FITT XII: RYGHT

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§1. Grace innogh the mon may have
That synnes then new yif him repente
Bot wyth sorw and syt he mot hit craue
And byde the payne therto is bent. [661-64]

§1.1 'mon may'

While it may seem trite to comment on such an apparently pragmatic instance of alliteration, the effect here is to draw focus from the concatenating phrase to the central theme of fitt XII: the conditional nature of grace's attainability for any living person.

The auxiliary 'may' introduces a conditional mood that predominates in this fitt, as seen in ll. 669 'the gyltyf may ...'; 694 'Thou may hit wynne ...'; and 703 '… thou may be innome'. The uncertainty of the sinner's salvation is contrasted to the future and present grammatical certainties of the righteous, who 'schal se [God's] face', and above all, the innocent, who 'is ay saf by ryght'.

From the twelfth century, grammar had gained a theological significance as a means of representing and understanding God, his being and his actions.[1] Modistic queries about ordained and potential actions of God gained particular significance in the wake of the condemnation 1277, Bishop Tempier's measure to restrict the discussion of 'dangerous' Aristotelian ideas at the University of Paris. Article 147 of the condemned theses proposed that 'the absolutely impossible cannot be done by God.'[2]

The condemnation of this article provoked more potentially heretical speculation, since if God is able to do the impossible, if he

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[1] E. J. Ashworth, "Review of *The Mirror of Grammar: Theology, Philosophy and the 'Modistae'* by LG Kelly" *Speculum* 80 No.2 (2005): 603.

[2] Edward Grant, "The Condemnation of 1277, God's Absolute Power, and Physical Thought in the Late Middle Ages", *The Nature of Natural Philosophy in the Late Middle Age*s (Washington: CUA Press, 2010), 53-4.

has *potentia absoluta* (short of "logical contradiction"[3]) then no divine promise is certain to be kept. As Thomas of Buckingham ventured, 'the basic tenets of faith might be mere contingencies.'[4]

Fitt XII of *Pearl* engages in a negotiation between a philosophical climate of skeptical inquiry, and the 'mystical certainty'[5] that, in the fourteenth century, acted as a counterweight to the destabilising effects of rationalism. Across the fitt, as I hope to show, Pearl constructs an argument that aims to reconcile, and ultimately subjugate, reason to revelation, though without ever making any guarantees concerning individual salvation.

§1.2 'thenne new'

In fitt XII Pearl refines her previous argument, and discusses not just sinners-by-default – that is, all mankind - but the particular and individualised post-baptismal sinner. The uncertain nature of God's grace is shown to hang on humanity's imperfection – one salvation, through baptism, evidently is not enough for us. Structurally, this fitt begins on an argumentative backlash, as if in imitation of the subject's own return to sin. It might be argued that Pearl's guardedly provisional and legalistic language in this fitt (see §10.1) is founded on the instability of the human nature, but her portrayal of the forces of judgement is not designed to instil confidence - even if the sinner repents, Pearl allows only that he *may* have grace.

§1.3 'yif him repente'

Etymologically, a tautologous combination of the Latin *re* (again) and *paenitere* (to regret or cause to regret),[6] to repent essentially means to re-regret. The buried implication in this word of swimming against the tide, of beginning at a disadvantage, reinforces the backtracking movement suggested by the sinner's doubly undermined (by himself and Adam) grace.

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[3] Grant, "The Condemnation of 1277", 53.
[4] John M Bowers, "*Patience* and the Ideal of the Mixed Life.*" Texas Studies in Literature and Languag*e 28 (1986): 4
[5] David Knowles in Bowers, "*Patience* and the Ideal", 4.
[6] "repent, v.". OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/> (accessed July 30, 2014).

Coinciding with the conditional mood of Pearl's speech, an eternally prior loss of security is established, although repentance is also forward-looking, as an 'undertaking to reform in future.'[7]

The temporal and unfinished nature of the sinner manifests as a perpetual entrapment in a state of pain. *Paenitere* has its root in *poena* (penalty, punishment, 'unpleasant consequence'),[8] which Pearl depicts as a necessary and expiatory aspect of repentance – 'the payne therto is bent', l. 664 - in line with scholastic views.[9] That said, pain is not by necessity productive. Harm done by an individual is inevitably re-felt in the form of repentance, damnation, or in the course of living, as expressed by Augustine: 'every disorder of the soul is its own punishment.'[10] The only certainty presented is that the sinner will be caught up in the repercussions of sin.

This idea of recursive sin and pain can also pertain to the jeweler's grief as a self-perpetuating moral and emotional disorder.

§1.4 'Bot … hit'

Syntactically, there is some ambiguity as to whether the sinner is supposed to crave grace or repentance. The former might seem likely if one considers that 'sorw and syt' and craving are synonymous with sincere repentance, although in that case, 'and' would seem a more appropriate conjunction than 'but'.

On the other hand, Pearl's apparent understanding of repentance as expiatory belongs to a scholastic outlook whereby grace is the 'efficient cause' of contrition.[11] Repentance, then, is a gift (a 'benignity') from God: '*ignorams quoniam benignitas Dei ad paenitentiam te adducit*'.[12] By this logic, the sinner must first have grace in order to get grace through repentance. If it is repentance itself that the sinner must crave, this gives the 'but' more purpose,

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[7] ibid.

[8] "poena, n.". OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. ⟨http://www.oed.com⟩ (accessed December 05, 2014).

[9] Renn Dickson Hampden, *The Scholastic Philosophy considered in relation to Christian Theology* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.,1848) 248.

[10] Augustine, trans. F.J. Sheed, *Confessions* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007) I.xii.19

[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. ⟨http://dhspriory.org/thomas/ english/QDdeVer28.htm⟩ (accessed December 4, 2014). I-II.28.viii, s.c.4.

[12] Romans 2:4 (Latin Vulgate) in *Douay Rheims Bible Online*. ⟨http://www. drbo.org⟩ (accessed July 30, 2014).

marking 'sorrow and grief'[13] as a further condition attached to the proviso 'yif him repente', rather than a continuation of it.

This exacting process indicates a key proposition of this fitt: that grace is only attainable for those to whom God grants it. Even when earned by sorrow, grief and pain, it can only be given as a favour.

§1.5 'sorw and syt'

This contemporary hendiadystic phrase means 'to lament, to express regret or anger…vexation or moral evil'. It is also recognised as a term for labour pains.[14] If this sense is implied alongside the more straightforward reading of sorrow and grief then it emphasises the productive nature of repentance, or of craving repentance, as labour through which salvation may be delivered.

To extend the metaphor, the saving grace potentially obtained through sorrow is figuratively a child. This has an obvious significance as a reference to Christ as an infant messiah; the effecting of salvation through Christ's innocence will be the fitt's climactic movement. The image also pertains to Pearl and others like her who died in infancy and a state of innocence; Pearl herself is cast as a possible agent of salvation for the jeweler (see §2.2).

§1.6 'craue'

According to the OED, crave has a possible root in the Germanic *kraft*, to force or extract, 'to demand … with authority or by right'. In l. 663 crave is used in the sense, 'to earnestly beg, as a gift or favour'.[15] The Germanic root suggests a relevant ambiguity between rights and favours; whether the guilty have any rights in this passage has been debated with reference to ll. 701-8 (see §10.2).

§2. Bot resoun of ryght that can noght raue
     Saues evermore the innossent.
     Hit is a dom that never God gave,
     That euer the gyltles schulde be shente. [665-68]

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[13] J. J. Anderson, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience* (London: Everyman,1996) 26.

[14] "sorw and sytr". MED. April 2013. University of Michigan. http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med (accessed July 30 2014).

[15] "crave, v.". OED Online. (accessed 30 July, 2014).

§2.1 'Bot'

In fitt XII the word 'but' occurs four times: ll. 663, 671, 695 and 705. Here, in anaphoric parallel with the instance in l. 663, the word introduces a new strand to Pearl's argument, contrasting the relations to grace of the 'gyltyf' and of the 'gyltles'.

The innocent enjoy a fundamentally different status to the guilty, since their right to safety is already established. The comparison drawn here is reasonable insofar as the states of guilt and guiltlessness are contrasted in this fitt, but it also forces attention to the source of their difference. It has been established in fitts X and XI that to live is more or less by necessity to be guilty, and that Pearl, the embodiment of innocence, is thus because she died young. This is confirmed in l. 700, which applies specifically to the living: 'non lyvyande to the is justyfyet'. The contrast is not between those who acted justly and those who did wrong, but between those who did and did not have an opportunity to sin. In that sense, it is not a fair comparison. Pearl's repetition of the conjunction 'but' gives a sense of superfluity to the second sub-clause: the innocent are a class of their own.

§2.2 'resoun'

Translators have interpreted 'resoun' either as an abstract concept – Osgood's 'fair consideration,' Vantuono's 'cause of justice' – or else as 'Resoun', 'a quasi-personification of justice', as described by Andrew and Waldon.[16] The former approach is consistent with the fitt's legalistic tone (see §10.2) stressing as it does the process of 'coming to a correct decision', guided by 'rectitude of judgement'.[17] To favour the personified Reason is, as a reader, to take this discriminatory faculty away from the human thinker, and to set it up as a semi-divine authority - Andrew and Waldon even take 'resoun' to refer to directly to God.[18] In fact, Reason has long standing as a literary personage in her or his own right.

To personify 'resoun' seems appropriate, in part simply because its grammatical status as the subject of the clause confers the action (saving) not on a thinker but on the faculty. Furthermore,

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[16] William Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1* (New York: Garland, 1984), 256.

[17] H. L. Spencer, "God's Law and Man's Law", *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 331.

[18] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1*, 256.

Reason is a character that an informed reader might well expect to see in a dream-poem, since the reason-figure has a generic heritage extending back to Lady Philosophy in Boethius's *Consolatione*, and beyond that to Augustine's *Soliloquia*.[19]

The female Reason in Jean de Meun's portion of the *Roman de la Rose* is a particularly likely model for Pearl's Reason; *The Roman de la Rose* has an evident influence on *Pearl*, and de Meun's Reason is is used as a prototype for Pearl herself:

> She seemed like a person of high estate. By her appearance and her face it would seem that she was made in Paradise, for Nature would not have known how to make a work of such regularity. Know, if the letter does not lie, that God made her personally in his likeness and in his image, and gave her such advantage that she has the power and the lordship to keep man from folly, provided he be such that he believe her.[20]

This description is echoed in *Pearl*, fitt 13:

> Quo formed the thy fayre fygure?
> That wroght thy wede, he was ful wys.
> Thy beauté com never of nature... [747-49]

While I will discuss the implications of this allusion in the description of Pearl shortly, I will first pursue the nature of the reason-figure, and the purpose it could serve in Pearl's argument. Primarily, Reason is a figure in God's image, but made for the edification of humanity – de Meun draws on the Biblical creation of mankind (Gen. 1:26-28) in his description of her.[21] Reason as he appears in Piers Plowman (where he is male) 'shal rule [the king's] reaume and rede [him] the best.'[22] In the *Roman de la Rose*, taking after Lady Philosophy, she shows an enlightened understanding of

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[19] Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy and Literary Form*, 68.

[20] Charles Dahlberg ed., *The Romance of the Rose* (Hanover and London: the University Press of New England, 1971), 73

[21] Dahlberg, *The Romance of the Rose,* 368.

[22] William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008) 4.9.

the Wheel of Fortune and its inconstancy, and of the workings of Nature.[23]

In short, the reason-figure has 'lordship' and understanding of the ways of the mortal world, and, equipt with this understanding, tends to despise mortal preoccupations. Augustine's *Ratio*, a prototypical reason-figure insofar as it remains an abstraction, urges him to 'flee the senses. The body is a trap.'[24] A fourteenth-century vision of *Ratio* is portrayed in the poem *Parvule, cur ploras*, where she oversees man's humiliating journey through his ages, from infancy to death.[25] The poem is presented on a Wheel of Life, with Christ pictured at the centre; any implication of spiritual salvation is left to that image, and goes unmentioned by *Ratio*.

This type of reason-figure is used by Pearl to represent the strict concept of justice that automatically exempts the innocent from danger. If we continue to take prompt post-baptismal death as a condition of innocence, then Reason is well-placed to know that the innocent do not belong to the realm of mortality, and should not incur its penalties.

Salvation for the living is not in Reason's purview. However there are, debatably, two further guiding figures in this fitt, Wisdom (see §8.1) and Christ, who help Pearl to explain that concept.

As noted earlier, Pearl is also a variant of the reason-figure. She conforms to the description Lynch gives in her overview of this trope in her 'attempts to inform and cure [the dreamer's] diseased imagination' and in helping to lead him to a 'revelation' that will foster 'moral and psychic wholeness.'[26] She departs from type, however, in that her role is more mystical than philosophical. Reason is only the first rung of her argument; she is aiming for the ineffable.

Josephine Bloomfield points out that Pearl can be seen in terms of Pseudo-Dionysius's conception of hierarchy, whereby God's truth is relayed through guiding figures possessed of superior understanding.[27] Pearl herself makes use of a Dionysian hierarchy of intermediaries in this fitt in order to move her argument towards

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[23] Dahlberg, *The Romance of the Rose*, 91-137.
[24] Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy and Literary Form,* 53.
[25] Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986),96.
[26] Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 68-69.
[27] Josephine Bloomfield, "Stumbling towards God's Light", 394-95.

a moment of revelation. This series of surrogates begins with Reason and ascends to Christ.

§2.3 'ryght'

As Vantuono points out, 'ryght' can either be understood as signifying justice – 'just and equitable treatment' - or the 'justifiable claim' accorded to privilege.[28] Depending on which definition of is followed, 'resoun' is either the application of 'abstract right'[29] or an enforcer of God's hierarchy - or, as Pearl might argue, both, since the two cannot be separated. As with most catch-words (see §3.1), the meaning of 'ryght' varies. In l. 672 it signifies security, in other stanzas - 'by ryght' - it denotes privilege or justice. The fact that the innocent are 'ryght' (safe) by right typifies the occasional use, in Pearl, of semantic ambiguity to imply tautology (see §6.4) and to suggest a confounding inflexibility in how things are: right is a right, for those who are right.

§2.4 'the innossent'

'Innocent' is from the Latin root *in* (not) + *nocere* (to hurt or injure). The word, understood to mean 'harmless', also suggests the meaning 'unharmed', which accords well with the Old Testament usage of *innocente* to signify 'cleanness'.[30]

The innocent are harmless and also unharmed by God in that they are preserved from sin. In dying young, Pearl was protected from the possibility of sinning. This exemption can only be a privilege, as much as the preservation of the harmless is surely a matter of justice. Even the sense in which death in infancy is experienced as harm - as the sacrifice of a blameless life - carries the honour of *imitatio christi.*

Innocence, for Pearl, has an equivalent status to that of virginity in Jerome's anti-Jovinian defense of the hierarchy of heaven - notably, Pearl appears later as one of 144, 000 virgin brides of Christ. According to Jerome's scheme, 'Christ loves virgins more than

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[28] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1,* 257.
[29] Spencer, "God's Law and Man's Law", 331.
[30] ibid., 329.

others,' and those who are enabled to go through life unstained have been granted 'a greater grace from God.'[31]

The question of hierarchy is significant throughout *Pearl*, and especially in this passage, where the superior rights of the innocent are so strongly emphasised. As I argued before, Pearl's use of allegorical guides in this fitt suggests a Dionysian model of hierarchy whereby spiritual superiors raise us "towards a truth … which is simple and one,'[32]so that hierarchy is a means towards the end of enlightenment. Bloomfield argues that the poem as a whole gestures to such a unifying process, though, as I hope to show in examining this fitt, such a resolution is never quite achieved, and the austere Jeromian model of hierarchy never surmounted.

§2.5 'saues'

Modal auxiliaries are no longer needed here: reason 'saves' – not may save, not shall save – the innocent. As Pearl's presence on the far side of the river indicates, the innocent are 'always safe'; set outside life and time, they are safe in 'God's all seeing now'[33] while the outcome for sinners remains contingent. It should be noted that to save is not only to rescue but also to preserve or protect.[34]

In short, what has been set up grammatically and explicitly in the first stanza is a double standard.

§2.6 'evermore...never...ever'

The correspondence of these chronological superlatives emphasises the certainty of the innocent's position, and its constancy alongside temporal fluctuation. The verbal pattern through ll. 666-68, where '[n]ever' moves from the first half-line to the second then back to the first enacts a pantomime of dialogism in Pearl's monologic argument. All Pearl's positives and negatives reinforce a single point, but are nevertheless in conceptual opposition to each other, so that her argument seems to close in on all sides, a multifaceted absolute. This rhetorical technique conspicuously

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[31] Josephine Bloomfield, "Stumbling toward God's Light: The *Pearl* Dreamer and the Impediments of Hierarchy" *The Chaucer Review* 45, No. 4 (2011), 392.

[32] Bloomfield, "Stumbling towards God's Light", 395.

[33] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, 94.

[34] "save, v.". OED Online. (accessed August 01, 2014).

represses a question which haunts the fitt: why are only the innocent made innocent, and not the rest?

§3. The gyltyf may contryssyoun hente
     And be thurgh mercy to grace thryght
     Bot he to gyle that neuer glente
     As inoscente is saf and ryghte. [669-72]

§3.1 'hente...thryght...glente'

Three contrasting movements are described in these lines. Definitions of 'hente' include, to lay hold of, seize or catch, to get to, arrive at, reach or to occupy[35] - the final sense is adhered to by most translators, and seems fitting given the metaphors of grace as place in ll. 678-81, 693-94 and l. 719. Glossed this way, the verb suggests an active approach of and arrival at the state of contrition, which in turn confers some power on the 'gyltyf' – a sense of control over their destiny stronger than that depicted in l. 675: 'the ryghtwys man schal se hys face'.

'Thryght', however, consigns the guilty to the passive and undignified position of having been 'thrust' into a state of grace by a superior power. This lackadaisical impuissance is far from suggesting grace as 'a quality possessed by human beings', 'an individual virtue or excellence which is regarded as divine in origin' - grace here is exclusively 'a quality of God',[36] for which the guilty seem essentially unworthy.

Conversely, the use of 'glente' to describe a non-existent slip into 'gyle' describes a glancing motion so subtle that its secondary application is to the movement of light. The use of this term apophatically reinforces the fitt's implication that the innocent and the guilty are not so much contrasting examples (as suggested by the rhyming opposition of 'hente' and 'glente') as irrevocably different and incomparable.

§4. Ryght thus I knaw wel in this cas
     Two men to save is god by skylle. [673-74]

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[35] "† hent, v.". OED Online. (accessed July 30, 2014).
[36] "grace, n.". OED Online. (accessed July 30, 2014).

§4.1 'god by skylle'

'Early editors', Vantuono writes, 'rendered 'good', but Hillman's 'God'... seems preferable.'[37]   As with many individual words in this fitt, this ambiguity of meaning leaves room for doubt as to the overall claim Pearl is making about the supremacy of privilege or of justice. The OED defines 'skylle' as 'reason as a faculty of the mind', 'discretion in relation to special circumstance' and/or 'that which is reasonable, proper, right or just.'[38] In conjunction with this word, 'Good' would suggest the principle of just behaviour, as guided by reason. 'God' in the same place would convey that the salvation of two types is a matter of divine discretion, and that his will is the only reason necessary.

Vantuono's translation, '[If] God, by agreement, is to redeem two men ...'[39] is questionable in introducing an element of contingency into a 'case' that Pearl 'know[s] well', and where the outcome is 'certain' (see l. 685). His 'by agreement' implies either that redemption is entirely a matter of theoretical debate, if the agreement is a matter of theological consensus, or else, if the agreement is between God and man, that God has struck a deal. This is an interesting translation insofar as it suggests the existence of a contract or guarantee for the righteous, whoever they are. The thesis of this fitt is never that God might renege on his offer of salvation, as Thomas of Buckingham imagined, but that only the innocent can be sure of their status. Vantuono's translation seems to posit that God is not a totally free and unpredictable agent, but is bound by 'the rights of his true subjects'[40] - God is held to his own 'skylle'.

The use of the word 'skylle' here also portrays 'resoun' unambiguously as a property of the mind. It puts personified Reason into retirement in preparation for Wisdom (see §8.1).

§5.   The ryghtwys man schal se hys face,
       The harmles hathel schal com hym tylle. [675-76]

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[37] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1,* 674.

[38] "skill, n.1". OED Online. (accessed July 30, 2014).

[39] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1,* 47.

[40] Spencer, "God's Law and Man's Law": 321.

§5.1 'harmles hathel'

Defined in the OED as a 'man of worth',[41] and in the MED as a man, warrior or nobleman,[42] the word is derived from the Old English *athel*, meaning ancestry/origin or nobility. The term may therefore be used in a humble sense, but has connotations of nobility which here, as the alliteration emphasises, are interlinked with harmlessness, which is the prize and the cause of high status within the hierarchy of souls.

§6. The Sauter hyt sas thus in a pace:
     "Lorde, quo schal klymbe thy hygh hylle,
     Other rest withinne thy holy place?"
     Hymself to onsware he is not dylle:
     "Hondelynges harme that dyt not ille,
     That is of hert both clene and lyght,
     Ther schal hys step stable stylle."
     The innosent is ay saf by ryghte. [677-84]

§6.1 'The Sauter hyt sas'

Aside from her use of facilitating reason-figures, Pearl always backs up her argument with scriptural authority, which is treated as proof since the Bible is, as stated by Aquinas, an example of supernatural illumination, bearing 'the stamp of God's own knowledge.'[43] This first allusion to the Bible sets a precedent, to be followed in the overall structure of the fitt, of looking to revelation - in the forms of God's word, and of Christ - in order to justify reason.

§6.2 'hymself to onsware'

This passage paraphrases parts of Psalms 14 and 23, the contents of which correspond closely at points. The poet's decision to replicate the psalms' question and answer format is in accordance with the pincer motion of Pearl's argument in this fit, as described earlier (see §2.6). The personified Psalter answers his own question with certainty and promptness: he 'is not dylle'.

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[41] "† hathel, n.". OED Online (accessed July 30, 2014).

[42] "hathel". MED. April 2013.(accessed July 30 2014).

[43] Armand Maurer, *Being and Knowing: Studies in Thomas Aquinas and Later Medieval Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), xii.

To pose a question and then immediately respond to it is to ostentatiously debar an answering party from the discourse – it is notable that this is a fitt where the jeweler does not speak. The impression given is both of unassailable control (by Pearl, by the Psalter), and of an unresolved aporia located in the space where another voice might have broken in.

Writing about Psalm 23, Sumpter discusses the probable roots of its 'question-answer-confirmation' structure in torah-entrance liturgy, wherein questions are posed to, and answered by, a priest. However, following Botha, he argues that the intended effect here is purely rhetorical, and that the psalm should be read as a post-exilic reassertion of the believers' right to Israel.[44] The adaptation of these verses in *Pearl* likewise exhibits a self-answering dialectic of salvation: the chosen may speak with and for God to answer their own question, which is in fact antiphonic to the answer, with no intervening uncertainty (see §6.4). The appearance of a dialectical structure (a form favoured by scholastics, and based on reason) is belied by mystical oneness. The fault-line exists for those who are outside the establishment of salvation - like the wordless jeweler.

§6.3 'of hert both clene and lyght'

This image of the beatific vision elides Psalm 23.4 ('*innocens manibus et mundo corde*') with Matthew 5:8 ('*beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*').[45] The latter is also paraphrased in *Cleanness* and in *Patience*:

> The hathel clene of his hert hapenes ful fayre
> For he schal loke on oure Lorde with a loue chere[46]

> Thay ar happen also that arn of hert clene,
> For thay her Savyour in sette schal se with her yyen [47]

Although Pearl specified that 'the ryghtwys man schal se hys face,' the *Pearl* poet evidently associates the beatific vision specifically with

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[44] Philip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalm 24", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 39 No. 1 (2014): 35, 39. Sumpter uses the alternative psalmic numbering system.

[45] Ps. 23:4, Matt. 5:8 (Latin Vulgate)

[46] *Cleanness* ll. 27-8.

[47] *Patience* ll. 23-4.

the state of cleanness, which here indicates innocence, since the 'clene and lyght' heart is a property specifically of those who 'did no harm.' The use of 'hathel' in *Cleanness* corresponds with the phrase 'harmles hathel' in *Pearl*, suggesting that the poet has a specific vocabulary associated both with the beatific vision and the state of cleanness, and that in the context of his *oeuvre* this passage, though ostensibly applied both to the innocent and the righteous, truly belongs to the innocent.

Pearl returns to Ps. 23:4 in the next stanza when describing the righteous man, 'That takes not her lyf in vayne, Ne glaveres her nieghbor wyth no gyle.' Her vacillation between separate books and chapters of the Bible is another example of how her impenetrable discourse incorporates breaches, distances, even 'gyle' - although her different sources back each other up, the fact that she does not stick to a single passage gives her argument a somewhat selective tone. The Psalter is perhaps the book of the Bible with which a lay reader might be expected to have the greatest familiarity - fudging the sense of it by combining it with Matthew 5:8 may be a calculated attempt to discomfit the reader.

§6.4 'Ther schal hys step stable stylle'

'Stable' here is a verb – meaning 'to render steadfast,' 'to ordain permanently'[48] – but use of its adjectival form – meaning secure, stationary, not liable to change – has been recorded from the thirteenth century.[49] The adjective 'stylle,' meanwhile, has a homophone in the verb 'stille' - to make or become still.[50] While grammatically this phrase is not quite subject to the syntactic ambiguity described by Morton Danner as a feature of *Pearl*,[51] a shadow sense is implied of something like 'his stationary step shall become still there', suggesting paradoxically but accurately that the 'harmles hathel' has always stepped, and stopped, in the holy place, with neither action nor jeopardy.

The self-confirming double meanings of this line are examples of the same kind of paronomastic tautology seen in the poet's play

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[48] "† stable, v.1". OED Online (accessed August 02, 2014).

[49] "stable, adj.". OED Online (accessed August 02, 2014).

[50] still, v.1". OED Online (accessed August 02, 2014).

[51] Morton Danner, "A Grammatical Perspective on Word-Play in Pearl" *The Chaucer Review* 22 No.4 (1988).

on the word 'ryght' (see §2.3). Overdetermination and instability of meaning are suggested at the same time. This use of language reflects the way that Pearl conveys an intractable message which she simultaneously renders questionable and confusing, denying her audience the security that is vouchsafed to the innocent.

§7.   The ryghtwys man also sertayn
      Aproche he schal that proper pyle,
      That takes not her lyf in vayne,
      Ne glaveres her nieghbor wyth no gyle. [685-88]

§7.1 'Aproche'
      Kind words butter no parsnips.

§8.   Of thys ryghtwys sas Salamon playn
      How Koyntise onoure con aquyle;
      By wayes ful streght he con hym strayn,
      And scheued hym the rengne of God awhyle,
      As quo says, "Lo, yon lovely yle!
      Thoy may hit wynne if thou be wyghte."
      Bot hardyly, wythoute peryle,
      The innosent is ay saf by ryghte. [689-96]

§8.1 'Koyntise … he'
      Other possible emendations of the manuscript's 'How oure con aquyle' include 'How kyntly on[o]re con aquyle'; 'How kyntly oure [kyng him] con aquyle'; 'How kyntly oure [Koyntise hym] con aquyle'; 'Hym Koyntise oure con aquyle.'[52] To favour a reading that names 'Koyntise' (Wisdom) seems appropriate since ll. 689-92 paraphrase Wisdom 10:10: 'She conducted the just [righteous man], when he fled from his brother's wrath, through the right ways, and shewed him the kingdom of God, and gave him the knowledge of the holy things ...'[53] With or without a direct mention, the figure of Wisdom would be evoked here, just as the personified Reason is alluded to in l. 665, whether or not 'resoun' is taken primarily to signify an abstract concept.

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[52] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1,* 47.
[53] Wisdom 10:10 (Douay Rheims Version).

As Andrew and Waldon point out, it is not necessary, when favouring the 'Koyntise' reading, to emend 'he' to 'ho' in order to restore Wisdom to the feminine identity she takes on in the Book of Wisdom, since the change of sex 'facilitates the "common medieval identification" of Wisdom with Christ.'[54] 'Quoyntise' is also used as a synonym for Christ in *Patience* l. 39.[55]

There is cause to connect Wisdom not only with Christ, the ultimate revelation-figure, but also with Reason. Wisdom is 'the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of his goodness';[56] Reason is also made in God's likeness. Wisdom bestows

> true knowledge of the things that are: to know the disposition of the whole world, and the virtues of the elements; The beginning, and ending, and midst of the times, the alterations of their courses, and the changes of seasons; 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.[57]

Wisdom shares Reason's lordship, her knowledge of nature, her synchronic perspective on time, and her mission of guiding humanity (see §2.2). Although there is no obvious allusion to the Book of Wisdom in de Meun's description of Reason, the resemblance of Reason to Wisdom may well have occurred to the Pearl poet.

Wisdom, however, goes beyond Reason in having a stake in salvation. She is sent 'out of thy [God's] holy heaven … that she may be with me [Solomon], and may labour with me, that I may know what is acceptable with thee.'[58] Pearl introduces Wisdom as a figure who shows the righteous man heaven, and advises him on getting there: 'thou may hit winne if thou be wyghte.' Wisdom is like

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[54] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition, Volume 1,* 258.
[55] Anderson, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience,* 298.
[56]Wisdom 7:26 (Douay Rheims Version).
[57] Wisdom 7:17-22 (DRV).
[58] Wisdom 9:10 (DRV)

Reason, with the addition of faith and hope. Wisdom is also a tropological representation of Christ.

§8.2 'thys ryghtwys'

The allusion to Wisdom 10:10 is also interesting in terms of its thematic connection to Psalm 23. The 'righteous man' in Wisdom 10:10 is Jacob, who was licensed by God to inherit his brother Esau's birthright - it is from Esau that Jacob is fleeing when Wisdom comes to show him 'the rengne of God.' Meanwhile, Psalm 23 refers to *faciem Dei Jacob* (the face of the God of Jacob).[59] This link in subject matter suggests a coherence underlying Pearl's appeal to these different scriptural passages, which in turn might appear to reflect some hinted consistency between Reason and Wisdom.

One significant thing about the God of Jacob is that he does not necessarily play by the rules, according to earthly standards. Although Jacob was the second-born of twins, his mother Rebekah was told 'two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be divided out of thy womb, and one people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.'[60] While it to some extent challenges notions of earthly hierarchy and order, the story of Jacob ultimately demonstrates God's favouritism, and his unpredictability. The God of Jacob is the God of the chosen, and their inexplicable rights.

Another connection between Psalms and the Book of Wisdom is that the latter was supposed to be written by Solomon, the son of David, from whose ancestral line Jesus came.

§8.3 'As'

Wisdom, already an allegorical figure, now incorporates another imagined persona through this simile. The glimpsed 'lovely yle' ('distant province')[61] is in a state of mirage-like uncertainty conveyed by 'may'; that this provisional utopia is only a figure of speech puts the possibility of reaching 'the rengne of God' at an even further distance from reality. The movement towards revelation in this fitt is still incomplete.

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[59] Ps 23:6 (LV).
[60] Gen. 25:3 (DRV)
[61] Charles G. Osgood, *The Pearl* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1906) 72.

§9.   Anende ryghtwys men yet sas a gome,
       David in Sauter, if ever ye sey hit:
       "Lorde, thy servaunt draw never to dome,
       For non lyvyande to the is justyfyet." [697-700]

§9.1 'yet says a gome'

Even allowing for the demands of form, it is jarring to have David introduced here as if for the first time, since parts of the Psalter have already been discussed in this fitt. Pearl's monologue is increasingly well-populated with spiritual guides, to the extent that David is tripled: posing a question, answering himself, and popping up again as 'a gome.' That multiple figures are made out of one source reflects Pearl's tactic of summoning many allegorical and scriptural authorities - Solomon, David, Reason, Wisdom, Christ - in order to build an argument which is all hers. Her presence represents the implacable morality behind an argument which, for all its modulations, is essentially unaltering: 'the innocent is ay saf by ryght'.

Behind Pearl, of course, is the poet, whose deployment of scriptural figures adds to the visionary authority of *Pearl*, while also tactfully highlighting the difference in status between poetry and scripture, potentially inserting another breach, another spiritual obstacle, between the reader and revelation.

§9.2 'if ever ye sey hit'

This is another slightly odd intrusion, which must read as either naive, patronising or sarcastic. It might be taken as read that the jeweler is familiar with the Psalter, ownership of which was relatively common among the laity by the fourteenth century,[62] although his familiarity with the Bible and Christian doctrine varies significantly over the course of the poem. I would argue that the most stubborn spiritual problem faced by the jeweler is not ignorance but doubt; the dream scenario allows him to confront the faultlines in his faith by encountering scripture as if for the first time.

§10.   Forthy to corte quen thou schal com,
       There alle oure causes schal be tryed,

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[62] Claire Donovan, *The de Brailles Hours* (London: The British Library, 1991), 26.

Alegge the ryght, thou may be innome
By thys ilke spech I have asspyed -- [701-4]

§10.1 'to corte'

The image of the court case, and the legal language used in this stanza - 'corte', 'causes', 'tryed', 'alegge', 'innome'[63] - reify the idea of judgement, which has been contemplated at a distance throughout the fitt. This is, theologically and dramatically, the fitt's climactic passage, referencing both doomsday and the crucifixion, and bridging the breach between the innocent and the guilty.

§10.2 'Alegge the ryght, thou may be innome'

This line has been interpreted in several ways. To Gollancz the sense is 'Renounce your claim, [and] you may be received...', meaning that if the defendant renounces his claim to righteousness, accepting David's statement, taken from Ps. 142:2, that 'no man living shall be justified' in God's sight, then he may be received into grace.

To Osgood, the meaning is 'Claim your privilege, [and] you may be received...', suggesting that the defendant should use David's words ('this ilke spech') as evidence in his favour, and that by proving he could not have lived guiltlessly, he may establish that he should be spared condemnation. According to this reading the guilty, like the innocent, have rights.

Everett and Hurnard have made a convincing case that 'alegge' is in the conditional subjunctive rather than the imperative, and that 'innome' is a legalistic term meaning cornered, trapped or 'refuted in argument.'[64] Their rendering of the line is, '[If] you claim to be righteous, you may be trapped,' in light of the guilt testified to by David.

Everett and Hunard's reading is the most consistent with Pearl's argument throughout the passage, and with her pointed grammatical provisionality: if 'alegge' is in the subjunctive, it adds another layer of hypotheticalism to what is already a conditional statement ('thou may be innome'). It also seems more characteristic of her didactic approach to warn the jeweler of a potential pitfall than to tell him what he should do.

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[63]D. Everett; Naomi D. Hurnard, "Legal Phraseology in a Passage in Pearl" *Medium Aevum* 16 (1947): 13.

[64] Everett and Hurnard, "Legal Phraseology", 13.

Osgood's rendering is interesting in that the defendant uses 'skylle' to plead his case. This is in accordance with H.L. Spencer's politicised reading of *Pearl* as a poem which reflects a king's obligations to his subjects.[65] To continue with a more theologically oriented reading, the idea of putting forward one's imperfection in one's own defense is not a simple matter of legal sophistry: trusting God to play fair, and to offer everyone the chance of salvation, can only be a matter of faith.

§11. Bot he on rode that blody dyed,
         Delfully thurgh hondes thryght,
         Gyve the to passe, when thou arte tryed,
         By innosens and not by ryghte. [705-8]

§11.1 'Bot'

This word is instrumental in Everett and Hurnard's argument against Osgood's interpretation, since if there is any possibility that the defendant might plead his 'privilege' successfully, then this would contradict the stanza's closing declaration that souls are saved by Christ's innocence, 'and not by ryght.'

To split hairs briefly, an apparently inappropriate 'but' would not be unprecedented in this fitt (see §1.4). In the first stanza, Pearl uses the conjunction to force a link between parallel cases. If we accept Osgood's reading, ll. 703-08 would read with the following sense: if you claim your privilege, you may be received, *but* may Christ let you pass through his innocence and not by your right. The effect of the sub-clause would be to simultaneously allow the possible effectiveness of the defendant's claim and to dismiss it on the grounds that such claims ultimately depend on Christ's intervention. To allow reason to reach the theologically correct conclusion, but with religious mysticism still playing the decisive part, would be consistent with Pearl's methods in this fitt.

I have expounded this rather unwieldy reading in order to illustrate the syntactic status of innocence in this fitt as something which is both essential and superfluous. It is Pearl's salient point, and explains how the sinner may be saved, but is also external to any reasoning or debate about the moral status of the living.

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[65] Spencer, "God's Law and Man's Law", 321.

§11.2 'Gyve'

The mood of the stanza's closing statement remains subjunctive. Osgood, Everett and Hurnard take it to express the volitional 'may Christ let you pass'; Anderson interprets it as yet another provisional statement: 'Christ should allow you to go free...'[66]

§11.3 'thurgh hondes thryght'

This very specific and isolated image of Christ's torture brings the reader into an encounter with the physicality of the crucifixion that replicates the methods of affective piety, a devotional practice that involved contemplating, often in great detail, the torments of Christ on the cross.[67] This type of contemplation encouraged a visceral connection between worshippers and Christ; at this moment in the poem the connection between innocence and guilt, effected by the crucifixion, is central.

The phrase summons two words already used in this fitt: 'hondelynges' (with [his] hands), l. 681, and 'thryght' (thrust) l. 670 (see §3.1). The former refers to the hands of the harmless, the latter is applied to the movement through which the guilty might arrive at grace. Here these words are used again in order to conflate the movement through which the guilty are saved, with the violent motion with which Christ's harmless hands were pierced by nails. This image invests the formerly hapless sinner with responsibility for a truly harmful action (this is also where the harmless become the harmed - see §2.4), and summons the central Christian paradox that humanity is saved by its own violence. At this point the privilege of the innocent becomes the privilege of the guilty. This reconciliation of the two strands of Pearl's argument is a moment of revelation - revelation in the form of Christ as God incarnate - which supersedes concepts both of justice and privilege.

§12. Ryghtwysly quo con rede,
      He loke on bok and be awayed
      How Jesus hym welke in arethede,

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[66] Anderson, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience*, 27.
[67] Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Mary at the Cross, East and West: Maternal Compassion and Affective Piety in the earliest L*ife of the Virgin a*nd the High Middle Ages" *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62, No. 2 (2011), 571.

And burnes her barnes unto hym brayde. [709-12]

§12.1 'Ryghtwysly quo con rede'

In his determination to make *Pearl* adhere to iambic tetrameter, Gollancz identifies this line's slightly awkward metre:[//] Rýght / wsyslý // quó / con réde.[68] The initial caesura, necessary even if one has a more flexible understanding of the poem's metre, highlights a change of tone at this point in the fitt, moving from the dramatic climax of judgement and sacrifice to a simpler biblical narrative (see §12.3).

As in stanzas three and four, the catch-word 'ryght' is adapted into 'ryghtwys,' though the concept of righteousness was torn apart in the preceding stanza. The weak caesura that Gollancz locates between 'ryght' and 'wys,' dividing the word into its constituent parts, may reflect this.

The '-wys' part of 'ryghtwys' may be derived either from the adjective 'wise', or the noun signifying 'a manner... of doing.'[69] Here Pearl encourages her audience not just to read righteously, as part of religious observance, but to read in the right way, taking the correct lesson from the text, and to read wisely, with an understanding of the 'rengne of god' (which Wisdom revealed), and how it belongs to the innocent.

§12.2 'he loke on bok'

This appeal to the biblical source, and exhortation to consult it, is evidently a rhetorical gesture since Pearl's account draws from Matt. 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16, as well as from Luke 18:15-17, upon which it is primarily based.[70] Having freely paraphrased several passages of the Bible, Pearl's instruction here that we 'look at the book' ourselves emphasises her use of this story as the final instance of supernatural illumination on which her argument is founded.

§12.3 'welke ...brayde'

The change into the past tense gives this narrative a sense of historical authority. Notably the other scriptural voices in this fitt,

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[68] Israel Gollancz, ed. and trans. *Pearl* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1891), 38.

[69] "righteous, adj., n., adv., and int.". OED Online. (accessed July 30, 2014).

[70] Anderson, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience,* 286.

David and Solomon, spoke in the present tense: 'sas Salamon playn', 'yet says a gome.' Christ's cameo is established as prior to the debate conducted by Pearl; his actions and words (which, as might be expected of the *logos*, reinforce each other) are the centre and source of Pearl's argument.

§13. For happe and hele that fro hym yede
         To touch her chylder thay fayr hym prayed.
         His dessypeles wyth blame let hem bede,
         And wyth her resounes ful fele restayed. [713-16]

§13.1 'resounes'
         The concept of reason recurs here as something which must fall short of what is divinely right.

§14. Jesus thenne hem swetely sayde:
         "Do way, let chylder unto me tyght;
         To suche is hevenryche arayed."
         The innocent is ay saf by ryght. [717-20]

§14.1 'Jesus … sayde'
         Christ asserts that heaven is made for the innocent, showing innocence to be at the centre of God's scheme for humanity - to question their place is to question heaven itself.
         In the previous stanza, the 'rights' of the guilty were ultimately dismissed. Here all of the meanings of 'ryght' - safety, justice, privilege - are combined, and made synonymous with innocence. Significantly, the poem's only instance of broken concatenation occurs between fitts XII and XIII. While various numerological readings and codicological emendations have been put forward, I would suggest that 'Jesus', the first word of the following stanza, is in conceptual concatenation with 'ryght.'
         In following Pearl's ascending hierarchy of guides, from Reason to Christ - from reason to right - it should be remembered that this poem is not one that ever grants total resolution. The testament of Christ gives us a brush with Dionysian enlightenment, but his words are paraphrased, and the final line brings us back to Pearl as the sole speaker in this fitt. She remains in place as the poem's reason-figure, standing between the jeweler and God, as a

help and an impediment. The jeweler is kept in the realm of uncertainty.

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