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The power of the medieval Solomon-magus and Solomon-auctor revealed through the "Canterbury Tales", "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", and the "Tale of the Sankgreal"

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THE POWER OF THE MEDIEVAL SOLOMON-MAGUS AND SOLOMON-

AUCTOR REVEALED THROUGH THE CANTERBURY TALES, SIR GAWAIN

AND THE GREEN KNIGHT, AND THE TALE OF THE SANKGREAL

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Knudson, Karen R. Ph.D., Purdue University, August 2016. The Power of the Medieval Solomon-*Magus* and Solomon-*Auctor* Revealed through the *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the *Tale of the Sankgreal*. Major Professor: Dorsey Armstrong.

The Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* traditions begin in the biblical record, and attribute authority to Solomon not only through his ever-familiar wisdom but also his authorship of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; his administration and craftsmanship in the building of the Temple; his peaceableness as king; his understanding of the natural world; and his weakness for women. The context for these traditions in the Middle Ages illuminates, in particular, the work of Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* in the *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*, which is the focus on this paper. The *auctor* tradition, based primarily on Solomon's kingship and authorship, was reinforced through orthodox Christian sources of the ancient and medieval time periods. The pedagogical exercise embodied in the three texts attributed to Solomon—the penitent shall progress from learning to live wisely in the world (Proverbs) to learning to disdain for worldly entanglements (Ecclesiastes) to embracing union with Christ (Song of Songs)—began with the earliest Christian commentary. Intrinsic to the idea of progress from Proverbs to Song of Songs is the assumption that certain texts should not be available to the lewd. The *magus* tradition is

based on the early association of Solomon with a preternatural understanding of the world. This tradition was carried forward by apocrypha and texts of ritual magic, and influenced vernacular works like the *Cursor Mundi* and *Solomon and Saturn Prose Pater Noster Dialogue* in the milieu of medieval texts.

In the *Canterbury Tales*, two brief glimpses of Solomon-*magus* shine through to show Chaucer's awareness of the tradition, but Solomon-*auctor* is the figure that dominates. In *Melibee*, where Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are Prudence's primary proof-texts, Prudence and, eventually Melibee, learns to live wisely in the world, but the appearance of Solomon-*auctor* raises questions about methods of interpretation and the bases of authority. These issues move to the forefront in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, in which Solomon himself becomes the Wife's proof text, and in the *Merchant's Tale*, in which January displays the failure of the lewd to appropriately interpret love as represented by the Song of Songs. The *Parson's Tale* offers the paradoxical truth that the only good interpreter is the one who recognizes, and pays penance for, his own sin.

Solomon-*magus*, and his association with secret knowledge and supernatural power, illuminates the function of the pentangle and the green girdle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Solomon-*auctor* provides narrative impetus for Gawain's journey. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* can be read as a narrative test of learned magic. Gawain is armed specifically as a Solomonic knight to prepare him to meet his mysterious, supernatural foe. Solomonic texts of ritual magic, like the *Ars notoria*, provide the appropriate training for a knight to meet the mystery of the Green Knight: Wild Man, demon, faerie. The pentangle, and learned magic, turns out, ultimately, to be powerless, and Gawain's battle is revealed as an internal one instead of external. The "real"

Solomon and his legendary failure remind Gawain that salvation is only through repentance.

The double tradition of Solomon-*magus-auctor* is at work in Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* throughout. Galahad is the ultimate Solomonic knight: He is Galahad-*magus* as he completes the quest for the Holy Grail through his singular, supernatural traits, and he is Galahad-*auctor* as he fulfills the pedagocial pilgrimage from Proverbs through the Song of Songs. This interaction explains one of the mysteries of the character of Galahad because he is presented simultaneously a unique character in romance history—one who can never be imitated in his ability to heal, for instance—and as an example of holiness for his brethren (and Malory's readers) to emulate.

This study lays the groundwork for a twenty-first century understanding of the complexity of a Solomon reference in a medieval text. The poweful traditions of Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* make King Solomon an attractive figure for a wide variety of authors to use to highlight issues of authority and interpretion regarding the operation of the supernatural in the natural world.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: SOLOMON-*AUCTOR* AND SOLOMON-*MAGUS* IN
THE MIDDLE AGES

King Solomon is a popular and powerful figure in Middle English religious and

secular texts, but his popularity and power have not been delineated. This dissertation is

an effort to provide an overview of the traditions that provide the context for references

to Solomon in late Middle English texts, and then to examine the function of the figure of

Solomon of three literary texts of the time period—neither of which analyses have been

done by any other scholar. In the twenty-first century, any familiarity with King Solomon

has been simplified to one epithet: wise king. My argument is that the figure of King

Solomon was quite complex in the Middle Ages, and that authors of a number of English

texts used that complexity to add to the complexity of their own messages and stories.

Wherever he appears in Middle English texts, Solomon functions much like the

pentangle, the symbol that came to represent him in ancient and medieval

pseudepigraphal writings.[1] In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the *Gawain*-Poet

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[1] With reference to the Old Testament, the Apocrypha are those Books of the Bible which are included in
the earliest translations, the Septuagint and the Vulgate. See *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Restamentum graece
iuxta LXX interpretes,* ed. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft,
2006) and *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem,* ed. Robert Weber and Roger Gryson, 5th ed. (Stuttgart:
Deutsche Bibelschaft, 2007). However scholars of the Protestant Reformation rejected them as being
canonical because at the time there were no suviving Hebrew witnesses to these books or passages.
However, they continue to be part of the Catholic canon. See *The Vulgate Bible* [with] *Douay Rhiems
Translation,* ed. Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 1, 4,-5, 8, 13, 17,
21, 6 vols. in 7 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010-2013)—this contains the sixteenth century
revised or Tridentine Latin text, and an 18th century revision of the 17th century Douay-Rheims edition.
Among the Old Testament Apocrypha is the *Liber Spapientia Salomonis* (Book of the Wisdom of
Solomon). See R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English,* 2

introduces the pentangle as the sign Gawain's shield: "Hit is a syngne þat Salamon set

sumquyle / In bytoknyng of trawþe" (625-26).[2] The pentangle is a magical symbol, as V.

F. Hopper points out: "[the] pentacle [in contrast to the cross] appears to have been

almost exclusively of magical significance."[3] So, this magical symbol is one

representation of Solomon from ancient times. The pentangle is also a figure for

Solomon, I would argue, because it represents the operation of Solomon in medieval

texts. The *Gawain*-Poet describes the five "poyntez" of the pentangle, but the figure of

Solomon is made up of many points, and each "vmbelappez and loukez in oþer"; the

figure of King Solomon is an "'endeles knot'" (627, 630). While discussing the

connections between the *Testament of Solomon* and the Song of Songs, Jesse Rainbow

uses the phrase "constellation of elements" to describe the connection between the

pseudepigraphical text and the canonical one.[4] His point is that, although there are few

direct quotations from the Song of Songs in the *Testament of Solomon*, the many echoes

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vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968 [1913]), 1: 518-68. James H. Charlesworth defines "Pseudepigrapha" as writings: "1) that … are Jewish or Christian; 2) that are often attributed to ideal figures in Israel's past; 3) that customarily claim to contain God's word or message; 4) that frequently build upon ideas and narratives present in the Old Testament; 5) and that almost always were composed either during the period 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 or, though late, apparently preserve, albeit in an edited form, Jewish traditions that date from that period." J. M. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* Vol. 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, Vol. 2: *Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday: 1985), 1: xxv. Among such works is the *Testament of Solomon,* composed sometime from the 1st to the 3rd century A.D. (Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1: 935-87.

[2] *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleaness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* Ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 5th ed., Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007).230-31. All quotations from the poem are from this edition.

[3] Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression* (1938; repr., New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1969). Hopper argues, "Had the author been primarily interested in these [Christian] moral and spiritual pentads, there is no conceivable reason for his not choosing that other and more fitting 5-pointed emblem, the cross, rather than such a notorious magical symbol," 124.

[4] Jesse Rainbow, "The Song of Songs and the *Testament of Solomon*: Solomon's Love Poetry and Christian Magic," *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007), 249-74 at 262.

and similar images build a distinct Solomon "constellation" by the time one finishes

reading the *Testament of Solomon*. I contend that Rainbow's concept for these two texts

describes the operation of the figure of Solomon in a wide variety of medieval texts. By

the time one works one's way through the *Canterbury Tales*, for instance, with its

seventy-nine direct references to Solomon, the ancient Hebrew king seems to be another

pilgrim journeying to Canterbury. Solomon's wide array of attributes, most of which

were established in Hebrew scripture, contribute to the "endeles" aspect of the referent,

Solomon. To tether the wide array of Solomon attributes, I will use two rubrics to

describe the primary threads of the Solomon legend: the Solomon-*auctor* tradition and

the Solomon-*magus* tradition. Solomon-*auctor* positions King Solomon as "author" and

as "authority," following Middle English definitions of the word.[5] Jesse Rainbow coined

the term "Solomon-*magus*" to describe the tradition that "regarded Solomon as the great

exorcist and magician of antiquity, the forerunner of the exorcistic activity of Jesus, and

the genius of later Christian magic and divination."[6] A Solomon-*auctor* reference

suggests the power of biblical kingship and canonical authority; Solomon-*magus* suggests

the power of the supernatural world accessed through the natural world. An author that

refers to an integrated Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus*, then, brings to bear in his or

her text a larger-than-life legend with historical and religious roots. The pseudepigraphal

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[5] The *Middle English Dictionary* provides these definitions: 1. (a) One who makes or creates a person or thing, one who founds an institution, one who brings about an action or a condition; creator, maker, originator, founder; perpetrator; (b) ancestor; 2. (a) A source of authoritative information or opinion, an authority; a teacher; **maken ~**, to make (sth.) an authority, authorize, vouch for; (b) a writer, an author. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), under "auctour," http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=orths&q1=auctor&rgxp=constrained (accessed July 25, 2013).

[6] Rainbow, The Song of Songs 249.

Testament of Salomon combines both Solomon *auctor* and Solomon *magus* as Solomon battles with demons during the building of his temple. Usually, however, one or the other of the traditions dominates, depending on the needs of the text. I have included a table with representative texts to help clarify the definitions of Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* and the uses of these two terms:

Table 1. Solomon-*Magus*[7] and Solomon-*Auctor*[8] Traditons

	Ancient & Medieval Commentary			Verncular Biblical Narratives		Magic Text	Story Collection & Romance		
	Origen	Bede	Bernard of Clairvaux	*Cursor Mundi*	*ME Metrical Paraphrase of the OT*	*Testament of Solomon*	*Canterbury Tales*	*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*
Solomon-*Auctor*	Philosopher; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs as progressive teaching from moral science to natural science to "inspective" sciences; type of Christ ("Peacable");	Builder of the Temple and craftsman of its interior, all of which figure the Church; "Peacemaker"; knowledge of the nature of all plants & animals; idolater	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs as progressive teaching; Song of Songs is contemplative & only to be read by the disciplined; "secure in peace"	Learned the 7 liberal arts; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; Discernment as wise king; Temple builder; Solomon's sin with emphasis on repentance **Possible overlap**: Legend of the Cross—miraculous/magical elements	Choice of wisdom; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, "Psalmes"; craftsmanship and wealth as builder; knowledge of the 7 liberal arts; knowledge of the nature of plants & minerals	Temple-builder; choice of wisdom; authority & power are primary attributes	Wise counsel; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, and Song of Songs; philogynist, misogynist, and idolater; the Parson turns 3 latter characteristics into a lesson about fallen human nature	Experience of Gawain & reader mirrors the progressive pilgrimage from Proverbs to Song of Songs	Experience of Galahad & reader successfully mirrors the progressive pilgrimage from Proverbs to Song of Songs;

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[7] Coined by Jesse Rainbow in "The Song of Songs and the *Testament of Solomon*: Solomon's Love Poetry and Christian Magic," *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007), 249.

[8] Created to encapsulate the tradition of Solomon's authority and authorship, based on the Middle English meanings of the word "auctor" in the *Middle English Dictionary*: 1. (a) One who makes or creates a person or thing, one who founds an institution, one who brings about an action or a condition; creator, maker, originator, founder; perpetrator; (b) ancestor; 2. (a) A source of authoritative information or opinion, an authority; a teacher; **maken ~**, to make (sth.) an authority, authorize, vouch for; (b) a writer, an author. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), under "auctour," http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=orths&q1=auctor&rgxp=constrained (accessed July 25, 2013).

Table 1 Continued

	Ancient & Medieval Commentary			Verncular Biblical Narratives		Magic Text	Story Collection & Romance		
Solomon-*Magus*	knows the natures of all things—covert reference?	No reference	No reference	Reference to "þe stori"—legendary material about Solomon; comprehensive knowledge of the physical world	Only a possible implication	Magic ring controls demons; esoteric knowledge of nature (astrologer); power in his name	Crafter of magical talismans (*Squire's Tale*) & as alchemist (*Canon's Yeoman's Tale*)	Pentangle & girdle as talismans	Galahad miraculously/ magically quits the mysteries of the Grail

The purpose of this Introduction is to outline the Solomon tradition in the Middle Ages based on the Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* traditions transmitted from ancient texts and practices into the culture and texts of the Middle Ages. The focus of this Introduction, then, is on the significant ancient and medieval texts that define and carry the figure of King Solomon. The goal is to sketch the context for Solomon references in Middle English literary texts, of which I've chosen three that engage Solomon-*magus-auctor* to energize the agenda of their texts: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*. Reading Solomon from these texts finishes the dynamic image of a figure who, in the twenty-first century, has become the static, ancient "wise king." Reading these texts through the lens of Solomon-*magus-auctor* emphasizes the progressive nature of the reading experience for each one and reveals a testing ground for practices of interpretation. The chapters that follow this Introduction provide an analysis of the influence of the figure of King Solomon within and between these important texts.

No study of the figure of Solomon in Middle English poetic texts has ever been completed in spite of the richness of the Solomon tradition and the power of a Solomon reference. Elaine Tuttle Hansen's valuable study of the wisdom tradition in Old English, *The Solomon Complex: Reading Wisdom in Old English Poetry*, focuses on wisdom and poetry but only refers to Solomon in a discussion of the *Solomon and Saturn* debate texts.[1] Lawrence Besserman's scholarly work regarding the use of Biblical quotations and

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[1] Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *The Solomon Complex: Reading Wisdom in Old English Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). Hansen study provides a definition of wisdom literature based on a "complex" of characteristics: the power and limits of language, the reinforcement of authority, the significance of role of the pupil for application outside of the text, understanding of the world by defining oppositions and the universality of wisdom. For a new edition of the Old English text see: *The Old English*

figures in *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* provides a template for the function of the figure of

Solomon, but his purpose is not to provide a detailed study of any particular Biblical

figure or to look into medieval literature beyond Chaucer.[2] David C. Fowler in *The Bible*

in Early English Literature and *The Bible in Middle English Literature* also offers

important research regarding the function of Biblical interpretation in medieval texts, but

his works survey a broad spectrum of medieval texts and how they were influenced <u>by</u>

the Biblical tradition, not the use of any specific figure within those texts.[3]

Related research has been completed in a field associated with Biblical

interpretation, which is allegorical interpretation, or allegoresis. Maureen Quilligan

provides helpful definitions of and differentiations between narrative allegory,

personification, and typology in her book *The Language of Allegory: Defining the*

Genre.[4] Although she does not address the function of the figure of Solomon per se, her

system provides a foundation for the role of such figures in literary texts—as

personification and type to be interpreted through allegoresis.[5] James J. Paxson is

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Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn, ed. and trans. Daniel Anlezark, Anglo-Saxon Texts 7 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009) which supercedes *The Poetical Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn,* ed. Robert J. Menner, MLA Monograph Series 13 (New York: Modern Language Association, 1941) .

[2] Lawrence Besserman, *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998). Besserman argues that the difference uses Chaucer makes of the Bible in his various works of literature reflect Chaucer's urgent interest in the contemporary issues of authority and interpretation. Quotations, partial quotations, misquotations, glosses, paraphrases were all used not only for effect within a narrative but also to comment on the state of biblical authority.

[3] David C. Fowler, *The Bible in Early English Literature*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), and *The Bible in Middle English Literature*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984). In the former, Fowler provides some valuable information on Solomon (chapters one and five) and the development of exegesis and translation, but his scope is much broader than my focus on the function of Solomon. In *The Bible in Middle English Literature* Fowler does not mention Solomon, although he does discuss, in more general terms, the influence of the Bible on medieval drama and poetry.

[4] Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979).

[5] Quilligan argues that narrative allegory "works horizontally, rather than vertically, so that meaning accretes serially, interconnecting and criss-crossing the verbal surface," and allegoresis is the method of interpretation working "vertically" and applied from outside of the text to determine meaning, p. 28.

interested in allegory as well but focuses on recurring figures, each of which is a "device for transcending spatiality."[6] Paxson describes such figures as "discreet formal entities [that] can be likened to texts."[7] While no scholars in this field have chosen to make a study of the figure of Solomon, their work is of particular value in illuminating the commonalities of the operation of the popular biblical figure within different literary texts. The purpose of the works of these scholars is not to provide an in-depth analysis of any particular figure or text but to provide an overview from which others can delve deeper by focusing on a particular allegorical figure or text, which is what I am attempting to do in this dissertation.

This project is an effort to take these studies a step further in a particular direction—into the workings of one powerful figure within medieval literary tradition. Clearly, the role of wisdom, biblical texts and images, and allegory were important for medieval authors and audiences. Taking contextual data on Solomon from historical and religious sources and then drilling into familiar medieval literary texts reveals strata otherwise unexposed, which is particularly powerful for the *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Quest for the Holy Grail* because, as three of the most popular works of the Middle Ages, much strata has already been exposed. They make use of the power of the figure of Solomon and his traditions while also making use

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[6] James J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 14. Paxson provides definition(s), development, varieties (with examples) of personification, which is the "foundation for allegory." Personification is making material a human characteristic or psychic entity. Paxson includes a discussion of types and antitypes, of which Solomon can be considered one. Paxson's work helps to label the figuration of Solomon, but Paxson does not directly address the figure of Solomon. He addresses the function of personification and allegory in other well-known medieval, allegorical works: *Piers Plowman*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, the *Parliament of Fowls*.
[7] ibid., 10

of him fairly freely for their own purposes. Chaucer, for instance, shows an awareness of the Solomon-*magus* tradition, but almost exclusively—and regularly—avails himself of the Solomon-*auctor* tradition to forefront his concern with interpretation and authority. The *Gawain*-poet primarily makes use of the Solomon-*magus*—versus Solomon-*auctor*—tradition to forefront the issue of learned or ritual magic[8] for his contemporary audience, while Solomon-*auctor* simultaneously energizes the progressive aspect of the plot to push Gawain, and the reader, from learning to live wisely in the world to embracing union with Christ. In Malory's *Quest*, Galahad embodies both traditions, revealing himself as the one-and-only Galahad-*magus* who fulfills and quits the Grail quest and also as Galahad-*auctor*, displayed to his audience as a model who can be followed, albeit down a narrow path. Before I analyze in detail the work of the figure of Solomon in these literary texts, however, I will establish the different aspects of Solomon's reputation in the Middle Ages based on traditions that begin with the biblical text itself.

The Biblical Record

Any assessment of the figure of Solomon must be based on the biblical account of his life, which begins with Solomon's dream encounter with God. I will give a summary of the significant aspects of the biblical biography before moving to an overview of the commentary tradition surrounding King Solomon and the biblical record. Chapter three of 3 Kings describes God speaking to Solomon in the dream: "Ask what thou wilt that I

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[8] Clare Fanger, ed., *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012) also uses the word "theurgy" to describe the activity expressed in texts seeking ritual access to the divine, or, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, "A system of magic…to procure communication with beneficent spirits, and by their aid produce miraculous effect."

should give thee," to which Solomon responds, "…Give therefore to thy servant an

understanding heart, to judge thy people, and discern between good and evil…" (3 Kings

3:5, 9).[9] This response was "pleasing to the Lord," according to the biblical record, and

God declares, "…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" (3 Kings 3:12)[10]. Following this encounter, Solomon promptly

enacts his first judgment: discerning the true mother between two prostitutes claiming the

same infant. His response draws the admiration of the people who see that "the wisdom

of God was in him to do judgment" (3 Kings 3:28).[11]

Chapter four of 3 Kings delineates additional kingly attributes: administrative

skill, wealth, power over enemies, authorship, and knowledge of the natural world. The

first part of the chapter lists the governors who administer territories and supply Solomon

and his house with animals and provisions, which are then described in the middle part of

the chapter. The final passage of the chapter summarizes some of Solomon's significant

attributes and begins by emphasizing his superlative wisdom: "And the wisdom of

Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the Orientals and of the Egyptians, and he was

wiser than all men…" (3 Kings 4:30-31a).[12] The very next verse is particularly significant

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[9] All English and Latin references to the Bible and biblical apocrypha are from *The Vulgate Bible* [with] *Douay-Rheims Translation,* ed. Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney. Chapters three through eleven of 3 Kings trace the reign of King Solomon, from his dream-vision of the Lord in chapter 3 when he is granted wisdom, to his understanding of nature in chapter 4, through the building of the temple in chapters five through seven, to military conquests in chapter nine, and, finally, to the condemnation of his apostasy in chapter eleven; The Latin: "Postula quod vis ut dem tibi; Dabis ergo servo tuo cor docile ut iudicare possit populum tuum et discernere inter malum et bonum."

[10] "…feci tibi secundum sermones tuos et dedi tibi cor sapiens et intellegens in tantum ut nullus ante te similis tui fuerit nec post te surrecturus sit."

[11] "…sapientiam Dei esse in eo ad faciendum iudicium"

[12] "Et praecedebat sapientia Salomonis sapientiam omnium Orientalium et Aegyptiorum, et erat sapientior cunctis hominibus…"

for the Solomon-*auctor* tradition: "Solomon also spoke three thousand parables and his poems were a thousand and five" (verse 32).[13] This verse connects, specifically, to the book of Proverbs, which also invokes Solomon's name in its first verse. Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs are also attributed to Solomon.[14] Solomon's authorship of these ancient texts is fundamental to the Solomon-*auctor* tradition.

Verse thirty-three of 3 Kings chapter four, while possibly obscure to a modern reader, provides the foundation for the Solomon-*magus* tradition : "And he treated 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" (verse 33).[15] Dennis C. Duling argues that this verse is the basis for the tradition of Solomon as astrologer, magician, and exorcist, pointing out that "[i]n these Hellenistic Jewish interpretations [Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*], beasts and flying creatures in 1 Kings 5:13 suggest various sorts of demons and spirits, while speaking about trees and plants is

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[13] "Locutus est quoque Salomon tria milia parabolas, et fuerunt carmina eius quinque et mille."

[14] Modern scholars no longer consider Solomon to be the author of any of these books, and pinpointing dates of composition according to modern scholarly standards is difficult. J. Robert Wright, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, IX (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005): Proverbs may have been composed or compiled any time between "the late eighth century B.C. down to the fourth century B.C." The probable dates of composition for Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs is slightly more precise: modern scholars estimate Ecclesiastes to have been written in the third century B.C. and Song of Songs in the fifth and/or fourth centuries B.C., xx, xxii, xxv. Roland Murphy summarizes second century Hebrew discussion of the canonicity of Ecclesiastes and, indirectly, the Song of Songs: "It can be said that the book was already considered canonical when controversy arose concerning it in the time of Rabbi 'Aqiba (d. *circa* A.D. 135). Then it was affirmed that Ecclesiastes, as well as the Song of Songs…is canonical, despite the questions that had been raised." *Ecclesiastes*, Word Biblical Commentary Series, vol. 23A (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), xxiii. Murphy also states that Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs are listed in the "earliest canonical lists among the Christian community, such as that of Melito of Sardis (d. about 190)." xxiii.

[15] "Et disputavit super lignis a cedro quae est in Libano usque ad hysopum quae egreditur de pariete, et disseruit de iumentis et volucribus et reptilibus et piscibus."

taken to refer to the plants and roots used for magical cures and exorcisms."[16] The Solomon-*magus* tradition begins, then, with Hebrew scripture.

Solomon's attributes of craftsmanship and administration in the building of the Temple are covered in detail in chapters five through nine of 3 Kings. Chapter ten marks the high point of Solomon's career as king with the visit of the Queen of Sheba and the statement that "King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom" (verse 23).[17] Sixteen occurrences of some form of the Latin word "sapientia" appear in the Solomon narrative of 3 Kings, from chapter three through chapter eleven. Chapter eleven, however, also describes Solomon's flaw and downfall: his philogyny, or love for women, as Jan Ziolkowski terms it in his Introduction to *Solomon and Marcolf*.[18]

The biblical record that in one place extols Solomon for his great wisdom in another place condemns him for his philogyny and apostasy. The condemnation in 3 Kings is clear: "And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods…And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his mind was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice" (11:4, 9).[19] This contradiction in his character haunts the figure of Solomon into the Middle Ages, a topic to which I will return shortly.

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[16] Dennis C. Duling, "The Legend of Solomon the Magician in Antiquity: Problems and Perspectives," in *Proceedings (Grand Rapids, Mich.) Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society*. 4 (1984): 1-22 at 9, 10, 11.

[17] "Magnificatus est ergo Rex Salomon super omnes reges terrae divitiis et sapientia…"

[18] Jan M. Ziolkowskiuses this term to contrast Solomon's fondness for women (philogyny) with his misogyny. *Solomon and Marcolf*, Harvard Studies in Medieval Latin 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19.

[19] "Cumque iam esset senex, depravatum est per mulieres cor eius ut sequeretur deos alienos….Igitur iratus est Dominus Salomoni quod aversa esset mens eius a Domino, Deo Israhel, qui apparuerat ei secundo."

One other important kingly attribute of Solomon's according to the biblical record is found in the book called 1 Paralipomenon, currently known as 1 Chronicles. Solomon's name as "peacable one" comes from the following verse: "…he shall be called Peaceable: and I will give peace and quietness to Israel all his days" (1 Paralipomenon 22:9).[20] This is the primary attribute supporting the Christian tradition of Solomon as a type of Christ, as Origen explains in his *Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs*: "I do not think it can be doubted that in a great many respects Solomon bears a type of Christ, either because he is called 'peaceful' or because 'the queen of the south came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon' (Mt. 12:42)."[21] Invocation of this attribute taps into the Solomon-*auctor* tradition, calling, as it does, upon Solomon's power and wisdom as king and connecting it to the new covenant of Christ as revealed in the New Testament.

"Wisdom of Solomon" is a first century deuterocanonical text, now considered to have been written in Greek, although, obviously, attributed to King Solomon.[22] Because the Apocrypha dropped out of the Protestant canon at the Reformation this text may not be as familiar to 21st-century readers as the three Solomonic texts we have been examining, but "Wisdom of Solomon" was "used frequently by the Fathers, especially the passages that could be interpreted as allegorical references to Christ or the Holy Spirit."[23] Pablo A. Torijano, in his book *Solomon: The Esoteric King* gives a helpful

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[20] "…pacificus vocabitur, et pacem et otium dabo in Israhel cunctis diebus euis."

[21] *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, trans. Rowan A. Greer (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), at 40.

[22] Sever J. Voicu, *Apocrypha*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, XV (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), xxvi.

[23] ibid.

overview of the structure of Wisdom of Solomon: "The work is divided into three parts: the description of wisdom's gift of immortality (1-6:21); the nature and power of wisdom and Solomon's quest for her (6:22-10:21); and divine wisdom or justice in the Exodus (11-19)."[24] Obviously, Solomon's association with wisdom is what prompts the writing or compiling of a book called "Wisdom," but other Solomonic attributes shine through as well. The text contains a detailed feminine personification of Wisdom including a description as a bride (chapters 6-8). The author describes the work of Wisdom from Adam through the deliverance of Hebrews from the Egyptians (10-19).

In the "Wisdom of Solomon," the king's wisdom includes a secret knowledge that is revealed exclusively to Solomon, which is an embellishment of the biblical record. As Torijano points out, in the second section of the work, Solomon speaks of a knowledge previously hidden that has been revealed to him, which he will in turn reveal to his audience (Wisdom 6:24, 7:15-21).[25] The following verses from the Wisdom of Solomon elaborate on the biblical description and emphasize the secret character of this knowledge: "For he [the Lord] hath given me the true knowledge of the things that are, to know the disposition of the whole world and the virtues of the elements…the revolutions of the year, and the dispositions of the stars, the natures of living creatures and rage of wild beasts, the force of winds and reasonings of men, the diversities of plants and the virtues of roots And all such things as are hid and not foreseen I have learned, for wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me" (7:17, 19-21).[26] The "Wisdom of

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[24] Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon: The Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition,* Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 89, 90.
[25] ibid., 90, 91
[26] "Ipse enim mihi dedit horum quae sunt scientiam veram, ut sciam dispositionem orbis terrarum et virtutes elementorum…anni cursus et stellarum dispositiones, naturas animalium et iras bestiarum, vim

Solomon," then, informs both the Solomon-*auctor* and the Solomon-*magus* traditions. Solomon is the king who is given insight into the whole history and future of wisdom and the revelation of that wisdom through this text is the result of his unique ability to access secret knowledge.

Clearly, the figure of Solomon from Hebrew tradition into the first century is robust, with an extraordinary list of attributes: wisdom, discernment, administrative skill, wealth, power over enemies, authorship, knowledge of the nature and the universe, craftsmanship, philogyny, apostasy, and peaceableness. Tensions between attributes are easy to identify in the list but the gravitational pull of such a figure is powerful, and the tensions themselves merely fuel the volatility of a Solomon reference.

<div align="center">Ancient Commentary Affirms the Solomon-Auctor Tradition</div>

As mentioned previously, the Solomon-*auctor* tradition derives part of its potency from Solomon's authorship of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and, usually, the Wisdom of Solomon. The views of early Church Fathers on the purpose and order of Solomon's books were highly influential through the Middle Ages, particularly Origen, St. Jerome, Augustine, and Pope Gregory. The Church Fathers solidify Solomon-*auctor* begun in Hebrew tradition. They also acknowledge Solomon's philogyny and address it to varying degrees of detail. The early Church Fathers acknowledge the Wisdom of Solomon as authoritative text but make no other reference to the Solomon-*magus* tradition.

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ventorum et cognitationes hominum, differentias virgultorum et cirtutes radicum. Et quaecumque sunt absconsa et inprovisa didici, omnium enim artifex docuit me, sapeientia."

In third century Alexandria, Origen, in his *Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs*, argues that the three books attributed to Solomon are a pedagogical module for the Christian:

> [Solomon] first taught in Proverbs the subject of morals, setting regulations for life together, as was fitting, in concise and brief maxims. And he included the second subject, which is called the natural discipline, in Ecclesiastes, in which he discusses many natural things. And by distinguishing them as empty and vain from what is useful and necessary, he warns that vanity must be abandoned and what is useful and right must be pursued. He also handed down the subject of contemplation in the book we have in hand, that is, Song of Songs, in which he urges upon the soul the love of the heavenly and the divine under the figure of the bride and the bridegroom, teaching us that we must attain fellowship with God by the paths of loving affection and of love.[27]

Origen proceeds, in his *Prologue*, to delineate an allegorical interpretation of Solomon's Song as the image of the relationship between Jesus and the Church and/or the individual soul. Origen does not make any reference to Solomon's biography—no comments are to be found regarding Solomon's philogyny or apostasy. A significant aspect of Origen's biblical interpretation is his belief that not all Scripture is for everyone at all times, and that Scripture should be delivered by the spiritually mature to the spiritually immature. He states that the Christian approach to reserving certain books for the spiritually mature began with the Hebrews: "it is their custom that all the Scriptures should be given to

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[27] *Origen,* trans. Greer 32.

children by the teachers and the wise, and that at the same time those passages which they call *deuterōseis* should be held back to the last."[28] The Song of Songs is one of four portions of Scripture that fall into this category. Origen warns the reader of the Song of Songs that "if he does not know how to listen to the names of love purely and with chaste ears, he may twist everything he has heard…and be turned away from the Spirit to the flesh."[29] The Solomon-*auctor* element of the Solomon tradition focuses on issues of interpretation but also, often, the mystical experience of love.

St. Jerome, translator of the Latin Vulgate in the 5th century, wrote a commentary on Ecclesiastes in which he makes a number of similar points about Solomon's works as Origen, with the important exception of a reference to Solomon's sin. Like Origen, Jerome believes that Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs were written by Solomon for particular purposes in a particular pattern: "In Proverbs, he is teaching a young person and instructing him, as it were, about his duties through maxims…. On the other hand, in Ecclesiastes he is educating a man of a mature age not to believe that anything among the affairs of the world is perpetual…Then at last, in the Song of Songs, he joins to the embraces of the bridegroom a man who has been perfected and prepared by treading the present age underfoot."[30] Jerome sees these texts as providing a progressive spiritual education from novice to proficient.[31]

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[28] *Origen*, trans. Greer 218.

[29] ibid.

[30] *St. Jerome: Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. trans. Richard J. Goodrich and David J. D. Miller (New York: The Newman Press, 2012), 34.

[31] Jerome connects this progression to Solomon's names: "For those who are beginning and those making progress, both his father's dignity and the authority of his own monarchy are rightly claimed [in Proverbs he's 'the son of David, king of Israel' and in Ecclesiastes, he's 'son of David, king of Jerusalem']. For the perfect, however, where the disciple is taught not through fear but by love, his personal name suffices [in Song of Songs, he's 'Solomon']…," 34-35.

Jerome specifically comments on Solomon as *auctor* when he discusses the nature of his inspiration: "the Word of God does not come to Solomon, as it did to Jeremiah and the other prophets; instead, he is himself a rich, mighty king, inasmuch as he *is* the Word and Wisdom and the other powers."[32] This description makes it more possible to rationalize Solomon's philogyny and apostasy, although Jerome does not directly defend Solomon. Jerome, in fact, condemns Solomon's philogyny and apostasy in at least two places in his commentary. The first place is his commentary on verse twelve of chapter one—"I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem"—when he explains the tradition of the Hebrews that the book of Ecclesiastes shows Solomon's repentance for trusting in his "wisdom and wealth, and offending God with his women."[33] In his commentary on chapter seven of Ecclesiastes, Jerome declares, "[Solomon] found, he says, that the chief of all evils was Woman…We are not to suppose that Solomon has given this view of the female sex without good reason; he is speaking from experience. That is just why he offended God: he was ensnared by women."[34] Jerome's comment on verse 29 of this chapter[35] is particularly significant for this study because not only does Bonaventure, in his thirteenth century commentary on Ecclesiastes, address Solomon's attitude about women through this verse, but so does Malory in *Tale of the Sankgreal* and Chaucer in the *Merchant's Tale* and the *Tale of Melibee*. Jerome's commentary uses the persona of Solomon to comment, "Another question my soul asked, he says, was whether an upright woman was to be found; and though I could only find just a few who were

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[32] ibid., 35.
[33] ibid., 41.
[34] ibid., 91.
[35] "One man among a thousand I have found; a woman among them all I have not found" ["…virum de mille unum repperi mulierem ex omnibus non inveni"].

good among the men, as few as one in a thousand, I was unable to find a single good

women, because they all led me into self-indulgence, not to virtue. Because the human

heart is diligently disposed to wickedness from youth up, and almost all have offended

God, in this fall of mankind it is women who is the more prone to fall."[36] So, Jerome,

while attesting Solomon's *auctorite* as author Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of

Songs, holds up the figure of Solomon, at least in this regard, as a negative warning for

Christians.

Augustine did not write a commentary on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Song of

Songs, but in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, he comments on the life of Solomon in

comparison with David's. In Augustine's judgment, lust took control of Solomon,

whereas David was able to rise above it. For David, "the immoderate desire did not take

up its abode with him, but was only a passing guest," but with Solomon, "this lust did not

come and pass away like a guest, but reigned as a king." Augustine goes on to spell out

the condemnation of Solomon: "…about him Scripture is not silent, but accuses him of

being a lover of strange women; for in the beginning of his reign he was inflamed with a

desire for wisdom, but after he had attained it through spiritual love, he lost it through

carnal lust."[37] So, it seems that, the constellation of Solomon viewed from this angle

shines with tarnished glow.

Pope Gregory addressed Solomon-*auctor* in a more comprehensive way, at least

according to written records, than Origen or Augustine. Gregory's exposition on the Song

of Songs and *Moralia on Job* both contribute in different ways to aspects of the Solomon

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[36] *St. Jerome: Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 92.
[37] *The Confessions, The City of God, and On Christian Doctrine* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952), 666.

tradition. Translator Mark DelCogliano, in introductory comments in *Gregory the Great*

on the Song of Songs remarks that Pope Gregory was "most deeply influenced by

Origen," so it should be no surprise to find that Gregory comments on Solomon's

tripartate spiritual education through Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.[38]

Gregory goes to greater lengths to emphasize the sequencing of Solomon's texts, though;

he comments three times on the moral, natural, and contemplative science of the three

texts. He is also concerned, like Origen, with the proper reading of the Song of Songs,

and comments:

> Now, in this book there is mention of kisses, there is mention of breasts, there is
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> mention of cheeks, there is mention of thighs. We should not ridicule the sacred
>
> narrative for using such language…. He has gone so far as to embrace the
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> language of our vulgar love in order to enkindle our heart with a yearning for that
>
> sacred love. Therefore, when we hear the words of a human conversation, let us
>
> be like those who are above ordinary people. Otherwise by listening in a human
>
> way to what is said we might not perceive anything about the Divinity that we
>
> ought to be hearing.[39]

Pope Gregory leaves out any comments about Solomon's life in his exposition on the

Song of Songs. Allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs, handed down from

Origen, seems to discourage biographical references to Solomon because it moves

immediately to exposition of the Bridegroom and bride of the text as Christ and the

church or the individual soul. In *Moralia on Job*, Gregory addresses the figure of

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[38] *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*. trans. Mark DelCogliano (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2012), 85.
[39] ibid., 110.

Solomon more comprehensively. The *Moralia* specifically references Solomon 168 times, most of which are lead-in phrases—"Solomon says"—for quotations from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, or 3 Kings.[40] Of the 168 references, 100 are quotations from the book of Proverbs, so it is Solomon's discernment and knowledge of the world that Gregory uses to explain the events and issues of the book of Job. The figure here is clearly Solomon-*auctor*. Gregory does not, however, ignore the controversy in Solomon's life. In his comment on Job 14.18-19, Gregory directly condemns Solomon's philogyny and apostasy: "Solomon by an immoderate intercourse and frequency with women was brought to this pass, that he built a temple to idols…by unremitting wantonness of the flesh, he was brought even to misbelief of the spirit."[41] Part of the Solomon-*auctor* tradition, then, contains the contradiction of the power of Solomon's works and his ultimate spiritual failure.

Continuing the Solomon-*Auctor* Tradition: Medieval Commentary on Solomon and His Texts

The commentaries of the ancient Fathers provided the basis for much of the medieval commentary on Solomon and his texts, as the works of Bede, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, and Bonaventure will show. The commentary *Cantica Canticorum* by the Venerable Bede was written in early 8th century Britain.[42] In

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[40] Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, (London: John Henry Parker, 1845-1850), accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoraliaIndex.html.

[41] ibid., Book XII, sec. 23.

[42] According to Arthur Holder, in *The Venerable Bede:* On the Song of Songs *and Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), the date of Bede's *Cantica Caticorum* "has long been considered uncertain, there is good reason to believe that it was composed prior to 716," 28.

introductory comments on his translation of the *Cantica Canticorum*, Arthur Holder

traces the tradition from early church history:

> Bede's commentary on the Song of Songs stands in a long line of Christian
> allegorical interpretations that take the bride and bridegroom in the Song as
> figural types of Christ and the church…Christian exegetes such as Hippolytus and
> Origen had established the fundamental lines of interpretation as early as the third
> century. Origen's commentary and homilies on the Song, which were partially
> preserved in Latin translations by Rufinus and Jerome, had great influences on
> Western patristic commentators such as Ambrose and Apponius in the fourth
> century and Gregory the Great in the late sixth century. But of these, only
> Apponius produced a complete verse-by-verse commentary on the Song that has
> been preserved, so Bede's commentary is the second-oldest complete Latin
> commentary that has come down to us today.[43]

Bede follows Origen and others who move directly to allegorical interpretation in

commentary on the Song of Songs, completely skipping any statement about Solomon

himself: "Whoever desires to read the Song of Songs, in which that wisest of kings,

Solomon, describes the mysteries of Christ and the church (that is, of the Eternal King

and his city) under the figure of a bridegroom and a bride, should remember first of all

that the whole congregation of the elect in general is called 'the church'…"[44] Bede's text

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[43] ibid., 26.

[44] *The Venerable Bede: On the* Song of Songs *and Selected Writings*, trans. Arthur Holder (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 37.; Bede, "In Cantica Canticorvm" In *Bedae Venerabilis Opera: pars II.* ed. D. Hurst. Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. 2B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983): "Cantica canticorum in quibus sapientissimus regum Salomon mysteria Christi et ecclesiae regis uidelicet aeterni et ciuitatis eius sub figura sponsi et sponsae descripsit quisque legere cupit meminisse debet in primis quod omnis electorum congrega tio generaliter ecclesia uocatur…," I.1-5.

shows that allegory was the mode of interpretation for this text in Britain in the medieval time period. The Solomon-*auctor* constellation infuses the background as author of this important text and not in the foreground as a primary performer.

In the *De templo Salomonis*, Bede continues allegorical interpretation, this time with a more literal product of Solomon's reign: the Temple in Jerusalem. Here, instead of the bride of the Song of Songs, the Temple represents the Church, which is "daily being built through the grace of the king of peace, namely, its redeemer. It is still partly in a state of pilgrimage from him on earth, and partly, having escaped from the hardships of its sojourn, already reigns with him in heaven."[45] Bede's Temple is on the move, so to speak, in a pilgrimage from earth to heaven, with the perfect form already existing in heaven and the earthly form, God's elect, progressing to the heavenly temple. The Solomon-*auctor* thread of the tradition seems to have combined with another of Solomon's biblical attributes—master-builder of the Temple—to create another allegorical description of union with Christ and pilgrimage to heaven. This interpretation emphasizes, in a way similar to Bede's work with the Song of Songs, the chronology of salvation history, with its shift away from present to eternal realities.

In his *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, Bede is not executing allegorical interpretation but addressing more mundane hermeneutical questions. Here, Bede discusses Solomon's life, including his apostasy. In his statement on 2 Kings 23:13, the critique is clear: "If I am not mistaken, it is also plainly shown there (how I wish it were

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[45] *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. Seán Connolly (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 5; Bede, "De Templo," In *Bedae Venerabilis Opera: Pars II.* ed. D. Hurst. Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. 2A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970) "…cotidie per gratiam regis pacifici sui uidelicet redemptoris aedificatur quae partim adhuc peregrinatur ab illo in terris partim euasis peregrinandi aerumnis cum illo iam regnat in caelis…," I.3-6.

not!) that Solomon never fully repented of the acts of idolatry which he had committed.

For had he borne fruits worthy of repentance, he would have been concerned above all to

remove from the holy city the idols he had built and not to leave behind, as things wisely

and rightly done, those deeds that he, for all his wisdom, had wrongly done and that

served as a stumbling block for the simple-minded" (23:13).[46] The Solomon figure

revealed throughout the body of Bede's work is Solomon-*auctor*, albeit Solomon-*auctor*

with feet of clay. Compartmentalizing Solomon's attributes and/or his works is one way

medieval commentators deal with the conflicting aspects of Solomon's reputation. Bede's

body of work (he includes a list with thirty-seven titles at the end of his *Historia*

Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum) indicates the comprehensive nature of his interest and

knowledge, but it is worth noting that, of those thirty-seven, at least six comment either

on the life of King Solomon, along with other Hebrew kings, or his works. One of those,

his commentary on *Cantica Canticorum*, is his longest work at seven books. This reflects

an interest inherited from the Church Fathers but also the sustained medieval interest in

all aspects of Solomon-*auctor* tradition.

  Figures of the Carolingian Renaissance provide important links from Bede to the

Cistercians of the twelfth century that show the ongoing interest in Solomon-*auctor*, with

the particular emphasis on allegorical and mystical reading of the Song of Songs. This

emphasis on embracing the Song as the book of love includes an overall lack of reference

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[46] *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany* trans. W. Trent Foley and Arthur G. Holder (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 135; Bede, "In Regum XXX Quaestiones," In *Bedae Venerabilis Opera: Pars II.* ed. D. Hurst. Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970): "Vbi hoc quoque ni fallor palam ostenditur quod utinam non ostenderetur quia uidelicet Salomon de admisso idolatriae scelere numquam perfecte paenituit. Nam si fructur paenitentiae dignos faceret, satageret ante omnia ut idola quae aedificauerat de ciuitate sancta tollerentur et non in scandalum stultorum quae ipse cum fuisset sapientissimus erronea fecerat quasi sapienter ac recte facta relinqueret," 320.16-22.

to the human author of the work, so, although Solomon is always assumed as author, the true originator of the text is God himself. David Fowler sees the entire period from Gregory to the twelfth century as a time in which "important tools for [bible] study were produced," including the "*Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville…and commentaries by the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, and Rabanus Maurus."[47] Fowler also makes the point that the "real importance of this period lay in its establishment of a central role for the Bible in religious life, a development that reached its climax in the early twelfth century with the energetic biblical revival of the Cistercians, led by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux."[48] Mary Dove, in her study of the glossed Song of Songs, traces a particular line of influence in the description of an early manuscript: "The text of the Glossed Song of Songs, which begins with Jerome's prologue to the Books of Solomon, is largely based on Bede's *In Cantica Canticorum*, on Gregory the Great's exegesis of the Song of Songs as transmitted by the sixth book of Bede's commentary, and on Bede's later editors (particularly Alcuin, Angelomus of Lexeuil and Haimo of Auxerre, but also untraced transmitters of the Bedan tradition, perhaps including Hrabanus Maurus)."[49] Alcuin, a Northumbrian who served Charlemagne by teaching at the palace school in the late 8th century, wrote, among other texts, the *Compendium in Canticum Canticorum*. Ann Matter describes the text as "essentially an expanded version of Bede's 'Capitula' with frequent rubrics to indicate the speakers."[50] Haimo of Auxerre wrote a *Commentarium in*

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[47] Fowler, *The Bible in Early English Literature*, 43.
[48] ibid.
[49] Mary Dove, *Glossa Ordinaria In Canticum Canticorum*. CCCM 170, pars 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 30. The manuscript is Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Reg. lat. 21, ca 1100.
[50] Ann E.Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 101.

Cantica Canticorum in the mid 9th century that assembles commentary from Origen, Gregory the Great, Bede, and "even Alcuin, from whom he borrowed the sensible structure of a chapter of commentary for each chapter of the Song of Songs."[51] Ann Matter makes the point that Haimo's style of "plunging in [to allegorical interpretation] with no theoretical discussion of the method" shows how firmly allegory was already established at this point in history. Haimo's style also "opened the way for yet another internal transformation of the genre, a series of commentaries which especially stress the understanding of the Song of Songs as the love between Christ and the individual human soul."[52] This transformation culminates in the twelfth century, primarily through the works of Cistercian monks William of St. Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux. Mark DelCogliano comments, "It could be argued that this ancient tradition of exegesis reached its apex in the Cistercian homilies on the Song of Songs in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries."[53] Carolingian monks solidified the commentary and, in the case of the Song of Songs, the allegorical tradition without any particular interest in addressing the issues raised in the biblical biography of Solomon-*auctor*. These commentators did maintain, however, the view of the Church Fathers that Solomon's works provide a

a progressive, pedagogical experience for the sincere Christian.

In the Preface to Bernard's *Selected Works*, Ewert H. Cousins claims that Bernard of Clairvaux "played a decisive role in the monastic reform of the twelfth century, stimulating the development of the newly founded Cistercian Order…"[54] Cousins goes on

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[51] ibid., 103.
[52] ibid., 104.
[53] *Gregory the Great on the Song of Song*, 59.
[54] *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 5.

to assert that Bernard "defended the autonomy of spirituality against what he thought was the destructive rationalism of Peter Abelard and the emerging Scholasticism….In his eulogies of human love, he echoed the troubadours, trouvères, and the writers of romance; but unlike his secular counterparts, he saw this love as a symbol of the soul's love for Christ, and he charted a journey through love to union with God."[55] Bernard, in his sermons on the Song of Songs, speaks of a King Solomon who is "singular in wisdom, sublime in glory, rich in possessions, secure in peace."[56] He continues the tradition of viewing Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs as steps in a progressive spiritual experience by stating that Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, respectively, can remedy the two chief evils of the world, which are "an empty love of the world and too much self-love."[57] Bernard warns his audience that "For the rest, it is not for the souls of children and novices to sing or to hear, or for those who have recently turned from a worldly life, but those who are making progress and have disciplined themselves to study, and who have, with God's help, reached, as it were, the age for marriage (I mean the 'age' of deserving, not of years), and is made fit for the heavenly Bridegroom."[58] Only when the chief evils have been neutralized can the disciple "fittingly go on to this holy, contemplative discourse which, the fruit of the first two, feeds only seriously inclined ears and minds."[59] Bernard does not address Solomon's apostasy or philogyny anywhere in his Sermons on the Song of Songs. In Bernard's Sermons, King Solomon is

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[55] ibid.
[56] ibid., 213
[57] ibid., 211
[58] ibid., 215
[59] ibid., 211

the powerful biblical king and poet about whom no question is raised regarding his integrity or authority.

The Franciscan monk, Bonaventure, writing a commentary on Ecclesiastes a century after Bernard, represents a shift in attitudes about the human authors of biblical books when he specifically addresses Solomon's philogyny and apostasy. Alistair Minnis, in *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, draws attention to another factor contributing to Bonaventure's interest in Solomon's life. Minnis traces a shift in attitude toward *auctoritas* from the twelfth century to the thirteenth: "Twelfth-century exegetes were interested in the *auctor* mainly as a source of authority. But in the thirteenth century, a new type of exegesis emerged, in which the focus had shifted from the divine *auctor* to the human *auctor* of Scripture."[60] One reason that Ecclesiastes particularly elicited comments about Solomon's life is because it was usually considered to have been written to show Solomon's repentance for his sin.[61] Bonaventure keeps the tradition of viewing Solomon's three works as progressive spiritual education, although his description of the steps is different from Bernard's: "since it is the duty of the wise to teach how a person may reach beatitude, this was the main concern and value of the work of wise Solomon… So he wrote three books, namely, Proverbs in which he teaches a son how to live wisely in this world; Ecclesiastes, in which he teaches a contempt for present realities; and The Song of Songs, in which he teaches the love of what is heavenly, especially, of the

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[60] Alistair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 5.

[61] St. Jerome, commenting on the first verse of Ecclesiastes in which the author identifies himself as "king over Israel in Jerusalem," remarks, "The Hebrews say that this is the book of Solomon showing repentance for having placed his trust in his wisdom and wealth, and offending god with his women," 41.

Bridegroom himself."[62] In his summary description of the figure of King Solomonin his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Bonaventure includes negative attributes as well as positive; Solomon is "powerful, rich, voluptuous, and curious or wise," but this is part of the argument is presented to underscore Solomon authority, based on his life experience, in writing Ecclesiastes. The negative attributes (voluptuousness and curiosity) work in a paradoxical way to make Solomon authoritative as the author of Ecclesiastes, which preaches the emptiness of worldly pleasures.[63] Bonaventure concedes the problems of this argument by admitting that Christians should not be taught by someone who is "a sinner and carnal."[64] He presents three key points: 1) the Jews say Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes while doing penance, 2) God can speak truth even through evil people, and 3) God gave Solomon a special gift of wisdom that it was his obligation to share.[65] Bonaventures's need to defend Solomon indicates the paradoxical nature of Solomon's authority.

Later in his commentary, Bonaventure addresses more specifically Solomon's philogyny in his careful explication of Ecclesiastes 7:29, a verse that had become part of the misogynist tradition[66]: "One man among a thousand I have found; a woman among them all I have not found." Bonaventure says that heretics try to use this verse to prove that no women will be saved; he responds with the affirmation that "the Lord received

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[62] *Works of St. Bonaventure: Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, trans. Campion Murray and Robert J. Karris (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 74.
[63] *Works of Bonaventure*, 76.
[64] ibid., 85
[65] ibid., 86, 87
[66] In his discussion of the *Merchant's Tale*, Lawrence Besserman comments, "…there is additional evidence of Chaucer's lively interest in this verse that remains to be considered. There is also impressive evidence of the widespread popularity of the verse among other medieval authors that deserves notice," *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* 133.

both sexes, healed the bodies of both, and called both through the Apostles."[67]

Bonaventure moves to two specific interpretations of the verse as either that no one is

free of concupiscence except for Christ because his was the only virgin birth, or that

Solomon is using hyperbole to emphasize the rampant sexual immorality of his time.[68]

Other medieval authors, like the *Gawain*-poet and Chaucer, remind their readers/listeners

of this same spiritual reality when they deploy the figure of Solomon.

Both of Bonaventure's explications ameliorate the harshest of condemnations of women

attributed to Solomon through this verse, but his efforts were not wholly successful, at

least in popular tradition, because Ecclesiastes 7:29 is attributed as a misogynist

statement to Solomon in Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* and in Chaucer's *Merchant's*

Tale (IV.2279) and *Tale of Melibee* (VII.1057).

  I will conclude this section by reference to Mary Dove's translation of Rusch's

1480/1 edition of the *Glossa Ordinaria on the* Song of Songs.[69] The Gloss is a repository

of the comments of many of the commentators mentioned in this section of my

introduction. The commentary on the Song of Songs solidifies the Solomon-*auctor*

tradition: the comment in the *Glossa* on Solomon as author of three wisdom texts states,

"In these three books he has put in order three different branches of learning, by means of

which knowledge of things is reached: in the first, ethics, that is, moral science, then

physics, the science that understands what the natural world is like, and lastly theoretics,

that, contemplative science."[70] So Solomon not only wrote his three books as a sequence,

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[67] *Works of Bonaventure*, 289.
[68] ibid., 290.
[69] Mary Dove, *The* Glossa Ordinaria *on the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004).
[70] ibid., 4.

but the tradition has transformed his wisdom into all-encompassing, medieval education.

We will see in the next section how the Solomon of popular lore, Solomon-*magus*,

combined with Solomon-*auctor* to create a figure an author with divine authority to direct

the life of a Christian but also a supernatural insight into the workings of the universe.

<div align="center">Vernacular Biblical Narrative</div>

The fourteenth-century poem, *Cursor Mundi*, bridges orthodox biblical sources,

commentaries, and popular texts like the *Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf*.[71] The *Cursor*

Mundi retells biblical stories in poetic form, infusing canonical narratives with

apocryphal material. The author of the *Cursor Mundi* establishes the work as a poem in

honor of the Virgin Mary and Christ: "crafty þ*at* can rimes make; / Of hir to mak bath rim

and sang / And luue hir suette sun amang" (86-88; 1: 12).[72] This project is contrasted

with "rimes for to here, / And romans red in maner*es* sere" (1-2; 1:8). The author of the

Cursor Mundi makes the particular point of acknowledging the difference in its types of

sources while synthesizing them into the narrative. Written in the vernacular, the

narrative delivers the whole scope of salvation history, giving a "detailed presentation of

the medieval world picture."[73] The figure of King Solomon has a powerful gravitational

pull in the *Cursor Mundi*, which provides a comprehensive picture of the king. Solomon

plays a vital role in the history of salvation according to this text, particularly in his

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Mary Dove, *Glossa Ordinaria In Canticum Canticorum*. CCCM 170, pars 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997): "In his quidem tribus libris trium generum disciplinas composuit quibus ad rerum scientiam peruenitur, in primis namque ethicam, id est moralem, post haec phisicam quae qualitatem naturae comprehendit, ad ultimum theoricam, id est contemplatium," 79-80.

[71] *Cursor Mundi: Four Versions,* ed. Richard Morris, 7 vols., Early English Text Society, o,s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99,101 (London: Oxford University Press, 1874-1893; Rpt. 1961-1962).

[72] Of the four versions edited by Morris, I will quote from the version one based on the British Library, London, MS CottonVespasian A.III.

[73] Fowler, *The Bible in Early English Literature*, 193.

connection with the legend of the holy cross.[74] Another significant aspect of the text in relation to King Solomon is the effort to rehabilitate Solomon's reputation in an even more thorough-going way than Bonaventure's.

Throughout the *Cursor Mundi*, the author makes statements specifically pointing the reader to the sources of his narrative. In a section that recites part of the legend of the holy cross (which is part of the larger section on Solomon's building of the temple), the author comments, "Als it in þe stori sais" (8818; 2:508). The author uses the word "stori" in the section of Prologue mentioned above as a synonym for "rimes," "romans," and "sanges" for the stories about love and worldly desire in contrast to the author's present purpose to write about the virtues of the Virgin Mary and her son (20, 1, 2, 22; 1:8, 10). The author seems to be primarily concered with content, not genre, but he does make distinction later between "stori" and Scripture when he is transitioning from the legend of the holy cross back to the building of the temple: "And þus sais sum opinion, / Bot sua sais noght þe passion" (8843-44; 2:510). These comments show the author's awareness of the distinction between stories—the popular Solomon tradition—and biblical text, but

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[74] The narrative of the *Cursor mundi* draws heavily on the *Historia Scholastica* completed 1169 by Peter Comstor (c. 1100-1178). See Smalley, *Study of the Bible* 178-80, 196-263. The story of the tree begins in the *Cursor Mundi* when an angel gives Seth three seeds from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (which become cedar, cypress, and pine) to put under Adam's tongue when he is buried (1366-76; 1: 86); the story continues with Moses, who first dreams of and then finds cedar, cypress, and pine rods that help him find water in the desert and accompany him during the wilderness journey (6316-68; 2: 366, 368); David finds the rods alongside the river Jordan, performs miracles with the now-joined wands, and plants the tree in Jerusalem (7999-8044, 8203-20; 2:462-63, 473-74); Solomon learns the secrets of nature and the world under the tree, which secrets he writes about in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, and then he tries to use the tree for the building of the temple but it resists the efforts of his workmen (8459-76; 2: 488); the tree is taken from the temple to be used as Christ's cross (2:516); Helen, Constantine's mother, finds the cross again after Constantine's conversion (4:1224, 1232, 1234) To give some context to the attention paid to Solomon in the *Cursor Mundi*, out of nearly 30,000 lines of poetry in the whole text, the poet spends roughly 750 lines specifically on the story of Solomon compared to, for instance, roughly 1000 lines for the story of David. Both of these biblical stories incorporate portions of the legend of the cross.

also his choice to include the popular tradition in the overall project to tell of the virtue of the Virgin and Christ. The distinction the author makes may be a preemptive effort to squelch criticism (a tactic that Chaucer and Malory use as well[75]), but the inclusion of "stori" in the *Cursor Mundi* is one indicator of the power of the popular legends connected to Solomon.

Solomon's rhetorical skill, discernment, wealth, understanding of nature, and divine vision are all in evidence in *Cursor Mundi*. The *Cursor Mundi*'s definition of Solomon's wisdom is broad, including academic knowledge, religious doctrine, understanding of nature, and discernment. School learning is emphasized in the early part of Solomon's story; as a child, Solomon "al his hert he gaf to lare," and "Son he cuth þe artes seuen" (8437, 8440; 2:486). Then, as the author incorporates the legend of the holy cross into the narrative, Solomon's learning is expanded. Solomon studies under a tree that David had brought to Jerusalem. This tree is connected to the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Seth, at Adam's request, had gone back to Eden and, although he could only look into paradise and not enter, he received three seeds from the tree of knowledge in Eden, which he carried back and planted in the mouth of his dead father. Various patriarchs have charge of the spindles that grow from these seeds, but King David ultimately brings the tree to Jerusalem, and Solomon sits under it to learn his

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[75] In the Thopas-Melibee link, Chaucer acknowledges that his version of the story of Melibee may vary from the version they have heard: "'And though I nat the same wordes seye / As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye / Blameth me nat…'" (VII.959-61). Malory makes regular references to his French source(s) through the *Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, of which his comment on the relationship between Guinevere and Lancelot in "Slander and Strife" is particularly telling: "For, as the Freynshhe booke seyth, the quene and sir Launcelot were togydirs. And whether they were abed other or other maner of disportis, me lyste nat thereof make no mencion, for love that tyme was nat as love ys nowadayes" (676.1-4). Malory is careful to present himself to his readers as a translator who is not responsible for the content, nor is he an interpreter of the characters or their actions.

lessons. It is appropriate that Solomon learns there of "Bath o tres, and gress fele, / Quil war þair mightes soth a*nd* lele…And q*u*ar þe medicine a-boute / Be funden in þe crop or rote" (8453-54, 8457-58; 2:486). This kind of knowledge corresponds with the Solomon-*magus* tradition, although Solomon of the *Cursor Mundi* does not go so far as to perform magic.

The Solomon-*auctor* tradition is connected specifically to the Solomon-*magus* tradition in the *Cursor Mundi*: "O lare he lere[d] vnder þat tre / þan made dughti bokes tre, / And dughtili he þam vndid, / Wit samples o tres and gress emid" (8459-62; 2:488). So Solomon not only learned his lessons under the marvelous tree but was inspired to write Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; these books are presented as if they contain the secrets of nature that he has learned. Although the connection is not explicit in *Cursor Mundi*, it is worth noting that the Song of Songs provides a significant link between Solomon-*magus* and Solomon-*auctor* traditions. In the Song of Songs, Solomon has written the perfect spiritual allegory as well as referenced many trees and plants used for medicines and charms. The author mentions each biblical text specifically, although he does not present them, as Bonaventure does, as a pedagogical package. He first mentions Ecclesiastes, which tells "Hu fals þis werld es for to faand" (8466; 2:488); Proverbs connects with the same theme, teaching humankind "vm-biloke / Agains þis werld wikeedhede" (8468-69; 2:488). The author describes the Canticle as the "boke of luue" because "o þat luue it spekes mast / Bituix man saul and haligast" (8474, 8475-76; 2:488). After a few general statements about Solomon's wisdom, the author tells of an inscription on marble that stands with the tree. The inscription speaks of the time when "'Godd self regn in þat tre,'" which the *Cursor Mundi* author explains as a reference to

Jesus' death on the cross who "Hang þar-on his folk to bij, / þe barnten of ald adam" (8486, 8498-99; 2:488-89). References to the apple that Adam and Eve bit and to the seed that Seth planted project images of paradise, paralleling the paradise Solomon has created in Jerusalem and the future paradise, heaven, created by Christ's death on the cross.

The *Cursor Mundi* moves from Solomon's books to the episode of Solomon's choice of wisdom over strength and riches (adding an angel intermediary to the episode), and then to a long rendition of Solomon's judgment in the case of the two women who claim the same baby. Although the author takes 165 lines to tell about this judgment, the embellishments are primarily for dramatic effect and do not deviate much from the fundamentals of the story. The discernment of the wise king Solomon dominates these lines, showing the author's preference for superlatives: "O þis dome þan spred þe fame, / þat all spak o þis king allan; / þai said, sua wis was neu*er* nan; / Ne crafteer in werc of hand, / Was neu*er* funden nan in land, / Ne neu*er* nan þat had, i-wis, / Sua mikel wel o werlds bliss" (8750-56; 2:504). This is also the author's transition to the story of the building of the temple. While the *Cursor Mundi*'s version of the building of the temple contains more marvelous elements that any other part of the Solomon story, these elements are attributed to the holy tree; Solomon seems to merely observe the miracles of the tree. The builders' attempt to use the holy tree as part of the temple results in the tree's resistance to such efforts by shrinking and growing to avoid fitting in the designated spot. After a few other adventures, the tree finally becomes a bridge over which the Queen of Sheba walks to visit King Solomon. The Queen recognizes the power of the tree, bows down to it, and prophesies (8961, 8966; 2:516). From a summary of the Queen of Sheba's visit, the story moves back to Solomon's personal life and his sin. The

narrative of Solomon's sin, repentance, and penance take up 135 lines of the *Cursor Mundi*, most of which is a detailed description of Solomon's self-chosen penance.

The defense of Solomon begins even before his sin is pronounced. In a short passage before the Queen of Sheba episode, Solomon is again described in superlatives: "Salamon was in mikel wele, / Vmsett bath wit hap and sele, / His wiues wond*er* war to neue*n*, / O quens had he hundrets seuen; / Thre hundret concubins, he sais, / Efter þe laghes war in þaa dais" (8883-88; 2:512). The subject of Solomon's wives and concubines is broached, but there is, at this point, no condemnation; in fact, these lines provide justification for Solomon's action by saying that Hebrew law allowed for multiple wives and for concubines. Following the Queen of Sheba episode, the author turns to the issue of Solomon's sin but begins the passage with reference to Adam: "þe sorful wark him ane he wroght, / þat all his sede wit sorou soght / Man for to fall in filth of fless…Ou*er* passed has þ*at* caitiue kind, / And mad king salamon al blind…" (8983-85, 8987-88; 2:518). Adam is ultimately to blame for sin; Solomon is human and therefore cannot escape sin. The next lines continue to build a defense for Solomon when further blame is placed on the women in Solomon's life: "Thoru wi*m*men þat he luued sa fele / He fell fra liue and saul hele" (8991-92; 2: 518). The author plays to the pity of his audience: "Lau*er*d king, sua mikel o might, / Q*ua*r be-com al his in-sight, / þ*at* did him-self alsua to spill, / Foluand a wicked wo*m*man will?" (8997-9000; 2:518). These lines create a sense of tragedy and solidarity with fallen humankind. The familiar litany of male biblical figures who were corrupted by women comes next: Adam, Sampson, David, and, of course, Solomon. These larger-than-life, powerful biblical figures cannot escape sin and cannot escape seductive women, so the poet asks, "Sin wo*m*man has þir

suiken sua / Q*ua* mai o þam be seker? qua?" (9009-10; 2:518). The rhetorical questions turn the spotlight momentarily on his audience, so he takes the opportunity to pronounce to his reader that "Blisced, i sai, for-þi es he / þ*at* dos him noght in hir [wicked woman's] pouste, / For if he luue hir mar þen nede, / To will als sott sco will him lede" (9015-8; 2:518). David C. Fowler connects the first part of this pronouncement with Ecclesiastes 7:29: "And I have found a woman more bitter than death, who is the hunter's snare, and her heart is a net, and her hands are bands. He that pleaseth God shall escape from her…"[76] Just when the anti-feminist condemnation comes through the strongest, however, the author backpedals: "Bot mistru nan þe-queþer for þat i / Thinc sai o wo*m*man wilani, / If I sua did i war vn-hind, / Thinc i na wo*m*man þof to scend" (9021-24; 2:520). David Fowler attributes the inclusion of these almost contradictory views to the fact that Solomon himself expressed contradictory views in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.[77] Anti-feminism is clearly part of the broader Solomonic tradition, but the tradition does seem to leave a little room for a defense of femininity as well. The author of the *Cursor Mundi* goes on to make the point that his condemnation is for wicked women and, unlike some poets ("Ne þe gode þe wers to prais" 9035; 2:520), he can praise good women as well. At this point the narrative turns the focus back to the life of Solomon—his sin and repentance.

Actual reference to Solomon' sin is lost in the poet's commentary on original sin and the danger of wicked women. Only a few lines are spent on Solomon's sin (transitioning from Adam's sin):

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[76] Fowler, *Early English Literature*, 177.
[77] ibid.

Ou*er* passed has þ*at* caitiue kind,

And mad king salamon al blind,

Blind o wijt and wisdom als,

And maked him, þ*at* faithful, fals.

Thoru wi*m*men þat he luued sa fele

He fell fra liue and saul hele;

Again þe lagh godd him for-bedd

Leuedis he luued of vncuth lede,

Þat did him drightin to renai,

And for to for-sak his aun lai. (8987-96; 2:518)

Solomon's sin is couched in general terms, of his loving "uncouth" women, for which the

Middle English Dictionary provides six definitions, only one of which could be construed

as having to do with religious belief ("secret, occult").[78] What directly follows are the

poet's commentary on women quoted above, "Lau*er*d king, sua mikel o might, / Q*ua*r be-

com al his in-sight, / þ*at* did him-self alsua to spill, / Foluand a wicked wo*m*man will?"

(8997-9000; 2:518). This commentary takes up thirty-three lines, and then the story

moves to Solomon's repentance for his sin, on which the poet devotes seventy-three

lines. Solomon declares his penance should be the removal of his crown, removal of his

king's robe, and pilgrimage to a foreign country. Solomon's penance begins with "waful

weping," and proceeds with "To scurg bare thoru al þat thrang, / Vte of his bak þe blode

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[78] The other definitions are "unknown, alien, novel or new, unseemly/distasteful/uncivilized, and ignorant." The whole entry for "uncuþ" contains six examples from the *Cursor Mundi*, but the one definition that could be construed as relating to religious belief, secret or occult, does not include a reference to the *Cursor Mundi*. *Middle English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "uncuþ" accessed Nov. 7, 2014, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED48094.

þai suang, / þat sare, þat scam, þat martiring, / Was neuer sene on suilk a king!" (9096, 9101-04; 2:524). The parallels to Christ's suffering on the way to Golgotha are unmistakable, although the necessity for Solomon's penance is clear: "For al-to gned him thoght þe g*ra*m, / þ*a*t he moght thol on his licam / Q*ua*r-of he forwit folud þe lust" (9107-09; 2:524). The poet concludes that Solomon "wan merci of his mis" through his humble repentance (9112; 2:524). Ultimately, the *Cursor Mundi* presents the positive thread of the Solomon tradition as a wise king whose life transcends time and whose works "er lastand" (9118; 2:524) but who is human as well. The *Cursor Mundi* provides the most comprehensive defense of Solomon of any Middle English text.

The second, and final, vernacular Bible that I want to mention is the *The Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*.[79] In the Prologue, the poet declares the purpose of the *Metrical Old Testament* is to tell the important points of the Bible "For sympyll men soyn fort se…That men may lyghtly leyre / to tell and undertake yt" (19, 23-24). Compared to the *Cursor Mundi*, the *Metrical OT* emphasizes the figure of David more than Solomon. David who gathers "metall, tre, and stone" in preparation for Solomon, who will oversee the building of the temple after David's death. The author reserves his superlatives for David: "For he was prince withoutyn peyre…on mold he was withoutyn make" (9603, 9618). As he prepares for his own death, David gives advice to prince Solomon, beginning with a warning: "The law that God hath lent / loke thou

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[79] *The Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament* survives in two manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. Supra 52 (fols. 2r-168r) and MS Longleat 257 (fols. 119r-212r), and an analysis of both manuscripts date them from the early to mid-fifteenth century. The *Middle English Metrical Paraphrase* is a "translation (and expansion) of the single most authorized [Latin] paraphrase of the Bible then in currency, that written by the 'maystur of storyse' (line 18), Peter Comestor." *The Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Livingston (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), 5, 4.

never yt forsake…" 9549-50). This sets the tone for the presentation of Solomon's story, with a note of irony running the whole way through.

Solomon's tale-proper starts with a formal reference to moving from the "Secund Boke of Kynges" to the "Thryd Boke" (9622, 9623). Most of the Solomonic apocryphal material in the *Cursor Mundi* is left out; the *Metrical OT* follows much more closely the biblical narrative of 3 Kings. This faithfulness calls attention to the contradictions in Solomon's story; dramatic irony highlights Solomon's downfall even during the recitation of his wisdom, power, and wealth at the height of his reign. The author of the *Metrical OT* could have had any number of reasons for highlighting these contradictions in this way—it may have been a deliberate rejection of popular, legendary material or a warning to his Christian readers of the danger of lechery and pride—but it ultimately speaks of fallen human nature for if the one man on earth known for a wisdom that was gifted to him from God allows himself to be led astray by his pagan wives, then, clearly, the average human, the "Everyman," cannot hope to escape corruption and should, perhaps, face this fact sooner rather than later. This is the lesson Gawain must learn in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Reference to Solomon's most famous—and pagan—wife, the daughter of Pharaoh, in the *Metrical OT* passage introduces the story of Solomon's choice of wisdom over riches and power. In this fairly early passage of his story, Solomon's wife is presented positively, as obedient to Solomon: "Bot evyn als Salamon wold do, / assented scho in dede and saw," but any audience even vaguely familiar with Solomon's story would know that Solomon's obedience to this wife, and other pagan wives, is the very sin that brings about his downfall (9727-28).

When Solomon chooses wisdom over riches and power, God speaks directly to him, saying, "'More wyse and wytty sall thou be / then Jew or panym that ever er past. / And ose thou trewly trestes in Me, / from thi kyngdom sall non thee kast, / Ne thin ayres that cumys aftur thee / as lang os thei in Law wyll last'" (9757-62). This passage is presented in an artless way, and echoes the advice of David to Solomon. The conditional phrase, "as lang os," brings attention to the potential for failure, and, because the reader knows the end of the story, line 9762 becomes a pronouncement of judgment against Solomon. The *Metrical OT* carries forward the Solomon-*auctor* tradition by mentioning each of the biblical books accredited to Solomon (and adding "Psalmes"), although not much is said about the three books. The author indicates a pedagogical function for Solomon's writings—"Who lykes of wytt to lere / or of counsell to crave, / In his bokes may thei here / what so ther hert wold have"—but they are not presented as a progressive learning experience.

For the poet of the *Metrical OT*, Solomon's craftsmanship in the building of the temple is the most significant aspect of Solomon's life, and the poet seems to be particularly occupied with Solomon's wealth and the materials of work (which are often the same thing). At least twelve different lines throughout the Solomon story refer to gold, silver, riches, or wealth in connection with Solomon. Was part of Solomon's power the ability to create his wealth, as an alchemist, as well as craft it? For the Temple workers, gold was "no more to be mett / then other metall ys us amang" (9905-6). Two stanzas that are part of the description of the temple weave together Solomon's craftsmanship and knowledge in a powerful way:

Ther was never beste that man myght nevyn,

     ne fulle that was formed to flygh,

That ne yt was ther ordand full evyn

     of fyne gold and besandes bryght.

The suteltes of science sevyn

     thor ware to red on raw full ryght.

Yt myght be lykynd unto Hevyn,

     for yt was ever lemand and lyght.

Then was wunder to tell,

     or to declare by skyll

Of gold what grett vessell

     that ware ordand ther tyll. (9889-9900)

This one poetic passage brings together beasts, birds, gold, gems, and the seven liberal arts. One wonders how the seven sciences—in all of their "suteltes"—are read in order within the temple. The Solomon of this passage, or behind this passage, has a comprehensive wisdom, including an understanding of animals, artistic skill for creating animals out of precious metals and gems, and academic understanding. Solomon's skill is so great that he creates heaven-on-earth. In the next stanza, the author of *Metrical OT* acknowledges that the temple is beyond description, or rather, the "ryches sere ther was to sett" that no one could "say ne syng in sang" (9901-2); in fact, his audience might not believe even what he has written: "To tell the lele withoutyn lett / sum suld suppose my wordes ware wrang; / Wher for who lykes to loke / how all that werke was wroyght, / Go to the Bybyll boke! / Thore sall thei se unsoght" (9907-12). The poet reminds his

"sympyll" reader that this story is not fiction, but comes from the divinely inspired word of God. In spite of the irony that threads through the narrative, Solomon-*auctor* shines through strongly with a glimmer of Solomon-*magus*.

The story of Solomon in the *Metrical OT* covers Solomon's building three more houses, one of which is for his queen, with "fowls full fayre of favour, / with sang and spekyng full gud spede, / And flours in ther kyndly colour" (9975-8). But, of course, Solomon's lust is what brings about his downfall in the end. Solomon's pagan wives "fed hym fere in foly" so that he "lyfed in lust and lechery aftur the wylles of wemen wyld," just like "Adam and Sampson, / our forfaders, ware flayd, / David and Salamon / with wemen ware betrayde" (10021, 10027-31). The condemnation of Solomon is much more forceful in the *Metrical OT* than the *Cursor Mundi*, but women still do not escape blame. The *Metrical OT* states that Solomon repents of his sin, but does not include a story of Solomon's penance. Solomon's fate gives the author a chance to pronounce his own proverbs: "Ryches rewled unryght / is nothyng forto nevyn; / Ne wytt may have no myght / witowtyn helpe from Hevyn. / Ne prowyse ys nothyng in prise / withoutyn grace of God Allmighty, / Bot he that ys the Hegh Justyce / may mend all myse thrught His mercy" (10149-56). The final statement about Solomon in the *Metrical OT* leaves his ultimate fate ambiguous—and closer to the biblical account—"So endyd Salamon the wyse; / I wott not what he was worthy" (10157-8). A powerful figure shines through the 500-or-so lines on the story of Solomon in the *Metrical OT,* but the poet ultimately leaves the contradictions of Solomon's story unaddressed in much the same way as the biblical account. Michael Livingston, editor of the 2011 edition of the *Metrical OT*, claims that this work was composed at "the same time that Chaucer was writing so many of his finest

works," and that both authors were "caught between the conflicting impulses of orthodoxy and reform."[80] The author of the *Metrical OT* certainly shows a skill in balancing the image of the king who had it all with the king who fell from that great height and betrayed the commandments of his God.

The *Cursor Mundi* and *The Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament* are valuable for demonstrating the constellation of Solomon in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Britain. While the Solomon-*auctor* tradition is obviously important in both texts—all three of Solomon's books are mentioned specifically—these poetic paraphrases are more interested in the content of Solomon's life than in the content of Solomon's texts; the figure of Solomon is the text to be interpreted. Twenty-first-century readers of these poetic paraphrases can see the breadth of the Solomon tradition but also the ambiguities provoked by any reference to Solomon.

<div align="center">Magical Texts and Dialogues</div>

In the collection of magical texts and dialogues to which we now turn our attention, the Solomon constellation shines brightly, but we view him seemingly from a different hemisphere than that of the biblical commentaries and metrical paraphrases. King Solomon takes center stage, bringing with him his rhetorical power, understanding of nature, philogyny, misogyny, astrological skills, and magic. Solomon-*auctor* is assumed in these texts—his ability to create texts is a source of power—but the attributes of the Solomon-*magus* tradition are more prominent. Attributes from legendary and apocryphal material take precedence in the characterization we find in the *Testament of*

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[80] ibid., 4.

Solomon, the *Ars Notoria*, and the medieval dialogues of Solomon and Saturn or

Solomon and Marcolph.

The discovery in 1955 by Karl Preisendanz of a section of the *Testament of*

Solomon in a Vienna papyrus dating to the fifth- or sixth-century confirmed former

scholarly speculation that the tradition of Solomon-*magus* represented in the *Testament of*

Solomon was an ancient one.[81] Chester C. McCown provides a helpful summary of the

text:

> In response to his prayers Solomon receives his famous magic ring, in order that
>
> he may protect a favorite workman on the Temple, who is being tormented by a
>
> demon. By means of the ring the King calls the demon before him, learns the
>
> powers and activities of all the demons, the formula, or angelic name, which
>
> frustrates each, and in addition many secrets of nature and of the future. The
>
> demons are used to perform various tasks in connection with the building of the
>
> temple. The story ends with an account of Solomon's fall because of his love for a
>
> Shunamite girl, and of the consequent loss of his power over the demons.[82]

This text does not merely hint at the possibility of Solomon's extraordinary powers, as do

the metrical biblical paraphrases, but presents these powers as the logical reason for the

speed and exactness with which Solomon built the Temple. The *Testament* takes basic

facts of Solomon's life—Solomon's prayer for wisdom, building of the temple,

understanding of nature, and the condemnation for his love of a pagan wife—and adds an

entire backstory that seems to directly conflict with the intent of the biblical story of

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[81] Todd E. Klutz, *Rewriting the* Testament of Solomon (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 20.

[82] *The Testament of Solomon*, ed. Chester Charlton McCown (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1922), 3.

salvation. Pablo A. Torijano argues that the *Testament* continues a tradition of King

Solomon as exorcist that was already established.[83] He considers fourth century C.E. to

be the likely date for the composition of the *Testament*, so the origins of this tradition are

obviously ancient.[84] Torijano maintains that "the principal attribute in the *Testament* is

not wisdom or knowledge, but authority or power…a power that is given by God to

Solomon as special knowledge."[85] A significant point regarding this emphasis on power

is the fact that some manuscripts of the *Testament* indicate their use as exorcistic

handbooks—readers of the book were also practitioners who believed that Solomon's

name in itself had power. The section on demons (of which the Vienna papyrus is part)

"furnishes more evidence of the importance in certain circles of the combination of

astrology, demonology and magical medicine in connection with Solomon, at least from

the fourth to fifth centuries onward."[86] Torijano makes the point that Solomon as

magician is a tradition "nurtured mainly in a 'popular' environment" instead of a more

"intellectualized environment," but says that the existence of references in a Qumran

papyrus, the Wisdom of Solomon, *Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo*, and Josephus'

Jewish Antiquities all point to the "underground existence of exorcistic traditions by the

first century CE."[87] In spite of this aura of power within the *Testament*, Solomon still

fails, falling for the wrong woman, and is condemned. Todd E. Klutz argues that the

Testament of Solomon in its final form, although clearly and strongly associating

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[83] Torijano, *Solomon: The Esoteric King* 53.
[84] On the other hand Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1: 935) dates it earlier to between 1st to the 3rd century A.D. (*a* 1: 935-87
[85] Torijano, *Solomon: The Esoteric King* , 56.
[86] Torijano, *Solomon: The Esoteric King* , 150.
[87] Torijano, *Solomon: The Esoteric King* , 195.

Solomon with magic, is "to be read from its very beginning under the clouds of the

Solomon story's tragic ending" because it begins with a reference to the end. The text

does not "commend the practice of 'magic' in any sense of the word that would have

been intelligible to the text's earliest readers…"[88] The protagonists of the *Testament of

Solomon* is a cosmic, mythic figure, but like many mythic figures, his weaknesses are all

too human, the combination of which makes his fall even greater. We can see why King

Solomon remained an attractive and powerful figure for so many centuries, in both

orthodox and popular texts.

The figure of Solomon of the *Ars Notoria* is just as powerful as that of the

Testament of Solomon; he is, in fact, nearly divine. According to Nicholas Watson, the

Ars Notoria had "multitudes of users, from the late twelfth century down at least to the

seventeenth."[89] This late medieval text fuses Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus*. The

Ars Notoria is more controversial than the various Solomonic texts under consideration,

as evidenced by a comment from William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris, provided by

Michael Camille in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*:

"…in his diatribe against various forms of learned magic complained that there was

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[88] Klutz, *Rewriting* 64, 72.

[89] Nicholas Watson, "Introduction: King Solomon's Tablets," *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 1-13 at 3. For an edition of a 13th century version see: Julien Véronèse, *L'*Ars notoria *au Moyen Age: Introducion et édition critique,* Micrologus Library 21, Salomon Latinus 1 (Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2007) and for a late English translation: *Ars Notoria: The Notory Art of Solomon, Shewing the Cabbalistic Key of Magical Operations, The Liberal Sciences, Divine Revelation, and the Art of Memory with Commentaries by Apollonius of Tyanæus. Written in Latin and now Englished by Robert Turner 1657,* ed. James H. Banner, 2nd ed. (Seattle: Trident Books, 1988). Another medieval/early modern text is *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis),* trans. and ed. S. Lidell MacGregor Mathers (London: George Redway, 1889) and the derivative 17th century text: *The Lesser Key of Solomon. Lemegeton Clavicula Salomonis. Detailing the Ceremonial Art of Commanding Spirits Both Good and Bad,* ed. Joseph H. Peterson (York beach, ME: Weiser Books, 2001).

divinity in the 'angles of Solomon's pentagon' and that the 'rings and seals of Solomon' were a form of idolatry execrable consecrations and detestable invocations and images."[90] The *Ars Notoria*, however, does not seek to, as many medieval manuscripts on magic did, assist in finding lost or stolen articles, secure the attraction of a lover, or harass an enemy, but instead seeks "the acquisition of knowledge or other related gifts such as rhetorical skills through the use of prayers and figures (*notae*)."[91] Frank Klaasen describes the figures in the *Ars Notoria* as similar to those in necromantic texts, but, in contrast to those texts, these are accompanied by specific Christian prayers.[92] In some of the copies of the *Ars Notoria*, the prayers are specifically directed to the Virgin. Klaasen notes, in fact, that in some medieval manuscript catalogues, "prayers to the Virgin and miracles of the Virgin accompany the *Ars Notoria*."[93] The *Ars Notoria* operates beyond linear time, with a "mythical history [that] likewise spans East and West, ancient and modern, heaven and earth, old and new covenants, while its actual reception history is five centuries long and a continent wide."[94] Watson comments on another, more intrinsic, aspect of *Ars Notoria*'s emphasis on the power of language: "For the *Ars* also argues not only that translation of certain words is neither possible nor desirable but also that there is a more potent route between authoritative truth and vernacular language: revelation."[95] Significantly, King Solomon of the *Ars Notoria* does not fall; no reference to any pagan

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[90] Michael Camille, "Visual Art in Two Manuscripts of the Ars Notoria," *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 110-39 at 112.

[91] ibid., 15.

[92] Frank Klaasen, "English Manuscripts of Magic, 1300-1500: A Preliminary Survey," *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger, 3-31.

[93] ibid., 17

[94] Watson, "King Solomon's Tablets" 7.

[95] ibid., 9.

wives occurs in this text, nor any hint that the ultimate spiritual fate of its namesake is in any doubt. The practitioner of this magical text can, with confidence, speak Solomon's words and perform Solomon's magic, since the "*auctoritas* ascribed to the past is in service to *experimenta* that can only be performed in the present."[96] The *Ars Notoria* is a later text than the *Testament of Solomon*, found as Latin texts from the High Middle Ages and into the Renaissance in various forms in at least one hundred manuscripts.[97] This healthy number of extant manuscripts and their manuscript contexts indicate that these two texts were not considered as disconnected from literary society as they might seem to 21st century readers. Familiarity with these two texts goes a long way to understanding some mysterious Solomon references in poetic texts like tales and courtly romances.

Solomonic traditions are carried through another set of texts that are not magical, per se, but which had an audience probably closer to that of the *Testament* and *Ars Notoria*: the Old English Solomonic dialogues. Solomon is present as *auctor* in each of the dialogues, but the power of language in the dialogues is intensified by the Solomon-*magus* tradition. There are two poetic dialogues – *Solomon and Saturn I* and *Solomon and Saturn II* – and a prose dialogue – *Solomon and Saturn Prose Pater Noster Dialogue*. In *Solomon and Saturn I* and the prose dialogue, Solomon conjures the personified letters of the Pater Noster to show Saturn how the Lord's Prayer defeats the devil (in very violent kinds of ways). The texts provide no explanation for the Jewish king being intimately familiar with the prayer of Jesus, but the fact that the drama seems to take place outside of chronological time helps dissolve tension between Jewish and Christian

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[96] ibid., 6.
[97] ibid., 3

belief systems. While, to the 21st century reader, the personification of the Pater Noster smacks of incantation more than invocation, Daniel Anlezark makes the point that "The Pater Noster was one of the prayers necessary for any Christian to know, and while it could have magical associations, so orthodox a churchman as Ælfric points out its protective power."[98] Solomon is <u>magus</u> in these texts but not explicitly magician. In the matrix of Solomonic texts, the dialogues make a connection between magic texts, like the *Testament of Solomon*, and vernacular narratives that treat Solomon a little more circumspectly, and romances and tales like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*.

In *Solomon and Saturn II*, Saturn is a little more active than in the other dialogues since he presents Solomon with various paradoxes to explain. Obviously, Solomon's wisdom, understood here as wide-ranging knowledge, is his dominant attribute. He is contrasted with Saturn the Chaldean who is "associated with the sinful confusion of Babel."[99] Anlezark argues that there is a strong Irish influence on the Old English texts and establishes a link with Glastonbury in the ninth or tenth century. This link emphasizes an interest in "creating (apparently achronological) links between Classical mythology and the biblical text…"[100] In spite of the seeming exoticism of these texts, their function was, according to T. A. Shippey, to affirm for their audience the fundamental, orthodox belief system of their day, reflecting "elemental oppositions, a tendency to expect the worst in this world, a confidence that it is nevertheless possible to

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[98] Anlezark, *Solomon and Saturn* 25-26.
[99] ibid., 46.
[100] ibid., 55.

be on the right side in the end."[101] So, although Solomon's knowledge and rhetorical power operate in a supernatural realm, the unique constellation of the figure of Solomon is employed to support the status quo.

The powerful, orthodox Solomon-*auctor* is precisely the character targeted by the comic and vulgar peasant Marcolf in the medieval dialogues of Solomon and Marcolf.[102] Solomon-*magus* does not make an appearance; if Solomon could do magic in the Solomon and Marcolf dialogues, he certainly would have conjured a demon to trap Marcolf in a jar and transport him to a distant country. Solomon's humiliation in these texts does not come from his falling for pagan women or worshipping their idols but from a vulgar peasant's insults and tricks. Marcolf can spout proverbs as quickly and easily as Solomon, with his puns consistently turning on the crudest definitions of words and

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[101] T. A. Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge, England: D.S. Brewer, 1976), 26.

[102] A medieval Latin version circulated, with the earliest Latin manuscript dating at 1410, according to Jan M.Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, 6. According to Ziolkowski, there are "more than two dozen extant manuscripts" of the Latin *Dialogus Salomonis et Marcolfi*. See *Salomon et Marcolfus: Kritischer Text mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen, Übersicht über die Sprüche, Namen- und Wörterverzeichnis*, Ed. Walter Benary. Sammlung mittellateinischer Texte 8. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1914.For the Latin text of a version published in Venice in 1502, see: *Il dialogo di Salomone e Marcolfo*, ed. Quinto Marini, "Minima" 14 (Rome: Salerno, 1991). The first Middle English version, published in 1492, is available in an edition from Donald Beecher, *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus*, Publications of the Barnabe Riche Society 4. (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1995) and in *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf: A Dual-Language Edition from Latin and Middle English Printed Edition*s, ed. Nancy Mason Bradbury and Scott Bradbury. TEAMS: Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2012). For a contemporary German edition see: "Marcolfus deutsch, Mit einem Facsimile des Prosa-Drucks von M. Ayrer (1487)," ed. Curschmann, Michael., *Kleinere Erzählformen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger. Fortuna Vitrea 8. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993. 151-255. The dialog was first published in Dutch in 1501: *Dat Dyalogus of Twisprake tusschen den wisen Coninck Salomon ende Marcolphus naar den Antwerpschen Druk van Henrick Eckert van Homberch in het Jaar 1501 uitgegeven*. ed. Willem de Vreese and Jan de Vries, Nederlandsche Volksboeken 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1941); and in Swedish, 1630: "Marcolphus," in Iris Ridder,. *Der schwedische Markolf: Studien zu Tradition und Funktion der frühen schwedischen Markolfüberlieferung*, Beiträge zur Nordischen Philologie 35 (Tübingen: Francke, 2002), 61-76.. For treatments of the literary tradition see: Luigi Biagioni. *Marcolf und Bertoldo und ihre Bezeihungen: En Beitrag zur germanischen und romanischen Marcolf-Literatur* (Cologne: Karl Utsch, 1930) and Sabine Griese, *Salomon und Markolf: Ein literarischer Komplex im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit.*,Studien zu Überlieferung und Interpretation: Hermaea, neue Folge 81 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999).

phrases, as in this example: "Solomon: 'A well-formed and honest woman is to be held above all desirable goods.' Marcolf: 'A fat and large woman is more lavish in producing farts'" (14a-14b).[103] Marcolf proves his better understanding of human nature, or, more accurately, of feminine nature by tricking his own sister, Fusada. He asks her to keep an important secret–his plan to kill King Solomon–and then provokes her to anger before the King, goading her to reveal the secret.[104] The Middle English version of the *Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus* is consistent with the Latin version in portraying Solomon as one who initially praises women but becomes disillusioned. Solomon's pronouncement on women—"'A woman strong in doing good, who shall find?'"—is a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 7.29. [105] Solomon maintains his dignity, barely, through the end of his contest with Marcolphus—Solomon is still the king and Marcolphus has been exiled— but the punch of the narrative comes from the power of the figure of Solomon combined with the exposure of Solomon's vulnerabilities. The significance of this stratum of the Solomon tradition is attested in the fact that John Audelay uses it in the early 15th century as the basis for a series of poems that comment on the current state of religious practice and reform.[106]

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[103] Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf* 57, Beecher, *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus* 139/141.

[104] Marcolf angers and humiliates Fusada by saying to Solomon, "O King, I make a complaint before you about this sister of mine, who has become a prostitute and pregnant, as you can see, and dishonors all my family and in addition wishes to have a share of my inheritance. On this account I entreat you to order that she not receive a share in the same inheritance." This makes Fusada angry enough to say that Marcolf has a knife under his clothes and plans to kill Solomon. When Marcolf is searched, no knife is found, of course, and Marcolf wins his argument that women can never be trusted. Ziolkowski, , *Solomon and Marcolf* 83-85, Beecher, *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus* 169/171.

[105]Beecher, *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus* 139.

[106] *The Poems of John Audelay*. ed. Ella Keats Whiting, Early English Text Society, os 184 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). James Simpson, in "Saving Satire after Arundel's *Constitutions*: John Audelay's 'Marcol and Solomon,'" *Text and Controversy From Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 387-404, argues that Audelay's "Marcol and Solomon" poems were published after Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409, and sees in this sequence of poems as "an interesting counter case to the consensus position" because it "directly and

Biblical, commentary, vernacular, and magical texts in the first three groupings of this Introduction are important for understanding the richness of the Solomon tradition in the Middle Ages because of the context they provide, but they are not my primary focus. My focus is the Middle English poetic texts and their use of this rich Solomon tradition. Such a text's reading of the figure of Solomon reveals much about that its poetic agenda. The power of Solomon and his symbols is a natural fit for a text, for instance, for which magic is a key motif. A full understanding of Solomon-*magus* tradition is essential for a complete reading of such a text. Not all Middle English poets would have necessarily been familiar with all of the texts mentioned in this background survey; the circulation of texts like the *Testament of Solomon* is difficult to pinpoint in Britain. The breadth and depth of the Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* traditions made them attractive to authors of many different types of texts, so it isn't surprising to find robust images of King Solomon in the *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters: Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* in Medieval

Story Collection and Romance

Solomon-*auctor* is the figure who journeys with the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*, although there are a few glimmers of Solomon-*magus* along the way. Solomon is invoked in eight different tales and three prologues in the *Canterbury Tales*, with a total of seventy-five direct references.[107] As one might expect, the Canterbury pilgrims make

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critically addresses ecclesiological issues; it is not at all catechetical or devotional; it brandishes knowledge of, even if it carefully avoids much direct translation of, Scripture; and it addresses each status of Christians, lay and clerical, in the one poem," 388.

[107] All quotations of Chaucer are from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987) and are identified by fragment and lines numbers.

varied use of Solomon, from the free interpretation of the Wife of Bath to the orthodox

exegesis of the Parson. Some references are straightforward citations of proverbs about,

for instance, wise counsel,[108] but a number of references are more complex. The very first

reference to Solomon, in the *Knight's Tale*, the *auctorite* of Solomon is simultaneously

presented and undermined, a recurrent tactic of Chaucer's throughout the *Canterbury*

Tales. Chaucer's use of Solomon throughout the Tales exposes the manipulative

interpretive methods of the clerics but also disastrous attempts of the *lewd* to interpret

Scripture.

Chaucer includes two brief references to Solomon-*magus* in the *Squire's Tale* and

the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale.* These references show an awareness of the tradition, and

highlight the fact that Chaucer chose to utilize Solomon-*auctor* and not Solomon-*magus* .

In the *Squire's Tale*, Solomon-*magus* is cited in connection with the crafting of

Canacee's magical ring, and in the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, the yeoman describes the

constant failure of the alchemists to produce gold (V 248-51;VIII 958-68). The bulk of

the chapter on the *Canterbury Tales* focuses on the analysis of the operation of Solomon-

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[108] Four tales reference a proverbial saying. In the *Miller's Tale*, Nicholas advises the carpenter,"Thou mayst nat werken after thyn owene heed; For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe: 'Werk al by conseil, and thou shalt nat rewe'" (I 3529-30). The note on these lines by Douglas Gray attribute this to Ecclesiasticus 32.24 by way of Albertanus of Brescia (?1193-?1270), *Liber consolationis et consilii ex quo hausta esta fabula gallica de Melibeo et Prudentia,* ed. Thor Sundby (London: Chaucer Society, 1873). This same quotation appears in the *Merchant's Tale* and *Melibee*. The Cook responds to the Reeve's tale in the *Cook's Prologue* by giving advice on hospitality with support from Solomon: "Wel seyde Salomon in his langage, / 'Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous'" (I 4330-31). The attribution provided in the note on this line cites Ecclesiasticus 11.29. In the opening lines of the *Clerk's Prologue*, the Host scolds the clerk for studying when he should be socializing, quoting Solomon: "But Salomon seith 'every thyng hath tyme'" (IV 6). This proverb is derived from Ecclesiastes 3.1, and occurs in three other tales, including the *Merchant's Tale*. The Manciple warns his listeners at the end of his Tale to be careful in their speech and cites Solomon: "Daun Salomon, as wise clerkes seyn, / Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel" (IX 314-5). Then in the speech he attributes to his mother, the Manciple references three important authorities: "'A jangler is to God abhomynable. / Reed Salomon, so wys and honurable; / Reed David in his psalmes; reed Senekke'" (IX 344-5).

auctor from the *Tale of Melibee* where Solomon is the dominant authority for Prudence through the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Merchant's Tale*, which reveal the devastating results of lewd interpretation of a contemplative work, to the *Parson's Tale*, where the preacher encourages the pilgrims to abandon worldly values and embrace union with Christ.

In the *Tale of Melibee*, Prudence offers Chaucer's audience a chance to practice authentic interpretation. The *Tale of Melibee* contains the most references to Solomon of all the *Canterbury Tales*. *Melibee* offers the pilgrim the first experience of interpretation—seeing—based on true biblical wisdom. Prudence allegorically represents this wisdom and offers it to Melibee in order to save him and their household. By the end of the tale, Melibee has accepted Prudence's method of interpretion. This is the first important step for all the pilgrims and readers of *Canterbury Tales* to rehabilitate their vision and build a solid foundation for authentic interpretation.

The Wife of Bath's use of Solomon—and other important biblical authorities, like St. Paul—as support in her argument for marriage draws attention to issues of authorship and authority. The Wife of Bath's rhetorical method exposes the manipulation of biblical texts by contemporary authorities, particularly the abuse within the misogynist tradition. Solomon is, for the Wife and for Chaucer, a reference text like no other: wisest king who ever lived, husband to seven hundred wives, author of three thousand proverbs (many referencing afore-mentioned wives), author of the ultimate spiritual allegory of love, builder of the temple, and apostate. The use one makes of Solomon reveals one's interpretive skills and biases.

The Merchant invokes Solomon in multiple ways throughout the *Merchant's Tale*, including references to the Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Proserpina's direct address of Solomon and his reputation in the garden scene (IV.1332, 1485-1490, 2291-2302). January interprets the Song of Songs literally, as an expression of sexual consummation instead of as a mystical union with Christ. His complete lack of spiritual understanding results in not only an inability to interpret Scripture, but an inability to see what is literally in front of his face. The exposé of this disastrous attempt of interpretation by the lewd January transitions into a criticism of a much more respected historical, orthodox tradition when Proserpina tackles the interpretation of Solomon-*auctor* in the scene in the garden. Solomon has no authority because it became corrupted when he forsook God, the source of truth and legitimate authority. The Wife of Bath and Proserpina expose the contradictions and limits of even orthodox methods of interpretation, and the Merchant and January reveal the wreckage of interpretation operated by the spiritually blind.

Although the Parson's Tale cannot resolve all the issues of interpretation raised in the *Canterbury Tales*, the final Tale does provide closure in the sense that it points the pilgrim to a way of reconciliation through relationship with Christ. The Parson, and Chaucer, takes the pilgrims the furthest an earthly or narrative journey can go, pointing them to the heavenly Jerusalem. The last reference to Solomon in the *Canterbury Tales*, a saying that in other contexts supports the misogynist tradition and condemns Solomon, becomes support for the Parson's—and the biblical—argument that all have sinned: "Ful ofte tyme I rede that no man truste in his owene perfeccioun, but he be stronger than Sampson, and hoolier than David, and wiser than Salomon" (X. 955) The statement is not

focused specifically on any of these famous men or even on the dangerous power of women but on the truth that no human has the power to save her or himself. Heaven came to earth only once, in Christ, and that narrative cannot bring heaven down again but can show the way to take the pilgrim to heaven through the work of Christ.

Solomon-*magus* is a more obvious influence in a different Middle English text—*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—but Solomon-*auctor* provides the framework for Gawain and the reader's experience. Analyzing this operation of Solomon in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the subject of Chapter 2 of my dissertation. Although there are no quotations from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Song of Songs in *Sir Gawain*, the hero of the tale moves through the spiritual pilgrimage represented by these books. Solomon-*magus* comes into view at Gawain's arming before his departure from Camelot when Gawain dons the shield bearing Solomon's pentangle. Part of the work of this chapter in my dissertation is to explore the different aspects of Solomon's pentangle that initiate Gawain's pilgrimage. Gawain's test at Hautdesert and the Green Knight's chapel is also a test of learned magic exemplified by the ritual magic text, *Ars notoria*.

At Hautdesert, Gawain's ability to parse the language of love is tested by the temptation and taunts of the Lady. Gawain successfully reads the falseness of the love that the Lady offers; however, Gawain has not completely relinquished his hold on present realities as exemplified by his acceptance of the Lady's green girdle. Gawain learns is that the lessons of Solomon-*auctor* —Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs—set him the right path, and that no magic, even that of Solomon-*magus* can save. Gawain does follow the legendary Solomon in one practice: repentance. Gawain, and the endless knot, have been translated into the true version of perfection.

In *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, unlike his sporadic appearances in the *Canterbury Tales*, the figure of Solomon appears in only one tale, but Solomon-*magus-auctor* is key within the *Tale of the Sankgreal.* Malory's use of the action moments from his source, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, while leaving out the theological commentary highlights the mystery versus the miraculous of Galahad's quest. In the *Queste*, the figure of Galahad and how he so precisely fulfills the requirements of the one true grail knight is explained as miraculous, as biblical-type prophecy fulfilled. Malory's choice to omit much of this explanation renders Galahad more mysterious than miraculous. Hence, we can read Galahad-*magus* as the one who fulfills the mysteries of the grail quest, while Galahad-*auctor* completes all three levels of the Solomon school of interpretation. In his latter role, Galahad offers an example, and hope, to the reader of the *Tale* for a secular, but pious, reading of Solomon-*auctor*'s Song of Songs. His example, though, is one of complete surrender to union with Christ, the ultimate paradise.

Solomon-*auctor* is the dominant figure who appears in biblical commentaries of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Solomon in the Middle Ages. The primary focus for these orthodox texts is Solomon's authorship. Although these texts are delivered for the Hebrew people and then the Christians, according to Christian view of God's revelatory plan, Solomon-*auctor* is understood also as delivering secret knowledge for those Hebrews or Christian who were trained and prepared to read in the appropriate way. Stories of Solomon-*auctor*'s secret knowledge and its acquisition is the important link to the Solomon-*magus* tradition. The medieval texts directly associated with this Solomon-*magus*—the *Testament of Solomon*, *Ars Notoria*, and perhaps the *Solomon and Saturn Prose Pater Noster Dialogue*—are not as numerous, but

combine with Solomon-*auctor* to influence the *Cursor Mundi*, the *Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*. I turn now to delineate the operation of Solomon-*auctor* in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *The Merchant's Tale* in Chapter 1

CHAPTER 2. TITLE SOLOMON-*AUCTOR* AND SOLOMON-*MAGUS* IN
CHAUCER'S *CANTERBURY TALES*

Throughout the *Canterbury Tales*, Solomon is directly referenced in eight tales
and three prologues—*Knight's Tale*, *Miller's Tale*, *Cook's Prologue, Wife of Bath's
Prologue, Clerk's Prologue, Merchant's Tale*, *Squire's Tale*, *Tale of Melibee*, and
Parson's Tale—for a total of seventy-seven direct references.[117] Chaucer did not
necessarily make comprehensive use of the figure of Solomon, but the fact that the
seventy-seven references are not just in one cluster, but spread throughout the work,
including occurrences in the first and last tales, indicates the pull and power of the the
figure of Solomon. Solomon is not the only biblical or ancient authoritative figure
Chaucer addresses, of course, but his particular handling of the different aspects of
Solomonic tradition is revealing. Chaucer was aware of the Solomon-*magus* tradition—
two of the seventy-seven references are to Solomon as alchemist and magician—but
Chaucer's overwhelming preference is for Solomon-*auctor*. One particular aspect of the
auctor tradition seems to be Chaucer's target since Chaucer delivers the most devastating
deconstruction of Solomon-*auctor* of any text under examination for this project, except

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[117] *The Riverside Chaucer*, Larry D. Benson, ed., 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987). All quotations of *The Canterbury Tales* come from this edition. An investigation into indirect references or unattributed references to Solomon in the *Canterbury Tales* is not feasible within the scope of this dissertation but may be a fruitful study for the future.

perhaps for the latter part of the *Testament of Solomon*.[118] The aspect of Solomon-*auctor*

Chaucer targets are Solomon's associations with love—Solomon's philogyny and

misogyny, and the handling of his most-allegorized text, the Song of Songs. Chaucer

takes on the figure of Solomon himself and displays for his audience the complete failure

of a layman's reading of the Song of Songs—the troubling possibility that those who

controlled the text had warned against since ancient times. Chaucer holds out the hope

that, in spite of humankind's inability to interpret love appropriately, the sincere can learn

to live wisely in this world with some even reaching the ability to disdain worldly things,

the Proverbs- and Ecclesiastes-levels of the progressive lessons of Solomon's texts. The

Tale of Melibee shows that a layperson, even a woman, can certainly practice these levels

of interpretation; Prudence teaches her audience not only to live wisely but, ultimately, to

surrender worldly entanglements for eternal values. The *Wife of Bath' Prologue* and the

Merchant's Tale reveals that the limit, however, of a layperson's discernment is with the

interpretation of Solomon and his "boke of luue."[119] The Parson use of a deconstructed

Solomon paradoxically offers a vestige of hope in the message of his penitential manual,

the *Parson's Tale*; the one who acknowledges one's sinfulness and surrenders to the

chastisement of God, can embrace union with Christ. The Parson's sermon is acted out,

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[118] Regarding the force of the *Testament*, Klutz states, "…in contrast to chs. 1-18, where the image of Solomon is almost entirely positive, much of chs. 19-26 can and probably should be read as motivated by a desire to subvert Solomon's reputation and to portray him as a figure of shame," and, "…the testamentary discourse of the document in its final form serves primarily to highlight the shame of Solomon's grievous errors and the degree to which they should be understood to overshadow everything else he did," *Rewriting* 11, 18.

[119] *Cursor Mundi: Four Versions*, ed. Richard Morris, 7 vols., Early English Text Society, o,s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99,101 (London: Oxford University Press, 1874-1893; Rpt. 1961-1962), 8474, 2: 488.

through reference to Solomon, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*, as the following chapters will demonstrate.

Solomon-*auctor* is the operational tradition in *Melibee*, *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, *Merchant's Tale*, and the *Parson's Tale*, but there are two brief references to Solomon-*magus* in the *Canterbury Tales* that should be mentioned.[120] The description of Canacee's ring in the *Squire's Tale* is the first reference: "And seyden alle that swich a wonder thyng / Of craft of rynges herde they nevere noon, / Save that he Moyses and kyng Salomon / Hadde a name of konnyng in swich art" (V. 247-51). The second reference is in the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, in the reference to the work of alchemy: "We faille of that which that we wolden have, / And in oure madnesse everemoore we rave. / And whan we been togidres everichoon, / Every man semeth a Salomon. / But al thyng which that shineth as the gold / Nis nat gold… / He that semeth the wiseste, by Jhesus, / Is moost fool…" (VIII. 958-63, 67-68). The context of this reference—the alchemical work of the Canon that the Yeoman has been describing—and the reference to gold link these lines to Solomon-*magus*, but since Solomon's wisdom and authority are also invoked, this could be considered a Solomon-*auctor* reference as well. The occurrence of these two references reveal that Chaucer was aware, at least through his story-sources, of the Solomon-*magus* tradition. It is Solomon-*auctor*, however, that Chaucer chooses for galvanizing his Tales at points along the narrative pilgrimage. This interest and anxiety may have been prompted by the development in the fourteenth century of availability of

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[120] Solomon-*auctor*, as I have explained on page 2 of my Introduction, is the title for the tradition of authority and authorship given to the wise king, which includes attributes such as discernment, skillful administration, wealth, superior craftsmanship, and knowledge of the natural world. Solomon-*magus*, a term borrowed from Jesse Rainbow and delineated in Torijano's work, *Solomon The Esoteric King,* represents the tradition of Solomon as exorcist, alchemist, astrologer, and magician.

the Bible in the vernacular, which heightened concerns about interpretation, particularly

putting into questions the skills of the average layman—the "lewd" and "seculeer"—for

reading Scripture from a trustworthy perspective. John Wyclif, while believing the Bible

should be available to every layman, emphasized the right(eous) basis for biblical

interpretation: "the first condition for the student of Scripture, exceeding any capacity he

may have for disputation or logical speculation, is a basic godly morality such as will

prompt him to seek a just interpretation of the text."[121] The most untrustworthy

interpreter is the one who does not recognize his or her own bias, or, to put it in Christian

terminology, the one who does not account for his or her own sinfulness.

Sixty-three direct references align the *Canterbury Tales* with the Solomon-*auctor*

tradition through the use of the following phrases: "Salomon seith," "seith Salomon,"

"Salomon seyde," "spak Salomon," "the word of Salomon," "the sentence of Salomon,"

or "Salomon techeth." One each such reference occurs in the *Miller's Tale*, the *Cook's*

Prologue, and the *Clerk's Prologue*. Three occur in the *Merchant's Tale* (Pluto and

Proserpina's references connect to Solomon-*auctor* but not by using these phrases, and

these references will be addressed separately). Forty such references occur in the *Tale of*

Melibee, two in the *Manciple's Tale*, and eighteen in the *Parson's Tale*. Solomon is by no

means the only authoritative source referenced in the *Canterbury Tales*, but, in

comparison to other authorities referenced by name, "Solomon" occurs by far the most

frequently except for reference to "Crist."[122] The Solomon references reveal Chaucer's

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[121] David Lyle Jeffrey, "Chaucer and Wyclif: Biblical Hermeneutic and Literary Theory in the XIVth Century," in *Chaucer and Scriptural Tradition*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1984), 109-138 at 116.

[122] Here are some of the more frequently occurring authorities with the number of direct references in parentheses: Seneca (33), Saint Paul (32), Tullius (18), King David (17), Saint John (13), and the more

preoccupation with issues of authority, particularly textual authority—methods for

establishing it, uses and abuses of it, and influences on it. The fact that Chaucer is

concerned about issues of authority and interpretation is not a new observation, of course;

a number of scholarly investigations have addressed this issue.[123]

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generic "Gospel" (14). "Crist" is directly referenced 311 times. A brief survey of the latter references reveal that they are not "Crist seith" types of references to indicate the same authoritative use as the "Salomon seith" references. The scope of this current project does not allow for further investigation and comparison.

[123] Alistair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988). Minnis argues that Chaucer use of compilation as the creative principle for the *Canterbury Tales* indicates his interest and examination of authority and authorship; Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Scanlon also sees Chaucer's wrestling with the issue of authority as fundamental to the construction of the text—the tales and their frame—as a whole, as revealed through Chaucer's use of authoritative exemplum; D. W. Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). According to Robertson, the representation of beauty and art in the Middle Ages is infused with Christian and biblical images and theological concepts. The *Canterbury Tales* reflects this infusion as a whole, as instructive text, and in individual places with its use of many character types, images, concepts, and sermons borrowed from the traditon; Judith Ferster, *Chaucer on Interpretation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Aers, *Chaucer* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1986). Ferster discusses the interaction of literary and political authority, and the power over the text by characters within the text—the Host, the narrator, and the pilgrims; Aers argues that Chaucer foregrounds authority and interpretation as matrices that reveal the impossibility of "objective and impersonal" interpretation, and that the *Canterbury Tales* encourages the reader to critically examine the way those with power use biblical texts to support their position; Lawrence Besserman, *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics.* Besserman argues that the different uses Chaucer makes of the Bible in his various works of literature reflect Chaucer's urgent interest in the contemporary issues of authority and interpretation. Quotations, partial quotations, misquotations, glosses, paraphrases were all used not only for effect within a narrative but also to comment on the agenda-driven use by orthodox and lay interpreters alike; Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's* Canterbury Tales (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 1994. Crane discusses, and uses the Wife of Bath, in particular to show—how concepts of gender within romance opens authority to examination; Lesley Lawton, "'Glose Whoso Wole'" Voice, Text and Authority in the Wife of Bath's Prologue," *Drama, Narrative and Poetry in the* Canterbury Tales, ed. Wendy Harding, 157-174 (Toulouse, France: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2003). Lawton argues that the Wife of Bath's *Prologue*, like other Chaucerian texts, is an intersection of different discourses, and is on the "cusp between the clerkly and the carnivalesque in its interplay of nature and reason, divine law, human authority and sexual instinct," 160; Helen Cooper, "The Classical Background," *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Steve Ellis, 255-71 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Cooper describes the way Chaucer brings attention to the relationship between the authority of classical texts and his own use of those texts—this attention diminishes *auctoritas*, to a degree, but also allows Chaucer to claim a degree of authority; Amanda Walling, "'In Hir Tellynging Difference': Gender, Authority, and Interpretation in the *Tale of Melibee*," *The Chaucer Review* 40 (2005), 163-81. Walling makes the point that, throughout the *Canterbury Tales* "debates about gender…are also debates about the function and meaning of [authoritative] texts," and that, in *Melibee*, Chaucer "presents a tale that challenges the ability of texts to sustain authority," at 163, 164..

Through his characters, Chaucer displays various interpretive techniques applied to Solomon and his texts—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs—and reveals the limited capacity of secular interpreters. Each of Solomon's books was considered a step in a progressive pedagogical development, a traditional view transmitted from Origen:

> Thus, he first taught in Proverbs the subject of morals, setting regulations for life together, as was fitting, in concise and brief maxims. And he included the second subject, which is called the natural discipline, in Ecclesiastes, in which he discusses many natural things. And by distinguishing them as empty and vain from what is useful and necessary, he warns that vanity must be abandoned and what is useful and right must be pursued. He also handed down the subject of contemplation in the book we have in hand, that is, Song of Songs, in which he urges upon the soul the love of the heavenly and the divine under the figure of the bride and the bridegroom, teaching us that we must attain fellowship with God by the paths of loving affection and of love.[124]

The attribution of biblical authorship to Solomon gives the wise king additional influence, while also imbuing each of his books with special "wisdom" status. In addition to his influence as author, Solomon was also considered an interpreter of the inspired texts that came before him: "Solomon…appears in rabbinic discussion as not only a writer of Scripture but also an inspired authority who in his biblical writing interprets the Torah."[125] Solomon is a unique figure for bringing this analysis to the forefront as wisest

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[124] *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, trans. Rowan A. Greer (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 232.

[125] William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), xv

king and author of the ultimate mystical text on love, the Song of Songs, who is brought down by his love of women. A lay-person may be able to live wisely by the guidance of Proverbs, and may even be able to abandon worldly values according to the admonishments of Ecclesiastes, but he or she inevitably fails when it comes to the interpretation of love. Chaucer's alchemical experiment combining interpretation and the practice of love shows that a carnal reading results in an individual's alienation from community, but a spiritual reading of love offers reconciliation with God and humankind.

The Solomon-*auctor* constellation shines plainly and clearly throughout the *Tale of Melibee*. The *Tale of Melibee* contains the most references to Solomon-*auctor* of any of the *Canterbury Tales*, with forty-one "Salomon seith," "seith Salomon," and "word of Salomon" phrases. All of these phrases integrate quotations from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Ecclesiasticus into the discussion.[126] Prudence speaks thirty-four of the quotations, Melibee speaks six, one is spoken by a narrative voice (IV.1047), and one is spoken by Melibee's counselors when they concede to Prudence's wisdom (IV.1739-40). I agree with Christian Zacher that *Melibee* is an "important link between the beginning and end of the *Canterbury Tales*."[127] *Melibee* is a critical juncture and a signpost pointing to the *Parson's Tale*, making the power of union with Christ available to all: the reader, Solomon, and even the author of *Canterbury Tales* himself.

Besserman argues that Chaucer's concern with authority and interpretation, particularly of the Bible, is contemporary concern: "Chaucer, like the Wycliffites, was

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[126] According to the explanatory note by Sharon Hiltz DeLong in the *Riverside Chaucer*, "The confusion of Solomon and the author of Ecclesiasticus here and elsewhere derives from Albertanus," 924; i.e. Albertanus of Brescia *Liber consolationis et consilii.*

[127] Christian Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1976), 119..

deeply concerned with the crucially related question of how the bible and its authority

could be put to use in deciding questions of religious, political, and social policy."[128]

Chaucer the pilgrim points to the issue of biblical interpretation in the *Thopas-Melibee*

link when he compares his proceeding work to the operation of the gospels in the New

Testament: "'every Evaungelist / That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist / Ne seith nat

alle thyng as his felawe dooth; / But nathelees hir sentence is al sooth'" (VII.944-6). The

reference is to the Evangelists, but he sets up an Old Testament context for the tale in the

following lines of the Link: "I yow biseche, / If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche, /

As thus, though that I telle somwhat moore / Of <u>proverbs</u> than ye han herd bifoore… /

And though I nat the same wordes seye / As y han herd, yet to yow alle I preye / Blameth

me nat'" (VII.953-6, 959-61) (emphasis added). The *Tale of Melibee* includes only four

references to the Gospels but twenty-three references to the book of *Proverbs* and twenty

references to *Ecclesiasticus*, which indicates that while the issues of authority and

interpretation are overarching, Old Testament authorities on practical wisdom—i.e.,

Solomon—provide the specific framework. Daniel Kempton argues that the *Thopas-*

Melibee link brings attention to the operation of interpretation and "makes the mediation

of the 'auctor' perceptible as problematic."[129] The reader is set up to examine the issues

of authority, authorship, and interpretation in *Melibee*, even before the advent of the tale

proper.

Prudence has much in common with Solomon's Lady Wisdom: "I, wisdom, dwell

in counsel, and am present in learned thoughts… Counsel and equity is mine, prudence is

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[128] ibid., 29.

[129] Daniel Kempton, "Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*: 'A Litel Thyng in Prose,'" *The Chaucer Review* 213 (1988): 263-78 at 268.

mine, strength is mine," and "she teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and

fortitude, *which are such things as men* can have nothing more profitable in life"

(Proverbs 8:12, 14, Wisdom 8:7b).[130] In her article, "'In Hir Tellyng Difference': Gender,

Authority, and Interpretation in the *Tale of Melibee*," Amanda Walling assumes

Prudence's femininity within the narrative, and also sees gender as key to mapping

Chaucer's exploration of the function of authority and interpretation. Walling sees

Prudence's response to Melibee's antifeminism as "one of the tale's key interpretive

moments."[131] When Melibee quotes Ecclesiastes 7.29 at Prudence, she "does not have to

refute Solomon's argument or his authority because she can show that, since Melibee's

citation proves nothing about Solomon's *entente*, no real conclusions can be drawn…"[132]

Charles Owen acknowledges Prudence's existence "primarily in the realm of the intellect

where disembodied ideals and qualities act out a Platonic conflict," but also recognizes

Prudence's existence at the literal level: "Prudence speaks as a prudent *wife*."[133] So part

of the practice of interpretation is reading a real man-and-wife relationship. Anne

Laskaya brings attention to the "flatness of Prudence's character, her one-dimensional

nature," but goes on to say that "Dame Prudence and Melibeus function not only as

allegorical figures, but also as representations of male and female."[134] She goes so far as

to say that "What Geoffrey's *Tale of Melibee* depicts in Prudence is a strong female

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[130] Ego, sapientia. habito in consilio et eruditis intersum cognitionibus…. meum est consilium et aequitas; mea est prudentia; mea est fortitudo. / sobrietatem enim et prudentiam docet et iustitiam et virtutem, qui utilius nihil est in vita hominibus.

[131] Amanda Walling, "'In Hir Tellyng Difference': Gender, Authority, and Interpretation in the *Tale of Melibee*," *The Chaucer Review* 402 (2005): 163-78 at 169.

[132] ibid.

[133] Charles Owen, "The *Tale of Melibee*," *The Chaucer Review* 74 (1973): 267-80 at 270.

[134] Anne Laskaya, *Chaucer's Approach to Gender in the* Canterbury Tales. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 164.

intellectual capability, though no aspiration to 'maistrie.'"[135] Solomon is a focal point for

Prudence's address of antifeminism, as he is for Proserpyna in the *Merchant's Tale*,

giving Prudence the opportunity to address the entire history of masculine biblical and

classical authorities regarding the validity of female social function and discourse.

When Melibee finally assents to listen to the advice of Prudence, he labels

Prudence via Solomon-*auctor*, as a legitimate counselor instead of a prattling woman, as

many of Solomon's misogynist proverbs have categorized her: "'I se wel that the word of

Salomon is sooth. He seith that 'wordes that been spoken discreetly by ordinaunce been

honycombes, for they yeven swetnesse to the soule and hoolsomnesse to the body.'[136]

And, wyf, by cause of they sweete wordes, and eek for I have assayed and preved thy

grete sapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conseil in alle thyng"

(VII.1113-14). After this concession, Prudence directs Melibee's attention toward an

Ecclesiastes-themed response by encouraging him to reject the worldly response of

revenge and turn to the pious (and Solomonic) response of peace and reconciliation.

Prudence's response points to the contemplative tradition, according to Paul

Strohm, in his article, "The Allegory of the *Tale of Melibee*."[137] In this tradition, the

pilgrim arrives at a spiritual Jerusalem, at peace with God regardless of outward

circumstances. This is final step of Solomon-*auctor*'s pedagogical pilgrimage, "teaching

us that we must attain fellowship with God by the paths of loving affection and of

love."[138] This reading also helps solve a scholarly conundrum in *Melibee* by rendering

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[135] ibid.

[136] Well ordered words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul *and* health to the bones. Favus mellis verba composita, dulcedo animae, sanitas ossuum. (Proverbs, 16.24).

[137] Paul Strohm, "The Allegory of the *Tale of Melibee*," *The Chaucer Review* 21 (1967): 32-42 at 39

[138] *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 232.

coherent the allegorical representations and Prudence's explanation of the attack on their household as originating from "the three enemys of mankynde – that is to seyn, the flessh, the feend, and the world – thou hast suffred hem entre in to thyn herte wilfully by the wyndowes of they body" (VII. 1421-2). The difficulty with this as allegorical interpretation is that Prudence has been advocating for Melibee to make peace with his enemies. Strohm asks: "Why should God, for all his approval of charity in human relations, approve of charity in the Christian's relations with the world, the flesh, and the devil?"[139] Strohm solves this hermeneutical problem by placing *Melibee* within the Christian tradition that calls for passivity even in the face of an overt attack of the devil. The Christian's only work is to "reconcile himself with God," and surrendering even one's claim on his or her own life.[140]

Prudence's use of Solomon-*auctor* has, for some scholars, been itself a problem. The very proverbs Prudence quotes seem to contradict one another within the frame of the tale. Unity in *Melibee* is "made problematic through a discourse that sets in contradiction 'auctours' quoted within the text, that calls attention to their differences, to ruptures in the mystical continuity and totality of a Christian scriptural tradition."[141] Kempton recognizes Solomon as a focal point for authority within the tale, saying: "I am tempted to call the little thing in prose, rather than a treatise or a moral allegory, a game of Solomon Says."[142] Amanda Walling responds to Kempton, saying: "Much of the instability that critics like Kempton detect in Prudence's use of authority is already

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[139] ibid., 37.
[140] ibid., 38.
[141] Kempton, 266.
[142] ibid., 267

present, and occasionally acknowledged, in the glossatorial tradition, in which the tools

of interpretation at times threaten to overwhelm the authorities they purport to serve."[143]

Walling uses the two proverbs of Solomon quoted by Kempton to show that Prudence's

methods are coherent. In her speech on good counsel at the beginning of the tale,

Prudence first quotes Solomon as saying: "'Manye freendes have thou, but among a

thousand chese thee oon to be thy conseillour," and then, a few lines later, a different

proverb of Solomon is cited: "'Salvacion of thynges is where as ther been manye

conseillours'" (VII.1167, 1671).[144] Walling argues, "…if we choose to read *Melibee* as

simply a *florilegium* of discrete fragments of texts (as many readers have), a number of

multiple and conflicting interpretations could easily be derived. In the context of

Prudence's discourse, however, the meanings of the phrases present no such

difficulty."[145] The *auctoritee* of Solomon remains intact for the prudent interpreter, the

one whose interpretation is based on eternal values instead of selfish or worldly ones.

Chaucer's naming of the daughter of Melibee and Prudence—Sophie—and the

ultimate success of Prudence's counsel to Melibee in the *Tale* is the final important

interpretational crux. Lee Patterson notes that: "Chaucer's is the only version of the story

in which the daughter of Prudence and Melibee is given a name," and makes the point

that, by doing so, Chaucer differentiates between wisdom and prudence as two types of

knowledge.[146] Patterson notes that Sophie's absence from the rest of the tale emphasizes

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[143] Walling, 167.

[144] These proverbs are from Ecclesiasticus: Be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counsellor; Multi pacifici sint tibi, et consilarius tibi sit unus de mille (6.6).

[145] ibid., 165.

[146] Lee Patterson, "'What Man Artow?': Authorial Self-Definition in *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and *The Tale of Melibee*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 11 (1989): 117-15.at 141.

the practical, active wisdom represented by Prudence versus comtemplative *sapientia*. Patterson also sees the disappearance of Sophie and dominance of Prudence in the narrative as an indicator of the genre of the tale. He argues that *Melibee* is pedagogical, a work that "defines itself as a particular kind of *miroir*…[that] assimilates itself to the genre of books written specifically for noble *children*."[147] Prudence's task is to "teach Melibee how to interpret," but Melibee, and then Harry Bailly in his comment after the tale, show the difficulty humans have in learning to see with an eternal perspective, since their views are colored by their own situations. David Raybin compares Melibee to Januarie of the *Merchant's Tale* in this failure of vision: "Melibee's self-reflexive response, like that of January in The Merchant's Tale, is indicative of his own moral limitations."[148] Melibee wants to confiscate the property of his enemies, and Harry, instead of applying Melibee's lesson to himself, wants his wife to hear the story of Melibee and Prudence so that she can learn patience. Patterson sees these incidents as evidence of Prudence's failure.[149] Prudence delivers one more persuasive speech to her husband, however, and Melibee finally seems convinced: "Whanne Melibee hadde herd the grete skiles and resouns of dame Prudence, and hire wise informaciouns and techynges, / his herte gan enclyne to the wil of his wif, considerynge her trewe entente...." (VII.1871-2). Paul Strohm see Prudence's efforts as successful: "At the end

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[147] ibid., 147.

[148] David Raybin, "'Manye been the weyes': The Flower, Its Roots, and the Ending of *The Canterbury Tales*" in *Closure in* The Canterbury Tales: *The Role of The Parson's Tale*, ed. David B. Raybin and Linda Tarte Holley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 11-43 at 40.

[149] Patterson says of Melibee's initial response: "Ironically, what this moment suggests is that in fact Prudence's teaching has been largely useless, as she herself seems to acknowledge…," and then says further : "But, in fact, of course, it casts a dark shadow on the effectiveness of her teaching, a shadow to which Chaucer draws attention with Harry Bailly's misreading of the tale he has just heard: just as Melibee has learned nothing, neither has Harry" ("'What Man Artow?'" 157, 158).

she succeeds, Melibee is enlightened, and his soul is again intact."[150] Perhaps the obvious

challenge Melibee and Harry Bailly present as pupils in the school of interpretation is a

comment not on Prudence's performance but on the intransigence of humankind and the

difficulty Scriptural interpretation presents for the lewd. That intransigence is played out

more fully in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and the *Merchant's Tale*. But the first reference

to Solomon occurs in the first tale, the one true chivalric romance of the *Canterbury*

Tales.

The *Knight's Tale* is usually considered a chivalric romance because of its focus

on "love and arms."[151] The reference definitively presents Solomon in the context of

love, but, in this case, carnal love as depicted in the Temple of Venus. Theseus builds the

shrine as part of the stadium for Arcite and Palamon's tournament. The description of the

shrine to Venus places it explicitly within the courtly love tradition, with its "broken

slepes," "sikes colde," "sacred teeris," and "waymentynge" (I.1920-21). The garden

painted on the wall "mirrors the Garden of Deduit from the *Roman de la Rose*" and the

images "all suggest…adultery, leisure, aristocratic pursuits, as well as the literary

convention of the *hortus conclusus*."[152] Within the description of the shrine of Venus, the

knight recites a list of important figures all overcome by the power of love: Idleness,

Narcissus, the "folye of kyng Salomon," Hercules, Medea and Circe, Turnus, and

Croseus (I 1940-46). Solomon is the only biblical figure in the list; the descriptor for

Solomon, "folye," is the opposite of the ubiquitous descriptor for Solomon as "wyse."

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[150] Strohm, "The Allegory of the *Tale of Melibee*," 42.
[151] Larry Benson, "Introduction," *The Riverside Chaucer*, 7.
[152] Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 204.

This brief phrase reminds the audience of the span of Solomon's life from its height at wisest king of the known world to his downfall because of his love for his pagan wives. The knight's moralizing comment afterward—"Thus may ye seen that wysdom ne richesse…Ne may with Venus holde champartie" (I 1947, 1949) makes the power of love supreme and raises the question at the beginning of the *Canterbury Tales* of whether it is possible for humans to ever experience or interpret love appropriately. Helen Cooper argues that, in the *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer uses the "pagan past as a point outside his own age of faith, from which to ask questions of a kind normally disallowed," and these questions are prompted by the characters' experience of love.[153] Although other concerns trump the Solomon matrix of interpretation and love in the *Knight's Tale*, the Wife of Bath keeps them front and center in her *Prologue*.

The Wife of Bath has, of course, much to say about interpretation and love. In the first line of her *Prologue*, the Wife addresses the contemporary obsession with and definition of "auctoritee," acknowledging that her claim to authority through experience is not considered legitimate. After she explains that she has been married five times, the Wife begins her recital of biblical auctoritee regarding marriage with the statement: "But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is…" (III.9). While the garbled nature of the account of biblical authorities that follows may fall on the Wife's deliberate misreading, clearly someone else brought these texts to her attention first, and she may be following an example set for her. In line twenty-six, the Wife comment that, "Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun."

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[153] Helen Cooper, "The Classical Background," *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 262.

Solomon-*auctor* himself is the text that the Wife cites, and Solomon's philogyny is biblical evidence that multiple marriages are valid and that marital sex is legitimate. She calls him "the wise kyng, daun Salomon,' and delivers the deliberate understatement: "I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon" (III 35-36). Although the Wife refers to Solomon as a noble king, she interprets him according to sexual terms: "Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys! / No man hath swich that in this world alyve is. / God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit, / The firste nyght had many a myrie fit / With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve" (III 39-43). Bonaventure, in his commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, provides a fascinating defense for Solomon's authority by saying: "So the author of this book had to be a person with experience of all these things, that is, a person who was powerful, rich, voluptuous, and curious or wise. We have not read or heard of anyone who so excelled in all these as Solomon. So he was more suitable than all others to be the author of this book."[154] Bonaventure goes on to carefully delineate the redemption of Solomon for his readers, and finish the justification of Solomon as authority. The Wife of Bath uses this notion of Solomon's experience, however, for her own defense. Solomon-*auctor* shines here in a new light, indeed.

The Wife of Bath's use of *auctoritee* exposes the manipulation of biblical texts by contemporary authorities, particularly the abuse within the misogynist tradition. Her free usage of biblical texts has been interpreted in a number of ways by scholars, including evidence of authorial condemnation of her character, evidence of Chaucer's Lollardy, evidence of Chaucer's proto-feminism. As Alcuin Blamires states: "In the case of the

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[154] *Works of St. Bonaventure: Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, trans. Campion Murray and Robert J. Karris (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 76.

Wife of Bath's Prologue, audacity in manipulating Christian propositions on marriage, love and gender famously goes to new lengths and six hundred years later the jury is still out on how we are meant to respond."[155] The multivalence of the Wife and her work in itself foregrounds the issue of interpretation in the *Prologue*. Lee Patterson argues that the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* is a narrative experience in learning to interpret. According to Patterson, the Wife of Bath's practically sacriligeous method of interpretation is a deliberate strategy to emphasize the carnality of experience.[156] Patterson describes parts one and two of the *Prologue* as a dilation and delay and all three parts as "a progressive series of glosses on a text."[157] The Wife of Bath's method is ultimately Chaucer's method in the *Canterbury Tales*, claims Patterson, as the game "postpones the penance of Canterbury."[158] Patterson's attention to interpretation and gender in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* pinpoint these two issues as primary in all of the tales that reference Solomon-*auctor* in one way or another.

The Wife names ten different authorities in eighteen lines, nine of whom have works bound together in Jankyn's book of "wikked wyves" (669-87). The last passage Jankyn quotes before the Wife takes matters into her own hands contains three proverbs attributed to Solomon: 'Bet is', quod he, 'thin habitacioun / Be with a leoun or a foul dragoun, / Than with a womman using for to chide.' / 'Bet is', quod he, 'hye in the roof abide, / Than with an angry wif doun in the hous.' …'A fair womman, but she be chaast

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[155] Alcuin Blamires, "Love, Marriage, Sex, Gender," in *Chaucer and Religion*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 3-23 at 17.
[156] Lee Patterson, "Feminine Rhetoric and the Politics of Subjectivity: La Vieille and the Wife of Bath," *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, and Reception,* ed. Sylvia Jean Huot and Kevin Brownlee (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 316-58 at 333.
[157] ibid., 334.
[158] ibid., 347.

also, / Is lik a gold ring in a sowes nose'" (III 775-79, 784-85). Jill Mann argues that

Solomon is a part of a "recognisable cluster of antifeminist motifs in a whole series of

texts from the twelfth century to Chaucer's time and beyond."[159] This is the tradition that

Proserpina attacks in the *Merchant's Tale*. Alcuin Blamires presents the possibility that

the reader of the *Canterbury Tales* is encouraged to see through the Wife's "straw

arguments" to St. Jerome's objections to marriage. Jerome's arguments are not

watertight; one contradiction in his argument is his criticism of Solomon for being

influenced by his wives, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, referencing

Solomon's leadership in building the first temple and quoting "extensively from his

biblical sayings."[160] I agree with Blamires' statement from his article "The Wife of Bath

and Lollardy," that Chaucer's interest here and throughout the *Canterbury Tales* is in

"how people quote, use, play, and misappropriate or 'harass' written *auctoritee*."[161] We

will never be able to determine unequivocally Chaucer's personal view of Lollardy, but

the issues of authority and interpretation at the heart of the controversy are certainly a

primary focal point of the *Canterbury Tales*. Blamires argues: "Among other things

(possibly above all other things) Chaucer was drawn to become a connoisseur of the

operations of *auctoritee* within the spoken or literary argument by the furore surrounding

that central feature of Lollardy which so dismayed the Lollards' opponents and which

must therefore have affected a poet who moved in Lollard circles."[162]

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[159] Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 40.

[160] ibid., 18.

[161] Alcuin Blamires, "The Wife of Bath and Lollardy," *Medium Aevum* 58. 2 (1989): 224-42 at 237.

[162] ibid., 237. Regarding Chaucer's textual interaction with the Wycliffite Bible, Frances M. McCormack, in her chapter, "Chaucer and Lollardy," , draws a definitive conclusion: "there are instances in which Chaucer appears to have used the Wycliffite Bible to assist or influence him in his scriptural translations in

Authorities on marriage, including Theofrastus, are an important link between the

the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Merchant's Tale*.[163] Januarie is a sixty-year-old bachelor

who is introduced to the reader as one who "folwed ay his bodily delyt / On wommen,

ther as was his appetyt, / As doon thise fooles that been seculeer" (IV.1249-51).[164]

Nicholas Watson equates "secular" with "lewd," and defines this group as "ordinary

members of the body of Christ" who consider repentance late in life a "practical

accommodation."[165] Living the active life makes sin inevitable, but "even the worst

sinners are saved if they have a proper attitude at the time of death," according to *The

Book of the Craft of Dying*, which Watson claims "many of Chaucer's later London

readers owned and read."[166] Januarie, however, does not exhibit the necessary attitude of

repentance. In fact, he attempts to construct his own salvation by recreating paradise.

Januarie is planning to marry as part of his late-in-life penitence. He prays that

God will grant him the "blisful life" of marriage because "wedlok is so esy and so clene /

That in this world it is a paradis." (IV.1259, 1264-65). I will return to the use of "paradis"

in the *Merchant's Tale* shortly but want to bring attention briefly to a specific connection

to the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*. At the beginning of the presentation of the case for

married life, the narrator[167] confronts the anti-marriage tradition, particularly Theofrastus,

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the Tale. Add to this points of doctrine on which Chaucer's Parson and the Lollards are clearly in accordance, and the resuls are certainly compelling," *Chaucer and Religion* ed. Phillips, 35-40at 37.

[163] Theofrastus, "Liber de nuptis", *Jankyn's Book of Wikked Wyves,* ed. Ralph Hanna III and Trautgott Lawlot, 2 vols. The Chaucer Library (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997-2014), 1: 149-55, 225-31.-

[164] The speaking voice in this opening section of the *Merchant's Tale*, refers again to "seculer": "Mariage is a ful greet sacrament; / He which that hath no wif, I holde him shent; / He liveth helplees and al desolate -- / I speke of folk in seculer estat" (IV.1319-22).

[165] Nicholas Watson, "Chaucer's Public Christianity," *Religion & Literature* 372 (2005): 99-114 at 105.

[166] ibid., 104-05

[167]167 David Aers, *Chaucer*, (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1986), 71. Regarding the poetic voice in the *Merchant's Tale*, Aers claims, "Its critical perspective, subtlety, imagistic resonance and overall organisation cannot meaningfully be attributed to the perverse shallowness of the misogynistic

who is included in Jankyn's book of wicked wives in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*. An eleven-line quotation from Theofrastus is introduced with a dismissal of its *auctoritee*: "And yet som clerkes seyn it nis nat so, / Of whiche he Theofraste is oon of tho. / What force thogh Theofraste liste lie?," and then the quotation is followed by a curse: "This sentence, and an hundred thinges worse, / Writeth this man, ther God his bones curse! / But take no kepe of al swich vanitee; / Diffye Theofraste, and herke me" (IV.1293-95, 1307-10). The Wife of Bath and the Merchant are the only two Canterbury pilgrims to make direct references to Theofrastus and to address the anti-marriage authorities in this way. On the surface, this attack seems like a liberal-minded, humanistic approach to marriage relationship, but I argue that the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and the *Merchant's Tale* together express Chaucer's anxiety about the lewd understanding of love and the secular reading of Solomon and the Song of Songs.

The constellation of Solomon is clear in the sky for the *Merchant's Tale*, but, like all constellations (and perhaps like the *Canterbury Tales* narrative), it does not move in a linear fashion but in an elliptical one, turning upon itself. Douglas Wurtele is the only scholar to directly address the figure of Solomon in the *Merchant's Tale*, in his article, "The Figure of Solomon in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*." Most significant is his discussion of typology in the *Tale* and his use of the *Glossa Ordinaria* to point out the Merchant's use of the *Canticum Canticorum* and use of the figures of Solomon, Mary, and Christ.[168] Wurtele's conclusion is that the references to Solomon function solely as a

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merchant who is its formal pilgrim-teller. As throughout the *Canterbury Tales*, there is simply no hard-and-fast rule about the relations between author, fictional tellers and tales, nor is there always a consistent narrative voice in even one tale."

[168] Douglas Wurtele, "The Figure of Solomon in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*." *Revue de l'Universite d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa Quarterly* 47, (1977): 478-87.

reflection of the Merchant's cynicism and deliberate blasphemy. Chaucer's purpose is,

however, to do more than create "an aberrant type like the Merchant"[169] to express bitter

and blasphemous views; Chaucer's target is his secular audience who may, like Chauer,

have a great familiarity with Scripture, but who also may have, as Chaucer's expresses in

his Retraction, "sownen into synne" (X 1086). The opening section of the *Merchant's*

Tale contains many clues to the narrator and Januarie's misinterpreation of an appropriate

marriage relationship and an appropriate relationship with God, but references to

Solomon-*auctor* provide a lens to clarify the dangers of a carnal interpretation of love.

> After the attack on Theofrastus, the narrator returns to the praise of marriage

through a visit to the Garden of Eden:

> The hye God, whan he hadde Adam maked,
>
> And saugh him al allone, bely-naked,
>
> God of his grete goodnesse seyde than,
>
> 'Lat us now make an helpe unto this man
>
> Lyke to hymself'; and thanne he made him Eve.
>
> Heere may ye se, and heerby may ye preve,
>
> That wyf is mannes helpe and his confort,
>
> His paradys terrestre, and his disport. (IV.1325-32)

This passage, up to the last line, is a vernacular paraphrase of the Scripture, but the

speaker has elided the Fall, jumping from "he made him Eve" to the generalization that,

for man, "That wyf is…his paradys terrestre." The speaker does not "se" the whole

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[169] Ibid., 487.

picture. Karl Wentersdorf points out the Merchant's unusual use of this passage:

"Traditionally, medieval accounts of the Biblical story stressed the part played by Eve in

bringing about the Fall, ignoring any responsibility on the part of Adam. The Merchant is

therefore making effective use of irony in evoking the bliss anticipated by January

through a detailed description of Adam's 'paradys terrestre.'"[170] The phrase "paradys

terrestre" in this passage not only invokes the image of the Garden of Eden, an

irretrievable paradise, but also the *hortus conclusus* of the Song of Songs. What, in this

passage, is an allusion later becomes Januarie's aspiration when builds a garden for

himself and his young wife, May, after their wedding. January never expresses interest in

union with Christ, the relationship that should be the basis for penance and entry to the

heavenly wedding feast. January's reading of paradise reveals his spiritual blindness.

Parallel to the speaker and the main character of the *Merchant's Tale* creating

their own reading of earthly bliss in marriage is an effort to undermine the authorities on

marriage, love, and interpretation. The first time that Solomon is actually named in the

Merchant's Tale is in connection with a proverb about counsel. Solomon-*auctor*'s official

entrance into the *Merchant's Tale* occurs in the counselors' meeting when Januarie is

ostensibly seeking advice about getting married. The proverb is: "'Wirk alle thyng by

conseil… / And thanne shaltow nat repente thee'" (IV.1485-86).[171] The irony is, of

course, that Placebo prefaces the proverb by saying Januarie does not really need counsel:

"'Ful litel nede hadde ye, my lord so deere, / Conseil to axe of any that is heere / But that

ye been so ful of sapience / That yow ne liketh, for youre heighe prudence, / To weyven

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[170] Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Theme and Structure in the Merchant's Tale: The Function of the Pluto Episode," *PMLA* 80.5 (Dec., 1965), 522-27 at 522.

[171] While Placebo atributes this proverb to Solomon, it is not Biblical in origin.

fro the word of Salomon. / This word seyde he unto us everychon'" (IV.1479-84). Placebo's follow-up comment to the proverb continues to undermine it: "'But though that Salomon spak swich a word, / Myn owene deere brother and my lord, / So wysly God my soule brynge at reste, / I holde youre owene conseil is the beste" (IV.1487-90). In his description of the figure of Solomon in the *Solomon and Marcolf* text of the fifteenth century, Jan Ziolkowski describes his reputation in this way: "Solomon takes a stand as an authority, much of whose power derives from the texts ascribed to him. In other words, he is an *auctor*, which is to say, a revered author… Quotations from the books of the Bible he is alleged to have composed constitute a major portion of the *auctoritates* that endow him with his authority."[172] Placebo advises Januarie to reject the advice of Solomon and becomes his own Solomon.

In the section of the Tale leading up to the actual wedding of January and May, January uses a form of the word "bliss" five different times to describe marriage. January is using the same approach that he used in his bachelorhood—"folwed ay his bodily delit"—for his (imaginary) relationship with his wife; His late-in-life penance has become a new obsession. He is so convinced in is own power to create this paradise that he is afraid he may ultimately forfeit his heavenly paradise by living in such bliss on earth (IV.1637-54). Justinus warns him that he may end up repenting against his will, as it were, if he goes into his marriage thinking that it will be an earthly paradise: "…God forbede but he sente / A wedded man hym grace to repente / Wel ofte rather than a sengle man!" (IV.1665-67). Januarie takes his own counsel, however, and marries May.

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[172] Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf* 16.

January continues to interpret "terrestre" incorrectly and incompletely. One of January's most egregious acts of poor reading is declaring his squire Damian as "wys, discreet, and as secree / As any man I woot of his degree, / And therto manly, and eek servysable." The narrator has already explained that Damian has fallen in love with May and is "servant traytour, false hoomly hewe, / Lyk to the naddre in bosom sly untrewe" (IV.1909-11,1785-86). The Merchant even warns his character: "God graunte thee thyn hoomly fo t'espye" (IV.1792). But January cannot seem to "espye" anything correctly. January's ultimate misinterpretation is building a *hortus conclusus*, a walled garden, as a retreat in which to enjoy his young wife.

January quotes from the Song of Songs to invite May to go with him to the garden: "'Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free! / The turtles voys is herd, my dowve sweete; / The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete" (IV.2138-40).[173] Douglas Wurtele, in his article, "The Blasphemy of Chaucer's Merchant," contends that January's quotation from the *Song of Songs* is a "profaning of the *Canticum's* sacred associations," which, as Wurtele views it, are associations with the Virgin Mary.[174] Chaucer's audience would certainly have recognized the dissonance between January's use of these words to call his wife to amorous play and the orthodox understanding of the verses representing the sacred femininity of the Church, the soul, or the Virgin Mary.

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[173] "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past … The voice of the turtle is heard in the land." / "Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, formonsa mea, et veni, iam enim hiemps transiit … Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra" (Canticle of Canticles, 2.10-11, 12).
[174] Douglas Wurtele, "The Blasphemy of Chaucer's Merchant," *Annuale mediaevale* 21 (1981): 91-110 at 92.

January continues his speech to May with words that echo the Song of Songs:

'Com forth now, with thyne eye columbyn!

How fairer been thy brestes than is wyn!

The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;

Com forth, my white spouse! Out of doute

Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, O wyf!

No spot of thee ne knew I al my lyf.

Com forth, and lat us taken our disport;

I chees thee for my wyf and my confort.'' (IV.2141-48)[175]

Although this passage sounds very like the Song of Songs, the further he goes, the more January manipulates the Scripture to fit his own situation, as with the previous interpretation of the Garden of Eden. Because May's physical beauty has been the focus of January's attention all along, January's reference to his "white" spouse and his wounded heart emphasizes her outward beauty that he has perceived with his eyes, not a reflection of authentic relationship. The "confort" to which January refers at the end of his speech is linked to the "disport" of one line earlier. The comfort January is anticipating is not certainly not spiritual but physical. The narrator concludes this passage with his own reading of January's interpretation: "Swiche olde lewed wordes used he" (IV.2149). In any other context, the words from the Song of Songs would be function as language that directs the attention toward the love of Christ—the very opposite of

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[175] Thy eyes are dove's eyes … and there is not a spot in thee …Come from Lebanon, my spouse … Thou hast wounded my heart … Thy breasts are more beautiful than wine … My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a garden enclosed … / Oculi tui columbarum … et macula non est in te … Veni de Libano, sponsa mea … Vulnerasti cor meum … Pulchriora ubera tua vino … Hortus conclusus soror mea, sponsa, hortus conclusus … (Canticle of Canticles, 4.1,7-9. 10, 12).

"lewed," in fact. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his first sermon on the Song of Songs, warns his 12th century audience that "it is presumptuous of us to attempt the study of what is holy, for we are impure. Just as a light shines unseen on blind or closed eyes, so the man who is an animal does not see the things which belong to the spirit of God."[176] King Solomon's sin, according to the *Cursor Mundi*, "mad king salamon al blind, / Blind o wijt and wisdom als," (8988-89) just like January. January tries to create a literal paradise of love, like Solomon did in a literary and figurative way. January's blindness, as Blamires states, is a "symptom of his mental and spiritual self-deception."[177] He interprets the Song of Songs literally as an expression of sexual consummation instead of as a mystical union with Christ.

May enters the garden with Januarie, but her tryst is with Damyan in the pear tree instead of with her husband Januarie. Pagan gods Pluto and Proserpina make a somewhat surprising entrance and comment on the situation, and summon Solomon-*auctor* along. Pluto directly quotes Solomon and prefaces the quotation with four lines of accolades:

'O Salomon, wys, and richest of richesse,

Fulfild of sapience and of worldly glorie,

Ful worthy been they wordes to memorie

To every wight that wit and reson kan.

Thus preiseth he yet the bountee of man' (IV.2242-46)

This is Solomon-*auctor* at his most powerful. And this is Pluto's introduction to the misogynist text that follows: "'Amonges a thousand men yet foond I oon, / But of

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[176] *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 211.
[177] Alcuin Blamires, *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 65.

wommen alle foond I noon'" (IV.2247-48). In *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics*, Lawrence

Besserman claims, regarding this verse (Ecclesiastes 7:29): "There is also impressive

evidence of the widespread popularity of the verse among other medieval authors that

deserves notice."[178] Besserman notes that "Solomon gets special attention," in his

analysis of Biblical figures and verses in *The Merchant's Tale*."[179] Alcuin Blamires, in

The Case for Women in Medieval Culture, calls Ecclesiastes 7:29 an "old misogynous

chestnut."[180] While this may be Solomon-*auctor* at his most powerful, it may also be

Chaucer at his most ironic. David Aers points out the irony that it is Pluto who expresses

this concern regarding the treasons of women, when a few lines earlier he was introduced

as the one who "'ravysshed' Proserpyna, fetched her 'in his grisely carte' and forced her

to be his wife in hell (IV.2225-33)." [181]

Proserpyna responds to Pluto's summoning of Solomon-*auctor* and his promise to

give Januarie sight—"'Thanne shal he knowen al hire harlotrye, / Bothe in repreve of hire

and othere mo'"—with an oath: "'Now by my moodres sires soule I swere / That I shal

yeven hire suffisant answere, / And alle wommen after…'" (IV.2265-67). The *Riverside*

Chaucer notes that Proserpyna's mother's sire is Saturn, a familiar figure in astrology and

myth, who also happens to be Solomon's opponent in the Old English *Dialogues of*

Solomon and Saturn.[182] Proserpyna certainly sets herself up as the opponent of Solomon-

auctor in her diatribe:

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[178] Lawrence Besserman, *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* 133.

[179] ibid., 136

[180] Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 106.

[181] Aers, 74.

[182] *The Riverside Chaucer*, 166, Note for line 2265; In his edition of *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, Daniel Anlezark explains the background of the Old English dialogues: "The OE dialogues of Solomon and Saturn represent one moment of a continuous literary tradition extending from biblical into

'What rekketh me of youre auctoritees?

I woot wel that this Jew, this Salomon,

Foond of us wommen fooles many oon.

But though that he ne foond no good womman,

Yet hath ther founde many another man

Wommen ful trewe, ful goode, and vertuous.

Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous;

With martirdom they preved hire constance.

The Romayn geestes eek make remembrance

Of many a verray, trewe wyf also.

But, sire, ne be nat wrooth, al be it so,

Though that he seyde he foond no good womman,

I prey yow take the sentence of the man;

He mente thus, that in sovereyn bontee

Nis noon but God, but neither he ne she. (IV.2276-90)

As Lawrence Besserman points out, Proserpyna sets up Solomon as a contemporary and

an enemy of Christianity: "he suddenly ceases to be the quintessential Old Testament

teacher of wisdom and ancestor of Christ and comes instead an infidel ('this Jew, this

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early-modern times. As Christian heirs to the Jewish scriptural tradition, the Anglo-Saxons inherited the figure of the wise King Solomon, son of David, builder of the Temple, and supposed author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs." Anzelark also comments on the contrast between Solomon and Saturn: "The poem assumed Solomon's authority, and Saturn presents the king with enigmas and paradoxes. Solomon emerges as a figure associated with the peace of wisdom, Saturn with the contentious restlessness exemplified in his frenetic geographic search… The associations of Babylon and Jerusalem were medieval commonplaces: Saturn the Chaldean is associated with the sinful confusion of Babel, Solomon with the peace of Jerusalem," 12, 46.

Salomon').”[183] Proserpyna shows her skill at building a rhetorical argument and at

developing exegesis based upon the literal meaning of the text. Proserpina wins by

"arguing more learnedly and persuasively from the bible than any character in the story

heretofore."[184] The real target of Proserpyna's attack is those who developed the

misogynist interpretation of Solomon's text, who created these "auctoritees." Her

interpretation puts the emphasis on God's holiness and mercy, paralleling the New

Testament verse "For all have sinned and do need the glory of God. Being justified freely

by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus…" (Romans 3:23-24).[185] An

important principle of biblical interpretation is focusing on the "sentence" of a verse or

passage as it relates to God's overarching work of salvation. Proserpyna is not, however,

finished with dismantling Solomon and the system that he represents:

> 'Ey! For verray God that nys but oon,
>
> What make ye so muche of Salomon?
>
> What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
>
> What though he were riche and glorious?
>
> So made he eek a temple of false goddis.
>
> How myghte he do a thyn that moore forbode is?
>
> Pardee, as faire as ye his name emplastre,
>
> He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,
>
> And in his elde he verray God forsook;

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[183] Ibid., 129
[184] ibid., 131
[185] Omnes enim peccaverunt et egent gloria Dei, iustificati gratis per gratiam ipsius per redemptionem qyae est in Christo Iesu

> And if God ne hadde, as seith the book,
>
> Yspared him for his fadres sake, he sholde
>
> Have lost his regne rather than he wolde. (IV.2291-2302)

This is the figure that Bonaventure is compelled to defend in his commentary on Ecclesiastes. Bonaventure formulates, in a dialogic fashion, the arguments of those who question Solomon's authority:

> But it seems that it would not be appropriate for him to be the author for the following reasons: 1. Solomon was a sinner and carnal. But when a carnal person preaches spiritually, the result is scandal rather than edification. Therefore, this book causes more scandal than edification. 2. Furthermore, Psalm 49:16 states: 'But to the sinner God has said: "Why do you declare my justices?" Therefore, if Solomon was a sinner, he sinned by speaking of divine justice. 3. Moreover, a good author inspires trust, and the authority of such a person strengthens what is said while a bad author inspires no trust. But the books of Sacred Scripture ought to generate trust.[186]

Bonaventure's primary defense of Solomon is the fact that the Jews believed that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes late in life while doing penance for his sins.[187] Thirteenth century exegesis, with its interest in the literal meaning of the text and the contribution of the human author, created the need for this justification of Solomon-*auctor*. Alastair Minnis characterizes this approach: "When coming to terms with the 'literal sense' of sacred Scripture, late medieval exegetes had been obliged to adopt fresh positions

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[186] *Works of St. Bonaventure*, 85-86.

[187] ibid., 86

concerning the achievements and limitations of Biblical authors. Authors like David and Solomon had on occasion been divinely inspired, but they had sinned as well; yet respect for their authority had come to be regarded as perfectly compatible with recognition of the shortcomings of their humanity."[188] Proserpyna raises legitimate issues about the authority of King Solomon, issues with which theologians of the time were wrestling and providing careful answers. Proserpyna does not provide an answer in defense of Solomon but shifts to a direct defense of the voice of women, sounding more like the Wife of Bath as she does it:

> I sette right noght, of al the vileynye
>
> That ye of wommen write, a boterflye!
>
> I am a womman, nedes moot I speke,
>
> Or elles swelle til myn herte breke.
>
> For sithen he seyde that we been jangleresses,
>
> As evere hool I moote brouke my tresses,
>
> I shal nat spare, for no curteisye,
>
> To speke hym harm that wolde us vileynye.' (IV.2303-310)

The allusion in line 2307 would likely have been found in Jankyn's book of wicked wives, and could refer to at least five different verses in Proverbs that refer to women as quarrelsome. Proserpyna does get the last word on Solomon since Pluto's response to her speech is to say, "'Dame…be no lenger wrooth; / I yeve it up!'" (IV.2311-12). Jill Mann asserts that Pluto and Proserpyna's argument is key to the tale. Proserpyna is proof that

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[188] Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* 214.

female shrewishness is the "inevitable corrective to masculine selfishness."[189] Mann sees

the pattern of assertiveness and conciliation in the argument between Pluto and

Proserpyna, with Pluto ultimately giving up 'maistyre,' and allowing marital peace to be

reached. Mann places more emphasis on this couple in the *Merchant's Tale* than on

January and May; she characterizes January as retreating into his own delusion and May

as the expected, stereotyped response of a woman to antifeminist expectations. Holly

Crocker agrees that Proserpyna enacts the shrewish wife in this tale, in spite of the

Merchant's efforts to set up May as such, stating that "Pluto's unwilling bride forces her

rapist-husband into exhausted submission by attacking the source of his folly with

arguments that are better than his."[190] But Crocker presents May as beyond the control of

the tale-teller by contending that May takes up "passive femininity as a performative

fiction."[191] May does not force her husband into submission physically or verbally, as a

shrew would, but gets January to believe her fiction is reality. May's "subversive agency"

reveals the "narrator's lack of control over his feminine creation."[192] Perhaps Proserpyna

is a shrew, one who violently tears away the male-perpetuated method of allegorical

interpretation of Solomon-*auctor* and his Song of Songs. She advocates a much more

literal translation of Solomon and his texts, as does the Wife of Bath. The entire *Tale*,

however, illuminates the problem of the interpretive methods of the carnal-minded

Merchant, January, May, and Damyan. While Proserpyna points to the inevitability of a

shift in interpretative methods, January and May's inabilty to interpret the *hortus*

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[189] ibid., 52.

[190] Holly Crocker, "Performative Passivity and Fantasies of Masculinity in the *Merchant's Tale," The Chaucer Review*, 38, no. 2 (2003), 178-98 at 193.

[191] ibid., 194.

[192] ibid.

conclusus before their eyes reveals the possible future where "every one did that which seemed right to himself" (Judges 17.6).[193]

The Wife of Bath and Proserpina expose the contradictions and limits of orthodox methods of interpretation, and the Merchant and January reveal the wreckage of interpretation operated by the spiritually blind. The *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Merchant's Tale* also present a serious warning against interpreting sacred Scripture without doing the proper work of sincere penance. In the *Tale of Melibee* and the *Parson's Tale*, Prudence and the Parson offer Chaucer's audience—and Solomon—a chance to establish a foundation for authentic interpretation.

The *Parson's Tale* includes eighteen "Salomon seith" phrases, one "the sentence of Salomon" phrase, and three "the wise man seith" phrases that are linked to verses from Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. The constellation of Solomon-*auctor* is, however, one among many because the Parson includes a wide array of references to the Early Church Fathers and many references to other biblical authors and books. The *Parson's Tale* points the pilgrims to a way of reconciliation through relationship with Christ. The *Parson's Tale* presents to the pilgrim the way that "leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Crist and to the regne of glorie," which is penitence (X 79). The Parson, and Chaucer, takes the pilgrims the furthest an earthly or narrative journey can go, pointing them to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Perhaps in an effort to distinguish himself from the Pardoner, the Parson does not choose a sermon, per se, but a personal handbook requiring an individual response from his audience Richard Newhauser considers the *Parson's Tale* a penitential manual, one

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[193] sed unusquisque quod sibi rectum videbatur hoc faciebat.

kind among other "catechetical and devotional forms."[194] As Helen Phillips indicates in

Chaucer and Religion, Chaucer's use of his sources – Raymond of Pennaforte, Peraldus,

and the *Summa virtutum de remediis anime* – emphasizes the "transcendental, penitential

purpose."[195] Gregory Roper comments on manuals such as the *Parson's Tale* and their

audience: "What the handbooks were teaching, to an audience largely ignorant, illiterate,

and unused to such things, was a complete and integrated process of self-exploration,

self-discovery, and self-presentation. To accomplish this instruction, the handbooks often

begin as Chaucer does in The Parson's Tale by defining sin and penitence and outlining

the prerequisites for contrition and a good confession."[196] Such an ending is appropriate

for a reader-pilgrim who has viewed first-hand the damage of reading carnally. While

there is some disagreement on the degree of Chaucer's orthodoxy, which will be

addressed below, Chaucer's sources and use of them, are considered, for the most part,

doctrinally unexceptional. Aspects of the character of the Parson, however, make him

much more controversial than his orthodox use of orthodox sources.

The description of the Parson in the General Prologue, the comments made about

him in the *Epilogue of the Man of Law's Tale*, and the Parson's own comments in the

Parson's Prologue link him, in a greater or lesser degree depending on one's

interpretation, to Lollardy. The description of the Parson in the *General Prologue* alone

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[194] Richard Newhauser, "The Parson's Tale and Its Generic Affiliations" in *Closure in* The Canterbury Tales: *The Role of The Parson's Tale*, ed. David B. Raybin and Linda Tarte Holley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 45-76 at 46.

[195] Helen Phillips, "Morality in the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer's lyrics and the *Legend of Good Women*" in *Chaucer and Religion*, ed. Phillips 156-72 at 161.

[196] Roper, "Dropping the Personae and Reforming the Self: The Parson's Tale and the End of *The Canterbury Tales*." *Closure in* The Canterbury Tales: *The Role of The Parson's Tale*, ed. David B. Raybin and Linda Tarte Holley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000): 151-75 at 156.

would not necessarily implicate him as a Lollard. Statements like, "That Cristes gospel

trewely wolde preche," while suggestive, do not automatically associate him with

Lollardy (I.481). The interchange in the *Epilogue of the Man of Law's Tale*, however,

clearly raises the question about the Parson's religious associations. After the Man of

Law has finished his tale, the Host directs the Parson to take the next turn and tell a tale.

When the Parson subsequently rebukes the Host for swearing ("for Goddes bones," and

"by Goddes dignitee!"), the Host retorts, "'I smelle a Lollere in the wynd'" (II.1173). The

Parson's comments in the *Parson's Prologue* add to the controversy when he insists that

he will not tell a fable because the apostle Paul "Repreveth hem that weyven

soothfastnesse / And tellen fables and swich wrecchednesse" (X.33-34). Peggy Knapp,

applying Anne Hudson's Lollard vocabulary to *The Parson's Tale*, points out that

Wycliffites "objected particularly to friars who drew large crowds by preaching *fablis*—

rhymes, gabbings, falsehood, dreams, or the wisdom of men—instead of the gospel."[197]

With this kind of set-up, *The Parson's Tale*'s apparent orthodoxy may come as a surprise

to its audience.

Douglas Wurtele deduces that the Parson's criticisms and his particular use of

Scripture locate him in orthodoxy versus Lollardy. The Parson's use of expressions from

Nicolas of Lyra's commentary instead of from a Wycliffite translation (Revelation 3:20

at X. 289-90, for example) reveal that "the Parson is meant to stand as the best of the

zealous, orthodox priests whose standards, if followed universally, would put Wycliff's

criticism, at least at the parochial level, out of court."[198] Katherine Little, however, sees

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[197] Peggy Knapp, "The Words of the Parson's 'Vertuous Sentence'" in *Closure in* The Canterbury Tales," ed. Raybin and Holley 95-113 at 98.
[198] Douglas Wurtele, "The Anti-Lollardry of Chaucer's Parson," *Mediaevalia* 11 (1985): 151-68.

the disparity between the Parson of the *General Prologue* and the *Epilogue of the Man of Law's Tale* and the Parson of the *Parson's Tale* as exemplifying the "uneasy and unresolved dialectic within lay instruction between, on one side, the demands for reform and, on the other, the limits of clerical language to enact that reform."[199] Consequently, Little opens the question of Chaucer's orthodoxy, and claims that the *Parson's Tale* reveals a shift in tone between the two parts, from contrition to confession, that delimits the capability of orthodox language. She claims that the section on contrition is, essentially, Wycliffite-leaning in emphasizing the interiority of contrition and de-emphasizing "the relationship between priest and penitent."[200] In the second part of the tale, Little sees the lists of sins completely take over, vacating the intended function of confession, the aspect of the practice of penitence that the Wycliffites "rejected almost absolutely."[201] Karen Winstead agrees with Little in seeing the Parson's emphasis on contrition of the heart and de-emphasis of confession as revealing the Parson's liberal leanings. Winstead adds an important point about the role of the Parson in particular: "That Chaucer co-opts a clerical voice at once acknowledges and subverts the authority of the priest."[202] Scholars agree that the Parson is not a Lollard (or a Wycliffite), and neither is Chaucer; Chaucer's presentation of the character of the Parson and the Parson's treatise, however, leave room for some scholarly speculation about the degree of the Parson and Chaucer's orthodoxy. Whether Chaucer was actually influenced by Lollardy

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[199] Katharine Little, "Chaucer's Parson and the Specter of Wycliffism," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 227-.53
[200] ibid., 249.
[201] ibid., 251.
[202] Karen A. Winstead, "Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* and the Contours of Orthodoxy," *The Chaucer Review* 43.3 (2009): 239-59.

will likely never be known, but what is certain is the concern regarding interpretation raised by the Lollard controversy—from both sides of the argument—is also Chaucer's concern and interest. Chaucer, from the *General Prologue* through the *Parson's Tale* of the *Canterbury Tales*, seems to be exposing the problems of biblical interpretation without right perception results in failure, and such a failure can mean the difference between eternal life and death.

The first two of the twenty-two Solomon-*auctor* references that occur in the *Parson's Tale* appear in the description of the tree of penitence. Within this description, the Parson first quotes Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew saying, "'By the fruyt of hem shul ye knowen hem.'" (X.116). A few lines later, the Parson states, "Of this matere seith Salomon that in the drede of God man forleteth his synne." (X.119).[203] Solomon's text is now viewed through the understanding of sin and penitence in the New Testament. The second Solomonic citation closes the description of the tree: "Penaunce is the tree of lyf to hem that it receyven, and he that holdeth hym in verray penitence is blessed, after the sentence of Salomon" (X.127).[204] Since the framework of the Parson's Tale is a treatise on penitence, and since this framework is based on the life and work of Christ as presented in the New Testament, Solomon quotations, and Solomon himself, are reinterpreted according to the new covenant. When we reach, therefore, the last reference to Solomon in the *Canterbury Tales*, the one that addresses the figure Solomon, Solomon has become a sinner like. Anne Laskaya affirms: "The *Parson's Tale*, describing human failures, assumes a spiritual equality among humanity. There is a levelling of humans as

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[203] and by fear of the Lord men depart from evil. / et in timore Domini declinatur a malo.(Proverbs, 16.6).
[204] Blessed is the man that is always fearful / Beatus homo qui semper est pavidua (Proverbs, 28.13)

they are represented in his tale…"[205] Albert C. Friend explains that "Chaucer's reference to the fall of Samson, David, and Solomon is in the nature of a proverb emphasizing the value of continence and reminding us how frail is virtue."[206] The New Testament admonition that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23)[207] paradoxically provides hope for Chaucer's audience because at the same time that the Parson is defining sin, he is offering a way to union with Christ, through contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

The final reference to Solomon in the *Canterbury Tales* is a statement that in another context would support the misogynist tradition, but, in the *Parson's Tale*, becomes support for the Parson's—and the biblical—assertion of the sinfulness of all humankind: "Ful ofte tyme I rede that no man truste in his owene perfeccioun, but he be stronger than Sampson, and hoolier than David, and wiser than Salomon" (X. 955) The statement is not focused specifically on any of these famous men or even on the dangerous power of women but on the truth that no human has the power to save her or himself. This is what Proserpyna and Prudence had argued for the meaning of Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Amonges a thousand men yet foond I oon, / But of wommen alle foond I noon." The Parson's message is that penitence is the only way to clearly perceive a text, human nature, and the world. In this sense, the *Parson's Tale* provides closure: "…Chaucer uses the theological and psychological structures of penitential reform to show how to criticize, and finally to supersede, the limitations and depredations of the rhetorical self… the Parson's epistemology is a realist one that

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[205] Laskaya, *Chaucer's Approach to Gender* 133.
[206] Albert C. Friend, "Sampson, David, and Salomon in the Parson's Tale," *Modern Philology* 46 (Nov., 1948), 117-21 at 118.
[207] Omnes enim peccaverunt.

suggests that language, though it might not be able to create paradise in fiction, can, for all its vagaries, do the job, show us how to get to heaven."[208] This realist view knows that heaven came to earth only once, in Christ, and that neither Solomon, in the Song of Songs, and Chaucer, in the *Parson's Tale*, can create only an image of heaven on earth, not a literal paradise, but can show the way to heaven through the work of Christ.

Offering the possibility of a right reading in the *Parson's Tale* is a positive yet realistic closure, as mentioned above, that Chaucer can provide for the operation of Solomon-*auctor* in the *Canterbury Tales*. The Parson ends his treatise with a vision of heaven in which he uses a form of the word "blisse" three times in five lines. The Parson offers an image of individual joy and integration into community: "Thanne shal men understonde what is the fruyt of penaunce; and, after the word of Jhesu Crist, it is the endelees blisse of hevene, / ther joye hath no contratioustee of wo ne grevaunce…ther as is the blisful companignye that rejoysen hem everemo, everich of otheres joye…" (X.1076-77). By "teaching us that we must attain fellowship with God by the paths of loving affection and of love" the Parson has reached the final level of Solomon-*auctor*'s pedagogical pilgrimage.[209]

The Solomon constellation is a constant presence for the pilgrims on the pilgrimage to Canterbury. Chaucer uses Solomon-*auctor* to bring into relief issues of authority, interpretation, and the human understanding of love. The shift in exegetical and interpretive practices from the twelfth to the thirteenth century brought the role of the human author of biblical texts into sharper focus. Referring to the wisdom books

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[208] Gregory Roper, "Dropping the Personae" 166,169.
[209] *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom,* 232.

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, became more problematic as theologians grappled with Solomon's sin as recorded in biblical history. The development in the fourteenth century of availability of the Bible in the vernacular heightened the concerns about interpretation, particularly putting into questions the skills of the average layman— the "lewd" and "seculeer"—for reading Scripture with the correct perspective. Chaucer plays out, within the *Canterbury Tales*, the dangers of carnal reading, but he also offers hope through the plain reading of the Parson. The *auctoritee* of Solomon—the tradition, including the misogynistic strain, that had gathered around him—is confronted in all of his sinfulness and is redeemed through a correct reading of his, and God's, "entente" for humankind to acknowledge sin, repent, and be reconciled. The text of the next chapter of my dissertation, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, recognizes these same necessities, but instead of Solomon-*auctor* making the journey, Solomon-*magus* accompanies the hero.

CHAPTER 3. SOLOMON-*MAGUS-AUCTOR* IN *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT*

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight lacks instances of the "Solomon says" game so prevalent in the *Canterbury Tales*, but *Sir Gawain* does not lack Solomon or game. The Solomon-*magus* constellation shines its astral influence throughout the text. The stars of Solomon-*magus* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* provide a code for understanding the figures and sites of the narrative. Solomon-*magus* and his magical texts are the interpretive filter through which we understand the significance of the Green Knight and the actions of Gawain and Arthur's court. Solomon-*auctor* and his canonical texts, working in a parallel fashion with Solomon-*magus*, energize the text as Gawain moves from learning to live wisely in the world toward the realizatin of his need to embrace union with Christ, even as that means facing his own death. Solomon-*magus-auctor* contributes much of the dynamic power of the narrative, and the narrative, in turn, opens a space for testing the efficacy of magic. The texts and symbols of learned magic can help solve, in particular, some of the mysteries of reading Gawain's arming scene at Camelot—all aspects of his armor, the pentangle, and the complicated description of the pentads. Ultimately, the story turns out to be a test not only for "good Gawain," who has been prepared to the highest degree according to aesthetic, intellectual, and religious standards, but also for learned magic itself. The failure of learned magic is revealed through the figure of Solomon when the curtain is drawn back on his *auctoritas* to reveal

Solomon's fatal flaw, which is echoed in Gawain's failure. Unlike Galahad who, in the *Tale of the Sankgreal*, seeks the Spirit of the Grail and does not cling to the grail itself, Gawain trusts in a talisman to save him instead of surrendering himself completely, even unto death.

Scholars have addressed the symbolism of the pentangle, the significance of Solomon, and the influence of magic in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but none have explicated these in the context of the Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* traditions.[210]

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[210] John F. Kiteley, "'The Endless Knot': Magical Aspects of the Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 4.2 (1971): 41-50. I follow much of Kiteley's argument regarding the significance of the magical aspect of the pentangle—and its ultimate failure—but Kiteley does not address the pentangle's association with Solomon; Martin Puhvel, "Art and the Supernatural in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Arthurian Literature V*., ed. Richard Barber, 1-69 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985). Puhvel discusses the magical, or fairy, aspects of the Green Knight, the Green Knight's Chapel, and the geography through which Gawain travels, but never mentions Solomon or discusses a connection with the pentangle; Eugenie R. Freed, "'Quy the Pentangel Apendes…': The Pentangle in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" *Theoria* (May 1991): 125-141. Freed <u>does</u> make the connection between the pentangle, magic, and Solomon, including reference to books of magic. Her main argument, however, focuses on the the explication of the five pentads and Gawain's flaw of 'surquidré'; Gerald Morgan, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Idea of Righteousness*. (Blackrock, County Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1991). Morgan emphasizes the influences scholasticism and Aristotelian definitions of art on the conception of the pentangle. Solomon is referenced but not his association with magic; Leo Carruthers, "Religion, Magic and Symbol in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Q/W/E/R/T/Y: Arts, Litteratures & Civilisations du Monde Anglophone* (October 1994): 5-13. Carruthers explores the the magical history of the pentangle (or "pentacle"), the myth of the Green Man, and the confession scenes through comparative religion categories, and states that Gawain's replacement of the pentangle with the green girdle is his "fall from virtue," and a sign of his foray into—and failure with—black magic; Laura F. Hodges, "'Syngne,' 'Conysaunce,' 'Deuys': Three Pentangles in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Arthuriana* 5.4 (1995): 22-31. Hodges purpose is to highlight the fact that there are three occurrences of the pentangle—on shield, coat, and helmet. She links the device on the helmet to what is considered natural magic: the power of colors, gems, and metals without pursuing any further connections with magic or Solomon; Susan Powell, "Untying the Knot: Reading Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R. A. Waldron*, ed. Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith, 55-74 (Woodbridge, England: D. S. Brewer, 2000). Powell calls the pentangle "quasi-magical," and references the tradition of Solomon as magician. She explores the relationship of the pentangle as endless knot to the axe lace and the girdle and all of these as symbols of "trawþe" or "vntrawþe"; Conor McCarthy, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the Sign of *TrawÞe*," *Neophilologus* 85 (2001): 297-308. McCarthy matches the pentads to aspects of the failures of Gawain's "trawþe" and as representative of the Arthurian court. McCarthy also makes the point, with which my argument agrees, that Solomon's second appearance at the end of the tale points out the "limitations of human perfection," which is a lesson Solomon teaches in Ecclesiastes; Mickey Sweeney, "*Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*: Making Meaning from Magic," *Mediaevalia* 23 (2002): 137-57. Sweeney's points are valuable to my argument: magic is fundamental to understanding the text, and magic would have appealed to the common and educated, "superstitious and faithful." For Sweeney, magic is a powerful literary device to explore complex social and spiritual issues of the time, but

The focal point of my interpretation is, of course, the pentangle passage, since that is

what sets up Gawain as Solomonic knight. In the pentangle passage, the poet describes

every phase of Gawain's arming, including Gawain's early morning activity: "he herknez

his masse / Offred and honoured at þe heȝe auter" (592-93). Since Gawain is going to

face an "aluisch mon," as the court seems to think, every aspect of his preparation is

planned (681). The Solomon-*magus* constellation shimmers into view: Gawain readies

himself not only with armor, but also with gold, gems, embroidered birds, a pentangle

embossed on the outside of his shield, and the image of the Virgin Mary painted on the

inside. While the connection to Solomon-*magus* is not automatic, the description echoes

the description of Solomon's legendary throne: "covered with fine gold from Ophir,

studded with beryls, inlaid with marble, and jewelled with emeralds, and rubies, and

pearls, and all manner of gems" where golden lion, eagle, ox, wolf, lamb, leopard, goat,

peacock, falcon, cock, hawk, sparrow ornamented it.[211] Gold is an appropriate accessory

for a Solomonic knight because, besides its occult power, it symbolizes "worth, value,

perfection, purity, honor—in a word, integrity."[212] For the medieval audience, precious

gems are also considered to have inherent powers, or virtues. According to Richard

Kieckhefer, in *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Gervase of Tilbury (ca. 1152-ca. 1220) "told

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he does discuss the pentangle or Solomon; Peter Whiteford, "Rereading Gawain's Five Wits," *Medium Ævum* 73.2 (2004): 225-34. Whiteford addresses the meaning of "fyue wyttez' in the pentangle description in reference to contemporary penitential literature without any reference to Solomon; Larissa Tracy, "A Knight of God or the Goddess?: Rethinking Religious Syncretism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Arthuriana* 17.3 (2007): 31-55. Tracy argues that the pentangle is a "symbol of synthesis" that brings together Christianity, paganism, and Jewish mysticism. Tracy's discussion of the significance of the magical texts associated with Solomon is valuable, although I disagree with her conclusion that the Gawain-poet deliberately layered on Christian meaning to pagan meaning, as I discuss later in this chapter.
[211] Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Bible*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1956), 566.
[212] ibid., 25.

how Solomon himself was the first to perceive the magical virtues of gems."[213]

Diamonds, which adorn the circlet crown on Gawain's head, "endow the wearer with various physical perfections and ward off evil spirits only if one remains chaste."[214] Laura Hodges argues that the "deuys" on the circlet makes the third pentangle of Gawain's ensemble, combined with the device on his shield and the one on his surcoat.[215] Gawain's gear symbolizes and imbues the knight with the powers and attributes that he needs to face and defeat an otherworldly foe.

Gawain's pentangle shield fulfills the idea of perfection symbolized by gold and diamonds and completes the knight's full body-and-spirit protection. The poet's switch to direct address in the introduction of the pentangle—"I am in tent yow to telle, þof tary hyt me schulde"—shifts the perspective, functioning like a gloss that provides in-depth exegesis (624). Here, Solomon-*magus* is articulated; the pentangle "is a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle / In bytoknyng of trawþe, bi tytle þat hit habbez" (625-26). Instead of shifting to a historical, geographical, and chronological panorama like the opening stanzas, however, the perspective shifts into the mystical realm. The attitude is that of spiritual warfare, as if the verse from the Epistle to the Ephesians is the watchword: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (6:12).[216] When anticipating a confrontation with "principalities and powers," the

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[213] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 105.
[214] Robert J. Blanch, "Games Poets Play: The Ambiguous Use of Color Symbolism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 20 (1976), 64-85 t 75.
[215] Hodges, "'Syngne,' 'Conysaunce,' 'Deuys': Three Pentangles in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Arthuriana* 24
[216] Carruthers, "Religion, Magic and Symbol in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," at 8, makes this connection between Paul's Epistle and Gawain's preparation, quoting the whole passage and commenting

power of Solomon-*magus* seems a wise choice for a Christian knight such as Gawain.

Accessing King Solomon is accessing "the wise king *par excellence*, touched by divine

wisdom, and the glorious king who built the Temple of God…with knowledge and

dominion over the four realms of nature, air, earth, fire, water… [who is] represented as

astrologer because it was believed that he knew about the times relating to the planets and

their servants, the demons and angels… [and] when he is represented as magician, his

knowledge becomes completely active, so that he is able to manipulate the reality to his

advantage"[217] The pentangle is the "syngne" that accesses Solomon-*magus* and offers a

proactive position for the confrontation with the Green Knight instead of the submissive

position of bowing one's neck to the blow.

Since the pentangle clearly provides access for Gawain to the power of Solomon-

magus, the question for the audience is whether Solomonic magic is the best way to quit

the challenge of the Green Knight. The choice of the pentangle is a deliberate connection

to magic; in his work, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, V. F. Hopper states that the

pentangle cannot be interpreted as anything but magical, especially when the cross was

such a ready symbol for the shield of a Christian knight.[218] Larissa Tracy brings attention

to the association of the pentangle with magic and Jewish mysticism.[219] Tracy's

assumption that the magic of the pentangle is automatically non-Christian, though, misses

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Paul reinterprets into "theological categories" the pieces of armor, which is what the Gawain-poet is also doing in the pentangle passage; "…quia non est nobis conluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem sed adversus principes et potestates adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum contra spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus."

[217] Torijano, *Solomon The Esoteric King* 225, 226, 228

[218] Hopper argues: "Had the author been primarily interested in these [Christian] moral and spiritual pentads, there is no conceivable reason for his not choosing that other and more fitting 5-pointed emblem, the cross, rather than such a notorious magical symbol,". *Medieval Number Symbolism* 124.

[219] Larissa Tracy, "A Knight of God or the Goddess?: Rethinking Religious Syncretism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Arthuriana* 17 (2007): 31-55 at 31

the mark. Tracy herself states that "the interpretation of signs was far more mutable in the medieval mind, so the pentangle could be given new meaning without contradicting its other traditions."[220] Christian belief was porous enough to absorb the magical influences. John Kitely comments that the magical aspects of the pentangle are certainly real for the lay-reader: "By the fourteenth century in England, [the] blurring of associations is probably well advanced, but I would maintain that the magical qualities of the Pentangle are still to the fore in popular superstition, a perfect number, and hence a fit defense against evil spirits."[221] A twenty-first century audience of *Sir Gawain* must tarry with the poet to understand the magical associations of the pentangle with which a medieval audience would have been at least familiar. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* contains the clues for the audience that such magic—trusting in a talisman—ultimately disappoints. The poem's very beginning reminds the reader that, although the poet is about to tell a story of one of the most marvelous courts and kings to ever reign, every court, every king, and every person fails or falls short.

The frame of the poem with its broadened perspective from Arthur's time to ancient Troy and the Roman Brutus, founder of Britain, warns the audience of the precariousness of power. The poet arranges the best seats in the house for the audience to interpret his story; the chronological, geographical, and narrative context in the opening stanzas provide a panoramic background for the action.:

Siþen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,

Þe borȝ brittened and brent to brondez and askez

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[220] ibid., 32

[221] John F. Kiteley, "'The Endless Knot': Magical Aspects of the Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 45.

Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroȝt

Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe.

Hit watz Ennias þe athel and his highe kynde,

Þat siþen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicome

Welneȝe of al þe wele in þe west iles.

Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,

With gret bobbaunce þat burȝe he biges vpon fyrst

And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;

Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,

Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes,

And fer ouer þe French flod, Felix Brutus

On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez

  Wyth wynne,

 Where were and wrake and wonder

 Bi syþez hatz wont þerinne

 And oft boþe blysse and blunder

 Ful skete hatz skyfted synne. (1-19)

Clark and Wasserman describe the underlying operation of the opening stanzas: "the

implicit falls of the cities and countries of the poem's first stanza speak directly to

Gawain's fall and, most importantly, to the implicit, subsequent fall of that society which

Gawain represents. Camelot, too, will fall…"[222] The message is that no human being, be

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[222] S. L. Clark and Julian N. Wasserman, "Gawain's 'Anti-Feminism' Reconsidered" *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 6 (January 1985): 57-70 at 62.

he as noble as Aeneas or as wise as Solomon, is completely faultless, and that Arthur and his court, even with its nobility and youthful vigor, will not escape a fall or failure

      While the first stanza sets the historical panorama, the second stanza sets literary expectations with words like "ferlyes," "aunter," "selly," "awenture," and "wonderez." The diction reinforces the romance genre but also set up the audience for a challenge to their own interpretive skills. As the poet brings attention to the anticipated supernatural elements of the romance genre, he brings to the fore the motif of interpretation. The bob-and-wheel of the second stanza focuses the attention specifically on story and form: "As hit is stad and stoken / In stori stif and stronge, / With lel letteres loken" (33-35). The poet's faithfulness to the alliterative style and strict line-numbering add to the aesthetic appeal while also requiring a high level of interpretive skill. Scholars are practically unanimous in analyzing *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as the story of a test, whether that is a test of chivalry in general, Arthur's court, or Gawain specifically.[223] R. A. Shoaf argues that *Sir Gawain* is also a test for the audience.[224] Does a lay audience have the skills to interpret the mysterious and esoteric? The Green Knight, the pentangle, Lady

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[223] J. A. Burrow sees the test as part of the theme of 'trawþe': "The Green Knight's Christmas game is a seasonable contribution to the festivities; but it engages the hero in a test of the most fundamental of all knightly virtues—'trawþe'." *A Reading of* Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 23; Derek Brewer interprets it as a symbolic *rite de passage* that tests the hero's ability to move to maturity in "The Interpretation of Dream, Folktale and Romance with Special Reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 77 (1976), 569-81; Sheila Fisher views the poem as a test of Gawain as representative of Arthur's court in a "Christian chivalric revision of Arthurian history" through the marginalization of the female, "Leaving Morgan Aside: Women, History, and Revisionism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 77-92 at 83;
[224] R. A. Shoaf, "The 'Syngne of Surfet' and the Surfeit of Signs in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" In *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*, edited by Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988): 152-69.

Bertilak, and the girdle all offer tests that reveal the limitations of the chivalric interpretation of experience.

The youthful king and his court are attractive and vigorous but in many ways still inexperienced. The fact that the opening scene is set during Christmas instead of Pentecost as other Arthurian marvels are set[225] may indicate the innocence, and, possibly, spiritual immaturity, of Arthur's court—they are not yet ready for the Song-of-Songs level of mystical union with Christ. The Green Knight refers in a derogatory way to the court's youth: "'Hit arn aboute on þis bench bot berdlez chylder" (280); Gerald Morgan recognizes the "period of adolescence to which the court belongs."[226] Certainly the descriptions of the celebration include more games than prayers: "And syþen riche forth runnen to reche hondeselle, / Ȝeȝed 'Ȝeres ȝiftes!' on hiȝ, ȝelde hem bi hond, / Debated busyly aboute þo giftes" (66-68). Their interpretation of "Krystmasse" could be described as "lewd." Certainly, neither the king nor his court are ever called "wise." Into this sophomoric court rides a singularly enigmatic marvel, the Green Knight, who will confound their ability to read and interpret.

When "an aghlich mayster" comes into the hall, the court understands him to be something otherworldly, but, beyond that, are not able to decipher the Green Knight. R. A. Shoaf observes that the passage describing the reaction of the courtiers to the Green Knight is remarkable for its "indisputable insistence on the incapacity of the courtiers,

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[225] At the beginning of the tale of Sir Gareth in *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, for instance, the narrator explains, "So evir the kynge had a custom that at the feste of Pentecoste in especiall afore other festys in the yere he [Arthur] wolde nat go that daye to mete unto that he had herd other sawe of a grete mervayle." Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur,* ed. by P. J. C. Field, 2 vols., Arthurian Studies 80 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013)., C.VII.1, 1: 223.6-9..

[226] Gerald Morgan, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Idea of Righteousness* (Blackrock, County Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1991): 58.

despite their extensive acquaintance with wonders, to interpret the Green Knight…"[227]

Before the visitor has even delivered his verbal challenge, King Arthur, his court, and the poem's audience are challenged to interpret the baffling figure who stands before them. The title given to the visitor, "grene" and "knyȝt," signifies the two equally-important aspects of his nature. The poet describes in great detail the knightly armor and appearance of the visitor in the hall (137-220), similar to descriptions of armor in other romances, but the poet also includes clear indicators of the supernatural nature of the Green Knight. A Solomon-*magus-auctor* knight, with natural and supernatural power, is the figure that may be able to quit the otherworldly power of the Green Knight.

The Green Knight's greenness is more than the romance trope of a monochromatic adversary. Green may not inevitably or exclusively correspond to faerie, as some scholars have assumed, but certainly association with the faerie world is one connection among a number the Green Knight presents to the court and the poet's audience.[228] The reaction of the courtly knights and ladies indicates the particular

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[227] Shoaf, "The 'Syngne of Surfet'" 153.

[228] Joseph F. Eagan, "The Import of Color Symbolism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Saint Louis University Studies. Series A* 1 (Nov., 1949), 11-86. Eagan states that "green in the Middle Ages was traditionally a fairy color"; Gerald Morgan contends that "Nothing is more natural to a romance than Black Knights, Green Knights, Red Knights, and Blue Knights…and so the *Gawain*-poet has himself produced a Green Knight as his hero's adversary (albeit a Green Knight of marvellous greenness)," *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 25; Susan Powell, "Untying the Knot: Reading *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R. A. Waldron*, ed. Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith (Woodbridge, England: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 55-74. Powell points out that green knights "appear to be less common in Arthurian literature than knights of other colours," 71; W. Bryant Bachman, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: The Green and Gold Once More," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23.4 (1981): 495-516. Bachman argues that *Gawain*-poet has "combined two literary and iconographical traditions, the green man and the wild man." Green men "signaled passion, vitality, rebirth, and impulsive tendencies toward death," 496; Blanch suggests that the poet's overall use of color in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is intentionally ambiguous in order to reinforce the "game-like tone of the poem." The multiplicity of meanings for green is part of the game: "Although the greenness of the Knight may be indentified with fairies, Otherworld creatures, life, death, the devil, the Green Man, and the Wild Man…such symbolic associations evoke for the medieval audience a bewildering variety of literary traditions," "Games People Play" 64, 70

challenge he presents to them for interpretation: "For fele sellyez had þay sen bot such neuer are; / Forþi for fantoum and fayryȝe þe folk þere hit demed" (239-40). The Green Knight's color encourages the audience to read the supernatural potentiality of the Green Knight's other characteristics, like his size; he is "half etayn in erde" (140). Joseph Eagan declares, "There is little doubt that, owing to his great size, unusual color, and the antics he performs with his head, the Green Knight is recognized as a preternatural being…"[229] The poet does not explain the significance of the Green Knight's size, but, as with many other aspects of his appearance, leaves interpretation to the audience. Such is the case with the holly bob: "Bot in his on honde he hade a holyn bobbe, / þat is grattest in grene when greueȝ ar bare.\" (206-07). Blanch allocates at least two different connotations for holly: as symbol of hidden life and fertility within the dead of winter (also connecting it to the death and resurrection of Christ), and as symbol of a prosperous New Year.[230] These overlapping signs indicate to the court that Arthur has truly received the marvel for which he wished. The otherworldliness of the Green Knight is interpreted by the court, however, not as mere courtly entertainment, but as a threat—a threat to their reputation and possibly their lives. Their interpretation sets up Gawain for what seems to be a journey to his death.

The pentangle, and the power of Solomon-*magus* it accesses, "quits" the threat of the Green Knight as Arthur's court perceives it. If the Green Knight is a Wild Man, Solomon-*magus* knows the secrets of nature; if he is a demon, Solomon-*magus* wields the power of exorcism; if he is faerie, the rituals of Solomon-*magus* reveal "trawthe." The

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[229] Eagan, "The Import of Color Symbolism" 68.
[230] Blanch, "Games People Play," 71, 72.

Gawain-poet uses the word "pentangel" twice to introduce the symbol on Gawain's shield, classifying it as the "syngne" that is "bytoknyng of trawþe" according to its title (620, 623, 625-26). Then, in case this language is too esoteric for his audience, the poet translates it into the vernacular, pointing out that "Englych hit callen / Oueral, as I here, 'þe endeles knot'" (629-30). "Pentangel" exemplifies mathematical perfection as delineated within scholasticism, while "endeles knot" connects to everyday life—or "experience" as the Wife of Bath would call it—for the poem's audience.[231] Vernacularizing the pentangle may bring it out of the learned realm into real life, but can Gawain be able to maintain its signified, "trawþe"?

Whether learned or lewd, the pentangle-knot carries expectations for its bearer, especially since Gawain carries it as his coat of arms. The nature of a shield denotes action or performance, and the sign upon Gawain's denotes performance to the highest standard: perfection. Gawain must prepare himself differently for a battle in the supernatural realm. The syntax and verb tense used by the poet in lines 633-35 allow for the interpretation that Gawain completes ritual(s) to fit himself for carrying the sign of Solomon: "Gawan watz for gode knawen and, as golde pured, / Voyded of vche vylany, wyth vertuez ennourned / In mote." Gawain earlier had attended mass; here he has prepared himself for his journey and confrontation through religious ritual. Solomonic magical texts supply context for the kind of ritual Gawain might perform. Frank Klaasen

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[231] Regarding the pentangle and scholastic tradition, Gerald Morgan states that "it is to the learned tradition that we must look to explain its use. This tradition is that of Scholastic Aristotelianism, and indeed the pentangle as a symbol, implicit or explicit, for the rational soul is to be found in the central texts of this tradition" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 37). Morgan goes on to describe the specific function of the pentangle within *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: "The pentangle is therefore established as a symbol of human excellence or perfection. The general term that the *Gawain*-poet uses to describe such perfection is *trawþe*…" (39).

describes these kinds of performances: "texts of the Ars Notoria involve complex rites, purifications, confession, drawn figures, and orations or invocations…there is great concern with ritual procedures such as fasts, confession, observing special times and extensive formulaic prayers."[232] Gawain must prepare himself properly for the pentangle shield. The pentangle is "nwe" for Gawain—not his usual device—because he is not facing regular knightly combat. He performs the proper rituals, accepts the appropriate armor, and then departs Camelot as Solomon's knight.

Two magical texts attributed to Solomon are particularly pertinent for the understanding of the operation of Solomon-*magus* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. An overview of the *Ars Notoria* and the *Testament of Solomon* are provided in the Introduction to this dissertation, in the section "Magical Texts and Dialogues." The book *Conjuring Spirits*: *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* analyzes these along with other ritual and image texts that are "a late medieval phenomenon, [none] much earlier than the thirteenth century."[233] Regarding the popularity of such texts, Claire Fanger states that "it is clear from the survival rate even of those texts we know about that the practices attested in them were fairly widespread in medieval Europe and transmitted over a considerable period of time." [234] Klaassen attests that the collectors of the *Ars Notoria* manuscripts were "an intellectual and mainstream group; their interest in the material as suggested by their books need not have conflicted with a more or less orthodox faith."[235] Practicing the rituals of such a book did not necessarily conflict with

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[232] Frank Klaasen, "English Manuscripts of Magic." 18.
[233] Claire Fanger, "Medieval Ritual Magic: What it is and Why We Need to Know more about it," *Conjuring Spirits.* ed. Fanger, vii-xviii at vii.
[234] ibid., ix.
[235] Klaasen, "English Manuscripts of Magic," *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger, 14.

practicing familiar, orthodox rituals of the church: "Some of the scribes appear to have regarded it as a more or less legitimate and devout work and this would certainly have been an encouragement. The fact that at least five of the owners were monks suggests, at least, a religious environment for the scribes. This may in part account for the instances in which they are found in the company of devotional material such as prayers or saints' lives"[236] In Turner's 1657 translation, the opening invocation reveals the emphasis on the intellectual aspect of the *Ars Notoria* text: "That thow wilt mercifully with the Father, illustrate my Minde with the beams of thy holy Spirit, that I may be able to come and attain to the perfection of this most holy Art, and that I may be able to gain the knowledge of every Science, Art, and Wisdom; and of every Faculty of Memory, Intelligences, Understanding, and Intellect, by the Vertue and Power of thy most holy Spirit, and in thy Name."[237] Michael Camille claims that there would have been at least an awareness of Notary Art well before the assumed writing of *Sir Gawain*: "By the end of the fourteenth century these signs, which had links with a whole tradition of image magic, were circulating more widely – widely enough to appear as 'quotations' in what Richard Kieckhefer has called 'the Romance of magic in courtly culture.'"[238] The *Gawain*-poet confronts this very awareness and practice through the performance of Gawain as Solomonic-knight. The ultimate meaninglessness of both talismans— pentangle and girdle—played out within the text reveal the impotence of learned magic.

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[236] ibid., 19.

[237] *Ars Notoria* 1.

[238] Michael Camille, "Visual Art," *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger, 135. Carolyn King Stephens in her article, "The 'Pentangle Hypothesis': A Dating History and Resetting of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 31 (2006): 174-202 specifically places the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in a historical courtly context, that of Henry the VI in the 1420s, 193.

While warnings are clear in the Middle Ages against necromancy, what Torijano calls active magic, by the fourteenth century, natural magic—the powers or virtues of plants, animals, and stars of the natural world—was familiar and, at least, tolerated. Kieckhefer describes a shift in the thirteenth century that accommodated natural magic as an alternative to demonic magic.[239] He also makes the point that intellectuals were the ones, literally, demonizing all magic, while in popular belief, magic was "natural," in the sense of being accepted.[240] Valerie Flint expands backwards this tolerant attitude, arguing that Isidore of Seville, in the sixth century, and Bede, in the eighth, while not condoning natural magic were disposed toward what Flint terms, "'scientific' astrology." [241] In addition to this relative tolerance in the real world, imaginative literature provided a safe place to observe the practice of magic without negative, real-life consequences.[242] The pentangle on Gawain's shield operates like a charm or amulet—protecting the wearer from harm or evil by occult power. As long as Solomon-*magus* and the pentangle are figures directing practitioners to Christ and the Virgin Mary, they are useful and even edifying. Thomas Aquinas's judgment on the wearing of tokens or charms (translated here by Gerald Morgan) is quite conservative, but contains a caveat: "The wearing of charms is superstitious and unlawful if they bear inscriptions that involve demons or if confidence is placed in the form of the inscriptions or the manner in which they are

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[239] Kieckhefer, *Magic* 12
[240] ibid., 16.
[241] Valerie I. J. Flint, "The Transmission of Astrology in the Early Middle Ages," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 21 (1990), 1-27 at 9.
[242] Kieckhefer explains this relationship, "People at court clearly recognized that certain magical practices could be sinister and destructive…In their imaginative literature, however, they were willing to accord it a different status and to consider without horror the symbolic uses of magical motifs," 95; Sweeney, "*Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*: Making Meaning from Magic," makes this point as well when discussing the Green Knight: "It is already possible to see how easily courtly and Christian traditions accommodate the presence of the magical…" 137.

worn… But the wearing of charms is not superstitious if they derive their power from God and the saints."[243] Solomon is not a Christian saint, and as soon the attention focuses on him instead of the one he signifies, the one who invokes him has lost the way.

The second pentangle stanza is the poet's particular gloss on the five fives of Solomon's star. V. F. Hopper points out the function of numbers as "fundamental realities" in the medieval worldview, and Susan Powell specifically illuminates the role of Solomon-*magus* in authorizing the study of numbers: "Numerology is sanctioned in Christian culture by the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, xi, 20; 'thou hast ordered all things by measure and number and weight'."[244] Numbers other than five carried symbolic meaning, of course, in medieval culture, but the number five conveyed a powerful symmetry because of its ability to reproduce itself to infinity—five multiplies into fives.needs a footnote and some primary text references Peter Whiteford defines the first of the fives, "fyue wyttez," not as the five senses as we might assume, but as "inner" or "gostli" wits, which are usually identified in medieval commentary as will, mind, imagination, understanding, and reason.[245] Whiteford points out that the Aristotelian view of these wits as "providing a bridge between the external senses and the intellect" gained "considerable popularity through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."[246] Alice Blackwell provides an overview of what medieval authors call the inner wits: "combinations of will,

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[243] Morgan, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 148.

[244] Powell, Untying the Knot" 57. The Vulgate/Douay txt has this verse as part of *Wisdom* 11.21: "but thou hast ordained all things in measure and number and weight" / sed omnia in mensura et numero et ponderedisposuisti.

[245] Peter Whiteford, "Rereading Gawain's Five Wits" *Medium Ævum* 73.2 (2004): 225-34 at 230

[246] ibid.

reason, memory, sensus communis, imagination, cogitation, and instinct."[247] These

"gostli" wits are the functions that the *Ars Notoria* of Solomon seeks to strengthen: "O

God the Father, confirm and grant this my Prayer, and increase my Understanding and

Memory, and strengthen the same, to know and receive the Science, Memory, Eloquence,

and Perseverance in all manner of Learning, who livest and reignest World without

end."[248] Geometrical images, or schemes, are combined with prayers for the practitioner

to access this kind of knowledge without actually studying it. Accessing Solomon-*magus*

also gains Solomon-*auctor*. Solomon-*auctor*'s pedagogical module through his three

orthodox texts associated with knowledge and liberal arts education: "Solomon, son of

David king of Israel, produced three volumes, in accordance with the number of terms for

him…In these three books he has put in order three different branches of learning, by

means of which knowledge of things is reached: in the first, ethics, that is, moral science,

then physics, the science that understands what the natural world is like, and lastly

theoretics, that is, contemplative science.[249] The power of the Solomon-*magus-auctor*

constellation should overwhelm any supernatural foe.

The pentangle 'apendez' to Gawain to indicate the extent and nature of his

preparation for his journey and confrontation with the Green Knight; Gawain understands

the challenge as a test of his physical, mental, <u>and</u> spiritual prowess. The journey to the

Green chapel is a test not only of Gawain the "gode," but also of the efficacy of "learned

magic," as Michael Camille[250] calls the version represented by texts like the Ars Notoria,

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[247] Alice Blackwell, "Gawain's Five Wits: Technological Difficulties in the Endless Knot," *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 29 (2008): 9-24 at 10.
[248] *Ars Notoria*, 1.
[249] *The* Glossa Ordinaria *on the Song of Songs*, 3-4
[250] Camille, "Visual Art," *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger, 112.

Sworn Book of Honorius,[251] and the *Liber visionum Marie*.[252] Did the growing popularity of learned magic contribute to the *Gawain*-poet appending the pentangle, in particular, to Gawain in his romance? Perhaps the poem provides a chance to test the efficacy of learned magic imaginatively. Gawain's journey and his accoutrements for it take on a significance beyond that of a knight errant on a quest to rescue a damsel.

The five pentads of Gawain's shield provide a comprehensive image, indicating "the physical, social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of its bearer."[253] Each set overlaps and locks together like the pentangle itself, but the description provided by the poet distinguishes between different aspects and unfolds in a particular order, as Eugenia Freed explains:

> The first two [fives] apply to the powers of the body, the lower faculties…. The
>
> third and central pentad of the five, the five wounds of Christ (642-3), combines
>
> body with spirit, reminding Gawain (and the poet's audience) of Christ's
>
> compassionate assumption of the frailty of human flesh when He descended to
>
> earth in order to die for the redemption of mankind. The nature of the remaining
>
> two pentads indicate that the focus has moved, using the wounds of Christ's
>
> mortal body as a transition, from the lower of man's faculties to the higher, the
>
> powers of the soul; from the symbolism of the pentangle in its pagan usage to its

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[251] *The Sworn Book of Honorius the Magician: As Composed by Honorius through Counsel with the Angel Hocroell* (Gillette, NJ: Heptangle Press, 1977). Srr also: Robert Mathiesen, "A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book* of Honorius of Thebes," *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger 143-62.

[252] Fora version of this text see: Nicholas Watson, "John the Monk's *Book of Visions of the Blessed and Undefiled Virgin Mary, Mother of God*: Two Versions of a Newly Discovered Ritual Magic Text," in *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger, 163-215.

[253] Whiteford, "Rereading" 231.

Christian significance. The five joys of the Virgin Mary (whose image is painted

on the *inner* face of Gawain's shield, backing the *outwardly*-facing sign of the

pentangle) (644-50) and the five most notable qualities of Christian chivalry (651-

5) provide Gawain with spiritual ideals, the former inward for contemplation, the

latter outward for translation into action.[254]

Reading the pentangle and the *Gawain*-poet's descriptions in this way synthesizes

Solomon-*magus* attributes with the authority and pedagogical project of Solomon-*auctor*.

Understanding the Solomon context for the pentangle description allows the reader to

appreciate why the Gawain-poet chooses to "tary" with the five fives. Gawain success as

Solomonic knight seems assured.

Placing Heaven's Queen, the Virgin Mary, in juxtaposition with the pentangle

may seem incongruous to a modern reader, but manuscript evidence from the Middle

Ages shows that the Ars Notoria itself often enjoyed such a literal juxtaposition: "prayers

to the Virgin and miracles of the Virgin accompany the Ars Notoria in medieval

catalogues."[255] The full name for a revised text of ritual magic usually referred to as the

Liber visionum is *Liber visionum beate et intemerate Dei genetricis virginis Marie*, or

Book of Visions of the Blessed and Undefiled Virgin Mary, Mother of God.[256] This author

describes the experience of receiving a "series of dreams inspired by the Virgin Mary,"

which were "Mary's attempts to persuade John [the author] to abandon his practice of the

artes exceptive (magic arts) by teaching a new, holy art instead."[257] The *Liber visionum*

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[254] Eugenie R. Freed, "'Quy the Pentangel Apendes…': The Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Theoria* (May 1991): 125-41 at 128.

[255] Frank Klaasen, "English Manuscripts of Magic," *Conjuring Spirits,* ed. Fanger, 17-18.

[256] Watson, "John the Monk's *Book of Visions*" 163.

[257] ibid.

also includes instructions for making and consecrating a "ring of power," which is "inscribed with the image and the names of Mary and Jesus."[258] The pentangle shield is an Ars Notoria text that concentrates divine powers into a transportable weapon to confront a supernatural enemy.

The chivalric language of the last set of fives, which, in another romance would be considered comprehensive attributes of a worthy knight, have become the last set amongst five in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Not only must the attributes "fraunchyse," "felaʒschyp," "clannes," "cortaysye," and "pité" harmonize with each other, but, as a set, they are presented as synchronizing with the magical-religious attributes that have come before; each is "halched on oþer." The whole description of Gawain at his arming—the fives fives—presents the knight as one who is as prepared and perfected as he can be. The piling up of attributes—reinforced by the repeated use of "alle" (5 times)—might raise a question in the audience about the feasibility of any knight living up to this presentation, but this perfection is necessary for the audience and for the fulfillment of the lesson at the Green Chapel. The failure of the best knight armed with the power of the wisest king should prompt self-examination and contrition from every member of the poem's audience. It should also bring into question reliance upon learned magic, at least by the lewd in the audience.

The first test of Solomon's pentangle seems to be successful when Gawain is thrust into the wilds of Wirral. Gawain is obligated to find "þe Knyʒt of þe Grene Chapel" who is supposedly "knowen me mony," but, as it turns out, is only known by

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[258] ibid., 180.

those of the household of Lord Bertilak, who <u>is</u> the Green Knight (454). Gawain faces

powerful foes in nature: "Sumwhyle wyth wormeȝ, and with wolues als, / Sumwhyle

wyth wodwos, þat woned in þe knarreȝ, / Boþe wyth bulleȝ and bereȝ, and boreȝ

oþerquyle, / And etayneȝ…" (720-23). Solomon's reputation for understanding the

secrets of nature is put to the test: "And he treated 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 " 3 Kings 4:33).[259] Dennis Duling that a

wilderness such as this is saturated with the supernatural: "In…Hellenistic Jewish

interpretations, beasts and flying creatures…suggest various sorts of demons and spirits,

while speaking about trees and plants is taken to refer to the plants roots used for magical

cures and exorcisms. What always seems to trigger the magical interpretation is

Solomon's knowledge of nature…"[260] If, as Martin Puhvel argues in "Art and the

Supernatural in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," the creatures, mountains, and trees

described as part of Gawain's journey are portents of the Otherworld, Gawain's trust in

Solomon-*magus* to get him through is affirmed.[261]

The power of Solomon's pentangle may have helped Gawain survive the

wilderness of Wirral, but the fact that his moment of deliverance comes when he

specifically prays to Christ and Mary may, conversely, indicate to the reader that a

talisman, even a Christianized one, is not the path for deliverance. Gawain may have

learned from Solomon-*auctor* how to live wisely in this world, as shown by his

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[259] "Et disputavit super lignis a cedro quae est in Libano usque ad hysopum quae egreditur de pariete, et disseruit de iumentis et volucribus et reptilibus et piscibus."
[260] Duling, "The Legend of Solomon the Magician" 11.
[261] Martin Puhvel, "Árt and the Supernatural in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *Arthurian Literature V*, ed. Richard Barber (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 1-69 at 23-26.

discerning response to the Lady's sexual temptations, but his trust in the pentangle sets him up to trust in another talisman that proves empty—the green girdle. them. Although he does not succumb to sexual sin, Gawain is deceived through the "wyles of wymmen," as he describes it later in the confrontation at the Green Chapel. Gawain counts himself among famous men who fell because of women—Adam, Solomon, Samson, and David. Each of these famous men have a strength that is beyond ordinary—Adam's prelapsarian innocence, Solomon's wisdom, Samson's strength, and David's righteousness. The circumstances of their fall vary, but the constant is the fact that a woman found or revealed a weakness that corrupted each one's particular strength.

Gawain firmly rejects the love-tokens the Lady proffers, correctly interpreting them as signs of sexual favor. When she initially offers the green girdle, Gawain again rejects it, since he is reading it in the same way. The Lady then draws attention to the seeming incongruity of the appearance of the girdle compared to its value: "'Lo! so hit is little, and lasse hit is worþy; / Bot who-so knew þe costes þat knit ar þerinne, / He wolde hit prayse at more prys, parauenture'" (1848-50). Gawain takes at face value the meaning the Lady provides and judges that it is "a juel for þe jopardé"; therefore, both taking and concealing it are legitimate. Gawain's reliance on one talisman, the pentangle, makes easy his trust in another, the green girdle. Kieckhefer makes the point, regarding holy objects versus magical amulets, that the "theoretical difference in the nature of the objects was overshadowed by the practical similarity in the way [the practitioner] used them."[262] The divine protection invoked on his behalf—"Gret perile bitwene hem stod, /Nif Maré

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[262] Kieckhefer, *Magic* 80.

of hir knyȝt mynne"—seems to be fulfilled when, in the final temptation scene, Gawain

stays strong against the sexual tempation: "He cared for his cortaysye, lest craþayn he

were, / And more for his meschef ȝif he schulde make synne / And be traytor to þat tolke

þat þat telde aȝt. / 'God schylde!' quoþ þe schalk, 'Þat schal not befalle!'" (1768-69,

1773-76). Just as clearly, Gawain accepts the Lady's girdle as a legitimate defense

against the threat on his life. When Gawain follows his acceptance of the green girdle

with mass and confession, I believe he is sincere, although I believe this act displays his

ignorance regarding his spiritual failure in accepting the girdle.[263] Perhaps what the poet

wants the reader to see clearly is that Gawain's reliance on Notae, as much as it may be

associated with legitimate devotional practices, has blinded Gawain to the danger of

trusting in a talisman. The Lady had earlier alleged that Gawain is "lewd" regarding

courtly love, but the lewdness that endangers his life is his simplistic attitude toward

magic(1528).

When the morning of Gawain's departure to attend the Green Knight begins with

cold wind and snow, Gawain's journey does not portend to be any easier than his

previous journey in the wilderness. He prepares in a similar way as he did the first one.

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[263] Critics who view Gawain's confession as legitimate, while possibly including a lack of self-awareness, include Morgan, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Michael Foley, "Gawain's Two Confessions Reconsidered," *The Chaucer Review* 9 (1974): 73-79; David Aers, "Christianity for Courtly Subject: Reflections on the Gawain-Poet," *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson 91-101 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1997); Derek Pearsall, "Courtesy and Chivalry in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: the Order of Shame and the Invention of Embarassment," *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet* 351-62; Alice Blackwell, "Submitted in Triplicate: Gawain's Three Confessions in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Medieval Perspectives* 27 (2012): 69-98.
Critics who view Gawain's confession as illegitimate or even sacrilegious include John Burrow, *A Reading of* Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; Nicolas Jacobs, "Gawain's False Confession," *English Studies* 51 (1971): 433-35; Robert Goltra, "The Confession in the Green Chapel: Gawain's True Absolution," *The Emporia State Research Studies* 32.4 (1984): 5-14; Julian Wasserman, "Sir Guido and the Green Light: Confession in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Inferno* XXVII," *Neophilologus* 84 (2000): 647-66;

The confession to a priest of the day before and his arming, with the reference to the

pentangle—"His cote wyth þe conysaunce of þe clere werkez / Ennurned vpon veluet"

(2026)—and to the girdle prepare him, again, for an encounter with a supernatural foe.

The poet makes it clear that Gawain is <u>not</u> wearing the girdle for worldy reasons but as a

talisman for his own preservation: "Bot wered not þis ilk wyȝe for wele þis gordel, / For

pryde of þe pendauntez, þaȝ polyst þay were, / And þaȝ þe glyterande golde glent vpon

endez, / Bot for to sauen hymself when suffer hym byhoued, To byde bale withoute

dabate…" (2037-41). This portrays a knight who lives a devout Christian life—one who

has learned to live wisely in the world—so that the lesson he learns at the Green Chapel

is more potent. If the best knight can fall by trusting in the performance of Solomon's

magic, then the reader who has discovered the allure of learned magic should beware.

Gawain's description of the Green Chapel, when he arrives there, reinforces his

interpretation of the Green Knight as a malevolent spirit. Twice he comments on the

place being a fitting habitation for the devil (2188, 2192). The defense he has mounted in

the form of the pentangle and girdle still seems eminently logical in such a

supernaturally-saturated place. It is not until the Green Knight spells out to him the

meaning of the green girdle that Gawain has to finally face the fact that he has put his

trust in powerless objects. Gawain's moment of reorientation is specifically marked: "Þat

oþer stif mon in study stod a gret whyle, / So agreued for greme he gryed withinne"

(2369-70). In this moment of re-interpretation, Gawain discerns the spiritual problem of

trusting in talismans—four times he uses a form of or synonym for the word false:

"falssyng," "falce," "vntrawþe," and "fawty" (2378, 2382, 2383, 2386). Gawain has

trusted in the wrong things, literally. People should "yeve the moore feith and reverence

to [God's] name," according to Chaucer's Parson, in his warning about charms. The cowardice and covetousness that Gawain confesses, although they carry a courtly meaning, should be primarily understood in their spiritual meaning, as offenses directly against God. The Green Knight calls the green girdle "þis a pure token of þe chaunce of þe Grene Chapel" (2398-99). This token is self-referential; it does not receive its power from nor direct the wearer or viewer to reverence God or the saints.

The moment that scholars have called Gawain's "anti-feminist" rant is a natural part of a coherent narrative when Gawain is understood as Solomonic knight. The Green Knight's revelation of the true nature of the girdle forces Gawain to reinterpret his trust in Solomon-*magus*. Gawain is painfully reminded of the rest of Solomon's story—he is one of "þes wer forne þe freest, þat folȝed alle þe sele / Exellently, of alle þyse oþer vnder heuen-ryche / Þat mused," who "þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe" (2422-24, 2415). The context gives it a similar message as that in Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, when the Parson warns his audience "Ful ofte tyme I rede that no man truste in his owene perfeccioun, but he be stronger than Sampson, and hoolier than David, and wiser than Salomon" (X. 955). There is no one stronger than Sampson, holier than David, and wiser than Solomon, not even Arthur's best knight. Albert C. Friend's comment on the Parson's admonition—"Chaucer's reference to the fall of Samson, David, and Solomon is in the nature of a proverb emphasizing the value of continence and reminding us how frail is virtue"—applies to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[264] Bonaventure, in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, makes this point when interpreting a verse associated with Solomonic

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[264] Friend, "Sampson, David, and Salomon" 118.

misogyny: "One man among a thousand I have found; a woman among them all I have not found" (Ecclesiastes 7:29).[265] Bonaventure addresses the fact that many have interpreted the verse as a condemnation of women, but Bonaventure explains, "[Solomon] is speaking of the universality of concupiscence… only Christ was conceived without sin."[266] Gawain, in facing the "full story" of Solomon's life, must face his own full story; even Solomon-*magus* cannot supply a perfection that excludes him completely from sin.[267]

Once Gawain is forced to face the rest of Solomon's story, he also embraces the Solomonic tradition that includes Solomon's repentance. Bonaventure, in his defense of Solomon as *auctor* of Ecclesiastes, refers to the one hope regarding Solomon's life: "according to Jerome, the Jews hold that Solomon wrote this book while doing penance."[268] The *Cursor Mundi* describes Solomon's penance in detail "I see wel now, I haue mis-gan, / For I haf honurd self sathan… / I haue me don a wicked dede, / Thoru womman, was o heþen lede…" (9051-52, 9061-62; 2:520, 522). Solomon asks the Hebrew leaders to remove his crown and "laes on me ful hard penance, / For sar it es mi repentence. / Sin I haf serued to haue þe scam, / Gis me mi scrift, o godds name!" (9087-90; 2:522). According to this account, Solomon's penance was sincere: "His sin be-fore þat gret cite / Wit waful weping sceud he…For al-to gned him thoght þe gram, / þat he moght thol on his licam…" (9095-96, 9107-08; 2:524). Solomon's language of

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[265] "Virum de mille unum repperi; mulierem ex omnibus non inveni."
[266] *Works of St. Bonaventure: Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 290.
[267] While much of the *Testament of Solomon* narrates Solomon's practices involving astrology and his manipulation of demons, the latter part of the text explicitly states his downfall as a result of sexual sin. Todd E. Klutz, *Rewriting the* Testament of Solomon.
[268] ibid., 86.

repentance includes blame for woman but also includes sincere, public repentance, and bearing on his body the marks of his repentance; Gawain accepts such penance as well, bearing on his body the sign of his "surfet" when he return and confesses to Arthur and the court (2433).

The text provides a final commentary on magic in the Green Knight's last speech. He reveals the identity of the the old hag at his court as Morgan le Fey, and describes her work as, "koyntyse of clergye, bi craftes wel learned— / Þe maystrés of Merlyn mony ho hatz taken" (2447-48). Gawain's attempt at using magic for protection—the pentangle shield and the green girdle—on his journey and at the showdown with the Green Knight now seem downright amateurish, which is perhaps the poet's point. Even though a form of magic seems to triumph in the Green Knight's triumph over Gawain, the conclusion indicates that magic is not the spiritual answer for Gawain, or any other mortal witnessing his experience. Gawain must return to being simply Gawain, the one who now wears publicly the sign of his fellowship with fallen humankind. When it comes to Solomon, the mantra, "Do what I say, not what I do," is the wisest approach: live wisely in this world, learn disdain for worldly things, and, most importantly, surrender oneself to union with Christ. Do not succumb to the wiles of woman nor fight the enemy by practicing magic. *Sir Gawain and the Green* Knight tells its audience that magic against magic will never answer.

Gawain's return trip includes the "wylde wayez" and "mony a venture in vale" of his initial one, but this time he gets by simply according to "þe grace hade geten of his lyue" (2479, 2482, 2480). The girdle is now the vernacular knot, "In tokenyng he watz tane in tech of a faute" (2487-88). Gawain confesses his sin to Arthur and the court: "Þis

is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne… / For mon may hyden his harme, bot vnhap ne may hit, / For þer hit onez is tachched twynne wil hit neuer" (2509, 2511-12). Solomon in the *Testament of Solomon* confesses his failure and warns his audience, "'For this reason I have written out this, my testament, in order that those who hear might pray about, and pay attention to, the last things and not to the first things, in order that they might finally find grace forever' (26.8)."[269] Gawain "groned for gref and grame" for his inability to let go of his own life, to follow Christ's example, when He said in Gethsemane: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).[270] Without completely condemning magic the Gawain poet issues a warning to his audience through Gawain's experience of failure in his trust of talismans. The narrative ends, similarly to The Parson's Tale, with emphasis on penance and a pointing his audience to the only person and place of complete perfection: "Now þat here þe croun of þorne, / He bryng vus to his blysse!" (2529-30).

The operation of Solomon-*magus* within the text of *Sir Gawain* teaches the audience of the text that, broadly, striving for human perfection is a misguided, even carnal, effort; it teaches, specifically/locally that the particular effort of learned magic for perfection is empty of all the potency its language claims for itself. Solomon-*auctor* serves the text in a different way, moving Gawain along the pedagogical pilgrimage from learning to live wisely in the world to embracing union with Christ, figuratively at least. Solomon-*magus-auctor* operates in a similar way in Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*, but with Galahad embodying the *magus-auctor* figure within the text himself; Galahad-

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[269] Klutz, *Rewriting* 9.
[270] "Verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu."

magus fulfills the Grail mysteries as he moves through the Quest while Galahad-*auctor* completes the pedagogical pilgrimage as a model for the reader to follow and repeat, over and over.

CHAPTER 4. SOLOMON-*AUCTOR-MAGUS* IN MALORY'S *TALE OF THE SANKGREAL*

The Solomon who shines in Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* is the doubly-potent Solomon-*magus-auctor*, the biblical king with building skills and a supernatural understanding of the workings of nature: "So thys Salamon was wyse, and knew all the vertues of stonys and treys; also he knew the course of the stirres, and of many other dyvers thynges. So this Salamon had an evyll wyff, wherethorow he went there had be no good woman borne, and therefore he dispysed them in hys bookis" (C.XVII.5, 1: 757.30-35).[271] This narrative comment is immediately followed in the text by a heavenly voice that reveals that the Virgin Mary will bring forth the Savior of humankind, and thereby save womankind from double condemnation. Solomon is told that a knight also will come of his lineage who is "a mayde and the last of your blood" (C.XVII.5, 1: 758.9-10). Solomon then builds a time-traveling ship full of mystical artifacts and mysterious directives. Solomon the esoteric king is the fitting figure to be projected into the Grail quest, for this quest is about unlocking secrets and interpreting veiled texts. For the *Tale of the Sankgreal*, Malory kept most of the material from his source, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, but his excision of the source's sermons on spiritual and salvation history enhance

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[271] Malory, *Le Morte Darthur.* ed. Field (2013). All quotations come from this edition.

the mysteriou—as opposed to the miraculous—aspect of the figure of Galahad.[272]

Galahad-*magus* reveals hidden secrets and understands the virtues of objects in the world

around him; Galahad-*auctor* obediently follows the pedagogical pilgrimage from learning

to live wisely in the world to disdaining present realities to embracing union with Christ.

In his *magus* aspect, Galahad is the last of Solomon's line whose actions complete the

search for the ultimate mystery, the grail. In his *auctor* aspect, Galahad is an example that

his fellow knights and Malory's readers can emulate, following the path set by the wisest

king to ever live on earth, Solomon.

Galahad has been critiqued as a static, impossibly perfect, and genderless

character,[273] but he should be read as an example and model for the secular knight. His

"blandness" does indeed offer "a challenge to the heteronormative gender dynamic of the

chivalric community, dislocating the masculine-feminine binary so central to the knightly

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[272] Eugène Vinaver, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, rev. P.J.C. Field, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 3:lxxxix. While a number of critics disagree with Eugene Vinaver's critique of Malory's one purpose for his changes to his source as a "rejection of the theology of the *Queste*," as I will discuss shortly, all agree with his assessment that Malory "reduced all doctrinal comment."

[273] R. M. Lumiansky, *Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of* Le Morte Darthur (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964) at 196. Lumiansky's language is not quite as severe as some, but he still describes Galahad as a "heavenly knight" whose "physical reality" is reduced by Malory; Charles Moorman, *The Book of Kyng Arthur* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1965) at 41: "Malory regularly elevates and dehumanizes Galahad"; Jerome F. O'Malley, "Sir Galahad: Malory's Healthy Hero," *Annuale Mediaevale* 20 (1981): 33-51 at 38-39: O'Malley describes Galahad's physical, spiritual, and psychological integrity, characterizing Galahd as a pre-lapsarian man; Sandra Ness Ihle, *Malory's Grail Quest: Invention and Adaptation in Medieval Prose Romance* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) at 151. Ihle calls Malory's Galahad "perfect and distinct," particularly as compared to Lancelot, in whose dilemmas/difficulties/troubles/sufferings Malory seems to be more interested; Donald L. Hoffman, "Perceval's Sister: Malory's 'Rejected' Masculinities," *Arthuriana* 6.4 (1996): 72-83. Hoffman contends that Galahad's masculinity is flawed, but that he is presented as a "unique chivalric messiah," which makes him impossible as a model for other knights even if they would wish to follow him; Dorsey Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's* Morte d'Arthur (Gainsville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003). Armstrong argues that the Galahad's "blandness" and genderlessness serves the purpose of critiquing "Arthurian chivalric values"—his and Percival's Sister chastity figure-forth the ultimate fall of the Round Table; Kenneth J. Tiller, "'So precyously coverde': Malory's Hermeneutic Quest of the *Sankgreal*" *Arthuriana* 13.3 (2003): 83-97. Tiller argues that Galahad represents reading <u>and</u> the text, and is "unsignifiable, unknowable, concealed, and finally, undefinable," at 87.

enterprise."[274] The presence of Solomon, in the flesh, so to speak, emphasizes the necessity of this rigid opposition since the wise king's apostasy is due to the influence of pagan women. Galahad's humanity in his perfection is all the more important; he never takes "religious clothyng," for instance, as Percival does (C.XVII.22, 1: 788.14). Galahad's responses show that he does not know everything but that he can quickly acquire the skills for correct interpretation of the grail landscape. Galahad fulfills the proverb of Chaucer's Parson: "Ful ofte tyme I rede that no man / Truste in his owne perfeccioun, but he be / Stronger than sampson, and hoolier than David, and wiser than Salomon" (X.954). The Parson is not speaking in superlative but comparative terms; the one who fulfills the statement may be a paragon, but he is not a messiah.

Galahad's success in the spiritual realm is due to his performance of the pedagogical exercise of Solomon's texts: "Therefore, since it is the duty of the wise to teach how a person may reach beatitude, this was the main concern and value of the work of wise Solomon… So he wrote three books, namely, *Proverbs* in which he teaches a son how to live wisely in this world; *Ecclesiastes*, in which he teaches a contempt for present realities; and *The Song of Songs*, in which he teaches the love of what is heavenly, especially, of the Bridegroom himself."[275] By learning contempt for present realities, which are, in his case, chivalric realities, Galahad is able to perceive spiritual realities, to become the sponsa of the Song of Songs, and to appropriately demonstrate heavenly love in his relationships.[276] Galahad must experience the quest—the first grail glimpse is an

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[274] Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's* Morte at 162.

[275] *Works of St. Bonaventure: Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 74-75.

[276] Pauline Matarasso, *Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the* Queste Del Saint Graal (Genève, Switzerland: Librairie Droz, 1979). Her point that Galahad "embodies the concept of the sponsa Christi, the seeker rather than the sought" in the *Queste del Sant Graal* can be applied to Malory, as well, 62.

incentive for all of the knights to go through the process of finding the grail, traversing a

spiritual landscape versus a geographical one. Galahad, as a vernacular reader, meets

monks and recluses who interpret his experiences along the way.[277] Because of this,

Galahad is an encouragement and a warning to the reader.

Malory's source, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, makes the disparity between

chivalric and spiritual values even more obvious than does Malory. The narrative

approach regarding the grail is analogous to the historical approach taken in

commentaries of the Song of Songs, as expressed, for example, in the Glossa Ordinaria:

"Nor should we overlook what our scholars tell us was the custom among the Jews: they

did not allow anyone to read this book unless he was complete in knowledge and

confirmed in faith, lest perhaps on account of childish weakness and inexperience in faith

study might not so much refine wavering as the text pervert them to carnal desires."[278]

The stories of romance protagonists like Januarie, Sir Gawain, and Lancelot testify that

childish weakness and inexperience in faith result in perversion to carnal desire. In this

text, Galahad is further separated from his fellow knights and from the reader, rendering

him less an active participant than a receptacle for designated meaning. Vinaver's

comment regarding Malory's approach to the *Queste* has been referenced regularly by

scholars, but is still worth noting: "His attitude may be described without much risk of

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[277] Even on his first visit to King Arthur's court, a "good olde man" dressed "all in whyght" brings Galahad to King Arthur's court and explains to Galahad that the message on the Siege Perilous refers to him and "that place ys youres" (C.XIII.3, 1: 669.23-24; C. XIII.3, 1: 670.9-10.).

[278] Dove, *The* Glossa Ordinaria *on the Song of Songs*. 5; Latin translation from Mary Dove, *Glossa Ordinaria In Canticum Canticorum*. CCCM 170, pars 2 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1997): "Illud uero non est omittendem quod a doctoribus nostris traditur apud Hebreos hanc fuisse obseruationem, ne cuiquam hunc librum legere permitterent nisi uiro iam perfectae scientiae et roboratae fidei ne forte per imbecillitatem infantiae et fidei imperitiam non tam erudiret cognitio lubricas mentes quam textus ad concupiscentias corporales conuerteret," 80.

over-simplification as that of a man to whom the quest of the Grail was primarily an

Arthurian adventure and who regarded the intrusion of the Grail upon Arthur's kingdom

not as a means of contrasting earthly and divine chivalry and condemning the former, but

as an opportunity offered to the knights of the Round Table to achieve still greater glory

in *this* world."[279] I agree with Vinaver that Malory emphasizes the active participation of

his characters in a "real" world, but I would argue that Malory's particular use of

Solomon-*magus-auctor* provides for his readers a catechism, a lesson in spiritual growth

and interpretation. Sandra Ness Ihle's response to Vinaver supports my approach:

"Malory does not secularize the story; rather, he exchanges mysticism and doctrine for

Christian moral behavior."[280] Malory uses the Solomon-*magus* tradition to infuse his tale

with mystery, and he makes it clear that the tradition ends when Galahad is taken into

heaven, but the parallel operation of the pedagogical exercise of Solomon-*auctor* offers

the pupil a path, albeit a challenging one, to follow.

A translation of the description of the *Queste*'s description is as follows:

"Solomon was so wise that he possessed <u>all</u> the knowledge a mortal man can have. He

knew the properties of precious stones and herbs, and he knew the course of the heavens

and the stars nearly as well as God himself" (emphasis added).[281] The descriptions of

Solomon's ship and its accouterments in the *Queste* emphasize the superlative nature of

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[279] Vinaver, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, rev. P.J.C. Field, 3:1535.

[280] Sandra Ness Ihle, *Malory's Grail Quest: Invention and Adaptation in Medieval Prose Romance* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 110, note 1.

[281] Norris J. Lacy, ed., *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 4:69; Albert Pauphilet, *Études sur la Queste del Saint Graal attribuée à Gautier Map* (Paris: H. Champion, 1980): "Et cil Salemons fu si sages qu'il fu garniz de totes bones sciences que cuers d'ome mortel porroit savoir, et conut toutes les forces des pierres precieuses et les vertuz des herbes, et sot le cours dou firmament et des estoiles si bien que nus fors Damediex ne le posïst mielz savoir," 220.

the marvels the Grail knights are seeing. The Grail knights declare that "there could be no

vessel on land or sea as beautiful and lavish as this one," and Galahad discovers "the

most beautiful bed he had ever seen."[282] The *Queste* includes a detail that Malory leaves

out about the language of the message written on the side of Solomon's ship: "…they

found on the side of the ship an inscription in Chaldean…"[283] *Ars notoria*, the text of

ritual magic associated with Solomon, includes invocations written in Chaldean. Julien

Véronèse, in his chapter on "Magic, Theurgy, and Spirituality in the Medieval Ritual of

the *Ars notoria*," points out that Chaldean, Hebrew, and Greek, are "traditionally

endowed with a great power in magical or theurgic operations, since they are connatural

with divinity or the celestial powers."[284] This reference to a powerful, possibly-divine

language accentuates the esoteric nature of the Solomon-*magus* tradition at work in the

Queste. Malory sifts out the strongest language of exclusivity, I believe, in order to keep

Galahad in a reality his audience can understand. The *Queste*'s emphasis on exclusivity is

echoed in the description of Galahad pronounced by Solomon' wife: "…the knight you

have described is destined to surpass in valor all those who have preceded him and those

who will follow afterward…"[285] The *Queste*'s emphasis on destiny and clear prophetic

contrasts to a degree with Malory's description: "thys knyght oughte to passe all

knyghtes of chevalry whych hath bene tofore hym and shall com aftir hym…" Malory's

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282 Lacy, 4:64; "…si dient qu'il ne cuidoient mie que en mer ne en terre eust nule si bele nef ne si riche come cele lor semble," and the bed is "le plus bel lit qu'il onques veist," Pauphilet, 202.

283 Lacy, 64; Pauphilet: "Et il resgardent el bort de la nef et coient letres escrites en caldieu…," 201.

284 Julien Véronèse, "Magic, Theurgy, and Spirituality in the Medieval Ritual of the Ars notoria," in *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 37-78 at 54.

285 Lacy, 70; Pauphilet, "…puis qu'il est einsi que cil chevaliers que vos dites doit passer de chevalerie toz cax qui devant lui avront esté et qui aprés lui vendront…," 222.

change to a conditional statement de-emphasizes the absolute exceptionality of his hero.

Malory keeps elements of the Solomon-*magus* tradition, and thus keeps much of the

mystery of the grail and grail quest, but he is more interested than the author of the

Queste in making the hero of his quest an active agent of the story and accessible to his

readers.

Scholars have analyzed in some detail the Ship of Solomon episode in the *Queste*

del Saint Graal, but none have specifically addressed the function of the figure of King

Solomon in Malory's tale.[286] Solomon is not interlaced throughout *The Works of Sir*

Thomas Malory as he is, by comparison, in *The Canterbury Tales*, but the "Wonderful

tale of kynge Salamon and his wyf," as Caxton labels it, is key to the *Tale of the*

Sankgreal, with its "concentration of typological allusions to such characters and motifs

as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Solomon and his wife,…the Virgin Mary, the Tree of

Life, the sword and crown of David and the ship like Noah's ark."[287] The *Tale of the*

Sankgreal, in turn, is pivotal for the Arthuriad, providing the rubric for reading the fall of

Arthur and the Round Table: "The quest for the Holy Grail is a watershed moment for the

Arthurian chivalric society…In the episodes that follow the 'Tale of the Sankgreal'…the

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[286] Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth-Century French Romance*. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967). Locke argues for the centrality of the Ship of Solomon episode for interpretation of the whole *Queste*, the typological interpretation as key to the episode, and Percival's Sister as focal point for gender issues—all points applicable to Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* and to my argument; Matarasso distinguishes between different modes of figuration in the *Queste*: allegorical, tropological, and typological. In her chapter on Lancelot, Matarasso reinforces this idea by stating that the "dominant theme of the *Queste* itself is spiritual *sight*," *The Redemption of Chivalry* 115. Sandra Ness Ihle, *Malory's Grail Quest* 162 applies a medival rhetorical analysis to interpreting and comparing the *Queste* and Malory's *Tale*, labeling the *Queste*'s method as employing *digressio* and Partiality and Malory's method as abbreviation and Totality. Ihle's point that Malory's purpose is to show the quest as a "literal event occuring in a particular time and place and involving earthly men," presents it as difficult but possible, which supports my argument for the function of Malory's Galahad.
[287] Muriel Whitaker, "Christian Iconography in the Quest of the Holy Grail," *A Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature and Ideas* 12.2 (1979): 11-19 at 17.

Arthurian community continues the slide toward collapse initiated by the Grail

Quest…"[288] Galahad, Bors, Percival, and Percival's sister uncover markers on the

questing landscape that deliver a new interpretation of experience that can now never be

concealed or ignored. Solomonic interpretive skills are necessary for negotiating such a

landscape. Solomon is not only *auctor* because he wrote three biblical wisdom books but

also because of his interpretive skills: "Solomon, for example, as (traditionally) the

author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, appears in rabbinic discussion as

not only a writer of Scripture but also an inspired authority who in his biblical writing

interprets the Torah."[289] Malory retention of the mystery of Solomon-*magus* and the

authority of Solomon-*auctor* energizes the plot while also offering hope to his courtly

audience that, though the way may be difficult, the layman can read and follow it.

Otherworldly messages appear ten times in the *Tale of the Sankgreal* to bring

attention to the importance of a seat, a sword, a path, and a ship. Three of the ten

references denote the "Sege Perelous," five refer to a sword (although there are two

different swords), one marks a path, and one labels a ship. Malory corresponds closely

with the *Queste del Saint Graal* in keeping all of the messages, and they function in

similar ways in both texts. The primary purpose of each message is to direct the reader's

attention to the particular person who is the fulfillment of the signs. Dhira Mahoney's

comment about the *Queste* applies to Malory's *Sankgreal*: "The *Queste* is a metafiction, a

story of interpretations of the events of its own narrative, and the reader is required to

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[288] Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community* 173.
[289] William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), xv.

become a hermeneutician along with the knights of the quest."[290] A grail knight must read the spiritual meaning of the landscape to understand the signs, and the signs point to the spiritual nature of the landscape. While no other knight can be Galahad and thus fulfill these singular prophecies, the Galahad-*auctor* aspect simultaneously provides the appropriate attidue for reading: a releasing of worldly values and embracing of eternal ones. The cryptic message that appears at the Round Table at the beginning of the *Sankgreal*, "'Here ought to sitte he,'" and "'He ought to sitte hyre'" references a particular person without providing a particular name—Galahad-*magus* (C.XIII.2, 1: 667.11-12). The description in the message on the Siege Perilous references a person who cannot be any of the knights present by the very fact that they already have their places at the Round Table. The one who arrives that day is the fulfillment of the prophecy because he is the one who arrives that day: "'Four hondred wyntir and four and fyffty acomplyvsshed aftir the Passion of Oure Lorde Jesu Cryst oughte thys syege to be fulfylled'" (C.XIII.2, 1: 667.114-16). Upon seeing this message, Lancelot expresses an anxiety common to esotericism—this message is clearly for a certain person or persons, and others might interpret or act upon it incorrectly: "'…I wolde none of thes lettirs were sene thys day tyll that he be com that ought to enchyve thys adventure'" (C.XIII.2, 1: 667.25-26). The round table knights proceed to cover the sign of the siege with cloth, presumably from the prying eyes of any who do not have the proper spiritual understanding or reverence. Although these messages in the *Tale of the Sankgreal* are not prayers, they have a similarity of operation to the supplications of the *Ars notoria*

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[290] Dhira B. Mahoney, *The Grail: A Casebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 25.

associated with Solomon. *Ars notoria* notae purportedly result in the supplicant's

acquisition of knowledge but are barely comprehensible in themselves. Nicholas Watson

comments: "These users [of the *Ars notoria*] had to contend with a heteroglossic,

multimedia text that was at its most powerful when least comprehensible and that

demonstrated in its words and diagrams the mysterious otherness of divine lucidity, at the

same time as it offered those words and diagrams as keys to the unlocking of all

knowledge."[291] The grail quest signposts are not impenetrable to this degree, but do

operate as references to esoteric knowledge.

Galahad is the code and the cipher for the cryptic landscape of the grail quest. The

sign at the Siege Perilous, when it is uncovered at Galahad's arrival to the Round Table,

becomes Galahad's place card: "'Thys ys the syege of sir Galahad the Hawte Prynce'"

(C.XIII.3, 1: 670.7-8). In the presence of the fulfillment, the words of the prophecy

change to reveal the identity of the one who was predicted. When Galahad and Sir Melias

are confronted with the sign in the road, "Now ye knyghtes arraunte which goth to seke

knythtes adventurys, se here too ways," (C.XIII.12, 1: 684.6-7)[292] In the *Queste* and

Malory's *Sankgreal*, Galahad proves his sufficiency as <u>the</u> grail quest knight when he is

able to decipher the message and choose wisely, just as Solomon chooses wisdom instead

of long life or riches when God offered him a gift. Galahad's wisdom is shown almost as

immediately as Solomon's when Galahad rescues Sir Melias from bleeding to death in

the forest. Galahad proves his sufficiency not by choosing a different path from Melias

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[291] Nicholas Watson, "Introduction: King Solomon's Tablets," *The Vulgar Tongue,* ed. Somerset and Watson, 3.

[292] Lacy, 4:15, "To the knight who seeks adventure, you find here two paths—one to the right, the other to the left. I forbid you to take the left path…"

but by being the right knight for the left-hand path. Galahad is the star knight going into the grail quest because he is the only one who is prepared appropriately; his lineage—spiritual and geneological—and his religious upbringing have positioned him for the role. At this point in the *Queste* and in the *Tale of the Sankgreal*, the audience is learning how to read the Grail quest—to disdain worldly values and embrace humility. Galahad must show his continued humility in the face of codes and puzzles that are not as easy to decipher as the first signpost he meets. Galahad's subsequent journey through the stages of the Solomonic pilgrimage—from wisdom (Proverbs) to disdain for present realities (Ecclesiastes) to union with Christ (Song of Songs)—unfold through the intervention of Percival's Sister and the Ship of Solomon episode. As the quest progresses, Malory's practice of leaving out the sermons and explanations highlights his role—Galahad-*auctor*—for the reader as model to follow in his goal to embrace union with Christ. Percival's Sister's presence in the grail quest as sibling instead of lover "suggests the necessary changes from *eros* to *agape* which the Grail requires," reinforcing the only type of love appropriate for this quest.[293]

Percival's Sister, in initiating the Ship of Solomon episode, introduces not only a drastic change in landscape, but also a shift in chronological perspective. This shift establishes the quest within the context of salvation history via the legend of the cross, and allows for the entrance of an ancient, Hebrew king onto the grail topography.[294]

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[293] Maureen Fries, "Gender and the Grail" *Arthuriana* 8.1 (1998): 67-79. at 75.

[294] The association of a ship with Solomon may be due to the allegorical interpretation of the Temple of Solomon. Bede, *On the Temple*, trans. Seán Connolly, Translated Texts for Historians Vol. 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), describes the Temple with the motif of movement: "The house of God which king Solomon built in Jerusalem was made as a figure of the holy universal Church which, from the first of the elect to the last to be born at the end of the world, is daily being built through the grace of the king of peace, namely, its redeemer. It is still partly in a state of pilgrimage from him on earth, and partly,

Multiple signs point to a shift in chronology, thus marking a new phase of Galahad's

spiritual pilgrimage. Galahad and Percival's Sister leave their horses behind, showing

them "symbolically rejecting earthly chivalry."[295] Galahad joins Percivale and Bors in a

ship that takes them to "a mervayles place" (C.XVII.2, 1: 751.22) and, finally, they,

along with Percivale's sister, enter a ship that is labeled "Faythe" (C.XVII.2, 1: 752.15).

In the Ship of Solomon episode, Malory has almost completely excised the legend of the

tree of life that is included in the *Queste del Saint Graal*. This legend in the *Queste*

reminds readers of the impossibility of returning to paradise, and through it, the narrative

voice delivers a sermon on the fall of humankind and the holiness of virginity.The

narrative voice of the *Queste* acknowledges that with the telling the legend "the story

here veers away from its straight path and its rightful subject."[296] Malory's exclusion of

the legend of the Tree of Life keeps the focus on the action in his current story—that of

Galahad on his quest for the holy grail—but the absence of the detailed, narrative

reminder of the fall of humankind also results in a more redemptive experience for the

reader. Malory's Ship of Solomon seems to be able, temporarily, to create a type of new

paradise—the image of union with Christ in the Song of Songs may be attainable for a

secular, albeit virgin, knight.

Ships are not completely foreign to the Arthurian landscape, but they are

somewhat unusual, often associated with magic and with a chronological shift. Arthur

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having escaped from the hardships of its sojourn, already reigns with him in heaven, where, when the last judgement is over, it is to reign completely with him," 5.

[295] Ginger Thornton and Krista May in "Malory as Feminist? The Role of Percival's Sister in the Grail Quest," *Sir Thomas Malory: Views and Re-views,* ed. D. Thomas Hanks, Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1992), 43-52 at 44.

[296] Lacy, 67; Pauphilet, "…si s'en destorne un poi li contes de sa droite voie et de sa matiere por deviser la maniere des trois fuissiax qui des trois colors estoient," 210.

and Merlin take a ship to retrieve the Lady of the Lake's sword; Merlin commands that a

ship take all boys of four weeks old away from Logres after Mordred is born; Arthur,

Uriens, and Accolon are captured by a demon ship that transports each to a different

place; Tristram, Lamerack, and Palomides all use ships for the mundane purpose of

travel. Compared to the rest of the Arthuriad the *Tale of the Sankgreal* has a high

concentration of ships: Percival goes aboard ship four times, one time in which he faces

his greatest tempation; Percival, Bors, and Galahad travel on two different ships together,

one of which is the Ship of Faith (often called the Ship of Solomon); after her death,

Percival's Sister's body is put aboard a barge to travel to Sarras; Galahad and Lancelot

travel on the barge with the dead lady. The proliferation of aboard-ship experiences, in

fact, blurs the timelines of Solomon, Joseph of Arimathea, King Hurlaine, Nacien, the

Maimed King, and Galahad. Such a blurring illuminates the timelessness of the Ship of

Solomon, the Sword of the Strange Girdle, and the Holy Grail. The panoramic view of

time focuses attention on typological figures of the grail landscape and anticipates the

operation of the legend of the cross on the Ship of Solomon. Frederick W. Locke

contends that, in the Ship of Solomon, the "basis of the imagery is typology."[297]

Typology works with the panoramic view of time, as well, by interpreting Old Testament

figures like Moses as precursors to New Testament or Christian figures.

By the time they are led to the Ship of Solomon by Percival's Sister, Percival,

Bors, and Galahad have all experienced spiritual tests, and have each needed a hermit or

heavenly voice to interpret for them. This reinforces the argument that they are

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[297] Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail* 85

vernacular readers, showing the precautions taken even for perfect, but secular, knights. The precautions taken for the grail knights' approach to the Ship of Solomon is analagous to those given for approaching the Song of Songs. In his commentary on the Song of Songs, Bernard of Clairvaux warns readers that: "Before the flesh has been subdued and the spirit set free by the pursuit of truth, before the glories of the world and its entanglements have been seen for what they are, and put from us, it is presumptuous of us to attempt the study of what is holy, for we are impure."[298] The grail knights must experience the Solomonic catechism from learning to live wisely through learning contempt for present realities. In his commentary, Bernard previously explained that the book of Proverbs teaches the pursuit of truth, Ecclesiastes teaches disdain for the glories of the world, and Song of Songs is praise of "the gift of holy love and the mystery of eternal union with God."[299] The tests of Percival and Bors before they reach the Ship of Solomon are temptations of the flesh and the world: Percival learns to subdue the flesh after the devil, in the guise of a beautiful woman, gives him "all maner of meetes" and the "strengyst wyne" and then lays down naked with him on a bed (C.XIV.9, 1: 711.6, 7, 24-25). In passing this test, Percival passes through the Ecclesiastes-level of his spiritual education. Bors faces sexual temptation as well, but also faces a decision to sacrifice his natural preference for his brother, which is a test of his attachment to the world's "entanglements" (C.XVI.9, 1: 736.10-14);[300] Bors, thus, also passes his Ecclesiastes-level

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[298] *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 211.

[299] *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 213.

[300] Lacy, 4:56: Pauphilet, "Quant Boors entent cele qui einsi le conjure de Celui cui liges hons il est, si est si angoisscux qu'il ne set qu'il doie fere; car se il son frere en lesse mener a celz qui le tienent, il nel cuide ja mes veoir sain ne haitié; et s'il ne secort ceste pucele, ele iert maintenant honie et despucelee, et einsi recevra honte par la defaute de lui," 174.

exam. Although Galahad's fate seems determined from the start, he still faces tests of his obedience and humility—will he lay aside worldly worship for eternal gain? He does, indeed, thus showing his readiness to surrender his attachment to life itself. The grail knights pass these tests—the flesh is subdued and worldly entanglements exposed—and Percival's Sister brings them together to begin the final stage of preparation—practicing holy love—before viewing the holy grail, and embracing union with Christ.

The already-established association of ships with magic in the Arthuriad makes logical the connection of the origins of the Ship of Faith with Solomon. In the Solomon-*magus-auctor* traditions, the amazing achievement of King Solomon as builder of the Temple was due to his extraordinary administrative skills, craftsmanship, and power over demons. McCown, in his explication of the apocryphal text, *Testament of Solomon*, comments on this tradition: "In the *Testament of Solomon* he is already the wise man and magician *par excellence*, the favorite of God, endowed by him with divine σοφία, which includes insight into the crafty wiles of his demonic captives. He uses the demons for one purpose only, to assist in building and beautifying the great Temple at Jerusalem, this labor being the usual form of punishment adopted for them."[301] So whatever Solomon-*magus* puts his hands to is infused with extraordinary power. The ability of the Ship he builds in the *Tale of the Sankgreal* to exist for a couple thousand years and travel through time reflects this extraordinary power. The fact that ship constructed by the Temple-builder bears the label "I am Faythe" reinforces the typological figuration in the *Tale* and

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[301] Chester Charlton McCown, ed. *The Testament of Solomon* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1922), 48.

the continuity between Solomon's time and Galahad's. Frederick W. Locke states that the ship is "the Church *in via migrationis*," moving toward Sarras and to heaven.[302]

In her study of Malory's source, the *Queste Del Saint Graal*, Pauline Matarasso contends that the "concept of the ark, or tabernacle, God's dwelling place among men, is of course implicit in the exodus theme of the sub-plot in which the Grail is brought to Britain…"[303] This sub-plot "is given new impetus in the Ship of Solomon in which so many images are fused: that of the ark of Noah, of the Temple built by Solomon, of the *ferculum Salomonis* of the *Song of Songs*, all figures of the Church…".[304] Although the grail knights have arrived at the Ship of Solomon prepared, the experience—reading the ship and its treasures—is the next, and final, step in their grail education. Percival's Sister is their teacher as she elucidates these treasures for the grail knights and the reader.

When Percival's Sister shows the visitors the first treasure, the sword of David, the knights do not yet know the origin of the ship itself, but the virtues of the sword, as described, point to the Solomon-*magus* tradition. The description in the *Queste* and in *Tale of the Sankgreal* correspond closely, but the focus in the *Queste* version is on the power of the virtues:

> …the pommel was made of stone containing all the colors on earth. And it had another more precious aspect: each color contained a virtue of its own. The story tells further that the hilt was formed from the ribs of two beasts. The first was a kind of serpent called a *papalustes*, found more often in Caledonia than elsewhere. This serpent was such that anyone holding one of its ribs or its bones

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[302] ibid., 86

[303] Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry* 191.

[304] ibid.

would be protected from feeling extreme heat. The other rib on the sword hilt was from a medium-sized fish found in the Euphrates river and called the ortenax. As soon as anyone takes hold of one of this fish's ribs, he can remember no joy or pain he has experienced, but only the reason he took hold of the rib. As soon as he puts it down, however, he will regain the thoughts of a normal man.[305]

This is a passage in which Malory does not reduce the source information, but closely follows the *Queste*, changing a few details and reminding his audience that these virtues work specifically for the knight who will handle the sword:

> …the pomell was of stoone, and there was in hym all maner of coloures that ony man myght fynde, and every of the coloures had dyverse vertues. And the scalis of the hauffte were of two rybbis of two dyverse bestis; that one was a serpente whych ys coversaunte in Calydone and ys called there the Serpente of the Fynde, and the boone of hym ys of such vertu that there ys no hande that handelith hym shall never be wery nother hurte; and the other bone ys of a fyssh whych ys nat ryght grete, and hauntith the floode of Eufrate, and that fyssh ys called Ertanax, and the bonys be of such maner of kynde that who that handelyth hym shall have so muche wyll that he shall never be wery, and he shall nat thynke on joy nother

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[305] Lacy, 64; Pauphilet, "…car li ponz estoit d'une pierre qui avoit en soi toutes les colors que len puet trover en terre. Et si avoit encore autre diversité qui valoit encor plus: car chascune des colors avoit en soi une vertu. Et encor devise li contes que l'enheudeure estoit de deus costes, et ces deus costes estoient de deus diverses bestes. Car la premiere estoit d'une maniere de serpent qui converse en Calidoine plus que en autre terre; si est apelez icil serpenz papalustes; et de cel serpent est tele la vertu que se nus hons tient nule de ses costes ou aucun de ses os, il n'a garde de sentir trop grant chalor. De tel maniere et de tel force estoit la caste premiere. Et l'autre estoit d'un poisson qui n'est mie trop granz, et si converse ou flum d'Eufrate, et ne mie en autre even, et cil poissons est apelez ortenax. Si sont ses costes de tel maniere que se nus hons en prent une, ja tant come il la tendra ne li sovendra de joie ne de duel qu'il ait eu, fors seulement de cele chose por quoi il l'avra prise. Et maintenant qui'il l'avra mise jus repensera ausi come il estoit acostumé, en maniere de naturel home," 202-03.

sorow that he hath had, but only that thynge that he beholdith before hym.

(C.XVII.3, 1: 753.1-13)

The virtues of the sword function like an amulet for its wielder, protecting him and focusing his energies during a contest. The sword carries written warnings, the second of which echoes Chaucer's Parson's proverb on perfection: "'Lat se who dare draw me oute of my sheethe, but if he be more hardyer than ony other…'" (C.XVII.3, 1: 753.22-23). Galahad is hardier, holier, and wiser than any other, including Sampson, David, and Solomon.

Percival's Sister's explication of the meaning of the bed and the spindles shifts the narrative perspective to the very beginning of time: Adam and Eve in Paradise. James Dean claims that the spindles function as a "remembrance of paradise–what mankind once was–and as a memorial…of the penalties of Eve."[306] Paradise represents innocence and face-to-face communication with God. The only ticket to the Ship of Solomon for the grail knights is innocence—all of the knights who have led sinful lives are excluded from this part of the adventure. The grail itself represents the impossible chance of face-to-face communication or union with God that is still possible on earth. The Ship of Solomon episode is the last step of preparation for this experience. Solomon-*magus* provides the ship and Solomon-*auctor* the text—Song of Songs—that models the right mode for this quest. In comparison, Chaucer's Merchant's attempt to read a literal Song of Songs into his carnal relationship with his wife, May, utterly fails. The grail quest approach is to read a figurative Song of Songs into the narrative by completely eschewing sexual

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[306] James Dean, "Vestiges of Paradise: The Tree of Life in *Cursor Mundi* and Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 13, (1985): 113-26 at 118.

activity, embracing mystical union with Christ, and reflecting that union into human relationships.

For the *Queste*, the transhistorical legend of the holy cross is a method for connecting the inteparadise of Adam and Eve to Solomon's vision of paradise in the Song of Songs to the mystical paradise affected by the holy grail. Malory eliminates much of the Legend of the Tree of Life that is the *Queste*, but his retention of the reference to the spindles connects to a contemporary vernacular text that is very attentive to in the figure of Solomon: the *Cursor Mundi*, an influential, fourteenth-century vernacular paraphrase of the Bible.[307] Within the broader work of joining the Old Testament and the New, the legend of the holy cross in the *Cursor Mundi* harmonizes the Solomon-*magus* and Solomon-*auctor* traditions. The description of Solomon's education and literary contributions meshes his supernatural knowledge with his texts:

> Bath o tres, and gress fele,
>
> Quil war þair mightes soth *and* lele
>
> Gains quatkin iuel ilkan moght gain,
>
> Quer-su*m* þai gru, in wode or plain,
>
> And q*u*ar þe medicine a-boute
>
> Be funden in þe crop or rote
>
> O lare he lere[d] vnder þat tre
>
> þan made dughti bokes tre,

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[307] Michael Livingston, in his edition of the *Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*, comments on the *Cursor Mundi* as "widely distributed and widely read; its function as an inspirational text for later writers interested in biblical translation is simply beyond doubt, its influence widely documented," 28.

And dughtili he þam vndid,

Wit samples o tres and gress emid" (8453-62; 2:486-88).

So, under an offshoot of the tree of knowledge Solomon learns the seven liberal arts,

pronounces his famous judgments, and pens his books of wisdom. The *hortus conclusus*

of the Song of Songs, read within this tradition, is not only about the "luue…Betuix man

saul and haligast,"[308] as it is specifically described but is also, "a magician's garden,

complete with all the plants needed for casting spells against demons."[309] In the *Tale of*

the Sankgreal, Solomon's wife manages to procure spindles from this supernatural tree,

but, before that part of the story is told, Percival's Sister introduces Solomon himself. She

introduces him with a paraphrase of the Wisdom of Solomon passage quoted earlier

(7:17, 19-21) paired with a comment on his attitude about women: "So this Salamon had

an evyll wyff, wherethorow he wente there had be no good woman borne, and therefore

he dispysed them in hys bookis" (C.XVII.5, 1: 757.33-35). The statement alludes to a

verse from Ecclesiastes quoted by Pluto in the *Merchant's Tale* and Melibee in the *Tale*

of Melibee: "One man among a thousand I have found; a woman among them all I have

not found" (7:29).[310] In the *Tale of the Sankgreal*, however, in contrast to the *Canterbury*

Tales, this misogynist statement is answered by a heavenly voice that tells Solomon that a

woman will be born of whom will come the greatest joy of all humankind. The result of

this revelation is Solomon's repentance: "So whan Salamon harde thes wordis, he hylde

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[308] *Cursor Mundi,* 8474, 8475; 2:488.

[309] Jesse Rainbow, "The Song of Songs" 263.

[310] "Virum de mille unum repperi; mulierem ex omnibus non inveni."; *The Riverside Chaucer* IV.2247-48 and VII.1057.

hymself but a foole" (C.XVII.5, 1: 758.5-6). Solomon's foolishness, in the *Tale of the Sankgreal* is not his philogyny but his misogyny.

The inclusion of Solomon's "evyll" wife in the story may be a reinforcement of the Solomon-*magus* tradition, but that connection has proved difficult to trace. She is not an example of righteousness like Percival's Sister, but she is a woman who gets things done—a redeeming characteristic—as she helps Solomon build the ship and initiates the inclusion of its most significant artifacts. She is also a woman who recognizes her limitations when she makes the girdle for the Sword of David and acknowledges that she is not the right woman for the job: "…I have none so hyghe a thynge whych were worthy to susteyne soo hyghe a swerde" (C.XVII.6, 1: 759.8-9). This and her following statement—"And a mayde shall brynge other knyghtes thereto…"—further emphasize the value of innocence in the performance of the grail quest. Robert Kelly comments on this as a typological function, "Solomon's wife is a second Eve in that she directs the transformation of the wood of the Tree into the ship. She is revealed to be precursor of Perceval's sister through the detail of the 'girdle' she provides for David's sword in preparation for Galahad."[311] The emphasis on "evyll" for Solomon's wife forefronts Solomon's ultimate fate: "his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods" (3 Kings 11.4).[312] The juxtaposition of Solomon and his evil wife with Galahad and Percival's Sister highlights the chasteness of the latter pair, and the triumph of the spiritual interpretation of love.

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[311] Robert L. Kelly, "Arthur, Galahad and the Scriptural Pattern in Malory." *The American Benedictine Review* 23, no. 1 (1972), 9-23 at 17.

[312] "…depravatum est per muliers cor eius ut sequeretur deos alienos…"

Throughout the Ship of Solomon episode, Galahad exhibits the proper attitude for a grail knight in his humility. When the three knights are confronted with the Sword of David, Percival and Bors exhibit the secular, chivalric response to the marvel. Percival exclaims, "'In the name of God…I shall assay to handyll hit" (C.XVII.3, 1: 753.16-17). After Percival fails, Bors makes an attempt and fails as well. Galahad hesitates, a response that in a chivalric context would be seen as cowardice: "'I wolde draw thys swerde oute of the sheethe, but the offendynge ys so grete that I shall nat sette my hande thereto'" (C.XVII.3, 1: 753.26-28). After Percival's Sister has finished telling the story of the Ship and its artifacts and the grail knights encourage Galahad to take the Sword with the Strange Girdle, Galahad's response shows that his focus is not on his worship but on the spiritual health of his companions: "'Now latte me begynne…to grype thys swerde for to gyff you corrayge. But were you well hit longith no more to me than hit doth to you'" (C.XVII.7, 1: 761.15-17). The Ship of Solomon episode concludes with Percival's Sister strapping on to Galahad the sword of David delivered to them by Solomon's ship. Galahad and Percival's Sister both recognize the significance of the moment. Malory's handling of the French text makes it unclear who makes the next statement: "'Now recke I nat though I dye, for now I holde me one of the beste blyssed maydyns of the worlde, which hath made the worthyest knyght of the worlde'. (C.XVII.7, 1: 763.20-22). Galahad follows with a courtly statement about his service to the lady: "'Damesell…ye have done so much that I shall be your knyght all the dayes of my lyff'" (C.XVII.7, 1: 763.24).[313]

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[313] In the *Queste*, the narrator comments that Galahad "admired [the sword] as much as one can admire anything in the world," Percival's Sister strapped it on him, and she then comments, "Truly, sir, I no longer care when I might die, for I feel I am the most fortunate maid in the world to have dubbed into knighthood the world's most valiant knight." Galahad responds, "Lady, you have done somuch for me that I will forever be your knight," Lacy, 72; Pauphilet, "si l prise tant come len poist riens ou monde plua

Galahad uses the language of courtly love, like Solomon does in the Song of Songs, as Gregory the Great describes it: "He has gone so far as to embrace the language of our vulgar love in order to enkindle our heart with a yearning for that sacred love."[314] The embrace between Galahad and Percival's Sister figures-forth the mystical communion of saints and foreshadows additional representations of the work of the Holy Spirit through the remainder of the *Tale*.

Percival's Sister fits the description of the perfect reader of the Song of Songs, according to Origen:

> So indeed, this book occupies the last place, so that a person may come to it when he has been purged in morals and has learned the knowledge and distinction of corruptible and incorruptible things. By this preparation he is enabled to receive no harm from those figures by which the love of the bride for her heavenly bridegroom, that is, of the perfect soul for the Word of God, is described and fashioned. For with these preliminaries accomplished by which the soul is purified through its act and habits and conducted to the discernment of natural things, the soul comes suitably to doctrines and mysteries, and is led up to the contemplation of the Godhead by a genuine and spiritual love.[315]

Percival's Sister has advanced through the lessons of the quest, so now she has her moment to show her ultimate unionn with Christ by surrendering her life. Thornton and

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prisier…certes, sire, or ne me chaut il mes quant je muire; car je me tiegn orendroit a la plus beneuree pucele don monde, qui ai fet le plus preudome dou siecle chevalier," 228.

[314] *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, trans. Mark DelCogliano (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2012), 110.

[315] *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, trans. Rowan A. Greer (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 234.

May make the point that Malory, when compared to the *Queste del Saint Graal*, "increases the significance of the maiden's role and allows Percival's sister to take part in the quest rather than simply acting as a guide."[316] At the Castle of Maidens, she gives her blood, and thereby her life, for the healing of another. She sacrifices her life, first, for the health of the lady of the castle—"Madame, I am com to my dethe for to hele you"—but also to save the grail knights—"…better ys one harme than twayne" (C.XVII.10, 1: 768.1-2; C.XVII.10, 1: 767.24-25). The symbolism of Sarras, where Galahad and the Grail create the "paradys terrestre" that Chaucer's Merchant fails to manufacture, is evident in her instructions to Percival as she lay dying.[317] Percival's Sister will be represented at Sarras—after Percival sends her body on boat, to be there to greet the knights when they arrive. Her sacrifice at the Castle of Maidens, while enacting the love of God on earth, is not itself consummation. Her work on earth continues as evidenced by the comfort she and her boat provide for Lancelot in the episode that follows.

Galahad's lesson at the Castle of Maidens shows that his education is still underway; when a knight of the castle insists that Percival's Sister "sholde hylde thys dyshe full of bloode of hir ryght arme," Galahad's response is, "And God save me, also sure mow ye be that of this jantillwoman shall ye fayle whyle that I have hele" (C.XVII.9, 1: 765.34-35; 1: 765.2-3). So Galahad and his two fellow grail knights fight the knights of the castle until darkness falls. Galahad must learn from Percival's Sister to give up chivalric concerns, in this case the knightly dictum to protect virgin maidens from harm. His journey from the Castle of Maidens through Corbenic to Sarras includes

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[316] Thornton and May, "Malory as Feminist?" 43.
[317] *The Riverside Chaucer*, Januarie uses this phrase to describe the value of marriage (IV.1332).

three of the four miracle healings mentioned previously. An anonymous recipient of Galahad's healing work describes it this way: "'Much are ye beholde to thanke God which hath gyven you a good owre, that ye may draw oute the soulis of erthely payne and to putte them into the joyes of Paradyse'" (C.XVII.18, 1: 780.18-21). On four occasions, Galahad heals a man who has been physically suffering for a long period of time. All four instances involve Galahad's physical embrace or laying on of hands to effect the healing. Three of the four recipients—all three who are embraced by Galahad—immediately die and are given a Christian burial. The Maimed King, upon whom Galahad administers the blood of the spear, is healed and enters a monastery. The imagery of bodily embrace and the language of surrender enacts sacred love on earth and, for the observers, kindles the desire for union with the divine. Galahad is making known the hidden secret of the Song of Songs. When Hernox is released from his prison at Carteloise, he "began to wepe ryght tendirly," and exclaims, "'Longe have I abyddyn youre commynge! But for Goddis love, holdith me in youre armys, that my soule may depart oute of my body in so good a mannys armys as ye be'" (C.XVII.8, 1: 763.32-35). Mordrains uses similar language and adds comparisons of Galahad to beautiful flowers: "'Sir Galahad…now enbrace me and lette me reste on thy breste, so that I may reste between thyne armys! For thou arte a clene virgyne above all knyghtes, as the floure of the lyly in whom virginité is signified. And thou arte the rose which ys the floure of all good vertu, and in colour of Fyre. For the fyre of the Holy Goste ys takyn so in the that my fleyssh, whych was all dede of oldenes, ys becom agayne yonge'" (C.XVII.18, 1: 779.8-16). Galahad embraces him and "all hys body" (C.XVII.18, 1: 779.18). Galahad, as the agent of innocence, is the perfect vessel for the work of the Holy Ghost and for a vision of the Holy Grail. At Corbenic,

before the healing of the Maimed King, the grail knights are granted a visitation of Christ

who speaks of the revelatory nature of their experience: "'My knyghtes and my

servauntes and my trew chyldren which bene com oute of dedly lyff into the spirituall

lyff, I woll no lenger cover me frome you, but ye shall se now a parte of my secretes and

of my hydde thynges…'" (C.XVII.20, 1: 783.15-19). Unlike the Solomonic knight Sir

Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* who takes the green girdle to protect his

life, Galahad asks for the privilege of dying, declaring, "'…whan my body ys dede, my

soule shall be in grete joy to se the Blyssed Trinité every day and the majesté of Oure

Lorde Jesu Cryste'" (C.XVII.21, 1: 785.21-23). Galahad demonstrates the committment

necessary for anyone who would assay the book of the Song of Songs or the grail that

holds the blood of Christ.

The figure of Christ at Corbenic directs the knights to leave Logres and head to

Sarras "'the spirituall paleyse,'" because the people of Logres "be turned to evyll lyvyng"

and will no longer be honored with the grail (C.XVII.20, 1: 783.30, 35-). Galahad's

healings and his complete surrender of his life on earth separate him from the other grail

knights (Percival, significantly, since Percival has virginity in common with Galahad)

and make him the one person on earth fit for the ocular revelation of the grail. The

ultimate secret is finally revealed: "'Com forthe, the servaunte of Jesu Cryste, and thou

shalt se that thou hast much desired to se'" (C.XVII.22, 1: 787.10-12). Galahad fulfills

the description of the seeker as delineated in the Glossa Ordinaria on the Song of Songs:

"in which he teaches the man in his perfect age about the love of God alone, so that he

may rest within the arms of the bridegroom."[318] Readers may follow Galahad on the Solomonic journey but as the *Tale* itself states, "And sythen was there never man so hardy to sey that he hade syn the Sankgreal" (C.XVII.22, 1: 788.7-8). Galahad is the encouragement and the warning to the reader and pilgrim that viewing the secret and holy comes at the price of setting aside all of one's secular entanglements and surrendering one's own life.

The joining of the Solomon-*magus* and Solomon-*auctor* traditions creates a powerful figure who energizes the narrative movement of the *Tale of the Sankgreal*. Solomon-*magus* generates the mystery and suspense surrounding cryptic messages, power-infused objects, and magically-propelled ships. The parallel work of Solomon-*auctor* frames the pedagogical pilgrimage and interpretive work of the major characters of the grail landscape. Galahad achieves the quest because his virtues, his very person, signal to the magical elements his fittingness as the perfect grail knight. Galahad-*magus* quits the grail mysteries, but Galahad-*auctor* leaves the path open for those who follow. He obediently pursues the Proverbs-Ecclesiastes-Song of Songs lessons to practice the spiritual interpretation of the earthly world. This aspect of the figure of Galahad stands as a model for the reader of the *Tale of the Sankgreal*; small is the gate and narrow is the road, and only a few find it, but the reward is paradise.

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[318] Mary Dove, *The* Glossa Ordinaria *on the Song of Songs*, 3; from Mary Dove, *Glossa Ordinaria In Canticum Canticorum*: "…in quo uirum consummatum docet de solo amore Dei ut requiescat inter brachia sponsi," 77.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* traditions began within the biblical

record, which attributed authority to Solomon not only through his ever-familiar wisdom

but also his authorship of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; his administration

and craftsmanship in the building of the Temple; his peaceableness as king; his

understanding of the natural world; and his weakness for women. It is not possible,

within the scope of this study, to track all of the intricacies of the development of either

the Solomon-*auctor* or Solomon-*magus* traditions. My purpose is to set the context for

these traditions in the Middle Ages in order to illuminate their workings in three

"compositions of worldly vanities," to use a phrase from Chaucer's Retraction. No study

before has connected the *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and

Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* through the figure of Solomon.

The *auctor* tradition, based primarily on Solomon's kingship and authorship, was

reinforced through orthodox Christian sources of the ancient and medieval time periods.

Early Church Fathers—Origen, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory—and many influential

medieval commentators such as Bede, Alcuin, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St.

Thierry, and Bonaventure, all reinforce the power of the word of Solomon. The

pedagogical exercise embodied in the three texts attributed to Solomon began with the

earliest Christian commentary; Origen delineates the process of learning to live wisely in

the world via Proverbs, learning to disdain for worldly entanglements via Ecclesiastes, and embracing union with Christ via the Song of Songs. Intrinsic to the idea of progress from Proverbs to Song of Songs is the assumption that certain texts should not be available to the lewd. Both Solomon-*auctor* and Solomon-*magus* traditions have in common this emphasis on esoterica.

The *magus* tradition is based on the early association of Solomon with a preternatural understanding of the world, was carried forward by apocrypha and texts of ritual magic, and influenced vernacular works like the *Cursor Mundi* and *Solomon and Saturn Prose Pater Noster Dialogue*. Words are still powerful in this tradition but so are herbs, flowers, trees, stones, gems, precious metals—and demons. Power is accessed through ritual and reliance on formulas. The attribute that shows up sporadically in both traditions is Solomon's philogyny. Some orthodox commentators ignore it (Origen) and other directly address it (Bonaventure). Some texts of ritual magic ignore it (*Ars notoria*) and some address it (*Testament of Solomon*). A text's primary concerns determine this choice. Chaucer, for instance, allows for regular reference to Solomon's also-familiar foolishness about women.

Solomon-*auctor* frequently operates within a text to reinforce authority—like the use Prudence makes of him in Chaucer's Melibee—but also operates as a focal point for grappling with issues of intepretation, as many authors and religious leaders were during the time of Wyclif and Lollard movements, when *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* were written. In the *Canterbury Tales*, two brief glimpses of Solomon-*magus* shine through to show Chaucer's awareness of the tradition, but the figure that dominates is Solomon-*auctor*. Chaucer's use, however, is

never straightforward. Even in *Melibee*, where Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are the Prudence's primary proof-texts, the use of Solomon raises questions about methods of interpretation and the validity of Solomon as authority. Those questions continue, and move to the forefront in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, where Solomon himself becomes the Wife's proof text, and in the *Merchant's Tale*. The *Parson's Tale* offers the paradoxical truth that the only good interpreter is the one who does not "truste in his owene perfeccioun," but recognizes, and pays penance for, his own sin.

Solomon-*magus* dominates in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but Solomon-*auctor* plays an important role as well. Solomon-*magus* is the key to solving the riddle of the pentangle, the inclusion of which has baffled many readers of the tale. Gawain departs Camelot and journeys through the wilderness as Solomonic knight. Good magic though Solomon's talisman may be, it ultimately proves impotent for the hero, which delivers the warning to the reader that learned magic is not the way to victory for the Christian knight. The message of Solomon-*auctor* is to disdain for worldly realities and embrace union with Christ.

The double tradition of Solomon-*magus-auctor* is at work in Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal* from the beginning. In fact, Galahad is the ultimate Solomonic knight: He is Galahad-*magus* as he completes the quest for the holy grail through his singular, supernatural traits, and he is Galahad-*auctor* as he fulfills the pedagocial pilgrimage from Proverbs through the Song of Songs. This interaction explains one of the mysteries of the character of Galahad because he is presented simultaneously a unique character in romance history—one that can never be imitated in his ability to, for instance, heal the Maimed King—and as an example of holiness for his brethren to emulate.

This study opens up a number of avenues for further research: do other references to Solomon or his texts in romances, love poetry, fabliaux, or dialogues fit in one or the other of the Solomonic traditions? Are certain aspects of either tradition—the pedagocial enterprise embodies in Solomon's texts or the pentangle—that surface in medieval texts? Do both traditions continue into the English Renaissance? Can my exploration of the tradition of Solomon-*magus* tradition further illuminate current investigation into texts of ritual magic? These avenues of research are worth exploring as they further inform discussions regarding attitudes in the late Middle Ages toward biblical interpretation and toward what we term as magic—particularly the layperson's access to both of these kinds of texts, perhaps even in juxtaposition.

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VITA

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EDUCATION

Doctorate of Philosophy, 2016, Literary Studies: Middle English Literature, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 4.0 GPA.
Dissertation: "The Power of the Medieval Solomon-*Magus* and Solomon-*Auctor* as Revealed through in *The Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Tale of Sankgreal*

Master of Arts, 1999, English, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA 3.52 GPA
Thesis: "John Donne's Sacred Aesthetics and Protestant Eschatology in *La Corona*"

Continuing education
Reading in the Content Areas class, 1999, Virginia State University

Bachelor of Arts, *cum laude*, 1991, Olivet Nazarene University, Kankakee, IL 3.52 GPA
1st Major: English Education; 2nd Major: Biblical Literature

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Associate Professor, Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, IL –8/2007 to present
> Teach general education composition, general education literature courses, sophomore-level through senior-level specialized literature, composition, and visual literacy courses.

Sponsor, Historic and Literary Tour of England, 2007 and 2009
> Coordinate through the Department of English and Modern Languages and Casterbridge Tour Company financial arrangements and academic credits for twenty college student participants; teach literature for a one group of the students participating in the tour

Interim Chair, Department of English and Modern Languages, Olivet Nazarene University, 2008-2009
> Coordinate department initiatives, meetings, and workshops; administer department budget and schedules of fourteen full-time faculty; communicate faculty concerns to administration and vice versa; supervise work of administrative assistant

Assistant Professor, Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, IL –8/2001 to 5/2007
> Teach general education composition, general education literature courses, sophomore-level through senior-level specialized literature, composition, and visual literacy courses.

Online English teacher, Nazarene Bible College, Colorado Springs, CO – 10/99 to 5/2001
> Using an online computer program, teach English grammar, essay writing, and the research paper in composition courses; teach analysis of and writing about literary texts in literature course.

English Teacher, Adult Career Development Center, Richmond Public Schools, Richmond, VA 8/98 to 5/99
> Teach literature and composition to adolescent at-risk populations; teach GED literature and composition to adults.

ESL Teacher, Chesterfield County Public Schools, Richmond, VA – 8/97 to 5/98, summer '99
> Teach verbal and written English language usage through vocational materials and simulations.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Midwest Conference on Christianity and Literature, 2016
> Presented the paper "Beautiful Wisdom: King Solomon's Building of the Temple in the Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament"

Southeastern Conference on Christianity and Literature, 2014
> Presented the paper —"Spiritual Paradise in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and Parson's Tale"

International Congress on Medieval Studies, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013
> Attended sessions on medieval literature and networked with academic colleagues from across the country

Interdisciplinary Studies Committee, 2009-2010
> Along with two other committee members, developed documents and proposal for an interdisciplinary major at Olivet.

College Readiness Workshop, Kankakee Community College, 2009
> Participated in workshop discussions with area high school English teachers and community college professors on the topic of students writing readiness for college

National Collegiate Honors Council Conference, Washington, D.C., 2009
> Attended sessions for faculty who teach honors classes and mentor honors students

Conference for Medieval Studies at Purdue University, February, 2008
> Presented a paper, "Sparring with Solomon: The Figure of King Solomon in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*"

Integration Committee, College of Arts and Sciences, 2005-06
> Generated ideas with the committee for possibile interdisciplinary work across the college and methods for implementing such work.

Faculty Development Committee, 2002-03 and 2003-04
>   Worked with other committee members on activities and resources for
>   professional and personal development for all faculty of the university.

College Composition and Communication Conference, March, 2005
>   Attended various sessions on philosophical and pedagogical issues relating to
>   teaching college composition.

Festival of Faith and Writing, Calvin College, 2002, 2004, and 2012
>   Attended sessions relating to writing and publishing and the integration of faith
>   and writing.

Sigma Tau Delta Annual Convention, 2003, 2009, and 2010
>   Served as faculty moderator for panel of undergraduate students presenting
>   papers.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Sigma Tau Delta, English Honor Society, member and chapter officer as undergraduate
Phi Delta Lambda Honor Society member, current chapter President
Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society member

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Medieval Association of the Midwest, member
Conference on Christianity and Literature, member