BIBLICAL ALLEGORY
IN THE POEMS OF THE MS. COTTON NERO A.X.4

THE THEMATIC USE OF BIBLICAL ALLEGORY IN THE POEMS OF THE MS. COTTON NERO A.X.4

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the Biblical elements used by the Gawain-poet to create thematic and allegorical meaning in the Middle English poems Cleanness, Patience, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The study is designed, first, to discover how Biblical paraphrase and Scriptural allusion are used in each poem to suggest certain moral themes, and, secondly, to indicate the poet's development of allegorical theme as his writing moves from the homiletic to the romantic genre. The interpretations of the poems as such are based upon the exegetical commentary and theological symbolism traditionally associated with Biblical material according to medieval scholarship. As the progression is made from the homilies to Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight there is also interpretative emphasis upon the poet's stylized adaptation of certain recurrent Biblical images.

Chapter I deals with the less sophisticated homily, Cleanness, showing how a vocabulary for dealing with Biblical material is developed and, particularly, how the Gawain-poet endeavors to associate abstract moral concepts with the social values familiar to his contemporary audience. The second homily, Patience, is dealt with in Chapter II, wherein it is shown that the poet's elaboration upon the allegorical meaning of his source material results in a dramatically ironic vehicle for the treatment of a moral theme. Chapters III and IV are devoted to Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight respectively. It

will be seen that the methods used to develop imagery and irony in Patience and Cleanness are present in these two nonhomiletic poems and that an allegorical interpretation is necessary for full understanding of the dream-vision and the romance.

This thesis takes the approach that it is possible to discuss the four poems as correlated parts of a canon and that they represent a series of progressively sophisticated approaches to certain thematic concepts.

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INTRODUCTION

The unique Cotton Nero A. x. 4 manuscript contains four alliterative poems composed in Middle English and accompanied by several illustrations. Discovered bound between two Latin manuscripts, the poems stood untitled and of unknown authorship. They have come to be known as Pearl, Cleanness (sometimes Purity), Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by modern scholars and are categorized respectively as a dream-vision, two homilies and a chivalric romance.

The scribe's handwriting and the execution of the illustrations date the manuscript at approximately 1400.[1] Studies of the poems themselves reveal the likelihood that they were composed during the last half of the fourteenth century, for they are representative in language and style of the Alliterative Revival, a literary school of that period. Linguistic studies have assigned the poems to a West Midland dialect.

Though there existed, at one time, some hesitation in ascribing all four poems to one author, comparisons of the poems in terms of vocabulary, phraseology and metrical style indicate the possibility of common authorship. Detailed analyses such as J.P. Oakden's dialectal and metrical survey[2] were undertaken to investigate the possibility and it was more or less proven in linguistic terms that the poems were written by one author. The additional evidence of similarities in style, imagery, narrative skill and theme have made the theory of common authorship unquestionable.

Unfortunately, the talented author has never been satisfactorily identified. For convenience's sake he is referred to as the Gawain-poet after the most popular of the four poems.

The poems can be found together and separately in numerous editions and translations. This thesis refers mainly to Robert J. Menner's edition of Cleanness (Purity, New Haven, Conn., 1920), J.J. Anderson's edition of Patience (Manchester, 1969), Sir Israel Gollancz' edition of Pearl (London, 1921), and the edition of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by Gollancz, Mabel Day and Mary S. Serjeantson (London, 1957), with occasional reference to A.C. Cawley's Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (London, 1962).

The four poems are rarely studied from the point of view that they represent an artistic canon and that certain aspects of imagery and theme are common to all. The subject of this thesis presents itself since in each poem the poet makes extensive use of Biblical elements as structural and symbolic devices and since in several instances the allegorical symbolism of a particular Biblical passage used in one poem is used again in another. The appearance of similar conceits in generically dissimilar poems is significant since it suggests certain thematic trends which may have bearing on any interpretational appraisal of the individual works. A retrospective comparison of possible thematic trends is, in turn, important, since controversy over the interpretation of the two more

famous poems, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, exists in modern criticism.

In this thesis it will be shown that the Gawain-poet's handling of the homiletic genre has direct influence upon the handling of theme in the dream-vision, Pearl, and in the romance, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. That is, it can be seen that the convention of employing Biblical exempla in a homily is used to particular effect by the Gawain-poet in Cleanness and Patience, and that the structural basis and even certain imagery used to achieve these effects in the sermons reoccur in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The progression can be traced from Cleanness, which, because of its elementary nature, will be looked at first, through to Patience and Pearl and finally to Sir Gawain. As the emphasis shifts away from homiletic to secular subject matter the use of Biblical allegory becomes necessarily more subtle, yet, ultimately, it is as necessary to recognize the use of traditional Biblical interpretation in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight as in Cleanness.

Some aspects of the approach of this thesis to allegory in the Gawain-poet's works are based upon D.W. Robertson's argument for the interpretation of medieval literature in A Preface to Chaucer.[3] Robertson points out that the Bible was important not only as a source of symbols and images for the medieval poet but also as the ultimate authority for allegorizing poetic concepts. According to medieval philosophy,

the literal level of scriptural narrative cloaks the sententia, or spiritually meaningful level, of divine revelation. Consequently, a poet of the devoutly Christian Middle Ages would imitate this literary model by suggesting an allegorical "sentence" within the literal drama of his own poetry. In so doing he would also often make use of what were established by patristic exegetes as the Bible's philosophical themes. Among the most important of these is the concept of the human duality of body and spirit, which developed out of the Church Fathers' metaphorical distinctions between the old Testament and the New. In the Epistles, St. Paul established that the truth of the Old Testament, or "Law", could be understood only through appreciation of the Gospels, or the Testament of "Grace": "Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed" (2 Cor. 3. 15-16). The distinction in understanding made possible by the advent of Christ extends itself to comparisons of the human preoccupations with life and death, sin and virtue, spirituality and carnality, and so on. In a moral context, these dualities are subsumed under the categories of caritas and cupiditas, or, spiritual and carnal understanding. The goal of the Christian novus homo, or "new man", as St. Paul defines him, is to have spiritual understanding of Christ's teachings, which will enable him to live virtuously on earth and to be, after death, reborn in spirit in the kingdom of heaven. In contrast, the possibility of eternal life is not

available to anyone who persists in vice and carnality and whose lack of spiritual understanding therefore characterizes him as an "old man" or vetus homo. The various applications of this specific theme are particularly important to the interpretation of allegorical "sentence" in Cleanness, Patience, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight since each poem demonstrates to some extent a concern with the attainment of spiritual life after death.

As well as establishing general thematic interpretations of the Bible, patristic exegesis also provided allegorical analysis of specific Biblical passages. Traditionally, there are three allegorical levels beyond the literal level of scriptural narrative, and one or more can be present in any given passage. The strictly allegorical level of a passage refers to the establishment of the Christian Church, the tropological level of meaning refers to Christian behaviour, and the anagogical level refers to the soul's eternal life. A medieval poet and his audience would be familiar with this system of analysis and also with its specific application to certain Biblical passages. Thus, in a literary context, a poet could link several Biblical passages in such a way that they would illustrate a single moral truth. This approach is used by the Gawain-poet in his homilies and in Pearl, wherein several Biblical passages are linked on the literal levels of the poems in order to discuss different aspects of one thematic preoccupation. In addition, a poet could depend upon his audience's familiarity with Biblical exegesis to the extent

that the quotation of or allusion to a Biblical passage in a poem might be used to suggest a certain intellectual interpretation of a nonbiblical narrative. In Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight there are many examples of this more subtle use of Biblical allegory as an informing principle. In either case, however, an understanding of the Gawain-poet's use of Biblical quotation is dependent upon consideration of the typical exegetical interpretation of the passage. To that end this study is devoted to a large extent to comparison of the appropriate patristic commentary with the poet's use of particular Biblical material in certain contexts, in the attempt to interpret major themes.

Several interesting parallels emerge upon comparison of the four poems. Immediately apparent is the fact that the Gawain-poet refers his readers almost exclusively to the anagogical level of Biblical allegory whether in quoting individual scriptural passages or in correlating several passages as illustrations of an idea. Secondly, it can be seen that the poet concerns himself with the contrast between carnal and spiritual thinking, not only as it relates to the attainment of Christian ideals, but also as it affects and is affected by social and secular ideals. Finally, it will be shown that the use of Biblical elements becomes, increasingly, a function of the poet's ironic point of view. The contrast of caritas and cupiditas, which is handled straightforwardly in Cleanness, takes on dramatic impact as the poet moves from the homiletic to the romantic genre. This is a significant

consideration in view of the fact that the ironies which exist in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight as a result of the manipulation of Biblical allusion have not been recognized.

This thesis will attempt to compensate for previous critical selectivity in dealing with the allegorical meanings of Cleanness, Patience, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by considering most of the major Biblical elements in the poems and by comparing various aspects of their use. It will be seen that such an analysis is important to the understanding of the poems as individual units as well as representatives of the Gawain-poet's canon.

Notes - Introduction

[1]Robert J. Menner, ed., *Purity* (New Haven, Conn., 1920), Introduction; A.C. Spearing, *The "Gawain"-Poet* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 2; *et al*.

[2]J.P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English*, Vol. I (Manchester, 1930).

[3]D.W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, 1962), Chapter 4.

CHAPTER I

CLEANNESS

In terms of the Gawain-poet's use of Biblical allegory, the homily Cleanness must be considered first, since it represents in many respects a basic approach to the method of allegorizing which the poet will use later with more sophistication. In this sermon many different exempla based upon events of the Old Testament are correlated and are interspersed with related teachings of the New Testament as well as narrative commentary which espouses the Christian point of view. The homiletic point of linking the diverse Biblical passages is to promote the virtue of fleshly purity, and although Cleanness finally manages this, it is done in an expansively digressive manner.

The allegorical relationship of the Biblical exempla and allusions is fairly straightforward. Although the stories are amplified with realistic detail and some characterization of main personalities, the poet paraphrases the plots of the Biblical sources faithfully. That he relies to a large extent upon the traditional exegetical interpretations of the passages is apparent in that points of emphasis in the originals are reproduced in Cleanness without alteration and since the narrator often pauses to refer pointedly to the allegorical meaning typically associated with his material. With the exception of several interesting elaborations, the allegorical theme of Cleanness is fairly static and shows none of the

manipulations of symbols and figuration which make dramatic contributions to Patience, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

However, like the other three poems, Cleanness compares caritas and cupiditas in terms of the anagogic implications of each. The exempla taken from the Old Testament illustrate aspects of cupiditas and demonstrate that God's anger with those who commit the sins of the flesh denies them the privilege of eternal life. This is in keeping with the philosophy of the final separation of the "few" from the "many" expressed in the parables of the kingdom of the New Testament. Similarly, the explicit references to the New Testament in Cleanness describe the virtue of caritas and are designed to contribute to the audience's edification. The theme of Cleanness relies mainly upon the comparisons which result from these basic juxtapositions, and it seems that the Gawain-poet depended upon the drama and graphic realization of his literal narrative to impress his audience with the importance of these thematic comparisons.

The important feature of the allegorical system in Cleanness is related to the graphic realization of the source material which characterizes the sermon. Besides visualizing in detail the many supernatural events of his narrative, the poet also endeavors to recreate scenes of feasting and other social events in such a manner that they are recognizable as imitations of medieval courtly life and are thus consonant

with the experience of his audience. This method of realization consequently affords the poet the opportunity to invest these scenes with characterizations of the social ideals and etiquette familiar to his contemporaries, and in doing so he composes a literal narrative which is consistent in atmosphere with the allegorical significance of his theme. That is, it can be seen that courtesy and courteous behaviour on the literal level of the narrative are equated with caritas in terms of the exegetical meaning of the passage in question, and that, similarly, discourtesy is associated with cupiditas. The resulting polarizations are such that the audience has access to the allegorical interpretations of the Biblical exempla by means of a familiar frame of reference. The importance of this correlation in Cleanness is that it anticipates a similar preoccupation with social and secular ideals in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. That is, in Cleanness the Gawain-poet defines in basic terms his endeavor to relate Biblical truth and theological philosophy to the daily concerns of the medieval Christian. Although the endeavor is much more sophisticated and ultimately has ironic impact in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, its inception can be seen here in Cleanness. Indeed, specific images used in Cleanness to correlate secular and theological ideas are used again by the Gawain-poet in practically unaltered form in the later poems.

Critical consideration of the allegorical "sentence" of Cleanness has concerned itself mainly with trying to define

a single allegorical meaning for "clannesse" which would be consistent with the narrator's explicit division of theme. This is a justifiable concern since the homily's first two main exempla, the Flood and the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, deal with sexual sinfulness, while the closing exemplum, the Fall of Belshazzar, deals with pride and idolatry. In addition, the narrator implies many other meanings for "clannesse" through the inclusion of digressive secondary material and narrative commentary.

He begins by citing the sixth Beatitude, found in Matthew 5.8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He goes on to imply that anyone who "any unclannesse hat3 on"[1] will not be admitted to heaven, thus introducing the anagogical atmosphere that will be maintained throughout the poem. The narrator explains that God's distaste for "unclannesse" is completely understandable,

> For what urþly haþel þat by3 honor haldez
> Wolde lyke if a ladde com lyþerly attyred,
> When he were sette solempnely in a sete ryche,
> Abof dukez on dece, wyth dayntys served? (35-8)

This comparison leads him naturally to the Biblical authority of the parable of the Wedding Feast. He cites Matthew as his source, although actually the story told is a compilation of the version in Matthew 22. 1-14 and the version in Luke 14. 16-24. In Matthew, the story is of a lord who sends his servants to invite guests to the wedding of his son. All those invited decline the invitation, which angers the lord and prompts him to send the servants to invite everyone they can

find anywhere, and to bring the people in until the hall is full. The servants do so and the wedding feast is conducted as though all the guests were actually members of the originally invited nobility. The lord mingles with his guests, treating them as his friends, until he comes upon one who is not appropriately dressed for the occasion. This guest's disrespect angers the lord so greatly that he has him thrown out of the feast and into a dungeon. Cleanness uses this version in its entirety. In Luke, the story focuses on the idea of the originally invited nobility's refusal to attend resulting in people from all walks of life becoming the lord's guests. Though Luke's version does not mention the filthy wedding guest, it does provide the Gawain-poet with the specific excuses for refusal given by the nobility, and these are woven into the narration of Cleanness in the appropriate place.

The parabolic story is followed by a short exegetical interlude wherein the narrator re-emphasizes the divine disfavour incurred by filthiness. According to the narrator, no other sin provokes God to such anger as "fylþe of þe flesch þat foles han used" (202). He cites the grievous sins of Lucifer and Adam as examples where God's punishment was relatively merciful: though exiled to Hell, Lucifer was not destroyed, and though Adam brought death to mankind, Christ was sent as its saviour. This is in keeping with the traditional typological idea that the Virgin and Christ are the New Eve and New Adam, and that the sins of the originals were forgiven in the creation of the latter.

The Flood is described as the first example of human uncleanness being thoroughly and ruthlessly punished. The sin of the antediluvians was the sexual promiscuity which resulted in a breed of "jeauntez wyth her japez ille" (272) who had no respect for God. As punishment all men and beasts, except for Noah's family and the well-known pairs of animals, were destroyed by the Flood. The narrator's source is Genesis, chapters 6, 7 and 8, but the story is elaborated upon extensively in order to focus on the anagogical aspects of the exemplum. Again, the Biblical authority is followed by an exegetical passage. This time the narrator implies the typological tradition of connecting the event of the Flood to the Christian sacrament of Baptism when he mentions the possibility of being washed clean of sin:

> Forþy war þe now, wy3e þat worschyp desyres
> In his comlych corte þat Kyng is of blysse,
> In þe fylþe of þe flesch þat þou be founden never,
> Tyl any water in þe worlde to wasche þe fayly. (545-8).

In this interlude the narrator also quotes Psalm 93 (A.V. 94), 8-9, in reference to covert sin.

The next example of divine wrath visited on filth is the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The narrator includes the long introductory section from Genesis 18 in which Abraham is visited by the Three Angels and learns of God's plan to destroy the two cities. This discursive introduction also contains the Three Angels' prophecy to Abraham that his barren wife will have a son who will become the father of the tribes of Israel. The story continues as in Genesis 19, with the

family of Lot, which showed hospitality to the divine avengers, being saved from the fire and brimstone which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin mainly in question is homosexuality for which the inhabitants of the city are destroyed, but the narrator also emphasizes the disobedience of Lot's wife, who upon turning back to look at the burning cities is transformed into a pillar of salt. The narrator expands on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in an epilogue which uses descriptions of the Dead Sea and the sterile plain surrounding it from the contemporary Mandeville's Travels.

This story is followed by what Menner calls an "exhortation to Purity". In this section the narrator appeals to another fairly contemporary work, Jean de Meun's Romance of the Rose. The narrator advises his audience that just as the Lover in the Romance is told to pay close attention to and learn the likes and dislikes of his beloved in order to obtain her love, so too should the good Christian emulate Christ. The narrator extols Christ's cleanness, describing the purity of the Virgin birth, his ability to cure disease, and, finally, even his clean table manners. The narrator goes on to point out that the ability to emulate Christ is available through penance. His metaphor is the washing of a pearl in wine. Earlier, after describing the Flood, the poet used the typological association of the Flood and the sacrament of Baptism to discuss penance; here, the treatment of the theme of penance implies the sacrament of Holy Communion. The metaphor is a significant one since it is contained in the only section of

Cleanness which approximates a definition of the virtue, instead of the opposite vice, and since it draws together the fundamental Christian ideas of the life of Christ, the meaning of the Crucifixion, penance and the sacrament of Communion.

This discussion of penance leads to a warning from the narrator that a Christian, once cleansed by penance, must never return to sin, for if he does,"þenne þuo Dry3ten dyspleses wyth dedez ful sore,/And entyses hym to tene more trayþly þen euer" (1136-7). God's extreme anger over the loss of anything which has divine sanctification extends far: "þa3 hit be bot a bassyn, a bolle, oþer a scole,/A dysche, oþer a dobler, þat Dry3ten onez served,/To defowle hit ever upon folde fast he forbedes,/So is he scoymus of scaþe þat scylful is ever" (1145-8). With this slight change in thematic direction, the narrator can bring in the story of the fall of Belshazzar whose sin was desecration of holy relics.

The story is introduced by recounting the history of the relics from their creation in Jerusalem to their seizure by Nebuchadnezzar and their ultimate desecration by Belshazzar. Although the narrator cites Daniel as his source, the discursive introduction is more likely based on Jeremiah 52. 1-26. The story provides the narrator with yet another example of divine vengeance, this time as a result of the Hebrews' idolatry. It also provides comparison with the following story, for though Nebuchadnezzar seized the relics he treated them respectfully, and thus never invited God's anger, while Belshazzar treated them blasphemously and ultimately came to a grisly end.

The desecration in question occurred at a feast which, as described by the narrator, featured most of the seven deadly sins as well as the fatal act of using the holy dishes as common serving pieces. This description is faithful to chapter 5 of the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. After the sin has been committed the mysterious handwriting on the wall appears. The divine warning cannot be interpreted by anyone in Belshazzar's court, so the prophet Daniel, who was taken in the Capture of Jerusalem, is called upon. Daniel prophesies the destruction of Belshazzar and Babylon after a few remarks on pride, disobedience and idolatry. The Biblical paraphrase ends with the murder of Belshazzar, as predicted.

Cleanness very abruptly ends as well:

> þus upon þrynne wyses I haf yow þro schewed,
> þat unclannes tocleves in corage dere
> Of þat wynnelych Lorde þat wonyes in heven,
> Entyses hym to be tene, teldes up his wrake;
> Ande clannes is his comfort, and coyntyse he lovyes,
> And þose þat seme arn and swete schyn se his face.
> þat we gon gay in oure gere þat grace he uus sende,
> þat we may serve in his sy3t þer solace never blynnez.
> Amen. (1805-12).

As is often pointed out, the "þrynne wyses" mentioned in this conclusion are not consistent in terms of traditional homiletic form. The narrator begins by condemning the filth of sexual perversion, then later indicates that disobedience, pride, idolatry, drunkenness and lechery are also meant to be thought of as aspects of "fylþe". The virtue of "cleanness" also has many meanings, including the chastity of sexual moderation, the purification of baptism, penance and communion,

the immaculacy of the Virgin, the moral perfection of Christ, the virtuousness of the prophets of the Old Testament, and so on. Some attempts have been made, notably by Charlotte Morse[2] and by T.D. Kelly and John T. Irwin[3], to interrelate the structure of Cleanness and a possible categorical meaning for "clannesse", but, ultimately, the diverse ideas which are suggested by the range of Biblical material frustrate the definition of a consistent structure.

However, in terms of a broad exposition of the moral and theological implications of caritas and cupiditas, Cleanness is very thorough. The actual word "charity" or "caritas" is not used in Cleanness, but it is clearly implied that the subject matter is the Augustinian dualism by the poet's selection of Biblical subject matter and manner of presentation. Furthermore, the poet implicitly relates the allegorical implications of the material discussed to social values which would be immediately comprehensible to his audience. Characters and events which are seen in patristic exegesis as examples of caritas are described in Cleanness in language pertaining to courteous behaviour and courtly grandeur. Similarly, Biblical characters and events which were interpreted by the Fathers as warnings against practicing carnal ways are treated in Cleanness as examples of discourtesy and barbarity. As a result of this kind of characterization, the poet's audience is compelled by the process of identification to appreciate more fully the contrast between charity and cupidity. Courtesy, which shows excellence tangibly in courteous people,

has its spiritual equal in charity, which shows its excellence in the securing of divine favour. In earthly society, courtesy permits people to enter the most worthy social circles and to lead socially constructive lives. In anagogical terms, that is, in terms of eternal life, charity permits men to enter the kingdom of heaven, or, to "see God", as the sixth Beatitude says.

The anagogical theme is introduced by way of Cleanness' first Biblical exemplum. The parable of the Wedding Feast is one of the group of Christ's parables of the kingdom and as such it illustrates, allegorically, the separation of the few blessed who will gain eternal life from the many damned at the Last Judgment. Commentary popularly applied interpreted the Wedding Feast itself as the establishment, in Christ, of the Church. The people who decline the invitation represent the Hebrew race, which denied Christ, while the motley group of guests who do attend represents the Gentile race, which accepted Christianity.

> Quod Dominus dixit, "Simile est regnum coelorum homini regi qui fecit nuptias filio suo"; nuptias dixit Verbum incarnatum, quia in ipso homine suscepto Ecclesia Deo copulata est. Quod dixit, "Tauri mei et altilia occisia sunt": tauros dixit principes plebium; altilia vero, omnia saginata. Quod dixit Dominus, "Ite ad exitus viarum, et quoscumque inveneritis, vocate ad nuptias": viae intelliguntur dogmata gentium; quia ex omnibus illis ad nuptias venerunt, id est, Christo crediderunt. 4

The episode of the wedding guest in the filthy garment being discovered by the host, in Matthew, furnishes another aspect

of the theme of separation. According to Jerome, the garment is allegorically an indication that the guest does not have spiritual understanding of the New Testament:

> Vestis autem nuptialis praecepta sunt Domini, et opera quae complentur ex lege et Evangelio, novique hominis efficiunt vestimentum. Si quis igitur in tempore judicii inventus fuerit sub nomine Christiano non habere vestam nuptialem, hoc est, vestam supercaelestis hominis; sed vestam pollutam, id est, veteris hominis exuvius, hic statim corripitur. 5

Jerome's interpretation of the wedding garment is based on St. Paul's metaphor for the adoption of spiritual philosophy, in Ephesians 4. 22-4:

> Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The implication, in terms of the parable of the Wedding Feast is that, though those who embrace Christianity have a good chance for admission to the heavenly kingdom, they must adopt Christianity spiritually, in other words, practice caritas, in order to make their admission secure. Otherwise, like the guest in the filthy garment at the wedding, they will be exiled to damnation at the Last Judgment. The interpretations of both Jerome and Augustine emphasize the role of caritas in the allegorical idea of separation, for perhaps one of the most fundamental meanings of caritas is spiritual understanding of Christian principles.

This familiar explanation of the parable is fostered in all respects by the narrator of Cleanness. However, the

inferences have added dimension in Cleanness due to the narrator's consistent allegorizing of spiritual philosophy as social courtesy. He introduces his description of the parable by asking his audience if it would tolerate an inappropriately attired guest at one of its own courtly functions (35-38). The question establishes the social superiority of the hypothetical audience and also prepares the listeners in a literal sense for the significance of the parable's allegorical meaning. They are asked to compare their own social requirements with God's spiritual requirements.

Accordingly, the narrator describes the host of the feast, who anagogically is God, as an extremely courteous and genteel person, one whom the audience would find appealing:

> Now inmyddez þe mete þe mayster hym biþo3t,
> þat he wolde se þe semble þat samned was þere,
> And rehayte rekenly þe riche and þe poveren,
> And cherisch hem alle wyth his cher, and chaufen her joye.
> þen he bowez fro his bour into the brode halle,
> And to þe best on þe bench, and bede hym be myry,
> Solased hem wyth semblaunt and syled fyrre,
> Tron fro table to table and talkede ay myrþe (125-32).

He takes the appearance of the filthy wedding guest as a personal insult to his own worthiness:

> "þou praysed me and my place ful power and ful gnede,
> þat watz so prest to approche my presens hereinne.
> Hopez þou I be a harlot þi erigault to prayse?"
> (146-8)

In contrast the disrespectful guest, who represents, anagogically, a type of St. Paul's vetus homo, is a snivelling, cowardly, unsympathetic character:

> þat oþer burne watz abayst of his broþe wordez,
> And hurkelez doun with his hede, þe urþe he biholdez;
> He watz so scoumfit of his scylle, lest he skaþe hent,
> þat he ne wyst on worde what he warp schulde (149-52).

The narrator's detailed accounts of the guest's unusually awful clothing and social awkwardness are designed to incite the audience's literal contempt, which can thus be associated with the implicit anagogical damnation. In very broad terms, cleanness and filth are the moral sins which can be represented sociologically as courtesy and discourtesy and anagogically as caritas and cupiditas.

The Biblical story of the Flood is treated in the same way. As well as representing the prefigurement of the sacrament of Baptism, the Flood is another example of a type of the separation of the few and the many. According to Augustine, the Ark represents the Church, in which the faithful are saved, while Noah is a type of Christ, the saviour.[10] Again, the narrator of Cleanness draws his lines of demarcation on the literal level in terms of courtesy and discourtesy. In Genesis itself, the antedeluvian sinners are described fairly neutrally:

> Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. (Gen. 6. 11-2)

In Cleanness, these representatives of the anagogically damned are not only violent and corrupt, they are also uncivilized:

> þose wern men meþelez and ma3ty on urþe,
> þat for her lodlych laykez alosed þay were.
> He was famed for fre þat fe3t loved best,
> And ay þe bigest in bale þe best watz halden. (273-6)

On the other hand, Noah, the type of the saved, is characterized as a properly courteous medieval lord, and God, according to Cleanness, makes the covenant of the rainbow in "cortays wordez" (512). Again, the traditional exegetical interpretation that Noah prefigured the caritas of Christ is the narrator's reason for stressing comparisons of literal courtesy. The audience of Cleanness, appreciating the "sentence" of caritas expressed throughout the sermon, would find the veneer of literal etiquette familiar and applicable.

The remainder of the Biblical passages in Cleanness are treated in the same manner. The narrator's literal exposition of God's revenge on "fylþe" is shown to have anagogical significance in terms of the ultimate separation of the few from the many. The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the capture of Jerusalem and the Fall of Belshazzar each represent a type of the future separation of the few from the many, and each episode contains heroes seen to prefigure Christ and characters seen as embodiments of cupiditas. It is clear that in Cleanness the Gawain-poet shows an intense awareness of audience and that the homiletic "sentence" of the poem is geared primarily to making Biblical authority less remote and more realistic.

Some aspects of this atmosphere in Cleanness are present again in Patience, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. However, in the latter three poems the use of Biblical allegory to convey theme becomes increasingly more complex and the relationship between literal narrative and allegorical "sentence"

becomes more dramatic. In these poems, this is the result of the technique of suggestive juxtaposition, and development of the figurative significance of certain Biblical passages which are in turn closely interrelated with the literal level of narrative. There are several isolated examples of the technique in Cleanness which are worth noting,since they recur in almost identical form in other poems.

One Biblical element Cleanness and Patience have in common is Psalm 93 (A.V. 94), 8-9:

> Understand, O dullest of the people!
> Fools, when will you be wise?
> He who planted the ear,
> does he not hear?
> He who formed the eye,
> does he not see?

In Cleanness, the poet paraphrases:

> Bot savor, mon, in þyself, þa3 þou a sotte lyvie,
> þa3 þou bere þyself babel, byþenk þe sumtyme
> Wheþer he þat stykked uche a stare in uche y3e,
> 3if hymself be bore blynde, hit is a brode wonder;
> And he þat fetly in face fettled alle eres,
> If he hatz losed þe lysten hit lyftez mervayle;
> Trane þou never þat tale, untrwe þou hit fyndez
> (581-7).

Though the narrator does not cite his source, it is clear that he is referring his audience to the Psalm by the language used and the literal meaning of the passage. In Cleanness the reference to the Psalm occurs just after the narrator has described the story of the Flood and made some remarks on the consequences of sin. The Psalm is thus appropriately alluded to, for its initial preoccupation according to the Old Testament is vengeance:

> O Lord, thou God of vengeance,
> thou God of vengeance, shine forth!
> Rise up, O judge of the earth;
> render to the proud their deserts!
> O Lord, how long shall the wicked
> how long shall the wicked exult? (Ps. 94. 1-3).

The allusion to the Psalm thus suits Cleanness' literal narrative in terms of God's revenge on filth and the anagogical idea of judgment. However, the application of the Psalm is also more complicated. The narrator of Cleanness quotes verses 8-9, which, literally, rebuke the sinner who supposes he can hide his sins from God. According to Augustine, these particular verses are also interpreted allegorically as a command to gain spiritual wisdom:

> Hoc modo facit Deus, erudit gentes; ideo misit uerbum suum per orbem terrarum hominibus, misit per angelos, per patriarchas, per prophetas, per servos, per tot praecones antecedentes iudicem. Misit et ipsum Verbum suum, misit et ipsum Filium suum; misit servos Fillii sui, et in ipsis servis Filium suum. Per totum orbem terrarum praedicatur ubique uerbum Dei. Vbi non dicitur hominibus: Relinquite iniquitates uestras priores, convertite uos ad itinera recta? 6

The allegorical subject at hand becomes again, therefore, another aspect of caritas. The "dull-witted" of the Psalm are the "babel" in Cleanness and this lack of wisdom is interpreted by Augustine as "your former injustices". "Former injustices" relates, of course, to St. Paul's figuration of the vetus homo: the "old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts." Thus the Psalm invokes on the exegetical level the idea of the ways of thinking attributed to the Hebrew race, which will be damned at the Last Judgment, and on the level of timeless application the

idea of cupiditas, or lack of spiritual understanding.

The inclusion of, and juxtaposition of, this particular Biblical passage are skillfully effective since the passage suits in all literal and figurative aspects the meaning of Cleanness. At the same time, it expands the meaning of the image of "clannesse" in this homily, and all without requiring the homilist's explicit interpretation. It is an example of the use of source material which goes beyond the simple hortative endeavors of homiletics to the intellectual level of theological philosophy, without affecting the narrative flow of the sermon. The Gawain-poet evidently found this passage useful, for it recurs in Patience at ll. 120-4. In this second context all the same allegorical implications are at work and become even more dramatic since the prophet of Patience shows in many aspects of his behaviour the characteristics of cupiditas. Though Patience has a much tighter thematic scheme that Cleanness, it relies on several accomplishments of the earlier homily, including this method of allegorizing.

Cleanness and Pearl have in common the use of pearl-imagery. The image of the "pearl of great price" in Matthew is yet another parable of the kingdom:

> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matt. 13. 45).

Like Psalm 93, the passage was interpreted in terms of the assumption of the philosophy of Grace:

> Bonae margaritae, quas quaerit institor, Lex et prophetae sunt. Audi, Marcion; audi, Manichaee: bonae margaritae sunt Lex et prophetae, et notitia veteris Instrumenti. Unum autem est pretiosissimum margaritum, scientia Salvatoris, et sacramentum passionis illus, et resurrectionis arcanum. Quod cum invenerit homo negotiator, similis Pauli apostoli, omnia legis prophetarumque mysteria, et observationes pristinas, in quibus inculpate vixerat, quasi puramenta contemnit et quisquilias, ut Christum lucrifaciat. Non quo inventio novae margaritae condemnatio sit veterum margaritum: sed quo comparatione ejus omnis alia gemmae vilior sit. 7

This is, essentially, the application used in Pearl. In Cleanness, there is a much more eclectic application, in keeping with the homily's ambitious nature. The following passage arrives at the point immediately after the narrator has discussed Christ's "cortayse" and is launching into some remarks on penitential doctrine. The soul of a Christian is compared to a pearl:

> And if hit cheve þe chaunce uncheryst ho worþe,
> þat ho blyndes of ble in bour þer ho lygges,
> No-bot wasch hir wyth worchyp in wyn, as ho askes,
> Ho by kynde schal becom clerer þen are.
> So if folk be defowled by unfre chaunce,
> þar he be sulped in sawle, seche to schryfte,
> And he may polyce hum at þe prest, by penaunce taken,
> Wel bry3ter þen þe beryl oþer browden perles (1123-32).

It is obvious that the narrator is thinking of Jerome's metaphor of the comparison of the Old Testament to the New being like the comparison of less precious gems to a valuable pearl, when he says "Wel bry3ter þen þe beryl oþer browden perles". However, he has again expanded an image to its figurative limits. As well as representing the "new nature" or the novus homo, the pearl represents allegorically the sacrament of Holy Communion

("wasch hir wyth worchyp in wyn"), tropologically the result of penance ("he may polyce him at þe prest, by penaunce taken") and anagogically the soul ("þat he be sulped in sawle"). Again, the design of the passage is skillful, for though not mentioning the source, the narrator manages to involve the Biblical parable, its exegetical interpretation and a penitential "sentence" all within the context of the literal image of washing a pearl in wine. We can see here in Cleanness the basis for the complicated pearl-imagery which affects a great deal of Pearl, and it will be useful to look back to this particular homiletic correlation in consideration of the dream-vision.

There are two other allegorical developments in Cleanness which relate to the Gawain-poet's other works. They are both examples of the Gawain-poet's particular poetic treatment of an allegorical "sentence", and are therefore more important for the thematic atmosphere they convey when later reconstructed than for background of allegorical interpretation.

One is the characterization of the prophet Abraham in Cleanness. He is referred to in the homily in connection with the story of the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and he is important mainly as an example of the courteous host who has divine favour and who is therefore contrasted with the rude Sodomites. In Genesis, Abraham is told of the plan to destroy the two cities when visited by the Three Angels. The prophet is provoked to plead for the sparing of the cities because his brother Lot lives there, and he prefaces his pleas to the Angels with the proper humility:

> Abraham answered, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes."
> ...
> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry and I will speak again but this once." (Gen. 18. 27,32)

The narrator of Cleanness expands the Biblical dialogue considerably, suggesting the epitome of a courteous exchange between a man and his superior:

> "Aa! blessed be þow", quod þe burne, "so boner and þewed,
> And al haldez in þy honde, þe heven and þe erþe;
> Bot for I haf þis talke, tatz to non ille
> 3if I mele a lyttel more þat mul am and askez"
> (733-6).

> "Now sayned be þou, Savior, so symple in þe wrath!
> I am bot erþe ful evel and usle so blake,
> For to mele wyth such a Mayster as my3tez hatz alle;
> Bot I have bygonnen wyth my God, and he hit gayn þynkez,
> 3if I, forloyne as a fol, þy fraunchyse may serve"
> (746-9).

The expressions of humility and respect are in keeping with Cleanness' general application of courtesy to individuals and events of the Old Testament which prefigured caritas. For many reasons, including the one given here in Cleanness, Abraham was seen by the Fathers as a type of Faith: although Abraham existed in pre-Christian times, he had the spiritual foresight to recognize in the Three Angels the Christian Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

> Quod superius dixerat hominem justificari per fidem, ostendit per Abraham, in quo omnes confidunt, qui per fidem adeptus est justiam et promissionem, et paternitatem. 8

Thus, in light of Cleanness' disposition to realize allegory in terms of courtesy, Abraham uses words such as "boner",

"þewed" and "fraunchyse", all belonging to the courtly language of courtesy.

Interestingly enough, echoes of Abraham's original pleas in Genesis occur in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In Pearl, the archetypal concept of humility and respect is used by the Dreamer in the hopes of appeasing the Maiden, at lines 362-3: "'Ne worþe no wrathþe vnto my Lorde,/ If rapely I raue spornande in spelle'" and again at line 382, "'I am bot mol, & manerez mysse'". In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Gawain uses a variation on the same idea to make his bid for the knightly adventure with the Green Knight: "'I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,/& lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe'" (353-4). In Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight the comparisons drawn between Abraham and these two protagonists are meant to be ironic and so have their various repercussions in terms of the protagonists' characters and behaviour. It is worthwhile to bear in mind, however, that the Gawain-poet first dealt with the concept of Abraham's caritas in Cleanness where it played its part in distinguishing between the philosophy of the vetus homo and the philosophy of the novus homo.

Another allegorical expansion in Cleanness which has significance in a later work is the description of Belshazzar's Feast. In realizing this scene the narrator borrows freely from contemporary medieval life and customs, with the result that the feast is suggestive more of a fourteenth-century festive celebration than of pre-Christian society (ll. 1357-1419).

However, the narrator does not ignore the common exegetical interpretation of the Biblical feast, which was to stress the idolatry and other sins manifested there:

> Juxta tropologiam, hic dicendum est: quod omnes haeretici, et doctrina contraria veritati, quae assumit verba prophetarum; et testimoniis divinae Scripturae abutitur ad sensum suum; et dat bibere his quos decepit, et eum quibus fornicata est: tollat vasa templi Dei, et inebrietur in eis: et non Deum eujus vasa sunt, sed deos laudet aureos et argenteos, et aeneos, et ferreos, ligneosque et lapideos...Abscondunt enim omnes haereitici, et operiunt mendaciorum suorum dogmata, ut sagittent in obscuro rectos corde. 9

Accordingly, the narrator exposes Belshazzar's lechery and pride, "þus in pryde and olipraunce his empyre he haldes,/In lust and in lecherye, and loþelych werkkes" (1349-50), and the entire court's drunkenness and idolatry, "So long likked þise lordes þise lykores swete,/And gloryed on her falce goddes, and her grace calles" (1521-2). As with the previous Biblical passages of Cleanness, allegorical significance is considerably expanded. Here all the sins of carnality are subsumed under the definition of "fylþe" and related to Jerome's concept that the episode reflects the subversion of true doctrine. The narrator's handling of the quadruplex exposition characterizes the feasting atmosphere as an example of the preoccupation of the vetus homo. Significantly, the feast at Camelot which opens Sir Gawain and the Green Knight uses a great deal of the language of feasting used here in Cleanness. Thus, though the scene in the romance is not predicated upon an allegorical interpretation of a Biblical source, it may be suggested that the Gawain-poet uses what was once an artistically successful

image of cupiditas again with the same intent, for, as will be shown, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight often operates on the basis of a similar use of scriptural allegory.

The above examples of the use of allegorical meaning and of the development of images which describe allegorical sense are features of Cleanness which are the most important to an understanding of the use of scriptural allegory in Patience, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In Cleanness it is possible to appreciate the Gawain-poet's broad familiarity with Biblical subject matter and exegetical interpretation, and his preoccupation with the anagogical level of such interpretation. Although the juxtapositions of Biblical elements used to convey an allegorical theme are fairly conventional, it is clear that the poet preferred the intellectual rather than the hortative approach to sermon-writing. The audience is treated to a rollicking narrative, but at the same time is subtly persuaded to appreciate all of the broad and narrow aspects of caritas and cupiditas. This is achieved by means of the implicit equation of spiritual and earthly values, in the delineation of courtesy and discourtesy on the literal level of the narrative.

These concerns are basic to the remainder of the corpus. However, as will be seen, the Gawain-poet's approach to allegorical theme becomes progressively sophisticated and increasingly subject to the characterization of protagonists, the dramatic irony of plot and the discussion of human fortune.

In the following discussion of Patience it will be seen that this refinement of approach develops even as the Gawain-poet continues to employ the homiletic genre.

Notes - Chapter I

[1]*Cleanness*, ed. Robert J. Menner, *Purity* (New Haven, Conneticut, 1920), l. 30. All quotations of *Cleanness* in this paper are taken from Menner's edition. Henceforth line references will be given in the body of the paper.

[2]T.D. Kelly and John T. Irwin, "The Meaning of *Cleanness*: Parable as Effective Sign", *Medi aevalStudies*, 35 (1973), 232-60.

[3]Charlotte Morse, "The Image of the Vessel in *Cleanness*", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XL (1971), 202-216.

[4]St. Augustine, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, 35, col. 1329.

[5]St. Jerome, *PL*. 26, col. 160.

[6]St. Augustine, "Ennaratio in Psalmos", Ps. XCIII, 13, Editores Pontificii, *Aurelii Augustini Opera*, 1956.

[7]St. Jerome, *PL*. 26, cols. 94-95.

[8]Peter Lombard, *PL*, 191, col. 1366.

[9]St. Jerome, *PL*. 25, col. 495.

CHAPTER II

PATIENCE

Like Cleanness, Patience operates on the basis of a homiletic structure and depends for its plot almost entirely on Biblical source material. Both homilies use the Beatitudes of Matthew as text and both argue the merit of their titular virtue by dwelling on the demerits of its opposite vice. However, the exemplum of Patience is a single book of the Old Testament, the Book of Jonah, and this approach to sermon-writing represents a considerably narrowing of focus in comparison to Cleanness, which relies on a large number of Scriptural passages. The approach results in, naturally, a much shorter poem. However, the poem is also a much better example of the homily form since the poet is permitted more thorough characterization of his important main figures and can develop his theme much more creatively. Other refinements in Patience include the adoption of a discreet narrative voice which guides the audience's perception of Patience effectively without intruding upon the dramatic development of the story it tells. Patience is a much less formal sermon than Cleanness and therefore much more effective, in that as well as presenting illustrative material, it asks for the audience's emotional and intellectual identification.

The narrator opens Patience in the first person and immediately endeavors to show sympathy for any frustration his audience may have experienced with the virtue he is about to

discuss:

> Pacience is a poynt, þa3 hit displese ofte.
> When heuy herttes ben hurt wyth heþyng oþer elles,
> Suffraunce may aswagen hem and þe swelme leþe,
> For ho quelles vche a qued and quenches malyce. 1

He continues his very informal introduction by mentioning that he heard listed, at mass, the eight Beatitudes of Matthew, and goes on to paraphrase the Beatitudinal text, commenting briefly on each of the eight. In summation, the narrator personifies each virtue, probably thinking of the popularity of this idea established by contemporary allegories such as The Romance of the Rose:

> If we þyse ladyes wolde lof in lyknyng of þewes:
> Dame Pouert, dame Pitee, dame Penaunce þe þrydde,
> Dame Mekenesse, dame Mercy and miry Clannesse,
> And þenne dame Pes and Pacyence put in þer-after.
> He were happen þat hade one, alle were þe better
> (30-34).

The narrator then goes on to confide that his own situation obliges him to concentrate presently on poverty and patience, which are also linked by his text since they have the same reward. He hopes that the adoption of patience will help him to endure poverty, which, apparently, is his involuntary experience at the moment.

This confession launches the narrator into the discussion of patience itself, for as he says, the virtue can make any unpleasant situation more bearable. In fact, to practice impatience can often make matters worse: "What grayþed me þe grychchyng bot grame more seche?" (53). This hypothesis introduces the exemplum of the unfortunate experiences of the prophet Jonah and establishes that the Gawain-poet will, as

in Cleanness, consider the virtue entirely from the point of view of its opposite vice. Neither the vice nor the virtue is mentioned again in the homily until the final lines.

The Book of Jonah, which the narrator claims to be quoting "as holy wryt telles" (60), describes the familiar story of Jonah and the whale. In its straightforward fashion the Scriptural narrative tells how the prophet is commanded by God to go to Nineveh and preach against the wickedness of its citizens. Jonah elects to flee from the "presence of the Lord" (1.3) and therefore boards a ship to Tarshish. God creates a storm which threatens to sink the ship and which frightens the ship's crew into appealing to their various heathen gods for rescue. While making panic-stricken attempts to lighten the ship's load, the sailors discover Jonah, asleep, in an inner part of the ship, and must wake him and urge him to pray to his god.

The crew finally decides to draw lots in the hopes of discovering whose fault it is that such a misfortunate has fallen upon the ship. The lot falls upon Jonah and so the prophet is compelled to explain who he is and what he is doing. This puts respect for the Hebrew God into the crew's minds, and they ask Jonah how they may resolve their dilemma. Knowing that he is at fault Jonah suggests that they throw him overboard. They do so, paying due respect to Jonah's God beforehand and then, upon realizing that the storm actually ends, offering a sacrifice afterward.

"And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah,

and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (1.17). While in this predicament Jonah composes an eloquent prayer which expresses his remorse and respect and which asks for God's mercy. In response God causes the fish to deliver the prophet safely onshore.

Once again Jonah is commanded to preach to the Ninevites and this time he does, prophesying the destruction of the city. However, the Ninevites avert this catastrophe by immediately repenting of their ways and observing elaborate penance. "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he said he would do to them; and he did not do it" (3.10). This displeases the prophet since it contravenes directly what he prophesied, and he explains that that is why he first attempted to avoid the command: "'That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil" (4.2). The prophet retires to a "booth" outside the city.

God causes a plant to grow over the booth in one night, with the result that Jonah's makeshift home is very comfortably shaded from the sun. However, the next night a worm destroys the plant, and in his discomfort the following day Jonah complains to God that it is better that he should die than live. God then asks the prophet to compare his love for the plant, for which he exercised no effort, to God's love for the Ninevites, and to appreciate thereby the divine mercy shown to them.

The narrator of Patience does not leave out any element of his Biblical original, but he does contribute a great deal in the way of amplification and detailed description. Perhaps the most striking embellishments on the literal level of the narrative are the graphic descriptions of the ship setting sail for Tarshish (101-8), the storm at sea (129-52), Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale (261-80, 289-300) and the growth and decline of the woodbine (443-56, 465-78). Each description is a very imaginative realization of the action, and in the case of the latter three scenes, of miraculous events which the Biblical original describes neutrally. Patience's audience, however, can visualize those events fully, and as was the case with Cleanness, it is clear by the addition of these descriptions that the Gawain-poet hopes to make Biblical authority an entirely understandable reality.

There are more important elaborations in Patience, however, and these relate to the Gawain-poet's exposition of his homiletic theme. The character of the prophet Jonah, which is fairly sketchy in the Old Testament, is completely developed in Patience, with the result that we are always aware of the motivation for his actions. One particular instance of this character exposition has attracted a fair amount of critical attention, for it deliberately associates the prophet with Christ at the point in the story when the prophet is attempting to escape from God. In the Old Testament there is no explanation given for the prophet's cowardice, but in Patience Jonah's

thoughts are exposed:

> "Oure syre syttes," he says, "on sege so hy3e.
> In his glowande glorye, and gloumbes ful lyttel
> þa3 I be nummen in Nunniue and naked dispoyled,
> On rode rwly to-rent with rybaudes mony" (93-96).

This is an example of characterization which depends upon the typological interpretation of the Book of Jonah as well as upon the poet's creation of a reason for Jonah's action. Criticism applied to this passage usually takes this allegorical implication into consideration, noting that it is entirely appropriate in terms of the patristic exegesis associated with the Book of Jonah. However, a more proper critical appreciation of the idea should take into account the complete characterization of the prophet in Patience for it will then become obvious that the typological reference is a very ironical one. The presentation of Jonah's personality is one of the most important embellishments made on the Book of Jonah in Patience, in terms of both the literal and allegorical levels.

Other elaborations include a fuller representation of God's point of view in the story, which amounts to expansion of his conversations with Jonah, and is thus in effect a form of exegesis on the poet's part. The result is a revealing contrast between the two main characters of the story which in turn has its effect upon the thematic trend of Patience.

In addition, the narrator of the story inserts some commentary at crucial points which, while purporting merely to explain the action, actually contributes to a consistently developed thematic "sentence". This kind of direction is not

comparable to the general tendency in Cleanness, where the narrator actually pauses to recapitulate, although there are several parallel examples. In Patience the narrative direction is more a matter of language and tone, and in one case, of a subtle allusion to another Biblical passage. The effect is such that an audience would not be aware of being preached at, but would become aware of how well the allegorical "sentence" and the narrative drama are suited.

Together with several other additions, these tendencies in Patience result in a very coherent allegorization of the Book of Jonah, and one which is not entirely traditional. As was the case with Cleanness, the poem operates on the anagogical extension of narrative and on some of the common patristic exegesis attributed to its scriptural source. However, the Gawain-poet endeavors to discuss the virtue of Patience by presenting the allegorical "sentence" almost entirely from an ironic point of view. This compels the audience to re-examine the homily's literal level, mainly in terms of Jonah's character, to discover the poem's purpose. This purpose seems to be to correlate a particular character type with a particular allegorical type, and the correlation results in an exposition of cupiditas and caritas. However, where the general concepts of courtesy and discourtesy were used to illuminate the theme and make familiar the preoccupations of Cleanness, in Patience the poet uses narrative irony and vivid characterization, which is a slightly more intellectual approach to the homiletic function.

Critical attention paid to Patience most usually concerns itself with the homily's structure, which anticipates in a microcosmic fashion the architectonic complexity of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.[2] Studies of the allegorical "sentence" of Patience, as for example, those of Schleusener[3] and Andrew[4], deal comprehensively with the homily's typological association of Jonah and Christ, but do not consider this aspect fully in terms of the other allegorical motifs in the poem, nor, as a result, in terms of the ironic point of view.

It is important to consider Patience's development of the Book of Jonah in terms of the poem's prologue, for this is where the narrator establishes the social and behavioural complements to his theme. In the prologue, after presenting the Beatitudes, the narrator confesses:

> Bot syn I am put to a poynt þat pouerte hatte,
> I schal me poruay pacyence and play me with bobe;
> For in þe tyxte þese two arn in teme layde,
> Hit arn fettled in on forme, þe forme and þe last (35-8).

The fact that both virtues are paid the same reward, "þe heuenryche to holde for euer" (14), links them logically and also establishes that the narrator is considering his theme from the point of view of gaining heaven; in other words, from an anagogic point of view. J.J. Anderson points out that the linking of the two virtues is not without precedence in fourteenth-century writing, but explains this on the basis of Psalm 9. 19: "and the hope of the pure shall not perish for ever".[5] However, since the narrator proposes his own poverty-stricken situation as his reason for discussion of

patience, it may be that he is thinking of Augustine's commentary on the Beatitudes:

> Now, what does He say? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We read in the Scriptures concerning the craving for temporal things: "All is vanity and presumption of spirit." "Presumption of spirit" means boldness and haughtiness. In common parlance, too, the haughty are said to have "high spirits"; and rightly, since spirit is also called "wind". Whence it is written: "Fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy wind". And who has not heard the haughty spoken of as "inflated", blown up as it were, with wind? So, too, the expression of the Apostle: "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth". For this reason "the poor in spirit" are rightly understood here as the humble and those who fear God, that is, those who do not have an inflated spirit. And there could be no more felicitous beginning of wisdom: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". Whereas, on the contrary, we have the attribution: "The beginning of all sin is pride". Let, therefore, the haughty seek and love the kingdom of the earth; but "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." 6

I quote Augustine at length to show the intricacy with which a virtuous concept and spiritual preoccupations can be connected. Augustine links impatience with the "craving for temporal things" and with pride which in turn establishes the vice as a characteristic of excessive carnal appetite. Moreover, Augustine's commentary relates patience and the "beginning of wisdom" which is, as was shown earlier[7], associated with putting on the garment of the novus homo or adopting caritas.

In terms of Patience, the passage illuminates the narrator's situation, for, apparently, the virtue of poverty is not one he has adopted voluntarily. Therefore, he links poverty and patience in his discussion since his own "craving for temporal

things" must necessarily be endured in patience.

More importantly, however, the commentary above predicts the way in which the prophet Jonah will be characterized. As will be seen shortly, the prophet is definitely a seeker of "the kingdom of the earth" in his concern for the safety of his skin, the security of his reputation and his love of material comfort. He is also a man of "high spirits", as demonstrated by the emotional extremes he suffers according to Patience's descriptions of his cowardice when asked to preach to the Ninevites, his anger when Nineveh is spared, and his disappointment over the death of the woodbine. The characterization stems from this type of exegetical correlation of virtue and temporal behaviour and from the Gawain-poet's consistent endeavor to show that Jonah is a classic example of the vetus homo.

The prophet is introduced with the narrator's implied disapproval: "Did not Jonas in Jude suche jape sum-whyle?/To sette hym to sewrte, vnsounde he hym feches" (57-8), and soon after the Biblical narrative has begun we discover how extremely bad-tempered and rebellious Jonah is. He thinks of the command to preach to the Ninevites as God's particularly spiteful plan to destroy him:

> "þis is a meruayl message a man for-to preche
> Amonge enmyes so mony and mansed fendes,
> Bot if my gaynlych God such gref to me wolde,
> For desert of sum sake, þat I slayn were" (81-4).

This narrator further suggests childishness and sulkiness in the prophet in a patronizing account of his escape:

> þenne he ryses radly and raykes bilyue
> Jonas toward port Japh, ay janglande for tene
> þat he nolde for no þyng non of þose pynes,
> þa3 þe fader þat hym formed were fale of his hele
> (89-92).

Then the narrator incorporates the typological reference mentioned above by showing that Jonah's cowardice is based on fear of physical pain, particularly the pain of being "on rode rwly to-rent with rybaudes mony" (96).

The list of patristic commentators who see Jonah as a prefiguration of Christ,

> ...sive cum fugit a facie Domini; sive cum
> auctor suae demersionis est in profundiam
> et triduano die samus evadit, 8

is a long one[9], inspired by Christ's own remarks in Matthew 12.40:

> "For as Jonah was three days and three nights
> in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of
> man be three days and three nights in the heart
> of the earth."

The Fathers usually minimize Jonah's disobedience on the grounds that the prophet foresaw and feared the overthrow of the Jewish race, which would be implicit in the redemption of the heathen:

> Scit propheta, sancto sibi Spiritu suggerente,
> quod poenitentia gentium, ruina sit Judaeorum.
> Idcircoamator patriae suae, non tam saluta
> invidet Niniue, quam non vult perire populum
> suum. 10

> Non gentium salutem oderat, sed suae gentis
> damnationem timebat, atque idcirco fugiens non
> multum Deo displicebat. 11

However, the Gawain-poet suggests typology deliberately to underscore his character's cupiditas and lack of spiritual

wisdom. Ironically, Jonah's fear for the safety of his skin is expressed in terms which indicate, without his realizing it, that he does not want to prefigure the most important person in religious history. The irony can, of course, be appreciated by a Christian audience which has begun to learn something of the prophet's character and is familiar enough with the events of the Book of Jonah to apply the suggestion of the typology.

Though it might be submitted that the Gawain-poet is establishing a heretical characterization of a worthy figure, it must be remembered that as an Old Testament figure, Jonah is both historically and allegorically subject to criticism. That is, from the point of view of Christian spirituality, the prophet will suffer in comparison to Christ or to any other hero of the New Testament, even though he is not an explicitly evil human being. The Gawain-poet merely takes this opportunity to exaggerate the contrast and the literal emphasis serves to underscore the theme of his "sentence". Jonah is made to seem foolish in comparison to the divine and, sometimes, human wisdom all around him, and therefore, from the audience's point of view, emulation of his behaviour is distasteful.

The allegorical contrasting of vetus homo and novus homo is further supported by Biblical tradition as it is used by the narrator. By way of commenting on the prophet's belief, the poet quotes from Psalm 93:

> 3ise, he blusched ful brode, þat burde hym by sure;
> þat ofte kyd hym þe carpe þat kyng sayde,

> Dynge Dauid on des þat demed þis speche
> In a psalm þat he set þe sauter with-inne:
> "O fole3 in folk, fele3 oper-whyle
> And vunderstoundes vmbe-stounde, þa3 3e be stape fole.
> Hope 3e þat he heres not þat eres alle made?
> Hit may not be þat he is blynde þat bigged vche y3e"
> (117-24).

As was noted earlier[12], the same verses are quoted in Cleanness and are there in order to draw together on the level of the poem's "sentence" the idea of revenge on evil, the anagogical theme, and the superior understanding of the novus homo. In Cleanness the exegetical background of the apostrophe expanded the meaning of "clannesse" on the intellectual level of the homily, and it is seen to do the same here in Patience. The verses of the Psalm quoted here are particularly appropriate to Patience's action, for Jonah is literally attempting to hide from God, a foolish endeavor as the narrator points out. However, the reference also stipulates that like "clannesse" "pacyence" subsumes Christian spirituality. Jonah is "stape fole", literally and allegorically.

Proceeding with his story the narrator continues to stress the contrast between types of caritas and types of cupiditas. This is accomplished very effectively during the storm sequence when the crew of the ship learns the reason for its misfortune. Unlike Jonah, who requires constant reminders of God's authority, the heathens appreciate the Hebrew God fairly quickly:

> He ossed hym by vnnynges þat vnder-nomen,
> þat he wat3 flawen fro þe face of frelych dry3ten;
> þenne such a ferde on hem fel and flayed hem with-inne,
> þat pay ruyt hym to rowue and letten þe rynk one
> (213-16).

When it becomes clear that they will have to rid themselves of Jonah in order to save their lives the sailors remain very respectful:

> Fyrst þay prayen to þe prynce þat prophetes seruen,
> þat he gef hem þe grace to greuen hym neuer
> þat þay in balele3 blod þer blunden her hande3,
> þa3 þt haþel wer his þat þay here quelled (225-8).

Thus the heathens contrast with Jonah in their quick adoption of loyalty to God, and it is seen in the above lines that the poet emphasizes the contrast by expanding his source with imagery of the Crucifixion. The concern of the crew is made to appear similar to the concern in the New Testament of Pontius Pilate, when against his instincts he was forced to permit the crucifixion of Christ. Like Pilate, the crew is conscious of the innocence of the blood being shed, and is forced to figure in the divine scheme of things in a rather negative manner; however, this is all to its credit. In comparison to Jonah, the sailors have superior spiritual understanding, and by having the crew remind us of the Crucifixion at this point, the poet is also furthering the irony of Patience's point of view. Jonah, after all, does not deserve all this respect for his innocence since his present situation is the result of his obeying his cupidinous desires and since, in essence, he is only a second-rate type of Christ.

The typological irony continues with the episode of Jonah's sojourn in the whale. According to the tradition, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights

in the heart of the earth", the whale was seen as a type of Hell. The Gawain-poet sustains this idea with the periodic use of suitable imagery. The whale's belly is "walowes gutte3" in line 258, its stomach "stank as þe deuel" (274), its contents "sauoured as helle" (275), and Jonah refers to his prison as a "hellen wombe" (306). However, in keeping with the ironical "sentence" of his narrative, the Gawain-poet describes the incident of the prophet being swallowed by the whale in an unusual manner:

> For he knew vch a cace and kark þat hym lymped,
> How fro þe bot in-to þe blober wat3 with a best lachched,
> And þrwe in at hit þrote with-outen þret more,
> As mote in at a munster dor, so mukel wern his chawle3 (265-8).

The idea of the whale's jaws being like a "munster dor" is a metaphor that critics refer to in passing as an example of the poet's vivid imagination. However, in terms of the "sentence" of Patience, it must be appreciated as a significant thematic symbol. If the whale's jaws are like the doors of a cathedral, then it might be suggested that at the same time that the whale is symbolized in malo as Hell, it is also symbolized in bono as a place for spiritual instruction. As we know by now, spiritual understanding is precisely what Jonah needs at this point and therefore the whale is operating more as an agent of God than as a typological convention. Again, Jonah is contrasted with Christ. Moreover, in the metaphor Jonah is a "mote", an insignificant particle of dust, which establishes the insignificance of the temporal problems with which Jonah

is so consistently concerned.

In fact, as a place for theological instruction, the whale is very inspiring. In addition to Jonah's prayer for deliverance, which is a part of the poet's source, the poet invents a preliminary prayer, not part of the Biblical book, to express the prophet's request for a safe and pleasant nook in which to wait out his hardship. As cathedrals are the typical places in which to make prayers, the addition is appropriate. Furthermore, Jonah's first prayer does secure him a cozy "bour", a possibility of the whale's anatomy not mentioned in the Old Testament source:

> With þat he hitte to a hyrne and helde hym þer-inne,
> Ðer no de-foule of no fylþe fest hym abute;
> þer he sete also sounde, saf for merk one,
> As in þe bulk of þe bote þer he by-fore sleped
> (289-92).

In this manner the Gawain-poet expands upon the traditional interpretation of the whale, allowing it to operate *in bono* as a type of the Church. The idea, of course, is to stress the characterization of Jonah as a *vetus homo* by showing that God is forcing the appropriate experience upon him, and to continue the irony of the contrast between the prophet and Christ.

What follows is Jonah's second prayer, which is based on the very poetic original. The Gawain-poet is faithful to the passion of the original, which has led critics to find the passage out of keeping with Jonah's characterization in Patience. "As consistent 'characterization' this does not work; as

thematic variation it is essential to the structure of the poem".[13] Although Diekstra's point concerning the suitability of the prayer to the structure is unquestionable, it does not follow that the prayer is not suitable to Jonah's character. If nothing else, Jonah is a sincere man; he was sincerely afraid to go to Nineveh, and later he is sincerely angry over the mercy shown to the Ninevites and sincerely sorrowful over the loss of the woodbine. Thus while trapped in the whale, the makeshift cathedral, we can be sure that he becomes sincerely appreciative of God's mercy and omniscience and of his own shortcomings. Jonah's essential problem is that his extreme reactions to different situations preclude his applying a consistent and mature, in other words, patient, philosophy to the frustrations of the temporal world. This ideal philosophy is that which the narrator wishes he had and which he advises his audience to have: "Be preue and be patient in payne and in joye" (525). God attempts to instil this philosophy in Jonah through example after example of comfort won through spiritual understanding. God's own patience with the prophet is an example in itself.

Thus it is ironical once again that Jonah, who desperately needs spiritual understanding, actually defines it in his prayer. He only appreciates the wisdom of the ideal philosophy after enduring a great deal of strife, which, paradoxically, he brought upon himself in attempts to avoid discomfort. In addition, in keeping with his capricious nature, we soon

learn from the narrator that the prophet's experience with spiritual wisdom is a brief one. The fact that Jonah emerges from the whale in "sluchched clobes;/Hit may wel be þat mester were his mantyle to wasche" (341-2) tells the audience that Jonah has not yet assumed the "garment of the new man". Remembering that in Cleanness the poet used the convention of the wedding guest in the filthy garment to denote a type of the vetus homo, the echo here, appropriate and amusing as it is on the literal level of the narrative, echoes the same spiritual failing. Since the prophet is now safe once again, the narrator hints that he will forget his former good intentions. As "consistent characterization" the quotation of the prayer does "work": the prophet's spiritual inconsistency is simply one aspect of his impatience.

The remainder of the poem can be said to be, in allegorical terms, a treatise on the theme of the separation of the few from the many, and it follows the preceding allegorical implications of the homily in that it illustrates the merits of practicing charity and the punishment for persisting in cupidinous ways.

At a word from Jonah, the Ninevites give up their material pleasures, immerse themselves in strict penance, and convert to the true religion. If Jonah compares rather unfavourably with them, it is because they represent collectively a type of the "few" who will be saved from the "many" in eternal Paradise. Christ's remarks in Matthew 12. 41, "The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation

and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah", and Jerome's, "Et primum credunt uiri de Niniue, qui ad aetatem Christi peruenerant"[14] are sufficient to cite the anagogical significance of the Ninevites' foresight. The Gawain-poet stresses this "sentence", elaborating on the Ninevites' transformation from a heathen to a God-fearing people and from a barbaric to a civilized race. Meanwhile, Jonah's anger over the turn of events, which is described impartially in the Old Testament, is developed by the poet of Patience to show not only the prophet's displeasure but also his egotism and deceitfulness:

> Much sor3e þenne satteled vpon segge Jonas;
> He wex as wroth as þe wynde towarde oure lorde.
> So hat3 anger onhit his hert, he calle3
> A prayer to þe hy3e prynce, for pyne, on þys wyse:
>
> "I biseche þe, syre, now þou self iugge
> Wat3 not þis ilk my worde þat worþen is nouþe,
> þat I kest in my cuntre, when þou þy carp sende3
> þat I schulde tee to þys toun þi talent to preche?"
> (409-16)

We know that, according to Patience at least, the prophet's original disobedience was not based on any such anticipation of futility. It is also worthwhile to note that the description of Jonah's anger, "he wex as wroth as þe wynde", bears comparison to Augustine's demonstration, quoted earlier, that the haughty are "spoken of as 'inflated', blown up as it were, with wind." The idea would remind us of the carnality of the vetus homo, shown here in Jonah's concern for his reputation, which contrasts very effectively here with the penance, or abandonment of carnal ways, depicted in the Ninevites. Thus, the Gawain-poet has

contrasted Jonah with the heathen crew of the ship and again with the heathen Ninevites. In the remainder of his story the Gawain-poet concentrates on the thematic contrast between the vetus homo and God himself and in so doing presents the anagogical repercussions.

In the final episode of Patience God emphasizes the mercy and concern he has shown and will always show for mankind in the form of the empirical example of the growth and death of the woodbine. The appearance of the woodbine pleases Jonah in the extreme way that he always reacts to anything:

> þenne wat3 þe gome so glad for his gay logge,
> Lys loltrande þer-inne lokande to toune;
> So blyþe of his wod-bynde he bateres þer-under,
> þat of no diete þat day -- þe deuel haf! -- he ro3t
> (457-60).

When the woodbine dies, Jonah's anger is similarly extreme:

> With hatel anger and hot heterly he calle3:
> "A, þou maker of man, what maystery þe þynke3
> þus þy freke to forfare forbi alle oþer?
> With alle meschef þat þou may, neuer þou me spare3"
> (481-4).

On the typological level of the "sentence" Jonah can be associated with the Hebrew race, according to Jerome's interpretation:

> Antequam oriretur sol justitiae, virens erat umbraculum, et non arebat Israel: postquam ille surrexit, et tenebrae Niniviteae ejus luce discussae sunt, paratus vermis in crastinum ascensione diluculi de quo vicesimus primus psalmus inscribitur: "Pro assumptione matutina", et qui absque ullo semine de terra oritur, et dicit: "Ego sum vermis et non homo" (Ps. XXI. 7); persuccit umbraculum, quod desertum auxilio Dei omnem virorem perdidit." 15

The Gawain-poet suggests this allegorical significance on the literal level of Patience by having Jonah react with illusions of

persecution as well as with anger. In addition, in terms of the traditional exegesis, Jonah's final disappointment in Patience is shown to be owing not to his disobedience but to his lack of charity, for the example of the woodbine exists to demonstrate this lack to him. On the literal level of the poem, the contrast is between Jonah's extreme passions and God's patience, as God himself points out in his commentary,

> "Wer I as hastif as þou, heere, were harme lumpen;
> Coube I not þole bot as þou, þer þryued ful fewe.
> I may not be so malicious and mylde be halden,
> For malyse is no3 to mayntyne boute mercy with-inne"
> (519-20).

In conclusion, it can be seen that Patience is coherent on all thematic levels. In the end the poet has drawn together the many literal and allegorical meanings he sees in "patience" and shows how the adoption of this concept of patience will result in attainment of "heuen-ryche". Moreover he has expressed his theme by compelling his audience to appreciate the vivid characterization of his hero. Because Jonah is so comically ill-mannered, the opinions he expresses and the responses he makes to situations turn the audience's sympathy away from him. Accordingly the Gawain-poet embellishes the "sentence" of his source to associate all aspects of cupiditas with the character. Although the audience is supposed to be hearing the account of a Biblical story, it actually hears the denunciation of a character type which allegorically represents cupiditas and, therefore, the denunciation is immediately applicable.

What Patience demonstrates mainly is that the Gawain-poet was able to develop an artistic approach to the presentation

of an allegorical "sentence". As a character, Jonah is enjoyable and his ironical misfortunes are entertaining. That the Gawain-poet maintains his sort of art while employing traditional Biblical theme is important in regard to Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, where the genre is no longer the homily. The situations of the Dreamer in Pearl and of the knight in the romance, though more complex, owe some of their conception to the Gawain-poet's handling of the relationships between man and God and between caritas and cupiditas in Patience.

Notes - Chapter II

[1]*Patience*, ed. J.J. Anderson (Manchester, 1969), ll. 1-4. All quotations of *Patience* in this paper are taken from this edition. Henceforth line references will be supplied in the body of the paper.

[2]Two good examples: R.J. Spendal, "The Narrative Structure of *Patience*", *Michigan Academician*, 5 (1973), 107-14, and A.C. Spearing, "*Patience* and the *Gawain*-Poet", *Anglia*, 84 (1966), 305-29.

[3]Jay Schleusener, "History and Action in *Patience*", *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 86 (1971), 959-69.

[4]Malcolm Andrew, "Jonah and Christ in *Patience*", *Modern Philology*, 70 (1972-3), 230-33.

[5]J.J. Anderson, ed., *Patience* (Manchester, 1969), p. 18.

[6]St. Augustine, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, tr. John J. Jepson (Westminster, Md., 1948), Bk. I.1.3 (pp. 13-14).

[7]See Chapter I, p. 20.

[8]J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, Indices II.

[9]St. Jerome, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, 22, col. 546; St. Augustine, *PL*. 33, col. 384; St. Peter Chrysostom; *PL*. 52 col. 303; Rupert of Deutz, *PL*. 168, col. 402; *et al*.

[10]St. Jerome, *PL*. 25, col. 1121.

[11]Rupert of Deutz, *PL*. 168, col. 403.

[12]See Chapter I, p.24.

[13]F.N.M Diekstra, "*Patience*: The Psychology of a Prophet", *English Studies*, 55 (1974), 211.

[14]St. Jerome, "Commentarius in Ionam", 3.5, Editores Pontificii, *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*, 1969.

[15]St. Jerome, *PL*. 25, col. 1149.

CHAPTER III

PEARL

Because of the genre in which it is written, Pearl represents an intermediate stage in the Gawain-poet's use of Biblical allegory as a thematic device. Here the emphasis is on the familiarity of secular literary conventions, although the homily, Biblical quotation and Biblical setting are retained as salient features of the poem. Structurally, Pearl is non-Biblical in nature, comprising as it does a dream-vision framework, a consolatio mortis theme, lapidary symbolism and imagery borrowed from the convention of popular allegorical romance. The Biblical features impart an unmistakably theological flavour to the structure in which they are contained, and are themselves at the same time contextually affected. The balance necessitated by this redistribution of emphasis permits the poet a broader range of meaning than was possible with Patience or Cleanness and concomitantly encourages subtler interpretation. Like Patience, Pearl employs only two main characters and operates as a unified plot, and like Cleanness, it correlates many Biblical extracts. However, whereas the elementary nature of Cleanness' theme demanded that its constituents form a related narrative, the more expansive nature of Pearl allows for a more versatile treatment of Biblical material. It also allows for the use of Biblical allusion and iconographical materials from the Bible and the subtler qualities they provide. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight the poet goes on to employ this aspect of

the scriptural tradition almost exclusively.

The ostensible consolatio mortis theme adequately justifies the presence of the most easily recognizable Biblical extracts. In the poem, the bereaved narrator is visited in a dream-vision by a young girl, possibly an altered version of his lost daughter. The maiden attempts to console him by advising him of the anagogical implications of several New Testament passages. Included among her Biblical authorities is the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, which the maiden delivers in a homiletic form comparable to that used by the Gawain-poet in Cleanness and Patience. She finally secures the narrator a vision of the New Jerusalem, which in its description in Pearl is directly dependent on the vision of St. John in Revelation.

The critical procedure with Pearl has been to treat these elements in isolation as the thematic and dramatic devices they fundamentally are. This treatment postulates the Dreamer's grief and the poet's interest in theology as the chief reasons for the inclusion of these and several other Biblical quotations, and accounts for the pearl symbolism thereby. What this treatment fails to consider is that these Biblical extracts and other non-Biblical allusions are related meaningfully on a level of understanding far less tenuous than the theological debate and far more significant than the consolatio mortis theme. In fact, it becomes clear upon detailed investigation of the "sentence" of Pearl that it is debatable whether the narrator ever fully appreciates the consolation attempted by the Maiden. In addition, though the narrator and the Maiden

do conduct a theological debate, Pearl's "sentence" and the literary conventions used by the Gawain-poet to support this allegorical "sentence" on the literal level reveal that the debate is designed less to settle theological controversy than to expose in an ironical manner a type of the vetus homo.

So far the poem has not been studied conclusively from the point of view that the Biblical elements are related in an organized manner to present a "sentence". In addition, though relationships between Pearl and the secular Romance of the Rose have been noted, critics have not emphasized the extent to which the Gawain-poet uses this relationship to support a "sentence". Studies of the possible allegorical meaning of Pearl concentrate on showing how the Dreamer, the human protagonist, is brought from grief over the loss of a loved one to acceptance of earthly frustration and finally to appreciation of the bliss to be found after death, all by way of the Maiden's structured argument. In allegorical terms, it is assumed by critics that the Dreamer develops the understanding of the novus homo.

Critics who follow this interpretation either cite the process through which the Dreamer seems to leave behind a preoccupation with the material world to learn the importance of spiritual faith[1], or explain that Pearl is basically a theological debate designed to show that the Maiden (and those who, like her, die young) deserves the blessedness of her paradisial status and that God's good judgment and mercy shown

by this should be the consolation of the bereaved on earth[2]. Two other important allegorical tacks view Pearl from the Dreamer's standpoint as an allegorical treatment of his own resurrection[3], and from the audience's standpoint in terms of the different meanings and the importance of the pearl symbol[4]. Standard throughout these studies, however, is the consideration of Pearl on the anagogical level of Biblical interpretation and the realization that whatever the final outcome of Pearl is meant to be, the wisdom of the Maiden is certainly characterized as superior to the Dreamer's.

What we have here then basically is a variation of the theme of Patience, without the restrictions concomitant with the use of the Bible as source for the plot. The Dreamer and the Maiden of whom he dreams develop a relationship similar to that between Jonah and God in the homily except that in this version of the relationship, the faulty human being is a genuine contemporary, and divine wisdom, as represented by the Maiden, is a synthesis of the poet's theological expertise. The drama of Pearl is that of the institution of the untransformed Old Law being confronted with the New Law of Grace, and of the attempt to bring the Dreamer to spiritual understanding of his own position and of divine ways. This invented situation permits the Gawain-poet to emphasize even more strongly than was possible in his homilies the differences between caritas and cupiditas. The Maiden appears, not to defend her position in Paradise, as many argue, but to convert the Dreamer, although she does not realize at first how difficult

her task will be. The Dreamer is hopelessly cupidinous; he idolizes the flesh and cannot see beyond the sensus litteralis of the Word, and thus the Maiden's main task is to expose to him the "spirit" beneath the "letter" of Scripture, according to St. Paul's recommendation. She does this by answering in an allegorical manner the Dreamer's literal-minded questions, and in so doing emphasizing the anagogical meaning of her answers. She challenges the Dreamer's interpretation of Scripture by trying to instil in him "faith" as opposed to "good works" as his objective in gaining eternal life. She also uses the method of the theologians to remind the Dreamer that he belongs to a new age in her subtle typological references to the Crucifixion and Christ himself. On the most basic of levels, the Maiden demonstrates the contrast between the frustrations of the transitory world and the peace of eternal salvation through a reinterpretation of cupiditas. Interestingly enough, the characterization of cupiditas in Pearl seems to owe its inspiration on the literal level of the poem to The Romance of the Rose, and thus the poet once again provides a familiar focus for his audience.

The relationship between the two protagonists generates a great deal of thematic irony, for the Dreamer, though he is not conscious of doing it, is stubbornly determined to remain a vetus homo, while the Maiden remains persistently persuasive as a type of novus homo. Ironically, the relief from the sorrow which the Dreamer professes to need is within his grasp throughout his dialogue with the Maiden, and upon being offered it,

he resists it in preference to an earthly, materialistic point of view. The irony of *Pearl* is particularly effective as a result of the *Gawain*-poet's use of a first-person narrator. We understand the Dreamer, the Maiden and their exchange entirely through the Dreamer's eyes and thus entirely from the point of view of a *vetus homo*. This can be comic at times, for though the narrator's wrongheadedness is vividly apparent he is in constant ignorance of it, and continually compounds the disapproval the audience must accord him. The irony afforded by a first-person narrator also has its intellectual ramifications in that the situation created is that of the philosophy of the *novus homo* being conveyed through a type of the *vetus homo*, all without affecting its conveyor and yet, paradoxically, without losing any of its intrinsic wisdom. In effect, the *Gawain*-poet has made the mood of *Patience*, which was to compel the audience to appreciate spirituality by asking it to dispprove of the *vetus homo*'s behaviour, even more sophisticated in *Pearl*. Basically, however, the meaning of *Pearl* reveals itself, as does the meaning of *Patience*, only to the audience.

In its first stanza, *Pearl* begins with the characterization of the Dreamer as one whose thoughts are preoccupied by material things and earthly pleasures. This can be seen first in the delight he expresses for the physical appearance of an unknown pearl, and secondly in the language he uses to express his reaction to the loss of this pearl:

> Allas! I leste hyr in on erbere;
> bur3 gresse to grounde it fro me yot.
> I dewyne, fordokked of luf-daungere
> Of þat pryuy perle wyth-outen spot. 5

The mood of the lines, and particularly the reference to "luf-daungere" in line 11, would remind the audience of the plight of the Lover in Guillaume de Lorris' and Jean de Meun's The Romance of the Rose. The thirteenth-century poem is a complicated allegory describing the adventures of a lover who sets out to win a fair "Rose", and in so doing parallels in allegorical detail all the events of a gentleman's courtship and sexual conquest of a lady. The poem was thus famous for its definition of romantic language and the trials and tribulations of love. The particular echo here at the beginning of Pearl is of the character Danger, who frightens the Lover away from the "blooms"[6], and who thus engineers the Lover's first disappointment in love. The Dreamer's language for pining, which is featured throughout Pearl's first stanza-group, is also generally reminiscent of that used by the Lover in the Romance whenever his suit seems to be hopeless, as, for example, at the beginning of Jean de Meun's section: "'confidence being lost, I'm near despair'" (20, 1).

Although The Romance of the Rose had devotees who took it seriously, the poem was more properly interpreted as a satire on the courtly love myth and as a denunciation of the idolatry and cupidity of devotion to sexual gratification[7]. Pearl's narrator identifies himself with the former persuasion in his blatant imitation of the Romance's language, seemingly

finding it an honourable as well as compelling way to express his personal passion and his grief over its frustration. However, the audience is soon aware that, though the Dreamer does not see any discrepancy, the poet of Pearl is using the device to characterize his narrator negatively. First, it becomes apparent that, though he does not say so explicitly, the obstacle to the narrator's love is not some coy resistance on the part of the beloved, but death: "To þenke hir color so clad in clot./O moul, þou marre3 a myry juele" (22-23). Secondly, in the interests of full expression of his grief, the narrator quotes for good measure the following words of Christ in John 12, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit'". It is clear from the context of his speech that the Dreamer's version, "For vch gresse mot grow of grayne3 dede,/No whete were elle3 to wone3 wone" (31-32), is an employment of the metaphor in purely physical terms. Christ clearly referred to the death of the human body and the release of the eternal soul, but the Dreamer, whose attention is presently focused on the flowers and fruits growing over what we are led to assume is the grave of his lost beloved, seems to be using the quotation to state the biological fact that living things are nourished by dead things.

The narrator condemns himself not only with the literal denseness of his appeal to authority but also with the irony of the metaphor's spiritual meaning. That is, according to Christ, death is the beginning of eternal life, which is cause

to rejoice. The Dreamer is obviously not joyful, and he is in fact becoming rather morbid. This realization of the Dreamer's preoccupation with the sensus litteralis of Scripture can be further expanded by consideration of Augustine's commentary on the Biblical passage:

> Sed altitudinem glorificationis oportuit ut praecederet humilitas passionis: ideo secutus adjunxit, "Amen, amen dico vobis, nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram, mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet: si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum offert." Se autem dicabat. Ipsum erat granum mortificandum et multiplicandum: mortificandum infidelitate Judaeorum, multiplicandum fide populorum. 8

Since the Dreamer is focusing on the buried "seed", we may associate him with the "infidelitate Judaeorum" on the anagogical level of Augustine's comment.

The narrator is further guilty, by his own admission, of allowing his sorrow to persist, even "pa3 resoun sette my seluen sa3t" (52) and "þa3 kynde of Kryst me comfort kenned" (55). The lines support in a secondary manner the wrongheadedness he demonstrates by reference to the New Testament passage.

As noted above, most critical interpretations of Pearl accept the Dreamer's grief at face value and find him in his woe a sympathetic character, but it can be seen by the juxtaposition of information in even the first stanza-group that the Gawain-poet did not mean him to be nor would a contemporary audience relate to him as a sympathetic figure. Though it is plain that the narrator has cause to grieve, it is also obvious that he is luxuriating in the emotion in elaborate language and letting the experience of the emotion stimulate him

intellectually, as we can imagine he has been pleasantly amused by the sensus litteralis of courtly love poetry. But as a result of the manner in which the Gawain-poet has had the character express himself, critics who have recognized the echoes of The Romance of the Rose in this introduction have interpreted it as a true gauge of the Dreamer's emotional state and have consequently been dissatisfied with the poem's later implication that the "pearl" mourned was, in life, a young child. In fact, the language used to mourn and the nature of the person mourned is more than likely a discrepancy devised to support, on the poem's literal level, the information conveyed by the Dreamer's casual use of the Biblical passage, on the allegorical level.

The irony of the introduction of Pearl prepares the audience for the irony of a revelatory dream-vision descending upon the consciousness of such a man. It also defines the problem the Maiden will face with her offer of consolation, and will determine the method of approach she will have to assume and the types of arguments she will select to deal with the Dreamer's problem. The Gawain-poet sustains the atmosphere created in the first stanza-group throughout. Biblical allegory is used to characterize the Dreamer and provide the Maiden's theme, and secular literary conventions are used to support the poem's premise on the literal level of the narrative.

In the second stanza-group the narrator describes his falling asleep and dreaming of being carried away to an otherworldly landscape. His description of the surrealistic garden

in which he finds himself is reminiscent, paradoxically enough, of both the Garden of Sir Mirth in The Romance of the Rose and the hortus conclusus of the Song of Songs. Such ambiguity has created some critical concern over the choice of allegorical interpretation to be made by the audience:

> It is clearly of the utmost importance to decide whether the journey we are to make with the poet takes its starting-point from the world of the Roman, or from that of the Bible. 9

Anticipating the hypothetical conversion of the Dreamer to occur later, Kean concludes that the imagery is meant to remind us of the hortus conclusus of the Bible only and therefore completely discounts any influence exerted by the walled garden of the Romance on this descriptive passage. However, in view of the poet's handling of the opening stanza-group, it would not be surprising to find the "sentence" of both sources connoted here. From the Dreamer's cupidinous point of view, his beautiful surroundings are reminiscent of the inevitable garden of romance literature, and he uses his preferred style of language to describe it. Again we can compare his rhapsodizing, "I hoped þe water were a deuyse/Bytwene myrthes made" (139-40), to a parallel passage in the French poem:

> Willingly would I have found a guide
> Who by means of a ladder or of stile,
> Might bring me therewithin; for so great joy
> And such delight as in that place might be
> Were seldom known to man, as I believe (2, 235-9).

In spite of himself, however, the Dreamer reminds the audience of the garden of the Song of Solomon, as, for example when the imagery of lines 85-89,

> The adubbement of þo doune3 dere
> Garten my goste al greffe for-3ete;
> So frech flauore3 of fryte3 were,
> As fode hit con me fayre refete

recalls the thought of Chapter 4, verse 16 of the Song:

> Blow upon my garden.
> let its fragrance be wafted abroad.
> Let my beloved come to his garden,
> and eat its choicest fruits.

Thus, the irony continues, for though the Dreamer prefers his cupidinous point of view, his audience cannot help but be reminded of the Biblical garden. Gardens are particularly abundant in medieval allegory, for together with the implications of the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane, and the allegorical "sentence" of the Song of Songs, a poet might introduce the framework for a "concern with man's original loss, which brough death into the world, and with the possibility of his recovery and regeneration."[10] The anagogical pre-occupations of Pearl suggest that such is the present intention.

However, the garden also has its cupidinous influences on the literal level of the poem. When the Maiden appears on the other side of the stream which prevents the Dreamer from venturing into an even more spectacular setting, he is overjoyed. We can attribute his joy to the fact that so far he has seen his situation paralleling the Lover's of The Romance of the Rose, and the appearance of the Maiden, "Hyr vysayge whyt as playn yuore" (178), must indicate that, like the final part of the secular poem where the Lover's goal is the accessible "Ivory Tower", his beloved is within reach. (Of course, the Dreamer's presumptuousness is not based on the desire for sexual

gratification which is the preoccupation of the Lover in The Romance of the Rose.) Although it is not stated explicitly here who the Maiden is, the effect of her presence upon the Dreamer is sufficient to indicate that she is associated with his sorrow. Familiarity with the Romance and appreciation of the Dreamer's references to it would confirm on the poem's literal level that she is the one whose absence has caused so much eloquent "grief".

The Dreamer confirms this suspicion in the next stanza-group when he describes the Maiden's pearl-like appearance and his delight with his visionary fortune. However, his delight and his intense self-interest lead him, ironically, into making a bad impression on the visionary Maiden.

> "O perle," quoþ I, "in perle3 py3t,
> Art þou my perle þat I haf playned,
> Regretted by myn one, on ny3te?
> Much longeyng haf I for þe layned,
> Syþen into gresse þou me agly3te;
> Pensyf, payred, I an forpayned,
> & þou in a lyf of lykyng ly3te
> In Paradys erde, of stryf vnstrayned.
> What wyrde hat3 hyder my iuel vayned,
> & don me in þis del & gret daunger?
> For we in teynne wern towen & twayned,
> I haf ben a joyle3 juelere." (241-52)

Though he does not realize it, the Dreamer's reproachful and literal-minded perception of his experience warns the Maiden that she has a challenge on her hands, and though she just previously "Ca3te of her coroun of grete tresore,/& haylsed me wyth a lote ly3te" (237-38), at the Dreamer's words she immediately "Set on hyr coroun of perle orient,/& soberly after þenne con ho say" (255-56), in quick recognition that her

role must be that of instructress to the cupidinous Dreamer.

The wisdom of her approach to teaching is manifested in her thorough appreciation of the situation. It is appropriate that she begin her argument at the Dreamer's level, as she does by subtle allusion to The Romance of the Rose: "'For þat þou leste wat3 bot a rose,/þat flowred & fayled as kynde hyt gef'" (269-70). She thus attempts, initially, to show him that his so-called loss is nothing over which to grieve. She next attacks his idea that fortune has been unkind to him: "'& þou hat3 called þy wyrde a þef,/þat o3t of no3t hat3 mad þe cler'" (273-74), hinting at the spiritual gains available after death.

Realizing that he must have done something to displease the object of his joy, the Dreamer quickly assumes an elaborately agreeable and obedient demeanor:

> "To be excused I make request;
> I trawed my perle don out of dawe3:
> Now haf I fonde hyt, I schal ma feste,
> & wony wyth hyt in schyr wod-schawe3,
> & loue my Lorde & al his lawe3,
> þat hat3 me bro3t þys blys ner.
> Now were I at yow by-3onde þise wawe3,
> I were a ioyfol jueler!" (281-88)

As we might expect, there is a comparable situation in The Romance of the Rose, in the episode of the Lover's required self-subjugation to the God of Love:

> "Sire, to you I give
> Myself most willingly; nor will I strive
> To make resistance to your will..." (8, 162-64).

But the wise Maiden sees through the Dreamer's facile propitiation, and lists for him, in simple terms, the mistakes his limited consciousness has led him to make:

> "þou says þou trawe3 me in þis dene,
> By-cawse þou may wyth y3en me se;
> Anoþer þou says, in þys countre
> þy self schal won wyth me ry3t here;
> þe prydde, to passe þys water fre, --
> þat may no ioyfol jueler." (295-300)

Her attack here addresses itself specifically to the Dreamer's main problem of insisting on the face value of all knowledge and experience. His belief that he has rediscovered his "pearl" in the physical sense is a variation of the more important problem of failure to understand beyond the sensus litteralis of Scripture and theology. Accordingly, the Maiden begins the first of many Biblical allusions designed to instil in the Dreamer the wisdom of the philosophy of the novus homo:

> "I halde þat iueler lyttel to prayse,
> þat leve3 wel þat he se3 wyth y3e,
> ...
> 3e setten hys worde3 ful westernays,
> þat leue3 no þynk bot 3e hit sy3e;
> & þat is a poynt o sorquydry3e,
> þat vche god mon may euel byseme,
> To leue no tale be true to try3e,
> Bot þat hys one skyl may deme." (301-2; 307-12)

Her words at line 302 recall those of Christ to Thomas, a disciple who showed propensity equal to the Dreamer's for believing in physical proof: "Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.'" (John 20.29) Augustine's comment on this remark was to emphasize the anagogical theme of separation of the interchange:

> But whether it was by gazing only, or also by touching that he saw and believed, what follows rather proclaims and commends the faith of the Gentiles: 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'" 11

It may be construed that the Maiden implies the same idea of the theme of separation, with her words, in an attempt to show the Dreamer that his belief and that of men like him will condemn them and number them among the "many" who will be separated from the "few" at the Last Judgment. In addition, in terms of the poem's symbolism and imagery, the passage serves to confirm the characterization of the Dreamer as an embodiment of the Old Law and to begin the characterization of the Maiden as the embodiment of the wisdom of the New Law of Grace. The Maiden, regardless of whether she is compared to Reason of The Romance of the Rose, Philosophy of The Consolation of Philosophy, the Virgin, or Christ, demonstrates in her knowledge and point of view complete understanding of Christian theology and spiritual thinking. In this regard she may be compared to the God of Patience and to the central consciousness of Cleanness, for her philosophy is the "courteous" and "patient" one, and her message is important not only to the fictional human protagonist but also to the audience. As in Patience, the appeal is to the audience's intellectual preference, for the contrast implied between the two characters in Pearl is very strong. In addition, since the Dreamer is meant to be a contemporary and it is implied that his consciousness is very close to that of the audience, it can be inferred that the demonstration of cupiditas and caritas as a "sentence" is a very topical one.

The Maiden continues her step-by-step denunciation of the Dreamer's point of view, while the hapless Dreamer comes

to the slow realization that contrary to his first belief he is not to continue his existence here in the paradisial garden, reunited with the Maiden. Slowly, he perceives that the Maiden is delivering a sermon to him for his own betterment. In that spirit, he draws upon his literary experience to develop a façade of humility designed to arouse the Maiden's pity. He does so in as Scriptural a fashion as he can approximate:

> Thenne demed I to þat damyselle:
> "Ne worþe no wrathþe vnto my Lorde,
> If rapely I raue spornande in spelle,
> My herte wat3 al wyth mysse remorde;
> As wallande water got3 out of welle,
> I do me ay in hys myserecorde.
> ...
> I am bot mol, & manere3 mysse;
> Bot Crystes mersy & Mary & Jon, --
> þise arn þe grounde of alle my blysse"
> (361-66, 382-84).

It is worth noting in terms of the characterization of the Dreamer as a vetus homo that in his conversation with the Maiden his quotation of scripture is always based on the Old Testament. The first lines of the above quotation recall Abraham's in Genesis 18.32, "'Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once'" when the patriarch was in the process of pleading with God for the sparing of Sodom and Gomorrah. As noted earlier, the scene was expanded in Cleanness to demonstrate the courtesy of the character interpreted by scholars as a type of Christian faith.[12] The Dreamer of Pearl presumably hopes to make the same kind of courteous expression of humility and faith, though ostensibly he is pointing out

to the Maiden that his state, untransformed as hers has been, leads him to be somewhat tactless and brash. However, his words continue to identify him negatively, for they are words of the Old Testament. Moreover, even though he is imitating a positive figure, the audience knows enough of his true character to realize that he can demonstrate none of Abraham's faith and yet all of the pre-Christian ignorance. The boldness of his plagiarism is matched only by the boldness of his hypocrisy.

Lines 364-6, quoted above, also refer the audience to Psalm 21 (A. V. 22). 14, a psalm of David:

> I am poured out like water,
> and all my bones are out of joint;
> my heart is like wax,
> it is melted within my breast.

Though the Dreamer uses the Old Testament passage to express the debilitating grief that has made him appear (against his "better" nature) unpleasant to the Maiden, the Gawain-poet found the passage appropriate in two ways as a continuation of the irony directed against the character. First, the psalm expresses desolation over the loss of God, and not any earthly and material good, and thus, in the mouth of the Dreamer, becomes almost sacrilege. Ironically, however, the Dreamer should be expressing desolation over the loss of God, for contrary to what he thinks, God could provide adequate comfort for the condition he is in. Secondly, Augustine's interpretation of the Psalm emphasizes its allusions to the Crucifixion and allegorizes the part played by Christ's passion in lifting the

veil from Scripture and exposing the truth of Christian belief to the vetus homo:

> Cor ipsius scriptura ipsius, id est, sapientia ipsius quae erat in scripturus. Clausa enim erat Scriptura; nemo illam intellegebat; crucifixus est Dominus, et liquefacta est sicut cera, ut omnes infirmi intellegerent scripturam. Nam inde et uelum templi scissum est, quia quod uelabatur reullatum est. 13

Thus, although the Dreamer is able to speak dramatically of the melting of his heart, he is not learning from the allegorical "sentence" of the words to let Christ reveal the "spirit" behind the "letter" of Scripture.

Line 382 quoted above is another echo of Abraham's plea in Genesis 18. 27: "'Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.'" Again the juxtaposition is an ironical one, for while Abraham was sincerely conscious of his humble position, the Dreamer is, quite literally, "bot mol & manere3 mysse" in speech and philosophy.

However, though the audience may have some doubt about the sincerity of the narrator's claim that "Bot Crystes mersy & Mary & Jon, --/þise arn þe grounde of alle my blysse", the Maiden seems to be satisfied that the Dreamer's point of view has changed somewhat. He is admittedly at least to the point where he is thinking of Christian figures, and in response, the Maiden relents temporarily and invites the Dreamer to walk and talk with her and learn something of her new status.

But in the security of having gained approval from the Maiden, the Dreamer reverts to his old, literal-minded ways.

His humility behind him, the Dreamer expresses his difficulty in believing that the Maiden is now a bride of Christ and numbers among the blessed in heaven. His knowledge of spiritual ways being limited, he accuses her of blasphemy, assuming that she means her status is equal to or better than the Virgin's. The Maiden must then explain that though the Virgin reigns highest, persons such as herself have so pleased God that all are crowned and also reign in complete equality and peace. She uses courtly language to explain the "cortysye" of the paradisial arrangement in this regard in concession to the limited understanding of her earthly student. Her use of this mode of interpretation is reminiscent of the same device in Cleanness where the bliss of spiritual understanding was explained in terms familiar to an audience used to the manners and customs of earthly society.

The Dreamer exposes all of his literal-minded failings in his passionate protestation of the Maiden's good fortune:

> "That cortaysye is to fre of dede,
> 3yf hyt be soth þat þou cone3 saye;
> þou lyfed not two 3er in oure þede;
> þou cowþe3 neuer God nauþer plese ne pray,
> Ne neuer nawþer Pater ne Crede;
> & quen mad on þe fyrste day!
> I may not traw, so God me spede,
> þat God wolde wyrþe so wrange away.
> Of countes, damysel, par ma fay,
> Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate,
> Oþer elle3 a lady of lasse aray;
> Bot a quene! -- hit is to dere a date." (481-92)

The Dreamer's argument is, ironically enough, consistent with an earthly point of view. He cannot accept that God would honour anyone, especially anyone so young at the time of her

transformation and so ignorant of rote liturgy, with such high privilege, unless the person had proof of the performance of a virtuous life. He shows in this speech complete misunderstanding of God's mercy and of the necessary requirements of Christian living, no understanding at all of the equality and liberality that exist in Paradise, and furthermore, cannot even find it within him to rejoice over the honour paid to the object of his "luf-longyng". The Dreamer, for all his claims of belief in the New Testament of Grace, actually believes in the Old Law of Justice, and though he lives literally in Christian times, figuratively he exists in the times of the "false vassals".

It is then that the Maiden must resume her role as instructress, which she does by employing a homiletic tactic. Her exemplum is the parable of the kingdom concerning the Labourers in the Vineyard, taken from Matthew 20. 1-16. She retells the parable at length throughout the ninth and tenth stanza-groups of Pearl and relates her own situation to that of the Labourers who come late to the Vineyard. Like them, she received her due reward according to the agreement made and in spite of the grumbling of the Labourers who believed, as the Dreamer does, that less labour deserves less reward.

The use of the Vineyard Parable in Pearl is a classic example of the Gawain-poet's ability to interweave literal sense with allegorical "sentence" in the handling of a pertinent Biblical element. The Vineyard Parable is entirely suited to the surface level of the debate, which is ostensibly to

demonstrate to the Dreamer God's mercy and to justify the Maiden's prestigious position. In allegorical terms, the parable provides further information on the narrator's spiritual blindness, and by way of the exegetical commentary commonly associated with it, serves as ironic condemnation of his views.

The typical interpretation of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard is that the Labourers who come to the vineyard late in the day represent the Christians who have come under the dispensation of the New Law, while the early-comers represent the Hebrews who lived under the domination of the Old Law. The penny to be paid to all equally is the reward of eternal life. According to patristic interpretation, "Judaei de capite vertentur in cauda, et gentes de cauda mutabuntur in capite"[14], and in this sense the words of the parable, "So the last will be first and the first last" (Matt. 20. 16) are fulfilled. The parable is a variation on the theme of separation, as the Maiden points out by recalling the words of Matthew 22. 14, "'For mony ben called, þa3 fewe be myke3'" (572). The Dreamer is very closely associated with the early-comers of the parable, for just as they grumble when they perceive that all will be paid equally regardless of hours worked, "'& þenne þe fyrst bygonne to pleny,/& sayden þat þay hade trauayled sore'" (549-50), the Dreamer has expressed his indignation over the Maiden's enviable reward. In anagogical terms, he will be among the spiritually Hebraic who will come last, if at all. On the level of instruction the Maiden hopes that her use of the parable will help the Dreamer to understand

the Kingdom, as was its purpose in Matthew, and perhaps to avert the fate he is sure to experience if he persists in thinking like a vetus homo. In retrospect it can be seen that the Maiden's sermon technique is similar in a condensed fashion to that which the Gawain-poet uses in Cleanness, for her use of the Biblical passage, anagogic symbolism and personal identification is designed for a specific audience's long-term edification.

However, in spite of her pains, the Dreamer is not to be convinced. As noted, the Dreamer always quotes the Old Testament whenever he appeals to Biblical authority, and this he does again in an attempt to refute the philosophy of the Maiden's sermon:

> "Me þynk þy tale vnresoun-able;
> Godde3 ry3t is redy & euer-more rert,
> Oþer Holy Wryt is bot a fable.
> In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte,
> þat speke3 a poynt determynable: --
> 'þou quyte3 vchon as hys desserte,
> þou hy3e Kyng, ay pertermynable.'" (590-96)

The words recall those of Psalm 61 (A.V. 62), 11-12:

> Once God has spoken;
> twice have I heard this:
> that power belongs to God;
> and that to thee, O Lord, belongs
> steadfast love.
> For thou dost requite a man
> according to his work.

The Dreamer's literal understanding of the psalm justifies his claim to a more expert understanding of divine ways than he believes the Maiden to have. The Maiden's response is to emphasize God's generosity and grace:

> "He laue3 hys gyfte3 as water of dyche,
> Oþer gote3 of golf þat neuer charde.
> Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard
> To hym þat mat3 in synne rescoghe" (607-10).

Her rejoinder, though admirable for its evident faith in divine mercy, does not on first impression seem to be making a responsible reply to the Dreamer's argument. However, R.E. Kaske has noted that the Maiden's words appear to be based on John 1. 14, 16-8:

> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;...And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

Kaske thus translates the Maiden's second sentence: "'The liberality of intimacy and grace of Him Who was ever hidden (God the Father) is abundant to Him Who makes rescue in sin (God the Son, incarnate in Christ).'"[15] The Maiden's comment can therefore be seen as a subtle condemnation of the Dreamer's dependence on the imperfect knowledge men had of God before Christ's coming. Specifically, the Dreamer has forgotten or has never appreciated that the "Word" which he quotes has since become "flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth", and that therefore the Old Testament requires a new interpretation. Kaske further notes that patristic interpretation of either of these two passages inevitably touches on the thought of the other, and among examples, quotes Augustine on Psalm 61. 12-3:

> "Semel locutus est Deus", unum Verbum habet unigentum Deum. In illo Verbo sunt omnia, quia per Verbum facta sunt omnia. Vnum Verbum habet, ubi omnes thesauri sapientiae absconditi Vnum Verbum habet: "Semel locutus est Deus". 16

Kaske concludes:

> The pair of allusions seems to present...a tacit opposition between Old Testament and New Testament teachings concerning salvation -- the dreamer's Old Testament verses emphasizing the rigor of the Law, the Maiden's New Testament verses, man's redemption through the Atonement...The dreamer, it appears, has erred partly through his own limited comprehension of Ps. 61. 12-3, somewhat resembling the preoccupation with the littera of the Old Testament often attributed to the Jews by medieval Christian exegetes. 17

The findings of this study support the theme that has informed Pearl all along. The Dreamer thinks in consistently cupidinous terms while the Maiden thinks in consistently spiritual terms, and though she has the patience and former experience to deal with the Dreamer's cupidity, the two are essentially opponents and their exchange is a form of the archetypal debate between Christ and the Pharisees.

From this point on in the poem, the Maiden refers often to the theme of the Old Law requiring an adjusted point of view as a result of Christ's birth. Her method is to remind the Dreamer of the Crucifixion as often as their conversation makes possible. Here, for example, she likens the abundance of God's grace to the pouring out of blood at the Crucifixion:

> "Innoghe þer wax out of þat welle,
> Blod & water of brode wounde;
> þe blod vus bo3t fro bale of helle,
> & delyuered vus of þe deth secounde;
> þe water is baptem, þe soþe to telle
> þat fol3ed be glayue so grymly grounde,
> þat wasche3 away þe gylte3 felle
> þat Adam wyth in deth vus drounde." (649-56)

At one point she also satirizes the Dreamer's reliance on passages of the Old Testament when she says:

> "Dauid in Sauter, if euer 3e sy3 hit:--
> 'Lorde, þy seruant dra3 neuer to dome,
> For non lyuyande to þe is justyfyet'" (698-700).

These lines are based on Psalm 143.2: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for no man living is righteous before thee". She thus demonstrates that a literal reading of Old Testament material will condemn the Dreamer as easily as support his arguments, and the content of her quote aptly mocks the Dreamer's self-professed knowledge of justice.

In answer to the less important question of whether she personally deserves her exalted state the Maiden quotes Luke 18. 15-7, "But Jesus called them to him, saying, 'Let the children come unto me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Her use of authority here is as much a justification of her own position as it is advice to the Dreamer concerning his own eventual death, for two stanzas earlier she had quoted the precise recommendations of Psalm 23 (A.V. 24) regarding the attainment of eternal life:

> "'Lorde, quo scal klymbe þy hy3e hylle,
> Oþer rest wyth-inne þy holy place?'
> Hymself to on-sware he is not dylle: --
> 'Hondelynge3 harme þat dyt not ille,
> þat is of hert boþe clene & ly3t,
> þer schal hys steppe stable stylle.'
> þe innosent is ay saf by ry3t.
>
> "'The ry3twys man also sertayn
> Approche he schal þat proper pyle,
> þat take3 not her lyf in vayne,
> Ne lauere3 her ne3bor with no gyle.'" (678-88)

The Maiden is capable of intertwining both Old and New Testament material in her method of instruction, as she demonstrates here, and thus it is established that far from being prejudiced about the value of each testament, she uses both in the best patristic fashion, which was to emphasize the correspondence of the Testaments and the continuity of the Bible as a whole.

In stanza-group 18 the Maiden links the themes of her lessons on spirituality and the value of belief in Christ with her anagogic recommendation, as well as with her own position, the emblem of it, and the Dreamer's references to pearls. Her authority is the passage from Matthew 13. 15 ("'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it'"):

> "þer is þe blys þat con not blynne,
> þat þe jueler so3te þur3 perre pres,
> & solde alle hys goud, boþe wolen & lynne,
> To bye hym a perle wat3 mascelle3." (729-32)

As pointed out earlier, Jerome's commentary on this parable is a straightforward comparison of the Law of Justice and the Law of Grace:

> Aliis verbis idipsum quod supra dicitur. Bonae margaritae, quas quaerit institor, Lex et prophetae sunt. Audi, Marcion; audi Manichaee: bonae margaritae sunt Lex et prophetae, et notitia veteris Instrumenti. Unum autem est pretiosissum margaritum, scientia Salvatoris, et sacramentum passionis illus, et resurrectionis arcanum. Quod cum invenerit homo negotiator, umque mysteria, et observationes pristinas, in quibus inculpate vicerat, quasi puramenta contemnit et quisquilias, ut Christum lucrificiat. Non quo inventio novae margaritae condemnatio sit veterium margaritum: sed quo comparatione ejus omnis alia gemma vilior sit. 18

The Maiden's clever assimilation of her topics and her point of view is the keynote of Pearl and represents the Gawain-poet's creation of a most complicated image. In retrospect it can be recalled that the narrator of Pearl began his monologue with the frankly materialistic appraisal of the beauty of a pearl, and that he developed the image to indicate that his suffering was being caused by the loss of a pearl. Further image development reveals the lost "pearl" to have been a beloved person. Consequently, when the Dreamer encounters the Maiden of his vision and is as a result cheered, it is not surprising that the main feature of her dress and ornamentation is pearl decoration. Finally, by way of the Gawain-poet's emendation of the "merchant" of Matthew to "jeweller", we are reminded of the Dreamer's complaint at lines 251-2: "'Fro we in twynne wern towen & twayned,/I haf ben a joyle3 juelere.'" Presumably the Dreamer figured himself as a jeweller to correspond to the allegorizing of his daughter as a pearl: in life he was her creator and keeper. As will be remembered the Maiden countered the Dreamer's symbolism with symbolism of her own: "'For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose'" (269), thus implying that his actual material loss was slight. But now, by quoting Matthew, and changing "merchant" to "jeweller", she implies that there has been a "pearl" lost: "the most precious pearl, knowledge of the Saviour, the sacramant of the Passion, and the resurrection", as Jerome describes it. Her quotation thus contains all at once her wise perception of the Dreamer's real loss and real grief, her counsel that triumph

over the loss and grief is found in the abandonment of cupidinous thinking (for thus is interpreted "went and sold all that he had") and the direction of the way to the kingdom of heaven ("Again, the kingdom is like a merchant in search of fine pearls"). The Dreamer voiced a literal desire to seek a "pearl of great value"; little did he know how allegorically apt his search was. Accordingly, he finds the "pearl" he sought, little realizing that she figuratively _is_ "the most precious pearl, knowledge of the Saviour, the sacrament of the Passion, and the resurrection" in all she tries to teach and show him. This is intellectual irony of the most striking variety, engineered by anticipation of a Biblical passage the philosophy of which permeates the whole of the poem.

At this point it would be worthwhile to recall the use of the pearl-image in _Cleanness_, at lines 1115-32.[19] Although the Maiden of _Pearl_ sums up very simply, "'I rede þe forsake þe worlde wode,/& porchace þy perle maskelles'" (743-4) and thus does not stress the penitential aspect of her message as much as she might have, the audience of _Pearl_, which presumably already has spiritual understanding, might appreciate the advice to "forsake þe worlde wode" and reconfirm its faith through penance.

Despite the Miaden's trump card, however, the Dreamer's attitude seems not to have been changed at all. Her mentioning of pearls stimulates the Dreamer's earlier interest in the material beauty of the gems, as is evidenced by his response to her counsel to buy a "maskelles perle":

"O maskele3 Perle, in perle3 pure,
þat bere3, quoþ I, "þe perle of prys,
Quo formed þe by fayre fygure?
þat wro3t þy wede, he wat3 ful wys" (745-8).

The indication that his point of view is as cupidinous as ever is supported by his following words, which relate again to Jean de Meun's Romance of the Rose: "'þy beaute com neuer of nature; Pymalyon paynted neuer þy vys'" (749-50). In the Dreamer's appraisal of the Maiden's beauty, the Gawain-poet refers the audience to the familiar story of Pygmalion and his adored statue, which is mentioned in The Romance of the Rose in a similar context concerning the striving of Art with Nature: "Pygmalion could not carve Nature's mold" (78, 140), and which is also related at length later on in the poem (97). In his consideration of the thematic significance of the Pygmalion story in the Romance, D.W. Robertson notes that it appears just as the Lover's soon-to-be-conquered goal begins to be referred to as an "image" instead of a "rose". By introducing the Pygmalion story it is likely that the author wished to suggest the absurdity to which the Lover's idolatry has grown, in accordance with general medieval interpretation of the meaning of Pygmalion's adoration. The story itself was not enjoyed for its literal romanticism of a perfect sculpture becoming a living person, but interpreted as the loss of reason associated with intense physical desire: "Pygmalion grew so hot in the pursuit of his little phantasm that the pleasure generated by his imagination deprived him of reason and he thought the statue was alive".[20] Robertson concludes:

> To turn briefly to the conclusion of the Roman, if the dreamer's "rose" is an idol image like the image of Pygmalion, this tells us a great deal about the dreamer himself. He too has created an image, an idol in the mind.... 21

The Dreamer of Pearl has also, as we have seen, created an "idol in the mind" in the form of his lost "pearl", and if the Gawain-poet chose to have the Dreamer refer to Pygmalion at this point it must be assumed that his idolatry has not lessened, particularly if it is here taken into account that he is doting on the physical beauty of the Maiden before him. If the Dreamer has changed at all, it is in substituting the idolization he originally nurtured for the pearl he lost for the magnificent figure of his vision.

In answer to the Dreamer's question, the Maiden begins to allude to details of the Biblical book of the Revelation to St. John, or Apocalypse. Dependence on this section of the New Testament increases until the Dreamer is finally treated to an experience which in all details parallels John's revelation. The Maiden first explains that she is among the 144,000 Virgins who in reward for their innocence and purity are designated the Brides of Christ:

> Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name written on their foreheads...It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.
> (Rev. 14.14-5)

Her introduction of apocalyptic material provides her with a

last ditch effort to persuade the Dreamer to a better point of view with rhetoric, and in so doing she employs what Ian Bishop calls the exegetical "method of the theologians":

> There is one passage in Pearl that affords indisputable evidence that the author was familiar with the "method of the theologians" and that he perfectly understood its essential characteristics. The passage comes between ll. 793 and 960, and is concerned with the associated figures of the Lamb and of Jerusalem. The author does not use the technical terms of the "sacred science", but it is easy to distinguish the sensus litteralis in the Old Testament which passes through the sensus allegoricus, fulfilled in the Gospel, in order to reach the sensus anagogicus as it is revealed in the Apocalypse. The Maiden demonstrates how the texts from these three sources "accord" with one another. 22

As Bishop points out, the Maiden uses an image of the Lamb in the Old Testament when she paraphrases Isaiah 53. 4-7:

> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,so he opened not his mouth.

Her version is:

> "As a schep to þe sla3t þer lad wat3 he;
> &, as lombe þat clypper in lande nem,
> So closed he hys mouth fro vch quere,
> Quen Jue3 jugged in Jerusalem.
> ...
> For synne he set hym self in vayn,
> þat neuer hade non hym self to wolde." (801-12)

The Maiden then shows the Dreamer that the words of John the Baptist in John 1. 29, "'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away

the sin of the world'",

> "'Lo, Gode3 Lombe as trwe as ston,
> þat dot3 away þe synne3 dry3e
> þat alle þyse worlde hat3 wro3t vpon'" (822-4),

echo Isaiah's and foresee those of the Apocalypse, "I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5. 6):

> "Thys Jerusalem Lombe hade neuer pechche
> Of oþer huee bot quyt jolyf,
> þat mote be maskelle mo3t on streche,
> For wolle quyte so ronk & ryf" (841-4).

Thus, through the use of Biblical allegory, the Maiden impresses upon the Dreamer the profound results of the Crucifixion, stressing its prefigurement in the Old Testament, its occurence in the New Testament and its outcome in the Apocalypse, and in so doing the Maiden makes explicit use of traditional exegetical practice in order to make perfectly clear the wisdom of her position and the need for the Dreamer to adopt it. Any members of Pearl's audience who had not yet appreciated the quadruplex exposition of Biblical allegory in the poem would now be forced to consider the past progression of the Maiden's participation in the debate.

And still the Dreamer is not converted. His response to the Maiden's description of heavenly Jerusalem is to resort to the type of humility he can best express by reference to imagery of the Old Testament and The Romance of the Rose, which he has depended upon all along: "'I am bot mokke & mul amonc./ & þou so ryche a reken rose'" (905-6).

This remark prefaces his enquiry concerning the domestic life of the 144,000 Virgins:

> "Haf 3e no wone3 in castel-walle,

> Ne maner þer 3e may mete & wone?
> ...
> I trowe al-one þe lenge & loute,
> To loke on þe glory of þys gracious gote"
> (917-18; 933-34).

The Dreamer, preoccupied with the material world, finds his imagination unequal to the thought of how such great numbers are housed and is convinced that the sight of such a building would be both an interesting experience and an aesthetic pleasure. The irony of the Dreamer's having received such a profound vision and not being able to give it the proper respect is at its climax here in his literal-minded requests. His resistance to even the most explicit of rhetoric has become almost comic, and the audience of Pearl would be forced at this point to not only dismiss any lingering sympathy it might have for the human protagonist, but also admire the Maiden's enduring patience.

The Maiden grants the Dreamer's request to see the Paradise she knows, although she cautions that his experience must be as an observer only, since in his present condition there can be no admittance to the heavenly kingdom. It must be understood that in granting his request, though it appears that the Maiden is conceding to the Dreamer's cupidinous desires, she is undoubtedly hoping that since he has not been persuaded by the intellectual approach, he will be moved by the privilege of a sacred vision. The Maiden has reconciled herself to her pupil's relentless reliance on physical evidence and dogmatic faith and so, by obtaining him a vision of Paradise, she will be putting in visible form, and therefore in a form accessible

to the Dreamer's limited range of understanding, the concepts she has been trying to teach him.

Her anticipation of the success of her final manoeuver can be read in the words she uses to inform the Dreamer of the great privilege he will be experiencing: "'Bot of þe Lombe I haue þe aquylde/For a sy3t þer-of þur3 gret fauor'" (967-8). Her use of the word "aquyled" suggests that the Maiden may herself have The Romance of the Rose in mind, for in the French poem "Bel Acueil" (Fair Welcome), the son of Courtesy, instructs the Lover in how he may see the object of his love-longing (58). Allegorically, the Maiden is imitating that role, for though the Dreamer may not appreciate her motive as she means it, she is certainly procuring for him the possible end of his sorrowing. In her language the Maiden is attempting to coax the Dreamer into the right psychological mood by suggesting that if he sees himself as a type of the "Lover" then he should now anticipate a type of the "gratification" the Lover received. She recognizes courtly love language as the only type which can arrest the Dreamer's attention and so uses it here to prepare him for what she hopes will finally change his attitude.

Stanza-groups 18 and 19 contain the Dreamer's impression of his Apocalyptic vision. Critics have noted that the passage does not stray very far from a word-for-word summary of the Revelation to St. John,and have found this part of Pearl uninteresting and rather dogmatic for that reason. Explanations for the quality of this part of Pearl vary. P.M. Kean explains that

> The result of this illusion of reported speech and of close dependence on a familiar biblical text, while it certainly does nothing to diminish the magnificence of a splendid passage, is to present it a distance -- almost as a lesson read in church, a retelling, recognizably at some remove, of an impressive and meaningful story. 23

Ian Bishop submits that

> In his description of the Heavenly City the author is not trying to emulate Canto XXXIII of the Paradisio; it is not his intention to deploy all his poetic powers to enable the reader to experience what it is like to perceive the Beatific Vision. His particular reason for adhering to the text of the Apocalypse is that he wishes to concentrate on the aspect of Deity that is most relevant to this poem about a pure and innocent child who suffered an untimely death. 24

Louis Blenkner meanwhile suggests that

> ...the poet adheres strictly to the details of the Apocalypse precisely because the contemplatives tend to shun all corporeal images except those authenticated by Sacred Scripture. 25

Although it is generally agreed that the poetry here is flat, apologies such as the above for the Gawain-poet's sudden loss of talent are, on the whole, unsatisfactory. Therefore it has to be surmised that if the Dreamer's apocalyptic description is dull in spirit, it must have been made so deliberately, and that this section is yet another means of insight into the Dreamer's character. Indeed, a literal and unimaginative dependence upon authority is a method of narration which would accord very well with what we know of the Dreamer's personality so far. Hence, the Gawain-poet shows that though the Dreamer has had the benefit of a paradisial vision, he has obtained none of the spiritual awareness which might be expected

of a more spiritual candidate. The Dreamer recognizes that his vision accords with the New Testament prophecy but his reaction is to embrace this discovery literally and to enjoy the physical beauty of the spectacle in the bodily sense. The "motif lines", that is, the lines which link five stanzas together by occuring in variation at the beginnings and endings of each stanza, are all, in stanza-group 17, some form of "As deuyse3 hit þe apostel Jhon" (984). Thus the Dreamer's constant refrain as he describes the vision is, "I knew hit by his deuysement/In þe Apocalyppe3, þe apostel John" (1019-20), "As John hym wryte3 3et more I sy3e" (1033), and so on. The effect is such that it appears that the Dreamer is more enchanted by the fact that his experience conforms to the next text than he is appreciative of what his experience means and predicts. If we recall that the Dreamer borrowed imagery from The Romance of the Rose to describe the supernatural landscape in stanza-groups 2 and 3, it is not surprising to find him groping for literary authority in his present situation. As a result a great deal of the mysticism and enthusiasm with which we experience the apostle's vision in the Bible is missing in Pearl. This is selective editing on the Gawain-poet's part.

Furthermore, the Dreamer appreciates only the visually spectacular aspects of the New Jerusalem, as is to be expected of him. In Revelation, John uses gem imagery to suggest the radiance of his vision in simile:

> And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. (Rev. 21. 10-11)

His account, therefore, stresses the glory of the heavenly city itself, and his similes exist partially to visualize for his audience what it could not otherwise imagine. In Pearl, the Dreamer is struck by the sumptuousness of the gems and other fine materials themselves, as can be seen in a comparable passage:

> As John þe apostel hit sy3 wyth sy3t,
> I sy3e þat cyty of gret renoun,
> Jerusalem so nwe & ryally dy3t,
> As hit wat3 ly3t fro þe heuen adoun.
> þe bor3 wat3 al of brende golde bry3t,
> As glemande glas burnist broun,
> Wyth gentyl gemme3 anvnder py3t,
> Wyth bantele3 twelue on basyng boun;
> þe foundemounte3 twelue of riche tenoun;
> Vch tabelment wat3 a serlype3 ston;
> As derely deuyse3 þis ilk toun
> In Apocalyppe3 þe apostel John. (985-6)

Unlike St. John, the Dreamer finds the rich ornamentation of the New Jerusalmen the most striking aspect of all.

More telling evidence of the Dreamer's point of view in this section occurs in the last stanza of the eighteenth group when he describes his personal reaction to the sight:

> An-vnder mone so gret merwayle
> No fleschly hert ne my3t endeure,
> As quen I blusched vpon þat bayle,
> So ferly þer-of wat3 þe fasure.
> I stod as stylle as dased quayle,
> For ferly of þat freuch fygure,
> þat felde I nawþer reste ne trauayle,
> So wat3 I rauyste wyth glymme pure.
> For I dar say wyth conciens sure,
> Hade bodyly burne abiden þat bone,
> þa3 alle clerke3 hym hade in cure,
> His lyf were loste anvnder mone. (1081-92)

Not only do the words "fleshly" in line 1082 and "bodyly" in line 1090 remind us of the cupidinous attitude of the speaker, but the overall language of the passage is also once again reminiscent of the elaborate poetry of The Romance of the Rose. One is particularly reminded of Genius' enthusiastic description of the Garden of Sir Mirth:

> "Though I'd proceed aright, I do not know
> How properly to speak; for there's no heart
> That can conceive -- no human tongue describe --
> The mighty worth and beauty of the things
> Contained therein, nor the delightful games,
> The everlasting joys, sincere and great,
> That are experienced by those within. (94, 67-73)

Although the Dreamer cannot be convicted of the disrespect for the New Jerusalem which would be implied in comparing it literally to the Garden of the Romance, the similarity of the passages indicates that once again he is borrowing from a stock of romantic imagery to express himself.

However, perhaps the most condemning section of the Dreamer's narrative occurs when he spies the wounded Lamb. Instead of the remorse we might expect from a good Christian, the Dreamer relates:

> But a wounde ful wyde & weete con wyse
> Anende hys hert, þur3 hyde torente.
> Of his quyte syde his blod out-sprent.
> Alas! þo3t I, who did þat spyt?
> Ani breste for bale a3t haf forbrent
> Er he þerto hade had delyt. (1135-40)

Though Christ's wound has moved the Dreamer, it has obviously not (as his naive question shows) made him aware of Christ as the saviour of of mankind. The Dreamer has not, to put it simply, gained awareness of either Christ or the Crucifixion.

The vision soon concludes by way of the Dreamer's own self-interest. Among the 144,000 Virgins the Dreamer spots the Maiden herself, and in spite of all the instruction he received from her, and the explicit warning to remain an observer only, he is seized with the romantic longing of which he has always been a victim and decides to cross the boundary made by the river:

> Hit payed hym not þat I so flonc
> Ouer meruelous mere3, so mad arayde,
> Of raas þa3 I were rasch & ronc,
> 3et rapely þerinne I wat3 restayed. (1165-8)

All critics of Pearl conclude that in this final section the Dreamer shows evidence of having been successfully converted to a spiritual point of view, and that the entire poem has described the detailed progress of this conversion, or, consolation. Consequently, the vision of New Jerusalem is read as having borne the weight of the supposed conversion with the Dreamer's "delyt" taken to be his spiritual delight. His desire to wade the stream is explained as a momentary lapse as a result of his great rapture. Although it would be pleasant to find the Maiden's efforts thus rewarded, it is clear that such is not the case. The audience of Pearl would have recognized the Dreamer's continual resistance to spiritual awareness throughout the section of the vision and would have found his disobedient action entirely in character and comic in the ironic sense that the poem has developed.

An entirely honest appraisal of the poem as a whole and its conclusion reveals that the mysterious point at which the

Dreamer learned from his experience need not be sought, for it does not exist. Upon awakening, the narrator is not, as would be expected from a converted soul, spiritually gladdened, but is exceedingly vexed over what his blunder accomplished. For three stanzas he regrets the rash move he made and its consequences:

> I raxled, & fel in gret affray (1174);
>
> Me payned ful ille to be outfleme
> So sodenly of þat fayre regioun (1177-8);
>
> A longeyng heuy me strok in swone (1180);
>
> þerfore my ioye wat3 sone toriuen,
> & I kaste of kythe3 þat laste aye (1197-8).

This is a most lengthy period of remorse for the loss of a pleasant experience if he is to be credited with a recent conversion from cupidinous ways. The lines traditionally cited as those proving his spiritual awakening include:

> & sykyng to myself I sayd,
> "Now al be to þat Prynce3 paye." (1175-6)
>
> "If hit be ueray & soth sermoun,
> þat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,
> So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun,
> þat þou art to þat Prynse3 paye." (1185-8)
>
> Lorde, mad hit arn þat agayn þe stryuen,
> Oþer proferen þe o3t agayn þy paye! (1199-1200).

If read giving the Dreamer as much credit as possible the lines might indicate a transformation of some sort; however, if read in light of the consistent characterization of the Dreamer, the lines can be seen to serve better as indicators of his stunned and sorrowful realization that events have ceased to suit him. The loss of the pleasure of the vision is dramatic in that it

is the first occurence in the poem to which he has reacted with anything less than presumptuousness. Line 1176 describes admittance of disobedience more than it does a prayer; lines 1187-88 are indicative more of self-pity than of acceptance of his fate; and lines 1199-1200 express bitter regret.

However, the regret is profound enough to motivate the Dreamer somewhat. He is sorry enough for the loss of the pleasant vision to be able to appreciate for the first time that it must have been the result of some sort of divine favour. The goal we see him contemplating in the last stanza of Pearl is finally the proper one, although we also know that he has a great deal of work ahead of him, rather than behind him. A.C. Cawley translates the last phrase of "To Paye þe Prince, oþer sete sa3te" (1201) "propitiate" and Gollancz translates "to make peace", which is fairly conclusive evidence in itself, although critics have not considered this, that the Dreamer is not yet a novus homo. Directly following, the Dreamer confesses, "For I haf founden hym, boþe day & na3t3,/A God, a Lorde, a Frende ful fyin" (1203-4). The fact that the Dreamer finds God a "Frende" is the final echo of The Romance of the Rose in the poem and this time it may be a positive image. In the Romance, the Lover's Friend is the character who helps him gain his objective, and in the context in which the Dreamer uses the idea it might be suggested that he is expressing an allegorized version of what he formerly understood literally. In this sense the objective is a much more important one and so is the Friend.

Thus although it cannot be said that Pearl concludes

with the successful and complete conversion of the Dreamer, there is evidence that his disappointment has promoted him to seek the beginning of rehabilitation, and this he intends to do in the proper Christian fashion:

> & syþen to God I hit byta3te,
> in Kryste3 dere blessyng & myn,
> þat, in þe forme of bred & wyn,
> þe preste vus schewe3 vch a daye;
> He gef vus to be his homly hyne,
> Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay. (1207-12)

However, although the experience of Pearl has not been conclusively beneficial for the Dreamer, the audience of the poem could not help but appreciate the thematic impact. The Dreamer's failure to arrive at a spiritual understanding of Christian theology is constantly associated with his cupidity on the allegorical level of the poem and with his use of imagery from the Old Testament and from courtly love conventions. These signposts of his fault are, as the Gawain-poet shows, also its cause. The Maiden's spiritual awareness characterizes her as patient, tolerant and wise, and her recommendation to purchase the pearl of great price is made as much, if not more, to the audience than to her ostensible pupil. Through broad typology the Dreamer becomes a type of the vetus homo, or a Pharisee; the Maiden, a type of the novus homo. Through the use of Biblical elements the Gawain-poet secures the audience's intellectual disapproval of the Dreamer and its concomitant approval of the Maiden, and at the same time presents Christian theology in an entertaining form. Pearl's secular setting allows this wider application of Biblical allegory, although the poet

still makes use of the homiletic mode developed in Cleanness and Patience for certain effects in the dream-vision.

Pearl's use of conversation and debate as the vehicle for the theme allowed the Gawain-poet to expand more than was possible in Cleanness or Patience a treatment of the contrast between caritas and cupiditas. Since the Dreamer can be seen as a type of Everyman, his point of view is more readily recognized and judged than those of the human heroes in the homilies, and since he is engaged in a visionary learning experience his shortcomings are more immediately meaningful. The Maiden's homiletic approach to several of her Biblical texts is comparable to that in the earlier poems, but again, the debate vehicle provides a more dramatic medium since the audience could anticipate the Dreamer's inevitably unsuitable responses.

The dramatic device of the first person narrator allowed the poet a particularly effective use of irony in the poem, for as the Dreamer remains in ignorance of the wrongheadedness he consistently demonstrates, the audience enjoys the inappropriateness of his experience. The use of narrator also afforded the poet the opportunity to make highly original use of the Biblical paraphrase of the Apocalypse, for here the passage is significant not so much for its "sentence" but for the way in which its presentation characterized its teller.

The imagery taken from The Romance of the Rose can be seen to be used in Pearl to support the use of Biblical elements on both the literal and allegorical levels of meaning. In its satirical sense it typifies the Dreamer's cupidity, idolatry

and greed, and Pearl's audience would be struck by the Dreamer's persistent habit of experiencing his vision as though it were romance. They would appreciate the obvious comparison between the superiority of spiritual understanding and the inferiority of carnal understanding. The use of this sort of imagery is, again, an example of the Gawain-poet's endeavor to help his audience understand both literally and allegorically the truth of his material.

The point of view of this paper is a departure from the common interpretation of Pearl, particularly in its harsh judgment of the Dreamer. The character usually wins critics' sympathy at some point and is considered to represent the normal values of the medieval man. By consideration of the total pattern of Biblical allegory in the poem instead of isolated passages, however, I think it is clear than an intellectual audience of the fourteenth century would be meant to feel superior to the character and appreciative of the poem's irony.

In terms of allegorical theme, it can be seen so far that some of the basic features of the homilies are featured again in Pearl. As in Cleanness, there is an equation of the spiritual meaning of caritas with a recognizable earthly concept in Pearl, in the form of the courtly romance tradition. As in Patience, there is also an ironic treatment of the confrontation of two points of view. Both features have become more complex, however, and it is clear that the Gawain-poet endeavors to widen the scope of his comparison of caritas and cupiditas. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight we find these same preoccupations

on an even more complex level, since the genre is the romance itself. Here, the Gawain-poet considers the ironies of the earthly point of view through the dramatization of the knightly code of chivalry.

Notes - Chapter III

[1]Ian Bishop, "Pearl" in its Setting (Oxford, 1968); John Conley, "Pearl and a Lost Tradition", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 54 (1955), 332-47; Marie Padgett Hamilton, "The Meaning of the Middle English Pearl" in "Sir Gawain" and "Pearl", ed. Robert J. Blanch (Indiana, 1966); Patricia M. Kean, "The Pearl": An Interpretation (London, 1967); Edward Wilson, "The 'Gostly Drem' in Pearl", Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 69 (1968), 90-101, and "Word Play and the Interpretation of Pearl", Medium Aevum, 69 (1971), 116-33; Ann Douglas Wood, "The Pearl-Dreamer and the 'Hyne' in the Vineyard Parable", Philological Quarterly, 52 (1973), 9-19; et al.

[2]R.E. Kaske, "Two Cruxes in Pearl: 596 and 609-10", Traditio, 15 (1959), 418-28; V.E. Watts, "Pearl as a Consolatio", Medium Aevum, 32 (1963), 34-36; et al.

[3]Jefferson B. Fletcher, "The Allegory of the Pearl", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 20 (1921), 1-21.

[4]Robert W. Ackerman, "The Pearl-Maiden and the Penny", in The Middle English "Pearl", ed. John Conley (London, 1970); Dorothee Finkelstein, "The Pearl-Poet as Bezalel", Mediaeval Studies, 35 (1973), 413-32; Milton M. Stern, "An Approach to The Pearl", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 54 (1955), 684-92; René Wellek, "The Pearl: An Interpretation of the Middle English Poem", in "Sir Gawain" and "Pearl", ed. Robert J. Blanch (Indiana, 1966).

[5]Pearl, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (London, 1921), ll. 9-12. All quotations of Pearl in this paper are taken from this edition. Henceforth line references will be supplied in the body of the paper.

[6]Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, ed. Charles W. Dunn, tr. Harry W. Robbins (New York, 1962), Section 13. All quotations of The Romance of the Rose in this paper are taken from this edition. Henceforth section and line numbers will be supplied in the body of the paper.

[7]D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, 1962), pp. 91-104.

[8]St. Augustine, Patrologia Latina, ed. J.P. Migne, 35, col. 1766.

[9]Patricia M. Kean, p. 7.

[10]Ibid., p. 52.

[11]St. Augustine, "On the Gospel of John", The Works of Aurelius Augustine, tr. Rev. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh, 1921), Tract. 121.

[12]See Chapter I, p. 30.

[13]St. Augustine, "Ennaratio in Psalmos", Ps. 21.2.15, Aurelii Augustini Opera, Editores Pontificii, 1956.

[14]Rabanus Maurus, PL. 107, col. 1029.

[15]R.E. Kaske, 425.

[16]St. Augustine, "Ennaratio in Psalmos", op. cit., Ps. 61.19.

[17]R.E. Kaske, 426-28.

[18]St. Jerome, PL 26, cols. 94-95.

[19]See Chapter I, p. 27.

[20]D.W. Robertson, p. 102.

[21]Ibid., p. 103.

[22]Ian Bishop, p. 55.

[23]Patricia M. Kean, p. 39.

[24]Ian Bishop, p. 39.

[25]Louis Blenkner, "The Theological Structure of Pearl", in The Middle English "Pearl", ed. John Conley (London, 1970), p. 257.

CHAPTER IV

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is based on Arthurian legend and tells of the adventures of one of the knights of the Round Table with a supernatural challenger. Sir Gawain, after having beheaded the mysterious Green Knight, is pledged to seek the shapeshifter out within a year to receive a return blow. The bulk of the story describes Gawain's experiences as the fateful day draws near and concludes with the fulfillment of the pledge. Among the most intriguing of Gawain's interim adventures is the "temptation" sequence which tells of an attempt made to seduce him while he is staying at an hospitable court. The Gawain-poet claims to be retelling a story from the "Brutus boke3"[1], but although his plot is inspired by several recognizable motifs, no tale sufficiently similar is extant prior to the date of this poem.

Although the Gawain-poet writes with great respect for the form and innate appeal of the romance, there is a certain amused detachment evident in the narrative style of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight that is not at all characteristic of earlier examples of the chivalric tradition. The nonromantic quality, in a generic sense, of what is otherwise a bona fide romance manifests itself in a number of critical problems. Among these are the nontraditional treatment of the character of Sir Gawain, the ambiguity of the role played by the Green Knight, and the unusual quality of the seduction scenes which occur between

Gawain and the Lady of the castle. Such problems have led critics such as G.L. Kittredge to assume that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is based on a lost original[2]; others such as Larry D. Benson, Brian Stone and J.A. Burrow have looked back to the traditions of Celtic myth to discover the possible allegorical significance of the Green Knight figure, the Beheading Game and the Temptation sequence.[3]

A recent critical approach to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has been to study the Christian motifs in the poem in an attempt to find a symbolic meaning for Gawain's adventure and eventual personal discovery. This is in keeping with the fact that the story tells of a moral challenge as well as a knightly challenge and with the fact that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is unquestionably Christian. However, attempts to discover the "sentence" of the poem have produced widely differing results.

M. Mills compares the use of Christian imagery in the Queste del Sainte Graal to that in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, pointing out that the combination of such imagery with the tradition of chivalric romance was not uncommon in the medieval legends and that the Gawain-poet makes even less explicit use of Christian allegory than other medieval writers of romance.[4] In complete contrast, Bernard S. Levy sees Gawain very definitely characterized as a type of Christ and the Green Knight as a tyoe of the Devil, with their conflict being the typical Christian struggle.[5] Joseph A. Longo, similarly, studies the symbols of Christ associated with Gawain, particularly in terms of the

theological significance of the Temptation sequence.[6]

Variations on the theological "sentence" of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight include the interpretation of Robert W. Ackerman, who considers Gawain's virtuousness and his temporary fall in terms of penitential doctrine[7], and the broader view of R.H. Green who compares the Biblical symbolism of Gawain's device of the pentangle to the allegorical significance of the green girdle and concludes that Gawain is a much less heroic figure than has previously been assumed.[8]

Among critics who actually resort to patristic commentary, David Farley Hills examines the significance of cupiditas in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, finding the treatment of Gawain's fault an example of the Gawain-poet's interest in theological problems concerning venial sins.[9] Hans Schnyder's study[10], the most detailed analysis of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in terms of the patristic method of allegorical interpretation, is important for demonstrating how networks of Biblical and other types of Christian symbolism are created. However, Schnyder cannot always support his argument for the "sentence" of the poem with Scriptural authority and must occasionally refer his audience to other secular literature.

It is evident that even a focus which concentrates on the Christian or theological features of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight does not relieve all of the ambiguities of the poem. The privilege of Biblical and other Christian symbols to be interpreted in bono or in malo is a particular problem here. It is therefore useful to study the use of specifically Biblical

allegory in the romance in all its manifestations within the context of its use in the Gawain-poet's other poetry, for the resemblance of the romance to its three predecessors in broad terms is considerable. Cleanness and Patience are based on the conflicts which arise from the direct relationship between a human figure and God; Pearl, on the relationship between a human figure and a divine being; Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, likewise, is the conflict between a human hero and a supernatural being. In all four poems the human heroes have faults which the otherworldly characters attempt to correct. The heroes of Patience, Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight are for the most part unwilling participants in the process of enlightenment; the God of Patience, the Maiden of Pearl and the Green Knight of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight are wise, concerned, and good-humoured though slightly exasperated instructors.

It will be shown in the following discussion that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight also has specific resemblances to Cleanness, Patience and Pearl in terms of allegorical meaning. It too operates on the basis of the theme of the separation and on the crucial difference between understanding according to the "letter" and to the "spirit". Like Jonah and the Dreamer, Gawain is characterized by imagery from the Old Testament as a less than perfect Christian; as was the case with the Dreamer in Pearl, the secular codes of behaviour Gawain believes in signal a barrier to true spiritual understanding. Conversely, the Green Knight, for all the trappings of folklore, is characterized as a positive figure, a type of novus homo

who can see beyond the preoccupations of the material world. The movement of the poem itself is from a cupidinous to a charitable atmosphere; the question of whether Gawain's "trawþe" is literal or spiritual is under examination.

These interpretations are indicated by the poet's use of Biblical symbolism in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, which, as in Cleanness, Patience and Pearl, suggests reference to the implications of familiar exegetical tradition. The poet's method in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is much more subtle, as would befit the romance genre, and in several cases the reference is not to the Biblical chapter and verse but to aspects of a Biblical scene which was in its handling important to the interpretation of another poem.

The appeal of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, as with the Gawain-poet's other works, is to the intellectual sophistication of its audience. Gawain's slightly complicated code of behaviour, his complete confusion when faced with the Lady's concept of courtesy, and his covert acceptance of the green girdle as a precautionary device are extremely amusing elements of the story. The audience would enjoy the Green Knight's testing of the exemplary knight and would be guided by the theological signposts of the poem to an understanding of cupiditas and caritas successfully developed outside the homiletic genre. As was the case with Cleanness, the audience would have a literal reference point for determining the poem's "sentence", in the concept of courtesy. Here, however, "courtesy" represents a much more specialized and formal concept and depends for its

effectiveness as a narrative device on the audience's familiarity with literary tradition. Furthermore, the interpretation of caritas and cupiditas to which it leads is a sophisticated one, for the character of the hero in question is portrayed as conscientious and sensitive, unlike the character portrayals in the earlier poems.

The characterization of Sir Gawain is however one of the first indications that the poet is tampering with romantic tradition for allegorical purposes. A literal reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight tends to indicate that Gawain is truly an admirable Christian knight, "Voyded of vche vylany, wyth vertue3 ennourned in mote" (634), and would encourage the reader to sympathize with Gawain's surprise when he is faced with the truth of his lack of faithfulness. This concept of Gawain contrasts with the traditional depiction of the knight, whose status degenerated from that of the worthy hero of Celtic legend to that of a bold philanderer whose victory in battle was not always assured in La Queste del Sainte Graal and the Morte d'Arthur.[11] It has been suggested that the Gawain-poet was not aware of or chose to ignore the character's reputation as this type of hero in his endeavor to present the perfect Christian knight. Such is not the case, however, for the court at Hautdesert is certainly familiar with Gawain's reputed success with women, "Vch segge ful softly sayde to his fere,/...'I hope þat may hym here/Schal lerne of luf-talkyng'" (915, 926-27), as is the Lady. It is in fact evident by his actions that Gawain is a very social knight who enjoys feasting, drinking,

flirting, sleeping in, and other less than dangerous pastimes. Only his own speeches, manners and other forms of assumed conduct exist to justify his role as the knight of purity, and the Gawain-poet often associates these character "revelations" with imagery the Church Fathers would recognize as typical of a vetus homo. The Gawain of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is not completely corrupt, but weakness in his moral character is very definitely indicated early on. Thus, there is an important distinction to be made between the widely held critical opinion that Gawain is a perfect Christian who falls and the evidence that he is a less than perfect Christian and only belatedly faces up to the fact himself.

That Gawain sincerely believes in his own propriety is made clear in his speech at lines 341-60 when he asks Arthur to grant him the responsibility of the Green Knight's challenge. The strangeness of the Green Knight's intrusion upon the court's Christmas festivities seems not to have affected Gawain's concern that his request be correctly humble and polite and that his sovereign does not take offence at it being made: "'& if i carp not comlyly, let alle þis cort rych, bout blame'" (360). Moreover, his bid for the adventure is based on the modest perception that his life is of least consequence to the Round Table: "'I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,/& lest her of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe'" (354-5), and, significantly, on a rather fastidious defiance of the Green Knight's conduct: "'For me þynk hit not semly, as hit is so knawen,/per such an askyng is heuened so hy3e in your sale'"

(348-9).

Hans Schnyder is among many critics who find Gawain's words indicative of true nobility:

> Arthur is obviously not the man to relieve the court of the corruption which he himself has furthered. Gawain, however, is of a different moral calibre than the rest of the company. His modest words show him free of pride, and so he is allowed by Providence to attempt the search for salvation. 12

However, the nature and purpose of Gawain's elaborately modest speech recalls a similar incident in Pearl, when the spiritually Hebraic Dreamer spoke to his psychological superior in the language he thought would please her: "'Ne worþe no wrathþe vnto my Lorde,/If rapely I raue spornande in spelle'"[13]. As was pointed out earlier[14], the apology is one made deliberately similar to that of Abraham when pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18. 27: "'Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.'" It was demonstrated that in Pearl the imitation of the Old Testament figure's conduct was to the Dreamer's discredit both for the presumptuousness of the comparison of himself to the patriarch and for the hypocrisy of the plagiarism. Gawain's anxiety that his speech may not be "comly" is a comparable example of pride in one's ability to quote authority. Similarly, Gawain's habit of associating himself with figures of the Old Testament (here, with Abraham) is one he obviously finds gratifying, but which an audience might find slightly suspicious.

The tendency to identify with heroes of the Old Testament is made explicit at lines 619-65 when the poet comments on the

symbolism of the pentangle device which decorates Gawain's shield. The device is of Old Testament origin: "Hit is a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle,/In bytoknyng of trawþe, bi tytle þat hit habbe" (625-6). This association, though impressive at first glance, is of debatable merit, as R.H. Green points out:

> The poet could hardly have chosen a more ambiguous patron for Gawain's virtue. For Solomon is a figure of perfection...But in the Bible, and everywhere in the exegetical tradition he is a gravely flawed figure, remarkably wise, but in the end guilty of follies that cost him his kingdom... If Solomon is a dubious figure, so is his pentangle. It is not found in the Bible, not even in the elaborate decoration of his Temple, though we do find there significant fives and even a pentagon... It is found in the books of magic associated with his name which were known and occasionally described as idolatrous books of necromancy...Here with exquisite irony, that serves his thematic purposes, the poet transforms a suspect magical sign into an emblem of perfection to achieve the simultaneous suggestion of greatness and potential failure. 15

In support of Green's point, we can turn to Augustine's comment on Solomon: "His beginnings were redolent with the desire for wisdom; when he had obtained it through spiritual love, he lost it through carnal love".[16] Thus it can be said that though Solomon is justifiably famous foremost as an embodiment of wisdom and spiritual understanding, he is also important as an allegorical example of good "beginnings" gone sour. In terms of the association of Solomon and Gawain, therefore, it might be well to add to Green's perception of dubious virtue the implied idea of intention not being equal to action, or, to use the language of theology, of the meaning of the "letter" needing the ratification of the "spirit". That is, we may expect that too much

of Gawain's energy is directed to the maintenance of literal impressiveness.

It can also be argued that in the forty-six-line description of the pentangle the Gawain-poet implies a tendency in Gawain to rely on the strength of the "letter". The poet warns us at line 624 that he intends to describe the pentangle "þof tary hyt me schulde", and indeed it does "tary" him, for the implications of the device are based on a complex system of groups of fives: it is "þe endeles knot" (630). The five groups of five symbols demonstrate Gawain's virtuousness in a manner which ranges in authority from the worthy tradition of faith in Christ's five wounds to the relative obscurity of being faultless on one's five fingers. The symbolism of the pentangle is truly a "knot" of concepts: Christian virtues are lumped together with secular knightly virtues, "Ne samned neuer in so syde, ne sundred souþer;/With-outen ende at any noke i-wis no-quere fynde" (660-1). The appeal of the pentangle is surely more in its witty synthesis of so many diverse concepts than in its implicit spiritual meaning, as is demonstrated by the lengthy description. If we agree for the moment that Gawain shows characteristics of a vetus homo it can be seen that the garrulous symbol is just the sort of thing which would indicate on the literal level of the romance the allegorical preoccupations of the knight.

Furthermore, the complexity and eclecticism of the pentangle is reproached by the symbol of the image of the Virgin which appears on the reverse side of Gawain's shield. Wholly

Christian in nature, this symbol typifies all that would be needed by Gawain were he truly a novus homo. Thus, the description of Gawain's shield is an example of the Gawain-poet's ability to create an aura of allegorical contrast suitable to his theme.

Despite the evident diversity of Gawain's loyalties and the concern he shows for his earthly image, there are many critics who maintain that the allegorical "sentence" of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight suggests that he is meant to be portrayed as a type of Christ. Joseph Longo sees an implicit comparison of Gawain to Christ:

> Just as Christ is the ultimate victorious Christian pilgrim and knight, so, too, Gawain is the normative Everyman and novus Adam who by conquering evil renews the Imago Dei within his heart and soul and manifests this birth in the good works of the Arthurian knight. 17

Bernard Levy considers such a comparison explicit:

> The whole action of the poem follows the consistent pattern of the Christian knight on his spiritual journey in an imitation of Christ. 18

The chief reason for this assignment seems to be the allegorical similarity between the temptation of Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight[19] and the Biblical temptation of Christ.

According to Matthew 4. 1-11, Christ sustained three types of temptation while in the wilderness. The devil suggested first that Christ turn stones into loaves of bread to satisfy his hunger; secondly, that he throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple to test God's concern for him; and finally, offered him power over all the kingdoms of the world in return for the

worship of himself. The Church Fathers conceptualized these temptations as "gluttony, vainglory, and avarice" or, "lechery, pride and covetousness", and drew upon the source to demonstrate that all men are subject to the corruption of this trio, and that to preserve the soul these sins in particular must be guarded against continually.[20]

Longo, Levy, Schnyder and others have pointed out that the Lady's temptation of Gawain corresponds in concept to this threefold symbolism. On the first day, she offers herself to the knight brazenly: "'3e ar welcum to my cors,/Youre awen won to wale'" (1237-38). On the second day she attacks Gawain's reputation as a courtly knight, finding it false in terms of her own interpretation of courtliness: "'Sir, 3if 3e be Wawen, wonder me þynkke3,/Wy3e þat is so wel wrast alway to god,/& conne3 not compaynye þe coste3 vndertake'" (1481-83). On the third day she begs him to accept a token of her love in the form of the life-preserving green girdle (1845-69).

It can be seen therefore that the temptation procedure does conform strikingly in terms of exegetical tradition. However, it would be irresponsible to define Gawain as a type of Christ on the strength of this correspondence, especially since, unlike Christ, Gawain finally succumbs to the appeal of the green girdle, thus admitting covetousness. If the Gawain-poet chose to make the temptation scenes of this poem reminiscent of the Biblical original, it is more than likely because he wished to make another subtle comparison of Gawain's philosophy to that of the novus homo. Like the contrasting symbols on the

front and back of his shield, the reactions of Gawain and the original Novus Homo to temptation are compared. While Christ's prompt reply was "'Begone, Satan!'", Gawain agonizes over the letter of his knightly code when reproached by the Lady for his lack of co-operation: "'Quer-fore?' quoþ þe freke, & freschly he aske3,/Ferde lest he hade fayled in fourme of his costes" (1294-95). Indeed he finds the complex responsibilities of his pentangle maxim increasingly hard to live up to in the face of the Lady's determined rhetoric: "He cared for his cortaysye, lest craþayn he were,/& more for his meschef, 3if he schulde make synne/& be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde a3t" (1773-75).

It might be argued that because Gawain withstands the chief aspect of the Lady's temptation, that is, sexual indulgence, he is to be commended. However, in terms of Gawain's implied status as a vetus homo, his ability to maintain literal chastity is but an aspect of his devotion to the outward appearance of things. That is, although it would be admittedly a much different story if Gawain succumbed physically to the Lady, literal chastity is practically all that the knight maintains. And even so, maintaining the outward appearance of chastity is a challenge, as lines 1764-68 demonstrate:

> þat al wat3 blis & bonchef þat breke hem bitwene,
> & wynne.
> þay lauced wordes godes,
> Much wele þen wat3 þer-inne;
> Gret perile bi-twene hem stod.

In addition, as good Christians know:

> "You have it heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'. But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5. 27-28)

Accordingly, it is the spiritual chastity which Gawain lacks that comes to the fore in the Temptation sequence, for in accepting the girdle and agreeing not to let the Lord of the castle know about it, he makes quick work of convincing himself that the deceit is justifiable: "My3t he haf slypped to be vn-slayn, þe sle3t were noble" (1858).

Further evidence to support the idea that, whatever he might hope to be, Gawain is not a type of Christ in the true spiritual sense can be found in the poet's subtle use of imagery associated with the Crucifixion in this section. In line 1412 "þe coke hade crowen & cakled bot þryse", and as J. A. Burrow notes in reference to the culmination of the Temptation sequence, "There is a powerful and ominous note of finality deriving in part from confused suggestions of the betrayal of Christ -- by Judas with a kiss and by Peter three times before the cockcrow."[21] The suggestion is enough to remind the audience of the introduction of the poem, where the tendency to treachery is mentioned in passing as a part of mankind's history: "þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wro3t/Wat3 tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe./Hit wat3 Ennias þe athel & his highe kynde..." (3-5).

At the end of the poem the Green Knight confronts Gawain with the fault which belies the whole ideology of the pentangle,

the knightly behaviour, the proper manners and the courteous speech. In his bitterness, Gawain claims that he should be excused for his fault on the ground that he was beguiled by a woman:

> "Bot hit is no ferly þa3 a fole madde
> & þur3 wyles of wymmen be wonen to sor3e;
> For so wat3 Adam in erde with one bygyled,
> & Salamon with fele sere, & Samson eft-sone3,
> Dalyda dalt hym hys wyrde, & Dauyth þer-after
> Wat3 blended with Barsabe, þat much bale þoled"
> (2414-19).

In terms of the allegory of Gawain's nature, the speech is ironic in two ways. First, the Lady cannot be blamed entirely for Gawain's weakness, for he accepted the girdle and the terms of the gift because of his own fear for his life. Similarly, the figures of the Old Testament whom Gawain cites as precedents are nowhere excused in patristic commentary for being tempted by women. As Augustine's comment concerning Solomon, quoted earlier, points out, there was no question that the fault was in the king himself, and the same holds true for Adam, Samson, and David. Gawain is therefore doing himself no favour by comparing his situation to the Biblical ones. Secondly, though Gawain no doubt believes that he is belittling his fault by putting himself in such hallowed company,he is in fact unconsciously stressing his status as vetus homo. Each of the Old Testament figures mentioned was considered in patristic commentary to be, in one form or another, a pre-Christian type of Christ:

> Solomon Christi praenuntiat figuram, qui aedificauit domum Domino in coelesti Hierusalem...

> Quando Deus immisit Adamo soporem, ut de latere illi conjugem faceret, typum gerebat Christi donnientis in cruce...
> Samson nascens, vivens, et moriens, Christum in plurimis expremebat. 22

In the end, however, all of them succumbed to concupiscence, not only because they were men, but because the spiritual understanding available to the Christian through Christ was not available to them. Ironically, Gawain too has the ambition to be a type of Christ and, relatively speaking, his potential is still greater than that of his average contemporary. But he lacks loyalty to spiritual understanding and this, shown here in his unconscious confession, is all the more damning, since he lives in Christian times.

Therefore, Gawain can be compared to Jonah in Patience and the Dreamer in Pearl, for all three have an understanding of theology which is literal in scope. Gawain is particularly like the Dreamer in that he has, like the Dreamer's high regard for secular romance, a high regard for his chivalrous code. The Gawain-poet shows in the situations of both men the eternal struggle between the attractiveness of the earthly life and the perfection of the spiritual life.

In terms of Cleanness, Patience and Pearl it would be then logical to assume that the Green Knight in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight represents some aspect of the perfection of spiritual life. Though it is of course impossible to compare him literally with the Maiden of Pearl or the God of Cleanness and Patience, it is worthwhile to examine the Gawain-poet's adjustment of the type of the otherworldly instructor to the

conventions of the romantic genre. Just as the spiritual figure of Pearl suited the dream-vision tradition, the supernatural Green Knight suits the chivalrous tale. The Green Knight is a figure of authority despite his hue, and is able to bring Gawain to a knowledge of himself he might otherwise never have discovered, despite the unusual method of doing so. It is not surprising therefore that in several significant instances he is associated with imagery characteristic of the philosophy of the novus homo and is, relatively speaking, closer to a type of Christ than Gawain is often thought to be.

Critics explaining the Christian atmosphere of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and who see Gawain's adventure as that of the morally superior knight seeking to become the perfect novus homo necessarily view the Green Knight as a type of the Devil and thereto cite the oddity of his appearance: "The unfolding action of Part One, the terror and fear associated with the Green Knight's challenge, aligns Bercilak and the colour green with the Satanic principle..."[23]; "Green is the appropriate colour of the hunter, and the Devil is the greatest hunter of all, for his prey is the souls of men."[24] However, the strictly Biblical and Christian imagery associated with the Green Knight indicates that he is to Gawain what the Maiden is to the Dreamer in Pearl and what God is to the prophet in Patience. In addition, the movement of the poem, from Camelot to Hautdesert to the Green Chapel, supports this view.

As has been noted often, the description of the New Year's feast which opens Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is very

similar to that of Belshazzar's Feast in Cleanness. For example, the poet's narration of the pomp and ceremony of the serving of food at Arthur's feast,

> þen þe first cors come with crakkyng of trumpes,
> Wyth mony baner ful bry3t þat þer-bi henged,
> Nwe nakryn noyse with þe noble pipes,
> Wylde werbles & wy3t wakned lote,
> þat mony hert ful hi3e hef at her towches (116-20),

is almost a duplication of the parallel event in Cleanness:

> And ay þe nakeryn noyse, notes of pipes,
> Tymbres and tabornes, tulket among;
> Symboles and sonetez sware þe noyse
> And bougounz busch batered so þikke.
> So watz served fele syþe þe sale alle aboute,
> Wyth solace at þe sere course bifore þe self lorde,
> þer þe lede and alle his love lenged at þe table. 25

The correspondence of the scenic description is enough to cast suspicion on the moral strength of the court at Camelot, but Hans Schnyder points out in addition that the action of the knightly feast also parallels the action of the Biblical feast:

> Anyone reading or hearing this part of the poem and noticing the unequivocal hints will at once be alert to what is due to happen. Like Belshazzar King Arthur will, in the course of the celebrations, receive some divine warning, the hand of God will give a sign that the King is being tested and that he is found wanting.
>
> In the context of our story the appearance of the Green Knight would consequently herald the manifestation of divine interference in the course of worldly events. The Green Knight might in that case be accepted as the Word of God -- and on a different level -- anagogically as Christ. 26

Indeed the Green Knight's appearance certainly frightens the knights at Camelot as thoroughly as the writing on the wall frightens Belshazzar, and it might be well to remember with respect to the Green Knight's unusual physical appearance that the Gawain-poet had no qualms about describing the Hand of God,

holy though it must be, as similarly unusual in Cleanness. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight thus begins in an atmosphere associated with the Old Testament, and the men of the court at Camelot can be seen as types of the vetus homo in their pre-occupation with earthly matters.

The association of the Green Knight with Christ as conveyed by the allegorical mood of the scene is further suggested when the Green Knight says to Gawain, after having received his blow, "'þe kny3t of þe grene chapel men knowen me mony;/For-þi for to fynde if þou frayste3, fayle3 þou neuer,/þer-fore com, oþer recreaunt be calde þe behoues'" (454-6). The Green Knight's mysterious "for to fynde if þou frayste3" may be an attempt to remind us of Christ's words "seek and you will find" in Matthew 7.7. In the Biblical context, the message concerned the search for spiritual understanding and, although it is unlikely that the Green Knight is invoking this association on the literal level of the story, it is possible that the Gawain-poet wishes to characterize the allegorical implications of the Knight's challenge for the audience's benefit. The paraphrase of the Gospel is particularly significant in view of the fact that, remembering the Christian connotation of the theme of life after death, the Green Knight has just displayed an uncanny ability to withstand what would have been sure death for a mortal. The Gawain-poet thus sets up an anagogical framework for the theme of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight which is similar to the allegorical themes of Cleanness, Patience and Pearl. The Green Knight's challenge to Gawain is like Christ's challenge to all

men, and the direction and depth of Gawain's faith will measure the results of the adventure.

If in this role the Green Knight's duty is to attempt to bring Gawain to spiritual understanding, as the Maiden attempts to do with the Dreamer, then this purpose can be seen to be reflected allegorically in the journey Gawain is forced to make to keep the literal bargain. Just as the feast at Camelot parallels Belshazzar's Feast in Cleanness, the description of Gawain's first impression of Hautdesert,

> Embaned vnder þe abataylment in þe best lawe;
> & syþen garyte3 ful gaye gered bi-twene,
> Wyth mony luflych louþe þat louked ful clene;
> A better barbican þat burne blusched vpon neuer;
> & innermore he be-helde þat halle ful hy3e,
> Towres telded bytwene, trochet ful þik,
> Fayre fylyote3 þat fy3ed, & ferlyly long,
> With coruon coprounes, craftyly sle3e;
> Chalk-whyt chymnees þer ches he in-no3e,
> Vpon bastel roue3 þat blenked ful quyte;
> So mony pynakle payntet wat3 poudred ay-quere
> Among þe castel carnele3, clambred so þik
> þat pared out of papure purely hit semed (709-802),

parallels that of the architecturally designed holy relics desecrated by the revellers of the Biblical Feast:

> Couered coupes foul clene, as castels arayed
> Enbaned under batelment wyth bantelles quoynt,
> And fyled out of fygures of ferlyche schappes.
> þe coperounes of þe covacles þat on þe cuppe reres
> Wer fetsely formed out in fylyoles longe,
> Pinacles py3t þer apert þat profert bitwene. 27

The Gawain-poet's use of certain types of description to convey atmosphere would thus indicate here that Gawain is about to request lodging at a court which is the spiritual superior of the one he left.

Schnyder goes as far as to say that Hautdesert is

reminiscent of the Holy City in Pearl, though he cannot cite any instances of descriptive parallels which equal the closeness of the passage from Cleanness: "The similarity lies less in the vocabulary than in the evocative quality of a certain poetic concept".[28] However, though it is true that the description of Hautdesert suggests a certain sanctity of atmosphere, it is not yet possible to infer that Gawain "has found Jerusalem within herself".[29] The Eternal City of the Apocalypse is the abode of the "few" who have been separated from the "many" and Gawain is in no respect prepared for such elevation. In addition, such an allegorical interpretation is faulty in view of the fact that Gawain is to undergo a test while within the walls of this castle, something no heavenly inhabitant would be required to do.

A more useful thematic comparison of Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight at this point would be to liken Gawain's progress to the Dreamer's when the latter finds himself in the terrestrial paradise described in the second stanza-group. The Dreamer is then in a setting conducive to spiritual instruction and undergoes rhetorical testing at the hands of the Maiden. The Maiden does all that is theologically possible to prepare the Dreamer for spiritual enlightenment, but it is beyond her jurisdiction to allow the Dreamer to enter into the Holy City itself. The terrestrial paradise, however, is emblematic of her state of grace, as the holy relics are symbolic of God's presence at Belshazzar's Feast, and similarly, Hautdesert represents the Green Knight's superiority. Each case is a type of heaven itself, the goal to which the Dreamer, Belshazzar and Gawain, respectively,

should aspire.

The testing of Gawain's spiritual understanding is arranged to suit the chivalric mode and the traditional reputation of the legendary knight, and yet, as noted above, its method bears unmistakable resemblance to the Biblical temptation of Christ. In this, the Lady plays the devil's advocate and her mission is to test Gawain's code of values. Again, it is interesting to compare Pearl to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, for though their methods differ, both the Maiden and the Lady propose to their unsuspecting students debates which are quite contrary to anything with which either hero if familiar. For both debates the Gawain-poet uses irony to illustrate the faultiness of the hero: in Pearl, the Maiden's spiritual wisdom contrasts with the Dreamer's extravagant romanticism; in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Lady's burlesque approach to the code of courtly love contrasts with Gawain's anxious attempts to live up to it. The approach in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is perhaps the more amusing exposé of the absurdity of earthly preoccupation, as Green points out:

> These scenes are high-style parody of a discredited literary convention...Everything is excessive and mildly ridiculous: the great Gawain lies in bed far into the morning while his host is out in the forest engaged in the chivalric exercise of hunting. His wife, a gentle lady, is engaged in a hunt of her own, and with all the courtesie of a sophisticated trollop. 30

These amusing scenes do have their serious aspect, however, for allegorically they demonstrate Gawain's preoccupation with "the world". His acceptance of the girdle and the Lady's stipulation that it be concealed from her husband is tangible

proof of this fault.

The anagogical mood of the narration is heightened when Gawain goes to chapel to make his confession the day before his appointment with the Green Knight:

> Syþen cheuely to the chapel choses he þe waye,
> Preuely aorochedto prest, & prayed hym þere
> þat he wolde lyfte his lyf & lern hym better
> How his sawle schulde be saued when he schulde
> seye heuen.
> þere he schrof hym schyrly & schewed his mysdede3
> Of þe more & þe mynne, & merci beseche3,
> & of absolucioun he on þe segge calles;
> & he asoyled hym surely & sette hym so clene
> As dome3-day schulde haf ben di3t on þe morn
> (1876-84).

Although this passage is not explicit enough to warrant the interpretation that Gawain makes a false confession, it does bring into focus the thematic movement of the poem. If the next day is to be a "dome3-day" for Gawain, then it can be predicted that the Green Knight will act as a type of the Judge. And here, Gawain, who seeks from the priest advice as to how to save his soul, goes on to "mace hym mery among þe fre ladyes,/With comlych caroles & alle kynnes ioye,/As neuer he did bot þat daye" (1885-87). His absolution is like his chastity: literal.

Gawain's first impression of the Green Chapel does not suggest a day of judgment, however:

> "We, lorde", quoþe þe gentyle kny3t,
> "Wheþer þis be þe grene chapelle?
> Here my3t aboute myd-ny3t
> þe dele his matynnes telle."
>
> "Now i-wysse," quoþ Wowayn, "wysty is here;
> þis britore is vgly, with erbe3 ouer-growen;
> Wel biseme þe wy3e wruxled in grene
> Dele here his deuocioun on þe deuele3 wyse;
> Now I fele hit is þe fende, in my fyue wytte3,

> þat hat3 stoken me þis steuen, to strye me here;
> þis is a chapel of meschaunce, -- þat chekke hit by-tyde!
> Hit is þe corsedest kyrk þat euer I com inne"
> (2185-96).

Critics who see the Green Knight as a type of Satan find this passage unquestionable evidence of such: "Gawain's description of the place, the green mound, makes explicit the suggestion that this is the Devil's true abode".[31] Even Schnyder, who on all other accounts sees the positive connotations of the character, cannot explain Gawain's perception of the Green Chapel satisfactorily:

> In reaching the Green Chapel Gawain has penetrated to the lowest point of his own soul, to the evil garden of his mind, to the centre of Hell as seen on the tropological level...In spite of his terrifying looks the Green Knight is not a monster that has chosen this place of gloom for its fitting abode. The Green Knight is not the inhabitant of the valley, but he descends into it whenever the necessity arises. 32

But it is not in fact necessary to identify the Green Knight with Gawain's Hell, even as briefly as this. Though the Green Chapel is the "corsedest kyrk" Gawain has ever seen, it can be no worse than the whale of Patience, through whose jaws the rebellious Jonah floats "as mote in at a munster dor".[33] As was pointed out earlier[34], the Gawain-poet's image prepared the audience for the drama of Jonah's spiritual enlightenment, and the whale, for all its filth and odour, emerged allegorically as an agent of God, a type of makeshift church. Here also we have a hero whose potential for spiritual improvement is great, and who will come to a reassessment of himself under unusual circumstances. If the Green Chapel has a satanic aura, it is

important to remember first that it is seen through the eyes of a fearful, self-conscious knight, and secondly that the Gawain-poet must make the abode of his Green Knight as otherworldly as the Knight himself is. Most importantly, however, the poet must contrast the earlier chapel, where Gawain made his literal confession, to this second chapel, where the hero will realize the concupiscence of his literal point of view. It might also be useful to compare Jonah's paranoia in Patience when commanded to go to Nineveh, "Bot if my gaynlych God such gref to me wolde,/ For desert of sum sake, þat I slayn were"[35], to Gawain's equally self-interested "Now I fele it is þe fende, in my fyue wytte3,/ þat hat3 stoken me þis steuen, to strye me here" (2193-94). Obviously, the comparison cannot be on the level of Jonah's religious cynicism, for Gawain does not realize with whom he is dealing. However, in terms of both characters' personalities and of the surprising events which will occur as a result of their respective weaknesses, it may be that the Gawain-poet portrayed such misapprehension in both characters to present a thorough contrasting of cupidinous and charitable points of view. Of course both characters are wrong about their futures, in fact, both gain in the allegorical sense the complete opposite of the death they fear in the mortal sense. Gawain's fear at this point therefore is not something to be understood as prophetic of events; as the audience, we are simply allowed to share his cupidinous attitude.

The anagogical mood of the Green Chapel scene and the identification of the Green Knight as novus homo are reinforced

by several Scriptural echoes. When Gawain calls out impatiently that he has arrived, the Green Knight replies, "'Abide, '.../& þou schal haf al in hast þat I þe hy3t ones'" (2217-8), words that recall Christ's to John in Rev. 22.12: "'Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done.'" The words literally confirm Gawain's fear of imminent death, but on the allegorical level of information they convey the sense of impending judgment to which the poem has been leading since the knight left Camelot.

As promised, the Green Knight returns the blow, after two false starts, although the blow returned is but a scratch in comparison to Gawain's complete decapitation of the challenger a year earlier. Gawain no doubt considers the third stroke to have been incomplete, for when he sees his own blood on the snow and realizes he is still alive, he leaps up and stands behind his shield, "Schot with his schuldere3 his fayre schelde vnder" (2318), ready to defend himself against further assault. This is a significant moment in the poem, for it demonstrates that Gawain, whether unconsciously or not, has recognized the impotence of the green girdle, which is symbolically the emblem of his concupiscence, and has reassumed the familiar, non-magical shield. In addition, St. Paul calls the taking up of faith the taking up of a "shield" in Ephesians 6.16, which is an appropriate image to introduce into a tale of Christian chivalry at such a crucial point in a character's spiritual revision. The Gawain-poet seems to be suggesting the concept here, for at long last Gawain is no longer making concessions to discredited codes of behaviour,

nor relying on deceit and false instruments to save his skin. In accordance with this idea, the Green Knight is seen to approve of Gawain's instinctual manoeuver: "& loked to þe leude þat on þe launde 3ede,/How do3ty dredles deruely þer stonde3,/Armed ful a3le3; in hert hit hym lyke3" (2333-35). Within the language and tradition of chivalric convention, the Gawain-poet has shown a spiritual lesson being learned, and it is one learned the hard way. Remembering that in Patience and Cleanness the poet argued his point by contraries, it is not surprising that the hero of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight discovers his cupidinous limitations in a similarly purgative manner.

The Green Knight then explains who he is, how he engineered the temptation of Gawain through his wife, and how the fulfillment of the challenge reflects Gawain's courteous faithfulness. The first two feigned blows, he says, represent Gawain's faithfulness on the first two days of the temptation; in this Gawain was "As perle bi þi quyte pese is of prys more,/So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi oþer gay knyte3" (2364-65). Literally, then, Gawain is admirable. It must be remembered, however, that Gawain is compared to a pearl among peas, and not to a pearl among pearls, as some critics, seeking to relate the analogy to the parable of the pearl of price, would like to imply.[36] The Green Knight then explains the deliverance of the nick on the neck: "'Bot here you lakked a lyttel, sir, & lewte you wanted,/.../Bot for þe lufed your lyf, þe lasse I you blame'" (2366-68). The Green Knight's summary of Gawain's fault is thus comparable to Christ's condemnation of cupidity in Matthew 17.25: "'For whoever would save his life will lose it'". However, the Green Knight cannot

condemn Gawain totally for his fear for his life, and it must be pointed out that there are degrees of devotion to one's body, as Augustine says:

> That he loves his body and wishes to have it safe and whole is equally obvious. But a man can love more than the health and soundness his body. 37

Gawain, therefore, has a natural fear of bodily harm which is entirely understandable; the issue in question is his faithfulness beyond that limit, and as the Green Knight points out, his loyalty in that regard precludes some of his ideological "lewte".

Thus, by way of the Green Knight's challenge and testing of Gawain, and his subsequent absolution of Gawain's sins, the poem's literal level brings the audience to an allegorical understanding of caritas. The cupidity of Camelot and of Gawain contrast with the charity of Hautdesert and of the Green Knight, and both the audience and the hero of the story are compelled by the poem's progress to appreciate this contrast. The latter has a bitter appreciation of his newly found self-knowledge, for all along he had thought himself perfectly familiar with the responsibilities of the spiritual philosophy and considered himself to be living up to them. In fact, on the allegorical level of interpretation, he has shown signs of being potentially a correct novus homo, in the image of the Virgin on his shield, his ability to remain chaste when tempted, and by his own admission, in the likeness of himself to Adam, Samson, Solomon and David, all of whom prefigured Christ. However, each of these allegorical symbols are matched on the same level with completely contrasting

evidence: the suspicious pentangle, the "magic" green girdle, the failings of even those most distinguished of pre-Christian men. In the characterization of his hero the Gawain-poet shows that the tendency toward cupidity increases when the spiritual ideology is confused with social ideologies, and that a man can be betrayed by his own faith in the latter.

In conclusion it can be seen by examination of the scriptural allegory used in the poem that the Gawain-poet has again presented the theme of the contrast of spiritual and carnal thinking. As with Cleanness, Patience and Pearl, the emphasis is on the anagogical ramifications of the contrast, with the focus on a hero's faulty point of view. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is written in a genre completely different again from its three predecessors, and therefore its references to scripture and patristic commentary are more subtle and more suitable to the romantic tradition. In the end, however, he exposes the same faulty human values which are important to the drama of the other poems, and he uses the same ironic perceptivity to disclose this information and entertain his audience.

Notes - Chapter IV

[1]Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (London, 1940), l. 2523. All quotations of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in this paper are taken from this edition. Henceforth, line references will be supplied in the body of the paper.

[2]G.L. Kittredge, A Study of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" (Gloucester, Mass., 1960).

[3]Larry D. Benson, Art and Tradition in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" (New Brunswick, N.J., 1965); Brian Stone, tr., Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Harmondsworth, England, 1959); J.A. Burrow, A Reading of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" (London, 1965).

[4]M.Mills, "Christian Significance and Romance Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", Modern Language Review, 60 (1965), 483-93.

[5]Bernard S. Levy, "Gawain's Spiritual Journey: Imitatio Christi in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", Annuale Mediaevelae, 6-11 (1965-70), 65-106.

[6]Joseph A. Longo, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: The Christian Quest for Perfection", Nottingham Medieval Studies, 11-13 (1967-69), 57-58.

[7]Robert W. Ackerman, "Gawain's Shield: Penitential Doctrine in Gawain and the Green Knight", Anglia, 76 (1958), 254-65.

[8]R.H. Green, "Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection", Journal of English Literary History, 29 (1962), 121-39.

[9]David Farley Hills, "Gawain's Fault in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" in Critical Studies of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", ed. Donald R. Howard and Christian Zacher (London, 1968).

[10]Hans Schnyder, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight": An Essay in Interpretation (Bern, 1961).

[11]See: Elisabeth Brewer, From Cuchalainn to Gawain (Totowa, N.J., 1973); Jessie L. Weston, The Legend of Sir Gawain (London, 1897); Alexandre Micha, "Miscellaneous French Romances in Verse", in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford, 1959).

[12]Hans Schnyder, p. 44.

[13]Pearl, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (London, 1921), ll. 362-63.

[14]See Chapter III, p. 74.

[15]R.H. Green, 130-32.

[16]St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, tr. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis, 1958), Book Three, XXI.31 (p. 97).

[17]Joseph Longo, 85.

[18]Bernard Levy, 84.

[19]Third fit.

[20]D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, 1962), p. 384.

[21]J.A. Burrow, p. 104.

[22]J.P. Migne, ed., Patrologia Latina, Indices II.

[23]Joseph Longo, 61.

[24]Bernard Levy, 80.

[25]Purity, ed. Robert J. Menner (New Haven, Conn., 1920), ll. 1413-19.

[26]Hans Schnyder, p. 41.

[27]Cleanness, ll. 1458-63.

[28]Hans Schnyder, p. 55.

[29]Ibid., p. 57.

[30]R.H. Green, 136-37.

[31]Bernard Levy, 101.

[32]Hans Schynder, p. 71.

[33]Patience, ed. J.J. Anderson (Manchester, 1969), l. 268.

[34]See Chapter II, p.49.

[35]Patience, ll. 83-84.

[36]For example: Levy, Longo.

[37]St. Augustine, op. cit., Book One, XXV. 26 (p. 22).

CONCLUSION

The question of the extent of Gawain's "trawþe" in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is dramatically crucial at the point in the poem when the knight chooses to accept the emblematic green girdle. However, an investigation of the allegorical "sentence" of the poem indicates that exposure of the limitations of his "trawþe" will be inevitable, and that the sentential climax of the poem occurs when Gawain is forced to face these limitations in himself. This is achieved through the poet's use of Biblical references and their traditional figurative meanings, which are juxtaposed ironically with certain key elements of the literal level of the chivalric tale. In this respect, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight differs from the rest of the canon in the use of Biblical allegory as a thematic device, since the narrator's references to the Bible exist mainly for their symbolic import and not as exemplary material or as part of the plot. Nonetheless, the irony with which the exegetical meanings of Biblical references in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight comment upon the ostensible function of the references in the poem is a feature the knightly romance has in common with Pearl.

Because it makes both implicit and explicit use of Biblical allegory, Pearl represents a transitional stage between the homilies and the romance. The instructional situation which is created in Pearl allows for the use of Biblical material in a homiletic context, and the visionary nature of the poem allows the poet to employ Biblical authority, in the form of the

Apocalyptic revelation, as part of his plot. In addition, the poet relies upon Biblical symbol and allusion to characterize his protagonists and to emphasize the irony with which the instructional situation confronts the Dreamer of Pearl, and this latter device is much the same technique as is in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

It can be seen, moreover, that in the homilies the basis is developed for the juxtaposition of secular and theological ideas and for an ironic comparison of human and spiritual ideals. In Patience, the poet alters the emphasis traditionally associated with the Biblical exemplum through narrative tone and the inclusion of pertinent secondary Biblical passages which, by their correlation, supply implicit thematic commentary. Thus, Biblical material functions thematically both as plot and as allegorical meaning. In turn, Patience represents a considerable refinement of the Gawain-poet's homiletic technique, as this was first established in Cleanness, since it uses a single book of the Bible and concentrates on a single human protagonist. In Cleanness, the poet's sentential ambition was such that a wide selection of Biblical exempla were used, with the result that narrative intervention was required in order to relate the components of the homily smoothly. However, Cleanness testifies to the Gawain-poet's broad familiarity with Biblical source material and allegorical meaning, and, more importantly, anticipates the association of caritas and courtesy which will occur in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

If this progression in the use of Biblical allegory in the four poems is recognized, then it can be seen that the poems have much in common in broad thematic terms. All four make implicit comparisons of caritas and cupiditas and all do so through the juxtaposition of human protagonists with otherworldly beings. Each poem directs its audience to the anagogical level of allegorical meaning in the Biblical material used and each accomplishes this by the invocation of both Old and New Testament conventions. In philosophical terms, it can be seen that the poems portray the inherent faultiness of human nature, and that this faultiness is a result of both the ignorance of and the misinterpretation of spiritual truth. In contrast, spiritual ideals are defined throughout the canon in the characterization of the otherworldly figures and in the use of scriptural reference.

These comparisons suggest re-evaluation of the interpretational treatment of all four poems and of Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in particular. As has been noted throughout this thesis, the ironies implied in some aspects of the Gawain-poet's use of Biblical allegory have not been recognized to the extent that it seems apparent they should. Some of the discrepancies which exist in the critical consideration of Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight can be removed if the poems are studied in light of the possible allegorical meanings of the Biblical references they contain, and if techniques used by the poet in the homilies are compared to techniques used in the dream-vision and in the romance. This thesis has attempted to

study these references in relation to theme and to make a comparative analysis of the more significant similarities and developments which can be discovered.

The developments in theme which take place suggest that Cleanness, Patience, Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is the probable chronological order of the poems. When considered in this order and in terms of similarities of approach and use of imagery, it can be seen that allegorical "sentence" is an important aspect of the interpretation of all four poems, regardless of genre, and that it is, in fact, most important to understand subtlety of Biblical reference as the poet abandons the homiletic genre in favour of the more popular narrative structures.

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