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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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SCHOLASTIC DIALECTIC
AND THE
MIDDLE ENGLISH RELIGIOUS LYRIC
OF THE 14th CENTURY

by Daniel Michael Mason

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of Graduate Studies of the
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of Doctor of Philosophy.



D.M. Mason, Ottawa, Canada, 1980

In memory of my mother and father

and to my wife

- this "scole-matere"

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In describing the lifestyle of the Netherlands and France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Johan Huizinga in The Waning of the Middle Ages depicts a civilization of dramatic opposites:

To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us. The contrast between suffering and joy, between adversity and happiness, appeared more striking. . . . Calamities and indigence were more afflicting than at present; it was more difficult to guard against them, and to find solace. Illness and health presented a more striking contrast; the cold and darkness of winter were more real evils. Honours and riches were relished with greater avidity and contrasted more vividly with surrounding misery. . . . The contrast between silence and sound, darkness and light, like that between summer and winter, was more strongly marked than it is in our lives. . . . All things presenting themselves to the mind in violent contrasts and impressive forms, lent a tone of excitement and of passion to everyday life and tended to produce that perpetual oscillation between despair and distracted joy, between cruelty and pious tenderness which characterize life in the Middle Ages.¹

To the student of medieval literature or history, Huizinga's statements are as valid as they are enticing. The splendour of the royal courts of Europe shone brightly against a world

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ravaged by the Black Death. The corruption of the established church, particularly after the eleventh century, was dramatically outlined against the religious fervour of the Cistercians in the twelfth century and the zeal of the mendicants in the thirteenth. Chaucer's Parson and Pardoner were part of the same world. The filth and squalor of the inn in "Passus II" of Piers Plowman with its noise and odours of spoiled food might well have set off the opulence and gaiety of the banquets in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight had they both been taking place in the slums and palaces of medieval London respectively.

It is therefore not surprising that the Middle Ages should have demonstrated in almost every sphere a concerted attempt to arrange all things in an orderly pattern. "Every notion concerning the world or life had its fixed place in a vast hierarchic system."² In the realm of economics and politics, particularly in the early Middle Ages, this tendency gave rise to feudalism with its strictly regulated social strata and system of vertical interdependence.³ Even when this order began to break down under new economic forces in the thirteenth century, the society was still bound together by a powerful and pervasive church, long the most important unifying factor in the society. Philosophically and theologically too, the Middle Ages sought to bring order to the whole corpus of knowledge, culminating in the summae of the schoolmen of the thirteenth century.

The fabric of medieval European society, structured as it was, was buttressed by component parts, themselves carefully

ordered. When a breakdown in order occurred in one sphere, the disintegration was supported by the superimposition of a principle of order from another. When, for example, purely political structures were not sufficiently developed to provide a stable international order, "medieval Europe offered, for the first time in history, the somewhat paradoxical spectacle of a society trying to organize itself politically on the basis of a spiritual framework."⁴

The awareness of this constant attempt to put in order all aspects of the society of the Middle Ages may, in part, accounts for the tendency of many critics of medieval literature to search for general organizational principles behind the literature of the period as a whole or the works of a single author. The search has taken critics into such areas of study as the liturgy, patristic exegesis, mysticism, and feudalism. A very brief look at three examples of Chaucer scholarship is illustrative of this tendency."

Since J. M. Manly published his article on Chaucer's indebtedness to the rhetorical tradition,⁵ a considerable debate has taken place over the years on the extent of that debt. Among those taking a pro-Manly stance is the distinguished scholar Dorothy Everett who states her case in a series of articles.⁶ Everett sees the rhetorical tradition as a strong and vital force in fourteenth-century England. "I believe," she states, "that for a number of poets in the late 14th century, rhetorica still had some of its old composing function. In particular it can be shown that Chaucer dealt with certain

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problems of presentation and organization in ways traceable, though certainly not always directly, to rhetorical teaching."⁷

Charles Muscatine, on the other hand, sees the whole body of Chaucerian writing being organized around two separate traditions, the bourgeois and courtly styles he describes in Chaucer and the French Tradition.⁸ Thus, in his discussion of The Parliament of Fowls, he feels that "Chaucer sees the courtly and bourgeois modes, idealism and practicality, in ironic juxtaposition. He holds them in balance, sympathetically and critically exploring each for its own essence, and for the light it casts on the other."⁹

Finally, D. W. Robertson in A Preface to Chaucer sees the controlling principle as an aesthetic sense based on an earlier, patristic tradition. For Robertson this tradition is translated in the fourteenth century into "the tendency to think in terms of symmetrical patterns,"¹⁰ which is in contrast to the modern habit of thinking in terms of opposites. Robertson cautions, "These are best described as tendencies, for not all medieval thought necessarily displays a hierarchical pattern, and not all modern thought necessarily involves dynamically opposed contraries. Nevertheless, when we superimpose dynamically interacting opposites upon medieval hierarchies—and there is plenty of evidence to show that we have wished to do this—the result is inevitably a distortion."¹¹

A similar pattern is discernible in the scholarship on Langland's Piers Plowman and on the works of Thomas Malory.¹²

All reflect the degree to which the modern student of literature has been affected by the awareness that order, pattern and hierarchy are the watchwords of medieval society and, by extension, its literature.

As will be shown later, this same tendency is evident in the scholarship on the English religious lyric. Beginning with R. L. Greene's The Early English Carols¹³ through to David Jeffrey's The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality,¹⁴ there has been a tendency to see the lyric, and its companion the carol, as the product of a medieval meditative or devotional tradition seeking to elicit an emotional response from the reader. David Jeffrey states:

Recent critics of the Middle English lyric have usually, in one way or another, seen this "meditative" quality as the chief distinguishing feature of the genre. But the adjective is potentially misleading: the poetry we usually think of as meditative—for example, that written in the early seventeenth century—is often highly intellectual, reflective and personal. The medieval English religious lyric is seldom so intellectual, is more often physical than metaphysical; immediate than reflective, roughly simple than elaborately careful. It is usually characterized by emotion rather than thought, by force of style rather than by elaboration of argument, and by a dramatic movement toward radical identification of the "subject" with the object of the poem.¹⁵

Jeffrey, as will be seen later, offers a substantially different view of the lyric in that he emphasizes its penitential quality,¹⁶ but he does remain in the mainstream of a critical tradition which stresses the affectual nature of the

lyric as opposed to its intellectual qualities.

However, in considering the writings of the "Ioculatores Dei" in Italy, Jeffrey quotes two very significant poems, one from Arnaldo Fortini's La Lauda in Assisi e le origini del teatro italiano, and the other from Franca Agno's edition of the laudi of Jacopone da Todi. The translations are Jeffrey's:

Poi ke l'entelliecto è preso
de la grande esmesuranca,
l'amore vola ad exteso,
va montando in desianca;
adbraçando l'abundança,
l'amirança el fa piglare.

(When the intellect is caught in the infinite love,
love flies to the limit, it mounts in desire,
embracing the fullness of things. Adoration makes
the intellect able to go beyond itself.)

and:

Scienza acquisita assai pò contemplare
non pò l'affetto trare ad essere ordenato;
scienza enfusa, puoi che n'hai a gustare,
tutto te fa enfiammare a essere ennamorato;
con Deo te fa ordenato, 'l prossimo edificando
e te vilificando a tenerte en veretate.

(Acquired knowledge can contemplate a great deal but
can't recompense the emotions. Knowledge granted by
spirit, once you have tasted it, will completely
ignite you to be in love; it puts you in harmony with
God, edifying your neighbour, vilifying yourself,
and keeping you in the truth.)¹⁷

Concerning the first poem, Jeffrey states that "of the
two heights of mind, the affectual is the harmonizing principle."¹⁸
However, it is quite obvious that in this poem particularly,

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the poet sees the intellect playing a prominent role in devotion. This invites an investigation of the degree to which the intellect is involved in devotional poetry, the literary manifestation of the larger devotional tradition. Once again we are reminded that the fusion of reason and faith, of love and understanding, was one of the hallmarks of Medieval civilization.

Such an investigation, and this is the thesis I am attempting to prove here, will indicate that the lyric is very much a part of this fusion of reason and faith. The primary impulse in the lyric may, indeed, be devotional, meditative or penitential. Nevertheless, this impulse is fused with a form of thought now known as scholastic dialectic which is the organizational principle around which many lyrics are ordered. Further, the use of the dialectic method produced poetry which is more emotional and affective than has hitherto been realized.¹⁹

The investigation will take the form of a discussion of the nature of scholastic dialectic as it appeared in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. This will be followed by a consideration of the ways in which dialectic may have found its way into vernacular poetry. Finally, an analysis of the lyrics themselves will demonstrate that the basic structure and highly affective nature bears witness to this fusion.

This approach is strengthened by a number of factors, one of which has already been mentioned, and two more of which will become evident in the discussion of the scholarship which follows. The initial factor pertains to the medieval

tendency to superimpose one form of order onto what seems to us an unrelated field of endeavour. In recalling Morrall's statement that "medieval Europe offers us, for the first time in history, the somewhat paradoxical spectacle of a society trying to organize itself politically on the basis of a spiritual framework," we should not be surprised to see poets organizing their poetry around a framework which, in the purest sense, is philosophical and theological.

Second, Rossell Hope Robbins and David Jeffrey prove conclusively that the Franciscans played a prominent role in the writing of lyrics in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁰ This period coincided with the time when the Franciscans were also the dominant force in philosophy and theology, taking over from the Dominicans whose leadership in these fields declined after Thomas. Similarities in the form of the lyric and scholastic writings, therefore, are more than coincidental.

Third, the acknowledgement that the lyric represents a fusion of two traditions is, by definition, non-exclusive. This means that the excellent body of scholarship that has grown up around the lyric as a form of popular meditation or devotion is not lost to this study. A consideration of this scholarship is now in order.

Out of the vast corpus of scholarship on the lyric, three basic issues are discernible. These issues are the origin of the lyric and its relationship to the Latin and vernacular traditions, the artistic merits of the lyric,

and its themes. This threefold division is most arbitrary, imposed for convenience of discussion here rather than by the scholars themselves.

In his essay "Some Aspects of Medieval Lyric," E. K. Chambers reflects the debate that is to rage until the present about the ancestors of the lyric. For Chambers, "the written lyric of the Middle Ages is generally the work of the minstrel or of the *trouvère*, who represent successive stages in the development of the poet as a self-conscious artist."²¹ However, he goes further back than that, insisting that "beyond *trouvère*-song and beyond minstrelsy lies the folk song . . ."²² which is a product of "the instinct of emotional self-expression, rhythmic with those quickened dilations and contractions of the heart which are the physiological accompaniments of emotion."²³

Chambers acknowledges the role of the Latin hymn in the development of the lyric. This role he says "would be unmistakable, even without the tags of Latin which indicate a habit of translating the couplets of a caudated poem, while leaving the caudae themselves in the original."²⁴

Chambers takes his analysis no further, but the broad outlines are clear. The lyric for him is emotional and evocative in content, and in form a product of a vernacular folk tradition coupled with a Latin one. It goes without saying that the world of the intellect has little role to play in Chambers' perception of the lyric.

Frank A. Patterson's The Middle English Penitential Lyric, the first major study of the religious lyric, extends the rôle played by the Latin tradition. Patterson, however, becomes much more explicit, placing the lyric firmly in the mainstream of Cistercian mysticism:

The abstract and scholarly reasoning of Lanfranc and Anselm was far removed from the simple faith and humble devotion of the religious poet. Likewise the intricate and over-subtle logic of medieval philosophers found no echo either in the lives or writings of these devoted clerks. Mysticism, as it developed under St. Bernard, was a protest and a reaction against scholasticism; and these poems, which as before stated, constitute one of the direct results of the mystic movement, are at all times conspicuously free from abstract theology. . . .

The penitential lyric was extremely simple in every respect; its purpose was practical, and its method direct.²⁵

Like Chambers, then, Patterson sees the lyric as "a matter of the heart, not the intellect."²⁶

Richard L. Greene's scholarly introduction to the carol, The Early English Carols, deals with the problem of the relationship of the Latin tradition to the carol. The observations he makes on the carol are no less relevant for the lyric, its close relative. Like Patterson, Greene sees the carol as related in part to Latin hymns, prose sequences in the mass, certain antiphonal sequences in the mass, the liturgy, and non-liturgical secular and

religious Latin poetry.²⁷ However, like Chambers, Greene sees the popular culture, specifically rhythms of speech and dance, as a more basic antecedent. "Behind them [the carols] as behind the vernacular lyrics of Europe is the song of the unlettered people, shaped by the physical conditions of its performance, the relentless periodicity of the dance, and the opposition of leader and chorus."²⁸

Though Greene's scholarship is immeasurably superior to earlier considerations, his study represents only a difference in degree. It falls to later scholars to clarify the relationship between the Latin and vernacular strains.

The work of Rossell Hope Robbins on the carol and the lyric helps place earlier scholarship in perspective while providing broad new outlines for future areas of study. Robbins' work in editing, cataloguing and commenting is invaluable to the student of the lyric.²⁹ Mention must be made here of only one portion of this work.

Basing his conclusions on what he calls "circumstantial, direct and negative evidence"³⁰ he concludes that "the majority of religious lyrics before the middle of the 14th century, in other words before the Black Death, were made by the Friars, generally the Franciscans."³¹ Though Jeffrey, as noted above, proves that the estimates are conservative, the original conclusion is no less important. By associating the lyric with the Franciscans, the search for the sources of the lyric is limited further, for the question moves from being a very general inquiry, to a

more specific investigation of Franciscan influences.

It is logical then that once such a question had been answered in part, scholars would turn to the lyric itself. This change in direction was much needed, as Robert D. Stevick states:

But the most important single reason [for the neglect of the Middle English lyric] I suggest is uncertainty about how to deal directly with the poems in performing the critic's work: how to talk about the poems instead of the anonymous poets, how to treat the texts as texts rather than as relics merely to be preserved and venerated, how to analyse the structuring of the expression (the poems are linguistic utterances of a special kind) more deeply than for tropes, rhyme schemes and metrical feet.³²

Sarah Appleton Weber's Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric attempts "to deal directly with the poems." Weber investigates the relationship of the liturgy to the lyric. For Weber, "the liturgy was fundamentally a sacred history which shaped the history of man from his birth to his death to the plan of redemption. It was itself an event with two modes, an objective, the perpetual reenactment of God's redemption of man; and a subjective mode, the response of the soul in its journey to God."³³ Its effects on the lyric cannot, for her, be overestimated.

The liturgy shaped the seasons of the year, the days, the hours, and the beginning and the end of the action of man. And the method of the liturgy's formulation of the history of redemption provided certain dynamic forms and principles of proportion for the lyrics which evolved from it.³⁴

The strength in Weber's argument lies not in her thesis regarding the liturgy as the source of the lyric, but in her assertion that the lyric did indeed have a definite, recognizable and purposeful structure. Her study is a reminder to the scholar that the lyric as a form of art had, in the mind of the critics, come of age.

Raymond Oliver takes up Stevick's challenge in Poems Without Names: The English Lyric 1200-1500. Oliver sees the whole corpus of Middle English lyrics, secular and religious, characterized by "a high degree of stylistic coherence"³⁵ which is the product of the "anonymous, practical and public nature of the poems."³⁶

Oliver then searches for basic structures in the poems which illustrate this stylistic coherence. He first deals with what he calls the semantics of the poems (diction, imagery, metaphor and other figures of speech), and later the larger unifying structures which he labels the syntax.

This latter label is most germane for this study and is, in fact, the first occasion in lyric scholarship, when scholasticism is seen to have a part to play in the

lyric. For Oliver, the two basic structures are the use of repetition and logic. Logic in Poems Without Names refers to the binary nature of the poem in which the poet uses contrast, paradox and logical connectives to persuade and define. In fact, says Oliver, "there are occasional poems which seem to reflect the question-and-answer method of the schools, the sic et non of Peter Abelard."³⁷

Oliver's musings are quite correct, though he never actually comes to grips with the direct relationship of the sic et non to the lyric as a whole. He certainly moves in the right direction, but his comments call for a great deal more investigation.

Stephen Manning's Wisdom and Number investigates the lyric as song, a song "designed to elicit emotional response."³⁸ He goes on to evaluate the songs by considering the relationship between the song as a literary form and the religious subject matter, the nature of what he calls "the lyric situation,"³⁹ and those qualities of sound, form and wit which "give the songs their particular literary value."⁴⁰ Once again, it appears that the critics have started to approach the lyrics for themselves.

W. E. Rogers' Image and Abstraction builds upon the foundation set out by Manning. Rogers theorizes that the image is the central core around which the lyric is constructed. Lacking originality, the image nevertheless is expressive of imaginative insight. It is the task of the

lyricist "to fasten the image to the dogmatic truth"⁴¹ of the context in a unique way. Rogers then goes on to interpret six religious and secular lyrics in this light.

Rogers' thesis suffers from approaching the lyric from the wrong end of the critical spectrum. Certainly, as Weber and Manning have shown, there is an artfulness in the lyric form, but to assume that the art rather than affective impulse is the primary motivating force in the lyric, results in a distortion of the poem.

A great deal more has been written on the lyric, and there are some studies to which only reference can be made⁴² if only because their approaches and conclusions are encompassed by the above observations on the scholarship. However, reference must be made to three major works, whose eclectic nature makes labelling somewhat difficult though this particular division of the corpus of scholarship was deemed "thematic." Actually, the insight into the lyric by Rosemary Woolf's English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages, Douglas Gray's Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric and David L. Jeffrey's The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality is much wider than simply thematic.

Woolf attempts to write a comprehensive history of the religious lyric. In her study she concedes that "a history of the religious lyric that seeks to be comprehensive must become in part a history of medieval meditation and devotion."⁴³ In doing so she argues strongly for a theory of Latin origin though she does allow the

vernacular tradition a specific role when she states that "the English religious lyric did not spring from the imitation of secular conventions to the service of religion; it grew directly and unselfconsciously from a Latin devotional movement, the authors using the verse forms conveniently at hand."⁴⁴

Woolf organizes her history on a thematic and chronological basis, studying the themes of death, the Passion, the Virgin and her joys in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with an additional chapter on the lyrics of the school of Richard Rolle. Though her conclusions are not necessarily original, the vast amount of material she has put together in her study makes the book an invaluable tool with which to approach the lyric.

Closely related, though by no means identical, is Douglas Gray's Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric. Like Woolf and so many others, Gray assumes that the basis of the English lyric was in the Christian Latin civilization. "The English religious poets of the Middle Ages inherited an impressive and complex imaginary museum, the fruit of twelve centuries of Christian tradition-hymns, religious poetry, commentaries, sermons, and of course, the Scriptures, the Psalter, and the Western liturgy. The tradition was a Western European one, though its roots were in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, and its spirituality was sometimes fed by the piety of the

Church."⁴⁵

Such an "imaginary museum" was, for Gray, directed by a devotional impulse which induced the poets to create works of "great care and craftsmanship."⁴⁶ For Gray, the inherited devotional tradition was simply a body of material on which an individual craftsman could rely to create individual works of great beauty.

Having designed this as his base, he proceeds to analyze the various themes in the lyrics, collected under the twin headings of "The Scheme of Redemption" and "The Life of this World." Unlike many scholars who seek to divorce the medieval lyric from its seventeenth century counterpart, Gray points out that the relationship between the two traditions is closer than has been thought. "Yet the great religious poets of the seventeenth century," he says, "are in a sense the inheritors of that delicate balance of emotion and intelligence, of learning and simplicity, and of that profound and humble style that is characteristic of the best of the medieval religious lyrics."⁴⁷

In many ways, the final full length study discussed here, Jeffrey's The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality, fits all three divisions of scholarship. In analyzing the effects of Franciscan spirituality on the lyric in England, Jeffrey makes reference to, and observations on, most of the topics raised in the above discussion. In general terms,

Jeffrey sets out "to demonstrate substantial connections between the theology and methodology of the Order of Friars Minor and the form and content of the extant Middle English lyrics and subsequently to show ways in which an understanding of the nature of this connection can illuminate the style, content and performance context of these poems."⁴⁸

After analyzing what he calls the spiritual revolution in Northern Italy and Southern France in the 13th century, of which the Franciscans were one manifestation, Jeffrey defines the brand of spirituality peculiar to the Franciscan, its effects upon their principles of aesthetics, and the effect again of those principles on the vernacular lyric in Italy and England. He concludes that "the results of this study show that the influence of the Franciscans in creating the Middle English religious lyric in theme as well as form was so pervasive and complete that it will henceforth be possible to regard the existence of the popular short-verse genre in England before 1350 as a particular phenomenon of that [Franciscan] spirituality."⁴⁹

Such is the state of scholarship on the Middle English lyric. From Chambers through to Jeffrey there are strong, well-supported arguments for meditation or devotion being the primary impulse behind the religious lyric. On the evidence of scholars like Manning, Weber and others cited above, there is also a growing trend towards the

realization that art and devotional literature are not incompatible. But with the exception of Oliver, no scholar has made any attempt to see the medieval intellectual tradition, scholastic dialectic, as a partner to this devotional impulse, a partner which is responsible for the ordering of that impulse. The nature of scholastic dialectic is the first step in the investigation of that partnership. This forms the subject matter of the next chapter.

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924; rpt. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 9-10.

² Ibid., p. 216.

³ See F. L. Ganshof, Feudalism (New York: Harper and Row, 1961). There is an extensive bibliography in the study which includes under the sub-section "Studies on Some Feudal Relationships" the titles of some interesting articles on the highly regulated format of feudal relationships.

⁴ John. B. Morrall, Political Thought in Medieval Times (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 10. The concept of order is discussed in some detail in Frederick B. Artz, The Mind of the Middle Ages: A Historical Survey A.D. 200-1500 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958) and Henry Osborn Taylor, The Medieval Mind: A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages, 2 vols., 4th ed. (1925; rpt. London: MacMillan and Co., 1938).

⁵ See J. M. Manly, "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," Proceedings of the British Academy, 12 (1926), pp. 95-113.

⁶ Miss Everett deals with the topic in several articles but two of the most important ones are "Some Reflections on Chaucer's 'Art Poetical'," Chaucer's Mind and Art, ed. A. C. Cawley (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), pp. 99-124 and "Chaucer's Love Visions with Particular Reference to The Parlement of Fowles," Essays on Middle English Literature (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 97-114.

⁷ Everett, "Some Reflections on Chaucer's 'Art Poetical'," p. 103.

⁸ Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957). See the first two chapters for a discussion of the bourgeois and courtly styles.

⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁰ D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹² Many examples of scholarship on both works can be cited. However, these few illustrate sufficiently this tendency: Morton W. Bloomfield, Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961); Elizabeth Salter, Piers Plowman: An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962); Charles Moorman, The Book of Kyng Arthur: The Unity of Malory's Morte d'Arthur (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965) and D. S. Brewer, "the hoole book," Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 41-63.

¹³ R. L. Greene, The Early English Carols, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977).

¹⁴ David L. Jeffrey, The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷ For the texts and translations of these poems, see Jeffrey, p. 146.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁹ The question of the affective dimension of words has recently been dealt with by Stanley E. Fish, Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). Fish distinguishes between what words mean and what words do. Therefore, according to Fish, even a simple statement becomes "no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of the reader." For a more detailed account of his theory see "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," pp. 383-427, in the above text.

²⁰ See Rossell Hope Robbins, "The Authors of Middle English Religious Lyrics," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 39 (1940), 230-238. Robbins estimates that sixty-six percent of all extant lyrics are written or collected by Franciscans. Jeffrey in The Early English Lyric finds this a conservative estimate, and presents evidence for the Franciscans being responsible for eighty-eight to ninety percent. See Jeffrey, p. 214.

²¹ E.K. Chambers, "Some Aspects of Medieval Lyric," Early English Lyrics, ed. Frank Sidgwick and E.K. Chambers (1907; rpt. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1966), p. 259.

²² Ibid., p. 259.

²³ Ibid., p. 259.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 286.

²⁵ A. Patterson, The Middle English Penitential Lyric (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 26.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

27 See R.L. Greene, pp. cxxxi-ixviii.

28 Ibid., p. cxvii.

29 Robbins' contributions are numerous and invaluable. See Carleton Brown and R.H. Robbins, The Index of Middle English Verse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) and R.H. Robbins and John L. Cutler, Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965). His editorial works include Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959). Scholarly contributions on the lyric include "The Early English Carol and the Fransiscans," Modern Language Notes, 53 (1938), 239-245; "Popular Prayers in Middle English Verse," Modern Philology, 36 (1939), 337-350; "Private Prayers in Middle English Verse," Studies in Philology, 36 (1939), 466-475; "The Authors of the Middle English Religious Lyrics," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 39 (1940), 230-238; "Middle English Carols as Processional Hymns," Studies in Philology, 56 (1959), 559-582 and "Friar Herebert and the Carol," Anglia, 75 (1957), 194-198.

30 Robbins, "The Authors of the Middle English Religious Lyrics," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 39 (1940), 231.

31 Ibid., 231.

32 Robert D. Stevick, "The Criticism of Middle English Lyrics," Modern Philology, 64 (1966-67), 117.

33 Sarah Appleton Weber, Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric: A Study of Sacred History and Aesthetic Form (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), pp. viii-ix.

34 Ibid., p. ix.

35 Raymond Oliver, Poems Without Names: The English Lyric 1200-1500 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 3.

36 Ibid., p. 3.

37 Ibid., p. 116.

38 Stephen Manning, Wisdom and Number (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. viii.

39 Ibid., p. ix.

40 Ibid., p. ix.

41 W.E. Rogers, Image and Abstraction; Six Middle English Religious Lyrics (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1972), p. 18.

42 See bibliography for additional items.

43 Rosemary Woolf, English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 3.

44 Ibid., p. 2.

45 Douglas Gray, Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 3.

46 Ibid., p. 71.

47 Ibid., p. 226.

48 Jeffrey, The Early English Lyric, pp. 8-9.

49 Ibid., pp. 260-261.

CHAPTER 2: SCHOLASTICISM AND THE DIALECTIC METHOD

In discussing the confusion that has surrounded the term "scholasticism" over the years, David Knowles concludes:

Indeed, the term "scholastic" cannot rightly be applied to the content, as opposed to the method, of medieval philosophy; it is essentially a term of method. If by a scholastic method we understand a method of discovering and illustrating philosophical truth by means of a dialectic based on Aristotelian logic, then "scholastic" is a useful and significant term. This medieval dialectic, whether, as in an early phase, it is based upon Boethian precepts, or whether, as in its mature phase, it rests upon the whole corpus of Aristotelian logic . . . follows throughout a basic pattern of question (quaestio), argument (disputatio) and conclusion (sententia), and is recognizable throughout the range of forms in which medieval thought finds expression . . .¹

Knowles' contentions provide an excellent starting point from which to pursue the nature of scholastic dialectic. His view that the term scholastic applies to method rather than content certainly helps clarify the issue. Indeed, this view is a welcome change in that it points to the form of writing, an area long neglected in scholarship.²

However, at best these statements are rather general. Nor do they point to the exact nature and function of the

dialectic method. In order to deal with these two matters in greater detail, it will be necessary to look at the writings of some of the great schoolmen themselves.

Even the most casual glance at a list of scholastic writers presents the modern reader with a number of philosophers and theologians whose works are important enough to be singled out from the rest. Anselm, Scotus, Bradwardine, Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus are only a few names from a seemingly endless list. Nevertheless, the works of four schoolmen who represent in three centuries the rise, flowering and decline of the scholastic method best illustrate the nature and function of that method, and its continuity throughout the later Middle Ages. These are Abelard, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham.

More will be said of each of these men as the discussion progresses, but some general observations on the choice of these four are necessary here. The first two, Abelard and Lombard, are the theoreticians of the scholastic method. Though not the innovator he was once thought to be, Abelard in his Sic et Non popularized the dialectic method as a way of discussing theological and philosophical problems. His fame as a teacher and a scholar virtually guaranteed that much of what he wrote would be eagerly read by later generations of students and teachers.

Lombard in his Sentences altered slightly the method of his former teacher and provided later generations with a text, second in importance only to the Bible, as a vehicle for discussing and interpreting theological problems. As a basic text in the universities, the Sentences was commented upon by virtually all later figures in the scholastic tradition of whom Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham are only two.

With the thirteenth century came the flowering of scholasticism dominated by the great Dominicans, and Thomas Aquinas in particular. To many, the Summa Theologiae of Aquinas with its consistently steady uniting of Christian principles and Aristotelian logic still represents the embodiment of the medieval synthesizing spirit. In style as well, the works of Thomas represented the fruition of the method set out a century earlier by Abelard and Lombard. If the latter two could be called the theoreticians of the scholastic method, Thomas was certainly one of its best practitioners.

While Paris was declining in the fourteenth century from its dominant position as the centre of learning in medieval Europe, Oxford moved into the forefront. No figure added more to Oxford's reputation in the fourteenth century than William of Ockham whose writings, while heralding the end of scholasticism as a viable method, attested once again to its vitality. Like Thomas, Ockham showed himself to be a most effective practitioner of the scholastic

method.

Each of these played an important role in the tradition of scholasticism. Together they represent three centuries and three different nations. Together they were associated with Paris and Oxford, the greatest centres of learning of their day. They became immediately famous in their own lifetimes, and exerted strong influence long afterwards. Together they illustrate the nature of the scholastic tradition and its continuity through the years.

One final prefatory note must be added. No attempt has been made to take a comprehensive look at any of these thinkers. Four selections will be used to indicate that there is a common method among them all, and that they use this method for the same end. Given the tendency of each man to employ the same method throughout his writings, one illustration from each is clearly indicative of a more general tendency.

Though Abelard's originality is now in question,⁴ the importance of the method popularized in Sic et Non has never been questioned. In The Renaissance of the 12th Century, for instance, Charles Homer Haskins acknowledges Abelard's debt to earlier thinkers while placing him firmly at the head of the scholastic tradition. "True," he says, "the method of collecting and arranging passages from the Fathers on specific topics had been

used before, as in the Sentences of Anselm of Laon, but Abelard gave it a pungency and a wide popularity which associated it permanently with his name."⁵ Similarly.

G. G. Coulton in Studies in Medieval Thought conclusively states that "the whole procedure of Scholastic philosophy after his [Abelard's] death rested upon his system."⁶

The system that Abelard gave to history is succinctly set out in the "Prologus" to his Sic et Non which represents a theoretical basis for the scholastic method.

Abelard first acknowledges that the writings of the Fathers are filled with inconsistencies. These inconsistencies, however, should not be used to make adverse judgements. As Abelard states, "Cum in tanta verborum multitudine nonnulla etiam sanctorum dicta non solum ab invicem diversa, verum etiam invicem adversa videantur, non est temere de his judicandum, per quos mundus ipse judicandus est . . ."⁷

He suggests several reasons for these inconsistencies including the unusual use of words (col. 1339), corrupted texts or texts erroneously attributed to a given author (cols. 1340-1341), the occurrence of statements which appear once and are later retracted (cols. 1341-1342) or the use of questions which are purposely left unanswered (col. 1342). He later sums up by stating that if inconsistencies are present in a text, "Auctor hujus libri non tenuit veritatem; sed aut codex mendosus est, aut interpres erravit, aut tu non intelligis" (col. 1347).

Given these inconsistencies, Abélard states that it may be necessary to review closely the various and contrasting opinions about the same thing, and to consider the relevance of the judgement to the specific and to the general. "Quid itaque mirum, si a sanctis quoque Patribus nonnulla ex opinione magis quam ex veritate nonnunquam prolata sint aut etiam scripta? Diligenter et illud discutiendum est, cum de eodem diversa dicuntur, quid ad praecepti coarctationem, quid ad indulgentiae remissionem vel ad perfectionis exhortationem intendatur, ut secundum intentionum diversitatem adversitatis quaeramus remedium; si vero praeceptio est, utrum generalis an particularis, id est an ad omnes communiter an ad aliquos specialiter directa". (col. 1344).

Reflecting the logician's confidence that a clear understanding of the use of words will usually erase the differences, he counsels, "Haec autem in institutionibus ecclesiasticorum decretorum vel canonum distinguere maxime necesse est. Facilis autem plerumque controversiarum solutio reperietur, si eadem verba in diversis significationibus a diversis auctoribus posita defendere poterimus" (col. 1344).

Having stated some general guidelines about the texts of the Fathers, and having raised some healthy doubts about their correctness, Abélard then goes on to explain the format of his collection and the reasons why the collection has taken that form. His method is to collect rather

arbitrarily the sayings of the Fathers which appear to be contradictory. The purpose of the collection is to stimulate young readers to seek the truth. He states, "His autem praelibatis, placet, ut instituimus, diversa sanctorum Patrum dicta colligere, quando nostrae occurrerint memoriae aliqua ex dissonantia, quam habere videntur, quaestionem contrahentia, quae teneros lectores ad maximum inquirendae veritatis exercitium provocent et acutiores ex inquisitione reddant" (col. 1349). This questioning he calls "sapientiae clavis" (col. 1349). Finally he makes his most famous pronouncement on the need to doubt and to question:

Dubitando enim ad inquisitionem venimus;
inquirendo veritatem percipimus; (col. 1349)

Following the "Prologus" is a series of discordant opinions on one hundred and fifty-eight issues. As he states he makes no attempt to place these in any order, nor does he attempt to solve the contradictions. He simply leaves the discussion in a contradictory state..

This inconclusiveness resulted in a charge against Abelard of instigating a kind of divisiveness into the study of theology, a divisiveness which called all tradition into doubt.⁸ This was certainly an opinion voiced in his own day. It has continued on through more recent scholarship.

However, there has been an attempt in many recent studies on Abelard to place his method in a more positive

framework. In Peter Abailard, for instance, J. G. Sikes states, "Doubt, however, is permissible in such matters [of faith] because it is the first step to belief since it compels men to inquire into the meaning of their faith, and this inquiry, far from teaching them either to adopt an agnostic attitude towards their beliefs or to accept only those beliefs which appeal to them in debated questions, instead leads them to a fuller and deeper understanding of the creeds."⁹

Similarly, Leif Grane in Peter Abelard: Philosophy and Christianity in the Middle Ages disagrees that Abelard "sought to create unrest or sow doubt. . . . He wanted to point out that the authorities as they stood cannot be accepted in intellectual lethargy, but that an effort, intellectual responsibility, is required."¹⁰ If it is remembered that in the opening paragraphs of the "Prologus" Abelard asks that the Fathers not be judged harshly for their apparent contradictions, and that he takes pains to suggest reasons for textual problems, Sikes' and Grane's more temperate views of the man appear to be substantiated.

What conclusions can be drawn from Abelard's work with regard to the form and function of the scholastic method? First, the dominant organizational principle Abelard sets out is the juxtaposition of contradictory opinions, opinions whose differences are more obvious because of their positioning beside others. Second, the

purpose of the juxtaposition was not to create unrest, but as Abelard states directly, to excite and to stimulate. The first is the form; the second the purpose. He could make no clearer statement of his perception of what is now called the scholastic method. It was left to his disciple, Peter Lombard, to develop the method further.

Unlike Abelard, Peter Lombard has never been seen as an original thinker even in earlier scholarship. A disciple of the more mercurial Abelard, he lacked his teacher's fiery commitment to intense intellectual pursuits. However, the temperate nature reflected in his Sentences gave his work a quality of reserve which made it acceptable to a Church ever watchful of heresy.

J. de Ghellinck acknowledges precisely this quality in his article on the Lombard in Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique:

Les caractères de l'ouvrage ne permettent nullement d'attribuer le génie à son auteur; on l'a vu facilement plus haut. La comparaison avec divers de ses contemporains ne lui est pas non plus avantageuse, ni pour la vigueur philosophique, ni pour la finesse dialectique, ni pour la compréhension personnelle ou pieusement approfondie du dogme, ni pour la netteté des airs précis ou l'expression vigoureuse d'un esprit maître de sa pensée.
Des qualités plus rares ou plus brillantes, qui pouvaient imposer d'autres oeuvres à l'attention, auraient trouvé ailleurs leur rançon; sa réserve trop impersonnelle devant

les solutions avait au moins l'avantage de laisser le jeu libre à l'originalité de commentateur.¹¹

Though he refuses to see the Lombard's work as indispensable to the scholastic tradition,¹² David Knowles nevertheless admits that "the Lombard stood at the fountain-head, the common inheritance of all the schools."¹³ Certainly the popularity of the Sentences cannot be doubted. As the basic text in the theology courses at both Paris and Oxford on which all inceptors in theology were required to lecture, it was the source of as much discussion as the Bible itself. Knowles reports that one hundred and fifty commentaries on the Sentences were written by the English Dominicans alone.¹⁵ Haskins makes a similar statement about the text and its commentaries at Paris. "They [the Sentences] were the text book for two years of the course in theology. Indeed the usual library of a student in theology, when he could afford a library, became the Bible and these Sentences, fifty copies of which with one hundred and eighteen volumes of commentaries were in the library of the Sorbonne in 1324."¹⁶

Like Abelard before him Lombard sees a series of contradictions in the philosophical writings of the Church. Whereas Abelard simply refers to them as contradictions, the Lombard's description in his "Prologus" to the Sentences is more graphic. He states, "Inter veri namque assertionem et placiti defensionem pertinax pugna est, dum

se et veritas tenet, et se voluntas erroris tuetur."¹⁷

Because of this he sets out to juxtapose elements of this "pertinax pugna" and determine, through the use of scriptures, the Fathers, and dialectic, the correct theological or philosophical conclusion. It is evident that he feels strongly the dangers of the method for which Abelard received such criticism, for he is at pains to show that he intends no impious questioning of the scholarly traditions of the Church. He states, "Horum igitur et Deo odibilem ecclesiam evertere, atque ora opilare (ne virus nequitiae in alios effundere queant), et lucernam veritatis in candelabro exaltare volentes, in labore multo ac sudore, hoc volumen, Deo praestante, compegimus, ex testimoniis veritatis in aeternum fundatis, in quatuor libris distinctum. In quo majorum exempla doctrinamque reperies; in quo, per dominicae fidei sinceram professionem, vipereae doctrinae fraudulentiam prodidimus, aditum demonstrandae veritatis complexi, nec periculo impiae professionis incerti, temperato inter utrumque moderamine utentes" (col. 522).

Each of the four books is divided into distinctiones or chapters, the equivalent of the quaestiones found in Thomas and Ockham. Though the form of the argument changes slightly on the surface throughout the Sentences, the underlying organizational principle is basically the same.¹⁸ The Lombard states opposing points of view on a given issue,

and then resolves the contradiction in a determinatio.

As a prelude to the discussion of the trinity, in

"Distinctio Prima," for instance, he considers the question of which things are to be used and which to be enjoyed.

He first quotes Augustine on the definitions of *frui* and *uti*:

2. Id ergo in rebus considerandum est, ut in eodem Aug. ait (lib. 1, c. 3), quod res aliae sunt quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum est, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur. Illae quibus fruendum est, nos beatos faciunt. Istis quibus utendum est, tendentes ad beatitudinem adjuvamus, et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas res, quae nos beatos faciunt, pervenire, eisque inhaerere possimus. Res vero quae fruuntur et utuntur nos sumus; quasi inter utrasque constituti et angeli, et sancti. Frui autem est amore alicui rei inhaerere propter seipsam. Uti vero; id quod in usum venerit referre ad obtinendum illud quo fruendum est; alias abuti est, non uti: nam usus illicitus, abusus vel abusio nominari debet. (col. 523)

Thus he discusses the heavenly and earthly things, stating that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are examples of those things which are to be enjoyed and the earthly, corruptible things are those things which are to be used only and not enjoyed.

However, he then goes on to point out that St. Augustine offers different definitions of *frui* and *uti* which appear to confuse the issue. He states:

Uti est assumere aliquid in facultatem

voluntatis. Frui autem est, uti cum gaudio, non adhuc spei, sed jam rei; ideoque omnis qui fruatur, utitur; assumit enim aliquid in facultatem voluntatis cum fine delectationis. Non autem omnis qui utitur, et fruatur, si id quod in facultatem voluntatis assumit, non propter ipsum sed propter aliud appetit. Et attende quia videtur Aug. dicere illos frui tantum qui in re gaudent, non jam in spe: et ita in hac vita non videmur frui, sed tantum uti, ubi gaudemus in spe; cum super dictum sit, frui esse amore inhaerere alicui rei propter se: qualiter etiam hic multi adhaerent Deo. (col. 523).

He then proceeds to resolve the issue in a "determinatio eorum que videntur contraria" (col. 523). He explains:

4. Haec ergo quae sibi contradicere videntur, sic determinamus, dicentes, nos et hic, et in futuro frui: sed ibi proprie, et perfecte, et plene, ubi per speciem videbimus quo fruemur; hic autem, dum in spe ambulamus, fruimur quidem, sed non adeo plene, unde in libro 10 de Trin., cap. 10: Fruimur cognitis in quibus voluntas est. Idem in lib. de Doct. christ. ait, lib. 1, cap. 30: Angeli illo fruantes jam beati sunt, quo et nos frui desideramus; et quantum in hac vita jam fruimur, vel per speculum, vel in aenigmate, tanto nostram peregrinationem, et tolerabilius sustinemus, et ardentius finire cupimus. (col. 523)

Finally, he strengthens his own conclusion by including another determination which, again employing Augustine, emphasizes his original solution.

It is obvious that the Lombard adds a more positive

dimension to the method set forth by Abelard. Whereas Abelard makes no attempt to solve any particular contradiction, Lombard is careful to do so. As Gordon Leff states in Medieval Thought, "Each question [in this case *distinctio*] dealt with the conflicting answers given by authority, and resolved them by dialectic. Hence was crystallized the method and outlook of mature scholasticism with the *quaestio* at its centre, and with all discussion guided by the interplay of pro and contra."¹⁹

It is justifiable to inquire why the Lombard, having obviously made up his mind about the conclusion before writing the *distinctio*, would still feel inclined to give place to arguments he was prepared to refute wholly or partially. Why not draw the conclusions using the required authorities and dispense with other opinions? One answer is, of course, that the scholastic thinker felt compelled to explain the discrepancies in patristic and scriptural writings. However, it appears that the Lombard was primarily interested in making some positive statement on a theological proposition, and not only in resolving contradictions. It would seem that the method of including opinions to be refuted had another purpose as well.

By including these, the scholastic thinker invites the reader to take part in the process of acceptance and rejection, to make both facets of the argument an integral part of the intellectual exercise. What M.-D. Chenu says

of Thomas' method in Toward Understanding Saint Thomas is no less true of the Lombard's method. "It should be well understood that in stating the pro and con the arguments are not, at least when the technique is employed to perfection, simply lined up and juxtaposed one after another. On the contrary they are interlocked with the purpose of leading the mind to the knottiest part of the problem."²⁰

Finally, the conclusions reached appear stronger in the face of authorities' opinions which have been considered and then rejected. In the Lombard's writings Abelard's format of juxtaposing opposites is still intact. The function of the method differs slightly. Rather than seeking to excite the reader through differences, Lombard's method allows him to temper that excitement through a careful alliance of the mind of the writer and reader as both work simultaneously through the solution to the problem. There is less a quick stimulation than a quiet prodding of an aroused and engaged intellect. It was left to the later practitioners of the method to give to this process a more organic, almost artful, form.

An introductory remark on Thomas Aquinas seems almost redundant, such is the extent of the attention he has received from scholars over the centuries. M. C. D'Arcy acknowledges Thomas' pivotal position in Catholicism when he states, "Within the Catholic Church St. Thomas

has always occupied a unique position. He is the most representative theologian and though the Church can never commit itself to any purely philosophic system, it has always favoured his as the most suitable framework in which to set forth revealed truth."²¹

Just as Thomas represents for many the flowering of the medieval spirit with his great Summae reflecting the synthesizing spirit of the High Middle Ages, so the method employed by him represents the fruition of scholastic dialectic. As H. O. Taylor states, "in Thomas' writings the method of the Sentences is rendered dialectically organic; and with the perfecting of the form of the quaestio and articulus, and the logical linking of successive topics, the whole composition . . . becomes structured and likewise organic."²²

There is a remarkable similarity in much of what Thomas writes. Behind the pages operates a highly intelligent, incredibly methodical intellect. Certainly the structure of the Summa and its component parts, the quaestio and the articulus, bears this out. It is possible to open a volume of the Summa at any page and see an identical format. Any question might serve to illustrate the form of his writings. However, because the question of God's knowledge was to be such an important issue in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,²³ an issue of which Ockham was acutely aware, Thomas' "Quaestio XIV"

of his Summa Theologiae, the "De scientia Dei."²⁴ seems a logical place to begin.

The quaestio begins with a general statement on God's knowledge and a statement of how Thomas is going to break the discussion into manageable units. "Circa scientiam," he says, "vero quaeruntur sexdecim" (p. 109). Each of the sixteen parts forms one articulus in which the dialectic method is employed.

"Articulus XIII" deals with the question of future contingents. The question is introduced by the omnipresent "utrum." Thomas asks, "Utrum scientia Dei sit futurorum contingentium?" (p. 124). This is quickly followed by the contradictory statement, "Videtur quod scientia Dei non sit futurorum contingentium" (p. 124).

This in turn is followed by a series of objections, in this case three, which take issue with the central question of the articulus:

1. A causa enim necessaria procedit effectus necessarius. Sed scientia Dei est causa scitorum, ut supra (a.8) dictum est. Cum ergo ipsa sit necessaria, sequitur scita eius esse necessaria. Non ergo scientia Dei est contingentium.

2. Praeterea, omnis conditionalis cuius antecedens est necessarium absolute, consequens est necessarium absolute. Sic enim se habet antecedens ad consequens, sicut principia ad conclusionem: ex principiis autem necessariis non sequitur conclusio nisi necessaria, ut in I Poster. probatur. Sed haec est quaedam conditionalis vera, si Deus scivit hoc futurum esse,

hoc erit: quia scientia Dei non est nisi verorum. Huius autem conditionalis antecedens est necessarium absolute: tum quia est aeternum; tum quia significatur ut praeteritum. Ergo et consequens est necessarium absolute. Igitur quidquid scitur a Deo, est necessarium. Et sic scientia Dei non est contingentium.

3. Praeterea, omne scitum a Deo necesse est esse: quia etiam omne scitum a nobis necesse est esse, cum tamen scientia Dei certior sit quam scientia nostra. Sed nullum contingens futurum necesse est esse. Ergo nullum contingens futurum est scitum a Deo. (pp. 124-125)

These objections, it should be noted, are bound together by the conjunction "praeterea" which serves to give them force.

Having made a strong case for the objections to the question, Thomas then includes his own objections to the objections already raised. This often takes the form of a statement and corroborative evidence from scriptural writings:

Sed contra est quod dicitur in Psalmo 32, 15: Qui finxit singillatim corda eorum, qui intelligit omnia opera eorum, scilicet hominum. Sed opera hominum sunt contingentia, utpote libero arbitrio subiecta. Ergo Deus scit futura contingentia. (p. 125)

The next stage is to restate the above contention, a pronouncement which supports the original question beginning with "Respondeo dicendum quod . . ." (p. 125).⁷



To this is added a series of statements which support Thomas' opinion.

The final stage includes responses to all the objections raised in the order that they were raised. Within these responses to the objection, other objections may again be raised and answered. The third response illustrates this:

Ad tertium dicendum quod ea quae temporaliter in actum reducuntur, a nobis successive cognoscuntur in tempore, sed a Deo in aeternitate, quae est supra tempus. Unde nobis, quia cognoscimus futura contingentia inquantum talia sunt, certa esse non possunt: sed soli Deo, cuius intelligere est in aeternitate supra tempus.

Sed obstant quidam, dicentes quod ista distinctio habet locum in formis separabilibus a subiecto; ut si dicam, album possibile est esse nigrum. Quae quidem de dicto est falsa, et de re est vera: res enim quae est alba, potest esse nigra; sed hoc dictum, album esse nigrum, nunquam potest esse verum.

sicut esse materiale attribuitur lapidi secundum se, quod non attribuitur ei secundum quod est intelligibile. (pp. 126-127)

In the articulus, then, the following organization is evident: It begins with a question followed by objections or negative responses to the question. Thomas

then gives his own statement which reaffirms the intent of the original question and summons new evidence to support the reaffirmation. Finally the initial objections are answered and any additional objections raised in these answers are also confronted.

The same observations that were made of the Lombard's method are pertinent here. The dialectical juxtaposition is still present but the contravening opinions are more closely interwoven with the structure of the discussion. As in the Sentences the reader is made aware of the differences and is part of the process whereby the conclusions are reached over and above the objections. Once again the intellect is engaged by the exercise of working through the "sic et non" of the debate.

Many years separate the careers of Thomas and William of Ockham. Each is associated with a different century, and each is generally thought to have dominated the intellectual life of his century. In the past, it has often been the tendency to see those centuries, the thirteenth and fourteenth, differing greatly from each other. Gordon Leff is representative of this view:

The changes that came with the fourteenth century . . . were not from innovations so much as from a group of existing elements. This can best be described as the waning of the hierarchy and universal order. From the first decades of the fourteenth century it is possible to notice a growing differentiation within most walks of

society and no less in thought. It made for new relationships between spiritual and secular, between seigneur and tenant, faith and reason. Ultimately, this division, where previously there had been unity, was to mark the end of the Middle Ages.²⁵

However, there is another view which sees the fourteenth century as a period in which the traditions of the earlier period were still carried on. Though there were signs of an impending disintegration, the fabric remained intact:

In one aspect the two centuries are two parts of a single whole—the period of classical scholasticism There was the unity of an unbroken academic tradition guaranteed by the use of common textbooks, viz. the writings of Aristotle, the Sentences of Peter Lombard and others which had to be read and publicly interpreted by anyone aspiring to academic degrees. Within this unity there was a lively discussion of the various conflicting solutions to the common problems²⁶

A perusal of the form of Ockham's writing indicates that the latter argument is certainly justifiable. To be sure, "scholasticism after Ockham was never again the same,"²⁷ but that judgement pertains to content, and not to the method of his writing, as the following discussion demonstrates.

Ockham's statements on God's causality and foreknowledge begin, as do Thomas', with a question. He asks,

"Utrum Deus sit causa efficiens omnium aliorum a se?"²⁸

Following this question are two contradictory statements which represent opposing views on the question:

Quod non: Quia non est causa efficiens entium rationis, quia tunc talia entia essent actualiter in rerum natura, quod est falsum.

Contra: Omne quod non est Deo effective est incausatum, et omne tale est Deus; ergo omne aliud a Deo est a Deo effective. (p. 128)

His response to the question begins with a statement of method when he says, "Circa istam quaestionem primo, distinguam de causa, secundo dicam ad quaestionem" (p. 128). Then he summons reason and authority to answer the question:

Circa secundum dico primo, quod Deus est causa omnium mediata vel immediata. Licet hoc non possit demonstrari, tamen hoc persuadeo auctoritate et ratione. Auctoritate, quia Ioannis i^o dicitur: "Omnia per ipsum facta sunt" etc. Quod non potest intelligi de Deo, quia ibi non fit distributio pro Deo; ergo intelligitur, quod omnia alia a Deo per ipsum facta sunt. Et in Symbolo: "Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem", et sequitur: "creatorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium", etc. Item, Extra de summa Trinitate et fide catholica, firmiter: "Ipse est creator omnium visibilium et invisibilium, spiritualium et corporalium".

Praeterea: Hoc probo per rationem primo sic: Omnia dependent essentialiter a Deo, quod non esset verum nisi Deus esset causa illorum. Praeterea, si sic, tunc aliquid aliud a Deo

esset increatum, vel esset processus in infinitum in causis: quia accipio aliquid, quod non ponis causari a Deo, et quaero, utrum sit causatum vel incausatum. Si detur primum, quaero de causa illius, et de causa illius eodem modo et sic in infinitum. Si detur secundum, habetur propositum.

Secundo dico, quod Deus est causa immediata omnium. Quod probō: Quia omne aliud a Deo plus dependet a Deo quam una creatura ab alia creatura; sed una creatura sic dependet ab alia, quod est causa eius immediata; ergo etc.

Praeterea: Si non, hoc maxime esset verum de culpa actuali; sed hoc non obstat, quia idem actus numero potest causari ab una causa culpabiliter, et ab alia inculpabiliter; sicut eadem volitio est a causa naturali, puta a cognitione, et a causa libera, puta a voluntate. Ergo potest idem actus causari a Deo immediate partialiter, sed inculpabiliter, et a voluntate culpabiliter. (pp. 128-129)

As does Aquinas, Ockham acknowledges several objections or doubts when he says, "Contra tamen hoc sunt aliqua dubia" (p. 129). He then goes on to list these objections stating, "Primum: quia impossibilia non sunt a Deo, et tamen non sunt Deus. Secundo: quia figmenta et entia rationis, quae distinguuntur contra entia realia, non sunt Deus nec sunt a Deo. Tertio: quia esse obiectiva rerum et similiter peccata non sunt

a Deo. Quarto: quia veritates propositionum et privationes non sunt Deus nec a Deo effective" (pp. 129-130).

Each of these objections is answered in turn. As in Thomas' writings the responses to the objections include the acknowledgement of other related objections which are also answered. In response to the third objection, for instance, he confronts another opposing viewpoint:

Ad tertium dico, quod non sunt talia esse obiectiva quae nec sunt nec possunt esse entia realia; nec est unus alius parvus mundus esse obiectivorum. Sed illud, quod nulla res est, omnino nihil est, sicut dicit Augustinus i^o De doctrina Christiana.

Si dicis, secundum Augustinum De Trinitate possum fingere talem hominem qualem vidi: dico, quod illa fictio est intellectio, quae est communis omnibus hominibus, et si nihil in re sibi correspondeat, est mendosa intellectio.

Similiter ad illud de peccatis potest dici, quod omnis res quae est peccatum, est a Deo, tamen Deus non peccat, quia non tenetur ad oppositum, cum nullius debitor sit (p. 131).

In general Ockham's method is very similar to Thomas'. The question begins the debate. Two short responses, a negative and a positive one, follow. He then supports the opening question by reason and authority. Finally he indicates the objections raised, responds in order to them, and confronts any new objections raised to the response.

Ockham reflects Thomas' method too in the careful interweaving of the objections and the supporting statements. The reader is asked to participate in the unravelling of the problem. In the end, Ockham's conclusions, like those of the Lombard and Thomas before him, appear the stronger for having been built upon sound objections.

What can then be said of the dialectic method? The most obvious conclusion is that the same method of inquiry with minor variations remained consistent over the centuries. Second, the juxtaposition of contradictory statements was the most significant component part of that method. Third, the inclusion of contradictory statements served as a stimulus to the reader. In Abelard it was a stimulus to doubt and to seek the truth. In Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham it was a stimulus to become involved with the writer in the process of solving a problem.

Obviously, not all scholastic thinkers have been—or could be—included in this chapter. What has been shown is the duration and continuity of the dialectic tradition from near its origins, through its apogee, to a point close to its conclusion. Four philosophers—Abelard, the Lombard, Thomas and Ockham—have been chosen, not only because they are representative of their times, but also because of their influence on the thought and

method of others. Others might have been chosen. Indeed, lesser known men using the same methods might have been more impressive. However, these four are sufficient to demonstrate the nature and continuity of the scholastic tradition.

One more prefatory note must be added. The use of contradictory statements for purposes of emphasis was not solely the tool of the dialecticians. The rhetorical contentio and the various similar devices employed in the ars praedicandi bear witness to the fact that other sources may indeed have influenced this particular stylistic element of the medieval religious lyric. However, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the dialectic tradition appears a far more likely source.

Notes to Chapter 2

¹ David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962). p. 87.

² For an insight into the early discussions on the scholastic method see Maurice De Wulf, An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy, trans. P. Coffey (1907; rpt. New York: Dover, 1956). The information in the first chapter and its notes are particularly helpful.

³ The vast majority of the early scholarship on scholasticism has centered on the content rather than the form. Some of the texts mentioned in De Wulf's study are exceptions. The same pattern has continued through later scholarship as well, though Knowles and others are looking to the form rather than content.

⁴ Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought, p. 126.

⁵ Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the 12th Century (1927; rpt. New York: The World Publishing Co., 1957). pp. 353-354.

⁶ G. G. Coulton, Studies in Medieval Thought (1940; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 117.

⁷ Peter Abelard, "Sic et Non," PL, CLXXVIII, Col. 1339. All future references are taken from this edition.

⁸ This was one of the main charges brought against Abelard throughout his career by a series of formidable opponents of whom Bernard of Clairvaux was one. For a discussion of this opposition see A. Victor Murray, Abelard and Bernard: A Study in Twelfth Century Modernism (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967).

⁹ J. G. Sikes, Peter Abailard (1932; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 83.

¹⁰ L. Grane, Peter Abelard: Philosophy and Christianity in the Middle Ages, trans. Frederick and Christine Crowley (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970). p. 88.

¹¹ Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, XII, Col. 2016.

¹² David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought, p. 183.

¹³ Ibid., p. 182.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the role of the Sentences.

¹⁵ David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought, p. 183.

¹⁶ Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the 12th Century, p. 357.

¹⁷ Peter Lombard, "In Libros Sententiarum," PL, CXCII, Col. 522. All future references are taken from this edition.

¹⁸ For a slightly different organization of a distinctio, see "Distinctio XII," Cols. 553-555. Lombard develops his arguments in a more organic fashion integrating objections and assertions much more closely. However, the basic organizational principles remain the same.

¹⁹ Gordon Leff, Medieval Thought (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1958), p. 129.

²⁰ M.-D. Chenu, Toward Understanding Saint Thomas, trans. A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), p. 94.

- 21 M. C. D'Arcy, St. Thomas Aquinas (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1955), p. 195.
- 22 H. O. Taylor, The Medieval Mind, 4th ed., (1925; rpt. London: MacMillan and Company, 1938), II, 337.
- 23 See Gordon Leff, Bradwardine and the Pelagians (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957) for a discussion of this issue as a dominant concern of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.
- 24 Thomas Aquinas, "De scientia Dei," Summa Theologiae (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1955), I, 109. All future references are taken from this text.
- 25 G. Leff, Medieval Thought, p. 258.
- 26 Philoteus Boehner, "Introduction," Ockham: Philosophical Writings (London: Nelson, 1957), pp. ix-x.
- 27 G. Leff, William of Ockham (Manchester: University Press, 1975), p. xxiv.
- 28 William of Ockham, "Quodlibeta, III, Q. iii," Ockham: Philosophical Writings, ed. P. Boehner, p. 128. All future references are taken from this edition.

CHAPTER 3: THE DIFFUSION OF THE DIALECTIC METHOD

Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,
 In scole-matere greet difficultee.
 Ye han seyd muche thyng right wel, I seye;
 But, dam, heere as we ryde by the weye,
 Us nedeth nat to speken but of game,
 And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
 To prechyng and to scole eek of clergye.¹

Thus Chaucer's friar introduces his tale to the pilgrims on their journey to Canterbury. Though he attempts to disassociate himself from the schools, his references to "scole-matere" and "auctoritees" would doubtless have been understood by his fellow travellers, secular and religious, to whom the activities of Oxford, Cambridge and perhaps distant Paris, would be at least vaguely familiar. It is the degree to which these activities permeated the society, and the world of the lyricist, that is of concern here.

In a society as structured and as hierarchical as that of the Middle Ages, the transmission of information from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy must have presented some interesting problems in communication. This is reflected in a number of scholarly works in which historians and literary critics have attempted to trace out possible routes through which ideas moved. Charles Homer Haskins, for instance, speculates that the pan-nationalism of the Roman era died with the political demise of the Empire. The attempt to spread ideas across a divided Europe was a

singularly difficult process. He states, "The spread of ideas in the Middle Ages is only part of a history of slow diffusion through the resisting medium of local habit and custom. It is chiefly concerned with the scattered centres of another sort, stations of high tension, if you like, communicating with other stations of the same type with comparatively little reference to distance or the nature of the intervening space. Such centres, representing different social strata, consisted chiefly of monasteries and cathedrals, courts, towns and universities."²

In a much later article on the same subject, Kenneth Humphreys reaches somewhat similar conclusions. He attempts to ascertain how books were distributed in the Middle Ages. After studying catalogues, manuscripts, wills and some books themselves, he concludes that, by the thirteenth and through the fourteenth century, three sources formed the basis for the distribution of books and ideas. These included the universities, the growth of professional book producers, and what he calls "the astonishing pervasiveness of the mendicant order—the friars, particularly the Dominicans and the Franciscans."³

Humphreys concludes that, although the main cultural centres were in the great university towns, the influence of the towns was spread widely and deeply around the realm. "There was," he states, "an awareness of the various currents of scholarly interests and an apparent desire to

benefit from study."⁴

In Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism, Erwin Panofsky discusses the transmission of ideas within the confines of two more specific endeavours. His approach is in the same critical and historiographical mode, and his conclusions sound equally plausible:

In contrast to a mere parallelism the connection [between architecture and scholasticism] which I have in mind is a genuine cause-and-effect relation; but in contrast to an individual influence, this cause-and-effect relation comes about by diffusion rather than by direct impact. It comes about by the spreading of what may be called, for want of a better term, a mental habit—reducing this over-worked cliché to its precise Scholastic sense as a "principle that regulates the act," principium importans ordinem ad actum. Such mental habits are at work in all and every civilization.⁵

It is difficult to take issue with this type of speculation, for all three scholars are establishing only plausible relationships. Nevertheless, in dealing with the history of ideas, a nebulous and undefinable subject at best, speculation is as good a tool as any with which to consider the problem.

However, in investigating the possibility of how the dialectic method of the schools may have affected the lyricist, the speculation can be more directed. A brief consideration of four factors including the role of the Franciscans in the development of the religious lyric, the

type of education the Franciscans received, the role of preaching in the Middle Ages, and the vitality of the tradition of debate literature through the fourteenth century clearly illustrates that the dialectic method was closer to the world of Chaucer's friar than the mendicant would care to admit. As Hastings Rashdall contends, "It was at this time that philosophy literally descended from the schools into the street."⁶

The role of the Friars Minor has, for more than half a century, received scholarly recognition. In his important study, A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages, F. J. E. Raby acknowledges Franciscan influence. "This spiritual and emotional renewal of Western and especially of Italian Christianity was the main influence which made itself felt in the vernacular and Latin poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."⁷ So pervasive is this influence now perceived to be; that it is now possible to talk of Franciscan literature, a type of literature which is stylistically and ideologically related to the spiritual movement of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁸

A more specific relationship of the Franciscans to the lyric tradition was considered by Rossell Hope Robbins in a series of articles appearing over some thirty years.⁹ Robbins, as noted earlier, concludes that "sixty-six percent of all shorter religious poems before 1348 show quite plainly the predominant influence of the Franciscans."¹⁰

David Jeffrey places the figure at eighty-eight to ninety percent.¹¹

It is interesting to note that this influence over the development of the lyric occurred at the same time in history as the Franciscan hegemony over philosophy and theology. It could be argued that the thirteenth century belonged to Thomas and the Dominicans. The fourteenth century, however, was clearly dominated by the Franciscans, with William of Ockham being the most prominent figure. Even as scholasticism declined in the later fourteenth century, the weight of Franciscan scholarship could be felt across Europe.

The rise to prominence in the academic world of the ~~Order~~ of Friars Minor was almost unexpected, given the humble beginnings of the order. The Dominicans, not the Franciscans, were originally designed to be the more scholarly and academic of the orders. As John V. Fleming states in An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages, "It is in the first place necessary to underscore the fact that, in primitive Franciscanism, there is a marked strain of anti-academicism more or less formally hostile to the learning of the university, and to its academic methodologies."¹² However, Franciscanism, especially in the English province, moved quickly away from its original unacademic spirit. As early as the mid-thirteenth century, it was attracting into its ranks some of the best minds in Europe, and it was beginning to make

provisions for the training of those minds.¹³

In his study The Franciscans in England, John Moorman who, along with David Knowles and A. G. Little, relies heavily on the writings of the thirteenth-century Friar Thomas Eccleston for information, points out the broad lines of Franciscan education in England. Moorman reports:

In 1254 there were in England thirty lecturers in the Franciscan convents who "solemnly disputed" (i.e. taught at a high level) together with three or four others who lectured without disputations. This shows that there were a good many Franciscan schools up and down the country where good teaching was being given. . . . We can see, therefore, a three-tier system in English Franciscan education. The friar began his own studies in his own convent under the tuition of one of his fellows who was called a lector. In due course he would be sent to one of the more advanced schools.

Finally, if he proved himself, he would go on to Oxford or Cambridge and read for his degree in theology like other post-graduate students.¹⁴

The success of the Franciscan educational process did not diminish in its fervour in the fourteenth century. Nor was the success overlooked. "When in 1336 Pope Benedict XII raised twenty-one of the Franciscan convent schools to a higher rank and turned them into colleges of advanced study, no less than one-third of the total number were in England."¹⁵

In each convent, the lector was an important person whose task it was to teach the students in his convent. This function, in fact, entitled him to his own room.¹⁶ Under the lector, for a minimum of four years, students were given basic academic training in preparation for enrollment in a faculty of theology at a university. Though it is almost certain that the Bible was still the basis for study, it can be stated with certainty that training in logic and dialectic as it pertained to the study of theology must also have accounted for a large part of the curriculum. Then, with the acknowledgement of the province, he would go to the university to study as a *studens de debito* or *studens de gracia* if the convent only supported his education. Such a sound training was necessary if a student was to succeed in the demanding education that was to follow at Oxford, Cambridge or Paris. As David Knowles states, "Indeed, by 1270 the grey friars in England were a 'student order' as fully, perhaps even more fully, than were the contemporary Dominicans."¹⁷

Noted earlier was the statement by Thomas Eccleston that in the convent schools the masters "disputed solemnly." It has already been shown that the *quaestio* and the *disputatio* formed the method for organizing and analyzing theological questions. In fact, the *disputatio* formed, in a very real sense, the method by which students enrolled in a faculty of theology were educated. The *disputatio* was inextricably tied to the educational process. The method was so

pervasive in the schools that it might well have formed the "principium importans ordinem ad actum" Panofsky mentioned earlier.

In his "Verbum Abbreviatum" Peter Cantor made his famous statement on the duties of a teacher and biblical scholar:

In tribus igitur consistit exercitium sacrae Scripturae: circa lectionem, disputationem et praedicationem. Cuilibet istorum mater oblivionis et noverca memoriae est nimia prolixitas. Lectio autem est quasi fundamentum, et substratorium sequentium; quia per eam caeterae utilitates comparantur. Disputatio quasi paries est in hoc exercitio et aedifico; quia nihil plene intelligitur, fideliterve praedicatur; nisi prius dente disputationis frangatur. Praedicatio vero, cui subserviunt priora, quasi tectum est tegens fideles ab aestu, et a turbine vitiorum. Post lectionem igitur sacrae Scripturae, et dubitabilium, per disputationem, inquisitionem, et non prius, praedicandum est; ut sic cortina cortinam trahat, et caetera.¹⁸

For Peter Cantor, then, the disputation was a firmly entrenched process in the reading, understanding and commenting upon scriptures. His suggestions were followed closely in the universities of medieval Europe.

A young friar entering Oxford in the later Middle Ages would be confronted with the possibility of years of study, lectures and disputations. His first six years would be

spent on listening to lectures on the Bible and the Sentences, and the next three (four in the thirteenth century) would be spent on lecturing on those texts, first (in Oxford) on the Sentences and then on the Bible (the reverse of Paris). Gordon Leff summarizes the demands in the following way:

At Oxford, a master of arts [thus not a mendicant] entering the theological faculty had to spend seven years before he could become a bachelor, that is, begin lecturing on the Sentences. Of these seven years the first four were taken up with attending lectures, mainly on the Bible; in his fifth year he could oppose in disputation and in his seventh year respond. For those who were not masters of arts the period was longer: six years of theological study for opponency and eight for responsion. Before he could go on to read the Sentences, admission to which constituted a B.D., he had, after 1419, to have taken part in a solemn disputation and received masters' depositions. . . . By a statute of 1310 . . . it was obligatory to read the Sentences for one year for the bachelorship. After completing them he had to spend a further two years opposing and responding in all the theological schools, to preach publicly, which after 1303 included a sermon at St. Mary's [before this it had been at the friars' own churches], and to lecture on any book of the Bible or the Sentences.¹⁹

The disputations in which the student was involved were of three types: the principia or solemn introductions, the

quodlibeta or free debates and the collationes or private debates. The principia and collationes have been described elsewhere in detail²⁰ and need not concern us greatly here. Suffice it to say that they were generally more structured than the quodlibeta, and as such lacked the vitality and spontaneity of the latter. Of the quodlibeta, Leff states, "Their great merit and historical interest is that they could be on any topic. Accordingly they tended to reflect the questions of the day with an immediacy not found in the more formal exercises of the school The other aspect of their freedom was that anyone could participate."²¹

Leff states that the function of these debates was to train the students in argument. "Formally," he states, "it was an exercise in pure dialectic, though in content it often produced ideas of fundamental importance."²²

Certainly these public exhibitions of skill in dialectic must have been exciting occurrences for the young intellectuals who pushed into the churchès to hear the disputants. Even if their Latin were not refined enough to follow the intricacies of academic sparring, the visual effect of two (or more) disputing sides carried with it the same excitement associated with a modern courtroom drama. In his study of these debates Palémon Glorieux paints such a picture:

L'auditoire est dense; et varié; puisqu'aussi bien les étudiants en théologie de Paris sont de toute origine et de toute robe: clercs séculiers, chanoines réguliers, Jacobins, Sachets, Cordliers, Carmes, etc.; Français,

Danois, Italiens, Anglais, etc.

Dans la dispute quodlibétique, n'importe qui peut soulever n'importe quel problème. Et c'est, pour le maître qui reçoit, le grand danger. Les questions où les objections peuvent venir de tous côtés, hostiles ou curieuses, ou malignes, peu importe. On peut l'interroger de bonne foi, pour connaître son opinion; mais on peut essayer de le mettre en contradiction avec lui-même, ou l'obliger à se prononcer sur des sujets brûlants qu'il préférerait ne jamais aborder.²³

The academic disputation, then, formed a basic part of the education of a young friar attending the university. Not only was he taught with texts like the Sentences which were carefully developed along dialectical lines discussed earlier, but the discussion of those texts mirrored their format. To the disputation of the text, a human dimension was added.

A third possible route through which the dialectic method may have affected the lyricist was the medium of preaching. The work of G. R. Owst on preaching in the Middle Ages²⁴ is sufficiently well known that comments on this area seem somewhat redundant. However, some general observations from him prove helpful. Discussing the role of the friars in preaching, Owst states:

With the advent of the friar, a host of missionaries spread through the land, most of them foreigners at the first and not a few trained in the schools of Paris, bringing with them minds reared amid the riches of continental civilization and

learning, but now forced to adapt themselves to the ways and expressions of the people they came to instruct. The friar, where faithful to his task, was committed, moreover, to a life of evangelism spent among the common folk, the lower orders of society, intimate enough in its turn to teach him all that the foreign traveller may still learn of strange oaths, quaint sayings and ideas, and quainter local customs in foreign parts. . . . Thus the preacher becomes, in due time, the chief mediating influence through which the mixed culture of medieval Christendom permeates the thought and expression of the land he has adopted.²⁵

It is obvious that the movement between preacher and audience would go in two directions. Not only would a preaching friar be affected by the speech habits of his audience, he would also affect them as well. Organizing his sermon in the fashion in which he was taught in the schools, he might, almost inadvertently, insert the dialectic method into his address. For those other friars who were part of his audience, this organization was probably not unnoticed, and perhaps even reflected later in their own efforts if they turned their thoughts to the writing of lyrics.

There exists one more influence which, though remote, might have touched the burgeoning Franciscan poets of the fourteenth century. I refer here to the tradition of the debate poem. "There is a great deal of evidence to substantiate the fact that popularizing knowledge was an

important fact in the literature of the thirteenth century."²⁶ The same could be said of the fourteenth. Much of this knowledge would have come from the debates of the great schoolmen. Like the scholastics, the poets were also interested in the question of authority. As J. A. W. Bennett states, "Most of all in the Golden Middle Ages was synthesis and reconciliation of apparently conflicting authorities the preoccupation of literature."²⁷ The similarity between this purpose and the goal of the disputation is obvious.

The alliance between the form of scholastic writings and the literature of the period found its most evident expression in the debate poem genre. "While the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed the greatest popularity of the form, the debate poem was represented intermittently throughout the Middle Ages."²⁸ It circulated around Europe "as freely as the chansons, the romances and the fabliaux."²⁹ Such debate poems as The Owl and the Nightingale, The Debate of the Body and the Soul, and The Cuckoo and the Nightingale spanned three centuries and attested to the popularity of the literary form which best dramatized the dialectic method.

A less evident manifestation of the same dialectic format also began to influence literature not normally associated with the debate tradition. William Langland's Dreamer in Piers Plowman confronts everyone with "Contra" as he solicits opinions.³⁰ The young Chaucer reflected

this as well. Wolfgang Clemen states:

In the early poems there are many juxtapositions and sequences which will leave scope for new interpretations in the future. We ought to admit these ambiguities and open questions and we should not feel limited to one meaning alone where Chaucer clearly avoided this. Chaucer did not want to present his reader with a complete answer and dismiss him at the end of his poem; what he was seeking to do was rather to induce in him a state of questioning disquiet, "of wonderment" to awaken his faculty of imagination.³¹

Clemen's statements are reminiscent of Abelard's "Prologus" and reflect clearly the close relationship between literature and scholastic dialectic.

Let us speculate, then, on a biography of a young Franciscan poet much in the same manner as James J. Murphy speculates on his mythical author of The Owl and the Nightingale.³² Showing some propensity for learning, and eager to study, he might have found occasion to discuss an academic career with the lector in his own convent. He might have heard from the university-educated lector of the latter's classroom experience where master and student debated a theological question. The lector might have recalled for the young listener his own experience as respondent or opponent in the debates of his fellow students. He might even have recalled the stories he heard of the huge crowds that packed the aula in Paris to hear William of Ockham, the

greatest Franciscan of the day, defend himself in a quodlibetal debate.

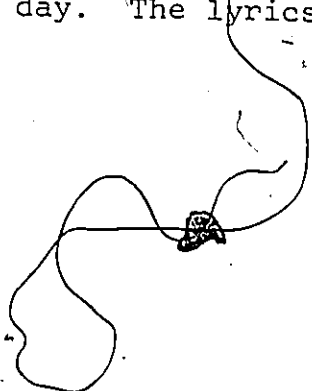
If the young friar were fortunate enough, and showed promise, he might have been sent to Oxford to gain the experience at first hand, but if this were not the case, he still had the experience of debating with his own lector. Failing that, he always had the opportunity to go to Oxford and simply see and hear the debates.

The pattern is clear. Etched in his mind, and aided by the training already received in his own convent school, would be scenes of colourful debates where robed masters demonstrated the skills of argument. Even without a visit to Paris or Oxford, the young friar's awareness of dialectic was a distinct possibility. A year's study in Paris or Oxford, or even at one of the higher schools in his own province, would have made that awareness a certitude.

Further, he might have witnessed a Dominican or another Franciscan preaching in a town square, delivering a sermon made more dramatic by the use of the juxtaposition associated with the dialectic method. The effectiveness of the sermon, due in no small part to that technique, might have made a profound impression on him.

Finally, he might have come into contact with a body of popular literature which was closely related to the method of the schools, debate literature. This would have provided him with an excellent model for his own writings.

Thus the dialectic method of the schools was not as distant from the sundry folk as Chaucer's friar would have us believe. The Franciscans' contribution to the thirteenth-and fourteenth-century literature, their importance to the contemporary world of philosophy and theology, the form of their (and others') education, the example of the sermon, and the awareness of the old and new debate literature, provided a highly plausible route for the transferring of the dialectic method to the literature of the day. The lyrics themselves clearly illustrate this.



Notes to Chapter 3

1. Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Friar's Prologue," The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 89, 1271-1277.
2. Charles Homer Haskins, "The Spread of Ideas in the Middle Ages," Speculum, 1 (1926), 20-21.
3. Kenneth Humphreys, "Distribution of Books in the English West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages," Libri, 17 (1967), 5.
4. Ibid., 5. See also two recent articles on the spread of ideas including Robert S. Lopez, "The Practical Transmission of Medieval Culture," By Things Seen: Reference and Recognition in Medieval Thought, ed. David L. Jeffrey (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979), pp. 125-142 and David L. Jeffrey, "Franciscan Spirituality and the Growth of Vernacular Culture," pp. 143-160 in the same collection. Christina von Nolcken, The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologiae (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979), pp. 19-21 also makes some pertinent observations on the problem.
5. Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (1957; rpt. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 20-21. A similar approach of placing a work of art in the context of general developments is also found in E. Salter, Piers Plowman: An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962) and Morton W. Bloomfield, Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961). The eclecticism of their method provides a useful mirror for a similar attempt in this study.
6. Hastings Rashdall, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), III, 254.

⁷ F. J. E. Raby, A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 417.

⁸ See John V. Fleming, An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), p. 2.

⁹ As indicated in Chapter 1, Rossel Hope Robbins' contributions to lyric scholarship have been invaluable. Three articles which pertain directly to the question of Franciscan influence include "The Earliest Carols and the Franciscans," Modern Language Notes, 53 (1938), 233-245; "The Authors of the Middle English Religious Lyrics," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 39 (1940), 230-238; "Friar Herebert and the Carol," Anglia, 75 (1957), 194-198.

¹⁰ R. H. Robbins, "The Authors of the Middle English Religious Lyrics," 237.

¹¹ David L. Jeffrey, The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 214.

¹² John V. Fleming, p. 5.

¹³ There has been a great deal of excellent scholarship on the Franciscans and Franciscan education written in the latter part of the last century and continuing on through this century. Chief among these are A. G. Little, The Grey Friars in Oxford (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1892); Studies in English Franciscan History (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1917), and "The Franciscan School at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century," Archivum Franciscanum Historicum, 19 (1926), 803-874; David Knowles, The Religious Orders in England, 3 vols.

(Cambridge: The University Press, 1948-1959). An extensive bibliography is available in J. Moorman, A History of the Franciscan Order from Its Origins to the Year 1517 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 595-613. The latter is now recognized as the definitive work on the Franciscan movement.

¹⁴ John Moorman, The Franciscans in England (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1974), p. 55.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁶ John Moorman, A History of the Franciscan Order, p. 123.

¹⁷ David Knowles, The Religious Orders in England, I, 213.

¹⁸ Peter Cantor, "Verbum Abbreviatum," PL, CCV, col. 25.

¹⁹ Gordon Leff, Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968), pp. 174-175

²⁰ See P. Glorieux, Répertoire des maîtres en théologie de Paris au XIII^e siècle, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1933), pp. 11-41 and La littérature quodlibétique (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1935), II, 9-50.

²¹ Leff, p. 171.

²² Ibid., p. 172.

²³ P. Glorieux, La Littérature quodlibétique, II, 10-11.

²⁴ See both his studies including Preaching in Medieval England (Cambridge: University Press, 1926) and Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, 2nd ed. (1961; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966).

²⁵ Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, p. 5.

²⁶ Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, trans. C.A.M. Sym (London: Methuen & Co., 1963), p. 11.

²⁷ J. A. W. Bennett, The Parlement of Fowls (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957); p. 13.

²⁸ J. W. H. Atkins "Introduction," The Owl and the Nightingale (New York: Russell and Russell, 1921), p. xlvii. For a detailed study of the debate poem and its sources, see Kathryn Haganir, The Owl and the Nightingale: Sources, Date, Author (New York: Haskell House, 1966); F. J. E. Raby, A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), Vol II; Kathryn Hume, The Owl and the Nightingale: The Poem and Its Critics (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975). The latter study has an excellent review of scholarship on pp. 3-12. It should be noted here that predecessor of the debate poem is generally accepted to be the classical eclogue or Carolingian confictus, not the dialectical writings of the medieval schoolmen directly, though the form of scholastic writings must have strengthened the traditions.

²⁹ Atkins, p. xiix.

³⁰ The word appears constantly throughout the text as the Dreamer disputes. Though no full length study on the use of dialectic in Piers Plowman has been written, there are some obvious possibilities for the development of a detailed study on the relationship.

³¹ Clemen, p. 11.

³² See James J. Murphy, "Rhetoric and Dialectic in The Owl and the Nightingale," Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric, ed. James J. Murphy (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 198-230.

G

CHAPTER 4: CHRIST, MAN AND THE SCHEME OF SALVATION

In Image and Abstraction William Rogers reflects the dilemma that faces many modern literary critics who study the literature of the Middle Ages and attempt to make definitive statements on the quality of its art. Rogers states that "the imagery of the Middle English lyric . . . is sometimes striking, but hardly ever original."¹ Thus he admits that "there may seem to be little room left in such poetry for imaginative insight."² Though he takes great pains in the succeeding chapters of his study to indicate that art and artfulness are, indeed, part of the medieval lyric, he obviously feels uncomfortable with his acknowledgement that originality may not be part of the medieval aesthetic.³

The usual response to the dilemma is to attempt to approach the lyrics as poems and to deal with them on their own terms. Robert Stevick's challenge, cited above in Chapter I, is worth repeating again:

But the single most important reason [for the chaos in the scholarship on the lyric], I suggest, is uncertainty about how to deal with the poems in performing the critic's work: how to talk about the poems instead of anonymous poets, how to treat the texts as texts rather than as relics merely to be preserved and venerated, how to analyse the structuring of the expression (the poems are

linguistic utterances of a special kind)
more deeply than for tropes, rhyme schemes
and metrical feet.⁴

Certainly Stevick's approach, on the surface, allows the critics to proceed more objectively in their analyses. However, closer scrutiny indicates that even this approach has two definite disadvantages.

On the one hand, as indicated in Chapter I above, the philosophical and theological preoccupations of the age affected the literature in general. Jeffrey's The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality⁵ and Weber's Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric⁶ are only two examples of current scholarship which, from totally different viewpoints, acknowledge this close relationship. Both these studies indicate clearly that to approach the lyric in splendid isolation, as it were, would result at best in a rather literal interpretation of the lyric, and at worst in a complete distortion of it.

On the other hand, the modern critic cannot, in all sincerity, approach any single poem completely on its own merits. Awareness of the achievements of Donne, Milton and the Romantic poets in the lyric genre makes a non-comparative study almost impossible, even with an acknowledgement that these poets were writing in a substantially different lyric tradition. With the possible exception of "I Sing of a Myden" and a few

others, most medieval lyrics would appear the poorer for this unintended, but nevertheless significantly present, comparative standard.

The answer lies with the acceptance of the lyric as a product of its age, both with respect to what the lyricists were attempting to do with the poetic tradition as they had come to know it, and the relationship they felt their genre had with the public for whom the lyrics were written. Eugene Clasby's observations succinctly reflect the one; Rosemary Woolf comments upon the other.

Clasby comments upon the conservatism of the lyricists. "They [the lyricists] wished to consolidate the gains rather than to extend the frontiers of English lyric verse. Their goal was not so much the discovery of a new poetic voice as the proper tuning of the voice which had emerged so far. Poets of a new departure break through the boundaries of established forms; the work of the 14th century religious poet was essentially one of establishing and confirming such boundaries."⁷ Clasby, then, sets out clearly the limitations the lyricists placed on themselves through their sense of tradition.

Rosemary Woolf approaches the question from a different though no less useful viewpoint:

. . . whereas in studying later poetry we justifiably search for an author with a distinctive cast of mind, we must consider a way of thought and particular emotional bias that

was not peculiar to one man, but that for centuries characterized medieval devotion. Their personal moods and emotions are not therefore revealed in their poetry, for they are not concerned with the question of how they feel individually, but only with what kind of response their subject should properly arouse in everyone. The abnegation of individuality is one of the most important differences between the medieval and the 17th century lyric.⁸

The subject matter of the lyric was known to, and accepted by, all members of the Christian civilization. The stories of the crucifixion, the nativity and the joys of Mary were religious commonplaces known to the lowliest of men and women who had only to raise their eyes to the facade of their church or turn their ears to the Franciscan or Dominican who was preaching in the local town square to see and hear the same tales. What was being said in the lyric was said countless times before and after. The challenge was to say it effectively and differently within the confines of the tradition which, as Clatsby says, is conservative in its conception, and as Woolf indicates, public in its direction.

A final word must be added to this question of the public nature of the poetry. With the advent of the full-length studies on the lyric, it has become clear that one of the most prominent areas of discussion is whether

the lyrics are primarily devotional, meditative or penitential. In their efforts to explain why they are on one side of an issue, why on another, scholars have neglected to acknowledge the one crucial point upon which they are all in agreement. All assert that the lyric poetry of the Middle Ages is affective in nature, designed to elicit an emotional response from the reader or the listener. Jeffrey's conclusion alludes to this. He states, "We may conclude with justification that the English Franciscans continued the traditions of their Italian forebearers in employing the popular vernacular lyric as a methodological weapon in an evangelical ministry, that their lyrics functioned similarly as songs of contrition and devotion, but also of theological instruction, and served to impart basic biblical knowledge in the vernacular."⁹

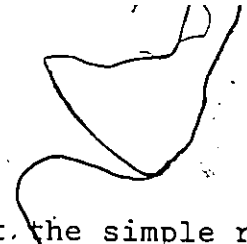
By way of summary, then, we may say that the poet's task was to create within the confines of a conservative poetic tradition, using known and accepted themes and subjects, verse which was capable of stirring to devotion, meditation, or ethical piety, a wide and varied audience. The task was not an easy one, but the tools in the form of the dialectic method were at hand. This dialectic provided the lyricist with innumerable solutions to the problems of effective organization for affective goals.

Of the one hundred and thirty-five lyrics which

make up the collection in Carleton Brown's Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century approximately ten deal with Christ's address to man from the cross.¹⁰ Rosemary Woolf dismisses most of these as "unmoving, partly because they lack the sweetness and gentleness of other forms,"¹¹ an observation of questionable merit. George Kane is a little kinder in his observation on this type of lyric though he sees these so-called Improperia as less successful than those which introduce a second person such as the Virgin Mary.¹² However, an examination of several of these illustrates clearly that a dismissal of them on the basis of what they are not, is entirely unjustifiable. The Improperia coupled with the dialectic method provide the lyricist with fertile ground for an effective and affective statement on the passion.

In "My volk, what habbe y do þe" (No. 15) the poet begins his poem with a quaestio never answered directly in the poem. The response obviously pertains to man's treachery. However, the answer is studiously avoided though, as will be seen later, it is often the practice for the lyricist to explain away the crucifixion in terms of divine order, especially in those lyrics in which Christ consoles His mother from the cross. It is evident that the poet wishes to emphasize that sinfulness, as the dialectic method demonstrates.

Christ's gifts to man are contrasted to the human



failure to meet the simple requests of a man dying on the cross, and mankind's desire to inflict additional pain on the dying figure. This is carried out through a careful juxtaposition of closely related situations as in "Of þe ston ich dronk to þe;/ And þou wyth galle drincst to me" (27-28); and images which are symbolically related as in "Ich 3af the crowne of kynedom;/ And þou me 3yfst a crowne of þorn" (31-32). At the same time, it should be noted that the generosity of Christ is emphasized as these gifts to man extend over the course of human history (the events used as examples are from Exodus), while mankind cannot meet His needs on His last day on earth.

These contrasting elements are further emphasized by the poet's constant use of the word "and" employed fourteen times throughout the poem in all stanzas but two. This word, used in the sense of "in addition to" and "but," along with the repetition of the burden, gives the poem a similar effect to the one noted in Aquinas and Ockham with evidence being carefully built up to strengthen the case for both sides of the argument.



The result is that the reader is induced to measure man's treachery towards a human Christ against divine assistance over the course of human history. No final statement is made.¹³ In fact, the audience is left with the opening quaestio. It is also left in an animated state pitying a temporarily defeated figure on the cross,



and feeling most inadequate over man's inability to respond in kind to the divine generosity of which it is so poignantly reminded.

"Man, þus on rode I hyng for þe" (No. 47) presents a radically different vision of the crucifixion scene, both in the description of the event itself, and in the tone of Christ's statement. The latter is completely without the sense of recrimination noted above. With the exception of Christ's reference, "And for þi luf þus wald I hyng, / My blyssed blode to blede" (5-6), no mention is made of the more spectacularly distasteful elements of the crucifixion. Because of this the poem is more controlled in tone and more logical in its development.

In this lyric Christ's infinite and steadfast mercy is contrasted to man's feeble nature. The poet develops this skillfully and logically. In the first stanza Christ touchingly indicates the reason for His great sacrifice with the lyrically simple "Man, I luf þe ouer all thing" (4) and emphasizes that love immediately with the only reference to the physical suffering He endures for mankind.

Following in the second stanza is a statement on man's disinclination to respond to the overwhelming love of Christ. Christ asks simply, "How es it so þou lufes me noght?" (8), and deems this disinclination "vkyndely" (9).

The two succeeding stanzas place the degree of Christ's love into the context of man's feeble nature.

These two stanzas are constructed admirably to contrast the two concepts with an identical, almost mathematically precise form. In each stanza the first two lines refer to the sinful nature of man. In each stanza the third and fourth lines introduce the element of contrition into the divine-human relationship. Finally, in the last two lines of each stanza, the result of the contrite state is seen in Christ's desire to "resayue" (17) mankind. More emphatically he tells man, "And fra þe fende I sall þe saue, / And fra his payns smert" (23-24).

The lyric might well end on this delicately balanced note, but in the manner of the scholastic dialectician, the lyricist turns to authority in the form of biblical history to emphasize the relationship he has carefully delineated in general terms. As an "insauple" (27 and 32) he cites the stories of Mary Magdalene and Peter. Further, as in the case of the third and fourth stanzas, an identical pattern is followed: a description of sinful man, the desire for mercy, the receiving of mercy. This is followed by the final lines of the poem which return to the general statements with which it began. As Christ began with, "For-sake þi syn for luf of me" (2), so he ends with "þarfor lete at my lare" (36).¹⁴

Not only is man's feeble nature contrasted with the steadfast quality of Christ's mercy in the poem as a whole, but the poet also takes pains to stress that contrast

between the first and second stanzas, and within stanzas three to six. It is a most effective organization of material.

To a far greater degree than was the case in the previous example, "Man, þus on rode I hyng for þe" is permeated with debate connectives. The argument of the poem is bound together by "sin" and "if" in a logical and orderly manner.

As befits a poem in which the pain of crucifixion is made subservient to its significance as the supreme example of divine mercy, the poet asks the audience to respond with a feeling of love without pity. Christ's all-encompassing mercy is and will be offered to all men. This reassurance is made stronger by the use of general statements and specific examples which emphasize the fickleness of mankind.

At first glance, "Senful man, be-þing & se" (No. 70) appears to be a less successful example than the previous two poems in depicting the crucifixion and commenting upon its significance to mankind. It lacks the historical scope of "My volk, what habbe y do þe" and the artistic balance of "Man, þus on rode I hyng for þe." However, a closer examination reveals that the poem is a powerful and concise statement which, as affective poetry, surpasses the other two discussed above.

Reminiscent of the immediacy of John Donne's "For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love!"¹⁵ the poem possesses a sense of urgency and a finality lacking in the others. This sense is developed throughout by the poet's use of the present tense in all verbs such as "pole" (2), "grede" (3), "drey" (7). The only exceptions are in the fifth and sixth lines where the past tense is employed. The use of the present reminds the audience that the pain of the crucifixion continues.

Within the confines of this overriding urgency the poet investigates the extent of Christ's suffering by contrasting it to man's spiritual ignorance of the degree of suffering and its significance. Unlike the two preceding lyrics, in this one the poet does not investigate each side of the argument simultaneously. He devotes seven lines to one aspect, and two and one-half to the other. This imbalance is partially responsible for the effectiveness of the poem.

As in "My volk, what habbe y do þe," the crucifixion is described in simple but graphic terms. Christ twice refers to his "peine" (2 and 10) and reminds the reader or listener that He is not only "nailed" (5) to the cross, but painfully "i-sprede" (4) upon it as well. The pain is given both a spatial and a temporal dimension when He says, "Nith & day to þe i grede, / Hand & fotes on rode i-sprede" (3-4).

This temporal dimension is most important to the meaning of the poem. Along with the use of the present tense, it clearly etches in the mind of the audience the notion that the pain is eternal. Outside of time there is no change in the lot of the suffering Christ. He remains in a state of complete stasis.¹⁶ The length of that static condition is represented by the fact that fully seventy percent of the poem is used to develop that notion.

In direct antithesis to the degree of suffering and length of time of endurance are the final two and one-half lines. Significantly these lines are introduced by the conjunction "but" (8) which has the same arresting function as the opening line. Having been made clearly aware of Christ's predicament, the audience is made to see, in an almost imagistic reference, man's possible reaction to the crucifixion. The fearful Christ is poignantly aware that man may not "onis" (9) turn his eyes to the sacrifice to see it for itself and to understand its significance.

In the final three lines the poem moves almost from a lyric to a dramatic mode as the audience is suspended in the midst of the action. A single everyman walks near the foot of the cross. The question arises as to whether or not he will, indeed, "turnen onis is ey3e" (9).

The answer is not given. The reader is left wondering about the outcome and questioning the significance of the ending in the same way in which Abelard's method in Sic et Non left scholars questioning and wondering.

The difference between the response to the poem, and to a dialectic treatise in the vein of Abelard's Sic et Non is that in the latter the intellect only is engaged. In the former the highly dramatic juxtaposition of an endlessly suffering Christ and the need for a minute (in time) recognition of that Christ engages both the intellect and the heart. The reader is left with a feeling of great pity for Christ and an overriding fear that man's spiritual recognition may not take place.

Scholars are deeply indebted to the efforts of R. L. Greene whose "Introduction" to The Early English Carols remains a standard reference work. Greene asserts that "the carol had its origins in the dance, or . . . at least [they] were at some time closely related."¹⁷ He argues that the dance left "easily discernible traces"¹⁸ and that "there can be no question of the enormous vogue of the carol as a social pastime."¹⁹ Though some of Greene's contentions have been questioned, the basic tenet that at the bottom of the lyric and carol tradition lie the music, rhythm and spirit of the folk festival,

is still an accepted one.²⁰ The traces of such an ancestor are evident in "Ihesus dop him bymene" (No. 126) in which the poet investigates man's ingratitude to God by superimposing the scene of the crucifixion on a folk festival.

The contrast begins slowly with the poet's use of colour. The dancers are wearing a "garland . . . of grene" (3), while Christ, in response to the pain inflicted by the crown of thorns, moans that "myn hewe it makeþ won" (6).

In the second, third and fourth stanzas the contrasting elements are brought into clearer focus as the stasis of the cross is juxtaposed to the dynamic energy of the dancers:

Myne [hands] wip nailes porled,
on rode & eke my feet.

'A-cros pou berest byn armes,
whan pou dauncest narewe; (9-12)

The stylishly slit clothing is contrasted to the wound in the side of Christ:

'opyne pou hast þi syde,
spaiers longe & wide,
for ueyn glorie & pride,
and þi longe knyf a-strout—
.....

Myn wip spere sharpe
y-stongen to þe herte; (17-24)

At the same time the sounds of the festival are rudely opposed to Christ who "bymenes" (1) in the face of "þe gai

route" (22) who "mai synge welawo" (36) at the foot of the cross.

Overriding the more specific contrasts cited above are the conflicting spirits of gaiety in the festival and tragedy in the suffering, with the latter being all the more poignant because of the former. The "welawo" of the final stanza has a hollow ring. The audience comes away from the poem with a feeling of pity for Christ, and shame at man's graphically displayed ingratitude.

Morton W. Bloomfield's The Seven Deadly Sins²¹ paints a clear and exciting picture of the development and effect of the seven deadly sins on the literature and art of the Middle Ages. In "Wip scharpe bornes pat weren ful kene" (No. 127) the lyricist turns again to this fertile source in the form of an admonition to man. In seven of the eight stanzas of the poem the poet calls the audience's attention to each of the seven sins. The contrasting elements here are the wounds of Christ, symbols of salvation, and human sin, vehicles of damnation. As is the case in "My volk, what habbe y do þe" the poet attempts to relate the pain or wounds of Christ to a human sin. Thus Christ tells man:

In al my þirst ypon þe rode,
Men 3auen me drinkis þat weren not gode,
Eysel & galle for to drynke;
Glotoun, þeron I rede þee þenke. (9-12)

and later, to the envious man who will give nothing to his fellow man:

Wip a spere scharp, pat was ful grill,
 Myn herte was persid—it was my wil—
 For loue of man pat was ful dere;
 Enuyous man, of loue pou lere. (21-24)

Though the lyric, using these contrasting elements, has an orderly development in which a sin is contrasted to a salvation symbol such as a wound or other form of torment of Christ, "Wip scharpe bornes pat weren ful kene" lacks the mathematical precision of "Man, pus on rode I hyng for pe."

However, using the arresting technique demonstrated in "Senful man, be-ping & se" the lyricist constantly forces the audience to alternate between concentration on the physical realities of the crucifixion and their significance. Thus, to buttress the juxtaposition of damnation and salvation symbols—sins and wounds—he forces the audience to change its focus from the "what" to the "why" of the crucifixion scene.

Coupled with the above is the use of several terms associated with the language of dialectic. "Perfore," "peron," and "perwip" appear throughout the poem. On the one hand they reinforce Christ's admonition to man to "Biholde pe lessoun that I pee teche" (6), and on the other hand, they remind us that, as in the writings of Ockham and Aquinas, the contrasting elements are used as vehicles through which man seeks the truth.

As was the case in "Ihesus dop him bymene," the

audience is left to pity Christ while considering the significance of the poem for itself. Nothing particularly new has been added to the portrayal of the crucifixion scene but, as Stephen Manning states in Wisdom and Number, "the medieval lyric poet is not so much interested in making his audience understand the truths more clearly as he is enhancing its acceptance of them."²²

As stated above, the material used by the poets in these lyrics was not new to the medieval audience. The reality of the crucifixion was a commonplace in all medieval art; its significance was, in varying degrees, accepted by all members of the Christian community. However, by combining a quasi-scholastic use of dialectic with the traditional themes, the lyricists created for themselves a striking technique for dealing with their material.

Further, not only was the framework useful of itself, it also provided the poet with opportunities to measure the crucifixion against a variety of backgrounds ranging from Christ's gifts to man, to man's own ingratitude, to human gaiety in the face of divine sacrifice.

Douglas Gray in Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric states:

Yet the great religious poets of the 17th century are in a sense the inheritors of that delicate balance of emotion and intelligence, of learning and simplicity, and of that profound

and humble style that is characteristic of the best of the medieval religious lyrics.²³

He might well have attributed that "delicate balance" to the great scholastic dialecticians of the day.

Notes to Chapter 4

¹ William Elford Rogers, Image and Abstraction: Six Middle English Religious Lyrics (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1972), p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 12.

³ Much has been written about the medieval aesthetic and its effects on literature. D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), is one of the most influential studies. See also Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (1957; rpt. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968) and E. de Bruyne, Etudes d'esthétique médiévale, 3 vols. (1946; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1975).

⁴ Robert D. Stevick, "The Criticism of Middle English Lyrics," Modern Philology, 64 (1966-67), 117.

⁵ David L. Jeffrey, The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).

⁶ Sarah Appleton Weber, Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric: A Study of Sacred History and Aesthetic Form (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969).

⁷ Eugene Clasby, "The Rhythm of the Fourteenth Century English Religious Lyrics," Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1966, p. 2.

⁸ Rosemary Woolf, English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 6.

⁹ David Jeffrey, The Early English Lyric, p. 260.

¹⁰ Carleton Brown, ed., Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, rev. G.V. Smithers, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952). These include No.'s 3,4,15,47,66,70,72,77,78,126 and 127. The decision to separate these from the corpus of lyrics in Brown is somewhat arbitrary in that there are others, such as No. 90, which are similar in style to these. As only five of the above are discussed in detail, the selection has no major role to play in the dissertation as a whole. All lyrics discussed hereafter are taken from this edition and are referred to by number and first line.

¹¹ Woolf, English Religious Lyrics, p. 37.

¹² George Kane, Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romances, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman (1951; rpt. London: Methuen & Co., 1970), pp. 147-148.

¹³ See Raymond Oliver, Poems Without Names: The English Lyric 1200-1500 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 117. Oliver maintains that the last line of a lyric has an important summative function. Research has not substantiated this conclusion though the claim is an interesting one in view of the scholastic sententia. See the discussion in Chapter 2 above.

¹⁴ As it stands in this edition the last line makes no sense. In his first edition of the lyrics using the Rawlinson manuscript, Carleton Brown prints "Pat for-lete at my lare." He notes that the same reading which Smithers uses later is employed in the Cotton manuscript. Smithers simply returns to the Cotton reading and does not acknowledge the change or the resultant problem in meaning.

¹⁵ John Donne, "The Canonization," The Poems of John Donne, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (1912; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 14, line 1.

¹⁶ The concept of stasis and kinesis in literature and art is an interesting one. For an excellent discussion of how this concept pertains to situation and character, see Richard P. Adams, Faulkner—Myth and Motion (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 4-12.

¹⁷ R.L. Greene, "Introduction," The Early English Carols, 2nd ed., (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), p. xliii.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. xliii.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. xliii.

²⁰ The folk contribution to medieval literature has been of interest for decades. See E.K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903) and "Some Aspects of Medieval Lyric," Early English Lyrics, ed. Frank Sidgwick and E.K. Chambers (1907; rpt. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1966), pp. 257-296. See also Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1968).

²¹ Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (East Lansing: Michigan State Press, 1952), and Emile Mâle, The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century, trans. from 3rd ed. by Dora Nussey (1913; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 98-130.

²² Stephen Manning, Wisdom and Number (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 31.

²³ Douglas Gray, Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 226.

CHAPTER 5: THE HUMAN CHILD AND DIVINE SON

In his study of 13th century French iconography, Emile Mâle notes a pattern in the artwork which pertains to the Gospels. He states, "All the human, tender or simply picturesque side of the Gospels does not seem to have touched the medieval artist. He evidently did not see in the New Testament the things which appealed to a Veronese or a Rembrandt. Here as elsewhere he was the docile interpreter of the theologian."¹ He does state, however, that the childhood and the events surrounding the crucifixion have been "represented . . . with a wealth of detail."²

In the sense that most lyrics on Christ deal with the passion and the nativity, Mâle's comments are as applicable to the lyric as they are to sculpture. Nevertheless, his perception that the sculptor "as elsewhere . . . was the docile interpreter of the theologian" is certainly not appropriate to the world of the lyricist. The opening stanza of "Als i lay vp-on a nith" (No. 56)³ is a case in point:

Als i lay vp-on a nith
 Alone in my longging,
 Me pouthe i sau a wonder sith,
 A maiden child rokking. (1-4)

Indeed, the nativity scenes in the lyric are often poignant

and moving passages in which the poet tenderly explores the early life of Christ and His relationship to His mother. The simple image of a young mother gently rocking her child exemplifies the human but emotional touch that surrounds the lyricist's portrayal of the life of Christ.

This emotional artistic stance may be the product of two related forces. The one is a general tendency in the Middle Ages; the other a heightening of that tendency by specific currents at work in the society. Johan Huizinga defines the general tendency:

All this general facility of emotions, of tears and spiritual upheavals, must be borne in mind in order to conceive fully how violent and high strung life was at the period [the High Middle Ages].

Public mourning still presented the outward appearance of a general calamity. At the funeral of Charles VII, the people are quite appalled at seeing the cortege of all the court dignitaries "dressed in the deepest mourning which was most pitiful to see; and because of the great sorrow and grief they exhibited for the death of their master, many tears were shed, and lamentations uttered throughout the town."⁴

Huizinga admits that the chronicles on which he relies may be "defective as to material facts,"⁵ and he himself may be guilty of romanticizing the age in this respect. However, that the life of the Middle Ages exhibited a highly emotional quality cannot be doubted.

This general tendency was aided by the religious fervour

of the 12th century. Rosemary Woolf states that this century bequeathed to the later Middle Ages a sense that it was possible to establish a more personal and emotional relationship with God.⁶ The dictum of St. Bernard, for instance, that the individual must seek "a mystical unity of love and a unity of the will"⁷ with the godhead set the stage for a more personalized form of devotion that was to characterize the later Middle Ages.⁸

It is not surprising, then, that the lyricist in attempting to move his audience should turn to the Christ child and the mother-son relationship to explore his themes. More specifically the poet deals again with the sacrifice as it is framed by the holy family. This framework allows him to portray more vividly the nature of the sacrifice in a variety of ways. As in the passion lyrics the vividness and variety are in part the product of the dialectic method. The lyricist succeeds in adding touching human qualities where the sculptor fails.

Several poems in Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century deal with the nativity scene or, as part of the "lullay" sub-type, are closely related to the nativity. Three in particular provide excellent vehicles for discussion.⁹ Though each approaches the subject matter differently, all are bound together by certain similarities as Douglas Gray states:

The best nativity lyrics often express dramatically the relation between mother and her child, which, as in the visual arts, becomes a sort of devotional image separated from the setting in the stable, existing in the timeless present. The artists present the relationship as an intensely human and intimate one. . . . The Christ child already seems rejected by the men he came to save. Joy is deeply mingled with sorrow. The undertone of sorrow in the Nativity scene is intensified because it often is made to look forward prophetically towards the scene of the Crucifixion.¹⁰

In Middle English Literature George Kane who is often critical of the lyric is enthusiastic in his appraisal of the nativity and lullay poems. He states that "they are principally remarkable for their effective exploitation of the principles of selection and emphasis for religious ends. In all, the intention of the poets has evidently been to throw the arresting and spectacular features of their subjects into prominence in order to induce a lively spiritual state."¹¹

Both Gray and Kane, then, see the nativity and lullay poems as being unified by a vivid quality which is designed to affect the reader. Each scholar, however, fails to see that this dramatic quality is a product of medieval dialectic which provides the poet with a method of examining the scene in a number of different ways.

One final note must be added before the poems themselves are analyzed. The lyrics involving Mary and Christ possess a

natural affinity to the dialectic method in that most include some form of dialogue. Christ and Mary often discuss, in a most animated fashion, the sacrifice, its necessity and its relevance to mankind. The discussions are made livelier by the poet's use of this dialectic method.

"Als i lay vp-on a nith" (No. 56) begins in a tone of gentle recrimination in which Christ kindly upbraids His mother who "wolde with-outen song/Hire child o slepe bringge" (5-6). Mary replies that she would indeed sing, but doesn't know what to sing about. She asks, "Wer-offe suld i singge?" (22), a type of quaestio which begins the debate.

Not only is the debate between mother and child, it is also between omniscience and innocence. Mary admits that she knows nothing of her son's future. She states, "Wist i neuere 3et more of þe/But gabrieles gretingge" (23-24). She simply proceeds with her song of the past. Her song ends at the nativity.

At this point the Christ child, singing from a position of omniscience, attempts to "lere" (62) Mary about the future. Christ's song continues in a slow, even tone. References to the circumcision (67) and to His desire to help His parents (81-84) add a note of familial simplicity to the poem.

Despite ominous signs such as "I mot be-ginne to fille/Werfore i am hidre sent" (86-87), the song goes on

in the same way. It is obvious from Mary's lack of reaction that she does not yet know of the trials her son must endure. Her innocence is finally emphasized when she joyfully admits:

'No sorwe sulde me dere,
Miht i 3et þat day se
a king þat þu were.' (106-108)

However, this statement is juxtaposed to the clearest statements Christ makes about the tribulations they will both suffer because of His future role:

þe sarpe swerde of simeon
Perse sal þin herte,
For my care of michil won
Sore þe sal smerte. (117-120)

Mary's reaction is swift and expected. Failing to understand the significance of the sacrifice which her son has just indicated to her she replies only, "Worto sal i biden þat day/To beren þe to þis wo?" (127-128)..

This is the climax of the poem. The innocence of Mary and the omniscience of the Christ child have united at this point. Christ goes on to recreate for Mary the divine plan which will follow His death. But it is the pained, startled reply of the human mother that dominates the remainder of the poem.

In Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric

Sarah Appleton Weber sees the poem as a series of movements, alternating between sorrow and joy. Referring to the symbolic overtones of the final five stanzas she states,

"The sorrow of the passion on Good Friday will be succeeded by the rejoicing at the resurrection on Easter. This in turn will be succeeded by the joyous time of Ascension and Pentecost, and the triumphant summer season of feasts, which includes the celebration of Mary's Assumption, and whose liturgy prefigures the joy of the Heavenly Jerusalem, to be established by the second coming of Christ and the resurrection and final judgement of mankind."¹² It is clear from the poem, however, that the final stanzas which do, indeed, point to a more joyous future, cannot overcome the sorrow of Mary. This sorrow is the dominant impression left on the audience and, as will be seen later, upon the narrator as well.

As the poem opens, the narrator finds himself in a state of "longing" (2), reminiscent of Chaucer's Man in Black in The Book of the Duchess. The poem ends with the narrator in the same state, indicating once again that Weber's contention that the final mood is joyous is clearly incorrect. The narrator has not moved from his emotional stance. The reasons for such a state are again to be found in the dialectical structure of the poem, and the reaction such a structure elicits from the audience.

As stated above, Mary and Christ are juxtaposed as symbols of innocence and omniscience. In between, to use an analogy from the scholastic debate, are the judges—the audience and the narrator. Both the audience and the

narrator are acutely aware of the impending sacrifice of Mary's son; she is not. Because of the audience's knowledge of the future, the simple, unassuming "maiden child" (4) becomes the object of pity as that audience watches Mary become painfully aware of the role her son is to play in the scheme of salvation. The "longging" of the poet, and that of the audience, is a response directed by the juxtaposition of the innocent Mary to an all-knowing Christ. Mary is pitied for what she does not know.

Finally, when Mary is told of the meaning of the sacrifice by the accepting Christ, the audience, like the longing narrator, is induced to pity the "maiden child" for what she now knows. But, unlike her son, she does not understand or accept. Even as she moves from a state of innocence to knowledge, the degree of that knowledge, limited as it appears to be beside her omniscient son, gives neither her nor the audience an opportunity to move away from a state of "longging." The dialectic method has aided the poet in inducing the audience to respond to Mary's predicament as the human mother herself pities her divine son.

In "Lullay, lullay, litel child" (No. 59) the poet presents a very different picture of the Christ child from the one seen in the above poem. Replacing the all-knowing divine instrument of "Als i lay vp-on a nith" is a human

child in need of comfort now and in the future. As Kane points out such poems that deal with Christ as a human child "make much of his vulnerability, of the mean circumstances of his birth, and they insist upon these points until the reader must in the end respond by seeing in his imagination a divinity shivering in a shed like an unwanted brat."¹³ But the poet's portrait is equally effective due to artistically contrasted structural elements.

For purposes of discussion these elements can be divided into the general and the specific. The overriding contrasting element in the poem is that between the innocent and apparently helpless weeping child and the sinful, experienced man or woman who tries to comfort him. The irony of this contrast is at once evident in that it is the child who must aid the man, in symbolic terms the direct opposite of what is to be expected from the literal situation. The child that has now become "meke & mild" (3), is told, "For man þat þu hast ay loued so/3et saltu suffren peines mo" (21-22).

The basic contrast is supported by placing the weeping child into the context of individual sin and human history. In the second stanza the narrator stresses the personal relationship when he acknowledges that the child must suffer "for my senne" (5). He then moves quickly to locate his own sinfulness in a broader framework:

A3enis my fadris wille i ches
An appel with a reuful res;

Werfore myn heritage i les,
 & nou pu wepist per-fore. (9-12)

It is significant that only two lines of this poem deal with the actual physical pain Christ will suffer (22-23). The reason for this appears to be that the poet has chosen to emphasize the theological rather than the physical burden. It falls to this "litel ping" (17) to save all mankind.

The general contrast is aided by the use of more localized contrasting elements, particularly in the first, fifth and seventh stanzas. Christ who is "so sterne & wild" (2) must "be-come meke & mild" (3) in order to save mankind. Christ's weeping will ultimately become the source of man's eternal joy (15-16). He is a "litel ping" (17) at the same time as He is "a litel king" (18).

The final stanza explores the nature of pain as the vehicle which unites God and man and destroys evil in the process. The lyricist states:

Pat peine vs make of senne fre,
 Pat peine vs bringge ihesu to pe,
 Pat peine vs helpe ay to fle,
 Pe wikkede fendes lore. Amen (25-28)

Obviously these localized examples are to some extent the product of the nature of the sacrifice, a paradox of death producing life. However, these more localized features coupled with the general contrast emphasize that the poet was acutely aware of the need for artfulness in discussing the divine sacrifice. As Raymond Oliver states

in Poems Without Names, contrast and repetition are common elements in certain lyrics.¹⁴ That the poet in "Lullay, lullay, litel child" was aware of the effect of such devices on the audience is quite clear. The image of a weeping child bearing the burden of the salvation of mankind presented in this poem in historical terms, is a delightful invitation to the audience's emotions.

In "Lullay, lullay litel child, child reste þe a þrowe" (No. 65) the poet investigates the same subject matter as in the above lyric. As in the passion lyrics, the dialectic method permits him to deal with identical material in a unique way. The vulnerability of the weeping child is emphasized again as the narrator addresses him, "Pore & litel art þu mad" (3). But the poet eschews the theological burden for the physical one as he contrasts the latter to this vulnerability.

The physical burden is given two dimensions. The first is the physical pain the baby endures in the present:

Child, it is a weping dale þat þu art comen inne,
 Þi pore clutes it prouen vel, þi bed mad in þe binne;
 Cold & hunger þu must þolen as þu were geten in
 senne, (13-15)

In the simplest sense, the vision of a suffering child is discomfoting. But the reason for the suffering adds to the unpleasantness of the vision. All this is "for loue of al man-kenne" (16). A selfless act is immediately rewarded with pain only.

The second dimension is the physical pain the baby will endure in the future. The description of this is more colourful:

Be anguis þat þu suffren salth sal don þe blod
to suete;

Naked, bunden saltu ben, & seipen sore beten,

No þing fre vp-on þi bodi of þine sal be lete. (20-22)

The present discomfort is only to be replaced by a harsher reality in the future.

Unlike the poet of "Lullay, lullay, litel child" the poet in this lyric does not explore the material using the localized allusions noted in the discussion of the former. Other than the reference to the "litel grom, king of alle þingge" (7) the poem is free of those quasi-metaphysical conceits noted above. This may be a product of the more graphic contrast in the second of these two poems. Measuring the child's innocence and vulnerability against a physical burden rather than a theological one apparently had a more obvious appeal to an era as overtly emotional as the Middle Ages. There was no need to strengthen the basic contrast. It was all that was needed.

Those poems which deal with Mary at the foot of the cross have been the subject of much critical comment with varying opinions on their effectiveness. George Kane in Middle English Literature admits that the dialogue between Christ and Mary at the foot of the cross is a potentially

successful form of affective poetry, but thinks little of the extant specimens of this type. He states:

In the surviving specimens the dialogue treatment is the less successful; it tends to diffuseness and clumsy handling or else, by the obviousness of its standard answers to the customary rhetorical questions of her lamentations, distracts attention from what seems the most striking feature of the situation, namely Mary's emotion as a human mother face to face with her suffering son. The dialogue treatment is the easy way of showing how an incarnate God and His mother are victims of the conflict between divine and human purposes . . . [but] the effect of this dialogue is weak and diluted compared with those which concentrate on her bewildered grief and leave to the reader some effort of understanding.¹⁵

Sarah Appleton Weber in Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric, on the other hand, sees the dialogue form as a potentially effective format which has been well developed. Because of such a form, "mankind is engaged and caught up as the object of the love expressed in the debate of the poem."¹⁶ Weber's observations are quite accurate, but her analyses of the two poems do not go far enough.¹⁷

In "Maiden & moder, cum & se" (No. 67) the poet introduces three people into the lyrics. It is evident that the speaker in the first stanza is not Christ for he refers constantly to Him in the third person. The function

of this speaker is to present the audience with a clear picture of the dramatic situation before the poem investigates two strikingly opposed responses to the crucifixion.

In the first stanza every effort is made to paint an effective visual image of the crucifixion:

Al abouten he is to-toren,
his heued is wrepen with a born,
his sides bopen on blode be,
with blod he's blent, he may nouth se. (5-8)

At this point the speaker withdraws completely. Having described the physical reality of the crucifixion, he allows Mary and Christ to discuss its significance. Their discussion follows from Mary's quaestio, "Wat hast þu don, qui art þu here?" (10). As is to be expected from the dialectic method, the responses are totally different, and carefully drawn to accentuate each other.

Mary's response is a purely human one. As a grieving mother, she phrases her reaction in the most personal terms:

Pi suete bodi þat in me rest,
þat loueli mouth þat i haue kist,—
Nou is on rode mad pi nest. (11-13)

Mary then disappears from the poem, leaving her son to make his explanation.

The speech which follows is, in one sense, dramatically opposed to the personal response of Mary, and at the same time, reflective of the dual nature of Christ. With the exception of the first two lines of this speech, Christ responds as a central figure in the divine plan. Though He

does refer to the physical realities of the crucifixion (21-23), the essence of His response is that it is simply a part of the divine order. Because it cannot be seen in human or personal terms, He counsels that He is not to be pitied:

Alone i am with-oten make,
On rode i hange for mannis sake,
Pis gamen alone me must pley3e,
For mannis soule pis det to dey3e. (17-20)

The poet's choice of the words "gamen" and "pley3e" is significant in that it underlines the fact that the sacrifice is part of an almost ritualistic plan, the parts of which are not as important as the whole.¹⁸

But there are clearly drawn lines of conflict within the holy family. The human attachment is secondary to the divine commitment. Mary the mother is sorrowful because of Christ the God.

Superimposed upon this dichotomy is the debate within Christ as He attempts to accommodate His dual role to the satisfaction of His grieving mother and the needs of His divine father. This internalized debate is subtle, but still present in the crucified Christ's response. Before explaining in detail the reasons for His sacrifice, He states, "Ion, pis womman for my sake, /Womman, to Ion, I be be-take" (15-16).

The lines are short, simple and touching. Despite the obvious intent of the divine child to explain objectively

the meaning of the sacrifice, the human son pauses in the midst of the event itself to ensure that Mary will be cared for.

By including these lines in the poem, the poet allows the audience to respond to two participants, Christ and Mary. Just as the audience feels pity for the grieving mother, who sees only the personal dimension, so it feels love and admiration for the representative of divine love and salvation, whose pain does not prevent Him from showing, for one moment, tender personal concern. Thus the central contrast between Mary and Christ is underlined by a more subtle one within the person of Christ. Once again, the dialectic method proves to be a fruitful one in the hands of the lyricist.

In Wisdom and Number Stephen Manning states that "the poets therefore characterize their speakers with intensity rather than depth."¹⁹ Even a cursory reading of "A Sone! tak hede to me whas sone pou was" (No. 128) demonstrates that Manning's observation is most applicable here. In this lyric there is a delicate balance displayed between both participants in the debate, but underlying the balance is that emotional intensity of which Manning speaks.

Mary demands that she be nailed to the cross instead of her son (1-3) so that the latter may go free. Because of the crucifixion she is in "gret care & endeles wo" (4).

This demand raises in Christ an equally strong emotion. He counsels her to "wep no more" (7). He openly admits that her sorrowing causes Him much grief, in spite of the pain of crucifixion. As He states, "stynt now, modir, & wep no more;/pi sorowe & desseise greuyp me ful sore" (7-8).

Each participant, then, shows a tender concern for the other. The result is that each elicits from the audience the same emotional response—pity. Pity is aroused because of the predicament itself and because of the reaction of each participant to that predicament.

The emotional intensity of the two is again placed in the context of the scheme of salvation. Mary has no part to play in this scheme though, as will be seen in the next chapter, she is often given a prominent role in that scheme. Christ, on the other hand, is clearly aware of His role. However, whereas in "Maiden & moder, cum & see" Christ's response is quite doctrinaire, His acknowledgement of His role here is much more loving and tender:

Be now glad, moder, & haue in pi boughte,
bat manys hele is founde, bat i haue sou3t.

(11-12)

There is an exaltation at this triumph that is transferred from the emotional intensity displayed towards His mother. Christ's all-encompassing love moves from a specific to a general orientation.

Within the framework of this equalized intensity the ends of both characters' emotional commitment are studied. Though Mary is to be pitied in her grief, the emotional commitment she makes pales when compared to that of her son. The audience is induced to respond to Christ as the suffering son, grieving for His mother's pain. But to this initial response is added love at the realization that He alone rises above the personal to show greater love to mankind. The degree of greatness is clarified by the subtle comparison to Mary's more personal response.

As in the passion lyrics scholastic dialectic has provided the lyricists with a variety of methods through which to explore the paradoxical nature of the human and divine son, and his relationship to his mother. It also permits them to display the subtleties of that relationship in clearer focus. As will be seen in the next chapter, the scholastic method is no less effective in exploring the nature and role of Mary.

Notes to Chapter 5

¹ Emile Mâle, The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century, trans. from 3rd ed. by Dora Nussey (1913; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 177.

² Ibid., p. 177.

³ Carleton Brown, ed., Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, rev. G. V. Smithers, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 70-75. All lyrics discussed hereafter are taken from this edition and are referred to by number and first line.

⁴ Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924; rpt. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 14.

⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶ Rosemary Woolf, "The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature," Review of English Studies, 13 (1962), 1.

⁷ David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962), p. 148.

⁸ See David L. Jeffrey, The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), Chapter 1.

⁹ Reference here is made to No.'s 56, 59, and 65.

¹⁰ Douglas Gray, Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 110-119.

- 11 George Kane, Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romances, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman (1951; rpt. London: Methuen and Co., 1970), p. 143.
- 12 Sarah Appleton Weber, Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric: A Study of Sacred History and Aesthetic Form (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), p. 86.
- 13 George Kane, Middle English Literature, p. 143.
- 14 See Raymond Oliver, Poems Without Names: The English Lyric 1200-1500 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 103-123.
- 15 Kane, Middle English Literature, p. 148.
- 16 Sarah Appleton Weber, Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric, p. 145.
- 17 In attempting to find echoes of the liturgy in the poems, Weber often fails to appreciate the dramatic aspects of the individual poems. Her analysis of the Mary-Christ debate poems is a case in point. ✕
- 18 The notion of the scheme of salvation as game is explored in V. A. Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966).
- 19 Stephen Manning, Wisdom and Number (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 47.

CHAPTER 6: Mother, Maiden and Queen

The cult of the Virgin which grew up in the twelfth century developed in the thirteenth. The bells of Christendom began to ring the angelus, the Office of the Virgin was recited daily, and the finest cathedrals arose under her patronage. Christian thought, meditating through the centuries on the mystery of a virgin chosen of God, anticipated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and as early as the twelfth century the mystical church of Lyons celebrated that festival. The monks ever thinking of the Virgin in their solitude extolled her perfections, and more than one of them deserved the title of Doctor Marianus, which was given to Duns Scotus. The new orders, Franciscans and Dominicans, true knights of the Virgin, spread her cult among the people.¹

Emile Mâle's ringing statement in The Gothic Image accurately reflects the sway the image of the Virgin Mary held over the minds of the artists of twelfth-and thirteenth-century France. Her face, the apocryphal stories surrounding her birth and early life were as familiar to the people of the Middle Ages as were those of Christ.

This familiarity was not only peculiar to late medieval France. Indeed, as Rosemary Woolf states, England had long been a centre of mariolatry. "By the 13th century England had had quite a long history of Marian piety, and in fact this country had been one of the chief originators in Western Europe of many of its forms: thus

by the time of the earliest lyrics, devotion to Mary was firmly established in many learned, liturgical and public ways."²

It is not surprising, therefore, that lyrics to the Virgin should increase in number in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when, as Woolf says, this interest in the mother of God was fused with an adequate mode of expression stemming from secular models.³ At the same time, such lyrics often achieved a degree of perfection not found in lyrics on other themes, as exemplified by "I sing of a myden," generally recognized as the flower of medieval religious lyric poetry.⁴

Like the lyrics which deal with Christ and Mary, those lyrics dealing with the Virgin proved fruitful ground for affective and effective poetry. Though many of these lyrics degenerate into rather simplistic sentimentality, a significant number display an artfulness not found in lyrics dealing with other subject matter.

This artfulness may be the product of necessity. The concepts of a virgin mother and the mild but powerful intercessor dominate many of the lyrics on Mary. So pervasive is the influence of these two paradoxes that the lyricists, seeking to express thought and feeling effectively, must have felt obliged to find new ways of expressing old ideas. In Image and Abstraction W. E. Rogers identifies this problem and offers one solution:

Just as the images of the medieval lyric are rarely original, so the dogmatic content (to the extent that it is separable from the poem), is predetermined. But imagery itself . . . necessarily possesses abstract content, and for

each image the possible directions of its abstract content may be regarded as theoretically infinite.

The expression of imaginative insight would then become a matter of controlling the abstract direction of a purely traditional image in such a way that the dogmatic truth, focused through the poet's insight, may be fastened to the image in a unique way. Instead of mysteriously choosing for comparison two abstractions out of a multitude, the imagination would realize in a single given, a certain abstraction out of a multitude of possibilities.⁵

Roger's conclusions are only partially correct. As will be seen, the Mary lyrics are made more effective through specific patterns in imagery and diction, moreso than those lyrics discussed earlier which rely on highly dramatic situations. But this effectiveness is again a product of the dialectic method which provides the poet with a variety of methods through which to examine Mary and the roles she plays.

In "Poþu wommon bouthe uere" (No.16)⁶ the poet investigates human salvation through an analysis of the two elements which play a quintessential role in whether or not man is to be saved—divine justice and divine mercy. These elements are represented by Christ and Mary respectively, though, as will be seen later, Mary plays the more prominent role.

In the second stanza the poet asks the question, "Who shulde

poenne drede?" (9). Superficially this appears to be a simple rhetorical question. However, an analysis of the stanzas following this line indicates that the poet is anything but certain about his fate. The dialectic technique allows him to enhance his uncertainty and thus affect the audience by arousing two necessary but diametrically opposed reactions.

The dominant motif in the poem is the impending day of judgement:

At pylke day of wrecke
 Boe by py sones trone,
 When sunne shal boen souht
 In werk, in word, in pouht, (38-42)

This day of judgement is made more awesome by the presence of a God of justice who is to preside over the reckoning. In spite of the poet's references to Christ as "my brother" (8) who is "so cunde" (28), the dominant image associated with the God of this lyric is much closer to the old God of the Hebraic tradition. Here He is a "domes-mon" (15) at whose hands mankind may "boe to helle y-pult" (35).

Underlining the judgement day motif is a series of words which are reminiscent of the idiom of Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale." Words such as "y-bounde" (21), "wytnessinge" (25), "chartre" (23), and "bouhte" (30) frame the question of justice in salvation in the language of a legal or commercial contract. The orthodox poet gives the audience the distinct impression that man, left on his own, will renege on his part of the divine-human bargain. "Beheste is dette,"⁷ Chaucer's Man of Laws tells his host. A highly judge-

mental god in this lyric appears to subscribe to that theory.

Juxtaposed to this harsh possibility is Mary, the dominant figure in the poem. Though a divine figure, she is introduced in familial terms, terms which express her intimate relationship with all mankind:

Gret wonder bys was
 Pat on wommon was moder
 To uader and hyre broper —
 So neuer oper nas

Pou my suster and moder (3-7)

Not only is Mary the mother of God, she is also mother and sister to all mankind.

The poet's direct address to Mary and his reference to her son in the third person emphasize that he feels much more comfortable in dealing with Mary. Twice he asks Mary to intercede with her son. "To me boe debonere" (17), he asks first, and later counsels her to "make hym debonere" (47). The most arresting image of Mary as the intercessor comes when the poet places her at the side of Christ on the day of judgement:

When ich mot nede apere
 Vor mine gultes here
 To-uore þe domes-mon,
 Suster, boe þer my uere (43-46)

Mary is developed as a figure of mercy here by what she is not as well. The only quality emphasized in the poet's description of her in her kindness as a nurturing mother. As will be seen later in this chapter, she is often depicted as a warrior akin to Christ the knight. Mary plays no such role here. She is simply the kind mother whose sole task is to ensure that justice is tempered

with mercy.

The dialectical nature of the approach raises two very different emotions on the part of the audience. The readers must, on the one hand, fear the god of judgement. They must examine their consciences on the nature of their lives on earth. On the other hand, the audience is induced to love Mary and the element of mercy she represents. Each reaction is no less important than the other for mankind. Fear may be a constructive force in that man, fearing damnation, turns to the good Christian life. But fear without hope of mercy leads to despair. Piers Plowman reminds us constantly that wanhope is one of the most heinous sins. By using the dialectical structure, the lyricist has succeeded in using fear and love to counterbalance each other.

In Medieval Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition John Speirs says of Mary: "But in the more traditional of the English songs, Mary has more of the older significance, something still of the tree-or-flower goddess or again the spring goddess."⁸ There is always a temptation to associate female figures in literature with fertility myths, and Speirs may be guilty of looking too intently for such associations in Mary, especially as she moves closer and closer to the role of queen in the lyric tradition. Nevertheless, Speirs' comments provide an excellent point of departure from which to discuss Mary as she is portrayed in "Haile be þu, mari maiden bright" (No.31). In this poem, the poet uses Mary to discuss the problem of hope in the face of human despair, an identical problem to the one raised in the earlier lyric.

Brown's title indicates that the poem celebrates Mary's joys.

However, these joys are used as foils to the narrator's emotional state. The difference between Mary and the narrator allows the latter and his audience to progress through three emotional stages, the first two diametrically opposed to each other, and the third a product of this opposition.

The poem begins on a happy note, with the standard invocation to Mary who is here a figure of light. This is followed by the most important line in the poem when the poet announces to Mary, "Pu teche me pe wais right" (2). Following this line is a portrayal of despair and happiness represented by the narrator and Mary respectively.

The first stanza paints a picture of a lonely, isolated figure fearful of damnation for the sins he has committed:

I am a sorful dzeri wight,
als pu mai se
Quer i sal in pe hard pine of hel be. (3-5)

The second stanza reiterates the same theme. Despite the fact that he decides to give himself over to Mary to be guided by her (8-10), he is still burdened by the knowledge of his own sin.

His despair is obvious:

Mi sinful saule sighes sare;
Liued i haue in sin and care, (6-7)

There is a very slight movement within the two stanzas from total despair to a willingness to try, but the overriding portrait is one of lonely and inactive isolation. The desire is there, but the spirit is not.

This lonely, sterile picture is emphasized by the plain,

uninspiring language of the stanza. The narrator is simply "a sorful dreri wight" (3), life is full of "sin and care" (7), with none of the more graphic accounts explaining precisely what these terms mean.

These two stanzas form the first of the three emotional stages in the poem. The narrator's situation is lonely and isolated; the mood is one of despair; the plain language serves to emphasize both of these. In Wordsworth's famous poem on the daffodils, his narrator wanders "lonely as a cloud"⁹ through the English countryside. In "Haile be þu, mari maiden bright" the narrator wanders figuratively through fields of spiritual anxiety.

This feeling of anxiety is in direct contrast to Mary whose joys form the subject matter of the next seven stanzas. From the Annunciation to her own Assumption Mary is the willing agent of her son and father. Unlike the narrator whose anxiety is obvious, Mary's response to her role in the scheme of salvation is one of unswerving obedience in the hope that all is as it must be:

Stil þu stod, ne stint þu noght,
 Þu said til him þe bodword broght,
 'Al his wil it sal be wroght,
 in his ancele' (16-19)

Mary's joys are a product of her own feelings of certainty. Her hope for salvation through Christ never diminishes.

This more hopeful stance, the second of the three emotional stages, is stressed again by the use of more colourful diction. When Gabriel approached Mary she was "in þi bright boure" (11) at

Ephiphany, "Pe king was riche, pe gold was rede, /Pe reclis fel
til his goddhed" (31-32). Finally, in the tenth stanza, the
most colourful images are applied to Mary, whose role as the
epitome of hope is fused with fertility symbols:

Leuedi, for pi ioies fiue,
Pu kid pi might and help vs suith,
Leuedi, mari, moder o liue,
wid flur and fruit,
Rose and leli pu sprede ay wide,
and helpe pi suite. (46-50)

The meditation upon the Virgin's joys, contrasted as they
are with his own anxiety, proves an inspiration to the narrator
and, in all likelihood, his audience. He immediately moves to
a state of hopeful activity:

Pir iois er said als i can sai,
Mi site, mi soru, i cast away,
Nu help me leuedi, wele pu may,
and be mi spere. (56-59)

Not only is the narrator prepared to take a more active role
in his own salvation, but he is now hopeful and confident enough
to reach out to others with his message:

All pat singes pis sang
And all pat liggies in paines strang,
Pu lede paim right par pai ga wrang (61-63)

Thus the narrator has moved from isolated inactive despondency
to an active, almost evangelical state. Like Wordsworth's
narrator, the penitent in the lyric has established communion with
something outside himself. "And then my heart with pleasure fills/
And dances with the daffodils."¹⁰ Our lyricist would concur.

As in the other two states, the poet is careful to underline his meaning with appropriate images. Mary, earlier a flower, now becomes "mi spere" (59) who is able to help him "cast thoru might of þe" (54-55) the "feindes" (52) who "fraistes" (52) mankind. The images are, of course, associated with a battle, a far cry from the earlier emotional state of the narrator, and the earlier language used to describe both him and Mary.

The lyricist has skillfully used the dialectic method. Not only have the narrator and Mary been brought into dramatic contrast, but the opening and closing states of mind of the narrator have been forcefully drawn. Through the short but effective description of despair in the first two stanzas, the hope and exaltation of the succeeding one are clarified.

In "Marye, mayde mylde and fre" (No. 32) the lyricist has a similar theme in mind, in that Mary is again used as a symbol of the means to salvation. However, the poem deals solely with the role of Mary, ignoring the narrator except for the importance the latter places on Mary as his guide. At the same time, however, he uses images similar to those seen in the second and third stages of "Haile be þu, mari maiden bright."

At the end of the poem, the poet asks Mary to "gyf me þy wyssynge" (82). The statement is here used as a conclusion to the poem; it might have been used as a quaestio at the beginning of the poem, with the poet asking, "How can Mary guide me?" The poem is a careful examination, again using the dialectic

method, of two seemingly opposing qualities—humility and fortitude. These are represented at one and the same time by Mary. Both are qualities necessary for salvation. On the one hand the poet defines Mary's fortitude by carefully associating her with a variety of images of power, influence and physical and moral courage. Many of these incidents are taken from Old Testament stories; most are extremely effective.

In the second stanza Mary is depicted as a powerful queen who, almost alone, has saved the world:

Pou art quene of paradys,
Of heuene, of erthe, of al pat hys;
Pou bere pane kynge of blys
Wyp-oute senne and sore;
pou hast y-ry3t pat was amys,
Y-wonne pat was ylore. (7-12)

Added to this are images associated with battle: "Pou ert pe slinge, py sone pe ston, / Pat dauy slange goly op-on" (25-26), divine authority: "Pou ert pe 3erd al of aaron" (27), spiritual and economic power: "Pou ert pe temple salomon," (31) and pure physical strength: "Pou ert pe gate so stronge so stel" (51).

To these images is added the most detailed association of this type in the poem, Mary's affinity to Judith:

Pou ert Judith, pat fayre wyf,
Pou hast abated al pat stryf;
Olofernes wyp hys knyf
Hys heuede pou hym by-none. (37-40)

Mary is firmly etched in the audience's mind as a powerful figure, almost a warrior goddess—queen whose personal power is

a reminder to all that only the strong man can save himself in the face of the evils of the world. This image of Mary forms one aspect of the "wyssynge" for which the narrator was searching.

The second image is diametrically opposed to this one. Mary is depicted as a woman of gentle humility, a sweet messenger between God and man:

Pou ert þe coluere of noe
 Þat broute þe braunche of olyue tre,
 In tokne þat pays scholde be
Be-tuexte god and manne. (13-16)

She is a "mayde mylde and fre" (1), crystes oþene drury" (23) who has the gentle capacity for softening the righteous anger of Christ:

Ine þe hys god by-come a chyld,
 Ine þe hys wreche by-come myld;
 Þat vnicorn þat was so wyld
 Aleyd hys of a cheaste:
 Pou hast y-tamed and i-styld
 Wyp melke of þy breste. (61-66)

Against the image of the avenging Judith, Mary is likened to the beautiful and innocent Rachael (53-54) and the guiltless, though courageous figure of Esther (43-48).

Mary's gentle humility represents the other side of the "wyssynge" mentioned earlier in the discussion, a humility more emphatic because it is juxtaposed to the fortitude of the other side of her character. Both are accepted Christian values; both are qualities essential to salvation; each is made more obvious to the audience by the presence of the other. The juxtaposition

of humility with fortitude* presents the reader with what Douglas Gray calls a non-metaphysical paradox. "The elements of the paradox are not violently and startlingly together; there is less of a harsh surprise than of gentle wonder."¹¹

A word must be said as well about the poet's constant use of the expressions "þou ert" and "ine þe." The poet skillfully employs these again and again in a manner not unlike the dialecticians. Not only is the audience induced to love Mary for her humility and respect her for her fortitude, but it is also forced by the accumulation of evidence which follows these expressions to acquiesce in the poet's viewpoint much in the way that a participant is defeated under the stress of superior evidence in a scholastic debate. When Raymond Oliver in Poems Without Names states that "there are occasional poems which seem to reflect the question—and-answer method of the schools,"¹² he might well have been referring to this particular poem.

In "Heile! sterne on þe se so bright" (No.45) the poet investigates Mary's role as intercessor. As in the lyrics discussed above, this investigation is accomplished through the assignment to Mary of two roles—Mary as warrior³, and Mary as mother. Unlike the other lyrics, however, these roles are only subtly contrasted. With reference to Mary as warrior we are merely told she is "maiden made of miht"⁽³⁾ who has the power to "vnles bandes of sinful kinde" (9).

Conversely, she is also a gentle mother figure who is at once mother to mankind and to Christ. This is illustrated in the fourth stanza:

Show þe for modir als tou is,
 Oure preiere take þe þorou þi blis;
 He þat for vs and for oure mis
 be-come þi sone, þou moder his. (13-16)

The poet makes no attempt to expand these roles more fully. They are there for the audience to see and hear only as a general concern.

The use of the dialectic method is more intricately woven into the fabric of the poem than by simple role association. Underlining Mary's dual personality, as it were, is a series of statements which come as close to metaphysical conceits as one can expect in affective lyrics of this type. Mary is "maiden made of miht" (3) who conquers through gentleness. "In pais þou put vs out of paine" (7), the poet says. Though she is "onely maiden and no mo" (17), she also has great power because, "oure iuels put þou alle bi-hinde" (11).

Certainly these paradoxes differ in degree of intellectuality from those associated with 17th century metaphysical poetry. However, that they are paradoxes, one cannot deny. Rosemary Woolf's statement in The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages that "allied to the neglect of typology is the omission of the paradoxes"¹³ is difficult to substantiate in view of this evidence. It would appear that, in this particular lyric where the poet has juxtaposed two conflicting roles of Mary almost in passing, the use of inter and intra line contrast in the form of paradox serves his purpose nicely. Once again the audience is asked to love Mary for her motherly mercy, and respect her for the power she possesses in herself, and by virtue of her

particular association with her son.

In "Why haue 3e no reuthe on my child?" (No. 60) the lyricist moves away from juxtaposing imagery patterns to the highly dramatic situations of the crucifixion and Mary-Christ lyrics discussed in the two previous chapters. This short but effective poem places Mary again at the foot of the cross addressing the Jews who have just crucified her son. The contrast is between Mary, here the embodiment of love and selflessness, and the treacherous Jews who have shown no love for the dying Christ, and less for this sorrowing mother. In the opening two lines Mary appeals to them on both counts when she says, "Why haue 3e no reuthe on my child?/Haue reuthe on me ful of murning" (1-2). Having reprimanded them for their treachery, she then presents herself in the role of the selfless mother who would rather suffer herself than see her son in pain. "Taket down on rode my derworpi child,/Or prek me on rode with my derling" (3-4).

In the final stanza the poet elaborates on her tragedy. Her own suffering will continue after the death of Christ for she will be burdened with sorrow and shame:

More pine ne may me ben don

Pan laten me liuen in sorwe & schame; (5-6)

In response to Mary's appeal, the selflessness of which is heightened by the contrast to the muted Jews, the reader is forced to love and grieve at the same time—grieve for her sorrow and love for her mercy and compassion. Though the poem is simple and almost prosaic in its form, the effect it has on the audience

is deep and lasting.¹⁴

As is the case of the lyrics discussed in the previous two chapters, then, the Mary lyrics give firm evidence that the dialectic method played a prominent role in the poet's organization of his material, and in the effect it had on the audience. At the same time, the variety of images applied to Mary, and the differences in the use of those images, bears testimony to the contention that the method of the philosophers and theologians of the 14th century gave the poets significant range for variety within the confines of common, one might even suggest overused, material.

Notes to Chapter 6

¹ Emile Male, The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century, trans. from 3rd ed. by Dora Nussey (1913; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 232.

² Rosemary Woolf, The English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 114.

³ Ibid., p. 114.

⁴ There are a great many studies praising this particular lyric. Among the most informative are Stephen Manning, "I Syng of a Myden," PMLA, 75 (1960), 8-12 and Sarah Appleton Weber, Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), pp. 55-60.

⁵ William Elford Rogers, Image and Abstraction: Six Middle English Religious Lyrics (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1972), pp. 18-19.

⁶ Carleton Brown, ed., Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, rev. G. V. Smithers, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 18-20. Mary is also the subject in No.'s 11, 17, 26, 31, 32, 33, 41, 45, 111, 112, and 122. All lyrics discussed hereafter are taken from this edition and are referred to by number and first line.

⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, "Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale," The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 62, line 41.

⁸ John Speirs, Medieval Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 66.

⁹ William Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," William Wordsworth: The Prelude, Selected Poems and Sonnets, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), p. 143, line 1.

- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 143, line 24.
- ¹¹ Douglas Gray, Themes and Images in the Middle English Religious Lyric (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 103-104.
- ¹² Raymond Oliver, Poems Without Names; The English Lyric 1200-1500 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 116.
- ¹³ Woolf, The English Religious Lyrics, p. 130.
- ¹⁴ Sarah Appleton Weber in Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric cites the Lamentatio St. Bernardi as the source for the poem. Though she acknowledges that the poet "has organized the poem in a series of oppositions," she again emphasizes the theological rather than the human dimension of the poem. Her focus on the former rather than the latter takes away from the poem's more simple dramatic qualities. See her detailed discussion on the poem on pp. 110-121.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

. . . I became aware of the old island here that once flowered for Dutch sailors' eyes-- a fresh green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.¹

Combining the prose of F. S. Fitzgerald with the medieval religious lyric seems at best an ill-contrived union, and one is indeed justified in wondering what the urbane American novelist has to do with the medieval lyricist. Yet, separated as they are by six hundred years, the former is most useful for understanding the latter.

Like the sailors in The Great Gatsby the lyricist too was faced with "something commensurate to his capacity for wonder." This was nothing less than the whole body of religious commonplaces that formed the medieval Christian tradition. As a poet interested primarily in arousing the emotions of his audience he had to confront the problem of organizing and presenting those commonplaces in such a way as to maximize their effect on that audience.

For some, the solution to the problem came in the form of scholastic dialectic, a method of thought associated

with the universities of medieval Europe. In the hands of its early practitioners such as Abelard, scholastic dialectic showed itself to be a system whereby contradictions and opposing statements were juxtaposed to arouse a reader or listener to become inquisitive, to seek the truth, to understand. In the hands of the later scholastics like Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham, the method of juxtaposing opposites became "dialectically organic"² with all arguments—pro and contra—carefully set out "with the purpose of leading the mind to the knottiest part of the problem."³ Whether in its early or later phases, scholasticism remained a system of thought designed to arouse and engage the intellect.

Though not necessarily a direct influence on the lyricist, scholastic dialectic as an organizational principle entered the world of lyric poetry through the pervasive influence of the Franciscan friars who as scholars, preachers and poets, applied a method learned or assimilated from the schools to the world of lyric poetry. This process would certainly have been aided by the example of debate literature which continued to flourish in the fourteenth century.

In the hands of the lyricist, scholastic dialectic proved to be a most useful and adaptable tool. By juxtaposing contradictory images, situations and characters, the lyricist was able to emphasize more fully those aspects of the content of the poem which would be best suited to arouse his audience.

At the same time scholastic dialectic furnished the poet with a variety of approaches to his subject matter. By carefully developing opposites, the lyricist could more strikingly portray Christ or Mary as figures to be loved, pitied, admired or feared all within the confines of the same material. The method of the schools became a most effective literary device.

To these conclusions two additional notes of caution must be added. The association of the medieval religious lyric with the intellectual traditions of the Middle Ages must in no way be construed as an attempt to divorce the lyric from its highly emotional roots and affective purposes. In other terms of reference, it is closer to the medieval pulpit than to the salons of the 17th century metaphysical poets. But the inability to see in the medieval religious lyric the traces of the intellectual and academic heritage of the period of its creation results in a failure to appreciate the art of the poetry. To the feeling of the poem was added the form of philosophy and theology. The success of those lyrics examined above in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 is a product of combination, not separation. Again like Fitzgerald's sailors, the medieval lyricist was "compelled into an aesthetic contemplation." The creation that was the product of this contemplation, like its age, reflected a synthesis of thought and feeling.

Nor should the relationship between the religious lyric and the method of the schoolmen be considered a source study. As indicated in Chapter 3, there are some very real possibilities for the movement of the scholastic method into the world of the lyricist, but a direct relationship has yet to be proved. But, Erwin Panofsky states in Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism, "mental habits are at work in all and every civilization."⁴ As demonstrated, the "mental habit" of juxtaposing opposites, forged in the schools of medieval Europe, found its way into the writings of some medieval lyricists. The form of their poetry, and the resultant quality of its emotional appeal bear witness to it.

Notes to Chapter 7

- ¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 227.
- ² H. O. Taylor, The Medieval Mind, 4th ed. (1925; rpt. London: MacMillan and Co., 1938), II, 337.
- ³ M.-D. Chenü, Towards Understanding Saint Thomas, trans. A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), p. 94.
- ⁴ Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (1957; rpt. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1968), p. 21.

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Thesis Abstract

The religious lyrics of the Middle Ages have long been recognized as a form of literature designed to arouse an audience through an emotional appeal. As such, these lyrics have been studied and examined in the context of medieval devotional, meditative and penitential practices. However, scholars have conspicuously avoided a study of the relationship of these lyrics to the intellectual traditions of the age.

The intellectual and academic activities of the later Middle Ages were centered at the universities where the schoolmen employed, after the 12th century, a form of thought and writing now known as scholastic dialectic. This dialectic, based ultimately upon Aristotelian logic, remained a constant feature of university education and scholarship from the 12th to the 14th century. It enshrined argument and debate as a way of arriving at truth.

This method of thought may have been transmitted to the world of the lyricist through the Franciscans in their roles as scholars, preachers and lyric poets. The transmission may also have been aided by the presence of a vital tradition of debate poetry which may have served as a literary example for the lyricist.

An analysis of a cross-section of the religious lyrics indicates that some lyricists may, indeed, have employed

scholastic dialectic in their poems. First as an organizational principle and next as a method through which the material was given a more emotional impact, the method of the schoolmen provided the lyricist with a useful and creative tool to write affective poetry.