CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY PREACHERS

THE ARTES PRAEDICANDI

AND THE USE OF

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

BY

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY PREACHERS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides a close analysis of the use of

sententiae and narrative exempla in five of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales,

those of the Nun's Priest, the Wife of Bath, the Pardoner, the Summoner,

and the Parson. The handling of these illustrative materials is examined

within the framework of traditional and late medieval sermon theory and

practice. Major commentators such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, Gregory the

Great, Alain de Lille, and Wycliffe had much to say over the centuries

concerning the character of the Christian preacher or "rethor" and the

nature of pulpit oratory generally. Chaucer, it is argued, was keenly

aware of preachers and their sermons. He knew of both not only in the

abstract from the theorists but in a very real sense from immediate ex-

perience. Without doubt, preaching was the most important and pervasive

form of institutionalized oral expression of the fourteenth century.

This study shows how Chaucer deliberately evokes the atmosphere

of a medieval preaching situation in the five tales named above, doing

so especially through the manner in which sententiae and narrative exempla

are presented. It is concluded that he thus sheds light on the characters

of those who are preaching and that he thereby gives a particularly sharp

focus to the satire that is operating in these tales. It is further con-

cluded that the role of The Parson's Prologue and Tale in the moral scheme

of The Canterbury Tales becomes paramount when viewed in the light of the

good priest's attitude toward and handling of illustrative sententiae and

narratives.

Chaucer's indebtedness to the _artes praedicandi_ and to homiletic materials of various kinds has not hitherto escaped the attention of scholars. Neither has his use of _sententiae_ and narrative _exempla_. No previous study, however, had made an in-depth analysis of such illustrative materials within the context of traditional and contemporary conceptions of the Christian preacher and the sermon. The purpose of this dissertation is to fill this gap in the scholarship. The value in such an undertaking is two-fold. First of all, it should help to give the reader a renewed appreciation of Chaucer's achievement as a literary artist: by closely scrutinizing the poet's treatment of two major commonplaces of pulpit rhetoric one is able to understand more fully how he went about the business of his craft. Secondly, the moral thrust of _The Canterbury Tales_ is more forcefully felt when special attention is paid to the use of sermons illustrations by such outspoken pilgrims as the Wife of Bath, the Pardoner, and the Parson. The latter serves as a moral touchstone on the road to Canterbury, a fact that has received increasing scholarly attention in the last few years. None of these studies, however, has recognized sufficiently the dynamic homiletic qualities of the Parson's presentation, especially his lucid and logical treatment of Biblical _sententiae_. This study shows how, in both the content and method of his discourse, the Parson provides the orthodox answer to the false preaching of those who have preceded him.

PREFACE

This study grew out of an interest of many years in Classical

and Medieval rhetoric and their value to the literary artist. Rhetoric,

of course, provides the scholar with a rich field in which to endeavour.

To venture into this area is to confront a mainstay of Western education

and literary culture from Classical times through the Renaissance. The

very richness of the field, however, constitutes a potential danger to

the scholar. If he or she is not sufficiently careful, incursions into

the area can turn into overly ambitious projects, attempts to map out

too-large tracts of an enormously varied and complicated landscape.

Initially, my own ventures into the field proceeded in this way, the

original plan of my thesis being a treatment of the role of rhetoric in

Chaucer's poetry. Such a plan, given the time at my disposal, was

doomed to failure. Rhetoric was part of the very air inhaled by a liter-

ate and learned man of the fourteenth century: to attempt to tackle a

subject as vast as the role of rhetoric in the art of a major poet was to

commit oneself to investigating an overwhelmingly large range of topics.

Clearly, a much less ambitious and more workable plan was required.

The artes praedicandi offered the opportunity to examine

Chaucer's use of rhetoric within a clearly definable area. Though over-

lapping with the contemporary artes poeticae (both drawing upon a common

rhetorical inheritance), the artes praedicandi are applicable to a

particular kind of public, oral occasion. As such, they allow one to

examine the kinds of rhetorical devices that are especially suited to

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such a situation. I have isolated two of these devices, authoritative sententiae or statements and narrative exempla, the most popular forms of illustrative material utilized by preachers in Chaucer's day. Essentially, the dissertation that follows is a close analysis of the use of such materials by five of Chaucer's Cantebury pilgrims, the Nun's Priest, the Wife of Bath, the Pardoner, the Summoner and the Parson. All the tales told by these pilgrims display identifiable sermon characteristics of one kind or another in structure, content, and in the dramatic context in which they are presented that are crucial to one's understanding of them. In each of the chapters that follows I will first isolate such features and then examine carefully each pilgrim's handling of sententiae and narrative exempla within the sermon framework. I have singled out such materials because, as I will argue, they help to illuminate Chaucer's methods of characterization, to clarify his satirical intentions and, finally, because they provide devices for reinforcing the unity of the moral scheme of The Canterbury Tales as a whole.

I should like to acknowledge the special assistance given to me by my supervisor, Dr. Chauncey Wood, and by Dr. Laurel Braswell and Dr. Alvin Lee. I should also like to express my gratitude to my wife, Anna, for her unflagging support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AnM	Annuale Mediaevale
CE	College English
ChauR	Chaucer Review
EETS	Early English Text Society, original series
EETS e.s.	Early English Text Society, extra series
EHR	English Historical Review
ELH	Journal of English Literary History
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
MÆ	Medium Aevum
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MLQ	Modern Language Quarterly
MLR	Modern Language Review
MP	Modern Philology
MS	Mediaeval Studies
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PQ	Philological Quarterly
QJS	Quarterly Journal of Speech
RES	Review of English Studies
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
SP	Studies in Philology
SN	Studia Neophilologica
TSE	Tulane Studies in English

TSL	Tennessee Studies in Literature
TSLL	Texas Studies in Literature and Language
UMSE	University of Mississippi Studies in English
UTQ	University of Toronto Quarterly

I

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL BACKGROUND

For purposes of this study, some understanding of the sermon

traditions upon which Chaucer drew is, of course, necessary. This open-

ing chapter will attempt to provide the reader with this by way of (1)

a brief historical survey of Christian preaching theory up to the end of

the fourteenth century, especially as this relates to illustrative

material, and (2) a discussion of the scholarship on Chaucer that has

recognized the role of sermon elements in the poet's work.

1.   Christian Preaching Theory To 1400 A.D.

This subject, needless to say, is vast and I do not ·by any means

intend to provide a detailed discussion of it, but rather to focus on

some of the major figures and works that largely determined the develop-

ment of the sermon over this long span of time. The period, for purposes

of this discussion, may be conveniently divided into two eras: (i) pre-

thirteenth century, which is dominated by the ideas of St. Paul and St.

Augustine and, to a lesser extent, those of Gregory the Great and Alain

de Lille, and (ii) the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the era of

the formal artes praedicandi, in which a prescribed and detailed rhetoric

of preaching was laid out in manuals such as Robert of Basevorn's

Forma praedicandi and De modo componendi sermones of Thomas Walleys.[1]

This era is also remarkable for the proliferation of collections of

narrative exempla intended largely for the use of preachers: the most

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Outstanding of these are the Liber sapientiae and the Liber de

moralizationibus (or Moralitates) of Robert Holcot, the Tractatus de

diversis materiis of Étienne de Bourbon, John of Wales' Comminoloquium,

and John Bromyard's Summa praedicantium.

The sermon of the first era came to be referred to in the later

era as "popular" or "ancient", a designation now also commonly used by

modern scholarship. Walleys in his manual speaks of it as follows:

> ...iste modus praedicandi populo non solum est
> facilior ipsi praedicatori, sed etiam utilior
> auditori inter omnes modos praedicandi. Et iste
> fuit antiquus modus praedicandi sanctorum, ut
> patet in eorum homeliis.[2]

The sermon of the late medieval era, in contrast, was designated as

"university", "modern", or "thematic", emanating as it did from the then

recently founded universities at Paris and Oxford. The Englishman,

Robert of Basevorn, writes in the first quarter of the fourteenth century:

> Inter tamen modernos sunt modi magis usati,
> scilitet gallicus et anglicus, utpote de
> durabus magis famosis universitatibus emanantes.[3]

Before proceeding to examine in more detail each of these two

types of sermon, it should be noted, first of all, that the "ancient"

sermon type was by no means replaced or superseded by the "modern" type.

Rather they co-existed with each other in the later era. Ross, in the

excellent introduction to his edition of Middle English Sermons, observes:

> Despite the popularity of the new form,...
> this old, free method was never abandoned. It
> remained particularly popular with preachers
> of vernacular sermons, which were delivered to
> the laity. There were several reasons for this.
> In the first place, the new sermon, highly
> formalized, a product of the universities, was
> designated for educated, sophisticated audiences.
> A part of their enjoyment of the sermon organized

> according to the "modern" method was aesthetic;
> it was the delight of seeing matter pressed into
> perfect form. Unlettered audiences obviously could
> not share in this kind of appreciation. Again,
> because of its very nature, the new form lent it-
> self rather to an intellectual than to an emotionally
> moving discussion of the meaning of a scriptural
> passage.[4]

Though recognizing two basic types of sermon, Ross also makes the

cautionary comment that the categories are a simplification: not "all

medieval sermons of the 'modern' type had precisely the same form."[5]

This view is corroborated by Charland's observation that there was no

one uniform preaching method in the middle ages, the sermon being a pro-

tean form which adapted to the particular milieu and circumstances in

which it was delivered.[6] Pfander, in his discussion of the "popular"

sermon in the later era, makes much the same point:

> ...rules are as notable for their violation as for
> their observance. So our preacher observed whatever
> portion of the rules fitted his capabilities and the
> occasion. Although everybody was instructed as to how
> sermons should be composed, in their practice many
> departed from the precepts.[7]

With such cautionary comments in mind, one can proceed to examine the

prescribed structure or form of each of the two basic types and the

precepts that lay behind them.

The "ancient" sermon type was quite simple in form. It consisted,

in the first place, of the citation (in Latin) of a long Biblical passage,

which was then explicated verse by verse in the vernacular. Walleys

describes this process as follows: "... totum evangelium quod legitur in

missa accipitur pro themate, et totum exponitur, et in ejus expositione

multa pulchra et devota dicuntur."[8] Such a sermon was based on the

homilies of the early Church which, as Gilson describes them, were

delivered under the divine inspiration of the Holy Ghost and were

"directes, sans art, sans divisions, sans comparaisons ni accumulations

de textes scriptuaires."[9]

No formal rhetorical precepts as such underlie early Apostolic

preaching of this kind.[10] Paul in his two Epistles to Timothy (which

epitomize the Apostolic view of preachers and preaching), places empha-

sis, as a recent study has shown, "upon the character of a preacher as

the final and most eloquent demonstration of the truth of a speaker's

words."[11] Paul writes that "...the end of the commandment [to preach]

is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned

faith."(I Tim. 1:5).[12] The Pauline Epistles provide guide-lines for the

preacher of only the most general sort: Timothy is repeatedly advised to

meditate upon and have faith in the goodness and words of the Almighty if

he is to be able to show effectively the way to salvation:

> Meditate upon these things; be wholly in these
> things; that thy profiting may be manifest
> to all./ Take heed to thyself and to doctrine;
> be earnest in them. For in doing this thou
> shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.
> (I Tim. 4:15-16)

Paul offers no structural paradigm for the sermon in these Epistles. He

does, however, speak pejoratively about sacred oratory that pays undue

attention to its own rhetoric. He warns Timothy "not to give heed to

fables and endless genealogies, which furnish questions rather than the

edification of God which is in faith" (I Tim. 1:4). Such "fables and

endless genealogies", he goes on to add, are nothing but "vain babbling"

(I Tim. 1:6), a manifestation of the preacher's own self-concern and

vanity, and can only result in the corruption rather than the enlighten-

ment of the preacher and those listening to him:

> If any man teach otherwise and consent not to
> the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to
> that doctrine which is according to godliness,/
> He is proud, knowing nothing, but sick about
> questions and strifes of words; from which arise
> envies, contentions, blasphemies, evil sus-
> picions,/ Conflicts of men corrupted in mind
> and who are destitute of the truth, supposing
> gain to be godliness. (I Tim. 6:3-5)

Of particular interest to this dissertation is Paul's attitude towards

"fables". In addition to the passage cited above, he also warns Timothy

later on to "avoid foolish and old wives' fables; and exercise thyself

unto godliness" (I Tim. 4:7). Even later, in the second Epistle, he

stresses the importance of true preaching as a counter-balance to bad

preachers dispensing untrue fables:

> Preach the word; be instant in season, out of
> season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience
> and doctrine./ For there shall be a time when
> they will not endure sound doctrine but, acc-
> ording to their own desires, they will heap to
> themselves teachers, having itching ears;/ And
> will indeed turn away their hearing from the
> truth, but will be turned unto fables.
> (II Tim. 4: 2-4)

This negative view of tale-telling, along with the emphasis on the

preacher's character, are Paul's two most important contributions to Christ-

ian ideas on the sermon. The latter, as will be seen shortly, was under-

standably accepted as an important requirement for preaching throughout

the two eras under discussion. Later generations, however, were not

altogether horrified by (and indeed at times even encouraged) the use of

stories of various kinds as illustrative material in sermons. But of this

more later.

In contrast to the generalities of Paul's Epistles to Timothy,

St. Augustine's On Christian Doctrine, especially the fourth and final

book, furnishes a quite detailed discussion of a rhetoric of preaching.

One modern scholar has described the work enthusiastically as "un des

meilleurs traités d' éloquence sacrée qu'on puisse lire"[13] while another

calls it "the basic statement of a Christian homiletic until the emer-

gence of the highly formalized 'thematic' or 'university style' sermon."[14]

Indeed the importance of the work to the history and development of the

Christian sermon cannot be overestimated. For purposes of this discussion,

three areas of Augustine's treatise require attention, (a) his comments

on the character of the preacher, (b) his treatment of the levels of style,

and (c) his statements on "things" and "signs".

Augustine felt much the same way about the character of the

preacher as Paul did. In fact, he makes extensive references to Paul's

Epistles to Timothy in one section of On Christian Doctrine (IV. 16.33)

and later on, in what could be a summary of Paul's ideas on the matter,

he states that

> ...the life of the speaker has greater weight
> in determining whether he is obediently heard
> than any grandeur of eloquence. (IV. 27.59)[15]

Augustine does go on to concede that preachers who live wicked lives can

benefit their congregations by persuasive exhortation to good,"although,

as it is written, he 'is unprofitable to his own soul'". Moreover, "many

more would be benefited if they [the preachers] were to do as they say."

(IV. 27. 60).

Augustine's emphasis on the character of the Christian orator

grew directly out of his dissatisfaction with the Sophistic inheritance

in which he and the other early Fathers of the Church had been schooled.[16]

As with Paul, Augustine saw danger in unnecessary and deliberately

deceitful disputation (Paul's "questions and strifes of words") and in

inflated rhetoric. Of these he writes:

> The science of disputation is of great value for
> understanding and solving all sorts of questions
> that appear in sacred literature. However, in this
> connection the love of controversy is to be avoided,
> as well as a certain puerile ostentation in deceiving
> an adversary....At times a discourse which is not
> captious, but which is more abundant than is consistent
> with gravity, being inflated with verbal ornament, is
> also called sophistical.
> (II. 31. 48)

Instead of the excessive verbal ornamentation recommended by the Sophists,

Augustine advises the Christian preacher to imitate the divinely in-

spired eloquence of the Scriptures. He then proceeds to analyse care-

fully certain Biblical passages for their skilled use of climax, period,

clauses, and the like to prove that a Christian rhetoric did indeed exist

(IV. 1-8).

Though he has no use for the Sophists, Augustine nonetheless

draws upon another Classical rhetorical tradition to strengthen the

foundations of his programme for a viable Christian rhetoric. This

tradition— the Ciceronian— provided him, first of all, with a clear view

of the orator's three goals (to teach, to delight, and to move, On Christ-

ian Doctrine, IV. 10-16), and, secondly, with the concept of the three

levels of rhetorical style (IV. 17-26).[17] Augustine quotes Cicero di-

rectly on the three levels of style, relating them to the three goals:

> To these three things— that he should teach, delight,
> and persuade — the author of Roman eloquence himself
> seems to have wished to relate three other things when
> he said, "He therefore will be eloquent who can speak
> of small things in a subdued manner, of moderate things
> in a temperate manner, and of grand things in a grand
> manner." It is as though he had added these to the three

> mentioned previously and said, "He is therefore
> eloquent who in order to teach, can speak of small
> things in a subdued manner, and in order to please,
> can speak of moderate things in a temperate manner,
> and in order to persuade, can speak of great things
> in a grand manner." (IV. 17)

Augustine, as this passage shows, did not hesitate to interpret Cicero as

he thought fitting the purposes of a Christian rhetoric. His somewhat

arbitrary linking of the Roman orator's three goals to the three levels

of style is actually only a prelude to an even bolder move — the severing

of the link between subject matter and stylistic level. In the Classical-

Ciceronian tradition only grand matters could be treated in the grand or

high style, lowly subjects in the subdued or low style, and everything

in between in the moderate or middle style. Since the Christian orator

only dealt with sublime subject matter, his use of one or another of the

levels of style was therefore dependent upon whether he wanted to teach,

to condemn or praise, or to move. Thus, Augustine writes

> ...although our teacher should speak of great things,
> he should not always speak about them in the grand
> manner, but in a subdued manner when he teaches some-
> thing, in a moderate manner when he condemns or praises
> something. But when something is to be done and he is
> speaking to those who ought to do it but do not wish to
> do it, then those great things should be spoken in the
> grand manner in a way appropriate to the persuasion of
> their minds. (IV. 19.38)

This, as Auerbach describes it, was nothing less than "a radical de-

parture from the rhetorical, and indeed from the entire literary,

tradition" that preceded.[18] Moreover, the grand manner or high style was

now seen to be dependent on more than mere verbal ornamentation:

> The grand style differs from the moderate style not
> so much in that it is adorned with verbal ornaments
> but in that it is forceful with emotions of the
> spirit. Although it uses almost all of the ornaments,

> it does not seek them. It is carried along by its
> own impetus, and if the beauties of eloquence occur
> they are caught up by the force of things discussed
> and not deliberately assumed for decoration. It is
> enough for the matter being discussed that the
> appropriateness of the words be determined by the
> ardor of the heart rather than by careful choice.   (IV. 20.42)

The "ardor of the heart" is, of course, a reference to the spiritual state

of the preacher. This is given precedence over rhetorical embellishment,

which explains why Augustine, after his lengthy treatment of the three

levels of style, concludes Of Christian Doctrine by reemphasizing the

importance of the life of the preacher to the effectiveness of his preach-

ing (IV. 27-29). This is a lesson that all but one of Chaucer's preachers,

as will be seen later, do not follow. Even a seemingly blameless character

like the Nun's Priest, it will be shown, subscribes to the notion that an

ornamentally inflated style is necessary for the propagation of God's

word.

Another important legacy to preaching theory and Christian think-

ing generally was Augustine's discussion in the first three books of On

Christian Doctrine of "things" and "signs". It would be utterly imposs-

ible to summarise this complex matter in a few pages, and thus I will

attempt to bring the reader's attention only to those aspects of it that

seem to me most pertinent to the subject of this dissertation. The

matter is indeed directly related to the subject of illustrative material

in sermons because (a) in encouraging the study of "things" or phenomena

of this world Augustine was encouraging their use in analogies,

similitudes, and examples of various kinds, and (b) the exegetical method

that was the culmination of all his ideas on the matter provided a sys-

tematic way of handling the Biblical sententiae that provided the

inspiration (in the form of themes) and backbone (in the form of

corroborating illustrations) of all sermons.

Before discussing Augustine's exegetical method, the basic mean-

ings of "things" and "signs" must be clearly understood. Augustine is

quite lucid in the definitions that he provides in On Christian Doctrine:

> Strictly speaking, I have here called a "thing" that
> which is not used to signify something else, like
> wood, stone, cattle and so on.... "signs"...are
> things used to signify something.Thus every sign is
> also a thing, for that which is not a thing is nothing
> at all; but not every thing is also a sign. (I. 2.2)

In referring to "things" Augustine is speaking of nothing more or less

than the phenomenal world, the world of mortal objects as perceived by

the senses. This world, Augustine goes on to argue, should be used "so

that the 'invisible things' of God 'being understood by things that are

made' may be seen, that is, so that by means of corporal and temporal

things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual." (I. 4.4). In other

words, earthly "things" become "signs" when they are used as emblems or

symbols of the world of the spirit. As such, "things" provide a vast

horde of illustrative materials for the teacher intent on making the

eternal verities of the Christian message accessible to the faithful.

Such materials, Augustine points out, are extensively used in the Bible

and the preacher can only understand their spiritual significance and

use them in turn in his own teaching if he first has knowledge of the

"things" themselves. Thus, for example:

> An ignorance of things makes figurative expressions
> obscure when we are ignorant of the nature of animals,
> or stones, or plants, or other things which are often
> used in the Scriptures for purposes of constructing
> similitudes. Thus the well-known fact that a serpent
> exposes its whole body in order to protect its head

> from those attacking it illustrates the sense of
> the Lord's admonition that we be wise like
> serpents (Matt. 10.16). That is, for the sake of
> our head which is Christ, we should offer our
> bodies to persecutors lest the Christian faith be
> in a manner killed in us, and in an effort to save
> our bodies, we deny God. (II. 16.24).

Augustine then gives examples of how a knowledge of stones, plants, num-

bers, and music is necessary for an understanding of figurative expressions

in the Scriptures (II. 16-18, 24-28). Extending even further the range of

wordly knowledge useful to the Christian preacher, he discusses in the

rest of the second book of On Christian Doctrine the value of studying

literature, logic and rhetoric, history, the mechanical arts, and so on.

Augustine readily acknowledges that the study of these matters will carry

the preacher outside the Christian framework, but truth, he states, may

be found in a pagan as well as a Christian context for it comes from God

not from men. In justifying the study of classical literature, for ex-

ample, he argues:

> But we should not think that we ought not to learn
> literature because Mercury is said to be its inventor,
> nor that because the pagans dedicated temples to
> Justice and Virtue and adored in stone what should
> be performed in the heart, we should therefore avoid
> justice and virtue. Rather, every good and true Christian
> should understand that wherever he may find truth, it
> is his Lord's. (II. 18.28)

The same argument is used to defend the study and use of logic and

rhetoric. Of logic he writes:

> ...the truth of valid inference was not instituted
> by men; rather it was observed by men and set down
> that they might learn or teach it. For it is per-
> petually instituted by God in the reasonable order
> of things. (II. 32.50)

So too does the plan or dispositio of rhetorical discourse reflect

the divine order rather than human (that is, pagan) genius:

> In the same way the science of definition, division,
> and partition, although it may be applied to false-
> hoods, is neither false in itself nor instituted by
> men; rather it was discovered in the order of things.
> (II. 35.53)

On the study of history Augustine observes:

> ...whatever evidence we have of past times in that
> which is called history helps us a great deal in
> the understanding of the sacred books, even if we
> learn it outside the Church as part of our child-
> hood education. (II. 28.42.)

He goes on to argue that

> Although human institutions of the past are described
> in historical narration, history itself is not to be
> classed as a human institution; for those things which
> are past and cannot be revoked belong to the order of
> time, whose creator and administrator is God. (II. 28.44)

These latter two passages, taken together, epitomize the balance bet-

ween the "letter" and the "spirit" that Augustine tried to achieve in his

exegetical or allegorical method. On the one hand, as Smalley puts it, he

gives the "letter" a "concrete chronological reality which it had never

had before":[19] the study of the "things" of this world—of objects and

events in time —is made respectable and thus opens up a rich store-

house of illustrative materials upon which the Christian preacher could

safely draw. On the other hand, these materials were to be seen not as

valuable in themselves but sub specie æternitatis, that is, they were

to be regarded as "signs" as well as "things". With reference to Paul's

statement that "the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth" (II Cor.

3:6), Augustine points out the dangers of "taking signs for things":

> There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this
> habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not
> able to raise the eye of the mind above things that

are corporal and created to drink in eternal
light. (III. 5.9)

To be sure, Augustine did not invent the exegetical or al-
legorical method, nor even introduce it into Christian thought but he
did, in On Christian Doctrine, make it for the first time part of a co-
herent programme for the study and teaching of the Bible and the truths
of the Christian faith.[20] The method was thus given an important role in
Christian teaching. In the centuries that followed Augustine's work the
method was commented and elaborated upon, the spiritual sense being most
commonly sub-divided into three levels of meaning, the allegorical, the
tropological, and the anagogical.[21] Such systematic elaboration, for all
its various complex expressions over the centuries, always remained
nonetheless rooted in the basic soil of the letter and the spirit.[22]
Robertson's cautionary comment on the matter is worth noting at this point:

> What was felt by the spiritual exegetes of the Middle
> Ages was not a "system" but a "spiritual understanding"
> which might be described rather crudely and inadequately
> in a series of technical terms.[23]

The comment is worth remembering for, as will be seen later on, Chaucer's
exegete/preachers utilize for the main part the rudimentary double di-
vision into "letter" and "spirit" rather than the complex four-level
system in their attempts to interpret or, as is more often the case,
deliberately misinterpret illustrative Scriptural passages.

After Augustine, the next major contributor to preaching theory
was Gregory the Great who in the Regula pastoralis reiterated the Paul-
ine-Augustinian emphasis on the character of the preacher. In addition,
he provided for the first time a detailed discussion of the importance of
gearing sermons to the special needs and particular social status of

different congregations.[24] The entire second part of the Regula is devoted

to the life of the pastor, treating such matters as the role of the

pastor's life as an example to his flock and the need for discretion in

preaching and for the pastor to meditate daily upon the Scriptures.[25] In

addition, Gregory discusses, in the fourth and final part of the Regula,

the danger (to which nearly all of Chaucer's preachers succumb) of a

"delight in self-display."[26] But it is in his discussion of various ways

of admonishing different types of congregations that Gregory makes his

most important contribution to the development of the sermon. In the pro-

logue to the third part of the Regula he advises:

> ...according to the quality of the hearers ought the
> discourse of preachers to be fashioned, so as to suit
> all and each for their several needs, and yet never
> deviate from the art of common edification....every
> teacher also, that he may edify all in the one virtue
> of charity, ought to touch the hearts of his hearers
> out of one doctrine, but not with one and the same
> exhortation.[27]

In the rest of this third part of the Regula, Gregory presents various

ways of preaching to different audiences based on such criteria as sex,

wealth, social status and, of course, spiritual needs.[28] Understandably,

Gregory argues that the choice of illustrative Scriptural passage should

be determined by the particular audience to which the preacher is appeal-

ing. Thus in dealing with servants and masters, for example, he advises:

> The former [the servants] are to be admonished to know
> themselves to be servants of masters; the latter [the
> masters] are to be admonished to acknowledge themselves
> to be fellow-servants of servants. For to those it is
> said, Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh
> (Coloss. 3:22); and again, Let as many servants as are
> under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honour
> (I Tim. 6:1); but to these it is said, And ye, masters, do the
> same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that
> both their and your Master is in heaven (Ephes. 6:9).[29]

This recognition of the need to tailor sermons carefully according to the particular social and moral make-up of different congregations now became an important area of discussion for preaching theorists in the centuries that followed.[30] As one approaches the appearance of the "university" sermon in the early thirteenth century one finds Alain de Lille, for example, giving over ten of the 48 chapters of his Summa de arte praedicatoria to a treatment of how to preach to the rich, the poor, to soldiers, lawyers, priests, married people, virgins, and so on.[31] His last chapter, amusingly enough, consists of a model sermon geared to those who are sleepy ("Ad somnolentos"). The beginning of this model is worth noting for it shows how Alain goes about choosing authoritative sententiae with his audience in mind and also how he confirms divisions of his sermon theme with appropriate corroborating Biblical passages:

> Scientes quia hora est jam nos de somno surgere
> (Rom. xiii): notandum est, fratres charissimi,
> quod triplex est somnus. Est somnus, quando quis
> rapitur ad contemplationem coelestium, et tunc
> quiescunt naturales vires; de quo dicitur: Misit
> Dominus soporem in Adam (Gen. II): et alius somnus,
> quando quiescunt animales virtutes, et operantur
> naturales; de quo dicitur, quod angelus apparuit
> in somnis, Joseph (Matt.1, II). Tertius somnus est
> quando dormit ratio, et sensualitas exorbitat....[32]

In thus confirming his divisions with authorities, Alain is following his own advice given earlier in the Summa:

> Sic praedicator omnem divisionem quam pro-
> ponit auctoritatibus debet roborare, aliter tota
> divisio nutans est et lubrica.[33]

The importance of this and other aspects of Alain's treatise should not be missed. Myers (following Roth) describes the Summa as providing the "first full statement of the principle of choosing a sermon

text and supporting it with concording authorities."[34] Viewed in this light, Alain can be seen as pointing the way to the important new developments in sermon form of the century following in his suggestions in his various model sermons for following a prescribed method, with theme, divisions, concording authorities and so on, for constructing a sermon.

Alain's method, however, is simple and concise when compared to the elaborate new form devised for the sermon in the universities at the end of the third decade of the thirteenth century. The first public expression of the new form took place at the University of Paris in the academic year 1230-31.[35] As an integral part of the academic course of studies it is not surprising that the sermon developed in the university environment into something of a scholarly exercise: the carefully structured plan of the "university", "modern", or "thematic" sermon was simply a reflection of its academic origins.[36] In manuals such as Robert of Basevorn's Forma praedicandi and Thomas Walleys' De modo componendi sermones this new plan was then recorded, systematized and elaborated upon in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[37] Essentially, the plan of the "university" sermon consisted of six parts:[38]

> (i) Theme: As in the case of the "ancient" sermon type, a
> passage or sententia from the Scriptures was used as the
> springboard for the rest of the sermon, though now the
> passage was to be much shorter, a verse or two. It was
> further advised (Alain de Lille had anticipated this) that
> the theme be divisible into three sub-topics. This number,
> as Basevorn explains it, was both sacrosanct and convenient,
> associated with the Trinity while providing sufficient

material for a sermon that was neither too long nor
too short.[39]

(ii) Protheme: A short exordium which usually ended with
a prayer invoking God's help. Often only the prayer was
included in this section.

(iii) Introduction of the Theme: Here the purpose of the
sermon is clarified. This, Basevorn advised, should be
short and could be done by authority and/or by argument
(historical and other examples, induction, syllogism or
enthymeme).[40] Walleys, in his discussion of the sermon
Introduction, gives much the same advice.[41]

(iv) Division of the Theme: At this point the sub-topics
of the theme (usually three, as noted above) are confirmed
by Biblical authority. This works in the same way as Alain
de Lille had suggested. Compare this passage from John of
Wales' manual of preaching, for example, with that of Alain
above:

> Exemplum possumus ponere dicendo quod gloria
> celestis habet tres nobiles condiciones. Prima
> est inerrabilis; vnde propheta: "Reple Syon
> inerrabilibus virtutibus tuis et gloria tua
> populum tuum". Secunda est inmarcessibilis.
> Ima Petri," cum apparuerit princeps pastorum
> percipiemus inmarcessibilem glorie coronam".
> Tercia est eterna et interminabilis; vnde
> propheta:" Qui perfectus est in illo " et ce-
> tera,"et erit illi gloria eterna".[42]

(v) Sub-division: Each sub-topic could then be further sub-
divided and each member of the sub-division confirmed by
authority.[43]

(vi)   _Discussion and Amplification_: This forms the body of the

sermon and the preacher could begin this section right after the

division. Basevorn, as a matter of fact, categorizes the sub-

division as a method of amplification, one of eight which he

discusses. Among the others are the discussion of a word (its

derivation, definition, and such like); argument (syllogism, in-

duction, and so on); metaphors; the four levels of Scriptural

exegesis; causes and effects, and the concordance of authorities.[44]

Walleys pays special attention to this last method, listing and

discussing no less than fourteen logical ways in which authorities

can be made to concord with the theme, its sub-topics, and with

one another.[45]

From the outline above, it is clear not only that the "university"

sermon was carefully and intricately structured, but also that, like the

contemporary _ars poetria_, it encouraged amplification rather than con-

cision.[46] In large measure this amplification took the form of authorit-

ative _sententiae_ and narrative _exempla_. _Sententiae_, it is evident, played

an especially favoured role in this type of sermon, appearing at the

beginning (the theme) and in almost every other of its six parts.[47]

Narratives, as will be seen presently, were much favoured in practice but

received little systematic discussion in the manuals and were frequently

condemned as unsuitable for sermons.

In encouraging the use of _sententiae_, the preaching manuals were

working in a tradition that went back to classical times. Curtius notes:

> In the antique poets there were hundreds and
> thousands of lines that put a psychological
> experience or a rule of life in the briefest

form. Aristotle discussed such apothegms (γνῶμαι)
in his Rhetoric (II, 21). Quintillian called them
"sententiae" (literally: "judgements") because they
resembled the decisions of public bodies....Such
lines are "mnemonic verses." They are arranged in
alphabetical order that they may be ready to hand.
This gives rise to philological parlour games, such
as enlivened festive gatherings in old Hellas.[48]

Here lay in great part the inspiration of the famous "scholastic

method" of the medieval period.[49] McKeon observes in his excellent over-

view of medieval rhetoric that

The method of rhetoric was...put to...use in the
interpretation of the theological doctrine. The
"scholastic method", as it came to be called,
grew out of the assemblage of "sentences", which
derived their name and their initial methods of
treatment from rhetoric. The early collections
of canon law were collections of authorities —
statements from Scripture, decisions of councils,
decretals, opinions of the Fathers....[50]

McKeon adds that such an "assemblage of 'sentences'" raised the problem

of bringing "discordant or apparently discordant" authorities into accord

with one another, a task attempted most notably by Peter Abelard in his

Sic et non and, perhaps even more significantly, by the "Master of the

Sentences", Peter Lombard, in his Sententiae.[51] Preaching theorists like

Walleys (as already noted above) worked out in their turn various ways of

bringing authorities into concordance with one another in the context of

a sermon. Authoritative sententiae thereby became an integral and vital

part of the process of developing a sermon. Davy, after noting "l'abond-

ance presque ininterrompue des citations des écrivains" in medieval ser-

mons and literature generally, adds that in the sermons "Ces textes ne

sont donc pas comme le support occasionel de la pensée et de la phrase,

mais ils en sont l'armature interne et l'actif développement."[52] The

Parson's Tale, as shall be seen later on, is a superlative example of the use of authority in this fashion. Chaucer's other preachers, however, tend to use sententiae in less logical and often deliberately confusing ways. One recent study (which unfortunately does not recognize Chaucer's debt to the artes praedicandi) has argued: "In general, citation of authority in Chaucer is a matter of parody, dispute, doctoring, illogic, or bombardment."[53] There will be ample opportunity in the course of the following chapters to validate this argument when the preaching techniques of such figures as Chantecleer, the Wife of Bath, and the Pardoner are closely examined.

One might well ask at this point who precisely were the authorities whose sententiae were most frequently used in the "university" sermon.[54] First and foremost, of course, there was the Bible: it provided the themes and the bulk of the illustrative passages cited by preachers. Secondly, there were the Fathers of the Church, particularly Augustine and Gregory the Great. Finally came the pagan writers, especially Cato and Seneca, who were esteemed for their observations on moral matters. Upon such a vast corpus of Christian and non-Christian materials the medieval preacher drew to give his sermons a divinely sanctified and hence unassailable authority by which he could teach the Faithful and move them (in the Ciceronian-Augustinian sense) closer to God. Such external authority was, of course, reinforced by the spiritual ardour of the preacher himself: the preaching manuals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries emphatically reaffirmed the centuries-old Pauline-Augustinian stress on the need for the preacher to lead an exemplary life.[55]

In contrast to their lengthy and systematic discussion of author-
itative sententiae, preaching manuals made little attempt, as Caplan has
noted, "to formulate a clear-cut treatment" of the narrative exemplum.[56]
For one thing, the manuals were very flexible in their suggestions for
the proper positioning of such illustrative stories in the structure of
the "university" sermon. Sometimes, for instance, it was recommended that
they appear early on in the sermon. Basevorn, as already noted above,
suggested that they could be used in the course of the Introduction of the
Theme. One of his specific suggestions here is the use of a historical
narrative ("Per exemplum in historia"), one from the fourth book of Valerius
Maximus' De gestis memoralibus, to illustrate the theme Diligentibus Deum
omnium cooperantur in bonum.[57] In an even earlier chapter Basevorn, in
outlining various ways of grasping and holding a congregation's attention
("allicere animos auditorum ut reddat eos benevolos ad audiendum et
retinendum"), recommends that some terrifying tale be told at the begin-
ning of the sermon. In this way hardened sinners could be frightened
into listening to the discourse that followed.[58] For the main part, how-
ever, narrative exempla appeared whenever they were needed, that is, at
any point in a sermon where they could reinforce or illustrate an argu-
ment. Ross notes that "there is no regularity" in the position of such
exempla in the fifty-one sermons in his edition of Middle English Sermons,
though he does concede that the "fact that an illustration of an argument
normally follows rather than precedes the argument causes exempla to
tend to appear late in the sermon."[59] Lecoy de la Marche in his pioneer-
ing study of the medieval sermon expressed the same view nearly a century
ago and, more recently, Owst has brought attention to specific examples of

concluding narratives in English vernacular sermons such as those in
John Mirk's Festial.[60] The fact is, nonetheless, that the theorists them-
selves never worked out hard and fast rules for locating narratives in
the structure of the sermon as they had for sententiae. The preacher was
thus given great leeway in the positioning and quantity of stories used
in the course of his sermons. As will be seen shortly, this liberty was
often abused.

The preaching theorists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centur-
ies also did not take much care in defining what they meant by exempla
and this often lead to a certain vagueness in their discussion of illus-
trative material, a vagueness, it might be added, which has caused much
discussion amongst modern scholars on the subject of defining exempla.[61]
The problem of defining rhetorical terms was not a new one. Indeed, McKeon
notes early in his study that the history of rhetoric requires special
attention to "altering definitions, the differentiation of various con-
ceptions of rhetoric itself, and the spread of the devices of rhetoric
to subject matters far from those ordinarily ascribed to it."[62] As a
rhetorical term exemplum could be especially imprecise, in the same way
as the modern word "example" can be. Thus it is often difficult to pin
down its exact meaning when it appears in preaching materials. Crane has
argued that the term is not used in the sense of "illustrative story" be-
fore the end of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth,
that is, just about the time that the "university sermon" was develop-
ing.[63] However, Gregory the Great in his homilies and dialogues and in
the Regula pastoralis was already using the term at the end of the sixth
century to designate narrative, the use of which in sermons he was actively

encouraging.[64] In contrast, one cannot be sure what Alain de Lille means

by the term when he uses it for he does not emphasize sermon narrative as

Gregory did. He recommends in his Summa de arte praedicatoria that exempla

appear at the end of a sermon but does not clarify whether he means the

term in its general or exclusive narrative sense:

> In fine vero, debet uti exemplis, ad probandum
> quod intendit, quia familiaris est doctrina
> exemplaris.[65]

Basevorn in his preaching manual also uses the term imprecisely, though

usually some measure of narrative is present in those illustrations that

he refers to as exempla. His historical example in the Introduction (re-

ferred to above) is indeed a fully developed piece of short narrative.

In the same section, however, other exempla ("Per exempla in natura",

"Per exempla in arte") are simply analogies with only the most meagre

narrative line. His exemplum from nature runs thus:

> Videtis naturaliter quod pater bono filio
> quantum potest providet ut habeat omnia
> quae sibi utilitati vel commoditati cedere
> possunt. Unde, si in eo velle et posse pari
> passu procederent, faceret sibi omnia esse
> utilia. Sed Deus pater noster est, qui omnia
> potest quae vult. Diligens est bonus filius.
> Sequitur tunc quod diligentibus Deum omnia
> cooperantur, etc.[66]

While preaching theorists provided no precise and consistent

definition of exempla, the numerous collections of moralized stories that

appeared on the scene in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did, or,

at least, encouraged the use of narratives as exempla by providing readily

available stories with which preachers could flesh out their sermons.[67]

It is to such collections rather than the preaching manuals that one

should credit the enormous popularity of narrative exempla in the later

medieval period.

The most noted historian of the exemplum, Welter, calls the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries "la période d'épanouissement" for the form because it was during this time that compilations of moralized stories proliferated. The most notable of these are, in France, the Tractatus de diversiis materiis of Étienne de Bourbon and the numerous stories from the sermones vulgares of Jacques de Vitry, and, in England, John of Wales Comminoloquium, the anonymously compiled Gesta Romanorum, Robert Holcot's Liber sapientiae and Liber de moralizationibus, and John Bromyard's Summa praedicantium.[68] These works utilized a variety of methods of compiling narratives but all were intended to make narrative a convenient tool for the preacher. In the mid-thirteenth century Tractatus of Étienne de Bourbon, for instance, stories are arranged under seven headings corresponding to the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Bromyard's late fourteenth century compilation takes the convenient form of narratives grouped alphabetically by topic.[69] A preacher needing an illustrative story on gluttony, for example, would simply have to look up "gula" to find one. Not as systematically ordered but nonetheless popular because of its enormous variety of stories from Oriental, Classical, and Christian sources was the Gesta Romanorum which appeared at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The case of the stories from Jacques de Vitry's sermones vulgares is a particularly interesting one because the narratives appeared originally in the context of seventy-four sermons and were only compiled separately by other hands afterwards in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[70] That de Vitry's sermons should have been specially favoured as a source of narrative exempla is not surprising: his sermons

are full of them. In a lengthy prologue he actually makes the point that it is better to move a congregation by "exterior examples" (by which he means illustrative stories) than by authorities or sententiae: "Magis enim moventur exterioribus exemplis quam auctoritatibus vel profundis sententiis."[71] There is something potentially subversive here of the authority emphasized in the preaching manuals, and, as will be discussed shortly, many Church figures were quick to recognize (as Paul had done in the earliest days of Christianity) the dangers of tale-telling in sermons.

Before proceeding to discuss this matter, however, a few comments must be made on the place of narrative exampla in moral treatises that were not exclusively collections of moralized stories but which made extensive use of them in trying to instruct the laity in the faith. Such treatises were inspired by the wave of ecclesiastical reform that culminated in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.[72] In the course of the thirteenth century the English Bishops, following the lead of this Council, issued a number of Decrees (of which Archbishop Peckham's Constitutions of 1281 are the most famous) in which a clear programme for instructing the laity was outlined. This resulted in two types of written religious literature: (a) manuals of instruction for parish priests which were usually in Latin, and (b) moral treatises in the vernacular intended primarily for the use of the laity. Both provided discussions of such matters as the Ten Commandments, the Vices and the Virtues, the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist and Confession), and so on. The manuals of instruction provided materials for many a parish sermon. Indeed Chaucer's Parson's sermon owes much to such manuals, as will be seen in the last chapter of this dissertation. Our immediate concern, though, is with

the moral treatises intended for the laity, because it is in these especially that one finds a frequent use of narrative exempla. This, I will argue, reinforced the laity's appetite for stories in sermons.

The moral treatises were not only written in the vernacular but, more often than not, in verse as well. This, Pantin suggests, may have been in order "to make it easier for the illiterate to learn at least the shorter works by heart."[73] Pantin then observes that these verse treatises "were evidently intended as a substitute for and a pious counterfeit of the profane literature of the period-the romances- in order to beat the worldlings...at their own game."[74] Unfortunately, Pantin does not develop this point: a close look at the prologue to the early fourteenth century work Handlyng Synne of Robert of Brunne (Robert Mannyng) shows that it is essentially sound. In this moral treatise (typical and probably the best of its kind in England) Mannyng promises to use the vernacular and to provide tales that are edifying but at the same time entertaining enough to be told to audiences in the tavern and on festive occasions:

> þat may be weyl on englyssh tolde,
> To telle ȝow þat, y may be boȝde;
> For lewdë men y undyr-toke
> On englyssh tunge to make þys boke.
> For many ben of swyche manere,
> þat talys and rymys wyl bleþly here;
> Yn gamys, & festys, & at þe ale
> Love men to lestene trotëvele:
> þat may falle ofte to vylanye,
> To dedly synne, or oþer folye;
> For swiche men haue y made þis ryme
> þat þey may wel dyspende here tyme,
> And þere-yn sumwhat for to here,
> To leue al swychë foul manere,
> And for to knunne knowe þerynne
> þat þey wene no synne be ynne.   (ll. 41-56)[75]

Mosher comments on these lines as follows:

> A new audience is appealed to; not the audience which
> assembled to hear the preacher, though overlapping was,
> no doubt, considerable, but the assembly at "gamys, &
> festys, & at þe ale." The effect of this on the spread
> and popularity of these moral tales must have been
> great.[76]

The observation on "overlapping" is provocative for it suggests a common

ground between the treatise and the sermon. However, the difference, as

Mosher goes on to add, was that the treatise "gave greater opportunity

than the more compact sermon for the amplification of illustrative nar-

ratives."[77] As it was, Mannyng in translating and adapting William of

Wadington's Manuel des pechiez, another notable moral treatise upon which

Handlyng Synne is based, had greatly expanded upon the narrative element

in William's work.[78] He did this by lengthening and improving upon stories

in the Manuel and by adding new ones (some twelve new stories, to be

exact), most of which were stories of local events.[79] Mannyng's adapta-

tions and additions are significant in the light of William's own close

adherence to the text and method of his sources (Gregory's Dialogues, the

Bible, the Vitae Patrum, and Beda's histories are the main ones).[80] Will-

iam had made it quite clear in his prologue that his work was based purely

on external authority with nothing of his own added to it:

> E pur ceo lesse ieo de grée
> Cunfermer par auctorité
> Les pechiéz qu ci mettrai;
> Car de seins escrit les ay;
> Pur ceo, tut ert auctorité,
> Tut ne seient les seins nomé.
> Riens del mien n'i mettrai,
> Fors sicum ieo apris le ay. (ll. 51-60)[81]

In thus emphasizing "auctorité", William is closer than Mannyng to the

spirit of the sermon as presented in the contemporary preaching manual.

Mosher describes the tales (some fifty of them) in the Manuel des pechiez

as not differing "in subject matter and treatment from those in ser-

mons....They are placed, regularly, near or at the close of the topic

divisions. Secular and local tales are comparatively few."[82] Handlyng

Synne in the flexibility of its adaptation of this material epitomized

the ever-growing appetite of the laity for narrative that was entertain-

ing as well as edifying. As Welter has described Mannyng's work:"...la

traduction avait comme but de divertir autant que d'instruire et d'édi-

fier la lecteur ou l'auditeur."[83]

Preachers of the period were well aware of the appetite for such

narrative and, with the assistance of the many convenient compilations of

moralized stories, many of them attempted to satisfy it. Jacques de Vitry,

as noted above, made such extensive use of narrative exempla in his ser-

mons that he became a favourite source of stories for other preachers. The

situation, it appears, often got out of hand, with preachers using too

many or downright inappropriate stories in the course of their sermons.

Dante focuses on the problem in the following passage from the Paradiso

in which he condemns in no uncertain terms preachers who tell idle tales:

> Each one strives for display and makes his own inventions,
> and these are treated of by the preachers, and the Gospel
> is silent. One says that at Christ's passion the moon
> turned back and interposed itself, so that the light of
> the sun did not reach below—and he lies, for the light
> itself hid itself, so that this eclipse took place for
> the Spaniards and the Indians, as well as for the Jews.
> Florence has not so many Lapos and Bindos as fables such
> as these that are shouted the year long from the pulpits
> on every side; so that the poor sheep, who know naught,
> return from the pasture fed with wind—and not seeing the
> harm does not excuse them. Christ did not say to his first
> company, 'Go and preach idle stories to the world,' but he
> gave to them the true foundation; and that alone sounded
> on their lips, so that to fight for kindling of the faith
> they made shield and lance of the Gospel. Now men go forth
> to preach with jests and with buffooneries, and so there be

only a good laugh, the cowl puffs up and nothing
more is asked.[84]

This concern with the vanity and idle tale-telling of preachers
was not a new one, of course. St. Paul, as mentioned earlier, had warned
the Christian preacher against indulgence in "fables" and over the cen-
turies many other Christian commentators had expressed similar views.[85]
With the proliferation of collections of moralized stories in the thirt-
eenth and fourteenth centuries the place of narrative in sermons became,
understandably, a subject of considerable controversy. Thomas Aquinas con-
demned their use outright.[86] In England Wycliffe and his followers, with
their emphasis on "the naked text" of the Gospel, did the same.[87] Even a
compiler of sermon stories such as Bromyard recognized the potential for
abuse.[88]

The main target of such commentators was the so-called "fable".
The term was not reserved exclusively for animal stories but was gener-
ally used in the broad sense of "fabula", which "appears to include every-
thing that is 'mere invention'", at least according to Isidore of Seville
in his Etymologiae.[89] Whitesell, in his study of the medieval fable, ob-
serves that the term designated any "extravagant tale," and that the
modern "fabulous" still, to some extent, carries this meaning.[90] Thus
romances were frequently considered to be "fables". The insomniac persona
at the beginning of Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess, for instance, reads
a "romance" in which "were written fables" (11. 48-52). The implication
here, as elsewhere, is that fables are too diverting and thus morally mis-
leading (hence Pantin's reference to romances as "profane", noted above).
Indeed, "fables and lesyngis" are consistently associated with each other

throughout Chaucer's work.[91] A recognition of this fact, it will be argued later on, is of crucial importance in interpreting the significance of the use or, in the case of Parson, the avoidance of narrative by the Canterbury preachers.

In concluding this survey of the main ideas that influenced the development of the sermon from the earliest days of the Church to Chaucer's time, especially in regard to illustrative material, one major point remains to be made. That is, the enormous importance of sermons in the everyday lives of everyone in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The various homilétic materials discussed above were known in one way or another to every Christian. In addition to the preaching of the parish priests which continued as it had done for centuries there was the presence of the friars, carrying out their original mandate to preach and further encouraged to do so by the tenth canon of the Fourth Lateran Council.[92] Pantin writes that the "revival of preaching was one of the things that helped to transform the everyday life of the Church in the thirteenth century and to give the laity a more active and informed participation in that life; it is impossible to overestimate its importance."[93] The fourteenth century he characterizes as "perhaps the classic age of preaching in medieval England, when sermons were abundant, vigorous and influential."[94] The all-pervasive presence of the sermon (and of the friars who were most active in its delivery) is graphically and concisely depicted in the following passage from Pfander's study of the friars' preaching in England:

> The friars preached in many places and at many times.
> In the street, in the market, in house or castle, in
> private chapels, in cemeteries, at the preaching cross,

and in churches ranging from the meanest to the
greatest. They preached to lay folk, clerks, pre-
lates, knights, and kings. They preached to nuns
and to Benedictine monks. They preached commonly
at Mass "either between the Creed and the Offertory
or else after the latter," and also in procession.
They preached very brief sermons devised to please
the common people; they preached collations, long
sermons on Sunday afternoon after dinner. They
preached on Feast Days, or at funerals, or at the
dedication of churches, or on various occasions at
the universities.[95]

Living in such a situation as he did, it is hardly surprising that Chau-

cer should have incorporated homiletic materials of various kinds into

his poetry, especially into a manifestly oral and religious scenario such

as prevails in The Canterbury Tales. In the final section of this intro-

ductory chapter I will provide the reader with a survey of the scholar-

ship that has dealt with the matter of Chaucer and the medieval pulpit.

I will point out, first of all, the main areas of discussion and show in

what respects much of this discussion has proved inadequate. After that I

will present the argument of this dissertation, my plan to make up for at

least some of this inadequacy.

2.   Chaucer and Preaching: The Scholarship

There is no coherent body of scholarship on Chaucer's debt to the

sermon and sermon materials. Treatments of the subject in the last seventy

five years or so have taken basically three approaches to the matter, (i)

through structure, (ii) through character, and (iii) through sources.

The approach through structure has, until recently, been the most

dominant of the three. Its origins lie in the three short studies of the

late nineteen twenties by Chapman.[96] These studies grew out of his read-

ing of Caplan's edition and translation of what he called "a late medi-
eval tractate on preaching" by the pseudo-Thomas Aquinas.[97] With Chap-
man's studies the role of the formal _artes praedicandi_ in Chaucer's
aesthetic began to be recognized. Chapman, however, too heavy-handedly and
misleadingly fitted some of the tales—the Pardoner's and the Parson's
most notably — into the rigid schema of the "university sermon".[98] Jones,
some ten years later, followed Chapman's line, this time applying the
schema even more arbitrarily to The Monk's Tale and The Second Nun's
Tale.[99] Again the result was a short and neat but misleading schematizing
of each of these tales. In recent years Owen has applied the "university
sermon" schema once again to the Pardoner's presentation, though with
greater awareness than Chapman of the particular dramatic context in which
it appears.[100]

Such studies have placed too much (almost exclusive) emphasis on
the structural aspects of the formal _artes praedicandi_, ignoring the
discussion in preaching manuals of such related matters as the proper
handling of illustrative materials and the age-old question of the char-
acter of the preacher. That the scope of the _artes praedicandi_ extended be-
yond a mere rigid, prescribed schema should have been clear to literary
scholars since the nineteen thirties. Several studies and editions of
preaching manuals and the preaching phenomenon generally were published
around this time: Owst's two historical studies, Ross' edition of Middle
English Sermons, Davy's discussion and edition of the first "university
sermons" at Paris, Gilson's study of the sermons of Michel Menot, and Charland's
edition (with lengthy preliminary discussion) of the fourteenth century
preaching manuals of Robert of Basevorn and Thomas Walleys. Each of these

works is invaluable but it was only some thirty years after their appearance that a Chaucerian scholar first pursued in a comprehensive way the implications of these studies. Though not without serious faults (it tends to be cursory as well as comprehensive) the unpublished dissertation of Myers draws attention to the concern of medieval preaching theorists with such matters as the histrionics of preaching, the levels of rhetorical style, special topics for sermons, the concordance of authoritative sententiae, and the character of the preacher.[101]

Concern with the character of the preacher is of special interest because Chaucer takes special care to highlight the moral state of each of his Canterbury preachers (with the exception, perhaps, of the Nun's Priest). Some very recent scholarship has focused on this matter and provided some valuable insights into the poet's intentions. Gallick's "look at Chaucer and his Preachers" is the most wide-ranging of these studies, providing a discussion of the characters of the Wife of Bath, Friar John In The Summoner's Tale, the Pardoner, Chantecleer, and the Nun's Priest.[102] She observes that:

> Chaucer was interested in the literary possibilities
> of the sermon precisely because of this central role
> of the preacher as both a teacher of morality and an
> example of his own teachings.[103]

More limited in scope, but nonetheless valuable, are the essays of Jungman and Cespedes which discuss the significance of the references to Paul's Epistles to Timothy for an understanding of the character and behaviour of the Pardoner and the Parson.[104] In his brief article Jungman points out that the Pardoner's theme ("Radix malorum est cupiditas") comes at the end of I Tim. 6:3-10, the section in which Paul discusses the outcome of teach-

ing motivated by cupiditas. Paul speaks there of "complaints", "battles
of words", "envy", "strife", "blasphemies", "evil suspicions", and "con-
flict" (p. 5 above). This explains, Jungman argues, the quarrel between
the Host and the Pardoner at the end of the tale of the three "riotoures".
In a longer essay Cespedes discusses the relevance of the same Epistle to
the Pardoner's rhetorical skill. The Pardoner demonstrates, Cespedes
argues, the separation of "word" and "deed" which Paul (and Augustine
after him) condemned. Cespedes observes that the Parson also refers to
"Thymotee" in his refusal to tell a "fable" at the end of the Canterbury
pilgrimage: the contrast between the characters and techniques of the two
preachers is thus underlined.

Such perceptive scholarship with its recognition of the link bet-
ween sermon-related references and the character of the preacher is an ad-
vance on earlier studies that do not discuss the implications of source
materials. At the turn of the century, for example, Petersen's two books
on Chaucer's debt to specific manuals of instruction for parish priests
and compilations of moralized stories provided little more than pages of
tabulated parallels between passages from Chaucer's tales and these manuals
and compilations.[105] More recently another piece of source scholarship,
that of Pratt, has done much the same thing.[106] Both scholars are inform-
ative and, in a superficial way, make one aware of the presence of sermon
materials in Chaucer's art, but they make little or no attempt to discuss
their function in his work. The latest treatment of sermon sources, Wen-
zel's "Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary Preaching," furnishes ad-
ditional information ("precise borrowings," as he calls them) in three
areas: homiletic narratives, images, and technical terms.[107] Wenzel, how-

ever, sees these as present throughout Chaucer's work and therefore argues against approaching particular tales as if they were sermons. At best, he argues, some of the tales are only "loose imitations" of medieval sermons.

Wenzel's argument cannot be ignored. It represents a challenge to any study (this dissertation being one) that emphasizes the medieval pulpit as a crucial frame of reference for certain of The Canterbury Tales. The answer lies not in over-emphasizing structure as Chapman does nor even, as Petersen does, in simply drawing attention to specific sermon-related sources. To take Chapman's line is to treat a lively performance such as that of the Pardoner as if it were a formal scholarly exercise. Recognizing material taken from manuals of religious instruction, compilations of narrative exempla and the like is informative. By itself, however, this is not convincing as an argument that Chaucer intends the reader (or listener) to view particular tales as sermons or as sermon-like. Could he not, in the case of The Parson's Tale, for instance, with its close resemblance to the medieval manual of religious instruction, be evoking that genre rather than the sermon ?[108] Moreover, to return to Wenzel, stories, images, and even words with sermon-related origins are scattered throughout the Chaucerian corpus: by themselves they confer no special homiletic status on particular works.

Clearly one must, while acknowledging the presence of homiletic source materials, go beyond them if one is to argue that in particular works Chaucer is evoking the gestalt of a medieval preaching situation. Recognizing formal structural elements is also helpful but, unless one is cautious, this can lead to a distortion of the actual "shape" of certain

of The Canterbury Tales and, furthermore, to a very limited view of what
is actually occuring when an individual like the Pardoner, the Parson or
the Wife of Bath delivers a discourse to the other pilgrims.

The preaching situation is one involving not just a sermon per
se but also a preacher and a congregation of one kind or another. The com-
plicated interrelationship of these three factors creates an essentially
dynamic and dramatic event in which a piece of instructional discourse
is carefully geared to the requirements of a particular audience and its
import reinforced (or undermined) by the moral disposition of the preach-
er. The scenario of The Canterbury Tales affords Chaucer ample opportunity
to bring these three factors into play. At one end of the moral scale one
finds the hypocritical and unrepentant Pardoner, revealing the depth of
his immorality to the "gentils" even as he outlines the slickness of his
methods of preaching to the "lewed peple." At the other end of the scale
(and at the end of the pilgimage itself) stands the humble yet very ar-
ticulate Parson, eschewing the Host's request for a "fable" and offering
instead a lucid and detailed authoritative discourse that shows his fellow
pilgrims the way to repentance and salvation. In between is a figure like
the Nun's Priest, constrained by the Host to "be blithe" and, much like
the Pardoner, offering an entertaining narrative exemplum such as he
probably included in his sermons and one which contains a fictional cock-
preacher to boot. Then there is Dame Alisoun of Bath, obviously not a li-
censed preacher, but imitating in the structure and contents of her pre-
sentation the methods of contemporary preachers. It is not surprising
that her discourse draws comment from two licensed (but not very holy)
preachers, the Pardoner and the Friar, the one recognizing her preach-

ing abilities ("Ye been a noble prechour in this cas," D. 1.165), the

other advising her to leave the use of authoritative sententiae "To pre-

chyng and to scole eek of clergye," (D. 1. 1277).

The Friar's comment is very à propos, since the Wife liberally

refers to "auctoritees" in the course of her performance and boldly

attempts to explicate or gloss the same to her own advantage. In this re-

spect she is like Friar John in The Summoner's Tale and unlike the Par-

son.[109] The Wife and Friar John ignore or, in some instances, even dis-

tort the spirit of the sententiae that they use in the course of their

arguments. The Wife does this in order to make "auctoritee" appear to con-

form with her "experience" or worldly philosophy. Friar John does it simp-

ly to gain money. In contrast, the Parson (who utilizes more "auctoritees"

than either of them) makes a point in his Prologue of eschewing such self-

serving exegesis ("I wol nat glose", I. 1. 45), in favour of the "moral-

itee and vertuous mateere" (I. 1. 38) of clearly stated sententiae ("I

take but the sentence," I. 1. 58). This stand is consistent with the

character sketch of him that is presented in the General Prologue. He is

described there as an humble and holy figure whose exemplary life gives

moral force to his teaching ("...first he wroghte, and afterward he

taughte," A. 1.497). The particular way in which a preacher deals with

authoritative sententiae thus becomes in Chaucer's hands a key to charac-

ter: to understand a Canterbury preacher's handling of "auctoritee" is,

in large measure, to understand the moral disposition of the preacher him-

self (or herself, in the case of the Wife), and therefore to understand

an important method of characterization employed by the poet.

The same holds true for that other important category of sermon

illustration, the narrative exemplum. Here again the Parson functions as

a moral touchstone. To the host's request for a "fable" he replies that

"Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me," (I. 1. 31), and to support his

position he refers to Paul's condemnation of "fables and swich wrecched-

nesse" in his Epistles to Timothy (I. 11. 31-34). The discourse that

follows, as one would expect, is almost free of narrative of any kind (save

for accounts of the Fall and Christ's Passion and death). In contrast, the

Pardoner delivers "ensamples many oon" in order to lure deliberately his

congregation into buying his false relics (C. 11.435 ff.). Friar John in

The Summoner's Tale also achieves his mercenary ends by serving up his

flock with "nyfles and with fables" (D. 1.1760). Though the term is not

used in the course of the Nun's Priest's presentation, he states at one

point that his story of the cock and fox is "trewe....As is the book of

Launcelot de Lake," a romance that women "holde in ful greet reverence"

(11. 3211-13). In other words, he seems to be saying, it is actually un-

true since in his view women are deceiving creatures (witness Eve, 11.

3253-59). Moreover, romances, as noted earlier, were commonly considered

to be mere fabrications and even to be morally misleading. To be sure,

the Priest does attempt to draw a moral (several, in fact) from the in-

cidents in his tale but this comes across as confused and ultimately in-

consequential. As with the Pardoner, the Priest's penchant for entertain-

ing story-telling undermines the moral authority of his preaching and in-

deed is also probably intended as a reflection of his character.

In the case of the Wife of Bath, her character and worldly phil-

osophy is revealed spectacularly in the second section of her Prologue

through the use of what amounts to an autobiographical exemplum, a detailed

piece of narrative about her own marital experiences which illustrates
her theme of the "wo that is in mariage" and is intended to support her
argument that personal "experience" is more important than external
"auctoritee." As will be seen later on in the detailed discussion of her
preaching techniques, she undermines authoritative sententiae not simply
by misinterpreting them but also by bringing them within the orbit of her
personal "experience" and thereby seeming to subjugate them. In the final
section of her presentation (the Tale itself) she delivers another narrat-
ive exemplum, superficially cast in the form of romance narrative, but in
effect an extension of her argument: here the fictional Old Hag (a kind
of alter ego) takes command of the marriage relationship and preaches a
sermon in bed that utilizes many of the same techniques with respect to
"auctoritee" as the Wife does.

That illustrative material is in Chaucer a key to character is
not in itself an original observation. Robertson, in a section of his Pre-
face dealing with "the prominence given to exemplary materials in the Tales,"
has shown how many of the pilgrims and the characters within the tales
told by them reveal various degrees of moral myopia in their misinterpret-
ation of or disregard for the meaning of the illustrative materials that
they employ.[110] He mentions, amongst others, Friar John in The Summoner's
Tale, Chantecleer in The Nun's Priest's Tale, and also non-preaching
figures like Dorigen in The Franklin's Tale and the Merchant. Here again
the question of the validity of approaching particular tales as sermons
arises and again the gestalt of the preaching situation must be empha-
sized.[111] It is this that gives particular significance to the deployment
of illustrative or exemplary materials by figures such as Friar John, the

Nun's Priest, Chantecleer, the Wife, the Pardoner, and the Parson. While, for instance, Dorigen's plethora of narrative exempla in her complaint may tell us something about her character, her moral deficiencies remain an essentially private matter.[112] In contrast to her isolated cry, there are the loquacious and very public pulpit performances of the Wife, the Pardoner and the Parson in which they at once bare their moral selves and attempt to instruct those listening to them on specific moral issues. Less public are the harangues of Friar John and Chantecleer, the former delivered to the ailing Thomas, the latter to the "debonaire" Pertelote. Both none- theless are presented as pieces of oral, moral instruction by individuals who exhibit many of the worst behavioural traits attributed to preachers in the medieval period.

Such traits offered more than sufficient grist for the mill of a brilliant satirist like Chaucer. When he presents certain of his Canter- bury pilgrims as preachers it is not because he is interested in them as individuals in their own right, but rather because they are in large part vibrant representations of a group that had obtained for themselves a notorious reputation in the late medieval period. The friars especially were commonly regarded as luxury-loving, mercenary, and lax in their teaching of the Gospel, the complete antithesis to their original ideals.[113] Sententiae and narrative exempla provided Chaucer with especially valu- able devices with which he could sharpen his satirical focus on the abuses of the contemporary pulpit. This is something that has hitherto not been sufficiently recognized. In closely examining the handling of such illustrative materials by each of the Canterbury preachers, I hope to define as carefully as possible the nature of this satire and the

specific ways in which it is achieved.

Finally, I hope to show how illustrative material seen in a preaching context becomes a device for unity in the over-all moral scheme of The Canterbury Tales. In this respect, I will be working in the line of the studies of Baldwin, Ruggiers, Robertson, Huppé and, most recently, Howard and Delasanta, that have stressed the importance of the penitential scheme in the concluding Parson's Tale as an inevitable climax to all that has preceded.[114] Unlike them, however, I will emphasize the sermon qualities of the Parson's discourse, most especially his lucid and logical treatment of Biblical sententiae. This, coupled with the portrayal of the Parson as the model preacher whose deeds match his words and who tells no "fables", seems to me a direct reply to the sinful, tale-telling preachers (some of them misleading exegetes to boot) who attempt to divert their fellow-pilgrims from the way to "Jerusalem celestial".

II

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

That Chaucer intended the preaching situation as one (if not the
only) important frame of reference in The Nun's Priest's Tale is evident
in a number of ways.[1] To begin with, it is reasonable to assume that "sir
John",[2] like most of his fellow clerics on the pilgrimage to Canterbury,
has the power to preach or, at least, is well acquainted with the basic
techniques of the homiletic art. As a companion to the Prioress (he is
one of the "preestes thre" mentioned in the General Prologue, 1.164), he
probably preached at a Nunnery and probably also served as the priest of
a local parish, an office which certainly would have required him to
preach.[3]

In his portrayal of Chantecleer Chaucer also uses a number of
metaphors and analogies that set the cock up as an ecclesiastical and
preaching figure, beginning with the description of his crow in images
drawn from church activities and architecture:

> In al the land, of crowyng nas his peer.
> His voys was murier than the murie orgon
> On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon.
> Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge
> Than is a clokke or an abbey orlogge.
> (11.2849-54)

More to the point, the depiction of the preacher as crowing cock, as more
than one scholar has pointed out, was quite common in the late medieval
period. Caplan's paraphrase of a thirteenth century list of habits

common to cocks and good preachers, for instance, reads much like a
description of the course of events in Chaucer's tale, except that Chante-
cleer's behaviour in each instance is anything but indicative of self-
denial and a heaven-ward orientation. The comparable passages in The Nun's
Priest's Tale are put in parentheses by me to show how closely Chaucer is
following what apparently was a common contemporary view of the preacher's
behaviour:

(1) Before crowing, the cock beats his sides.
Before preaching, the preacher must mortify
himself,
> [This Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete,
> As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,
> So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.
>
> (ll. 3322-24)]

(2) To crow, the cock stretches his neck. So
must the preacher lift his head; he must
preach of heavenly things and not mundane.
> ["Save yow, I herde nevere man so synge
> As dide youre fader in the morwenynge.
> Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
> And for to make his voys the moore strong,
> He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his
> yen
> He moste wynke, so loude he wolde cryen,
> And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
> And strecche forth his nekke long and smal."
>
> (ll. 3301-08)]

(3) The cock crows only at certain hours. So does
the preacher preach.
> [By nature he knew ech ascensioun
> Of the equynoxial in thilke toun;
> For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,
> Thanne crew he, that it myghte nat been
> amended.   (ll. 2855-58)]

(4) The cock shares his grain with his hens. The
preacher must willingly communicate his wisdom
to others.
> [For it was day, and eke his hennes alle,
> And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
> For he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
>
> (ll. 3173-75)]

(5) The cock attacks his rivals. The preacher
should attack all heretics.
> [Instead the fox attacks Chantecleer,
> ll. 3334 ff.]

(6) The Cock shuts his eyes before the sun. The
preacher must shut his eyes to the blaze of
success.
> [This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos,
> Strecchynge his nekke, and heeld his eyen
> > cloos,
> And gan to crowe for the nones.
> > (ll. 3331-33)]

(7) At nightfall the cock mounts to his wooden
roost, and comes down only at daybreak. The
preacher must at time of temptation climb to
his perch — that is, consider the cross and
passion of Christ, and descend only when all
danger is vanished.
> [Instead Chantecleer <u>descends</u>
> from his roost, succumbing to his passion
> for Pertelote (ll. 3172 ff.), and thus
> leaving himself an easy target for the blandish-
> ments and physical attack of the fox.][4]

Myers has also shown that the recurring reference to winking (ll. 3306,

3430) can be understood as a highlighting of prelatical shortcomings, as

is the priest's warning near the end of the tale against the dangers of

recklessness and negligence (ll. 3436-37).[5]

The preaching situation is also implied in the use of the formulaic

"goode men", a standard term of address employed by medieval preachers in

the course of delivering their sermons.[6] This tag is used with particular

emphasis at the end of the tale in the Nun's Priest's exhortation to all

assembled to "Taketh the moralite" (l.3440). Here one is reminded of the

Pardoner who, after he has delivered a tale which, in his own words, he

was "wont to preche" (C l.461), enjoins his listeners as follows:

> Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre trespas,
> And ware yow fro the synne of avarice!
> > (C ll.904-05)

The Pardoner soon follows this up with a closing prayer (C ll.916-18),

another device used by the Nun's Priest (his very last words, ll.3444-46)

and a commonplace in contemporary sermons.[7]

One could discuss, as some scholars have done, other features of
The Nun's Priest's Tale that were common in fourteenth century sermons:
the use of humour, the employment of verse and the vernacular, recurring
themes and so on.[8] Suffice it to say that all these characteristics to-
gether with those discussed above help to create, if not a full-blown
sermon, certainly the gestalt or atmosphere of a late medieval preaching
situation. In other words, they strongly suggest an occasion of the type
in which an articulate cleric, conversant with the methods of the con-
temporary pulpit would instruct and, very often simultaneously entertain
an assembled congregation. Indeed, two such situations may be said to
exist in The Nun's Priest's Tale, one contained within the other. Both
"sir John" and Chantecleer, as already noted, are preaching figures, the
former by trade, the latter in his general behaviour and, as shall be seen
shortly, in his oratorical methods. With this duplex situation in mind,
then, one can proceed to examine the use made by both figures of sententiae
and narrative exempla. This will provide, first of all, fresh insight into
Chaucer's characterization of "sir John" (not as sketchy as has hitherto
been argued) and Chantecleer. Secondly, it will help to clarify the nature
of Chaucer's satire on the misuse of illustrative materials by contemporary
preachers.

Such a discussion must begin with a recognition of the particular
conception of the rhetorician's function that exists in the tale. The high-
flown rhetoric of the tale has been long recognized, of course.[9] While
high style rhetorical devices as such are not the concern of this
dissertation, certain key statements made on the subject by the Nun's
Priest do have a special bearing on the study for they epitomize a view

that runs counter to the Pauline-Augustinian reservations about too much

rhetorical facility in the Christian preacher. The first of these state-

ments comes at the conclusion of the sequence of rhetorically inflated

apostrophes (11.3338-54), at which point the Priest laments his lack of

Geoffrey of Vinsauf's learning ("loore") and ability to make what he is

saying sound of great moral consequence ("sentence"):

> Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,
> The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?
> (11. 3350-51)

These words, I believe, are meant to complement the Priest's earlier

pronouncement:

> For evere the latter ende of joye is wo.
> God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;
> And if a rethor koude faire endite,
> He in a cronycle myghte it write
> As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
> (11.3205-09)

Quite clearly, the Nun's Priest sees the rhetorician as a purveyor of

magisterial, sententious statements and moral truths: the rhetorician or

orator ("rethor") takes a plain adage ("the latter ende of joye is wo")

and, if he is skilled in his craft ("koude faire endite"), he notes it down

with the proper embellishment, thereby converting it into a monumental

philosophical statement ("soverayn notabilitee"). It is his supposed lack

of this ability that the Priest later complains about. Ironically, both

he and Chantecleer do indeed display such an ability and in so doing be-

come representative of preachers who were more concerned with rhetorical

effects than with the inner truth of their words. In the Nun's Priest's

case the intention is to use the preaching situation as a forum for a dis-

play of specious learning even as he entertains the pilgrims with a piece

of narrative. Even more pompous and self-indulgent, Chantecleer uses his perch/pulpit as a stage from which to launch both an intellectual and sexual offensive on his "debonaire" paramour.

This concern with rhetorical effect can, at worst, result in outright lying. As a prelude to his sexual assault on Pertelote, for example, Chantecleer provides the following rationale;

> For al so siker as In principio,
> Mulier est hominis confusio,-
> Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
> 'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'
> (11.3163-66)

Chantecleer is here using a Latin sententia drawn from the common fund of medieval anti-feminist sentiment and as such it is not specifically authoritative.[10] However, he couches it in such inflated and dogmatic terms that it takes on the aura of an authoritative statement even as (and here Chaucer compounds the irony and humour) a deliberate mistranslation is provided. The very calculated way in which the arrogant cock makes a trite remark appear to be an assertion of indisputable and divinely sanctified truth merits close attention. His introductory words set the tone ("For al so siker as In principio"). Not content with a simple pitch to the listeners' familiarity with a popular saying, he imparts to his sententia the aura of infallible Gospel truth. His use of Latin (the language of the Church and understood by all educated medieval men) should also be seen as a way of giving unassailable authority to what is being stated. Not only is the maxim itself given in Latin; so too are the initial words of the Gospel of St. John ("In principio"). Chantecleer also makes a point of drawing Pertelote's attention to his use of the hallowed ancient tongue ("this Latyn") whose "sentence" or meaning he supposedly provides in the vernacular for her. The untruth of his mistranslation hardly matters. Pertelote

hitherto argumentative) accepts without protest what he says. This is surely a sign that Chantecleer's calculated rhetoric has had its effect.

The Nun's Priest (speaking in propria persona) also performs rhetorical tricks when dealing with commonplace medieval anti-feminist sentiments. Thus, for example, he links the proverbial remark, "Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde",[12] to authority by the deft use of the rhetorical figure occupatio,[13] thus avoiding specific elaboration (and personal responsibility) while making a simple observation appear to be nothing less than an authoritative sententia:

> Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
> Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,
> And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
> Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese.
> But for I noot to whom it myght displese,
> If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
> Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
> Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere,
> And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere.
> (ll. 3256-64)

His subsequent disclaimer that "Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne" is, like Chantecleer's mistranslation, patently untrue, but again it hardly matters. The calculated rhetoric, in creating an aura of authority, has taken precedence over truth.

Even when "sir John" appears to be elaborating upon sententiae in a specific way, close analysis reveals him to be providing little more than obfuscating verbiage. The section in which he raises the question of predestination and freewill, for example, is a prime example of this (ll. 3234-51). Beginning with a sententia "after the opinioun of certain clerkis", he proceeds to note the controversy surrounding the issue raised, admits his inability to handle it ("I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren"), shrewdly

defers by name to a battery of experts on the matter, then leaves the
question dangling by simply changing the moral of his story to one con-
cerning the misleading advice of women. The end result is that sixteen
lines of verse have been indulged in for mere rhetoric's sake. The lines
run as follows:

> But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,
> After the opinioun of certein clerkis.
> Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
> That in scole is greet altercacioun
> In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
> And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
> But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren
> As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
> Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,
> Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
> Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng,-
> "Nedely" clepe I symple necessitee;
> Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
> To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
> Though God forwoot it er that was wroght;
> Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
> But by necessitee condicioneel.
> I wol nat han to do a swich mateere;
> My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
> That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,

For sheer verbiage in the handling of sententiae and narrative
exempla, Chantecleer is a good match for the Priest. Some marvellous
dramatic irony informs his lengthy sequence of illustrations supporting
his contention that dreams are prophetic (ll. 2984-3150): how easily he
throws caution to the winds at the end of the sequence ("Now let us speke
of myrthe, and stynte al this," l.3157), showing, as Gallick has put it,
that he

> ...does not see the inconsistency between rhetorically
> dilating on a theme and then ignoring its personal
> relevance. Chantecleer is the kind of preacher that
> so many authors of the artes praedicandi warn against—
> a man with a great rhetorical skill but no personal
> convinction.[14]

The sequence merits close attention for the way in which it reveals the use of illustrative material as a self-serving instrument.

Much like the Pardoner, Chantecleer immediately follows his statement of theme (his "sentence" on dreams at ll. 2979-81)[15] with supposedly instructive and time-honoured stories, "swiche ensamples olde" by which, he tells his "faire Pertelote", one may "leere" that men should not recklessly ignore the prophesies of dreams (ll. 3105-09). Consistent with his (and the Nun's Priest's) calculatedly deferential attitude toward "olde bookes" (l. 2974), he also introduces his two opening stories as written by "Oon of the gretteste auctour that men rede" (l. 2984). As Petersen has convincingly shown, the immediate source of these two narrative exempla is probably Holcot's Liber sapientiae, noted in the last chapter as one of the numerous compilations of moralized stories that provided preachers in the later medieval period with tales for their sermons (see pp. 24- 25,34).[16] Chantecleer also seems to be following the guide-lines of the artes praedicandi in the location and kinds of stories that he tells in this first part of his sermon. In the first tale, with its images of bloody murder, for example, he could easily be following the advice of Robert of Basevorn who, as noted in the first chapter (p. 21), suggests that one way of grasping and holding a congregation's attention is by terrifying it with some horrifying tale or example ("narratione vel exemplo terribili") at the beginning of a sermon.[17] One such tale, which Basevorn recounts, runs in part as follows:

> ...Christus apparuit quibusdam induratis, pro-
> jiciens palmam plenam sanguine accepto de latere
> ejus, dicens: Hic sanguis quem induratus con-
> temnis testimonium perhibebit contra te in die
> judicii.[18]

The same elements, blood and a ghostly appearance, are also present in

Chantecleer's first tale:

> And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe
> Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, "I am now slawe.
> Bihoold my bloody woundes depe and wyde!
> (ll. 3013-15)

This tale, one must not forget, is also introduced as being written by

"Oon of the gretteste auctour that men rede." It is thus doubly daunting,

through its identification with book authority and its clever use of

terror.

The second of Chantecleer's narrative "ensamples" is also pre-

sented as authoritative (from the same source as the first, in fact)

though it is somewhat shorter and very different in tone. Having, supposed-

ly, scared Pertelote with his first tale, the cock now lowers the tension

by offering a more leisured and overtly entertaining piece of narrative.

With consumate skill, he creates an ambience graced with festive touches

and suggestions of the exotic and the marvellous. The town into which

wander the two pilgrims of the first tale is over-crowded and uncomfortable:

> And happed so, they coomen in a toun
> Wher as ther was swich congregacioun
> Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage,
> That they ne founde as muche as o cotage
> In which they bothe myghte ylogged bee.
> (ll. 2987-2991)

In contrast, the two sea-travellers of the second "ensample" find them-

selves tarying in a "citee....That stood ful myrie upon an haven-syde"

(ll. 3070-71), located in "a fer contree" (l.3068). Rest comes easily

in this almost magical, far-away land (l.3074). No nightmares here: a

dream is "a greet mervaille" (l.3076) or a "wonder dreem" (l.3077). Again

Basevorn's advice to preachers provides an instructive parallel. In his

discussion of various ways of retaining a congregation's attention, he

states:

> Uno modo, proponendo aliquid in principio sub-
> tile et curiosum, ut de aliquo mirabili authen-
> tico quod ad propositum thematis trahi congrue
> possit.[19]

True enough, the second tale, like the first one, ends with death. None-

theless, in keeping with the salubrious, adventurous atmosphere of the

rest of the story, death occurs at sea, cleanly and quickly, without

blood:

> But er that he hadde half his cours yseyled,
> Noot I nat why, ne what myschaunce it eyled,
> But casuelly the shippes botme rente,
> And ship and man under the water wente
> In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,
> That with hem seyled at the same tyde.
> (ll. 3099-3104)

How different this to the horrifying picture of the unfortunate pilgrim,

freshly murdered, lying in the midst of the stinking contents of a dung

cart:

> The peple out sterte and caste the cart to grounde,
> And in the myddel of the dong they founde
> The dede man, that mordred was al newe.
> (ll. 3047-49)

It should be noticed too that the deliberate charm of Chante-

cleer's second illustrative narrative spills over into his endearing

address to Pertelote which follows immediately:

> And, therfore, faire Pertelote so deere.
> (l. 3105)

Chantecleer, it needs to be emphasized at this point, is a lover as well

as a preacher: his purpose is to seduce as well as to instruct the hen.

At this juncture both purposes function as one or perhaps the cock even

momentarily forgets the moral intent of his tale, much like those preachers

and moral writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries who, as

Welter puts it, "substituant le rôle de conteur à celui du moraliste,

cherche plutôt à intéresser qu'a instruire et moraliser son auditoire ou

ses lecteurs."[20]

The pedant (if not the moralist) in Chantecleer comes to the fore

again, however, and dominates the second half (ll. 3110-56) of his sermon.

The measure of his pedantry is seen in the scaling down of narrative in

favour of "auctoritee" in most of the illustrations presented in this

section. The first illustration in this second half (the "legende" or "lyf"

of St. Kenelm, ll. 3110-21) is a much briefer (12 lines) and less en-

grossing piece of narrative than either of the two "ensamples" of the

first half (which run for 66 and 41 lines respectively). As with the two

longer tales, this one is tied to book authority, the point being made not

once, but twice, at the beginning and at the end of the brief account of

the young saint's life. At best, narrative is only suggested in the follow-

ing four illustrations (ll. 3122-35), while "auctoritees" (Macrobius, the

Old Testament) are clearly stated.[21] As Chantecleer approaches the con-

clusion of his sermon, he changes his tack once again, moving away from

authority back to narrative. The change begins with his allusion to King

Creoesus:

> Lo Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,
> Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,
> Which signified he sholde anhanged bee?
> (ll. 3138-40)

Here he eschews written authoritative reference altogether, as he does in

the following account of Andromache and Hector which, in addition, has a

more fully developed narrative line:

> Lo heere Andromacha, Ectores wyf,
> That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf,
> She dremed on the same nyght biforn
> How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn,
> If thilke day he wente into bataille.
> She warned hym, but it myghte nat availle;
> He wente for to fighte natheles,
> But he was slayn anon of Achilles.
> (11. 3141-48)

This stands on its own as a piece of instructive narrative: no author-
itative reference is given. Why, it might well be asked, does Chante-
cleer shift his methods in this way ? Is this purely arbitrary on his part
or, for that matter, on Chaucer's part and hence a sign of careless writ-
ing ?[22]

To understand fully what is going on, one must always appreciate
the Chantecleer-Pertelote relationship under its two aspects, that of
lover-paramour and that of preacher-congregation. The point was made above
that after Chantecleer completes the first section of his sermon he
addresses Pertelote with great tenderness, his role as seducer taking
over, for the moment, his role as preacher. The same thing, with even
greater intensity, occurs at the end of the second and final section of
the sermon. Very simply, his last two unauthoritative illustrations lead
into a prelude to seduction (11. 3157-71), a section in which the now
sexually aroused cock abruptly ends his talk of dreams, praises Pertelote
for the beauty of her face, speaks longingly of the thought of her beside
him at night, and, finally, flies down from his perch and "fethered
Pertelote twenty tyme". To be sure, the two brief stories that lead into
this lack the charm of the longer tale of the two sea-travellers. None-
theless, the absence of stated authority, the focus on a wifely figure

("Andromacha, Ectores wyf"), and the final, explicit abandoning of all

pretense at serious purpose ("Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al

this", 1. 3157), clearly show Chantecleer's shedding of the role of

solemn preacher/pedant and assumption of that of playful, lecherous lover.

The ensuing dénouement marks a resumption of the narrative action

and, as such, signals the end of the preacher-congregation relationship

of Chantecleer and Pertelote. The preaching voice of the Nun's Priest,

however, continues to be heard as the "col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee"

(1.3214) moves onto the scene to play his part in the story. Not only is

this voice evident in the lengthy interjections (ll. 3226-66 , so pedantic

and rhetorically inflated that the pompous cock himself could be speaking

them).[23] It comes through as well in the call at the conclusion of the

Tale for all "goode men" to "Taketh the moralite". One is made aware then

that the entire Tale is intended by the Nun's Priest as a narrative exemplum:

the duplex preaching situation, spoken of earlier, is given its final con-

firmation. In the larger frame — that containing the relationship of the

Nun's Priest vis à vis the other Canterbury pilgrims — Chaucer is pro-

viding more than simply a longer story, however. In it he addresses, I

believe, that complicated and controversial problem of his time: should

fictional narrative be used at all in the course of preaching ? This

question, as treated in The Nun's Priest's Tale, must now be considered

in the final section of this chapter.

Chaucer's concern with the question is evident in the Nun's

Priest's attitude toward the veracity and seriousness of the tale that

he is telling. This is, for all the Priest's rhetorical facility, defen-

sive. With sly irony, Chaucer has him state (right on the heels of his

statement on the duty of the "rethor", ll. 3205-09) that:

> This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
> As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
> That wommen hold in ful greet reverence.
> (ll. 3211-13)

In effect, the Priest is admitting at this fairly late point that his story is a fabrication, little more than a tissue of lies that only women (inferior beings that they are, in his common medieval view) would regard as truthful. Nonetheless, this does not prevent him from pressing on with it and attempting to extract whatever "sentence" he can from it (l. 3214). He is especially defensive at the conclusion of the Tale, the humour of the events in the widow's farm-yard (particularly the lively action of the concluding chase) making him suspect that his listeners might not be taking his story seriously enough:

> But ye that holden this tale a folye,
> As of a fox, or of a cock and hen,
> Taketh the moralite....
> (ll. 3438-40)

The Nun's Priest's concern is not surprising in the light of the contemporary controversy over the propriety of fictional narrative in a sermon, a matter discussed in the first chapter (pp. 28-30). Indeed "sir John" finds himself in something of a bind over the whole question for he is under the Host's directions to "be murie" and to "Telle us swiche thyng as may oure hertes glade" (l. 2811). The Host, it must be remembered, is reacting to the Monk's dull recitation of tragedies of fortune which, he pointedly states, is putting the pilgrims to sleep. As "thise clerkes" (such as Robert of Basevorn, perhaps ?)[24] have warned, the Host adds, the "sentence" or moral meaning of a story is lost on a dozing audience :

> "By hevene kyng, that for us alle dyde,

> I sholde er this han fallen doun for sleep,
> Althogh the slough had never been so deep;
> Thanne hadde your tale al be toold in veyn.
> For certeinly, as that thise clerkes seyn,
> Whereas a man may have noon audience,
> Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence."
>   (ll. 2796-2802)

Following on the heels of this admonition as he does, the Nun's Priest

is very careful, not surprisingly, not to appear to be presenting a tale

that will draw similar criticism:

> "But I be myrie, ywis I wol be blamed."
>   (l. 2817)

Must he then serve up, as the unscrupulous Friar John in The Summoner's

Tale, nothing but "nyfles...and fables" (D.l.1760) ? His comparison of

his tale to the romance of Lancelot as well as his worry at the con-

clusion that his narrative might be looked upon as a mere "folye" would

seem to indicate that he has done just that. Far from being happy about

this, he begs the pilgrims to extract whatever "moralite" they can from

what they have just heard.

There are, in fact, any number of "moralites" or moral meanings

that the pilgrims can take away with them from the Tale. Sententiae abound.

The Nun's Priest in the course, as well as at the end of his presentation,

calls upon the many lessons that his narrative is meant to teach: amongst

others, on predestination and free will (ll. 3234-51), on flattery (ll.

3325-30), on women's advice (ll. 3256-64), on fortune and destiny (ll.

3338, 3403-04). Surely such a tale could not be considered untrue or

flippant ? As noted above, however, by his own admission the Priest lacks

the capacity of the great teachers of the Church to "bulte it to the

bren" (l. 3240). He is speaking here specifically of the difficult problem

of predestination and free-will but the statement carries important implications for <u>all</u> the other comments and <u>sententiae</u> that he presents in the course of the <u>Tale</u>. Can he be taken seriously on any ? The seriousness of his many <u>sententiae</u> is thrown under added suspicion when one takes into account his (and Chantecleer's) too great love of the superficial dazzle of high-flown rhetoric. In the final analysis, he is shown to be unable to separate what is morally important from what is not, truth from untruth, "whete" from "chaf", "moralite" from "folye". This inability makes the plea at the end to "Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be still"(l. 3443)[25] particularly ironical and also explains, I believe, the plethora of morals that are presented. It is precisely because he does <u>not</u> know what his tale of the cock, hen, and fox is supposed to be teaching that "sir John" provides such a jumble of loosely connected lessons made sporadically along the narrative way. The end result is to leave the <u>Tale</u> without any consistent, convincing, and authoritative moral point.

Of course, as noted earlier, the Priest is also in the bind of having to comply in some way with the wishes of the Host for something that is not overly sententious. This adds further to the moral confusion of his <u>Tale</u>. It helps to explain the uneasy mixture of "sentence" and "solaas" that exists in it. For a start, it should be noted, the Priest avoids making a statement of a theme at the beginning of his story. Instead he launches directly into the narrative, no doubt wishing to give the impression that he is complying with the Host's wish for something "myrie". As the story progresses, however, he gradually shifts the emphasis to give the narrative a more didactic as well as rhetorically

high-sounding ring: Chantecleer's harangue gives him the opportunity to present a pedantic and rhetorically inflated sermon within the context of an ostensibly entertaining piece of narrative fiction, and this allows "sir John", in turn, to give a decidedly didactic and homiletic quality to his interjectory and concluding comments. The broad pattern of the Tale thus follows a movement from "solaas" to "sentence" but with the latter coming across, in the increasingly desperate efforts of the Priest at pointing to a serious meaning of one kind or another, as confused and ultimately inconsequential.

In the end, the Tale triumphs as a piece of highly entertaining satire. This is not because, as one scholar has argued, Chaucer "is poking fun at those who felt that a poem had to have some moral point in order to justify its existence; he himself felt that it needed no justification."[26] Chaucer is not so much taking up the cause of imaginative literature as he is satirizing the methods of contemporary preachers, especially those who got carried away with the sound of their own voices, confusing self-serving high-style rhetoric with authoritative "moralite".

To summarize: Chaucer in The Nun's Priest's Tale presents the reader with two preaching figures, the Nun's Priest himself and Chantecleer, the cock. Though denying a facility with high-style rhetoric, the Priest more than once expresses the view that the function of the "rethor" is to embellish sententiae or moral truths. Both he and Chantecleer perform this task only too well, thereby showing themselves to be the antithesis of the good preacher as traditionally conceived. Both get carried away with their pulpit oratory while trying to fulfill other roles as well: "sir John", under instructions from the Host, that of entertaining

story-teller, Chantecleer, driven by sexual passion, that of Pertelote's lover. Each utilizes illustrative material in various ways to enhance at different times one or the other of the roles that they are playing. The resulting confusion expresses itself in the doubt that is cast over the seriousness and veracity of the story being told and in the multiplicity of morals or sententiae strewn throughout the narrative. The end result is a piece of sophisticated satirical entertainment firmly grounded in the ethos of the medieval pulpit.

III

THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE AND TALE

Two statements, made respectively in the course and just after the end of The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, make one aware that the contemporary pulpit is intended as a crucial frame of reference for the Wife's verbose but riveting presentation. The first comes from no less a person than the Pardoner, that most notorious of Chaucer's Canterbury preachers, who readily perceives Dame Alisoun's use of homiletic techniques and boldly interrupts her monologue to make his recognition plain:

> "Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by seint John!
> Ye been a noble prechour in this cas."
> (ll. 164-65)

Yet another preacher, the Friar, is also listening to what the Wife is saying. His amiable observation on her "long preamble of a tale" (ll. 829-31) suggest this, and his longer statement later on about the entire presentation makes his professional interest unequivocally clear:

> "Dame," quod he, "God yeve yow right good lyf!
> Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,
> In scole-matere greet difficultee.
> Ye han seyd muche thyng right wel, I seye;
> But, dame, heere as we ryde by the weye,
> Us nedeth nat to speken but of game,
> And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
> To prechyng and to scole eek of clergye.
> (ll. 1270-77)[1]

Some of the implications of these statements, as will be seen shortly, have been noted by modern scholars and have resulted in increasing general awareness of Chaucer's achievement in this particular part of The Canterbury Tales. Approaching the Prologue and Tale from the

perspective of the artes praedicandi has helped to clarify the structure
of the Wife's presentation, the poet's handling of conventional themes,
Chaucer's methods of characterization and (what is to be the major concern
of this chapter) the deployment of illustrative material in the form of
authoritative sententiae and narrative exempla. All this imparts a great
measure of validity to Owst's sweeping comment on the Prologue (and one
which can be extended to apply to the Wife's Tale as well): "No section
of the poem [The Canterbury Tales] illustrates better the debt of con-
temporary thought and literature to the pulpit than the whole of this
Prologue."[2]

The structure of The Wife's Prologue and Tale is, to begin with,
broadly based on the standard plan for the "modern", "thematic", or
"university" type sermon. There is a clear statement of theme at the start
("wo that is in mariage", 1.3); a protheme or prayer ("Thonked be God that
is eterne on lyve," 1.5); an Introduction; a division of the theme into
various sub-topics which are amplified in turn by references to "auctor-
itees" and narratives illustrating the theme (the "tale" of the Wife's own
marriage tribulations, the Tale itself); there is a closing prayer (11.
1257-64). The very theme of marriage that the wife chooses for her sermon/
monologue, it has been pointed out, was commonplace in medieval sermons.[3]
Moreover, the employment of anecdotes dealing with husband-wife relations,
especially as a source of humour, was much favoured by medieval homilists.[4]

One modern scholar has concluded from facts such as these that the
Prologue is a "travesty on the serious antifeminist sermon" and, furthermore,
"a penetrating critique by a woman of the new bourgeois order who detested
ecclesiastical intransigence in marital affairs."[5] This, I believe, is

going too far and shows a misunderstanding of the satire at work. As shall
be discussed more fully later, there is too much gross misinterpretation
(deliberate and otherwise) of antifeminist texts for the Wife's discourse
to be taken seriously as a critique on her part of antifeminist doctrine.
It is, rather, to be taken as a satire on Chaucer's part of the antifemin-
ist sermon as delivered (and here the satire takes on a particular complex-
ity) by a female "prechour" who herself is living proof of many of the
worst feminine traits highlighted by the doctrinal material against which
she is attempting to argue.

It should be added that Dame Alisoun's "wandrynge by the weye"
also serves her in good stead as a preacher: journeys at home and abroad
and impressions of strange customs (the Wife, as indicated in the General
Prologue, has travelled extensively in England, throughout Europe, and as
far afield as Jerusalem)[6] were considered acceptable as sermon material and,
indeed, as giving added authority to the speaker.[7] In this respect, as
well as in others, the Wife is similar to the Pardoner.[8] As one scholar puts
it, there is a pattern of "general parallelism and contrast "between the
Pardoner and the Wife: one has only to compare them on such matters as
sexuality, avariciousness, the significance of the Offertory of the Mass
in both their lives, and their predilection for defaming the characters of
others when they feel threatened.[9] These numerous points of comparison
give special resonance to the Pardoner's interruption of the Wife's mono-
logue. They make it clear beyond any doubt that Chaucer wishes us to look
upon Dame Alisoun as a kind of preacher and her lengthy Prologue and Tale
as a kind of pulpit performance.[10]

The particular concern of this chapter is with the way in which

the Wife utilizes illustrative materials, especially as her methods reflect contemporary preaching theory and practice. This should help to illuminate the nature of Chaucer's satire on the abuses of the fourteenth-century pulpit, to give a clearer understanding of the character of the Wife herself, and, generally, to elucidate the poet's literary craftsmanship. The value of this approach has so far not been sufficiently recognized by scholars. MacDonald, in the course of his discussion of the "comic misapplication" of various kinds of illustrative material in Chaucer's comic tales, writes:

> ...she is supplied in her Prologue with more
> than enough proverbs, sententiae, and exempla,
> but her use of these expressions hardly yields
> the impression that the Wife is wise.[11]

MacDonald's discussion, however, is too cursory. It excludes consideration on the Tale itself (of any illustrative narratives, in fact) and fails to take into account the artes praedicandi. Robertson, in his important discussion of the Wife's exegetical technique, recognizes her indebtedness to contemporary preaching methods though, unfortunately, he restricts his analysis to the first 162 lines of the Prologue (the section prior to the Pardoner's interruption).[12] Yet another modern scholar has discussed the Tale as a typical narrative exemplum, but ignores the larger context in which it appears.[13] The intention of this chapter is to look at the Prologue and Tale as an artistic whole which derives much of its unity (and satirical edge) from its basis in preaching techniques, especially the way in which illustrative materials are handled.

For a start, it should be noted that there is a definite pattern in the Wife's use of illustrative materials: different types of illustration predominate in different sections of her presentation. Before

the Pardoner's interruption, authoritative _sententiae_ are very much in
the forefront, narrative in any developed way totally absent (ll. 1-162).
In the second section of her Prologue (ll. 193-828), in contrast, narra-
tive, mainly in the form of the recounting of the Wife's own marital ex-
periences, is made to contain and ultimately to overwhelm "auctoritees"
and their _sententiae_. In this section, as will be seen, the primacy of
"experience" is also asserted through the extensive use of proverbs.[14]
The _Tale_ itself is, for the most part, narrative in nature, but from the
Loathly Lady's "pillow sermon" to near the end (ll. 1105-1218) the stress
is almost exclusively on "auctoritees" and _sententiae_ once again. One
must look closely at each of these sections to see, first of all, what it
is that the Wife is trying to accomplish by her varying choice of illus-
trative material and, secondly, to try to reach some kind of understanding
of exactly how Chaucer himself is satirising, through the presence of so
much and so many types of illustration, some of the abuses of the late
medieval pulpit.

It may seem surprising at first that there is so much emphasis
on "auctoritee" in the first section of the Wife's Prologue: doesn't she,
after all, begin her argument by exalting the value of "experience" over
"auctoritee" ? Close analysis shows that Dame Alisoun is initially pre-
occupied with certain "auctoritees" only because she wants to clear the
way for the presentation of her own "tale" of marital woe. Indications
of the autobiographical account to come are certainly present (ll. 1-8,
44-50, 113-14, 147-62) and become particularly strong toward the con-
clusion of this section of the Prologue. But the Wife, in her selection
and treatment of illustrative materials in this section, evidently wishes

her listeners to see her initially as something of an exegete.

After stating her theme, providing an opening prayer and making a properly brief Introduction (11. 4-8) in which she makes a general reference to her five marriages,[15] Dame Alisoun proceeds into the body of her sermon which consists, prior to the Pardoner's interruption, of three parts (see pp. 16-17 above): (i) a discussion of "bigamye or of octogamye" (11. 9-61), (ii) a weighing of the respective merits of virginity and marriage (11. 62-114), and (iii) a discussion of the function of the "membres...of generacion" (11. 115-62). Each of these three sub-topics is amplified in turn by Biblical authoritees whom the Wife boldly proceeds to interpret.[16] In other words she proceeds about the business of exegesis, stating early and explicitly her intention to do so after her own fashion.

> Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,
> But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,
> God bad us for to wexe and multiplye;
> That gentil text kan I wel understonde.
> (11. 26-29)

Not surprisingly, her understanding of the various Biblical passages that she refers to, as Robertson has so judiciously shown, is invariably at odds with the accepted interpretations of medieval Christianity. She is, in Robertson's words, a "hopelessly carnal and literal" exegete.[17] At the beginning, she seems in fact to be avoiding the task of exegesis, at any level, altogether. In her fleeting reference to Christ at Cana, she merely mentions that the incident was once told to her as a sign of Christ's endorsement of monogamy:

> But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,
> That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis
> To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee,
> That by the same ensample taughte he me
> That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.
> (11. 9-13)

In her second illustration (a seemingly more explicit condemnation by

Christ of multiple marriages), she deliberately avoids facing up to the

literal, much less the spiritual, meaning of the incident:[18]

> What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn;
> But that I axe, why that the fifthe man
> Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan ?
> How manye myghte she have in mariage ?
> Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age
> Upon this nombre diffinicioun.
>   (ll. 20-25)

The presentation of these Biblical stories in such sketchy form facili-

tates the Wife's skirting the task of proper exegesis. One is reminded

here of Robert of Basevorn's discussion of the various ways in which a

preacher can pervert a Biblical text, to wit: "Sic igitur per truncationem,

per nimiam disconvenientiam, per translationem a propria significatione."[19]

The Wife's abbreviation of the two Biblical stories can thus be seen as a

deliberate attempt on her part to distort, by omission, the proper meaning

of her examples. This explains as well her hasty catalogue of exemplary

figures from the Bible (Lamech, Abraham, Jacob and "many another holy man

also," ll. 53-58)[20] which she uses to support her argument for "bigamye,

or of octogamye", practices acceptable under the Old Law but not under the

New.[21] One should also note that in the case of another Biblical figure

alluded to in this part of her sermon — Solomon — she supplies a mass of

innuendo, frankly sexual and titillating but without specific narrative

details. The innuendo allows her to misrepresent the meaning of the "wise

kyng's" behaviour: this was traditionally condemned not condoned by the

Church.[22] The passage runs as follows:

> Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;
> I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon.
> As wolde God it were leveful unto me

To be refresshed half so ofte as he!
Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys!
No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.
God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,
The first nyght had many a myrie fit
With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve.
                    (ll. 35-43)

Distortion of the true significance of Biblical texts is especially

striking in the Wife's treatment of authoritative statements or <u>sententiae</u>

taken from the Scriptures. This, I maintain, is the main thrust of her

argument in this first section of her sermon. Exemplary figures are of

secondary importance to another Biblical personage, St. Paul, with whose

pronouncements on virginity and marriage the Wife is particularly pre-

occupied. There are no less than twelve crucial references to Paul in the

first 162 lines of the <u>Prologue</u> but, as Robertson puts it:

> The support of her position that Alisoun is
> able to derive from St. Paul is obtained only
> by quoting him out of context and by disregarding
> the obvious implications of what he says.[23]

She uses Paul to support in turn each of the three parts of her

argument. She makes it appear that he condones multiple marriages with the

following two statements (paraphrases of I Cor. 7:39 and I Cor. 7:28):[24]

> Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,
> Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon,
> For thanne, th'apostle seith that I am free
> To wedde, a Goddes half, where it liketh me.
> He seith that to be wedded is no synne;
> Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.
>   (ll. 47-52)

Dame Alisoun makes Paul appear even more supportive in the discussion of

virginity. Catching "th'apostel"[25] in a supposedly more tolerant moment

(I Cor. 7:25),[26] she argues;

> I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
> Th'apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,

He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.
Men may conseille a womman to been oon,
But conseillyng is no comandement.
(11. 63-67)

She then pursues Paul relentlessly on this point, citing next his desire

that all men be virginal like himself (I Cor. 7:7):[27]

I woot wel that th'apostel was a mayde;
But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde
He wolde that every wight were swich as he,
Al nys but conseil to virginitee.
(11. 79-82)

Soon after she quotes him almost verbatim on the dangers of the flesh (I

Cor. 7:1),[28] but provides a characteristically misleading gloss in which

his statement is made to have particular (to Paul himself) rather than

general application:

Al were it good no womman for to touche,-
He mente as in his bed or in his couche;
(11. 87-88)

It is worth noting that the Wife avoids identifying Paul explicitly

by name in the rest of this part of her argument and in the bulk of the

third part. He becomes a very shadowy presence as Dame Alisoun appropri-

ates many of his sententiae and effectively makes them her own. Notice, for

instance, the way in which she presents the following paraphrases (of I

Cor. 7:7,[29] itself tacked on to the Pauline parable —II Tim. 2:20—of the

lord and his household vessels, which is introduced by the unspecific

"For wel ye knowe...):

God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,
And everich hath of God a propre yifte,
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.
(11. 102-04)

An echo of this occurs in the third part of her argument (in a paraphrase

of I Cor, 7:20)[30] with the sententia in this instance twisted even more

boldly into an expression of personal rather than authoritative opinion:

> In swich estaat as God hath cleped us
> I wol persevere;...
>
> (ll. 147-48)

She does the same thing in her treatment of Paul's discussion of the marriage debt (whose authoritative source is alluded to vaguely at l. 129) and the consequences thereof (in I Cor. 7:28, Paul discusses the "tribulacion" suffered by both partners):[31]

> An housbonde I wol have, I wol nat lette,
> Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
> And have his tribulacion withal
> Upon his flessh, whil that I am his wyf.
>
> (ll. 154-57)

This is immediately followed by another Pauline sententia, also plagiarized and misrepresented (this time by the omission of the first half of the same verse, I. Cor. 7:4):[32]

> I have the power durynge al my lyf
> Upon his propre body, and noght he.
>
> (ll. 158-59)

The one sententia credited specifically to Paul in the third part of this first section of her sermon occurs right at the conclusion. As in the two earlier parts, he is not named but referred to as "the Apostel", and, for all her protestation to liking the "sentence" very much, she again distorts the text by omission.[33] The result makes Paul appear to be commanding husbands to love their wives without any obligations whatsoever on the woman's part:

> Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me;
> And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.
> Al this sentence me liketh every deel.
>
> (ll. 160-62)

From this over-view it is clear that Dame Alisoun perverts both

the literal and spiritual meaning of Pauline _sententiae_ in a variety of ways, some obvious, others more subtle.[34] She is easily caught and plainly culpable when she errs by omission or abbreviation as in the case of the last two citations. She is more slippery when she takes statements out of context (Paul having no "precept" on virginity, simply counselling it). With the higher levels of meaning, an area in which Robertson has been particularly illuminating, the Wife is, I believe, barely conversant and thus her misinterpretations in this realm (of the significance of II Tim. 2:20, for example)[35] are probably unintentional rather than deliberate. In addition, it has been shown how the Wife shows an increasing propensity, as her argument progresses, to present Pauline _sententiae_ as if they were her own. What is gradually happening is precisely what Dame Alisoun promised in the first place: experience (her own) is being made to take precedence over "auctoritee", but this is being achieved almost imperceptibly. Not only does she avoid identifying her source. Even more shrewdly, she turns _sententiae_ of universal application into expressions of purely personal opinion or feeling (her paraphrases of I Cor. 7:20, I Cor. 7:28, I Cor. 7:4).[36] Her method of presenting such _sententiae_ can thus be seen as affording a subtle transition from the explicit citation of Biblical "auctoritee" in the earlier parts of her sermon to the unabashed account of personal experience that follows the Pardoner's interruption.

The presence of a few proverbs in this section of the _Prologue_ also serves as a signal of what is to come. There are, in fact, only two proverbs. The Wife describes virginity succinctly and with irony as a state for which there is a prize — for those who want it, that is!

> The dart is set up for virginitee:
> Cacche whoso may, who renneth best lat see.
> (ll. 75-76)

Chastity, she soon after observes, is impossible if men and women come

into close contact:

> For peril is bothe fyr and tow t'assemble.
> (l. 89)

In addition there is a distinctly proverbial quality to the Pauline ex-

ample of the lord and his household vessels which she uses to support

her contention that God calls some men to virginity but does not discard

those who cannot achieve such perfection.[37] She paraphrases the text (II

Tim. 2:20) as follows:

> For wel ye knowe, a lord in his houshold,
> He hath nat every vessel al of gold;
> Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.
> (ll. 99-101)

The proverbial quality of this authoritative text is achieved by the Wife's

assumption of the familiarity of her listeners with what she is saying

("For wel ye knowe"), which makes the example effectively anonymous rather

than specifically authoritative, and by its images drawn from everyday

experience. Such images, as will be discussed later, are important to the

Wife's establishing the primacy of "experience" over "auctoritee". In this

first section of her sermon, though, she is attempting to keep up some-

thing of the appearance of a clear-headed exegete dealing impersonally with

her Biblical materials. A flood of proverbs at this point would tip the

balance too early on the side of experience. Sufficient to hint (as in

the case of the appropriated sententiae) at what is to come.

What immediately follows the end of the first section of the

Prologue is the interchange between Dame Alisoun and the Pardoner. In

brief, the Pardoner suddenly interrupts to note that the Wife is a "noble prechour" and, furthermore, that he himself was about to marry but, after what she has just been preaching about wifely tyranny, he has decided not to do so. To Dame Alisoun and the other pilgrims this would no doubt be the cause of some amusement because the Pardoner is probably physically incapable of the marriage act.[38] The Wife cannot resist taunting this de-sexed cleric with the promise of a tale of "tribulacion in mariage", which, she takes care to emphasize, will be heady stuff indeed for him. Not one to be easily intimidated, the Pardoner, trying to keep up the facade of a sexually active younger man, encourages her to tell her tale and "teche us yonge men of youre praktike" (l. 187). The Wife then turns to the pilgrim company as a whole and makes a typical Chaucerian mock-apology, delivered in advance in case anyone is offended by her speaking "after her fantasye".[39] Her intention, after all, "is nat but for to pleye" (l. 192), a double-entendre referring both to the entertaining nature of her story and, more literally, to her actual sexual behaviour. That done, she turns again to the Pardoner (one can imagine the mischievous smile on her face):

> Now, sire, now wol I telle forth my tale.
> (l. 193)

The "tale" which follows makes up the rest of the Prologue and is, in effect, a narrative exemplum illustrating, from an intensely auto-biographical point of view, the stated theme of "wo that is in mariage". That Dame Alisoun intends her listeners to see her account as a piece of narrative is clear from the references to it as such in the course of its telling.[40] After one of many digressions, she returns to the thread of her

story with:

> But now, sire, lat me se, what I shal seyn ?
> A ha! by God, I have my tale ageyn.
> Whan that my fourthe housbonde....
> (ll. 585-87)

That she delays the account of her marital experiences is explained, first of all, by the need, as noted above, to deal initially with "auctoritees" and their sententiae and, secondly, by the common tendency, as noted in the first chapter (pp. 21-22), for late medieval sermons to conclude with one or two illustrative stories. That the Wife illustrates her theme with autobiographical incidents can also, as pointed out in an introductory paragraph to this chapter (p. 63), be traced to an accepted sermon practice, though her behaviour in these incidents can hardly be said to be morally uplifting. In this, she reveals herself, like the Pardoner, to be a corrupt "prechour" indeed.

Like the Pardoner, Dame Alisoun deliberately reveals aspects of personal behaviour that are incongruous with the role of the good preacher. Both do this through the medium of largely confessional prologues. In the case of the Wife, the personal record is cast into the form of an illustrative narrative with a clearly demarcated location in the structure of the Prologue. In short, its function and structural position reflect the Wife's indebtedness to the artes praedicandi. One has only to compare the plan of Dame Alisoun's Prologue as a whole to the monologue of La Vieille in De Meun's Roman de la Rose. The latter, as is well known, provides the direct source of much of what the Wife has to say.[41] At the same time, La Vieille has none of Alisoun's sense of sermon structure. Instead of the meandering, all-pervasive reminiscences of the aging whore of the French

poem, Chaucer provides the Wife with a clearly stated theme at the beginning of her discourse which is dealt with, first of all (in proper sermon fashion), through the systematic (if misleading) treatment of Biblical texts, followed by a carefully organized piece of narrative (a series of anecdotes dealing chronologically with the Wife's encounters with her five husbands) which is carefully tailored to illustrate the theme of marital woe.

In this carefully positioned autobiographical illustration (taking up the entire second section of the Prologue) subjective narrative is more than a vehicle for self-indulgent personal reminiscence. The process of coopting, consuming and destroying "auctoritees" continues, but now within the enormously enlarged context of recounted "experience". At first, Dame Alisoun simply incorporates "auctoritees" into the onrushing flow of her narrative: in her introductory remarks and the anecdotes pertaining to her first four husbands (ll. 193-502), she avoids mentioning that much of what she is presenting as her own words or experience has actually been taken from authoritative sources. Muscatine has discussed this in the light of what he calls her "naturalization" of authorities,[42] a process which, I have argued above, is already occuring in the first section of the Prologue (especially in the last part of it). The instances in this second section are even harder to spot, for "naturalization" is even more thoroughgoing, caught up as it is by the vigour and blatant subjectivity of the narrative action. Muscatine points out a couple of passages (ll. 235-41, 285-91) in the particularly lively dramatization of her offensive against her husbands' false accusations:[43] in these, "auctoritees" remain unidentified and in the latter instance falsity is

compounded by the Wife's complete fabrication of what her husbands

supposedly told her.[44] Muscatine captures the complexity of what Chau-

cer is doing in the following passage:

> Within the...autobiographical frame...he [Chaucer]
> goes a step farther, widening the scope of the
> dramatic monologue by also including within the
> Wife's report what her husbands might have said,
> or thought they said, to her. The whole process
> of quoting the masculine abuse of the three old
> husbands is further dramatized by its being repre-
> sented as the Wife's invention of what they said.
> In short, it does duty as an example of her
> aggressive war on them. So, beginning with verse 248
> we hear the Wife of Bath quoting herself as she
> used to pretend to quote her old husbands. The
> matter attributed to them constitutes a significant
> part of the traditional anti-feminist material
> that sets off and gives perspective to the Wife's
> position.[45]

It is not until Dame Alisoun comes to telling the story of her relation-

ship with Jankyn, her fifth husband (11. 502-85) that "auctoritees" be-

come, as in the first section of her sermon, an obvious presence once

again in her discourse. But she draws attention to them only in order to

attack them, this time in purely physical terms and without any pretense

whatsoever at high-minded exegesis. She literally rips to shreds some of

their recorded statements and examples and makes Jankyn burn the rest of

his offensive book.

Jankyn himself is presented as something of a living representative

of the scholarly clerical class upon whose turf the Wife so boldly treads.

He is a sometime scholar:

> He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,
> And hadde left scole....
> (11. 527-28)

It is somewhat ironic that Dame Alisoun should love such a man for she

realizes that, as a class, clerks have never had anything good to write

about women (ll. 688-96), especially in their old age when they become

impotent:

> Therfore no womman of no clerk is preysed.
> The clerk, whan he is oold, and may noght do
> Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,
> Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage
> That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage!
> (ll. 706-10)

Perhaps she had thought that because Jankyn had left Oxford and was young

he would not share the antifeminist mania of his fellows. How wrong, by

her own account, she turned out to be!

The Wife's account of her relationship with Jankyn is carefully

orchestrated to reach a climax in her violent attack on the source material

(so carefully recorded by the literate clerical class) that provided the

ammunition for antifemnist preaching. Hints of the violence to come are

present early in the narrative, in the deceptively idyllic springtime

courtship of the Wife and the ex-clerk. She tells him falsely of her dream

of his slaying her in bed (ll. 574-84), a dream which "bitokeneth gold"

and which therefore attracts Jankyn to her. Little does she know that

Jankyn will in fact offer her violence later on, even though he will not

go as far as murdering her. As the narrative moves inexorably to its climax,

Jankyn's stock of books assumes increasing importance as he mines the

"auctoritees" for stories of faithless and murderous wives. He throws

these stories in Alisoun's face much as a preacher haranguing his congre-

gation with the same:

> For which he often tymes wolde preche,
> And me of olde Romayn geestes teche;
> (ll. 641-42)

Like a preacher too, he takes _sententiae_ from the Bible to support his
argument (ll. 650-53). But the main source of his examples is a single
volume whose main contents are three antifeminist tracts:[46] Walter Map's
Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum de non ducenda uxore, the _Liber de nuptiis_
of Theophrastus and St. Jerome's _Epistola adversus Jovinianum_ (ll. 669 -
75). This volume, as the Wife puts it:

> ...gladly, nyght and day,
> For his desport he wolde rede alway.
> (ll. 669-70)

The truth of this statement is borne out not only by the fact that Dame
Alisoun draws upon these same sources for much of what she herself states
throughout the _Prologue_,[47] but also by the ease with which she recalls the
contents of these tracts, specifically their many stories of "wikked wyves",
most of them outright killers! In a passage of 57 lines (ll. 715-71) she
recounts (with varying degrees of elaboration) no less than ten specific
(and several collectively grouped) examples that Jankyn read to her "as
he sat by the fire."[48] The place of these brief narrative _exempla_ in the
larger account of the Wife's own marital woes should not go unrecognized.
The provide a sequence of brief, animated anecdotes that are not only
intended to support Jankyn's view of wifely depravity, but also to fore-
shadow the violent confrontation to come and the eventual subjugation of
Jankyn. To be sure, the dénouement of the Wife's "tale" is not altogether
convincing (surely Jankyn would not have given up that easily; the Wife's
kindness is too sudden to be believable). What is convincing, indeed in-
evitable, is Dame Alisoun's rampageous act of revenge on Jankyn and the
"auctoritees" he stands for:

> And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne

> To reden on this cursed book al nyght,
> Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght
> Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke
> I with my fest so took hym on the cheke
> That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun.
>   (ll. 788-93)

The revengeful nature of the Wife's attack is underscored with her own

words soon after:

> And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,
> And seyde, 'Theef, thus muchel am I wreke;
>   (ll. 808-10)

This is, very simply, the moment she has been waiting for all along, the

moment to which all her earlier glossing and appropriating of "auctoritees"

and their sententiae has been leading.[49] She has calculatedly drawn

"auctoritees" into the orbit of her own "experience" in order to facil-

itate their destruction (she finally makes Jankyn burn his entire volume of

stories, l. 816). Whether or not Dame Alisoun has thereby struck a blow in

the cause of female independence is not the immediate concern of this

chapter. Pertinent to the topic of this dissertation is the skilful way

in which a characteristic of sermon structure (the concluding narrative

exemplum) has been made to express autobiography which, through sheer sub-

jective and narrative force, overwhelms all "auctoritees", their sententiae

and their stories in its path.

One must not ignore either the emphasis on "experience" that is

provided by the numerous proverbs that appear in this section of the Pro-

logue. The vivid images contained in such illustrative proverbs help to

create a graphic picture of Dame Alisoun's world and her behaviour in it.

Noting and explaining the Wife's penchant for proverbs, Whiting has

written:

> No other of the pilgrims cares for proverbs so
> much as the Wife of Bath. She values experience
> above authority, and...proverbs are close enough
> to experience to appeal to her.[50]

The point is a good one and worth pursuing. Very simply, the Wife is

attracted to illustrative proverbs (especially in this section of her

Prologue) because they are anchored in the world of everyday experience.

They provide a convenient source for the kinds of images with which, as

Muscatine puts it, Chaucer can create "his mosaic of her domestic phys-

ical world."[51] Though Muscatine does not specifically make the point, as

Whiting does, that the Wife's imagery stems in large part from the pro-

verbs she utilizes, a glance at the following catalogue reveals that

many of these simple images are in fact embedded in proverbs. Her world,

Muscatine observes:

> ...is put together of images like dart, fire,
> tow, vessel, tree [wood], wheat seed, barley
> bread, tun, wine, ale, bacon, chough, gnat,
> horse, mill, sheep, tooth, mouth, tail, flour,
> bran, grease, shoe, market, ware, bed, blood,
> gold, legs, feet, and so on. The whole collection
> is impressive in its unity of connotation.[52]

The bulk of these images that appear in a proverbial context

(and others not listed by Muscatine) are found in this second section of

the Prologue with its emphasis on experience. Thus, in summing up her

offensive tactics in complaining to her husbands before they ever had

a chance to accuse her of misbehaviour, the Wife states:

> Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt;
> (1. 389)

On the aphrodisiac qualities of liquor ("after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,"

1. 464), she makes the observation:

> A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.
> (1. 466)

Commenting on her delight in making her fourth husband angry with jeal-

ousy, she states (in a proverbial expression still current in our own

times) that "...in his owene grece I made hym frye" (l. 487). Her famil-

iarity with the varied activities of the medieval market place (where she

attended processions, heard sermons, and attended miracle plays, ll. 556-

58)) provide an empirical basis for the following statement on her material-

istic philosophy:

> Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,
> And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys:
> (ll. 522-23)

Her experiences in the market place also underscore the proverb that clinch-

es her account of holding sex up for ransom:

> Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle;
> With empty hand men may none haukes lure.
> (ll. 414-15)

In addition to several other proverbial statements made by Dame Alisoun in

this section of her Prologue,[53] there figure very prominently the proverbs

thrown at her by fifth husband, Jankyn, the sometime clerk of Oxford. He,

the Wife informs us, knew many proverbs indeed:

> And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes
> Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.
> 'Bet is,' quod he, 'thyn habitacioun
> Be with a leon or a foul dragoun,
> Than with a womman usynge for to chyde.'
> 'Bet is,' quod he, 'hye in the roof abyde,
> Than with an angry wyf doun in the hous;
> They been so wikked and contrarious,
> They haten that hir housbondes loven ay.'
> He seyde, 'a womman cast hir shame away,
> Whan she cast of hir smok;' and forthermo,
> 'A fair womman, but she be chaast also,
> Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.'
> (ll. 773-85)

Jankyn, it appears, has a shrewd eye for selecting proverbs that neatly

sum up the behaviour of the shrewish and lecherous Alisoun. Comparing
her to a lion or dragon echoes the Wife's self-admitted Martian bellig-
erence (ll. 610ff.); his reference to hypocritical behaviour in wives'
promising to love their husbands forever is a comment on Dame Alisoun's
calculated shows of affection (ll. 395-96, 417); his two proverbs on
the promiscuity of women are more than confirmed by the Wife's own account
of her sexual adventures. Attention should also be paid to another pro-
verbial statement attributed to Jankyn and quoted verbatim earlier on in
the Wife's account of her relationship with her fifth husband:

"Whoso that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,
And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,
Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!'
(ll. 655-58)

Here again the appropriateness of the proverb to the Wife's activities
(in this case her love of pilgrimages) is obvious. Typically, Chaucer is
using this proverb as he does the many others throughout the Prologue, but
especially in this second section, to sharpen the focus on Dame Alisoun's
behaviour and her materialistic view of the world in which she operates.

The tale of the Knight and the Loathly Lady which follows the
Prologue (commonly designated as The Wife of Bath's Tale) is, as presented,
nothing more or less than a second major narrative exemplum and hence a
continuation of the Wife's sermon on marriage.[54] The appearance of a second
lengthy narrative was not uncommon in medieval homilies: many of the ser-
mons in Mirk's Festial, as already noted (n. 60, p. 187), end with two or
more tales. The choice of this particular story also points in the di-
rection of the sermon. As Miller has shown, in its "exemplary function

> ...The Wife Of Bath's Tale...resembles its
> closest analogue, the Tale of Florent in
> Gower's Confessio Amantis. There the story
> of the transformed loathly hag is told in a
> sermon setting by the priest of Venus as an
> exemplum illustrating the virtue of Obedience.
> Gower, in fact, makes the priest Genius re-
> late it to the body of exempla such as are
> found in the conventional materia praedicandi,
> by pretending a fictitious historicity of the
> sort claimed for the moral tales in the Gesta
> Romanorum.[55]

We are, Miller continues, "to imagine it [the Tale of Florent] as perhaps

contained in some clerkly collection of exemplary tales, catalogued under

the title Obedentia".[56] He then proceeds in the rest of his paper to argue

that although the tale in its "expanded literary form" as developed by

Gower and Chaucer does not appear in any known collections, the motif of

the transformed woman is quite common in them.[57] This is not the place to

discuss the various ways in which this motif was treated in the analogues

(Miller does this quite adequately anyway). The point that must be

appreciated for purposes of this discussion is that Gower and Chaucer both

"invite their audience to associate their stories with exemplum literature".[58]

At the same time, it is not absolutely necessary, I believe, for us (nor

was it for a contemporary audience, for that matter) to know specifically

the analogues in these collections. It is sufficient to catch the broad

hints of clerical origin in the introductory remarks of the Tale. When,

first of all, the Wife refers to the fairy element in her story as "the

olde opinion, as I rede" (1. 862), there is a strong suggestion of the

clerical authority that she attacks with increasing vehemence in the course

of her Prologue. It should come as no surprise then when she launches

into an apparently digressive satirical comment on the behaviour of itiner-

ant "lymytours and othere hooly freres" (ll. 864-81). The association of

such preachers and the "scole ...of clergye," as the Friar makes clear

later on (l. 1277), was very close: the former delivered and glossed

orally the illustrative materials that were carefully recorded and gloss-

ed in manuscripts by the latter (a class to which, it must be remembered,

Jankyn once belonged). One must not forget either that Friar Huberd him-

self has just interrupted the Wife as she was about to begin this second

tale. She simply cannot resist a sly dig at him and his kind. The Wife is

not stepping out of bounds in her assumed role of preacher when she in-

dulges in such open anti-clericalism: medieval sermons were full of the

same.[59]

Once past her introductory remarks, the Wife proceeds for a

while with remarkable economy in the telling of this second tale. The

Knight commits his shameful deed; is prosecuted; the Queen intervenes and

makes her proposal; the Knight, distraught, sets off on his extensive but

seemingly fruitless travels — all this within 49 lines (ll. 882-930) and

without the inclusion of any subsidiary illustrative material whatsoever.

After this, however, the narrative is temporarily abandoned for the next

52 lines (ll. 931-82) as Dame Alisoun intrudes, not only with her own

comments on the various things that people say women like best, but also

with the tale of Midas and his wife. In this insertion of a subsidiary

narrative exemplum within the larger one, she is not simply digressing

because it is in her nature to "wander by the way" (in this case to stray

from the narrative way of her main story). Such a psychological explana-

tion is attractive to the modern sensibility but is only partly true.[60]

What she is doing is similar to what the Pardoner does in his sermon

"ensample" of the three young gadabouts. He too wanders off the track of his compelling plot line to present, amongst other less elaborate illustrations of various kinds, two anecdotes from John of Salisbury. The Nun's Priest, as seen in the last chapter, also includes briefer tales within his lengthy narrative exemplum of the cock and the fox: he temporarily halts the forward movement of his plot when he has Chantecleer support his "sentence" on dreams with two full-blown (and several briefer) narrative "ensamples".

In another respect too The Nun's Priest's Tale is similar to the Wife's: both provide sermons within the context of long narrative exempla. In the case of The Nun's Priest's Tale, as discussed in the preceding chapter, Chantecleer in his sermonizing to Pertelote echoes the larger sermon of the Priest to the other pilgrims. This was spoken of as a duplex preaching situation. Such a situation also holds in the Wife's Tale. Just as she preaches to her fellow pilgrims using "auctoritees" and narrative exempla so does the Loathly Lady preach within the Wife's second major exemplum, in this case on "gentillesse" to her newly acquired husband.

As with the earlier intrusion of the Wife, the Loathly Lady's monologue brings the movement of the plot temporarily to a halt. It too comes after a sequence of unimpeded forward action: the Knight encounters the Lady and the fairies; she exacts the promise of marriage from him; they return to the court and the Knight dutifully but reluctantly marries the Lady after she answers the riddle; the Knight's unhappiness over his ugly, old, and lowly bride is described (ll. 983-1105). Again there is a total absence of illustrative material; plot is all. Why then does Chaucer, for the next 123 lines (ll. 1105-1227, for more than a quarter of the Tale,

in fact) indulge in a static, philosophical monologue, replete with
"auctoritees", sententiae and exemplary figures, for which, furthermore,
there is no model in the narrative analogues ?[61]

As with the Wife's intrusion, the answer lies in great part, I
believe, in the preaching conventions with which Chaucer is playing and
turning to his own particular purposes. In this case, the Loathly Lady's
monologue is meant to echo in its structure and use of illustrative
material (sometimes even in its language) the first section of the Wife's
Prologue and as such is testimony to the careful shaping on the poet's
part of the whole of the Wife's presentation.

The parallels between the two sections become clear on close exam-
ination. As with the Wife's first 162 lines, these near concluding 123
lines of the Tale are divided—sermon-style — into three sub-topics as
the Lady deals in turn with each of the Knight's arguments: (i) "Gentillesse"
and Social Status (ll. 1109-1206); (ii) Old Age (ll. 1207-12): (iii) Ugli-
ness (ll. 1213-18). As in the first section, "auctoritees" become less ob-
vious a presence as the Lady moves from the first to the third part. In
the first part, all references are clearly identified: Dante ("the wise
poete of Florence"),[62] with his "sentence" on the religious origin of
"gentillesse" (ll. 1125-30); Seneca and "othere clerkes" —Valerius Maxi-
mus, Boethius, Juvenal — all invoked to support the view that "gentillesse"
and poverty or lowly status are not incompatible. Paul, it should be noted,
is entirely absent as an authority here. He is ignored perhaps because he
has been digested to the Wife's satisfaction (the last reference to him
was in the course of the Wife's "tale" at ll. 341-45), or perhaps because
the Wife has by this point broadened her argument to embrace an issue

related to but larger than that of marriage and virginity, and one upon which apparently Paul has nothing to say. Another Biblical figure assumes prominence in this first part of the Loathly Lady's sermon —Christ. Christ as an exemplary figure is, in fact, predominant here. It is from him, the Lady argues, that "...we clayme oure gentillesse" (l. 1117), and she repeats this sententia, verbatim in quoting later from Dante (l. 1130), rewording it slightly (l. 1162), and giving it flesh in the brief, suggestive picture of the "hye God" who "in wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf" (ll. 1178-79). In thus focusing on Christ, the Loathly Lady recalls the two opening illustrations of the Wife's sermon, those of Christ at Cana and at the well of the Samaritan woman. The central figure is the same in all and a certain air of earth-bound sanctity is imparted to both the beginning and concluding sections of the Wife's presentation. Could it be that Dame Alisoun means her audience to see Christ as on the side of her style of earthly "experience" ? The phrasing of the prayer at the very end of her sermon would seem to bear this out:

> ...and Jhesu Crist us sende
> Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,
> And grace t'overbyde hem that we wedde;
> And eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lyves
> That wol nat be governed by hir wyves;
> And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,
> God sende hem soone verray pestilence!
> (ll. 1258-64)

If "auctoritees" quickly fade away in the second and third parts of the Loathly Lady's sermon, this is because Chaucer seems again to be carefully duplicating the Wife's methods of the first section of her sermon. Thus, after her preoccupation with authoritative support in dealing with "gentillesse" and poverty, the Lady finds it not absolutely necessary (in

language reminiscent of the opening lines of the Prologue) to call upon

"auctoritees" to support her argument on old age:

> And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee
> Were in no book....
>
> (11. 1208-09)

In a somewhat dismissive fashion, she refers to the "auctours" she could

find if she cared to: "...auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse" (1. 1212)

By this point, however, they have been made to assume such a low profile

that they have become virtually non-existent. The third part of her

argument (on ugliness) is brief and without any authoritative support what-

soever. As with the Wife, the Loathly Lady ultimately has no use for

"auctoritee".

To summarize: the artes praedicandi have long been recognized as

important to an understanding of different sections of The Wife of Bath's

Prologue and Tale. In this chapter, I have looked at the entire presenta-

tion as a kind of sermon, focusing especially on the different types of

illustrative materials, in the form of proverbs, authoritative sententiae

and narrative exempla employed by the Wife. In carefully examining her use

of such materials, one comes to appreciate a number of things: (i) the way

in which she develops her argument through her choice of different types

of illustration in each of the three sections of her presentation; (ii) the

personalizing or "naturalization" of such materials as the sermon pro-

gresses; (iii) the important contribution made by proverbs to giving a

clear picture of the Wife's everyday world, her behaviour in it, and her

materialistic philosophy; and (iv) the extent and complexity of Chaucer's

satire (it is his, not the Wife's) on the abuses of the contemporary pul-

pit as he has the Wife present herself as a self-styled exegete deal-

ing with antifeminist doctrine that she understandably hates but which,

in her own behaviour, she corroborates.

IV

THE PARDONER'S PROLOGUE AND TALE

A considerable amount has been written on the sermon qualities,
especially as supposedly revealed in structure, of The Pardoner's Pro-
logue and Tale. Kittredge over a half a century ago observed that:

> The whole tale, as it lies before us, is one of
> the Pardoner's sermons, consisting of text ("the
> love of money is the root of all evil"), brief
> introduction, illustrative anecdote (or exem-
> plum), and application.[1]

Elaborating on Kittredge's argument (with the help of the then recently
edited and translated medieval preaching manual of the pseudo-Aquinas),
Chapman commented on the "excellent structure of the tale as a whole",
which, he maintained, was a result of its being a "typical specimen of
medieval preaching".[2] In more recent times, Owen has seen medieval sermon
structure in its most elaborated form — "theme, protheme, restatement of
theme, introduction of theme, process and development of principals, con-
clusion, and benediction" — as the ground plan of the Pardoner's entire
presentation.[3] In the case of the first four parts of this plan (which
in her view correspond to the Pardoner's confessional Prologue), Owen
argues that "the Pardoner fuses revelation of his homiletic techniques
with the normal requirements of each of these sermon parts".[4]

Such arguments for a rigid sermon structure have not gone un-
challenged. Carleton Brown in his edition of the Tale asserts that "it
is impossible to make the Prologue and Tale conform to anything like
symmetrical sermon structure" and that, rather than delivering a full-

blown "university" type sermon, the Pardoner is merely "illustrating his pulpit methods", especially his use of the narrative exemplum.[5] Taking much the same line, Shain sees Chaucer, in the case of the Pardoner, FriarJohn in The Summoner's Tale, and the Merchant, as giving at best a "general sermon shape" to what these individuals are saying as they utilize such standard homiletic tools as figures, exempla, authorities, and the glossing of Scriptural texts.[6] Shain writes:

> The only method the Pardoner can be described
> as using is a mélange of all the methods. Like
> an accomplished monologist who collects a reper-
> toire from histrionic styles, the Pardoner has
> collected congenial bits from all the preaching
> he has heard and combined them with glittering
> ease.[7]

The arguments against the Pardoner's presentation being a struc-
turally complex "university" type sermon stand up, it seems to me, on close
examination of the evidence. To begin with, he is accustomed to preaching
to an unsophisticated audience (the "lewed peple" as he calls them at l.
437) to whom, it is reasonable to assume, he would deliver his sermons in
a direct and decidedly non-academic manner. To "stire hem to devocioun"
(l. 346), he uses a mixture of simple but very effective techniques. By
his own account, he begins by intimidating his congregations with epis-
copal authority so that no one dares to challenge his position (ll. 335-
40, 342-43).[8] Moreover, he reinforces his authority with a few words of
Latin to "saffron" his sermons (ll. 344-45). At the same time, he dazzles
his audiences with flamboyant histrionics. The behaviour he describes in
the following passage seems a variation on that of the cock-preacher dis-
cussed above in the chapter on The Nun's Priest's Tale (pp.43 -44) and,
in its excess, departs radically from the advice in preaching manuals that

preachers be decorous and controlled in hand and facial gestures:[9]

> Thanne peyne I me to strecche forth the nekke,
> And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
> As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.
> Myne handes and my tonge goon so yerne
> That it is joye to se my bisynesse.
>   (ll. 395-99)

There is excess too in the Pardoner's use of narrative exempla. Brown, as noted above, has pointed out that the pulpit method which the Pardoner best illustrates is the use of such illustrative stories. "Tales" apparently constitute the greater part of the Pardoner's sermons and it is to this feature of his preaching that this chapter will principally address itself.

Chaucer draws attention to the Pardoner's penchant for story-telling several times, beginning with the portrait in the General Prologue where one learns that:

> Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie.
>   (l. 709)

Later in his own Prologue the Pardoner himself informs his fellow pilgrims twice of his use of narrative. In the midst of his account of his initial display of episcopal authority, he states:

> ...after that thanne telle I forth my tales;
>   (l. 341)

Later on in the Prologue he reports that, after the statement of his standard theme ("Radix malorum est Cupiditas")[10]

> Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon
> Of olde stories longe tyme agoon.
>   (ll. 435-36)

He then immediately explains very clearly his reason for using so many stories in his sermons:

> For lewed peple loven tales olde;
> Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.
> (ll. 437-38)

These lines should be seen as consistent with the calculated directness
of the Pardoner's preaching and complementary to his statement on the
complex of wrong reasons for which sermons were often delivered and listen-
ed to:

> For certes, many a predicacioun
> Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun;
> Som for plesance of folk and flaterye,
> To been avaunced by ypocrisye,
> And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.
> (ll. 407-11)

The "yvel entencioun" of the Pardoner himself is only too obvious ("I
preche nothyng but for coveitise", l. 433). He becomes "avaunced by ypo-
crisye", gaining money selling false relics while preaching against the
very sin of which he himself is most guilty. In his delight in his own
pulpit histrionics, noted above, he also shows himself guilty of the "veyne
glorie" which, as was seen in the first chapter, Christian commentators
since St. Paul's time had warned preachers against. Because of the out-
rageousness of the Pardoner's position, one is apt to ignore the less-
than-laudable motives of those listening to him. Had not St. Paul also
spoken of those who would not "endure sound doctrine" and turn instead to
preachers who would tell them fables ? (see p.5 above). The Pardoner's refer-
ence to "plesance of folk and flaterye" shows his recognition of such weak-
ness in his congregations. It is precisely in order to cater to such weak-
ness that he tells so many stories: the "lewed peple" (his usual audience)
love them; the "gentils" (part of his audience on the road to Canterbury)
constrain him to telle them "som moral thyng" (l. 325) and, in appearing

to comply, as I will argue, he indulges in an insidious form of flattery.

There are, then, two audiences informing the Pardoner's presentation. Recognizing this fact (and arguing against what he calls the "Sermon Heresy" of Kittredge, Chapman, et al), Sedgewick has observed:

> Chaucer had no intention of constructing a medieval
> sermon 'typical' or otherwise. He did set out to
> portray a certain remarkable charlatan of a preacher
> who, in the course of self-revelation, delivers a
> 'sermon' as a sample of his trade tricks. Fussy as
> that statement is, it is not quite meticulous enough.
> For the whole homily, as actually delivered to simple
> folk 'dwellyng upon lond', is not set down verbatim:
> part of it is reported, in satiric vein, to another
> kind of audience that is listening not so much to the
> homily as to the self-revelation. Let us say, for the
> sake of convenience, that the Pardoner fits his rural
> 'sermon' into an 'address' delivered to the Pilgrims.[11]

Sedgewick's observations on the influence of the two audiences on the contents and particular "shape" of the Prologue and Tale do not go far enough, however. He fails to recognize the implications of the two audiences on the kinds of "ensamples" that are told in the course of the Tale. The variety of such "ensamples" that results from having two audiences give the Tale a stylistic (not to be confused with structural) complexity that has hitherto not been sufficiently recognized.

The first of the Pardoner's audiences that one is made aware of is that of his fellow pilgrims, especially the "gentils" who become uneasy at the Host's request to this "beel amy" to tell "som myrthe or japes" (ll. 318-19). The "gentils", concerned that the Pardoner may tell them something off-colour, some "ribaudye" (l. 324), request that he tell something moral instead. The Prologue prolongs the uncertainty about what kind of story the Pardoner will tell, indeed whether he will tell any story at all as he gives a lengthy account of his preaching techniques and sheer im-

morality (is this to be another autobiographical "tale" like the Wife's ?),

all the while enjoying the alcohol at the local "alestake" at which the

pilgrims have just stopped on their way to Canterbury (11. 321-22). There

are recurring references to the Pardoner's drinking, again at 1. 328 and

finally at the end of the Prologue:

> Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne,
> And have a joly wenche in every toun.
> But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:
> Youre likyng is that I shal telle a tale.
> Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,
> By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng
> That shal by reson been at youre likyng.
>   (11. 452-58)

This talk of drink (and the passing reference to casual sexual encounters),

coming as it does at the end of the Pardoner's self-revelation (and at the

end of his draft of ale), is nothing but a deliberate tease on the Pardon-

er's part. The "gentils" or "lordynges" must be expecting at this point a

confirmation of their initial fears that the Pardoner will tell them "som

myrthe or japes" as the Host has requested. However, the Pardoner then

states his intention to relate

> A moral tale yet I yow telle kan,
> Which I am wont to preche for to wynne.
>   (11. 460-61)

He does not simply plan to deliver any old tale to the skeptical pilgrims,

however. He is too versatile a preacher for that, aware no doubt of the

importance laid by preaching theorists since the time of Gregory the Great

on the need to gear sermons to the particular requirements of different

audiences (see pp. 13-15 above). It was shown above that the Pardoner

knows only too well what kind of stories the "lewed peple" want. His aware-

ness of the feelings of his present audience of pilgrims, especially those

of the "gentils" amongst them, is no less astute. His preoccupation with
telling them something that is to their "likyng" is clear in the con-
cluding lines of the Prologue quoted above. Obviously, the taste in stor-
ies of the "gentils" is somewhat different from that of the less sophis-
ticated folk. At least, this is what the "gentils" themselves would
probably like to think and the Pardoner, for the moment at any rate, ap-
pears willing to cater to their wish for a pleasant and edifying story.[12]
If one looks carefully again at the final section of the Prologue (ll. 435 -
62), it becomes clear that the Pardoner actually has two types of stories
in mind, (i) the "ensamples" which he speaks of in the plural and which
he associates exclusively with his regular audience, and (ii) the "moral
tale" which he refers to three times in the concluding lines of the Pro-
logue and which he intends to relate directly to the pilgrims themselves.
What ensues in the Tale can then be seen as a sequence of lengthy, in-
dividual tale, brief moral anecdotes, and collective exempla[13] in which
the audience of pilgrims and the audience of peasants alternate in the
Pardoner's mind: at times he focuses directly on the audience that immedi-
ately surrounds him, at other times he apparently drifts away in his imag-
ination (not altogether unconsciously, as shall be seen) to what would be
his normal preaching situation. One can then outline a sequence of alter-
nation of audience and story type as follows:

ll. 463 - 84 - Pilgrims - "moral tale".

485 - 572 - Peasants - Collective exempla.

573 - 628 - Pilgrims - Moral anecdotes.

629 - 59 - Peasants - Collective exempla.

660 - 894 - Pilgrims - "moral tale" (continued)

895 - 915 - Peasants - Conclusion of sermon.

By "drifting away" I do not mean to imply that the Pardoner is drunk and therefore cannot control the direction of what he is saying.[14] He may perhaps move from tale to exempla through sheer force of habit ("For I kan by rote that I telle", l. 332).[15] It is more likely, I believe, that he is carefully choosing his narratives to suit the different requirements of his two audiences. At some points in the Tale, as will be seen, he even gives the proper "lordynges", under the guise of edifying fare, a dose of the very "ribaudye" in which they feared originally he would indulge. There is thus a variety of tones and styles in the course of the Pardoner's presentation which reflects the complex interaction of two different types of audience in his mind. He alters the style of his delivery, especially in the various narratives that make up the bulk of it, to suit the effect that he wishes to achieve at a particular point on one or the other of his audiences.

A convenient clue, for a start, to the variation in tone in the Pardoner's delivery lies in his use of various terms of address. For the "lewed peple" he reserves the commonplace homiletic salutation, "goode men and wommen" or, simply, "goode men". The formula appears twice in the Prologue (ll. 352, 377) in the course of the Pardoner's verbatim report to the pilgrims of the sales pitch that he uses in hawking his relics to his usual audience. It reappears again after he has finished his "moral tale", or, more accurately, after the exclamatory outburst which comes immediately after the end of the tale (ll. 895-903). What seems to be happening here is that the tale, directed primarily at the pilgrim audience, has come to an end. The exclamatory sequence marks a drift away to the Pardoner's usual

audience, this being confirmed by the use of the formula:

> Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre trepas,
> And ware yow fro the synne of avarice!
> (ll. 904-05)

He soon after brings into focus the audience that is actually around him,

changing his term of address;

> And lo, sires, thus I preche.
> (l. 915)

The term "sires" is used almost exclusively for the pilgrim

audience. Soon after the instance just mentioned, he employs it again in

introducing his relics to the pilgrims:

> But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale.
> (l. 919)

The most significant use of the term comes just before the resumption of

the "moral tale" at the end of the sequence of Biblical exempla on "othes

false and grete":

> But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
> (l. 660)

At this point the Pardoner is consciously switching not only from collective

exempla to single "tale" but from peasant congregation to pilgrim audience.

The term of address used is meant to indicate this.

Yet another term of address employed by the Pardoner and one which

is undoubtedly addressed to the pilgrims is "lordynges".[16] He in fact opens

his Prologue addressed to the pilgrims with the term:

> "Lordynges", quod he, "in chirches whan I preche."
> (l. 329)

It appears near the end of the Prologue as well:

> "But, herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:"
> (l. 454)

Of considerable importance is his third and final use of the term, in the

course of the sermon exempla as he shifts from preaching against the vice

of drunkenness to talking about the dangers of "hasardye":

> "But herkneth, lordynges, o word, I yow preye,"
> (l. 573)

Appearing as it does in the midst of the long sequence of collective

exempla that comes between the brief beginning of the "moral tale" and

its resumption with the introduction of the "riotoures thre" at line 661,

the term indicates that the Pardoner, at least for a while, is directly

speaking to the pilgrim audience. After subjecting them to the kind of

narrative exempla with which he would normally harangue his peasant con-

gregation, he realizes, shrewd man that he is, that he must change his

manner if he is to be allowed to continue with his presentation. But he

is apparently not ready to resume his "moral tale", so what follows is in

effect a kind of compromise: two illustrative stories or anecdotes which

in their brevity are somewhat similar to those he has so far delivered,

but which contain matter which will be of direct interest to the pilgrim

audience, especially the "gentils" who, it can be assumed, are listening

with some trepidation to what he has been saying.

The transition that he effects between what has preceded his call

to the "lordynges" to listen and what follows is nothing less than brilliant.

He continues to preach against drunkenness but he almost imperceptibly changes

his manner of speaking about the vice. Before, his preaching was filled with

an earthiness reminiscent of the fabliau:[17]

> O dronke man, disfigured in thy face,
> Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,
> And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun
> As though thou seydest ay "Sampsoun, Sampsoun!"
> (ll. 551-54)

Now he begins to speak with more moderation, as the following example shows:

> Looke, Attilla, the grete conquerour,
> Deyde in his slepe, with shame and dishonour,

> Bledynge ay at his nose in dronkenesse.
> (ll. 579-81)

He then elaborates on the matter of the honourable behaviour of rulers,
this leading him to paraphrase two anecdotes from the _Policraticus_ of John
of Salisbury in which indulgence in "hasardye" or games of chance is seen
as harmful to the spiritual welfare and public reputation of princes.
What he is doing, in other words, is dealing with a subject that he knows
will be of special concern to the "gentils".

Stylistically too the Pardoner delivers the stories in this sec-
tion (ll. 573-628) in a fashion meant to prove appealing to the "lord-
ynges." A contrast with the collective _exempla_ that precede the section
shows this up very plainly. As noted above, there is a fabliau-like qual-
ity to much of the earlier part of the Pardoner's discussion of "glotonye"
(l. 463-572). In addition to the grotesque picture of the stinking drunk
man, there are the numerous exclamations which punctuate the brief _exempla_
of this earlier section, some decidedly off-colour as, for example, the
following:

> O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod,
> Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun!
> At either ende of thee foul is the soun.
> (ll. 534-36)

Such an outburst, like the picture of the drunk man, would surely be up-
setting to the decorous "gentils". For all their ostensible condemnation
of sinful excess, these passages are in effect examples of the "ribaudye"
which the Pardoner has been asked to avoid. Thus there are fabliau elements
not only at the beginning and end of the Pardoner's presentation, as Owen
has noted,[18] but also in the very midst of his discourse. What sweet and
perverse satisfaction the Pardoner must be experiencing in being able to

get away with such indelicate, racy descriptions and exclamations in the face of the "gentils" ! When he returns to addressing them <u>directly</u>, however, his admonitions and anecdotes become couched in inoffensive, velutinous language that momentarily counter-balances what has preceded and seems calculated to appease the gentle folk. Thus, in place of the earlier outbursts, he comes up with tamer admonitions such as:

> A capitayn sholde lyve in sobrenesse.
> (l. 582)

Or, again:

> It is repreeve and contrarie of honour
> For to ben holde a commune hasardour.
> (ll. 595-96)

Or, again:

> Lordes may fynden oother maner pley
> Honest ynough to dryve the day awey.
> (ll. 627-28)

The choice of anecdotes from John of Salisbury, especially, is evidence that the Pardoner is directing his words in this section at a more sophisticated audience than he would normally appear in front of. He subtly flatters the pilgrims by making it seem that he is assuming their acquaintance with the work of a man generally considered during the middle ages as one of the most learned men of his time. The Pardoner, in addressing both the true and self-styled aristocrats among the Canterbury pilgrims, draws on John's chapter in the <u>Policraticus</u> on the use and abuse of gambling,[19] particularly for the stories of Chilon[20] and Demetrius. The Pardoner presents these much as they appear in the <u>Policraticus</u>:

> Stilboun, that was a wys embassadour,
> Was sent to Corynthe, in ful greet honour,
> Fro Lacidomye, to make hire alliaunce.
> And whan he cam, hym happede, par chaunce,

That alle the gretteste that were of that lond,
Pleyynge atte hasard he hem fond.
For which, as soone as it myghte be,
He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree,
And seyde," Ther wol I nat lese my name,
Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame,
Yow for to allie unto none hasardours.
Sendeth othere wise embassadours;
For, by my trouthe, me were levere dye
Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye.
For ye, that been so glorious in honours,
Shul nat allyen yow with hasardours
As by my wyl, ne as by my tretee."
This wise philosophre, thus seyde hee.
Looke eek that to the kyng Demetrius,
The kyng of Parthes, as the book seith us,
Sente him a paire of dees of gold in scorn,
For he hadde used hasard ther-biforn;
For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun
At no value or reputacioun.

<div align="center">(ll. 603-26)</div>

In the <u>Policraticus</u> the stories are related as follows:

> Chilo the Spartan was sent to Corinth for the
> purpose of forming a treaty with the people of
> that city and on arriving found the leaders and
> elders of the city playing at draughts. Not
> attempting to transact his business, he returned
> and explained that he did not wish the glory
> of the Spartans whose valor had been conspicuous
> for the building of Byzantium to be dimmed,
> should it be said that they had made a treaty
> with a nation of gamesters. Then, too, golden
> dice were presented to King Demetrius by the
> King of the Parthians to taunt him for his child-
> ish inconsistency. As a result of that gift it
> would seem that he should have cast off a servile
> adolescence which did not shrink in the slightest
> degree from trivial conduct though vested with the
> dignity of royal power.[21]

As close as the Pardoner remains to his source, he nonetheless
enlivens his paraphrase of these narratives by adding direct speech, the
report of Chilon/Stilboun to his fellow Spartans on his return from his
mission (ll. 611-19). The purpose of the Pardoner's addition of this di-
rect speech is for more than simply dramatic effect, however. If it is

compared with the reported direct speeches in the exempla preceding and

immediately following the moral anecdotes, an important difference be--

comes plain. In the exempla the Pardoner makes liberal use of the in--

formal, second person singular pronoun "thou"; in the moral anecdotes, he

avoids it completely, preferring the formal second person plural "ye"

(objective case: "yow").[22] It may be argued that the Pardoner must have

"Stilboun" use the plural form in his speech because he is addressing a

group. Again how can the Pardoner himself avoid using the plural form

when he is speaking directly to the "lordynges" immediately preceding

this anecdote ? That he could have easily done so, however, is made clear

when one observes the method used in the earlier exempla, a method, as

Nathan points out, perfectly in keeping with standard sermon practice of

the late medieval period:

> It is to be expected that the one who delivers
> or writes a sermon will frequently use the in-
> formal pronoun even when addressing a group, if
> he is exhorting the members of that group as in-
> dividuals. An examination of some late fourteenth
> and early fifteenth century sources showed that
> the informal was normally so used.[23]

In the illustrations dealing with gluttony and swearing, for example (ref-

erences to "auctoritees" and sententiae, not stories in these cases), the

Pardoner neatly works in the informal singular pronoun (he is at this point

preaching as he would normally to a congregation of "lewed peple") by using

Biblical texts which level their injunctions at the individual:

> Witnesse on Mathew; but in special
> Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye,
> "Thou shalt swere sooth thyne othes, and nat lye,
> And swere in doom, and eek in rightwisnesse":
> (ll. 634-37)

He completely eschews this method when addressing the "lordynges"

because, of course, it would require his addressing them informally and

this, no doubt, would prove too overtly offensive. As Nathan notes:

> ...when the [medieval] preacher felt himself
> inferior or at best equal in rank with his
> audience, he used the formal.[24]

Thus even when the Pardoner draws the attention of his pilgrim listeners

to the Bible, he avoids quoting from it and, in deference to their pre-

sumed literacy, he invites them to read it for themselves:

> And over al this, avyseth yow right wel
> What was comaunded unto Lamuel -
> Nat Samuel, but Lamuel, seye I;
> Redeth the Bible, and fynde it expresly
> Of wyn-yevyng to hem that han justise.
> Namoore of this, for it may wel suffise.
> (ll. 583-88)

Leaving the Bible aside for the while, he then proceeds to take John of

Salisbury as his text, speaking to the "lordynges" as a group just as

"Stilbourn" in his turn addresses his fellow Spartans. Consequently, the

over-all impression that one is left with in this section (ll. 573-628)

is of a greater formality coming from the careful use of the second person

personal pronoun which is respectful as well as plural. If one puts this

together with the avoidance of exclamation and scatological imagery and,

not forgetting the opening words of the section ("herkneth, lordynges"),

it can be reasonably assumed that the Pardoner is here addressing the

audience that is actually around him, that is, the Canterbury pilgrims.

As already noted above, close analysis of the concluding section

of the Pardoner's Prologue reveals that he seems prepared initially to

give the pilgrims nothing more or less than a "moral tale" that is to

their "lyking". It is to this major narrative exemplum, its contents and

manner of presentation, that we must now turn our attention, beginning,

as the Pardoner himself does (and the Host when he proposes the scheme

of story-telling in the General Prologue, ll. 796-801),[25] with the

matter of "sentence" and "solaas". The Pardoner is ostensibly concerned

at the end of his Prologue with telling a tale that is at once pleasant

and morally uplifting. According to Gallick, he is not successful in try-

ing to fulfill these "two demands of medieval poetry and sermons".[26] The

matter is not this simple, however. For one thing, as argued above, the

Pardoner, in the case of many of the collective exempla and their accom-

panying exclamations, is nothing less than brilliant in the way in which

he manages to present material that is in fact at once morally sound in

its condemnation of sin and quite risqué in its use of grotesque and

scatological imagery. The result is a tension rather than a simple balance

between the entertaining and edifying ends of poetry, much like that

which exists in The Nun's Priest's Tale (pp. 57-59 above). This, no doubt,

is meant to keep the pilgrims, especially again the decorous and morally

righteous "gentils", off balance. It was shown earlier how the Pardoner

teases them in the final section of his Prologue, speaking of drink, sex,

and a "moral tale" almost in the same breath. Then there is the beginning

of the Tale itself with its vision of loose living in Flanders that sounds

like the beginning of a fabliau but which quickly leads into an exempla-

filled harangue.[27] In presenting the pilgrims with this volatile mixture

of "sentence" and "solaas" the Pardoner, I believe, is slyly deriding the

"gentils'" belief that the two can blend together easily in "som moral

thyng" (l. 325), words which he echoes with cunning irony soon after as

he promises, over a glass of ale, to think about "som honest thyng" (l.

328), and which he eventually clarifies at the end of the Prologue with

the promise of a "moral tale".

It seems likely that what the "gentils" have in mind in making their somewhat desperate request, and what the Pardoner at the end of the Prologue is leading them to expect, is a narrative exemplum of the type that appeared in fourteenth century moral treatises such as Robert Mann-yng's Handlyng Synne. As pointed out in the first chapter of this disserta-tion (pp. 25-28), such treatises offered the laity moralized stories that struck a middle ground between profane secular literature and didactic sermon stories. In other words for the "gentils" here lay a way out of the dilemma of being offered either a bit of "ribaudye" or a sermon story. Indeed, they, like one of the potential audiences mentioned by Mannyng, are "at the ale" (1. 321), so it would seem that in their request for such a story in a tavern setting they are epitomizing the kind of audience to which such treatises were geared. Recognizing their drift, the Pardoner, as argued above, teases them: now holding out the prospect of a proper sermon story, now the prospect of a "moral tale", all the while subtly suggesting that he is capable of spicing either one with elements of "ribaudye".

As shown earlier, such "ribaudye" is worked into the collective exempla for the main part, though the opening of the "moral tale" also has hints of it. In this major narrative exemplum the Pardoner is appeal-ing more directly to the pilgrims, however. Like the two anecdotes from John of Salisbury, the tale is non-Biblical, a marked contrast to the Biblical origins of the vast majority of the "ensamples" directed at the peasant audience (the only non-Biblical illustration amongst these is to Seneca, ll. 492-97). The contemporaneity (the Flanders setting,[28] the

presence of the plague), and the length of the tale also distinguish it
from the "olde stories longe tyme agoon" which the Pardoner says he
normally tells to the "lewed peple". Finally, there is the lengthy inter-
change between the young men and the old man. This, I believe, takes its
meaning from the dramatic situation immediately surrounding the tale (the
pilgrim audience listening to the Pardoner) as well as from the narrative
context itself. The pilgrims, especially again the "gentils" amongst them,
can be seen as being particularly sympathetic to the old man in his mild-
mannered reproach to the young men on their lack of courtesy and respect:

> "But, sires, to yow it is no curteisye
> To speken to an old man vileynye,
> But he trespasse in word, or elles in dede.
> In Hooly Writ ye may yourself wel rede:
> 'Agayns an oold man, hoor upon his heed,
> Ye sholde arise;' wherfore I yeve yow reed,
> Ne dooth unto an oold man noon harm now,
> Namoore than that ye wolde men did to yow
> In age, if that ye so longe abyde.
> And God be with yow, where ye go or ryde!
> I moot go thider as I have to go."
>   (ll. 739-49)

Conversely, one can easily imagine the shock of the "lordynges" at the
disrespectful words of one of the young "riotoures" in answering the old
man:

> "Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so,"
> Seyde this oother hasardour anon;
> "Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John!"
>   (ll. 750-53)

No doubt, the reply must offend the "gentils" sense of decorum if not of
morality. The interchange can thus be viewed as an encounter not so much
between moral goodness and evil as between courtesy and "vileynye", a
matter which the Pardoner surely knows will be of special interest to the
"lordynges". He has thereby subtly shifted his listeners' perspective,

from a religious and spiritual plane to a more worldly and secular one,
from morality to social manners.

This is but another symptom of the state of continual moral im-
balance in which the Pardoner keeps his pilgrim listeners. Instead of the
pat morality cum innocuous entertainment which they desired and which the
Pardoner had lead them to expect, they are given a subtly disorienting
but nonetheless spellbinding performance in which the relationship be-
tween the "sentence" and "solaas" of the various narrative and other
illustrations is seen to be less than comfortably symbiotic. No wonder
their stunned silence at the end of the presentation as the Pardoner tries
to sell them his false relics and pardons.[29] The Host's outburst serves
but to compound their confusion. In his anger he simply indulges in
blasphemous swearing and scatological references (ll. 946-55). In short,
he indulges in much the same kind of "ribaudye" with which the Pardoner
has spiced his "tale" and brief exempla. As the hitherto silent pilgrims
laugh (somewhat uneasily, one imagines) at the exchange between the Host
and the Pardoner, the Knight restores order of a kind in asking the two
to kiss and make up.

And what are the "gentils" left with ? To be sure, there is the
neat moral of "Radix malorum est Cupiditas" to the main "tale" that they
have just heard. But the material which surrounds and is worked into the
very midst of the narrative has done little to support, indeed has been
calculated to severely jolt, their moral complacency and their sense of
decorum. Though apparently no match for the outspoken and belligerent
Host, the Pardoner has proved himself more than able to handle the proper
"gentils".

To summarize: though not organized, as it has often been argued, according to the rigid schema of the "university" type sermon, The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale does provide an invaluable opportunity to analyse closely the motives and methods of an unscrupulous preacher in his use of narrative exempla. The presentation of such illustrative material by the Pardoner is particularly interesting because he actually delivers two types of exempla, one geared to the "gentils" or "lord-ynges" around him at the "alestake", the other to the "lewed peple" who constitute his regular congregation. In so doing he gives the "gentils" a volatile and disorienting blend of "sentence" and "solaas" that leaves them spell-bound and bewildered, their sense of decorum and their moral complacency having been shaken in the process of the Pardoner's telling them more than a straightforward "moral tale" to their "likyng".

V

THE SUMMONER'S TALE

Like the Pardoner, Friar John in The Summoner's Tale is an un-
scrupulous preacher. Right at the beginning of the Tale the Summoner pro-
vides a brief account of the friar's customary preaching style, in the
course of which he highlights the ultimate goal of all of Friar John's
sermons:

> And so bifel that on a day this frere
> Hadde preched at a chirche in his manere,
> And specially, aboven every thyng,
> Excited he the peple in his prechyng
> To trentals, and to yeve, for Goddes sake,
> Wherwith men myghte hooly houses make,
> (ll. 1713-18)[1]

This report is corroborated later on at the end of the friar's sermon on
anger to the bed-ridden Thomas: quickly shedding the role of concerned
confessor (Thomas having just stated that he has already been confessed
by his parish priest, ll. 2094-97), Friar John assumes that of ecclesi-
astical fund-raiser:

> "Yif me thanne of thy gold, to make oure cloystre,"
> (l. 2099)

Friar John's greedy plea for money is, of course, a perversion of
the traditional mendicant activity of begging, and indeed, in making money
the over-riding objective of his priestly activities, he perverts two
other closely inter-connected mendicant duties as well: the hearing of
confessions and preaching.[2] It is to this latter activity that this chapter
will address itself, especially to Friar John's use of illustrative

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sentantiae and narratives as devices for making his congregations will-
ing to hand over their gold to him.

As in the case of The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale, one should
not try forcibly to fit any of the friar's three homiletic discourses (at
Holdernesse, 11. 1713-34; on the fasting and prayers of mendicants, 11.
1869-1980; on anger, 11. 1981-2088) into the structural mould of the late
medieval "university" sermon.[3] This is not to say, as one scholar has
argued, that Friar John's sermonizing is "clumsy" and that this is deliber-
ately done by the Summoner as part of his satirical attack on Friar John
and the mendicant class as a whole.[4] His preaching to Thomas, it is true,
results finally not in money but in humiliation, but this outcome should
not be allowed to obscure Friar John's basic shrewdness in manipulating
his congregations. As the Summoner himself reports in the opening account
of the friar's preaching quoted above, this priest is normally very success-
ful in "exciting" or moving "the peple" to give him money. This same account
concludes with a picture of the friar continuing on his way only after
"fok in chirche had yeve him what hem leste" (1. 1735).

This basic shrewdness shows itself in Friar John's adopting cer-
tain methods recommended in the artes praedicandi and adapting them to the
particular situations in which he finds himself. Thus in the description
of his preaching at Holdernesse, one learns that he customarily resorted
to the threat of hell-fire to achieve his end:

> "Delivereth out," quod he, "anon the soules!
> Ful hard it is with flesshhook or with oules
> To been yclawed, or to brenne or bake.
> Now spede yow hastily, for Cristes sake!"
> (11. 1729-32)[5]

Here he is simply using a method of conclusion commonly recommended in

late medieval preaching manuals, but doing so to scare his hapless congre-
gation into giving him money not into making them concerned about the
state of their own souls.[6] Another conclusion in the same vein comes at
the end of his sermon to Thomas on anger in which he cleverly sets up con-
trasting pictures of Christ releasing souls from hell and a world doomed
to utter destruction, the one or the other outcome dependent, according
to him, upon the reception accorded the preaching of friars like himself:

> Now help, Thomas, for hym that harwed helle!
> For elles moste we oure bookes selle.
> And if yow lakke oure predicacioun,
> Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.
> (ll. 2107-10)

Thomas, however, is not a typical member of Friar John's usual congregation.
A match in shrewdness for the friar, he is not terrorized into handing over
any money, nor is he taken in by the mendicant's feigned concern that,
without financial help, he and his fellows will have to sell the books that
provide the material for their sermons.[7]

Such books, of course, furnish Friar John with the very sententiae
and narrative exempla that he uses for illustrative purposes in his ser-
mons and which, furthermore, he twists into instruments for achieving his
mercenary ends. Thomas, however, is not one to be readily taken in by such
devices. A close analysis of the way in which Friar John utilizes sententiae
and narrative exempla will reveal how he attempts to handle the overt hos-
tility of Thomas who, as his wife describes him to the friar, is "as angry
as a pissemyre" (l. 1825).

The first thing to be noticed in this respect is Friar John's
casual attitude toward sermon theme, the Biblical sententia or sententiae
that appeared at the beginning of both "ancient" and "university" type

sermons and which Chaucer's other preachers are usually careful to use.

The Pardoner, for example, is positively inflexible in his use of a ser-

mon theme on "Cupiditas" ("...always oon, and ever was", C. 1. 333). Friar

John's attitude toward the choice and proper placing of a theme, on the

other hand, is nonchalant, even dismissive. This is suggested right at

the beginning of the Tale in the Summoner's report of the friar's custom-

ary preaching method (11. 1713-34): no mention whatsoever is made here of

a theme in the conventional homiletic sense. By his own admission, Friar

John makes little if any use of Biblical texts or sententiae for the themes

of his sermons, relying instead, he informs Thomas, on his own "wit":

> "I have to day been at youre chirche at messe,
> And seyd a sermon after my symple wit,
> Nat al after the text of hooly writ;
> (11. 1788-90)

Using his own "wit" instead of a stable, authoritative text allows the friar

great flexibility in handling illustrative material at the beginning as

well as in the body of his sermons. Notice, for example, how he begins his

sermon to Thomas:

> "O Thomas, je vous dy, Thomas ! Thomas!
> This maketh the feend; this moste ben amended.
> Ire is a thyng that hye God defended,
> And therof wol I speke a word or two."
> (11. 1832-35)

Not wanting to exacerbate Thomas' anger, one sees the friar here opening

his homily in a noticeably light-handed manner. There is, for a start, the

mock courtesy of his French and, secondly, there is a noticeable absence

of an orthodox theme or text. The statement that "Ire is a thyng that hye

God defended", can be called at best only a pseudo-theme for it is a mere

paraphrase (not even a translation) of a sententia whose specific Biblical

origins the friar does not even bother to identify. The casualness of his

attitude toward an opening text is further emphasized by the ease with
which he temporarily abandons the subject of anger altogether: question-
ed by Thomas' wife on his eating preferences and informed by her of her
son's death, he quickly switches to a homily on the fasting, prayers, and
church-building activities of mendicants (ll. 1838-1980, of which more
presently), not to return to the subject of anger until some 143 lines
later. At that point he casually resumes the sermon he originally began,
the very tone (the formal, second person plural pronoun now in English)
and opening image (the devil) the same as they were in the original false
opening:

> "Ye lye heere ful of anger and of ire,
> With which the devel set youre herte afyre,
>   (ll. 1981-82)

What comes in between the false opening and resumption of the ser-
mon on anger is, as already noted, the sermon on the importance of mendicant
prayers and fasting and here again the friar's off-hand attitude toward
sermon theme is evident. As with the Ira sermon, the beginning of this
other sermon is unstable, indeed difficult to even pin down, for the friar,
diverted by Thomas' wife from his first homelitic track, finds himself
initially half-conversing with, half-preaching to the woman. Thus in answer
to her simple question "What wol ye dyne ?" (l. 1837), he first of all
replies with detailed reference to an array of delectable possibilities
(capon's liver, soft bread, roasted pig's head, ll. 1839-41), then with
feigned sanctity makes solemn reference to the Bible:

> "I am a man of litel sustenaunce;
> My spirit hath his fostryng in the Bible.
>   (ll. 1844-45)

As Robinson has pointed out, this statement is based on Christ's reply to

his disciples' request that he eat (John 4: 31-34) and/or on a state-
ment of Job (Job 23:12).[8] Friar John provides only a skimpy paraphrase of
these sententiae, however, presenting them, moreover, as expressions of
subjective feeling, a trick, it was shown above, also used by the Wife of
Bath (pp. 69-71 , 75-76). Thus this can hardly be said to be an orthodox,
authoritative sermon theme and, indeed, the friar has hardly had a chance
to begin (or resume) his sermon at this point anyway for Thomas' wife
interrupts again, now with the news of the recent death of her son. Friar
John handles this second interruption with consummate skill and, as a
result, finally manages to get a sermon underway. He speaks, first of all,
with an air of inflated self-importance (much like that other preacher/
dreamer, Chantecleer) of his "avisioun" of the child carried heaven-ward
(ll. 1854-62). Having thus apparently consoled the child's mother, he
proceeds wtih his sermon on the importance and efficaciousness of men-
dicant prayers and fasting. Once again, he fails to provide an orthodox
theme, self-interest not external authority being the springboard of his
sermon:

> "For, sire and dame, trusteth me right weel,
> Oure orisons been moore effectueel,
> And moore we seen of Cristes secree thynges,
> Than burel folk, although they weren kynges.
> We lyve in poverte and in abstinence,
> And burell folk in richesse and despence
> Of mete and drynke, and in hir foul delit.
> We han this worldes lust al in despit."   (ll. 1869-76)

Though he ignores using authoritative sententiae as themes for
sermons, Friar John does use them in the body of his sermons to illus-
trate or corroborate his various arguments and, characteristically, to
further his own venal aims. In a hypocritical display of professional duty,

he tells Thomas' wife just before going in to preach to her sick husband:

> "...in prechyng is my diligence,
> And studie in Petres wordes and in Poules."
> (ll. 1818-19)

At first reading, this statement would appear to be contradicting Friar
John's earlier statement to Thomas, noted above (ll. 1789-90), in which
he casually dismisses "hooly writ" as a basis for his sermons, and his
later statement in the course of his homily on prayers and fasting:

> "I ne have no text of it, as I suppose."
> (l. 1919)

Both these statements refer in fact to the use of Biblical <u>sententiae</u> as
themes, not to their employment as illustration in the body of sermons.
Friar John makes use of several Scriptural passages, both of a narrative
and non-narrative nature, to corroborate his arguments. What is particular-
ly interesting for our purposes is the way in which he distorts the mean-
ings of these passages to suit his unholy purposes. Like many medieval
preachers he attempts the task of exegesis, but he does this after his own
fashion.

In the chapter on the Wife of Bath it was shown how the literal
and spiritual meanings of various texts could be distorted in a number of
ways (pp. 66-71); by simply ignoring the literal sense (D. ll. 20-25); by
omission (leaving out complementary passages, thus providing a literal
half-truth, D ll. 158-59); by simple ignorance of the true spiritual import
of Biblical references (the Wife's interpretation of II Tim. 2:20, D ll.
99-104). Friar John would have Thomas believe that his general approach
to exegesis is to ignore the literal sense altogether, a method for which
he provides apparent Scriptural support from no less an authority than

Paul (II Cor. 3:6);

> "For lettre sleeth, so as we clerkes seyn."
> (l. 1794)

In taking this line (seemingly so correct), the friar is actually mis-

representing the Pauline attitude to the literal sense of the Scriptures.

What Paul is condemning here is the <u>abuse</u> of the letter, that is, its use

as an end in itself and not as the first step on the road to an under-

standing of the spiritual sense. As Robertson puts it, this condemnation

(cited by many subsequent patristic and medieval commentators) is "direct-

ed against the letter only insofar as it is taken without the spirit not

against the letter itself".[9] Robertson goes on to note that:

> Far from neglecting the letter, spiritual exegetes
> from Patristic times onward regarded it as the
> foundation of spiritual understanding.[10]

On this first count, then, Friar John's stated exegetical method

is deficient. As it turns out, the friar does not, however, always follow

this method. Much of his exegesis does in fact remain at or is reduced to

the literal level. Fleming, somewhat over-stating the case, goes so far

as to argue that "there never was a more hidebound literalist than the

friar", supporting this by referring to Friar John's "preposterous dilemma

over the division and distribution of Thomas' gift".[11] This dilemma is

prepared for in the friar's literal interpretation of the name and function

of St. Thomas of India as a builder of many physical church structures

(ll. 1718-19, 1974-80, 2099-2106) where he should be more concerned with

the spiritual essence of Christ's Church on earth. Close attention to the

following passage reveals how Friar John, instead of proceeding, as he should,

from the literal to the spiritual, does the exact opposite:

> "Thomas, noght of youre tresor I desire
> As for myself, but that al oure covent
> To preye for yow is ay so diligent,
> And for to buylden Cristes owene chirche.
> Thomas, if ye wol lernen for to wirche,
> Of buyldynge up of chirches may ye fynde,
> If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Inde.
>   (11. 1974-80)

He begins this passage in a spiritual vein: there is mention of communal

covent prayers and, more significantly, mention of the building of "Cristes

owene chirche", a reference to the Biblical passages from Matt. 16: 17-19:

> And Jesus, answering, said to him: Blessed art
> thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood
> hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who
> is in heaven./ And I say to thee that: Thou art
> Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church;
> and the gates of hell shall not prevail against
> it./ And I will give to thee the keys of the
> kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind
> upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven;
> and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall
> be loosed also in heaven.

The spirit not the letter is obviously predominant in this text: when

Christ refers to the building of the Church, he is clearly referring to a

spiritual entity not to actual church buildings. The friar, however, pro-

ceeds to misrepresent this meaning, first of all by pluralizing "chirche"

with its collective-spiritual connotations, thereby twisting it to refer

to many physical church structures, a blatantly incorrect interpretation

which he then underscores with the reference to Thomas the Apostle's pro-

selytizing mission in India. Friar John is here turning a commonplace of

saints' legends — the introductory etymology of the saint's name — on its

head. Ordinarily, the etymology was designed to lead to the spiritual implica-

tions of the saint's name under discussion.[12] However, the Summoner's friar,

in shrewd and subtle fashion (he does not even bother to give the actual

etymology), works solely at the literal level of one of the legendary

meanings ("division" or "parting") of the name "Thomas".[13] Thus "Cristes

owene chirche" (a single spiritual entity) is divided or parted into

"buyldynge up of chirches", which, the friar asserts, was Thomas the

Apostle's main business in India. However, as Myers observes on the basis

of the account of Thomas' life in the Legenda aurea:

> ...Thomas of India as a builder is said to have
> chosen to build edifices in heaven through preach-
> ing and carpentry rather than material churches in
> this world. The Friar also promises in confession
> that he will be as just as the carpenter's square
> [l. 2090] which is the saint's identifying symbol.[14]

Friar John's clever etymological game ultimately brings him no reward,

however. Quite the contrary! He becomes so trapped in his own literal-

mindedness that he finally is shown to be something of a fool in his angry

preoccupation with the literal "division" or "parting" of Thomas' humiliat-

ing "gift" to him.

At times in the course of his argument, Friar John nonetheless

does live up in his own way to his initial promise to ignore the "lettre"

altogether in favour of "glosynge" or exegesis exclusively at the spirit-

ual level. This is not to say, especially in the light of the evidence

just provided above, that in his preaching as a whole he "neglects the

literal sense completely, substituting for it ideas of his own".[15] More

accurately, he sometimes ignores the spirit; at other times, he neglects

the letter. When he does combine the two, as in the reference to the build-

ing of the church, he reverses the orthodox direction of exegesis. The

concern at the moment is with his occasional neglect of the letter al-

together. The friar's rationale, as he initially states it, is that the

bare text of the Scriptures can be too difficult for the faithful to under-

stand at face value and therefore the preacher should leave it behind in

favour of his own explicatory "glossynge":

> "For it is hard to yow, as I suppose,
> And therfore wol I teche yow al the glose".
> (ll. 1791-92)

In other words, his approach is precisely that which was so vehemently

condemned by Wycliffe and his followers (see p. 29 above) and Friar John,

in his "glossynge", validates the criticisms of the Wycliffites. In the

midst of his sermon on prayers and fasting, for example, the following

passage occurs:

> "I ne have no text of it, as I suppose,
> But I shal fynde it in a maner glose,
> That specially oure sweete Lord Jhesus
> Spak this by freres, whan he seyde thus:
> 'Blessed be they that povere in spirit been.'
> And so forth al the gospel may ye seen,
> Wher it be likker oure professioun,
> Or hirs that swymmen in possessioun."
> (ll. 1919-26)

The opening line of this passage has already been mentioned above as

evidence that the friar does not even bother to open his sermons with the

customary theme. His method of exegesis at the spiritual level is also

hinted at here in his reference to finding "in a maner glose" for his sub-

ject matter: the language echoes that of the Summoner's early report of

Friar John preaching "in his manere" (l. 1714), and thus emphasis is given

to its idiosyncratic character. The extent of the friar's sheer knavery

becomes plain when one examines what he does with the Biblical sententia

"Blessed be they that povere in spirit been" (Matt. 5:3), the first of the

Eight Beatitudes with which Christ prefaced his sermon to his disciples on

their mission in the world.[16] Completely ignoring the historical/literal

context in which this statement originally appeared, the friar proceeds

to make a giant leap in time and apply Christ's words to the mission of

the mendicants who, he adds for good measure, are more worthy than the

parish clergy (the reference to those that "swymmen in possessioun"). To

be fair, Friar John's "glosynge" was not altogether without sanction. As

Williams, Szittya, and other scholars have shown, the claim of apostolic

heritage was quite commonly made by the Friars.[17] What is of particular

interest in this Chaucerian passage, though, is the way in which it high-

lights the danger inherent in exegesis that ignores the literal or

historical context altogether. In the hands of an unscrupulous preacher

like Friar John, such "glossynge" is made to serve partisan and, what is

worse, individual interests.

The literal/historical context is ignored again in the treatment

of Luke 10:7 which Friar John paraphrases as follows for Thomas:

> "Thou woldest han oure labour al for noght.
> The hye God, that al this world hath wroght,
> Seith that the werkman worthy is his hyre."
> (ll. 1971-73)

There is a complex inter-play of the literal and spiritual senses in this

passage, especially when seen in the light of what immediately follows and

of the important allusion to other verses from Luke made earlier in the

Tale. This earlier allusion ("scrippe and tipped staf", l. 1737) is to

two verses from Luke, the first very close to the passage paraphrased above:[18]

> Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; and
> salute no man by th way. (Luke 10:4)

The second runs as follows:

> And he said to them: Take nothing for your
> journey, neither staff, nor scrip, nor bread, nor
> money; neither have two coats. (Luke 9:3)

The purpose of these two Biblical passages is quite plain: they provide a specific set of instructions for the proselytizing behaviour of Christ's apostles and disciples.[19] As such, they carry a very definite literal meaning. Scrip, staff, bread, money, coats, and so on, are a reference to material possessions, those that must be left behind if the spiritual mission (the saving of men's souls) is to be fulfilled. Friar John not only chooses to ignore the letter of these instructions — he prominently carries scrip and staff, his "harlot" behind a sack for food and money (ll. 1754-56) and so on — but, true to form, he also provides a gloss that is a gross distortion of the spirit of the original texts. The passage which he paraphrases runs in the original as folows:

> And in the same house, remain, eating and drink-
> ing such things as they have; for the labourer
> is worthy of his hire. Removeth not from house
> to house.   (Luke 10:7)

Friar John, it is made clear, does go from house to house (l. 1765),[20] keeping on the move until he comes to a house

> ...ther as he was wont to be
> Refresshed moore than in a hundred placis.
>   (ll. 1766-67)

In other words, he stays put at the house where he receives the most bountiful meal (Cf. ll. 1839-41). Obviously, Christ's command to "remain, eating and drinking such things as they have", was not an invitation to gluttony which is how the friar chooses to interpret it. More to the point, he is decidedly not a "labourer...worthy of his hire". In spite of this, he insists, with monumental hypocrisy, on his worthiness as a "werkman" labouring in the service of the "hye God". He makes this point early upon his entrance into Thomas' household:

> "God woot," quod he, "laboured have I ful soore,
> And specially, for thy savacion
> Have I seyd many a precious orison,
> And for oure othere freendes, God hem blesse!
> (ll. 1784-87)

This equation of labour with prayer then reappears at the conclusion of
his sermon on prayers and fasting, that is, in the paraphrase of Luke 10:
7 under discussion. What is more, the imagery of labour is sustained but
subtly changes meaning in the passage immediately following (ll. 1974-80).
Its spiritual dimension is at first apparently maintained in the friar's
plea to Thomas to help "to buylden Cristes owene chirche" but, as dis-
cussed earlier, the friar quickly sets the exegetical process into reverse
as he enjoins Thomas to "lernen for to wirche" in order to further the
"buyldyng up of chirches".

As argued above, Friar John is by this point working solely with
the "lettre" of his text, but he has reached here in a roundabout way. By
initially ignoring completely Christ's specific commands to his apostles
and disciples concerning scrip, staff, money, food, drink, and house-hopping,
that is, by wrenching the text from its literal/historical context, he is
able to tamper with its spiritual meaning (labour for the salvation of
souls), twisting it so that its purport is ultimately materialistic. Notice
too how he has repeatedly presented prayer in the setting of the mendicant
convent church (ll. 1863-68, 1959-60), not of preaching per se as in the
original Biblical text. The purpose of this finally becomes clear when the
reference to convent prayer that follows his paraphrase of Luke 10:7 (ll.
1975-76) leads tangentially to the plea for money to build more churches
in which such prayer can take place. The friar has thus done more than
simply reversed the exegetical process in this section as a whole. By in-

itially ignoring the literal sense altogether, he has been able not only

to distort the spiritual sense of the Biblical sententiae but ultimately

to arrive at a new "lettre" far removed from the original literal context

and intentions of his references.

Deliberate misinterpretation (or misapplication) is also character-

istic of Friar John's handling of narrative exempla in the course of his

sermonizing. This applies to the full range of narrative or near-narrative

illustrations that he utilizes: it holds equally in the case of simple

exemplary figures such as the brief references to "Lazar and Dives" (l.

1877), Christ (ll. 1904-05), Jovinian (ll. 1929-31), and St. Thomas (l.

1980); short narratives such as the examples of Moses (ll. 1885-90),

Elijar (ll. 1890-93), and Aaron (ll. 1894-1901); and the three anecdotes

from Seneca's De ira (ll. 2017-84).

It has already been seen how the reference to St. Thomas'

proselytizing activities in India is a complete distortion of what the

apostle's true mission was all about. Less subtle, blatantly hypocritical

in fact, is Friar John's paralleling the behaviour of mendicants with the

true holiness and self-denial of figures like Lazarus[21] and Christ him-

self:

> Oure Lord Jhesu, as hooly writ devyseth,
> Yaf us ensample of fastynge and preyeres.
> Therfore we mendynantz, we sely freres,
> Been wedded to poverte and continence,
> To charite, humblesse, and abstinence,
> To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,
> To wepynge, misericorde, and clennesse.
> (ll. 1904-10)

Also hypocritical is the friar's equation of possessioners or

parish clergy with Jovinian, charging them with "pompe", "glotonye" and

"lewednesse" (11. 1926-30), sins of which the friar shows himself eminent-
ly capable. The charge, as Baker has noted, is also a biased one, a
reflection of the contemporary friction between the mendicants and the
parish priests, and calculated to contrast "neatly with the humility [of
the friars] of which he has just spoken so proudly".[22]

In addition to such exemplary figures, the friar also uses three
narrative _exempla_ to flesh out his sermon on prayers and fasting. These
three illustrations — those of Moses, Elijah, and Aaron — are taken, Yeager
has shown, from a source which Chaucer uses elsewhere in The Summoner's
Tale and in the early part of Fragment III (or D) of which the Tale forms
part: St. Jerome's Adversus Jovinianum.[23] Yeager points out a number of
important differences, however, between this source material and Friar
John's paraphrasing of it. To begin with, significant omissions are made
by the friar in his detailing of the Moses story. He presents it as follows:

> "Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty nyght
> Fasted, er that the heighe God of myght
> Spak with hym in the mountayne of Synay.
> With empty wombe, fastynge many a day,
> Receyved he the lawe that was writen
> With Goddes fynger;
> (11. 1885-90)

This, to be sure, is very close to the original Biblical text (Exodus 34:
28):

> And he was there with the Lord forty days and
> forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank
> water: and he wrote upon the tables the ten
> words of the covenant.

However, Friar John chooses to ignore the material referring to the idol-
atrous and licentious behaviour of the Hebrew people while Moses is on Mt.
Sinai. Jerome details this behaviour, basing his account, of course, on

the original Biblical version (Exodus 32: 6-35), and he is careful,

Yeager points out, to contrast Moses' abstinence with the lack of the

same on the part of the Hebrews.[24] Yeager goes on to argue that the friar

ignores the actions of the Hebrews because he wishes instead to concen-

trate on the figure of Moses with whom he is associating "the clennesse

and the fastynge of us freres" (1. 1883). Indeed, Yeager adds, there is

a pattern of "increasing self-absorption" as the friar moves from the

figure of Moses to that of Elijah, whom the mendicants frequently held up

as their founder, to that of Aaron, a priest like himself.[25] The point is

a good one and is complemented and supported by the research of Myers who

has shown that all these figures were commonly viewed in the medieval

period as "exemplars of some prelatical virtue or power": Moses represent-

ing "law-giving authority"; Elijah, the "prelatical function of prophesy"

or preaching; and Aaron "priestly dignity".[26]

As illuminating as both these scholars have been on these

narrative exempla, neither of them, however, recognizes sufficiently the

rhetorical strategy that Friar John is adopting in this particular section

of his homily. Yeager touches on this matter in his observation that the

exemplary figures of "Lazar and Dives" (11. 1877-78) are briefly pre-

sented because the friar wants to get around as quickly as possible to the

praising of friars.[27] The same can be said of the three narrative exempla

under discussion: they are transitional to the overtly self-congratulat-

ing pronouncements of the rest of the sermon on prayers and fasting (11.

1906-47, 1954-80) and hence quite brief. Though not merely exemplary

figures, these exempla are intentionally abbreviated paraphrases of the

Biblical stories to which they refer. Even when one grants Yeager's point

that Friar John emphasizes Aaron's priestly activities more than Jerome does,[28] there is still the sense that the loquacious priest wants, at least for the while, to present concise illustrations so that he can get on with his more overt propagandizing. Thus he ends the sequence of short narrative exempla with the following terse warning and rhetorical occupatio:

> "Taak heede of what I seye!
> But they be sobre that for the peple preye,
> War that I seye -namoore, for it suffiseth.
> (11. 1901-03)

True enough, he then continues to preach about fasting and prayers, giving another example right away, that of Jesus Christ (11. 1904-05). The point is, though, that throughout his homily on the subject he deliberately sticks to short narrative illustrations, whether they be exemplary figures such as those of Lazarus and Dives, Christ, and Jovinian, or brief narratives such as those of Moses, Elijah, and Aaron. These latter three examples are not so much focal points highlighting the friar's inflated view of himself and his fellow friars as they are a carefully controlled and orchestrated prelude to the more open and long-winded propaganda in favour of supposedly needy and deserving mendicants that follows. No doubt, Friar John is also aware, like the Pardoner, of the value of keeping "ensamples" short, ancient, and wellknown (hence, preferably Biblical) when preaching, as he first thinks he is, to a gullible audience.

As it turns out, of course, the ailing Thomas is anything but impressed by the friar's brief examples and prolix paean cum appeal, and he interrupts to tell him this:

> "God woot," quod he, "no thyng therof feele I!
> As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeres,

> Have spent upon diverse manere freres
> Ful many a pound; yet fare I never the bet."
>   (11. 1948-51)

Always quick on the up-take (note his handling earlier of the news of the

child's death, 11. 1854 ff.), Friar John changes his tactics. He proceeds

to argue that Thomas should not be giving to "diverse freres" for

> "What nedeth hym that hath a parfit leche
> To sechen othere leches in the toun ?"
>   (11. 1956-57)

Therefore, his argument continues, the money should be given to this one

perfect "leche" (that is, himself) rather than be uselessly divided among

the twelve members of the mendicant convent:

> "What is a ferthyng worth parted in twelve ?
> Lo, ech thyng that is oned in himselve
> Is moore strong than whan it is toscatered."
>   (11. 1967-69)

This leads on to the gross and deliberate misinterpretation of the Biblical

texts concerning spiritual labour and the building of the Church (dis-

cussed in detail above), followed by a change of subject as the friar re-

turns to the original matter of Ira. What is happening in this final

section of the homily on prayers and fasting that follows Thomas' inter-

ruption (11. 1954-80) is a quick and somewhat desperate change of strategy

on Friar John's part. He must, very simply, take another line if he is to

get any money out of this wily peasant, so he tries a number of ploys: (i)

he sets himself somewhat apart from his fellow friars — the "parfit leche"—

where before he was emphasizing the collective mendicant life; (ii) his

exegetical method shrewdly incorporates Thomas ("...if ye wol lernen for

to wirche", 1. 1978) into the business of building "Cristes owene chirche",

where before he made no mention of the role of the faithful, so concerned

was he with the "labour" of himself and his fellow friars; and (iii) he

switches (or, rather, returns) to the subject of anger, thereby complet-

ing the shift in focus from the friars, to himself, to Thomas.

In the initial section of his sermon on anger (ll. 1981-2010),

Friar John even appears concerned over the spiritual welfare of the ail-

ing Thomas, but it soon becomes clear that he is now out to flatter Thomas

(yet another tactic) in order to achieve his ultimate objective of getting

money out of him. One is reminded here of the Pardoner and his statement

on the various evil intentions for which a sermon could be preached (p.

93 above). The Pardoner, one recalls, flatters the skeptical "gentils"

by including two "ensamples" from the Policraticus of John of Salisbury

concerning the proper behaviour of princes (pp. 101-104 above). In much

the same way, Friar John now treats Thomas to three narrative exempla

that are quite different in a number of ways from the earlier narratives

which he had used. Two of the three, to begin with, are much longer than

the earlier stories, a development for which he prepares Thomas in the

statement:

> "I koude of ire seye so muche sorwe,
> My tale sholde laste til to-morwe."
> (ll. 2011-12)

Like the Pardoner's stories from the Policraticus (and the "moral tale"

of the three young rioters), Friar John's three narrative illustrations

concerning Ira are non-Biblical in origin (directly or indirectly taken

from Seneca's De ira),[29] a contrast to the Scriptural source of the

earlier illustrations. As with the Pardoner's "ensamples" from John of

Salisbury, Friar John's Senecan examples are also concerned with the be-

haviour of men in high positions, a point which he makes quite clear in

his statement immediately preceding the first story:

> "It is greet harm and certes greet pitee
> To sette an irous man in heigh degree."
> (11. 2015-16)

The apparent inappropriateness of relating such stories to a man

of Thomas' humble class has often been remarked upon and explained in a

variety of ways. Myers, for example, argues that these examples of men of

high station are simply another manifestation of the Summoner's pre-

occupation with prelacy.[30] Merrill contends that Friar John is merely a

poor preacher:

> The sheer irrelevance of his talking about the
> effects of anger on men of high degree to a man
> of Thomas' station in life is example enough of
> this [his "clumsy" preaching] without pointing
> to his complete negligence in not bothering to
> relate the exempla of the sermon to Thomas'
> spiritual needs. John merely quotes, practically
> verbatim, three anecdotes from Seneca, leaving
> the impression that his preaching is formulaire,
> inflexible, and insensitive to the needs of those
> to whom he preaches.[31]

Merrill then examines the stories on anger in the light of the Parson's

treatment of the same sin and concludes that Chaucer is highlighting not

so much the immediate dramatic situation (Friar John preaching to the

angry, bed-ridden Thomas) as he is the tense relationship of the Summoner

and Friar Huberd.[32] Yeager, in his discussion of the second and third

stories, notes that their respective moralizations shift the original

Senecan emphasis "from the moral realm to the social" and that thereby Friar

John "has undercut his role as a spiritual advisor".[33]

There is some measure of truth in all of the above observations

but all fail to take into account two important considerations, (i) the

differences between these narrative exempla and those presented earlier

in the homily on prayers and fasting and (ii) the rhetorical strategy of Friar John as it compares with that of another Canterbury preacher faced with an unreceptive audience — the Pardoner. Comparisons in these two areas help to illuminate further the complex motivation and artistic intentions that underlie this lengthy sequence of narratives.

Some of the important differences between the earlier exempla and those now under discussion have already been noted: the earlier ones are shorter, Biblical, and deal with figures of eminent spiritual stature. Having tried this approach with no success (as Thomas' interruption shows), Friar John, astute preacher that he is, takes a different tack. The build-up to this was noted: the shift in focus from the mendicants to Friar John to Thomas. The change in the kind of narrative exempla is also part of the over-all shift in strategy that Friar John is effecting. In choosing, first of all, to present longer narratives, he is, like the Pardoner, switching from the shorter "ensamples many oon" that have not worked on a supposedly "lewed" audience, to a more leisured type of story-telling which, naturally, he hopes will make more of an impression on the skeptical Thomas. Similarly, in choosing examples of men of high rank, the friar is implicitly flattering Thomas; equating not only himself but the sick man as well with men of power and "heigh degree".[34] As with the Pardoner's two illustrative anecdotes from the Policraticus, the stature of these men is purely social and hence, as Yeager notes, their moralizations belong to the realm of social ethics.[35]

The first of these moralizations is the statement that prefaces the sequence of three narratives and which simply remarks on the "greet harm" and "greet pitee" of putting an angry man into a position of power

(ll. 2015-16). In the story that immediately follows this (ll. 2017-42),
Friar John focuses specifically on a matter he touches on earlier — "how
ire engendreth homycide" (l. 2009).[36] The subject seems outrageously in-
applicable to Thomas's situation, especially when the details of the
story — the execution of three hapless knights on the orders of an "irous
potestat" — are filled in. However, Friar John is concerned not so much
with strict applicability at this point as he is with telling a good
story that will simultaneously entertain, flatter (equating Thomas with
a "potestat"), and show Thomas, even if exaggeratedly, how his anger can
result in murder. The hyperbole is not totally unprepared for: the friar
has been building up to it from the very beginning of his sermon with the
image of the devil setting Thomas' heart on fire (l. 1982), right through
the warning of the terrible results of strife between husbands and wives
(ll. 1935-2004).

In the second story, there is again a blatant lack of concern for
the spiritual dangers of anger, its moral carrying a bit of undisguished
opportunist advice on how to deal with those above one in rank:

> "Beth war, therfore, with lordes how ye pleye.
> Syngeth Placebo, and 'I shal, if I kan,'
> But if it be unto a povre man.
> To a povre man men sholde his vices telle,
> But nat to a lord, thogh he sholde go to helle."
> (ll. 2074-78)

As both Merrill and Myers have pointed out, the original Senecan moral in-
volves, first of all, a warning against the danger of anger when men in
high position are in its grips and, secondly, a reproof of those who,
like Praexaspes the knight, flatter men above them in rank when they should
be castigating them.[37] Instead of this, Friar John (a) steadily undermines

the significance of Cambises' anger to the point where (b) he is able to

draw a moral on the need to comply with the wishes of lords. The reason

for this, in the light of my argument, is clear: Friar John is at once

flattering Thomas by implicitly equating him with a knightly figure

(Praexaspes who, like Thomas, loses a son), while at the same time warn-

ing him that he should go along with the fancies of those above him in

status (in this case, with the wishes of Friar John himself to whose re-

quest for money he should be willing to accede).

For the third narrative exemplum in his sermon on anger the

friar provides the following moral taken from Prov. 22: 24-25:

> "'Ne be no felawe to an irous man,
> Ne with no wood man walke by the weye,
> Lest thee repente;'"
> (ll. 2086-88)

The advice, however, seems to have little to do with what has actually

happened in the story immediately preceding it. Cyrus the Persian, it is

recounted, reduces the size of the "river of Gysen" on his way to Babylon

because of his annoyance at the drowning of one of his horses in it (ll.

2079-84). In this abbreviated form of the original story there is no

elaboration on the wrath of Cyrus and the reduction of the size of the

river seems a patently absurd act.[38] What does all of this have to do with

being the companion to an angry man or walking "by the weye" with him ?

In keeping with his thesis that the three narrative illustrations of anger

are applicable to the conflict between the Summoner and Friar Huberd,

Merrill argues that this Senecan exemplum is used because it shows how

anger has a tendency to allow trivial events to "trigger unproportionate

and catastrophic reactions".[39] This, however, is itself a comment dis-

proportionate with what actually occurs between the Summoner and Friar

Huberd and does not explain the lack of apparent connection between the

story and the moralization that follows it. Yeager is closer to the

truth when he notes that the story as presented is consistent with the

de-emphasizing of anger and the shift from the moral to the social plane

that is apparent at the end of the second story. He also observes that

in the original story Cyrus divides the river into three hundred and

sixty small rivers, a detail, of course, which has obvious relevance to

the mathematical dilemma in The Summoner's Tale.[40] This, however, still

does not explain the brevity of the exemplum and the seeming incongruity

of its accompanying moral. The answer lies, I believe, in the recognition

of yet another change of rhetorical strategy on Friar John's part. The

brevity and sketchiness of this third story is simply a manifestation of

the friar's growing impatience, a sign of his desire to return to his

original plea for money. The moral with its translation of a Biblical text

also marks an actual departure from the Senecan narrative sequence, re-

calling the Biblical basis of the illustrations in the earlier sermon on

prayers, fasting, and the need to donate money to the friars. Finally, it

should be noted that, as with the sequence of earlier stories, this one

ends with an abrupt occupatio ("I wol ne ferther seye", l. 2088). As with

the earlier exempla too, this allows a quick switch to an open plea for

money. One should also recognize the complex irony at work in the moral-

ization: the "irous man" is ostensibly Thomas but, as with the Biblical

examples of Moses, Aaron and Elijah, the friar seems to be talking about

his own behaviour as well, though hardly consciously here. If Thomas is

taken to be the "irous man", Friar John is seen to be breaking his own

rules in being a "felawe" to him. At the same time, when the reference
to "felawe" is taken together with the picture of walking "by the weye",
the figure of the "felawe" or "harlot" who accompanies the friar on the
road (ll. 1753-56) is brought to mind: this then casts Friar John himself
in the role of the "irous man", a characterization that is only too well
borne out in his subsequent behaviour and the depiction of him as a "wood
leoun" (l.2152) and a "wilde boor" (l. 2160). This anger, of course, is in
reaction to his humiliation in receiving the "gift" from Thomas, a
situation in which, it might be added, his demonstrated rhetorical and
exegetical skills are of absolutely no avail to him.

To summarize: as with The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale, The
Summoner's Tale shows how a mercenary and astute preacher attempts to
achieve his objective by adopting and adapting certain methods prescribed
in the artes praedicandi. Ignoring what does not suit him (the use of a
sermon theme, for example), Friar John develops his sermons by (i) self-
serving exegesis in which he tampers, like the Wife of Bath, with the
literal and spiritual meanings of authoritative sententiae, and (ii)
narrative exempla which serve to highlight his own character and behaviour.
Furthermore, these exempla in their content and varying length form part
of a rhetorical strategy that, upon close analysis, is seen to be quite
clever but which ultimately (and quite literally) backfires on the friar.

VI

THE PARSON'S PROLOGUE AND TALE

There are, essentially, two parts to this discussion of the final
and, in many ways, most crucial of The Canterbury Tales. In the first
part it is argued, after an over-view of scholarship on the Tale, that
the Parson's discourse is public and homiletic in nature because of its de-
cisive role in the spiritual drama that is enacted on the road to Canter-
bury by the various pilgrims: a sense of urgency, heightened by the high-
ly symbolic references to the sunset and to Libra, prevails as the pil-
grims draw close to their destination and, lest they forget the true
purpose of their journey, the Parson proceeds to show them in a "sermo
in processione" the way to heaven through repentance. In the second part
of the discussion, the Parson's methods of handling sententiae and narra-
tives are closely examined for it is through both the form and content of
these that he provides an answer to the shortcomings of the pilgrims,
especially the preachers amongst them, who have preceded him. Analytical
clarity characterises his presentation of authoritative sententiae so
that their truth is made readily accessible to those listening. In the
case of narrative exempla, the Parson restricts himself to the stories of
the Fall and Redemption, the first outlining the nature and modus operandi
of sin, the second providing the promise of eternal bliss to all those who
repent.

A considerable amount of scholarly effort has been expended on

tracing the sources and establishing the genre of The Parson's Tale.

Simon, more than a century ago, argued that the Tale in its original form
was a Wycliffite treatise subsequently interpolated with more orthodox
dogma in the decade immediately following Chaucer's death.[1] On the heels
of this came Eilers' contention that Chaucer was indebted to the late
thirteenth century Le Livre de vices et de vertus of Frère Lorens for the
material on the Seven Deadly Sins.[2] At the turn of the century, Peter-
sen upset these earlier theories by showing the close correspondence be-
tween passages in the Tale (ll. 1-320) and the third book of Raymond of
Pennaforte's Summa casuum poenitentiae, and between the treatment of the
Deadly Sins (ll. 321-957) and the Summa seu tractatus de viciis of
Guilielmus Peraldus.[3] As enlightening as this study was, however, it fail-
ed to tackle the more difficult matter of Chaucer's immediate source or
sources (the two tracts, in Petersen's words, are "ultimate sources").[4]
There thus remained an open question to which subsequent twentieth century
scholarship could address itself.

As it has turned out, this scholarship has uncovered much histor-
ical information and many analogues but has been unable to pinpoint definite
immediate sources. Pfander's study is outstanding in this respect: in his
search for sources he has provided a very useful historical over-view of
the numerous manuals of religious instruction that were inspired by the
decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council (see p.25 above), but his argument
stops short of identifying one or more specific manuals as the immediate
source or sources of the Tale.[5] Source hunting in the case of The Parson's
Tale, it seems at this point, is something of a dead end or, at least, should
be indulged in only with great caution. Kellogg (himself something of a

source hunter) correctly advises that it is better "...to regard Chaucer's Parson's Tale less as an isolated problem in certain rather specific borrowings, than as a very small part of a great tradition", Augustinian at its core, added to by other Patristic writers, "reworked and transmitted through century after century of compilers to the work or works that Chaucer happened to read".[6]

Pinning down the genre of The Parson's Tale has also proved something of a tricky question for scholars because this has commonly been tied up (too much so, as I shall argue) with the already knotty problem of sources and analogues. Thus Pfander, citing the similar treatment of the subject of Penitence and the Deadly Sins in late medieval manuals of religious instruction, argues that the Tale, very simply, belongs to the same class.[7] This view has been subscribed to by such eminent scholars as Dempster and, more recently, Robertson.[8] Originally, as put forward by Pfander, this view was intended to counteract the argument of Chapman who, in one of his famous pioneering articles on Chaucer and the artes praedicandi (see pp. 31-32 above), contended that the Tale displayed many of the structural features — theme, protheme, division and recapitulation — of the late medieval "university" sermon and was therefore itself such a sermon.[9] As Pfander was quick to point out: where then is the salutation ? the recitation ? the benediction ? - all standard features of the "university" sermon.[10] Besides, adds Pfander, the Tale is much too long to be workable in a preaching situation.[11] Along the same lines have been the passing comments of Shain, who points out the lack in the Tale of such important elements of pulpit rhetoric as narrative exempla and appeals to the audience, and Gallick who, in her very recent review of "Chaucer and His preachers", pro-

vides no discussion of the Parson's presentation because, she maintains,
it lacks the inter-action of preacher and congregation so essential to the
preaching situation.[12] She too cites Pfander as taking the most valid
approach to the Tale.

To be sure, Chapman's discussion of the Tale is cursory when
compared to the more solidly documented study of Pfander. Unfortunately,
this has encouraged scholars to be too easily dismissive of Chaucer's debt
to the oral, homiletic tradition. While as in the case of The Pardoner's
Tale or The Summoner's Tale, one cannot argue that Chaucer is providing a
medieval sermon conforming slavishly to the rigid schema of the formal
artes praedicandi, one can certainly find evidence to prove that the poet
means us to see the Parson's discourse as more than a manual for private,
silent reading. In short, like the rest of the Canterbury tales (more so
than most, in fact), The Parson's Tale should be viewed in the wider dramatic
context of the Pilgrimage and the inter-action of the pilgrims. As Baldwin
puts it:

> ...the Parson's Tale can be considered non-dramatic
> only if it is regarded in itself, completely de-
> tached from the Tales. Yet such a reading of the
> Parson's Tale, or the complexus of the Tales, would
> pervert the work. For we know that Chaucer never
> allows us to forget that each story is part of a
> total situation....For when its pulsing relation-
> ships and organization with the rest of the tales
> and the pilgrimage proper is marked, it becomes in
> its own way, very dramatic.[13]

An appreciation of the inherent drama and dynamism of the Tale
leads one to its homiletic qualities, for it is through his role as
preacher that the Parson establishes his relationship with the other pil-
grims. Myers, in arguing with Pfander's dismissal of the Tale as a sermon,

comments that

> ...the rhetorical structure of the tale is perhaps
> not as important as the moral stance of the speaker
> and his relationship to the other Canterbury pilgrims
> for the purpose of establishing the discourse as a
> sermon and as an exercise of prelatical responsibility.[14]

As it is, Chaucer emphasizes the Parson's preaching function

several times in the course of The Canterbury Tales, beginning with the

portrait in the General Prologue where one is informed that

> He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
> That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
> His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
> (11. 480-82)

At the end of the portrait the point is made again:

> But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
> He taughte, ...
> (11. 527-28)

In fact, it can be argued that the portrait of the "Persoun of a Toun" in

the General Prologue is not so much that of the ideal parish priest as it

is that of the ideal preacher as conceived from St. Paul's time on: a man

who follows his own teaching, providing his congregation with the good

example of his life. St. Paul, it should be recalled from the opening chapter

of this dissertation (pp. 4-5 above), emphasized the importance of the

preacher's "pure heart", "good conscience", and "unfeigned faith". Chaucer

appears to be working with this conception of the Christian preacher when

he portrays the Parson in the following terms:

> This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
> That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.
> Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
> And this figure he added eek therto,
> That if gold ruste, what shal iren do ?
> For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
> No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
> And shame it is, if a prest take keep,

A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
By his clennesse, how that his sheep sholde lyve.
(General Prologue, ll. 496-506)

The importance of the preacher being a living example of his own teaching

is underlined again in the very last words of the portrait:

He taughte, but firste he folwed it hymselve.
(General Prologue, l. 528)

Moreover, Chaucer, like Paul and, especially, Augustine (see pp.

4-5, 6 above), depicts his ideal preacher as one who avoids vainglorious

and confusing rhetoric. The Parson's use of simple analogies is evident in

his "figure" of gold and iron, and the lack of inflation in his pulpit

oratory comes through in the following lines:

Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng discreet and benygne.
(General Prologue, ll. 517-18)

Pulpit "speche" could be especially harmful, Paul and Augustine argued, if

the preacher indulged in misleading and contentious "questions and strifes

of words". Here again Chaucer is careful to emphasize his Parson's con-

formity with the traditional Christian conception of the good preacher. In

the Prologue to The Parson's Tale the priest states very clearly his in-

tention to provide only unadulterated "whete" or moral meaning in his

discourse while foregoing difficult or idiosyncratic exegesis ("I wol nat

glose", l. 45) of the type at which, as shown in earlier chapters, the Wife

of Bath and Friar John in The Summoner's Tale are so notoriously adept:

Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest,
Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest ?
For which I seye, if that yow list to heere
Moralitee and vertuous mateere,
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,
Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.
(ll. 35-41)

This statement should also be considered as a direct reply to the Shipman

in the Epilogue to The Man of Law's Tale (also called the Prologue to The

Shipman's Tale) who dismisses the Parson outright because of the prospect

of his delivering a sermon laced with difficult glosses:

> "Nay, by my fader soule, that schal he nat!"
> Seyde the Shipman; "heer schal he nat preche;
> He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche.
> We leven alle in the grete God", quod he;
> "He wolde sowen som difficulte,
> Or springen cokkel in our clene corn."
> (B[1] ll. 1178-83)[15]

As promised, the Parson does avoid "draf" or difficult and

extraneous matter in delivering his sermon, a topic to be discussed later

on in this chapter. The other pilgrims, it seems, are willing to give him

"audience" under these conditions, as the narrator-pilgrim himself makes

clear:

> Upon this word we han assented soone,
> For, as it seemed, it was for to doone,
> To enden in som vertuous sentence,
> And for to yeve hym space and audience;
> And bade oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye
> That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.
> (ll. 61-66)

The emphasis here on the oral nature of what is to be presented should not

be missed either for this is one of the determinants of the preaching

situation that exists at this important point in the Canterbury pilgrim-

age.[16] This is also seen when the Host requests the priest right after to

"Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere" (l. 73, emphases mine). He

does beg him to hurry, however, to say what he has to say "in litel space",

for the sun will soon be setting (ll. 70-71).

Of course, what follows is anything but brief, a fact which has

been used by Pfander, as noted above, in his argument that the Tale could

not possibly be considered a sermon. Certainly, it could not be considered

a sermon of the type customarily delivered "inter missarum sollemnia",

that is, at Mass between the Creed and the Offertory or after the Offertory:

these, as Owst has indicated, usually ran for only five to ten minutes.

But this is only one possible preaching situation and obviously not the

one that exists at this crucial juncture in the Canterbury pilgrimage.

Owst is quick to note the "great divergence in sermon length to be found

in any written collection of manuscripts",[18] a divergence explained in

great part by the different types of situations - at Mass, after Sunday

dinner, outdoors at preaching crosses and during processions - in which

sermons were delivered[19] (see pp. 30-31 above). The outdoor situations

provided ample opportunity for, as Owst puts it, "the lengthy orations of a

Rypon or a Brunton".[20] Often the outdoor "sermo in processione" was

preached, according to Owst, in the context of a "public intercession".

Owst elaborates:

> Wars, pestilences, the inclemency of the weather,
> the health of the king, queen, and royal house-
> hold, some expedition about to cross the Channel,
> demanded that the whole nation should signalize
> publicly its loyalty to the throne of Heaven, repent,
> and pray upon its knees.[21]

Though no national or political crisis occasions the long discourse of the

Parson, there is undoubtedly a sense of spiritual crisis at this juncture

in the Canterbury pilgrimage, the urgent need to show the fallen pilgrims

the way to "Jerusalem celestial" because the Day of Judgement —symbolised

in the astrological reference to Libra,[22] the Host's reference to the

setting sun, and the Parson's own long treatment of the "day of doom and

of the horrible peynes of helle" (ll. 158-230) —is nigh. It is this crisis

(and there has been more than ample opportunity in the course of the preceding action to view both the grave sins and pecadillos of the pilgrims) which necessitates a throughgoing treatment of Sin and Penance by the Parson. After examining examples of the various sins amongst the pilgrims, Baldwin sums up the situation as follows:

> Every one of the sins has its perpetrators among
> the pilgrims. It is against the blandishments
> threatening their souls at that moment that the
> Parson assidiously, spiritually struggles. And it
> is a struggle. If drama is basically a matter of
> conflict, then this is a conflict of the gravest
> sort, because in context the Parson is battling
> not only against the "principalities and powers"
> behind all evil, but more specifically, and
> dramatically, against the weaknesses and sins
> which have been displayed en route, which call for
> correction and penance.[23]

Dramatic and specific in nature, The Parson's Tale is therefore more akin to the "sermo in processione" as described by Owst than it is to the religious manuals and treatises intended for the private reading of priests and laymen. This is not to say that sermon and manual were completely distinct from each other. Just as the sermon story and the moral treatise shared common ground (see p. 26-27), so too did the religious manual and the sermon. Pfander himself admits the overlapping of the two, though, preoccupied with countering Chapman's argument from structure, he ignores the essential dynamism of The Parson's Tale which makes it more a public, oral discourse than a private, written one. Noting the wide variety of manual types, Pfander comments that "some are cast into form such that portions of them may be read verbatim as sermons", a point which he makes again in passing with reference to the Speculum Christiani, one of the manuals which "approached in form the finished ser-

mon".[24] In dealing with this matter of the overlap of sermon and manual, Myers has taken a more sensible position. She points out that "tracts, disputations, and sermons were sometimes confused in public" and notes that preachers were often warned not to turn their sermons into disputations[25] (see also pp. 5, 7 above). In the case of The Parson's Tale, it seems best to view the whole, because of its dramatic context and teaching function, as a sermon which draws upon the common ground of both the homiletic tradition and the contemporary written manual of religious instruction for its materials and form.[26]

Having established, then, that the Parson is indeed preaching to his fellow pilgrims who are in great need of the kind of spiritual enlightenment and guidance that he can offer, one can now examine closely the specific illustrations in the form of sententiae and narrative exempla that he uses in the course of his sermon. Not only will this show that much of this material is aimed specifically at the sins of the other pilgrims, but also that the choice and manner of presentation of the illustrations contrasts markedly with the illustrative methods of the other legitimate and self-styled preachers — the Nun's Priest, Chantecleer, the Pardoner, the Wife of Bath, Friar John — which have been discussed in the earlier chapters of this dissertation.

The most immediately striking feature of The Parson's Tale is undoubtedly the enormous number of sententiae that appear in the course of the homily. There are, by my own count, some 160 brief quotations, paraphrases of or references to statements taken from authoritative sources, the bulk of these being Biblical or Patristic in origin. A statistical break-down of the most popular of these is as follows:

Augustine - 25 (26?)[27]

Paul   - 16

Solomon   - 14

David   - 9

Gregory   - 9

Jerome   - 6

In contrast, there are very few non-Christian references, as follows:

Seneca   - 4 (5?)[28]

Cato   - 1

Galen   - 1

It is perhaps best to begin a discussion of the Parson's use of sententiae

by examining his general method in the light of its historical context.

Invaluable in this respect are the comments of Robertson on the forces that

resulted in the appearance in the twelfth century of Peter Lombard's

Sententiae (see also pp. 19-20 above). Robertson writes:

> Speaking very generally, two tendencies are
> observable in the cultural life of the twelfth
> century: first, a tendency toward the systematic
> organization of materials of every kind, and
> second, a tendency to make this new organization
> explicit and to make it functional in the attitudes
> and lives of the people. If we extend our view into
> the thirteenth century, these two tendencies are
> seen to be intensified, and in fact do not show
> signs of serious deterioration until the middle
> of the fourteenth century.[29]

As Robertson goes on to point out, these two tendencies became especially

manifest with regard to the Sacraments after the decrees of the Fourth

Lateran Council: knowledge of them, particularly of Penance and the Eu-

charist, was to become systematized for purposes of wide-spread dissemination

and application. It is in such a context that the Parson's homily should

be viewed. Robertson argues:

> Chaucer's Parson's Tale, which is an analysis of
> Penance, affords an excellent example to illustrate
> both the systematic character of this knowledge and
> its relevance to the everyday affairs of life.[30]

The promise of systematic analysis is made very plain at the

beginning of the Parson's discourse in his statement of the general plan

of what is to follow:

> ...this wey is cleped Penitence, of which man
> sholde gladly herknen and enquere with al his
> herte,/ to wyten what is Penitence, and whennes
> it is cleped Penitence, and in how manye maneres
> been the acciouns or werkynges of Penitence,/ and
> how manye speces ther been of Penitence, and whiche
> thynges apertenen and bihoven to Penitence, and
> which thynges destourben Penitence.
> (ll. 81-83)

From this general plan grows a highly intricate and logical system which,

in outline (here somewhat simplified for convenience' sake), is as follows:

(1) What is Penitence ? - ll. 84.93.

(2) 3 "acciouns or werkynges of Penitence" - ll. 94-100.

(3) 3 "speces that been of Penitence" - ll. 101-06.

      (a) "solempne", of which there are "two maneres".

      (b) "commune", of which pilgrimages are an example.

      (c) "pryvee".

(4) "Which thynges apertenen and bihoven to Penitence" : a

    huge area which embraces the bulk of the rest of the

    sermon (ll. 107-1075), and which is sub-divided as follows:

        3 things necessary to "verray parfit Penitence":[31]

      (A) <u>Contrition</u>

        (i) What is Contrition ? - ll. 129-32.

(ii)   6 causes that move a man to

Contrition — ll. 133-291.

(iii)   How a man should be contrite — ll. 292-307.

(iv)   What Contrition availeth to the

soul — ll. 308-15.

(B)   Confession

(i)   What is Confession ? — ll. 318-20.

(ii)   "Whennes that synnes springen and how

they encreesen" — ll. 322-57.

(iii)   2 types of sin

(a) Venial — ll. 358-66.

(b) Deadly — ll. 367-957.

(iv)   7 "circumstances that agreggen muchel

every synne" — ll. 960-79.

(v)   4 conditions necessary for making "trewe

and profitable confession" — ll.982-1028.

(C)   Satisfaction — ll. 1029-56.

(i)   3 types of alms — ll. 1030-38.

(ii)   Bodily Pain — ll. 1039-56.

(5) 4 things that "destourben Penance" — ll. 1057-75.[32]

(6) Peroration — ll. 1076-80.

Each of these various sections and sub-sections is in turn fleshed out

with illustrations (mainly sententiae) and the Parson's own commentary.

As with the over-all plan of the discourse, these illustrations and comment-

ary generally operate according to analytical principles, their relation-

ship to the particular topics under discussion and to each other "governed",

as Myers puts it, "by considerations of the logical relationships listed by Walleys as aids to invention".[33] What Myers is referring to is an important section (Chapter Nine) of De modo componendi sermones in which Walleys suggests logical ways of connecting authoritative sententiae to topics and to each other (see p. 18 above). These connections, according to Walleys, can be direct or indirect. He then lists eleven methods of direct connection, with examples, as follows:[34]

(i) Similitude: when two authorities express parallel ideas. He gives the example of I John 2:18 (Filioli mei, novissima hora est) and suggests that the idea of the hour being the last may be reinforced by also citing Matt. 20:1 ff., the parable of the householder hiring labourers for his vineyard up to the eleventh hour.

(ii) Mediation: when an authority acts as a link between two other authorities. For example, the two statements above may be more tightly linked to each other through a third authority, John 11:9, Christ's words: Duodecim sunt hora dei. The logic here may be paraphrased as follows: this is the last hour; Christ said that there are only twelve hours in the day; in the parable of the householder, one could be paid (that is, saved) up to the eleventh hour of the twelve hours; therefore there is no time to lose.

(iii) Exposition: when an Old Testament authority is clarified by a New Testament authority or when Scriptural authority is explained by Patristic gloss or commentary.

(iv) Definition: when the second authority defines some element

or elements in the first authority. For example, if I Peter 5:9 is cited (Cui resistite fortes in fide), faith may be defined with reference to Paul, Hebr. 11:1 (Est autem fides sperandarum substantium rerum, etc.).

(v)   Description: the reference to Ps. 88:21 (Inveni David servum meum), for example, may be linked to an authority or authorities which describe David's office, dignity, parentage, etc.

(vi)   Causality: when the second authority reveals the reason for which the first statement is made. In this way, for example, the preacher would cite Rom. 13:11 (Hora est jam nos de somno surgere), explaining the motivation behind this in terms of I John 2:18 (Hora novissima est): in other words, it is time to leave off sleeping because it is the last hour.

(vii)   Specification: for example, if the hour spoken of in Rom. 13:11 is carefully identified as the eleventh hour referred to in the story of the householder in search of labourers for his vineyard.

(viii) Modification: when the second authority elaborates on the way in which an action, mentioned in the first authority, is to be accomplished. For example, if the first authority is Rom. 13:11, as above, the second authority could be Acts 12:7 (Surge velociter) or Eccles. 32:15 (Hora surgendi, non te trices).

(ix) <u>Confirmation</u>: when the second authority confirms the
first as, for example, having Eccles. 32:15 confirm
Acts 12:7.

(x) <u>General-specific, species-genus relationship</u>: for example,
the Psalms speak of mendacity specifically (<u>Perdes omnes</u>
<u>qui loquuntur mendacium</u>), and of iniquity in general
(<u>Perdes omnes qui operantur iniquitatem</u>). The preacher can
either move from general to specific or vice versa.

(xi) <u>Complementary relationship</u>: when one authority completes
what the other has begun. Walleys here refers to the
Evangelists but gives no specific citations.

Walleys also lists three methods for <u>indirectly</u> connecting authorities,
as follows:[35]

(i) <u>Contrarity or Contradiction</u>: when a second authority is
produced to solve an apparent contradiction in the first
authority; using a second authority to say the contrary to
the first authority as, for example, following the state-
ment that the just go to heaven with the statement that the
unjust go to hell.

(ii) <u>Diversity</u>: as, for example, when a preacher uses a diversity
of references from the Old Testament to illustrate exemplary
faith in Hebr. 11.

(iii) <u>Exception</u>: when the first authority states the general case
and the second states an exception to it. For instance, the
Psalmist says <u>Perdes omnes qui loquuntur mendacium</u> or
<u>Perdes omnes qui operantur iniquitatem</u> to which a second

authority could state the exception, that is, that
the wicked who repent can be saved, as stated in
Ezechiel 33:11 (*Nolo mortem peccatoris, sed ut
convertatur et vivat*).

Though one cannot argue that Chaucer had Walleys specifically in
mind when he wrote The Parson's Tale, he must certainly have been aware
of the close working relationship of analysis and authority that existed
in contemporary religious thought. Indeed, he makes a point of exploiting
this close relationship in the Parson's case for various reasons, not the
least of which was to highlight the contrast between the Parson's preach-
ing method and that of the other Canterbury preachers.

For a start, one could look at the Parson's use of authorities
for purposes of definition and compare his procedure with that of Chante-
cleer and the Wife of Bath. The Parson begins his lengthy discourse on
Ira, for instance, by defining through authorities:

> This synne of Ire, after the discryvyng of Seint
> Augustyn, is wikked wil to been avenged by word or
> by dede./Ire, after the philosophre, is the fer-
> vent blood of man yquyked in his herte, thurgh
> which he wole harm to hym that he hateth.
> (11. 535-36)

Here the initial Augustinian definition of sin is followed by an apparent-
ly needless second definition. In fact, the second authority ("the
philosophre") is not merely defining Ire again but clarifying the general
terms in which Augustine describes it. Thus the rather vague "wikked wil
to been avenged" is elaborated upon as "the fervent blood of man yquyked
in his herte, thurgh which he wole harm to hym that he hateth". The
authority and clarity of the Parson's defining texts stand in marked con-

trast to the confusing and misleading manner in which Chantecleer and the
Wife of Bath begin tackling the topics of their discourses. Definition,
in their cases, comes more by way of subjective experience than through
objective statement. Thus, for example, Chantecleer, after brief deference
to "olde bookes" in which the "sentence" on dreams can be found, adds that
men "han wel founded by experience" the same thing, a point which he makes
again in his statement that on this definition of dreams "ther nedeth
make...noon argument" because "the verray preeve sheweth it in dede" (B^2
2974-83). The primacy of subjective experience is that much more remarkable,
of course, in the case of Dame Alisoun. She makes it quite clear at the
beginning of her discourse that she will develop her argument through
autobiography:

> Experience, though noon auctoritee
> Were in this world, is right enough for me
> To speke of wo that is in mariage;
> For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeere was....
>   (D ll. 1-4)

Thus when faced with Paul's praise of virginity, she plays deliberately
confusing semantic games with the words "conseil" and "precept", re-
defining them in terms of her own "juggement":

> Th'apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,
> He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.
> Men may conseille a womman to been oon,
> But conseillyng is no commandment.
> He putte it in oure owene juggement;
>   (D ll. 64-68)

Here one sees the Wife undercutting Pauline authority by denying it a
link to another authority: the Pauline sententia is left dangling on its
own, then shoved aside as Dame Alisoun moves in with her own definition
of what "conseil" and "precept" mean.

Standing in even starker contrast to the deliberate breaking of

the chain of authority is the Parson's frequent use of the process of

authoritative mediation as described by Walleys, that is, his linking

of two authorities by a third one. Myers points out a particularly

striking example of this in which several authorities on the disdain of

sin are "joined by mediation so that they form a syllogism: sin is worthy

of disdain because it is a thralldom, and thralldom is worthy of dis-

dain".[36] The passage runs as follows:

> The seconde cause that oghte make a man to have
> desdeyn of synne is this: that, as seith Seint
> Peter, "whoso that dooth synne is thral of synne";
> and synne put a man in greet thraldom./And ther-
> fore seith the prophete Ezechiel: "I wente sorweful
> in desdayn of myself." Certes, wel oghte a man
> have desdayn of synne, and withdrawe hym from that
> thraldom and vileynye./And lo, what seith Seneca
> in this matere ? He seith thus: "Though I wiste
> that neither God ne man sholde nevere knowe it,
> yet wolde I have desdayn for to do synne."
> (ll. 142-44)

Once the logical basis of such a sequence is appreciated, the iteration

of the words "thral", "thraldom", and "desdayn" become signs not of mere

repititiousness, but of a closely knit network of relationships necessary

for a lucid definition of sin and why it should be avoided.

One could also compare the clarity and logic of the Parson's dis-

course with that of the Pardoner. For convenience's sake, let us focus on

their different treatments of the subject of swearing. Blasphemous swear-

ing receives special authoritative attention from the Parson (has he the

Host in mind, perhaps ?), meriting specific sententiae from no less than

six authorities — God, Christ (through Matthew), Jeremiah, Ecclesiasticus,

Saint Peter, and Saint Paul — in just 16 lines (ll. 587-602). In his

discussion of the sin just before resuming the tale of the three young

"riotoures" (C ll. 629-60), the Pardoner provides four authorities: God

(through the second commandment), God (through Matthew), Jeremiah, and

Ecclesiasticus. The logic underlying the linking of the Pardoner's

authorities, however, is nowhere as tight as that underlying the Parson's

and, consequently, his argument is less rational than the Parson's. To

be sure, the Pardoner begins his discussion in a very straightforward way

by stating his topic and his intention to use authorities:

> Now wol I speke of othes false and grete
> A word or two, as olde bookes trete.
> (C ll. 629-30)

Proceeding with the distinction between false and great oaths, he comments

that the one is "reprevable", the other "abhominable", then brings in his

first two authorities:

> The heigh God forbad sweryng at al,
> Witnesse on Mathew; but in special
> Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye,
> "Thou shalt swere sooth thyne othes, and nat lye,
> And swere in doom, and eek in rightwisnesse";
> (C ll. 633-37)

The two authorities, it can be seen, are linked by the indirect method

of exception, that is, the first text (Matt. 5:34) states the general

rule (no swearing), the second the exception (cases in which swearing is

legitimate). After stating the exception, the Pardoner returns to "ydel

sweryng" which he characterizes as "cursednesse", supporting his argu-

ment by referring twice in sequence to the second commandment. The mere

repetitiousness of this sequence is obvious:

> Bihoold and se that in the firste table
> Of heighe Goddes heestes honurable,
> Hou that the second heeste of hym is this:
> "Take nat my name in ydel or amys."

> Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng
> Than homycide or many a cursed thyng;
> I seye that, as by ordre, thus it stondeth;
> This knoweth, that his heestes understondeth,
> How that the seconde heeste of God is that.
> (C ll. 639-47)

After such waffling, the Pardoner then simply provides confirmation

through a final authority (a paraphrase of Ecclus. 23:11):

> And forther over, I wol thee telle al plat,
> That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous
> That of his othes is to outrageous.
> (C ll. 648-50)

For good measure, he concludes with a string of blasphemous oaths, deliver-

ed verbatim (C ll. 651-55), to provide some characteristically off-colour

spice to his preaching.

Unlike the rather loose stringing together of authorities that

occurs in the Pardoner's discussion of swearing, there is a sense of care-

ful and logical progression as the Parson ties one authority to the next in

treating the same problem. He begins somewhat like the Pardoner in stating

explicitly what his topic is to be and then making a statement on the

general reprehensibility of the sin as supported by the word of God him-

self:

> After this, thanne cometh sweryng, that is expres
> agayn the comandement of God; and this bifalleth
> ofte of anger and of Ire./ God seith: "Thow shalt
> nat take the name of thy Lord God in veyn or in
> ydel."
> (ll. 587-88)

This is followed by a second authority that is related to the first by

complementarity. Not only is swearing by God's name itself wrong, but

> Also oure Lord Jhesu Crist seith, by the word of
> Seint Mathew,/ "Ne wol ye nat swere in alle man-
> ere; neither by hevene, for it is Goddes trone;
> ne by erthe, for it is the bench of his feet; ne

> by Jerusalem, for it is the citee of a greet kyng;
> ne by thyn heed, for thou mayst nat make an heer
> whit ne blak./ But seyeth by youre word 'ye, ye,'
> and 'nay, nay'; and what that is moore, it is of
> yvel," - thus seith Crist.
>
> (ll. 588-90)

This complementary authority, with its list of specific and distinct

examples of types of blasphemous swearing, should be compared to the

mere repetition in the Pardoner's two references to the second command-

ment. Further complementation follows, though in the Parson's own words

not those of an authority, as he paraphrases the various ways in which

one can swear blasphemously with reference to Christ. In contrast to

the verbatim oaths of the Pardoner, however, the Parson provides a much

milder paraphrase and listing of the same:

> For Cristes sake, ne swereth nat so synfully in
> dismembrynge of Crist by soule, herte, bones, and
> body.
>
> (l. 591)

Having outlined, with the help of authorities, the various forms of

blasphemous swearing, the Parson only then (in contrast to the Pardoner's

early reference) brings in his exceptional cases and, as with the Pardoner,

he cites Jeremiah:

> And if so be that the lawe compelle yow to swere,
> thanne rule yow after the lawe of God in youre
> swerying, as seith Jeremye, quarto capitulo: "Thou
> shalt kepe three condicions: thou shalt swere in
> trouthe, in doom, and in rightwisnesse."
>
> (l. 592)

Picking up on each of these conditions, the Parson elaborates on each in

turn, mainly in his own words (ll. 593-95), though, interestingly enough,

in discoursing on the first condition, he paraphrases, like the Pardoner,

Ecclus. 23:11:

> And thynk wel this, that every greet swerere,
> nat compelled lawefully to swere, the wounde shal
> nat departe from his hous whil he useth swich un-
> leveful swerying.
>
> (l. 593)

The difference here, though, is that the Parson ties the text by way of

causality to the text from Jeremiah, the reasoning running as follows:

you must only swear lawfully because otherwise the sin will remain in

your house. Having outlined the various forms of swearing and the ex-

ceptional cases in which it is allowed, the Parson completes his dis-

cussion by using two authorities to stress the sacredness of the name of

Christ. These are connected to each other by way of confirmation, the

touch of repititiousness that this brings easily justified by the fact

that the Parson is concluding his discussion by blasphemous swearing and

recapitulating what has preceded:

> Looke eek what seint Peter seith, Actuum, quarto,
> Non est aliud nomen sub celo, etc., "Ther nys noon
> oother name," seith Seint Peter, "under hevene yeven
> to men, in which they mowe be saved"; that is to
> seyn, but the name of Jhesu Crist./ Take kep eek
> how precious is the name of Crist, as seith Seint
> Paul, ad Philipenses, secundo, In nomine Jhesu, etc.,
> "that in the name of Jhesu every knee of hevenely
> creatures, or erthely, or of helle sholde bowe";
>
> (ll. 597-98)

The extensive authoritative attention given the sin of blasphemous

swearing may be explained in great part, as noted in passing above, by

the Parson's desire to chastise a sin in which the Host indulges frequently

and gratuitiously. In other words, it is a symptom of the dramatic inter-

action between preacher and congregation discussed in the introductory

paragraphs of this chapter.

The same thing is noticeable a little later on in the Parson's

treatment of _Ira_ when he discourses on "chidynge and reproche" (ll. 622-

34). Here again the authoritative discussion has specific targets, in

this case the evil tongues of such ruthless preachers as the Wife of Bath,

the Pardoner, and Friar John in The Summoner's Tale.[38] Again too, it

should be noticed how the argument is clear, logical, and hard-hitting in

its use of authorities. The Pardoner and Friar John, one recalls, are

only too quick to take revenge by way of slander on those who trespass

against them. The Pardoner states his method in this respect most candidly

and fully:

> For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate,
> Thanne wol I stynge hym with my tonge smerte
> In prechyng, so that he shal nat asterte
> To been defamed falsly, if that he
> Hath trespased to my bretheren or to me.
> For though I telle noght his propre name,
> Men shal wel knowe that it is the same,
> By signes, and by othere circumstances.
> Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances;
> (C ll. 412-20)

This viciousness is matched by that of Friar John who, humiliated by the

ailing but wily Thomas, vows revenge in the presence of the lord and lady

of the village to whom he brings his complaint:

> "Madame," quod he, "by God, I shal nat lye,
> But I on oother wyse may be wreke,
> I shal disclaundre hym over al ther I speke,
> This false blasphemour, that charged me
> To parte that wol nat departed be,
> To every man yliche, with meschaunce!"
> (D ll 2210-15)

To such unmitigated ruthlessness the Parson provides an unequivocal

answer:

> For certes, unnethes may a man pleynly been
> accorded with hym that hath hym openly re-
> vyled and repreved and disclaundred. This is

a ful grisly synne, as Crist seith in the gospel.
(1. 623)

The Parson then proceeds to define the nature of this sin through specific

examples, first in his own words, then by way of a second authority:

And certes, chidynge may nat come but out of
a vileyns herte. For after the habundance of
the herte speketh the mouth ful ofte.
(1.627)

The section from the Gospel (Matt. 12:33-34) which is partly paraphrased

here runs as follows:

Either make the tree good and its fruit good; or
make the tree evil and its fruit evil. For by the
fruit the tree is known./ O generation of vipers,
how can you speak good things, whereas you are
evil ? For out of the abundance of the heart that
mouth speaketh.

Though the Parson only paraphrases the last sentence of the second of

these verses, the figure of the tree bearing fruit (a favourite one

throughout the sermon)[39] is clearly in his mind as the following Old

Testament *sententia* (linked by similitude) testifies:

For as seith Solomon, "The amyable tonge is the
tree of lyf," that is to seyn, of lyf espiritueel;
(1. 629)

The Parson then brings in two authorities, the first standing in con-

trary relationship vis à vis the *sententia* from Solomon, the second in

contrary relationship to the first. A neat, effective sequence of con-

trasts is thus set up:

Loo, what seith Seint Augustyn: "Ther is nothyng
so lyk the develes child as he that ofte chideth."
Seint Paul seith eek, "The servant of God bihoveth
nat to chide."
(1. 630)

Having dealt thoroughly with the spiritual dangers resulting

from public slander, the Parson next turns his attention to domestic

"chidynge", that is, between husband and wife:

> And how that chidynge be a vileyns thyng bi-
> twixe alle manere folk, yet is it certes moost
> uncovenable bitwixe a man and his wyf; for there
> is nevere reste.
>
> (1. 631)

Domestic strife, as Owst has pointed out, was a common topic in medieval

sermons.[40] Friar John, one recalls, begins his homily on Ira with author-

itative reference to and discussion of domestic squabbling (D ll. 1981-

2004).[41] The Parson's discourse on the matter takes on a particular edge

because of the presence on the pilgrimage of the cantankerous Wife of Bath.

It is to her specifically that his discussion of husband-wife relations

is directed. In the "tale" of her own marital experiences, she relates

in great detail how she gained "maistrie" over her husbands by endless

chiding and lying (D ll. 224 ff.). She sums up her triumph thus:

> And thus of o thyng I avaunte me,
> Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,
> By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,
> As by continueel murmur or grucchyng.
> Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:
> Ther wolde I chide, and do hem no plesaunce;
>
> (D ll. 403-08)

The danger of such a situation is focused upon by the Parson in complement-

ary passages from Proverbs. The first stresses the instability to which

it leads:

> And therfore seith Salomon, "An hous that is uncovered
> and droppynge, and a chidynge wyf, been lyke."/ A
> man that is in droppynge hous in manye places,
> though he eschewe the droppynge in o place, it droppeth
> on hym in another place.
>
> (ll. 631-32)

The Parson continues explicating the analogy in his own words (in terms

that recall the Wife's reference to her "continueel murmur or grucchyng"),

adding the second complementary passage from Proverbs:

> So fareth it by a chydynge wyf; but she chide hym in
> o place, she wol chide hym in another./ And ther-
> fore, "bettre is a morsel of breed with joye than an
> hous ful of delices with chidynge," seith Salomon.
>   (1. 633)

This is immediately followed up by a _sententia_ that provides the solution

to the problem by standing in contrary relationship to what has preceded:

if chiding wives make for strife-torn households, then, this authority

assures us, submissive (and, by implication, silent) wives make for happy

marriages. The wife's argument for female "maistrie" is thus answered:

> Seint Paul seith: "O ye wommen, be ye subgetes
> to youre housbondes as bihoveth in God, and ye
> men loveth youre wyves." Ad Colossenses tertio.[42]

It is significant that, although the Parson sets up authoritative

sententiae in contrary relationships,[43] he never ventures into the more

tricky business of contradictions. As described by Walleys, this would

work as follows:

> ...et hoc vel ratione contrarietatis quae apparent
> in superficie verborum inter auctoritatem et auc-
> toritatem, et tunc fit connexio objiciendo per
> unam auctoritatem contra aliam et solvendo.[44]

The Parson's task, it must be remembered always, is to provide unequivocal

spiritual guidance, and this he has been shown above to be doing through

the lucid analysis of various sins and the ways they are to be combated.

His avoidance of texts with even only apparent contradictions is con-

sistent with this approach.

The danger in dealing in apparent contradictions in authoritative

texts is well illustrated by the Wife of Bath's use of them to confuse

deliberately her audience and further her heretical and specious argu-

ments. Two of her earliest authorities stand in contradictory relation-

ship to each other. Instead of attempting to explain the apparent contra-

diction, Dame Alisoun simply opts for the authority that seems to better

support her case. The self-serving nature of her argument is plain in the

following passage:

> Herkne eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones,
> Beside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,
> Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan:
> "Thou has yhad fyve housbondes, 'quod he,
> 'And that ilke man that now hath thee
> Is noght thyn housbonde,' thus seyde he certeyn.
> What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn;
> But that I axe, why that the fifthe man
> Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan ?
> How manye myghte she have in mariage ?
> Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age
> Upon this nombre diffinicioun.
> Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,
> But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,
> God bad us for to wexe and multiplye;
> That gentil text kan I wel understonde.
> (D 11. 14-29)

As if such an obfuscating argument were not enough, the Wife throws in

another text for good measure, not to clear up the apparent contradiction

but to confirm her second authority:

> Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn housbonde
> Sholde lete fader and mooder, and take to me.
> But of no nombre mencion made he,
> Of bigamye, or of octogamye;
> Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye ?
> (D 11. 30-34)

Much less shrewd than the Wife, the Nun's priest provides another example

of the citing of seemingly contradictory texts though he openly admits

his inability to resolve the apparent contradiction. His dilemma — slipping

into the complex and controversial question of predestination and free-will

without being able to provide a satisfactory answer (see pp. 48-49 above) - is

precisely the kind which the Parson avoids.

The Parson's avoidance of such difficulties is also seen in the

general lack of scholarly exposition or glossing in his discourse, a

matter noted earlier on in this chapter. Robertson notes correctly that

"most of his authorities are clear on the surface without exposition".[45]

This general shying away from the complexities and subtleties of exegesis

is not, however, to be seen as an outright dismissal of the nonliteral

meaning of his texts but as a manifestation of the Parson's intention to

be explicit and unambiguous in his preaching. There is, to be sure, a

lengthy allegorical treatment of the Fall (ll. 322-36, of which more later),

and, it might be added, occasional brief glosses such as the following on

the sacredness and higher meaning of the Sacrament of Marriage:

> Certes, the brekynge of this sacrement is an
> horrible thyng. It was maked of God hymself in
> paradys, and confermed by Jhesu Crist, as
> witnesseth Seint Mathew in the gospel: "A man
> shal lete fader and mooder, and taken hym to
> his wif, and they shullen be two in o flessh."/
> This sacrement bitokneth the knyttynge togidre of
> Crist and of hooly chirche.[46]
> (ll. 842-43)

For the most part, however, the Parson's authorities are left to speak

for themselves, their _sententiae_ offering clear and unimpeded access to

spiritual truth as the Parson promises his fellow pilgrims at the

beginning of his sermon:

> Stondeth upon the weyes, and seeth and axeth
> of olde pathes (that is to seyn, of olde
> sentences) which is the goode wey,/ and wal-
> keth in that wey, and ye shal fynde refresshynge
> for youre soules, etc.
> (l. 77)

That access to the truth of _sententiae_ could be made difficult,
if not impossible, by exegesis has been more than sufficiently demon-
strated in the preceding chapters in the close analysis of the preaching
methods of such pilgrims as the Wife of Bath and Friar John of _The_
Summoner's Tale. After the Wife's lengthy _Prologue_ and _Tale_, it may be
recalled, Friar Huberd had begged her to

> ...lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
> To prechyng and to scole eek of clergye.
> (D ll. 1276-77)

His plea is a reaction to her deliberate abuses, discussed in detail in chap-
ter III, of the exegetical method. Misinterpretations of the meanings
of Scriptural passages, it was seen, result essentially from the Wife's
assertion of the primacy of subjective experience over objective, external
authority. She does not explicate in an orthodox manner but by using her
"owne juggement". Her rejection of authoritative exegesis is plain in her
statement on the meaning of Christ's statement to the Samaritan woman
where she refers dismissively to the glossing "up and doun" of exegetes
which she intends to replace with texts which she herself can "wel under-
stonde" (see pp.66-67 , 163 above). The same idiosyncratic, self-serving
approach to Scriptural authority was discussed above in the case of Friar
John, who promises the ailing Thomas to "teche yow al the glose" but with
the proviso that it will be "after my symple wit", which is merely another
way of stating that he will use his "owne juggement" in explicating the
authorities he cites (see pp. 119 - 23 above).

It is abuses such as these that lead the Parson to leave the
bulk of his texts as bare as possible, bare not in the sense that they
are merely left literal, but bare in their statement of spiritual truth,

free of potentially confusing glosses. The Shipman, it should be re-
called, expresses his concern in the Epilogue to The Man of Law's Tale
that the Parson would provide such glosses, that he would "sowen som
difficulte,/ Or springen cokkel in our clene corn" (B[1] 1182-83). It
is in reply to this that the Parson delivers the assurance in his Pro-
logue that he will not "sowen draf" but "whete". He clarifies this
statement by equating "whete" with "moralitee and vertuous mateere", and
"draf" with two things, (a) glossing ("I wol nat glose", 1.45), and (b)
"fables and swich wrechednesse" (l. 34). The rejection of glossing, as
was just demonstrated above, is largely followed through in the sermon.
So too is the rejection of "fables", a matter to which the final part of
this chapter will now address itself.

Fables in the broad medieval sense of the term (roughly "fabulous",
"fabricated", or misleading stories) are invariably associated with deceit
or lying ("lesynges") in the medieval period and Chaucer retains this
association throughout his work: this is a matter discussed in the open-
ing chapter of this dissertation (pp. 29-30 et passim). Here, in the final
tale told on the Canterbury pilgrimage, the Parson appropriately enough
gives not only the last but the most explicit and orthodox statement on
the whole matter. As with so many of the other problems raised in the
course of the telling of the preceding tales, he provides an unequivocal
answer. This is immediately apparent in his quick reply to the Host's
request to him to "telle us a fable anon, for cokkes bones!" (l. 29):

> This Persoun answerede, al atones,
> "Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me;"
> (ll. 30-31)

As Cespedes has argued recently (see p. 33 above), the reference to Paul

that follows (11. 32-34) underscores the orthodoxy of the Parson's
position and, furthermore, is meant to contrast with the position of
another preacher who refers to the Epistle "unto Thymothee" — the Pardon-
er.[47] With his "hauteyn speche" (C 1. 330) and over-abundance of stories
from Biblical and secular sources ("ensamples many oon"), the Pardoner
deliberately tries to deceive those who listen to him into believing in
the efficacy of his so-called relics. It was also demonstrated in the
preceding chapters how the other Canterbury preachers misuse narrative
illustrations: the Wife of Bath who presents the "tale" of her own life
(a subjective and probably not altogether reliable report);[48] Chante-
cleer who tries to intimidate Pertelote with a pedantic display of "en-
samples" that he does not really believe in (hence his subsequent lack
of caution and self-restraint); the Nun's Priest himself who confuses
truth and high style rhetoric and laments that his story lacks both and
may be accounted a mere "folye"; Friar John in The Summoner's Tale with
his array of Biblical and Senecan stories which, though true in themselves
like the Pardoner's "ensamples", are twisted to further selfish purposes
and therefore made to function as misleading "fables". It is in reaction
to such a spectacular marshalling of "fables and lesynges" that the
Parson avoids narrative exempla whenever possible in favour of clear and
concise sententiae.

When the Parson does use narrative to illustrate his arguments,
they are, with only one exception (the story of the impatient and angry
philosopher, 11. 670-73),[49] taken exclusively from the Bible. Many of
these illustrations are simply exemplary figures, mere references with-
out elaboration to the well-known behaviour of such individuals as Judas

(11. 616, 696, 1015), Cain (1. 1015), Samson, David, Solomon (1. 953),

Mary Magdalene (1. 947), Adam and Eve (1. 819). The Parson's caution with

regard to the sources and number of narratives that he uses also comes

through in the careful selection of the Biblical stories that he chooses

to elaborate upon. Significantly, only two such stories — those of Adam

and Eve and of the Passion of Jesus Christ — receive special and repeated

attention.

The story of Adam and Eve is given lengthy treatment both at the

literal and spiritual levels the first time that it is used for illus-

trative purposes. This occurs early on in the Parson's discourse on the

"second partie of Penitence" (Confession) as he discusses "whennes that

synnes springen, and how they encreesen" (11. 322 ff.). He first of all

identifies the source of sin in the world in a concise, syllogistic

sententia from Paul:

> Of the spryngynge of synnes seith Seint Paul
> In this wise: that "right as by a man synne entred
> first into this world, and thurgh that synne deeth,
> right so thilke deeth entred into alle men that
> synneden."
>
> (1. 322)

The man who first allowed sin and death to enter this world is then

identified by the Parson as Adam, after which follow six lines (11. 325-

30) in which the events in Eden are related in detailed and chronological

order: initial innocence; the serpent's questioning of Eve about God's

command; Eve's reply; the serpent's deceitful assurance of the knowledge

to come with the eating of the forbidden fruit; Eve's contemplation, eat-

ing, and sharing of the fateful fruit with Adam; the opening of both their

eyes, not to knowledge, but to their own nakedness, for which they are

ashamed and which they try to disguise with fig leaves. So far, this is

a presentation of the narrative at a purely literal level. Because of its
crucial importance as an allegory of the source and process of sin, how-
ever, and, as a prelude to the discussion of the "two maneres" of sin,
venial and, most especially, "deadly" sin, the Parson next provides, as
Robertson puts it, a "lengthy exposition of the most common tropological
interpretation" of the narrative action (11. 330-57).[50] This, as already
noted above, is one of the very few instances of learned exegesis in the
Parson's sermon but it is in no way obscure or confusing. Directly
addressing the pilgrims around him, he lucidly explains:

> There may ye seen that deedly synne hath, first,
> suggestion of the feend, as sheweth heere by the
> naddre; and afterward, the delit of the flessh,
> as sheweth heere by Eve; and after that the con-
> sentynge of resoun, as sheweth heere by Adam./
> (1. 331)

The three stages of the Fall —the serpent's temptation, Eve's delight,
Adam's consent —are here set out as the basic modus operandi of all sin,
each stage of which the Parson then proceeds to elaborate upon further.[51]
As children of Adam, the pilgrims are told, all men are fallen and there-
fore subject to temptation ("the peyne dwelleth with us, as to temptacioun,
which peyne highte concupiscence", 1. 335), which leads them to covet
earthly things:

> And this concupiscence, whan it is wrongfully dis-
> posed or ordeyned in man, it maketh hym coveite,
> by coveitise of flessh, flesshly synne, by sighte
> of his eyen as to erthely thynges, and eek coveitise
> of hynesse by pride of herte.
> (1. 336)

The final bastion is reason, which consents to or decides against the sin
that has been offered in temptation and contemplated:

> And after that, a man bithynketh hym wheither he

> wol doon, or no, thilke thing to which he is
> tempted./ And thanne, if that a man withstonde and
> weyve the firste entisynge of his flessh and of
> the feend, thanne is it no synne; and if it so be
> that he do nat so, thanne feeleth he anoon a
> flambe of delit./ And thanne is it good to be war,
> and kepen hym wel, or elles he wol falle anon into
> consentynge of synne; and thanne wol he do it, if
> he may have tyme and place.
>
> (ll. 352-54)

Throughout, this lengthy exposition is characterised by the analytical

clarity that is the hall-mark of the Parson's sermon. In this particular

case, the clarity and analysis springs from a narrative that carefully

lays the ground-work in its specific details for what is to follow: the

sequence of actions stands in a neat one-to-one relationship with the

three distinct stages of the process of sin. This neatness results in

allegory that is pure, simple, and readily understandable.

Equally pure, simple, and understandable is the interpretation of

the marriage of Adam and Eve as an allegory of the marriage between Christ

and the Church. The Parson first mentions human marriage in these terms,

as noted above, at the beginning of his discussion of Luxuria (ll. 842-43).

At this point the Adam and Eve story is only alluded to in passing ("it

was maked of God hymself in paradys"). In the second part of his discussion

of the sin ("Remedium contra peccatum luxurie"), the Parson brings up the

question again and discusses it in much the same terms. This time, how-

ever, after a brief mention that marriage is "figured bitwixe Crist and

holy chirche", l. 922), he moves on to outlining the pre-lapsarian roles

of Adam and Eve, emphasizing Adam's love of Eve and, even more significantly,

Eve's submission to Adam. The internal drama of The Canterbury Tales gives

a particular immediacy to the allegory, for surely the following pre-

occupation with "maistrie" and the proper place of a wife is intended as

an answer to Dame Alisoun of Bath's loudly proclaimed theory and practice:

> For he ne made hire nat of the heved of Adam, for
> she sholde nat clayme to greet lordshipe./ For
> ther as the womman hath the maistrie, she maketh
> to muche desray. Ther neden none ensamples of this;
> the experience of day by day oghte suffise./ Also,
> certes, God ne made nat womman of the foot of
> Adam, for she ne sholde nat been holden to lowe;
> for she kan nat paciently suffre. But God made
> womman of the ryb of Adam, for womman sholde be
> felawe unto man.
>
> (ll. 926-28)

The Parson's passing comment on "the experience of day by day" could also

be plausibly taken as an ironic reference to the Wife's assertion of the

supremacy of "experience" over authority. As if such pointed remarks were

not enough, the Parson continues by returning to the matter of wifely

subjection (St. Peter as his authority, l. 930), and adds authorities

(Jerome, Gregory, John, ll. 933-34) and his own commentary on extravagant

clothing or "queyntise of array". The _sententia_ of Gregory particularly

seems to be used to castigate Dame Alisoun's prideful over-dressing. She

is described in the General Prologue, one recalls, as wearing elaborate

"coverchiefs" (especially at Sunday Mass) and scarlet red hose (ll. 453-

57). On such flamboyant finery the Parson comments:

> Seint Gregorie eek seith that "no wight seketh
> precious array but oonly for veyne glorie, to
> been honoured the moore biforn the peple."
>
> (l. 934)

In this second use of the Adam and Eve story, then, one sees the Parson

beginning with allegory but the implications of it radiate outwards to

apply to a situation immediately at hand. It is thus made an vital part

of the "sermo in processione", of the Parson's direct preaching to his

fellow pilgrims on the road to Canterbury.

The other important Biblical narrative in the Parson's sermon,

as noted above, is that of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. The

link between this story and that of Adam and Eve is, of course, well known.

The one represents the response to the other: if man fell through the deed

of Adam, then he can be saved through the sufferings of Christ.[52] Both

narratives as originally presented by the Parson, it should be noted, pro-

vide the explanation of the workings of sin as a three-stage process. In

the case of the first and longest account of the Passion, which occurs

near the end of the first part of the discussion of Penitence (11. 255-

82), however, the relationship of God to this hierarchy is added. This

opens the way for the appearance of Christ as the suffering Redeemer.[53] The

following passage comes in the midst of a detailed account of the ordeals

of Christ:

> For it is sooth that God, and resoun, and sensualitee,
> and the body of man been so ordeyned that everich of
> thise foure thynges sholde have lordshipe over that
> oother;/ as thus: God sholde have lordshipe over re-
> soun, and resoun over sensualitee, and sensualitee
> over the body of man./ But soothly, whan man synneth,
> al this ordre or ordinaunce is turned up-so-doun./
> And therfore, thanne, for as muche as the resoun of
> man ne wol nat be subget ne obeisant to God, that is
> his lord by right, therfore leseth it the lordshipe
> that it sholde have over sensualitee, and eek over
> the body of man./ And why ? For sensualitee rebelleth
> thanne agayns resoun, and by that way leseth resoun the
> lordshipe over sensualitee and over the body./ For right
> as resoun is rebel to God, right so is bothe sensualitee
> rebel to resoun and the body also./ And certes this
> disordinaunce and this rebellioun oure Lord Jhesu Crist
> aboghte upon his precious body ful deere, and herkneth
> in which wise./ For as much thanne as resoun is rebel
> to God, therfore is man worthy to have sorwe and to be
> deed./ This suffred oure Lord Jhesu Crist for man, after
> that he hadde be bitraysed of his disciple, and
> distreyned and bounde, so that his blood brast out at

> every nayl of his handes, as seith Seint Augustyn.
>
> (ll. 260-69)

This explanatory passage has been quoted in full because, first of all,

as noted above, it links the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ to the

lengthy narrative and explication of the Fall that soon follows at the

beginning of the second part of the discussion of Penitence. Further-

more, it acts as a necessary complement to the detailed narrative of the

sufferings of Christ that are on either side of it, underlining at once

the seriousness of sin and the absolute heroism and goodness of Jesus

Christ in saving man from it. The narrative itself, with its details of

Christ's fastings, various humiliations and sufferings, and crucifixion

(ll. 255-59, 272-82), does not follow an uninterrupted chronological

sequence, however, but works by way of brief and repeated pictures of

moments in Christ's Passion and Death. The picture of Christ on the cross,

for example, is presented no less than four times (ll. 259, 269, 272,

280). The whole comes across as a kind of meditation: the pilgrims are not

so much invited to follow a story as they are being enjoined to contemplate

Christ's sufferings in order to be moved to sorrow for their sins. This

double purpose (contemplation and sorrow) is indeed made clear by the Par-

son at the very beginning of this section of his discourse:

> The fifthe thyng that oghte moeve a man to
> contricioun is remembrance of the passioun
> that oure Lord Jhesu Crist suffred for oure
> synnes.
>
> (l. 255)

Sorrow for sins implies, of course, the promise of eternal reward,

and it is significant that such hope accompanies this initial presentation

and the three subsequent references to the Passion story in The Parson's

Tale. Right on the heels of the first lengthy meditation on the Passion

comes the following, complete with yet another picture of Christ on the

cross, but this time triumphant:

> The sixte thyng that oghte moeve a man to
> contricioun is the hope of three thynges;
> that is to seyn, foryifnesse of synne, and
> the yifte of grace wel for to do, and the
> glorie of hevene, with which God shal ger-
> done man for his goode dedes./ And for as
> muche as Jhesu Crist yeveth us thise yiftes
> of his largesse and of his sovereyn bountee,
> therfore is he cleped Jhesus Nazarenus rex
> Judeorum./ Jhesus is to seyn "saveour" or
> "salvacioun," on whom men shul hope to have
> foryifnesse of synnes, which that is proprely
> salvacioun of synnes.
>
> (ll. 283-85)

Later on, in his discussion of "remedium contra peccatum Ire", the Parson

once again presents pictures of the suffering Christ, patiently enduring

the humiliations of "wikkede wordes", the loss of "al that he hadde in

this lyf", and bodily harm (ll. 663-68). Here the images of Christ's

sufferings are counterbalanced by the promise of eternal happiness:

> Heere may men lerne to be pacient; for certes
> noght oonly Cristen men been pacient, for love
> of Jhesu Crist, and for gerdoun of the blisful
> lyf that is perdurable,...
>
> (l. 669)

In the other two references to the Passion story, hope is again emphasized.

In discussing the "releevynge of Avarice", mention is made of Jesus Christ

who

> ...yaf hymself for oure gilt, and suffred
> deeth for misericorde, and forgaf us oure
> originale synnes,/ and therby relessed us
> fro the peynes of helle, and amenused the
> peynes of purgatorie by penitence, and ye-
> veth grace wel to do, and atte laste the
> blisse of hevene.
>
> (ll. 808-09)

Finally, contemplation of the Passion of Christ is held up as an antidote

to "wanhope" or despair:

> Certes, agayns that cursed wanhope sholde he
> thynke that the passion of Jhesu Crist is moore
> strong for to unbynde than synne is strong for
> to bynde.
>
> (l. 1072)

This hopeful note carries through to the conclusion of the Parson's

sermon which soon follows. The "fruyt of penaunce", the pilgrims are told,

is nothing less ("after the word of Jhesu Crist") than the "endelees

blisse of hevene" (l. 1076).

The promise of eternal bliss, as reiterated in the narrative of

the Passion at various points in the Parson's sermon, merits the attention

given to it above because one is apt to be overwhelmed by the condem-

nation and careful analysis of sin, forgetting that the Parson, for all

the thoroughness and directness of his comments vis à vis such sinners as

the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner, is ultimately out to save such sinners

not to condemn them. This attitude is made clear from early on in The

Canterbury Tales, in the course of his portrait in the General Prologue:

> He was to synful men nat despitous,
> (l. 516)

Walleys, as Owst has pointed out, warned

> ...the preacher against being "too austere or
> harsh in his rebuking of vice." There is
> special danger, says he, that simple folk in
> the audience may think that all his remarks
> are levelled at them, and shrink from making
> their confessions to him later on.[54]

Owst goes on to note that one of the ways suggested by Walleys for avoid-

ing overly harsh censure was for the preacher to bring attention to the

redemptory function of Christ's sufferings.[55] It is in such a light that

one must view the emphasis on and recurring references made to the
Passion in the course of the Parson's sermon. His analysis of sin, as I
have argued, is relentless and often aimed directly at sins openly flaunt-
ed on the road to Canterbury. But such relentlessness and directness are
a necessary means to a happy end, the promise of eternal happiness that
is offered in the very opening lines of the sermon:

> Oure sweete Lord God of hevene, that no man
> wole perisse, but wole that we commen alle to
> the knoweleche of hym, and to the blisful lif
> that is perdurable,...
>
> (l. 75)

To summarize: despite a considerable amount of scholarly argument
to the contrary, The Parson's Tale is best looked upon as a sermon. The
lengthy discourse derives its homiletic qualities from the portrayal of
the Parson as the ideal preacher as conceived since St. Paul's Epistle to
Timothy, from the public and aural context in which it is presented (the
terminus ad quem of the Canterbury pilgrimage), and from the ways in which
it replies, both in form and content, to the moral failings and preaching
methods of the other Canterbury preachers. A product of the medieval
penchant for organizing disparate authoritative materials (especially with
regard to the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance), the Parson's
technique in presenting an enormous number of sententiae is distinguished
by analytical clarity and a general avoidance of difficult glossing or
exegesis. His rejection of "fables" is also carried through in his use
essentially of only two pieces of Biblical narrative, those of the Fall and
the Redemption. These complement each other, the latter providing the
final message of hope that rings in the ears of the fallen pilgrims as
they are shown how, through Penance, they can make their way to

"Jerusalem celestial".

VII

CONCLUSION

In many ways, the preceding chapter on The Parson's Tale has already provided the conclusion of this dissertation because in it I argued that the Parson, through his exemplary life and through the contents and method of his sermon, provides the orthodox answer to the moral shortcomings and misleading methods of the other Canterbury preachers. A few points of a broader nature, however, need to be made or reemphasized.

The first and, perhaps, most obvious one is that Chaucer, in utilizing homiletic materials, was drawing upon the most important and pervasive form of institutionalized oral expression of his time. What may now seem to many of us as rather quaint and remote, an experience undergone only on the occasional Sunday, was in fact of central and immediate importance to all medieval Christians. As noted in the opening chapter of this dissertation, preachers were everywhere in Chaucer's day. The poet would have encountered sermons in a wide variety of situations, not only in the confines of public churches and palace chapels, but outdoors in the market place, at civic and religious processions, pilgrimages, and on innumerable other occasions. They were, in short, a readily available source of orthodox (and sometimes heretical) ideas, images, proverbs, stories, rhetorical devices and the like, upon which the perceptive poet could draw for materials for his art, for his recreation of the fourteenth century world and man's place in it.

Such materials, as a number of scholars have shown, are scattered throughout Chaucer's work and are often of only peripheral significance to an understanding of some poems. In the five Canterbury tales discussed in the preceding chapters, however, I have argued that they are of central importance, providing an indispensable frame-work within which one can analyse closely the poet's achievement as a literary and moral artist.

That Chaucer should have made extensive use of homiletic sen-tentiae and narratives in these five tales is not surprising: these two types of sermon illustration had become, by the poet's time, two of the most vital elements in pulpit oratory. The former, as scholars such as Davy and Charland have shown, were the very warp and woof of the sermon.[1] The latter, though immensely popular with preacher and layman alike, were regarded with suspicion and sometimes outright hostility by many moralists, an attitude which dated back to the condemnation by St. Paul in his Epistles to Timothy of "fables" and of self-aggrandizing and misleading sermon rhetoric in general.

This recognition of the potential dangers of public oratory was not, of course, entirely original with Paul. Centuries before, Plato had condemned the sophistic of his day with its "rhetoric of personal display and triumph".[2] In a Christian context, however, it became especially necessary to emphasize the morality of the orator's life and the need to give priority to truth over rhetoric per se. In Apostolic and Patristic times the spread of the Faith was understandably of paramount importance: "rethors" who were too preoccupied with their own self-importance and with the technical accomplishment of their sermons were seen as more of a danger than a help to the propagation of the Christian message. As Paul

advised Timothy (II Tim. 2:14-16):

> Contend not in words; for it is to no profit, but
> to the subverting of the hearers./ Carefully study
> to present thyself approved unto God, a workman
> that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling
> the word of truth./ But shun profane and vain
> babblings; for they grow much towards ungodliness.

Closer to Chaucer's time, the wave of ecclesiastical reform that culminated in the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 fostered, among other things, a renewed interest in the moral character of the Christian preacher and the effectiveness of his teaching. At the same time, however, manuals of preaching rhetoric (the formal _artes praedicandi_, so called) were beginning to appear and, soon after, numerous convenient compilations of stories for use in sermons. The effect of these latter two developments was to encourage attention to sermon technique as never before and to foster an ever-increasing utilization of narrative _exempla_ by preachers. The age-old controversies of rhetoric and truth and the acceptability of homelitic narrative were thus given new life. The controversies boiled down to the question of whether or not stories and too great a facility with rhetoric generally (especially at the level of the high style) would lead to the obfuscation of the guiding message or "sentence" of the sermon.

The answer that the Parson provides to this question in his lengthy discourse is unequivocally against "fables and swich wrecchednesse". "I take", he states emphatically, "but the sentence": truth, in his orthodox view, takes the form of authoritative "olde sentences" which, presented in a clear and coherent manner as Walleys had recommended (and Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard before him), offer readily accessible

sources of divinely inspired wisdom for the faithful. Such is the Parson's method, presented with seemingly overwhelming seriousness at the conclusion of The Canterbury Tales.

To some, this may appear a too serious ending, an excess of "moralitee and vertuous mateere" in a work notable otherwise for its healthy mixture of "sentence" and "solaas". It is, however, a necessary conclusion if the moral purpose of the Canterbury pilgrimage is to be realized. It is especially necessary because the preachers amongst the pilgrims (some of the most outspoken of the company of "nyne and twenty", it might be added) have been particularly derelict in their duty to provide their fellow pilgrims with moral guidance. If the Parson seems excessive in his condemnation of narrative, it is not because he (nor Chaucer) is rejecting the art of story telling in itself. He is not making a blanket rejection of narrative but specifically of the "fables" indulged in by the other Canterbury preachers.[3] In the same way, his rejection and general avoidance of glossing does not mean that he (nor again Chaucer) considers exegesis to be wrong in itself. Rather, the perversion of the method by preachers such as the Wife of Bath and Friar John has made him feel obligated to provide, by way of counterbalance, an alternative approach to the truth of the Scriptures. Viewed in this light, the Parson's sermon becomes an inevitable, necessary, and altogether appropriate piece of dynamic pulpit oratory as the fallen pilgrims approach their final destination.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]The Latin text of both these manuals may be found in Th.M
Charland, Artes Praedicandi: Contribution in a l'histoire de la
rhétorique au moyen âge, Publications de l'institut d'etudes médiévales
d'Ottawa 7 (Ottawa and Paris, 1936), pp. 231-403. An English translation
of Robert of Basevorn's manual may be found in James J. Murphy, ed.,
Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), pp. 114-
215.

[2]Charland, p. 344.

[3]Charland, p. 244.

[4]W.O. Ross, ed., Middle English Sermons, EETS, No. 209 (London,
1960), p. xliii.

[5]Ross, ibid. Cf. also Susan Gallick, "A Look at Chaucer and his
Preachers", Speculum, 50 (1975), p. 457, where she observes that "probably
the majority of sermons fell somewhere on a continuum between the university
model with its strict structural pattern and the popular sermon with its
important rhetorical features".

[6]Charland, p. 109.

[7]Homer G. Pfander, The Popular Sermon of the Medieval Friar in
England (New York, 1937), p.16.

[8]Charland, p. 344.

[9]Étienne Gilson, "Michel Menot et la technique du sermon médiéval",
Revue d'histoire franciscaine, 2 (1925), pp. 313-14.

[10]On early Apostolic preaching see B. Reicke, "Synopsis of Early
Christian Preaching", in A.J. Fridricksen, ed., The Root of the Vine
(London, 1953), pp. 128-60.

[11]Frank V. Cespedes, "Chaucer's Pardoner and Preaching", ELH, 44
(1977), p. 2.

[12]This and all subsequent Biblical quotations are from The Holy

Bible: Douay Version (London, 1956).

[13]François Jansen, "Saint Augustin et la rhétorique", Nouvelle revue théologique, 57 (1930), p. 292.

[14]James J. Murphy, "Saint Augustine and the Debate about a Christian Rhetoric", QJS, 46 (1960), p. 407.

[15]The text I am using here and in all subsequent references is Saint Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York, 1958).

[16]On Augustine and Sophistic, see C.S. Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic to 1400 (New York, 1928), pp. 51-73. On Sophistic itself, see Baldwin, ibid., pp. 1-50.

[17]On Augustine and the three levels of rhetorical style, see Baldwin, pp. 64-71, and Erich Auerbach, Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series 75 (New York, 1965), pp. 27-66.

[18]Auerbach, p. 37.

[19]Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, (Oxford, 1941), p.10.

[20]On the development of Christian allegory from the writings of Philo through Origen, Ambrose and Augustine, see Henri de Lubac, Exégèse médiévale: Les quatres sens de l'Ecriture, Première partie (Paris, 1959), I, 198-219 ; Smalley, pp. 2-10; Harry Caplan, "The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching", in Of Eloquence: Studies in Ancient and Mediaeval Rhetoric by Harry Caplan, eds. Anne King and Helen North (Ithaca and London, 1970), pp. 96-97; and D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, 1962), pp. 290-95, who stresses the importance of St. Paul to Christian allegory.

[21]For detailed discussion of these three levels of meaning, see de Lubac, II, 489-667. For a brief explanation, see Caplan, pp. 94-95. Augustine himself did not speak in quite the same terms. In De utilitate credendi his discussion of the literal or historical sense of the Scriptures includes treatments of what he calls aetiologia and analogia, the former dealing with causes, the latter with the congruence of the Old and New Testaments. For the spiritual sense Augustine simply uses the term allegoria. See de Lubac, I, 178-79; Caplan, p. 97; and Robertson, Preface pp. 292-93.

[22]On various systems of multiple interpretation of the Scrip-
tures in the middle ages, see Caplan, pp. 97-104.

[23]Robertson, Preface, p. 293.

[24]The Latin text of the Regula may be found in PL, 77: 49-123.
A translation based on this text may be found in Gregory the Great, The
Book of Pastoral Rule, trans. James Bramby, in A Select Library of Nicene
and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, XII (Grand
Rapids, 1964), 1-72. Subsequent references are to this translation.

[25]Gregory, pp. 9-24.

[26]Gregory, pp. 71-72.

[27]Gregory, p.24.

[28]Gregory, pp. 24-71.

[29]Gregory, p. 28.

[30]See A. Lecoy de la Marche, La Chaire française au moyen âge
surtout au xiiie siècle d'après les manuscrits contemporains, (2nd
ed., Paris, 1886), pp. 205-11, 276-77.

[31]Alanus de Insulis, Summa de arte praedicatoria, in PL, 210:
104-98.

[32]PL, 210: 195-86.

[33]PL, 210: 115.

[34]Doris E. T. Myers, "The Artes Praedicandi and Chaucer's
Canterbury Preachers", Dissertation University of Nebraska, 1967, p.11.
Myers closely follows Dorothea Roth, Die Mittelalteriche Predicttheorie
und das Manuale curatorum des Johann Ulrich Surgant, Basler Beiträge zur
Geschichtswissenschaft, 58 (Basel and Stuttgart, 1956), p. 43.

[35]The best discussion of this development is found in M.M. Davy,
Les sermons universitaires parisiens de 1230-1231: contribution à
l'histoire de la prédication médiévale (Paris, 1931).

[36]Preaching was traditionally one of three duties of the Master

of Theology in the university, the other two being the lecture or _lectio_
and the disputation or _disputatio_:see Hastings Rashdall, _The Universities
of Europe in the Middle Ages_, eds. F.M. Powicke and A.B. Emden (Oxford,
1936), I, 471-86. The inter-relationship of the three duties is imagina-
tively articulated in the following statement of Peter Cantor in his
Verbum abbreviatum (PL, 205: 25):

> Lectio autem est quasi fundamentum....Disputatio
> quasi paries est in hoc exercitio et aedificio
> ....Praedicatio vero, cui subserviunt priora,
> quasi tectum est tegens fideles ab aestu, et a
> turbine vitiorum.

[37]For convenient listing of other manuals, see Harry Caplan,
"Classical Rhetoric and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching", in _Of
Eloquence_, pp. 110-12.

[38]The outline of the structure of the "university" sermon is
based largely on Charland, pp. 107-226; Ross, pp. xliii-li; Davy, pp.
36-46; Gilson; and G.R. Owst, _Preaching in Medieval England_ (Cambridge,
1926), pp. 316-54.

[39]On the recommended tripartite division of the theme see Robert
of Basevorn in Charland, pp. 254-55, and also Owst, pp. 321-23, and Ross,
p. xliv.

[40]Charland, pp. 269-72.

[41]Charland, pp. 357-68.

[42]Quoted in Ross, p. xlvii.

[43]See Robert of Basevorn in Charland, pp. 295-97.

[44]Charland, pp. 180-84. Cf. also Caplan, "Classical Rhetoric and
the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching", pp. 125-28, for brief discussion of
different methods of amplification by various theorists.

[45]Charland, pp. 387-90.

[46]On the over-lap of the _ars poetria_ and the _artes praedicandi_
see Gallick, pp. 457-58. On the _ars poetria_ see Edmond Faral, _Les arts
poétiques du xiie et du xiii siècle_ (Paris, 1971), which contains both
a discussion (pp. 1-103) and texts of contemporary poetry manuals (pp.
104-380), most notably those of Matthieu de Vendôme and Geoffroi de Vinsauf.

[47]Cf. Charland, p. 195, where he observes:

> Certains prédicateurs ne se servent que d'
> autorités, qu'ils empruntent à la Sainte
> Écriture ou aux docteurs catholiques, parfois
> aux philosophes paiens, surtout a ceux qui ont
> écrit sur la morale, comme Cicéron et Sénèque,
> ou qui ont, intercalé dans leurs oeuvres des
> propos de morale. Ils enfilent les autorités,
> passent d'une autorité à une autre presque
> sans interruption jusqu'à la fin du developpe-
> ment d'un membre de division.

[48]Ernest R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1963), p. 58.

[49]On the "scholastic method" see David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York, 1962), pp. 87-90, 95-96.

[50]Richard McKeon, "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages", in Critics and Criticism, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago, 1952), p. 283.

[51]See McKeon, pp. 283-84, and Rashdall, pp. 59-62.

[52]Davy, pp. 46-47.

[53]Stewart Justman, "Medieval Monism and the Abuse of Authority in Chaucer", ChauR, 11 (1976), p. 96. Justman, pp. 97-101, discusses the attempts of Abelard and Lombard to unify the corpus of authorities.

[54]The following information is based on Davy, pp. 48-51.

[55]See, for instance, Robert of Basevorn in Charland, p. 241, where he discusses purity of life as the first of three requirements for preaching (the others being sufficient knowledge and the authority to preach).

[56]Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in Some Mediaeval Tractates on Preaching", in Of Eloquence, p.91.

[57]Charland, p.270. On the importance of Valerius Maximus to the development of the narrative exemplum, see Salvatore Battaglia, "L'esempio medievale", Filologia Romanza, 6 (1959), 45-82, and 7 (1960), 21-84. The importance of this article is discussed by P.L. Yeager, "Chaucer's Exempla: A Study of their Backgrounds, Characteristics, and Literary Functions", Dissertation University of North Carolina, 1974, pp. 5-6.

[58]Charland, pp. 260-62.

[59]Ross, p lxiii.

[60]G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, (2nd ed. rev.; Oxford, 1966), p.153. See John Mirk, Festial, ed. Theodor Erbe, EETS, e.s., 96 (London: 1905), pp. 7-11 (Sermon 2, two concluding stories), pp. 60-62 (Sermon 14, three concluding stories). There are many more examples in the Festial.

[61]See Yeager, p. 5, who observes that "Delineation of the boundaries of the concept of 'exemplum' has been... a major task of exempla research". He gives over the opening chapter of his dissertation to discussing the problems of and the scholarship on defining the exemplum. For a concise and informative survey of the various meanings of the term from the time of Aristotle to the later middle ages, see Curtius, pp. 59-61. The definition of the term as exclusively a short narrative illustrating a general truth or statement is followed in a pioneering study of the form, J.A. Mosher, The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England (New York, 1966). More thorough scholarship, however, has tended to support the more inclusive definition of the term, that is, any kind of homelitic illustration: see the indispensible study, J.-Th. Welter, L'Exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge (Genève, 1973), pp. 1-2, and Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p. 152. A useful summary statement on the question may be found in Donald Baker, "Exemplary Figures as Characterizing Devices in the Friar's Tale and the Summoner's Tale". UMSE, 3 (1962), pp. 36-37:

> First, to be brief, the exemplum as defined by
> the medieval rhetoricians, is a brief anecdote
> used to reinforce the point of a particular argu-
> ment. There is, however, rather more to the
> exemplum than this. By extension, other figures
> could be and were considered under the same general
> heading. A second one is the exemplary figure which
> is the citation in analogy of the name of a person
> whose story is famous. In other words, the anecdote
> is omitted but evoked in the mind of the reader who
> is almost certainly familiar with the story. For
> example, Absalon's name could be cited in analogy
> in an argument concerning rebellion without its being
> necessary to relate the Biblical story. In other words,
> the exemplary figure is a kind of elliptical exemplum.
> And a third variety, somewhat more loosely connected,
> is the citation of "auctorite", without which medieval
> literature would have been poor indeed. It has perhaps
> little immediate relation to the exemplum, but
> actually serves much the same purpose in illustrating
> an argument. The three, closely connected in the

effect that they achieve, are probably the most common
of rhetorical devices used in the Middle Ages.
In my analyses of the use of illustrative materials by the Canterbury
preachers I use the term 'narrative exemplum' to designate clearly
Baker's first category, and retain his use of 'exemplary figure'.

[62]McKeon, p. 262.

[63]Thomas F. Crane, ed., The Exempla or Illustrative Stories
from the Sermones vulgares of Jacques de Vitry, Publications of the
Folklore Society 26 (Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1967), p. xviii. For
historical evidence that the term was used in the narrative sense from at
least the fourth century AD, see Frederick Tubach, "Exemplum in Decline",
Traditio, 18 (1962), pp. 408-09.

[64]See Welter, pp. 14-16, and Mosher, pp. 10-11, 20-21.

[65]PL, 210:114.

[66]Charland, pp. 269-70.

[67]See J.A. Herbert, Catalogue of Romances in the Department of
Manuscripts in the British Museum, III (Bath, 1962), which contains
descriptions of manuscripts containing exempla, listing the contents of
the important compilations of de Vitry, Holcot, Mannyng, Waddington,
Bromyard, and others.

[68]The stories from de Bourbon's Tractatus may be found in A
Lecoy de la Marche, ed., Anecdotes historiques, légendes et apologues
tirés du recueil inédit d'Étienne de Bourbon (Paris, 1877). Its importance
has been stressed by Davy, p. 34, and a concise discussion of it is
provided in Welter, pp. 215-23. De Vitry's stories have been edited by
Crane (see note 63 above). On John of Wales see Welter, pp. 233-36. On
the importance of the Gesta Romanorum, see Mosher, pp. 78-80, and Welter,
pp. 369-73. On Holcot see Crane, pp. lxxxii-lxxxv, xcviii-c, and
Welter, pp. 360-66. Bromyard's Summa as the major representative of the
class of alphabetical compilations is best discussed in Crane, pp. c-cii,
and in Welter, pp. 328-34.

[69]For detailed discussion of alphabetical compilations see Welter,
pp. 290-334. A more superficial treatment is provided in H.G. Pfander, "The
Mediaeval Friars and some Alphabetical Reference-Books for Sermons",
Medium Aevum, 3 (1934), 19-29. Another alphabetical reference-book in a
convenient modern edition is A.G. Little, ed., Liber exemplorum ad usum
praedicantium, (Aberdeen, 1908).

[70]See Crane, pp. xl-xlix.

[71] Quoted in Crane, pp. xli.

[72] See W.A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 189-235, who provides a discussion of the manuals and treatises in their religious-historical context. Concise over-views of the various works may be found in Owst, Preaching, pp. 279-308, and, especially, H.G. Pfander, "Some Mediaeval Manuals of Religious Instruction in England and Observations on Chaucer's Parson's Tale", JEGP, 35 (1936), pp. 244-53.

[73] Pantin, p. 221.

[74] Pantin, pp. 221-22, where he quotes the Speculum Vitae:
    Good men and women...
    I will make no vain speaking
    Of deeds of arms nor of amours,
    As do other minstrels and other gestours...

[75] Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, A.D. 1303, with those parts of the Anglo-French Treatise on which it was founded, Le Manuel des Pechiez by William of Wadington, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS 119, 123 (London, 1901-03), p.3.

[76] Mosher, p. 120.

[77] Mosher, p. 122.

[78] The text of William of Wadington's work may be found in the same edition as that of Mannyng's (see note 75 above).

[79] See Mosher, p. 121.

[80] See Mosher, pp. 119-20, Welter, pp. 170-71, and Crane, pp. cxiv-cxv.

[81] William of Wadington, p.3.

[82] Mosher, pp. 119-20.

[83] Welter, p. 171.

[84] Paradiso, XXIX, 11. 94-117. The edition used is Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy III: Paradiso, trans. Charles S. Singleton, Bollingen Series 80 (Princeton, 1975), 329-31.

[85]See n. 70 in Welter, pp. 102-03, for a survey of Christian commentary on the use of _fabula_ from the fourth century to the twelfth.

[86]See Harry Caplan, "A Late Mediaeval Tractate on Preaching", in Of Eloquence, p. 49.

[87]See Mosher, p. 17, for specific condemnations in Wycliffe's writings. On the Wycliffite emphasis on the "naked text", see Owst, Preaching, pp. 132-36.

[88]Owst, Preaching, p.80.

[89]Curtius, p. 452.

[90]Frederick Whitesell, "Fables in Medieval Exempla", JEGP, 46 (1947), p. 350.

[91]Based on a careful check of all the instances of "fable" listed in J.S.P. Tatlock and A.G. Kennedy, Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and to the Romaunt of the Rose (Gloucester, Mass., 1963). The poet's version of the Romance of the Rose, for instance, begins as follows:

Many men sayn that in sweveninges
Ther nys but fables and lesynges;   (ll. 1-2)

Over and over again, the formula "this is no fable" or some variation there-of appears in Chaucer's work as an assertion of truth: the marvellous mechanical horse in The Squire's Tale is presented as real,"....sikerly, withouten any fable" (l. 180); the legend of Cleopatra in The Legend of Good Women ends with the claim that "this is storyal soth, it is no fable" (1.702); the false judge in The Physician's Tale is called Apius, "So was his name, for this is no fable" (1.155). These and all subsequent line references to Chaucer are from The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson (2nd ed.; Boston, 1957).

[92]On the tenth canon of the Lateran Council and its effect on increased preaching activity, see Davy, pp. 29-30, Lecoy de la Marche, La Chaire française, p. 23, and D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Frequency of Preaching in Thirteenth-Century England", Speculum, 24 (1949), p. 377. Robertson, ibid., pp. 378 ff., discusses various decrees in England that specifically encouraged preaching.

[93]Pantin, p. 236.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Pfander, Popular Sermon, pp. 4-5.

[96]C.O. Chapman, "The Pardoner's Tale: A Medieval Sermon", MLN, 41 (1926), 506-09; C.O. Chapman, "The Parson's Tale: A Medieval Sermon", MLN, 43 (1928), 229-34; C.O. Chapman, "Chaucer on Preachers and Preaching", PMLA, 44 (1929), 178-85.

[97]Harry Caplan, "A Late Mediaeval Tractate on Preaching", pp. 52-78.

[98]Robinson, p. 729, in his note to 1. 33 of The Pardoner's Prologue seems to support this schematic approach.

[99]Claude Jones, "The Monk's Tale, a Mediaeval Sermon", MLN, 52 (1937), 570-72; Claude Jones, "The 'Second Nun's Tale', a Medieval Sermon", MLR, 32 (1937), 283.

[100]Nancy Owen, "The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale: Sermon and Fabliau", JEGP, 66 (1967), 541-49.

[101]See n. 34 above.

[102]Gallick, "A Look at Chaucer and his Preachers".

[103]Gallick, p. 460.

[104]Robert E. Jungman, "The Pardoner's Quarrel with the Host", PQ, 55 (1976), 279-81; and see n. 11 above.

[105]Kate O. Petersen, On the Sources of the Nonne Preestes Tale, Radcliffe College Monographs, No. 10 (New York, 1966) in which she provides convincing evidence to show that Chaucer draws upon Holcot's Liber sapientiae for sections of The Nun's Priests Tale, the Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale, The Summoner's Tale, The Pardoner's Tale and Troilus and Criseyde. Also Kate O. Petersen, The Sources of the Parson's Tale, Radcliffe College Monographs, No. 12 (New York, 1973), in which she restricts herself to tabulating parallels between the tale and two thirteenth century Latin tracts, the Summa casuum poenitentiae of Raymond of Pennaforte, and the Summa seu tractatus de viciis of Guilielmus Peraldus (the latter an ancestor, through Wadington's Manuel des Pechiez, of Handlyng Synne).

[106]Robert A. Pratt, "Chaucer and the Hand that Fed Him", Speculum, 41 (1966), 619-42. The compilation here is John of Wales' Comminologuium which, Pratt argues, is the source for sections of The Wife of Bath's

Prologue and Tale, The Summoner's Tale, The Pardoner's Tale, and The Nun's Priest's Tale.

[107]Siegfried Wenzel, "Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary Preaching", SP, 73 (1976), 138-61.

. [108]See Pfander, "Some Mediaeval Manuals of Religious Instruction", pp. 253-58, who argues this.

[109]See Robertson, Preface, pp. 317-36, who discusses the exegetical methods of the Wife, Friar John, the Pardoner and the Parson. The Pardoner, however, strikes me as much more interesting for his over-use of "ensamples" than for his exegesis per se.

[110]Robertson, Preface, pp. 273-76.

[111]Two other scholars who treat illustrative materials such as this dissertation is concerned with but not exclusively in a preaching context, are Yeager (see n. 57 above), and Donald MacDonald, "Proverbs, Sententiae, and Exempla in Chaucer's Comic Tales: The Function of Comic Misapplication", Speculum, 41 (1966), 453-65. Both conclude that the mis-application of such materials fulfills a primarily comic function, a view I consider to be very limited but not very surprising in the light of their not recognizing sufficiently (if at all) Chaucer's debt to the medieval pulpit.

[112]On Dorigen's exempla as a key to her character see Robert-son, Preface, pp. 273-74. Cf. also Yeager, pp. 153-64, who sees the exempla-filled complaint in its excess as an "element in the comic characterization of Dorigen".

[113]For a concise, well documented discussion of the historical background to Chaucer's use of contemporary charges against the friars, see Arnold Williams, "Chaucer and the Friars", Speculum, 28 (1953), 499-513.

[114]Ralph Baldwin, The Unity of the 'Canterbury Tales', Anglistica, Vol.5 (Copenhagen, 1955); Paul G. Ruggiers, The Art of the Canterbury Tales (Madison, 1965), pp. 23-30; Robertson, Preface, pp. 335-36; B.F. Huppé, A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (Albany, 1964), pp. 19-20; Donald Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976), esp. pp. 68-74; Rodney Delasanta, "Penance and Poetry in the Canterbury Tales", PMLA, 93 (1978), 240-47.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

‧ [1]The Tale has always defied precise categorization. It has been
variously labelled as a "mock heroic" poem: see G.L. Kittredge, Chaucer
and his Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 13-14; a medieval tragedy
of fortune in a Boethian vein (like The Monk's Tale that precedes it): see
John F. Mahoney, "Chaucerian Tragedy and the Christian Tradition", AnM,
3 (1962), pp. 88-89, an essay that builds on the earlier study — whose
focus was on Troilus and Criseyde — by D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Chaucerian
Tragedy", ELH, 19 (1952), 1-37; a "beast fable": see especially Kate O.
Petersen, On the Sources of The Nonnes Prestes Tale, pp. 1-90, for the
tale's links with medieval beast epics; a fabula in the broad medieval
sense of the term: see Stephen Manning, "The Nun's Priest's Morality
and the Medieval Attitude toward Fables", JEGP, 59 (1960), 403-16, and
R.T. Lenaghan, "The Nun's Priest's Fable", PMLA, 78 (1963), 300-07. For
a recent study of the tale as "fable-exemplum", see A. Paul Shallers,
"The 'Nun's Priest's Tale': An Ironic Exemplum", ELH, 42 (1975), 319-
37. On the "mixed style" of the poem, see Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and
the French Tradition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), pp. 237-43, and
Susan Gallick, "Styles of Usage in the Nun's Priest's Tale", ChauR 11
(1977), 232-47.

[2]Both the host and the pilgrim-narrator refer to the Nun's
Priest by this name (ll. 2810, 2820). See note to l. 2810 in Robinson,
p. 751, in which he points out that "sir John" was a "common nickname for
a priest". Cf. Friar John in The Summoner's Tale.

[3]See Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the
Canterbury Tales (2nd ed., New York, 1967), p. 104, and Robinson, p. 655,
in note to l. 164 of the General Prologue, both of whom discuss the probable
duties of this most elusive of the Canterbury pilgrims. On "preachings in
the nunnery" see Owst, Preaching, pp. 258-59, who notes that the "nun was
treated to the same high-and-dry formality of 'figures' and expositions as
her brother of the cloister". This may explain in part the high style
rhetoric of Chaucer's Tale.

[4]Harry Caplan, "Classical Rhetoric and the Mediaeval Theory of
Preaching", pp. 117-18, Cf. also Doris Myers "The Artes Praedicandi and
Chaucer's Canterbury Preachers", pp. 20-22, where, with reference to the
sermons of Thomas Brinton and John Bromyard (both contemporaries of Chaucer),
she shows how birds were commonly used as figures of prelatical vigilance,
with special reference to their eyes: prelates were the eyes of the Church
because of the "superior knowledge and spiritual discernment of the clergy".
The cock, Myers goes on to elaborate, was a particular favourite in such
discussions: his vigilance in heralding the dawn was seen as symbolic of

the vigilance of the prelate in awaiting the Second Coming; because of
his knowledge of astrology, he was also held up as a symbol of the
knowledge and discernment of the prelate. The Cock figure, Myers adds
later (pp. 26-28), was specifically applied to the preaching situation:
the text commonly cited here was Job 38:36, "Who gave the cock under-
standing ?", to which Myers provides Bromyard's reply in "Praedicator"
that the "cock's knowledge of times and seasons comes from God; there-
fore the preacher must pray earnestly for discretion, so that he may
preach the right thing at the right time" (p. 27). Cf. also the early
fourteenth century anonymous Latin poem, "Why there is a Weather-cock
on the Church Tower", in F.J.E. Raby, ed., The Oxford Book of Medieval
Latin Verse (Oxford, 1959), pp. 437-39, for a poetic treatment of the
parallels between the behaviour of the cock and that of a good parish
priest. The flapping of the cock's wings as a symbol of mortification
is also found in Gregory's Regula pastoralis and Bromyard's "Praedicator"
(pointed out by Myers, p.28).

[5]Myers, pp. 108-13. Again she uses Bromyard as her main authority.
She refers to the example he gives in an ordination sermon ("Ordo Cler-
icalis") of the fox who persuaded the ape to close his eyes, this treated
as symbolic of the devil closing the eyes of prelates to sin. Negligence
was, very simply, the opposite of prelatical vigilance and diligence.
Winking or shut eyes testified to the former, alert open eyes to the latter.
In this respect then, the Bruges MS. discussed by Caplan, with its refer-
ence to the preacher shutting his eyes to success, is different.

[6]See Ross, Middle English Sermons, pp.1, 12, 103, 133, et
passim. See also The Pardoner's Tale, 11, 352, 377, 906.

[7]See Ross, throughout.

[8]Humour is recommended to waken up sleepy congregations by
Robert of Basevorn in his Forma praedicandi: Charland, p. 320. Such use
of humour as well as the use of vernacular and verse as homelitic
qualities are discussed in John Friedman, "The Nun's Priest's Tale: The
Preacher and the Mermaid's Song", ChauR, 7 (1972-73), pp. 253-56. On the
use of verse and the vernacular in sermons, see also Owst, Preaching, pp.
239-47, 271-78, 282-86, et passim. On verse sermons, see also Pfander,
Popular Sermon, pp. 20-44. On recurring themes see Petersen, On the
Sources of the Nonnes Prestes Tale, pp. 96-97, who lists "Mulier, Adulatio,
Necessitas, Gaudium, Aleatores or Ludas, Jurare, etc.," as common head-
ings in late Medieval sermon-books under which preachers found ample
material for their homilies.

[9]See the pioneering, if somewhat misleading, study, J.M. Manly,
Chaucer and the Rhetoricians, Warton Lecture on Poetry 17: Proceedings of
the British Academy (London, 1926), pp. 3-4, 15, 16, 18-19; Karl Young,
"Chaucer and Geoffrey of Vinsauf", MP, 41 (1944), 172-82; and Sister M.
Joselyn, "Aspects of Form in the Nun's Priest's Tale", CE, 25 (1964), 566-71.

[10]See note to 1. 3164 in Robinson, p. 753.

[11]See note to 1. 3163 in Robinson, p. 753, and also note to
1.254 of the General Prologue, Robinson, p. 657, where he notes that these
"opening words of St. John's Gospel...were regarded with peculiar reverence
and even held to have a magical virtue" in the medieval period.

[12]For the widespread occurence of the remark in medieval times,
see note to 1. 3256 in Robinson, p. 754, and n.3 in Petersen, On the
Sources of the Nonnes Prestes Tale, pp. 96-97. On the expression of anti-
feminist sentiments in sermons, see Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 375-
404.

[13]"...the refusal to describe or narrate", as defined in
Manly, p. 14.

[14]Gallick, "A Look at Chaucer and his Preachers", p. 473.

[15]The lines run as follows:
        ...dremes been significaciouns
        As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns
        That folk enduren in this lif present.

[16]The identity of the "auctour" referred to at 1. 2984 has
actually been a matter of considerable scholarly discussion. It has
generally been agreed that the ultimate source of the two "ensamples"
lies in the work of Valerius Maximus, but disagreement arises on the
question of who was Chaucer's immediate source. Petersen argues for Hol-
cot, but the Expugnatio Hibernica of Giraldus Cambrensis has also been
suggested: see Shio Sakanishi, "A Note on the Nonne Preests Tale", MLN,
47 (1932), 1950-51. To complicate matters, the stories are also found
in Cicero's De divitione. But Valerius Maximus should probably stand as
the ultimate source when one recognizes his pre-eminence as a source for
the many compilations of narrative exempla in the late medieval period
(see n. 1 in Petersen, pp. 109-10) and his importance in the development
of the form into an important device for moral instruction (see n. 57,
p. 186 of this dissertation).

[17]Charland, p. 261.

[18]Charland, ibid.

[19]Charland, p. 260.

[20]Welter, p.80.

[21] The lines run as follows:

> Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,
> Macrobeus, that writ the avisioun
> In Affrike of the worthy Cipioun,
> Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been
> Warnynge of thynges that men after seen.
> And forthermoore, I pray yow, looketh wel
> In the olde testament, of Daniel,
> If he heeld dremes any vanitee.
> Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see
> Wher dremes by somtyme-- I sey nat alle--
> Warnynge of thynges that shul after falle.
> Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun Pharao,
> His bakere and his butiller also,
> Wher they ne felte noon effect in dremes.

[22] Chaucer's handling of illustrative material of varying length (and apparently questionable relevance to stated theme) has been severely criticised, for example, in the case of Dorigen's complaint in The Franklin's Tale: see Germaine Dempster", Chaucer at work on the Complaint in the Franklin's Tale", MLN, 52 (1937), 16-23. On the other hand, the seemingly careless stitching together of such illustrations (especially the tendency for them to become increasingly brief) has been noted as recurring in other works by the poet and thus a sign of deliberate artistry: see James Sledd, "Dorigen's Complaint", MP, 45 (1947), pp. 38-39.

[23] Indeed the two voices virtually blend into one at ll. 3256-64, as the Priest's unconvincing disclaimer at ll. 3265-66 makes clear.

[24] Robert of Basevorn, we recall, recommends "Opportuna jocatio" to combat the problem of sleepy congregations: Charland, p. 320.

[25] Chaucer uses this expression with slight variations, but always with the same meaning, in The Man of Law's Tale, ll, 701-02; The Parson's Tale, ll. 35-36; The Legend of Good Women, Prologue G, ll. 311-12. The meaning it embodies is central to the thesis of an important modern study: Bernard F. Huppé and D.W. Robertson, Jr., Fruyt and Chat: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories (Princeton, 1963).

[26] Manning, "The Nun's Priest's Morality", p. 416.

¹Six lines that appear in several manuscripts should also be
mentioned:

> Of whiche I have pyked out the beste,
> Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste,
> Diverse scoles maken parfyt clerkes,
> And diverse practyk in many sondry werkes
> Maketh the werkman parfyt sekirly;
> Of fyve husbondes scoleiyng am I.
> (11. 44a-44f)

These, according to Robinson, p. 891, "are probably genuine, but whether
Chaucer added them late and meant to keep them, or wrote them early and
meant to reject them, is uncertain". We can never be absolutely sure, of
course, of the poet's intentions in the matter, but I would suggest that he
meant to retain them. In the light of my argument later on in this chapter
that Chaucer in the first section of the Prologue means us to see the Wife
as something of an exegete, utilizing the methods and appropriating and
"personalizing" the materials of a class that she actually despises, it
would seem that these clever lines are eminently suited to her purposes.
In them she pictures herself as a perfect clerk because she has much
practice in "many sondry werkes". Of course, the practice she is talking
about is anything but intellectual. The lines are heavy with irony and
also epitomize what she does throughout the first section of the Prologue:
appearing to be a clerical exegete, seeming to be using authoritative
materials ("many sondry werkes") while at the same time gradually and
subtly undermining them with the force of her own "experience" or
"scoleiyng" with five husbands. Of the latter she is to talk openly and
at great length in the second section of the Prologue.

There are also several lines (E.11 1415-32) spoken by
Januarius in The Merchant's Tale which not only call to mind the Wife's
age and behaviour but are also directly related to the statement above:

> For sondry scoles maken sotile clerkes;
> Womman of manye scoles half a clerk is.
> (E. 11. 1427-28)

²Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p.389. See also Pratt, "Chaucer
and the Hand that Fed Him", pp. 620-27, who lists the following passages
in the Prologue and Tale as probably coming from John of Wales Comminoloquium:
11. 457-68, 637-65, 784-85, 1165-67, 1168-76, 1177-1202.

³See Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 378-82.

⁴See Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 163-64.

[5] Arthur K. Moore, "The Pardoner's Interruption of The Wife of Bath's Prologue", MLQ, 10 (1949), pp. 49, 57.

[6] See The Wife of Bath's Prologue, ll. 555-58, where she speaks of her "visitaciouns" to vigils, processions, pilgrimages, miracle plays and sermons, and also the General Prologue, ll. 463-67, which run as follows:

> And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;
> She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
> At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
> In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.
> She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.

[7] See Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 169-77, and Preaching, pp. 58-64. See also Welter, p. 16, where he notes that in the earliest homilies of the Church there existed "l'exemplum personnel emprunté à l'expérience religieuse de l'auteur", a category which took on increasing importance and, apparently, became more flexible from the thirteenth century on as experiences that were not strictly religious came to play a bigger role. Welter speaks of this development as resulting in one of two principal classes of narrative exempla, one which

> ...comprend les souvenirs personnels ou les
> événements contemporains de l'écrivain, pré-
> dicateur, moraliste ou compilateur, dont on
> ne saurait jamais trop apprécier les renseig-
> nements qu'il nous fournit sur la société, les
> moeurs, les usages et les coutumes, les traditions
> et les croyances. Celui-ci est, en effet, un
> homme qui, en raison de ses fonctions de
> prédicateur ambulant, a beaucoup voyagé. (p.104)

For examples of such personal exempla, see Little, Liber exemplorum, pp. 85-86, in which the compiler (a Franciscan friar) speaks of stories picked up when he was in Ireland, and also pp. 110-11, where he tells of one Friar Peter, a Danish visitor to the Friars Minor in Ireland, preaching to the convent in Dublin on the strange customs which prevailed in his country.

[8] The Pardoner is known throughout England ("...fro Berwyk unto Ware," A l. 692), has preached and begged "in sondry landes" (C. l. 443), and has, just prior to the Canterbury Pilgrimage, returned from Rome (A. 1671), possibly stopping along the way in Flanders, whose sinful ways he so vividly evokes at the beginning of his Tale" (C. ll. 463-84).

[9] See Anne Kernan, "The Archwife and the Eunuch", ELH, 41 (1974), 1-25.

[10] One of the ironies informing the Wife's Prologue and Tale is that, as a woman, she should not be preaching at all. See Owst, Preaching, pp. 4-5, where he notes that "Women as a class most people would consider

quite naturally excluded from the privilege of preaching in the middle
ages". He notes on exception to this general rule — abbesses.

[11]MacDonald, "Proverbs, Sententiae and Exempla in Chaucer's
Comic Tales", p. 457.

[12]Robertson, Preface, pp. 317-31.

[13]Robert Miller, "The Wife of Bath's Tale and Medieval Exempla",
ELH, 32 (1965), 442-56.

[14]See Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 41-46, who shows that
proverbs provided a fertile source of illustrative material for medieval
preachers and he quotes a number of them that appear in Bromyard's Summa
praedicantium, some of which are still current today. Very recently,
Wenzel, "Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary Preaching", pp. 144-51,
has pointed out specific examples in Chaucer of images cast in proverbial
form that can be traced to sermon sources. I have not discussed the use
of proverbs as illustration in the other sermon tales because they do not
play a distinctive role in those tales as they do in the Wife's. For
convenient lists of proverbs found in Chaucer, see Willi Haeckel, Das
Sprichwort bei Chaucer, Erlanger Beitrage zur Englischen Philologie, 8
(Erlangen and Leipzig, 1890); W.W. Skeat, Early English Proverbs, Oxford,
1910 (not exclusively on Chaucer); B.J. Whiting, Chaucer's Use of Pro-
verbs, Harvard Studies in Comparitive Literature, Vol 11 (Cambridge, Mass.,
1934). Cf. also R.M. Lumiansky, "The Function of Proverbial Monitory
Elements in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde", TSE, 2 (1950), 5-48, an
important study of proverbs in a major work of the poet.

[15]On the Introduction in a sermon, see p.17 of the first chapter
of this dissertation.

[16]The wife actually takes most of the Biblical texts at second
hand from St. Jerome's Epistola adversus Jovinianum.

[17]Robertson, Preface, p. 317.

[18]See Robertson, Preface, pp. 318-22, for a lengthy discussion
of the Wife's first two illustrations. As enlightening as Robertson
generally is on the Wife's exegetical methods, he nonetheless rather need-
lessly discusses, I find, the complex spiritual meanings of these two
illustrations. My point is that the Wife feigns ignorance of the literal
meaning of these passages and probably does not understand (or even care
to) their allegorical meaning. In the light of this, Robertson's lengthy
explanation seems unnecessarily erudite.

[19]Charland, p. 253. See also Walleys' discussion of this question

in Charland, pp. 344-45, in which he lists various minor ways in which texts can be altered without changing their meaning as, for example, the following:

> Joannis 21° de petro sic dicitur: Tunica Succ-
> inxit se, erat enim nudus, et misit se in mare
> Unde si quis ommitteret istud: erat enim nudus,
> et hoc modo acciperet thema: Tunica succinxit
> se et misit se in mare, non erraret in acceptione
> thematis.

Two other allowable alterations are the ommision of conjunctions such as ergo, enim, autem, et, and the substitution, in certain cases, of the masculine for the feminine (or vice versa).

[20] The lines run as follows:

> What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye
> Of shrewed Lameth and his bigamye ?
> I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,
> And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan;
> And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,
> And many another holy man also.

[21] See Robertson, Preface, p. 326.

[22] See Robertson, Preface, pp. 323-24.

[23] Robertson, Preface, p.324.

[24] The passages run as follows in the original:

> A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband
> liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty.
> Let her marry to whom she will; only in the Lord.
> (I Cor. 7:39)

> But if thou take a wife, thou has not sinned.
> And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned...
> (I Cor. 7:28)

[25] The Wife, it should be noted, never actually identifies Paul by name.

[26] The passage runs as follows in the original:

> Now, concerning virgins, I have no command-
> ment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having
> obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful.
> (I Cor. 7:25)

[27] The passage runs in the original as follows:

For I would that all men were even as myself.
(I Cor. 7:7, in part)

[28]The passage runs in the original as follows:
It is good for a man not to touch a woman.
(I Cor. 7:1)

[29]The passage runs in the original as follows:
But every one hath his proper gift from God;
one after this manner, and another after that.
(I Cor. 7:7, in part)

[30]The passage runs in the original as follows:
Let every man abide in the same calling in
which he was called.
(I Cor. 7:20)

[31]The first part of this verse is quoted above at n. 23 and
continues as follows:
...such shall have tribulation of the flesh.

[32]The passage runs in the original as follows:
The wife hath not power of her own body;
but the husband. And in like manner, the
husband hath not power of his own body;
but the wife.
(I.Cor. 7:4)
See Robertson, Preface, p. 329, for a discussion of the Wife's distortion
of this passage.

[33]The text here stress the subjugation of the wife and the love
of the husband for her. They run in the original as follows:
Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ,
So also let the wives be to their husbands in
all things./ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ
also loved the church and delivered himself up
for it.
(Eph. 5:24-25)

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as it be-
hoveth in the Lord./ Husbands, love your wives
and be not bitter towards them.
(Col. 3:18-19)
Robertson, Preface, pp. 329-30, discusses the Wife's treatment of these
passages.

[34]She does the same, of course, with the non-Pauline Biblical
references in her first section: Gen. 1:28 (1.28); Gen. 2:24 or Matt. 19:5

(ll. 30-31); Matt. 19:21 (ll. 107-10): John 6:9 (ll. 144-45). For a convenient discussion of her treatment of these texts see Robertson, Preface, pp. 322-23, 327-28, 328-29.

[35]The passage in the original runs as follows:

> But in a great house there are not only vessels
> of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of
> earth; and some indeed unto honour, but some
> unto dishonour.
>
> (II Tim. 2:20)

See Robertson, Preface, p. 327, who, after discussing the spiritual meanings of the vessels of gold and silver, admits that the Wife's misinterpretation of this text is "inadvertent on her part".

[36]This is part of the process of what Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, p.207, calls "the careful naturalization of the Wife's authorities". See Muscatine, pp. 207-10, for his full discussion.

[37]See n. 34 above.

[38]See the General Prologue, ll. 688-91, which contradict the Pardoner's statement in his Prologue, l. 453 (certainly not to be trusted) that he is accustomed to having "a joly wenche in every toun". For a discussion of the Pardoner's physical deformity and its moral implications, see W.C. Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences (New York, 1926), pp. 58-59.

[39]The word "fantasye" has several meanings in Middle English, all of which come into play in this statement. According to Robinson, p. 948, in his brief glossary definition, it can mean "delight" or "desire" whose application to the pleasure-seeking Wife is obvious. It can also mean "fancy" or "imagination" in the pejorative sense of a distortion of the truth caused by sinful self-indulgence (see The Merchant's Tale, ll. 157.-87). Much of the Wife's "tale" is untruthful, sometimes by her own admission (ll. 379-83).

[40]She also refers to it as a "tale" before it actually begins (ll. 169, 193).

[41]See Muscatine, pp. 79-97, 205, 210ff., for a discussion of De Meun's "invention of the dramatic monologue" and what Chaucer did with it. Most (not all) the source passages from the Roman de la Rose are conveniently excerpted in W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, eds., Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (New York, 1958), pp. 213-15.

[42]Muscatine, pp. 207-10.

[43] Muscatine, pp. 208, 210-11.

[44] Other passages in which "auctoritees" remain unidentified and which appear in the context of complete fabrication are: ll. 282-92, 293-302, 303-06, 362-70, 371-78.

[45] Muscatine, p. 211.

[46] Jankyn's volume also contains the Old Testament Book of Proverbs and Ovid's Ars amatoria (ll. 679-80), but all but one (the reference to Pasiphae at ll. 733-36 is from Ovid) of the subsequent references are from Map, Theophrastus and Jerome.

[47] See Bryan and Dempster, pp. 207-13.

[48] The lines run as follows:

> Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse
> Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse,
> For which that Jhesu Crist himself was slayn,
> That boghte us with his herte blood agayn.
> Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde,
> That womman was the los of al mankynde.
> Tho redde he me how Sampson loste his heres:
> Slepynge, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres;
> Thurgh which treson loste he bothe his yen.
> Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,
> Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,
> That caused hym to sette hymself afyre.
> No thyng forgat he the care and the wo
> That Socrates hadde with his wyves two;
> How Xantippa caste pisse upon his heed.
> This sely man sat stille as he were deed;
> He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn,
> But 'Er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn!
> Of Phasipha, that was the queene of Crete,
> For shrewednesse, hym thoughte the tale swete;
> Fy! spek namoore — it is a grisly thyng —
> Of hire horrible lust and hir likyng.
> Of Clitemnystra, for hire lecherye,
> That falsly made hire housbonde for to dye,
> He redde it with ful good devocioun.
> He tolde me eek for what occasioun
> Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.
> Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf,
> Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold
> Hath prively unto the Grekes told
> Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,

For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace.
Of Lyvia tolde he me, and of Lucye:
They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye;
That oon for love, that oother was for hate.
Lyvia hir housbonde, on an even late,
Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo;
Lucia, likerous, loved hire housbonde so
That, for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,
She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke
That he was deed er it were by the morwe;
And thus algates housbondes han sorwe.
Thanne tolde he me how oon Latumyus
Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius
That in his gardyn growed swich a tree
On which he seyde how that his wyves thre
Hanged hemself for herte despitus.
'O leeve brother,' quod this Arrius,
'Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,
And if my gardyn planted shal it be.'
Of latter date, of wyves hath he red
That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,
And lete hir leccher dighte hire al the nyght,
Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.
And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn,
While that they slepe, and thus they had hem slayn.
Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hire drynke.

[49]This overt act of revenge on "auctoritee" should be compared
to La Vielle's revenge on former lovers who taunt her in her old age:
Le Roman de la Rose, ed. E.Langlois (Paris, 1921), III, 259-62. This
underscores my point made earlier that, for all his use of De Meun,
Chaucer reshapes his source material to give it a homelitic quality: La
Vielle is simply not preoccupied with "auctoritee" as the Wife is.

[50]Whiting, p. 92. Whiting attributes "fourteen proverbs and
twenty-five sententious remarks" to the Wife in her Prologue and two
proverbs and seven sententious remarks to her in the Tale itself. He
lists these, pp. 92-100, though he fails (as he does throughout his book)
to sufficiently clarify the difference between the two forms of illus-
tration.

[51]Muscatine, p.205.

[52]Muscatine, pp. 205-06.

[53]Other proverbs as follows:
    Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake.
                    (l. 269)

He is to greet a nygard that wolde werne
A man to lighte a candle at his lanterne;
He shal have never the lasse light, pardee.
(ll. 333-35)
I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek
That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,
And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.
(ll. 572-74)

[54]Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, pp. 191-92, was the first modern scholar to refer to the Tale as a sermon exemplum.

[55]Miller, "The Wife of Bath's Tale and Medieval Exempla", p.443.

[56]Miller, p.443.

[57]Miller, pp. 444-45, refers to Odo of Cheriton's use of the motif in one of his sermons. See also Bryan and Dempster, p. 223, where it is noted that in Chaucer's Tale the motifs of the "hag transformed through love, and that of the man whose life depends on the correct answering of a question" are joined as they are not in the analogues (also excerpted in Bryan and Dempster, pp. 224-64). See also Bernard F. Huppé, A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1964), pp. 129-35, on the five points on which the Tale differs from its analogues.

[58]Miller, p. 444.

[59]On anti-clericalism in medieval sermons, see Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 242-86, and Ross, Middle English Sermons, p.xxxviii, n.2. Cf. also Huppé, Reading, p.130 who notes that the introductory remarks to the Tale are original to Chaucer.

[60]On the absence from medieval art of human "psychology" in the modern sense, see Robertson, Preface, pp. 35-38, 276-77, et passim.

[61]See Huppé, Reading, p.131. Cf. also Charles Koban, "Hearing Chaucer Out: the Art of Persuasion in the Wife of Bath's Tale", ChauR, 5 (1971), 225-39, who discusses the Loathly Lady's sermon as an example of the "explicit statement of thought" which, along with "exemplary materials", supersedes plot and allows Chaucer to reflect here (and in his other works) on larger philosophical issues. However, Koban's terminology is unanchored in the rhetorical tradition (neither in the ars poetria nor the artes praedicandi) and this weakens the validity of much of what he is saying.

[62]I would suggest that a parallel is intended here as well:

in this case a parallel to the "wise" figure of the first part of the first section of the Prologue —Solomon (1.35).

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1] Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, p.21

[2] Chapman, "The Pardoner's Tale: a Medieval Sermon", pp.509, 506.
On the preaching manual of the pseudo-Aquinas, see Chapter I, p. 32,
of this dissertation.

[3] Owen, "The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale:
Sermon and Fabliau", 541-49.

[4] Owen, p. 544.

[5] Chaucer, The Pardoner's Tale, ed. Carleton Brown (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. xii, xiii-xiv.

[6] Charles E. Shain, "Pulpit Rhetoric in Three Canterbury Tales",
MLN, 70 (1955), 235-45.

[7] Shain, p.238.

[8] The Lines run as follows:
    First I pronounce whennes that I come,
    And thanne my bulles shewe I, alle and some.
    Oure lige lordes seel on my patente,
    That shewe I first, my body to warente,
    That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,
    Me to destourbe of Cristes hooly werk.
                  (11. 335-40)
    Bulles of popes and of cardynales,
    Of patriarkes and bishopes I shewe,
                  (11. 342-43)
Cf. Robert of Basevorn in Charland, pp. 241-42, who lists ecclesiastical
authority as one of three requirements for preaching:
    Tertium necessarium est auctoritas, qua mitt-
    atur ab Ecclesia. Quomodo, inquit Apostolus,
    praedicabunt, nisi mittantur ? Unde XVI, q.1,
    addiscimus: Nullus laicus vel religiosus, nisi
    per Episcopum vel Papam licentiatus, nec mulier
    quantumcumque docta et sancta, praedicare debet
The Biblical text cited by Basevorn is Rom. 10:15. The second authority
is Canon Law: see Corpus Juris Canonici, ed. Freidberg, I:86, I:592,
II:786.

[9]See, for example, Walleys in Charland, p. 332:

> Quintum documentum ad praedicatoris gestus et
> motus' corporeos pertinet, ut scilicet dum prae-
> dicat debitam in hiis servet modestiam, ne
> videlicet sit velut statua immobilis, sed al-
> iquos motus decentes ostendat. Valde tamen
> caveat ne motibus inordinatis jactet corpus suum,
> nunc subito extollendo caput in altum, nunc subito
> deprimendo, nunc vertendo se ad dextrum, nunc
> subito cum mirabili celeritate se vertendo ad
> sinistrum, nunc ambas manus sic extendo simul
> quasi posset simul orientem occidentemque
> complecti, nunc vero subito eas in unum con-
> jungendo, nunc extendendo brachia ultra modum,
> nunc subito extrahendo.

[10]This theme is taken from I Tim. 6:10 and is actually shortened from its original form. Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas (Latin text from Biblia Sacra Latina ex Biblia Sacra Vulgate Editionis, London: Samuel Bangster & Sons, 1970). The Pardoner's shortening of the text was allowable under the guide-lines of the artes praedicandi: see Chapter III, n.19 (pp.199-200) of this dissertation.

[11]G.G. Sedgewick, "The Progress of Chaucer's Pardoner, 1880-1940", MLQ, 1 (1940), rpt. in Chaucer Criticism: The Canterbury Tales, ed. R. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame, Ind., 1960), p. 196.

[12]A sense of the "gentils" taste in stories is present from early on in the journey to Canterbury when the pilgrim- narrator focuses on their approval of the "noble storie" of the Knight:

> Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,
> In al the route nas ther yong ne oold
> That he ne seyde it was a noble storie,
> And worthy for to drawen to memorie;
> And namely the gentils everichon.
> (A. ll. 3109-13)

Soon after, the pilgrim-narrator anticipates the possible disapproval of "every gentil wight" of the "cherles tale" of the Miller that is about to be related (ll. 3169-75). As it turns out, reaction to The Miller's Tale is generally one of laughter, with perhaps a hint of minority disapproval (that of the "gentils" ?) or discomfort in the third line of the following passage:

> Whan folk hadde laughen at this nyce cas
> Of Absolon and hende Nicholas,
> Diverse folk diversely they seyde,
> But for the moore part they loughe and pleyde.
> (A. ll. 3855-58)

[13] I am using the term *exempla* here in all the broadest sense to cover any kind of illustrative material, narrative and otherwise (see Chapter I, n. 61, pp. 187 - 87 , of this dissertation). The two sequences of illustrations (ll. 485-572, and ll. 629-59) that, I argue, are aimed at the "lewed peple", contain both narrative and non-narrative types of illustration.

[14] On the tavern setting and the supposed drunkenness of the Pardoner, see especially Frederick Tupper, "The Pardoner's Tavern", JEGP, 13 (1914), 553-65, and G.H. Gerould, Chaucerian Essays (Princeton, 1952), pp. 55-71. For a convenient survey and discussion of the scholarship or, what he terms, the "Tavern Heresy", see Sedgewick, pp. 199-201.

[15] Walleys in Charland, p. 334, takes a very negative view of rote preaching:

Non enim decet praedicatorem, nec etiam est
auditoribus utile, ut sic loquator sicut puer
qui suum Donatum recitat, non sciens nec
intelligens ea quae loquitur aut quae dicit.
Et quid judicant auditores, quando praedicatorem
audiunt sic loquentem ? Consueverunt enim duo dicere:
Iste sermonem quem praedicat nunquam composuit,
sed ab alio accepit, et: Sic eum nobis recitat
sicut puer juvenis recitaret.

[16] See Tatlock and Kennedy, Concordance, p. 620, which reveals that, apart from one instance in the translated Romaunt of the Rose, the term appears exclusively in The Canterbury Tales and here, in all but two instances (both in The Tale of Melibee), in cases where the Host or one of the pilgrims is addressing the other pilgrims. Thus, for example, there is the Host calling upon the pilgrims as he introduces his plan of story-telling for the journey to Canterbury:

"Lordynges", quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;"
(General Prologue, l. 788)

Or there is the Clerk just after he has finished his tale of Griselda:

But, o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:
(E. l. 1163)

[17] Such earthy preaching was quite commonplace. See the discussion of medieval sermons against drunkenness and excessive eating in Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 425-49.

[18] Owen, pp. 547-49.

[19] The Policraticus deals essentially with the art of ruling and in the course of his discussion John warns leaders against over-indulgence in such frivolous pastimes as hunting, gaming and music. Of gambling he

writes at one point:

> Gambling is the mother of liars and perjury for
> she is prodigal as the result of her lust for other
> possessions and, having no respect for private
> poverty, as soon as she has squandered her own,
> gradually has recourse to theft and rapine.

Carefully echoing the words of his source and adding some hyperbole of his own, the Pardoner warns:

> Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges,
> And of deceite, and cursed forswerynges,
> Blasphheme of Crist, manslaughtre,and wast also
> Of catel and of tyme;

(ll. 591-94)

The translation of John of Salisbury is taken from Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers: Being a Translation of the First, Second, and Third Books and Selections from the Seventh and Eight Books of the Policraticus of John of Salisbury, trans. J.B. Pike (Minneapolis, 1938), pp. 27-28.

[20]Chaucer substitutes "Stilboun" for "Chilon", "possibly under the influence of Seneca", says Robinson, p. 731, in his note to l. 603.

[21]John of Salisbury, pp. 28-29. The original Latin text of this passage may be found in Bryan and Dempster, p. 438.

[22]The difference between the two forms is briefly discussed in the note to B. 1. 1677 by W.W. Skeat, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford, 1894), V. 175. It is discussed more fully in J. Kerkhoff, Studies in the Language of Chaucer (Folcroft, Pa., 1971), pp. 135-36, and in Norman Nathan, "Pronouns of Address in the 'Canterbury Tales'", MS, 21 (1959), 193-201.

[23]Nathan, p.199. Cf. also Ross, Middle English Sermons, pp. 8, 12, 69, et passim, for use of "thou".

[24]Nathan, p. 200.

[25]The lines run as follows:

> And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle,
> That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
> Tales of best sentence and moost solaas,
> Shal have a soper at oure aller cost
> Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,
> Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.

[26]Gallick, "A Look at Chaucer and his Preachers", p. 467.

[27]The passage on Flanders runs in part as follows:

> In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye
> Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,
> As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes,
> Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,
> They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and nyght,
> And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
> Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifise
> Withinne that develes temple, in cursed wise,
> By superfluytee abhomynable.
>   (11. 463-71)

CF. Brown, The Pardoner's Tale, pp. xv-xx, who argues that the description of Flanders life and the exempla - filled harangue and stories from John of Salisbury (11. 463-660) form one unit what he calls "the homily on the Sins of the Tavern". His "hypothesis" is that this "homily"

> ...originally formed part of a Parson's Tale
> afterwards made over for the Pardoner [which]
> will account for the lack of connexion between
> this discussion of the Tavern sins and the
> Pardoner's Avarice prologue, while at the same
> time it explains the curious abruptness with
> which the story of the three rioters begins [at 1.
> 661]... (p.xx).

[28]See Dorothy M. Norris, "Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale and Flanders", PMLA, 48 (1933), 636-41, on the common contemporary English view of Flanders.

[29]For various explanations of what is occuring at this juncture, see especially Kittredge, pp. 211-18; Garland Ethel, "Chaucer's Worste Shrewe: the Pardoner", MLQ, 20 (1959), 211-27; P.S. Taitt, "Harry Bailly and the Pardoner's Relics", SN, 41 (1969), 112-14; and, as noted in the first chapter (pp.33-34), Jungman, "The Pardoner's Quarrel with the Host", pp. 279-81.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

- [1]See Robinson, p.707, in his note to line 1717 where he describes
a trental as "an office of thirty masses for souls in purgatory". This
service, of course, had to be paid for.

[2]Historical research has revealed The Summoner's Prologue and
Tale to contain a rich collection of late medieval antifraternal
materials. For the best over-view, see the concise but well documented
study, Arnold Williams, "Chaucer and the Friars", 499-513. See also
Robertson, Preface, p.249; John V. Fleming, "The Antifraternalism of
the Summoner's Tale", JEGP, 65 (1966), 688-700; Penn R. Szittya, "The
Friar as False Apostle: Antifraternal Exegesis and the Summoner's Tale",
SP, 71 (1974), 19-46).

[3]See Chapman, "Chaucer on Preachers and Preaching", pp. 178-
82. He uses the reference to a concluding prayer (1. 1734) and the
verbatim report of the friar's supposed "brief recapitulation" (11. 1724-
32) to clinch his argument that the friar carefully structures his ser-
mons according to the rigid prescription of the "university" type sermon.
This, however, is skimpy evidence to support his argument.

[4]Thomas F. Merrill, "Wrath and Rhetoric in The Summoner's Tale",
TSLL, 4 (1962), p.344.

[5]This description of the torments of hell is typical of the time:
see note to 1. 1730 in Robinson, p. 707.

[6]In thus concluding his sermons, Friar John is following fairly
closely one of the three methods recommended by Robert of Basevorn in his
Forma praedicandi for the Conclusion of a sermon: see Charland, pp. 307-08,
where Basevorn notes that this method works as follows:

> ...per detestationem, sicut quando ultima pars
> ultimae auctoritatis exponitur de aliquo malo
> horribili, sive culpae sive poena, ut si ultima
> auctoritas unitionis esset: Justitia liberabit
> a morte, et exponeretur sive de morte peccati
> mortalis, sive de morte damnationis aeternae.
> Tunc per destestationem esset claudendum sic: Ab
> ista morte ille qui solus potest, Deus, nos
> defendat ne in tantum et tam interminabile malum
> incidamus. Amen

Cf. also Owst, Preaching, pp. 335-44, on the preparedness of the medieval preacher "at all times to combat the fallacies of the ever-forgiving Redeemer...with a terrifying message of death, burial, judgement and hell-pains". At the same time, it should be noted, by way of caution, that preachers like Chaucer's Parson, not attempting to intimidate or terrify their congregations, could temper the threat of hell-fire and offer an ultimately hopeful message (see pp. 173-76 of this dissertation).

[7]On the controversy over the selling of books by friars in the fourteenth century, see Fleming, pp. 697-98. Cf. also the recurring references to the friar as "maister", an allusion to his degree of Master of Theology or Divinity: see note to l. 2186 in Robinson, p. 708, and also note 36 of Chapter I of this dissertation where the three duties of the Master of Theology are outlined.

[8]The Biblical verses run in the original as follows:

> In the meantime, the disciples prayed him
> saying: Rabbi, eat./ But he said to them: I have
> meat to eat which you know not./ The disciples
> therefore said one to another: Hath any man
> brought him to eat ?/ Jesus saith to them: My
> meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that
> I may perfect his work. (John 4: 31-34)

> I have not departed from the commandments of his
> lips: and the words of his mouth I have hid in
> my bosom.   (Job 23:12)

Robinson, p. 707, in note to l. 1845 points out these passages.

[9]Robertson, Preface, p.303.

[10]Robertson, Preface, p.303. Cf. also pp. 12-13 of this dissertation on Augustine's attitude toward the letter and the spirit.

[11]Fleming, p. 694.

[12]For a standard etymology in a saint's legend, see The Second Nun's Prologue, ll. 85-119. The spiritual meanings of Cecilia's name are especially evident at ll. 94-98.

> Or elles Cecile, as I writen fynde,
> Is joyned, by a manere conjoynynge
> Of "hevene" and "Lia"; and heere, in figurynge,
> The "hevene" is set for thoght of hoolynesse,
> And "Lia" for hire lastynge bisynesse.

[13]See Jacobus a Voragine, Legenda aurea, ed. Th. Graesse (Osnabrück, 1965), pp. 32-33, where the etymology of Thomas' name is given as follows:

> Thomas interpretatur abyssus vel geminus, quod
> et Graece Didimus dicitur; vel Thomas a thomos,
> quod est divisio sive sectio. Dicitur ergo abyssus

eo, quod profunditatem divinitatis penetrare meruit,
quando ad sui interrogationem Christus sibi res-
pondit: ego sum via veritas et vita. Dicitur geminus
eo, quod ressurectionem Christi quasi geminate et
in duplum quam alii cognovit. Nam illi cogno-
verunt videndo, iste videndo et palpando. Divisio
siue sectio dicitur, quia mentem suam ab amore
mundi divisit vel quia ab aliis in fide resurrectionis
divisus et sectus fuit. Vel dicitur Thomas quasi
totus means in Dei scilitet amore et contemplatione.
...Vel Thomas dicitur a theos, quod est Deus et
meus. Unde Thomas quasi Deus meus, et hoc propter
illud quod dixit, cum certificatus credidit: dominus
meus et Deus meus.

This passage gives a very good idea of the imaginative and spiritual
flights in which saints' legends indulged.

[14]Myers, pp. 198-99. The point is also made in a note by
Szittya, p. 32. See Jacobus a Voragine, Legenda aurea, pp. 35-36
where Thomas' building of edifices in heaven is focused upon.

[15]Robertson, Preface, p.332.

[16]See Szittya, pp. 30-33, who conveniently identifies and dis-
cusses the five specific references made to the Apostles in the course
of the Tale: (i) 11. 1816-22, (ii) 11. 1970-73, (iii) 11. 1974-80, (iv)
11. 2184-88, (v) 11. 2195-96. The Beatitudes are also referred to at 11.
1907-10.

[17]See Williams, pp. 510-13; Szittya, pp. 28-41. On the Pentecostal
theme specifically and the marvellous parody at work in the Tale, see
Bernard Levy, "Biblical Parody in the Summoner's Tale", TSL, 11 (1966),
pp. 52-58, and Alan Levitan, "The Parody of Pentacost in Chaucer's Summoner's
Tale", UTQ, 40 (1970-71), 236-46.

[18]See Fleming, p. 692, who points out that these verses from Luke
were incorporated into the Regula primitiva of St. Francis in a passage
which runs as follows:

Quando fratres vadunt per mundum, nihil portent
per viam, nec Sacculum, nec Peram, nec Panem,
nec Pecuniam, nec Virgam.

[19]Luke 10:4 is addressed to the seventy-two newly appointed
disciples being sent out "two and two before his face into every city and
place whither he himself was to come". (Luke 10:1).

[20]Cf. also 1. 1738: "In every hous he gan to poure and prye".

Fleming, p. 693, and Szittya, pp. 43-44, both point out that this is a
reference to the penetrantes domos of II Tim. 3:6 who, as Szittya des-
cribes them, "were so widely used as prophetic types for the friars after
William of St. Amour made them popular in his De Periculis Novissimorun
Temporum....shepherds of the Church who illegitimately forced their
way into the "house" of the consciences of their people, in particular
through confession".

[21]See Yeager, pp. 133-34, for a discussion of the "Lazar and
Dives" example which, he points out, was a common illustration contra
gulam, found in Mannyng, Wadington and Alain de Lille.

[22]Baker, p.39.

[23]The Wife of Bath, for example uses Jerome extensively (see n. 16
on p. 199 of this dissertation). See also Yeager, pp. 134-37, where
he conveniently shows the parallels between the passages in Jerome and
in Chaucer.

[24]Yeager, p. 134.

[25]Yeager, pp. 136-37. On Elijah see also Friar John's statement
later on:
> "But syn Elye was, or Elise,
> Han freres been, that fynde I of record,
> In charitee, ythanked by oure Lord!"
> (ll. 2116-18)

See note to l. 2116 in Robinson, p. 708: "The Carmelites claimed that
their order was founded by Elijah on Mt. Carmel". Myers, pp. 183-86,
notes that Friar John may be "inadvertently suggesting a less complimentary
comparison to Eli" who failed to reprove his sons for the loss of the Ark of
Covenant (I Sam. 2-4).

[26]Myers, pp. 193-94.

[27]Yeager, p. 134.

[28]Yeager, pp. 136-37.

[29]The original Senecan examples may be found in Seneca, Moral Essays,
ed. John W. Basore, (London: Heineman, 1928), I, 155-56, 289-93, 309. Cf.
Pratt, "Chaucer and the Hand that Fed Him", pp. 627-31, who argues that
Chaucer's source was not Seneca directly but John of Wales'Communiloquium.

[30]Myers, p. 194.

[31] Merrill, "Wrath and Rhetoric in The Summoner's Tale",
p.344.

[32] Merrill, pp. 346-49.

[33] Yeager, pp. 143-44.

[34] The equation of the lowly Thomas with a man of power and
"heigh degree" is not altogether sudden. A little earlier, the friar
depicts him as a master of his household who should "To thy subgitz do
noon oppression" (ll. 1989 ff.).

[35] Cf. pp. 107-08 of this dissertation where I make much the
same point about the implications for the "gentils" of the interchange
between the old man and the three men in The Pardoner's Tale.

[36] Cf. The Parson's Tale. ll. 561 ff., where the same subject is
dealt with. For a comparison of Friar John's and the Parson's treatments
of the deadly sin of Ira, see Merrill, pp. 346-47.

[37] Merrill, pp. 348-49; Myers, pp. 195-97. In the original story
Praexapes tells Cambises after he has shot his (Praexaspes') son with an
arrow that Apollo could not have done better!

[38] The original runs in Seneca for some twelve lines: see Seneca,
Moral Essays, I, p.309.

[39] Merrill, p. 349.

[40] Yeager, p.143.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

[1]H. Simon, "Chaucer a Wicliffite: An Essay on Chaucer's Parson and Parson's Tale", Essays on Chaucer, Part III, Chaucer Society, 2nd Series, No. 16 (London, 1876), pp. 227-92.

[2]Wilhelm Eilers, "Dissertation on The Parson's Tale and the Somme de Vices et de Vertus of Frère Lorens", Essays on Chaucer, Part V, Chaucer Society, 2nd Series, No. 19 (London, 1884), pp. 501-610.

[3]Petersen, The Sources of The Parson's Tale (see n. 105 of Chapter I on p. 191 of this dissertation). See also Dudley R. Johnson, "'Homicide' in the Parson's Tale", PMLA, 57 (1942), 51-56, who discusses Pennaforte as the source of the Parson's treatment of homicide.

[4]Petersen, The Sources of the Parson's Tale, pp. 79-81. Cf. Germaine Dempster, "The Parson's Tale" in Bryan and Dempster, p. 724, who casts doubt on Peraldus as one of Chaucer's sources.

[5]Pfander, "Some Mediaeval Manuals of Religious Instruction", 243-58.

[6]Alfred L. Kellog, "St. Augustine and the Parson's Tale", Traditio,8 (1952), p. 427.

[7]Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction", pp. 243-44. 253-58.

[8]Dempster, "The Parson's Tale", p. 724; Robertson, Preface, p. 335.

[9]Chapman, "The Parson's Tale: A Medieval Sermon", 229-34.

[10]Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction", p.254.

[11]Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction", p.254.

[12]Shain, "Pulpit Rhetoric in Three Canterbury Tales", pp. 236-37; Gallick, "A Look at Chaucer and His Preachers", pp. 460-61.

[13]Baldwin, The Unity of The Canterbury Tales, p.98. See also
Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Design of The Canterbury Tales", in Companion
to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (New York, 1968), pp. 92-207, for
a very useful survey and discussion of the scholarship on the matter of
the Tales' dramatic unity.

[14]Myers, p. 77.

[15]This, it might be added, comes at the end of a sequence in
which the Parson's preaching function is the cause of some uneasiness.
The sequence begins with the Host's request to "Sir Parisshe Prest" that
he tell a tale. However, in characteristic fashion, the Host spices his
request with casual swearing ("for Goddes. bones", B^1 1. 1166), a habit
which understandably draws a righteous retort from the priest ("What
eyleth the man, so synfully to swere ?", B^1 1. 1171). Not one to be easily
put down, the Host playfully accuses the priest of Lollardy (B^1 1. 1173),
proceeding then to make fun of his preaching function. Harry Bailly's
good-natured teasing is evident from the beginning of the following speech
in his sarcastic use of the preacher's standard term of address to his
congregation:

> "Now! goode men," quod our Hoste, "herkneth me;
> Abydeth, for Goddes digne passioun,
> For we schal han a predicacioun;
> This Lollere heer wil prechen us somwhat."
> (B^1 1174-77)

This section of The Canterbury Tales, it should also be noted, has problems
of variant readings and also appears in different places in the various
manuscripts. In the Ellesmere MS. It does not appear at all, in fact. For
a convenient discussion of the problems, see Robinson, pp. 696-97, 891,
who concludes:

> Although the MSS. strongly support the theory that
> Chaucer abandoned the Epilogue, there can be no
> doubt of its genuineness or of its interest to
> the reader of the Canterbury Tales.

I concurr with this view as the matter of preaching and glossing is one
that is directly answered, I argue, in The Parson's Prologue and Tale.

[16]Cf. also Wenzel, "Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary
Preaching", pp. 156-61, who has very recently suggested that the expression
"to knytte up", used by both the Host (1. 28) and the Parson (1. 47), is
probably based on the technical term "knot" which in homiletic literature
commonly signified not only the end but the central or main point of a
discourse or story.

[17]Owst, Preaching, pp. 144-45, 355-56.

[18]Owst, Preaching, p.145. See also the varying length of the
sermons in Ross, Middle English Sermons: Sermon 1 (8 pages), Sermon 9
(14 pages), Sermon 16A (3 pages), Sermon 41 (22 pages), Sermon 46 (6
pages.

[19]Owst, Preaching,pp. 195-221, 356-57. Cf. also Owst, Preaching, pp. 360-62, on the sermon of Thomas Wimbledon at Paul's Cross in 1388.

[20]Owst, Preaching, p. 145. The references are to Thomas Brunton (or Brinton), Bishop of Rochester, and Robert Rypon, a sub-prior at Durham, both contemporaries of Chaucer. For biographical details, see Owst, Preaching, pp. 15-20, and Sister Mary Aquinas Devlin, The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-1389), Camden Third Series, Vol. 85 (London, 1954), pp. ix-xviii.

[21]Owst, Preaching, p. 145. See also Owst, Preaching, pp. 205-08, for discussion of the outdoor preaching of Brinton and Rypon.

[22]See Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars (Princeton, 1970), pp. 272-97.

[23]Baldwin, The Unity of The Canterbury Tales, p. 104, and also pp. 101-04 for a discussion of the specific sins of the various pilgrims.

[24]Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction", p. 247, and p. 254 for more details and a discussion of the Speculum Christiani.

[25]Myers, p. 77. Cf. also Owst, Preaching, p. 284, where he observes of the sermons of Richard Rolle of Hampole:
> ...it would be easy to show, in the case
> of compositions by Rolle, how frequently
> with the omission of a name or the re-
> setting of a title, the adaptation of
> tract to sermon or sermon to tract is
> repeated according to the immediate intent of
> the compilation in hand.

[26]The overlap of sermon and manual explains the seeming in-consistency of Robertson's calling the Tale an "excellent specimen" of a penitential manual on one page, while on the very next page referring to the Parson speaking "as a preacher" whose "sermon is developed from the text of Jer. 6. 16", a "sermon [which] hinges on a spiritual interpretation": Robertson, Preface, pp. 335, 336 (italics mine).

[27]See Robinson, p. 767, in note to 1.85:
> Skeat quotes a sentence with a similar meaning from
> the passage of St. Ambrose just cited [1.84].
> But Pennaforte refers to St. Augustine.

[28]See Robert C. Fox, "The Philosophre of Chaucer's Parson",
MLN, 75 (1960), 101-02, who argues that the reference to "the philosophre"
at 1.536 is also to Seneca.

[29]Robertson, Preface, p. 172.

[30]Robertson, Preface, p.173.

[31]See Chapman, "The Parson's Tale: A Medieval Sermon", p.231,
who notes that this tri-partite division is like that recommended
in the formal artes praedicandi.

[32]The appearance of this section fulfills the promise of the
last section of the general plan as stated at the beginning of the
sermon ("whiche thynges destourben Penitence", 1.83) and testifies to the
unity of the whole.

[33]Myers, p.85. See also pp. 85-87, where Myers discusses a few
examples of logical relationships in The Parson's Tale, but does not give
this matter anywhere near the amount of attention that it deserves. My
discussion is intended to make up for this deficiency.

[34]See Charland, pp. 387-89.

[35]See Charland, pp. 389-90.

[36]Myers, p.85.

[37]The Parson's use of Latin here should be commented upon. He is
always careful to translate the Latin that he cites. His purpose is neither
to confuse nor to show off like Chantecleer with his "Mulier est hominis
confusio" (see pp.47-48 of this dissertation) or the Pardoner who con-
fesses:
> ...in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,
> To saffron with my predicacioun.
> (C 11. 344-45)

This sounds much like the preacher described in Owst, Preaching, p.231,
who "will introduce a few Latin words into the structure of his narrative,
for no apparent reason other than to impress his audience with some high-
sounding dignified syllables in the speech of the learned".

[38]See Merrill, "Wrath and Rhetoric in "The Summoner's Tale",
pp. 346-47, who notes the common Senecan sources of both the Parson's
and Summoner's treatment of Ire, and, furthermore, draws attention to
Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Development of The Canterbury Tales", JEGP, 57

(1958), pp. 458-59, who argues that The Parson's Tale was "an active force in Chaucer's imagination" at the time he was writing the tales from the "marriage group" on.

[39]The Parson's use of illustrative "figures" is demonstrated as early as the General Prologue (ll. 498-500). The tree figure appears several times and in several contexts in the course of his sermon to the pilgrims: (i) to illustrate Penitence which "may be likned unto a tree" (ll. 112-27, and see note to lines in Robinson, p. 767, on sources); (ii) in the Adam and Eve narrative (ll. 326 ff); (iii) to illustrate the Seven Deadly Sins of which Pride is the root (ll. 387 ff., and see notes to lines in Robinson, pp. 768-69, on sources); (iv) in the form of the resilient fire of the juniper tree to illustrate the fire of "rancour" in men's heart's (ll. 550-51, and see notes to lines in Robinson, p. 769, on analogues). The tree was also commonly used as a metaphor or figure of the artes praedicandi itself: see Caplan, "A Late Medieval Tractate on Preaching", pp. 76-78. Another favourite figure of the Parson is the hand with its five fingers. This invariably carries a negative meaning: the five fingers of the devil's hand used to lure men into gluttony (ll. 828-30, 863) and lechery (ll. 852-63). On "figures" in preaching, see Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p.152.

[40]Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 163-64, 378-82.

[41]The lines run as follows:
"Ye lye heere ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devel set youre herte afyre,
And chiden heere the sely innocent,
Youre wyf, that is so meke and pacient.
And therfore, Thomas, trowe me if thee leste,
Ne stryve nat with thy wyf, as for thy beste;
And ber this word awey now, by my feith,
Touchynge swich thyng, lo, what the wise seith:
'Withinne thyn hous ne be thou no leon;
To thy subgitz do noon oppression,
Ne make thyne aqueyntances nat to flee.'
And, Thomas, yet eft-soones I charge thee,
Be war from hire that in thy bosom slepeth;
War fro the serpent that so slily crepeth
Under the gras, and styngeth subtilly.
Be war, my sone, and herkne paciently,
That twenty thousand men han lost hir lyves
For stryvyng with her lemmans and hir wyves.
Now sith ye han so hooly and meke a wyf,
What nedeth yow, Thomas, to maken stryf ?
Ther nys, ywys, no serpent so cruel,
Whan man tret on his tayl, ne half so fel,
As womman is, whan she hath caught an ire;
Vengeance is thanne al that they desire".

[42]Cf. the Wife of Bath's misuse of this text as discussed on p. 70 of this dissertation.

[43]See also, for example, 11. 894-96.

[44]See Charland, p.389.

[45]Robertson, _Preface_, p.336.

[46]The last line here is a paraphrase of Eph. 5:25.

[47]Cespedes, "Chaucer's Pardoner and Preaching", pp. 7-8, 13-15, especially.

[48]How can one trust her when, by her own report, she habitually lied to her husbands ? (See D 11. 230 ff., 382, 390 ff.).

[49]See note to 1.670 in Robinson, p. 770, on possible source of this story.

[50]Robertson, _Preface_, p.336.

[51]Robertson, _Preface_, pp. 80-81, discusses this three-stage process. See also Robertson, "Chaucerian Tragedy", 1-37, where he again discusses it, this time in terms of _Troilus and Criseyde_.

[52]The typological correspondences between the Adam and Eve story and that of Christ are, of course, well known, Christ being the New Adam, Mary the New Eve, and the Cross the Tree of Salvation: see Robert P. Miller, "Allegory in _The Canterbury Tales_", in _Companion to Chaucer Studies_, p.274.

[53]Robertson, _Preface_, p.81, discusses this passage, but not in terms of the link between the Fall and the Passion as I do.

[54]Owst, _Preaching_, p. 346.

[55]Owst, _Preaching_, pp. 346-48.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

[1]See Davy, pp. 46-54. This section of Davy's book may also be found published as "Les 'auctoritates' et les procédés de citation dans la prédication médiévale", Revue d'histoire franciscaine, 8 (1931), 344-54. See also Charland, pp. 195-991.

[2]See Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic, p. 2.

[3]Cf., for example, Cespedes, p.15, where it is concluded that "the Parson's resal to tell a fable is, on one level, an assertation that poetry has no place in a Christian universe". The Parson is asserting no such thing and it is unfortunate that Cespedes makes such a statement in an otherwise very fine essay.

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The following is a list of works consulted in the course of doing research

on this dissertation. It is divided into five parts: (1) bibliographies,

(2) editions and translations of primary sources, (3) historical studies,

(4) editions of and concordance to the works of Chaucer, and (5) Chaucer

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