who as yet are not endowed with virtuous habits are directed in the performance of virtuous acts by reason of some outward cause, for instance by the threat of punishment or some extrinsic rewards, such as honour, riches, or the like. Hence the Old Law, which was given to men who were imperfect, that is, who had not as yet received spiritual grace, was called the Law of Fear, inasmuch as it induced men to observe the commandments by threatening them with penalties; and it is likewise spoken of as containing temporal promises. On the other hand, those who are possessed of (the habit of) virtue are inclined to do virtuous deeds through love of virtue and not because of some extrinsic punishment or reward. Hence the New law, which derives its pre-eminence from the spiritual grace instilled into our hearts, is called the Law of Love; and it is described as containing spiritual and eternal promises, which are objects of its virtue, chiefly of charity. Accordingly, such persons are inclined of themselves to these objects, not as to something foreign, but as to something of their own. For this reason, too, the Old Law has been described as restraining the hand, not the will, since when a man refrains from some sin through fear of being punished, his will does not shrink absolutely from sin, as does the will of a man who refrains from sin through love of righteousness. Hence the New Law, which is the Law of Love, is said to restrain the will.

(*Summa Theologica* 1/2.ques. 107, art.2; Ed. Anton Pegis, 2.958ff., 1954.)

For Aquinas, the movement is from idea to idea, from definition to explanation to application, with all intellectual progression being governed by a rigid order of logic and reasoning. Artificially divided, his argument proceeds from premise to proof, from the human to the sacramental, with direct references to the Text being used only as supports for, and not as centres of, discourse.

d) The "textual" method of reading - Nicholas of Lyra on the Song of Songs:

[Chap. 1, v. 1] Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, that is, O that God would show himself to me through a sign and a friendly gesture, as a groom toward a desired bride. For thy breasts are better than wine. In the Hebrew it says, for thy loves are better than wine, for the Hebrew word placed here means both "loves" and "breasts." The Hebrews follow one meaning, and our translation [follows] the other. But in this [case], the Hebrews seem to speak better, because according to the particular nature of the Hebrew language [sermonis], "bride" here is applied to "groom." In the praise of the groom, indeed, mention of the breasts does not seem to be made decently. Nevertheless, it can be said that through the breasts of the groom, there is understood the fullness of the mercy of God. Therefore, according to the Hebrews, the sense is this, when it says, for thy loves are better than wine, that is [thy loves are] more tasty to the mind in a devout way than whatever is tasty to the bodily taste in a bodily way. And according to our translation, [the sense is this, when it says], for thy breasts are better than wine, that is, the fulness of your mercy is sweeter to the human mind than wine to the taste, which among bodily things is very tasty.

[Chap. 1, v. 14] Behold, thou art fair. After the cohabitation of the groom and bride there is placed here the mutual and gracious conversation of the groom and bride, which is usual to be [found] in bodies after cohabitation. According to this, the groom says: Behold thou art fair, O my love, and the word "fair" is repeated to denote the beauty of the mind and of exterior conversation. Thy eyes are as those of doves, through single beholding, which much adorns the bride bodily, and through this is understood the singleness of spiritual intention in the bride, adorning her, according to what the Saviour says in Matthew 6[:22]: 'If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome.' The bride responds: [Chap. 1, v. 15] Behold thou art fair, my beloved, and comely, of whose fairness there is no end. Our bed, that is, the tabernacle in which the bride, through Moses and Aaron and other priests, rested in quiet contemplation as if on a bed, is flourishing, because the inner covering of the tabernacle was of curtains of various colours, embroidered in beautiful variety in the manner of various flowers, Ex. 26.

Of the three, only Nicholas' "textual" reading focuses on, follows closely, and is shaped by the immediate linguistic demands of the text. As well, it alone makes the historical contexts of Scripture (and not the historical or doctrinal demands of the commentator's day), a defining feature of its

exegesis. Note also the "running commentary" style which is characteristic of his (and Rashi's; see Appendix C.v) "postilla" method which blends text and commentary to provide a more complete sense of both text and commentary as well as of the interactions of the two.

ii) Reader entente and the exegetical tradition: secular contributions

a) John of Salisbury in The Policraticus (8.10) writes:

- (1) It may be assumed that all writings except those that have been disapproved should be read, since it is believed that all that has been written and all that has been done has been ordained for man's utility although at times he makes bad use of them [cf. Rom. 15:4, QCD 1.3.4] ... any meaning that excels in forming for the mind faith and faith's works, that is to say good character, is the more desirable and clearly the more useful. The aim always to be sought in reading is that man should constantly surpass himself in virtue ... For it is agreed that all building of character is by the Lord [Eph. 2:21], and when anyone either by work or by word or in any other way is instructed for virtue he is profitably fed by things granted him by the Lord. For all instruction of salvation is, as it were, the word of God, and true teaching by whomsoever offered must be accepted for the reason that truth is always uncorrupted and incorruptible When therefore it is said, "Eat whatever you wish except blood" [Acts 15:20], it is as if it were figuratively said, "Provided you avoid sin, read what you wish." ... in books there is something profitable for everybody provided, be it understood, the reading is done with discrimination and that only is selected which is edifying to faith and morals ... There is scarcely a piece of writing in which something is not found either in meaning or in expression that the discriminating reader will not reject. The safe and cautious thing to do is to read only Catholic books. It is dangerous to expose the unsophisticated to pagan literature; but a training in both is very useful to those safe in the faith, for accurate reading on a wide range of subjects makes the scholar; careful selection of the better makes the saint.

... Therefore let the pagan writers be read in a way that their authority be not prejudicial to reason ... It is certain that the pious and wise reader who spends time lovingly over his books always rejects errors and comes close to life in all things. (Hence the saying of the teacher of teachers, Jerome: have the knowledge of the Scriptures and you will not love the errors of the flesh) [Epistles 125:11].

b) Richard de Bury in the Philobiblion (ch. 13) writes:

Let anyone therefore institute in himself a pious intention, and, with any material whatsoever, the conditions of virtue being observed, he shall make a study pleasing to God; and if he may find profit in a poet, even as great Vergil says he did in Ennius, he will not go astray.

iii) Thomas Aquinas on the sensus literalis

One passage from the works of Thomas Aquinas is particularly relevant to the study of the sensus literalis in the late Middle Ages generally and in Nicholas of Lyra specifically. The most significant sections are included here:

The author of holy scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify his meaning, not by words only (as man also can do) but by things themselves. So, whereas in every other sciences things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. For as the apostle says (Heb. 10:1) the Old Law is a figure of the New Law and (Pseudo-)Dionysius says: "the New Law itself is a figure of future glory." Again, in the New Law, whatever our Head has done is a type of what we ought to do. Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense. Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of holy scripture is God, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says, if even according to the literal sense one word in holy scripture should have several senses.

The multiplicity of these senses does not produce equivocation or any other kind of multiplicity, seeing that these senses are not multiplied because one word signifies several things; but because the things signified by the words can themselves be types of other things. Thus, in holy scripture no confusion results, for all the senses are founded in one--the literal--from which alone can any argument be drawn, and not from those intended in allegory, as Augustine says. Nevertheless, nothing of holy scripture perishes on account of this, since nothing necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense which is not elsewhere put forward by the scripture in its literal sense. (Summa Theologica 1.1.10; emphasis added)

iv. Further Examples of Nicholas of Lyra's Exegesis

Though both "literals" (historical and Christological) exist simultaneously in the Text for Nicholas, often the christological is given intentional primacy so that the "true" or most complete "literal" meaning of the passage is less the history and more than which pertains to the Christ event. For example, in his commentary on Psalm 2:

The MODERN HEBREWS say that David made this Psalm in praising God for the victory achieved over the Philistines who went up to fight

against him, when they heard that he had been annointed publicly over all Israel, as in 2 Kings 5 ... And according to their signification, the modern Hebrews expound that Psalm, saying: Why have the Gentiles raged? That is, the Philistines-- because all who were not of the race of the Jews were called '(pagan) nations' or 'gentiles' [the Hebrew *goyim*]--as in the New and the Old Testaments in many places. And the peoples, that is to say of the diverse states in the lands of the Philistines, Devised vain things--for they intended to destroy the kingdom of Daviod, but they were frustrated from their intention. The kings of the earth stood up, that is, the five satraps of the Philistines; and the princes, who, under them (the satraps), governed the people of the land, They met together against the Lord, etc., because they came against David who had been annointed king by Divine ordination, and thus was called the 'annointed of the Lord,' i.e. annointed by His ordination, and thus they came against the Lord, that is to say, to destroy His ordination

... the text is sufficiently clear according to that signification. And although the text harmonizes with the aforesaid signification in certain things, yet it does not seem to me that it ought to be retained for the present. First, because the text in many things is out of harmony, as will be seen. In the second place, because the Apostle to the Hebrews, 1, on account of that which is said in this psalm, proves that Christ is greater than the angels, saying (v. 5), 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten thee.' Proof, however, is not valid from the mystic sense, but from the literal only ... And, therefore, according to the Apostle who knew the Old Testament through the instruction of Gamaliel, and more fully through the vivid representation of the Holy Spirit, one ought to say that this Psalm is understood of Christ ad litteram. Likewise in Acts 4, the Apostles, after receiving the Holy Spirit, alleged this psalm in such a way, just as (a prophecy) spoken concerning Christ, as will be evident below

Likewise RABBI SALOMON, in the beginning of his commentary on this psalm, says as follows: 'Our teachers expounded this psalm of King Messiah,' (through whom is understood Christ promised in the Law and the Prophets), whence he (Rashi) follows with: 'but according to the plain understanding of the psalm' (that is the literal), 'and for providing a response to heretics, it is expounded of David ... From this statement of RABBI SALOMON we know ... that the ancient doctors of the Hebrews understood this psalm as referring to Christ ad litteram.

But no proofs are evidence except out of the literal sense, as was said above. And thus it is evident according to the learned men, converted from Judaism, that the psalm is understood as referring to Christ ad litteram ... because he confesses that the ancient doctors of the Hebrews expounded this psalm as referring to Christ--(the ancient doctors of the Hebrews) who used to follow the littera exclusively, or the literal sense; likewise because he confesses that the exposition of this psalm as referring to David is for providing a response to the converts, from which it seems

fabricated, evidently for evading the arguments of the converts--I, therefore, wishing to follow the doctrine of the Apostles and the statements of the ancient Hebrew doctors, will expound this psalm ad litteram by disproving from the text the aforesaid exposition of RABBI SALOMON AND THE MODERN HEBREWS. (translation Hailperin's)

And again on Isaiah 9:5:

Likewise this same thing is evident through the Chaldaic translation, which is authoritative among the Hebrews, (as was said above in the preceding chapter), which is as follows: 'A child is born unto us, and a son is given unto us, and he shall receive the Law upon him to keep it; and his name shall be called from of old, "wonderful in counsel, the mighty God, abiding to eternity, the Messiah," in whose days peace shall be multiplied upon us.' From this it is manifestly evident, that that passage speaks of Christ ad litteram, who was expected in the Law and Prophets as coming for the salvation of the world. (translation Hailperin's)

v) Nicholas of Lyra on Isaiah 9:5 and Hosea 9:12

Read by the Christians as an Old Testament "Gospel" and by the Jews as a prophetic text concerned with Hezekiah, the historically appropriate "promised one" for the particular crisis of the times (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Typho, A Jew 66-67, 77-78), the book of Isaiah is a primary text of contention between the Jewish and Christian expositors of Sacred Scripture. Nicholas, however, being aware of the reverence with which the Scriptures are regarded in the Jewish community, realizes that any actual alteration of the Text, for any purpose, would be completely anathema to them. Therefore, he clearly intends something less insidious by his suggestion that the Jews might have "corrupted" something in Scripture ("Second Prologue" 42f.). A study of his own "corrections" of such changes reveal them to consist primarily of differences in pointing and/or interpretation as in the following passages:

It is to be understood ... that Rabbi Salomon and the modern Jews who follow him expound this passage [Isa. 9:5] as referring to Hezekiah, king of Judah, by corrupting the text. For he (Rashi) says that the Hebrew text is as follows: 'a child is born unto us, a son is given unto us, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, will call his name--prince of peace.' And such a corruption can easily be made in Hebrew because this word, Veyikare, which means 'and he will be called,' and Veyikra, which means 'and he will call,' are written in Hebrew entirely with the same letters but sound differently because of the difference in pointing. Likewise, in a similar way, the fact that he (Rashi) places prince of peace in the accusative instead of in the nominative can easily be done in Hebrew because nouns, among them [i.e. the Hebrews], are indeclinable, just as "cornu" and "gelu" among the Latins. Therefore, he (Rashi) expounds the aforesaid quotation as follows: 'A child is born unto us and a son given'--as if the prophet were saying: Although Ahaz is the worst idolater, yet his son, Hezekiah, who will be king after him, will be good and just; 'and the

wonderful Counsellor etc. will call his name,' that is, our God, who is the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father will call, (to wit), Hezekiah, [by the name of] prince of peace, because he will make peace in his days, [Rashi expounds it thus], so 'that the names expressing deity do not have reference to the child.'

But that he (Rashi) corrupts the text by alleging 'he will call' for 'he will be called' is evident from the version of the Seventy Translators, who were Hebrews and exceedingly learned--whose translation is as follows: 'A child is born unto us, and a son is given unto us, whose government is on his shoulder, and his name will be called the messenger of great counsel,' thus, that for those expressions, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, Father of the World to Come, Prince of Peace, they stated this only: 'The Messenger of Great Counsel.' The reason of which was, according to what Holy Jerome says in the "Letter to Desiderius" (which is placed first in the Bibles in the beginning of Genesis)--because they translated the books of the Old Testament for King Ptolemy, who was a philosopher, and a worshipper of one God. And therefore where, in Hebrew, mention is made of the deity of Christ, just as there was in this place, they kept silent, or translated otherwise, lest Ptolemy would believe them to allege a dual deity, and in order not to reveal to a Gentile the mystery of the faith. Nevertheless it is evident from their translation that the Hebrew has, and he will be called, and not 'he will call,' and that that which follows--Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, etc.--refers to the child, and that the end of the quotation does not have 'Prince of Peace' in the accusative (principem pacis)--because in the place of all those distinctions, the Septuagint translation alleges The Messenger of Great Counsel, in the nominative. (translation Hailperin's)

In most such instances where Nicholas perceives "tampering" with the Text, he does not present it as a matter of malicious, Judaizing corruption. Rather, he suggests that the differences are largely a matter of christology and may well turn upon very fine and intricate points of Hebrew grammar and philology--as above. Often, he presents the essential differences between the two readings as based upon something as seemingly innocuous as an "ambiguous letter," as in his commentary on Hosea 9:12:

Yea, and woe to them ... Concerning which it is to be known that that is one of the passages of Old Testament scripture corrupted by the Jews--in reference to which, Friar Raymundus, very expert in the Hebrew language, speaks. For the understanding of which it must be known that the Hebrew has it as follows: 'Because, also woe to them [besuri] from them.' The Hebrews indeed have an ambiguous letter, that is samech and shin,--differing in sound and character. When however besuri is written with the letter samech, it signifies 'in my departing'; when however it is written out with a shin, it signifies 'my incarnation.' But here it is written with a shin, and therefore this is the true text: Because also woe to them, my incarnation (is) of them.

Rabbi Salomon, however, endeavors to reject this truth consonant

with our faith, saying, that the letter shin when dotted on the left side has the sound and value of the letter samech [i.e. 's']--and thus besuri signifies here 'departing' and not incarnation, because the letter shin is thus dotted in this place.

But that seems an escape from the truth--first, because this letter is not found elsewhere in the whole of the Old Testament so dotted, as says the aforesaid Friar Raymundus. And I similarly do not recall that I found it elsewhere so dotted--on account of which, this augmenting (of a dot) seems to be done in order to deprave the (real) sense. Secondly, because the dots are not substantially part of the letter, nor were they (so) written from the beginning; and hence, the scrolls, which are read in their synagogues, are without dots, but a long time afterwards dots of this kind were devised for facilitating the reading. Since, therefore, when the aforesaid dot is removed, they themselves concede that besuri written with shin signifies 'my incarnation'; they are convinced (by argument) to concede that here besuri is 'incarnation.' (translations Hailperin's)

All aspects of the littera are thus truly essential to Nicholas' fully "textual" readings.

- vi) "Psalm 8," vv. 1-6, 9 from The Earliest Complete English Prose Psalter. Part I. Ed. Karl D. Bulbring. London EETS, 1891.

Ha thou, Lord, our Lord, ful wonderful hys thy name in al therthe.
For thy mychelnes ys heyed up the heuens.

Thou madest heryyng of the mouthe of childer and of the sukand,
for thyne enemys; that thou destruye the enemy and the wrecher of
Adam sinne.

For ich schal sene thyn heuens, the werkes of thyn fyngers, the
mone and the sterres, that thou settest.

What thyngge ys man, that thou ert thenchand on hym? other mannes
sone, that-ou visites hym?

Thou madest hym a lyttel lasse than thyne aungels; thou corowned
hym wyth glorie and honour, and stablist hym vp the werkes of thyn
hondes

Ha Lord, our Lord, ful wonderful ys thy name in alle erthe.

APPENDIX C: Jewish Texts and Traditions

Below are translations of certain central texts from the Jewish tradition which are referred to in Chapter Two. These texts are included here as a supplement to the material within the chapter and are intended for the convenience of the reader, particularly one who may be unfamiliar with the Jewish liturgy and exegetical tradition.

i) Shemoneh Esrei

My Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise.

Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our Fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob; the great, mighty, and awesome God, exalted God, who bestows bountiful kindnesses and creates all things, who remembers the piety of the Patriarchs, and who, in love, brings a redeemer to their children's children, for the sake of His Name. O King, [You are] a Helper, a Savior, and a Shield. Blessed are You Lord, Shield of Abraham.

You are mighty forever, my Lord; You resurrect the dead; You are powerful to save. He causes the dew to descend. He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall. He sustains the living with lovingkindness, resurrects the dead with great mercy, supports the falling, heals the sick, releases the bound, and fulfills His trust to those who sleep in the dust. Who is like You, Mighty One! And who can be compared to You, King, who brings death and restores life, and causes deliverance to spring forth!

You are trustworthy to revive the dead. Blessed are You Lord, who revives the dead.

You are holy and Your Name is holy, and holy beings praise You daily for all eternity. Blessed are You Lord, the holy God.

You graciously bestow knowledge upon man and teach mortals understanding. Graciously bestow upon us from You, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Blessed are You Lord, who graciously bestows knowledge.

Cause us to return, our Father, to Your Torah; draw us near, our King, to Your service; and bring us back to You in whole-hearted repentance. Blessed are You Lord, who desires penitence.

Pardon us, our Father, for we have sinned; forgive us, our King, for we have transgressed; for You are a good and forgiving God. Blessed are You, gracious One who pardons abundantly.

O behold our affliction and wage our battle; redeem us speedily for the sake of Your Name, for You God are the mighty redeemer. Blessed are You Lord, Redeemer of Israel.

Heal us, O Lord, and we will be healed; help us and we will be saved; for You are our praise. Grant complete cure and healing to all our wounds; for You, Almighty King, are a faithful and merciful healer. Blessed are You Lord, who heals the sick of His people Israel.

Bless for us, Lord our God, this year and all the varieties of its produce for good; and bestow blessing upon the face of the earth. Satisfy us from Your bounty and bless our year like other good years, for blessing; for You are a generous God who bestows goodness and blesses the years. Blessed are You Lord, who blesses the years.

Sound the great shofar for our freedom; raise a banner to gather our exiles, and bring us together from the four corners of the earth into our land. Blessed are You Lord, who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel.

Restore our judges as in former times, and our counsellors as of yore; remove from us sorrow and sighing, and reign over us, You alone, O Lord, with kindness and compassion, with righteousness and justice. Blessed are You Lord, King who loves righteousness and justice.

Let there be no hope for informers, and may all the heretics and all the wicked instantly perish; may all the enemies of Your people be speedily extirpated; and may You swiftly uproot, break, crush, and subdue the reign of wickedness speedily in our days. Blessed are You Lord, who crushes enemies and subdues the wicked.

May Your mercies be aroused, Lord our God, upon the righteous, upon the pious, upon the elders of Your people, the House of Israel, upon the remnant of their safes, upon the righteous proselytes, and upon us. Grant ample reward to all who truly trust in Your Name, and place our lot among them; may we never be disgraced, for we have put out trust in You. Blessed are You Lord, the support and security of the righteous.

Return in mercy to Jerusalem, Your city, and dwell therein as You have promised; speedily establish therein the throne of David Your servant, and rebuild it, soon in our days, as an everlasting edifice. Blessed are You Lord, who rebuilds Jerusalem.

Speedily cause the scion of David Your servant to flourish, and increase his power by Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation all day. Blessed are You Lord, who causes the power of salvation to flourish.

Hear our voice, Lord our God; merciful Father, have compassion upon us and accept our prayers in mercy and favor, for You are God who hears prayers and supplications; do not turn us away empty-handed from You, our King, for You hear the prayer of everyone. Blessed are You Lord, who hears prayer.

Look with favor, Lord our God, on Your people Israel and pay heed to their prayer; restore the service to Your Sanctuary and accept with love and favor Israel's fire-offerings and prayer; and may the service of Your people Israel always find favor.

May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy. Blessed are You Lord, who restores His Divine Presence to Zion.

From Siddur Tehillat Hashem Nusach Ha-ari Zal. Ed. and trans. by R. Nissen Mangel. (Brooklyn: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc., 1988), 50ff.

ii) The Thirteen Hermeneutical Principles of R. Ishmael

1. A conclusion drawn from a minor premise or more lenient condition to a major or more strict one, and vice versa.
2. An analogy between two laws established on the basis of identical expressions in the Biblical text.
3. A general principle derived from one Biblical text or from two related Biblical texts, [is applicable to all similar cases though not specified in detail].
4. When a general rule is followed by an explicit particular, [the rule is limited to the specified particular].
5. When a specification is followed by a general rule, [all that is contained in the general rule applies].
6. When a general rule is followed by a specification and then again by a general rule, the law is applicable only to such cases which are similar to the specification.
7. When a general rule requires an explicit specification [for the sake of clarity, the general rule is not limited to the specified particular, as in rule 4]. Similarly, when a specification requires a generalization [for the sake of clarity, the generalization does not have the all-embracing effect, as in rule 5].
8. When a particular case that is included in a general law is singled out to instruct us concerning something new, it is singled out not only to teach concerning its own case, but is to be applied to the whole of the general law.
9. When a particular case that is included in a general law is singled out to add another provision similar to the general law, it is singled out in order to lessen, but not to increase, the severity of that provision.
10. When a particular case that is included in a general law is singled out to add another provision which is unlike the general provision, it is singled out in order, in some aspects to lessen, and in others to add to, the severity of the provision.
11. When a particular case that is included in a general law is singled out with a new stipulation, the provisions of the general law no longer apply to it, unless the Torah expressly states that they do.
12. The meaning of a passage may be deduced from its context or from a subsequent passage.
13. Similarly, when two Biblical passages contradict each other, the meaning can be determined by a third Biblical text which reconciles them.

From Siddur Tehillat Hashem Nusach Ha-ari Zal. Ed. and trans. by R. Nissen Mangel. (Brooklyn: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc., 1988), 25ff.

- iii) Abraham Abulafia, "The Seven Paths of the Torah." In Ben Zion Bokser, The Jewish Mystical Tradition. pp. 102-104. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981.

There are seven paths in the knowledge of the Torah.

The first path consists in understanding the simple meaning of the Torah text, for a biblical text may not be detached from its simple meaning. This is the way best suited for the multitude of people, men, women, and children. Since some people are learned and some altogether unfamiliar with anything except the letters ... it is appropriate that the uneducated (except for the knowledge of the letters) be taught some traditions so that they might possess religion in its conventional form

The second path includes those who study various commentaries, but what they have in common is that they revolve around the simple meaning and pursue it from all angles as in the expositions of the Mishna and the Talmud which expound the surface meaning of the Torah. This is illustrated by the interpretation of the phrase "circumcision of the heart." The Torah ordains that it be circumcised, as it is written (Deut. 10:16), "And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your heart." This commandment cannot be observed literally. It must, therefore, have an explanation. This is to be understood in the light of the verse (Deut. 30:6), "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart," with the accompanying verse (30:2), "And you shall return to the Lord your God." The term "heart" must, therefore, be taken here as alluding to a return to God.

But the circumcision of the child on the eighth day cannot be understood in the same way, for it cannot be applied to penitence

.... The third path embraces the study of the biblical text from the perspective of midrash and homiletic exegesis, and the derivatives from these types of study. This is illustrated by the inquiry as to why there is no mention that "God saw that it was good" (only) after the second day of creation, and the answer that it was because the organization of the waters was not completed on the second day. There are other such expositions. This path is called "searching/expounding" (derash) to indicate that here there is room to search and probe and also that this subject may be expounded in public.

The fourth path embraces parables and riddles. In this path begins the divergence between the select few and the multitude. The multitude will understand things according to the three paths mentioned earlier. Some will follow the simple text and some will seek explanations for them according to the "searching/expounding" method. But the select few will realize that these are parables and they will search after their meaning, and here they will encounter double-meaning terms, as that subject has been explained in (Maimonides') Guide of the Perplexed.

The fifth path includes only the secrets of the Torah. The four paths mentioned earlier are shared by people of all nations, their masses in the first three and their wise men in the fourth. The fifth path begins the levels of secrets possessed by the Jews alone. In this, we are differentiated from the world's general populace as

well as its wise men, but also from the Jewish sages, the rabbis, whose views revolve around the circle of the latter three of the paths mentioned above.

I cite as an illustration of this (fifth) path the secret meanings disclosed to us by the fact that the (Hebrew) "B" with which the Torah begins is large, and the large letters of the alphabet appear in all twenty-four books of the Bible ... or by the inverted form of the base in the two (forms of) the (Hebrew) letter "N" enclosing the chapter describing the movement of the Holy Ark (Num. 10:35) There are many similar mysteries handed down by tradition ... and nothing of the truths of those mysteries has been disclosed to any people except ours.

One who follows the way of the nations may mock, thinking these letters were written that way without any reason and thus they misrepresent the tradition, and they are guilty of grave error. But those who have mastered the truths of these paths recognized their distinction and these mysteries have been made clear to them, for they are holy. This path is the beginning of the general wisdom of combining letters. This path is appropriate only for those who fear God and meditate [on] His Name.

The sixth path is very deep and who can attain it? ... It is fitting for those who withdraw from the world in their desire to draw close to God to the point that they themselves shall experience His active presence in themselves. These are the people who seek to resemble in their activity the actions of the Active Intellect [that is, a higher intelligence, of an angel, the Holy Spirit, or of God Himself]. This path embraces the secret of the "seventy languages" which, by the rules of gematria [that is, the system of substituting their numerical equivalents for the letters of a word], is equivalent to the "combination of letters" [that is, they both have a numerical equivalent of 1214]. This involves the return of the letters to their original essence in memory and in thought, analogous to the ten noncorporeal primordial numbers which involve a holy mystery, and all things holy have at least ten constituents.

Thus Moses ascended no higher than the ten heavenly realms, and the Shekina, the divine presence, descended no more than the ten heavens, and the world was created by ten divine commands, and the Torah was given by Ten Commandments, and there are many cases involving ten which illustrate this. Under the rubric of this path is also involved (the exegetical methods of) gematria, notarikon [that is, the reading of letters in a word as abbreviations of other words], and the interchange of letters, and then new interchanges to be repeated up to ten times. This halts only because of the weakness of human intelligence, for there is no limit to this process of permutation.

The seventh path is a special path and it includes all the others and it is the Holy of Holies and it is fitting for prophets only. This is the circle that revolves around all things. In attaining it, one comprehends the message that descends from the Active Intellect to the power of speech.

It is improper to describe the manner by which this path, the Holy of Holies, proceeds, by writing about it in a book. It is impossible to disclose this to anyone, not even the main points, unless in his [or her] yearning he [or she] has learnt as a

preliminary, in a direct communication from a teacher, the forty-two and the seventy-two names of God. I have, therefore, included here in my description, with is the essence of brevity, all that is needed to be said on the subject.

- iv) Sa'adia Gaon, Kitab al-'Amanat wal-l'tikadat. Eng. The Book of Beliefs and Opinions, 7.2 (regular text). Trans. S. Rosenblatt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.

In his main text, Sa'adia elaborates the examples and explains the logic behind each of his exceptions:

... it is a well-known fact that every statement found in the Bible is to be understood in its literal sense except those that cannot be so construed for one of the following four reasons. It may, for example, be rejected by the observation of the senses, such as the statement: 'And the man called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living' (Gen. 3:20), whereas we see that the ox and the lion are not the offspring of womankind. Hence we must needs conclude that the implication of the statement embraces human descendants only.

Or else the literal sense may be negated by reason, such as that of the statement: 'For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God' (Deut. 4:24). Now fire is something created and defective, for it is subject to extinction. Hence, it is logically inadmissible that God resembles it. We must, therefore, impute to this statement the meaning that God's punishment is like a consuming fire, in accordance with the remark made elsewhere in Scripture: 'For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy' (Zeph. 3:8).

Again, [the literal meaning of a Biblical statement may be rendered impossible] by an explicit text of a contradictory nature, in which case it would become necessary to interpret the first statement in a non-literal sense. Thus, for example, it is said in Scripture: 'Ye shall not try the Lord your God, as ye tried Him in Massah' (Deut. 6:16). And it is also said, on the other hand: 'And try me now herewith ... if I will not open to you the windows of heaven' (Mal. 3:10). Now the point wherein these two statements agree is that we must not test our Lord as to whether He is able to do a certain thing, as they did of whom it is reported: 'And they tried God in their hearts by asking food for their craving. Yea, they spoke against God; <213> they said: 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?' (Ps. 78:18,19). It is to these that the remark 'as ye tried Him in Massah' refers. It is, however, permissible for a servant of God to test his Master's power by asking whether it be possible for Him to create a miracle in his behalf. Such a request was indeed made by Gideon, who said: 'Let me make trial, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece' (Judg. 6:39). It was also done by Hezekiah (II Kings 20:8) and others.

Finally, any Biblical statement to the meaning of which rabbinic tradition has attached a certain reservation is to be interpreted by us in keeping with this authentic tradition. Thus it has been transmitted to us that the punishment of stripes

consists of thirty-nine blows, although Scripture states: 'Forty stripes may he give him' (Deut. 25:3). We therefore adopt the view that this is just a rough way of saying that there be thirty-nine stripes. The text of Scripture has merely expressed this thought in round numbers, as it has done in the statement: 'After the number of the days in which ye spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years' (Num. 14:34). For in reality there were only thirty-nine years, since the first year of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness did not enter into this punishment. (Beliefs 7.2, regular text)

(Sa'adia Gaon, Kitab al-'Amanat wal-l'tikadat. Eng. The Book of Beliefs and Opinions. Trans. and Ed. Samuel Rosenblatt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.)

v) Sample Passages From Rashi's Commentaries

Rashi on Genesis 3:1-7:

(1) ... AND THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE -- What connection is there between the following narrative and the statement just made? The latter should have been followed by 'and He [the Lord God] made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them' (3.21), but the Scripture informs you with what plan the serpent assailed them: ... MORE SUBTLE THAN ALL -- Corresponding with his subtleness and his greatness was his downfall; 'more subtle than all' -- 'more cursed than all' (see v. 14). (Gen. R. 19).
... ALTHOUGH HATH GOD SAID -- The meaning is, 'Perhaps He has said unto you' ... YE SHALL NOT EAT OF EVERY TREE OF THE GARDEN -- And although he saw them eating of the other fruits yet he entered into a long conversation with her so that she should answer him, and so that he might have an opportunity to talk about that particular tree. (3) ... NEITHER SHALL YE TOUCH IT -- She added to God's command (which did not forbid touching the tree, but only eating of its fruit) therefore she was led to diminish from it. It is to this that the text refers (Prov. 30:6): 'Add thou not unto His words' (Gen. R. 19). (4) ... YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE -- He pushed her until she touched it. He then said to her, 'Just as there is no death in touching it, so there is no death in eating it' (ib.). (5) ... FOR [GOD] KNOWS -- Every artisan detests his fellow artisans ('Two of a trade never agree'). The serpent suggested to her: God ate of the tree and created the world (ib.) so if you eat ... YOU WILL BE AS GOD -- Creators of worlds. (6) ... AND THE WOMAN SAW -- She approved the words of the serpent -- they pleased her and she believed him (ib.)

Rashi on Deuteronomy 6: 5-6:

(5-6) ... AND THOU SHALT LOVE [THE LORD] -- Fulfill His commands out of love, for one who acts out of love is not like him (is on a higher plane than one) who acts out of fear. He who serves His master out of fear, if he (the master) troubles him overmuch, leaves him and goes away (Siphre). ... [THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD] WITH ALL THY HEART -- The form of the noun with two beths instead

of the usual form lamed-beth-kof suggests: Love Him with thy two inclinations (the yetzer ha-tov [inclination to good] and the yetzer ha-ra [inclination to evil]) (Siphre; Ber. 54a). Another explanation of ... with all thy heart is that thy heart should not be at variance (i.e. divided, not whole) with the Omnipresent God (Siphre).... AND WITH ALL THY SOUL -- even though He take thy soul (even though you have to suffer martyrdom to show your love of God) (Siphre; Ber. 54a, 61b).... AND WITH ALL THY MIGHT, i.e. with all thy property. You have people whose property is dearer to them than their bodies (life), and it is on this account that there is added, 'and with all thy property' (Siphre). -- Another explanation ... is: -- Thou shalt love him whatever measure ... it may be that he metes out to thee, whether it be the measure of good or the measure of calamity. Thus also did David say, (Ps. 116:13 and 3) 'If I lift up the cup of salvation, [I will call upon the name of the Lord]; If I find trouble and sorrow, [I will call upon the name of the Lord].' -- What is the 'love' that is here commanded? The next verse tells us ... THESE WORDS [WHICH I COMMAND THEE] SHALL BE [UPON THINE HEART] -- for thereby thou wilt arrive at a recognition of the Holy One, blessed be He, and wilt cleave to His ways (Siphre). (Silbermann's translation)

(A. M. Silbermann and M. Rosenbaum, trans. Chumash with Tarqum Onkelos, Haphtorth and Rashi's Commentary. Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1934).

vi) Notes From Traditions Upon Which David Kimhi Draws

In The Book of the Covenant, Joseph Kimhi advises the reader to:

Know that the fact is that the Torah is not [to be taken] altogether literally or altogether figuratively. If one says to his servant, 'Take the horse and ride it on the sea,' we must try to interpret this figuratively ... There is no need for a figurative interpretation if he says to him, 'Board the ship and go on the sea in it.' Some comandments may be understood both literally and figuratively ... [Jer. 4:4, Gen. 17:12] ... Both [senses] ... are obligatory.

(Joseph Kimhi, Sefer ha-Berit. Eng. The Book of the Covenant. Trans. Frank Talmage. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 44-45)

Similarly, Maimonides suggests how context should be understood. Concerning Scripture, he writes:

In some of these parables, each word has meaning, while in others, the parable as a whole indicates the whole of the intended meaning. In such a parable, very many words are to be found, not every one of which adds something to the intended meaning. They serve rather to embellish the parable and render it more coherent or to conceal further the intended meaning, hence the speech proceeds in such a way as to avoid everything required by the parable's external meaning. Understand this well.

(Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed. "Introduction." Trans. Shlomo Pines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963; 12)

He also explains the relationship which exists between the exterior and the interior meanings of the Text:

In every word which has a double sense, a literal and a figurative one, the plain meaning must be as valuable as silver and the hidden meaning still more precious ... The figures employed by prophets, taken literally ... contain wisdom useful for many purposes, among others for the amelioration of the condition of society ... Their hidden meaning, however, is profound wisdom, conducive to the recognition of real truth. (ibid.)

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Abbreviations of Journals

ABR	<u>American Benedictine Review</u>
AFH	<u>Archivum Franciscanum historicum</u>
AHDL	<u>Archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du Moyen Age</u>
AnM	<u>Annuaire Mediaevale</u>
BGDSL	<u>Beitrage zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur</u>
BJRL	<u>The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
BLR	<u>The Bodleian Library Record</u>
BSOAS	<u>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</u>
C&L	<u>Christianity and Literature</u>
CalThJ	<u>Calvin Theological Journal</u>
CE	<u>College English</u>
CH	<u>Church History</u>
CHB	<u>Cahiers Henri Bosco</u>
ChR	<u>Chaucer Review</u>
CL	<u>Comparative Literature</u>
CP	<u>Classical Philology</u>
CR	<u>Critical Review</u>
CUB	<u>Catholic University Bulletin</u>
E&S	<u>Essays and Studies</u> (London)
EF	<u>Etudes Franciscaines</u>
EHR	<u>English Historical Review</u>
EIC	<u>Essays in Criticism</u>
EJ	<u>The English Journal</u>
ES	<u>English Studies</u>
ET	<u>English Today</u>
FS	<u>Franciscan Studies</u>
HAR	<u>Hebrew Annual Review</u>
HLF	<u>Histoire litteraire Francaise</u>
HTS	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
HUCA	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual</u>
JAAR	<u>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</u>
JADS	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u>
JBL	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
JEGP	<u>Journal of English and German Philology</u>
JEH	<u>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</u>
JELH	<u>Journal of English Literary History</u>
JES	<u>Journal of English Studies</u>
JJS	<u>Journal of Jewish Studies</u>
JLT	<u>Journal of Literature and Theology</u>
JMRS	<u>Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies</u>
JNT	<u>Journal of Narrative Technique</u>
JofR	<u>Journal of Religion</u>
JQR	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review</u>
JRE	<u>Journal of Religious Ethics</u>
JTS	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>

L&T	<u>Literature and Theology</u>
LeedsSE	<u>Leeds Studies in English</u>
MAe	<u>Medium Aevum</u>
Meth	<u>Medievaliae et Humanistica</u>
MLN	<u>Modern Language Notes</u>
MLQ	<u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>
MP	<u>Modern Philology</u>
MS	<u>Medieval Studies</u>
N&Q	<u>Notes and Queries</u>
NLH	<u>New Literary History</u>
NM	<u>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</u>
NTS	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
P&P	<u>Past and Present</u>
PLL	<u>Papers on Language and Literature</u>
PMLA	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
PQ	<u>Philological Quarterly</u>
R&L	<u>Religion and Literature</u>
REL	<u>Revue of Etudes Latines</u>
RES	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
RTAM	<u>Recherche de theologie ancienne et medievale</u>
S&P	<u>Studia Patristica</u>
SAC	<u>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</u>
SCH	<u>Studies in Church History</u>
SLitI	<u>Studies in the Literary Imagination</u>
SP	<u>Studies in Philology</u>
SSF	<u>Studies in Short Fiction</u>
TS	<u>Theological Studies</u>
TSL	<u>Tennessee Studies in Literature</u>
TSLL	<u>Texas Studies in Language and Literature</u>
YES	<u>Yearbook of English Studies</u>
ZAW	<u>Zeitschrift fur alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>

Works Consulted

While not called upon directly in the body of my work, the following texts were essential to the development of my argument. They so helped define my field (albeit negatively) that it would be a blatant falsification of my effort were I not to include them as constellatory references, for they enabled me to do critically something of that which Chaucer does creatively: to make the absence significant. But, whereas Chaucer's text focuses on the framing elements through his invitation to the reader to give the suggested absence a personal and substantive articulation, my work, being an expository--and textual--endeavour, "unpacks" the substance and logic enacted by the frame, in turn only suggesting the reference points out of which it grows. Rather than reviewing and merely "connecting the (well-known) stars" as it were, this excursus expounds the absent image suggested by the "stars," leaving the critical re-assessment to the reader while still reminding him or her of what has gone before. In effect, then, the texts below speak throughout the present work: being both outside of, but also the framing elements for, the constellation of my text, they configure and permit an articulation of a dabar aher, an "alternative interpretation" or "alternative word" on Chaucer's structural logic.

The "Primary Texts" listed are supplemental to those included in the "Works Cited" list. To further clarify the constellatory influence of the "Secondary Texts," I have divided their references into five categories, each of which represents a principal sphere of influence brought to bear on the others to frame the present effort. The categories are as follows: (i) Literary and Cultural Studies, (ii) Socio-Historical Circumstances and Contemporary Influences, (iii) Semitic Contexts, (iv) Nicholas of Lyra and John Wyclif, (v) Chaucerian Texts and Contexts.

A. Primary Texts & Linguistic Aids (Lexicons, Commentaries, Bibles, etc.)

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