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*To my revered Superiors of the School
Sisters of Notre Dame, valiant women
every one, to whom I would tender
love and gratitude and loyalty.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WISDOM AND PERSONIFICATIONS OF WISDOM IN THE BIBLE

Wisdom appears in the Bible¹ in personification and in type as well as in purely abstract form presented under various phases or with distinguishing qualities. Wisdom as knowledge² is mentioned in *Ecclesiasticus*:

The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, . . . He will keep the sayings of renowned men, and will enter withal into the subtilties of parables. He will search out the hidden meanings of proverbs, and will be conversant in the secrets of parables.³

St. James asks:

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew, by a good conversation, his work in the meekness of wisdom.⁴

"Wisdom shall distribute knowledge"⁵ for she herself says, "I am the mother of . . . knowledge." ' Solomon was taught by her

about trees from the cedar that is in Libanus, unto the hyssop that cometh out of the wall: and he discoursed of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

And they came from all nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon.⁷

¹ For the assurance of the reader that the word "wisdom" in the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible corresponds to "sapientia" in the Vulgate, I have checked the two versions and found sufficient agreement to be safe in this conclusion, although there may be slight differences in some minor details of the translations.

Again the Vulgate "sapientia" corresponds to the Middle English "wisdom" as similar checking of identical passages in Latin and in Middle English shows. Whatever other names may have been used for wisdom in Hebrew or in Greek, these did not affect the Middle English writers by whom the Vulgate or its English translation was known or used.

² Knowledge is here used in the sense of "the sum of what is known; learning; lore; information."

³ Eccus. xxxix, 1-3. ⁶

Ibid., xxiv, 24.

⁴ James iii, 13.

⁷ 3 Kings iv, 33-34.

⁵ Eccus. i, 24.

This encyclopedic information, in part, entitled Solomon to be called a wise man.

Not only was unbounded knowledge given to Solomon in his early days but also an understanding spirit.

the Lord appeared ... in a dream by night, saying: Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee.

And Solmon said: . . . Give ... to thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, and discern between good and evil.⁸

So pleasing was this petition that the Lord answered:

Behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, insomuch that there hath been no one like thee before thee, nor shall arise after thee.⁹

In accordance with God's promise Solomon "was renowned in all nations round about" for he "spoke throe thousand parables: and his poems were a thousand and five,"¹⁰ besides abounding in all riches and fame. Such unusual understanding of difficult problems aroused the interest of the Queen of Saba who "came to him with hard questions/" but "there was not any word the king was ignorant of, and which he could not answer her."¹¹ This understanding¹² which is found "in the treasures of wisdom"¹³ "teacheth temperance";¹⁴ she is "the mother of fair love,"¹⁵ "pure . . . undefiled, . . . loving that which is good, . . . beneficent, Gentle, kind, steadfast, assured, secure." There is no danger to a wise, understanding soul, filled with the knowledge and fear of the Lord, and prudent in keeping His laws.

Wisdom and understanding are sometimes regarded as synonymous and their close conjunction in the Bible would incline us to treat them as such, but although they appear in the same verse, they seldom connote exactly the same meaning. This we observe in these verses from Job:

⁸ 3 Kings iii, 5, 6, 9.

¹⁰ 3 Kings iv, 31, 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹ 3

Kings x, 1, 3.

¹² Understanding is used in the sense of the power of comprehension, discernment, logic.

¹³ *Ecclus.* i, 26.

¹⁵

Ecclus. xxiv, 24.

¹⁴ *Wis.* viii, 7.

¹⁶

Wia. vii, 22, 23.

But where is wisdom to be found, and where is the place of understanding?

Man knoweth not the place thereof, neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights.¹⁷

It, the singular pronoun, would imply wisdom and understanding to be one. But further on in the same chapter we find: "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil, is understanding."¹⁸ We are not sure of their identity here. An interesting distinction is noted by Harris Fletcher in studying Ben Gerson as a source of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.¹⁹ Gerson had noted that in the *Book of Proverbs*, Wisdom is personified as being with God at the creation,

I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times;

Playing in the world.²⁰

This same passage has been variously commented upon in a number of the general reference works mentioned in the preface but usually only personified wisdom, "the companion of Yahwe (though his creature) in the primeval work of creation"²¹ is noted. In Gerson's commentary on these verses mentioned above he says that God had with Him at creation both Wisdom and Understanding. These, he claims, are not identical. Both are "nearby God/" but he would distinguish, Understanding figuratively representing the *plan* of creation and Wisdom, the *ability* to execute the plan.²² This is in accord with "wisdom is more active than all active things"²³ and would entitle her to direct participation in the creative act. Fletcher sees this double idea used by Milton²⁴ in *Paradise Lost* when Urania, typifying Understanding, is called

¹⁷ Job xxviii, 12, 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁹ Harris Fletcher, "Milton and Ben Gerson," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 29 (Jan., 1930), pp. 41-52.

²⁰ Prov. viii, 30, 31.

²¹ *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, ed. by Cheyne and Black, vol. 4, col. 5330. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, also mentions this in a particular manner.

²² Harris Fletcher, "Milton and Ben Gerson," *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²³ Wis. vii, 24.

²⁴ H. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

Heavenly-born,
 Before the hills appeared or fountains flowed,
 Thou with eternal Wisdom didst converse,
 Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
 In presence of the Almighty Father, pleased
 With thy celestial song. (Bk. VII, 6-12)²⁵

It is stated in the *Boole of Proverbs* that one should study wisdom in order to "give an answer to him that reproacheth,"²⁶ for wisdom is "eloquent."²⁷ "She knoweth the subtilties of speeches, and the solutions of arguments"²⁸ thus training the mind to penetrating thought. "She preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets"²⁹ for it is not the part of wisdom to conceal her gifts when they may be of advantage to human kind, nor does she remain silent and retired when the public good has need of her eloquence. Honor and praiseworthy necessity ever find in her a champion. She is always ready to uphold the pronouncements of right, just as she "will not acquit the evil speaker from his lips."³⁰ One may trust her unhesitatingly, relying upon her as instructor and guide, for she "will lead thee by the paths of equity"³¹ and bring thee to good and ultimate happiness for "no evil can overcome wisdom."³²

Closely connected with knowledge, understanding, and eloquence, is counsel.³³ What shall knowledge and facility of speech avail us, if we use not this gift in giving advice to those less fortunate! Yet, counsel is of benefit not only to the one who receives it, but also to the possessor of this wisdom as counsel, for

If wisdom shall enter into thy heart, and knowledge please thy soul :
 Counsel shall keep thee.³⁴

²⁵ H. C. Beecher, ed., *Poetical Works of John Milton* (Oxford, 1928), p. 318.

²⁶ Prov. xxvii, 11.

²⁷ Wis. vii, 22. Eloquent meaning capable of or characterized by forceful, vivid expression of ideas.

²⁸ Wis. viii, 8.

³¹

Prov. iv, 11.

²⁹ Prov. i, 20.

³²

Wis. vii, 30.

³⁰ Wis. i, 6.

³³ Counsel is here used in the sense of instruction, advice.

³⁴ Prov. ii, 10, 11.

In fact, so closely are these attributes related that one implies the others. Wisdom says, "I, wisdom, dwell in counsel, and am present in learned thoughts."³⁵ Further on in the *Book of Proverbs* we read, "They that do all things with counsel, are ruled by wisdom."³⁶ Since wisdom dwells in counsel and counsel is ruled by wisdom, the two seem to be almost interchangeable, yet it is wisdom that speaks, thus manifesting the vital spark that makes her, in some degree, superior to her attendants, knowledge and counsel.

Besides the qualities thus far discussed, wisdom discerns³⁷ what is right and knows how to enforce it. She says, "I walk in the ways of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment."³⁸ Again in *Proverbs* we find, "The mouth of the just shall bring forth wisdom."³⁹ A wise judge knows that "Wisdom and discipline, and the knowledge of the law are with God,"⁴⁰ and since justice requires "discipline" and "the keeping of the laws" it follows that this quality also is near akin to wisdom,

For the beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline. . . .

Therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom.

If then your delight be in thrones, and sceptres, O ye kings of the people, love wisdom, that you may reign forever.

Love the light of wisdom, all ye that bear rule over peoples.⁴¹

"Wisdom to discern judgment"⁴² was the gift asked of God by Solomon, and so renowned was his exercise of this gift that "all Israel heard . . . and they feared the King, seeing that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment."⁴³ Daniel displayed this wisdom in judgment when he confounded the wicked elders who falsely accused the virtuous Susanna.⁴⁴ Hastings considers wisdom in the earlier literature of the Old Testament, as exemplified in Joseph and Solomon, "clever judicial decision."⁴⁵ Again in the Bible we are told if we "desire wisdom, keep justice, and God will give her,"⁴⁶ for "Wisdom inspireth life into her children, and

³⁵ Prov. viii, 12.

³⁶

Prov. xiii, 10.

³⁷ Discernment in the sense of clearness in judgment, penetration, insight.

³⁸ Prov. viii, 20.

⁴¹ Wis. vi, 18-23.

³⁹ Prov. x, 31.

⁴²

3 Kings iii, 11.

⁴⁰ Eccclus. xi, 15.

⁴³/bid.,

28.

⁴⁴ Daniel xiii.

⁴⁵ *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, vol. 2, p. 682.

⁴⁶ Eccclus. i, 33.

protects them that seek after her, and will go before them in the way of justice."⁴⁷

The truly just man acts with fear and caution. Wisdom, therefore, is the "Mother of Fear"⁴⁸ and "teacheth prudence."⁴⁹ Wisdom and prudence are referred to as one in this verse of *Proverbs* where the singular pronoun is used:

Doth not wisdom cry aloud, and prudence put forth her voice? . . . in the very doors she speaketh, saying:

O ye men, to you I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.⁵⁰

There seems to be little difference in their origins if "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is prudence."⁵¹ Likewise, a similarity is to be noted in their abodes since "in the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days prudence."⁵² In our common use of the word, we regard wisdom as active, prudence as passive. Wisdom leads to what is most proper while prudence prevents from what is improper. Both combine to protect us, and we are counseled to "purchase prudence"⁵³ with all our possessions. A superiority seems to belong to wisdom and a dearer and closer connection with her is implied in the command, "Say to wisdom: Thou art my sister: and call prudence thy friend."⁵⁴ The five wise virgins who "took oil in their vessels with the lamps," displayed the wisdom that we term prudence, evident also in their answer to the request of the foolish virgins: "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." The reply, "Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves,"⁵⁵ is an excellent illustration of prudent foresight as wisdom.

But the quality of wisdom most emphasized in the Bible is "The fear"⁵⁶ of the Lord." Wisdom is, as already noted, the "Mother of Fear"⁵⁷ and at the same time "fear . . . is the beginning of wisdom."⁵⁸ This

⁴⁷ Ecclus. iv, 12.

⁴⁸ Ecclus. xxiv, 24.

⁴⁹ Prudence here means the quality of being discreet or careful; wisdom put into practice. Wis. viii, 7.

⁵⁰ Prov. viii, 1, 3, 4. ⁵³

Prov. iv, 7.

⁵¹ Prov. ix, 10. ⁵⁴

Prov. vii, 4.

⁵² Job xii, 12. ⁵⁵

Matt, xxv, 4, 8, 9.

⁵⁶ Fear in this sense means reverence for a supreme power.

⁵⁷ Ecclus. xxiv, 24. ⁵⁸

Prov. i, 7.

fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy . . . (It) shall delight the heart, . . . give joy, and gladness, and length of days.

With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed.⁵⁹

Thus we see that it is the resultant glorious end that makes "The fear of the Lord . . . the beginning of wisdom."⁶⁰ This idea is repeated many times. In the same chapter of *Ecclesiasticus* we find, "To fear God is the fulness of wisdom/⁶¹ "The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation/⁶² "The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord: and the branches thereof are long-lived," "For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline."⁶³ Later in the same book we have again, "the fear of God is all wisdom, and therein is to fear God."⁶⁴ "Better is a man that hath less wisdom, . . . with the fear of God, than he that . . . transgresseth the law of the most High."⁶⁵ "The perfection of the fear of God is wisdom."⁶⁶ "How great is he that findeth wisdom . . . ! but there is none above him that feareth the Lord."⁶⁷ In the *Book of Job*, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,"⁶⁸ and in *Proverbs* we have "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" followed in the same verse by this contrasting observation, "Fools despise wisdom and instruction."⁶⁹ Again in *Proverbs*, "The fear of the Lord is the lesson of wisdom," for it "driveth out sin."⁷⁰ The felon could not execute his evil design if he gave heed to this wise fear, but he is not compelled in his attention to it. Here free will enters. But *Ecclesiasticus* sounds a note of warning:

Be not incredulous to the fear of the Lord: and come not to him with a double heart.

Be not a hypocrite in the sight of men, and let not thy lips be a stumbling-block to thee.⁷¹

These are only a few of the many instances that may be cited con-

⁵⁹ *Ecclus.* i, 11, 12, 13.

⁶⁰ *Ecclus.* i, 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 25; 34.

⁶⁴ *Ecclus.* xix, 18.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁶

Ecclus. xxi, 13.

⁶⁷ *Ecclus.* xxv, 13.

Job xxviii, 28.

Prov. i, 7.

⁷⁰ *Prov.* xv, 33.

⁷¹ *Ecclus.* i, 36, 37.

cerning "fear" and "wisdom" in the Bible. *Ecclesiasticiis* admonishes the wise man to "Keep his fear, and grow old therein."⁷² Age has always been associated with wisdom; the hoary head suggests knowledge, counsel, prudence. It is eloquent of justice and inspires respect for its judgment, since we realize that only caution engendered by fear of the Lord could enable youth to surmount successfully the obstacles that life must encounter. True, age does not always fulfil these expectations and yet we are inclined to believe that "In the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days prudence."⁷³ The *Book of Wisdom*, too, tells us, "venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years: but the understanding of a man is grey hairs."⁷⁴ Nevertheless, *Ecclesiasticus* exclaims, "O how comely is wisdom for the aged."⁷⁵

Skill is accounted wisdom in the passage of *Exodus* in which God commands Moses to "speak to all the wise of heart, . . . filled with the spirit of wisdom "⁷⁶ that they may make vestments for Aaron, the high priest, as also when the Lord told Moses that Beseleel, of the tribe of Juda, had been filled "with the spirit of God, with wisdom and understanding, and knowledge in all manner of work."⁷⁷ In regard to the construction of the tabernacle, the "ark of the testimony," and all the vessels and appurtenances necessary for the prescribed ceremonies, God assured Moses saying, "I have put wisdom in the heart of every skilful man, that they may make all things which I have commanded thee."⁷⁸ Subtlety, craft, or stratagem, whether in good or evil, was termed wisdom as in the case of Pharaoh's treatment of the Israelites. When the king saw that the Israelites were outnumbering his own people he said, "Come, let us wisely oppress them lest they multiply."⁷⁹ Jonadab, subtle and crafty, who suggested to Amnon to attain his evil desires by deceit and strategy is called "a very wise man."⁸⁰

St. Paul discriminates between "human wisdom" or "the wisdom of men" and that showing "the spirit and power."

⁷² *Ecclus.* ii, 6.

⁷³ *Job* xii, 12.

⁷⁴ *Wis.* iv, 8.

⁷⁵ *Ecclus.* xxv, 7.

⁷⁶ *Exodus* xxviii, 3; *ibid.*, xxxv, 10-25.

⁷⁷ *Exodus* xxxi, 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Exodus i, 10.

⁸⁰ *2 Kings* xiii, 3.

My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in shewing of the Spirit and power;

That your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

• Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, neither of the princes of this world that come to nought;

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory:

Which things also we speak, not in the learned words of human wisdom; but in the doctrine of the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.⁸¹

Moses, who according to St. Stephen "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians/"⁸² furnishes a striking example of the wisdom of God in contrast with the wisdom of the princes of this world. When, as commanded by God, Moses and Aaron threw down the rod before Pharaoh, it was changed into a serpent. The wise men and the magicians, "by Egyptian enchantments and certain secrets" did the same, but "Aaron's rod devoured their rods."⁸³ The magicians could not undo their magic, but Moses' divine gift of wisdom could do and undo with perfect power as we see when, in reference to the rod,

the Lord said: Cast it down upon the ground. He cast it down, and it was turned into a serpent: so that Moses fled from it.

And the Lord said: Put out thy hand and take it by the tail. He put forth his hand, and took hold of it, and it was turned into a rod.⁸⁴

Neither could Pharaoh's wise men compete in the other miracles wrought by Moses as evidenced in the ten plagues visited upon the Egyptians.⁸⁵

Besides discriminating in regard to wisdom, St. Paul also condemns that carnal wisdom which is "an enemy to God,"⁸⁶ and that art of subtle reasoning and vain striving after wisdom. It is quite probable that as a youth in Tarsus Paul first conceived his disgust for such worldly wisdom, for then his home was noted for its schools and distinguished masters.⁸⁷ Philostratus tells us how these scholars

⁸¹ 1 Corinth, ii, 4-7, 13.

⁸² Acts vii, 22.

⁸³ Exodus vii, 10-12.

⁸⁷ Abbe" Constant Fouard, *Saint Peter and the First Years of Christianity* (New York, 1920), p. 103-4.

⁸⁴ Exodus iv, 3, 4.

⁸⁵ Exodus vii-xii.

⁸⁶ Romans viii, 7.

used to gather along the banks of the Cydnus, noisily disputing and disgracing their discussions by vile coarseness.⁸⁸ Later St. Paul in his spiritual wisdom condemned the wisdom of the world as set forth by the Greek poets, orators, and philosophers. The Apostle of the Gentiles seldom refers to them or to their writings, and when he does, it is usually to reprehend them as when he says:^{BQ}

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

For it is written: / will catch the wise in their own craftiness.⁹⁰

And again: *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*⁶¹

He warns against them in these words:

For there are also many disobedient, vain talkers, and seducers: especially they who are of the circumcision:

Who must be reprov'd, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.⁹²

Only once does he, by comparison, quote one of their poets to illuminate his own doctrine, when he says: "Be not seduced: *Evil communications corrupt good manners*"⁹³ St. James also, in regard to carnal wisdom, warns against a "bitter zeal" and "contentions in your hearts." This is not wisdom from above, "but earthly, sensual, devilish."⁹⁴

Thus far we have considered only natural wisdom, but wisdom penetrates beyond nature. "All such things as are hid and not foreseen, I have learned: for wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me."⁹⁵ "She knoweth things past, and judgeth of things to come: . . . she knoweth signs and wonders before they be done, and the events of times and ages."⁹⁶ Such foreknowledge was vouchsafed to Daniel who, enlightened by God, declared and interpreted the dream of Nabuchodonosor,⁹⁷ and exercised on many occasions his ability to understand what dreams foreshadowed,⁹⁸ to

⁸⁸ Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* i, 7. Trans. in Stanford University Publication Series, *Literature and Language*, vol. 2, no. 1.

⁸⁹ I Corinth, iii, 19, 20.

⁹⁴ James iii, 14, 15, 17.

⁹⁰ Job v, 13.

⁹⁵ Wis.

vii, 21.

⁹¹ Psalm xciii, 11.

⁹⁶

Wis. viii, 8.

⁹² Titus i, 10-11.

⁹⁷ Daniel

ii.

⁹³ I Corinth, xv, 33.

⁹⁸

Daniel iv.

interpret the handwriting on the wall at Baltasar's banquet," and to foresee in visions coming events.¹⁰⁰ Joseph,¹⁰¹ likewise displayed prophetic wisdom in his own dreams and in interpreting first, the dreams of Pharaoh's servants¹⁰² and then those of the ruler¹⁰³ himself. The Magi of Babylon, the Brahmins of India, the sages of Egypt, the necromancers of Chaldea—all were accredited wise men because they wrought wonders, interpreted signs and portents, and predicted future events. Prophecy is allied to wisdom for "she maketh . . . prophets."¹⁰⁴ Jesus the son of Sirach says: "I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy, and will leave it to them that seek wisdom."¹⁰⁵ All the prophets of the Old Testament are so called on account of the fulfillment of their inspired utterances. We note especially some of those concerning the birth, life and death of Our Redeemer. Isaiah predicted the Saviour's birth of a Virgin;¹⁰⁶ Micheas saw His crib in Bethlehem of Juda;¹⁰⁷ in Osee we read, "I called my son out of Egypt."¹⁰⁸ Christ was the Cornerstone¹⁰⁹ foretold in the Psalm and the Stumbling-Block spoken of by Isaiah.¹¹⁰ Every detail of His Passion had been foreshadowed. Judas and the thirty pieces of silver/¹¹¹ the deadening drink which Jesus refused;¹¹² the garments divided by lot,¹¹³ the feet and hands pierced¹¹⁴ with nails, the thirst,¹¹⁵ the sponge soaked with vinegar,¹¹⁶ the bones left unbroken,¹¹⁷—all had been foretold by the Wisdom of Prophecy. But not only the great men of old predicted events in their wisdom. A little Jewish maiden, standing on the hillside of Judea, sang in the *Magnificat*, her ecstatic out-burst of humility and prophecy, "Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is his name."¹¹⁸ Each day sees the fulfillment of her words in the prayer that rises from countless loving

⁹⁹ Daniel v.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel vii, viii.

¹⁰¹ Genesis xxxvii, 7-11.

¹⁰² Genesis xl.

¹⁰³ Genesis xli.

¹⁰⁴ Wis. vii, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Eccclus. xxiv, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah vii, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Micheas v, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Osee xi, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Psalm Ixvii, 22.

¹¹⁰ Isaiah viii, 14.

¹¹¹ Zacharias xi, 12-17.

¹¹² Psalm Ixviii, 22.

¹¹³ Psalm xxi, 19.

¹¹⁴ Psalm xxi, 17-18.

¹¹⁵ Psalm xxi, 16.

¹¹⁶ Psalm Ixviii, 22.

¹¹⁷ Exodus xii, 46.

¹¹⁸ Luke i, 48, 49.

hearts, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb/" When the Wise Men from the East¹¹⁹ came to Jerusalem seeking the new-born King of the Jews, "the wisdom of the princes of this world" recognizing Divine Wisdom, displayed their prophetic power when "they offered Him gifts:¹²⁰ gold, frankincense, and myrrh" by which they signified His Kingship, His Godhead, His Divine Humanity. In striking contrast to the admirable wisdom of the Three Kings is the shrewd cunning of Herod. He would question the royal visitors, learn their secrets, and telling them that his purpose was to adore the new-born King,¹²¹ he would accomplish the Child's destruction. But divine wisdom triumphed and worldly cunning sought a retrieval in the wholesale massacre of the Innocents.¹²² Simeon, when he "came by the Spirit into the temple"¹²³ saw hidden in the Child to be circumcised "the light to the revelation of the Gentiles"¹²⁴ and uttered in prophecy:

Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted;

And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.¹²⁶

The patriarchs and prophets, mystically called the everlasting hills,¹²⁶ because of the surpassing greatness of their wisdom and holiness, present in countless instances, we may even say throughout their lives, the continued evidence of their prophetic wisdom. An interesting concrete example is furnished by Jacob in his death-bed prognostications to his sons of the things that would befall them in their successors.¹²⁷ To his best-beloved child of Rachel he gave this cryptic word: "Benjamin a ravenous wolf, in the morning shall eat the prey, and in the evening shall divide the spoil."¹²⁸ Many years later in Saul of Tarsus, descended from the tribe of Benjamin,¹²⁹ we see the fulfilment of this prophecy. Saul, the

¹¹⁹ Matt, ii, 1-2.

¹²⁰ Matt. ii, 11.

¹²¹ Matt, ii, 7, 8.

¹²² Matt, ii, 16.

¹²³ Luke ii, 27.

¹²⁴ Luke ii, 32.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 34, 35.

¹²⁶ Genesis xlix, 20.

¹²⁷ Genesis xlix.

¹²⁸ Genesis xlix, 27.

^{1a9} Philip iii, 5.

persecutor of the Christians, "The ravenous wolf." who "in the morning" of his life did "eat the prey" became Paul, the glorious Apostle of the Gentiles, "in the evening" to "divide the spoil" of a rich conquest of souls. So this preacher of the "foolishness" of the Cross, illustrating in his own life the wisdom of prophecy, became a majestic exponent of wisdom in suffering all for Christ, exemplifying the wisdom of folly by renouncing the kingdom of this world, earthly prestige and advantage, that he might preach Christ Crucified and thereby gain the kingdom of heaven.

The living word of wisdom, uttered in prophecy, may be supplemented by another arresting incident. The tomb of the prophet Eliseus at Sebaste, once Samaria, was celebrated throughout Israel¹³⁰ because it was this monument from which the corpse of the Seer prophesied¹³¹ and whence the dead man had been restored to life. The Book of Kings¹³² gives record of this prodigy. Robber bands were pillaging the country at that time when they came upon a funeral train just outside the city. So terrified were the mourners that they hastily threw the dead man into the sepulchre of the prophet and sought night. No sooner had the corpse touched the bones of the dead saint than the man stood up. Thus "wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb."¹³³ This miraculous power of wisdom, seen later when St. Peter's shadow falling on the sick was sufficient to cure them,¹³⁴ "shineth in the face of the wise."¹³⁵ St. Stephen, the first martyr, a man "full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost,"¹³⁶ disputed with the Hellenists in the Synagogues, but they, "not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke,"¹³⁷ plotted his death. The members of the council were his enemies, predetermined upon his destruction, and yet, they listened to his last discourse and "looking on him, saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel."¹³⁸ Stoned to death, Stephen by his sacrifice gained "Wisdom and glory . . . more precious than a small and short-lived folly,"¹³⁹ being the first to give his blood, as His Master did, for the wisdom of folly.

¹³⁰ Abbe Constant Fouard, *St. Peter and the First Years of Christianity*, p. 79.

¹³¹ *Ecclus.* xlviii, 14.

¹³² *4 Kings* xiii, 20, 21.

¹³³ *Wis.* x, 21.

¹³⁴ *Acts* v, 15.

¹³⁵ *Prov.* xvii, 24.

¹³⁶ *Acts* vi, 5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³⁹ *Ecclea.* x, 1.

Folly and wisdom are antonyms. Ecclesiastes, in searching into the vanity of all earthly things, found "that wisdom excelled folly, as much as light differeth from darkness."¹⁴⁰ But as the wise man and the fool "die both alike" he concluded that wisdom "also was vanity."¹⁴¹ We speak of the folly of wisdom when to our earthly sight no good or advantage accrues to its practice, though oftentimes a penetrating spirit may see the ultimate gain to be derived therefrom. In like manner, the wisdom of folly is used to designate that Christian renunciation of self and selfish ends for the love of God and the attainment of His kingdom. Christ Himself first gave an example of such "folly." His disciples, on the way to Emmaus, downcast at their Master's apparent failure, and not recognizing Him in the fellow-traveler with whom they conversed, told Him the cause of their sadness,—how they had hoped that Jesus of Nazareth would have redeemed Israel, but that now He had been crucified by the Jews.¹⁴² The Master's reply:

O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?¹⁴⁸

enlightened their minds to perceive the truth. The "folly" they deplored was the Wisdom of God consummating the sacrifice that redeemed mankind, as they afterwards learned. The wisdom, as well as the love, of such "folly" is not hard to see, and chosen followers of the Crucified have since gloried in His livery of shame. St. Paul by "the foolishness" of his preaching converted the Gentiles unto whom "Christ Crucified" was "foolishness,"¹⁴⁴ convincing them that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"¹⁴⁵ and glorying in his acknowledgment, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ."¹⁴⁶

Just as the wisdom of folly searches out ultimate good things for the soul, so does all wisdom benefit man, if we except the "wisdom that aboundeth in evil"¹⁴⁷ which we have previously

¹⁴⁰Eccles. ii, 13.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 14, 15.

¹⁴²Luke xxiv, 13-32.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*,

¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁷

I Corinth, i, 21, 23.

iii, 19.

Ibid., iv, 10.

Ecclus. xxi, 15.

noted. Wisdom says in Proverbs, "I . . . enrich them that love me, and . . . fill their treasures."¹⁴⁸ "All good things . . . and innumerable riches "¹⁴⁹ are her gifts. "She is an infinite treasure to men! which they that use, become the friends of God."¹⁵⁰ Not only is wisdom a means to God, but it is also said of her, that she "came forth from God,"¹⁵¹ "out of the mouth of the most High, the firstborn before all creatures."¹⁵² The infinite attributes of God are hers. She is omniscient, "overseeing all things" with knowledge "to know the disposition of the whole world, and the virtues of the elements, The beginning, and ending, and midst of the times, the alterations of their courses, and the changes of seasons."¹⁵³ She is omnipresent, "reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity"; omnipotent and unchangeable, "she can do all things; and remaining in herself the same, she reneweth all things."¹⁵⁴ "She is the vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God; . . . the brightness of eternal light, . . . the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of his goodness."¹⁵⁵ She "was set up from eternity and of old before the earth was made."¹⁵⁶ In the New Testament Wisdom is the special appellation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In St. Luke we read, "The wisdom of God said: I will send to them prophets and apostles."

The symbols and comparisons used in Holy Scripture when speaking of wisdom are many and various. The serpent and the fox are used as symbols of cunning or worldly artifice. In the garden of Eden, the serpent, "more subtle than any of the beasts which the Lord God had made,"¹⁵⁷ cunningly tempted Eve to her fall, and has ever since been used to connote deceitful trickery. The cock is spoken of in *Job* as a bird of understanding in reference to the instinct by which he distinguishes the times of crowing in the night.¹⁵⁸ The dove and fire symbolize divine wisdom. At the

¹⁴⁸ Prov. viii, 21.

¹⁴⁹ Wis. vii, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Wis. vii, 10, 14.

¹⁵¹ Eccus. xv, 10.

¹⁵² Eccus. xxiv, 5.

¹⁵³ Wis. vii, 17, 18, 23.

¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁸

Ibid, 24, 27.

25-26.

Prov. viii, 23.

Genesis Hi, 1.

Job xxxviii, 36.

Baptism of Christ in the Jordan "the Spirit of God descending as a dove "¹⁵⁹ rested upon Him, and when the apostles, having chosen Matthias to complete their number, were assembled "there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them." ¹⁶⁰ Caesarius of Heisterbach explains the appropriateness of these symbols:

For the dove, which is the simplest of birds, has seven natural virtues; and through them the gifts of the Holy Spirit are mystically represented. In fire there is heat and splendour and the Holy Spirit burns with love and illuminates by the operation of wisdom.¹⁶¹

The Bible is rich in allusions to wisdom in simile and metaphor. "She is a vapour of the power of God," "the unspotted mirror of God's majesty." ¹⁶² "All gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay." ¹⁶³ She is not to "be compared with the dyed colours of India, or with the most precious stone sardonyx, or the sapphire," nor "any precious stone." ¹⁶⁴ "She is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars." ¹⁶⁵ "Gold or crystal, . . . vessels of gold, . . . the topaz of Ethiopia," ¹⁶⁶ "honey and the honeycomb," ¹⁶⁷ "money," ¹⁶⁸ "weapons of war," ¹⁶⁹ "kingdoms and thrones, . . . riches," ¹⁷⁰ "health, beauty, light," ¹⁷¹ "strength," ¹⁷² "wine and music," ¹⁷³ "a grape soon ripe" ¹⁷⁴ enhance her by comparison. She was "exalted like a cedar in Libanus, . . . a cyprus tree on mount Sion, . . . like a palm tree in Cades, . . . a roso plant in Jericho, . . . a fair olive tree in the plains, . . . a plane tree in the streets." ¹⁷⁵ She "gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm, . . . a sweet odour like the best myrrh"; perfumed her

¹⁵⁹ Matt, in, 16-17.

¹⁶⁰

Acts ii, 1-4.

¹⁶¹ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, vol. II, ed. by G. G. Coulton and Eileen Power in *Broadway Medieval Library* (London, 1929), p. 37.

¹⁶² Wis. vii, 25, 26.

¹⁶⁹

Eccles. ix, 18.

¹⁶³ Wis. vii, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Wis. vii, 8; viii, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Job xxviii, 16.

¹⁷¹ Wis. vii, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Wis. vii, 29.

¹⁷² Wis. vi, 1.

¹⁶⁶ Job xxviii, 17, 19.

¹⁷³

Ecclus. xl, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Prov. xxiv, 13, 14; Ecclus. xxiv, 27.

¹⁷⁴

Ecclus. li, 19.

¹⁶⁸ Eccles. vii, 13.

¹⁷⁵

Ecclus. xxiv, 17, 18, 19.

"dwelling as storax, and galbanum, and onyx, and aloes, and as the frankincense not cut" an "odour ... as the purest balm." Wisdom stretched out her "branches as the turpentine tree; ... as the vine " she "brought forth a pleasant odour"; her "flowers are the fruit of honour and riches."¹⁷⁶ Wisdom "poured out rivers"; she came out of paradise "like a brook out of a river of a mighty water, . . . like a channel of a river, . . . like an aqueduct." She says, "I will water my garden of plants, and I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow."¹⁷⁷ Her dwelling is made by herself, a house with seven pillars.

She hath slain her victims, mingled her wine, and set forth her table.

She hath sent her maids to invite to the tower, and to the walls of the city; ... to the unwise she said:

Come, eat my bread, and drink my wine which I have mingled for you.¹⁷⁸

These verses, together with the symbols and comparisons just cited, supply most of the allegorical trappings so frequently found in connection with wisdom.

From our preliminary study of the biblical aspects of wisdom it is evident that wisdom may be of various kinds. The amassing of unbounded knowledge of things of this world is a common but limited type of wisdom. True wisdom shows itself also in understanding, in eloquence, in counsel, in discerning judgment, in prudence, and in the fear of the Lord. Only that wisdom that has had its beginning in the fear and love of God can attain to an understanding of eternal values. This is commendable worldly wisdom. Opposed to this is cunning, sometimes improperly called wisdom and that carnal wisdom which merits only condemnation.

Powers of prophecy are associated with wisdom, these characteristics apparently resulting from the understanding which penetrates beyond nature. According to the different degrees of penetration there are two classes of prophets: sagacious seers whose natural gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding qualify them to foretell coming events, and prophets divinely inspired whose utterances, literally fulfilled, have entitled them to veneration.

Wisdom may seem folly, or apparent folly may be true wisdom.

¹⁷⁹ Eccclus. xxiv, 20-23.

¹⁷⁷ Eccclus. xxiv, 40-42.

¹⁷⁸ Prov. ix, 1-5.

St. Paul says, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God/⁵¹⁷⁹ and again, " We are fools for Christ's sake/⁵¹⁸⁰ but only to those who can not fully comprehend does true wisdom seem folly. " Wisdom, that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation."¹⁸¹ Greatest of all is divine wisdom, seen in the Godhead, and often especially associated with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Wisdom is personified as one who " preacheth abroad."^{181J} She carries "Length of days in her right hand and in her left hand riches and glory."¹⁸³ She dwells in counsel and in " learned thoughts/⁵¹⁸⁴ builds herself a house, sets forth her table and invites her friends.¹⁸⁵ She " is glorious and never fadeth away/⁵ is easily accessible to those that love her and seek her, even going forth to find " such as are worthy of her."⁵⁷¹⁸⁶ She is characterized by supereminent virtues and powers, partaking even of things divine.¹⁸⁷

The different phases of wisdom seem to be personified in types, as Solomon, typifying wisdom of many kinds; the Queen of Saba, known for her knowledge; the Wise Virgins, for prudence; Moses and Aaron and the Magi, excelling in divination; the patriarchs and prophets, Simeon and John the Baptist, representing prophetic wisdom; Daniel and Joseph, interpreting dreams and visions; St. Paul and St. Stephen, exemplifying in their lives the wisdom of folly.

Wisdom may be symbolized in the fox, the serpent, the cock, the crown, the wine of wisdom, the fiery ball, or the dove,—the latter signifying wisdom which is divine. The sun and the stars, gold and precious stones, honoy, a ripe grape, aromatic herbs and spices, the palm, the cedar, the cypress, the rose plant, the olive and the plane trees are all used in comparison with wisdom. We shall see later how analogies to the various phases of wisdom and these types may be discovered in Middle English literature.

^{17t>} 1 Corinth, iii, 19.

¹⁸⁰ 1 Corinth, iv, 10.

¹⁸¹ James iii, 17.

^{1M} Prov. i, 20.

¹⁸⁸ Prov. iii, 16.

¹⁸ⁱ Prov. viii, 12.

^{18B} Prov. ix, 1-5.

"• Wiſ. vi, 13-17.

¹⁸⁷ Wis. vii, 17-28.

CHAPTER II

WOELDLY WISDOM

That the characteristics of wisdom as found in Middle English writings may be more easily seen to parallel those of the biblical concept of wisdom, the citations gathered are here presented under the same distinguishing qualities as those observed in the study of the biblical characteristics in the introductory chapter.

WISDOM AS KNOWLEDGE

In *Old English Homilies*,¹ sermons from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, we learn that the wise man who did not give good example by his good works was blamed because his lore or knowledge would have little weight with the common people if he himself did not do what he taught others to do. This association of *lare* with the *wisa mon* would indicate that in the conception of this writer knowledge was implied in wisdom. Orm in his work, *The Ormulum*, c. 1200, of which we have only a fragment, in dealing with the teaching of the gospel insists that a good man follows knowledge guiding himself with wisdom.² In *Vices and Virtues*, a Middle-English dialogue written about 1200, we learn that some "are held very wise through this gift of God," referring to knowledge/ while "the wise clerk" who neglected to improve his knowledge was condemned, again suggesting that his wisdom depended upon his increasing knowledge.⁴ In *The Court of Sapience?* written about

¹ Richard Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies and Homilectic Treatises*, EETS os 27, 34 (London, 1867), Part I, p. 109: Nu 3if be wisa mon bio butan gode wercan. be be oSer monnen scolde aullan gode bisne. hu ne bio sone his lare ban lewede monnen unwuro. 3if he seolf nule don swa swa he heom techeo to donne.

•R. Holt, ed., *The Ormulum*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1878), vol. I, p. 207, ll. 5996-97: Forr god mann folbhej)? witt—skill—wibb wissdom himm ledebb.

³Ferd. Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, EETS os 89 (London, 1888), Part I, p. 65, l. 14: Ac hit bie8 sume 8e bieQ swiOe wise ihealden Surh Cessere godes giue (witte).

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 81, ll. 16 ff.: wel wis clerc, oe wisliche hem seluen naht ne wisseO, and binc oet he hafo ino3h on his witte oe he cann.

⁵Robert Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience* (Leipzig, 1927).

1465, Sapience has been analyzed as intended by the author to be "a personification of the knowledge resident in the Deity."⁶ In the allegory Dame Sapience is attended by Intellygence and Scyence who introduce themselves and tell us how they differ. Divinity or theology is the proper field for Sapience who says, "Hyt ys my part to know diuinite"; Intellygence possesses knowledge of all creatures in heaven and on earth, while Dame Science has pure knowledge of all temporal things. Dame Sapience then continues to say that she is superior to the other two in that she is "the trew propyr knowledge" of all things divine as well as human, leaving no doubt that knowledge constitutes her wisdom.⁷

Cursor Mundi (c. 1300) relates that wisdom and knowledge constituted the great gift of God to Adam and Eve at creation, "Witte and wisdam he J?am gaue."⁸ *Genesis and Exodus* (c. 1350) states that it was desire for an increase of this gift of knowledge which the devil used in tempting Adam, telling him that if he ate the forbidden fruit he would know all things and would forget nothing, so that he would be as wise as those who dwelt above in heaven,⁹

^e Joseph Burns Collins, review of "The Sources of the Court of Sapience" by Curt Ferdinand Bihler (Leipzig, 1932), in *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 49 (April, 1934), pp. 275-276.

^fRobert Spindler, ed., *The Court of tiapicnce*, p. 129, ll. 150-154; p. 130, ll. 155-58:

Hyt ya my part to know diuinite,
My sustyr here hath knowledge diligent
Of creatures in heuen and erthe content,
And Dame Science of thyngis temporall
Hath knowledge pure; thus mayst thou know vs all.

Of vs all thre I am the most souerayn,
And yf the lyste me discryue and defyne,
I am the trew propyr knowledge certayn
Of erthely thyng, and eke of thyng diuine.

"Richard Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, EETS os 57 (London, 1874), p. 46, l. 667.

•Richard Morris, ed., *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, EETS os 7 (London, 1865), p. 10, ll. 330-32:

Al ge it fulen witent and nogt forgeten,
And ben so wise all euene
So So oe wunen a-buuen in heuone.

or as it is said in the *Chester Plays*, "as wise as God."¹⁰ Among the frequent references by Middle English writers to Solomon as a wise man, it is not surprising to find the knowledge of Solomon lauded, thus:

So mychel wisdom neuer y-herd was; as kyng salamon coube :
 Vche word wyt and wisdom was; bat com out of his moube.
 De kynde he coube of vche beest; and of vche quik bing,
 And be vertu of vche herbe; bat dob on erbe spr(i)nge; ¹¹

In addition to direct introduction of biblical characters we find holy men and saints possessed of knowledge. As an instance, may be cited Philip of Paris, who appears in *The Secrees of Old Philosoffres* as a "rigght-wys" man, skilled in languages and so diligent in seeking out mysteries that he was deemed worthy of translating the book of secrets. Philip used his knowledge for Guy, Bishop of Valence, who desired to have the book translated into Latin. This bishop is compared to Solomon in wisdom. His knowledge was boundless. He was linguist, scientist, philosopher, and poet.¹² Furthermore, knowledge as wisdom is mentioned frequently in connection with the saints, a most striking example being that of St. Katherine of Alexandria whose wisdom confounded fifty wise sages from the East.¹³ This maiden's preeminent distinction

¹⁰ Herman Deimling, ed., *The Chester Plays*, EETS es 115, Part II (London, 1916 [for 1914]), p. 29, l. 224.

¹¹ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, EETS os 69 (London, 1878), ll. 1-4.

¹² Robert Steele, ed., *Lydgatc and Burgh's Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, EETS es 66 (London, 1894), p. 7, l. 212; p. 12, l. 373.

¹³ Eugen Eickenel, ed., *The Life of Saint Katherine*, EETS oa 80 (London, 1884). This legend has a very interesting history. The first undoubted allusion to St. Katherine and at the same time a narrative of her life and passion is contained in the *Menologium Basilianum*, a ninth century collection of legends made for the emperor Basil the First. Upon this very brief account two more elaborate versions, both in Greek, are founded; one, by Simeon Metaphrastes, about the beginning of the tenth century, and another, a somewhat later version, by Athanasios. The latter, of which there are two copies, differing only in minor points, one in the library at Vienna, the other in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, Baroccian Collection, No. 180, is the prototype of the Latin legend, which in turn, is the original of our Early English poem. There are many more English versions, in the library of the British Museum and elsewhere, noteworthy among them being

was her knowledge. So well instructed was she "that none was her equal." All the celebrated clerks in the realm could not match her wisdom. Then fifty schoolmasters from the East, "in all sciences of worldly wisdom the wisest in the world/¹⁴ were sought to match their knowledge against the wisdom of this young girl. John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria*,¹⁵ too, emphasizes the wisdom and learning of this queen who meets three hundred and ten "wyse men/" confounding them all/¹⁶ but it gives a comparatively brief account of the discussion with the philosophers, representing theology as overcoming pagan skill and knowledge. Accounts of the life of St. Katherine are also given in *The Early South-English Legendary or Lives of the Saints*, edited by Dr. Horstmann,¹⁷ and in Dr. Furnival's *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints*.TM

Other examples of the fact that to Medieval English translators and paraphrasers of lives of the saints wisdom implied knowledge may be added. Thus in Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints* knowledge and wisdom are often accompanying qualifications of sanctity, one almost implying the other. St. Basil was "committed to learning and to worldly wisdom when he was seven years (old)," and in his eagerness for knowledge "wonderfully searched into all the wisdom" which the Greek philosophers knew how to teach him.¹⁸ St. Eufrasia (or Euphrosyne) was taught by her father "in holy

two old prints of Pietro Aretino's *Vita di Catherine Vergine* in the British Museum and another, embellished with works of art, which was composed at the command of Philip the Good of Burgundy, by his secretary, Jean Mielot, copies of which are to be found at Paris and at Brussels.

"*Ibid.*, 11. 524-26:

bat in alle wittes
of worldliche wisdomes
wisest on worlde.

¹⁵Carl Horstmann, ed., EETS os 100 (London, 1893).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, Bk. I, 11. 405 ff.

¹⁷EETS os 87 (London, 1887), pp. 92-101.

¹⁸(Berlin, 1862), pp. 90-98.

"Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS os 76 (London, 1881), p. 50, 11. 4-5: be-faestan to lare to woruld-wis-dome. oa oa he syfon wyntre waes. P. 52, 1. 24: and eallne J?one wysdom wundorlice asmeade.

writings and goodly readings, and in all worldly wisdom."²⁰ She was known throughout all the town for her wisdom and learning.²¹ Knowledge was sought by Eugenia, virgin and saint, who was sent to school by her father, Philip, "that she might be educated in worldly wisdom" and "well increased in wisdom and philosophy."²²

Beyond such examples there occur in Middle English writings many drawn from classical literature or antiquity, which do not, however, vitally concern the discussion here. Thus, Aristotle is cited as famous for wisdom which was synonymous with knowledge. His history is to be found in Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* (c. 1450) in which Aristotle "in sapience of Secretees hath the name" of being without parallel.²³ Another philosopher whose knowledge, some thought, made him famous for wisdom was Sydrake who is mentioned in *The Quare of Jelusy* as the great clerk who was "be ioure Of clergy, wisdom, and intelligence."²⁴ His reputation for wisdom depended mainly on a book of wondrous knowledge which he is supposed to have written for King Bokas.²⁵ In *The History of Jason*, Argos was considered wise because of his expert knowledge of navigation.²⁶ References may be added which concern Alexander the Great and Dindimus.²⁷ Another non-biblical character referred to in Middle English texts as possessing wisdom is Isope in the *Tale of Beryns** This tale occurs in a manuscript

²⁰ Skcat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, Part IV, "Homilies," p. 336, 11. 26 ff.: se faeder pa gelaerde paet maeden . mid halgum gewritum . and godcundum readiigum . and mid eallum woruldlucum wis-dome.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336, 11. 29-31.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 27, 11. 20-23: paet hco on woruld-wysdome waere getogen . . . wel peah on wisdome . and on ufiwytegunge.

²³ *Op. cit.*, 1. 8.

²⁴ Alexander Lawson, ed., *The Kingis Quair and The Quare of Jelusy* (London, 1910), p. 113, 11. 317 ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151, note. The Tale of Bochas forms the sixth book in Giovanni Boccaccio, *A Treatise excellent and compendious shewing and declaring, in maner of Tragedye, the falls of sondry most notable Princes and Princesses*, translated by Dan John Lydgate. In aedibus Richard! Totelli, 1527.

²⁶ William Caxton, *The History of Jason*, edited by John Munro, EETS es 111 (London, 1913), p. 71.

²⁷ J. S. Westlake, ed., *The Prose Life of Alexander*, EETS os 143 (London, 1913), p. 77, 11. 26 ff.; p. 78, 11. 14 ff.

²⁸ F. J. Furnivall and W. G. Stone, editors, *The Tale of Beryn*, EETS es 105 (London, 1909), p. 120.

of the *Canterbury Tales* between leaf 115 where the *Sompnour's Tale* is interrupted and leaf 235 where it is taken up again. It is believed to have been written by a Canterbury monk as the colophon implies and as W. A. Clouston thinks very probable.²⁹ Isope "is so inly wise, That no man alyve can pas-(sen) his devise." He knows all languages, writes poetry, is proficient in law and philosophy, and the sayings of Seneca, Sydrak and Solomon. He understands the seven sciences, all laws of arms, experiment, pumping and all kinds of charms. He is the acknowledged wise man of that land.³⁰

Women sometimes are mentioned as wise on account of their knowledge. It was customary to associate learning with queens as may be inferred from these lines in *The Pride of Life*, a fifteenth century poem that has been edited by Osborn Waterhouse together with the *Non-Cycle Mystery Plays* and *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*:

(>a)t ladi is lettrit in lor
As cumli becomit for a quen.³¹

So, in *Layamon's Brut*,³² Tonuenne, the queen, is "a wifmon wis and kene," while the sister of Edward, son of Alfred, King of England, helped her brother "wij? hir witt," as we are told in the *Anonymous Eiming Chronicle of England*.^{2*} The heroine of the Middle Ages is seldom presented as the wise lady. However, Goldsborough of *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, must have been an exception for "Of alle]?ewes w(as) she wis."³⁴ The few "wise ladies" that are to be found in the Middle English romances were

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 137, note.

³⁰ Furnivall and Stone, editors, *The Tale of Beryn*, ll. 2642-2702.

³¹ Osborn Waterhouse, ed., *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays*, together with *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* and *The Pride of Life*, EETS es 104 (London, 1909), p. 89, ll. 45-46.

³² Frederick Madden, ed., *Lajamon's Brut*, or *Chronicle of Britain*, 3 vols. (London, 1847), vol. 1, v. 4988.

³³ Marion Crane Carroll and Rosemond Tuve, editors, "Two Manuscripts of the Middle English Anonymous Riming Chronicle," *PMLA*, vol. 46 (March, 1931), 1. 1560.

³⁴ Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, EETS es 4 (London, 1868), p. 9, 1. 282.

considered such on account of their knowledge. Melior of the *Partenope* and Felice of *Guy of Warwick* are cited as typical examples by Adelaide Evans Harris in her study of *The Heroine of the Middle English Romances*.³⁵ Melior was educated that she might govern the kingdom wisely. She was taught by a hundred or more masters, so that she might learn perfectly all the worldly wisdom then attainable. "Felice la Belle,"³⁰ the other representative of the erudite heroine, had wise masters from the medical university of Toulouse who gave her the training in healing, a necessary accomplishment, and the required skill in the seven arts or sciences.

While many instances are to be found in which qualities other than knowledge are the distinguishing marks of wisdom, some of which we are next to consider, these just noted sufficiently emphasize the fact that knowledge was one of the outstanding characteristics of the wisdom concept of our Early English writers just as it formed an essential quality of the biblical idea of wisdom.

WISDOM AS UNDERSTANDING

Fewer examples of wisdom conceived as understanding are to be found in Middle English than of those illustrating the concept of wisdom as knowledge. However, this quality of wisdom is obviously presupposed in many cases, particularly in matters pertaining to counsel. As we reserve "Wisdom as Counsel" for treatment in the pages which immediately follow, these instances will not be discussed here. Notwithstanding, a sufficient number of examples are here given to illustrate the fact that understanding as a quality of wisdom was not unknown to medieval English writers.

We have noted in chapter one how Solomon asked for an understanding heart as part of his gift of wisdom, showing that knowledge alone was not sufficient. In *Vices and Virtues* which we have mentioned when treating of knowledge, this virtue is clearly distinguished as the gift of God which enables man to understand all the

³⁵ Adelaide Evans Harris, *The Heroine of the Middle English Romances* (Cleveland, 1928), pp. 17, 18.

³⁶ Julius Zupitza, ed., *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, EETS es 25, 26 (London, 1875, 1876), 11. 63-70.

thoughts which come from the heart, whether they are of God or born of the flesh or prompted by the devil.³⁷ From which it follows that the man to whom God has given this gift will be responsible in a greater measure if he "love more the creature which God created, then he does his Creator, who created him and all things."³⁸ In the *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*³⁹ Job is called "witty and wys" because of this understanding spirit by which he saw the hand of God in all his misfortunes.

Understanding is also predicated of characters from classical literature. Aristotle is described as "moost Sotyl / of Entendement," in the *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*⁴⁰ Robert Henryson saw understanding rather than knowledge in the "nobill clerk Esope," who does not "Lak the wisdom of hie nor law estait."⁴¹ This wise man sympathized with the poor as well as with the rich and dealt out wisdom for both. Troilus, as Chaucer represents him, is "The wyse worthy Ector the secunde" in whom is to be found understanding coupled with truth and gentleness.⁴² So in the citations to follow under wisdom as counsel we shall find understanding very often implied.

WISDOM AS COUNSEL

It would appear that medieval writers recognized as one of the duties logically devolving upon the man of wisdom the duty of counselling his less fortunate fellow-beings. Consequently, we find early mention of this office of counsellor. Moses, *Old English*

³⁷ Ferd. Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, Part I, p. 87, ll. 5 ff.: Burh Sessere godes 3iue Su miht alle So Sohtes icnawe Se cumeS from Sire herte; hwilche bieS of gode, and hwilche of Sine flesche, and hwilche bieS of Se dieule.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69, ll. 29 ff.: Walewa Sas siSes, Sat ani mann Sat godd haf8 i3iuen witt and wisdom, scall luuieii more Se scaftes Se godd 3escop, Sanne he do his sceppend, Se him and alle J?ing 3escop!

³⁹ Charlotte D'Evelyn, ed., *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, EETS os 158 (London, 1921), p. 45, l. 1709.

⁴⁰ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, l. 63.

⁴¹ Gregory G. Smith, ed., *The Poems of Robert Henryson* (Edinburgh and London, 1906), vol. II, p. 6, ll. 57 ff.

⁴² Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London, 1931), "Troilus and Cresyde," Bk. II, l. 158.

Homilies tells us, was considered the type of a wise ruler, one who should "be true to his word and listen to wise lore (counsel)."⁴³ One of the abuses of the times is cited as a weak and powerless ruler who will not teach his adherents to follow any wisdom.⁴⁴ In *Genesis and Exodus* the writer, apparently paraphrasing the biblical counsel of Jethro to Moses, states that God commanded Moses to choose seventy wise men to help him in the government of the people, presumably to give advice.⁴⁵ In the same work Lot is presumably taken as exemplifying wisdom of counsel when he warned his son-in-law "wislike and wel," even though to no purpose.⁴⁶ In *Vices and Virtues* Solomon instructs thus, "Do all things after counsel, thereafter it shall not cause thee worry,"⁴⁷ but the counsel is to be taken "not from a wise man only, but from one who is both wise and also God-fearing, and tried in religion."⁴⁸ In *Solomons Book of Wisdom*, the Middle English work mentioned previously, the wise king's wisdom appears as counsel to help the needy, to be merciful to widows and orphans, not to fight, "Ajein strong men and ireful, . . . For lesu cristes swete loue; to susteyne]?e ri3th," to have one good friend and to cherish an old friend: "To New-fangel ne be]?ou noujth; lest]?ou finde vntrewe." These and many more similar sayings show that Solomon, in the conception of the writer, possessed and exercised wisdom as counsel.⁴⁹ *The Knight de la Tour-Landry* counsels us "wel to have in our memorye the

⁴³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, II, p. III: beon weordfeste, and wise lare lusten.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111: pet he his men eisian ne der ne to nane wisdom e heom nule wissian.

⁴⁵ Morris, ed., *Genesis and Exodus*, p. 104, ll. 3665-68:

Quoo god, " cues Se nu her seuenti
Wise men to stonden Se bi,
And ic sal hem geuen ivitter-hed,
And he Se sulen don helpe at ned.

The italics are my own.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.1091.

⁴⁷ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, Part I, p. 71, ll. 6-9: Do alle ping after rade, o'er after hit ne seal pe of penchen.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70, ll. 10-11: nim Oar after rad, naht at wise manne one, and pe bie baowis ec goddrihti, and ifonded of religion.

⁴⁹ Furnivall, ed., *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, pp. 83-84.

saynges and auctoryties of the wyse Salamon, whiche sayth that men must thynke on the wordes twyes or thryes or they be putt oute of the mouthe. And thus ought to doo al wyse folke."⁵⁰ It was due to the wise counsel given by Daniel that Nabuchodonosor reigned over all the land.⁵¹ When Anne and Joachim, nonplussed at Mary's refusal to marry, asked advice of "all J>e wysest men)?at weren in)?at land,"⁵² they were counseled to trust in God's grace.

Besides these biblical characters we find other holy men and women renowned for counsel. Guy, Bishop of Valence, already mentioned as possessing exceptional information, converted the wicked by his counsel.⁵³ *The Lay Folks' Mass Book* in the "Bidding Prayer" admonished,

ye sail pray for . . . y^e kyng and his counsell yt god sende hym gude counsell and wytt and gras so for do yerafter yat it may be plesyng to gode.⁵⁴

Characters from classical literature, especially the philosophers are accredited with counsel. The *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* tells us that Alexander as a result of Aristotle's sage direction brought all kingdom's under his control.⁵⁵ Alexander himself, medieval writers showed as paying particular respect for wisdom under the aspect of counsel. In the beginning of his rule he sent for "ten philosophres pat be wyse, by the whilke we may be encensede and conselled."⁵⁶ This shows clearly that the wisdom of the philosopher implied counsel. *The Knight de la Tour-Landry* mentions the "wyse Cathon" who gave wise counsel to his son, Cathonet.⁵⁷ Eson, "the auncient and wise king," father of Jason, counseled his son to virtue and to "ensiewe alway the men that be wyse and wel

⁶⁰ Thomas Wright, ed., *The Book of The Knight de la Tour-Landry*, EETS os 33 (London, 1808), p. 204.

⁶¹ Richard Morris, ed., *Early English Alliterative Poems*, EETS os 1 (London, 1864), "Cleanness," p. 75, ll. 1325-28.

⁶² Roscoe E. Parker, ed., *The Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, EETS os 174 (London, 1928), p. 121, ll. 301 ff.

⁶³ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, ll. 379 ff.

⁶⁴ Thomas Frederick Simmons, ed., *The Lay Folks' Mass Book*, EETS os 71 (London, 1879), p. 74, ll. 10 ff.

⁵⁵ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, ll. 65 ff.

^{Be} J. S. Westlake, ed., *The Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 33, ll. 2-3.

⁶⁷ T. Wright, ed., *Book of the Knight de La Tour-Landry*, pp. 194-95.

renommed."⁵⁸ "The kyng Creante (of Corinth) was a wise prince" and likewise advised Jason well.⁶⁹ We read of the "right wise knight," Hercules, who knighted Jason and counseled him to justice, humility and courtesy.⁶⁰ It is the wisdom of Geffrey, the Cripple, that counsels Beryn to consult Isope and advises him in his distress.⁶¹

Heroes in Middle English literature are accredited with wisdom manifested as counsel. Amyntans counsels Arthur about the selection of his knights.⁶² The barons in the early days of Britain referred to Ulfm for counsel,

Sere, 30, we knowen the for a wys man,
and niichel of good cownseyl thou can.⁶³

When Arthur first appeared before the barons they thought he

Sehal ben rylit wys, the sothe to say,
(F)or wondyrly he doth va answere here.⁶⁴

King Aungers adjudged Arthur

... wyseste and worthyeste, arid wyghteste of hanrides, The knyghtlyeste of counsaile that euer corono bore.⁶⁵

In Layamon's *Brut* a "wisne cniht" was sent to the foe to give counsel and arrange peace.⁶⁶ The early poems often served as vehicles for didactic utterances such as that a king to be well thought of must "be lad by wys coimsayle,"⁶⁷ or that if a ruler desired to maintain his state, he must meet his lords in council,

⁵⁸ Caxton, *The History of Jason*, p. 5, 1121 ff.

Ibid., p. 169.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8, 1. 35.

⁶¹ Furnivall, ed., *The Tale of Beryn*, 11. 2620 ff.

⁶² Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Lancelot of the Laik: A Scottish Metrical Romance*, EETS os 6 (London, 1863), p. 50.

⁶³ Ernest A. Kock, ed., *Merlin, A Middle-English Metrical Version of a French Romance by Urry Lovclich*, EETS es 93, 112 (London, 1904, 1913), p. 151, 11. 5669-70.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202, 11. 7644-45.

⁶⁵ George G. Perry, ed., *Morte Arthure*, EETS os 8 (London, 1865), p. 10, 11. 290-91; 1. 290 is repeated as line 532 on p. 17.

⁶⁶ Brie, ed., *The Brut*, 1. 8758.

⁶⁷ J. Kail, ed., *Twenty-six Political and Other Poems*, EETS os 124 (London, 1904), p. 12, 1. 82.

per euer mon moste in certeyne
Schewe his wisdom and his witte.⁶⁸

Even in the romances counsel distinguishes the wise ruler as in the case of William of Palerne

So wisli . . . wrou3t . to sauen his reaume .
tok to him tidely . trewe cunsayl euere
pat al þe peeple for him preide.⁶⁹

Likewise, Amoryus,

be hys wysdam, (was)
abyll an hole reme to gye.⁷⁰

Counsel is not very often predicated of women by the Middle English writers but there are a few instances to be found. *The Knight de la Tour-Landry* mentions "the wyse lady Rebecca" as counseling that "kyssynge is nyghe parente and cosyn vnto the fowle faytte or dede," confirming this advice with the authority of the "Sybylle."⁷¹ Edward, King of England, was counseled by his sister as *The Riming Chronicle* states,

Sche halpe hir broker Edward J?e king
Wip hir witt and wip hir rede.⁷²

Floripas, daughter of the Soudan, in *The English Charlemagne Romances*⁷³ gives wise counsel to her father, but usually for an unworthy end.

The wisdom that is contained in proverbs, the "potted wisdom"⁷⁴ of all the ages, is generally in the form of counsel. This

⁶⁸ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vcmon MS.*, EETS os 98 (London, 1892), Part II, p. 732, ll. 47-48.

⁶⁹ Walter W. Skeat, ed., *William of Palerne*, EETS es 1 (London, 1867), p. 173, ll. 5482-84.

⁷⁰ Hardin Craig, ed., *The Works of John Metham*, including *The Romance of Amoryus and Cleopes*, EETS os 132 (London, 1916), p. 4, ll. 98-99.

⁷¹ Wright, ed., *The Book of The Knight de la Tour-Landry*, p. 185.

⁷² Carroll and Tuve, editors, *Middle English Anonymous Riming Chronicle*, ll. 1558-1560.

⁷³ Emil Hausknecht, ed., *The English Charlemagne Romances*, Part V, EETS es 38 (London, 1881), pp. 44-48, ll. 1512-1664.

⁷⁴ William J. Shearer, *The Wisdom of the World in Proverbs of All Nations* (New York, 1904), p. 1.

gnomic wisdom, fittingly illustrated in *The Proverbs of Alfred*,⁷⁵ abounds in *The Exeter Book*,TM among *Anglo-Saxon Apothegms*,⁷⁷ in Aelfric's *Lives of Saints and Homilies*^{7*} in the *Heptateuch*⁷⁹ *Reliquiae Antiquae*,⁸⁰ and in *An Old English Miscellany*.⁸¹ Later it appears in such works as *How þe Goode Wyfe taujt hyr Doubter*, *How a Wyse Man Taught Hys Sone*, *The Abce of Aristotill*, *Proverbs of Good Counsel*,⁶² *Ratis Raving*, *The Thewis off Gud Women*,⁶³ *Urbanitatis*,⁸⁴ and many others.⁸⁵ Further examples of such wisdom of counsel in proverbial utterances are to be found in *Early English Homilies*,⁸⁶ *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne*,⁸⁷ *George Ashby's Poems*,⁸⁸ and *The Rule of St. Benet*TM Collections of

⁷⁵ Helen Peimock South, *The Proverbs of Alfred* (New York, 1931).

⁷⁶ Israel Gollanz, ed, *The Exeter Book*, EETS os 103, 104 (London, 1894-95), "A Father's Instruction," et passim.

⁷⁷ John M. Kemble, *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus* (London, 1848), "Anglo-Saxon Apothegms," p. 267.

⁷⁸ Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS os 76, 82, 94, 114 (London, 1881-1900), "Homilies," Part I, II, and III.

⁷⁹ S. J. Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, EETS os 160 (London, 1922), pp. 15, 74, et passim.

⁸⁰ Thomas Wright and James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, editors, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, 2 vols. (London, 1841-43).

⁸¹ Richard Morris, ed., *An Old English Miscellany*, EETS os 49 (London, 1872).

⁸² F. J. Furnivall, ed., *A fiooke of Precedence*, EETS es 8 (London, 1869), "How]þe Goode Wyfe tau3t hyr Dou3ter," pp. 44-51; "How a Wyse Man taught Hys Sone," pp. 52-55; "The Abce of Aristotill," pp. 65-67; "Proverbs of Good Counsel," pp. 68-70.

⁸³ J. Rawsoii Lumby, ed., *Ratis Raving*, EETS os 43 (London, 1870), pp. 26-103; "The Thewis off Gud Women," pp. 103-12.

⁸⁴ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Babees Book*, EETS os 32 (London, 1868), "Aristotle's A B C," "Urbanitatis."

⁸⁵ Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Bruce*, by Master John Barbour, EETS es 11, 21 (London, 1870, 1874), Part II, "How the good wife taught her daughter," pp. 523-536.

⁸⁶ Rubie D-N Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies from the Twelfth Century*, EETS os 152 (London, 1917), pp. 6, 92, et passim.

⁸⁷ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne"*, EETS os 119, 123 (London, 1901, 1903).

⁸⁸ Mary Bateson, ed., *George Ashby's Poems*, EETS es 76 (London, 1899), "Dicta Philosophorum" pp. 42-100, et passim.

⁸⁹ H. Logeman, ed., *The Rule of St. Benet*, EETS os 90 (London, 1888).

poems such as, *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*,⁹⁰ *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*,⁹¹ *Twenty-six Political and Other Poems*,⁹² *Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems*,⁹³ contain frequent instances of a similar nature. Chaucer in his *Knight's Tale*, in *Boethius*, and in the *Tale of Melibeus*⁹⁴ used such pithy bits of wisdom.^{94a}

Fables, like proverbs, teach or counsel wisdom in the guise of allegory. ^Esop,⁹⁵ to whom both Lydgate and Henryson paid homage as "poyet Laureat,"⁹⁶ left such a legacy of fable wisdom that it lingers in literary allusions and is even current in speech and writing. Caxton to satisfy the Middle English love for wisdom presented in fable, englished and printed ^Esop in 1484.⁹⁷ Here each story gives some sage advice. Lydgate used the fable to inculcate moral lessons as in *The Horse, Goose and Sheep*,⁹⁸ *The Serpent of Division*⁹⁹ *The Churl and the Bird*.¹⁰⁰ This last teaches

⁹⁰ Horstmann, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, EETS os 98 (London, 1892), Part I; Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, EETS os 117 (London, 1901), Part II.

⁹¹ Furnivall, ed., *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, EETS os 15 (London, 1866).

⁹² J. Kail, ed., *Twenty-six Political and Other Poems*, EETS os 124 (London, 1904).

⁹³ Roman Dyboski, ed., *Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems*, EETS es 101 (London, 1907).

⁹⁴ Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Knight's Tale*, pp. 430-56, ll. 3041-42; *Boethius*, pp. 130-205, Bk. II; *Tale of Melibeus*, pp. 505-29, ll. 2295-2300.

^{94a} Many of these sententiae or lists of wisdom parallel the lists of folly cited by Barbara Swain's work, *Fools and Folly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*.

⁹⁵ Various works use different spellings for the wise old writer of fables: Isope in *The Tale of Beryn*; ^Esop, in this article to be quoted; Esope, elsewhere.

⁹⁶ M. Ellwood Smith, "vEsop, a Decayed Celebrity," *PMLA*, vol. 46 (March, 1931), p. 226.

⁹⁷ Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of JEsop* as first printed by William Caxton with those of Avian, Alfonso, and Poggio, now again edited and induced (London, 1889).

⁹⁸ John Lydgate, *The Horse, Goose and Sheep*, edited by Max Degenhart (Leipzig, 1900).

⁹⁹ John Lydgate, *The Serpent of Division*, edited by Henry Noble MacCracken (London, 1911).

¹⁰⁰ John Lydgate, *The Churl and the Bird*, printed by William Caxton c. 1478 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1906).

explicitly of wisdom, "Thre grete wisdoms," all being of the nature of counsel.

WISDOM AS PRUDENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Closely allied to counsel are prudence and discrimination, for the wise man who counsels must be both prudent and discriminate. An apt example of prudent discrimination may be seen in William of Malmesbury, Canon of Newburgh, who refused to approve the cause of the martyrdom of Thomas a Becket, even though he believed him to be a saint. The Canon considered a Becket indiscreet, alleging that his words to the king could have served no useful purpose but only to anger the monarch. Accordingly he judged the martyr to have been lacking in wisdom, even though he commended his zeal.¹⁰¹ In *Twelfth Century Homilies*, prudence is called wisdom, "by which it shall know its creator, and love him, and distinguish good from evil."¹⁰² The same idea of discrimination is found in *Old English Homilies* in which prudence is also made the doorkeeper of the soul in "Sawles Warde."¹⁰³ A definition similar to that in *Twelfth Century Homilies* may also be found in Caxton's *Boole of the Ordre of Chyvalry*¹⁰⁴ and in "Dan Jon Gaytrye's Sermon"¹⁰⁵ while in *Ayenbite of Inivyt* also, the Father of the House appoints Sleight (Prudence) keeper of the

¹⁰¹ Gerald R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 128.

¹⁰³ A. O. Belfour, ed., *Twelfth Century Homilies*, Part I, EETS os 137 (London, 1909), p. 90, ll. 22-24: Prudentia, þ is snoternes, purh þam heo sceal hire Scyppend understonden hine lufian, to sceadan god fram yfele.

¹⁰³ Morris, Richard, ed., *Old English Homilies*, Part II, p. 255; pp. 245 ff.

¹⁰⁴ Alfred T. P. Byles, ed., *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*, Trans. and printed by William Caxton, EETS os 168 (London, 1926), p. 95, ll. 4ff.: The vertu of prudence is she by the whiche a man hath knowledge of good and euyl And by the whiche a man hath grace to be frend of the good and enemy to the euyl. For prudence is a science by the whiche a man hath knowledge of the thynges that ben to come by the thynged presente.

¹⁰⁶ George G. Perry, ed., *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26 (London, 1914), "Dan Jon Gaytrye's Sermon," p. 11, ll. 16-20: Sleghte or sleghenes (Prudence), þat wysses vs to be-warre with wathes of þe werlde; For it kennes vs to knawe þe gud and þe ill, and als wa to sundire þe tane fra þe to þer, and for to leue þat es euyl, and take to þe gude, and of twa gud thynges for to chese þe better.

door.¹⁰⁶ Prudence is the food of wisdom, as told in *The Revelations of Saint Birgitta*:

Sowle of goodely wysdome, thinkyng all way what is to come, and how thynges ar to be gouerned that are now.¹⁰⁷

This virtue is rightly called prudence for she is "wis and 3eap a3ean all Sohtes, agean alle wordes, ahean alle werkes."¹⁰⁸ We find this same threefold office accredited to prudence in *Ayeribite of Inwyt*,¹⁰⁹ for it is prudence that governs "al pet man dep and 3ayp / and peng." "Prudence is called wit and sapience" by Hoccleve.¹¹⁰ In *The Court of Sapience*, "Prudence the wyse," is one of wisdom's attendants, as we see her with

Counsayle and Reasoun,
The Drede of God and Tractabilite,
Dame Prouidence, cawser of all bounte.¹¹¹

In this same work, "wysedom," one of the "seuen pryncypal vertues" is defined as the ability to discern good from evil and the strength always to choose the former.¹¹² Dame Prudence, the exemplary housewife, of whom Albertanus of Brescia wrote in 1246,¹¹³ which tale Chaucer used in translation in his second attempt at pleasing the Canterbury pilgrims, is also to be found in *Le Menagier de Paris*.¹¹⁴ Reginald Pecock, in *The Folewer to the*

¹⁰⁶ Richard Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, EETS os 23 (London, 1866), p. 263: De uater of pe house / ate uerste guoinge in: he 3ette sle33e / to by doreward.

¹⁰⁷ Edited by William Patterson Gunning, EETS os 178 (London, 1929), p. 23, ll. 29-31.

¹⁰⁸ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virgues*, Part I, p. 99: Hie is 3eapnesse inanned mid gode rihte. Heo is wis and 3eap, etc.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, p. 124.

¹¹⁰ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Hoccleve's Works. The Reyement of Princes and Fourteen of Hoccleve's Minor Poems*, EETS es 72 (London, 1897), vol. 3, l. 4750.

¹¹¹ R. Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, l. 1503; ll. 1520-23.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹¹³ Alexander Barclay, *The Castle of Labour*, translated from the French of Pierre Gringore, edited by Alfred W. Pollard (Edinburgh, 1905). See Introduction. *The Castle of Labour* presents wisdom personified as "a man prudent / deserete and honest," but the translation was made c. 1503, so lies beyond the scope of this study.

¹¹⁴ *Le Menagier de Paris*, par un Bourgeoise Parisien (Paris, 1846).

Donet, a fifteenth-century work, discusses three meanings to the term "wisdom/" one of which is concerned with prudence, called by Pecock "prudencial wisdom."¹¹⁵

Middle English writers do not mention many biblical characters as famous for prudence. Judith who delivered her people by slaying Holofernes is not commended as wise, although prudence was her outstanding characteristic. She is called "the wily maid" (l. 145), "the daring damsel" (l. 146), "the tactful woman" (l. 147), "the adroit one" (l. 171), "clever in mind" (l. 172), but wisdom is not predicated of her.¹¹⁰ Philip of Paris, that holy bishop whom we have noted as being remarkable for knowledge and counsel, was also "prudent and ryght-wys."¹¹⁷ St. Katherine of Alexandria, although only eighteen years old, "maintained her parents' servants wisely and warily in the heritage and in the household."¹¹⁸ *The Knight de la Tour-Landry* teaches that "no wise woman ought to be hasty to take up the new noualities of array and queyntys,"¹¹⁹ implying that she should be prudent in adopting new fashions, and such references are commonplace.

Similarly and more frequently do medieval English writers turn to literature and history in seeking examples of prudence. Aristotle is described as "prudent and wys / and of discrecyoun," in the *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* which book also says that prudence should characterize a wise king.¹²⁰ In such a ruler "Sapience, Queen of vertues / as lady souereyne," should reign between royal munificence and discreet providence. Priam, realizing the necessity of this virtue in a ruler, said to Galatea, his son,

¹¹⁵ Reginald Pecock, *The Folewer to the Donet*, ed., Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS os 164 (London, 1924), pp. 54-62.

¹¹⁶ Albert S. Cook, *Judith* (Boston, 1904), ll. 145-171.

¹¹⁷ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, p. 7, l. 212.

¹¹⁸ Einkenel, ed., *The Life of Saint Katherine*, p. 6, ll. 80-83:

Ah pah zung were,
ha heold hire aldrene hird
wisliche 7 warliche
in pe heritage 7 i pe herd.

¹¹⁹ Wright, *Knight de la Tour-Landry*, p. 62, ll. 12 ff.

¹²⁰ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, p. 3, l. 60; p. 26, ll. 813 ff.

In pe wyt, and pi wornes, and pi wyght
dedys do I rely.¹²¹

Pheris, also "was a wise yong man . prudent . discrete . attempred and moche loid . . . alle vertues and good Justice."¹²² It was because of his "preudommye and wisedon" that Pheris was made king. These virtues were predicated of Alexander, who was "a wonder wyse man and a warre, and a man]?at gouernes hym by reson."¹²³ When Alexander refused tribute to the messengers of Darius, they marveled at his speech and "His witt and his wisdom . wonderly prayesd." Darius wrote to him, saying

So wyde is pe wisdom . pat wonne(s) in gour saule,
pat wele 30 wate, of all men.¹²⁴

Middle English legend and history afford many instances of prudent wise men. "pe eorl Beduer" in the *Brut* was a "god cnih wis and war."¹²⁵ Locrine, son of Brutus, in the same story, was the knight

J>e wes]?e wiseste
pe wes pe warreste.¹²⁶

and so delighted his father's heart. Sir Gawaine, Arthur's trusted knight, appears "Alls he that weysse was and wyghte, wondyrs to seke."¹²⁷ The *Riming Chronicle* calls Fortiger "bope war and wise"¹²⁸ and he is referred to again in Lovelich's *Merlin*.¹²⁹ Henry I is recorded in *The Boole of the Foundation of St. Bartholo-*

¹²¹ W. W. Skeat, ed., *Lancelot of the Laik*, p. 203, l. 6277: In thy wisdom, and thy prudence, and thy brave deeds, do I rely.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹²³ Westlake, ed., *The Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 34, ll. 1-3.

¹²⁴ W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Wars of Alexander*, EETS es 47 (London, 1886), p. 42, l. 888; p. 182, ll. 3089-90.

¹²⁵ Madden, ed., *Layamon's Brut*, ll. 25999-26000.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 2107-08:

who was the wisest
who was the most prudent.

¹²⁷ Edmund Brock, ed., *Morte Arthure*, EETS os 8 (London, 1865), p. 74, l. 2514.

¹²⁸ Carroll and Tuve, editors, "Two Manuscripts of the Middle English Anonymous *Riming Chronicle*," in *PMLA*, vol. 46, l. 539.

¹²⁹ Kock, ed., *Lovelich's Merlin*, p. 46, l. 1689; l. 1713.

mew's Church in London as being wisely prudent in having "grauntid to the petitioner his kyngly fauore."¹³⁰ Macmorgh was "wise and war" in the conduct of the war in Ireland.¹⁸¹ Scotland, too, had her king, Bruce, "That wes ay wiss and a-verty," a hero whom the people loved, "that in his deid wes wyse." James Douglas, also "That wycht, wyss, and awerty was."¹⁸² The Knyght, Mylys Stapylton, is lauded in these words:

Wysdam euer setting in yche werk be-ffore
As Salomon in sapyens makyth remcmbrauns;
Pruderis hys frend and systyr he namyd euermore,
With hos counsel he so demenyd hys gouernauns,
That iche wyse creature hym louyd with hertely affyauns.¹³³

In *The Owl and the Nightingale*, written about the middle of the thirteenth century, "Mayster Nichol of Guldeuorde," the judge, is described as "^cwis and war of worde."¹³⁴ A practical prudence marked the activity of the maunciple in Chaucer's *Prologue*. He was so "wyse in bying of vitaille" that his wit surpassed "The wisdom of an heep of lerned men."¹³⁵ Innumerable such examples might be cited but they are not necessary to show that prudence was closely united with wisdom in Middle-English thought.

WISDOM IN ELOQUENCE AND DISPUTATION

The characteristics of wisdom thus far noted have been positive qualities. Now we shall consider eloquence and disputation which rather offer an opportunity for the display of wisdom than constitute its characteristics, and yet the opportunity emphasizes the

¹⁸⁰ Norman Moore, ed., *The Book of the Foundation of St. Bartholomew's Church in London*, EETS os 163 (London, 1923), p. 10, l. 11.

¹³¹ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The English Conquest of Ireland*, EETS os 107 (London, 1896), p. 12, ll. 28-29.

¹⁸⁸ W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Bruce by Master John Barbour*, EETS es 11, 21 (London, 1870, 1874), Part I, Bk. VIII, p. 183, l. 162; Bk. II, p. 46, l. 561; Bk. II, p. 43, l. 489.

¹³³ Hardin Craig, ed., *The Works of John Metham*, p. 78, ll. 2128-32. Compare with Prov. vii, 4.

¹⁸⁴ John Wilkinson Hey Atkins, ed., *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 19, l. 192.

¹⁸⁸ Skeat, ed., *Chaucer*, "The Prologue," p. 426, ll. 571, 576.

power that wisdom wields in dispute. Middle English writers furnish few examples of this phase but of these few none is better than that reflected in the life of Katherine of Alexandria whose extraordinary knowledge and understanding coupled with prudent discrimination fitted her to dispute, not only with the emperor himself, but also with the celebrated clerks whom he summoned from all parts of his realm. Fifty schoolmasters from the East, "in all sciences of worldly wisdom the wisest in the world/" were to "overcome with argument" this maiden "so exceedingly intelligent and wise in her words." The proud Eastern sages were indignant that they should have been summoned to argue with a maiden. One answered, "Surely one of our men might with his reasoning master, and with his wit alone overthrow, the wisest of all that dwell in the West."¹³⁶ However, Katherine started the discussion by characterizing their worldly lore as inflated "not with wisdom but with the wind of nothing but pompous words." She explained that "True understanding and wisdom ... is Jesus Christ." She proposed the main truths of religion so clearly and beyond dispute that they listened "filled with admiration at her wise words."¹³⁷ In a similar manner, Saint Juliana, "wise and dear to God" disputed with the prefect whom she refused to marry, trying to make him "wisely recognize the God of glory, the creator of spirits," exulting in her true wisdom over the devil himself, who came to persuade her to sin.¹³⁸ The holy men, Philip of Paris and Guy, Bishop of Valence, were noted for eloquence. Philip was so

¹³⁶ Einkenkel, ed., *Life of St. Katherine*, 11. 524 ff.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11. 835-842:

ich aweorj? wi6 alle
 pe glistende wordes
 p beoS in ower bokes
 pe beoo wiCuten godleic
 7 empti wiSinnen)
 p ze beoS mit toswollen,
 nawt wio wit ah wi8 wind
 of ane wlonke wordes.

11. 871, 874: p is so8 wit 7 wisdom . . . lesu Crist.

11. 1242-43: waro swa awundret
 of hire wittie wordes.

¹³⁸ Israel Gollancz, ed., *The Exeter Book*, EETS os 103, 104 (London, 1894, 1895), pp. 242-286. Cf. also Oswald Cockayne, ed., *Be Liflade of St. Juliana*, EETS os 61 (London, 1872), pp. 1-79.

skilled in rhetoric that "Of Tullius gardyn / he bar away the fflour." Guy was also compared to Cicero.¹⁸⁹

Another interesting disputation, this time in allegory, appears in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* which Lydgate translated about 1426 from the *Pelerinage* of Guillaume de Deguileville. "Aristotyles the Wyse," sent by Nature to the "Lady Sapyence," complained that the bread in the Holy Eucharist, since the whole is complete and entire in every part, is contrary to one of her laws. The conversation between the two shows in a very interesting manner, by homely but clarifying examples, the simplicity which characterizes divine teaching and presents human wisdom, personified in Aristotle, yielding to divine wisdom, personified in the "Lady Sapyence."¹⁴⁰ There are numerous other examples of wisdom manifested in eloquence that could be gathered from Middle English writers, but little that is new could be added here through further citing of sources.

WISDOM AS JUDGMENT, DISCERNMENT, MODERATION

In addition to the characteristics already mentioned, wisdom appears as judgment, discernment, moderation. Solomon's discernment as well as his justice is demonstrated in the judgment given in the dispute between the two women concerning the dead child.¹⁴¹ The Middle English authors relate this biblical story almost literally in *Solomon's Bool; of Wisdom*¹⁴² and in *Cursor Mundi*.¹⁴³ The scene, Solomon's dividing a child with his sword, is depicted on one of the walls of the School of Doctrine, described in *The Assembly of Gods*.¹⁴⁴ Among the "folke of reuerence" in *The Court of Sapience* we see Solomon enthroned as for judgment.¹⁴⁵ Another excellent example of wisdom discerning right

¹³⁹ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Decrees of Old Philosoffres*, ll. 224, 378.

¹⁴⁰ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* by John Lydgate, EETS es 77, 83, 92 (London, 1899, 1901, 1904), ll. 5537 ff.

¹⁴¹ 3 Kings iii, 16-28.

¹⁴² F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, p. 85.

¹⁴³ Richard Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, Part II, pp. 495 ff., ll. 8583-8756.

¹⁴⁴ Oscar Lovell Triggs, ed., *The Assembly of Gods* by John Lydgate, EETS es 69 (London, 1896), p. 45, ll. 1539-40.

¹⁴⁵ Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, ll. 1791-92:

Wythyn a shryne, lusty at all deuyse,
Set wyth all blysse was Salamon the wyse.

is afforded in the justification of Susanna, the beautiful wife of Joakim, saved by DaniePs confounding the accusers or the wicked elders. Daniel employed the simple device of separating the witnesses.¹⁴⁶ This biblical passage is to be found at length and very accurately transposed in "Susannah, or Seemly Susan," one of *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*,TM and in Huchown's *Pistel of swete Susan*.¹⁴⁸ This latter remains in four manuscripts, two of them written before 1500. One, MS. Vernon c. 1370-1380, and MS. Cotton Cal. A II c. 1430.

The method used by Daniel of separating the witnesses served as a model for "Andronicus ... a wise Emperoure regnying in the cite Borne," who thus detected and convicted three false witnesses who had aided Plebius in unjustly acquiring the land of Pirius. This story, one of the *Oesta Romanorum*, to be found in the Middle English version,¹⁴⁹ recalls the biblical story of Naboth's vineyard,¹⁵⁰ seeming to fuse some of these details with the story of Daniel's judgment. Wisdom in judgment may be noted in "a wise knight" mentioned in *The Book of the Knight de la Tour-Landry*. This man must have been a good judge of qualities as he was sent to choose a wife for the king. The same author speaks of a man discreet of speech called "wise of words."¹⁵¹ *The History of Jason* relates how the Pyriens, the people of the god Mars, cried out to Apollo, "thou art the god of Sapyence as long as we lyve we wyll haue none other luge but the."¹⁵² The pilgrim to *The Court of Sapience* prays that Dame Sapyence "myght lerne me som descrecione."¹⁵³ In *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, we read that a requisite for "all domes-men" should be "Autorite full for to deme, wysdam."¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁶ Daniel xiii.

¹⁴⁷ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part II, EETS os 117 (London, 1901), pp. 626-636.

¹⁴⁸ Huchown, *Pistel of Swete Susan*, Kritische Ausg. von H. Koster (Strassburg, 1895), pp. 63-90.

¹⁴⁹ Sidney J. H. Herrtage, ed., *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, EETS es 33 (London, 1879), p. 72.

¹⁵⁰ 3 Kings xxi, 1-20.

¹⁵¹ Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight de La Tour-Landry*, p. 16; p. 32.

¹⁵² William Caxton, *The History of Jason*, p. 95.

¹⁵³ Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, p. 128, 11. 121-22.

¹⁵⁴ Frances A. Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, EETS os 166 (London, 1926), p. 361, 11. 10626-28.

The *Ayeribite of Inwyt* says, "Wysdom tekp sobrete" and moderation, "Vor he makep man wytuol and wys . and amesure}? alle)?ing."¹⁵⁵ *Handlyng Synne* makes moderation the highest wisdom, teaching such in these words:

Of alle wysdom pat shal dure,
 pe most wysdom, pan ys ' mesure '
 Mesure and resun, to-gedyr pey wone,
 And alle manere of vertues pey kone.
 with whom pey wone, he ys wys,
 And ys ryche, and holdyn yn prys.¹⁵⁶

Moderation along a certain line is considered in these words, "Hit is grat wyt / to loki mesure / ine mete / and ine drinke / and grat helpe."¹⁵⁷ The same advice is to be found in Richard Rolle's *Rule of Living*: "In meet and drynkc be]?ou scars and wisse."¹⁵⁸ We are told in *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* that the ember days occur in summer so that by abstinence the fire and heat of covetousness may be overcome, in this way "wel to make vs wise."¹⁵⁹ Abstinence says to Mankind in *The Castle of Perseverance*,

Who-so etc or drynke more,
 þanne skylfully hys state a-store,
 I holde hym no þynge wys.¹⁶⁰

Noah is cited as an example of patient wisdom in *Genesis and Exodus*, when he "was wis and nogt to rad (hasty),"¹⁶¹ awaiting God's command to go out of the ark.

Rulers, especially, are called upon to exercise this wisdom in judgment. The *Old English Homilies* give this etymology for the word, king:

¹⁵⁵ Morris, ed., *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwyt*, p. 248 and p. 150.
 ice Furnivall, ed., *Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne,"* p. 211, ll. 6527-32.

¹⁵⁷ Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, p. 53.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living*, edited by Richard Misyn, EETS os 106 (London, 1896), p. 113, ll. 20-21.

¹⁵⁹ Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 170, l. 5064.

¹⁶⁰ F. J. Furnivall and Alfred W. Pollard, editors, *The Macro Plays: Mankind, Wisdom, The Castle of Perseverance*, EETS es 91 (London, 1904), p. 125, ll. 1628-30.

¹⁶¹ Morris, ed., *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, p. 18, l. 617.

King is called *rex*, that is, governor (director), for he shall direct his people with wisdom, and put down wrong, and exalt belief (faith).¹⁶²

The idea that kings must be wise was generally accepted by Middle English writers. In fact we read in *Alexander and Dindimus*, "non emperour on er]e . J?at euere was founde, pat wantede wisclam."¹⁶³ The *G-esta Eomanorum* seems to accept this for the title emperor is almost always qualified by the adjective "wise."¹⁶⁴ "Witt of Sapience" in a king or prince is manifested by the good name he bears, by the peace that he preserves among his subjects, by his justice tempered with mercy in dealing with heretics and enemies of Holy Church and by the judgment meted out to law-breakers.¹⁶⁵ "Rex sine sapientia"¹⁶⁶ is one of the twelve abuses to be dreaded and a king who wastes his goods and destroys his realm is "callid a folle-large, or a wastoure, that ouer-Passyth Wysdome and Purveyaunce."^{166U} "A]?elberd J?e king . . . a swi]e wise man" showed discerning judgment when "Of seynt austin cristendom he nam."¹⁶⁷ In *The Brut* we learn of "Eynallo . . . an Wise kny3t, and an hardy and curteise, fat wel and nobly gouernede]?e lond."¹⁶⁸ Isope, in *The Tale of Beryn*, although blind, exercised justice so wisely that during his long reign of one hundred and forty years no one ever "for wrong on hym compleyned."^{16e} All

¹⁶³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, Part I, p. 115: King is ihaten rex .)?et is wisegend for he seal wissian mid wisdom his folke and unriht aleggen and J?ene ileaue areren.

lea Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Alexander and Dindimus or The Letters of Alexander to Dindimus, King of the Brahams*, EETS es 31 (London, 1878), p. 11, l. 262.

¹⁶⁴ Herrtage, ed., *The Early English Versions of the Gestes Romanorum*, pp. 101, 104, 108, 109, etc.

¹⁶⁵ Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, p. 26, ll. 806-19.

¹⁶⁶ J. Schick, ed., Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, EETS es 60 (London, 1891), Appendix II.

^{166a} Robert Steele, ed., *Secreta Secretorum*, EETS es 74 (London, 1898), p. 131.

¹⁶⁷ Carroll and Tuve, editors, "Two Manuscripts of the Mid. Eng. Anonymous Riming Chronicle," ll. 1119-20.

¹⁶⁸ F. W. Brie, ed., *The Brut*, EETS os 131, 136 (London, 1906, 1908), p. 21, ll. 16-18.

¹⁶⁹ Furnivall, ed., *The Tale of Beryn*, ll. 2690 ff.

difficult matters were brought to him for decision. *The Meroure of Wyssdome*¹⁷⁰ composed in the year 1490 for the use of James IV, King of Scotland, by John Irlande, is a kind of "Speculum Regis" offering many excellent precepts for the ruler's guidance. Since it is not power, nor violence, nor caprice but wisdom that is the principal factor in governing a kingdom, the Scottish monarch is admonished to be wise. He must not fail to distinguish between the wisdom of man, which is folly, and the wisdom of God. Just as God rules the world by a wise benevolence, so must the king rule his kingdom, and he can best learn how to do this by a diligent attention to Holy Writ. The author then points out how dominion and power have always gone hand in hand with wisdom, citing as examples the successive rise and decline of the Jews, Assyrians, Persians, Trojans, Greeks, Macedonians, Carthaginians, Romans. These nations were each in turn great as long as they were guided by wise men, Solomon, David, Darius, Hector, Plato, Aristotle, Hannibal, the Carthaginians. They all perished by folly. Their success was but temporal fame and temporal wisdom, against which the king must be on his guard. The only wisdom which will make him great here and hereafter is heavenly wisdom which is to be attained by humility, submission, and prayer. As Irlande thinks the *Pater Noster* is the chief gateway to understanding, he devotes the rest of the first part of the *Meroure* to a detailed explanation of this prayer, indicating and defining the limits of wise and legitimate desires and eulogizing patience and prayer. The second part of the work is more concerned with divine wisdom in the person of Christ and will be treated in a subsequent chapter.

WISDOM AS THE FEAR OF THE LORD

All the qualities of worldly wisdom that we have been considering up to this point are essentially of the natural order, but this last characteristic, the fear of the Lord, elevates and ennobles all the other attributes. The biblical phrase "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom"¹⁷¹ is echoed in Old English writers and

¹⁷⁰ Johannes de Irlandia, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, edited by Charles Macpherson (Edinburgh and London, 1926).

¹⁷¹ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies from the Twelfth Century*, p. 74, 1. 4: Godcs ege is wisdomes anginn. *Ibid.*, p. 104, 1. 9: Godes ege is se

occurs again in Middle English works. Thus we find it in *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, "Vor drede is beginnyng of wisdom . ase zayþ dauid."¹⁷² In *Orologium Sapientiae*, "þe drede of godde, þe wheche is J>e beginnyng of wisdam."¹⁷³ *Reliquiae Anliquae* uses it in

For the begynnyng of wusdom is
For to drede Goddys rystwysnes.¹⁷⁴

Among "Prouerbes of diuerse prefetes and of poetes and of o]ur seyntes" in *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Ms.* we find

J?e wyse mon in his bok ha]?)is seying
J?at J>e beginning of good liuyng
Ouer alle J?ing is God to drede
And him to worschupe wij> al vr spede.¹⁷⁶

In *The Court of Sapience* it appears as "For drede of God ys wey of all wysdome."¹⁷⁵ In Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, we find a more amplified expression:

He doth nou3t wel J?at doth J?us
ne drat nou3t god almi3ty,
Ne loueth nou3t salamones sawes
]?at sapience tau3te;
Inicium sapientie, timor domini:
Bat dredeth god, he doth wel; >at dredeth hym for loue.¹⁷⁷

Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* uses it, "Bygynnyng of wisdom is, god to drede."¹⁷⁸ It is counseled and repeated in *Speculum Gy de Warewyke*:

frume wisdom. Bede, *Proverbia*, Migne, PL, vol. 90, col. 1098. Arthur Napier, *Wulfstan* (Berlin, 1883), p. 51, l. 33, p. 52, l. 1.

¹⁷² Morris, ed., *Ayerbite of Inwyt*, p. 119.

¹⁷³ Carl Horstmann, ed., "Orologium Sapientiae" in *Anglia*, vol. X, p. 328, ll. 33-34.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Wright and James Orchard Halliwell, editors, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, 2 vols. (London, 1845), vol. I "Moral Proverbs," p. 92.

¹⁷⁶ Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part II, p. 523, ll. 15 ff.

¹⁷⁵ Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, l. 951.

¹⁷⁷ Walter W. Skeat, ed., William Langland's *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman*, EETS os 28 (London, 1867), Text B, p. 136.

¹⁷⁸ Furnivall, ed., *Hoccleve's Works. The Regement of Princes*, vol. 3, p. 175, l. 4852. Also in *Minor Poems*, "How to learn to Die," p. 179, ll. 20-21; p. 209, l. 840.

Wisdom in godes drede
 Vse wcl, þat be my rede.

Wisdom in godes drede,
 Off which þat i erere seide,
 Tweie Binges it wole þe teche,
 Whar-þurw þu miht to heuene reche:
 Dat is, lat þi sinne and do god
 For his louc, þat deiede on rod.

Drede of God in alle þing
 Off wisdom is þe beginning.¹⁷⁸

Very similar in tone is this passage from "Wisdom" in *The Macro Plays*,

. . . drede and conforme yowur wyll to me,
 For yt ys þe heelfull dyscyplyne þat in Wysdom may be,
 The drede of God, þat ys begynnynge.¹⁸⁰

George Ashby dilates upon the subject thus:

Knowe for certeyne that the dre(de) of Issu
 is the grettest wisedam and dilectacion,
 Of wliiche springeth al goodenes and vertu,
 Of wise vnderstandyng exultacion,
 And of goode guidyng dominacion.
 So who that wolbe wytty and eke wise,
 Drede god, and he ahal haue it in best guise.¹⁸¹

A Middle English prose version of the *Wisdom of Solomon*¹⁸² though only a digest of the reflections contained in the *Book of Ecclesiasticus*, shows that sagacious meditation leads to the fear of the Lord. In *The Lanterne of Lift*, we learn that God will give us such wisdom as is needful for us if we do not fail in our duty to Him.¹⁸³ Even in the old romances this God-fearing ele-

¹⁷⁹ Georgiana Lea Morrill, ed., *Speculum Gy de Warewyke*, EETS os 75 (London, 1898), p. 6, l. 81; p. 8, ll. 139 ff.; p. 40, ll. 884-885.

¹⁸⁰ Furnivall and Pollard, *The Macro Plays*, "Wisdom," EETS es 91 (London, 1904), p. 38, ll. 88-90.

¹⁸¹ Mary Bateson, ed., *George Ashby's Poems*, EETS es 76 (London, 1899), p. 70, ll. 624-30.

¹⁸² J. R. Lumby, ed., "Wisdom of Solomon" in *Ratis Raving*, EETS os 43 (London, 1870), pp. 13-14.

¹⁸³ Lilian M. Swinburn, ed., *The Lanterne of Lijt*, EETS os 151 (London, 1917), p. 5, ll. 9-11: Faile we not God >anne in good lyuyng; and he mai not faile to 3yue vs suche wisedam as is nedful to vs.

ment was acknowledged as may be seen in Ygwern whom King
liter thought " a wys lady " and of whom Merlin said, she

is wis, with-owten varyaunce,
And therto trewe azens God and man.¹⁸⁴

WISDOM CONCOMITANT WITH AGE

From the citations presented it is evident that the same characteristics which were outstanding in the biblical concept of wisdom are also to be noted in the wisdom concept of Middle English writers. Early English writers also associated age with wisdom just as they recognized the other biblical characteristics. Melchizedek is described in *Genesis and Exodus* as " of elde most, of wit hegest." ¹⁸⁵ It was from " a solytarye . . . with lokkys hore and gray/" that Philip of Paris obtained the wisdom necessary for translating the wonderful book mentioned in *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*.¹⁸⁶ Dame Sapience says in *The Court of Sapience*,

Though I seme yong, full olde myn yerys bene;
For Sapience in olde folk ys ay sene.¹⁸⁷

Alexander is represented by a Middle English author as saying, " I will rather, . . . chese þe sadnesse of an aide wyse man than þe vnavesy lightenesse of 3onge men . . . aide men wirkes all by consaile and by witte." ¹⁸⁸ Mopsius, " the sage and auncient knight" of " VI score yere," was the privileged counselor of Jason.¹⁸⁹ It is lamented in *The History of Jason* that children mock and despise " olde and auncient men and wene that they ben so wyse . that men nede not to shewe them ony wysedom." This thoughtlessness of youth is taken for granted in *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, when

Quod man to Conscience, " zoupe axip delice;
For zoupe þe course of kinde wole holde;

¹⁸⁴ Kock, ed., *Lovelich's Merlin*, p. 158, l. 5938; p. 145, l. 5450.

¹⁸⁵ Morris, ed., *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, p. 26, l. 900.

¹⁸⁶ Steele, ed., *Lydgate and Burgh's Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, ll. 257-58.

¹⁸⁷ Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, p. 130, ll. 160-61.

¹⁸⁸ Westlake, ed., *The Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 13, ll. 32 ff.

¹⁸⁹ Caxton, *The History of Jason*, p. 60. *Ibid.*, p. 54, ll. 30 ff.

But zoupe were a foole and nyce,
How schulde wijadorn be founde in oolde.¹⁰⁰

Isope in *The Tale of Beryn* was three hundred and more years of age and "Wherfor of alle sciencis he hath J?e more lore!"¹⁹¹ In *Lancelot of the Laik*, Arthur is advised to seek an old knight as counselor:

Than of ilk cuntre wysly yow enquere
An agit knycht to be thi consulere, . . .
Wyse and discreet, and no thing Inwyus.¹⁹⁸

^{is}
the Rule of St. Benet provides that

To the gate of the monestary an aged persone, wise and well manerd, is to be assigned / the whiche can take an answeere wittely or a message.¹⁹³

Among the *Proverbs of Alfred* we find this counsel to the young:

Rise and give place to the hoary head, and invite him to take thy seat; sit beside him and learn wisdom from him. We may out-ride, but not out-wit the old man.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, EETS os 24 (London, 1867), p. 66 "The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life," ll. 273-76.

¹⁹¹ Furnivall, ed., *The Tale of Beryn*, l. 2672.

¹⁹² Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Lancelot of the Laik: A Scottish Metrical Romance*, p. 50, ll. 1705-08.

¹⁰³ Logeman, ed., *The Rule of St. Benet*, "The Caxton Abstract" p. 137, ll. 25-27.

^{ie*} Richard Morris, ed., *An Old English Misceljrny*, EETS os 49 (London, 1872), "The Proverbs of Alfred," ed. by Wright and Kemble, p. 136, ll. 626 ff.:

þif Jni on benche sitthest,
and þu þen beuir hore sixst
þe bi-foren stonden,
buch þe from þi sete,
and bide him sone þer-to,
Danne welle he sawin
sone one his worde,
wel worþe þe wid,
þad þe first taite.
Sete Jmne seijnn
besiden him seluen,
listes and fele þewes,
þe baldure þu migst ben;
(ne) for-lere þu his reides,
for þe helder mon me mai of-riden,
betere þenne of-reden.

Chaucer uses a similar expression in *The Knight's Tale*.

And sothe is seide, Eld hath grete avantage,
in elde is bothe wysedom and usage;
man may the old outren, but not outrede.¹⁰⁵

In *The Owl and the Nightingale* "the nightingale stands for careless youth, the owl, with his mournful cry, for the wisdom of old age," according to the interpretation of Emile Legouis.¹⁰⁶ John Wilkinson Hey Atkins thinks the nightingale symbolizes the passion of love, thus making the disputation one between wisdom and love.¹⁰⁷ The nightingale says, "soþ hit is of luue ich singe," but even this is quite in keeping with the idea of youth singing of love and life, evincing a carefree attitude quite in contrast with the gravity of the owl whose songs urge men to repent and find pardon for their sins.

CUNNING

Having thus far discussed the wisdom of the world in its commendable aspects, let us now see what Middle English writers thought of the less worthy phases of worldly wisdom, commonly called cunning, trickery, clever deceit. In the biblical play, *Adam*, the two kinds of wisdom are named simultaneously in the Garden of Eden when Adam rejects the temptation of the devil, who urges

The fruit of knowledge—can bestow
The gift all mysteries to know,

and then flatters Eve with

But thou'rt the wiser, I confess;
Thy heart is full of cleverness.¹⁰⁸

*Cursor Mundi*¹⁰⁹ notes of "Salamon þe wis How craftilik he did

¹⁰⁵ Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, "The Knight's Tale," pp. 430-457, ll. 2447-49.

¹⁰⁶ E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* (New York, 1930), pp. 93-94.

¹⁰⁷ John Wilkinson Hey Atkins, ed., *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Introd., pp. Iviff., 1. 1339.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Noble Stone, ed., "Adam," *University of Washington Publications in Language and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 159-193 (March, 1926), ll. 157-58; ll. 233-34.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, ed., *Cursori Mundi*, Part I, p. 16, ll. 149-50.

iustis." It was craftiness that prompted the mother of the dead child in the days of Solomon to substitute her lifeless babe for the living child, but true wisdom recognized the deceit.²⁰⁰ Jabal, son of Lamech, is mentioned in *Cursor Mundi*²⁰¹ as a cunning shepherd. Jubal, his brother, was especially esteemed because of his knowledge of music and it is particularly noted that he wrote "sat wistom" on ivory and brass lest it be destroyed by fire or water.²⁰² The same text also mentions that God taught Moses "wislike" how to fashion the tabernacle.²⁰³ While David was reigning in Jerusalem, Eboras "J?at swipe wise and crafti was" reigned in England.²⁰⁴ His son, Lud, was also "a swipe wise man." Bladud, son of Lud, "was a clerk of nigramancie" who invented "þe hote bape."²⁰⁵ Ser Yuell the Barn, was "a witty man, and subtill in werkung" who attempted to abduct the king's daughter.²⁰⁶

The Middle English version of the *Seven Sages of Rome* presents worldly wisdom as clever cunning, playing a delaying and preventive part, ultimately achieving good. The story is of Eastern origin but found its way very early into the West. Just how early it is impossible to state, as the parent version has been lost, but it can not have been later than 1150. There are nine manuscripts of this version, eight of which had a common source in a thirteenth century English manuscript, now lost.²⁰⁷ Wisdom is the compelling motive in the fourth, eleventh, thirteenth, fourteenth, and

²⁰⁰ See p. 39.

²⁰¹ Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, p. 46, l. 667.

²⁰² Morris, ed., *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, p. 14, ll. 460 ff.:

Wit of musike, wel he knew;
On two tables of tigel and bras
wrot he Sat wistom, wis he was,
Cat it ne sulde ben undon
If fier or water come 8or-on.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 103, l. 3630.

²⁰⁴ Carroll and Tuve, editors, "Two Manuscripts of the Mid. Eng. Anonymous Riming Chronicle" in *PMLA*, p. 123, l. 496.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 521, 539.

²⁰⁶ W. Aldis Wright, ed., *Generydes*, EETS os 55, 70 (London, 1873, 1878), p. 115, l. 3617.

²⁰⁷ Killis Campbell, *The Seven Sages of Rome* (New York, 1907), pp. xv, xxxv.

fifteenth stories. Cunning figures especially in the thirteenth and the fourteenth. In the thirteenth, the siege of the Saracens was foiled when a "Genus,]?at was wise, Wan þe maystri by quaintise" (ll. 3149-50). The fourteenth story features a more subtle kind of cunning used in deceitful and malicious trickery by "a nobil knyght ... A rightwis man and wise of dome" (ll. 3237-38) who dreamed of the lady he loved and let nothing prevent his finding her.

The wisdom displayed by Daris in *King Horn*, *Floriz and Blancheflur*²⁰⁸ is of the clever type. To advise Floriz to go disguised as a mason; to induce the porter to play at draughts and to get an invitation to the house (pp. 93-94); afterwards to promise him unlimited gold and silver as remuneration for his aid and by showing him his cup of gold to make him greedy for it (ll. 383-416), all this is that worldly cunning which attains its end without serious compromise of truth but which deserves no higher reward than its own satisfaction. The same wisdom of expediency but of an inferior type is personified in Langland's *Piers Plowman*.²⁰⁹ Here Wisdom is met in company with Witt following Conscience and Eason. We are surprised at Wisdom's attitude toward Wrong. When Wrong tried to bribe Wisdom to plead for him, Wisdom advised him to resort to Meed (Bribery). When Wrong wept and implored further aid, Wisdom consented to let Meed accompany him. Then Wit and Wisdom attempted to overcome the king. When the king condemned Wrong, Wisdom offered bail. From all this we conclude that Langland's Wisdom was not only worldly but also questionable in character. It was with Meed rather than with Wisdom that the author was interested, his satire being directed especially against "Meed and the confusion and distress which, because of her afflict the world."²¹⁰ It is further decried in Passus XI, ll. 17-19:

Wisdam and wit nou is not worj? a Russche
But hit beo (cardet) with Couetise as closers doþheor wolle,
pat conterfetej? disseites and Conspiret wronges.

²⁰⁸ George H. McKnight, ed., *King Horn, Floriz and Blancheflur*, EETS os 14 (London, 1866, 1901).

²⁰⁹ Skeat, ed., William Langland's *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman*, EETS os 28 (London, 1867), Part I, The "Vernon" Text, Passus IV, ll. 22-143.

²¹⁰ *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. II, p. 13.

The wise Peronelle whose story is related by John Gower in the *Confessio Amantis*,²¹¹ became a king's wife by her ready wit. When her father, whose cleverness in answering difficult questions had aroused the king's jealousy, was required to explain three intricate propositions or lose his life, Peronelle, his fourteen year old daughter, begged to be allowed to answer for him. Her wisdom so pleased the king that he said he would make her his wife, if only she were of his station. However, he promised to give her any favor she might ask. Whereupon Peronelle at once asked for an earldom for her father which remedied her deficiency in rank and compelled the king to keep his word.

Cunning and magic very often appear as characteristics of wise ladies²¹² in the Middle English romances. Moreover, ingenuity or cunning was often shown by the heroine's maid or confidante,²¹³ In *Floriz and Blaunche fleur*, when Claris had been frightened into a betraying scream, at the sight of Floris emerging from the basket of flowers, her ready wit is quick to allay suspicion by the invention of the butterfly story.²¹⁴ Equally resourceful was Alexandrine in *William of Palerne* who suggests that Melior and William disguise in white bear skins. They thank her "of hire crafty cunsayl."²¹⁵ It is only the alert invention and practical wisdom of Lunette in *Yvain and Gawain* that saves the life of Yvain, "war and wise and . ful curtayse" (l. 1241), and effects his subsequent marriage.²¹⁶

In many cases the fox figures as worldly wise, representing cunning. Percy "Robin in *Animal Lore in English*"²¹⁷ mentions *The Vox and the Wolf*, a thirteenth century English poem which is really an allegory, "an episode from the great animal romance,

²¹¹ G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John (lower, EETS es 81 (London, 1900-1901), Bk. I, 11. 3067-3402.*

²¹² Harris, *The Heroine of the Middle English Romances*, pp. 17, 18.

²¹³ Harris, *The Heroine of the Middle English Romances*, p. 13.

²¹⁴ George H. McKnight, ed., *King Horn, Floriz and Blaunche fleur*, EETS os 14 (London, 1866), p. 64, l. 469.

²¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 60, l. 1697.

²¹⁶ Joseph Ritson, *Romance and Minstrelsy*, to which is appended *The Ancient Metrical Romance of Yvain and Gawain* (Edinburgh, 1891), p. 139, 11. 839 ff.

²¹⁷ Percy Ansell Robin, *Animal Lore in English* (London, 1932), p. 17.

Reynard the Fox, probably written first in Latin in the tenth century, and translated later into German, French, and other languages. In this, Eeynard pits his force and wit against the cock, the hare, the ram, the bear, and the wolf,, and even the lion-king." In Lydgate's *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*,²¹⁸ we find the story of how on one occasion the fox by pretending that he was dead, was flung into a load of herrings of which he ate his fill and escaped. In the fable of the Eaven and the Cheese, by flattery the fox cunningly secured the cheese.²¹⁹ Likewise in Chaucer's *Nuns' Priest's Tale* he prevailed over Chaunticleer by deceit and flattery but the cock in the end outwitted the fox and escaped.²²⁰ The serpent symbolizes wise craftiness but *An Alphabet of Tales* shows a serpent outwitted by a fox.²²¹ In *A Bestiary*²²² the fox's nature is said to possess two qualities, prudence and wisdom :

Twifold forbisne in Ois der
to frame we mugen finden her,
worsipe and wisdom
wið deuel and wið iuel man.

The fox is the usual representative of subtle cunning but in *The Fables of Æsop* the mule, commonly regarded as an ass or fool, is clever enough to outwit the wolf.²²³ The fable form itself deserves to be classed as a vehicle of wisdom.

One of the more evident personifications of wisdom, involving the idea of cunning, is found in *The Assembly of Gods*, one of Lydgate's later works (c. 1412).²²⁴ Konnyng is one of the minor captains in a battle between the Vices and Virtues, Celestial

²¹⁸ Furnivall, ed., *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, EETS es 83 (London, 1901), ll. 14, 605-14, 619.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 14, 248-14, 282.

²²⁰ Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, "Nuns' Priest's Tale," pp. 542-50, ll. 4474-4618.

²²¹ Mary Macleod Banks, ed., *An Alphabet of Tales*, EETS os 126, 127 (London, 1904, 1905), Part II, p. 473.

²²² Morris, ed., *An Old English Miscellany*, p. 14.

²²³ Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of Æsop* as first printed by William Caxton in 1484 with those of Avian, Alfonso, and Poggio, 2 vols. (London, 1889), Liber Quintus, pp. 128-29.

²²⁴ Oscar Lovell Triggs, ed., *The Assembly of Gods* by John Lydgate, EETS es 69 (London, 1896).

Sapience and Wysdom leading similar groups in the same battle. In *The Castle of Perseverance* carnal worldly wisdom is thus characterized:

pis werldys wysdom 3euyth no[t] a louse
of God, nyn of hye hevene,²²⁶

In the *Romaunt of the Rose* the inconsistency of love is expressed in a number of paradoxes, two of which are "cunning without science, wisdom without sapience."²²⁶

In summary, this chapter has presented outstanding examples of worldly wisdom which are to be found in Middle English Literature. Wisdom as knowledge is mentioned with didactic significance in the old homilies and homiletic treatises, notably in *The Ormulum* and in *Vices and Virtues*. Knowledge is personified as wisdom in *The Court of Sapience* and is predicated in this sense of many characters who thus become types of this phase of wisdom. *Cursor Mundi*, *Genesis and Exodus*, and the *Chester Plays* speak of Adam and Eve's being endowed with wisdom as knowledge. Solomon is the type par excellence of wisdom under every phase, particularly of knowledge. We find Solomon so mentioned in many Middle English works, *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, *Cursor Mundi*, *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, *The Brut*, *Lancelot of the Laik*, thus showing that many references, even in the historical romances recognize Solomon as wise on account of his learning. Other types are found in holy men and saints. Similarly, numerous characters from classical literature, noteworthy among them, Aristotle and Alexander, serve as such types, while history and romance mention women, such as Goldsborough of *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, Melior of the *Partenope*, and Felice of *Guy of Warwick*, accounted wise because of their great knowledge.

Wisdom as understanding, though not of such frequent occurrence in Middle English writings as wisdom which is characterized by knowledge, yet is defined as such in *Vices and Virtues*, and Job in *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ* serves as such a

²²⁶ Furnivall, ed., *The Macro Plays*, "The Castle of Perseverance," p. 92, l. 491.

²²⁶ Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, "The Romaunt of the Rose," pp. 1-78, ll. 4717-18.

biblical type. The classical characters, Aristotle, Æsop, and Troilus are considered to possess wisdom as understanding. Wisdom as counsel presupposes this understanding and appears very often in Middle English literature. Moses and Lot in *Genesis and Exodus*, Solomon in *Vices and Virtues*, *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, *The Book of the Knight de la Tour-Landry*, and Daniel in *Cleanness*, one of the *Early English Alliterative Poems*, are the principal biblical types of wisdom as counsel. Guy, Bishop of Valence, in *Decrees of Old Philosoffres*, is a similar type. Numerous figures from Classical antiquity appear as Middle English Counsellors. Aristotle, Plato, Eubolus, Cato, Alexander, Eson, Jason, are mentioned as such. Amyntans in *Lancelot of the Laik*, Ulfen in Lovelich's *Merlin*, Arthur in *Morte Arthure* and *The Riming Chronicle*, and a wise knight in the *Brut*, all exemplify wisdom as counsel. In the romances, William of Palerne and Amoryus are such types. The sister of Edward, King of England, counsels her brother, so *The Riming Chronicle* relates. The "wyse lady Kebecca" gives advice in *The Boole of the Knight de la Tour-Landry*. Floripas exerts power and influence through counsel in *The Early Charlemagne Romances*. Proverbs and fables, so frequent in Middle English literature abound with examples of wisdom as counsel.

William of Malmesbury early exercises wisdom as discrimination. Prudence is called wisdom in *Twelfth Century Homilies*, *Vices and Virtues*, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, lioccleve's *Regement of Princes*, Caxton's *Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*, *Dan Jon Gaytrye's Sermon* and *The Revelations of Saint Birgitta*. Prudence is personified as an attendant of Wisdom in *The Court of Sapience*. Biblical characters personifying prudence as wisdom are rare in Middle English literature. Judith, though prudent, is not called wise, but Katherine of Alexandria gives marked evidence of possessing this virtue. Personages from classical literature appear in legend and chronicle as types of the prudent wise man. Aristotle, Priam, Galatea, Pheris, Alexander, are thus presented. In the *Brut* we find Beduer and Lochrine remarkable for prudence. Likewise, Sir Gawaine in *Morte Arthure* and Fortiger in *The Riming Chronicle* and in Lovelich's *Merlin*. Kings of England and Bruce and Douglas of Scotland are marked by prudence. This virtue also characterizes the judge

in *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Chaucer represents the maunciple as prudent in providing.

Wisdom in eloquence and disputation occurs seldom, but the types found are convincing. It is also interesting to note that these types, Katherine and Juliana, Philip, Guy, and Aristotle are the same, with one exception, Juliana, as those already found possessing other qualities, showing that eloquence and disputation are not so much inherent characteristics of wisdom as accompanying abilities. More striking are the types of wisdom in judgment, discernment, and moderation. Here Solomon and Daniel are the principal types of discernment and judgment. Solomon as judge appears in *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, *Cursor Mundi*, *The Assembly of Gods*, and *The Court of Sapience*. Daniel's judgment and acquittal of *Susanna* is related in *Seemly Susan*, one of *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.* and in Huchown's *Pistel of swete Susan*. Wisdom as moderation is defined in *Ayenbite of Inwyte*, *Handlyng Synne*, and Richard Rolle's *Rule of Living*. It is commented on in *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, and in *The Castle of Perseverance*. Somewhat different is the example of Noah cited in *Genesis and Exodus* as a type of patience showing wisdom. That rulers must be guided by wisdom is a fact which Middle English writers accept in general. The *Meroure of Wyssdome* treats in detail of such wisdom, and most of the kings of Britain as well as the monarchs of antiquity are characterized as wise.

The fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom is frequently quoted or paraphrased in Middle English writings. *Early English Homilies*, *Ayenbite of Inwyte*, *Orologium Sapientiae*, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman*, Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*, *Speculum Gy de Warewyjce*, the morality *Wisdom of The Macro Plays*, and George Ashby's *Poems*, all use it in varying forms. The fact that true wisdom leads to fear of the Lord and to right living is found in *Wisdom of Solomon* and *The Lanterne of Liht*. Ygwern in Love-lich's *Merlin* is in all things "trewe and wys," possessing this true wisdom which leads to happiness.

Middle English gives examples of old age as a concomitant of wisdom in Melchizedek in *Genesis and Exodus*. Alexander expresses his preference for old men as counsellors. Mopsius is "sage

and auncient"; Isope, so wise because of his three hundred and more years. In *Lancelot of the Laik* Arthur is advised to take counsel of an old knight and *The Rule of St. Benet* requires old men as porters, because of their wisdom. Chaucer enjoins respect for the wisdom of age, *The Owl and the Nightingale* allegorically represents youth disputing with age or wisdom, and Dame Sapience in *The Court of Sapience* says that wisdom is always found in old folk.

Cunning is distinguished from true wisdom in Middle English texts just as it is in the Bible. In the play, *Adam*, Eve is nattered by the tempter as being wiser than Adam on account of her cleverness. *Cursor Mundi* mentions Lamech's two sons, Jabal and Jubal, as types, Jabal of a cunning shepherd and Jubal as a skillful musician. Moses is wisely skillful as the designer of the ark of the covenant. Wise and crafty rulers of England are named in *The Riming Chronicle*. The Seven Sages of Rome possess cunning together with wisdom and knowledge. Daris in *Xing Horn, Floriz and Blauncheflur* and the Wise Peronelle in *Confessio Amantis* stand out as types of cleverness, while the wise ladies in the Middle English romances possess cunning and magic as requisites for fame. Especially are the heroines' maids, like the slaves in old Eoman comedy, practised in cunning. The fox and the serpent, animals symbolical of cunning, appear often in Middle English tales. Personifications of the different phases of worldly wisdom appear in Lydgate's *The Assembly of G.ods*, *The Court of Sapience*, and Langland's *Piers Plowman*. In Chaucer's *Compleynte unto Pite*, Wisdom stands silently among the mourners, offering no word to indicate her character, but in the other personifications and citations offered, the various phases of worldly wisdom as seen in the biblical passages are clearly evident in Middle English writings.

CHAPTER III

PEOPHETIC WISDOM

Just as in general, we may distinguish two kinds of worldly wisdom, so we find two kinds of prophetic wisdom. There is that supernatural gift of prophecy which we are accustomed to associate with the prophets of the Old Testament, supernatural because God spoke through man as His instrument. Then there is a preternatural power of prophecy manifested in the accomplishment of evil as well as of good. Astrologers and magicians exemplify this particular kind. Both of these types are often described as wisdom by medieval writers. The types and personifications of prophetic wisdom automatically arrange themselves in these two general classes. We find characters from classical literature and from early history, wise men and wise ladies, possessing preternatural prophetic wisdom. This kind also embraces wonders of magic and witchcraft. Patriarchs and prophets, seers and saints, are found endowed with supernatural prophecy. Sometimes this prophetic power is manifested in dreams and visions which foretell future events. Our discussion of prophetic wisdom will follow these two classifications.

PRETERNATURAL PROPHETIC WISDOM

Magic and witchcraft do not, generally speaking, connote wisdom, yet in the *Blickling Homilies* it is said that St. Paul pronounced God's judgments upon Simon the sorcerer or magician calling him "the worst of men, who through the devil's wisdom deceiveth many unwary men with his temptations."¹ Augustine, "the wise bishop," as told in Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*, also warned against witchcraft.² *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus* mentions that

¹ Richard Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, Part I, EETS os 58, 63, 73 (London, 1874-80), p. 184, ll. 1-3: Dis is manna se wyrresta)?e Jmrh deofles wisdom manige unware men beswice)? mid his costungum.

² Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*, Part II, XVII On Auguries, p. 369, ll. 67 ff. "Augustinus se snotera bisceop."

Two wycches, lames and Membres,
 Did to moyses gret lettyng;
 Disprufed his signes and made þaime leese
 All thurghþaire fals enchauntyng,⁸

appearing to be wiser than Moses. Even though "the devil's wisdom" was condemned in the magician and witchcraft was denounced, nevertheless, magic and necromancy in the early days of England enjoyed great vogue.

One of the most famous of those skilled in magical arts, according to medieval writers, was Virgil. In the fifteenth century *The Life of Virgilius* had appeared in English; it was printed at Antwerp by John Doesborcke, about 1508. This gives the full outline of the medieval belief in Virgil, the Magician. He is supposed to have studied magic in the famous school at Toledo. While a student there he had a strange experience with the devil who was imprisoned under a board deep down within a cave. The demon gave Virgil, in exchange for temporary liberty, the power of wisdom in magic beyond all other men.⁴

Domenico Comparesetti in his work, *Virgil in the Middle Ages*, discusses the wisdom, prophetic power, and magical arts exercised by the great scholar. He tells us that the "sortes Vergilianae," the name given to the custom of opening at random a volume of Virgil in order to learn the future, were consulted as early as the Antonines and even by the emperor himself. From this, some idea can be formed of the veneration in which Virgil was held, for such powers of prophecy were accorded only to books that were prized on account of their extraordinary wisdom.⁵

John Webster Spargo has very recently made a study of Virgil, the Necromancer, gathering much matter into one volume.⁶ He tells us that "Virgil as one of the many philosophers who have traveled far afield in search of wisdom" is the subject of many

³ Edited by William Henry Hulme, EETS es 100 (London, 1907), p. 51, 11. 445 ff.

⁴ Thomas Wright, *Narratives of Sorcery and Magio* (London, 1851), vol. I, pp. 99-121.

⁵ Domenico Comparesetti, *Virgil in the Middle Ages*, translated by E. F. M. Benecke (London and New York, 1895), p. 47.

• John Webster Spargo, *Virgil the Necromancer* (Cambridge, 1934).

Latin Medieval writers, among them Vincent of Beauvais and Joannes de Alta Silva. Alexander Neckam, the foster-brother of Richard Coeur de Lion, in *De Natura Rerum*, written in the last decade of the twelfth century, enumerates many marvels wrought by Virgil.⁷ John Lydgate in *The Fall of Princes*⁸ refers to the *Salvatio Romae*, which is also mentioned in *Gesta Romanorum*? In *The English Works of John Gower* is related the story of the mirror which Virgil "made of his clergie" and set upon a pillar so that for thirty miles around, by day and by night, Rome's enemies and their plans would be plainly mirrored therein.¹⁰ Caxton's *Mirroure of Hie World* recounts the marvels that Virgil wrought by astronomy and describes a prophesying head which he made to foretell his own death. According to the *Mirroure*, "Virgylc was a moche sage and subtyl clerke and ful of grete engyne."ⁿ In the *Towneley Plays* Virgil's *Eclogue* is quoted,

lam noua progenies celo demittitur alto,
lam rediet virgo, redeunt saturnia regna.¹⁹

Later in the same plays Herod sends his clerks to inquire concerning this talk of a maiden and her child.¹³ It was owing to this *Fourth Eclogue* of Virgil's that the poet was elevated to the rank of those prophets who had foretold the coming of Christ.¹⁴ Spargo cites an interesting tale, *An Olde Deceyte of Vergilius*, one of a collection of twenty-two, printed about 1550 but seeming to be a reprint of an earlier copy, that gives us the following information, in which the

⁷ Alexander Neckam, *De Natura Rerum*, Libri Duo, ed. by Thomas Wright (London, 1863), pp. 309-10.

⁸ John Lydgate, *The Fall of Princes*, EETS es 121-24 (London, 1924-27), p. 326, ll. 4493-4501.

⁹ Sidney J. Herrtage, ed., *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, EETS es 33 (London, 1879), Tale LVII.

¹⁰ G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John Gower*, EETS es 82 (London, 1901), vol. II, p. 3, ll. 2031-2234.

¹¹ Caxton's *Mirror of the World*, edited by Oliver H. Prior, EETS es 110 (London, 1913), pp. 157-60.

¹² George England, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, EETS es 71 (London, 1897), p. 112, ll. 388-89.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 172, ll. 203 ff.

¹⁴ Comparetti, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

compact with the devil seems to recall the similar story mentioned by Wright,

Vyrgyll was a very Wyse and experte man, and was a mayster of many dyvers sciences ye whiche (as some wise men say) the deuel had learned him, and also he was a wise man of council, in so much that ye Emperour chose him to be one of the lordes of his counsell.¹⁶

Another historical character credited with prophecy by English writers was Aristotle, the philosopher. At the beginning of Lydgate's work, *Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, we read that Aristotle "in sapiencie of Secretees hath the name" of excelling all others. He is described as "with a spirit / endewyd of prophecy."¹⁶ In keeping with his "celestial influence" "wryters bere witnesse He was Ravysshed / . . . Vp to the hevene / lyk a dowe of ffyr" both the dove and the fire being symbols of the extraordinary wisdom that had consumed his life,¹⁷ Gower in his *Confessio Amantis* gives nearly three hundred lines to extolling the greatness of Aristotle, stressing in particular his boundless knowledge, within which is included his acquaintance with the stars and the heavenly bodies, this enabling the philosopher to forecast coming events.¹⁸ The custom of consulting philosophers whenever sage advice was needed is evident in many early English works. The fact that prophetic power was generally conceded to accompany philosophic wisdom is evident in "Mary Magdalen/* one of the *Digby Plays*, when two philosophers are represented as foretelling that a child shall be born, the ruler of Israel.¹⁹

Alexander, too, has "grete wysedom and a hye witt: so þat note allanly 36 knawe thynges þat are present or passed, bot also thynges3 þat ere for to come."²⁰ He also manifests the keenest interest in divination, using all available means to look into the future. The god, Serapis, appeared in a vision to Alexander and prophesied that

¹⁶ Spargo, *op. cit.*, pp. 58, 343.

¹⁷ Robert Steele, ed., Lydgate and Burgh's *Secree» of Old Philosoffres*, EETS es 66 (London, 1894), 1. 8.

"IMd., 11. 77, 82, 87-98.

¹⁸ G. C. Macaulay, *op. cit.*, Bk. VII, p. 233, 11. 4-293.

"F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Digby Plays*, EETS es 70 (London, 1896), p. 61, 11. 173-85.

•° Westlake, ed., *Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 50, 11. 10 ff.

the king's " name and . . . dedes schall be made mynde of to the worldes end." Then Alexander addressed the god and

prayed hym, þat he wolde prophycye hym what kyns dede he scholde die. Serapis ansuerd and said, ' It is noghte spedfull till a man to knawe his paynefull endynge. For if he knewe it, perauenturc, he scholde neuer hafe loye in his hert. Neuer þ>e lesse bi-cause >ou hase prayede me to tell >e, I sall say the. After a drynke þou shall take thi dede. For in thi 3outhen þou sail make thyn endynge. Bot spirre me noþer þe tyme ne þe houre when it schal be, For I will on na wyse telle it to thee.²¹

While Alexander was in Babylon he employed " a philosopher]?at couthe of wiche-crafte " to interpret the omen of the child born half dead and half alive, the live part like divers beasts, the dead part like a man. This presaged Alexander's early death and his successors.²² He spoke with the Holy Trees, " þe tree of þe Son had leues lyk fyne golde, reed and faire schynande. And þe tree of þe mone had lefes whitt als syluer and faire schynande." These trees prophesied that Alexander would never return to his father's realm, that he should live " a twluemonth and aughte monethes," and that he would be poisoned by one whom he trusted.²³ When asked to reveal the name of the man who would kill him, the tree refused to say, lest Alexander kill the man and make his prophecy fail. The god Sensochosis reproved Alexander's neglect of him and in answer to Alexander's promise to build him a temple in Macedonia, the god said he would never again see Macedonia. Similar to the trees in prophetic power were the " grete fewles white als doufes" in the palace of Xerxes. These greatly interested Alexander as they could foretell whether a sick man would live or die.²⁴

Another figure that excelled in the use of magic to foretell events was Anectanabus, king of the wisest men in Egypt, who was

wyse eno3e wirdis to reken,
when he þe heuyn beheld.⁸⁵

He was an accomplished magician. By filling a brazen bowl with

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 102-3.

^{**} *Ibid.*, p. 94, 11. 13-15, 28 ff.

^{**} *Ibid.*, p. 109, 11. 13 ff.

^{**} *Ud.*, pp. 103, 107, 11. 32 ff.

" W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Wars of Alexander*, EETS es 47 (London, 1886), p. 2, 11. 39-40.

water and invoking the spirits, he could see his enemies sailing on the sea in such numbers that their masts were as thick as trees in a wood. When these, the Persians, bore down upon Egypt, Anectanabus disguised himself as a clerk and a prophet and went to Macedonia.²⁶ Serapis comforted the Egyptians by foretelling the return of their king to revenge their defeat.²⁷ When in Macedonia, Anectanabus told Olympias, mother of Alexander, that he was from Egypt, and learned in the lore of that land so that he might "preche as a prophet preued of witt."²⁸ He had power of charms, necromancy and shape-shifting.

By far the greatest prophet and wise man of preternatural origin and powers is Merlin, a product of the English mind, for although he appears in the old Welsh poems before the Arthurian romances, he is in them only a bard, not a magician or prophet.²⁹ It is just this "evolution of a little-known Welsh bard into a mighty enchanter" which constitutes the development of the character of Merlin in the Arthurian legend.³⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth gives the name Merlin to the boy known as Ambrosius in the *Historia Britonum* of Nennius,³¹ using both names, but adding the fact that his father was an incubus which accounted for his prophetic powers. According to Adelaide Marie Weiss, whose recent study of *Merlin in German Literature*³² gives an excellent treatment of the English Merlin legend, Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Robert de Boron, and other romancers of later times, all portray the prophetic child Ambrose, later known as Merlin, as a

** *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3, 11. 55 fit. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁸ W. W. Skeat, ed., *Alisaunder*, EETS es I (London, 1867), 11. 603-04 ff. In this version he is called "Nectanabus," as he is also called in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in which the complete tale is given: Bk. VI, pp. 215-30.

²⁹ James Douglas Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance From the Beginnings Down to the Year 1500* (Baltimore, 1923), pp. 129-51 for history of Merlin.

³⁰ Egbert S. Ownby, *Merlin and Arthur*, Diss. Vanderbilt University (Nashville, Tennessee, 1932), p. 20.

³¹ F. Mommsen, ed., Nennius' *Historia Britonum*, *Monum-enta Oermaniae Historica* (1904), pp. 181 if.

³² Adelaide Marie Weiss, *Merlin in German Literature*, A Study of the Merlin Legend in German Literature from Medieval Beginnings to the End of Romanticism, Diss. Catholic University (Washington, 1933), pp. 1-38.

marvelous boy prophet, who like the Christ-child in the temple astounds the wise men with wonderful wisdom and knowledge; he is the boy whose predictions do not fail to materialize . . . ; he is the clever youth who through his prophetic skill escapes being sacrificed.³³

The entire seventh book of Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae* is made up of Merlin's famous prophecies which referred to recent events of the author's time and the eighth book begins with his prophecy concerning the death of Vortigern. Later (Ch. 15) he interprets the portent which betokens the death of the gallant hero, Aurelius Ambrosius.³⁴ Through an act of magic, Merlin metamorphoses King Uther into Gorlois in order to accomplish his desires and it is through magical operations that he removes the great "Stonehenge" from Mt. Killaraus in Ireland to the site of Mt. Ambrius in England.³⁵ In Geoffrey's other work, the *Vita Merlini*, we meet Merlin as a king and prophet who has already lived an indefinite time, this limitless age being often associated with wisdom, as already seen in the case of Isepe in the *Tale of Beryn*. In the *Vita Merlini* the prophet's wonderful power is manifested in reading the thoughts of others. In his house with seventy doors and seventy windows he predicts the future by observing the heavens, reading therein the calamities that are to befall the Britons and so many coming events that one hundred and forty scribes are kept busy recording his predictions. After the death of the king, Eodarchus, as he had foretold, the king's wife, Ganieda, goes to live with Merlin, her brother, and is also endowed with the prophetic gift. The Vulgate continuation of Robert de Boron's prose *Merlin* adds the Grisandole episode in which Merlin figures as shape-shifter and prophet, appearing as a great stag and a wild man, penetrating the disguise of Grisandole and the twelve ladies-in-honor and disclosing their real sex.⁸⁶ In the Prose Romance, *Merlin*, we have the boy represented as knowing the thoughts and plans of others, similar to the incident as told by Nennius. He explains why the tower falls and suggests a remedy. Thereupon Vortigern declares Merlin to be "oon of the wisest mon of the worlde."⁸⁷ In the *Brut*, Merlin is the famous prophet who fore-

"*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁴ Bruce, *op. tit.*, p. 147.

"Weiss, *op. tit.*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ Bruce, *op. tit.*, pp. 147 ff.

"Harry B. Wheatley, ed., *Merlin*, EETS os 112 (London, 1899), p. 40.

tells the destruction of Winchester by Arthur's army and the departure of the wounded king to Avalon from whence he shall yet come to help the Britons.³⁸ Ownbey, in tracing the evolution of the character of Merlin, says, that Geoffrey of Monmouth is "the first to endow Merlin with definite necromantic ability" which by the time of Layamon's *Brut* has developed into foreknowledge of events, ability to read the minds of men, necromantic power to reduce the weight of great stones and to change not only his own shape but also the shapes of others.³⁹ Malory adds nothing of special importance to Merlin's prophetic wisdom. He is portrayed as dream-reader, wizard, shape-shifter, and enchanter, wise in the knowledge of the past and foreseeing the future as he will.⁴⁰

In Henry Lovelich's *Merlin*, A Middle-English Metrical Version of a French Romance, we learn that the devils held council concerning the redemption of man because they had heard the prophecy that the Son of God would die upon earth to save sinners. Then they wanted a child that would be equal to Christ, one that "scholde hauen alle connenge, of thyng]?at is past and)?at is comenge."⁴¹ Merlin, whose father was an evil spirit of the order called "Equibedes," seemed to be the answer to their desire, for he had the mental capacities of the evil spirits to know things past, and for his pious mother's sake, God had permitted him to know things to come.⁴² As Merlin himself says,

For it is goddis wille that j knowe
things to-comeng,*⁸

and again

God that is almighty,
Wit and memorie hath grauntid to me
thynges that ben comeng to knowen certeinle.⁴⁴

³⁸ F. W. Brie, ed., *The Brut*, EETS os 131, 136 (London, 1906-08), 11. 13, 622 ff.

³⁹ Ownbey, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁰ H. O. Sommer, ed., Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d' Arthur*, 3 vols. (London, 1889-91).

⁴¹ Ernest A. Kock, ed., Henry Lovelich's *Merlin*, EETS es 93 (London, 1904), pp. 1-3, 11. 91-92.

"*Ibid.*, p. 40, 11. 1465 if.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 43, 11. 1581-82.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114, 11. 4284-86.

When Merlin had foretold why the messengers from Fortager sought him, to put his blood into the foundation so that the tower would stand, Blasy, marveling at the boy's prophetic insight said, "And he mot lyve, he wil ben a wys manne."⁴⁵ Those already acquainted with him declared him to be "the wisest man . . . þat evere was born, except God alone."⁴⁶ Fortager said to his council, "This child is wondir wis with-alle,"⁴⁷ and Pendragon informed his brother

That this is the wisest man, trewlye,
That here on lyve may now be.⁴⁸

Uther, convinced of Merlin's wisdom acknowledged,

That he knoweth thinges jn dyvers londe,
Bothe that is to comen and that js gon;⁴⁹

and those present at the baron's death said that

Merlyne was þe wysest man
That In al this world was lyveng than.⁵⁰

In *The Brut*, we find the same Merlin story. He confuted the "wise concelers" by explaining the cause of the falling tower, prophesied, and built Stonehenge.⁵¹ Strange that all this wisdom and prophecy was not able to confound "a wykede womane,"

And merwelus merlyne is wastede away
Wyght A wykede womane,—woo mycht sho bee!—
Scho has closede him in A cragge of cornwales coste.⁸⁸

Of minor importance, yet wise with prophetic understanding, is Josephes in *The History of the Holy Grail*. He tells Moys not to sit in the Graal-seat as only sinless mortals may attempt to do so. Moys refuses to acknowledge his guilt, attempts to take the seat,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60, 11. 2232ff.

"Ibid., p. 96, 11. 3590-91.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69, 11. 2541-42.

"Ibid., p. 97, 11. 3622-23.

"Ibid., p. 74, 1. 2733.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106, 11. 3963-64.

⁸⁸ Brie, ed., *The Brut*, p. 57, 11. 21 ff.; p. 66, 1. 30; p. 72, 1. 1; p. 76, 1. 11; p. 243, 11. 1ff.; p. 247, 1. 19.

⁶² Lumby, ed., *Bernardus de Cura Rei Familiaris*, with some *Early Scottish Prophecies*, EETS os 42 (London, 1870). "Ancient Scottish Prophecy," No. 1, p. 22, 11. 137-39.

and is lost.⁵³ Legend attributes superhuman wisdom to Jonitus, a son of Noah, born after the flood. The Syrians have made him the recipient of all wisdom from God and the founder of astronomy. He is mentioned in *The Middle-English Metrical Version of the Revelations of Methodius*.⁵⁴

It is interesting to note the various prophetic marvels mentioned in books of the time. A brazen head capable of speech was believed to have been made by Roger Bacon (1214P-1294), considered a necromancer by his contemporaries.⁵⁵ The raven usually presaged misfortune. In *The History of Jason* when "A meruayllous grete Rauen" flew over the head of the King of Sklauonye, "cryeng right horribly," it foretold the king's defeat in battle.⁵⁶ The banner called the Raven which King Alfred took from the Danes had prophetic power. In every fight in which this banner was carried, if the Danes were to win, the raven would seem to flutter as if it were alive. But, if they were to be defeated "then would it droop, still and lifeless."⁵⁷ We read that Romulus set up a golden image of himself on a lofty pillar, the face turning with the sun. It held a circle in the right hand and a sword in the left. He said this statue would remain until a maiden bore a child, and at Christ's birth the statue fell down.⁵⁸ The same prediction was made by the builder of the Temple of Peace in Rome. In it each land had a god with a silver bell. Above was a revolving horseman of brass. If any land plotted against Rome, the god of that land

⁵³ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The History of the Holy Grail*, EETS es 30 (London, 1878), pp. 218-19.

⁵⁴ C. D'Evelyn, "The Middle-English Metrical Version of the Revelations of Methodius; with a Study of the Influence of Methodius in Middle English Writings," in *PMLA*, 33 (1918), p. 137. Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (Halle, 1898), pp. 14-26 give a study of the legend. C. Bezold, *Schatzhöhle* (Leipzig, 1883), gives the history of Jonitua.

⁵⁵ Wright, *Narratives of Sorcery and Magic*, pp. 122-23. A brazen head speaks in the old French romance, *Valentine and Orson*, but this appeared in English only about 1550 as the *History of two Valyannte Brethren, Valentyne and Orson* by Henry Watson.

⁵⁶ Caxton, *The History of Jason*, p. 38.

"Edward Conybeare, *Alfred in the Chroniclers* (London, 1900), Asser, "Of the Deeds of Alfred," pp. 85-119; p. 99.

⁵⁸ Frances A. Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, EETS os 166 (London, 1926), p. 21, ll. 645-84.

rang his bell and turned his back. The horseman pointed with his spear. Then the priests told the rulers, and soldiers were sent in the direction indicated. An ever-burning fire was kept in the temple, but both fire and temple were destroyed at the birth of Christ.⁵⁹ Roger of Wendover, a monk of St. Albans, who died in 1237, in recording the martyrdom of King Edmund, tells how the severed head which the Danes, to prevent Christian burial, had cast into the woods, answered, "Here, here, here!" to the seekers' cry, "Where are you?"⁶⁰ When St. Kenelm's head was cut off, a dove flew up to heaven. Later, as the Pope was saying Mass in Rome, the dove placed on the altar before the Pope, a writing in English, with letters of gold, saying that Kenelm lay under a thorne in Corebach.⁶¹

Oracles were sought in an endeavor to discover future events. An oracle of Apollo told the Thebans who wanted to know if their city would ever be rebuilt,

he þat schall bygge þis citee agayne sail hafe thre victories. And when he hase geten thre victories, he sail onane come and reparell this citee, and bigge it agayne, also wele, als euer it was.⁶²

At the Temple of Diana, the maiden priestess prophesied to Alexander, "Dou schall conquere all þe werlde."⁶³ Belief in zodiacal signs, palmistry, and physiognomy is manifested in *The Works of John Meiham*.[^] Many signs and situations indicate wisdom. There we learn that he shall be wise who is born on the sixth day of the moon, while he who may claim the thirtieth as a birthday "schuld be dysposyd to be wyse."⁶⁵ If the right line in the palm of the hand be small, "yt sygnyfyeth wysdam and a gode wyt."⁶⁰ "Phylemon the sotheseyer" was versed in physiognomy.⁶⁷ After looking at a picture of Hippocrates, he declared him to have an evil disposi-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Conybeare, *Alfred in the Chroniclers*, "Roger of Wendover," p. 185.

⁸¹ F. J. Furnivall, *Lives of the Saints* (Berlin, 1862), "Life of St. Kenelm."

⁶² Westlake, ed., *Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 31.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 32, l. 1.

⁶⁴ Hardin Craig, ed., *The Works of John Metham*, EETS os 132 (London, 1916).

"*Ibid.*", p. 88, ll. 16 ff.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155, l. 16.

"*Ibid.*", p. 118, l. 27.

tion. This assertion was resented by the scholars of Hippocrates but their master declared that Philemon "ys ryght a wyse man; and an experte man in that cynnyng."⁶⁸ In the treatise on physiognomy we are told that a head that is neither too long nor too short, too flat nor too round "betokynnyth wysdam / and gret wytt."⁶⁹ Likewise,

A ryght hed that ys pleyn in the croune, off a mene gretenea, betokynnyth wysdam, and manned, and strong-hartydnes.⁷⁰

Browys that returne in growyng to the skyn betokyn . . . lytyl wysdam.
(p. 123, ll. 24-25.)

A lytyl cerkyl off rede in a moyste eye with-owte sharpnes off coloure, yff no schappc off scharpnes appere ouer that ccrkyl, yt sygnyffyith wysdam and ryghtffulnes and a gret wytt. (p. 128, ll. 28-31.)

And yff yt be so that this tokyn appere in a moyst eye, yt sygnyffyith gret hastynes, wysdam, and re / dynes to lecchery. (p. 129, ll. 2-4.)

Qwan yt ys so that the nose comyth ryght doune fro the forhed, yt sygny(fy)ith a gode and gret dysposycion to alle kunnyng and craftys; and yt sygnyfyith wysdam. (p. 134, ll. 19-22.)

A nek the qwyche ys smal nyghe the hed and gret be the body, that qwyche seldum meuyth nowdyr in spec-he ner in labour, yt sygnyfyith wysdam and strenght of body. (p. 135, ll. 28-31.)

And qwan yt ys so that the throte in maner ys dyuydyd fro the schul-dyrrys, so that the ouer bone off the brest appere, yt sygnyfyith wysdam, clennes off cornplexcion and boldenes off hert. (p. 136, ll. 25-28.)

Handys the qwyche be schort of schap and made strongly, thei sygnyfyfe wysdam and strenght. (p. 137, ll. 5-6.)

Qwan yt ys so that the part off the brest nest the nek ys gretter than the nedyr, yt sygnyfyith wysdam. • (p. 138, ll. 11-12.)

It is evident from all this how important wisdom was considered, how eagerly it was desired, how greatly it was prized, since it figures so frequently in the prognostications sought from physical formation.

Since prophetic marvels aroused such interest in medieval times, it is to be expected that necromancy, especially of a divining nature, would be in high favor. Indeed, it was such an important department of knowledge that it constituted part of the training of the "learned" person of the day, male or female. Melior of the *Partenope* was taught by a hundred masters or more. At fifteen,

she was ready to take up the study of necromancy which had been her highest ambition. By this study, having acquired the power of enchantment and the exercise of magic, she was fit to be placed in the category of wise ladies.⁷¹ Cassandra was most polished of wit, instructed in the liberal arts and had a knowledge of the stars, implying astrology.⁷² Gower tells us that she foresaw the destruction of Troy.⁷³ Braunde, the daughter of the Prince of Portingale, knew "al þe werk of wicchecraft" and had "namore of nigramauncy to lere."⁷⁴ She, by using "a noynement . . . made ... by enchaunmens of charmes" changed her stepson into a werwulf in appearance but left him "his wit."⁷⁵ The Green Knight confessed his magic and powers of divination to be "þur3 my^t of Morgan la Faye . . . De maystres of Merlyn."⁷⁶ We find "Morgan the wise" in *Ywain and Gawain*,⁷⁷ furnishing an ointment that would restore a man's wit. Malory tells us that "the third sister (of Arthur), Morgan le Fay, was put to school in a nunnery: and there she learned so much that she was a great clerk of nigromancy."⁷⁸ With her magic powers she sent the enchanted ship to Arthur after his adventure with the hart.⁷⁹ To escape the pursuit of Arthur, when she had stolen his scabbard, she changed herself,

⁷¹ Adelaide E. Harris, *The Heroine of the Middle English Romances*, p. 12.

⁷² George A. Panton and David Donaldson, editors, *The "Gest Hystoriale" of the Destruction of Troy: An Alliterative Romance*, EETS os 39, 56 (London, 1869, 1874), p. 50, ll. 1496-1498:

Cassandra was cald, clennest of wytte,
Bat Enformet was faire of e fre artis,
And hade knowyng by course of þe clere sternys.

⁷³ G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John Gower*, "Confessio Amantis," Bk. II, p. 156, ll. 7441-7450.

⁷⁴ Skeat, ed., *William of Palerne*, p. 10, ll. 116-21.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 136 ff.

⁷⁶ Richard Morris, ed., *Sir Gawayne and The Green Knight*, EETS os 4 (London, 1864), p. 78.

⁷⁷ Joseph Ritson, *Romance and Minstrelsy*, To which is appended *The Ancient Metrical Romance of Yuxiine and Gawain* (Edinburgh, 1891), p. 159, ll. 1753 ff.

⁷⁸ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, edited by Sir Edward Strachy (London, 1904), Bk. I, Ch. II, p. 27.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, Ch. VI, p. 79.

"horse and man, . . . unto a great marble stone," afterwards removing the spell so that she and her men might assume their natural shapes.⁸⁰ By her magic she cast a deep sleep upon Launcelot that he might be carried to the castle Chariot in the hope that he might accept one of the four queens.⁸¹ She fashioned the magic horn that would test the fidelity of wife or of husband⁸² and gave to Alisander a drink that caused him to sleep for three days and three nights.⁸³ Lucy Paton gives an excellent discussion of "Morgain la fee," noting all her remarkable powers of prophecy, magic, and shape-shifting, not only in Middle English but in other literatures as well.⁸⁴ Owenby notes that in the Huth *Merlin*, the mage is entranced first by Morgan le Fay, and then by Nivien, daughter to the King of Northumberland.⁸⁵

Those half-fairy women of whom prophetic power is especially characteristic, or to be more exact, those fairies who sometimes took the form of beautiful women and married men under certain conditions, are certainly preternatural in their foreknowledge and magic achievements. Thus in the medieval *Melusine* compilation of Jean d'Arras, Melusine, Melior, and Palatyne were the children of a fairy mother who carried them away with her when her husband broke the promise he had made to her before their wedding. Melusine, to avenge her mother's wrong, contrived with the help of her sisters to imprison their father in a mountain, but their mother, grieved at this conduct, punished her daughters. Melusine was to be turned into a serpent every Saturday, until she could find some one to marry her who would promise never to see her on that day. She met Ilaymondin, her future husband, at the Fairy Fountain, and astonished him by calling his name and recounting to him his recent adventure, known only to himself and which he was anxious to forget. She promised to make him a great lord and asked him to marry her to which he readily assented, having

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, Ch. XIV, p. 86.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Bk. VI, Ch. III, p. 113.

⁸² *Ibid.*, Bk. VIII, Ch. XXXIV, p. 189.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Bk. X, Ch. XXXVII, p. 272.

"Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (Boston, 1903), Morgain la fee, pp. 1-166.

⁸⁶ Owenby, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

granted her petition that he would never see her on Saturdays. Her power bordered on magic and her wisdom exceeded the ordinary bounds. Her castle rose in an incredibly short time, stronger and more beautiful than any before seen. She knew the doings of distant places, counseled wisely and predicted the fortunes of her sons, their friends and their enemies. She used her marvelous powers for right and justice. Her children were defective physically but grew so rapidly that folks marveled at them. Her sixth son, Geoffrey, had a tooth that protruded an inch and more, so he was called Geoffrey with the Great Tooth. He seemed to inherit the wisdom of his mother and ruled wisely and justly over his people. Not even the prophetic knowledge of Melusine could prevent her husband from breaking his promise,, whereupon she disappeared. She became a serpent and until the day of Judgment must appear before her castle for three days whenever it is about to have a new ruler or when one of her descendants is about to die. Thus forever she must fulfil her prophetic mission.⁸⁶

The Sibyl, doubtless, owes her very existence in literature to her gift of prophecy, and these utterances of wisdom were believed by Christians as well as by pagans, the former considering them the means adopted by God for revealing Himself to those not of the Jewish or Christian Church. We find a trace of this even in the hymns of the Church, the *Dies irae*, "*Teste David cum Sibylla*,"⁸⁷ In general, the Sibyl stood for extraordinary wisdom as we may judge from this comparison, intended to show the high opinion the Christians held for Christ: "They hold hym wyser þan euer was Syble sage."⁸⁸ There were as many as twelve⁸⁹ of these sibyls although the *Heptateuch* limits the number to ten. They appeared at sundry times as prophetesses whose authority was greatly respected and they "prophesied all of our Saviour Christ, and compiled their bookes doubtlesse by the assistance of Almighty God,

⁸⁶ A. K. Donald, ed., *Melusine*, compiled (1382-1394) by Jean D'Arras. Englished about 1500. EETS es 68, Part I (London, 1895).

⁸⁷ J. Vriend, S. J., *The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Medieval Drama of England* (Purmerend, Holland, 1928), pp. 25 ff.

⁸⁸ Osborn Waterhouse, ed., *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays*, together with *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, p. 68, 1. 351.

⁸⁹ Vriend, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

concerning his whole passage, with full beliefe: for God would have his witnesses as well among the heathen as the faithful."⁹⁰ An example of the "Sibille" prophesying other than about Christ may be found in the *Book of the Knight de la Tour-Landry* when she spoke of Brun, the wicked queen of France,

Brun shalle come into the kingdom of Fraunce
that shal do meruailes.⁹¹

We learn from another English source, that near Eome a spring flowed with oil all day, as the Sibyl had prophesied.⁹² Gower relates that the "Sibille" was filled with sorrow at the thought of the destruction which she foresaw would come to Troy.⁹³ Another office she performed was that of writer or chronicler, as the words said by "Merlin þe wise" were set in a book by "Sibillie þa wise."⁹⁴ One Sibyl figures more prominently than the others in Middle English drama. In *Towneley*⁹⁵ the prophecy is of Doomsday and its signs. In both *Towneley*⁹⁶ and *Chester*⁹⁷ the Sibyl in answer to Octavian prophesies that a virgin will give birth to a child who is destined to overthrow his power. In *Chester*, the emperor refuses to accept the honors of divine worship from the senators before taking counsel with

⁹⁰ S. J. Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch. Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, EETS os 160 (London, 1922), p. 46, ll. 712 ff.: Tyn intrdena wæron on mislicere tide on haeoene leodum, þa mon het Sybillas, þet beoð "witege-stran"—heo witegodan ealle be þam Haelende Cristo—heora bee 8etton swiðe swutelice þurh ðone soðan Gost be alre his fare mid fullum geleafan, for þan Se God wolde heom gewitan habban of haeþenum leode—of geleaf-fullum; ac heora bee ne beoð na on ure gesetnyase on ðare bibliothecan, swa swa Sag oðre beoð.

⁹¹ Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight de La Tour-Landry*, p. 90, ll. 2-3.

⁹² Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 19, ll. 569-80.

⁹³ Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John Gower*, "Confessio Amantis," Bk. V, p. 156, ll. 7454-62.

⁹⁴ Madden, ed., *Layamon's Brut*, ll. 32, 178; 32, 182: "Sibillie þa wise a bocken hit isette."

⁹⁵ George England, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, pp. 61-63, ll. 163-216.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁹⁷ Herman Deimling, ed., *The Chester Plays*, EETS es 62 (London, 1893), p. 118, ll. 353-84.

. . . her that has grace for to see
 Thinges that afterwarde shal be
 By ghost of prophesie.⁹⁸

The Sibyl tells the Emperor to look up at the sky and see One who is greater than even he is. And there in the heavens Octavian sees the Virgin Mary with Jesus in her arms." In *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*¹⁰⁰ of about 1350 we find this same Sibyl legend in which she says to the Emperor,

this ilk child þou ses now her
 shal pas þe in alle thing,
 of strength, wisdom—power.¹⁰¹

One of the oldest accounts of the legend may be found in *Mirabilia Romae* which dates from about 1150.¹⁰² Lydgate in his *Life of Our Lady*¹⁰³ uses the Sybil's prophecy and refers to it in his *Poem on St. Valentine's Day*¹⁰⁴ and *On the Prospect of Peace*.¹⁰⁶ We find it in John Mirk's *Festial*,¹⁰⁵ in Caxton's *Golden Legend*^{TM1} and in the *Meroure of Wyssdome* by Johannes de Irlaiddia. Another refer-

⁹⁸ Deimling, ed., *The Chester Plays*, p. 118, ll. 346-48.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30, ll. 657-92.

¹⁰⁰ Frances A. Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, pp. 593-620.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21, ll. 622-24.

¹⁰² J. Vriend, S. J., *The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Medieval Drama of England*, pp. 33-35, gives complete treatment of the Sibyl legend with bibliography.

¹⁰³ Of Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*, Vriend tells us that there are as yet only two printed editions, Caxton's of about 1484 and Robert Redman's, 1531. Of chapters 1-23 there is a popular edition in C. E. Tame, *English Religious Literature*, Part II (London, 1879). Vriend quotes these chapters in the work just mentioned.

¹⁰⁴ Henry Noble MacCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, Part I, EETS es 107 (London, 1911), "Poem on St. Valentine's Day," p. 308, ll. 92-98.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Wright, ed., *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History*, 2 vols. (London, 1861), "John Lydgate's On the Prospect of Peace," pp. 209-15.

¹⁰⁶ Theodor Erbe, ed., *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies* by Johannes Mirkus, EETS es 96 (London, 1905), p. 25.

¹⁰⁷ F. S. Ellis, ed., Caxton's *Golden Legend*, 3 vols. (London, 1892), vol. I, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Johannes de Irlandia, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, p. 141.

ence to the Sibyl, this time as the valiant woman, "enspyred with þe grace of goostly sapyence," occurs in *An fipistle to Sibille*, one of *The Minor Poems by John Lydgate*.¹⁰⁹ The popularity of this legend, found also in several French works, attests the interest manifested in wisdom of prophecy.

Even closer to the Christian idea of prophetic wisdom is the divining power of the "Magi" those University "masters" from Persia or Parthia,¹¹⁰ whose study of the stars—that occult science usually regarded with suspicion as were the artifices of Oriental divination—led them to Divine Wisdom, thus placing them apart from all other masters of their art. An interesting question as to why they were called "in the gospel *magi*, men of gret connyng, and not *reges*, *kynges*," is found and answered in a manuscript cited by Owst in *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*:

This is the cause, to shewe the grett connyng of thise thre princes, thei were called *magi* . . . For like as the grettest clerces amonge the Grecceth (sic!) were called *philosophi*, "philosphres," and amonge the Jewes, "scribe," *scribus*, and amonge us Latyns, *magistri*, "masters," ryght so were thei called amonge Perses *magi*. For it was more fittyng to grounde of oure fey3th and beleve in tham undir the name of clergy, than undir the name of kny3thod; and therfore were thei called in the gospell *magi*, men of gret connyng, and not *kynges*. All-be-it that thei were myghty princes in armies and men also of right gret letture.¹¹¹

In *The Story of Genesis and Exodus* we have Moses and Aaron equipped by God to confound the Wise Men of Pharaoh's court as we have seen previously.¹¹² This same incident displaying the power of changing the rod into a serpent and thence into a rod again, together with the hand made leprous, and again made whole, is used in *The Towneley Plays*.¹¹³

Our discussion of preternatural prophetic wisdom has noted men considered wise on account of their skill in magic; has seen that

¹⁰⁹ Edited by Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS es 107, pp. 14-18.

¹¹⁰ Gerald R. Owst, *literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 116.

¹¹¹ MS. Roy. 18. B. XXIII, fol. 130. See G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 506.

¹¹² Morris, ed., *Genesis and Exodus*, pp. 80 ff.

¹¹³ England, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, "VIII Pharaoh," p. 69, ll. 158-69.

greatness in a scholar, exemplified in Virgil, implied a knowledge of magical arts; that the philosopher, Aristotle, could foretell by his understanding of the stars; that Alexander, esteemed as conqueror, was even more renowned on account of his ability to foresee future events. This able warrior was most interested in portents, oracles, and all manner of divinings. Especially were men famous for wisdom who, like Anectanabus and Merlin excelled in works of magic, prophecy, and in shape-shifting. However, the practice of necromancy was not limited to men. Equally ambitious to excel in such knowledge were the wise ladies of the Middle English romances. Half-fairy women were said to possess the gift of prophecy and the Sibyl was venerated as a renowned prophetess. All kinds of prophetic marvels, oracles, belief in zodiacal signs, palmistry, physiognomy, aroused attention. Moses and Aaron appear in Middle English writings as wonder-workers and the Magi hold a special charm due to their knowledge of astrology. Other examples of preternatural wisdom might be cited but those already mentioned will suffice to show the interest, we might almost say the fascination, that such marvels and divinings exerted over the medieval mind.

SUPERNATURAL PROPHETIC WISDOM

Turning now to consideration of prophetic wisdom of a nobler kind, as displayed in the literature of the day, we may observe by way of preface a minor distinction among the prophetic personages of the Old Testament. Samuel is named "the seer,"¹¹⁴ the title seeming to imply his ability to see by divine light hidden things and coming events. Then there were, in the time of Samuel, bands of prophets. One such was met by Saul as he came down from the high place.¹¹⁵ These used music to arouse an intense enthusiasm, or, possession, in which they raved in prophetic fury; the same word in Hebrew, used in such connections, may mean "raving" or "prophesying."¹¹⁶ Saul also "prophesied in the midst of them/" Not always were these gregarious prophets, who appear in the stories of Elisha as organized societies of devotees,

¹¹⁴ 1 Kings ix, 9 ff. ¹¹⁵ 1 Kings x, 10 ff.

¹¹⁶ George Foot Moore, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (New York, 1913), pp. 142 ff.

inspired by the spirit of God. Elijah said: "I only am left of all God's prophets, and Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets"¹¹⁷ Obadiah, the worthy servant of God "hid alive one hundred and twenty prophets, and fed them with food, when Jezebel killed all God's prophets whom she could discover."¹¹⁸ The true figure stands forth in Micheas, son of Jemla, who confronted the four hundred prophets whom Achab had assembled. Micheas declared their unanimity of inspiration "to be the work of a lying spirit who would deceive the king and bring him to destruction."¹¹⁹ God warned his people against such deceivers. In the *Heptateuch* we find:

1. If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet or one that saith he hath dreamed a dream, and he foretell a sign and a wonder.

2. And that come to pass which he spoke, and he say to thee: Let us go and follow strange gods, which thou knowest not, and let us serve them:

3. Thou shalt not hear the words of that prophet or dreamer: for the Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, or not.¹²⁰

Again in the same book God says to His people,

If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream.¹²¹

It was through these ministers that God made known his designs to his chosen people. In a parable in the *Old English Homilies* we read, "God sent the holy prophets, and they revived by their writings, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, the good law, and cor-

¹¹⁷ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament*, p. 360, ll. 102-03: Ic belaf ana ealra godes witegena . and baal haefS feower hund and fiftig witegan.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 388, ll. 81-84.

¹¹⁹ 3 Kings xxii, 22 ff.

¹²⁰ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Deuteronomy*, Ch. XIII, 1, p. 350: Gyf senig witega arise betwynan (eow), secge 8eet hine meete swefen, secge tacnu forebeacnu, 2. hit agtpS call swa he sprycC, he cwyl to eow: Vton gan fylan fremdum godum (8e ge ne cunnon) uton Seowian him. 3. Ne hlyste 8u his worda, for San 8e Drihten fandaS eower, hwaeOer ge hine lufian mid eallum mode.

¹²¹ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Numbers*, Ch. XII, 6, p. 313: Gyf hwylc man of eow bi8 Drihtnes witega, ic him aeteowe on gesyhSe o88e 8urh swefen ic sprece to him.

rected the folk, as far as they were able, and foretold the coming of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who should write his own will in our hearts, through the gift of his Holy Ghost, and make us with his might what book-learning could not.¹²²

So dear to God were these teachers of his and so important it was that the people hearken to their tidings that God promised a recompense to those who harbored them in these words: "He who receives a prophet shall have a prophet's reward."¹²³ Isaias, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, and Daniel stand out as the greatest prophets while out of the host of lesser ones those that have left their writings as part of the Sacred Canon exemplify our idea of great prophetic wisdom. We find Adam accredited with prophetic powers in *The Wheatley Manuscript*.¹²⁴ He foretells to Seth the coming events that will befall his people; how they will break the commandments and displease God in many ways but will afterwards repent.

Men schulen be purefyed of her aymie by water of Cristendom; . . . Wijs is þat man þat amendiþ? his aoule, for win þere achal be a great day of iuggement a-mong synful men, and her deedes schulen ben enqwerid of ri3twiJ3 God her iuge.¹²⁵

The same manuscript tells the legend of how Seth went to the garden of Paradise to seek the oil of mercy with which to rub his father's body, and how Saint Michael refused mercy then, but foretold to Seth the coming of Christianity and the sacrifice of the God of Mercy.¹²⁶ Moses enjoyed so great a reputation in his own time that we find his successor recording, "There arose no more a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to

¹²³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, II, p. 235: god sende e halie witi^e . and hi þa arerdon mid hare write þnirh þes halie gastes gife þa god lage . and rihtleceden þat folc swase hi mihten . and bodeden ures hlaforðes to-cyme ses helendea ihcsu criatea þe sceolde hia a3en wille . þurh hia gaates 3ife in lire heorte write . and don us mid his mihteþat strf creft ne mihte.

¹²³ Morria, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 63,1. 4: Se þe wytegan underfoho, he haefO wytegan mede.

¹²⁴ Mabel Day, ed., *The Wheatley Manuscript*, EETS os 155 (London, 1921), p. 90, 11. 16if.; p. 91, 11. 1-23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94, 11. 28-34.

"• *Ibid.*, p. 95, 11. 1-19.

face."¹²⁷ After Moses had chosen the seventy wise men to help in the government of the people,²⁸

the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke to him, taking away of the spirit that was in Moses, and giving to the seventy men. And when the spirit had rested on them they prophesied, not did they cease afterwards.

Two of the men "upon whom the spirit rested," were Eldad and Medad who remained in the camp.¹²⁹ Although Moses was so richly endowed with wisdom and prophecy, he hesitated when God commanded him to approach Pharaoh, alleging in excuse his slowness of speech, so God gave him his brother Aaron, as his prophet.¹³⁰ Of David it is said, "A holy Prophet is he and prophesied many things of our Saviour Christ,"¹³¹ and of Solomon,

son of David
wise of old in song
in the spirit's mystery.¹³³

Even an angel appeared to "Salamon the wiys kyng" to interpret for him the tables on which Seth had written, as his mother had commanded him, the story of Adam and Eve.¹³³ We are admonished to

hear the wisdom
of the songs of Job (Cf. Job xxiv, 18.)

¹²⁷ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Deuteronomy*, Ch. XXXIV, 10, p. 376: Ne aras suððan nan witega on Israhela deode swylce Moyses waes, de Drihten cuðe of anysne to anysne.

¹²⁸ Morris, ed., *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, p. 104.

¹²⁹ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Numbers*, Ch. XI, 25, 26, p. 312: Drihten astah nyðer þurh genip, spræc to him, nam of ðam gaste Se waes on Moyse, sealde ðam hundseofontigum mannum; ða se gast gereste on him, hi witcgodon syððan ne geswicon. Da belifon twegen men on ðam wiestowum; ðsera oðer hatte Eldad oþer Meldad; ofer ða se gast gereste; hi waBron awritene ne eodon ut to Ssere eardlungstowe.

¹³⁰ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Exodus*, VII, 1, p. 228: . . . Aaron fcin broðer byð Sin witega.

¹³¹ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch*, p. 36, 11. 483-84, referring to David, "He ys halig witega,—he witegode fela ymbe urne Haelend Crist."

¹³³ Benjamin Thorpe, ed., *Codex Exoniensis* (London, 1842), p. 45, in "Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving."

¹³³ Mabel Day, ed., *The Wheatley MS.*, "Life of Adam and Eve," p. 98, 11. 21 ff.

who is called "a wise man, ... of soul sagacious, God's prophet," who sang in ancient days "about his resurrection into eternal life."¹³⁴

This prediction of "se witega Sophonias" is noted in *Early English Homilies*, "The great day of God is near at hand and exceedingly swift."¹⁸⁵ When Elias was being carried up into heaven he dropped his mantle which Elisha took and upon wearing it "was God's prophet as wise as was the other." He wrought many miracles and prophesied many things.¹³⁰ When the servant of the great prophet Elisha had taken "treasures in money and in raiment" from the Syrian officer, Naaman, his master "saw through the Spirit of God" what had taken place and was able to accuse his servant to that one's great astonishment.¹³⁷ After the death of this holy man

a corpse was brought to the saint's tomb, and robbers put the bearers suddenly to flight, so that they left the dead man upon his sepulchre, and ran away as soon as they saw the cruel flock. Then the dead man arose when he touched the sepulchre, and went home sound, for Elisha's merits.¹³⁸

The story of the prophet Jonas being sent by God to Nineveh to foretell the destruction of that city if its inhabitants did not repent, is recounted in *Early English Homilies*,¹³⁹ in "Patience" in *Early English Alliterative Poems*,¹⁴⁰ and in *Aelfric's Lives*.¹⁴¹ Aelfric also tells us that the Holy Ghost "spoke also by the Prophets, who prophesied concerning Christ,"¹⁴² and he mentions the "seuenfold

¹³⁴ Thorpe, ed., *Codex Exoniensis*, "The Phoenix," pp. 234, 236.

¹³⁵ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 72, ll. 20-21: Se mycele Godes daeig is swyðe gehaende,—Dearie awift. Cf. the Bible, Sophonias, i, 14.

¹³⁶ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part II, p. 402, l. 298. "Homilies."

¹³⁷ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 122, ll. 13, 14: Se cnape folgode þan maeren witege Eliseum. Ll. 30 ff.: Se witege cwaeð, 'Ic gesch ðurh Godes Gast, þa se þeign alihte of his crsete, code togeanes þe, þu name his sceattes on feo on reafe.

¹³⁸ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part II, p. 402, ll. 303-08. "Homilies." Cf. Chapter I, p. 13.

¹³⁹ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 120, ll. 19 ff.

¹⁴⁰ Morris, ed., *Early English Alliterative Poems*, pp. 91-104.

¹⁴¹ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part II, p. 302, ll. 276 ff.

¹⁴² Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch*, p. 18, l. 1: he spraec þurh witegan, þe witegodon ymbe Crist.

grace he bestoweth on mankinde ... as the Prophet Esay hath recorded in the booke of his prophesie."¹⁴³ Isaias is described as foretelling the dwelling place of the Son of God in the poem, "On the Nativity," in these lines:

look'd then thus the wise
prophet o'er the region,
till that he beheld
where was placed
a noble entrance.¹⁴⁴

Ezekiel, carried away captive into Babylon prophesied in captivity.¹⁴⁵ Jeremiah had prophesied, "When God comes to Egypt all idolatry shall cease," and the legend adds that the Egyptians made an image, worshipped it, and wrought miracles through it, until Christ was born. At His entrance into Egypt, the statue was destroyed.¹⁴⁶ In the *Towneley Play*, XIV "Offering of the Magi." Jasper recalls the prophecy of Balaam that all folk shall obey the star of Jacob.¹⁴⁷ The Doctors of the Law consult books of prophecy and in XVIII "The Play of the Doctors" ¹⁴⁸ the prophet Habakkuk appears.¹⁴⁹ This condemnation is recorded in *Old English Homilies* against those who refused to listen to the wisdom of prophecy:

this obstinate folk will not listen to the wisdom of that Instructor who taught Solomon and all wise prophets their wisdom; and therefore their end shall be worse than their beginning.¹⁵⁰

The prophet who received special attention from Middle English writers is Daniel. According to the etymology of the name, Daniel means "God is my judge" and Daniel's life may well be considered a personification of the wisdom and judgment of God. Carried to

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 18, ll. 3-5: Seofonfealde gifa he gif8 mancynne git, . . . swa swa Isaias se witega hit on bee sette on his witegunge.

¹⁴⁴ Thorpe, ed., *Codex Exoniensis*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁶ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch*, Aelfric, p. 43, ll. 631 ff.: Ezechiel se witega wearð gehergod mid þam folce, þa þa se Chaldeisca kining acwealde 8a ludeiscan, etc.

¹⁴⁶ Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 31, ll. 917-40.

¹⁴⁷ England, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, p. 147, ll. 205-58.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153, ll. 403-26.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁵⁰ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, p. 83, l. 35; p. 85, ll. 1 ff.

Babylon as a captive by Nabuchodonosor, this youth gained the favor of man and of God who gave him "knowledge and understanding in every book and wisdom" over and above that which was granted to the other captives, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, "the understanding also of all visions and dreams/" so that the Jewish youths whom he instructed "in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the King inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the diviners, and wise men, that were in all his kingdom."¹⁵¹ The *Codex Exoniensis*¹⁵² gives the story of Daniel and the three young men in the fiery furnace, praying to God to manifest His wisdom. Of Daniel we read in the *Heptateuch*, "much hath he written and of many things to come."¹⁵³ The *Early English Homilies* note that "often Daniel, the prophet, wrote in his prophecies, that he had seen God in his spiritual visions."¹⁵⁴

When the spirit of Nabuchodonosor was terrified by a dream which he could not remember, he summoned all the diviners, the wise men, the magicians, and the Chaldean astrologers and commanded them to declare his dream and also to interpret it. Since no one was found able to satisfy this demand, the king issued a decree of death against all the wise men of Babylon, but Daniel, known among them as Baltassar, prayed to God that this secret might be revealed to him, and his prayer was answered by a vision in the night.¹⁵⁵ Eobert of Brunne recounts this story. He tells us "Danyel had noght wyst byfore þe dreme of Nabugodonosore," but he related what the king had thought and what he had dreamed. Then the king "tolde þe profyte þan euery deyl" and the "profete redde hyt weyl wysly he seyde."¹⁵⁶ Again Nabuchodonosor had a dream, this time remembered, and when the diviners, the wise men

¹⁵¹ Daniel i, 17, 20.

¹⁵² Thorpe, ed., *Codex Exoniensis*, pp. 185, 188.

¹⁵³ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch*, Aelfric, pp. 43, 44, 11. 645-55: Daniel se witega wunude on Chaldea . . . His boc is swiðe micel on manegum getacnungum.

¹⁵⁴ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 66, 11. 3-5: Eft Daniel se witega awrat on his witegunge, þ he God gesega on his gastlicher gesihðe.

¹⁵⁵ Daniel ii.

¹⁵⁶ Furnivall, ed., Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, p. 16, 1. 445; p. 17, 11. 455-57.

and the Chaldean astrologers could not interpret it, "Baltassar, prince of the diviners," to whom no secret was impossible, was called. The tree that reached to the skies, he interpreted to mean the king. The watcher and holy one that came down from heaven to cut down the tree and destroy it, leaving the stump and the roots in the earth, the stump to be bound with iron and brass and left among the grass, to be sprinkled with the dew of heaven "till seven times pass over" signified the sentence of the Most High fulfilled in the king when, in his pride, he gloried in his own strength and power. "He was driven away from among men, and did eat grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven: till his hairs grew like feathers of eagles, and his nails like birds' claws." At the end of the time he was restored to himself and to his kingdom.¹⁵⁷ Reference is made to this in "Cleanness" ¹⁵⁸ one of the *Early English Alliterative Poems*, when Daniel in reproving "Belshazzar" relates how Nabuchodonosor had fallen through pride and become like a wild beast. The alliteration as well as another prophecy may be observed in these lines:

Danyel in his dialokes de-vysed sum tyme,
 As 3et is proued ex-presse in his pefecies,
 How þe gentryse of luise and Iherusalem þe ryche
 Watz disstryed wyth distres, and drawen to þe erþe.¹⁵⁹

Daniel's own dream of the four winds of the heavens that blew upon the sea and four great beasts, differing one from the other, that came out of the sea, the fourth,

That Beast was wonderous stiff and stronge,
 of Teeth and neiles sharp and longe
 eatinge over all that he could fonge,
 the remnant he fortreed.
 Vnlike he was to any lead:
 Tinne homes he had vppon his head,
 in the midst one little home can spread
 aboue all other on hye.

¹⁵⁷ Daniel iv.

¹⁵⁸ Morris, ed., *Early English Alliterative Poems*, "Cleanness," p. 84, 11.1672-1708.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70, 11. 1157-60.

This prediction of the kingdoms and kings preceding Antichrist is used in the play of *The Prophets and Antichrist*.¹⁶⁰

Similar to the interpretation of the dreams was the reading of the handwriting that appeared on the palace wall when Baltassar, grandson of Nabuchodonosor, profaned the gold and silver vessels which his grandfather had carried away from the temple of Jerusalem.¹⁶¹ All the wise men of Babylon being unable to read the writing, Daniel was called, "because a greater spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, and interpretation of dreams, and shewing of secrets, and resolving of difficult things were found in him" (v. 12). The word *Manes*, he said, signified "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and hath finished it." *Thecel*, "thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." *Phares*, "thy kingdom is divided, and is given to the Medes and Persians." That night the king was slain and Darius, the Mede, succeeded him. This account of the writing on the palace wall together with the story of Daniel in the lions' den has been dramatized by the wandering scholar, Hilarius, of whom very little is known. Only one slender manuscript of his writings is extant and the biographical disclosures therein contained are not sufficient to determine the nationality of the author. He has addressed certain poems to English persons, but this does not make him an Englishman. He studied in France under Abelard to whom also a poem is addressed, but this fact does not necessarily proclaim him French. As this latter poem seems to have been written on the occasion of his master's retirement to the oratory of the Paraclete near Nogent-sur-Seine, the time must have been about 1125. In his play (*Hyistoria de Daniel Representanda*, the king says to Daniel (ll. 227-30):

Tua sapiencia,
que nouit latencia,
in mea presencia
est hodie laudata.^{1aa}

¹⁶⁰ Herman Deimling, *The Chester Plays*, Part II, EETS es 62 (London, 1892), XXII, p. 392, ll. 125-50 ff. Cf. Daniel vii.

¹⁶¹ Daniel v.

¹⁶² Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1933), pp. 276, 211.

Another rendering of this same story occurs in Robert of Brunne's *Handling Synne* where the queen tells "Baltazare,"

Yn þys cyte, yn a strete,
woneþ a ful wys prophete,
hys name men calle Danyel,
he shal vndo þe wrytyng wel.¹⁶³

A detailed account of this story may be found in "Cleanness" *Early English Alliterative Poems*. There "Belshazzar" sends first for the "wyse of wyche-crafte and warla3es (wizards) o]ʒer" before the queen suggests Daniel.¹⁶⁴ In the *Early English Homilies* this incident is related and to it is added Daniel's being cast into the lion's den, his exposure of the idol Bel, his slaying of the dragon, and his consequent stay of six days in the lions' den when the "wytega Abachuc" was sent with food to him.¹⁶⁵ In the days of Cyrus, the Babylonians accused "þone witega Daniel" because he had cast down their idol.¹⁶⁶

Equal to Daniel in prophetic wisdom displayed in the interpretation of dreams, in wise governance and sage counsel was Joseph, the son of Jacob, and equally popular was he in Old and Middle English as a perusal of Frederick E. Faverty's article, *Joseph in Old and Middle English*,^{TM7} will prove. Beauty as well as wisdom is predicated of Joseph. "He was so beautiful that he was called the Moon of Canaan, and he had on one of his shoulders a luminous point like a star, a token that the spirit of prophecy rested upon him."¹⁶⁸ This more than natural wisdom of Joseph displayed in the interpretation of dreams is noted in *Handlyng Synne*.¹⁶⁹ *Cursor Mundi* relates how Joseph, the son of Jacob, "wise and chaste of maners gentel" aroused the jealousy of his brothers by his interpretative power. Sold by them into Egypt,

¹⁶³ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne*, EETS os 119 (London, 1901), Daniel, 11. 9347-9434; lines quoted, p. 293, 11. 9403-9406.

¹⁶⁴ Morris, ed., *Early English Alliterative Poems*, pp. 81-86, 11. 1600-1740.

¹⁶⁵ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, pp. 37-40.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 107, 1. 23.

¹⁶⁷ In *PMLA*, vol. 43 (March, 1928), pp. 79-104.

¹⁶⁸ Sabine Baring-Gould, *Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets* (New York, 1872), p. 228.

¹⁶⁹ Furnivall, ed., *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne*, pp. 428-46.

he rises by the same power to become lord of all that land and is known as "þe worlds saveour."¹⁷⁰ A similar version of Joseph's prophetic wisdom is told in *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*.¹⁷¹

He was iacobes gunkeste sune,
Brietest of waspene, and of witter wune.¹⁷²

His dream of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him, so evidently signified his preeminence over his father, mother, and eleven brothers that even his father, although he believed the dream would come to pass, nevertheless reproached his son for his boldness in recounting it. The butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh's palace, imprisoned for their misdeeds, discovered Joseph's marvelous power in the interpretation of their dreams, but the butler forgot his benefactor and only remembered Joseph when all the wise men of Egypt were unable to explain Pharaoh's dreams. The seven fat kine eaten by the seven lean kine, and the seven full ears of corn "on a rank bush" that were "smote ... to the ground" by seven withered ears, defied the interpretative power of the wise men. Joseph's ready explanation that the two dreams signified one thing, seven years of plenty that would be devoured by seven years of famine, and his able suggestions for the wise conservation of the bounteous harvests made his wisdom revered throughout the East.¹⁷³ His beauty and wisdom, his own dreams, his interpretation of the dreams in prison as well as that of the king's dream are all related in *Iacob and Iosep*.¹⁷⁴ Pharaoh can find no one wiser than Joseph.¹⁷⁵ The earliest English reference¹⁷⁶ to this superior intelligence and exceeding prudence is in Alfred's *Owsius*, "Joseph though the youngest, is the wisest of Jacob's sons."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, 11. 4037-5494.

¹⁷¹ Morris, ed., *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, 11. 1917-2136.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 11. 1909-10:

He was Jacob's youngest son,
Brightest of form, and of wise abilities.

¹⁷³ *IUd.*

¹⁷⁴ A. S. Napier, ed., *Iacob and Iosep* (Oxford, 1916), 11. 145-56; 11. 41-52; 11. 254-71; 11. 282-98.

¹⁷⁵ Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Genesis*, p. 184, Ch. XLI, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Frederick E. Faverty, *Joseph in Old and Middle English*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁷ Henry Sweet, ed., *King Alfred's Orosius*, EETS os 79 (London, 1883), p. 32, Joseph se þe gin(g)st wees hys gebroora,—eac gleawra ofer hi alle.

He is *vir Justus et sapiens*; ¹⁷⁸ *prodigiorum sagacissimus erat, et somniorum primus intelligentiam >condidit: nihilque divine juris humanique ei incognitum videbatur.* ¹⁷⁹ The *Historia Scholastica* recounts that he was hated by his brothers because he was more beloved than the others by his father, this because Joseph had been born to him in his old age and besides, Joseph was more comely and wiser than his brothers. ¹⁸⁰ It appears that Joseph had learned some of the arts of the Egyptian wise men. ¹⁸¹ When his brothers, returning with the cup which had been found in Benjamin's sack, threw themselves at his feet, he asked Iudas why he had done so; did he not know that there was no one like to him in the knowledge of augury or divining. ¹⁸² St. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Greek Fathers, in explaining the part played by Daniel and Joseph in the interpretation of dreams says that they were "vicars of God in the land of the pagans, and on their prophecies depended the fate of empires." ¹⁸³ Robert of Brunne in *Handlyng Synne* ¹⁸⁴ gives the same explanation.

The wisdom of the prophets found great favor in the hands of the medieval dramatists. In the York cycle the prophet play serves as a prologue to the Nativity play. In many of the cycle plays, frequent references are made to the prophecies, especially to those of Isaiah, David, Ezekiel and other utterances concerning the coming of the Saviour. ¹⁸⁵ Allusion is made to this same foreknowledge in *Elene* when she

spake
and said before the men:
" Hear ye prudent-minded
the holy secret,

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁰ *Historia Scholastica*, Migne, PL, vol. 198, col. 1125.

¹⁸¹ Sweet, ed., *King Alfred's Orosius*, p. 34, ll. 7, 8: þæt he of þæm drycraefte geleornode godcundne wisdom.

¹⁸² Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of The Heptateuch, Genesis*, XLIV, 15, p. 194.

¹⁸³ Faverty, *Joseph in Old and Middle English*, p. 102.

¹⁸⁴ Furnivall, ed., Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 428-46.

¹⁸⁵ J. Vriend, S. J., *The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Medieval Drama of England* (Purmerend, Holland, 1928), pp. 6ff.

word and wisdom!
 Lo! ye the prophets'
 lore received,
 how the lord of life
 in the likeness of a child
 was to be born,
 the ruler of powers,"¹⁸⁶

The Procession of Prophets from the Prophet Play in the York cycle arises from a sermon to be found among the spurious works attributed to St. Augustine,, entitled *Contra Judaeos, Paganos, et Arianos Sermo de Symbolo*.¹⁸⁷ In this sermon the preacher is showing how the wisdom of prophecy has clearly borne testimony to Christ as the Saviour of the World. He summons Isaiah, then Jeremiah, Daniel,, Moses, David and Habbakuk. With the boast that he might readily extend this succession of witnesses from the Old Testament, the preacher passes on to the premonitions regarding Christ in the New Testament, quoting utterances from Simeon, Zacharias, Elizabeth, and John. Next, he calls upon the Gentiles, Virgil and Nabuchodonosor, and finally quotes a prophetic passage in hexameters from the Erythraean Sibyl.¹⁸⁸ This assemblage of witnesses is quite convincing as to the verity of prophecy as well as to the fulfilment of it. In the *Ludus Coventriae* we have an arrangement of prophets and kings, both rehearsing the foreknowledge of the Saviour.¹⁸⁹ In the same collection, the eighteenth part, *The Purification*, presents Anna and Simeon uttering their prophecies concerning Our Saviour and Our Blessed Mother, while *The Council of the Jews*, the twenty-fifth section, shows John the Baptist proclaiming,

That on xal come aftyr me and not tary longe,
 In many folde more strengere than I,
 Of whose shon I am not worthy to lose the thonge.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ John M. Kemble, ed., *The Poetry of the Codex Vercellensis*, Parts I and II (London, 1844), "Elene," 11. 663 ff.

¹⁸⁷ Migne, PL, vol. 42, col. 1117ff.

¹⁸⁸ Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, p. 125. Migne, PL, vol. 41, col. 579-81, St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. XVIII, cap. 23, quotes and interprets these verses from the Sibyl.

¹⁸⁹ J. O. Halliwell, ed., *Ludus Coventriae* (London, 1841), In Supplement to Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. II (London, 1853), pp. 65-69.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

In *English Metrical Homilies* from manuscripts of the fourteenth century, a more detailed account is given of how the Jews questioned John, asking if he were a prophet, and expanding his prophetic answer in a naive manner.¹⁹¹ William of Shoreham tells us that,

Symeon, þe olde man, gan crye,
And spek of hym fur prophecie.¹⁹²

In *The Life of St. Anne*, we have the details of this event. Symeon said,

now live þi seruand, Lord, in pees,
Ffor both myne eyne withoutyn lesse
Has sene my saueour here,
Lyght to all folke for soyth to tell
And yoi to þe pepyll of Ysraell
Thurgh god ordand and dyght.¹⁹³

A little later he repeats his recognition of the Godhead,

me lyst leue full ylle
For)i let me dye when it ys þi wylle,
Lord, sen I of þe has syght.¹⁹⁴

Similar accounts are given in *English Metrical Homilies*,^{TM*} one giving in detail the story of Simeon and the other adding to this the prophecy of Anna. When Elizabeth greeted Mary she "began to prophesy," her words still familiar to us in the prayer called the "Hail, Mary/"

Blesside be þou, modir Mary,
Imong alle wymmen ful of grace,
And þu fruyte of thi body
that thou now conceyuet hace.¹⁹⁶

One of the Towneley Plays, XI *The Salutation of Elizabeth*, gives

¹⁹¹ John Small, ed., *English Metrical Homilies* (Edinburgh, 1862), p. 48, 11. 1-26; p. 49, 11. 1-6.

¹⁹³ M. Konrath, ed., *The Poems of William of Shoreham*, EETS es 86 Part I (London, 1902), "5 Joys of the Virgin," p. 120, 11. 166-67.

¹⁹³ Roscoe E. Parker, *The Middle English Btansaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, EETS os 174 (London, 1928), p. 32, 11. 1198-1203.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11. 1207 ff.

¹⁹⁵ Small, ed., *English Metrical Homilies*, p. 156, 11. 17-24; p. 157, 11. 3-10; p. 93, 11. 11-13.

¹⁹⁶ Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 8, 1. 227; 11. 233-36.

this same prophecy in similar words.¹⁹⁷ There can be no excuse for the blindness of the Jews since

Be masters and doctours of þe law
Be sere prophecies gon þai know
Bat je was cryst, god son.¹⁹⁸

An old legend tells us, because of the prophecy of Balaam, *Orietur stella ex Iacob et exsurget homo de Israel et ipse dominabitur omnium gentium*,¹⁹⁹ the keeper on the hill of Vaws in the East, who had been posted there to signify the advance of an enemy by fire-signals, was ordered to look out for the new star. The Three Kings set out to follow the star and

Att þe last unto lerslem comme þai,
And þer þai askyd wysmen alway:
Qwhare ys þat lord in lede
Bat hys now borne and jewes kyng?²⁰⁰

Herod called

Be wysest men of þe Jewry all
To wit whare criste was borne.³⁰¹

By consulting the prophecies these wise men knew that Bethlehem was the place. When the Jews took counsel against Jesus to put him to death, Caiphas, the high-priest spoke in prophecy, "One shall die, that all the folk be not lost."^{17 202}

¹⁹⁷ England, ed., *The Towneley Plays*, p. 99, ll. 56-57.

¹⁹⁸ Roscoe E. Parker, ed., *The Middle-English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of St. Anne*, EETS os 174 (London, 1928), p. 32, ll. 1213-15.

¹⁹⁹ Carl Horstmann, ed., *The Three Kings of Cologne, An Early Translation of the "Historia Trium Regum"* by John of Hildesheim, EETS os 85 (London, 1886), p. 6, ll. 11ff. Also recounted with slight variation in Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 58, ll. 1719 ff.

⁸⁰⁰ Parker, ed., *The Middle-English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of St. Anne*, p. 33, ll. 1243-46.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1262-63.

⁸⁰⁸ Frances A. Foster, ed., *The Northern Passion*, EETS os 145 (London, 1913), p. 6, ll. 32-35:

Ne wateze noghte whate salle by fall
A mane sail dye vs by fore
Bat all the werlde be noghte for (lore)
Thus he seide thurgh prop(hecye).

Prophetic wisdom or foreknowledge in the form of warning has sometimes been manifested in dreams, so unmistakably clear that no formal interpretation was necessary. Such was *Pilate's Wife's Dream*²⁰³ and King John of England's dream of the lacerated Saviour.²⁰⁴ The following quotation gives the former:

Sere Pilate wyfe, dam procula,
Sent hire lorde forto say:
" Deme nouther Ihesu til na fra,
Bot menske hym þat yhe may,
I have bene dreched with dremes swa
Dis ilk nyght als I lay;
If he thurgh dome tille deede ga,
Our welthe sal wende oway."²⁰⁵

In the *Life of St. Gilbert* we read that the Pope, in doubt whether to canonize Gilbert or not, had a dream which Eeyner, "a ful wise man, . . . so as a-nothir Daniel on-to Nabugodonosor, or lich a-noþer Joseph on-to Pharaο, . . . expounded²⁰⁶ declaring that Gilbert should be canonized, and so he was. John of B̄rompton, Abbot of Jorvaulx, in Yorkshire, during Henry VFs time, in the *Chronicle* attributed to him, relates the story of Rollo's dream. But from internal evidence, the *Chronicle* belongs to the thirteenth century. The same incident is mentioned in *The Chronicle of St. Neot*, commonly called "The Annals of Asser," which dates from the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century. Kollo dreamed that a swarm of bees flew over him and hummed off southward, over mid-sea to land. There they drew together and settled on the leaves of divers trees. They filled all that land and began to bring

Deimling, ed., *The Chester Plays*, Part II, p. 281, ll. 21-24:

It is nedefull this say I,
that one must dye, verely,
all the people to forbye,
so that they perishe nought.

²⁰⁸ James Orchard Halliwell, ed., *Ludus Coventriae* (London, 1841), XXXI, pp. 308-10.

²⁰⁴ G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 160.

²⁰⁵ Hulme, ed., *The Middle-English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus*, EETS es 100 (London, 1907), p. 34, ll. 193-200.

²⁰⁶ John Capgrave, *Lives of St. Augustine and St. Gilbert of Sempringham, And a Sermon*, EETS os 140 (London, 1910), p. 112, ll. 8, 10ff.

together flowers of many kinds. This seemed to signify that Rollo would find peace across the sea, whither he went, conquered the people, established the realm of Normandy and was made first Duke there.²⁰⁷ Cato warns against dreams and putting any faith in them.

zyf þey come nat also þurgh þoght,
Be wyse clerk hadde tolde hyt noght,
Ne suffryd hyt be wrytyn yn boke.

.
Bus þe wyse clerk seyþ?, Catun,
And techyþ chyldryn þys lessun,
'zeve no charge to [þy] dremys.'²⁰⁸

However, the knight Mopsius, whose father was Apollo, interpreted Jason's dream.²⁰⁹ The eleventh tale of *The Seven Sages of Rome* tells of a mighty man of noble fame who had seven clerks, wise men who interpreted dreams, but they could not explain the emperor's sudden blindness. Merlin opened the ruler's eyes to the fact that the seven masters were deceiving the people by false interpretations of their dreams, thus introducing harmful practices.²¹⁰ In the fifteenth tale, a boy, fifteen years old, was so wise as to be able to interpret the meaning of the cries of birds in wood or in cage and to show their prophetic meaning.²¹¹

Visions have often served the same purpose as the deathbed vision of the sainted Edward the Confessor, foretelling disaster to his realm as a punishment for the diabolical conduct of some prelates. For a whole year and a day the terrified country was to be at the mercy of her enemies and demons would haunt her domains.²¹² Bishop Brunton tells of St. Anselm's vision of the death of King

²⁰⁷ Edward Conybeare, *Alfred in the Chroniclers* (London, 1900), "John of Brompton" pp. 197-206: Hollo's Dream, pp. 201-02; "The Chronicle of St. Neot's," pp. 224-27: Hollo's Dream, pp. 225-26.

²⁰⁸ Furnivall, ed., Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, Part I, p. 16, 11. 417-19; 11. 421-23.

²⁰⁹ Caxton, *The History of Jason*, pp. 58 ff.

²¹⁰ Killis Campbell, *The Seven Sages of Rome* (New York, 1907), pp. 90 ff.

²¹¹ J6id., pp. 129-142.

"This is found in a fourteenth century sermon-book of some unknown English homilist. MS. Harl. 7322, fols. 51 b and 101; see Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 160 and note.

William Rufus, after he "had spoiled many churches of England and had extorted fifty thousand marks from the church of Lincoln."²¹³ Thomas Walsingham has recorded the same in *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*.²¹⁴

Anselm . . . saw in a night vision, through God's revelation, that he had been led before the tribunal of the Great Judge. And when many saints of England made bitter complaints about the injuries too frequently inflicted upon them by the king, the angered Lord replied, "Let the Protomartyr of the English come hither." Then to Alban approaching, God gave a fiery arrow, saying, "Avenge yourself and all the saints of England, who have been injured by the tyrant." Alban, accepting the arrow from the hand of the Lord, threw it down upon the earth like a comet, saying, "Satan, receive power against that William, the tyrant." And on that same day, in the morning, the king perished, transfixing through the middle of the heart by an arrow.

The English Cistercian, Odo of Cheriton²¹⁵ and the author of *Speculum Laicorum*²¹⁶ say that King William Eufus himself had a warning vision in which he saw himself devouring one of Christ's hands, "because he destroyed many towns and churches to give the wild beast peace" and trying to devour the other hand, "because he had imposed crushing taxation upon the whole of his realm/" This latter injustice the king strove to justify by saying that his necessary court entertainments entailed heavy expenditures. However, shortly after the vision he met his fate, "Slain by an arrow in a grove, he fell into the well of hell." William of Malmesbury relates many signs and portents that preceded the death of William Rufus to which he adds St. Anselm's dream that he was being bled so that the blood darkened the sky, significant of the impending disasters to Church and people.²¹⁷ Charles, King of the Suavi, had a vision which foretold coming events of the kingdom.²¹⁸ In

²¹³MS. Harl. 3760, fol. 191 b, and again on fol. 203 b. See Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 159.

²¹⁴Henry Thomas Riley, ed., Thomas Walsingham, *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, vol. I (London, 1867), pp. 65-66.

²¹⁵Owst, pp. 159-60. *Tractatus de Passione* (MSS. Bibl. Nat. Paris, 16506, fol. 282, col. 3, and Balliol Coll., Oxf. 38 etc.

²¹⁶J. Th. Welter, ed., *Speculum Laicorum* (Paris, 1914), p. 48, no. 227.

²¹⁷William Stubbs, ed., William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (Rolls Series), 2 vols. (London, 1887-1889), vol. II, p. 377.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*, Bk. II, pp. 112-16.

a dream St. Cuthbert appeared to King Alfred to foretell his coming good fortune as king.²¹⁹ St. Dunstan uttered condemnation in prophecy against Ethelred, a cruel and worthless king, who had accepted a bribe.

Since you have preferred silver to God, money to the apostle, and covetousness to me; the evils which God has pronounced will shortly come upon you; but they will not come while I live for this also hath God spoken.⁸⁹⁰

St. Wulfstan foretold the greatness of St. Peter's at Shrewsbury, and the destruction of one of his churches.²²¹ Edward the Confessor, England's saintly king, when in the Church of God, seemed resplendent with the beauty of virtue "and full of the spirite of prophicie, he schoone bright / beholdyng thynges fer of / as they were presente. And thynges to cumme, as they were nowe existente, with the yis of his soule / by the holy goste for he was Illumyned."²²² In this spirit of illumination the site of St. Bartholomew's was shown to him.

We have a fragment of an *Alliterative Poem*²²³ containing Thomas A-Beckefs Prophecies. He is said to have prophesied that Avignon would be the abode of the Popes: "For her Sail þe pope of Rome sett, and his See holde."²²⁴ The story is rather romantic telling how he went to Poitou and was consulted about the tower that King Charles was then having built. A letter had been produced which told that a Boar from Briton would root up the tower. Becket asked Our Lady who said the prophecy would come true. According to tradition, his many other prophecies concerning the political affairs of France and England were bound in a book which an angel in blue carried up into heaven.²²⁵

Legend also relates that Saint Margaret, the holy queen of Scot-

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²²⁰ J. A. Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle of the Kngs of England* (London, 1847), Bk. II, Ch. 10, p. 167.

²²¹ Reginald Ralph Darlington, *The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury* (London, 1928), pp. 26, 106.

²²² Sir Norman Moore, ed., *The Book of the Foundation of St. Bartholomew's Church in London*, EETS os 163 (London, 1923), p. 11.

²²³ Rawson J. Lumby, ed., *Bernardus de Cura Rei Famularis*, with *Some Early Scottish Prophecies*, EETS os 42 (London, 1870), p. 23.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1. 19.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 23 ff.

land, had known in her time, through revelation, how the castle would be stormed and taken by the French. To record this and at the same time to urge vigilant watch against the French she kept in her chapel a painting of the castle with a ladder standing up against the wall, on which a man was climbing. Beneath were the warning words: *gardisswouss de francoiss*.^{2~Q} This prophecy was fulfilled when the French took Edinburgh, scaling the wall by means of a ladder. St. Edith, in the thirteenth year after her death, by a vision sent her brother to Etheldrede, King of England, to tell him to exhume her body. For three nights both the king and her brother had the same dream, after which the body was taken up, incorrupt and perfect.²²⁷ In *An Alphabet of Tales*, Gregorius Nazarenus, when studying philosophy at Athens, was comforted by a dream in which he saw two fair women sitting by him reading, one on his right side and the other on his left. Fearing to fail against chastity if he looked upon them or spoke to them, he was thus addressed, "Young man! be not hevie, for thou knowest us well enough; for one of us is Wisdom and the other is Chastite, and we are sent hither to dwell with thee; for thou hast ordained for us in thy hard heart a joyful habitacle and a merie."²²⁸

More striking than all the marvelous predictions of fairy women or the still greater preternatural insight into the future that char-

"•Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Bruce* by Master John Barbour, EETS es 11, 21 (London, 1870, 1874), Part I, p. 253, ll. 737-47:

Sanct mergaret, the gud haly queyne,
Vist in hir tyme, throw reveling
Of him that knawis and wat all thing.
Tharfor, in stede of prophesye,
Scho left ane takyne Richt loly;
That is, that scho in hir chapell
Gert weill be portrait ane castell,
A leddir wp to the wall standand
And a man thar-on clymande,
And wrat owth him, as old men sayis,
In franch: *gardisswouss de francoiss*.

⁸⁸⁷ C. Horstmann, 8. *Editha sive Chronicon Vilodunense* (Heilbronn, 1883), p. 54, l. 2395; p. 56, l. 2480.

"•Mary Macleod Banks, ed., *An Alphabet of Tales*, EETS os 126 (London, 1904), Part I, p. 94, cxxiv.

acterized Merlin, and of equal supernatural value with the utterances of the prophets, is the spiritual understanding that is manifest in the dealings of God's saints with their sinful brethren, or the simple foretelling of coming events that so often attends upon eminent sanctity. Illustrative of that power of the saints to foresee the good or bad result of an apparently praiseworthy deed is the story of Peter, Archbishop of Tarentaise, in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*.²²⁹ The same ability to read the hearts of men, as well as to understand the animals and to foretell the future is chronicled of St. Guthlac, hermit of Crowland, by his disciple, Felix, who says, "all future things were through God's grace known to him, and also present things, and he could see and look through the man within as well as without."²³⁰ This saint could also speak to the birds, to the fishes and wild beasts of the wilderness. All these obeyed him and he fed them from his hand (p. 51). He knew "the words of the absent as easily as those of the present which were uttered before him" (p. 71). There was "so much wisdom in him, so much heavenly prudence" that he spoke as one inspired (p. 73). His sanctity brought throngs of pilgrims to his cell. He foretold the exact time of his death:

The slayer approacheth,
Swift for his prey. When seven nights
In the course of time shall have come and gone,
My hours are spent, and my spirit shall pass:
When the eighth day dawns, the end shall come.²³¹

He had told his serving-man and pupil that a holy spirit, sent from heaven, had visited him, storing his mind with manifold wisdom and supernatural mysteries. In his breast had been enclosed

the gift of wisdom, (as he said)
· · · · ·
so that frome me might not
any man

²²⁹ E. S. Hartland, ed., *Walter Map's "De Nugis Curialium"* (London, 1923), pp. 70-72.

²³⁰ Charles Wycliffe Goodwin, *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Life of St. Guthlac, Hermit of Crowland*, originally written in Latin by Felix (commonly called of Crowland) (London, 1848), pp. 46-47.

²³¹ J. Duncan Spaeth, *Old English Poetry* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1927), p. 110, ll. 24 ff.

conceal
 what he secretly
 in his mind, meditated,
 in his heart's thoughts,
 after that he before my eyes
 became visible.²³⁸

So incomprehensible were these revealed wonders that no mortal could understand them nor was it given to Guthlac to make them known to anyone.²³³

The Supreme will
 that we wisdom ever
 wisely imbibe²³⁴

had directed his whole life. God "gave him wisdom in his bosom's thoughts" and he could see thereby the thoughts of others. Æthelbald, nephew of Penda, spent part of his exile²³⁵ with the saint. After Guthlac's death he appeared to Æthelbald in a vision and told him that he would one day become king, a prophecy which was verified in 716.²³⁶ "His wisdom's fame" is preserved by these who knew his spiritual wonders.²³⁷ St. Guthlac is only one of countless saints of God in whom we find this wisdom of prophecy. "Seinte Neote," a holy man of God, sought to be hidden from the world, but King Alfred sought him out for counsel. He foretold the king that he would suffer much and would be driven from his kingdom by the Danish people.²³⁸ St. Editha, the daughter of King Edgar, when rebuked by St. Ethelwold because she liked to dress in a costly manner, answered with wit and with what appears to be an insight into St. Ethelwold's interior, that the judgment

²³² Thorpe, ed., *Codex Exoniensis*, pp. 176-77.

²³³ Spaeth, *Old English Poetry*, p. 115.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²³⁵ Israel Gollancz, ed., *The Exeter Book*, EETS os 103, 104 (London, 1894, 1895), p. 132, l. 473: sealde him snyttru on sefan gehygðum.

²³⁶ John F. X. Murphy, "St. Guthlac" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VII (New York, 1910).

²³⁷ Gollancz, ed., *Exeter Book*, p. 113, l. 157.

²³⁸ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, pp. 129-33: ac ic secge get þ after minen forosioe þu feale þoligen scealt, fram Deniscra þeode þu aflemed byst of þinen cynerice,—þine cæmpen—heretogen þe fram gewiteo—tostæncte byo.

of God was true and irrefragable, that of man alone, was fallible; for pride might exist even under the garb of wretchedness. Wherefore, "I think," she said, "that a mind may be as pure beneath these vestments, as under your tattered furs."²³⁹ The accusing saint was silent, apparently conscious of his own inner pride. St. Dunstan consecrated the Church of St. Denys which St. Editha had built, prophesying at that time that her death would follow six weeks after the consecration, which happened as he had said.²⁴⁰ St. Basilus and Eubolus went to Cappadocia to see the bishop Eusebius to whom in a vision it was revealed that Basilus should be bishop after him. "Exceedingly wondering at the depth of their wisdom"²⁴¹ Eusebius entertained them. St. Eusebius is said to have recorded that a little before the birth of Christ, the oxen spoke to the ploughman in a field and prophesied that "fold shuld faile . . . And cornes shulden encres," referring to the stubborn Jews who could not make corn grow.²⁴² St. Eugenia appeared to her mother in a vision and prophesied the time of her mother's death, saying, "Thou shalt come to us now on Sunday."²⁴³ When Zosimus approached St. Mary of Egypt, she called his name, although they were wholly unknown to each other. Thus he "perceived that she was enlightened with divine foreknowledge."²⁴⁴

SUMMARY

To summarize we find from a study of Middle English texts, prophetic wisdom of different kinds mentioned by the writers of that period, the various types falling into two general classifications, the one resulting from magic, sorcery, necromancy, which might be termed preternatural as distinguished from that divinely inspired gift, the second type, which is noted in the patriarchs and

²³⁹ Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle of the Kings of England*, p. 245.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

²⁴¹ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part I, p. 56, 1. 98.

²⁴² Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 35, 11. 1025-44.

²⁴³ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part I, pp. 25-50; p. 51, 1. 422.

²⁴⁴ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part III commencing vol. II, EETS os 94 (London, 1890), p. 14, 11. 215-10: *buton þæt he swutellice ongeat þæt heo mid þære godcundan fore-sceawunge onliht wæs.*

prophets of the Old Law, the saints and seers of the New; exemplified also in the prophetic significance of dreams and visions, and fitly called supernatural prophetic wisdom. Although magic and witchcraft were denounced in the *Blickling Homilies*, and warned against in Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*, nevertheless, they were accepted in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and even enjoyed a certain popularity among the people of that age.

Classical characters are mentioned as specially endowed with powers of magic and divining, being held in reverence on account of this gift. Virgil, popular among Medieval writers as a magician, appears as such with prophetic power in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and Caxton's *Mirroure of the World*. His *Fourth Eclogue* is quoted in *The Towneley Plays*, this prophetic utterance meriting for Virgil recognition as a prophet. Aristotle is credited with prophetic wisdom in Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* and in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Alexander in *The Prose Life of Alexander*, and Anectanabus in *The Wars of Alexander*, *Alisaunder*, and *Confessio Amantis* foresee by magic and consult oracles and omens. Merlin is the perfect type of wise enchanter, mind-reader, shape-shifter, necromancer. He appears in this role of wise man in Nennius' *Historia Britonum*, Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Vita Merlini*, in the Prose Romance *Merlin*, *The Brut*, Herry Lovelich's *Merlin*, and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Josephes in *The History of the Holy Grail* is of lesser importance but wise in mind-reading. Jonitus is the founder of astronomy.

Besides these men who possessed preternatural prophetic wisdom we find marvels of like significance often mentioned in Middle English works. The brazen head made by Roger Bacon; the raven noted in *The History of Jason*, the Banner of the Raven captured by Alfred from the Danes as told by Asser; the golden image of Romulus and the Tempel of Peace described in *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, Roger of Wendover's account of King Edmund's severed head which spoke; the prophesying dove noted in the *Life of St. Kenelm*; oracles mentioned in *The Prose Life of Alexander*, zodiacal signs, palmistry, and physiognomy as set forth in *The Works of John Metham*, all these bear witness to the Medieval love of magic and marvelous prognostications.

Necromancy was essential to the learned person of Medieval times and wise ladies were specially skilled in it. Melior of the *Partenope*, Cassandra in *The Destruction of Troy* and in *Confessio Amantis*, Braunde in *William of Palerne*, Morgan la Faye in *Sir Gawayne and The Green Knight*, Ywain and Gawain and in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, were all skilled in magic and divining. Melusine, Melior, and Palatyne, half-fairy women in the romance *Melusine*, possessed prophetic power. Greatest of all was the Sibyl. The *Heptateuch* speaks of ten sibyls as prophetesses. It was an accepted fact that the sibyl was wise in prophecy as is attested by many Middle English works, among them *The Book of the Knight de la Tour-Landry*, *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, Layamon's *Brut*, Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*, *On the Prospect of Peace*, *Poem on St. Valentine's Day* and *An Epistle to Sibille*; John Mirk's *Festial*; Caxton's *Golden Legend*, Johannes de Irlandia's *Meroure of Wyssdome*, and *The Towneley* and *Chester Plays*. Wise men are seen as types of prophetic wisdom in the Magi and in Moses and Aaron who confound the wise men of Pharaoh's court. Both *Genesis* and *Exodus* and the *Towneley Plays* make mention of this.

Supernatural prophetic wisdom is exemplified in the seers and prophets of the Old Testament. In Aelfric's *Lives* and the *Heptateuch* the prophets are specifically distinguished and the true type is characterized. This is also done in *Old English Homilies* and besides, a recompense is promised to the friend of prophets. In the *Wheatley Manuscript*, Adam is called a prophet. The *Heptateuch* and *Genesis* and *Exodus* style Moses the greatest prophet and speak of the seventy men, his assistants, as possessing power to foretell. Aaron, David, Solomon, Job, as well as the prophets generally so called are mentioned as gifted with foreknowledge. *Early English Homilies*, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, Aelfric's *Lives* and the *Heptateuch*, repeatedly speak of the wisdom of the prophets, as do the *Towneley Plays*. Daniel is the accepted interpreter of dreams and visions. The *Codex Exoniensis*, the *Heptateuch*, *Early English Homilies*, Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, *The Chester Plays*, all mention him and relate whole biblical passages connoting his prophetic wisdom. Joseph, son of Jacob, is almost as popular as Daniel with Middle English writers. *Handlyng Synne*, *Cursor*

Mundi, *Genesis and Exodus*, the *Heptateuch*, King Alfred's *Orosius*, all pay homage to the prophetic wisdom of Joseph. Frequent references to the prophets occur in many of the cycle plays, the *Prophet Play* appearing in the *York Cycle* and *Ludus Coventriae*. In this latter Anna and Simeon, and John the Baptist appear with prophetic wisdom as also in *English Metrical Homilies*, *The Poems of William of Shoreham*, and *The Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*. The *Northern Passion* and the *Chester Plays* mention the prophecy of Caiphas.

Dreams and visions serve as prophetic warnings, examples being "Pilate's Wife's Dream" found in *Ludus Coventriae* and in *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus*, and also in the dreams recorded in the *Chronicles*, such as those of King John and of Rollo. In *The Seven Sages of Rome* we find seven wise men who were dream interpreters. Visions of Edward the Confessor, St. Anselm, William Rufus, Charles, King of Suavi, St. Cuthbert, St. Dunstari, St. Wulfstan, St. Edith, serve for prophetic purposes.

Prophetic wisdom types are seen in holy men and saints such as Peter, Archbishop of Tarentaise, St. Guthlac, St. Neote, St. Dunstan, St. Eusebius, St. Eugenia, St. Editha, St. Mary of Egypt. In fact, these are only a few of the types that might be cited, these having been very definitely styled wise by Middle English writers. From these citations it is evident that prophetic wisdom, both preternatural and supernatural, was not only mentioned frequently but also treated with veneration by these authors.

CHAPTER IV

THE WISDOM OF FOLLY

Having essayed a definition of the wisdom of folly in chapter one, it will not be necessary to repeat those observations here. Suffice it to recall that this phase of the subject will fall naturally under two considerations: wisdom learned through folly, and the wisdom of the Folly of the Cross. The wisdom that is taught by folly, in the sense that we learn from our mistakes and from others' misfortunes, must be supplemented by the wise counsel and valuable knowledge communicated under the guise of folly. Here must be considered the wise fool who outwits the sage, supplying literally the wisdom of folly. The mystics and friends of Christ, who, by seeking what the world terms foolishness, find the wisdom of God, will exemplify what we have termed the Folly of the Cross.

WISDOM LEARNED THROUGH FOLLY

The fact that we find wisdom in age often depicted in literature is because writers expect the follies of youth to enhance the sagacity of a ripened experience. We learn by our mistakes, is a truth generally accepted. We have seen how in *The Owl and the Nightingale*¹ "Maister Nicole of Guldeforde," proposed as judge by the Nightingale who represents youth or love, is accepted by the Owl, signifying "wisdom of age,"² because although Maister Nicole in his youth loved the Nightingale, now he has grown older and wiser.

The Wise Men of Gotham afford a most interesting study in paradoxes for never were greater fools termed wise men nor was greater wisdom hidden under absurd folly. It is difficult to trace, with any certainty, the origin of this tradition. William de Gotham was Master of Michael House at Cambridge, in 1336, and twice Chancellor of the University. This seems to be one of the earliest

¹ John Wilkinson Hey Atkins, ed., *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Cambridge, 1922), p. lvi.

² Legouis and Cazamian, *A History of English Literature*, pp. 93-94.

vestiges, but the myth of the stupidity of its inhabitants antedates this, for in the Widkirk Plays we have,

**Foles al sam;
Sagh I never none so fare,
Bote the foles of Gotham.³**

The tale of the origin of the Wise Men of Gotham—a village in Nottinghamshire—handed down by tradition and given in Halliwell's edition as preserved in *Thorotons Nottinghamshire*, I, 42-3, is as follows:

"King John, intending to pass through this place towards Nottingham, was prevented by the inhabitants, they apprehending that the ground over which the king passed was for ever after to become a public road. The King, incensed at their proceedings, sent from his court, soon afterwards, some of his servants to inquire of them the reason of their incivility and ill treatment, that he might punish them. The villagers, hearing of the approach of the King's servants, thought of an expedient to turn away his majesty's displeasure from them. When the messengers arrived at Gotham, they found some of the inhabitants engaged in endeavoring to drown an eel in a pool of water; some were dragging carts upon a large barn to shade the wood from the sun; and others were trying to hedge in a cuckoo, which had perched itself upon an old bush. In short, they were all employed some foolish way or other, which convinced the King's servants that it was a village of fools." The earliest collection of such tales ascribed them to the men of Norfolk, but it is the men of Gotham who have been immortalized by the stories. If we are to believe Alfred Stapleton who has also edited these tales, the men pass for wise men rather than fools because "They thought themselves wise, at any rate—a way that foolish people had then, and still have. Whatever silly thing they had done, they never thought it silly; indeed, much more often each one of them turned to his companion in foolishness and said how wise they all were!" * It was evidently a case of being taken

³ James Orchard Halliwell, ed., *The Merry Tales of the Wise Men of Gotham* (London, 1840), *Introd.*, pp. Iff.

⁴ Alfred Stapleton, *The Wise Men of Gotham* (London, n. d.), *Introd.*, p. iii.

at their own evaluation, and yet, were they not wise, if we consider the end attained? Their foolish actions secured for them their land and property; mad men are not held accountable. We have no evidence that they were not happy and contented in their self-conceded wisdom. Does the wisest man ask for more than the happiness and content that follow upon satisfaction?

The Ship of Fools, by its title, does not sound like a treatise on wisdom and yet these fools are made to teach by their foolishness. "Wisdom and law, not folly, are the heroines of Brant's *Narrenschiff*, or in its English translation, *The Ship of Poles of the Worlde*."⁵ It was on the Latin translation of Brant's work by his pupil, Locher, that Alexander Barclay based his English version, the Latin being much expanded to include Barclay's own ideas about fools and to make it conform to rhyme royal. But the wisdom inculcated by the fool-symbol of 1494 by Brant is practically the same as that of the English edition, so that Barclay's text reflects the spirit of the original. Sebastian Brant was "a divine seer who saw the weakness and wickedness of the hearts of men, and warned them to amend their ways and flee the wrath to come." ° In urging them to a better life he says:

He that delyteth in godly sapience
And it to obtayne putteth his besynes
Aboue all folys shall haue honour and rychesse
Or a worthy crowne in heuyns blessydnesse
Or els bothe welthe here, and after joy and blysse
Where as a fole of bothe the two shall mysse.⁷

There are two waya open to man, one of which he must choose. "The one lyeth leftwarde, the other lyeth right." At the end of the latter may be seen a crown of gold, the reward of wisdom, but at the left end lies an accumulation of follies, the captivity that many fools seek.⁸ This perversity should be a cause of sorrow. We see it in the disregard manifested for "the wysdome and doctryne

⁵ Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York, 1932), pp. 114ff.

⁶ Alexander Barclay, *The Ship of Fools*. Edited, in two volumes, by T. H. Jamieson (Edinburgh, 1874), p. xii.

⁷Ibid., p. 119.

⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 244.

Of wyse men, just, and full of grauyte." We lament the ruin which falls upon those fools who "to wysdome wyll not inclyne " and despise the wise man and his just deeds.⁹ Barclay's description of the " wyse man " shows how " sapience " reproves deeds that are not commendable; watches over the tongue lest any word offend; takes care to teach virtue and profitable knowledge, at the same time not neglecting to guard the inward soul, considering each act before it is performed. He is voicing the English idea of wisdom and has added special English types to Brant's crew.¹⁰ These make so evident the weakness and wickedness of men and the evil results attendant upon questionable conduct that they furnish an eloquent appeal for conscientious and right living. Barbara Swain contends that to follow order is the essence of wisdom and shows that Brant's purpose was "to teach obedience to the law of God and compliance with the code of man."¹¹ His fools by failing to follow this required order served, by contrast, to emphasize the part of wisdom. Since the fool, by his very character, enjoys a certain freedom of speech, allowing him to indulge in parody and startling truth telling, we can see how he might, under cover of his folly, rebuke and correct his should-be wiser companions as well as his superiors. This privilege makes it worth while for sane men sometimes to adopt the fool's role. Cato says, " To feign folly sometimes is wisdom,"¹² and among Anglo-Saxon Apothegms is found,

That is wisdom, that a wise man should pretend folly; and that is the greatest folly, that a fool should pretend wisdom.¹³

Thus, it may be remarked, by way of analogy, that many of the fools in Elizabethan Drama were counsellors in disguise. In fact it would seem that monarchs kept just such advisors, preferring probably to receive their words of wisdom and corrective counsel

9Ibid., vol. II, p. 281.

¹⁰ Legouis and Cazamian, *A History of English Literature*, p. 116.

¹¹ B. Swain, *Pools and Folly*, p. 117.

¹² W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Bruce*, Part I, p. 14, 1. 344:

To fenyhe foly quhile is wyt.

¹³ John M. Kemble, ed., *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus* (London, 1848), p. 263, "Anglo-Saxon Apothegms,"

Daet is wisdom, 8aet wis man licette dysig; and
oæt is Saet maest dysig, Saet dysig mon licette wisdom.

under a guise which enabled them to hear the truth which they should follow, while at the same time, they might laugh at it as though it were their amusement, thus securing advice without the appearance of being advised.

An example of such rebuke and criticism is preserved in *The Sage Fool's Testament*.¹⁴ This fool, being very ill, made his testament by which he left his soul to the devil, his bed to his mistress, his bauble to his master's almoner, his hood to his master's steward, and his money to his master. When his master, the young heir of the house, asked him why he disposed of his property in this way he answered:

"I have lovyd so well your fadyr, þat I Covett & Dessyre to be in hys Company Above All thyngis, for he lovyd me so well. And I know well >at he ys in ,hell; wherfor I wolde be with hym. And I gyve to my lady your wyffe my Bedde, be Cawse þat she myghte lye on hyt; for now she lyethe so softe, þat hyt ys All-moste none every day or þat she Ryse. And to your Steward my hode; be Cawse hyt hathe iiij erys. for where ye put All your truste in hym, to pay your Credytour and the pore pepyll, he may not here. And to your Amner, my Babyll; Be Cawse when he delyueryth your Almys A-monge the pore pepyll, they prese on hym, & thene he betis them with his Staffe, þat the Blode Ron Abowte there erys; & my babyll ys Softer. And, my lorde, to yow I geve All my money þat I have gatheryd, bothe in your servuyse & my lord your fadyrs, to geve in Almus." "Whye," seyde the lorde, "thowe knoweste þat I have money more than thow." Then sayd the fole "All that money þat ye have, & I to, wyel not Restore the wrong þat your fader hathe don, whyche ys in hell. And thedyr ye goe withowte Amendment; & therfor I geve yow All my money."

Lydgate's *Order of Folys*, in number three score and three with "Marcolfe theyer foundyr, patron and prcsidente"¹⁵ by contrast gives us pictures of wise men, for if the

Chyffe of folis . . .

Ys he that nowther god loueth nor dredethe,

Nor to his chyrche hathe none aduertence, (11. 9-12)

we conclude that the wise man does what his foolish brother neglects to do. Thus do these fools teach wisdom. Although the fool

¹⁴ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *A Boke of Precedence*, EETS es 8 (London, 1869), p. 77, "The Sage Fool's Testament."

¹⁵ F. J. Furnivall, ed., "The Order of Folys" in *A Booke of Precedence*, EETS es 8 (London, 1869), pp. 79-84, 1. 5.

may teach wisdom, it is never the wise man's part to teach folly,
for wisdom is

not to be this day wise,
And for to be a fole a nother day,
Bui euermore to a bide in wise guise
In wordes and dedis to goddes pay.¹⁶

The wise fool who outwits the sage appears in the literature of almost every country of Europe. Marcolfus and Saturnus are the usual names given to this competitor of Solomon's and it is interesting to note that the Anglo-Saxon, of all the forms of the story yet preserved, are undoubtedly the oldest. No trace of the original source can with certainty be found and we accept an imperfect hypothesis for an Eastern origin.¹⁷ Our love of contrast exults in this exhibition of wit and knowledge, this juxtaposition of serious wisdom and frivolous wit. We see the same ludicrously mated in Don Quixote and his squire, Sancho, but different in that conscious wit is lacking. In the Solomon and Marcolf legend, under whatever specific title it appears, Solomon is represented not strictly as the biblical character but somewhat modified according to his traditional reputation held in the East. He is the "lord of all wisdom, the sovereign of the powers of the invisible world, & the builders of the temple." Lydgate speaks of him as "most sufferayn of cunningg, richest of byldyng, of tresour incomparable,"¹⁸ and as "son of Sapience."¹⁹ All kinds of wise sayings are attributed to him, as we see in Chaucer's *Melibaeus* which frequently quotes, "For Salomon saieth," followed by some sage maxim or proverb, possibly founded upon a biblical quotation but sometimes mixed with other sources or twisted almost out of recognition. This is sufficient to show that Solomon was the accepted Wise Man without parallel.²⁰ Marcolf, Solomon's competitor, has a longer and more intricate

¹⁶ Mary Bateson, ed., *George Ashby's Poems*, p. 35, ll. 702-05.

¹⁷ John M. Kemble, *The Dialogue of Solomon and Saturnus* (London, 1848), pp. Iff.

¹⁸ Kemble, ed., *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus*, p. 104; p. 105, MS. Bibl. Publ. Hh. 4. 12. fol. 87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105, MS. Bibl. Publ. Hh. 4. 12. fol. 84 b.

²⁰ Kemble, ed., *Salomon and Saturn*, pp. 104-13. Traditional Character & Proverbs of Salomon.

history. This character, representing wit, in contest with Solomon, representing wisdom, may be found very easily in many countries. In Scandinavia and other parts of Germanic Europe trials of wit and wisdom were used much as trials of strength and feats of arms among our forefather. Sometimes great rewards or treasures were offered to the victor—sometimes the forfeit was a life.²¹ This remarkable wit or wisdom was sometimes acquired by a magical drink as in the case of the Spanish story of Gotward, wife of Colo, who, to avenge the death of her sons challenges Eric to a struggle of this kind. Her son was made the wisest of men by a magical draught and so won the contest.²² In the Latin *Salomon and Marcolf* the king would know whence Marcolf became so subtly cunning. In explanation Marcolf said, "When your mother had taken the heart of a vulture, and placing it upon a piece of bread, had roasted it at the fire and had given it to you to eat, I, who was then in the kitchen, had a piece of the bread moistened with the heart of the vulture, thrown at my head. I ate it and my cunning came from this, while you derived your wisdom from eating the vulture's heart."²³ This wisdom was supposed to be communicated by eating the hearts of all birds, serpents, and of many animals. In the North, it bestowed the power to understand the language of birds. Just how and when and where the name Marcolf was substituted for Saturnus is discussed with great detail in the historical introduction prefatory to Kemble's edition of the *Dialogue*. The matter of the various versions is substantially the same in so far as they offer a "series of riddling questions mutually proposed,"²⁴ but they differ greatly in the tone and character of the questions and answers. As only the Old English legends are concerned in our study, we shall confine our investigations to these. The poetical *Salomon and Saturn* exists in two manuscripts, both to be found in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. The longer and more complete is in MS. No. 422, the other is written on the margin of a copy of *Aelfred's Bede*, MS. No. 41.²⁵ The first part of this

²¹ Saxo Grammaticus, *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*, revised and edited by J. Olrick and H. Raeder (Hauniae, 1931), Bk. V, Section XLIIb, p. 118.

²² *Ibid.*, Section XXXIX b, p. 110. ²⁴ *Iud.*, p. 133.

²³ Keiubte, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-15. ²⁵ Kemble, p. 132.

poetic version is very different from other dialogues of this nature. It is entirely devoted to a description of the Pater Noster personified. Saturnus opens the conversation by expiating on his knowledge acquired from books and travel, but offers all to Salomon if he will teach him to honor Christ "through the Canticle." Salomon pronounces as "devoid of wisdom" all "who through the Canticle cannot honour Christ" and a unique and lengthy discussion of the Pater Noster follows.²⁶ The second part contains the wit and wisdom dispute. It opens with the words:

Lo! I have learnt that there contended
in days of yore
men wise of mood,
princes of the earth,
struggled about their wisdom.

In this discussion the subjects are solemn, theological, biblical and moral, very unlike the satirical jibes uttered by the French Marcon or the Latin and German Marcolf. In these latter versions Salomon taught true wisdom but Marcolf retorted with a ready parody of it.²⁷ The prose version bears more resemblance to these latter although it, too, adheres to the Old Testament biblical stories. It was found in the Cotton MS. Vitell. A. XV from which it was printed by Thorpe in *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica*. The opening lines will illustrate the nature of the narrative:

Then quoth Saturnus to Salomon:
Tell me where God sate when he wrought the heavens and the earth.
I tell thee, He sat on the wings of the wind.
Tell me, what word first proceeded from the mouth of God?
I tell thee, Let there be light, and there was light.
Tell me, on what account is heaven called *heaven*?
I tell thee, because it concealeth all that is above it.
Tell me, what is God?
I tell thee, that is God, that hath everything in its own power.²⁸

Similar dialogues, one by *Adrian and Ritheus* found in the Cotton MS. Julius A. 2., and another, by *Adrian and Epictus* in Arundel MS. No. 351, fol. 39, carry on almost the same discussion.

²⁶ Kemble, p. 135, ll. 43, 47-48.

²⁷ Kemble, p. 16.

²⁸ Kemble, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-79.

Questions between the Maister of Oxinford and his Scoler, MS. Lauds. No. 762, is almost identical with the first prose version noticed.²⁹ An extract from "Demaundes Joyous," a translation from a French book which was not printed in England until 1511 although the original was written before 1500, will give an idea of the wit that prevailed in the French type of this discussion:

Demaunde.—What space is from ye hiest space of the se to the deepest?

R.—But a stoness cast.

Demaunde.—Wha antecryst is come in to this worlde what thyng shall be hardest to hym to knowe?

R.—A hande barowe, for of that he shall not knowe whiche ende shall goo before.

Demaunde.—How many calues tayles behoueth to reche frome the erthe to the skye?

R.—No more but one and it be longe ynough.³⁰

Marcolfs answers are always of the spicy kind. We find him mentioned as the father of Uendynge, the author of a collection of English proverbs. This Hendynge succeeded in the fourteenth century to the place of popularity which had previously been Alfred's as the representative of popular wisdom.³¹ It may have been that Alfred had succeeded Marcolf or dimmed his lustre on account of the people's love for "England's darling" and that Hendynge in his turn assumed his father's role. The opening lines of *Proverbs of Rending* acquaint us with this relationship:

Mon þat wol of wysdam heren
at wyse Hendynge he may lernen
þat wes Marcolues sone
gode þonkes and monie þewes
for to teche fele schrewes,
for þat wes euer is wone.³³

The wisdom displayed by Geoffrey, the Cripple, in *The Tale of Beryn*³³ when he outwitted the people of Falsetown combined the wit of Marcolf with a practical sagacity. Since the deceitful inhabitants required only affirmative evidence, Geoffrey admitted their false charges but turned the tables on the villains by telling them

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 198-216.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 287.

³¹

Ibid., p. 280.

³²*Ibid.*,

p. 270.

³³Furnivall, ed., *The Tale of Beryn*, EETS es 105 (London, 1909).

bigger lies or more cunning propositions than they had told. For example, he agreed that Beryn would drink all the salt water in the sea, but first Syrophane, his accuser, must separate from it all the fresh water that flowed in from the rivers. If he failed in this he must pay heavy damages. By this method the charges were all withdrawn and Beryn was rich in consequence of the fines paid. Apparent folly has proved to be wise. In the *Gesta Romanorum*³⁴ we have the story of the knight who saved his life by his wit in answering seven questions; of another who escaped by stating three incontrovertible facts;³⁵ how a poor man by solving three difficulties obtained an emperor's daughter in marriage,³⁶ in all of which a ready wit converts what seemed folly into wisdom. A contest of wits is mentioned in the Turin MS. between Virgil and Nero; Virgil apparently on the side of the angels, wins, while Nero who represents the devil, fails and is decapitated.³⁷

Walter Gaedick in his study of *Der weise Narr in der englischen Literatur von Erasmus bis Shakespeare*³⁸ mentions Diogenes as the wise man who preferred to be considered a fool. Being thus accepted, he was free to voice his opinions and to administer stinging rebukes whenever he saw fit. This cloaking of wit under folly may be true wisdom, provided the wit is god-fearing, but it is true, as we find in one of *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, "Better is folly, than godless wit,"³⁸ for folly may be of slight consequence, but a wit that is godless must needs be dangerous. In Stoic cosmology we find a simple classification of all men into sages and fools. No *tertiurn quid* was recognized in the matter of wisdom and folly, which in the last analysis, is not far from correct.⁴⁰ Our classification must be, more or less, relative. We read in *Ayeribite*

³⁴ Herrtage, ed., *Gesta Romanorum*, XIX, p. 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, XXVII, p. 101.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, XXXV, p. 356.

³⁷ Spargo, *Virgil the Necromancer*, p. 29.

³⁸ Diss. (Berlin, 1928).

⁴⁰ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, EETS os 117 (London, 1901), Part II, p. 551, l. 433, "Better is folye þat faileþ of symplesse, . . . þen of þis world al þe wit."

⁴⁰ W. S. Ferguson, I. "The Leading Ideas of the New Period" in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. VII (New York, 1928), p. 39.

of *Inwyrt*, "by words may the follies and wisdom of man be known,"⁴¹ a statement generally true, yet words may deceive, or the mind judging may be prejudiced, for "the World and the Saint can never agree to call the same conduct wise."⁴² Again, in *Old English Homilies* we find, "Many ways there are, as the *Book of Wisdom* declares, which men think right, but they lead to death those that foolishly follow them."⁴³ In Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*⁴⁴ he considers the soul's beauty to consist in loving wisdom, but not that earthly wisdom of which it has been written, *Sapientia hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum* (I Corinth, i, 20). Bede quotes this in his *Proverbs*⁴⁵ and it is expanded in the *Ayenbite of Inwyrt* into :

Ac þe wyse of þise worlde þet of þis half þe streme yzyeo zuo **brizte** :
of oþerhalf hi nazit ne yzeo*. an þeruore his clepeo þe wittinge: foles and
yblent. Vor þerne dyeo: hi clepieo lyf. And þane dyao Set is to þe
guoden beginnyng of liue: hi hit clepieo" þan ende.⁴⁸

In *Vices and Virtues*, commenting on the words of the Apostle, "If any man among you . . . seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that so he may be wise," we find this observation :

The wise worlding esteems it great folly for a man to leave, for God's love, house and home, wife and child, gold and silver, and all worldly wealth, and to become such a great wretch as he who had nothing.⁴⁷

Similarly, in *Early English Homilies*, "Above all things man is to seek true wisdom and true knowledge, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. True wisdom is that man should

⁴¹ Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*, p. 255, "by þe wordes me may yknaewe þe folyes / and þe wyttes of men."

⁴² Swain, *Fools and Folly*, p. 27.

⁴³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies* II, p. 119: Monie þewas beoo swa swa þe wisdom cleopao. þe monnin þuncheo rihte, ac hi þah ledao to deþe on ende þa þe heom duseliche folgiao.

⁴⁴ Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*, EETS os 76 (London, 1881), p. 25.

⁴⁵ Migne, PL, vol. 90, col. 1109.

⁴⁶ R. Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*, p. 72, The wise of this world are fools and blind, for they call death life, and death they call the end.

⁴⁷ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, p. 67, 11. 17-20: "Be wise worlde-mann, he halt michel sothade Cat mann forlate, for godes luue, hus and ham, wif and child, and gold and silver, and alle worlde wele, and become swo michel wrecche al swo he oe naht ne hadde."

forsake his sins and avoid the devil's promptings."⁴⁸ The *Ayeribite of Inwyt* tells us that without the love of God, all other wisdom is folly.⁴⁹

Thus in many ways is wisdom learned through folly. By actual experience folly leads to ruin, thereby showing that the course of wisdom is preferable. By observation we learn from the Wise Men of Gotham that foolishness may serve to gain a desirable end. By contrast, folly in *The Ship of Fools* and in *The Order of Fols* inculcates wisdom. The wise fool may be a counselor in disguise as in *The Sage Fool's Testament*, while the clever fool, like Saturnus and Marcolf in the old dialogues, not only outwits the sage but also speaks words subtly wise. Many times folly is used as a cloak for wit and apparent folly may be true wisdom in the eyes of God. It is this last phase which we shall next consider as the folly of the Cross.

THE FOLLY OF THE CROSS

The Great Exemplar of this Folly of the Cross, just mentioned, is Our Lord and Saviour, who is thus presented in Robert Manning of Brunne's English version of Cardinal Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord, and the Hours of the Passion*. When accused before the Sanhedrin Our Lord said nothing. For this "Werse þo þan a fole of hem he ys holde."⁵⁰ Some of the mocking Jews asked,

Where ys now all þy wysdom? pou held þe wyser þan any ouþer man.

They brought Him then to Pilate and cried out,

Syre, þys fole kalleþ hym self a kyng!

And He is king of the world and all the creatures in it, His subjects

⁴⁸ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 91 xxv The Old English Alcuin 11. 25-29: *Ærest ealre þingen alighwylce msen is to secene, hwset seo se sode wisdom oððe hwylc seo seo sooe snytere, for þan þe se wisdom þyssere wurlde is dysignysse beforen Gode. Se sooe wisdom is þ man from reoffles þeowdome gewite, his synne forlsete.*"

⁴⁹ Morris, ed., *Ayeribite of Inwyt*, p. 25.

⁵⁰ John Bonaventure, *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord, and the Hours of the Passion*. Drawn into English Verse by Robert Manning of Brunne (c. 1315-30), EETS os 60, 61 (London, 1875), p. 14, l. 432.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17, l. 535.

ransomed from the power of hell by the foolishness of His sufferings and death. It is in His gospel that we learn,

Whosoever shall smite thee under the ear, suffer it for My love, and turn to him the other. Whosoever shall take away thy coat, give him thy mantle. Whosoever shall compel thee to go with him two miles, go with him three. This seems foolishness to the fool, but nevertheless Wisdom said it."

It was following these and other counsels of perfection taught by Our Divine Saviour which led His saints and mystics to excel in this wisdom of folly. Jacopone da Todi, poet and mystic of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, tells us *How It Is the Highest Wisdom to Be Reputed Mad for the Love of Christ*⁵³ in his exquisite Lauda LXXXIV:

Wisdom 'tis and Courtesy,
Crazed for Jesus Christ to be.

No such learning can be found
In Paris, nor the world around;
In this folly to abound
Is the best philosophy.

Who by Christ is all possessed,
Seems afflicted and distressed,
Yet is Master of the best
In science and theology.

Who for Christ, is all distraught,
Gives his wits, men say, for naught;
—Those whom Love hath never taught,
Deem he erreth utterly.

He who enters in this school,
Learns a new and wondrous rule:—
"Who hath never "been a fool,
Wisdom's scholar cannot be."

⁶² Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, Part I, p. 127, 11. 29-33: Se Be smit J?e under Sat (e)are, >ole hit for mine luue, and wand him to >at oSer. Se >e benimS Se J?ine kiertel, ?if him J?ine mantil. Se Se net >e to gonne mid him twa milen, ga mid him J?rie. Bis J?incS Se sott sothade, ac naSelas wisdom hit sade.

⁶⁸ Translated in E. Underbill, *Jacopone da Todi* (London and Toronto, 1919), pp. 283-85. C. Guerrieri Crocetti, *La Lirica Predantesca* (Florence, 1925), pp. 312-13.

He who enters on this dance,
 Enters Love's unwall'd expanse;
 —Those who mock and look askance,
 Should do penance certainly.

He that worldly praise achieves,
 Jesus Christ his Savior grieves,
 Who Himself, between two thieves,
 On the Cross hung patiently.

He that seeks for shame and pain,
 Shall his heart's desire attain:
 All Bologna's lore were vain,
 To increase his mastery.

Jacopone finds an outlet for the mysticism that absorbs him in his poems wherein he sings of Love and Wisdom who, as the world sees, have crazed his soul.

And this I tell Thee, Love, if I be crazed,
 Thou, Wisdom's self it is, that crazeth me.⁶⁴

O Deepest Wisdom, counting all things dross,
 Save love of us, so wretched and forlorn.

For see how Wisdom hid herself away,
 And Love alone was to our vision plain.

For that same Love, that drives me all distraught,
 Took all Thy wisdom, Lord, away from Thee;
 That Love, that dips in languor all my thought,
 Destroyed Thy powers too, and all for me.⁵⁵

This is folly to a practical worldly mind. Not so to the mystics. Richard Rolle was an English mystic whose temperament had much in common with that of Jacopone.⁵⁶ As a young man he borrowed two of his sister's kirtles and his father's rain hood out of which he improvised a hermit's dress, and ran away from home, leaving his sister where he had agreed to meet her, exclaiming that he was mad. He lived in seclusion, giving himself up to constant prayer and contemplation.⁵⁷ His love lifted him up to burning heights where "that wild rapture . . . persuaded him that the highest

⁵⁴ *Lauda XC* in Evelyn Underhill, *Jacopone da Todi*, p. 375.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 377, 379. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁵⁷ Hope Emily Allen, *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole* (Oxford, 1932), *Introd.*, p. xvi.

wisdom was found in the folly of love."⁵⁸ In one of his own works, *The Fire of Love*, he says, "The lover's soul shall not wax cold; though but a fool before,, he has gained wisdom to speak among the wise, and say what seems good to him."⁵⁹ Rolle praises the hermit's life for love dwells in the solitary heart. Closely connected with Rolle in thought and sentiment was Walter Hilton,, one of the most popular of the English mystics, but practically nothing is known of Hilton's life beyond the fact that he belonged to a house of Augustinian canons at Thurgarton, in Nottinghamshire and that he died in 1396. His best known work is the *Scala Perfectionis*, which was written originally in English and later translated into Latin by a member of the Carmelite Order, as the *BacuLum Contemplationis* or *Speculum Contemplationis*.⁶⁰ The *Revelations of Divine Love Shewed to Mother Juliana of Norwich*⁶¹ 1373, which exists in two manuscripts, is another evidence of the mystic's wisdom; divine love triumphing over all things. This anchoress, Juliana, is believed to have lived at Norwich between 1342-1442, and to have seen in vision what she transcribed.

St. Francis of Assisi, poet, mystic, saint, spent his life in practicing the wisdom of folly, attaining thereby not only the promised heavenly reward but also the glory of being one of the most loved and best known characters of history. Catholic and Protestant alike sing his praises. Worldly wisdom, even of the best kind, could see no reason for Francis, as a rich young man embracing and kissing "a lodlick Misel." He saw in the sick man not a loathesome leper but only one of God's children asking alms.⁶² When he had disposed of his clothes and all his belongings to help build the Church, he hid in a ditch to escape his father's anger. Later when

⁵⁸ Underbill, *Jacopone da Todi*, p. 125.

⁵⁹ Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living*, ed. by Richard Misyn, EETS os 100 (London, 1890), p. 74.

⁶⁰ W. K. Smart, *Some English and Jatin Sources and Parallels for the Morality of Wisdom* (Menasha, Wis., 1912), pp. 17, 18.

⁶¹ P. J. Lennox, *Women Writers of England in the 15th Century* (Baltimore, 1911), pp. 425-20.

⁶² Carl Horstmann, ed., *The Early South-English Legendary or Lives of the Saints*, EETS os 87 (London, 1887), "St. Francis of Assisi," pp. 53-67, line quoted, 40.

he returned he was greeted with "here cometh a wod man" (l. 56). When his exasperated father took him to the bishop that he might publicly renounce his inheritance, he gave up all gladly, even his father, to have henceforth, only his father in heaven (l. 106). He begged his bread, sought revilings and reproof, practiced the severest austerity. But even the birds and fishes honored him and listened to his voice. The Crucified took him in His arms and gave him the marks of the five wounds on Mount Alverno. Folly, if you will, but verily the folly of the Cross.

Sometimes sanctity is disguised in folly as we see in the humble nun of whom Heraclides tells in *An Alphabet of Tales*. For God's love she "made herself even as a fool, and meek and buxom alike to everyone's command." Every one despised her as vile and lowly. When a holy hermit came to the monastery and asked to see the nuns, all came except the humble servant. He bade them call her and falling on his knees before her he said, "Spiritual Mother! give me thy blessing." She fell down on her knees and said, "Nay, father, rather thou should bless me." The Sisters of the house had great wonder and said, "She is but a fool." But the hermit replied, "Nay, she is wise, and ye are but fools; for she is better than either ye or I."⁶³ Again sometimes wisdom lies concealed in simplicity. We know the story of the tumbler who had become a monk in the Abbey of Clairvaux, and being too ignorant to take part in the regular services, decided to praise the Blessed Virgin in the only way he knew. So every night he tumbled before the statue of Our Lady, a foolish proceeding apparently. But one night when the Abbot, becoming suspicious, had hidden himself in the crypt, he saw the Virgin herself step down from the pedestal to fan her exhausted worshipper and to wipe the sweat from his brow. So there was wisdom, according to the writer, in the poor acrobat's performances.⁶⁴ The troubadour, Pierre de Siglar, also entertained Our Blessed Lady with his best songs at her shrine at

⁶³ Banks, ed., *An Alphabet of Tales*, p. 223, CCCXXII. This same story is related in *Jacob's Well*, ed. (by Dr. Arthur Brandeis, EETS os 115 (London, 1900), p. 81.

⁶⁴ Johannes Herolt, *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (London, 1928), Introd., p. xxiii. (*Broadway Medieval Library*, ed. by G. G. Coulton and Eileen Power.)

Rocamadour. In return, he begged if he had pleased her, to give him one of her candles to light him, to supper. Thrice her candle descended upon his viol, much to the fury of the sacristan of the place, who considered troubadours to be shady people, and saw only folly in his songs.⁶⁵

Another story will illustrate how medieval writers believed that Our Blessed Mother would perform a miracle rather than have one of her advocates taunted with folly. A certain Didymus, born blind, in his eager desire for God's wisdom kept His commands and God gave him wisdom, so that frequently in wordy disputes with Jews and heretics, Didymus confuted their unbelief. They taunted him with his blindness in serving those who were unable to give him light. Thereupon, he called a truce, and having implored God through His Blessed Mother with prayer, fasting and alms, to cure his blindness, he immediately received his sight.⁶⁶

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* we read how the wisdom of folly inspired the three Scots, Diebslane, Macbethu and Maelenmum, to come to King Alfred from Ireland in a boat without any oars, because they wished for the love of God to be in a state of pilgrimage. The boat in which they came was wrought of two hides and a half, and they took with them food sufficient for seven nights.⁶⁷

The great outstanding exponents of this foolishness that leads to godliness are the saints and martyrs of the Church. To worldly eyes their actions are devoid of sense and reason, but their hearts and minds are captivated by the wisdom of God. Juliana, that damsel "in soul sagacious," took her counsel "against wise men's judgment" refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods, "unwisely" according to her father's opinion, who begged her "wisely reflecting" to sacrifice and escape the judge's wrath. She remained firm in her resolution even when the evil spirit himself tempted her, and he, finding her "wise in soul" departed, acknowledging that he had found neither patriarch nor prophet, "though to them the God of hosts, the King of glory, had reveal'd the spirit of wisdom," so bold as Juliana.⁶⁸ St. Alexius needed not to contend with angry

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

⁶⁶

Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Thorpe, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (New York, 1861), vol. II, p. 69.

⁶⁸ Thorpe, ed., *Codex Exoniensis*, pp. 248-75,

judges and evil spirits. He distributed his goods to the poor and passed his life as a beggar. Not being recognized by his own parents who sought him, he accepted alms from them, dwelt with his father's servants, or as a beggar lodged at the gate, revealing himself at death by his life story which he had written.⁶⁹ It may have been folly to change one's estate in Medieval times,⁷⁰ but Alexius used this means to acquire sanctity. St. Alban foolishly offered himself to the soldiers whom the king sent to get his guest, the missionary, thus securing martyrdom.⁷¹ St. Eugenia left her home to become a Christian; adopted man's attire that she might be entirely lost. Later when accused before the judges she revealed her identity to her father, mother and two brothers, thereby converting them all, although she suffered a most cruel martyrdom,⁷² a foolish sacrifice in the eyes of the pagans. St. Lucy preferred death to marriage with the pagan Paschasius.⁷³ St. Agatha, a noble maiden, "wise and faithful," despised the world and the riches and honor of the pagan governor, Quintianus, when he pressed her to sacrifice to the gods. "Like a noble and wise maiden" (l. 64), she said to him, "Greatly I wonder that thou, a wise man, hast stooped to such folly" (ll. 74, 75). But the price she paid for rebuking him was prison, torture, starvation. Yet she kept her faith and died in prison by her own prayer.⁷⁴ It was the wisdom of folly for St. Agnes to reject the offer of the prefect's son, riches and honors, and to suffer cruel martyrdom.⁷⁵ St. Katherine boldly reproved the emperor for his great folly in worshipping idols, Ilis answer fitly exemplifies the worldly attitude.

⁶⁹ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Life of St. Alexius*, EETS os 69 (London, 1878), in four versions from six MSS.

⁷⁰ Ruth Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1933), p. 332.

⁷¹ Baedae, *Opera Historica*, "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," Bk. I; also *The Early South-English Legendary*, St. Alban, Proto-Martyr of England, pp. 67-70.

⁷² Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of the Saints*, Part I, pp. 25-50.

⁷³ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, pp. 210-19. St. Lucy also in F. J. Furnivall, *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints* (Berlin, 1862), pp. 101-06.

⁷⁴ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part I, pp. 194-208. Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, pp. 193-97.

⁷⁵ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, pp. 171-95. Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, pp. 181-84.

These were witty and wise words, if they were not false. But all that you say is such manifest folly, that no wise man, but witless, would credit it. Now what is greater madness than to believe in him, and say that he is the son of God, whom Jews condemned and heathens hanged? (pp. 16-17.)

Katherinc quoted,, " I shall destroy the wisdom of those wise worldlings, he saith, and east down the understanding of the prudent of this world." She then proceeded to refute the wise men brought to convince her and converted them. The emperor failing to persuade or terrify her, she glorified her "Cod of Folly" by her sufferings and death.⁷⁶ Only the Folly of the Cross could have prompted Sebastian and his companions to remain in Rome when there was opportunity to escape the persecution. But the love of God and desire to serve Him in his creatures prompted them to heroic sufferings and death for Ilis greater honor and glory.⁷⁷ It was the wisdom of God that prompted St. George to refuse to worship Dacian's false gods, to endure the horrible torture of being scourged and salted, to be turned on a wheel of swords, thrown into a furnace of boiling lead, and then beheaded.⁷⁸ St. Andreas was impelled by the same wisdom to visit strange lands, preach Christ crucified and give his life for his faith.⁷⁹ Of this apostle we read,

Wise is he in wit
and sayings of words.
I from one of his age
never met
in mind
with greater prudence! ⁸⁰

The warriors address him as, "wise of thought" (p. 33, 1. 1113), "O wise man" (1. 1248) when seeking his counsel.

St. Paul, after his conversion, spent his life in preaching the folly of the Cross.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Eugen Einkenkel, ed., *Life of St. Katherine*, EETS os 80 (London, 1884), pp. 25 ff.

⁷⁷ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part I, " St. Sebastian," pp. 138-47.

⁷⁸ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part U, pp. 300-18. Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, pp. 294-96.

⁷⁹ Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, Part I, EETS os 58, 63, 73 (London, 1874-80), XIX, "St. Andreas," pp. 229-49.

⁸⁰ J. M. Kemble, *The Poetry of the Codex Vercellensis* (London, 1844) Part I, p. 32, 11. 1103ff.

⁸¹ Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, pp. 189-92.

For why þe woord of þe cros þat is þe prechyng of þe crosse to þe perschende it is folye; þat is to þe perschende it semys foly; to þem forso)? þat bei maad sof þat is to vs it is þe vertue of god.⁸²

þe world knew not god by his wisdom in þe wysdom of God þat is by þe sone incarnate.

We forsoþe prechyn crist crucified . . . to þe fole forsoþe folye But to þem . . . kallid with predestynacyoun to þe lyf . . . goddys vertue and goddys wysdam.⁸³

When St. Barnabas, Paul's disciple left Jerusalem he went to the land of Cyprus where he found

A felauzschiþe of quoynte Men: þe wiseste of al þe land,
je spac with heom so quoynteliche: ase he bi heom cam,
þat þar nas non of heom alle: þat ne wondrede of his wisdam.⁸⁴

When St. Lawrence was asked for the Church's treasures, he brought the poor and the sick.⁸⁵ Not understanding his folly the pagans scourged him for his insolence; then he was burnt and torn on a gridiron, but his wisdom kept him true to Christ.

Euphrasia,⁸⁶ Cecilia,⁸⁷ Ypolite,⁸⁸ Mary of Egypt,⁸⁹ likewise preferred the Folly of the Cross to the pleasures of the world. St. Dominic taught his friars to seek this wisdom in poverty, love, and meekness.⁹⁰ This same "folly" is illustrated in the story of *Pers the Usurer* found in Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*⁹¹ Nicholas,⁹² Bridget,⁹³ Vincent,⁹⁴ Ursula,⁹⁵ Fides,⁹⁰ Cuthbert,⁹⁷ Wulfstan,⁹⁸ Martin,⁹⁹ Thomas a Bekct,¹⁰⁰ Dunstan,¹⁰¹ are noted in

⁸² Margaret Joyce Powell, ed., *The Pauline Epistles*, EETS es 116 (London, 1916), I Ad Corinthos, I, 18.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, I, 21, 23, 24.

⁸⁴ Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, p. 27, 11. 23-25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 340-45.

⁸⁶ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part IV, Homilies, pp. 334-54.

⁸⁷ Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, pp. 490-96.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 480-83. ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-71.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 283, 11. 175-76; p. 286, 11. 308-11.

⁹¹ Furnivall, ed., *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne*, pp. 182-92.

⁹² Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, p. 241.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-94. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-77.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 187. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 449-56.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-92. ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-77.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-124. ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-24.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 359-62.

Early South-English Legendary as examples of this folly. In *Early English Homilies* ISTeote¹⁰² is said to have preferred to live in a waste place in the western part of England,—apparent folly. Edmund the Confessor,¹⁰³ dear to his people as saint and king, practised many austerities from his youth bent on the pursuit of this wisdom of folly. Other examples might be cited but those already given are sufficient to illustrate the various deeds of folly that became divine wisdom when prompted by grace.

SUMMARY

In summing up this chapter, we have seen wisdom taught by the fool exemplified in the *Wise Men of Gotham*. The actions of these silly folk taught wisdom by contrast and their happy, self-satisfaction conveys its own peculiar lesson. *The Ship of Fools* is an earnest appeal to forsake folly, advocating the good that the fool never enjoys on account of his indiscretion, while *The Sage Fool's Testament* is one of those bold rebukes administered by the wise fool for the good of his rash but indulgent master. *The Order of Polys* like *The Ship of Fools* has wisdom as its direct lesson. All of these serve to illustrate the biblical quotation, "and because they had not wisdom, they perished through their folly" (Baruch iii, 28) as well as to show "that wisdom excelleth folly, as much as light differeth from darkness" (Eccles. ii, 13).

The contrast between true wisdom and a foolish wit is evidenced in the *Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus* and other similar disputations. Marcolf is a most piquant adversary, his apt replies suggesting a keen understanding and quickness of intellect that shows the wisdom latent in his apparent foolishness. Geoffrey the Cripple, in the *Tale of Beryn*, uses this same subtlety to outwit the people of Falsetown, achieving by his wisdom masked under folly, the restoration of Beryn's property. In the *Gesta Romanorum*, we find several examples of the same ready wit proving to be saving wisdom for those in peril. Thus wisdom "knoweth the subtilties of speeches

¹⁰² Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, pp. 129-33.

¹⁰³ F. J. Furnivall, *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints* (Berlin, 1862), p. 75; also in Horstmann, ed., *Early South-English Legendary*, pp. 431-39.

and the solutions of arguments " (Wis. viii, 8). Besides, this may be considered as exemplifying how " A fool worketh mischief as it were for sport: but wisdom is prudence to a man" (Prov. x, 23).

The Son of Man called a fool before Pilate and redeeming the world by His Folly of the Cross is the Great Exemplar of this wisdom of folly. Following close in the footsteps of this Master, we find the great mystics, Jacopone da Todi, Richard Holle of Hampole, Walter Hilton, Juliana of Norwich, St. Francis of Assisi, who in their frenzy of divine love appeared as mad and bereft of all reason, but whose apparent folly was none other than the Folly of the Cross. " Fools, yet noble," might be termed the humble nun who debased herself beneath all, only to be singled out by the pious hermit for reverence; the tumbler and the troubadour who, in their simple wisdom, used the only talents they possessed to honor God and His Blessed Mother; the blind man, who converting many by his wisdom, was taunted with the inability of those whom he served to cure his blindness, and whose sight was restored in proof of Divine Wisdom; and the three Scots whom love of God and a desire for pilgrimage carried safe in an open boat without oars, from Ireland to King Alfred. Apparently simple, these serve Medieval authors as examples of the wise.

Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*, the *Codex Exoniensis*, *Early English Poems and Lives of the Saints*, the *Early South-English Legendary*, *The Blickling Homilies*, Aelfric's *Homilies*, and other saints' chronicles afford us numerous examples of saints and martyrs who preferred poverty to riches, ignominy to fame, suffering and torments, even death, to the least offense against that Divine Wisdom who said, " I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject" (I Corinth, i, 19). "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ?

For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe. (I Corinth, i, 20, 21.)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (I Corinth, iii, 19.)

CHAPTER V

DIVINE WISDOM

Having seen how Middle English writers reflected the view that the Folly of the Cross leads to the Wisdom of Ood, it now remains for us to observe how they expressed the thought that Wisdom is God, and what characteristics, in their opinion, make it divine. We shall consider first what they regarded as qualities of divine wisdom, and then see how they found that wisdom displayed in God's saints and His Blessed Mother, in the Godhead itself, and lastly, how the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, as the Wisdom of God, appeared in allegory and in the literal sense.

QUALITIES OF DIVINE WISDOM

Divine wisdom and the love of God are inseparably united. In the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, where the author speaks of the love of God we read:

pet is þe welle of wytte and of wysdom. uor þe ilke þet þerof dring)? /
he knaup wyt and wysdom and velp / and smakeþ þe greate zuetnesse þet
is ine god / and þet is þe heseste wyt of man: wel to knawe his sseppere /
and him louie mid al his herte.¹

The same idea that wisdom is love of God is inculcated by the Knight de la Tour-Landry when he says, "there be other be wyse, that haue her herte and hope of God."² God as love is supplicated for wisdom in this old prayer, "My love and my counsel, . . . give me will and might and wisdom to forsake every sin and to work well."³ Again in a prayer of thanksgiving, "My lyve, my lymmes þou has me lent, my right witt þou has me sent."⁴ "Wisdom to love" is the petition in this prayer,

¹ Richard Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, EETS os 23 (London, 1866), p. 251.

² Thomas Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight de la Tour-Landry*, EETS os 33 (London, 1868), p. 54.

³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies* II, p. 215.

⁴ Thomas Frederick Simmons, ed., *The Lay Folks' Mass Book*, EETS os 71 (London, 1879), p. 30. Text B.

pi merci, ihesu, would I have

.

And gyue me witt & wisdame right,
to loue þe, lord, with al my might.⁵

God's grace is that true wisdom that enlightens the soul as we are told in *Ayenbite of Inwyt*

Cleregye and wyt / byeþ Jnnges moche yworþssiped. As yef þou wylt by wys arijt. and heze cleregye lyerny: make þet þou habbe þet zoþe godes guod. þet is / grace / and uirtue. uor þet is þe zoþe wysdom. þet alyzt þe herte of man. ase deþ þe zonne þe wordle. þis wyt paseþ þe wyttes of þe wordle / ase deþ þe zonne: þe brytnesse of þe mone.⁶

This true wisdom leads to love and contemplation of God for "þe yeffþe of onderstondinge / and þe yefþe of wisdom: belongeþ to þe opre liue þet is y-hote restuol."⁷ This idea is repeated and emphasized by Dan Michel. He says,

þe last yefþe / and þe meste / and þe heZests: is þe yefþe of wysdom. þet is a grace þet þe holy gost yefþ to þe contemplative herte. huerby he is ynome of þe love of god. þis is þet greate (step) of perfeccion / þe ende of conteinplacion.⁸

And again,

þe yefþe of wysdom / þet þe holy gost zet ine herte . . . ioneþ to god / be a glu of loue / zuo þet he is al on mid god.⁹

The same idea is repeated in these lines,

þe yefþe of wysdom / hese makeþ stedeuest / and his confermeþ / and ioynen to god.¹⁰

In speaking of the "well of love" that comes from the heart of Christ, Dan Michel says that this well is sweet and delicious, pure and undefiled, wholesome to drink, for it is the well of wit and wisdom, imbuing those who drink of it with these gifts, such as the Holy Ghost gives.¹¹ In speaking of the Lord's Prayer he says

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 42, ll. 446, 450-51.

⁶ Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, pp. 81-82.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Ibid., p. 251.

that the first three petitions ask for the gifts of wisdom, of understanding and of counsel.¹²

"pin name be yhalzed ine ous" means "yef ous þane gost of wysdom" and by this spirit we shall be so filled with the love of God that all other sweetness shall seem bitter to us.¹³ The word holy, according to him is synonymous with pure and thus the "gost of wysdom" renders our souls pure, "wyþoiite erþe" and hallowed in God's service as if dipped in His precious blood.¹⁴ Eichard Rolle also speaks of wisdom leading to contemplation.

Wysedome is forgetyng of erthely thynges and thynkyng of heven with discrecyone of all mens dedys. In þis gyfte schynes eontemplacyone, þet es, Saynt Austyne says, a gastely dede of fleschely affeccyones, thurgh Beioye of a rayside thoghte.¹⁰

The spirit of wisdom enables us "To knowe God in His owne kynde."¹⁶ It leads to contemplation. Three kinds of contemplation are enumerated in *St. Edmund's Mirror*: the first one, in creatures, teaches the gift of understanding the second, in Holy Writ, teaches the gift of counsel; the third, in God Himself, teaches us the gift of wisdom.¹⁷ This gift in the soul teaches man to know aright

How it caine about when the Almighty
was born into the world in purity.¹⁸

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁵ Kenneth Sisam, *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* (Oxford, 1921), p. 43 "The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost." Carl Horstmann ed., *Richard Rolle of Hampole*, "The Form of Perfect Living," vol. I, p. 196.

¹⁶ Horstmann, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part I, p. 280, Of þe seven gifts of þe holigost, 1. 455.

¹⁷ George G. Perry, ed., *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26, p. 26, ll. 13-18: For the maners of contemplacion. Are es in creaturs; and þat leres þe gaste of vndirstandyrige. The toþer is in Holy Writte, whare þou sese whatte þou doo and what þou sail lefe, and þat leres þe the gaste of consaile. The thirde manere es in Godde Hym-selfe! and þat leres vs þe gaste of wysdom.

¹⁸ Gollanez, ed., *The Exeter Book*, "Christ," p. 29, ll. 440-44: Nu Cv geomlice gæst-gerynum Jmrh sefan snyttro þait þu soo wite hu þæt geode þa se ael-mihtiga acenned wearo þurh cleanne had.

It

fordos lecherie pes
and confortes man in loye of god and swetly,
and mas man to kepe and make pees . . .¹⁹

It is one of the "Seven medicines of þe seven dedly synnes."²⁰ Seven virtues guard and lead aright the spirit of wisdom: Obedience, Love, Mildness, Prowess, Liberality, Chastity and Sobriety.²¹ "Simplicity is not pleasing to God without wisdom, nor wisdom without simplicity. . . . What is wisdom without true love to God and to men?"²² In *On Lofsong of Ure Louerde*, the humility of the suppliant finds expression in these words, "T have in me neither wisdom nor honour, and am devoid of counsel"²³ but the author of the *Ormulum* suggests,

ziff þatt we follshenn rihht tatt witt
þatt follzheþþ Godess wille,
þat hallzhe witt tatt laereþþ uss
To berrzhenn ure sawle,²⁴

God would be well pleased and honored. St. Augustine closely connected love and wisdom, which fact we recognize in *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ* where we read

Seint Austyn þat was so wys,
Among doctours he bereþ þe pris;
.
He bereþ wel witesse of þis þing
P in Ihesu is al lyking.²⁵

Those who love God and who love to study the things of God might well meditate on these words of the psalmist,

¹⁹ Horstmann, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part I, "A Sawley Monk's version of Grosteste's Castle of Love," p. 434, ll. 949-51.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 239, l. 692.

²¹ Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*, p. 160.

²² Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, p. 95: Ne bio þeo bilehwitnesse godes icwime butas snoternesne ne snoternesne butan bilehwitnesse . . . and hwet bio snoternesne bute sooe lufe to gode and to monnen.

²³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, II, p. 210.

²⁴ R. Holt, ed., *Ormulum*, vol. I, p. 233, ll. 6736-39.

²⁵ Charlotte D'Evelyn, ed., *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, EETS os 158 (London, 1921), p. 52, ll. 1993-94; 1997-98.

For lo! þou louedist treuþe; þou hast achewid me þe vnserteyn þingis and pryue þingis of þi wisdom.³⁶

It is wisdom to wish "to praise enow the name" of the Creator, as we read in the *Christ*,²⁷ and in Aelfric's *Lives* we are told

If we live wisely, even as books instruct us,
then may we come amongst Christ's Saints.²⁸

Man's knowledge and attainments are his by the grace of God and "the wit and the wisdom which Our Lord hath sent us, let us speak it in God's will and in God's works."²⁹ We find in Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*³⁰ and in *Twelfth Century Homilies*³¹ two passages so similar as to be almost identical, concerning true or divine wisdom. -Aelfric says,

The soul's beauty consists in loving wisdom; not that earthly wisdom of which it is thus written, *Sapientia hujus mundi stultitia est apud deum*: The wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. But this wisdom it should learn—to love God, and ever honour Him in all its works; to learn those things which please God, and forsake those things which are displeasing to Him. This wisdom is written of in Holy Scripture; and it is said of it, *Omnis sapientia a Domino Deo cst*: 'Every wisdom is of God.' Wherefore every man is happy and blessed who is wise toward God, and if he order his deeds by the aid of wisdom. Concerning this spake blessed Job, 'Man's wisdom is righteousness, and his true knowledge is to depart from evil': Verily this is true wisdom, that a man desire the true life wherein he may live for ever with God in glory, if he merit it in this world.³²

²⁶ Henry Littlehales, ed., *The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book*, Part I, EETS os 105 (London, 1895), p. 40, Ps. li, 6. Fred. Harsley, ed., *Eadwine's Canterbury Psalter*, Part II, EETS os 92 (London, 1889), p. 88: Eaellenga witþlice soSfestnesse Su lufodes ungewissa—oae dihlw wisdomes t snitro þines þu geeypdes me.

²⁷ Gollanez, ed., *The Exeter Book*, "Christ," p. 5, ll. 47-49.

²⁸ Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*, Part III, St. Maurice and his Companions, p. 167, ll. 150-51: Gif we wislice libbaS swa swa us wissiaS beo]þonne mage we becuman to cristes halgum.

²⁹ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, p. 123: >et wit and)?ene wisdom >e ure drihten us sende aspenen we hit on godes willan and on godes wercan.

³⁰ Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*, Part I, p. 24, ll. 225-39.

³¹ Belfour, *Twelfth Century Homilies*, p. 95, ll. 22-35 and p. 96, ll. 1-4.

³² Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*: Daere sawle wlyte is þæt heo wisdom lufie. na Cone eorolican wisdom be þam þe þus awritten is. *Sapientia huius*

This probably served as the source for the passage in *Twelfth Century Homilies*.

WISDOM OF GOD'S SAINTS

The inspiration of God is "boþe lok and keye"³³ of wisdom. Wisdom is, therefore, predicated of many of God's saints, and even though it be not expressly stated, sanctity of necessity implies wisdom in the things of God. St. j3Ethelthryth, daughter of the King of the East Angles, was given as spouse to the alderman Tondbyrht, and afterwards to King Ecfrið. But wise with the wisdom of God, she remained ever a virgin. Finally, desiring to forsake all worldly things, she entered a nunnery, in which she in turn became abbess.³⁴ She practiced great mortifications and suffered much. Sixteen years after her death her body was found to be incorrupt, a testimony of her wisdom and sactity according to the Catholic Church. The Abbess Hilda was most noteworthy on account of her prudence, wisdom and love for the divine service.³⁵ Even kings and princes acknowledged her superior sagacity and came to her for advice.³⁶ Her innate wisdom was so fully developed—even when she had been but one year in religion—and her desire so eager to advance the service of God, that Bishop Aldan of Lindisfarne and other learned

mundi. stultitia est apud deum. Bysses middaneardes wysdom. is stutnris aetforan gode. Ac þonne wisdom heo seal leornian. þæt heo lufie god. and hine aefre wurdige on eallum hyre weorcum. and þa þing leornige þe gods liciao. and þa þing forlaete þe him looe syndon. þæs wisdom is awryten on halgum bocum. and be Sam is þus gecwaeden. *Omnis sapientia a domino deo est.* Mlc wisdom is of gode. Is nu foroy aelc man eadig and gesaelig. se oe for gode wis bio. and gif heo his weore mid wisdom gefadeS. Be Jæm cwaro se awdiga iob. þæs mannes wisdom is arfaestnys. and soS ingehyd. þæt heo yfel forbuge. Witodlice þæt is soþ wysdom. þæt man gewylnige þæt soSe lif on þam þe he aefre lybban maeg mid god on wuldre gif he hit on >yssere worulde ge-earnad.

³³ Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Trans, by John Walton; edited by Mark Science, EETS os 170 (London, 1927), in 2nd stanza of the translator's preface.

³⁴ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part II, pp. 432-40.

³⁵ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, The Old English Version, edited by Thomas Miller, EETS os 95. 96 (London, 1890, 1891), p. 332, ll. 32-34.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 334, ll. 13 ff.

religious came often to her monastery to foster and develop her powers.³⁷ Her greatest wisdom was shown in her management of the monastery of Whitby. There she discerned the latent genius of the poet Caedmoii³⁸ and was wise enough to insist that he exercise his gift of song. The Synod of Whitby was convened by King Oswy in 664 at the monastery over which Hilda presided and she participated with kings, princes, bishops, priests, monks and others in the learned discussions of the council.³⁹ St. Editha, on account of her wisdom, was raised to the position of abbess.⁴⁰ According to the *Rule of St. Benet*⁴¹ the abbess "ajht at be wise in goddis law"; and further we read, "}}?urgh gude life and wisdom sal sho be chosin." Likewise the abbot shall be "wis of speche "⁴² he "sal be in holy kirke in godis stede for to lere his rnunkis wisdom and charite."⁴³ Giving tithes, alms, keeping God's word, these are "enjoined, on each man who may be skillful in anything, either in greater wisdom or less."⁴⁴

Of some saints particular mention is made of their exercise of Wisdom. Bede tells us of Ecgberht, who came to the isle of Iona from Ireland and there, by his zeal changed the old usage and ordinance of the elders, for they had "zeal for God but not according to wisdom." By the efforts of this zealous missionary "the wisdom of the divine knowledge" was imparted to the English.⁴⁵ "The sagacity and wise words of the youth," Wilfrid, so pleased Dalfinus, Bishop of Lyons, that he offered him wealth and honor, but Wilfrid preferred the ecclesiastical state and proceeded to

³⁷ Byrne, Sister Mary of the Incarnation, *The Tradition of the Nun in Medieval England* (Washington, 1932), p. 80.

³⁸ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Old English Version, Ch. XXV, pp. 342-48.

³⁹ Byrne, *The Tradition of the Nun*, p. 80.

⁴⁰ C. Horstmann, 8. *Editha sive Chronicon Vilodunense*, etc., p. 36.

⁴¹ H. Logeman, ed., *The Rule of St. Benet*, EETS os 90 (London, 1888), "Northern Prose Version," p. 42, 1. 16.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 42, 11. 4-5; p. 5, 1. 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 5, 11. 9, 10.

⁴⁴ Morris, ed., *The Rlickli/ng Homilies of the Tenth Century*, Part I, p. 49, 11. 27 ff., "and awghwylcum men is beboden }?e on aenigura þingum craeftig sy, oþþe on maran wisdom e oþþe on laessan."

⁴⁵ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*, p. 472.

Rome.⁴⁶ Ealfrith, King of Britain, found Wilfrid "orthodox and wise"⁴⁷ and had him ordained. Later he became Bishop. King Eadwine studied the truth of the holy faith under St. Paulinus and with those of his nobles whom he knew to be wisest and most prudent he took counsel.⁴⁸ St. Sebastian and St. Polycarp condemned an excellent mechanical contrivance with which the pagan, Chromatius, essayed to show by the stars, what would happen to a man in the course of his life, proceeding to explain God's laws so convincingly that Chromatius wondered at their wise words, and said, "He is the true God who has such discerning worshippers."⁴⁹ St. Polycarp was called "a holy man and wise." He baptized many converts.⁵⁰ Chrysanthus was set "to the learning of worldly wisdom that he might become a philosopher,"⁵¹ but thinking he would not be wise to turn to darkness from the true light, he became a Christian. He converted Daria, "wise in philosophy"⁵² whom he married but they both lived in chastity. They were tortured in unbelievable ways for their faith but God wrought wondrous miracles that not only frustrated the designs of the executioners, but converted them as well, and all suffered martyrdom. We are told of a "yonge mane, Wymund, by name," who was dumb but by prayer to the Apostle, St. Bartholomew,

his tonge was losyd, and with a grete voice he praysid the vertu of the Apostle, thankyng and blessyng the myght and the wysdome of God / the whiche openyth the dumme moweth / and. the tongis of infantis maketh opyne and diserte eloquent.⁶³

Aelfric tells us that Mary of Egypt, referring to Zosimus, "began

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 454, ll. 4, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 457, l. 14.

⁴⁸ Bcde, *Ibid.*, Part I, Book II, Ch. XIII.

⁴⁹ Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*, Part I, "St. Sebastian," pp. 11G-46, l. 286, "se is soo god. þe swa gesceadwise biggengan haefS."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124, l. 125.

⁵¹ Skeat, ed., Aelfric's *Lives*, Part IV, Homilies, p. 379, l. 9, "befeeste he his sunu, sona to lare to woruld-wisdome þaet he uo-wita wurde."

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 383, l. 83.

⁵³ Norman Moore, ed., *The Book of the Foundation of St. Bartholomews Church in London*, EETS os 163 (London, 1923), p. 24. Reference is to Wis. x, 21: For wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb, and made the tongues of infants eloquent.

to sympathise with the wise old man's steadfastness";⁵⁴ also about "a certain wise writer, called Sulpicius," who desired to record the miracles performed by St. Martin;⁵⁵ about a noble maiden in the City of Rome, Agnes, "gentle and wise/" who believed in the Saviour.⁵⁶ He also states that "The third Evangelist is Luke . . . and he wrote and wisely arranged the Gospel";⁵⁷ "The fourth Evangelist is John, Christ's aunt's son; he was so dear to Christ that he leaned upon His breast in which was hidden heavenly wisdom."⁵⁸ This act of John's at the Last Supper is described in Mirk's *Festial* :

And þen ryght as a man leneth to a well and dryngketh his body full of watyr, ryght soo Ion drangke of þe well of wysdom þat ys yn Chrystys brest, and fulled hys sowle so full of gostly wysdome, so þat aftyr he passed all othyr yn wysdome.⁵⁹

He is generally accounted "witty and wyse."⁶⁰

God's wisdom is especially necessary in the ministers of his Church and is communicated to them in a divine manner. On the first Pentecost tin's miraculous inspiration was evident in the gift of tongues, immediately exercised by St. Peter. *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* notes it thus:

he sent them (the Apostles) wytt and wysdom
For to vnderstond euery langage.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part III, Homilies, p. 16, l. 243, Daongan heo hire onemnbrowigan þaes ealdan witan staoalfaestrysse.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218, l. 1, "Sulpicius hatte sum (snoter) writere."

⁵⁶ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part I, p. 170, ll. 6-8. On)a3re tide wees sum ueOel-boron maeden.

Agnes gehaten. on 8one hselend gelyfed.
binnan rome byrig. bilewit. and snotor.

⁵⁷ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part II, p. 331, ll. 150, 154, se Cridda godspellere is lucas . . . and he oa godspel awrat. and wislice geende-hyrde."

⁵⁸ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part II, p. 330, ll. 159-01:

Se feorSa godspellere is iohannes cristes moddrian sunu.
se wses criste swa leof þæt he hlymode uppan his breoste.
on Cam þe waes behyd (eall) se heofonlica wisdom.

⁵⁹ Theodor Erbe, ed., *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies* by Johannes Mirkus, EETS es 96 (London, 1905), p. 32, ll. 20ff.

⁶⁰ Perry, ed., *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, p. 99, l. 55.

⁶¹ Osborn Waterhouse, ed., *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays*, together with

The *Ormulum* speaks of this in these words,

piss illke mahht off Hali3 Gast,
 patt Crist zaff hise possless,
 Iss witt—wissdom dep inoh,
 To speken—to spellenn
 Off all þatt tatt iss god—ned,
 Wiþþ alle þede spsechess.⁶³

Old English Homilies tell us "the people are blessed through a wise bishop."⁶³ St. Birgitta was told by Our Lord to lay open her conscience "to spirituall wyssemen,"⁶⁴ and the seventh point of shrift, as given in *Handlyng Synne* is:

pat þy shryfte be wysly doun,
 pat ys to sey, to a wys man,
 pat þy shryfte vndyrstondi kan;
 Nat to one þat haþ no wyt
 of vndyrstondyng of holy wryt.⁸⁵

God has promised to those who trust in Him that he will enlighten and direct their speech. That the author of *The Southern Passion* was familiar with this truth may be seen from the following quotation:

ffor ich wolle zine zow mouþ. and wisdom, to whan non of 3oure ffon ne ehal wiþ-segge nougt a word, to non of zow euerichon.⁶⁶

Many miracles were wrought by the Apostles after receiving the gift of wisdom, so that the people "laid the sick men along the street where Peter went forth, and as soon as his shadow glided over them they were healed of all infirmities."⁶⁷ In *Vices and*

The Croxton Play of the Sacrament, etc., EETS es 104 (London, 1909), ll. 345-46.

⁶² Holt, *Ormulum*, p. 202, ll. 15,984-15,989.

⁶³ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, II, p. 117: þet folc iseli þurh snoterne biscop.

⁶⁴ Wm. Patterson Gunning, ed., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta*, EETS os 178 (London, 1929), p. 3, ll. 35-36.

⁶⁵ Furnivall, ed., Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, EETS os 123 (London, 1903), p. 361, ll. 11,576-11,580.

⁶⁶ Beatrice Daw Brown, ed., *The Southern Passion*, EETS os 189 (London, 1927), p. 15, ll. 421-22.

⁶⁷ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies I*, In *Die Pentecosten*, p. 91:

þa warhte god feole tacne on þan folke þurh þere apostlan hondan swa

Virtues, warning is given "against the stonerocks of the hardheart which never will soften with any water of wisdom, but if a ship comes thereto it breaks up. So does the unwise man who comes to the unbelieving man that neither will nor can understand God's lore through the hardness of his heart."⁶⁸ To such a one might be said what St. Basil said to Julian, the Apostate, who after having insulted the bishop went off for conquest, "Would that God Almighty might grant thee to follow wisdom!"⁶⁹

When the Almighty made the angels "he made by his wisdom ten Armies of them in the first day!"⁷⁰ The angels, full of celestial wisdom, are most mighty as "lohan Damesce wisele"⁷¹ says, and since our guardian angel will tell all our deeds to God,

J?an es wisdom to be-war
No workcs to do our god to greue,⁷²

as *The Rule of St. Benet* declares.

The Wisdom of God, about to become incarnate of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in reverent consideration of the maid's humility and virginity, sent His Angel Gabriel to ask her consent. The Virgin was anxious how this should be done.

forrþi wolde 3ho ben wis
Off þatt þurh Godesa enngell,⁷³

and the explanation having been given, she pronounced her *fiat*.

þet ileiden þa untrummen men bi þere stret þere petrus foro-eode and swa reoe swa his sceadu heom on glao heo weren iheled. from alle untrumnesse. Cf. Ch. I, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, Part I, p. 45, l. 18, "8e harde hierte 8e meure ne wile nexin for none watere of wisdom, ac 3if Car cumj? scip to hit tobreko. Alswo doo Sat unwise mann de cump to San unbeliefde manne 8e ne wile ne ne mai godes lare understanden for his herte hardness.

⁶⁹ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives*, Part I, p. 62, l. 211: Forgeafe god ælmihtig. >at 8ie fyligdest wysdome.

⁷⁰ Crawford, ed., *Heptateuch*: Aelfric—p. 8, ll. 52-55, "pa wrohte he þurh his wisdom tyn englar werod on Sam forme daege on mucelre feegernesse."

⁷¹ Foster, ed., *Stanzaic Life of Ohrist*, p. 310, l. 9212.

⁷² Logeman, ed., *The Rule of St. Benet*, "Northern Verse Version," p. 72, l. 882.

⁷³ Holt, ed., *The Ormulum*, vol. I, p. 77, ll. 2279-80.

According to Bede's proverb, "*Anima justi sedes est sapientiae*"⁷⁴ it is most fitting that Our Blessed Mother should be styled, "Seat of Wisdom," for never was a soul purer or more just than that which the Son of God made his habitation. In a Middle English poem entitled "Hail Mary," she is saluted with the words,

Hayle well, hayle wyte of all wysedom!⁷⁵

and the legend claims that "Mari after her byrthe receyued wytte and vnderstandyng in lesse age then other chyl dren."⁷⁶ So united are Mother and Son in the Wisdom of God that St. Bernard "ful wittely declares" that when Mother and Son intercede for us, the Father can refuse nothing.⁷⁷

WISDOM AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD

Since all perfection must necessarily center in the Godhead, perfect wisdom must be an attribute of the Supreme Being. Richard Rolle has written, "Qwhat god is truely, if þou knew als wys]þou suld be als god is,"⁷⁸ and this were necessary if we were to understand God absolutely. Relatively, we find His wisdom expressed in many ways and "this knowledge of the divinity and wisdom of truth is to be learned through the true faith," as is stated in *Early English Homilies*.TM From knowledge of ourselves we can in some measure learn to know God, "by wndyrstondyng . . . beholde wat Gode ys,"⁸⁰ and although "In-comprehensyble in hym-selff he ys; . . . by knowynge of me, to knowynge of Gode I assende."⁸¹ In many Middle English works, reference is made to

⁷⁴ Bede, *Proverbia*, Migne, PL, vol. 90, col. 1091.

⁷⁵ J. H. Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, EETS es 19 (London, 1873), p. 214.

⁷⁶ Roman Dyboski, ed., *Songs, Carols and other Miscellaneous Poems*, EETS es 101 (London, 1907, issued in 1908), p. 59, l. 6.

⁷⁷ Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, EETS os 166 (London, 1926), p. 317, l. 9420.

⁷⁸ Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life*, ed. by Richard Misyn, EETS os 106 (London, 1896), p. 14, l. 39; p. 15, l. 1.

⁷⁹ Warner, ed., *Early English Homilies*, No. 152, p. 92, ll. 9-10: Ac þeos oncnawednysse þære godcundnysse,—þære soSfsestnysse wisdom is to leornigen þurh þone rihte gelsefe.

⁸⁰ Furnivall, ed., *Macro Plays*, "Wisdom," p. 43, l. 246.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43, ll. 249-52.

God as wise. He is spoken of as "þe welder of wyt" in *Patience*, one of the *Early English Alliterative Poems*.⁸² In *Genesis and Exodus*, referring to the Maker of the Second Day, we find "He Se it made is mightful and wis."⁸³ In His wisdom all things were planned in his mind before the world was made,⁸⁴ and the *Blickling Homilies* make clear that "by his eternal wisdom, according to his purpose (will), he orders and disposes all things."⁸⁵ Again in speaking of God "whoes grete / vertu and wysdome is with-owte numbre" we read that

all ys made by hys myght,
By wysdom gouernyde most eouercnly.⁸⁶

How the order of the elements shows the wisdom of God is so quaintly illustrated in one of *The Minor Poems of the Venwn MS.* that the whole section may prove interesting.

Eyr & ffuir on hei? ben founde,
Water and erþe heuy at grounde:
Of his wisdom hit, scheweþ a part
And so to loyne hern a ful gret art.
Had fuir and water to-geder ben set,
Not wysli don men wolden han let,
pat On þat oþer wolde distruye;
Hedde Eir be loyned to eaþe so fruye,
Hit wolde for-chyne, for to seye soþ
No fruit wolde bere as hit now deþ
Water and Erþe are meynt to-gidere,
ffor grene þing schulde not al to-whidere.
Gret wit and wisdom, as I ow tolde
In God zit ze may be-holde.⁸⁷

⁸² Morris, ed., *Early English Alliterative Poems*, "Patience," p. 92.

⁸³ Morris, ed., *The Story of (Genesis and Exodus)*, 1. 100.

"Ibid., p. 2, 11. 35-38:

Wit, and wisdom, and luee godd,
And fer ear biSohte al in his modd,
In his wisdom was al biSogt
Ear danne it was on werlde brogt.

⁸⁵ Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 121, 11. 15, 10: & þurh his ecean snyttro eefter his willan receþ & stihtaþ.

⁸⁶ Furnivall, ed., *Macro Plays*, "Wisdom," p. 44, 11. 258-59.

⁸⁷ Horstmann, ed., *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part I, p. 273, 11. 179-92.

All created things speak of the power of God. The song to the Almighty Creator in *The Phoenix* reads,

Peace be thine, true God,
and wisdom's power,⁸⁸

and His "greatness is raised above all heavens, that is, to the seat of sovereign wisdom."⁸⁹

This is a consoling thought for his harassed creatures weighed down with anxious cares, that His sovereign wisdom will provide for them with fatherly love. These reflections from an early poem, *Why I Cant be a Nun*, may be a suggestion;

I can no more but trust in the
In whom ys alle wysdom an wyt;
And thow wost what ys best for me,
For alle thyng in thy syzt ys pyt.⁹⁰

Wisdom is associated with the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity as one of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. On Pentecost the Holy Ghost came in fire and bestowed the gift of wisdom,⁹¹ but especially is wisdom predicated of the Son, the Second Person.

In ysaie Xje chapitre, where it is seid þus, þat vpon crist schulde / rest ' þe spirit of wisdom, *and* of vndirstonding, þe spirit of counseil, *and* of strengþe, þe spirit of kunnyng, *and* of pitee, þe spirit of drede of god.'⁹²

The reference seems to be to Christ as man, receiving these gifts, although "the sonne of Mary had parfyte wytte anon as he was becom man in her wombe."⁹³ The "maisteres of the Jowes law" having heard Christ discourse in the temple were in wonderment

⁸⁸ Gollancz, ed., *The Exeter Book*, p. 238, l. 622: Sib si þe soð god and snyttru-crseft. *Codex Eoconiensis*, p. 239.

⁸⁹ Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 311, ll. 9237 ff.: he said that Goddes gretnesse was abowe all heuens howen on hegh, that is to wit to that place ther soueraigne wisdom is—slegh.

⁹⁰ Furnivall, ed., *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints*, p. 141, ll. 104-07.

⁹¹ Foster, ed., *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, p. 348, ll. 10261-62: "He strengthes vpward fer—new be gyf of wysdome mon to pay."

⁹² Reginald Pecock, *The Donet*, ed. by Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS os 156 (London, 1921 for 1918), p. 114, ll. 52-55.

⁹³ J. H. Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, EETS es 19 (London, 1873), p. 214.

"For wisdom that com of his mouthe."⁹⁴ After the Child Jesus returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary "bath till Godd and man he thraf Wit witte and graz."⁹⁵ And again we find in *English Metrical Homilies*,

And wel wax Jhesu thair childe
For grace and wysdom hym fullfylde.⁹⁶

The same incident is described in various places. We find in *The Birth of Jesus*

Ihc wex wel in elde, and in wisdom al so
And in grace a^en God and a^en men, iwis.⁹⁷

and

þhis child Ihe wax ful wel, and iconforted was also
And folwas of wisdom, and Godes grace in him was do.⁹⁸

Slightly different in the *Ormulum*, it reads,

—hire sune wex—þraf
I wissdom—inn else,
—he wass Godd—gode mann "

The Jews hated Christ because "his wittcs passes paire lore/"¹⁰⁰

Helen Flanders Dunbar notes that "Catholic theology could never escape the fact that man might reach union with God by way of the Primal Love, only after Eternal Wisdom had descended to earth to initiate and maintain in his own dual nature contact with men."¹⁰¹ The attribution of power, wisdom, love as distinguishing characteristics respectively of the Three Divine Persons of the

⁹⁴ John Small, ed., *English Metrical Homilies* (Edinburgh, 1862), p. 108.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109, l. 78. From Luke ii, 41-52.

⁹⁶ Small, ed., *English Metrical Homilies*, p. 76. From Luke ii, 40.

⁹⁷ Mary W. Smyth, *Biblical Quotations in Middle English Literature before 1850* (New York, 1911), p. 121, cites "Birth of Jesus," p. 108, ll. 1134-35.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120, cites "The Birth of Jesus," p. 107, ll. 1107-08.

"Holt, ed., *Ormulum*, vol. V, p. 312, l. 8974.

¹⁰⁰ William Henry Hulme, ed., *The Middle-English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus*, EETS es 100 (London, 1907), p. 43, l. 293.

¹⁰¹ Helen Flanders Dunbar, *Symbolism in Medieval Thought and Its Consummation in the Divine Comedy* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1929), p. 390.

Blessed Trinity, is frequently met in Middle English literature. In *St. Edmund's Mirror* we find

in Godde es myghte, and of þat commes his wysdome; and of power
and wysedom bothe comes lufe . . . powere es apporirde to Godd þe Fader,
and wysdoin to Godd þe Sonne, and gudnes to Godd þe Holy Gaste.¹⁰²

In the *Court of Sapience* they are thus described, "The fadyr full
of myght, The Son of wyt, the Spyryt of goodness."¹⁰³ The bishop
Adrian teaches Katharine of Alexandria, "To þe fadir longeth
myght, to the sone kunnyng, Goodness to the goost—pas coupled
be thei, Igesse."¹⁰⁴ Again in *The Prick or Spur of Love* -we find,

þe ffades haþ mizt, þe Sone wisdame;
His miht is euer gret inlike,
þe sones wisdam may nou3t be swike.¹⁰⁵

In *The Poems of William of Shoreham*, one VII. *On the Trinity*;
dilates on these three attributes. This Power, the Father of our
Creed, brings forth a divine Wisdom, the Son, and from both comes
a true Love.¹⁰⁶ In the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*,

¹⁰² Perry, ed., *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26 (London, 1867, 1914), p. 47, ll. 32 ff., p. 48, ll. 13 ff.

¹⁰³ Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, 1. 579.

¹⁰⁴ Capgrave, *The Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria*, p. 255, ll. 1415-16.

¹⁰⁵ Horstmann, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part I, p. 296, ll. 1061-63.

¹⁰⁶ M. Konrath, ed., *The Poems of William of Shoreham*, EETS es 86 (London, 1902), Part I:

þys ilke mytte, for hyt wel may,
BrynggeJ? for]þe a wyt of swete aray. (p. 133, ll. 79-80)

þe mytte hys fader of oure crede,
Wysdom þe sone, for wytti-hede
þat he forþ toke. (ll. 94-96)

þat wyt was euere nabeles,
þe myztte nys neuere wytles,
ne by ne may. (ll. 106-08)

And bote a truwe lone come
Of þare myztte and þa wysdome,
ne myzt hyt by; (p. 135, ll. 151-53)

þaz myztte be to þe fader yleyd,
And wyftdome of þe sone yseyd,
And love þe gost,

workes of myzte / byþ appropred to þe vader. and þe workes of wysdom / to þe zone: alsuo þe workes of guodnesse: to þe holy gost.¹⁰⁷

This prayer to the Trinity, found in *The Ancren Riwe* beautifully shows not only how power, wisdom and love were attributed to the Three Divine Persons but also the appropriate graces besought from each.

Almighty God, Father, Son, and soothfast Holy Ghost, even as ye three are one God, and one power, one wisdom, and one love, and yet power is especially ascribed to thee in holy writ, thou dear Father; to thee wisdom, of thy Son; to thee love, of the Holy Ghost. Give me grace, Almighty God; inspire into me, ye three persons, these same three things: power to serve thee, wisdom to please thee, love and will to do it; power that I may do, wisdom that I may know what to do, love that I may be constrained to do all that is most approved by thee; as thou art full of every good thing, as there is no good wanting where there are, power, wisdom, and love united together, that thou grant me them, O holy Trinity, in the worship of thee.¹⁰⁸⁻¹⁰⁰

The Son is coupled with the Third Person in the following:

pou art þo heghest, of wisdom most,
Ihesu crist with þo holy gost.¹¹⁰

In the *Codex Exoniensis*, the hymn "On the Nativity/" referring to the Second Person says,

Set beþ hy þre of one my3tte,
Of one wytte and loue Iyztte,
þorz fay þe hyt wost. (p. 137, ll. 211-16)

¹⁰⁷ Morris, ed., *Ayenbite of Inwyte*, pp. 120-21.

¹⁰⁸ James Morton, *The Nun's Rule*, Being the *Ancren Riwe* Modernized, with Introduction by Abbot Gasquet (London, 1924), pp. 20-21. This is from the thirteenth-century manuscript.

¹⁰⁹ Joel Pahlsson, ed., *The Recluse, A Fourteenth Century Version of The Ancren Riwe* (Lund, 1918), p. 10, ll. 15 if., gives the same:

Almighty god fader & son & holy gost as ze ben þre Persones in o god and as ze ben of mizth. of wisdom. & of loue. & þat miath in holy wrytt is turned to þe fader. & wisdom to þe son. & love to þe holy gost sine me o reule in þise þre Binges, myjth forto serve þe. wisdom forto knowe þe love & wille forto doute þe. Myzth þat ich may do. wisdom þat ich cunne do. loue þat ich wil do al þat þe leeiast is. as þou art floure of al goode-nesse. And also wisse as þere nys no. godenesse wane þere þise þre ben. þe holy Trinet.

¹¹⁰ Simmons, ed., *The Lay Folks' Mass Book*, Text B, p. 14, ll. 143-44.

Thou art the wisdom,
 who this wide creation
 with the Powerful
 wroughtest all;
 Therefore is not any so wise,
 Nor in mind so powerful
 who may thy origin
 to the children of men
 manifestly declare.

In the same work,, the "Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving," referring to the Son, says,

He can all things abundantly sing and say,
 to whom the power of wisdom is in sone committed.¹¹¹

We note a slight variation in this extract from *Old English Homilies*, "One God is naturally in three persons—the Father, the Son, who is his wisdom, and the Holy Ghost who is the will of them both/"¹¹² while in *Twelfth Century Homilies*, we read, "his Son ... is the might and wisdom of the wise Father/"¹¹³ In explaining why the Second Person and not the First or Third was chosen to overcome the devil and redeem mankind, *The Coventry Plays*, "Christ Disputing in the Temple" presents Jesus saying,

Whan the serpent Adam to synne browth,
 He temptyd hym nowght be the faderes myght;
 Of the gostys goodnes spak he ryght nowght,
 But in connyng he temptyd hym ryght.
 Myght is the Faderys owyn propyrte;
 To the Gost apperyd is goodnes;
 In none of these tweyn temptyd he
 Mankinde to synne, whan he dede dresse:
 To the Sone connyng doth longe expres,
 Therwith the serpent dyd Adam asay,—
 "ete of this appyl," he seyde no lesse,
 "And thou xalt have connyng as God verray."¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Benj. Thorpe, *Codex Exoniensis* (London, 1842), p. 15.

¹¹² Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, II, "In Die Pentecosten" p. 99, "And god is icundeliche on þreom. Hadan feder, and sune,]?et is his wisdom, and fce hal3e gast: þe þet is herore beire wille.

¹¹³ Belfour, *Twelfth Century Homilies*, p. 82 his ancennedae Sunse sefre of him acenned, ... is miht, wisdom of þam wise Faeder." 11. 2-4.

¹¹⁴ James Orchard Halliwell, ed., *Ludus Coventriae*, "Christ Disputing in the Temple," pp. 192 ff.

In the same discussion Jesus says of his own wisdom,

My wytt and my lernynge is no 3onge store;
Or this worde was wrought alle thingc dede I knowe;
ffyrst or ze wore borne 3eres many score,
Thorwe the myght of my fadyr, my wytt
in me dede flowe.

The Virgin's Complaint and Comfort, Stanza 5, asks the same question as to why the Second Person had to pay the ransom for sin and the answer gives

For wysdome to þo sone was be-tawte.¹¹⁵

The Father in *A Council of the Trinity and ike Incarnation*, says to the Son,,

In your wysdom, son, man was mad thor,
And in wysdom was his temptre 'on,
Therfor, sone, sapyens ye must ordeyn her' for',
& se how, of man, may be salvac'on.

To which the Son replies,

. . . syth, in my wysdam, he began
I am redy to do this dede.¹¹⁶

Many references are made to the Son, possessing and bestowing wisdom. In this prayer from the *Old English Homilies* we see both phases illustrated:

Who, for largess, is better worthy of being beloved than thou, my dear life? . . . But largess is worth little when wisdom is lacking. And if that I will love any man for wisdom, there is none wiser than thou that art called the wisdom of thy father in heaven; for he through thee, that are wisdom, created all this world and ordereth it and divideth it, as it seemeth best. Within thee, my dear love, is hidden the hoard of all wisdom. . . .¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Political, Religious and Love Poems*, EETS os 15 (London, 1866).

¹¹⁶ William Hone, *Ancient Hysteries Described* (London, 1823), p. 41.

¹¹⁷ Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, II, p. 271, "þe Wohunge of Louerd,": Hwa for largesce is betere wuro to beo luued þen þu mi luue lif . . . Bote largesce is lutel wuro þer wisdom wontes. And zif þat iwile animon luue for wisdom, nis nan wisere þen þu þat art wisdom cald ofþi fader in heuene. For he þurh þe þat wisdom art al þis world wrahte and dihteo hit and dealeo as hit best semeo . Inwio þe mi leue lif is hord of alle wisdom. . . .

Another plea for wisdom is found in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*.

And now I pray thee, our good Savior, that you will mercifully grant me to drink in sweetly the words of thy wisdom, that you will also graciously grant that I may at last come to thee, the fount of all wisdom and appear for ever before thy face.¹¹⁸

In *Byrhtferth's Manual*, reference is made to a certain one who speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in his hymns, as Author, First-born, Wisdom, Virtue,"¹¹⁹ but Wisdom, more often than any appellation, is used in regard to Him. We are admonished to

Love God the sone, for ge gevyth wysd'm the most.¹²⁰

and we are told

To þe Sone al ful of wit
On kneo we schullen falle.¹²¹

Our gratitude should never cease because

þe Sone of his witti wille
suffriþ þe lesse yuel. þe more to be fledde / &
abidij? synnars long, bi vertu of his incarnacioun.¹²³

Heaven would never have been opened to fallen man had it not been for "the great wisdom of that wise father, by himselfe begotten without beginning, who redeemed vs out of our bondage since, by taking flesh of the Virgin Mary."¹²³ The humility displayed in the life of Our Lord has linked very closely humility with wisdom. In the *Ancren Riwe* it is stated

¹¹⁸ Bede, *EC. Hist. of Eng.*, p. 486, 11. 3 ff.: Ond nu ic J?e bidde, dugu>a Hailend, j?alt J?u me milde forgifte swetlice drincan }?a word J?ines wisdomes, Caet J?u eac fremsumlice forgifte J?set ic set mihstan to Se J?am willan ealles wisdomes bccuman mote 7 symle setywan beforan }?inum anyne.

¹¹⁹ S. J. Crawford, ed., Vol. I, EETS os 177 (London, 1929), p. 199. Daniel, *Thesaurus Hymnologicus* I, 273.

¹²⁰ Wm. Hone, *Ancient Mysteries Described*, p. 23.

isi Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part II, "A Prayer to the Trinity," p. 740, 11. 3, 4.

¹²² Swinburn, ed., *The Lantern of Li)t*, p. 122, 11. 27-28.

¹²³ Crawford, ed., *Heptateuch*, p. 17, 11. 37 ff. "se micla Wisdom of pam wisan Fopder aefre of him anum butan anginne acenned, se þe us alise of urum þeowte sySOan mid þære menniscnisse,þe he of Marian genan."

Vbi humilitaa. ibi aapiencia. pere lowenese is J?ere is wisdom, and J?ere J?at is wisdom >ere is J?e faders strengj?e.¹²⁴

A beautiful instruction may be found in *Vices and Virtues*, in which the Son is called God's wisdom, and the epithet commented upon in this wise:

He instructs the man's thoughts to whom He comes, either through holy writings or through holy sermons, which He sends him through some wise man in whom He is dwelling. Then when he has entered his heart, He "locks it within and without, so that He, who is King of all Kings, may have His rest within."¹²⁵

No more fitting prayer might be added here than this one found in *Twelfth Century Homilies*:

To this may the dear Lord Christ lead us,
Who is true wisdom and the life of the soul.¹²⁶

As "Patris sapiencia" we find several interesting examples. In the *Minor Poems of the Venwn MS.*, a Macaronic poem by that name with the sub-title *florae de Cruce* (Matins of the Passion), 118 lines,, carries this verse, repeated as an antiphon or prayer:

Patris sapiencia, veritas divina,
deus homo factus est hora matutina,
A notis discipulis cito derelictus,
A ludeis traditus, venditus, affiictus.¹²⁷

The same appears in the *York Hours of the Cross*¹²⁸ while in *The Prymer or Lay Folks Prayer Book*¹²⁹ a verse to Patris Sapiencia of like content but in English reads thus:

¹²⁴ Pahlsson, ed., *Ancren Riwe*, p. 134.

¹²⁵ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, Part I, p. 35, 11. 27 ff., He is icleped godes wisdom. He wisseS Ses mannes iflang(c) oe he to-cun8, ofier Curh halite writes oSer Surh hali sermons, J?e he him Surh sume wise manne Se he is inne wuniende, sarit." p. 95, 11. 9 ff., "Hie hit belokeS wiS-innen and wiSuten, þat he, Se is alre kiningene kyng, mu3e haven his reste wio-innen."

¹²⁶ Belfour, *Twelfth Century Homilies*, p. 96, 11. 2-3:

To þam us laede þe leopse Drihten Crist, >e >e is
soO wisdom—sawle lif.

¹²⁷ C. Horstmann, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Part I, p. 37.

¹²⁸ Thomas Frederick Simmons, ed., *The Lay Folks' Mass Book*, EETS os 71 (London, 1879), p. 82.

¹²⁹ Henry Littlehales, ed., *The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book*, Part I, EETS os 105 (London, 1895), p. 15.

The wisdom of þe fadir,
 þe treuþe of þe his king,
 God and mann was takun
 In þe morenyng.
 Of hise knowun disciplis
 Soone he was forsak;
 Sold & put to peyne,
 Mankynde saaf to make.

The Father speaks of His Son as "Patris Sapientia" in the *First Pageant of the Fall of Lucifer*.¹³⁰ Somewhat similar is John Lydgate's salutation in *The Fifteen Goes of Christ*,

O lesu! called sone moost myghty
 Of thy Fadrys wysdam and sapyence.¹³¹

It is impossible to cite every instance of the Son as Wisdom, so numerous are these occurrences, but before studying the allegorical personifications of Wisdom as Christ we shall rapidly enumerate some of those not already mentioned. In *Genesis* and *Exodus* the co-eternal Son of God is called "Hise word, 8at is, hise wise sune."¹³² In *Cursor Mundi*, "His sun his wisdom es."¹³³ In *Vices and Virtues*, "The Son, called by the father, His Wisdom, in heaven without mother, and on earth without father."¹³⁴ In the same passage we note, "He who was God's wisdom, took his manhood very wonderfully from Saint Mary, the holy virgin, through the Holy Ghost."¹³⁵ And again, God's holy words come from "his sune, Se is wisdom."¹³⁶ In Grosseteste's *Castle of Love* which allegorically represents the Blessed Virgin, in the line "Wiþ-Inne, þe castel is whit schinyng" we have a reference to our Lord as "whit" or wis-

¹³⁰ Deimling, ed., *The Chester Plays*, EETS es 62 (London, 1892), 1. 8.

¹³¹ Henry Noble MacCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, pp. 238-50, 11. 305-06.

¹³² Morris, ed., *Genesis and Exodus*, p. 2, 1. 46.

¹³³ Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, p. 26, 1. 313; of. also 1. 320.

¹³⁴ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, p. 24, 11. 13-15: Se sune of 8e fader akennd, al swa his wisdom, on heuene wio-uten moder, and on ierde wi8-uten fader.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11. 22-24: pese manniscnesse he nam alswo he oe was godes wisdom, swioe selcuoliche of sainte Marie oe hali maiden, Surh oe hali gaste.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37, 1. 1.

dom.¹³⁷ The sermon on *The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ* says "the Son is the Father's Wisdom."¹³⁸ In Alfred's *Boethius* we find "wisdom is God" (XLI, 4). Jack Upland in *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History*,¹³⁹ speaks of "Christ, that is the wisdom of God the Father/" and Katherine of Alexandria before meeting the fifty wise men from the East prays, "Christ . . . thou Almighty God! thy Father's wisdom! teach thy disciple."¹⁴⁰ The Son as Wisdom may be found in a Latin Poem *Oracio de Beatissima Virgine et Jhesu Crisli* appended to *The Meroure of Wyssdome*.¹⁴¹ In Lydgate's *Fabula Duorum Mercatorum*,¹⁴² a prayer is addressed to the "sonno of sapience," and in one of Hoccleve's minor poems, *How to Learn to Jjie*,¹⁴³ "sapience eterne" admonishes and instructs the soul.

PERSONIFICATIONS OF DIVINE WISDOM

The personifications of divine wisdom in allegory are sufficiently interesting to warrant a more careful study of each one. Thomas Uskj contemporary and disciple of Chaucer, in explaining the allegory of the Pearl in the introduction of his Testament of Love says:

Right so a jewel bctokeneth a geinme, and that is a stoon vertuoua or ela a perle, Margarite, a woman, betokeneth grace, lerning, or wisdom of God, or els Holy Church,

but the general interpretation of Pearl has been cleanness or purity, rather than wisdom until Sister Madeleva's recent study has shown it to signify spiritual clryness.¹⁴⁴ In *The Pilgrimage of the Life of*

¹³⁷ Horstmann, ed., *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Vol. I, p. 355, l. 721. Grosseteste's *Castle of Love*.

¹³⁸ Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of the Saints*, p. 12, l. 36.

¹³⁹ Edited by Thomas Wright, 2 vols. (London, 18(51), vol. II, p. 30.

¹⁴⁰ Einkenel, ed., *Life of tit. Katherine*, EETS os 80, ll. 618-19.

¹⁴¹ Johannes de Irlandia, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, Oracio, pp. 177-86; the Son as Wisdom, p. 180.

¹⁴² Edited by Dr. Gustav Schleich (Strassburg, 1897), p. 39, ll. 794-95.

¹⁴³ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Hoccleve's Works. The Minor Poems*, EETS es 61 (London, 1892), p. 206, l. 744, and pp. 179, 208, 209.

¹⁴⁴ Israel Gollanez, ed., *Pearl*, an English Poem of the XIVth Century (London, 1921), Tntrod., p. xvi. Sister M. Madeleva, *Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness* (New York and London, 1925).

Man,¹⁴⁵ Wisdom or Sapience in feeding our souls with the Bread of Life represents the Wisdom of the Son of God, or the Son Himself, as may be understood by a brief summary of the allegory. The pilgrim sees Moses at a table bestowing sustenance on other pilgrims. The bad come away as black as a collier's sack but the good become beautiful, satisfied and desirous of no other sustenance. Grace Dieu explains that this food is changed from bread and wine into flesh and blood by Moses for good pilgrims. Nature, not understanding the mystery, refuses to believe, but Grace Dieu insists that the bread and wine are the very flesh and blood of Christ. She explains that Charity brought the grain from heaven and sowed it in the earth. When ripe, it was gathered and brought to the mill, which, turned by the winds of envy, crushed the grain between two stones, scorn and derision. Charity then sought Wisdom to knead the dough and make the bread that might feed the world, which Wisdom did. Though the bread appeared little, there was much and in every part was the virtue of the whole. Nature was angry at this unnatural achievement and sent Aristotle to dispute with Wisdom, who easily refuted his arguments, the wise philosopher becoming Wisdom's obedient disciple. This last part seems to symbolize the union of human and divine knowledge united in the Wisdom of God.

Another personification of wisdom, this time as guide and teacher in the spiritual life occurs in *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*.¹⁴⁶ The "abbaye of saynte spirite" situated in a place called "conscience," has "Charyte" as abbess, "Wysedome" as prioress, and "Meekness" as superioress.¹⁴⁷ The author tells us that his purpose is to make "a book of the religion of the heart" (p. 51) which may be of consolation to the many who are prevented from actually taking religious vows. Eighteousness and Purity cleanse the place while Meekness and Poverty prepare the ground. Other virtues function in all the capacities and offices needful in a well-regulated abbey. The Holy Ghost is Warden and Visitor, but the personifications are not characterized with any vividness beyond what their scriptural

¹⁴⁵ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, Englished by John Lydgate, EETS es 77, 83, 92 (London, 1899, 1901, 1904).

¹⁴⁶ Perry, ed., *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26, pp. 51 ff.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54, ll. 20 ff.

connections imply. The great lesson is that all our labors should be done for the love of God and "for >e lufe of >e lady Wysclome >at sail be prioresse; for scho cs worthy, *Nam prior omnium creata est sapiencia* (Ecclus. i, 4), J?at is 'al-)?ir-firste es Wysedome made; and thurgh J>e lare of hire, and J?e concele of j?is prioress, sail we do all J?at we do; and this sayse David, *Omnia in sapiencia fecisti*. pat es at saye "alle þat J?ou hau made, þou hase made wysely.¹⁴⁸ The final exhortation is to let Charity, Wisdom and Meekness dwell in the heart always.

In *The Assumption of the Virgin*,¹⁴⁹ a miracle play from the N-Town Cycle, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity appears as Sapientia to summon His Blessed Mother to heaven. Halliwell¹⁶⁰ places the whole of this pageant in the time of Henry VIII but Gregg^{1C1} shows there is every reason to believe that it belongs to an original work of the late fifteenth century, probably about 1468. The pageant represents Mary in the temple, imploring "hye wysdani," her Son, to take her to himself. Then Sapientia, hearing his "suede moderis preyere" (l. 127), sends an angel to assure her of his love and mercy, he takes her soul to heaven and promises after three clays to come again when He reanimates her body, fitted to dwell eternally with Him. *The Court of Sapience* has previously been mentioned as an allegorical mosaic in which gatherings from many sources have been imbedded.¹⁵² Dame Sapience urges the writer to forsake the world and remain with her. After recounting the story of the Four Daughters of God in which Christ appears as Wisdom, Dame Sapience leads him to the Castle or Court where Theology lives with the Seven Sisters, the seven liberal arts, describing with much detail the castle and the ladies who dwell therein. The composer seems to think that "religion is the sum of all knowledge, and there can be no wisdom that is not intrinsically connected with the religious scheme. Not only does he be-

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54, ll. 22 ff.

¹⁴⁹ Edited by W. W. Gregg (Oxford, 1915) and also by James Orchard Halliwell in *Ludus Coventriae* (London, 1841).

¹⁵⁰ Halliwell, p. 417.

¹⁵¹ Gregg, p. 49.

¹⁵³ Curt Ferdinand Bihler, *The Sources of the Court of Sapience* (Leipsig, 1932).

lieve "*Initium Sapientiae timor Domini*" but also that the true and proper end of knowledge is the study of God, i. e. Theology."¹⁵⁵ The nature of Sapience has been very well analyzed by Joseph Burns Collins.^{151*} He finds this characterization to be not "the personage found in Court of Love writings, but rather as Sapientia was popularly conceived in the treatises of such medieval mystics as Bernard, the Victorines, Bonaventura. . . . Among these, one feels, the character of Sapience received its essential qualities. She is not merely an 'attribute of the son' nor 'a union of human and divine wisdom,' but rather a personification of the knowledge resident in the Deity conceived as a divine attribute irrespective of the Trinity of Persons and only arrived at or participated in by the devout mind through mystical contemplation."

The story of the *Four Daughters of God*¹⁵⁵ is the allegory based on Ps. 84:11—*Misericordia et Veritas, obuiarunt sibi: Justitia el Pax osculae sunt*—so popular throughout the Middle Ages that it is to be found in every language and in many forms of literature. It is Jewish in origin, making its appearance not later than the tenth century in the *Midrash*. Originally the occasion of the dispute among the Four Daughters was the creation of man, but in its Christian adaptation, the allegory developed along two distinct lines, one making the redemption the theme of the dispute, the other retaining the creation. Hugo of St. Victor introduced the modified form in his Annotations on certain psalms.¹⁵⁰ St. Bernard further elaborated this in his own original manner in his sermon for the feast of the Annunciation.¹⁵⁷ This version as modified by Grosseteste, St. Bonaventure and Deguileville, has been used by the author of *The Court of Sapience*.¹⁵⁸ Here we have Dame Sapience

¹⁵⁰ Bihler, *Sources of the Court of Sapience*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph Burns Collins, review of "The Sources of the Court of Sapience" by Curt Ferdinand Bihler (Leipsig, 1932), in *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 49 (April, 1934), pp. 275-76.

¹⁵⁵ Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God*, in Bryn Mawr College Monographs, vol. VI (Baltimore, 1907), pp. 7 ff.

¹⁵⁶ Hugo of S. Victor, *Miscellanea*, Lib. II Annotationes in quosdam Psalmos David, Ch. LXIII, Migne, PL, vol. 177, col. 621 ff.

¹⁵⁷ S. Bernard, *Opera*, In Presto Annunciationis Beatae Virginis, Migne PL, vol. 183, col. 389 ff.

¹⁵⁸ Bihler, *The Sources of the Court of Sapience*, p. 17.

summoned by "the brother to Mercy" (1. 499) the Second person of the Blessed Trinity, "the Kyngis sone" for counsel in the matter of settling the dispute between the sisters (11. 505-511). The Son asks which of the Three Divine Persons it shall be.

My fadyr ys ay full of lastyng myght,
 And all wysdoni appropored ys to me
 Of all gooduch the blyssyd heuynly lyght
 The holy gost hath to hya propurte. (p. 145, 11. 533-30.)

Sapience decides that redemption or settling the dispute must be the Son's task for three reasons. First, the Father is "too fearful" (1. 549) and "the holy gost . . . ys Mercies frende" (1. 553); secondly, man's sin was directed against the wisdom of God, therefore "For thy wysdom he (the devil) kest wyth the to fyght"; (1. 556) and thirdly, the one to satisfy "Must be the son of man and take mankynde" (1. 562). With the answers to the king, "1 am thy son, in whom all wysdom ys" (p. 153, 1. 723), the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity accepts the redemption of man's soul. In St. Bernard's version (*Op. cit.* col. 588) an angel suggests that Solomon be sent for, Solomon being surely used as an allegorical figure for Wisdom or Christ.¹⁰⁹ Urosseteste's *Castle of Lore*¹⁶⁰ represents the King's Son after he has heard the Four Daughters disputation, feeling confident "þat wiþ-uten help of his wisdom ne mihten heo neuere togedere come" (11. 525-526). Whereupon he offers to His Father to take the thrall's (Adam's) place. The "*Cursor Mundi*"¹⁶¹ written about 1325 by an unknown author quotes Grosseteste as authority. Here the allegory is used at the end of a survey of Old Testament history, to serve as introduction to the story of the Redemption. When the King's son saw His sisters' strife

Fader, he said, þi sun i es
 O þi strenght and þi witernes
 Sa wel i am ya lured wit þe
 þat þi wisdom man clpes me (11. 9729-30.)

¹⁵⁹ Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God*, pp. 16, 17.

¹⁶⁰ Horstmann, ed., *Minor Poems of Vernon MS.*, pp. 368 ff.

¹⁶¹ Richard Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, Part II, EETS os 59 (London, 1875), pp. 560 ff.

The allegory appears in a confused form in *Vices and Virtues*¹⁶² seeming to have parts of other legends or stories inserted, but sufficiently like the original to ensure its identity. "He (Christ) paid for all the harm which had come through Adam, very wisely as He who was Wisdom Himself."¹⁶³ In Lydgate's *Lyf of our Lady*,¹⁶⁴ " Sapience also settles the dispute:

And this request is nought agens Rigt
Ne unto Trouthe pleylnly noon offence
Yif that oure juge of his grete mygt
Ordeyne so in his providence
To shape a weie thoug his *sapience*
That trouthe and Rigt be not displesid
Thourg Pees and me thoug man be
holpe and esid.

This shows that wisdom found a way for reconciliation. The only appearance of the allegory in the great English cycles is in the first part of the *Salutation Play* of the Coventry Cycle. In the dispute Mercy refuses to leave the council "Tyl Wisdom hath seyde I xal ses."¹⁶⁵ In Chapter IX of the *Meroure of Wyssdome* is found a slightly varying version. The "gret disputacioun" takes place before the "hie maieste and the hevinly wissdome, anens þe incarnacioun of the blis sone of God, jhesus, þe soie and froit of þis nobile lady and virgin." The virtues are "secretaris and wiss counsalouris." They argue regarding mankind, and "dame mercy" reminds them of God's promise of a saviour. When the other virtues know "dame charity" to be allied with "dame mercy," they see the "souuerane lady, dame sapience, be werray ressonne and equite jnclyne to mercy and mannis redempciounne," then they stand in a manner of ecstasy and are ashamed. Here "dame sapience" seems to signify the Mother, of God, "þis nobile lady and virgin." Finally "dame pess" implores her father, "O wissdome jnfynit,"

¹⁶² Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, EETS 89 (London, 1888), pp. 112 ff.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 117, ll. 33 ff. All he jeald Sane harm 8e was 3ec;umen 8urh Adam, swiSe wisliche al swo he oe was wisdom himself.

¹⁶⁴ Stanza 167, p. 38 quoted by Curt Ferdinand Böhler in *The Sources of the Court of Sapience*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ J. O. Halliwell, *Ludus Coventriae* (London, 1841), p. 110, line quoted, 193.

end " þi blist sone, þe prince of pæss, to amend the offence of creature humane."¹⁶⁶

*The Castle of Perseverance*¹⁶⁷ uses this story as an ending for tie play. The Four Daughters dispute regarding mankind's soul and a final appeal is made to God that man may be saved through Christ's sufferings and death, but the crucifixion seems to have already taken place. *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*¹⁶⁸ presents the story more in the form of a meditation, the dramatic qualities being absent but the Son as Wisdom, is man's mediator and Saviour. In the use of the allegory in *Piers Plowman*¹⁶⁹ and in Lydgate's *Poem on the Prospect of Peace* in MS. Harl. 2255 (which seems to have been composed about 1443) the encounter of the sisters occurs just after Christ's crucifixion and they dispute concerning his proposed release of His followers from hell. In *Jacob's Veil*¹⁷¹ there is no strife among the Four Daughters.

By far the two most interesting personifications of Wisdom in English literature, the morality *Wisdom* and *Orologium Sapientiae*, are so closely related, the one being the most important source for the other, that our study of them must, in some measure, overlap. Valter Kay Smart in a dissertation, *Some English and Latin Sources and Parallels for the Morality of Wisdom* (Menasha, Wis., 1912) has gathered valuable information concerning both works. The fifteenth-century morality play, *Wisdom, or Mind, Will and Understanding*, exists, in its complete form, only in the Macro MS.¹⁷² so called from the name of a former owner, the Reverend

¹⁶⁶ Johannes de Irlandia, *The Meroure of Wyssdomc*, ed. by Charles Macpherson (Edinburgh and London, 1926), pp. 100 ff.

¹⁶⁷ Furnivall, ed., *The Macro Plays*, "The Castle of Perseverance," 11. U30-3602.

¹⁶⁸ George G. Perry, ed., *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, EETS os 26 (London, 1914), "The Abbey of the Holy Ghost," pp. 51-62.

¹⁶⁹ Walter W. Skeat, ed., William Langland's *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman*, EETS os 28 (London, 1867), Passus XVIII of text B; Passus XXI of text C.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Wright, ed., *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History*, 2 vols. (London, 1861), "John Lydgate's On the Prospect of Peace," pp. 209-15.

¹⁷¹ Arthur Brandeis, ed., *Jacob's Well*, EETS os 115 (London, 1900), Dp. 255-56.

¹⁷² F. J. Furnivall and Alfred W. Pollard, editors, *The Macro Plays*:

Cox Macro, an antiquarian of the eighteenth century. It is now in the possession of Mr. J. H. Gurney, of Keswick Hall, near Norwich. The *Orologium Sapientiae* is extant in MS. Caius Coll. 390, and in MS. Douce 114. The fifth chapter is also found separately in MS. Douce 322, fol. 20, and in MS. Harl 1706, fol. 20. The entire treatise was printed by Caxton, about 1490, and by Carl Horstmann in 1888 in *Anglia*, vol. X, pp. 323-389. Both Caxton and Horstmann printed from MS. Douce 114, although Caxton changed the form and spelling of many words. The text in the two MSS. differs in spelling and word forms, but the matter is essentially the same.¹⁷³ Although five copies of Caxton's printing are still preserved,¹⁷⁴ the Horstmann edition in *Anglia* is the accessible text. The question of authorship for both works is still undetermined. That of *Wisdom* will probably never be definitely known, but from a study of the internal evidence we know the author to be "particularly interested in the works of the mystics," as Smart has shown his sources to be the writings of Richard Rolle of Hampole, Walter Hilton, Henry Suso (an English adaptation from one of his works), St. Boriaventura, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, or from writings attributed in the fifteenth century to them. The author was probably one of the fifteenth century followers of Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton, most likely a man of religion, priest, monk or friar. "The evidence at hand points to St. Edmundsbury Abbey, a great Benedictine house, as the probable place of performance. "If this is the case, our author was probably a Benedictine monk of this abbey."¹⁷⁵

Concerning the author of the *Orologium* little is known. From his introduction we learn that the writer was the "trewe chapeleyne" of a "moste worschipful lady," who had "excellente wisdom bothe to god and to þe worlde," and that he undertook the writing of the treatise at the request of this lady and other devout persons.¹⁷⁰ Horstmann suggests Richard Rolle of Hampole as

"Wisdom," EETS es 91 (London, 1904). F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Digby Plays*, EETS es 70 (London, 1896), contain part of *Wisdom*.

¹⁷³Walter Kay Smart, *Some English and Latin Sources and Parallels for the Morality of Wisdom*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁴Horstmann, ed., "Orologium Sapientiae," *Anglia*, vol. X, p. 323.

¹⁷⁵Smart, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-84.

¹⁷⁶Horstmann, in *Anglia*, vol. X, p. 324.

the author, but questions the suggestion. It seems to have been the custom to ascribe most of the English mystical writings to Rolle but Walter Smart could find no specific evidence that the treatise is his.¹⁷⁷ In the preface to the *Orologium in Anglia*¹⁷⁸ HoTstmann speaks of a fifteenth-century French text, with the title: *Cy comense le livre qui est dit orloge de sapience, lequel fist frere Jehan de soushaue de l'ordre des frere prescheurs*. In his introduction to this edition of Richard Eolle's works, published in 1896, he calls the treatise printed in *Anglia* an English reproduction of Ileinrich Suso's *Buck von der gollichen Weislieit*. This work by Suso (the proper title of which is *Bucklein der ewigen Weisheit*) is, however, in German, not in Latin, and can not, therefore, be the original of the English treatise.¹⁷⁹ There was, however, a Latin *Orologium Sapientiae* by Henry Suso, which was very popular in the fifteenth century. This is undoubtedly the original of the English treatise, as Smart has shown by comparing the passage about the name "Orloge" in the English with a passage from the prologue in the copy of the Latin work in the British Museum, bearing the press mark I A. 39278, and the passage beginning: "Also)?e sengulere prerogetyfe of mye godenesse and love is so grete, etc.," with the sixth chapter of the same Museum copy, which parts tally almost exactly. Other similar correspondences have led to the conclusion that the English is a close translation, at least in parts, of the Latin text. Mr. Smart also shows that this Latin *Orologium* "was almost certainly written by Henry Suso," although it is equally clear that the authorship was not generally known to be his. The date of the *Orologium* he places at sometime after 1333, thus showing that the author of *Wisdom* borrowed from it as that morality belongs to the next century.¹⁸⁰

The Orologium Sapientiae or *The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom*, is a spiritual work, "a lutele schort tretyse of euerlastyng wisdam — J?e trewe loue of Jhesu," written for a "moste worschippful lady," for the purpose, as the author says, "to comfort 3owre gostlye wisdam namelye in þis wikkede worlde . þat is fulle of deceyuable wisdam." The author then proceeds to set forth "gostlye reuelaciones and deuowt ymaginaciones, in manere of

¹⁷⁷ Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁸ Vol. X, p. 323.

¹⁷⁹ Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁰

Smart, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 16.

spekyng by-twix þe maystre, euerlastyng wisdom, (and) þe deuowt discyple þat wrote þe boke," repeating his purpose, "to stirre deuowte sowles to þe trewe lone of owre lorde Jhesu, þe euerlastyng wisdom of þe fadere of heuene."

The treatise proper begins with the description of a dream or vision in which is seen a large round house, divided into two mansions, one above the other, each one containing many different doctors and masters with many disciples adhering to each. Natural sciences are taught in the lower mansion. The disciples all seem to have, as it were, veils upon their faces. They are comforted with a sweet drink which does not fully quench their thirst but engenders a greater desire. After a while in this school, the disciple seeks the higher mansion, more richly decorated and having this superscription over the door:

J?is is)?e scole (of) soþfaste diuinyte, where þe inaystresse is euerlastyng wisdom, þe doctrine is verite and trewþ,—þe ende euerlastyng felicitye.¹⁸¹

There are three orders in this school. The first sit on the ground; the second do not profit fervently but seem to be "stodene stille"; the third sit next to the master, drinking in the words that come from his mouth and are filled with the wisdom of God. His teaching, "heuenly wisdom," is contained in the seven points. The master introduces himself in these words:

I am clepede of hem þat liuene in erþe euerlastyng wisdom. þe which name is most conuenient and best acordyng to myne nobleye. ffor J?owhe hit so be þat euerye persone of þe holye trinite taken by hit-selfe is wisdom,—alle þe persones to-gydere one euerlasting wisdom, neuerless, for als miche as wisdom is proprelye applyede to þe sone and also hit falleþ to him by resone of his generacione specialye, þerfore (þe) bylouede sone of þe fadere is takenne—vnderstande in þat-mariere significacione of wisdom custumablye, nowe as godde—nowe as manne, nowe as he þat is spowse—wyfe of euerye chosene sowle.¹⁸²

Here the author quotes Wisdom viii, 2, and vii, 10, 11 :

abouene heele—alle bewte I haue louede wisdom—I haue purposede for to have hir as for mye lihte,—alle godes haue comene to me with hir.

also Wisdom vii, 29, 26:

¹⁸¹ *Anglic*, vol. X, p. 327.

¹⁸² *Anglia*, vol. X, p. 329, 11. 20 ff.

þat is to seye: wisdam is feyrere þanne sonne—in comparisone of hir to liht she is fowndene passynge aboue alle þe disposicione of sterrea, she is forsoþe þe bryhtnesse of euerlastynge liht and þe mirrour with-owt wemme of goddes maieste—þe yniage of his godenesse.

Again he quotes Proverbs iii, 15, 16:

wisdam is bettur þanne (alle) inanere of moste preciouae godes,—alle J?at may be desyrede may not be in comparisone lyke to hir; þe lengh of jeres is in hire righ(t) syde and in hir lift seyde richesses—ioye.¹⁸³

Here we may pause to consider the morality play, *Wisdom*,¹⁸⁴ which uses this passage, with very little alteration. In the beginning of the play, Wisdom tells us,

1 am clepyde of hem þat in erthe be,
'Euerlastynge Wysdom.' (p. 35, ll. 3-4.)

then proceeds to justify his name:

Wyche name acordyt best in espeeayll,
And most to me ys conveyent.
All-thow eche persone of þe trinyte be wysdam eternall,
And all thre, on euerlastynge wysdome to-gedyr present,
Neuer-þe-les, for-as-moche as wysdom ys propyrly
Applyede to þe sune by resune,
And als yt fallyt to hym specyally,
By-cause of hys hye generacion,
Ther-for þe belowyde sone hathc >is synnyficacion
Custummaly 'Wysdom,' nowe Gode, now man,
Spows of þe chyrche, and wery patrone,
Wyflfe of eche chose sowle. (p. 36, ll. 5-16.)

The biblical ideas are clearly discernible in the words of the heroine, Anima, almost identical with those of the *Orologium*:

Fro my yougthe, thys haue I sowte,
To haue to my spowse most specyally;
For a loue of yowur schappe am I wrowte.
(ll. 17-19; cf. Wis. viii, 2.)

A-bove all hele and bewty þat euer was sowght,
I haue louyde Wysdom, as for my lyght,

¹⁸³ *Hid.*, p. 330.

¹⁸⁴ F. J. Furnivall and Alfred W. Pollard, editors, *The Macro Plays*, "Wisdom," EETS es 91 (London, 1904).

For all goodnes with hym ys broughte.
 In wysdom I was made all bewty bryghte.
 (11. 20-23; cf. Wis. vii, 10, 11.)

Likewise, these observations of Wisdom have their originals in the Bible, but have been carried over from the *Orologium*:

I am foundon lyghte with-owt comparyson,
 off sterryys a-boue all þe dysposicion,
 Forsothe, of lyght þe very bryghtnes,
 Merowr of þe clyvyne domynacion,
 And þe Image of hys goodnea.
 (11. 27-31; cf. Wis. vii, 29, 26.)

Wysdom ys bettur þan all worldly precyosnes;
 And all þat may dysryde be,
 Is not in comparyschon to my lyknes;
 The length of þe yerys in my ryght syde be,
 Ande in my lefte syde, ryches, ioy and prosperyte:
 lo, þis ys þe worthynes of my name!
 (11. 33-38; cf. Prov. iii, 15, 16.)

The play then proceeds with its own theme. When Anima would know what Wisdom desires most, she is asked to give him her heart. When she asks, "Teche me þe scolys of yowur dyvynte!"¹⁸⁵ she receives this instruction which might serve for a definition of divine wisdom:

Dysyer not to savour in cunnynhe to excellent,
 But drede and conforme yowur wyll to me,
 For yt ys þe heelful dyscplyne þat in Wysdom may be,
 The drede of God, þat ys begynnyng;
 The wedis of synne, þat makyt to flee,—
 And swete wertuus herbys in þe sowll spryng.
 (p. 38, 11. 87-92.)

Wisdom teaches Anima how she may know God through knowledge of herself, how "Wysdam, þat was Gode and man ryght" (1. 121), by His death upon the Cross satisfied the "fadyr of hewyn," and gave the seven sacraments for man's use. The three "myghtis" in one soul, "Mynde, wyll, and wndyrstondyng," are thus explained:

By 'mynde,' of Gode þe Fadyr, knowyng he haue ye;
 By 'wndyrstondyng,' of Gode þe Sone ye haue knowyng;

¹⁸⁵ Furnivall and Pollard, editors, *Macro Plays*, "Wisdom," p. 38, 1. 86.

Gode þe Holy Gost, þat clepyde ys 'lowe':
 Not iij Godes, but on Gode in beyng;
 Thus eche clene soule ys symylytude of Gode a-bowe.

(p. 44, ll. 279-84.)

But in the absense of Wisdom, the devil, disguised as a gallant gentleman, tempts the "myghtis" and Anima yields to sin and sinful pleasures. Realizing her guilt and disloyalty, Anima repents and having been reconciled, she exclaims:

O thou hye soueren Wysdani, my ioy, Christus,
 Hewyn, erthe, and eche creature
 Yelde you reuerens; for grace pleyntuus
 Ye yeff to man, euer to Induyr. (p. 73, ll. 1149-52.)

She comes to "Salomonys conclusyon," *Timor domini initium sapientie* (Psalm ex, 10) and finishes with the prayer:

That þe doctryne of Wysdom we may sew:
 Sapiencia patris, grawnt þat for hys paasyon!
 Amen.

(p. 73, ll. 1107-08.)

To return to the *Orologium*, this "soueryne doctour, eueiastyng Wisdam, Jhesus," said, "þou schalt vnderstande þat þe wisdam of godde is love,"¹⁸⁶ and further "þou moder of love, euerlastyng wisdam."¹⁸⁷ He recognizes "þat felawship of Seintes þe whiche as morowesterres schyneden in þe dirke ny3hte of þis worlde, and as grete lizhtes schedden oute þe beemes of her clere kunnyng." ¹⁸⁸ These days are recommended for special devotion to "euerlastyng wisdam: . . .

þe firste daye þat os ordeyned by holy chirche for þe story of wisdom to be songen, ... þe ffirste aondaye of Auguste; .. byfore þe vigil of Natiuite of oure lorde is begunne at euensonge þat anthem O Sapiencia; and þoo dayes þat folowcn into þat glorious nyzte in þe whiche þe sone of þe fader of heuene, Jnit euerlastyng wisdame, vouched-saufe to be boren into þis worlde.

Three days for all lovers of wisdom to keep are "þe circumcisiōne of oure lorde; . . . þe sondaye In Quinquagesima with þe tweyne dayes folowyng, þat is cleypd Schroftyde, . . . þe þridde daye is

¹⁸⁶ *Anglia*, vol. X, p. 331, l. 36.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 332, l. 15.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 353, ll. 29-31.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 386, ll. 7 ff.

þe firste daye of þe moneth of Maye." ¹⁹⁰ So inspired and consoling has been the teaching of the master that the disciple cries,

O lord Jhesu, . . . ffor soth it is þat þou arte þe souereyne worthy wisdam, withoute comparyson to alle deedly creatours; þe whiche schewist and bryngest oute in to þe li3te of knowynge þy sofcfastnesse with the swete sauoure of thy oute-spekyng, so þat þou leuist no place of dowyngþe pere-of in vs. ¹⁹¹

Most earnestly is the disciple exhorted to worship especially " þat worþy moder of þe souereyne kyiige euerlastyng wisdame," ¹⁹² and so beautiful are the two prayers proposed, that our study of the *Orologium Sapientiae* would be unwisely deficient were we to omit them. The first presents Our Blessed Mother as intercessor, sheltering the naive disciple who speaks:

Oo euerlastyng wisdame of þe fader of heuene, loo w>we I brynge in to rnye socour 7 helpe þi syettust moder, presontyng hir to þe 7 hidyng me byhynde hir bakke, for I darre not lift vp inyne eyene be-fore þe face of þi blisse; butte by hir I desyre to be herde. Where-fore I beseche þe þat þou wille haue in mynde alle þe seruyces and businesses þat þou toke of hir in þi you(þ)e 7 þe zerea of þi chylthode, in swajnnge, in clippyng and kyssyng 7 alle oþer seruioes done to þe; and also haue in mynde alle þe sorows þat sche standyng vnder crosse with pyteuous compassione suffrede in þat tendere moder-hert for þe! ¹⁹³

The second, is suggested as a prayer for a happy death, the disciple being exhorted to pray to the

swettist herte of goddes moder, þat is þe moost piteuous refute of alle synful creatours, þat sche mercyfully opun þat priue chaumbre of euerlastyng wisdame þorow her medyacyone and bowe hit to alle þe disciples of this wisdame, her sone, in þe laste passyng-oute of her spirites, 7 þat sche . . . brynge hem with hir to þe paleys of heuene fynale. ¹⁹⁴

The symbolism which occurs in descriptions of wisdom reflects in an interesting manner the biblical similes and metaphors. In *Old English Homilies* we find the Holy Ghost "should be manifested both as fire and as a dove for he causes men's hearts . . . (to) be

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386, ll. 18ff.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352, ll. 45-46; p. 353, ll. 1-4.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 387, ll. 19 ff.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 346, ll. 4 ff.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 387, ll. 41 ff.

meek through innocence, and kindled by love and wisdom."¹⁹⁵
Gold compared to wisdom appears in the *Imitation of Christ*,

Wherefore I make persuasion to þe to bye golde of me, þat þou mowe be
made riche, þat is, heavenly wisdom tredyng under fote all þese lowe þinges.
Put behinde all erþely wisdom and all propre complacence.¹⁹⁶

St. Agnes in refusing the offer of the pagan youth uses the symbols
of wisdom as the adornments given her by her heavenly spouse:

He hath encircled my right hand and also my neck with precious stones,
and with shining gems . . .¹⁹⁷

He hath decked me with a robe woven of gold, and hath adorned me
with exceeding (rich) jewels;¹⁹⁸

He hath shewed me also His incomparable treasures, From his mouth
I have received milk and honey;¹⁹⁹

In describing her spouse, she says,

The winsome stars glorify His beauty, and the sun and moon also,
which enlighten the earth.²⁰⁰

"Golden" is used to characterize the word of God which "is wisdom of the breast and honey of the soul."²⁰¹ *If all Mcidenhed* reflects the "weapons of war,"²⁰² idea in this passage:

¹⁰⁵ Moris, ed., *Old English Homilies*, I, "In Die Pentecosten," pp. 95-97:
foroon þe halia gast . . . scule beon isceawed eioer ze on fure / 30 on culfren
foroon *pet* heo deo þere monnan heortan . . . þet heo beoð lioe þurh
uncladnesse . and iteno þurh Infe and snotcncsse.

¹⁹⁶ John K. Ingram, *DC Imitatione Christi*, EETS es 03 (London, 1893),
Bk. II, Ch. 38, p. 107, ll. 31 ff.

¹⁹⁷ Wis. vii, 9; Job xxviii, 10, 19.

¹⁹⁸ Job xxviii, 17; 16, 19.

¹⁹⁹ Wis. vii, 14; Prov. xxiv, 13, 14; Eccclus. xxiv, 27.

²⁰⁰ Wis. vii, 29; *Aelfric's Lives*, St. Agnes, pp. 171-95; lines quoted, 32-33;
30-38, 45, 51-52.

He befeng rñinne swiSran. and eac rñinne swuran.
mid deorwuroum stanum . and mid scinendum giminum.
He geglengde me mid orle . of golde awefen.
and mid ormettum mynum me gefretewodc.
He set eowde me eac . his aeilican hordas.
Of his mu8e ic under-feng meoluc . and hunig.
His wlites wuldriao . þa wynsumun (sic) tunglan.
Sunne . and mona . þe middan-eard onlihtao.

²⁰¹ John M. Kemble, *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus*, p. 138,
ll. 127-35.

^{202a} Eccles. viii, 18.

Hwil þe scheld is hal, þat is, te
 wisdom os þi wit, þat hit ne breke
 ne beie, þah þi fleschliche wil fals beo
 þer-under, 7 walde as hire luste; þe
 feondes flan fleoo awei a3ain on him seluen.²⁰³

In *The Court of Sapience*, the detailed descriptions employ numerous symbols and allusions to wisdom. On the bridge which led across the river Quyeté were "pynacles and towres" with an inscription inviting the passerby to wisdom. John Lydgate refers to the Mother of God as the "cloos castel."²⁰⁴ This figure of a house is evidently founded on Proverbs ix, 1:

Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars.

Alcuin in explaining this passage uses the idea that the house is the Son of God, strengthened by the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, or, he says, it may be the Church, illuminated by these same gifts. Then, as is to be expected from so great a teacher and scholar, he draws an apt comparison with the wisdom of a liberal education sustained by seven columns, no other than the seven liberal arts, by which the philosopher attains his goal.²⁰⁵ In Dan Michel's *Ayeribite of Inwyte* the number seven is connected with the virtues that "lokeþ? arid ledeþ? wel rijte and wel zikerliche j?ane gost" of wisdom²⁰⁶ and the very text is used in *Vices and Virtues*,

Wisdom . . . ararde hire an hus,
 and hie karf seueii postes.²⁰⁷

Here the seven pillars or "postes" signify the "seuen hali mihtes," the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In this house is gathered such timber that will never rot and Wisdom is workmaster over it. "He locks the house within and without so that He who is King of all Kings may have His rest within."²⁰⁸ Raban Maur, when beginning his

²⁰³ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Hali Meidenhad*, EETS os 18 (London, 1922), p. 21, ll. 210 ff.

²⁰⁴ John Lydgate, *Minor Poems*, ed., H. N. MacCracken, pp. 35-43, "A Procession of Corpus Christi," 1. 74, p. 38.

²⁰⁵ Alcuin, *Opera*, Migne, PL, vol. 101, col. 853.

²⁰⁶ Morris, ed., *Ayeribite of Inwyte*, p. 160.

²⁰⁷ Holthausen, ed., *Vices and Virtues*, p. 91, ll. 8-14.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 95, ll. 9 ff.: Hie hit belokeo wio-innen and wiOuten, þat he, 8e is alre kiningene kyng, muze hauen his reste wio-innen.

allegorical study of the sacred scriptures, regards Mother Sapientia as having four daughters, whose four meanings or interpretations (iintelligentias) are historical, allegorical, tropological, anagogical. She feeds her adopted sons on the milk of history, the bread of allegory, the refectio of tropology, and the wine of anagogy. This seems to have been suggested in part by the fifth verse of the same chapter:

Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.⁸⁰⁹

The symbolism found in this verse has also served Lydgate in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* when Charity asks Wisdom to knead the dough so that the world might be fed with bread.

To return to *The Court of Sapience*, we find the castle itself magnificent beyond comparison. The precious stones were as thick as gravel, rivers, flowers, plants and herbs, symbolical of wisdom, enhance the description. Among the trees are mentioned "the cedyr" (l. 1328), "the Palme, and eke the gret cypres" (l. 1331), "the olyue" (l. 1338), "the rede aromatyke" (l. 1349), "the aloes" (l. 1350), "the balsamome" "the cynamon" (l. 1349), "spykenard" (l. 1350). Grapes and honey are to be found then^{1, 210} The castle was grounded on a rock adorned with "golde and perle and stonys curyosly (l. 1488). The hall was hung with

Aras-werke in golde,
Full of storyes of wysdom and of wyt;
The parables most goodly to beholde;
Ecclesiastes eke than folowyth hit,
The boke of Sapience full well ywryt;
The good boke eke Ecclesiasticus
All wysdom there declare can and dyscus.

On the dais sat Minerva as goddess of wisdom, her appurtenances explained in this stanza:

She hath the ryght spere of correccioun,
The shyld of fortitude and pacience,
Tholyue of pees the nyght-crow (set) about,
Whyche ys the byrde of mekenes and silence;
She hath the eyen of reasoun and prudence;

²⁰⁰ Raban Maur, *Opera*, Migne, PL, vol. 112, col. 849-50.

²¹⁰ Compare with Ecclus. xxiv; Job xxviii; Proverbs xxiv.

Her clothynge eke that ys of colours thre,
Betokeneth Feythe, Hope and Charyte.

(Stanza 254, ll. 1772-78.)

Gold and precious stones appear as symbols in the description of Wisdom at the beginning of the morality play. He is clothed in a "Ryche purpell clothe of golde"; has "a berde of golde (of Sympres)" and wears "a Ryche Imperyall Crown . . . sett with precyus stonys (& per)lys." He carries in his left hand a ball of gold surmounted by a cross and in his right hand, a regal sceptre.²¹¹

The palace of Isope is similarly a fitting abode for a wise man. With "pilours cristall . . . The keueryng of-bove . . . of se-londyn; And the pament be-neth, of gold and asure fyne,"²¹² we recognize the crystal and gold²¹³ to which wisdom has been compared and the surrounding garden resembles that²¹⁴ of wisdom in being "evir green, and ful of may(e) flouris (1. 2763) so redolent that the air is fragrant all about. May we suggest that the gifts sent by Isope to Beryn by the five maidens may also be symbolical of wisdom. The cup of gold recalls that "neither shall any vessel of gold be changed for it."²¹⁵ The sword "I-fretid all with perelis orient and pure" (1. 3926) reminds us of the "weapons of war" than which "wisdom is better."²¹⁶ The "mantell of lusty fressh coloure; The vttir part of purpill" (1. 3827-28), is reminiscent of "the dyed colours of India."²¹⁷ The cloth of gold suggests riches, esteemed as "nothing in comparison of her,"²¹⁸ and the palm "J?at stode to-fore the deyse, I(n) tokyn and in signe of trowth and (of) pese" (11. 3931-32) might well recall the "palm tree in Cades"²¹⁹ like to which wisdom is exalted.

The most interesting bit of symbolism concerning wisdom is in the *Legends of the Holy Rood* which tells us that there were four kinds of trees used in making the cross, "That is of palme of cypres / of cedre and of olyue," each of the four pieces of the cross

²¹¹ Furnivall and Pollard, editors, *The Macro Plays*, "Wisdom," p. 35.

²¹² Furnival, ed., *The Tale of Beryn*, ll. 2722-24.

²¹³ Job xxviii, 17.

²¹⁴ Eccclus. xxviii, 23, 42.

²¹⁵ Job xxviii, 17.

²¹⁶ Eccclus. ix, 18.

²¹⁷ Job. xxviii, 16.

²¹⁸ Wis.

vii, 8.

²¹⁹

Eccclus. xxiv, 18.

being of one of these trees.²²⁰ The same is to be found in *The Northern Passion*, in which the cross on which Our Lord died is thus described:

Of cypresse þe lenthe was made all
 ffor hys body [þar suld seme small
 Of olyfe was puruayed onone
 ffor it was bryght and [of fayre hewe
 [Men }?at it sawe fer þai it knewe
 [þe end þat in]þe erth stude
 It [was made of Cedir full gude
 ffor ir suld noght [in erth rotyn
 So long als it stude þar apon.²²¹

In the Allegory of the Christ-Knight, the war-horse which is brought for the Knight is of four kinds of wood,

The body was of cypress, of cedar the foot,
 The back was of olive, high maned with palm,²²²

Since Wisdom "was exalted like a cedar in Libanus and as a cypress tree on mount Sion . . . like a palm tree in Cades, and . . . as a fair olive tree in the plains," it is appropriate that these four woods should fashion the Cross on which the Wisdom of God was exalted for the salvation of the world, just as the charger which was to bear Wisdom, the Christ-Knight, should be allegorically fashioned of wisdom. With equal appropriateness does Lydgate in one of his minor poems, *To Mary, the Queen of Heaven*, call her "Celestial cipreses set vpon syon, Hiest Cidre of Perfit holynesse."²²³

²²⁰ Richard Morris, ed., *Legends of the Holy Rood*, EETS os 46 (London, 1871), p. 155.

²²¹ Foster, ed., *The Northern Passion*, p. 141, ll. 1423-32.

²²² Thomas Wright, ed., *Pierre de Langtoft's Chronicle* (Rolls Series), Appendix II, pp. 426-36 "An Allegorical Romance on the Death of Christ." Lines quoted, p. 431, ll. 14-15.

²²³ MacCracken ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, p. 285, ll. 9 ff. H. Oscar Sommer, ed., *The Life and Death of Mary Magdalene* by Thomas Robinson, EETS es 78 (London, 1899). In this legendary poem of the early seventeenth century (c. 1620), occur all the biblical symbols in connection with the "court of Wisdom" where repentance may be learned. Wisdom, herself and her characteristics reflect the Bible similes and metaphors. Two rooms, one high, the other low, recall the double mansion in the *Orologium Sapientiae*.

SUMMARY

To summarize this part of our study, we have found Middle English writers considering love of God the chief characteristic of divine wisdom; passages mentioning this are found in *Old English Homilies*, *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*, *The Boole of the Knight de la Tour-Landry*, *The Lay Folks' Mass Book*, and *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*. Eichard Rolle tells us that it leads to contemplation, the same idea being voiced in *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*, *St. Edmund's Mirror*, and "Of þe seven zifts of þe holigost," one of *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS*. In the same collection it is named as one of the seven medicines of the seven deadly sins, a power to destroy sin and to lead man to make and to keep peace. *Old English Homilies* uses the biblical idea that simplicity needs wisdom, while *The Lay Folks' Prymer* and *Canterbury Psalter* use a similar idea that truth leads to knowledge of wisdom.

Divine wisdom is especially evident in God's saints as many works relate. Chief among these are Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*, *The Rule of St. Benet*, *St. Bartholomew's Church in London*, Mirk's *Festial*, and *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. This wisdom is often manifested in miracles as St. Peter's shadow curing the sick, a power attributed to his wisdom in *Old English Homilies*. The *Heptateuch* recounts the creation of ten armies of angels on the first day by God's wisdom. The *Ormulum* commends Mary's wisdom in asking the Angel Gabriel to explain his message.

In general, wisdom is considered an attribute of God. *The Blickling Homilies*, *Genesis and Exodus*, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, *The Phoenix*, *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, all bear evidence to this. It is predicated of each Person of the Blessed Trinity but especially of the Son, and because the Son is Wisdom, and man's temptation was to be as wise as God, the Son accepted the office of Redeemer as "Christ Disputing in the Temple," one of the *Coventry Plays*, informs us. This same explanation is offered in *The Virgin's Complaint and Comfort* and in one of the *Ancient Mysteries*, *A Council of the Trinity and the Incarnation*. Power, wisdom, and love are named as the distinguishing marks of the Three Divine Persons in many works.

Ayenbite of Inwyte, *The Ancren Riwe*, *St. Edmund's Mirror*, *The Court of Sapience*, Capgrave's *Life of Saint Katherine of Alexandria*, *The Prick or Spur of Love*, "On the Trinity" in *The Poems of William Shoreham*, all note this. Especially is wisdom attributed to the Son in "Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving" in the *Codex Exoniensis*, the *Ormulum*, *English Metrical Homilies*, *The Myroure of Our Lady*, and *The Donet*. On the other hand, Wisdom is attributed to the Holy Ghost in *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* and in *The Lay Folkes' Mass Book*. However, the Son not only possesses wisdom, according to Middle English writings, but also bestows it upon his suppliants. It is as Wisdom, however, that the Son appears most frequently in Middle English. In many macaronic hymns he is *Patris Sapientia*. Numerous citations of this kind, speaking of the Son as Wisdom, have been sufficiently mentioned to suggest that Wisdom was the general appellation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

The personifications of divine wisdom represent Christ. In *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, Wisdom feeds the world with the bread and wine which are very flesh and blood of Christ. In *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* Wyse-dome is the prioress, the wisdom of Christ that should rule our lives and dwell always in our hearts. In *The Assumption of the Virgin*, Sapientia comes to take His Blessed Mother to heaven. In *The Court of Sapience*, Dame Sapience is a personification of the knowledge resident in the Deity. Christ as wisdom appears in the *Four Daughters of God*, an allegory found in this work as well as in many other Middle English writings, as *Cursor Mundi*, *Vices and Virtues*, Lydgate's *Lyf of Our Lady* and *Poem on the Prospect of Peace*, *The Salutation Play of the Coventry Cycle*, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, *Piers Plowman*, and *Jacob's Well*. The most important personifications of Wisdom as Christ occur in the morality, *Wisdom*, and in *Orologium Sapientiae*.

The biblical symbols for wisdom are effectively used in the various works describing this virtue, especially in the allegories, but none is more provocative of thought than the use of the four trees, cypress, cedar, olive, and palm, in making the Cross for Christ, and in fashioning the war-steed for the Christ-Knight in the allegory.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I

From a careful study of the wisdom concept in the Bible and from a consideration of the comments of others who have made such study, it is evident that the outstanding characteristics of biblical wisdom, i. e., the important phases under which wisdom is presented, are knowledge, understanding, counsel, prudence, eloquence, judgment, and the fear of the Lord. Age is frequently a concomitant of wisdom though not requisite for it. The wisdom embracing these qualifications is human wisdom, a priceless gift of mind and soul. Added to this, skill in various artifices is called wisdom; likewise cunning and strategy, usually deceitful in purpose and wrongfully styled wisdom. The "wisdom of the princes of this world" is the term applied to the power of magicians, the wise men of Egypt, Chaldea, and Babylonia, to perform feats preternatural and wonderful. There is to be noted a carnal wisdom which embraces the art of subtle reasoning and vain seduction, a perversion of the ideal concept of this gift. These various forms may be considered as worldly wisdom, which may easily be subdivided into two species, commendable wisdom and cunning or trickery.

Distinct from these two general classifications is the wisdom that foresees events and prophesies things to come. This in turn may be considered under two phases: divination of the future by magic, interpretation of omens and portents, designated the wisdom of magic and witchcraft or preternatural prophetic wisdom, and secondly, the prophetic wisdom of the great patriarchs, prophets, and saints of God. The wisdom of folly is another interesting phase considered primarily as "the folly of the Cross" but worthy of attention from another angle, the wisdom that may be learned from folly. Greatest of all is divine wisdom, one of the attributes of the Godhead and the personification of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Even the symbols and comparisons used in Holy Scripture when referring to wisdom present worthwhile matter for study and analogy.

II

Our scrutiny of Middle English texts and critical works bearing on wisdom has resulted in gathering the citations offered, showing that the same characteristics outstanding in the biblical concept appear in Middle English writings. We have selected first those reflecting the qualities mentioned above as indicating human or worldly wisdom. In the old homilies and homilectic treatises, the *Ormulum*, *Vices and Virtues*, *Genesis and Exodus*, *Cursor Mundi*, *Ayeribite of Inwyte*, *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, *Handlyng Synne*, *The Court of Sapience*, *Revelations of Saint Birgitta*, *The Book of the Ordre of Cliyvalry*, *Dan Jon Gaytry's Sermon*, *The Folewer to the Donet*, wisdom is defined or mentioned under one or several of these characteristics, the different phases occurring with a frequency warranting the conclusion that Middle English writers were familiar with the biblical concept of worldly wisdom in every phase.

Not only do the definitions of wisdom bear this resemblance. The same characteristics are repeated in types and in personifications. Particularly interesting among the biblical types appearing in Middle English are Solomon and Daniel. Solomon is cited as wise on account of his knowledge, his understanding, his counsel, his judgment and discernment, his disputation with the Queen of Saba, his fear of the Lord. His age fails to advance in wisdom; Melchizedek supplies the biblical figure which stands for wisdom in age. Daniel is the particular type for keen discernment and unfaltering judgment; Moses, for counsel.

Holy men and women frequently occur as types. Katherine of Alexandria typifies all the various phases. She possesses boundless knowledge, penetrating understanding, wise counsel, prudent discrimination. Her eloquence amazes the Emperor. Her judgment and fear of the Lord convert her hearers. She could fittingly be called the personification of human and divine wisdom. Juliana almost equals Katherine in her wise disputations with her persecutors. The holy bishops, Philip of Paris and Guy of Valence, possess wisdom as knowledge, counsel, and eloquence. Many names are mentioned in the homilies and lives of the saints as worthy of note on account of some phase of worldly wisdom.

Characters from classical literature also are prominent as wisdom

types in Middle English historical legend and romance. Aristotle shares honors for first place with Alexander. These two are favorite wise men in Medieval England, not less honored in the writings of that time than Arthur and Alfred. Isope in *The Tale of Beryn* is another well-defined example of commendable worldly wisdom. Geoffrey, in the same tale, stands for cunning, as does Daris in the romance of *Floriz and Blancheflur*. The Seven Sages of Rome combined cunning with their wisdom and exemplify the same combination in some of the tales they relate. The Wise Peronelle in *Confessio Amantis* typifies ingenuity. The wise ladies in the Middle English romances usually excelled in necromancy as part of their wisdom and knowledge. The maid or confidante in the same romances typifies cunning or skill.

The same characteristics color the personifications of worldly wisdom in Middle English writings. In *The Court of Sapience*, Dame Sapience represents knowledge of things earthly and divine. She teaches discretion. Prudence, Counsel, Dread of God, dwell in her Court. In *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, Wisdame is worldly wise and personifies cunning or craft rather than the laudable virtue. In *Confessio Amantis* Wisdom is presented as human and subject to human faults. Chaucer places her among the mourners for Pite, an understanding personification. *The Assembly of Gods* contains various wisdom characters. In the battle between the Vices and the Virtues, Celestial Sapience, Konnyng, and Wysdom are the minor captains led by Grace. Konnyng commands a much larger force than either of the other two. The fox and the serpent in the animal stories allegorically represent cunning.

Thus we have noted the biblical characteristics of what we have termed worldly wisdom in Middle English texts; we have seen the same qualities typified in biblical personages, in holy men and women, in characters from classical literature, and in the wise ladies of the Middle English romances. We have studied the worldly wisdom personifications of the Middle English period and have found them to embody these same characteristics that have their origin in the biblical concept.

III

Prophetic wisdom is mentioned in many Middle English works under various phases, types and personifications, but these fall

under the two classifications noted in the biblical idea: preternatural prophetic wisdom and the supernatural gift of prophecy. Certain historical, mythological, and biblical characters were looked upon as prophets. Virgil, to medieval writers, was most famous for his skill in magical arts; he was the popular enchanter and necromancer who used his powers for his country's welfare and protection, this patriotism having a strong appeal for the English heart. His *Fourth Eclogue* with its apparent prediction of Our Saviour's birth placed him among the Old Testament prophets in English literature. Lydgate, Gower, Caxton, and the authors of the *Towneley Plays* mention Virgil as such a wisdom type. Aristotle excelled all other philosophers, possessing not only an unbounded store of learning but also scientific lore of the stars. He was endowed with the spirit of prophecy as noted in Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Alexander, like Virgil, is a type of magical foreknowledge and evidenced keen interest in all divining agencies. He invoked the gods for oracles and sought of philosophers the interpretation of omens. Anectanabus is mentioned as wise man, astrologer, magician, and shape-shifter. Merlin possessed all these powers in an eminent degree. He was the outstanding type of preternatural prophetic wisdom, appearing as a boy prophet, a mighty enchanter, shape-shifter, diviner—the wisest man in the world—his wisdom partaking of the demon's preternatural intelligence. The Sibyl was a particular favorite on account of her gift of prophecy, being held in veneration by both pagans and Christians. She not only foretold the coming of Christ but uttered other predictions and recorded the words of the wise Merlin. She is regarded as the valiant woman, her wisdom being exceeded only by that of Christ.

Sorceresses and learned ladies were almost synonymous terms in Middle English times, for the learned lady had to excel in necromancy. Types of this kind appear in Melior of the *Partenope*, who began this study at the age of fifteen, having already mastered all other branches of learning; in Cassandra who used the stars in her divining; in Braunde, a wicked queen, proficient in witchcraft and magic, who used her power to transform her step-son into a werewolf; in Morgan le Fay who equalled the greatest clerks of

"nigromancy." She exercised this in spells and enchantments, even bestowing similar power on others, as the Green Knight confessed his to have come through her. Her greatest achievement was her enchantment of Merlin.

Prophetic marvels also were widely referred to in Middle English literature. Brazen heads spoke; the gods gave oracles. Omens had prophetic significance. The Holy Trees prophesied as when they foretold Alexander's early death. Birds revealed the future in various ways. The raven usually presaged misfortune, while the dove signified wisdom and was indicative of love and help. The great white fowls in Xerxes' palace could foretell whether a sick person would live or die. Also closely connected with prophecy was the serpent, its appearance foretelling death or change of ruler, as in the case of Melusine. Ointments and charms were believed potent to change a man into a werewolf or restore a man's wit. Palmistry and physiognomy could help to indicate wisdom, and the date of birth, in some instances, was fraught with prophetic meaning. This English love for marvelous portents did not neglect the Star that led the Wise Men from the East, nor the Magi who found Divine Wisdom through their study of the stars, thus seeming to hallow the oriental practice of divination. It is also noted that God himself commissioned Moses and Aaron to confound Pharaoh and his wise men by their superior magic.

Prophetic personages from the Old Testament appear frequently in Middle English texts. They are treated with great reverence, especially the prophets, processions of whom appear in the cycle plays. Not only the prophets accepted as such in the *Bible* but Adam, Moses, Solomon, Job, all are regarded as possessing foreknowledge. Daniel, on account of his power to interpret dreams and visions, and Joseph, son of Jacob, for a like understanding, are very frequent representatives from the Old Testament. Dreams and visions served as prophetic warnings,—for example, Pilate's wife's dream, Eollo's dream of the bees, or King John's dream of the lacerated Saviour. Visions are often recorded. Edward the Confessor, on his deathbed, foresaw the disaster that would overwhelm his domains. St. Anselm had a vision which foretold the death of William Eufus. St. Cuthbert's appearance to King Alfred foreshadowed the coming good fortune of the king.

Many other dreams, visions, and portents served to foretell or to forewarn. Especially was the divining spirit evident in the saints of God, specific examples furnished in St. Guthlac, St. Neot, St. Editha, and many others.

Finally, it may be noted that the wise man, in addition to being an interpreter of dreams and strange happenings, as in the case of Daniel, Merlin, usually was skilled in observance of the heavens. Again Merlin may serve as an example, or the Magi, equally proficient in both of these qualifications. To the more fantastic imagination of certain writers, the wise man possessed powers of shape-shifting or otherwise disguising himself, as seen in Anectanabus, Morgan la Fay, Merlin. He may be of preternatural birth, as was Alexander, and is often accused of contact with evil spirits, as was Virgil. In many instances he is unusually old, of indefinite years, as was Merlin, and his dwelling may be unusual, in keeping with his age and exceptional wisdom, as was Merlin's house of seventy doors and seventy windows. The unusual seems to be the outstanding characteristic of the man wise in prophecy, just as his gift is unusual among the children of men. The prophets of the Old Law and the saints of the New Dispensation approach very near to Divine Wisdom in their prognostications. They were considered God's special representatives, exceptionally endowed with prophetic and divining powers, closely connected with the life of Our Saviour and primarily interested in man's eternal welfare. It was for the purpose of teaching truth and exemplifying God's law that His saints enjoyed the wisdom of prophecy.

IV

The wisdom of folly was well understood by Middle English authors. Not only do we find frequent allusion by quotation or paraphrase to the biblical teaching "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," but also original comments upon the Folly of the Cross and the wisdom that appears to be folly to the godless. Wise suggestions for avoiding folly and for increasing in wisdom by learning from another's folly occur in the homilies and homiletic treatises. The value of folly as a vehicle of wisdom was fully appreciated as is evidenced by Middle English works on this theme. *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus* and similar dia-

logues present the wise man being outwitted by the fool. These trials of wit and wisdom, while they differ greatly in the tone and character of the questions and answers, illustrate the wisdom of folly in two ways. First, by contrasting personified wisdom and wit or folly, and secondly, by showing how much real wisdom is often concealed under apparent folly. The same cleverness in outwitting evil by intelligence in the guise of the fool is seen in the types of Geoffrey, the Cripple, in *The Tale of Beryn*, and in the heroes of *Oesta Romanorum* tales who save their lives or accomplish their desires through their ready wit.

Fools may dare to do what wise men would appear foolhardy in attempting, so Middle English writers often used the fool as an instrument of wisdom or rebuke. In the *Wise Men of Gotham* we have such types, men wise enough to assume the role of fools to avert the king's displeasure, and in reality successful wise men since their ruse accomplished the desired end. It is clearly stated in *Anglo-Saxon Apothegms*, "that is wisdom, that a wise man should pretend folly/⁷ and Cato is quoted as saying, "To feign folly sometimes is wisdom." *The Ship of Fools* is, in purpose, a treatise on wisdom, the fool-symbol being used to inculcate moral teaching, rebuke, and precept, contrast often proving more effective than direct statement. In *The Sage Fool's Testament*, rebuke is severely administered to the master and his household by the fool, wisdom presented in the garb of folly, an audacious act that only a fool could manage. Lydgate's *Order of Folys*, "three score and three/" chastises vice and urges the duty of the wise man by contrast.

The Great Exemplar of the Wisdom of Folly appears in Middle English as the fool before the Sanhedrin in Robert of Brunne's English version of Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord, and the Hours of the Passion*. His gospel wisdom of foolishness in suffering gladly, in cheerful renunciation, and in universal charity are repeated in *Vices and Virtues*. The English mystics, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Juliana of Norwich, rival Jacopone da Todi in the folly inspired by the Wisdom of Christ. Their writings burn with the love of God; their lives, to the eyes of the world, present vain folly and senselessness. Francis of Assisi, the saint of simplicity and folly, was loved by medieval

Englishmen as the account of his life in *The Early South-English Legendary* shows. In *An Alphabet of Tales* and in *Jacob's Well* the humble nun, apparently a fool, is justified as one of God's saints. Similarly the tumbler, the troubadour, and the blind Dindymus, by their simplicity and apparent folly merited the help of Our Blessed Mother.

The great types of this folly that is wisdom are the saints and martyrs. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* notes examples. Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*, his *Homilies*, *The Blickling Homilies*, *Early English Poems and Lives of the Saints*, *Early South-English Legendary*, the Middle English versions of *The Life of St. Alexius*, *The Life of Saint Katherine*, all teem with accounts in which this wisdom of folly is especially evident. Not only the well known saints of the Church, Paul, Barnabas, Andrew, Sebastian, Lawrence, Martin, Nicholas, Agatha, Agnes, Ursula, Cecilia, Eugenia, Katherine, Juliana, Eufrosia, Mary of Egypt are praised, but also the English patrons, George, Dunstan, Alban, Neote, Cuthbert, Wulfstan, Edmund the Confessor, Thomas a Beket. Stories were used to impress the importance of this wisdom of renunciation. "Pers the Usurer" in Kobert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* is such a story, presenting Pers as a type. Very many examples of this kind are to be found, leaving no doubt that Middle English authors understood and appreciated the biblical wisdom of folly.

V

In our study of divine wisdom as seen in Middle English works, we find the love of God to be considered its first characteristic; God's grace supplies wisdom: contemplation results from it. It is one of the seven medicines of the seven deadly sins; it renders the soul pure; it comforts man and enables him to make peace and to keep it. Humility tends upon wisdom. Simplicity is not pleasing to God without wisdom. Truth is essential to it. Obedience, mildness, prowess, liberality, chastity and sobriety guard and direct it. Middle English writers predicated wisdom of many of God's saints; they may be thought to consider it characteristic of all of them, since he must needs be wise who attains to God, but especially has it been noted in the lives of Aethelthryth, Hilda, Editha, each an abbess distinguished for wisdom and prudence.

We find it manifested in various ways in the lives of Ecberth, Wilfrid, Sebastian, Polycarp, the Kings Ealfrith and Eadwine, Chrysanthus, Daria, Wymund, Zosimus, Sulpicius, Martin, Agnes, Birgitta, the Apostles and Evangelists; all these appear in Middle English as evidencing special wisdom in God's service. Above all others is Mary, the Mother of the Wisdom of God, accredited with this virtue.

Perfect wisdom is always considered an attribute of the Godhead. The incomprehensible wisdom of God, to be truly understood, would require man to be as wise as God, but in a measure, it may be comprehended by a study of ourselves, and learned through the true faith. Frequent and various are the references to God's wisdom. As Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, God and Man, He is all-wise. Angels and men, the material universe, are all produced by His wisdom. Power, wisdom, and love are cited in many works as the distinguishing characteristics of the Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but each Person is mentioned as associated with wisdom, individually and in connection with each other, as Son and Holy Ghost, and the Father and the Son, but especially is it predicated of the Son. It is one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost but the Son was chosen to redeem man because man's temptation was against the wisdom of God and the Son as the Wisdom of the Father, would atone for it. In any account of the life of Christ His wisdom is always stressed from His discourse in the temple to His death on the Cross. He not only possesses wisdom but also bestows it, and in the old homilectic treatises prayers mentioning this fact and imploring His help are found. He is called Wisdom, God's Wisdom, the Father's Wisdom, so often that it seems to be His best known and generally accepted appellation. To list a few of the works in which the Son is mentioned as Wisdom will justify this claim. The hymn "On the Nativity" in *Codex Exoniensis*, Alfred's *Boetius*, *Old English Homilies*, *Vices and Virtues*, *Genesis and Exodus*, *Cursor Mundi*, *Byrhtferth's Manual*, "The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ," one of Aelfric's *Homilies*, the *Heptateuch*, *Twelfth Century Homilies*, Grosseteste's *Castle of Love*, Jack Upland's *Political Poems*, *The Life of Saint Katherine*, all speak of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity as Wisdom. As *Patris sapientia* He is mentioned in *Horae de*

Cruce, York Hours of the Cross, The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book, First Pageant of the Fall of Lucifer, Lydgate's The Fifteen Ooes of Christ, and Johannes de Irlandia's Oracio de Beatissima Virgine, these besides the many works in which His wisdom receives comment.

Not only is the appellation Wisdom given to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity very often in Middle English works, but personifications of Christ as Wisdom are also frequent. Moreover, our Blessed Mother is the castle wherein Wisdom dwells. Divine Wisdom appears in allegory in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, Wisdom sought by Charity to save the world. In *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, Wisdom is prioress, representing the wisdom mentioned in Ecclesiasticus as "created before all," for love of which all our actions must be performed. This when applied to the spiritual life, allegorically symbolizes Christ. Sapientia appears in *The Assumption of the Virgin* to summon His Blessed Mother to heaven. In *The Court of Sapience*, Dame Sapience is a personification of divine wisdom irrespective of the Trinity of Persons. This work also contains the story of the *Four Daughters of God* in which Christ enters as Wisdom. *Cursor Mundi, Vices and Virtues, Lydgate's Lyf of Our Lady and Poem on the Prospect of Peace, the Salutation Play in the Coventry Cycle, the Meroure of Wyssdome, The Castle of Perseverance, The Abbey of the Holy Ghost, The Vision of Piers Plowman, and Jacob's Well* make use of this allegory. In the *Meroure of Wyssdome*, Dame Sapience signifies the Mother of God and the Father is besought as "wissdome infynit" to send His Son for man's redemption. The two most important personifications of Wisdom as Christ in Middle English are the morality play, *Wisdom*, and the *Orologium Sapientiae*, the latter being the most important source for the former, both presenting wisdom as described in *Proverbs* and *Book of Wisdom* with biblical symbols and comparisons. We can not agree with Thomas Usk who suggests that the Pearl may allegorically symbolize the wisdom of God. Sister Madeleva has too convincingly interpreted it to signify spiritual dryness. But Usk's suggestion adds further evidence of Middle English familiarity with the wisdom personification.

The symbolism used in descriptions of wisdom by Middle English writers reflects biblical similes and metaphors. Fire and

the dove represent wisdom of the Holy Spirit; gold, precious stones, treasures,, milk and honey, stars, the sun, weapons of war, towers, a castle, a house with seven columns, bread, rivers, flowers, herbs, spices, grapes, the trees: cedar, palm, cypress, olive, plane, all have biblical origin. A most interesting use of these symbols in connection with Christ as Wisdom is found in the *Legends of the Holy Rood* which describe the Cross as made of four pieces of wood, each being from a different one of the four trees: palm, cypress, cedar and olive. The same four woods compose the war-horse used by the Christ-Knight in the *Allegory of the Christ-Knight*, and Lydgate calls the Mother of God in his poem, *To Mary, the Queen of Heaven*, " celestial cipresse " and " cidre of perfit holynesse."

A study much more pretentious than the present would have to be carried to a conclusion before the claim could be advanced that all citations pertaining to wisdom in Middle English literature had been exhausted. Nevertheless, I feel that sufficient material has here been collected to add to knowledge concerning ideas of wisdom current among Middle English writers; to show the variety and nature of the concepts of wisdom expressed by these authors; to make evident how closely they resemble the variety and nature of the biblical concepts of wisdom and to illustrate the ready use made of biblical material by these authors for pleasure and instruction. This knowledge of the close resemblance of the Middle English wisdom concept to its biblical prototype in all its phases, and of the varied and intelligent use made of it by writers of the period adds to our knowledge of their familiarity with the Bible and emphasizes the fact that they clearly understood this subject, for they have shown keen appreciation and accurate discrimination in distinguishing the various phases of wisdom, in presenting these various qualities in characters as types, and in using such personifications for instruction and edification. The great number of wisdom references, the variety of types of wisdom, the frequency of wisdom personifications, the importance of the ideas treated, show that during the Middle English period Wise Men and Wisdom received equal if not more attention than Fools and Folly, the latter, in fact being subsidiary in the didactic sense, serving mainly to inculcate by contrast and by example the teaching of Wisdom.

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