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The meaning of *Caritas* in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*

Cubie, Genevieve McMackin, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1987

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THE MEANING OF CARITAS IN JOHN GOWER'S

CONFESSIO AMANTIS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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INTRODUCTION

In one of the last sections of his *Mirour de l'Ommme* Gower seeks for the source of the malice for which the world has been blamed and concludes that man alone is guilty. He is guilty because he has failed to render true obedience to God; therefore, "he will have to go the highway to hell." However, because he has been endowed with reason and free will, man can choose to obey, but he must first make amends, and he must begin by blaming only himself for the evil condition of his world. Each person, Gower says, must be willing to correct "one single man"—himself; "for it would never be necessary to go farther than to begin with oneself" (ll. 27277f). So saying, Gower begins with himself. "In olden days," he says, "I gave myself freely to wantonness and vain joy. . . . But now . . . I will change all that. . . . I will accuse my conscience, and I will sing a different song . . . . [And] thou, who art willing to listen to me, listen while I sing softly, for it is a song of the heart" (ll. 27337f).

At the close of the Prologue to the *Confessio Amantis*, which has many affinities with the *Mirour*, Gower yearns for the healing of England and longs for "An other such as Arion," whose harp was so finely tuned and whose song was of such "good mesure" that he healed the hierarchy

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The song that Gower sings in the \textit{Mirour de l'Ommme} is a lengthy paean of praise to his "Lady," the Virgin, who alone can heal his afflicted soul and cure the malady of his heart (ll. 2742ff). The song of the \textit{Confessio Amantis} is a song of Christian love that tells every man (Amans) how to attain the Lady who knows how to apply the healing salve for sin. The world is composed of men like Amans, and if each will listen to the song and obey the instructions, all of society can be healed. As man is the cause of evil, just so he can be the cause of good. Utopia is not impossible.
CHAPTER I
THE NEED FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM CARITAS

As its title suggests, love is the chief subject of John Gower's Confessio Amantis. But what kind of love Gower is presenting is a matter of dispute among those writers who have attempted to identify it. Moreover, the very meaning of the term love, or caritas, has been defined in various ways, and this adds to the difficulty of discovering Gower's intention.

Actually, Gower scholars rarely analyze the idea of love in the Confessio Amantis; they discuss more frequently such subjects as Gower's technique, sources, relationship to Chaucer, political philosophy, and social criticism. A few critics who do inquire into the nature of love in the poem are William G. Dodd, C. S. Lewis, John Fisher, and Russell Peck. Dodd some time ago concluded that Gower's poem is fully within the tradition of courtly love.¹ Lewis says that courtly love is the framework for the Confessio Amantis, and that although the story itself is that of an old man's unsuccessful love for a young girl, the poem includes serious moralizing, which Gower artistically manages.² Fisher


denies the courtly love theory altogether and states that the real context of the poem is "Empedoclean love."³ According to Peck, "common profit," a form of social love, is the key to Gower's moral philosophy.⁴ Other critics, notably H. A. Kelly,⁵ argue that the love championed in the Confessio is marital love. Four kinds of love, then, have been alleged to be dominant in the Confessio Amantis: courtly, Empedoclean, social, and marital.

Dodd, in 1913, was one of the first to interpret the Confessio Amantis as a courtly love poem.⁶ Besides identifying the typical courtly love trappings, which he has denoted in the first section of his book, he elaborates on those aspects of courtly love which he perceives as peculiar to the poem. He unduly construes Gower's representation of the love deity as untrustworthy and harsh. According to Dodd, Venus is unfavorable to lovers, unjust, neglectful, a goddess of carnal passion; he insists that "it is the deceitfulness of love that Gower remarks upon more than any other quality."⁷ More importantly, Dodd alleges that Gower


⁶Dodd also early made the association of the Confessio with such Christian confessional manuals as Friar Lorens's La Somme des Vices et Vertues, The Pricke of Conscience, Manuel des Peches, Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale," and Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Handlynge Synne. "What these manuals, with their stories, were to the Christian," he writes, "the Confessio Amantis would have been to priests of Love, if any such priests had really existed" (Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, p. 45).

⁷Dodd, pp. 51-3.
presents the attributes of the god or goddess of love in abstract fashion. In giving utterance to the "conventional" ideas regarding the love deity, Dodd explains, Gower "does not confine himself to personification"; rather, every expression of control is a manifestation of Venus or Cupid. Thus Dodd is able to see courtly love concepts throughout the Confessio Amantis. He asserts, for example, that "the idea of the absolute dominion of love over the lives of men and women occurs on almost every page," and illustrates this by quoting lines 389-91 of Book 3: "And thogh a man be resonable, / Yit after kinde he is menable / To love, wher he wole or non."

Dodd uses three distinguishing terms for courtly love poems: ecclesiastical, feudal, and classical. He identifies as ecclesiastical those works in which "the religion of the deity in question reflects some phase of the Christian religion or of the worship of the medieval Church." He uses the term feudal "when the deity exercises the powers of a feudal lord whom the lover serves in the capacity of a vassal or subject," and the term classical for "those cases in which the deity appears with the characteristics given him in the classical literature, but without any of the attributes peculiar to either the feudal or the ecclesiastical conception." Dodd concedes that "the prevailing idea" of the Confessio Amantis is ecclesiastical, but he does not envision

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8 Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, pp. 53-4.
9 Dodd, p. 54.
10 Dodd, p. 20.
11 For Dodd, the metaphor confusingly shifts back and forth between the ecclesiastical and the feudal. Dodd, pp. 46-7.
this as a restriction on its courtly love theme; he merely decides to
dismiss, according to Gerald Kinneavy,

all the offenses which the Confessor judges by the Christian
standard (except, of course, the seven principal sins them­
selves). Thus we exclude Hate, Contek, Homicide, Stealth,
Sacrilege, Love-Drunkenness, Love-Delicacy, Unchastity, and
Incest. Omitting these absurdities we find that the Confes­
sor's counsels, if followed, would result as follows: the
lover would be humble, charitable, patient, courageous, and
generous.12

Unfortunately, as Kinneavy points out, "Dodd would have us disregard an
alarming number of items."13 To omit all the items listed above would
not only result in slighting a large part of the poem but throw into
question Gower's careful revisions carried out, according to Derek Pear­
sall, "to establish his reputation as a serious writer, and to commit
himself to posterity as a poet worthy to stand beside his classical
forebears."14

C. S. Lewis also believes that courtly love is the prevailing love
in the Confessio, but unlike Dodd, he distinguishes three major features
in the poem: the tales, the didactic passages, and the love allegory
"in which all the rest are set."15 Although the love allegory is the
framework of the poem, Lewis does not depreciate the importance of the

12Gerald Kinneavy, "Gower's Confessio Amantis and the Penitentials,"
The Chaucer Review, 19 (1984), 158.
13Kinneavy, p. 158.
14Derek Pearsall, "The Gower Tradition," in Gower's Confessio Aman­
tis: Responses and Reassessments, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S.
15Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p. 211.
allegory itself. In fact, he protests against the view "which treats
Gower's allegory as nothing more than the thread on which his stories
are strung. Gower comes before us as a poet of courtly love," Lewis
continues, "and I think he makes good his claim."\textsuperscript{16} He does so, Lewis
says, in typical fashion. The setting of the poem is conventional.
The weeping lover on the usual May morning, goes wandering in the wood
where he meets Venus and her priest Genius.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, the four iden-
tifying marks of courtly love––humility, courtesy, adultery, and the
religion of love\textsuperscript{18}––are all present. The lover confesses with naivete
(a form of humility) and evidences courteous regard for his lady. His
adultery, perhaps, falls short of the true mark of the courtly lover's,
but, as Lewis says, "he knows that he does not offer his mistress a
virgin heart, or body."\textsuperscript{19} The presence of the god and goddess of love,
the priest, and the confessional confirm the poem as qua religious. In
addition, the conclusion of the poem is in line with the courtly love
tradition, according to Lewis. Gower's courtly lover is not prosperous
in his suit. In fact, Lewis maintains, the primary subject of the poem
is "the death of love. . . . The Confessio Amantis, written by an old
poet, in failing health, appropriately tells the story of an old man's
unsuccessful love for a young girl."\textsuperscript{20} This failure, however, in

\textsuperscript{16}Lewis, \textit{The Allegory of Love}, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{17}Lewis, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{18}Lewis, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{19}Lewis, pp. 215-16.
\textsuperscript{20}Lewis, p. 217.
Lewis's analysis of courtly love, is proper, for "the very nature of courtly love demanded that the perfect love poem should end with a re­cantation. The claims of the objective moral law . . . must, in the end, be faced. Hence the last Book of Andreas, and the conclusion of Troilus and Cryseide."21

John Fisher contends that the "context" of the Confessio Amantis "is not courtly love, but Empedoclean love as a social cement."22 A footnote to this statement helps clarify what he means when he calls Gower's love Empedoclean: "C. S. Lewis [in] The Allegory of Love . . . remarks that the Middle Ages knew Empedocles. But Gower, like Chaucer, no doubt found a more immediate source for this concept of universal love in Boethius, Consolation, Book II, met. viii."23 The poem is as follows:

The world in constant change
Maintains a harmony,
And elements keep peace
Whose nature is to clash.
The sun in car of gold
Draws forth the rosy day,
And evening brings the night
When Luna holds her sway.
The tides in limits fixed
Confine the greedy sea;
No waves shall overflow
The rolling field and lea.
And all this chain of things
In earth and sea and sky
One ruler holds in hand:
If Love relaxed the reins

23Fisher, p. 359, n. 93.
All things that now keep peace
Would wage continual war
The fabric to destroy
Which unity has formed
With motions beautiful.
Love, too, holds peoples joined
By sacred bond of treaty,
And weaves the holy knot
Of marriage's pure love.
Love promulgates the laws
For friendship's faithful bond.
O happy race of men
If Love who rules the sky
Could rule your hearts as well! 24

Lewis makes the statement that "Gower traces the condition of the world to the fact that Division has ousted Love." 25 To support this he refers to Empedocles's concept of Love and Strife, which was known to the Middle Ages via Aristotle, but neither he nor Fisher explains Empedocles's theory of the nature of the universe or how it is applicable to Gower's views as expressed in the Confessio Amantis.

Helle Lambridis, who has made a study of this ancient Greek philosopher's ideas, focuses on the two forces of Love and Hate. His explanation may help to throw light on Fisher's concept of Gower's understanding of love:

Empedocles held that the forces of Love and Hate alternate in predominating over the world. The tendency of the former was to unite, to make one out of many; and of the latter, to disperse things in all directions, without order or design. Hatred does not simply separate the world into its four constituent elements, which would result in an ordered stratification of the elements, each joining with its own, and leading to


complete immobility. Instead, Hatred throws them about without any order, producing in the process monstrous creatures unable to survive. These monstrous creations are slowly eliminated as Amity gains the upper hand at the "appointed time." Appointed by whom, or what? Empedocles seems to believe in an ineluctable, eternal decree of Fate or Necessity, in a supreme Law that is above the elements, above the forces, above the gods. . . .

Empedocles posits a triad of Hate-Law-Love, which could be sketched in the following manner:

```
  Law
 /  \
/    |
Hate  Love
```

Under the influence of Law, Hate and Love are constantly moving toward either the center of the universe or toward its periphery. In due time one is completely in the center while the other is completely on the periphery, and then either Love or Hate is the prominent force and determines "the kind, form, and variety of all creatures." But also in due time the positions are reversed and the opposite power holds sway. When neither are at the center, Hate or Love is either weaker or stronger according to its relation to the focal point.

When Hate is in control, all nature longs for the dominance of Love, and, at the appointed time, Law will eliminate the chaos and disorder that Hate has brought about by bringing into eminence the force of Love. Under the predominance of Love all elements are mingled evenly.

26 Helle Lambridis, Empedocles, Studies in the Humanities, No. 15 (University, Ala.: The Univ. of Alabama Press, 1976), p. 77.

27 Lambridis, pp. 51-2.
and order returns, or, as Denis O'Brien says, "When Love has made the
elements into one they are at rest."\(^{28}\)

Fisher sees a similar pattern in Gower's poem--Sin-Law-Love--which
operates not on the cosmic plane as in Empedocles's thought, but on that
of an earthly commonwealth.\(^{29}\) Sin or hatred has brought division and
chaos to society with, though Fisher does not make the analogy, such
monstrous results as the Peasants's Revolt or the division of the papacy.
Love is the only force that can bring order and harmony back to the
realm, but Love can take effect only through the power of the civil law
as embodied in the God-appointed ruler. The result of the return of
Love to Gower's world would be common profit (Empedocles's rest), for
Gower envisions, as Fisher says, "an interdependence of the king, the
legal system, and a peaceful nation."\(^{30}\) As in Boethius, then, so in
Gower: one ruler holds in his hand "all this chain of things"; he (the
king for Gower, Love as a personification for Boethius) "holds peoples
joined / By sacred bond of treaty."\(^{31}\) Or, as Gower says in the Confes-
sio Amantis:

\begin{verbatim}
Ther is a stat, as ye schul hiere,
Above alle othre on erthe hiere,
Which hath the lond in his balance:
So stant it al in his power
Or forto spille or forto save. (8.3055-63)
\end{verbatim}

\(^{28}\) Denis O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle: A Reconstruction from the
\(^{30}\) Fisher, p. 201.
Russell Peck's *Kingship and Common Profit* is unusual among the rather cursory critical works on the *Confessio Amantis* in that Peck moves steadily through the poem, analyzing an impressive number of stories in his attempt to prove Gower's conscious theme that true governance of the self and of the political kingdom results in common profit. Peck gives considerable attention to the individual (Amans), but his primary interest is on the two-pronged theme of political kingship and common profit. He believes that though the *Confessio* treats "'somewhat of lust, somewhat of lore,'" Gower's poem always has "an eye toward the public welfare." Peck declares the "basic plot" of the *Confessio Amantis* to be "the movement from confinement and singular profit to a recognition of personal kingship and recovery of domain." He views this plot as a "psychological chronicle of the wanderings of Amans, who is a figure for the wayward will." Genius brings Amans to a proper understanding of charity, which Peck defines as "right order." This charity, duly followed, will bring a man into alignment with his own personal kingdom and result in an ordered relationship with his fellow man. This is true not only for the individual but, on a more elevated plane, for the king and the commonwealth as well. This "ordered relationship" results in "common profit," Peck's key term. In Peck's usage, "common profit" becomes synonymous with "community profit," and as one reads Peck's book the

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33 Peck, p. 23.

34 Peck, p. xvii.

cumulative effect is that the love of the Confessio is unselfish and even at times self-sacrificing as its propagators unstintingly strive for political and social unity. True concern for the other and especially for the community as a whole over against the selfish concern of singular profit is Peck's keynote of love.

H. A. Kelly examines the Confessio Amantis in light of the ideas regarding marriage which, for the Middle Ages, he says, "was considered the most desirable conclusion to serious love." He supports his view of the love proposed in the Confessio with several arguments. First, Gower was solidly influenced by the "later" or "middle" Ovid, who endorsed marriage and commended it in the Herodes and in some of the stories of the Metamorphoses. Of the 147 exempla in the Confessio Amantis, 73 deal with love or the lack of it, and Ovid is the source for 29 of these stories. Second, "fidelity in marriage is always commended over adultery throughout the poem by Genius and John Gower . . . ." Third, Gower sees the need for the procreation of children for the good of the commonwealth. Fourth, at the end of the Confessio Amantis special recognition is given to "the four great wives, Penelope, Lucretia, Alcestis, and Alcyone." Fifth, the law of nature requires that there be "a one-to-one rule of human love," and this is stated in terms of marriage. Sixth, Gower correctly distinguishes between the times when the natural law and the Church's positive law are both equal to the moral law and when they are not. Seventh, marriage is in accord with reason. Eighth,

36 Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer, p. 333.
37 Kelly, pp. 95-152.
Amans himself desires to marry his lady; his love is "honeste." Ninth, a proper love between man and woman "is not profitless on earth"; it can, in fact, be "assimilated to the supernatural love of charity . . . ."

To support all of these arguments, Kelly refers to scattered stories that involve marriage or to remarks made by Genius on the subject. He anticipates certain problems that may arise from his claims and answers most of them by pleading "the nature of the exemplary technique"; an exemplum "is normally told to illustrate one lesson alone, without much worry about whether it contradicts earlier or subsequent lessons."

Or, when Gower fails to "specify the nature of the love affairs that Genius retails" (whether it is an adulterous affair or not, for example), "one could say . . . that it prevents the reader from being distracted from the specific moral being urged at the moment." Or, in cases where Gower could have freed from blame a faulty love affair (for instance, in the story of the king's steward who prostitutes his wife), Gower does not see the necessity of such exoneration, "since he clearly and directly sets forth his views on marriage elsewhere in the poem." ^38

At the conclusion, however, Amans is advised to give up human love altogether, which would include marriage, because his present love "is sinful and therefore profitless" and "such love will eventually fail." ^39 Genius offers Amans a severe alternative: he is to choose whether he will live or die. This choice, however, according to Kelly, can be explained away as "rhetorical exaggeration in this kind of spiritual

^38 Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer, pp. 131, 133, 135.
^39 Kelly, p. 150.
exhortation," for "we know . . . that if the passion of love can be re-
strained, the love can merit heaven."40 Yet the outcome is simply that
John Gower is too old; "he does not have what it takes."41 Venus's ad-
vice is that "he act his age," remain chaste, and "confine himself to the
study of moral virtue."42 Kelly says that even Gower, in his own per-
son, admits that any earthly love is such "that no one can fully delight
in it . . . for it is either lacking in some way or another, or it goes
to excess."43 Nevertheless, Kelly concludes, in spite of all, the Conf-
fessio Amantis has marked out "a via media of honest love . . . ."44

Courtly, Empedoclean, social, and marital--these are the most com-
mon interpretations of the love that is central in the Confessio Amantis,
with Dodd and Lewis, Fisher, Peck, and Kelly as spokesmen for these views
respectively. But Dodd refuses to give credence to a large segment of
the Confessio. Moreover, his identification of the personified Venus
and Cupid with the many abstract representations of the dominance of
love over men's lives tends to confuse the definition of love and does
not take into consideration Gower's own usage of such terms as division
and sin. Lewis fits the poem to a predetermined definition of courtly
love. In addition, he devotes so much time to Gower's artistic manage-
ment that thorough proof for his argument is neglected. What Fisher

40 Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer, p. 151.
41 Kelly, p. 153.
42 Kelly, pp. 155, 156, 157.
43 Kelly, p. 159.
44 Kelly, p. 160.
means by the term "Empedoclean" remains ambiguous since it is never defined outright. He does discern two patterns that move through Gower's three major works, and his description of them could resemble Empedocles's theory of Love and Hate: ". . . the movement from sin through justice to love and the movement from individual sin and social chaos to individual virtue and social order . . . ." The latter pattern is the one that asserts itself in the *Confessio Amantis*, he says.45 His discussion of the poem, however, concentrates on the moralistic and political dimensions of kingship, and this leaves much of the poem unattended to.

Peck's arguments are, on the surface, persuasive, and his application of them to the poem unusually thorough. Nevertheless, his insistence on the political aspect forces him to lay heavy emphasis on "common profit" as the key to the poem. According to Rossell Hope Robbins, the term "common profit" is "a stock phrase, frequently found in manuals of devotion and in wills, for pro bono publico."46 If we look in the *Confessio Amantis* we find that the term "common profit" itself is rare, occurring perhaps less than a dozen and a half times and not always with the weight of significance that Peck ascribes to it. Although "singular profit" is indeed cupiditas, "common profit" in Peck's sense is not necessarily its contrary. In the *Confessio* a religious self-profit that stems from a desire for God is that which is opposed to singular profit,


which is a derivative of the cupidinous self. In short, the struggle in the *Confessio Amantis* is that between *cupiditas* and *caritas*, not between singular profit and common profit.

Kelly does not give broad coverage to the poem in his discussion of marital love in the *Confessio*. Also, he concludes that marriage finally is not recommended for Amans nor for most people "at the end of treatises of spiritual instruction, when one is to be left looking at the shortest way to heaven," because the path of "honest love" is too hard.\(^4^7\) In fact, he says, because of the "dangers and difficulties" of achieving this kind of love, "Gower chooses not to acknowledge even the possibility of its existence in his final counsel."\(^4^8\) Instead, he recommends that love which is "'withinne a mannes herte affermed / And stant of charite confermed'" because it "requires no repentance and entails no retribution."\(^4^9\) This is a rather disturbing conclusion, to say the least.

Whatever Gower intends by *love*, then, in the *Confessio Amantis* can be interpreted in a number of ways. Critics are not in agreement. The very terms of love and charity (or *caritas*), too, can assume a variety of nuances in the literature of the Middle Ages. Charity "is so broad a concept, amenable to so much variation, that it did not limit the medieval artist. But however broad, it is specifically Christian, is indeed the very core of Christian doctrine . . . ."\(^5^0\) "Neither Christian

\(^4^7\)Kelly, *Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer*, p. 159.

\(^4^8\)Kelly, p. 153.

\(^4^9\)Kelly, p. 159.

charity nor feudal love necessarily involved an emotional or passionate personal attachment. . . . Love could express a purely formal relationship, a political alliance, the deference of a vassal before his lord, the bond of all the monks in a monastery, including those who disliked each other. . . ."51 To the Middle Ages "love was a very practical remedy for social evils. . . . The commandments of Christ bade man love God with all his heart and soul and mind and his neighbor as himself. This love of man for man was the same thing as the friendship that Plato described in The Laws. . . ."52

The above observations reveal in part, at least, the problem of understanding how the terms "love" and "charity" are to be defined. Sometimes the word charity expresses the love of God (interpreted either as love for God or as God's love), but it can express as well the kind of social love that Christians should have for all mankind. In this latter context it can be limited further to mean giving alms or performing good deeds. The more general word, love, is broad enough to include charity with its various meanings as well as any form of delight, affection, desire, fellow feeling, benevolence, fondness, regard, etc. Gower himself uses the term in many different ways. He writes of love of paramours, honest love, wild love, God's love for the world, man's love for


God, natural love, incestuous and adulterous love, the love that is against reason, love that fails, love that never fails, etc. Critics who define caritas as love for God and one's neighbor generally proceed to define cupiditas as "love" for the world or one's self. So, cupiditas itself can fall under the general category of love.

Another problem arises when the term caritas is anglicized as charity. The word caritas conveys a theological meaning; that is, we nearly always tend to connect it with God or Christianity in some fashion and interpret it as the love of God or love for God. But the term charity generally points us in another direction, that is, toward charitable deeds or benevolence. And, indeed, the Middle English Dictionary bears this out. It rarely ever defines charity as love for God. When it does, it does not distinguish love for God from God's love. For example: "The supreme virtue of love or Charity according to Christian doctrine, comprising affection, devotion, benevolence, kindness, mercy, gratitude as between God and man or man and man." The reference given as an illustration of this usage is Confessio Amantis 2.3173, "Ayein Envie is Charite." A second definition, with three sub-headings, describes charity from the viewpoint of man's relationship to man only:

(a) Benevolence, beneficence; charity, extend hospitality; (b) an act of benevolence or charity, benefaction, kindness or charity, alms-giving; also, an act of devotion; do a generous thing, give alms, exercise charity; (c) a charitable gift, alms, also funds received by a religious house.

MED, pp. 168-69.
MED, pp. 168-69.
We can assume, then, from these definitions that the word charity is most often defined as some form of good deed.

One last problem regarding the understanding of the word love or caritas needs to be addressed. Some writers are aware that the idea of Christian love is derived from a variety of sources. Ruth Mohl observes that two remedies promulgated during the Middle Ages for the cure of social ills were a return to God and a renewal of love among the estates. She writes: "If the estates fall short in their divinely appointed duties, they not only disobey God, but they also fail all mankind. They evidence a lack of love--a very necessary element in human society."55 In her ensuing discussion she identifies three sources for this love: biblical, classical, and medieval (presumably Augustinian). She concludes that "with this three-fold authority behind it, the doctrine of love as a remedy for the defections of the medieval estates becomes a very important one."56 Although there are three very different sources for love, Mohl makes no distinction between them; she can, in fact, describe them as one and the same.

At the close of the Confessio Amantis Gower clearly embraces caritas, so clearly, even, that Macaulay entitles the final section "Farewell to Earthly Love." Scholars do not dispute Gower's declaration for heavenly love, but they tend to view it from different perspectives. For some it is merely the religious expression of a typical medieval palinode, similar to the narrator's closing commentary on Troilus and


56Mohl, p. 369.
Criseyde. For others it is the only path left open for a man too old for Venus's court. For still others it is a break from the kind of love expressed in the poem and a concession to cultural, and perhaps literary, expectations for serious literature; like the Prologue, it is out of step with the rest of the poem.

There are those few critics, however, who think that Gower treats love from a religious perspective throughout the poem, upholding caritas and opposing it to cupiditas. J. A. W. Bennett, for example, maintains that "Christian caritas [is] threaded through the whole system," and observes that

When priest turns to penitent and bids him

    Now scrif thee, Sone, in Godes pes
    And of thi love tell me plein
    If that thi gloire hath be so vein,

we are within a Christian confessional. And when later he cites scripture to his purpose it is not in parody:

    After the vertu moral eke
    To speke of love if I schal seke,
    Among the holi bokes wise
    I finde write in such a wise,
    Who loveth noght is hier as ded. (iv.2321)

That this is a conscious attempt to relate the doctrine of courteous love to Christian teaching is indicated by the marginal direction, which runs: Nota de amore caritatis. . . .

Gower, himself, asserts that nothing stands firm except the love of


58 Bennett, p. 111; underlining Bennett's.
God,\(^5\) and the final Latin marginal note of Book 8 states that ". . .

\[\text{omnis amoris delectatio extra caritatem nihil est. Qui autem manet in caritate, in deo manet} \]

(". . . the delight of all love outside of caritas is nothing. Who then abides in caritas abides in God"; 8.3110).

But to state that what informs the \textit{Confessio Amantis} is Christian love is not to define that love. What did \textit{caritas} mean for John Gower? How did he understand the term? How does he present it in the poem? Is there any significance in the courtly love convention that would make this schema expedient for his ideas?

In his study of the rise of the European love-lyric, Peter Dronke states that

\[\text{a wealth not merely of love-language, but of precisely that kind of love-language which is most consonant with amour courtois, had accumulated over the centuries in the mystical and theological tradition itself. . . . the more deeply religious the language, the closer it is to the language of courtoisie. The virtues acquired by the soul illuminated by divine grace are exactly those which the lover acquires when his soul is irradiated by his lady's grace: they are truly a courtly lover's virtues. . . .}\]

According to Janet Coleman, fourteenth century poetry was more "didactic, social and religious commentary . . . than . . . entertainment. It is significant," she continues,

that Middle English romances were themselves used as illustrations of moral and religious principles, unlike German romances,

\(^5\) See the last two lines of the Latin poem that introduces \textit{"Nebuchadnezzar's Dream"} (Prol. 583) in the \textit{Confessio Amantis}.

where one can observe certain concrete religious themes "in­
vading" a primarily courtly text. Thus, as the basis of lit­
erature broadened with the extension of the "middle class" and
its patronage, it appears that the newly literate were far
less interested in artificial conventions of love, found in
traditional older works, than in what concerned pious men of
commerce, eager to establish law and order, principles of mo­
rality, and peace.61

Gerald Kinneavy compares Gower's poem with two penitential books, Robert
Mannyng of Brunne's Handlyng Synne and John Myrc's Instructions for Par­
ish Priests. Kinneavy wishes to "demonstrate that the penitentials in­
fluenced Gower and did so in a massive way, and ... to suggest that the
confession technique serves as organizing principle and focuses the work
as an exposition by doctrine of an ordered and Christian world."62

So, by using some of the conventions of courtly love, Gower is as
much within a religious tradition as a secular one. Seen in this way,
Amans's love can be symbolic of either cupidinous desire for a cupidin­
ous object which must be rejected or the soul's search for God through
the channels of caritas. Thus the poem is a complex allegory in which
Gower sets side by side two desires--caritas and cupiditas--and demands
that a choice be made. His real intent is sermonic, but in order to
make such a design palatable, he has chosen to combine the ever-popular
courtly love tradition with the more staid and sober mandates of the
confessional. From one perspective, then, the lady is an earthly love
--cupiditas--that Amans must renounce in favor of a heavenly one.

61 Janet Coleman, Medieval Readers and Writers: 1350-1400 (New York:

Accordingly, the concluding lines of the poem (8.3138-72) constitute a palinode, and "courtly love" is revealed finally as, in Frances M. Leonard's words, "a straight and narrow road to hell."\(^{63}\) From another perspective Amans's love for the lady is the soul's love for God—caritas—and his desire to win her is "the soaring toward God, the inclination toward the End of man which is God possessed fully and eternally."\(^{64}\)

To identify the love of the *Confessio Amantis* as caritas is one thing; to define the term and actually apply that definition to the poem is yet another. Critics who defend caritas tend to use the term ambiguously, assuming, it seems, that construing Christian love is unnecessary. Bennett, for instance, though he believes that caritas runs throughout the poem, never clearly defines what he means by caritas nor refers to any stories that might throw light on his perception of the idea. When at the close of the poem Amans is revealed as too old for marriage, Genius tells him that he must "Tak love where it mai noght faile" (8.2086). This love, according to Bennett, is caritas. His conclusion is that in the last stages of life, when man no longer has dues to pay to "Kinde"..., he must put by amorous concerns and both seek and practice caritas... 'Honeste love' in wedlock, caritas in the commonwealth are wholly compatible ideals, and it is Gower's distinctive achievement to have harmonized them in a single poem...\(^{65}\)


\(^{65}\)Bennett, "Gower's 'Honeste Love,'" pp. 120-21.
D. W. Robertson, Jr. has selected from Saint Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* a statement about caritas versus cupiditas that is the ground for Augustine's definition of love:66

> I call "charity" the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbor for the sake of God; but "cupidity" is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbor, or any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God.67

When scholars refer to the caritas-cupiditas tension, they generally have the above dictum in mind. In fact, it is probably safe to say that the pervasive meaning of caritas for the Middle Ages, as far as modern scholarship is concerned, derives from Augustine's definition.

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67Augustine, p. 88.
When scholars approach the idea of Christian love via Augustine's theology, they generally do so by analyzing the caritas which they find in Augustine's works rather than looking behind the concept for its shaping force.¹ For example, the primary meaning of caritas for Augustine is love for God; it is "the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God . . . ."² "... charity moves towards God . . . ."; "... the definition of love implies desire for a good we want to possess . . . ."³ Yet the New Testament rarely speaks of love for God; its central concern is God's love for man and man's love for his neighbor.⁴ How, then, did Augustine come to make man's love for God the focal point?

One scholar who attempts to answer this question is Anders Nygren, who in his Agape and Eros traces the development of Christian love from its beginnings through the Reformation.⁵ Nygren begins with the theory

¹See, for example, Gilson's work, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine.


⁴For references to the terms ἁγάπη, ἁγαπάω, φιλέω, and the compounds of φιλος, see Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible, 7th ed. (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.).

that the Christian idea of love, as it developed toward and flowered in the Middle Ages, was moulded by three different motifs of religion and ethics: the New Testament motif, which Nygren calls agape; the Judaisitic motif, which he calls nomos; and the Hellenistic, or eros (p. 449). These three loves were synthesized by Augustine, but in the process a new philosophy of love emerged, and the result of this synthesis Nygren identifies by its most common term, caritas.

In his inquiry into the understanding of Christian love, Nygren begins with the agape of the New Testament and notes that early on this agape came into conflict with the already widespread eros tradition. After carefully delineating the characteristics of agape and eros, Nygren shows how these two diversely opposed philosophies were, along with the nomistic emphasis of Judaism, finally assimilated in the thought of Augustine and how Christian love, as it confronted, rejected, or appropriated ideas, developed into what the later years of the Middle Ages, on the eve of the Renaissance, understood by the term caritas. In tracing the process of these motifs, Nygren discovers that there was no one "pure" type, "but one motif can be dominant in the mixture of motifs, and can set its mark upon any particular conception" (p. 250). He also points out that although "These types rival one another with varying measures of success and defeat, . . . none finally supersedes the rest" (p. 449).

The element of caritas that is predominant in John Gower's Confessio Amantis is nomos, but agape and eros are also present in the poem. Therefore it is important to know the characteristics of these motifs in order to identify them as aspects of caritas in Gower's work.
Because, as the title of his book indicates, Nygren is primarily concerned with the influence of Hellenistic eros on New Testament agape, he carefully delineates their primary traits, placing them side by side in order to present more clearly their contrasting nature:

Eros is acquisitive desire and longing.  

Eros is an upward movement.  

Eros is man's way to God.  

Eros is man's effort; it assumes that man's salvation is his own work.  

Eros is egocentric love, a form of self-assertion of the highest, noblest, sublimest kind.

Eros seeks to gain its love, a life divine, immortalized.

Eros is the will to get and possess, which depends on want and need.

Eros is primarily man's love; God is the object of Eros. Even when it is attributed to God, Eros is patterned on human love.

Eros is determined by the quality, the beauty and worth, of its object; it is not spontaneous, but "evoked," "motivated."

Eros recognizes value in its object--and loves it.

Agape is sacrificial giving.  

Agape comes down.  

Agape is God's way to man.  

Agape is God's grace: salvation is the work of Divine love.

Agape is unselfish love, it "seeketh not its own," it gives itself away.

Agape lives the life of God, therefore dares to "lose it."

Agape is freedom in giving, which depends on wealth and plenty.

Agape is primarily God's love; God is Agape. Even when it is attributed to man, Agape is patterned on Divine love.

Agape is sovereign in relation to its object, and is directed to both "the evil and the good"; it is spontaneous, "overflowing," "unmotivated."

Agape loves--and creates value in its object (p. 210).  

Most of these statements are self-explanatory but two need clarification. 1) "Agape lives the life of God, therefore dares to 'lose it'"
Nygren does not make a list of characteristics for nomos as he does for eros and agape, but in his discussion of the nomos motif in the early Church (pp. 254-365) and in other references to nomos scattered throughout the book, the following distinctive features appear:

1. As a guide for behavior, nomos first asks, What is the law? (p. 250).

2. Love based on legalism (strictness in conforming to the law) is "the loftiest human achievement" (pp. 248, 259, 264); it is "man's way to God" (pp. 249, 259); it is the way by which man "finally reaches perfection" (p. 259).

3. Love rooted in legalism is motivated by either fear of punishment or desire for reward (pp. 349, 727). Such motivation robs the love expressed of its essential spontaneity (p. 727).

4. Sacrifices and prayers are means to gain God's favor or appease His wrath (pp. 120-22). (In the Old Testament, sacrifice is man's way to God; in the New, it is God's way to man.)

5. Through deeds of merit man produces a righteousness of his own and by this means seeks to enter into fellowship with God (pp. 249, 347-8).

6. "Through the idea of merit, the good which [man] does . . . comes to be regarded less as obedience to God than . . . the profit which it yields for man" (pp. 681-82).

7. Stemming from the commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," love becomes something that can be

recalls the familiar saying of Christ that "He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it" (Matt. 10:39; The Douay-Rheims version. Baltimore, Md.: John Murphy Company, 1899; rpt. Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1971. All references will be from this version.). Also, the first half of the sentence wedes the ethical life with the religious. "The ultimate reason why human relationships are to be governed by Agape is that the religious relationship [between God and man] is so governed" (pp. 127-28). 2) "Agape loves--and creates value in its object" is concerned with the spontaneous, unmotivated nature of agape, which creates value in man, who has no value in himself. To accept the notion of "the infinite value of the human soul" is to attribute a motivation to God's love and thus deny the "value-creating principle" of agape (pp. 78-9).
measured: through acts of charity, one attempts to love his neighbor more than he loves himself or at least as much as he loves himself (pp. 263, 345).

8. Love for one's neighbor, expressed chiefly in almsgiving, is often regarded as compensation for sins committed (pp. 248, 260). Also, it is considered meritorious (pp. 248, 262), and especially so if it is extended to one's enemies (p. 263). Such charity makes one worthy of God's love (p. 249).

9. The love God requires of man becomes more important than the love God gives to man (pp. 264, 265).

10. God's fellowship with man and man's fellowship with his neighbor are conditioned by justice (pp. 250, 345, 346, 348).

Nearly all these nomistic concepts appear in the Confessio Amantis; so a brief description of the historical process of nomism can help clarify how nomos early became the dominant motif of the Church and continued to be so as late as the closing decades of the fourteenth century.

Agape first appeared in opposition to the Judaic value system, which was founded on Old Testament law. The Old Testament was a foil for the new idea of love; agape needed to be seen as a true "transvaluation" of the Jewish system of ethics if it were to have any significance. This involved a risk, to which early Christianity succumbed. Agape ceased to be an actual transvaluation of nomos and became instead another permanent scale of values that could be determined by law (p. 259). The Didache illustrates this absorption of agape by nomos.

Jewish literature, with its special requirements and precepts, its catalogue of virtues and vices, and its commandment of love for God and neighbor, customarily presented its ethical teachings under the heading of the "Two Ways," the Way to Life and the Way to Death. The Didache takes over this tradition, adding to it some of the teachings of Christ, giving, however, to those teachings the wonted nomistic interpretation
of its Jewish source (pp. 258-59). For example, to Christ's counsel that "'If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek also,'" the Didache adds, "'and thou wilt be perfect'" (p. 259). "'Blessed is he that gives according to the mandate,'" it says, "'for he is innocent'" (p. 258). The inclusion of these and similar instances indicates that in the Didache love becomes a human achievement, a way of salvation that can be attained in obedience to a law of love. Already love has become man's way to God (nomos) rather than God's way to man (agape). Moreover, with regard to man's love for his neighbor, the Didache substitutes for a causal motivation a teleological one.\(^7\) "Love" increasingly becomes "almsgiving," which can result in compensation for sins committed or in "deliverance from death." In short, the love one gives to his neighbor becomes advantageous to both the neighbor and the giver (p. 260). Christianity, then, becomes the "New Law of Christ," a mere replacement of the old law. Christ is seen as the lawgiver, the example of the law's fulfillment, and the judge "who is to judge the world in accordance with [the law]" (p. 263). Moreover, love for one's enemies requires "'an extraordinary goodness,'" according to 2 Clement, "which leaves ordinary humanity far behind, and arouses the astonishment and admiration of all" (p. 263). In another version of the "Two Ways" (the Epistle of Barnabas), the simple command to "'love thy neighbour as thyself'" becomes "'Thou shalt love thy neighbour more than thy own life'" (p. 263).

\(^7\)Man's agape, like God's, is unmotivated; that is, it has no ulterior purpose. "If a motivation can be found, it is purely causal, inasmuch as love to one's neighbour springs by inner necessity out of the experience of Divine love" (p. 260).
Nygren continues to follow the progress of the nomos motif in the early history of the Church. By the time of Tertullian [c. 160-230] nomos had already asserted itself over agape and eros. Tertullian advanced it one more step. Trained in the law, Tertullian "unites Old Testament nomism and Roman moralism and jurisprudence. The result is a theology of merit . . ." (pp. 347-48). Retribution becomes central.

Nygren summarizes some of Tertullian's views:

Nothing . . . can more become God, as the good and righteous Judge, than to elect and reprobate men according to their deserts. God simply cannot disregard man's merit; He cannot condemn those who have not deserved it, nor refrain from reprobating those who have sinned. The Law is thus the proper Way of salvation. As a condition of salvation, God requires man to have fulfilled His will as revealed in the Law; He requires man to give Him complete "satisfaction" . . . . By doing what is well pleasing to God, man has in the strictest sense of the word to merit his salvation; and the best means to this is an ascetic life. By good works man can make God His debtor. The highest degree of merit attaches to the highest conceivable achievement, martyrdom . . (p. 348).

Nygren's account of the development of the nomos motif demonstrates the ease with which nomos entered and finally dominated the theology of the early Church. The Jewish system of values was thoroughly grounded in law, and the two most important commands to love God and one's fellow man were already included in its religious ethic. It was not difficult, then, to interpret the centrality of love in Christ's teachings and in the writers of the New Testament as the "new law" of love. The emphasis given to fulfilling the law made central man's efforts to love God and his neighbor, thus opening the door for behavior that, strictly adhering to a code of deeds and observances, becomes a means of justification.

Agape, eros, and nomos are all found in differing mixtures in the history of Christian love until in Augustine's doctrine a new love
emerges, caritas, Augustine's synthesis of the above three loves, which he found in his religious heritage. By taking certain conceptions from each of these loves, Augustine is able to mould their ideas into his own doctrine of charity.

Augustine's most famous appropriation from the eros tradition is his assumption that all love is acquisitive. This belief led him to distinguish between cupiditas and caritas. Desire in itself is not wrong; in fact, God created man in such fashion that he must long for something. Therefore, the object that satisfies that desire becomes supremely important. For Augustine,

there are ultimately only two possibilities: . . . love is directed either upwards towards God, the Creator, or downwards towards created things. . . . Caritas is love directed upwards, Cupiditas is love directed downwards. Caritas is love of God, Cupiditas love of the world. Caritas is love for the eternal, Cupiditas is love for the temporal (p. 483).

The only right love is caritas, whose object is God, man's summum bonum. This distinction between caritas and cupiditas, based as it is on the object of desire, arises out of the nature of eros and not agape, according to Nygren:

. . . Even if Augustine's distinction between Caritas and Cupiditas does not entirely lack points of contact with New Testament Christianity, there cannot be the slightest doubt that his doctrine of love . . . rests substantially on the foundation of Eros and has very little in common with Agape-love. The fact that he thinks of all love as fundamentally acquisitive love speaks plainly enough. Behind Caritas we detect the "heavenly Eros" of Platonism, behind Cupiditas "vulgar Eros." The contrast between the two forms of love is very much the same in Augustine as in Neo-platonic Eros doctrine: it is the contrast between love directed upwards and love directed downwards, between love for the eternal and love for the temporal (pp. 499-500).
A proper self-love, another eros characteristic included in caritas, is a fundamental trait of the love Gower offers in the Confessio Amantis. Augustine uses the term amor sui in two ways: regarding the nature of love and regarding its object (p. 544). All love is acquisitive and seeks its own good; thus all love in this wide expression is amor sui. In this sense, too, Augustine can explain that to love God properly is to love the self properly, since the self, searching for its highest good, finally must come to God (p. 544). With regard to the object of love, however, the only right love is amor dei; there is no right amor sui as object, for self-love as such is the sin of sins (p. 515). Although love for God, amor dei, is implicit in the Confessio Amantis, which on one level is a treatise of spiritual instruction for the individual, Gower's emphasis is on amor sui in its correct sense.

The agape element of caritas is revealed most clearly in Augustine's doctrine of grace. For Augustine, "everything in life depends ultimately on God's grace": our existence, our justification, our faith, our works, our love to God all stem from grace, which is given freely, "with no preceding merit on our side" (p. 526). Yet the most important aspect of grace ties in with the eros motif. "If God had not condescended to us in His gratia, we could never have ascended to Him in Caritas. . . . Without grace, Caritas has no air beneath its wings for its flight to God. Grace 'prevents' our every deed--but as the means precedes the end. The end is and remains the ascent of Caritas to God" (p. 527). And it is here that the synthesis of the two ideas of salvation, Christian agape and Platonic eros, is brought about. Augustine shows the necessity of grace, God's descent (agape), to effect the ascent (eros) to God. "The
foundation of the life of Caritas is Divine grace. . . . But the goal is to attain to God . . ." (p. 531).

Augustine does not find it difficult to include the nomos ethic in his eros-dominated doctrine of love, for the ideas of law and merit are not extraneous but organic to Augustine's thought. For example, the command to love one's neighbor is not difficult, for in reality it is God one is loving, not the neighbor as an individual apart from God. But the command to love another involves acts of charity, and it is here that nomistic elements come into play. Love for the neighbor, for instance, can take the form of almsgiving, and when it does that love has the effect of blotting out one's own sin. Love for enemies, according to Augustine, is especially meritorious since it is a more difficult task to accomplish (pp. 551-52).

Augustine's love is not New Testament agape nor Old Testament nomos; neither is it Platonic or Neo-platonic eros. It is a synthesis of these ideas. All are present in it, but they are all now identified as caritas. Though for Augustine the eros characteristics dominate, nomos and agape are essential elements. Agape, expressed chiefly as God's grace, restores man's relationship with God which was lost in the Fall and initiates the journey back to God. Nomos requires righteousness and neighborly love; salvation is identified primarily at the level of their fulfillment and as such becomes reward. Caritas is impossible without agape, ethically meaningless without nomos, and it would not be caritas without the eros ascent. Caritas may have for its primary meaning man's love for God (eros), but comprehensively it must include God's love for man (agape) and man's love for his neighbor as he fulfills the command to love (nomos).
Caritas is, then, an intricate, complex synthesis of three ways of salvation. Augustine was not the first to synthesize at least eros and agape (Nygren credits Origen with this [p. 368]), but no one before him succeeded so thoroughly that a new doctrine of love emerged as a result of the synthesis. The exponents of love from Augustine's time through the Middle Ages place varying degrees of importance upon agape, eros, and nomos; yet the rational cradle in which all these emphases exist is Augustinian caritas.

One of the challenges of John Gower's Confessio Amantis has been to discover the kind of love that is sanctioned in the poem. Gower himself assigns a serious purpose to each of his three poems in the colophon that appears at the end of the Confessio. I quote from Fisher's translation: "Because anything should be shared with others in proportion as one receives it from God, John Gower, desirous of lightening somewhat the account for the intellectual gifts God gave to his keeping . . . composed three books of instructive material . . . ."\(^8\) In light of this statement, to view Gower's poem as an exposition of Christian love is not out of line. Moreover, Yeager, discussing Chaucer's designation of his friend as "moral Gower," considers Gower a "poet of insistent connections, demonstrating over and over how all behavior small and large forms a unified mosaic [sic] in the eye of God." From first to last Gower "struck the same chords."\(^9\) Yeager observes also that Gower adapts "classical references and borrowings . . . to render moral arguments consistent with


Christian teaching," and that the **Confessio Amantis** "provides us with our best-known examples of this practice . . . ."\(^{10}\) Yeager considers that the predication of Chaucer's Troilus as he views the world from the eighth sphere to damn " . . . al our werk that foloweth so / The blynde lust, the which that may not laste, / And sholden al oure herte on heven caste (V, 1823-25)" "approximates" Gower's view in his French and Latin poems.\(^{11}\)

If Yeager is correct in his estimation of Gower's consistency of subject matter, then the **Confessio Amantis** is presenting a Christian worldview, one dominated by the **caritas-cupiditas** tension. Such a tension can be seen in Troilus's decision to damn "al our werk" that follows "blynde lust" or desire, and in Gower's condemnation of inordinate love and the mad passions of lovers. Chaucer's narrator directs his audience "to that sothefast Crist that starf on rode"; Gower's priest Genius holds out to the penitent Amans a nomistic ethic of love that if followed will enable him to attain the end of his desire, the lady.

The **Confessio Amantis** is a complex poem embracing all the loves that comprise **caritas**, but **nomos** predominates. The poem participates in the penitential genre, and this fact could help account for its nomistic emphasis. Morton Bloomfield states that "the influence of the penitentials and confession played no little part" in the importance of the cardinal sins in the vernacular literature of the later Middle Ages and the fascination that the sins exercised on the lay mind.\(^{12}\) So, Gower could be

\(^{10}\)Yeager, "'O Moral Gower,'" p. 93.

\(^{11}\)Yeager, p. 92.

utilizing a popular tradition that is advantageous for his purpose and at the same time permits him to adapt the advice of the poem to his own predilection regarding Christian love, which is nomistic. Yet it cannot be said that the poem's nomism is totally derived from the confessional/penitential materials, because some of them either are non-nomistic or do not stress the nomistic ethic, as an investigation of a few of these works will show.
In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that all Christians who had reached the age of reason were to receive annually the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. This enactment provided the priest with an opportunity to examine the conscience of the sinner and advise him regarding his ethical and religious life. It also resulted in "a substantial amount of educational literature on the subject of penance." Idelle Sullens takes note of the "flood of encyclopedia reference works" that appeared from the "mid-thirteenth century to well into the fourteenth." W. A. Pantin lists "manuals of instructions for parish priests," "vernacular religious and moral treatises . . . dealing with the vices and virtues, the ten commandments, and so forth, . . . [and] the writings of the mystics and the religious lyrics of the fourteenth century" as included in this vast outpouring of penitential literature.


These materials were written to aid the priests who had to enforce the new decree, and who were for the most part ignorant of the proprieties of confession and penance. They also served to "teach man the intricacies of the doctrine of sin, so that he might learn to recognize and avoid evil and to confess properly and save his soul." Some of the documents merely listed the sins with their punishments; others discussed the principles and meaning of the sacrament, making "full allowance ... for the circumstances in which sins were committed," while others sought to present a "philosophy of penance and a psychology of sin." Thus the aims, format, and audience of confessional literature vary. What occurs, however, is that each author, adapting his material to the particular situation, reveals his private understanding of caritas as he proffers his counsel and advice.

Now, advice in itself is not nomistic. It can and did convey the varying aspects of caritas. Counsel which accents God's love for man and/or man's concern for his neighbor is governed by agape; that which advocates man's love for God is ordered by eros; but advice which seeks to motivate behavior by stressing obedience to the moral and/or civil law is regulated by nomos. It is this last type that prevails in the Confessio Amantis.

Nomos is identifiable by certain advisory hallmarks that are common in the confessional/penitential literature of the Middle Ages. One is the insistence that redemption comes by performing some special act or

5Braswell, The Medieval Sinner, p. 57.
6Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins, p. 124.
observing a particular law. Such advice invites the conclusion that salvation is earned, that remission of sin comes about by obedience to the commands of God or the priest who is speaking for God. Consider, for example, a few lines from a fourteenth-century poem, "The Stacyons of Rome":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In } & \text{ pat mynster* pat ys so hende,} \\
& \text{Fowr dores shalt pou fynde;} \\
& \text{As sone as } pou \text{ be In at one,} \\
& \text{And passes powr everychone} \\
& \text{Plener Remyssyon may pou haue} \\
& \text{Of all } \text{ te synnis pat } pou \text{ wylt craue.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Here the forgiveness of sins and merited punishment can be remitted by the performance of a simple act. Presumably the pilgrim would evidence a sincere sorrow for sin as he discharged his penance or complied with the religious law by which he was bound, but not all sinners were contrite. Chaucer's Wife of Bath is representative of the unrepentant transgressor, and as such she exemplifies a problem inherent in the nomistic approach to salvation. In the very act of concurring with the ordinance to bring her gift to the altar, the narrator suggests, she commits the worst of the seven deadly sins, pride, and on occasion is clearly guilty of yet another, anger. This kind of action is the risk

*The Chapel of John the Baptist.


\footnote{For an account of the behavior of pilgrims in the fourteenth century, see Christian K. Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth Century England (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1976).}

\footnote{Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," The Canterbury Tales in The}
that must be taken when any institution attempts to resolve cases of conscience through legalisms. The fulfillment of the law often becomes the end rather than a legitimate means to a proper end. Although the intent and motive of the sinner finally determine whether he will merit reward or deserve punishment, some confessors placed undue weight on performance and the deed performed.

Inordinate stress on reward and punishment is also a common trait of counsel with a nomistic slant. Ellen Braswell points out one of the reasons for this. Perfect contrition, she says, "is a state that few penitents can successfully achieve. Therefore, true sorrow can originate from other sources as well: fear of hell or of the loss of heaven . . . ." This "imperfect contrition," she continues, must be accompanied by charitable acts and a sincere desire for reconciliation with God in order for absolution to take place.\(^1^0\) However, what originates as an agapistic intent of salvation—warning for the sake of redemption—too often shifts over into nomistic motivation. G. R. Owst observes that in the sermonic material of the fourteenth century accounts of damnation became "a means of frightening sinners into the kingdom of Heaven."\(^1^1\) In fact, with regard to the "devilish heresy" that "'Howsoever great thy sins may be, greater is His mercy,'" the typical medieval preacher, Owst says,

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Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 21, ll. 449-52. Though the Wife is not here carrying out a particular penance for a particular sin, she is following a broader injunction which had been ordered by the Church.

\(^1^0\)Braswell, The Medieval Sinner, p. 15.

was "prepared at all times to combat the fallacies of the ever-forgiving Redeemer . . . with a terrifying message of death, burial, judgment and hell-pains."\textsuperscript{12} The homilist, Waldeby, for example, along with others of like mind, felt that the wrath of God should be preached more than his mercy.\textsuperscript{13} Attrition, however, motivated as it is by fear of punishment or the loss of heaven, robs any love expressed of its spontaneity. The sinner loves God because he fears Him; he performs deeds of charity because he must do so to avoid punishment. Such love is characteristic of nomos, and by the same token, when the impelling force to obey the laws of God and the Church is to earn reward, the love expressed is again a manifestation of nomos.

A serious problem with nomistic counsel is the effects it can have on the penitent. Not only can such advice lead to legalistic behavior, which can place stress on the individual, it can also result in an unhealthy psychological pressure which the Church brings to bear on the penitent. In her descriptive book on the medieval sinner, Braswell uses the account of Freud's theory of the super-ego as explained by Karen Horney to illustrate "the concept of the Church's control over the individual conscience":

"The [Super-Ego is] an inner agency of a primarily forbidding character. It is like a secret police department, unerringly detecting any trends of forbidden impulses, particularly of an aggressive kind, and punishing the individual inexorably if any are present. . . . The neurotic need for perfection is thus seen as a consequence of the Super-Ego's tyrannical

\textsuperscript{12}Owst, Preaching in Medieval England, pp. 335-36.

\textsuperscript{13}Owst, p. 101.
From this observation Braswell draws the conclusion that the Church is analogous to the "Super-Ego" and that it is in the confessional that the "policing act" of ridding the sinner of the "selfness," which is "the deadly sin of pride," goes on.\(^\text{15}\) Such stringency bears unsavory fruit. Under the circumstances, Horney theorizes, the penitent feels compelled to attain perfection: "The individual had to attain perfection willy-nilly, in order to comply with the Super-Ego and to avoid punishment."\(^\text{16}\)

Similarly, Donald R. Howard observes that Christianity in the Middle Ages demanded more of the individual than he could be expected to perform:

> It asked sainthood from men who, according to its own most fundamental doctrines, were corrupted since the Fall by ignorance, concupiscence and death. . . . The result was that to take seriously the responsibilities of the Christian life was to submit oneself to an unending struggle, a lifelong psychomachia between cupiditas and caritas . . . . It was this element of struggle in the Christian life that informed all of medieval thought.\(^\text{17}\)

Howard confines his comments to those who "take seriously the responsibilities of the Christian life." Such men and women may or may not succumb to the perils of nomism. But no doubt many merely conformed to the law of penance, which was "imposed on every Christian as a duty."\(^\text{18}\)

\(^\text{15}\) Braswell, p. 58.
\(^\text{16}\) Braswell, p. 58.
The very fact that confession was not voluntary would tend more to aggra­
vate a legalistic posture toward penance than to encourage true repentance
for sin. In such an atmosphere nomos thrives.

In the time of Gower the penitential tradition was still flourish­
ing and Gower was influenced by it. J. A. Burrow describes the "confronta­
tion" between penitent and confessor as "very prominent in Ricardian
poetry and specially characteristic of the late medieval period . . . ."

The sacrament of penance, Burrow continues, plays "an important part in
the work of all four poets under discussion here." 19 Kinneavy's argument
that the penitentials influenced Gower "in a massive way" has already
been noted. 20 Braswell contends that the bellestris tic writers of the
fourteenth century, among whom she includes Gower, made use "of the prin­
ciples of confession in creating the inner life of their characters." 21

The confessional manuals, she says, whose tenets had been "thoroughly
assimilated" by the poets and their audiences, became "guidelines for
fashioning the personalities of the fictional sinners and the confessors
. . . . " 22 John Fisher maintains that of the "four streams" that fed
Gower's "systematic discourse upon the nature of man and society" the
"first and most easily recognizable is the penitential tradition

19 J. A. Burrow, Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the

144. See Chapter One of this study, p. 23.

21 Braswell, The Medieval Sinner, p. 60.

22 Braswell, p. 16. Gower's use of the methods of the confessional
more than its theology appears to be Braswell's concern. But the impor­tant
point is Braswell's assumption that Gower was influenced by the
literature of penance.
associated with the books of vices and virtues" and that the second, "nearly as evident but more difficult to explore, is the popular sermon . . . ." Similarly, Maria Wickert feels that to describe the contents of Gower's Latin poem, the Vox Clamantis, excluding the Visio of Book I, as "estates satire" is "misleading"; even to list it under the category of "class critique" is "justified only to a limited extent." Medieval theology, especially as found in the sermon, cannot be denied, she says. And W. N. Pantin remarks that the "correct use of the sacrament of penance is a theme which dominates or underlies most of the religious literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, from the constitutions of the bishops down to such unexpected places as certain passages in Langland, Chaucer and Gower."  

Gower may or may not have actually read such penitential manuals as Handlyng Synne, The Pricke of Conscience, The Ayenbite of Inwyte, or Pennaforte's Summa casum poenitentiae, Peraldus's treatise on the vices and virtues, or Friar Laurent's Somme le roy. The Ancren Riwle or the Cursor Mundi may not have been available to him. What Gower read at first-hand has never been confirmed with absolute certainty. Perhaps all we can do is agree with Macaulay that "On the whole we must conclude that he was a well-read man according to the standard of his age, especially for a layman, but [not to] attribute to him a vast stock of learning on the strength of the large number of authors whom he quotes"

Yet Macaulay has little doubt that "Gower knew the Bible, in the Vulgate version . . . thoroughly well" and he believes, too, that "the moral and devotional books of Gower's own day must have been pretty well known to him" (Works, I, lii and lvi).

If scholars are correct, this devotional literature included such penitential manuals as Handlyng Synne, Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests, The Ancren Riwle, Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale," and others. Yet an examination of some of these more well-known manuals does not reveal that all penitential literature was nomistic in emphasis. The Ancren Riwle, for example, gives scant attention to nomos. The love it presents as the ideal for the Christian life is an eros-dominated caritas.

The author, whose audience is a group of nuns, begins his treatise by asserting that there are many kinds of rules which the Theological Law enjoins but he will speak of two only. The one is "euere wīnnten" and guides the heart (p. 2); the other is "al wiōuten" and governs the body and its actions (p. 4). The first rule is "cherite," the "lefdi"; the second is her handmaid (p. 4). The external rule is an invention of man; it ordains "festen, wakien, koldū here werien, swuche oūre heardschipes," which some are able to bear and others not. Therefore, this rule may be adapted by the anchoresses's confessor "efter euch ones manere" and as prudence directs (p. 6). Moreover, no one should make solemn promises to keep this second rule lest perchance breaking a part of it causes pain and induces despair (p. 8). This external rule chiefly

consists in sound advice given to regulate the devotional practice, proper decorum, and personal relationships of the sisters.

Although practical in nature, the exterior rule is not presented nomistically. The sisters are not urged to obey its guidelines for any religious self-profit. On the contrary, they are told that such discipline as scourings, stinging nettles, and cutting of the flesh will not extinguish temptation and therefore should not be carried out without the confessor's permission (pp. 418-20). The author himself attaches little importance to these rules, for they exist merely to serve the rule of love: "alle pe oðre serued hire: and one uor hire sake me ham ouh forto luuien. Lutel strençðe ich makie of ham, vor hwon ðet ðeos beon deoru-wurðlice i-wust" (p. 410). It is the interior rule of caritas with which the author is concerned, and subsumed under it are all things necessary for a true Christian ethic:

Auh cherite ðet is luue ð edmodnesse, ð polemodnesse, treowe-schipe, ð holding of ðe tene olde hesten, schrift ð penitence, ðeos ð swiche oðre ðet beod ð summe of ðe olde lawe, summe of ðe neowe, ne beod nout monnes fundles, ne riwle ðet mon stold, ah beod Godes hesten, ð for ði euëriche mon ham mot nede hold-en . . . vor ðeos riwleð ðe horte . . . (p. 8).

In the seventh section of The Ancren Riwle, which is entitled "Love," the author makes explicit what he means by charity. He begins by quoting from the Apostle Paul's well-known depiction of agape (I Cor. 13), but his eros emphasis is made clear by what he adds to his source (underlined):

"ðauh ich kuðe," he seið, "alle monne ledene ð englene: and ðauh ich dude o mine bodie alle ðe pinen, ð alle ðe passiuns ðet bodi muhte polien: and ðauh ich ȝefde poure men al ðet
ich hefde: but zif ich hefde luue per mide to God \( t \) to alle men, in him \( t \) for him, al were aspilled" . . . (p. 384).

That he has given the word *caritas* an Augustinian rather than a Pauline interpretation is made manifest with his continued explication:

"Schir heorte," ase Seint Bernard sei\( \delta \), "make\( \delta \) two pinges: pet tu, al pet pu dest, do hit oder uor luue one of God, oder uor o\( \delta \)res god, \( t \) for his biheue." . . . Hwat is schir heorte? Ich hit habbe iseid er: pet is, pet ze no ping ne wilnen, ne ne luuien bute God one, and peo iike pinges, uor God, pet helpe\( \delta \) ou touward him. Uor God, ich sigge, luuien ham, \( t \) nout for ham suluen . . . . Uor, ase Seint Austin seid, \( t \) speked pus to ure Louerd, . . . "Louerd, lesse heo luuiied \( \delta \) pet luuiied out bute pe, bute zif heo luuien hit for pe." . . . Schirnesse of heorte is Godes luue one. I pissen is al \( \delta \) strenche of alle religiuns, and \( \delta \) ende of alle ordres . . . (p. 386).

To bring home to the sisters the lesson that by loving the good in another, one makes that good one's own, the author invites them to "Extend thy love to Jesus Christ, and thou hast gained him. Touch him with as much love as thou, sometimes, hast for some man, and he is thine, to do all that thou desirest" (p. 409).

Moreover, according to this writer, the purpose of God's *agape* is to arouse man's *eros* desire for God: "He bouhte us mid his heorte blode . . . uorte of-drawn of us ure luue touward him . . ." (p. 392). There is no presentation of *agape* in *The Ancren Riwle* other than in this manner. When the author describes God's love for man apart from this conception, he attributes to God *eros* desire and longing. For example:

Nime\( \delta \) god \( \zeta \)eme, mine leoue sustren, uor hwi we ough him to luuien. Erest, ase a mon pet wowe\( \delta \)--ase a king pet luuede one lefdi of feorrene londe, and sende hire his sondesmen beforen, pet weren pe patriarkes \( t \) pe prophetes of pe Olde Testament, mid lettres isealed. A last he com him suluen,
and brouhte pet gospel ase lettres iopened, and wrot mid his owune blode saluz to his leafmon, of luue gretunge uorte wowen hire mide, "forte welden hire luue (p. 388).

Or, consider the following, which not only depicts God's love for man as eros but makes agape the foundation of man's eros ascent:

Vorñi, seiñ pe psalm-wuruhte, ... nis non pet muwe etlutien pet heo ne mot him luuien. Pe soñe sunne iðe undertid was forði istien on heih oðe heie rode uorto spreden over al hote luue gleames: þus neodful he was, "t is wort tisse deie, to ontenden his luue in his leoues heorte, and seiñ iðe gospelle, ... Ich com, he seiñ, uorto bringen fur into eorðe, pet is, berninde luue into eorðliche heorten, "hwat zirne ich elles but pet hit blasie? (p. 400).

Nomos is rare in The Ancren Riwle and when present is either un-stressed or qualified by the context. For example, in the first of sixteen sections depicting confession ("Confession shall be accusatory") the author brings to the attention of the anchoresses the pains of hell and the awful day of doom; yet he allows no more than a page in this his lengthiest reference to judgment. He spends as much time encouraging the sisters to learn to accuse themselves here so that God will excuse them in the hereafter (pp. 304-06). There are a few other references to judgment (pp. 145, 320, and 328, for instance), but these are brief and scattered and therefore lack the intensity that some writers bring to the subject.

Prayer, fasting, and alms are recommended by medieval manuals as satisfaction for sin. As such, they are primarily nomistic since they become a way to earn salvation. But for the author of The Ancren Riwle such means have their roots in a caritas that is dominated by eros, that is, good works prepare the heart to love God. He quotes the holy abbot
Moses as saying: "Al pet wo\'t al pet herschipe pet we polie\'d of flesche, al pe god pet we ever do\', alle swuche pinges ne beod buten ase lomen worte tilien mide pe heorte" (p. 384). This tillage of the heart is the cultivation of our longing for God. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving become means for obtaining the goal of eros--winning God--rather than instruments for earning salvation. Good works, the author assures his audience, "will warm you and kindle this fire in opposition to the flame of sin. For, as one nail driveth out another," he continues, "so doth the flame of the love of God drive the fire of foul desire out of the heart" (pp. 403-05).

It is first of all, then, from this perspective that almsgiving and good works must be seen. Good deeds, the author insists, must be performed in secret in order to discourage vanity: "... how evil it is to be vain and boast of good deeds, and how good it is to conceal our good works, and ... to gather in the darkness ... food for the soul" (p. 147). To disclose one's good actions is to "peel the fig tree," making it wither and fit for nothing. "And is it not a great pity," he asks rhetorically, "that the fig tree, which, with its sweet fruit, that is, its good deeds, should spiritually feed God ... should dry up without bark, on account of its being uncovered ..." (p. 151). Referring to the parable of the man who found a treasure of gold and hid it until he could buy the field, the author explains that "Treasure is a good deed, which is compared to heaven, for men buy it therewith; and this treasure, if it be not the better hid and concealed, is soon lost" (p. 151). Taken at face value, the statement, with our good deeds we buy heaven is nomistic, but the use of such language is in line with
the metaphor of the hidden treasure and thus is not to be taken literally. The thrust of meaning for the entire context is that good works are to remain hidden and concealed if they are to become proper implements for cultivating caritas.

By contrast, John Gower's depiction of good deeds or alms is nomistic. In the Vox Clamantis he states:

\[\ldots\] let your generous alms take care of the poor, by which means you can pacify God the King. \ldots\] If anyone gives to the unfortunate for love of God, his gifts endure for a time (but) his fame will be everlasting. \ldots\] A sincere alms is the handmaiden of God, the antidote to death, the gateway to grace, the path of salvation. It contends against the sins of the giver, it pleads for its author, it redeems the worthy, it supplicates for the rich. Sin is the death of the soul and death is the due punishment of sin, but in this way the pious spirit does away with death.\textsuperscript{27}

Similarly, in the Mirour de l'Omme Gower declares that

Alms-giving goes as an advocate to high Heaven, and she prepares the way and the contact with God and with the saints around Him, so that all those who prudently sent their message in advance shall be received in great honor. Generous Alms-giving knows so well how to talk to the Creator in His language and bears with her such a rich pledge that she disengages the soul from all evils and puts it back into good love.

We find clear teaching that God extinguishes sins, for Daniel said to the King of Babylonia that he should give alms to the poor of the great wealth of his domain, whereby he might be redeemed of his sins. Ah, what adequate payment which brings the soul to salvation and liberates one who previously was in bondage to the tyrant; behold what a good chambermaid! (11. 15697-720).

Gower's nomistic emphasis in these two passages is readily apparent.

Alms are not only a means to "pacify God" but also serve to produce a righteousness in man that makes him worthy of fellowship with God. Almsgiving will "extinguish sins" and do away with death. Through the giving of alms, man can earn salvation for the afterlife and everlasting fame for this one. Gower realizes that alms must be given "for love of God," but this is not the driving motive for giving. What is profitable for man, even though it is a commendable religious self-profit, is what spurs Gower's giving. Unlike the author of The Ancren Riwle, whose overriding motivation for doing good deeds is eros, or love for God, Gower's motivation has its roots in nomos.

Now, Gower is following a tradition that is as old as Christianity itself. The efficacy of alms for salvation appears as early as the First Epistle of Clement (chapter 49) in the first century. Approved by Saint Augustine, the doctrine was still a viable teaching of the Church in Gower's age. So, Gower certainly is not alone in his decision to accept this dogma, but it is a choice he makes. The author of The Ancren Riwle (early thirteenth century), if he assents to the principle at all, plays down its significance for the nuns who compose his audience.

The Cursor Mundi attributes to alms a power similar to Gower's description. Almsgiving protects a man's soul from the fiend; it is a wall that shields the soul from dangers. It pierces the gates of heaven, going before the giver like a trumpeter; it cries on Christ with a loud voice "dat pe gifer may helpid be." Unlike Gower, however, the author

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of the Cursor Mundi, citing Augustine as his authority, asserts that "Almus es goddes aun werk"; moreover, the good works "bat first was slain" (by sin) are recovered through grace (11. 28846-849). Such an interpretation agrees with the agapistic delineation of God that is the prelude to penance in the Cursor Mundi:

```
bot get his mercy is als are.
he wil nozt thole vs forfare
bot he grante vs suche couering
pat we may come til his sagtling
pat is penance so past & shrift
pat quen we falle vp mai vs lift
& pat nozt anis allane ne pries
bot quen we falle ay mai we rise. (11. 25738-745)
```

God's mercy is boundless; man's sin held up against His mercy is "na mare pen a sparc in see" (1. 25756). Almsgiving, good deeds, all must be viewed from the perspective of God's love. God will not suffer a man to be lost but will sustain him in order that he may come to reconciliation (11. 25738-741). He has promised that any man who will turn from his sin shall find mercy (11. 25758-761). Even Adam could have received mercy if only he had asked (11. 25810-815). Good works done before falling into sin will avail that man who steadfastly hopes in Christ's mercy (11. 26538-541).

To Gower's discussion of almsgiving, there is no such preface of God's mercy and love. Toward the end of the Mirour de l'Ommme there is a stanza depicting God's mercy (11. 27301-312), and the Vox Clamantis contains several references to the mercy of God, but these passages are never linked with those of penance and almsgiving. Rather, in the several stanzas that lead up to the above passage from the Mirour three
things emphasized as coming on the heels of almsgiving are the profit that benefits the self, the reward that follows, and the influence almsgiving has on God (11. 15421-696). The stanza that immediately precedes the same passage not only associates the ethic of Seneca with that of Isaiah but also exemplifies the profit and reward motives:

Seneca says: "To the poor I will give liberally of my wealth, so that I may be saved from poverty of body and soul together." Saint Isaiah gives us advice saying that he who gives alms shall be recompensed by God on high very richly with His light and His presence, where he shall see God all clearly without any shadow on his conscience (11. 15685-696).

Such nomistic emphases on self-profit and reward are not uncommon in Gower's poetry. In the Confessio Amantis they, along with the desire to avoid punishment, are two important motives for action.

Similar to The Ancren Riwle, the Cursor Mundi does not give predominance to nomos in its treatment of penance and confession. The efficacy attributed to good deeds and almsgiving is presented in nomistic language; yet the nomism is blunted by the strong presentation of God as merciful. For the most part, the Cursor Mundi, in this section on penance and shrift (11. 25684-29555), is descriptive. The depiction of the seven deadly sins, for example, occupies a large number of lines.

John Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests is exactly what its title says it is. At the beginning of the directions on confession and penance (the largest section of the work), Myrc assures the priest that

30 John Myrc, Instructions for Parish Priests, ed. Edward Peacock, EETS 31 (London: Trübner & Co., 1868). Further references to this work appear in the text. Although Myrc's Instructions is later than the Confessio Amantis, it is representative of one type of confessional manual popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
he will need to know more about penance than is written in this book, for often he will need to give penance in "Ouer weyes ρen wolz pe lawe" (1. 797). Such legal penances are hard and must be given with discretion; therefore, for whatever guidance the priest needs beyond what is contained in the book he should "Pray to god to sende pe hyt" (1. 794). With that introduction, Myrc begins his advice and instructions. Verification that the penitent is indeed from the priest's parish is the initial step. Questions follow regarding the ten commandments, the seven mortal sins, and the venial sins (classified under the five senses). Myrc then instructs the priest on the manner of enjoining penance. It should be done with gentleness and discretion:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bettur hyt ys wyth penaunce lutte,} \\
\text{In-to purgatory a mon to putte,} \\
\text{Pen wyρ penaunce ouer myche,} \\
\text{Sende hym to helle putte. (11. 1659-62)}
\end{align*}
\]

He suggests that "Counter wyρ countur ys 1-huled [healed] ofte, / When pey be leyde to-gedur softe" (11. 1665-66). The contraries for the seven deadly sins follow, with a few lines of instruction for each one. Myrc concludes his injunctions for penance by once again stressing the need for discretion and mercy:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A monnes contricyone be-holde ρou ÿerne,} \\
\text{Per-by ρy domes thow moste lerne;} \\
\text{Jef hyt be gret ρeue luyte penaunce,} \\
\text{Jef hyt be luyte ρow moste hyt vaunce,} \\
\text{Be not to harde I pe rede,} \\
\text{But ay do mercy in goddes drede,} \\
\text{He ρys ful of me[ρ]cy ay,} \\
\text{Be ρou also I the pray. (11. 1745-54)}
\end{align*}
\]
Myrc is concerned with the information a confessor needs to have in order to carry out his priestly duties. Though he sets down certain "laws" regarding penance, these laws are flexible and should be applied as the occasion demands. Nomos is not a characteristic of the work; rather nomism is consistently discouraged in the overt appeal to gentleness and individual discretion.

G. R. Owst identifies the tale of Chaucer's Parson as a sermon typical of the "preaching curati as a whole." If Owst is correct, these humble priests fed their flock a balanced spiritual diet, for the Parson recommends a caritas that is a synthesis of agape, eros, and nomos. The tale is a combination of a sermon on penitence and a treatise on the seven deadly sins. After defining penitence as true sorrow for sin, the Parson lists the three acts which the Church considered "bihovely and necessarie to verray perfit Penitence": contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction (11. 107-08). A discussion of these three ordinances becomes the major divisions of the tale.

Consuming more than half the space is the treatise on the sins. Its prelude refers to Saint Augustine's distinction between caritas and cupiditas: "'Deedly synne,' as seith Seint Augustyn, 'is whan a man turneth his herte fro God, which that is verray sovereyn bountee, that may not chaunge, and yeveth his herte to thyng that may chaunge and

33 Augustine is the Parson's most often cited authority.
flitte" (l. 367). This statement implies the characteristic definition of caritas as love for God. The meaning is reinforced by the Parson in the lines immediately previous to the treatise:

Now shall men understande that, al be it so that noon erthely man may eschew alle venial synnes, yet may he refreyne hym by the brennynge love that he hath to our Lord Jhesu Crist, and by preyeres and confessioun and othere goode werkes, so that it shal but litel greve. / For, as seith Seint Augustyn, "If a man love God in swich manere that al that evere he dooth is in the love of God, and for the love of God, verraily, for he brenneth in the love of God, / looke, how muche that a drope of water that falleth in a fourneys ful of fyr anoyeth or greveth, so muche anoyeth a venial synne unto a man that is perfit in the love of Jhesu Crist" (ll. 381-84).

Thus Chaucer's Parson's sermon is grounded in caritas in its Augustinian eros emphasis. Because of this, the nomistic statements that occur in the tale, like a venial sin, "anoyeth" little, cushioned as they are by eros. Moreover, the nomistic statements are balanced by a healthy emphasis on agape. For example, for the lengthy warning regarding the fires of hell and the final judgment (ll. 158-230) there is the agapistic reminder of the passion of Christ (ll. 254-82). The fact that heaven is a reward for good deeds (l. 283b) is preceded by the affirmation of "the yifte of grace wel to do" (l. 283a) and immediately followed by a note of praise for the "largesse" and "sovereyn bountee" of "Jhesus Nazaremus rex Judeorum" (ll. 284-90). This bracketing of nomistic statements with agapistic ones is a common feature of the Parson's tale. In addition, the account of the efficacy of alms, which in this chapter has been a touchstone for the dominance or non-dominance of nomos in confessional manuals, is not only brief but agapistic rather than nomistic:
Now been ther thre manere of almesse: contricion of herte, where a man offreth hymself to God; another is to han pitee of defaute of his neighbores; and the thridde is in yevyng of good conseil and comfort, goostly and bodily, where men han nede, and namely in sustenauce of mannnes foode. / And tak kep that a man hath nede of thise thinges generally: he hath nede of foode, he hath nede of clothyng and herberwe, he hath nede of charitable conseil and vistynge in prisone and in maladie, and sepulture of his dede body. / And if thow mayst nat visite the nedeful with thy persone, visite hym by thy message and by thy yiftes. / Thise been general almesses or werkes of charitee of hem that han temporeel richesses or discrecioun in conseil-ynge. Of thise werkes shaltow heren at the day of doom (11. 1029-33).

Alms, then, is defined as offering oneself to God and having concern for one's neighbor. Moreover, good deeds are to be performed quickly and privately, the Parson continues. One is not excused if the latter condition is impossible given the circumstances but should do good anyway, not for the world's thanks but for Christ's (11. 1034-37). Nomos is not to be found in the Parson's explication of alms and good deeds; rather, agape is urged and, in the first part of the definition—giving oneself to God—eros.

There follows this statement on alms the section on bodily pain, which lists a number of ways that man may fulfill the satisfaction necessary for true penitence. But again, nomistic statements are coupled with agapistic ones. Fasting is shunning "bodily mete and drynke, ... worldly jolitee, and ... deedly synne" (1. 1048), but God ordained fasting for man's benefit. Fasting insures "largenesse to povre folk" and "gladnesse of herte espiritueel"; it enjoins the participant "nat to been angry ne anoyed, ne grucche for he fasteth," and it encourages him to set "resonable houre for to ete" (11. 1049-50). The final paragraph of the tale is a description of the "fruyt of penaunce"—"the
endless blisse of hevene" (1. 1076). And although "This blisful regne may men purchase" (1. 1080), one is made vividly aware that he can do so only because of agape: "And though he never so longe have leyn in synne, the mercy of Crist is alwey redy to receiven hym to mercy" (1. 1072).

Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, unlike the treatises and sermons and books of instruction that have been discussed so far, is similar to the Confessio Amantis in its aim, narrative format, and audience. Although it includes in its structure discussions on sacrilege, sacraments, and shrift, all of which the Confessio does not, its treatment of the seven sins (Gower's formative device) consumes nearly half the work.

Like Gower's, Mannyng's purpose is didactic; he wishes to teach "lewed men" how to spend their time wisely and avoid sin (ll. 51-6). He is fond of proverbs and, similar to Gower, uses secular authors to support a Christian sentiment. If the sources Gower and Mannyng draw on are of a piece, what they choose from them varies. Sullens describes Mannyng as "opinionated, righteous always, but never perverse," and says that "he balances his revelations of the life of his age at its most brutal and outrageous with stories of extraordinary goodness and saintliness" (p. xv). Gower, for the most part, is content to choose stories that exemplify the cupidinous nature of man.

Almsgiving gets full treatment in Handlyng Synne, and like the authors of the Cursor Mundi and The Ancren Riwle, Mannyng does not view almsgiving from the same perspective as Gower does. Both Gower and Mannyng relate the story of Dives and Lazarus to illustrate the sin of gluttony and its contrary, alms. There are no major differences in their
accounts of the story itself; however, the purpose for telling the story and the application made do vary. Mannyng's purpose is that no one "for-gete / Þe pore men at Þy mete" (11. 6633-34), and he reasserts this lesson at the close of the story:

DIS tale tellèp oure lord Ihu
To ryche men for here pru,
Dat Þey ne be no nythyng
Of here mete ne of here Þymg.
To pore men namely,
Dat pou Þyuest hem, Þyue blethly,
Wyþ no betyng ne wyþ noun awe. (11. 6723-29)

The admonition is repeated in the extensive application: this rich man went to hell because he would not give to Lazarus the food for which he asked (11. 6771-74). "Why was god most wyþ hym wroth?" Because "he dede Þe pore man loth" (11. 6779-80). The author wonders how these "robburs" (the rich) will fare that "Þe pore peple pelyn ful bare" (11. 6791-92). He reminds the rich that God charges them to "Þyue Þoure almes large," and not just "largelye," but "wyþ louse Þat ys curteysye" (11. 6823-28).

Whereas in his purpose and application Mannyng brings to the glut-tonous man an awareness of the needs of others, Gower shows no such concern. True, Genius points out to Amans that Dives refuses to give Lazarus a crumb so that the latter might live "Upon the yifte of his almesse" (6.1002-05), but the real purpose of the story and its application are directed toward the self and not toward the needy. The intent of the ex-emplum is to demonstrate that "bodely delices alle / ... Unto the Soule don grievance" (6.967-69). This is not an improper intention; it is a legitimate concern. What is important to understand, however, is that Gower and Mannyng have two very different approaches to gluttony and its
cure. The needs of the self are the focal point for Gower, and for Mannyng an awareness of the needs of the poor.

Gower's egocentrism is continued in the way he applies the story, which, again, contrasts with Mannyng's application. This "sothe experience," Genius says, has proven that "bodili delicacie / Of him which yeve-theth non almesse / Schal after falle in gret destresse" (6.1116-18). But Genius does not stop here; he goes on to explain that one can have all the "bodely delices" and heaven too if he has a proper attitude toward the things of the world:

Bot he that is a governour,
Of worldes good, if he be wys,
Withinne his herte he set no pris
Of al the world, and yit he useth
The good, that he nothing refuseth,
As he which lord is of the thinges.
The Nouches and the riche ringes,
The cloth of gold and the Perrie
He takth, and yit delicacie
He leveth, thogh he were al this.
The beste mete that ther is
He ett, and drinkth the beste drinke;
Bot hou that evere he ete or drinke,
Delicacie he put aweie,
As he which goth the rihte weie
Noght only forto fiede and clothe
His bodi, bot his soule bothe. (6.1128-44)

This rationalization is typical of nomos in its concern for what profits the body and the soul. Albeit Gower most likely is intending a proper religious self-profit, it is, nevertheless, self-profit with which he is concerned.

A comparison of the discussion of almsgiving and good deeds given in Handlyng Synne with those in Gower's Mirour de l'Ommme and Vox Clamantis cited earlier in this chapter will serve once more to point out the
difference between Gower's nomistic emphasis and Mannyng's more generally agapistic one. After the story of Dives and Lazarus, Mannyng narrates the tale of Bishop Troylus, who learns that he must not regret the alms he gives to the poor. Following this story the author gives a lengthy recital (11. 7077-7112) regarding alms in which he stresses that the giving of alms arises out of one's love for both God and man. There are two purposes for giving, he says: the first is to win earthly fame; the other to gain the joys of heaven. The first will not last and is therefore discouraged; the second leads to life everlasting:

De touper loue ys noght for pys;
Ryt asks kep noght but heuene blys,
And pat loue ys eurydeyl
 Loue of god and pore man weyl,
What ys loue unto men pore,
Almes to hem ys recouere,
Almes dede of loue ys weyl:
Noper mysdo hem no myssey.

\[\text{Dan wyl god almyghty loue pe:}\]
\[\text{By loue ys pan wyp charyte. (11. 7103-12)}\]

There follows a paean of praise for charity, which includes the whole of the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians. Unlike the author of *The Ancren Riwle*, however, who also quotes from this chapter and whose interpretation of the word charity is love for God or *eros*, Mannyng's consistent understanding of the word is that charity is love for man that arises out of love for God. He summarizes Paul's exposition in the following lines:

\[\text{Seynt charyte ys bope gode & hende,}\]
\[\text{Lastyng wyp god wyp outen ende.}\]
\[\text{Gode hyt were to loue hyt weyl}\]
\[\text{And folowe hyt wyp oure dede somdeyl.}\]
\[\text{Zyf we pys charyte wyl haue,}\]
\[\text{Zyue we pe pore whan pey vs craue.}\]
\[\text{Zyue we hem as hyt ys oure myght,}\]
Wyp oute myssawe or any fyght.
Pan ys hyt curteys almes dode;
Tank of god pan ys oure mede,
And shal stond ful stawklely
Azens pe synne of glotony. (11. 7173-84)

Such an explication of the word charity is agapistic, and throughout the lengthy discussion on giving Mannyng's preponderant concern is for the poor. Even the fact that such love is the remedy for gluttony is forgotten until the author reminds us of it, as he does in the last line cited above. This stance which Mannyng takes regarding almsgiving is a far cry from Gower's position: "... let your generous alms take care of the poor, by which means you can pacify God the King."

(Vox Clamantis, p. 239).

No adverse criticism of Gower is intended by the comparisons made in this chapter. My purpose has been to demonstrate that confessional/penitential literature, literature of counsel and advice for regulating one's life, is not necessarily nomistic. All the writers chosen have recommended caritas; yet the definition of that term as revealed by their handling of the subject is various. The Ancren Riwle is Augustinian in its eros emphasis and its definition of caritas as love for God. The author of the Cursor Mundi insists that man's fulfillment of the command to love one's neighbor is empowered by agape. Myrc discourages the nomistic approach by his appeal to gentleness and concern for the individual. Chaucer reveals a true understanding of caritas as a synthesis of eros, agape, and nomos as he presents it in "The Parson's Tale." Handlyng Synne is not free of nomos; many instances of it can be cited. Yet the poem's first story, illustrating the first of the ten commandments, is thoroughly agapistic, as is its treatment of alms as a cure for the sin of gluttony.
In fact, an agapistic note sounds often in *Handlyng Synne*.

Gower, too, recommends *caritas*; he prescribes it for the world's ills and demonstrates how it will cure society if every man will tune his harp accordingly. He is concerned with the effects of love on society, and his plan is to instruct the individual how to live the life of love in the social world. Thus Gower is concerned with ethical relationships, but his ethic is not divorced from his faith; in fact, the two are one and the same: *Caritas* in every individual equals common profit in society. It is a magnificent obsession, and in his poem Gower seeks to show how the goal of peace and harmony can be achieved through a right understanding of love.

So the *Confessio Amantis* is an account of one man's confession of the sins that have hindered his love and brought about the separation and division so common to the human situation. It is an account, too, of the advice the priest offers this man in order to restore him to love. To define, then, the kind of love that is tendered in the *Confessio*, two things must be carefully observed: the nature of the advice the confessor offers the penitent and what he emphasizes in the exempla he relates to him.
The concept of *caritas* was shaped and moulded throughout the Middle Ages to fit with all of society and culture. Any choice for the right could be cast in terms of love. Division among the estates, disorder in the realm, disharmony among men were caused by "sin" and cured only by "love." Thus Gower could include temporal rulers, the Church, and the commons in a lump sum of evil and recommend love as the corrective for every variance from a preconceived notion of unity, order, and harmony. He could compare the golden age with the present sinful one and conclude that neither God nor Fortune but man himself is the cause of the evil state of affairs. Nebuchadnezzar's statue, he said, bears the "likenesse / Of man and of non other beste" (Prol. 908-09). Gregory had shown that man is a little world, and "whan this litel world mistorneth, / The grete world al overtorneth" (Prol. 957-58). Unless man is brought into a right relationship with God, himself, and his neighbor, the stone that threatens the statue will fall, bringing in its wake the final day of doom. What is needed is a person like Arion, whose harp is so tuned that through his song division and discord are replaced by unity and harmony, and love again reigns in the land.

But Arion is a myth. The real world is composed of sinners who need to be converted from their sins and turned toward God. Such regeneration comes through confession and repentance. Toward the close of
the Mirour de l'Omme Gower makes clear that the restoration of the world to health begins with the restoration of each individual:

Each one hopes in turn that we might get the world back in good shape, for all of us want to improve it. But I say that everything would be well if each one would be willing to correct one single man, for it would never be necessary to go farther than to begin with oneself. And if each one would do so, I am certain without any doubt, one would see the world improve more than anyone can tell (11. 27277-88).

In the Confessio Amantis Amans is that representative man who is guilty, in some manner, of society's most besetting sins. Through shrift Gower is able to reveal how Amans, or any man, might be converted and thus become an instrument for steadying the teetering world that ever is on the brink of destruction.

Confession in the Confessio Amantis follows a set pattern throughout the first six books. Genius describes the sin under discussion, after which he questions Amans regarding the latter's guilt or innocence. He then illustrates the destructive nature of the sin via exempla, concluding with an application of the story to Amans's situation. The pattern seldom changes until Book 7, where, because the book is an account of the education of Alexander, the conversations between Amans and Genius cease. Although the tales account for the bulk of the Confessio, the lessons which Genius draws from these exempla and the advice he subsequently gives Amans are vitally important because they reveal Gower's moral and ethical stance, which is based on his conception of caritas.

To approach the Confessio Amantis by way of an examination of Gower's understanding of caritas does not negate interpretations of the Confessio as a poem with a political emphasis. Such an emphasis is
present; Gower is concerned about the quality of life in his beloved
England. But for Gower and for many of his age a political question was
a religious one; the two were not separated but intertwined. The idea
of a man as a little world was not an analogy for Gower but a point of
practical theology. As man turns, so turns the world, and the king, as
God's vicar of the God-ordained hierarchical society, was the most impor-
tant "turner" of them all. Therefore Gower stresses the importance of
the proper ethical relationship of the king to God and to the people.
Elizabeth Porter comes to a similar conclusion. Referring to the final
Latin sidenote of the poem, in which Gower concludes that "'all the
pleasure of love apart from charity is nothing,'" she states:

Macaulay's sidenote to this final sequence, in which Gower says
farewell to his readers, labels it a 'farewell to earthly love',
but it would be wrong to read this praise of caritas as a re-
nunciation of human love. It is rather the culmination of the
ethical teaching that Gower has been putting forward through­
out his poem. Human love, properly directed in accordance with
reason towards the 'comun profit' of the community, in the fam­
ily and in the state, is itself a reflection of caritas and
ensures 'perdurable lyves foode'. The good lover and the good
king--and, we might add, the good poet--are finally indistin-
guishable from the good Christian.1

The Confessio Amantis is, then, a poem that recommends caritas.
But, as has been pointed out earlier, what Gower means by caritas needs
to be clarified if the term is as complex as Nygren insists it is.

In his study of medieval monasticism, Jean Leclercq's consistent
assumption is that caritas is desire for God. His explanation of Saint

1Elizabeth Porter, "Gower's Ethical Microcosm and Political Macro-
cosm," in Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments, ed.
Gregory's discussion of compunction is a case in point:

The "compunction of the heart," "of the soul" . . . always tends to become a "compunction of love," "of delectation" and "of contemplation" . . . . Compunction is an act of God in us, an act by which God awakens us, a shock, a blow, a "sting," a sort of burn. . . . The ultimate role of compunction is to bring to the soul a longing for Heaven . . . .

Here the agapistic act of grace is bestowed on man in order to inspire his desire, or eros, for God. Similarly, Leclercq quotes Saint Bernard as saying, "'The revelation which is made by the Holy Spirit gives light so that we may understand, and fire so that we may love . . . .'" Occasionally in monastic literature fear of God is equated with charity, but in Leclercq's explanation, fear of God is the under side of eros: "... fear is very often the same thing as charity . . . . This loving fear is ... reverence, or respect. . . . [It] is a way of referring to charity under its somewhat negative aspect."

Love for God, expressed as desire for Him, is not only typical of monasticism but of mysticism as well, and it is also the primary definition of caritas in the theology of the medieval Church. Yet this specific interpretation of caritas is never once presented in the Confessio Amantis. In fact, eros of any sort, apart from Amans's expressions of desire for the lady, is rare in the poem. Though it does occur, it is always as a reaction to an individual who is perceived to be valuable.

3Leclercq, p. 284.
4Leclercq, p. 94.
in some way, never as a man's response to God.

In "The Trump of Death," the king humbles himself before the pilgrims because they point the way to salvation; that is, he sees his own death in their image, which reminds him to fear (dread, not love) death and God (1.2228-51). The king does not love the pilgrims for themselves, which would express agape; rather, he recognizes the value they have for him and honors them for that. Similarly, the king and queen of Pentapolis and their subjects recognize the value and worth of Apollonius and love him without knowing anything about him except that he is from Tyre (8.938-40). The only hint of caritas as love for God is found in the tale of "Mundus and Paulina," where Paulina's desire for God is revealed in her eager willingness to fulfill His commands (1.852-71; 879-95). However, eros here, as a serious definition of caritas, is negated somewhat by the fact that such inclination on Paulina's part is essential to the plot of the story.

In the "Tale of Constance" all the actions of God on behalf of Constance are grounded in His love for her. God steers the ship which the mother of the Sultan of Barbary assumes is without steer; He slays the wicked knight who has murdered Hermyngheld and laid the blame on Constance, and the ship's steward, who would rape her. He sends amenable winds and hears her prayers. He visits Constance, and she is with child by King Allee. God brings Allee to Rome, which precipitates the happy reunion of Constance with both husband and father. And finally, it is God who from "this worldes fairie" takes her into His company. In short, God protects, defends, and comforts Constance. The descent of God into the lives of men is generally an expression of His agape. However, in
this case, Gower has stated from the outset that Constance is well-pleasing to God; she has "wel apaide" (pleased, satisfied) God (2.594). God is drawn to Constance because she is worthy of His love. On the other hand, Constance's Christian witness throughout the story is not motivated by eros. Although such a motivation is not out of line, Gower never makes an explicit statement of Constance's love for God. Rather, her active concern to convert to the Christian faith the pagans who cross her path is agapistic. Caritas, then, actually presented as love for God, or eros, is not found in the Confessio Amantis, even though references to God and pagan deities are unusually frequent.

Agape fares better. It takes three forms in the Confessio: God's love for man, man's love for his neighbor, and general references occasionally found in the advice of Genius to Amans. God's love for man is most often expressed in terms of the Incarnation (see 5.1737-84) and the delineation of God as creator and source of all good (see 7.80-90). On at least one occasion His agape is revealed in His concern for certain individuals: in the tale of Ahab and Micaiah, God protects the people of Israel who have been scattered because of Ahab's folly in listening to the flattering false prophet Sedechie:

Bot god, which alle thinges may,  
So doth that thei no meschief have;  
Here king was ded and thei ben save,  
And hom ayein in goddes pes  
Thei wente . . . . (7.2680-84)

Also, there are two stories of pagan deities who exhibit characteristics of agape: the "Prayer of Bacchus in the Desert" and the "Tale of Phrixus and Helle." Bacchus, son of Jupiter, caught in the desert with his
army, prays to his father for water to quench his and his men's thirst. Jupiter hears and sends such an abundant supply that every man is able to drink his fill (6.396-439). Similarly, Juno descends to guard the children of King Athemas, Phrixus and Helle, who were to be sacrificed, ostensibly for the good of the land. She forbids the killing of the children and provides the golden ram for their escape (5.4243-4361).

But none of these stories is told to illustrate agape. The purpose of "Ahab and Micaiah" is to prove that he who believes flatterers loses his good world when he most supposes to attain it (7.2518-21); the "Prayer of Bacchus in the Desert" demonstrates the power of prayer (6.391-95); and the "Tale of Phrixus and Helle," coming as it does on the heels of the Jason and Medea story, is told to satisfy Amans's curiosity about the golden fleece (5.4233-34). Thus we conclude that Gower's presentation of God's agape is rare indeed. Moreover, the references to the Incarnation tend to be stereotypical, and the deity's concern for man is either of slight import (the story of Ahab and Micaiah) or grossly misapplied, as in the tale of Bacchus.

Bacchus asks Jupiter to send water so that he and his men might arrive home safely:

'O hihe fader, that sest al,
To whom is reson that I schal
Beseche and preie in every nede,
Behold, mi fader, and tak hiede
This wofull thurst that we ben inne
To staunche, and grante ous forto winne,
And sauf unto the contre fare,
Wher that ous lusti loves are
Waitende upon ous hom comeinge.' (6.417-25)

Jupiter's answer is immediate. Bacchus sees a ram kicking the ground,
and where he overturns the soil, there gushes forth

a welle freisshe and cler,  
Wherof his oghne boteler  
After the lustes of his wille  
Was every man to drinke his fille. (6.431-34)

Bacchus's prayer is a simple request for water. Its tone implies trust that Jupiter will answer favorably. The water given in response is abundant. But when Genius adapts the story to Amans's situation, he not only exchanges the simplicity of tone for a more agitated one, he also substitutes for the affirmative response a pessimistic hope. He charges Amans to never let up in his request, but to "axe and prei erli and late," remembering that the "boteler which berth the keie / Is blind," and it just might happen that he will draw the proper draught. Thus, he says, "I rede thou assobre / Thin herte in hope of such a grace," even though there is no assurance that the gods are gracious (6.450-61).

Curiously enough, there are times when Genius gives Amans advice that clearly expresses the concepts of agape. Although these occasions are rare, they are nevertheless present in the poem and are evidence that Gower is conscious of a kind of love that is unselfish and unmotivated. One of these references occurs at the end of the "Tale of the Three Questions," told to teach Amans to follow humility, the antidote of pride. Genius recommends humility to Amans, pointing out that it does not demand retribution but rather redresses anything that stands "in contraire" with "humble speche," which is "softe and faire" (1.3413-17). Another time Amans confesses his hatred for the lovers of his lady, but Genius reproves him, admonishing that he must hate no one.
He may hate "the condicioun," and do so with the priest's "beneicoun," but not the man. To hinder another is despicable, he adds (3.904-44). Book 3 concludes on an apparent agapistic note: Amans is to have pity on and compassion for other men's passions; he should let nothing be dear to him that is another's grief, and he should "take into [his] conscience / Merci to be [his] governour (3.2720-29).5

Genius's finest comprehension of agape is to be found in tales that are concerned with man's relationship with his fellow man, but even here it is impossible to find an example of agape that includes the purpose for the tale, the tale itself, and the way Genius applies the tale in his advice to Amans. The story of King Midas and the golden touch comes closest to a description of pure agape. The tale and purpose for telling it are both clearly agape; Genius's application, however, is nomistic.

Gower's source for this story is Ovid's Metamorphoses (Book XI), which, Macaulay says, Gower has "freely treated as usual" (Works, II, p. 514, n. 141). Before he receives the gift of the golden touch, Ovid's Midas, who had learned the joys of Bacchus from Orpheus, recognizes in the lost Silenus a fellow comrade from the past and throws a drinking party for him which lasts ten days. In a radical change of this account, Gower attributes to Midas a character that is primarily concerned for his fellow human beings. When the drunken Cillenus is caught and brought before Midas, "This courteis king" does all he can to take care of Cillenus, not because he recognizes him in any way, for

5But see footnote 11 of this chapter, under 3) "Tale of Telaphus and Teucer."
evidently Cillenus is a stranger to Midas. As a reward for his charity, Bacchus offers Midas anything he desires "of worldes good," but the latter is quite aware that delight in what the world has to offer is never satisfactory: "He can no siker weie caste" (5.221). At last, however, he "fell upon the coveitise / Of gold" (5.223-24). In his major addition to the source (the debate that goes on in the mind of Midas regarding what he should ask for) Gower clearly lets his audience know that no choice which Midas makes can be right. The very fact that the selection is limited to the world's goods is condemnation enough. Furthermore, Midas himself recognizes the senselessness of the offer. (Ovid's Midas had asked immediately for gold.) Yet he makes the cupidinous choice for gold, and, since this tale illustrates avarice, he compounds his sin by exceeding measure; that is, he asks for more than he needs (5.247-48).

After having sadly learned the evil of avarice, however, Midas "preide Bachus to foryive / His gilt" and permit him to be "such as he was tofore" so that he will not be lost (5.291-93). This wish, too, is granted, and Midas "goth him hom the rihte weie / And liveth forth as he dede er" (5.316-17). Now, his life before, as shown in his treatment of the drunken Cillenus, was a life of charity, and Gower once again stresses the agape of Midas in the latter's concern to guard his people from the sin of avarice. He establishes good laws which will enable the people to avoid the pitfalls of greed and maintain peace in the land. He urges his people to till the land, live under the law, breed cattle, and seek no increase of gold, for gold is the mother of evil device and the "bringere inne of all werre" (5.344-45). Ovid's Midas, after his bad
experience, is still stupid, and the story of the asses ears follows.

Genius's purpose for telling this story is agapistic, a purpose rare in the Confessio Amantis. He begins by questioning Amans regarding avarice. Amans whimsically applies what he has learned about the sin thus far to his desire for his lady. Genius, however, not to be put off, continues to discuss avarice and man's cupidity. Having given his rationale against greed, he concludes his exposition by asserting that no one is "amended" with gold unless that gold is "despended / To mannes us" (5.135-37). The tale of Midas is an illustration of this fact. Sin is not in the gold itself; it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. Hoarded wealth breeds disease (avarice is likened to dropsy) but spent on others, it brings peace and an ordered society. Thus the purpose for telling the story (money must be distributed for man's use) and the conclusion of the story proper fall within the tradition of agape. And though Midas succumbs to the temptation of avarice, Gower has altered Ovid's story sufficiently to attribute to the king a true and unselfish concern for others. No motivation is given for Midas's regard for Cillenus, and his commands respecting the stranger are indicative of nothing but a concern for his welfare. Similarly, the advice to his people derives from his care for them. What has occurred is that Gower's King Midas exchanged a spiritual golden touch for a physical one, and having realized his error, he shed the latter to pick up again the former in earnest.

The purpose and the tale are exemplary of agape; the brief application Genius makes is nomistic. Amans is told that if he sees "a creature, / Which thurgh poverte is falle in nede," he should give him "som
good" in order to avoid the pains of hell hereafter: "... for this I rede / To him that wol noght yiven here, / What peine he schal have elleswhere" (5.358-62). This remark taken by itself could be a simple cause-and-effect statement, but it does not stand alone. Gower amplifies it by immediately moving into the example of Tantalus to show that avarice is analogous to certain punishments in hell, and he concludes with these lines:

Forthi thi goodes forth withal,
Mi Sone, loke thou despende,
Wherof thou myht thysel amende
Bothe hier and ek in other place. (5.398-401)

He continues in this vein for several more lines, advising Amans to "tak ensample of Mide king / And of the flod of helle also" (5.412-13). Such advice is compatible with caritas—it is given for Amans's spiritual welfare—but it falls within the nomos emphasis rather than within eros or agape, since fear of punishment is used to induce a proper dispensation of wealth.

The "Tale of Constantine and Silvester," the final story of Book 2, is told to exemplify the virtue of charity as an antidote to envy. Constantine, the great emperor of Rome, has contracted leprosy. His physicians conclude that he can only be healed by bathing in the blood

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6"Charity" in the first half of this story is defined as almsgiving, bounty, and compassion. In the second half of the account, which relates the miraculous healing of Constantine and his unfortunate gift to the Church, God, too, acts charitably. But unlike Constantine's agapistic concerns, God's charity is overwhelmingly nomistic in its emphases on reward and punishment, equity and justice, and acts of charity such as Constantine's as meritorious before God. See the discussion on this aspect of the tale in the next chapter.
of children seven years old or under. The decree is sent out for the mothers to bring in the children. Sorrowfully they gather at the palace, and the noise of weeping awakens the emperor, who decides that it is not good for so much blood to be spilled for him alone. Calling his treasurer, he bids him give money to the mothers that they might feed and clothe the children and return home without loss. This compassionate concern of Constantine's is characteristic of agape.

Constantine's decision is preceded by an account of his awareness of the laws of God. He calls to mind the "divine Pourveance" that operates through the law of nature, the law of hierarchy, and the law of scripture. Through the law of nature God has created all men alike: the poor man is born in the same manner as the rich and dies in the same way; the fool and the wise alike experience sickness and health; beauty and strength are free to every man; and the poor child is as able to choose virtue as is the king's son. "Thus stonden alle men franchised" (2.3244-63). This is not true in the law of hierarchy, which divine providence has also ordained. Some have honor and riches, others poverty and distress, and some rule while others serve (2.3264-73). Constantine also remembers that He who has made the law of nature would also "binde" man to the scriptural law:

And ek he tok a remembrance
How he that made lawe of kinde
Wolde every man to lawe binde,
And bad a man, such as he wolde
Toward himself, riht such he scholde
Toward an other don also. (2.3274-79)

Through the consideration of these laws, Constantine finds his own proper order, his own integrity:
And thus this worthi lord as tho
Sette in balance his oghne astat
And with himself stod in debat,
And thoghte hou that it was noght good
To se so mochel mannes blod
Be spilt for cause of him alone. (2.3280-85)

Add to these conscientious reflections on the laws of God the emotional
outbursts of the mothers and the children, and Constantine's

herte tendreth,
And such pite withinne engendreth,
That him was levere forto chese
His oghne bodi forto lese,
Than se so gret a moerdre wroght
Upon the blod which guilteth noght. (2.3289-94)

Although a consideration of the laws of God has prepared Constantine's heart so that he is able to act compassionately, it is the sight of the mothers and the children and the sound of their cries that engender pity and charity, not the laws themselves. Constantine's acts of mercy are agapistic. Gower insists on it. For "pite" he chooses possible death (2.3289-94); for "pite which he tok," he forsakes all "leches" save God, concluding that he "'Who . . . woll maister be, / He mot be servent to pite'" (2.3295-3300). Constantine is "So ferforth . . . overcome / With charite" that he opens his storehouse and gives of his treasures to feed and clothe these women and children and send them safely home again (2.3301-10). Then in the next lines Gower emphasizes this act of charity by repeating it:

Thurgh charite thus he despendeth
His good, wherof that he amendeth
The povere poeple, and contrevaileth
The harm, that he hem so travaileth. (2.3311-14)
The rejoicing mothers return home, praying for the health of their lord who "hath his oghne will forsake / In charite for goddes sake" (2.3319-24).

When Gower presents stories that exemplify agape, he often uses the word "pite" as well as "charite." In the first part of the tale of Constantine "pite" and "charite" are used interchangeably, and both refer to acts that are agapistic. "Pite" enables Constantine to choose his own death rather than that of the children (2.3290-95), and "charite" empowers him to share his goods with the women and children (2.3301-07). In Book 7 the word "pite" takes on a different coloring, and "merci" rather than "charite" becomes its synonym.

Pity is the fourth point of Policy in Aristotle's theory of education. It is preceded by Justice, which may help account for the variant meaning of pity from that found in Book 2. Gower begins with what is usually considered an expression of agape. It was "Pite" that moved God to send His Son "the world to rihte" (7.3110) and "Pite" that was the cause of that good (the Incarnation) whereby we all are saved.

Gower's Latin sidenote (7.3107) identifies this pity as "Pietas," which carries the following meanings: "1) An attitude of dutiful respect towards those to whom one is bound by ties of religion, consanguinity, etc. . . . 2) Applied to the attitude of man towards the gods [or] of the reciprocal feeling of gods towards human beings . . . . 3) of relationship between human beings . . . . 4) of citizens toward a state or ruler; also of government towards citizen" (Oxford Latin Dictionary). Professor Alan K. Brown has pointed out to me that the word also means "justice towards the gods." For the first section of the story of Constantine, the Latin sidenote (2.3190) uses the word "caritas." For the second half of the story, which recounts the relationship between God and Constantine, "pietatis" is given (2.3206). Thus Gower perceives Constantine's act toward the mothers and children as moved by love or caritas, but God's toward Constantine as by an act of justice. Significantly, this is exactly the form that the relationship between Constantine and God takes.
(7.3112-13). If God, who is all wise, values pity, man also ought to have "Pite" and "sette [it] in pris" (7.3114-17).

Having begun with the affirmation of God's regard for the world, the greatest example we have of agape, Gower shows the virtue of pity in human relationships, specifically that between a king and his people, since Book 7 is Aristotle's instructions for Alexander. All subjects should respect their ruler and obey his commands. By the same token, the ruler should be "pitous" and "gracious" to his people (7.3122-26). "Pite" will make a king so courteous in both word and deed that he will take no vengeance that could be construed as cruelty; he will be merciful (7.3120-31). In this way the king will be assured of the love of the people and the continuance of his reign (7.3132-36). Any king who remains firm and stable in "Pite" can himself save the realm:

For in a king, if so befalle
That his Pite be ferme and stable,
To al the lond it is vail able
Only thurgh grace of his persone;
For the Pite of him al one
Mai al the large realme save. (7.3174-79)

"Pite" is well equipped with mercy and will do all in its power to keep another from suffering pain, for "Charite," the mother of "Pite," will suffer nothing to go amiss if at all possible (7.3163-69). Pity also extends beyond the subjects of the realm: it shows mercy even to the enemy (7.3205-08). Scattered throughout this discursive account of pity are references to those who have practiced pity as well as

8Here "charity" should be defined as agapistic love. This same relationship is given in Book 2, lines 3173-74.
citations of authorities on pity. The Emperor Constantine asserts that any ruler who bows to pity is worthy to be lord of the world (7.3137-41). Troian, who once governed Rome, preferred to draw to himself the hearts of his subjects "With love . . . / Than with the drede of any lawe" (7.3152-56). In the second recension Gower cites James the Apostle, Cassiodorus, and Tullius in support of this agapistic concept of pity (7.3149-80*).\textsuperscript{9} In addition, he includes four stories to illustrate his definition of pity: the "Tale of Codrus," the "Tale of Pompeius and the King of Armenia," and two stories found in the second recension, the "Tale of the Jew and the Pagan" and "Alexander and the Knight." However, only the tale of Codrus, the king of Athens who chose to die for his people rather than see them defeated in battle (7.3163-99), is a true example of pity which is agapistic. There is another occurrence of pity in Book 7 which exemplifies agape—the story of Carmidotirus (7.2845-88)—even though the account is given to illustrate the firmness of the law. The consul Carmidotirus made a law that anyone entering the council chamber wearing a weapon should be put to death. One day he himself, returning in haste from the hunt, unintentionally breaks his own law. When the men of his council are lenient and refuse "for routhe / To do justice upon his gilt," he kills himself with the very sword by which he had broken the law. Adherence to the letter of the law, characteristic of nomos, controlled Carmidotirus. The concern of the council members, however, is an expression of agape. They refuse to be limited by law and

\textsuperscript{9}Macaulay places at the bottom of the appropriate pages additions found in the second recension and omitted in the third. As in Macaulay, these lines, when referred to, will be starred.
seek instead to transcend it. On the spiritual level, the story is excellent proof that the law kills and that salvation must come through agape.

Similar to the sacrificial agape that Codrus has for his people are the loves of Alcestis for her husband and Lycurgus for his subjects. Alcestis, obliged to choose between her life and her husband's, makes the choice in his favor without hesitation (7.1917-43). Such spontaneous, sacrificial love is characteristic of agape. Lycurgus is not forced to make a decision, as are Codrus and Alcestis, but, caring more for the people of the realm than for himself, he willingly chooses exile so that his subjects will never forsake the good and just laws which he has established (7.2917-3017).

So, examples of agapistic love are found in the Confessio Amantis, but they are rare. There are a mere six tales with explicit agapistic statements of purpose: the tales of "Constantine and Silvester," "Telephus and Teucer," "Midas," "Codrus," "Alexander and the Knight,*" and "The Jew and the Pagan.*" Yet the tales of "Codrus," "Midas," and

10 The various expressions of these purposes are:

1) "Constantine and Silvester": Charity denies the self in favor of others:

Ayein Envie is Charite,  
Which is the Moder of Pite,  
That makth a mannes herte tendre,  
That it mai no malice engendre  
In him that is enclin therto.  
For his courage is tempred so,  
That thogh he mihte himself relieve,  
Yit wolde he noght an other grieve,  
Bot rather forto do plesance  
He berth himselven the grevance,
"Alexander and the Knight* (eleven lines long) alone carry through the agapistic purposes in the tales proper. Only the first half of "Constantine and Silvester" does and "Telephus and Teucer" and "The Jew and

So fain he wolde an other ese.
Wherof, mi Sone, for thin ese
Now herkne a tale which I rede,
And understand it wel, I rede. (2.3173-86)

2) "Telephus and Teucer": Every law binds a man's reason to mercy:

For every lawe and every kinde
The mannes wit to merci binde;
And namely the worthi knihtes,
Whan that thei stonden most uprihtes
And ben most mihti forto grieve,
Thei scholden thanne most relieve
Him whom thei mihten overthrowe,
As be ensample a man mai knowe. (3.2631-38)

3) "Tale of Midas": No one is bettered by gold unless he spends it for man's use:

for man is noght amended
With gold, bot if it be despended
To mannes us; wherof I rede
A tale, and tak therof good hiede. (5.135-38)

4) "Tale of Codrus": The king who has pity can save the whole realm:

For in a king, if so befalle
That his Pite be ferme and stable,
To al the lond it is vailable
Only thurgh grace of his persone;
For the Pite of him al one
Mai al the large realm save.
So sit it wel a king to have
Pite; for this Valeire told,
And seide ....... (7.3174-82)

5) "Alexander and the Knight*": A king should judge with pity. Directly preceding the tale are citations from the Epistle of James, Cassadorus, and Tullius, all recommending pity in the king (7.3149-67*). This tale, which has no stated purpose of its own, illustrates these recommendations.  

6) "Tale of the Jew and the Pagan*": This tale is told to lend support to pity and grace:
the Pagan* not at all.

There are four tales with applications that are agapistic: "The Three Questions," "A Strange Bird," "Telephus and Teucer," and "Midas."^11

To do pite support and grace,
The Philosophre upon a place
In his writinge of daies olde
A tale of gret essample tolde
 Unto the king of Macedoine. (7.3207-11*)

^11 The various expressions of these applications are:

1) "Tale of the Three Questions": Genius gives an agapistic description of humility, the antidote for Pride:

   Bot Humblesce is al otherwise,
   Which most is worth, and no reprise
   It takth ayein, bot softe and faire,
   If eny thing stond in contraire,
   With humble speche it is redresced. (1.3413-17)

2) "A Strange Bird": The virtue of mercy never lacks grace:

   Be this ensample it mai well suie
   That man schal homicide eschuie,
   For evere is merci good to take,
   Bot if the lawe it hath forsake
   And that justice is therayein.
   For ofte time I have herd sein
   Amonges hem that werres hadden,
   That thei som while here cause ladden
   Be merci, whan thei mihte have slain,
   Wherof that thei were after fain:
   And, Sone, if that thou wolt recorde
   The vertu of Misericorde,
   Thou sihe nevere thilke place,
   Where it was used, lacke grace. (3.2617-30)

It should be noted that this application includes nomistic as well as agapistic advice: if law and justice approve, then "For evere is merci good to take."

3) "Tale of Telaphus and Teucer": Genius advises Amans to have pity on and compassion for other men's passions and to let nothing be dear to him that is another's grief:
Yet all of these tales include nomistic statements as well in the applications Genius makes. Moreover, the agapistic admonitions in the tales of "A Strange Bird" and "Midas" are muffled by nomistic advice that tends to limit or qualify agape. Through Genius, Gower recommends actions that stem from a true agape and recognizes that those who practice

Lo, this ensample is mad therfore,
That thou miht take remembrance,
Mi Sone; and whan thou sest a chaunce,
Of other mennes passioun
Tak pite and compassioun,
And let nothing to thee be lief,
Which to an other man is grief. (3.2718-24)

Immediately following this advice, Genius communicates a general conclusion to the whole book, which has, on the surface, an agapistic emphasis. But Gower's qualification of mercy by justice and law must be kept in mind (see the above reference--the application of "A Strange Bird"--and the digression on war, 3.221f):

To stonde ayein the vice of Ire,
Consaile thee with Pacience,
And tak into thi conscience
Merci to be thi governour. (3.2726-29)

4) "Tale of Midas": Again, the brief agapistic generosity Genius enunciates following this tale is circumscribed by nomistic statements:

Bot Sone myn, do thou noght so,
Let al such Avarice go,
And tak thi part of that thou hast:
I bidde noght that thou do wast,
Bot hold largesce in his mesure;
And if thou se a creature,
Which thurgh poverte is faile in nede,
Yif him som good, for this I rede
To him that wol noght yiven here,
What peine he schal have elleswhere. (5.353-62)

One gives to the poor who are in need, not out of a prodigal heart, but by "hold[ing] largesce in his mesure." This limitation by measure in effect destroys the spontaneity of agape. Moreover, Amans is warned that if he does not give now, he may suffer in the world to come. Immediately following this statement is the story of "The Punishment of Tantalus," told to demonstrate that avarice is analogous to certain pains of hell.
such are happy (3.2622-26). But unrestrained generosity goes against Gower's cautious nature, and he must ensconce his agape in nomos. When this occurs, Gower, in effect, negates the agape he has just commended.

The largest cluster of examples of agape is found in Book 7, which contains three stories with an agapistic purpose: the "Tale of Codrus," "Alexander and the Knight,*" and the "Tale of the Jew and the Pagan.*" Within the book itself there are twenty instances of agape, nearly half of which (eight) are found in the two short tales about Codrus and Trojan. Four of the twenty are references to God's agape, one is an assumed agape only,\(^{12}\) and another is an agapistic concern expressed by the narrator (7.2199-2220). The remaining six references are either agapistic actions of characters or statements regarding their agape.

The length of Book 7--almost twice as many tales and/or discussions as Book 5, the longest book by line count--may help account for the relatively large number of instances of agape. In addition, Book 7 contains the discussion on Pity, which invites agapistic illustrations or affirmations. What is most interesting, however, is that Book 7, in spite of its length, its number of stories, and its collection of agapistic examples, includes no applications of either agape or eros. Genius's purposes are given to make Amans aware of the particular vice or virtue the story to be related illustrates. But his applications contain the

\(^{12}\)In the example of the justice of Maximin (7.2765-79), Gower affirms that the just king will not do anything "excessive / Ayen the lawe . . . / For love ne for hate" (7.2722-23). But Gower leaves open one doorway through which agape may enter and modify this strict nomos. The king has the power to stand above the law in some instances. For example, with regard to capital punishment, he has the right "To yive bothe and to withdrawe / The forfet of a mannes lif" (7.2718-21).
advice, admonitions, cautions, or warnings that are pertinent to Amans's situation or necessary for his salvation. Yet nowhere in Book 7, and rarely elsewhere in the poem, does Gower recommend agape or eros as a guide for behavior. He is cognizant of both loves, and in the Mirour de l'Omme and Vox Clamantis is capable of depicting them with true awareness of their meaning, but he never perceives of either eros or agape as a practical solution for the ills of society despite his insistence upon "love" as the all-encompassing cure for the world. What Gower does recommend, however, is nomos, the legalistic arm of caritas.

That nomos does dominate eros and agape in the Confessio Amantis is no surprise. The general appeal to law was a long-standing feature of the Middle Ages. Discussing the struggle between the Papacy and the Crown, W. A. Pantin refers to the "medieval zeal for legal rights [which] represents one of the finer features of the medieval mind, and one that has done a good deal to mould western civilization and society." Living in such an atmosphere makes it easier for Gower to call for obedience

For example, see 11. 10561-836 of the Mirour for a sustained declaration of eros, which begins as follows:

The sixth weeping [of Devotion] is not in vain, but is rather the most supreme which the soul can weep. It is for the love of God alone, to which all the five other senses, together with complete affection, are put into serving and loving God with such ardent desire that all earthly joy seems anguish and trouble . . . .

Similarly, in the Vox Clamantis, Gower states that we are to love God unstintingly: "In loving Him let moderation vanish, let there be no bounds, for none has loved Him according to His worth" (p. 109). Also, examples of agape are to be found in both the Mirour and the Vox. See Mirour, 11. 12937-13152 and Vox, pp. 106-07 and 111-12, on God's agape or pp. 238-39, with regard to agape on the human level.

Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century, p. 93.
to law as a cure for the ills of society. Moreover, the nostalgia for the age of gold, so readily apparent in the Prologue of the Confessio Amantis, confirms Gower's desire to return to a time when the law of hierarchy was the steadying influence for the world. But that system is breaking down, its values being displaced by an encroaching secularism and a religious individualism.\textsuperscript{15}

Christianity, too, is a religion of ethics, and the Church stressed the centrality of man's obligation, his moral responsibility, his duty to God, and his need for perfection. Under such constraints, certain questions became pressing. Janet Coleman identifies several of these:

"What must one do to be worthy of receiving the reward of eternal life?" Is it sufficient to labour "as the world asks," or is there a more direct and certain road which can help the man who does his best naturally to persevere onwards towards being numbered among the elect? What precisely does each man owe, and how does he merit reward? What must he do necessarily to ensure salvation? Can we even speak of the natural act that is necessary to salvation apart from that act which is performed with the help of supernatural grace towards the same end?\textsuperscript{16}

The doctrine of grace, too, had come upon hard times. Saint Augustine had recognized the need for grace as the inciting force of caritas. Man was too bound by his sinful nature, brought on by the Fall, to exert


\textsuperscript{16}Coleman, Medieval Readers and Writers, p. 243.
the effort needed for salvation unaided by grace. But the concept of grace was beginning to wear thin. In a discussion of the author of The Cloud of Unknowing, David Knowles comments that from the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards grace as a real entity had been gradually losing ground under the attack of the new school of thinkers. This traditional conception of grace as a quality of the soul, strictly and truly the beginning, the seed, of eternal life, had vanished under the attacks of the followers of Ockham (who in this matter was not himself in intention a revolutionary), and had become a relationship, an attitude towards God, not necessarily implying any new principle or quality or spring of action in the soul concerned. Grace was simply a right relationship of man towards God consequent upon God's acceptation of man's love.17

Seen against such a background, Gower's nomism is not difficult to understand. The loss of a firm doctrine of grace would tend to place preponderance on man's effort in his search for salvation rather than on God's initiating power. The individualism of popular piety would help account for the stress on self-profit which runs throughout the Confessio Amantis. Furthermore, the act of confession itself, with its psychological probing of the sinner in respect to his sins, would increase the tendency toward individualism. In addition, the insistence on every man's obedience to the commands of God and his responsibility before Him, and especially the responsibility of the prince as the "ruler for the welfare, morals, and integrity of his country,"18 open the door through which nomos is able to enter.

17Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition, p. 95.
To characterize the caritas of the Confessio Amantis as nomistic is not to denigrate Gower or his ideology in any way. Gower's philosophy is sincerely and overtly Christian in all his works. For example, his concept of law cannot be understood properly apart from the recognition of God. In the Vox Clamantis the law envisioned is the law of God, in particular the hierarchy of the three estates, believed to be decreed by God, and the civil law as an expression of God's law. Gower advises Richard II to "be a lover of justice. Be dutiful and govern your people according to law. But in order that the law do good, let your approval lend assent to the law through Christ, without Whom no good law is bestowed" (p. 245). Quoting from a book "of the clergy of Rome," he admonishes the rulers of the Church to "... Serve justice, let your ways be impartial to all. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you ..." (p. 134). When references to the law are not literally connected with the law of God, they are understood to be so. Gower makes such statements as "the law of the Gospel, the voice of Paul, the word of the prophet are my three witnesses of whence is our salvation" (p. 127); "A world without justice has abolished the law that once was Christ's . . . . false men . . . . hold that Thy perfect law is null and void" (p. 145); "Make our leaders be what Thou hast decreed by Thy law, so that the right way of life may guide them" (p. 145). In the same work Gower also distinguishes between the laws of man, which are often evil, and the laws of God:

Christ's law, to be sure, was the kind which His grace rendered welcome, but our positive law is strict in its penalties. . . . Christ's law is quite generous to men, but under our law no mercy is freely given without money. . . . Thus it is that
positive law, which the clergy has established, represents a big business. . . . [The clergy] are people who preserve neither the teachings of the Old Testament nor the new ones which Christ added to them (p. 123).

Later in the *Vox* he contrasts love and man's law, which is unlike God's law: "The law rampages, piety is dormant, wisdom fails, peace is a burden, and every lawsuit furnishes opportunities. . . . But if the people would stand united in enduring love, then the status of the lawyer would be meaningless" (p. 225). He reminds King Richard that he is made in the image of God so that he can follow God's law, and he points out the spiritual advantages of so doing:

> Remember that you are made in the image of your Maker. Why? That you may follow Him, conforming to His law. Therefore, it is to your advantage that you love with all your might Him who fashioned and redeemed you. O king, pray for the bounty of so great a King, that He may fulfill your life and protect your death. . . (p. 247).

A second important indicator of Gower's fundamental Christian philosophy is wrapped up in his use of a wide variety of references drawn primarily from Christian and classical sources. R. F. Yeager, in his query regarding Chaucer's dedication of the *Troilus* to "moral" Gower, defines the latter's morality as Senecan virtue and assumes that it stems from antiquity:

> What Chaucer meant by "moral" Gower, then, is probably to be derived from four elements of Gower's poetic reputation as it would have been familiar in London in the mid-1380's:* personal and social reformism; conscious (and conscientious)

*Yeager notes that the *Vox Clamantis* was "doubtless Gower's poem read most often in the mid-1380's." Yeager, "'O Moral Gower,'" p. 93.
classicism; an advocate's stance; a thorough consistency in his approach to questions of evil and good. Summed, these characteristics amount to a view of the "moral" based on antiquity. "Moral" Gower is arguably possessed of Senecan virtue (for Chaucer links the Roman with "moralitee" in what may be the first use of that word in English): it is a definition converted from Latin mores, carrying with it ideas of behavior in accord with honored custom and just law, ordained by civic--and higher--authority. . . . Entries in the Middle English Dictionary . . . almost invariably couple "moral" with some reference to law--of "kinde," of the state, of God. . . . 19

Although Yeager concedes that Gower "adapts" classical references "to render moral arguments consistent with Christian teaching" and that the "Confessio Amantis provides us with our best-known examples of this practice," he seems to insist on the classical legacy as the most important source, not only for Gower but also for medieval thought in general. Discussing Troilus's laughter from the eighth sphere at all human action which does not benefit the soul, Yeager states:

To stop his scoffing, we would have to alter what gives us delight, not only in our moral lives, but also in all our various "werk," including the institutions of the state. Such a holistic moral reform, connecting personal ethics with public, is part of the legacy of Greece and Rome so central to medieval judicial and religious thought. It is also, along with temptations of "lust" in its narrow, moral sense, Gower's major focus throughout his writings . . . . 21

Jean Leclercq also notes that classical literature was an important literary source for the Middle Ages, but he places it last in importance of the three major sources of, at least, monastic culture, following the

19 Yeager, "'O Moral Gower,'" p. 97.
20 Yeager, p. 93.
21 Yeager, p. 92.
Scriptures and the Patristic tradition. More importantly, Leclercq describes medieval monastic culture as a synthesis of these three influences, which became the heritage, then, of medieval man.

Leclercq's study is limited to medieval monastic culture through the twelfth century and would not include Gower's era, which may have so emphasized the classical influence that an awareness of the synthesis of sources was lost. Yet Yeager's argument is that Chaucer dedicated the \textit{Troilus} to Gower precisely because the latter would be capable of correcting the audience should it misunderstand the "Christian vision of the final stanzas" and because Gower understood "the correct relationship between pagan and Christian inspiration." So, a loss of the synthesis that Leclercq portrays is implicit in Yeager's argument. By the same token, however, Gower had somehow maintained the synthesis, and Chaucer was convinced of it; hence the dedication. The search for Gower's sources for the \textit{Confessio Amantis} is legitimate but inconclusive unless one keeps in mind that these sources function in syncretic fashion in Gower's thought. This is why it seems that Gower easily moves from Isaiah to Seneca, say, and vice versa. He really is not moving from one to the other at all, because for Gower they are one and the same. In short, the flood of exempla, references, and allusions that can be found in Gower's works all flow from one river.

The concept of reason as it appears in the \textit{Confessio Amantis} is another indication of Gower's Christian philosophy. In fact, an

\footnote{Leclercq, \textit{The Love of Learning and the Desire for God}, p. 139.}
\footnote{Leclercq, p. 181.}
understanding of what Gower means by reason is imperative, since it is the guide to the moral virtue recommended in the poem and thus fundamental to Gower's understanding of *caritas*.

After Genius has concluded the story of Apollonius, Amans, still unconvinced, asks Genius to say outright what is best for him. So Genius comes straight to the point regarding Amans's love: "it is a Sinne" (8.2088); that is, it is *cupiditas*. He explains to Amans that sin is not profitable and to follow after it is unwise (8.2089-94). Moreover, even if Amans were to succeed in fulfilling his desires, the end of every "lust" is painful, and therefore should be avoided (8,3096-99). In other words, cupidity is illogical. Genius clinches his argument with a few pertinent proverbs, concluding with the assertion that "love is blind" and makes his servants blind also (8,2104; 2131). A man so caught by cupidinous desire stands in need of advice that will restore his sight and bring him to a proper awareness of himself, because every man has a spiritual kingdom to "justefie." If he misrules this kingdom, he loses himself, and that is worse than if he lost ship and oar and all the world's goods besides. "For what man that in special / Hath noght himself, he hath noght elles" (8.2114-20). Therefore, Genius tells Amans that he must set his heart under that law which is governed by reason and not by will (8.2133-36). When Amans requests a second opinion and from a higher authority, he receives the same answer: "Let reason be your guide," Venus tells him (8.2919), and reiterates as well Genius's caution that *cupiditas* is deceptive:

If thou thin hele wolt pourchace,  
Thou miht noght make suite and chace,  
Wher that the game is noght pernable;
It were a thing unresonable,
A man to be so overseie. (8.2929-33)

In short, if you would procure salvation, do not pursue cupidinous desire, which can never be satisfied. Such a chase is neither reasonable nor prudent. Amans must forsake the court of love (cupiditas) and, guided by reason, "go ther vertu moral duelleth" (8.2925). Only reason can give Amans's love its proper direction, because reason is the imago dei in man (8.2971-79).

Rozanne Elder's analysis of William of Saint Thierry's ideas on love and reason may be helpful for understanding Gower's thoughts at this point. "...[William] spoke of reason as a second eye by which, with love, God may be seen. Reason aids and instructs love ...." 26 So when George Coffman identifies the rule of reason as Gower's "central thesis" for his three great works, 27 and Elizabeth Porter has Genius explain to Amans that "through the exercise of reason man achieves control over his animal nature ...", 28 it must be understood that this reason is God's image in man. That is, man is distinguished from the beasts because he, like God, has a rational soul. Thus reason is a trustworthy guide. Through reason man is led to a true knowledge of his sinful nature (Amans's traumatic look in the mirror) and thus to

26 E. Rozanne Elder, "William of Saint Thierry: Rational and Affec-


contrition and absolution. Reason, as conceived by Gower, is more than scientia, a mere rational science; if it is not sapientia, by awakening man's conscience, it brings him to wisdom. Thus, if man is governed by the rule of reason, he is led to a true knowledge of himself, and to know oneself aright is to know God, according to Augustine. In effect, then, to be guided by reason is the first step on the royal road to moral virtue, which leads at last to God.

Gower has presented the rule of reason as the necessary condition for moral virtue obliquely throughout the first six books of the Confessio Amantis, urging it more explicitly in Books 7 and 8 (see especially "Solomon's Wisdom" and "The Courtiers and the Fool" in Book 7 and lines 2106-25 of Book 8, referred to earlier), but in his prayer for England he presents it forthrightly. After a brief look at the clergy and knights and their duties, he examines the state of a king. In the first recension copies Gower does not criticize the estates; rather, he describes Richard II as the good king who qualifies as the just ruler. In the third recension, however, Gower mentions no king by name for either praise or blame; instead, he outlines the duties of the good king. This king is literally any king of England; he is also any man who through reason accepts his responsibility to rule his own personal kingdom. But whether literally or allegorically, the process is the same. The king's first concern is, through reason, to bring himself into a right relationship with God. This, says Gower, "is the chief of his office" (8.3068-72). When this alignment with God has been accomplished, the king will be able to fulfill his second responsibility, which is to attend to justice and govern the people (3.3073-79). Gower lists no
other duties for the king, but in the next lines he not only reiterates these two obligations, he shows their interrelationship as well:

For if a kyng wol justifie  
His lond and hem that beth withynne,  
First at hym self he mot begynne,  
To kepe and reule his owne astat,  
That in hym self be no debat  
Toward his god; for othre wise  
Ther may non erthly kyng suffise  
Of his kyngdom the folk to lede,  
Bot he the kyng of hevene drede. (8.3030-88)

Gower introduces a moral equation here: the ability to rule justly is in direct ratio to the king's relationship with God. The king who takes "his lust on every side / And wi1 noght go the righte weie" should not be surprised that God withdraws His grace (8.3090-95), which amounts, in effect, to damnation. But the king who, by the aid of reason and in humility, lives according to the law of God by eschewing vice and pursuing virtue will discover that he is capable of fulfilling all other kingly duties:

Bot what kyng that with humble chere  
Aftir the lawe of god eschuieth  
The vices, and the virtus suieth,  
His grace schal be suffisant  
To governe al the remenant  
Which longith to his duite . . . . (8.3096-3101)

Gower could hardly present any clearer the moral duty of the king: if the realm is to be "al on," the king must fear God and rule justly. If he does so, "his name schal be blessid, / For evere and be memorial" (8.3104-05). The lines of the second recension stress the same lesson:

What king that so desireth pes,  
He takth the weie which Crist ches:
And who that Cristes weies sueth,
It proveth wel that he eschueth
The vices and is vertuous,
Wherof he mot be gracious
Toward his god and acceptable. (8.3029-35*)

Similarly, Gower had advised the king in the Vox Clamantis: "If you wish to convert the kingdom subject to you, first make yourself return to God through Christ. And afterwards pacify your people toward yourself, not by means of terror but rather through love..." (p. 249).

So the need for caritas, expressed in the recognition of and turning to God via reason, has been Gower's bailiwick all along. Maria Wickert asserts that in Gower's three major works "Self-knowledge and love of God are ... the two basic demands which God makes of mankind as well as the prince."29 In the Confessio Amantis Gower's religious belief takes the form of ethical behavior rather than a mystical search for God. Gower, however, is vitally concerned with man's relationship to God, and ethic becomes identified with belief. The poem itself is a confessio, that is, it is an act of faith that involves acknowledge- ment and recognition, contrition and absolution. On the literal level, Amans is instructed regarding his lady; on the allegorical level, he is presented with examples of love as it should or should not be so that he might evaluate the love he has. The love that Genius recommends is caritas, but a caritas in which nomos predominates over agape and eros.

The "theology" of the Confessio Amantis is one of merit, that is, man attains blessedness by a series of acts. The fundamental question the poem asks is "How may I gain the lady?" or, "How may I attain to God?" The fundamental answer is obedience to certain moral principles that will enable a man to reach his teleological goal. Thus the poem stresses that which is morally profitable for the individual, whether that profit involves a religious, political, or ethical relationship. If society is to be brought into unity and if harmony is to be restored, each man must be an Arion and learn how to tune his own harp. Each individual has a kingdom to "justifie," and Gower believes that if every man seeks for and attains his own spiritual self-profit, he will help lay the foundation for common profit. Yet the latter is not the primary aim of the Confessio; rather, the poem seeks to make the way of love so plain that a man, though a fool, will not fail to find it.

Gower assumes two primary relationships in the Confessio Amantis—that between God and man and that between man and his neighbor—and both are controlled by law. Now, whether Amans, through sin, has damaged these relationships or has been ignorant regarding a proper stance toward the object of his love is the information that Genius must elicit from him so that he can instruct him properly. Confession of the seven mortal sins becomes the vehicle Genius uses to accomplish this end. As
he draws forth confessions or denials, or satisfies Amans's curiosity for more information, Genius admonishes in the presence of guilt or warns in the absence of it. Throughout, he advises and sets standards for the kind of behavior which will bring Amans successfully to his goal. He sketches out how Amans or any man can produce a righteousness of his own and thus be acceptable to God (or the lady) and enter into fellowship. Consequently, that which motivates the individual takes on distinctive prominence. With regard to God or authority, appeasement and obedience are advised; with regard to others, equity, justice, and the worth of the individual are major considerations; with regard to one's personal salvation, prudence, industry, and Aristotle's mean are all essential. Such nomistic action heals the breach between God and man and man and his neighbor; it brings peace and a quiet life and, most of all, common profit.

This brief outline of the Confessio, which reveals its nomistic tendencies, can be substantiated by a list of the characteristics of nomos that are to be found in the poem:

1. Divine vengeance and retributive punishment;
2. Urgings to avoid punishment;
3. Emphasis on general reward and punishment;
4. A *quid pro quo* form of justice;
5. Love given or withheld based on the worth of the individual;
6. Aristotle's golden mean as a measure for love;
7. Self-profit:
   a. Concern for one's honor, fame, reputation, etc.;
   b. Concern for winning and success in love;
c. Concern for gaining this world and the next;
d. Prudential wisdom as a guide for behavior;

8. Achieved righteousness:
   a. Meritorious acts;
   b. The virtue of man's own strength to live a good life;
   c. The virtue of diligence, perseverance, honor, prowess, and labor;

9. Law as the basis for all moral action.

These are the subject matter of the Confessio Amantis, the ideas that the numerous tales illustrate, the nuclei of the conversations. Although Amans consistently refers to winning the love of his lady, Genius's direct responses to him and the examples he proffers indicate that Gower is concerned with an object far more important than an earthly love. He is responding to the need for caritas in a world ravaged and divided by sin.

Caritas is the love that governs the divine-human relationship. That God is an important figure in Gower's poem is evident as early as the Prologue, which clearly sets forth the aspect of God's character that will be verified throughout the Confessio, which is that God's relationship to man is nomistic. This is demonstrated chiefly in that God inflicts retributive punishment on all who displease him.1 After

1With the exception of a few remarks on the Incarnation of Christ and God as creator, the references to God stem from the theory of atonement known variously as the Anselmic, the Latin, or the Satisfaction theory. This theory is rational and juridical. One of its important descriptions of God is that of Judge and His government as one of justice. An accompanying aspect of the doctrine is the wrath of God and the vengeance He wreaks on sin, which He perceives to be an insult to His justice and majesty.
the preliminaries of the Prologue are completed, Gower announces the
text, as it were, for this work of his: man is the cause of all evil,
and, bluntly put, unless he straightens up, God will straighten him out.
The nobles, the priests, and the commons are all at fault. The nobles
are not wise rulers in that they know not how to choose good counselors;
the priests are proud, greedy, ignorant, and careless; the commons do
not fulfill the obligation of their estate to remain in their proper
place.

To prove that man in general is culpable, Gower relates the story
of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue, which signifies "how the world
shall change / And waxe lasse worth and lasse, / Til it to noght al
overpasse" (Prol. 628-30). The metals, beginning with gold and conclud­
ing with earth mingled with steel, represent the gradual worsening of
the world, and the stone is God's punishment for sin (Prol. 625-57).
Gower moves into an historical account of the kingdoms of the world,
showing in each instance how certain rulers, whom Gower names, brought
about the destruction of their kingdoms. Ironically, the modern age of
iron and steel is ushered in by Charlemagne in defense of God's cause.
But later, under another ruler, partisan and contentious dissension
bring in the division and hate that characterize the present state of
affairs. Unless these change--and Gower has only one remedy: love for
God or caritas— the stone of God's wrath will fall. To support this
contention, Gower reminds his audience of the great flood which God
sent, destroying all the world save righteous Noah and his family (Prol.

2See the last line of the Latin stanza that introduces "Nebuchadnezzar's Dream" and lines 849-67 of the Prologue.
1008-16). He calls to mind also that when Nembrot erected the Tower of Babel in contempt of God, God punished his efforts by dividing the language so that men could not understand each other (Prol. 1017-25). These reminders are prelude to Gower's gloss of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. For Gower, the stone that falls is the retributive punishment of God for the world's wickedness, bringing about the final destruction of civilization. Then begins the after-life, the new world that "schal lasten endeles," and man shall go "al to peine or al to pes" (Prol. 658-62):

Al sodeinly the Ston schal falle,  
As Daniel it hath beknowe, 
Which al this world schal overthrowe, 
And every man schal thanne arise 
To Joie or elles to Juise, 
Wher that he schal for evere dwelle, 
Or straght to hevene or straght to helle. 
In hevene is pes and al acord, 
Bot helle is full of such descord 
That ther may be no loveday. (Prol. 1038-47)

The biblical account (Dan. 2:1-45) does not equate the destruction of the statue with retribution. Neither does it describe heaven and hell in terms of reward and punishment; in fact, the afterlife is not a part of the narrative at all. The stone, which Gower has earlier glossed as "goddes myht, / Which whan men wene most upryht / To stond, schal hem overcaste" (Prol. 655-57), is the new kingdom which God will establish in place of the kingdoms symbolized by the statue. This kingdom will destroy all other kingdoms and it will endure forever.³ In other words,

³A check into several of the patristic writers reveals that the general interpretation of this scripture is that the stone is Christ
Daniel's stone is the eschatological kingdom of God on earth; Gower's is God's retributive punishment. The latter has changed his source in order to present this feature of God's nature, which remains consistent in the course of the poem. Gower's God made the starry heavens, and He is the majesty that sits on high, but He is ever looking down upon the sons of men, observing their actions and praising, blaming, rewarding, or punishing them accordingly. Examples of this occur again and again in the Confessio Amantis.

and/or the eschatological kingdom of God. Tertullian asserts that Christ is "that 'rock' . . . which is read of in Daniel as forecut from a mount, which shall crush and crumble the image of secular kingdoms." ["An Answer to the Jews," in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1867; American rpt., ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, 1885; rpt. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), III, 172]. In the same work he describes the mountain as Christ, "praecised without concisors' hands, filling every land!" [Ibid., p. 154]. In his answer to Marcion, Tertullian again affirms that Christ is "that very stone in Daniel, cut out of the mountain, which was to smite and crush the image of the secular kingdom" [Ibid., p. 326]. Cyprian also identifies Christ as the stone and the mountain as the eschatological kingdom of God ["The Treatises of Cyprian," in The Ante-Nicene Fathers (1971), V, 523]. Severus says that "in the stone cut out without hands . . . there is a figure of Christ. . . . [He] will reduce to nothing that world in which exist earthly kingdoms, and will establish another kingdom, incorruptible and everlasting, that is, the future world, which is prepared for the saints" ["The Writings of Sulpitius Severus," in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd ser., eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (rpt. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1937), XI, 98]. Ignatius is yet another writer who holds to this general interpretation ["Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians," in The Ante-Nicene Fathers (1973), I, 61]. Occasionally the visions of Nebuchadnezzar's statue and Daniel's four beasts (chapter 7) are treated as one prophecy; the ten toes of the statue and the ten horns of the fourth beast are equated, with the tenth horn identified as the antichrist. In these interpretations Christ, the stone, judges the world. Hippolytus's exegesis is exemplary: "The stone that 'smites the image and breaks it in pieces,' and that filled the whole earth, is Christ, who comes from heaven and brings judgment on the world" [quoting Eusebius, "Fragments from Commentaries," in The Ante-Nicene Fathers (1971), V, 186-87. See also his own "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," Ibid., pp. 208-09].
Capaneus, whom Gower uses as an example of presumptuous pride, refuses to recognize the gods, considering prayer to them as vain speech brought on by fear. He prefers to rely upon his own chivalric powers. At the siege of Thebes, however, when he is "proudest in his gere" and presumes that nothing can injure him,

Godd tok himselve the bataille  
Ayein his Pride, and fro the sky  
A fiery thonder sodeinly  
He sende, and him to pouldre smot. (1.2000-03)

Whether "Godd" here refers to the God of Christianity or to Jupiter (although Gower generally mentions the names of the pagan gods) is debatable, but the lesson is not. The strength of man is lost, Genius tells Amans, unless it is well governed. Not only from the story but from the lines that precede it (1.1891-1909) the assumption is that the well-governed man recognizes God; he who does not is punished.

"Nebuchadnezzar's Punishment" is a prime example of God's retribution. In fact, Gower's purpose for telling the story is to prove that with the vice of vain glory "The hie god of his justice / Is wroth and gret vengance doth" (1.2777-79). The chief point that Daniel makes in his account of Nebuchadnezzar's calamity is that "the most High ruleth over the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:22; see also 4:14, 23, 29, 5:18, and 21). Although pride may be implied in one of the king's remarks, only twice in the story is the word "pride" actually used: once by Nebuchadnezzar himself after he has recovered

And the king answered, and said: Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built to be the seat of the kingdom, by the strength of my power, and in the glory of my excellence? (Dan. 4:27).
his kingdom (Dan. 4:34) and once by Daniel when he recounts the fate of Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar after the latter has seen the handwriting on the wall (Dan. 5:20). Thus the emphasis is not upon Nebuchadnezzar's pride but upon God as ruler of the earth and giver of its kingdoms to whomever He wills to give them. Now, Gower shifts this emphasis from God's sovereignty and His gift of earthly kingship to Nebuchadnezzar's pride in this kingship. In short, the shift is made from the arena of God to the arena of man, and this emphasis remains continuous in the story. Thus when reconciliation comes, the movement is from man to God rather than the opposite.

The biblical Nebuchadnezzar tells his story in order to show how "The most high God hath wrought signs and wonders toward me. It hath seemed good to me therefore to publish his signs, because they are great: and his wonders, because they are mighty: and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his power to all generations" (Dan. 3:99-100). He concludes in the same vein: "Therefore I Nabuchodonosor do now praise, and magnify, and glorify the King of heaven: because all his works are true, and his ways judgments, and them that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan. 4:34). The lesson that Nebuchadnezzar learns is that the Lord is able to give and able to take away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

The story is told simply, with the emphasis upon God and His action. Nebuchadnezzar is at rest in his house, flourishing in his palace, when he has a dream which frightens and troubles him. He asks his wise men for interpretation, but they are not able to unravel the mystery. Daniel is brought in, listens to the dream, and after some
hesitation, interprets it. His advice follows: "... redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor: perhaps [God] will forgive thy offences" (Dan. 4:24). Twelve months later, while walking through the palace, the king takes credit for the greatness of Babylon which he had "built ... by the strength of my power, and in the glory of my excellence" (Dan. 4:27). Immediately a voice from heaven announces that "Thy kingdom shall pass from thee" (Dan. 4:28), and the predicted calamity comes that very hour. The biblical author uses approximately 200 words (Dan. 4:25-30) to relate the actual downfall. Verse 31 begins simply with, "Now at the end of the days, I Nabuchodonosor lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my sense was restored to me: and I blessed the most High ... ." Another 160 words conclude the events of the story and the praise of Nebuchadnezzar for the King of heaven whose "works are true, and his ways judgments ... (Dan. 4:34). That which befalls Nebuchadnezzar is "the sentence of the most High" for the king's presumption of equality with God. The decree is never referred to as a punishment (though this may be implied in the hoped-for forgiveness of offenses); at the most, Daniel sees it as something that will make Nebuchadnezzar's enemies rejoice. The dream with its gloss and the verdict have the objectiveness of a mathematical equation or of a cause-and-effect law: if Nebuchadnezzar does X or fails to do Y, then he can expect Z. Nebuchadnezzar does X and Z results. No mention is made of God's wrath or His vengeance. At the end of the ordained days, and not because of any action the king takes or any prayers he prays, he lifts his eyes to heaven, his reason returns, and he blesses God.
Genius tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar not because Amans is guilty of vain glory, the branch of Pride in question—he has just acquitted him of that—or because the story has anything to do with love, the subject at hand. He tells it as a precaution against arousing God's anger: "How that ayein this proude vice / The hihe god of his justice / Is wroth and gret vengeance doth" (1.2777-79). A further reason is to show Amans that vain glory is "forto fle" (1.2782). He concludes with an even stronger admonition that God and His laws are to be feared:

And thus is shewed
What is to ben of Pride unthewed
Ayein the hihe goddes lawe,
To whom noman mai be felawe. (1.3039-42)

The lesson that Gower's Nebuchadnezzar learns is that if he has the right attitude toward God, God will have the right attitude toward him and will reward him with restoration to his proper form and to his kingdom.

Gower's story is not as simply told as the biblical account. Genius is so intent on emphasizing Nebuchadnezzar's pride that he uses the words "pride" and "proud" a dozen times, not counting the various uses of "veine gloire," "surquiderie," and "humility," pride's cure. Moreover, he elaborates upon the relationship between God and Nebuchadnezzar far beyond that found in the source. The opening lines are a description of Nebuchadnezzar's might and pride. The first reference to God is that "He tok vengance" upon the king's pride. This view of God is ameliorated somewhat in that God does send a vision to Nebuchadnezzar "To loke if he him wolde amende" (1.2811). Such concern can only be interpreted as a gracious act in hopes that Nebuchadnezzar will repent.
and be saved. However, this act of grace is not associated with God's love for Nebuchadnezzar and compassionate concern for his amendment but with punishment that is rooted in vengeance:

He was so full of veine gloire,  
That he ne hadde no memoire  
That ther was eny good bot he,  
For pride of his prosperite;  
Til that the hihe king of kinges,  
Which seth and knoweth alle thinges,  
Whos yhe mai nothing asterte,—  
The privetes of mannes herte  
Thei speke and sounen in his Ere  
As thogh thei lowde wyndes were,—  
He tok vengance upon this pride. (1.2799-2809)

Nebuchadnezzar will be punished, not because sin brings down upon itself its own destruction, but because God is a God of vengeance. God's wrath is creative when it is an instrument for correcting man and awakening him to his need for salvation. As such it is an expression of agape. When, however, that wrath does not arise out of God's mercy but out of His vengeance, it is an expression of nomos. If there is a relationship between the deed and God's response to the deed, then both deed and response are measured in terms of a law that has been broken or kept, and punishment or reward is forthcoming. If one perceives God as a God of vengeance, then actions are based upon that knowledge, and repentance takes the form of attrition (fear of punishment) rather than contrition (loving respect for God). The repentance of the biblical Nebuchadnezzar is contrition; the story is enveloped by the king's statements of praise, extollment, honor to God, and admission that the most High is the ruler of all the world and has power to give a kingdom to a man or take it from him. Daniel, as a human advisor, has suggested
that the king "redeem [his] sins with alms, and [his] iniquities with works of mercy to the poor." Whether Nebuchadnezzar acts upon this advice is not noted, nor is mention made at his restoration that he will perform alms. The only requirement God Himself has enjoined is that Nebuchadnezzar realize that he is the king of a flourishing realm only because God has permitted him to be. No other demand is made other than admission of this fact.

A look at Gower's presentation of Nebuchadnezzar's repentance, however, reveals the nomistic aspects of Gower's thought. In his interpretation of the dream, Gower's Daniel is more explanatory than his biblical counterpart. The latter uses about thirty words (Dan. 4:19) to explain that the tree is the king. Gower's Daniel needs nearly three times as many (1.2383-2900), chiefly because he must elaborate on the reason for the punishment and the nature of it, which follows the tree's description:

So that with vein honour deceived
Thou hast the reverence weyved
Fro him which is thi king above,
That thou for drede ne for love
Wolt nothing known of thi godd;
Which now for thee hath mad a rodd,
Thi veine gloire and thi folie
With grete peines to chastie. (1.2893-2900)

Gower reinforces this addition to the story by having Daniel repeat the same sentiment at the end of his interpretation of the dream:

5To the extent that the biblical Daniel has added to his advice, "Perhaps he will forgive thy offences," Gower has a precedent for his nomistic emphasis. But Gower goes far beyond this one statement, which is in no way connected with God's demands in the biblical story.
In these statements Gower makes clear that there is a relationship between the deed and the punishment; in fact, he emphasizes the point when he makes it an addition to the source and repeats it. With the stage so set for a deed-punishment relationship, its concomitance, deed-reward, easily follows.

The seven years over, the biblical Nebuchadnezzar lifts his eyes to heaven and his understanding returns. When the seven years are completed in Gower's story, Nebuchadnezzar's first look is not toward God but toward himself, and his action is not to bless the most High but to sigh for the very things that have brought about his downfall:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{... and thanne he gan to syke} \\
&\text{For cloth of gold and for perrie,} \\
&\text{Which him was wont to magnefie.} \\
&\text{When he beheld his Cote of heres,} \\
&\text{He wepte and with fulwoful teres} \\
&\text{Up to the hevene he caste his chiere. (1.2996-3001)}
\end{align*}
\]

The "For" in the second line of the above quotation can also function as a causative, in which case Nebuchadnezzar sighs because he once magnified gold and jewels. Whether he is sighing for the gold and jewels or because of them (and I suspect it is the latter), the point is clearly made in the statement about the coat of hairs: when he beholds his coat of hairs, he weeps and casts his face up to heaven. What he has become because of pride is what brings about his repentance. In his
heart (because he has no voice) he confesses that there is "no prosper-
ity" outside of God, that all men, rich and poor, are equal in God's
sight, that no man has power without God, and that God is most powerful
(1.3005-12). He then makes a covenant with God: if God will mingle
mercy with justice, he will promise to amend his life (1.3013-21). Gow-
er's imagination becomes ludicrous in the lines that follow; however,
the very ludicrousness intensifies the bargain aspect of the king's re-
pentance. Because he is literally in the form of an ox (the source says
he will graze like an ox), he cannot lift up his hands in prayer; so he
lies on his back and lifts up his feet and wails in his "bestly ste-
vene." Then he changes to a kneeling position and "braieth." All of
this action is carried out in order to "seche merci" and "assaieth" God.
When God sees that Nebuchadnezzar is "humble and tame," He responds,
and "in a twinklinge of a lok" Nebuchadnezzar receives his human form
again and his kingdom. God's reward is as immediate in time as His
punishment had been. Once restored, Nebuchadnezzar never succumbs to
the vice of pride again. He has learned the lesson that humility is
indeed the best policy, or as Genius puts it: "And thus is schewed /
What is to ben of Pride unthewed / Ayein the hihe goddes lawe . . ."
(1.3039-41).

The story of Demetrius and Perseus, an exemplum against envy, pre-
sents yet more evidence that vengeance and retributive punishment dog
the heels of the wicked. The simple purpose of the tale is to show the
evil results of detraction based on lies (2.1608-10). Perseus, desiring
the kingdom to which his brother Demetrius is heir, manages to destroy
Demetrius through lies told to the king, his father. When, too late,
the king becomes aware of what has happened, he seeks vengeance according to the civil law. But Perseus and his followers are so strong that "Ther mai no riht ben execut" (2.1740-42). God, however, has already decided that the conspiracy against Demetrius will not go unknown:

But such a fals conspirement,
Thogh it be prive for a throwe,
God wolde noght it were unknowe;
And that was afterward wel proved
In him which hath the deth controved. (2.1704-08)

The remainder of the story is an account of the execution of divine justice. God sets the length of time that Perseus may rule before he is overthrown:

Bot ther mai nothing stonde longe
Which is noght upon trowthe grounded;
For god, which alle thing hath bounded
And sikh the falshod of his guile,
Hath set him bot a litel while,
That he schal regne upon depos;
For sodeinliche as he aros
So sodeinliche doun he fell. (2.1752-59)

When Perseus decides to lay waste Rome, he assembles a great host of soldiers, so great "that it mihte noght be nombred, / The folk which after was encombred / Thurch him, that god wolde overthrowe" (2.1769-71). Paulus, the Roman consul, knows that the "hihe god" who hates all untruth shall "redresse" Perseus's crime against Demetrius (2.1795-1801). Perseus in his pride forgets "al the riht" which "longeth unto governance"; therefore, through "goddes ordinance" the soldiers that Perseus led against Rome fall through the ice while crossing the Danube. Many are drowned and the rest taken by the enemy (2.1809-39).
Similar accounts of vengeance and retributive punishment are numerous throughout the *Confessio Amantis* and can be found in every book. Most often it is the God of Christianity who enacts vengeance, but occasionally the accounts of such punishment involve the classical deities and/or man. The "Tale of Orestes" is a case in point.

Derek Pearsall, who maintains that Gower, with regard to his sources, "suppresses all the cross-connections and allusions, and re-embeds the pieces of the mosaic in the only overall pattern he knows, that of humane Christian values," feels that "something is lost" when Gower's sources "provide material which Gower is simply not equipped to cope with."^6 He uses the story of Orestes as an example:

> It is difficult to know, for instance, exactly what lies behind his telling of the story of Orestes . . . . Purportedly an exemplum against murder, it fails completely to make its point or even to extract any single story line, and the pressure to provide motives and to relate cause to effect in a moral sphere results in a sad mangling of high tragedy. . . .

Elizabeth Porter, on the other hand, insists that Gower uses the vengeance of Orestes "to pursue his theme of the relations of the ethical microcosm and the political macrocosm." She continues: "A significant portion of Gower's version of the story is given over to an account of the general 'parliament' which follows Orestes' killing of his mother and her lover. The point for Gower seems to be that the actions of

---


^7Pearsall, p. 483.
Orestes threaten disruption in the political macrocosm. . . ."\(^8\)

But the "significant portion" of the story amounts to 54 lines out of a total of 310, and the parliament seem to be discussing more whether Orestes killed his mother with malice aforethought than whether he is throwing the political world into disorder. And whether the story fails to make its point, as Pearsall insists, depends upon what the point is. The sin under consideration is wrath and the specific branch of wrath that this tale illustrates is homicide, particularly that homicide committed in the affairs of love when the will of the perpetrator is "noght wel assised" and "wit and reson ben aweie" (3.1863-67). Under such conditions "Folhaste," wrath, takes over, which, in turn, invites "gret vengeance" (3.1869). Genius then speaks directly to Amans, reminding him that desire is a fact of life, but that he should love in such a way that he will merit no punishment. For, he continues,

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{if thy wit be overgon,} \\
&\text{So that it torne into malice,} \\
&\text{Ther wot noman of thilke vice,} \\
&\text{What peril that ther mai befalle:} \\
&\text{Wherof a tale amonges alle,} \\
&\text{Which is gret pite forto hiere,} \\
&\text{I thenke forto tellen hiere,} \\
&\text{That thou such moerdre miht withstonde,} \\
&\text{Whan thou the tale hast understonde.} \ (3.1876-84)
\end{align*}
\]

Thus the "Tale of Orestes" is yet another account of the vengeance that falls upon those with whom God is displeased. Retributive punishment is the keynote of the story, and human beings, pagan deities, and God all act as agents of correction. The adulterous relationship of

\(^8\)Porter, "Gower's Ethical Microcosm," p. 130.
Clytemnestra is avenged by Orestes, who receives not only approval from the gods but also instruction from them on how to carry out the vengeance (3.1997-2001; 2005-15). Phoieus, lord of Cropheon, offers to help Orestes because Aegisthus had been married to Phoieus's daughter and had forsaken her for Clytemnestra. Phoieus seeks vengeance on Aegisthus (3.2023-32). Orestes avenges as well the death of his father by slaying his mother (3.2051-69). Menesteus, one of the leaders who have been called to sit in judgment on Orestes by reason of the murder of his mother, defends the vengeance Orestes took as that which was done at the command of the gods and not from personal cruelty (3.2143-71). The suicide of Egiona, Orestes's sister, is seen as "goddes juggement" that falls upon those who assent to murder, as did Egiona (3.2180-95). The moralization of Egiona's suicide is Gower's addition to the story, according to Macaulay, who sees it as "rather out of place, considering the circumstances of the story" (Works, II, 499, n. 1757). Yet, rather than being out of place, it is another affirmation of the nomistic aspect of this tale with its emphasis on divine retribution and judgment: "So that be goddes juggement, / Thogh that non other man it wolde, / Sche tok hire juise as sche scholde" (3.2188-90). That such vengeance and punishment is sanctioned is evidenced by the fact that the deaths of Clytemnestra and Egiona are placed within the context of a quid pro quo, always a proper motive in the Confessio Amantis:

Unkindely for thou [Clytemnestra] hast wroght,
Unkindeliche it schal be boght,
The Sone schal the Moder sle,
For that whilom thou seidest yee
To that thou scholdest nay have seid. (3.2065-69)
And as sche [Egiona] to an other wroghte,
Vengeance upon hiresel sche soghte,
And hath of hire unhappi wit
A moerdre with a moerdre quit.
Such is of moerdre the vengance. (3.2191-95)

There are numerous accounts in the Confessio of divine wrath and punishment. In the "Tale of Echo," whose purpose is to show that brok­
erage is "sore venged" (5.4570-72), an angry Juno punishes Echo (5.4620-
40). To demonstrate that rapine "mai noght failen of vengance," Phoe­
bus sends a pestilence upon the city of Troy because of Agamemnon's
crime against Criseide (5.6430-75). God damns Galba and Vitellius for their lust for the wives and maidens of Spain (6.537-95) and overthrows
Nero because of his unnatural self-indulgence (6.1151-1227). When the
king Cambyses finds a judge who will not "venge of lawe broke," he "dede
upon him . . . vengance" by having the judge flayed alive and his skin
nailed to the seat on which the judge's son will now sit, for the breaking
of the law must be avenged (7.2889-2904). The wicked Jew, in the "Tale
of the Jew and the Pagan," absconds with the pagan's ass and goods; so
the pagan appeals to God to judge his cause and act either with mercy
or with vengeance (7.3300-09*). Typically, God enacts vengeance rather
than showing mercy, because God rewards the "pitous" man by repressing
his foes (7.3330-35). The Jew is killed by a lion, the ass preserved,
and the pagan is directed by God to the scene of the slaughter.

The soldiers of Israel lose the favor of God and incur His ven­
geance because of their lust for the Saracen women (7.4406-45); the di­
vision of the kingdom is God's punishment for Solomon's blind lusts
(7.4469-4545); and God so avenges the transgressions of Antonius, who
customarily gave his life "holy unto thilke vice" (of lechery), that it
is still remembered (7.4574-84). The stories of Lucrece and Virginia are pointed warnings against all the vices that oppose the virtues of policy: the unchaste are chastised (7.5301). The first seven husbands of Sara, wife of Tobias, die, slain by a fiend, because they "the lawe exceede" (7.5307-65). In the opening lines of Book 8, Genius reminds Amans that God punished the pride of Lucifer and the apostate angels with hellfire (8.10-23); He punished Caligula for the violation of his sisters (8.199-212). Ammon paid for his lust when Absolom "Tok of that Senne vengement" and slew Ammon with his own hand (8.213-22).

Amans is admonished, after the account of Lot and his daughters, that incestuous love "torneth ofte to vengance" (8.265-67), which statement also serves as the purpose for "Apollonius of Tyre," and though that story involves more than vengeance, the deaths of the evil characters--Antiochus and his daughter, Strangulio and Dionise--come about through the retributive punishment that God or Apollonius metes out. Early on in the story we are told that God destroys Antiochus and his daughter "for vengeance" (8.977-1002), and the last six lines of the tale recall that vengeance (8.2003-08). Moreover, Apollonius punishes Strangulio and his wife Dionise by hanging, drawing, and burning them, then scattering their ashes to the wind (8.1944-49). Such brutal vengeance must be seen in light of the fact that Gower approves of Apollonius, which approval he confirms in three ways. First, he carefully depicts Apollonius's character as irreproachable; second, he takes pains to show that Apollonius is loved and admired everywhere he goes; and third, he draws attention to the fact that at every critical moment God guides Apollonius. Furthermore, the punishment meted out to Strangulio
and Dionise is accounted as an act of justice; they are slain through
the justness of justice ("Thurgh verray trowthe of rihtwisnesse"; 8. 1959),
and when the penalty has been carried out, all the witnesses are
thankful for God's providence, which "doth mercy forth with justice"
(8.1957).

The Confessio Amantis is filled with tales of vengeance or punish­
ment taken against the guilty who for various reasons have sinned. More­
over, the admonitions Genius gives as he applies the tales are generously
sprinkled with warnings that urge Amans to avoid punishment. A few ex­
amples will serve to illustrate this emphasis.

In a discussion of ingratitude that precedes the "Tale of Adrian
and Bardus," Genius affirms the inhumanity of this vice by asserting
that every kind of law that God has established is against it, and he
who breaks the law will be punished:

The bokes speken of this vice,
And telle how god of his justice,
Be weie of kinde and ek nature
And every lifissh creature,
The lawe also, who that it kan,
Thei dampnen an unkinde man. (5.4917-22)

After the "Tale of Medusa" Genius warns Amans that if he does not guard
against "fol delit," he will be overtaken by his cupidity and destroyed
by it (1.436-39). The account of "Mundus and Paulina" is written to
demonstrate that he who wins the goal of love through deceit, though he
may have delight for a while, he "schalt it afterward repente" (1.752-
57), and the "Tale of Canace and Machaire" proves that sudden, irrational
anger, ever unrestrained, is the cause of much evil (3.316-41). Genius
informs Amans that no one can fight against the natural law of desire that God has set in both man and beast. Therefore, he warns, harshness toward another should be restrained or else vengeance may fall (3.337-59). In the lines that introduce the tale of "Jupiter, Juno, and Tiresias," Genius advises Amans to restrain his words before he "falle in any paine" (3.724-29). At the close of the tale he reinforces the same lesson, adding that the wrathful man will lose favor where he thought to "pourchase" thanks (3.768-74). "Folhaste" will bring down vengeance, Genius says; therefore, Amans should love in such a way that he does not "deserve" judgment (3.1863-72). He who turns to malice cannot possibly know the peril that may befall him (3.1876-79).

The "Tale of Rosiphelee" points out the danger of failing to love when the opportunity presents itself (4.1227-35). After the vision, Rosiphelee determines to amend her ways, but she does so for one reason only: she is disturbed by the punishment she has seen meted out to the lady who was slow to love and realizing that she is in "the same cas," resolves to change her ways in order to avoid such punishment:

And tho for fere hire herte afflihte,  
And seide to hirself, 'Helas!  
I am riht in the same cas.  
Bot if I live after this day,  
I schal amende it, if I may.'  
And thus homward this lady wente,  
And changede al hire ferste entente,  
Withinne hire heart and gan to swere  
That sche none haltres wolde bere. (4.1438-46)

Genius concludes this tale by admonishing Amans that he who is idle and will not serve love may earn a greater pain than the lady of the vision, "and forthi / Good is to be wel war therbi" (4.1461-62).
If, as Midas did, a man will give money to the poor, he will avoid punishment in the afterlife (5.360-62). However, if a man embrace any covetousness that is not according to love's nature, as the false steward did, who prostituted his wife, he will repent of his act (5.2826-37). After recounting the "Tale of Tereus," Genius specifically cautions Amans against rapine lest what happened to Tereus may befall him also (5.6048-52).

Gower concludes his lengthy Book 5 with one of the most famous stories of the Middle Ages--the abduction of Helen, which resulted in the Trojan War--and he tells it to warn Amans of the "wreche" that accompanies sacrilege (5.7190-94), because for Gower it is not the rape of Helen that initiates the war; rather, it is the sacrilege Paris commits in the Temple. He first sees Helen there, and it is in the holy place that he steals her heart away when he should be offering his prayers to Venus (5.7505-18; 7586-87). Gower reinforces this point by referring to two other lovers who came to a bad end because they fell in love in a temple. Achilles first saw Polixena in the Temple of Apollo, and that "was the cause why he dyde / And al his lust was leyd aside" (5.7595-96); and Troilus lost his heart to Criseide in the holy place, for which he was forsaken for Diomede: "Such was of love his laste mede" (5.7601).

Genius begins the discussion of sacrilege, which leads up to the tale of Paris and Helen, by referring to the law God gave first to Adam and later to Moses that every man must work for his living. But there are many, Genius says, who are content to earn their way by stealing that which belongs to another, and thus the law of God is overrun (5.6971-75). Genius moves from this beginning to the subject of sacrilege
itself, which he defines as robbing Holy Church of its goods (5.6977-79).
The person guilty of sacrilege has lost all conscience; he gives God no
reverence and cares not for the priest's curse (5.6984-95). Genius fol-
lows this up by naming three men from the Old Testament who committed
sacrilege: Antiochus, Nabuzaradan, and Nebuchadnezzar (5.7007-25). This
lengthy reference to God's laws and to the Bible is indicative of the
seriousness of the subject for Gower.

So the tale is an important one on at least three counts: (1) the
references to God's laws; (2) the examples from the Bible; and (3) the
cause of the Trojan War as the choice of subject. In addition, the "Tale
of Paris and Helen" sums up nearly all the vices that are found in Book
5.\(^9\) The advice, then, that Genius gives Amans will be important.

The first comes early in the discussion on sacrilege and precedes
the tale. It is the typical warning: he who breaks God's law and com-
mits the sin of sacrilege has committed an unpardonable sin and will be
punished:

\begin{verbatim}
And forto speke it otherwise,
What man that lasseth the franchise
And takth of holi cherche his preie,
I not what bedes he schal preie.
Whan he fro god, which hath yive al,
The Pourpartie in special,
Which unto Crist himself is due,
Benymth, he mai noght wel eschue
The peine comende afterward;
For he hath mad his foreward
With Sacrilegge forto duelle,
Which hath his heritage in helle. (5.6995-7006)
\end{verbatim}

The particular admonition to Amans given at the conclusion of the tale

is that he "Be war therfore and bidd thi bede, / And do nothing in holy
gerche, / Bot that thou miht be reson werche" (5.7588-90). This is
followed by the examples of Achilles and Troilus, referred to earlier,
after which Genius reiterates the warning to impress upon Amans the ser-
iousness of sacrilege:

Forthi, mi Sone, I wolde rede,
Be this ensample as thou myht rede,
Sech elles, wher thou wolt, thi grace,
And war the wel in holi place
What thou to love do or speke,
In aunter if it so be wreke
As thou hast herd me told before. (5.7603-09)

In the conversation leading up to the story about Ulysses, Genius
describes how men use the world for their own indulgence. A sorcerer
will go even to hell to seek out the devil in order to advance himself
in love. Genius concludes that such a man, "For al the craft that he
can caste," finally must pay the piper (6.1376-81). Amans, who is in
danger of misusing his world in order to attain his lady (6.1360-73),
must realize what it means to "winne love amis, / Which endeth all his
joie in wo" (6.1779-81). Ulysses, who "thurgh the science of his art /
... / begat Circes with childe" (6.1459-61), meets an untimely and un-
fortunate death, unwittingly slain by the son of his witchcraft.

Nectanabus, too, who uses sorcery to satisfy his concupiscence,
suffers for it (6.1780-88). The conclusions Genius draws from the story
of Nectanabus are cogent: (1) Illicit use of sorcery results in death.
(2) God punishes those who, using powers against His law, refuse Him and
turn to "the deiules craft." (3) There is no profit in such behavior:
Nectanabus lost his kingdom and became an underling; his deception of
the queen turned to woe; through lust of love he got hate; Alexander overturned all of his "olde sleyhtes"; and finally, he was slain by his own son. (4) He who practices necromancy will receive a wrong for a wrong: "Nectanabus his craft miswente, / So it misfell him er he wente." (5) Genius continues this warning against the misuse of sorcery for one's own self-indulgence\textsuperscript{10} by referring to two other figures connected with the black art. Zoroaster, the first teacher of black magic, was slain despite his craft, and Saul, who had forbidden the practice of witchcraft, partook of it himself and was slain. (6) That which is against faith ("That stant noght riht with the believe") never succeeds (6.2337-94). In conclusion, Genius admonishes Amans that he should stand in "drede" of these examples of Ulysses and Nectanabus and

\begin{verbatim}
for no lust of erthli love
Thou seche so to come above,
Wherof as in the worldes wonder
Thou schalt for evere be put under. (6.2397-2400)
\end{verbatim}

Concomitant to the nomistic emphasis on divine wrath, judgment, and retributive punishment is the weight given to general reward and punishment. The illustrations assigned to this latter category are almost as numerous as the first, and the two taken together constitute one of the largest groups of nomistic characteristics in the whole of the Confessio Amantis, nomistic because the consistent and almost constant reminder of reward and punishment places in the mind of the Confessio's audience

\textsuperscript{10} The use of divination was not necessarily evil. It was the employment of the knowledge that was important. A man might use the craft of magic according to the law of nature or he might use it for unlawful gain (6.1293-10).
a suspicion that to practice caritas is worthwhile and not to practice it is dangerous.

In the "Tale of Telaphus and Teucer," told to illustrate that every law binds a man's reason to mercy (3.2631-38), what at first appears to be an agapistic example of mercy proves to be instead a nomistic emphasis on reward. The mercy which Telaphus shows to Teucer is motivated by the fact that he (Telaphus) owes Teucer a favor, for once in the past Teucer gave him help when he needed it. Telaphus said he would repay; now he does. Moreover, it happens that years ago Achilles (who with his son Telaphus has been warring against Teucer) had helped Teucer in time of need. So Teucer, recalling that deed, owes a double debt: first to Achilles and now to Telaphus for saving his life. Such a debt he pays by making Telaphus heir to his kingdom. Thus the merciful act of Telaphus to Teucer pays off. The tale is enveloped by statements that make this point quite clear. The beginning lines are "He mai noght failen of his mede / That hath merci . . ." (3.2639-40), and the concluding ones state, "And thus was merci reguerdoned, / Which he to Teucer dede afore" (3.2716-17).

The stories of Hercules and Achelons, Penthesilea and Philemenis, and Eneas are preceded by a general statement that "every labour axeth why / Of som reward . . ." (4.2023-24). In each case, the reward is a lady's love. Moreover, the tales of Penthesilea and Philemenis (combined in one story to show "hou love and armes ben acquainted"; 4.2137) contain a more explicit statement regarding reward. Pantasilee, seeking the love of Hector, goes to Troy, where she is slain by Pirrus, son of Achilles. Philemenis, seeking honor, also goes to Troy. He rescues
Pantasilee's warrior maidens and takes the body of Pantasilee back home for proper burial. For these deeds he "wan of love in special / A fair tribut for evermo" (4.2158-59). Every year the Amazon women send three fair maidens to Philemenis, and later to his heirs, as reward (4.2175-77).

In the digression on religion found in Book 5, Genius makes the forthright statement that good deeds will be rewarded: "... what man clepeth to Jhesu / In clene lif forthwith good dede, / He mai noght faile of hevene mede" (5.1790-92). Similarly, in Book 7, under "Theology," Gower takes account of the fact that there are mysteries of faith which the clerks of divinity are not always able to prove "be weie of Argument sensible," but he who "thenkth himself to save" and therefore believes will receive great reward (7.121-30). At the close of the "Tale of Virgil's Mirror" Genius moves into a contemptus mundi reflection. Covetousness in the king, in his advisors, or in his court is an evil thing and will be avenged. However, covetousness is not always punished; some who covet do profit, while others, who covet just as hard, do not. All things are not equal in this life, and the covetous man whose trust is in the world must accept whatever capricious Fortune gives (5.2262-69).

The tales of "The Two Coffers" and of "The Beggars and the Pasties" deal with the rewards that come to those who trust in Fortune and those who trust in God. The older knights and squires who murmur against the king in the "Tale of the Two Coffers" because younger men are advanced and they are not are taught the lesson, via a choice of two coffers, that the fault lies not in the king but in the fact that Fortune is against them (5.2383-87). The "Tale of the Two Beggars and the Pasties" advances
the *contemptus mundi* reflection and proves that those who trust in God will be rewarded. The first beggar holds that a man would be rich if the king chose to enrich him; the other that a man is rich to whom God sends happiness. The emperor, who has overheard the discussion, sets before the beggars two pies, one containing a capon and the other gold florins. The first beggar, choosing the pie with the capon, loses but does learn that he who trusts "mannes helpe" will be deceived. However, "wel is him whom god wol helpe, / For he stant on the siker side" (5. 2426-27). Such a stance brings reward in its wake.

The story of "Pompeius and the King of Armenia" (7.3215-44) deals with the one who gives the reward rather than with him who receives it. Pompeius has defeated the King of Armenia, has led him away prisoner and cast him into prison. The King of Armenia, however, so suffers his lot with patience and humility that Pompeius is moved to pity and restores the king's crown and realm. On the surface, Pompeius's action appears to be agapistic, and it is Gower's concluding story illustrating Pity, the fourth point of Policy. But Pompeius's deed does not have the spontaneousness of, say, Alcestis's sacrifice for her husband or of Co-drus's for his people, neither of whose actions stem from the desire to reward the recipients for good behavior. Pompeius's action, noble and commendable though it is, is nomistic, for the restoration of the king to his crown and realm is a reward unwittingly earned for having a proper attitude toward his lot.

The story of Dives and Lazarus, treated somewhat in Chapter Three, can be used here to demonstrate punishment that is not identified as a result of divine wrath yet still is nomistic. Genius tells this story
after first asserting its importance. He connects it with Christ three times: it is "Of Cristes word," "Crist himself it berth witnesse," and "Crist seith." It is in "thevangile," which, since the gospel tells it "plein," "mot algate be certein." Furthermore, although the story is in Latin, Genius will declare it in English "for the more knoulechinge / Of trouthe, which is good to wite" (6.975-86). Although Genius in telling the story follows the biblical account in its basic outline, he amplifies it along the way. For example, he gives more detailed descriptions, especially of Lazarus, than are found in his source and makes significant additions, such as the fact that the rich man

Ne deigneth noght to speke a word,
Onliche a Crumme forto yive,
Wherof the povere myhte live
Upon a yifte of his almesse. (6.1002-05)

Luke does not attribute this positive neglect to Dives; he merely states that Lazarus was "longing to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table" (Lk. 16:21). More importantly, some of Genius's amplifications take on a nomistic coloring. He expands Abraham's simple contrast of the fate of Dives and Lazarus into an elaborate statement of reward and punishment. Luke's Abraham remarks: "Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted; and thou art tormented" (Lk. 16:24). In contrast, Gower's Abraham points out to Dives that his punishement is a just reward of his earthly life:

"Më Sone, thou thee miht avise
And take into thi remembrance,
Hou Lazar hadde gret penance,
Whyl he was in that other lif,
The bodily delices soghest:
Forthi, so as thou thanne wroghtest,
Nou schalt thou take thi reward
Of dedly peine hierafterward
In helle, which schal evere laste;
And this Lazar nou ate laste
The worldes peine is overronne,
In hevene and hath his lif begonne
Of joie, which is endeles. (6.1048-61)

For the biblical Abraham's reminder to Dives that a great gulf is fixed
between him and Lazarus, Gower substitutes a judgmental statement:

Thou schalt no suche graces fiele; [a drop of cold
For to that foule place of Sinne, water]
For evere in which thou schalt ben inne,
Comth non out of this place thider,
Ne non of you mai comen hider;
Thus be yee parted nou atuo. (6.1066-71)

The nomistic emphasis is continued in yet another addition to the
source, the fear of punishment. Dives begs Abraham to send Lazarus to
his five brothers yet living to warn them "hou the world is went" so
that they will avoid hell. When Abraham reminds him that his brothers
have Moses and the prophets, Dives argues that if one sent from the
dead were to go to them, they "of pure fere" would repent (6.1088-99).

Genius's application is an admonition to Amans that if he really
understands this tale ("canst descryve / This tale"), he will know from
"sothe experience" that "bodili delicacie / Of him which yeveth non alm-
esse / Schal after falle in gret destresse" (6.1110-18). Dives would
not "unto his liche / A Crumme yiven of his bred"; therefore, "afterward,
whan he was ded, / A drope of water him was werned" (6.1120-23). "Thus
mai a mannes wit be lerned," Genius concludes, that he who indulges in
such "delices" as did Dives will discover after death overtakes him that that which "erst was swete is thanne sour." However, he who puts "delicacie" away will feed and clothe not only his body but his soul also (6. 1124-44).

When a story is told as an example of how to act or how not to act and the results of the action become not only a part of the story, but a clinching part, that constitutes motivation for behavior. The last lines in the tale proper of Apollonius recount not only the retributive justice enacted against Antiochus, Strangulio, and Dionise but also the good fortune that comes to Apollonius. Immediately after the account of the judgment against Strangulio and Dionise, Apollonius receives a letter from the citizens of Pentapolim telling of the death of Artestrates and praying Apollonius to receive the crown of Pentapolim and the fortune "which god hath yove him" (that is, Artestrates, who was also a worthy king). The last line describing the adventures of Apollonius is that at Pentapolim all good was supplied to him in abundance (8.1992).

Genius's first advice to Amans following the story is that one can learn from this account what it means "to love in good manere" (8.2009). There is reward, he continues, and it arises out of the service performed (8.2012). In short, one gets what one earns. Within the nomos motif perfection is achieved righteousness. By his fulfillment of the five points of Policy--Truth, Liberality, Justice, Pity, and Chastity--Apollonius attains to perfection and thus merits his reward.

The tale of "Apollonius of Tyre" includes both punishment and reward. Most of the tales in the Confessio Amantis, however, call attention to punishment which is inflicted rather than reward earned. This
is to be expected, of course, since Gower narrates more tales illustrating the cupidinous nature of man than man's better side. But there are a few accounts which stress the rewards that come to the person who knows how to love properly. One of these is the "Tale of Babio and Croceus." Although the story is told to demonstrate that the parsimonious man loses more than he saves (the end result for Babio; 5.4778-80), the major stress in the tale is on the success of the man who is aware of the fact that love can be motivated by reward (5.4800-05). Babio, who has Viola "at his menage," will yield to her none of the "likinge and plesance" that belongs to the "richesse / Of love" (5.4809; 4820-22). But Croceus is a "freissh, a fre, a frendly man / That noght of Avarice can"; he is "large of his despence, / And amorous and glad of chiere." He falls in love with Viola and "for sche scholde assente" to him, he "yaf hire yiftes evere among" (5.4333-45). Men say that "mede is strong," and such was proven true. Viola chose Croceus: "This Viola largesce hath take / And the nygard sche hath forsake" (5.4849-50).

Genius himself points out this power of reward to spur love: "He was wys that first made mede; / For where as mede mai noght spede, / I not what helpeth other dede . . . (5.4720-22); "So was he wys that ferst yaf mede, / For mede kepeth love in house . . ." (5.4798-99). His direct instruction to Amans following the story accents the necessity of generosity in order to be received at love's court:

Lo, thus departeth love his lawe,  
That what man wol noght be felawe  
To yive and spende, as I thee telle,  
He is noght worthi forto duelle
In loves court to be relieved.
Forthi, my Sone, if I be lieved,
Thou schalt be large of thi despence. (5.4863-69)

Similarly, the lines following the account of Lycurgus's unselfish love, who, Gower notes in passing, "for evere wolde plese / The hihe god, whos thonk [gratitude, reward] he soghte" (7.2940-41), emphasize the rewards that come to such good leaders as Lycurgus:

Of every bienfet the merite
The god himself it wol aquite;
And ek fulofte it falleth so,
The world it wolde aquite also,
Bot that mai nought ben evene liche:
The god he yifth the heveneriche,
The world yifth only bot a name,
Which stant upon the goode fame
Of hem that don the goode dede.
And in this wise double mede
Resceiven thei that don wel hier. (7.3029-39)

Here follows the brief list of lawgivers, including Lycurgus, whose names are still being "rad and sunge" (7.3040-61).

The primary basis for human relationships, similar to that between God and man, is justice. A right relationship with God and a government based on a proper understanding of justice are the two things most desired in the king (8.3069-79). From a modern perspective, true justice is disinterested; it does not weigh advantages but seeks equity for all. The justice generally depicted in the Confessio Amantis, however, is a quid pro quo, a common interpretation of the primitive eye-for-an-eye law of the Old Testament, which Gower generally rephrases in terms of the Golden Rule of the New. Justice as such, then, in the Confessio Amantis becomes a measure for love.
Most of the examples of Gower's use of the *quid pro quo* form of justice are found in Book 7, which emphasizes legal ethics, although examples can be found scattered throughout the poem. In Book 1, for instance, Narcissus is punished by a form of retribution that is in essence a *quid pro quo*, but the action of the nymphs (they bury him out of pity) softens the retaliatory action taken against him. Narcissus, a young lord who would not bow to love, through "the goddes pourveance" falls in love with his own reflection; this eventually destroys him. The nymphs bury his body, from which spring the flowers since named for him. However, these flowers, beautiful though they are, bloom contrary to nature and are a perennial reminder of the folly of Narcissus's pride which caused him to disregard the natural instinct of love (1.2356-48). Therefore, since Narcissus disdained love, love disdained him; or, as Genius phrases it for Amans's benefit, "And as he sette his pris most hyhe, / He was lest worth in loves yhe" (1.2361-62).

Similarly, in the story of "Tiresias and the Snakes," presented as a caution against unwarranted wrath, the angry gods punish Tiresias's unnatural behavior toward the snakes by transforming him into a woman: "And for he hath destourbed kinde / And was so to nature unkinde, / Unkindeliche he was transformed" (3.373-75). In the lines that precede the "Tale of Diogenes and Alexander" (3.1100-18), Genius states that the wrathful man who sheds blood without mercy or pity will have no mercy or pity from God at the day of judgment. He makes the same tit-for-tat equation in his account of the wars and death of Alexander. At the

More than once Genius expresses pity for the guilty. Canace and Egiona are two other examples.
height of his power, when the great king supposed most to be "hol lord and Sire," he was poisoned to death by his own people, upholding, incidentally, Genius's contention that condemnation awaits those who wage war "In worldes cause"--wars for profit. So, Alexander pays the penalty of death, and his punishment fits the crime:

Thus was he slain that whilom slowh,
And he which riche was ynowh
This dai, tomorwe he hadde noght:
And in such wise as he hath wroght
In destorbance of worldes pes,
His werre he fond thanne endeles,
In which for evere descomfit
He was. (3.2461-68)

The "guilour" will be "beguiled," Amans is cautioned (6.1379-81), and that lesson is affirmed by the accounts of Ulysses's death by Telegonus and Nectanabus's by Alexander, referred to earlier in this chapter. He who practices necromancy will receive a wrong for a wrong. Similarly, the man who will not be guided by measure will discover that measure will forsake him (7.2159-61). But on the positive side, he who serves pity earns pity (7.3330-31*), as, for example, in the "Tale of Constantine and Sylvester."

The first half of this tale illustrates the Emperor Constantine's agapistic action based on his response to the mothers and their children. The latter part of the story, however, is, in part, concerned with God's response to Constantine's gracious act and His rewarding of Constantine through His servant Sylvester. Gower's emphasis on reward and equity is evident in the introductory lines of this section of the story, which recount the conversion of Constantine. Hear, he says, what God, who
"doth all equite," has wrought in this matter:

To him that wroghte Charite
He was ayeynward charitous,
And to pite he was pitous:
For it was nevere knowe yet
That charite goth unaquit. (2.3328-32)

This concern is reinforced by the message of Peter and Paul, whom God sends to Constantine in a dream: "'O Constantin, for thou hast served /
Pite, thou hast pity deserved'" (2.3339-40). After informing Constantine that he will be cleansed of his leprosy, Peter and Paul remind the emperor that he has persecuted the church. "Bot now," they continue,

thou hast somdiel appesed
Thi god, and with good dede plesed,
That thou thi pite hast bewared
Upon the blod which thou hast spared.
Forthi to thi salvacion
Thou schalt have enformacioun. (2.3357-62)

The language of appeasing God or pleasing Him belongs to the Anselmic theory of the Atonement, which teaches that man must, in some way, satisfy the demands of justice; that is, he must compensate God for his (man's) fault or sin. Man satisfies God through some deed, and God in turn accepts the work as meritorious. Constantine has pleased God by his unselfish response to the intended victims for his own healing. Therefore, he merits God's favor, or, as Sylvester tells him,

the hih creautour
Hath underfonge his charite,
Of that he wroghte such pite,
Whan he the children hadde on honde. (2.3436-39)
This measure-for-measure law is brought home to Amans in Genius's admonition regarding his reaction to his competitors in love. Among Amans's confessed sins is that of "bacbitinge of fals Envie" (2.451), and his lengthy confession includes the worst kind of behavior toward the lovers of his lady, whether they be good or bad (2.454-549). Truly concerned that Amans repent, Genius reminds him that such behavior will set his own cause behind, because what Amans does to others is what others will do to him (2.566-69).

Book 7 contains several stories that exemplify the law of quid pro quo. One would tend to assume that these illustrations would fall within the discussion of Justice, the third point of Policy. But, surprisingly, they are included under the fourth point, which is Pity. Gower gives only three examples of Pity ("Troian," "Codrus," and "Pompeius and the King of Armenia") before moving into the stories that exemplify its opposite, Cruelty. It is in this latter group that Gower most clearly justifies the eye-for-an-eye law. In fact, it may not be too far off the mark to assume that Gower's "piteous" man is one who dispassionately practices the law of quid pro quo. The tales of the cruelty of Leontius, Siculus, Dionysius, Lichaon, and Spertachus all carry the message of a just retaliation.

The tyrant Leontius overthrows the "piteous Justinian," maliciously cutting off his nose and lips in order to make him "lothe / Unto the poeple" (7.3274-75). But later his own nose and lips are cut off by

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12 He gives five, if the two stories of the second recension are counted: "Alexander and the Knight" (7.3168-79*) and "Tale of the Jew and the Pagan" (7.3207-3360*).
his conqueror, Tiberius, whose action is, according to Gower, ordained by God: "Bot he which is all merciable, / The hie god, ordeigneth so" (7.3276-77). The cruel tyrant, Siculus, who slays whom he can for the enjoyment of it—"But whom he myhte slen, he slouh / And therof was he glad ynouh" (7.3305-06)—is himself a target for cruelty of one of his own council, Berillus. But the devil, "that lith in helle fast" and "alle sleihtes can," overthrows the plan, and Berillus himself is caught in his own ingenuus device (7.3307-32). The cruel Dionysius sets no value on life but instead feeds his horses with men rather than with corn. Hercules defeats him and does to Dionysius the same as Dionysius had done to others—he feeds him to his own horses (7.3341-50). Genius sanctifies this quid pro quo by referring, in negative fashion, to the Golden Rule: "As he til othre men hath do, / The same deth he deide also" (7.3351-52). Lichaon sins against the law of nature when he slays his guests and serves them as food. For this beastly behavior, Jupiter turns him into a wolf (7.3355-69).

Genius has recounted these four stories without comment until at the conclusion of the last one he moves into the admonition he has for Amans: as the tyrant does to others, so will it be done to him (7.3378-79). The agents of the retributive quid pro quo in these particular stories have been God, other men, Satan, and Jupiter. In short, the law of just retaliation seems so extensive in practice that it could be taken almost as a law of nature.

13 For the word "merciable," the Latin sidenote uses the word "pius," which carries such meanings as "faithful to one's moral obligations," "dutiful," "upright"; "natural justice," "equity"; "justly waged [wars]." Oxford Latin Dictionary.
Similar to the above stories but more elaborate in its presentation is the tale of "Spertachus and Thamaris." Gower prefaces this record with an account of the noble lion (7.3387-99) who, if a man whom he is about to slay will bow before him, of his nature will restrain his ire and refuse to harm his prey. Spertachus, however, is worse than a beast in the cruelty he extends to his prisoners of war. Thus when he is caught by Thamaris, whose son he has violently slain, he whose cruelty "mai no Pite areste" is shown no mercy: "It halp no mercy forto crie / To him which whilom dede non" (7.3485-86). The queen, whom God uses as His agent in this case (7.3440-41; 3514-18), justifies her cruel slaying of Spertachus by an appeal to the eye-for-an-eye law: "'. . . As thou til othre men hast do, / Nou schal be do to thee riht so'" (7.3497-98). Upon saying this, she has the princes who were Spertachus's coun­cillors bled to death and their blood collected in one huge vessel. Then Spertachus is cast into the vessel and forced to drink the blood of his men. "'Lo, thus myht thou wynne,'" the queen says, "'The lustes of thin appetit. / In blod was whilom thi delit, / Nou schalt thou drinken al thi fille!'" (7.3510-13). In the line immediately following Genius attributes Thamaris's action to "goddes wille."

One of the most troublesome expressions of nomos, and one that occurs in all three of Gower's great poems, is the giving or withholding of love based on the worth of the individual. Agape does not take into consideration the beauty or goodness of the person but freely reaches out to all. Eros and nomos, however, are limited in their outreach. Eros values only the individual or object that will enable it to attain its goal, as Socrates did when he married a "wickid wif" in order to
develop patience (3.646-51). Nomos defines the worth of a man and gives or withholds love according to a predetermined standard. It sets up a rule or law by which the individual is judged, and although the rule is generally commendable, nevertheless, its foundation is a legalism that makes the quality of the individual more important than the individual himself. In short, with regard to the object to which love is directed, love is to be given or withheld according to the value of the object, this value to be determined by the object's beauty, virtue, or worth which it has for the giver. Cicero's precautions with regard to generosity and kindness exemplify this principle of selfishness: "... first, we should see that acts of kindness are not prejudicial to those we would wish to benefit or to others; second, we should not allow our generosity to exceed our means; and third, it should be proportionate to the merits of the recipient."^14

Gower uses such reasons in some of his illustrations or, more especially, in his prefatory or concluding remarks to an exemplum in the Confessio Amantis. The Mirour de l'Ommme and the Vox Clamantis project the same principle. In the Mirour Charity marries Reason and begets five daughters, the first of which is "Praise-of-Others," who "praises and loves all good people" (11. 12613f; underlining mine). In the ensuing injunction to praise, Gower enjoins all to praise God and then, "for God's sake, thou wilt agree to give praise to thy neighbor (insofar as thou seest him worthy of it) ..." (11. 12697f). "Let no man be loved who is unworthy of love, and let the man lack love who refuses

its responsibility," he cautions in the *Vox Clamantis* (p. 207). In the same poem he advises the king to "Let the man whom God has made equal to you in character, worth, and rank be equal in your sight" (p. 243). Gower's attitude toward the peasants is a prime example of this nomistic expression. Although "God and Nature have ordained that they shall serve, . . . neither knows how to keep them in bounds," and certainly love is not the answer. "Just as a barren field cultivated by the plowshare fails the granaries and brings home no crop in autumn, so does the worthless churl, the more he is cherished by your love, fail you and bring on your ruin" (p. 209).

In his discussion of "gentilesse" in the *Confessio*, Gower describes the worthy man as one who is morally good, but better yet, wealthy and industrious (4.2273-91). Amans adds to the list the characteristic of integrity, asserting that "who that hath tobroke / His trouthe, . . . / is noght worthi forto love / Ne be beloved . . ." (5.4362-65). Be "large of thi despense," Genius advises Amans after the story of Babio and Croceus, so that you will be "worthi forto duelle / In loves court . . ." (5.4866-67). It is no surprise, of course, to learn that virgins are worthy of honor and obedience (5.6362-66), because their state of virginity best "acordeth" to Christ and is acceptable both in heaven and on earth (5.6787-94).

Like man, God bestows his blessings on objects worthy of them. One of the lessons Amans must learn is that the mighty God favors the king who fights for the common right, and He sees to it that his cause succeeds (7.3614-22). Genius recites the account of Gideon to prove his argument. Gideon has been chosen by God to lead the war against the
enemies of Israel and Judah. He is a good man, his cause is just, and God is on his side; therefore, failure is impossible if he obeys the commands of God. He obeys and defeats all the host of Midian, even though they outnumber him three to one. Gower makes it quite plain at the end of this story that God will favor the good man: "For it is openliche schewed / That God to hem that ben wel thewed / Hath yove and granted the victoire" (7.3787-89). He does not favor the man who is not "wel disposed" (7.3784-85). Therefore, if every king makes certain of the goodness of his own life and of the goodness of his warriors, he will have cause to be glad in everything he does (7.3790-97), for

he which sit above the Mone
And alle thing mai spille and spede,
In every cause, in every nede
His goode king so wel adresceth,
That alle his fomen he represeth,
So that ther mai noman him dere;
And als so wel he [God] can forbere,
And soffre a wickid king to falle
In hondes of his fomen all. (7.3798-3806)

The overriding witness of the story of Gideon is that nomos limits God's love to the righteous. God has no obligation toward those who do not fear Him; rather He is bound by the limits of the law of the covenant: to those who are good He will be good.

Rewards as well as love are given according to merit or worth. In the discussion immediately preceding the "Tale of Julius and the Poor Knight" Genius recounts Aristotle's advice to Alexander regarding liberality in the king, which includes, among other things, the recommendation that worthy knights are to be recompensed according to their merit:
He mot ek, as it is befalle,
Amonges othre thinges alle
Se the decertes of his men;
And after that thei ben of ken
And of astat and of merite,
He schal hem largeliche aqueite. (7.2047-52)

In short, the king must take account of the service his men have given and then, according to their quality, their estate, and their merit, he is to reward them.

Associated with the idea of worth is the recommendation of Aristotle's mean as a measure for love. This, too, is characteristic of nomos and is common to the Confessio Amantis. One phrase that appears several times in the poem is that loving (or whatever action is under discussion) must be done "in manere." Macaulay construes this to mean that "the virtue of [loving] depends on the measure with which it is done" (Works, III, 529, n. 2132). This concept of measure ultimately derives from Aristotle's idea of moral virtue as expressed in the golden mean: "Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it." 15

Book 5 of the Confessio contains one of the most obvious examples of a pure application of Aristotle's mean. The sin is avarice. At one extreme is parsimony; at the other prodigality. The mean is liberality or largess, the virtue opposed to avarice, and Gower defines this concept of liberality in the discussion that follows the last of the

tales of Book 5, the "Tale of Paris and Helen." Here Genius compares avarice to a plant that although it may attain riches and thus flower, will never ripen or "greine / Unto the fruit of rihtwisnesse" (5.7625-27). This is a noble statement and certainly a condemnation of avarice. But it is not an unqualified remark. The fruit of righteousness is the end product of a life lived according to certain principles—in this instance, the "reule" of "largesse." The first thing largess must do is to bring itself into conformity with a right standard, which is measure (5.7674-79). Once this is accomplished, largess can respond properly to others and thus avoid the sin of greed:

... to alle othre, where it nedeth,  
He yifith his good in such a wise,  
That he maketh many a man arise,  
Which elles scholde falle lowe. (5.7680-83)

Moreover, largess cannot remain hidden, for whatever land it rules (or whatever person it leads), "mai noght faile forto winne / Thurgh his decerte love and grace, / Wher it schal faile in other place" (5.7684-88). In addition, much joy betides the heart guided by largess, for "his mesure is so governed" that he is pleasing to both God and man (5.7701-06). The poor receive alms and are relieved of thirst, hunger, and cold. These acts of largess are described agapistically: "The yifte of him [the man ruled by largess] was nevere sold, / Bot frely yive" (5.7710-11).

Liberality that gives freely of itself without regard to the worth of the object is characteristic of agape. Gower's largess, however, is not modeled on agapistic lines but on the Aristotelian principle of the mean, thus qualifying largess and removing it from the arena of agape and placing it, instead, in that of nomos. This is born out in the
ensuing discussion of largess, which reveals the usual concerns of Gower with self-profit. For example, Gower immediately follows the above agapistic description of giving with an emphasis on reward, and though this is indeed part of the joy that will come to the liberal man, the very mention of reward is indicative of where Gower's concerns really lie:

... and natheles
The myhti god of his encress
Rewardeth him of double grace;
The hevene he doth him to pourchace
And yifth him ek the worldes good:
And thus the Cote for the hod
Largesse takth, and yit no Sinne
He doth, hou so that evere he winne. (5.7711-18)

Furthermore, the man ruled by largess not only receives the world's goods from God, but from the world as well: "What man hath hors men yive him hors" (5.7719). This is the way of the world (5.7722).

More importantly, however, the idea of largess in this discussion is given a rationalistic twist entirely foreign to agape. In the first place, reminiscent of Christ's statement that it is more blessed to give than to receive, Genius considers whether it is wiser "to yive than to take" (5.7725) and decides that giving is better, but his choice is nomistically motivated. If one must choose between giving and receiving, "the siker weie" is to give because a man makes friends when he gives gifts; moreover, he avoids the obligation of having to respond in kind, which the receipt of gifts brings with it (5.7724-29). In the second place, it must be understood, Genius says, that charity begins with the self. If a man impoverishes himself by enriching twelve others, he will receive no thanks for his generosity (5.7740-46). In support of this position Gower places a Latin marginal note here which reads:
"Apostolus. Ordinata caritas incipit a seipsa." When Gower refers to the Apostle, he is usually intending Paul. Paul does say in his epistle to Timothy that a man who does not provide for his own (his extended family), and especially for those of his household (his immediate family), denies the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (I. Tim. 5:8). But this is not what Gower has in mind. Gower's concern is simply for the individual. Charity begins at home--literally--with the self. In contrast, Paul's concern is for others for whom one is responsible.

This philosophy of the mean, however, has a spiritual quality in the Confessio Amantis which transforms it into an ethical theism. First, God is always in the background of the poem and often out front. For example, in the tales of "Constance" and "Apollonius of Tyre," two of the more famous of the stories, He is an active participant in the lives of these protagonists and freely acknowledged by them. Thus this interference of God in the affairs of men that can be seen throughout the poem qualifies somewhat the concept of the mean (as well as all other concepts) as it appears in the Confessio. If God functions as a dramatis persona who must be reckoned with (and He does), then the ideas presented are, in essence, God-approved. Second, the concern for the commonwealth often substitutes for the concern for the individual. Practical and rational decisions are made with the good of the people in mind. This is particularly true of Apollonius, who, moreover, most fully represents Gower's definition of caritas. All the points of Policy are found in proper measure in his character. He knows when to give love and when to withhold it; he knows especially when justice is necessary for the good of the commonwealth. He is correctly chaste in the affairs of
love, truthful, and properly liberal and pious. His harp is tempered truly, and love is the ethical basis for all his acts, but it is a measured love, love "in good manere." When love is measured, even though by such noble devices as justice, say, that are perceived to be God-ordained, the result is a legal perspective that views the other individual as worthy or unworthy of love.

Closely related to this principle of measured love is the idea of self-love that can be found in the Confessio Amantis. It is not an improper self-love, for its aim is salvation. Eros and nomos have as their central concern the needs of the self. Only agape has as its primary concern the need of another. Even caritas, as a synthesis of these three loves, begins with a proper love of the self. So self-profit, which occasionally in the Confessio has its eye on heaven, but most often on this world, is a valid point of interest. This love is suggested in various ways in the poem, as, for example, cautions and admonitions concerning one's honor, reputation, fame, success, etc., which are to be found almost exclusively in the advice Genius gives Amans. Maria Wickert describes such passages as these as Gower's departure from the Christian point of view and ascribes their origin to the influence of the Secretum Secretorum. In the "Mirror for a Prince," she says (found in Book VI of the Vox Clamantis), Gower interprets the theme of largitas or liberalitas

in the Christian sense as almsgiving. . . .

16 The translator first gives the Latin as found in Wickert's work, then its translation. For easier reading, I have omitted the Latin phrases and the brackets placed around the translations.
merits, let your generous alms take care of the poor. And he ends on a purely Christian note:

A sincere alms is the handmaiden of God, the antidote to death, the gateway to grace, the path to salvation. It contends against the sins of the giver, it pleads for its author, it redeems the worthy, it supplicates for the rich.

In between, however, are the SECRETUM's reflections upon the cautions with which largitas or liberalitas should be exercised. They are the same reflections that Gower repeats with reference to Aristotle, without any of the Christian trimming, in Book VII of the CONFESSIO AMANTIS. In this context largitas does not serve the goal of redemption, but is a means of acquiring fame, and, according to the view of the SECRETUM, fame is the proper goal of any lordship:

... therefore it is fame that preeminently and for itself is desired in ruling, because ruling is not desired for itself, but for fame.

The CONFESSIO AMANTIS combines the two points, the end and the means of largitas, in a Latin distich in a chapter superscription:

... Fame flying through the ages favors a generous King, Nevertheless, gifts are to be distributed moderately.

... (CONFESSIO 7.2014 ff.) ... The extent to which Gower departs from the Christian point of view is made clear by such sententious remarks as ... Gifts endure for a time, but fame will be everlasting ...

Such sententious remarks, though, do not reveal Gower's departure from a Christian point of view but his interpretation of that view. This kind of comment permeates the Confessio and becomes a part of the definition of caritas as Gower understands the term. When Gower urges a particular action because it will be profitable (it will give the prince a worthy name, for instance), he is expressing the nomistic emphasis of caritas. Take the story of Codrus, for example. Codrus, a man who "Pite

hath parfit / Upon the point of his believe" (7.3196-97), acts sacrificially to save his people; thus he exemplifies agape. Such love is amazing to Gower: "Wher is nou such an other hed," he asks, "Which wolde for the lemes dye?" (7.3200-01). Nevertheless, he continues, such action ought to move a king to act in like manner, for "he may deserve pris" if he acts out of pity rather than vengeance (7.3202-08). The act arising out of pity, then, is not done as much for God, as in Codrus's case, as it is for the profit which will accrue.

This emphasis on self-profit is further illustrated by the account of Vulcan versus Venus and Mars, a story concerned with the preservation of one's reputation. Genius relates the story as an exemplum regarding jealousy. The suspicious Vulcan finds Venus and Mars in bed together and binds them with a chain made for the occasion. But when he calls the rest of the gods to view his find, they laugh him to scorn for exposing his wife, which in effect, they say, makes him a cuckold, and proceed to loose Mars from his bonds. The conclusion Genius draws is a prudential one: a man should weigh advantages against disadvantages and act accordingly. So jealousy should be discouraged, especially if it works against one's reputation:

Thoogh such an happ of love asterte,
Yit scholde he noght apointe his herte
With Jelousie of that is wroght,
Bot feigne, as thogh he wiste it noght:
For if he lete it overpasse,
The sclaundre schal be wel the lasse,
And he the more in ese stonde.
For this thou myht wel understonde,
That where a man schal nedes lese,
The lesthe harme is forto chese. (5.707-16)
In lines addressed to a king in Book 7 most of Gower's advice regarding the king's liberality is given with the latter's own good in mind. A king should keep "mesure" in his "expence" so that he will not come up short financially, for poverty hinders the success of his rule (7.2025-30). In order to keep the good will of the people, a king will give gifts from his own store and not plunder the realm (7.2039-42). The king should take care that all needs that should be "defended" are first provided for before he distributes goods to others (7.2043-46). Rewards, which should be handed out on the basis of desert, quality, estate, and merit, must be given so that those who deserve them will not fall into poverty or dishonor, which ultimately would reflect upon the king's reputation and character (7.7047-57). All of this advice is sound and practical for one who must rule a kingdom. In fact, in Macaulay's prose translation it reads like political gospel: "... As Aristotle taught by the ill example of the king of Chaldee, [a king] must spend his own substance and not that of his people, he must do justice before he makes gifts, and his gifts must be to those who have deserved them" (Works, II, lxxxi). What Macaulay omits, however, are all the ulterior motives which Gower seldom fails to ascribe to any act taken by the individual. Macaulay does the same with the "Tale of Julius and the Poor Knight," which immediately follows:

A knight came to plead his cause at Rome, where the Emperor Julius was in presence; but he could get no advocate, because he was poor. He prayed for justice to the Emperor, and Julius assigned him an advocate. The knight was angry, and said, 'When I was with thee in Afric, I fought myself and put no man in my stead; and so thou here shouldest speak for me thyself.' Julius took his cause in hand; and thus every worthy king should help his servants when in need (Works, II, lxxxi-ii).
Macaulay takes no notice of Gower's stated purpose for telling the tale—to show how a king can keep a good reputation (7.2056-57)—nor does he include in his translation Julius's reason for taking the poor knight's cause into his own hands, a reason which Gower clearly states: "And for he wolde noght ben holde / Unkinde, he tok his cause on honde" (7.2102-03).

Similarly, Russell Peck takes no cognizance of either the lesson the tale is to exemplify or the purpose of Caesar's action: "... Julius, recognizing that the knight speaks truth, bestows upon him enough goods to last him the rest of his life. Julius does not turn the knight away for having spoken directly to him; neither does he give him too much to make up for his error; rather, he gives him 'good ynouh'

..." 18

The story that follows receives the same treatment from both Macaulay and Peck. Macaulay summarizes it as follows:

Antigonus and Cinichus. A king should know how much to give. A poor knight asked King Antigonus for a great sum, and he replied, 'That is too much for thee to ask': then when the knight asked a very small gift, he said, 'That is too little for me to give.'

Kings must not exceed the due measure in giving, and especially they ought not to give to flatterers, who offend against God, against the prince and against the people. Yet flattery is always found in the courts of kings (Works, II, lxxxii).

Peck's interpretation is similar:

As a second example, Genius explains how a poor knight named Cinichus demanded great gifts of Antigonus and was refused, for the demand exceeded the knight's merits; when the

18Peck, Kingship and Common Profit, p. 145.
knight sarcastically asked then for "bot a litel peny" (2125), he was again refused, for that was too small an acknowledge-
ment. A king must learn to measure what is right. It be-
hooves each man "to helpe with his oghne lond" (2139), and it behooves the king to support such pleas when they are rea-
sonable. . . .19

Although here both Peck and Macaulay include Gower's purpose, they neglect to treat fully the way in which Genius applies the story. In the story itself, Cinichus's request for a large sum of money is refused on the basis of his "povere astat" (7.2123-24); that is, the money is denied because of the knight's social standing. This in itself is a legalistic judgment based on the value or worth of the knight. Similarly, his request for a penny is denied because it would be dishonor-
able for the king to give so small a sum (7.2124-30). Giving must be "in manere" (7.2132). In the Confessio this measure is relative to the worth of either the donor or the recipient, for not only must the merit, the social standing, and the quality of the recipient be taken into con-
sideration, but also how the act reflects upon the giver. In the last two lines preceding this story, Gower states that to give to those who are not deserving, that is, those who fail to meet the requirements of a predetermined measure, will earn the king no favor (7.2111-14). This is not merely a literal king of a commonwealth; in the Confessio Amantis every man is the king of his own spiritual domain (8.2111-13), and all that applies to the political king applies as well to the spiritual one.

19Peck, Kingship and Common Profit, p. 145.
Fisher defines caritas as "selfless, divine love":

The Confessio Amantis has been traditionally regarded as a poem whose chief subject is courtly love. . . . Yet there is always the problem of relating this obviously courtly theme to the political theory set forth in the Prologue, Book VII and the conclusion . . . . The last book of the Vox Clamantis, however, indicates the intended connection. For here adulterous, carnal love is taken as the principal reflection of selfish, temporal love (cupiditas, if one will, although the term is not mentioned), which brings all suffering into the world, and contrasts with selfless, divine love (caritas, again not so named), which leads to personal salvation, social justice, unity, and peace.™

That Fisher intends these definitions to apply as well to the love found in the Confessio Amantis is made evident in the opening sentence of the above statement and his observation that the "most impressive feature of Gower's moral philosophy . . . is . . . the unity and coherence of Gower's world view . . . ."21 But the love recommended in the Confessio Amantis, as illustrated by the two stories treated here, is far from being "selfless, divine love," which is, of course, agape. Theoretically, Gower may be able to define agape, but practically he shows no knowledge of it. The love depicted in these two representative tales is controlled by a standard foreign to agape. It is no more, really, than enlightened self-interest. The statements that Genius makes as he elucidates the story of "Antigonus and Cinichus" and which both Macaulay and Peck omit bear out Gower's concern for self-profit. Giving must result in honor to the king; otherwise, no one will relieve him in his need nor yet mourn for him when he dies:


21Fisher, p. 203.
Be this ensample a king mai lere
That forto yive is in manere:
For if a king his tresor lasseth
Withoute honour and thonkles passeth,
Whan he himself wol so beguile,
I not who schal compleigne his while,
Ne who be rihte him schal relieve. (7.2131-37)

In the ensuing lines, which Macaulay entitles "Prodigality of Kings" and "Flatterers," Gower's essential nomism is continued. The king is to "modifie" and "adresce" his gifts according to such largess that he not exceed measure (7.2152-55). If the king does not heed this advice, he may fall into need himself, and this would cause "sondri thinges" which are "ungoodly" to the king (7.2156-58). Moreover, the man who will not be guided by measure will discover that measure will forsake him (7.2159-61).

All of the advice given is sound; no complaint can be brought against it justly. But also it must be kept in proper perspective. As a political ethic it can be excused, perhaps even accepted. But as a religious ethic, if the term caritas is given to it, then it is caritas governed by law. The very last definition that can be applied to it is "selfless, divine love." Rather, self-interest, self-profit, self-love is the nucleus of Gower's caritas.

The emphasis on this type of self-interest can be spotted throughout the Confessio Amantis. If a king does not keep the law, his name will be slandered (7.3080-83); the pity and graciousness of the king brings much prosperity which "elles scholde torne aside" (7.3159-62); if a king acts with pity toward his enemies and does not take vengeance when it is in his power to do so, he can earn praise (7.3206) and not fail "Of thilke speche / Wherof a risst the worldes fame, / To yive a
Prince a worthi name" (7.3212-14); if the king rules according to the mean, God and the people will praise his name (7.3922-24). Obedience enables one to attain the goal. Clerks use the story of Florent to "teche how that obedience / Mai wel fortune a man to love / And sette him in his lust above" (1.1856-60). The last lines of the "Tale of the Three Questions" continues the emphasis on self-profit. Genius admonishes Amans to "take Humblesce upon thi side" in order to obtain more grace (1.3424-25). Amans promises not to forget the instruction and adds, "And if that eny such manere / Of humble port mai love appaie, / Hierafterward I thinke assaie" (1.3426-29).

The purpose of the "Tale of Constance" has the same self-interest in mind as that found in "Vulcan and Venus": he who unjustly accuses another uncovers his own shame, "Which elles myhte be riht stille" (2.579-81). In the lines that lead up to the story of Constance, Genius's advice to Amans expresses this nomistic concern for self-advantage: Amans should remain silent in order to attain his desire, for if he continues to inform against the other lovers of his lady, he might lose her favor (2.5601-63). Such behavior will set his own cause behind, for what he does to others will be done to him (2.551-69). In the conversation between Genius and Amans that precedes the account of "Deianira and Nessus" (2.2148-2307), Genius's comments reveal not only his concern for a good reputation but also for profit. Amans should not wear a "viser" on his face because if he does, in a short time men will find him out and he will lose a great part of his reputation (2.2080-36). Genius then proceeds to criticize the deceitful Lombards who "duelle among ous here." These Lombards are so sly that they win when they
should lose; they take the profit "of oure oghne lond" and let us bear all the burden (2.2093-2114). Similarly, in the lines that precede the tale of "Geta and Amphitrion" (2.2459-95), Genius describes how lovers who are supplanterers take "a part of thilke plaunte" which belongs to another, and concludes with an emphasis on self-protection. Amans should avoid supplantation in love's cause, Genius says, by keeping his own estate so well that he is not supplanted (2.2440-42). Genius further advises Amans that for the sake of his good reputation ("for worschipe of thi name"), he should not supplant any one else (2.2443-45). For illustration he refers to Agamemnon's supplantation of Achilles for "that swete wiht," Brexeida, and of Diomedes's supplantation of Troilus for Criseida (2.2451-58). The account of Geta and Amphitrion (2.2459-95) which follows this advice is a lengthier example of the same lesson.

When a particular virtue is enjoined, it is usually done so with Amans's self-interest in mind. After describing the vice of contention, Genius cautions that if Amans knew all that contention does to love, he would flee from it and learn to be "debonaire," because "who that most can speke faire / Is most acordernde unto love" (3.597-603). And, he continues:

Fair speche hath ofte brought above
Ful many a man, as it is knowe,
Which elles scholde have be riht lowe
And failed mochel of his wille. (3.604-07)

Therefore, Amans should hold his "tunge stille" (3.608). In addition, he should remember to "gete pacience, . . . the leche of alle offence," because when all else fails to bring him to his desired end, patience "overcomth . . . ate laste . . ." (3.612-19).
The lengthy conversation following the tale of "Pyramus and Thisbe" also emphasizes the motive of self-profit. Amans expresses his anger against his lady who will show him no pity or mercy and his desire to kill Daunger, his enemy. Genius advises him to restrain his heart from wrath, for whoever receives wrath will wait a long time before he is received by love (3.1613-17). Unless wrath is refused, he continues, things might happen that would make a man so fall from love that love never afterward would look his way (3.1618-22). Moreover, the man who is "folhasitif" and malicious often falls and, furthermore, love seldom calls him (3.1634-36). If you would succeed in love's cause and reach your goal, Amans is advised, be patient. Love requires peace. He who yields to strife shall have the least chance of attaining the object of his love. Unless one is patient in love's cause, he merely wastes his time; therefore, one must restrain his heart. Haste has no advantage but rather sets a man behind in the cause of love (3.1639-58).

Later in the poem Genius assures Amans that he who is bold and dares to labor in love's cause will more quickly be taken into love's favor (4.2192-95). Be generous in your giving in order to succeed in love (5.408-14). Avoid avarice and thus be free from the restlessness of jealousy (5.415-28), and better not love at all than love that which finally must be given up and ill will incurred to boot (5.6476-81) are other examples of the self-interest theme.

This concept of self-profit as a motivation for behavior is expressed also in the Confessio Amantis in the numerous references to winning, losing, and success in love, many of which have been discussed
already.22 After the story of Telaphus and Teucer Amans is admonished that unless he is merciful and compassionate, he will long waste his time before he has his way in love's cause (3.2736-38). Or, sloth will win no profit, he is told (4.250). The pusillanimous man who will not venture to win must by reason lose (4.338-39). Genius concludes the story of "Pygmalion and the Statue" with the warning that if one fails to speak he loses (4.438-40). In the discussion that precedes the "Tale of Nauplius and Ulysses" Genius insists that a knight attains and keeps his lady's love by plying all the duties of knighthood and love (4.1620-44). Amans's response that no matter how busy he keeps in the practice of love, he never gets anywhere with his lady receives the reply that he should not be concerned about anything except winning (4.1773-75); so patience is recommended. Amans is advised to be generous in his giving in order to succeed in love (5.402-07). At the close of Book 5, when Genius asks Amans if he has been prodigal in love and Amans admits that he may have "tasted" here and there but his true affection is on one only and there he probably has wasted his love, Genius encourages him to hold steady. Anything "worth the cost" is neither "wast ne lost"; you may yet win, he says (5.7810-34). Admonitions such as these can be found scattered throughout the Confessio.

22 It is almost impossible to avoid the overlapping of ideas since Gower will include more than one concept in the same story. For example, the story of "Antigonus and Cinichus" (see pp. 151-52 of this chapter) exemplifies both love given or withheld based on the worth of the individual as well as concern for one's reputation. In the same manner, the four segments of self-profit (see pp. 101-02 of this chapter) often are intertwined.
Moreover, the miscellaneous usage of such terms as "earn," "de-
serve," "merit," "reward," "purchase," "profit," "win," "lose," as well as "appeasing" or "satisfying" God are inherent in the poem. Retribu-
tive justice is the norm. Punishment, as often as not the fires of hell, and the depiction of God as one ready to smite the evil-doer with vengeance or one who, offended by man's sin, requites him his deed are not as uncommon as one might suppose in a poem whose avowed subject is love. Perhaps these may be excused as Gower's choice of language suit-
able for a bourgeoise audience, but their very preponderance calls such an argument into question. They are so much an integral part of the Confessio that to remove them would destroy the poem. They are intrin-
sic to it and along with other presentations of nomos complement the exempla which are given to instruct Amans in the art of loving in order to attain his goal.

Closely associated with the concern for succeeding in love is the advice Genius gives Amans urging him to so live that he will gain both this world and the next. After tellin g the story of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, Gower elaborates on the division and hatred which began with the fall of man and is now destroying the world. He cites the accounts of the flood and the division of the language at the Tower of Babel as ex-
amples of God's punishment which He wreaks upon a sinful world now in danger of being crushed by the stone. Therefore, Gower counsels, a man should make peace with his brother and love him so that he may win the world's wealth as well as his soul's health in the hereafter (Prol. 1048-
52). So, in the Prologue of the poem the stage is set for this feature of self-profit, which becomes a part of the advice of Genius to Amans.
The story of Constantine and Sylvester is excellent proof that charity (good deeds) can "helpe a man / To bothe worldes" (2.3498-99), for God not only heals Constantine's body but his soul also through the ministrations of Sylvester. Following the story of Midas and the account of Tantalus in hell, Genius advises Amans to distribute his wealth in such a way that he will "amende" himself both for this world and the next (5.398-401). Proper largess, Amans is told, enables a man to so live with reference to God and the world that he wrongs neither:

Bot who that wolde do largesse
Upon the reule as it is yive,
So myhte a man in trouthe live
Toward his god, and ek also
Toward the world, for bothe tuo
Largesse awaiteth as belongeth,
To neither part that he ne wrongeth;
He kepth himself, he kepth his frendes,
So stant he sauf to bothe hise endes. (5.7628-36)

Truth is the thing "most convenient" to "sette a king in evene / Bothe in this world and ek in hevene" (7.1982-84). Pity also has a double value; it teaches the king how to "get him love / Toward the hihe god above / And ek among the men in erthe" (7.3095-97).

Prudential wisdom is another segment of the self-profit emphasis and Gower continues his advice via tales and remarks that particularly illustrate the need for this aid to salvation. For example, Genius begins his long list of stories with the "Tale of Acteon" (1.333-78), which emphasizes man's responsibility to guard well the senses. He enforces this idea in the next three stories, stressing especially the responsibility of man to so wisely govern himself that he is not conquered by any force that would finally destroy him. Perseus, using the shield of
Pallas and the sword of Mercury, safely covers his face and slays the Medusa (1.419-35). The cunning serpent Aspidis deliberately stops up his ears in order to prevent the theft by enchantment of the carbuncle which he bears in his forehead (1.463-80). Ulysses, knowing the danger that the Sirens present, contrives beforehand that no man of his company will hear their songs. This wily leader has such "governance on honde" that not only do the sailors withstand the sirens, they slay a great part of them (1.481-529). If Amans is wise, Genius concludes, he will judiciously guard the two gates--the eye and the ear--through which evil can enter in order to protect himself from harm (1.530-49).

Gower employs the memento mori device in two stories to demonstrate further the need for prudential wisdom. Both tales are told to remind a ruler that life is fleeting and flatterers should have no place in his government. The tale of "The Roman Triumph" recounts how that in the midst of the emperor's greatest exaltation, his jester cautions him that for "al this pompe and al this pride," he must "Let no justice gon aside, / Bot know thiself . . ." because Fortune may turn her wheel and you may be overthrown. Such words as these enable the king to repress his vanity and thus turn aside flattery (7.2397-2410). In the story of "The Emperor and His Masons" (7.2412-45), the emperor is reminded of death when his masons appear at the height of the celebration on his coronation day to ask where he wishes to be buried. As in the previous story, the emperor's ensuing refusal to be swayed by flattery is based on the reminder of this prudential memento mori.

Gower is fond of proverbs, another form which the prudential wisdom of the Confessio Amantis takes, and the poem is liberally sprinkled
with them. On occasion Genius will string several together. His cau-
tions to Amans with regard to "folhaste" is a case in point:

In harde weies men gon softe,
And er thei clyme be avise hem ofte:
Men sen alday that rape reweth;
And who so wicked Ale breweth,
Fulofte he mot the wers drinke:
Betre is to flete than to sincke;
Betre is upon the bridel chiewe
Thanne if he felle and overthawe,
The hors and sticked in the Myr:
To caste water in the fyr
Betre is than brenne up al the hous. (3.1623-33)

A few lines later the admonitory voice sounds again:

What mai the Mous ayein the Cat?
And for this cause I axe that,
Who mai to love make a werre,
That he ne hath himself the werre?

For this thei tellen that ben wise,
Wicke is to stryve and have the wers;
To hasten is noght worth a kerse;
Thing that a man mai noght achieve,
That mai noght wel be don at Eve,
It mot abide til the morwe. (3.1643-55)

When Amans is despondent and fears he will never win the lady, Genius,
advising patience, phrases his counsel in proverbial and prudential lan-
guage: the dice is everyday to cast; better to wait for the tide than
row against the strong streams; perhaps the revolution of heaven and
your condition are not yet in accord (4.1777-85).

Another illustration of the kind of prudential wisdom that pervades
the Confessio is found in the tale of the two Greek kings, Athemas and
Demephon. When these kings return home from the Trojan War, they are
rejected by their subjects; so they swear to aid each other in taking
vengeance. Nestor, "which was old and hor," and "of conseil wys" (3. 1801-03), advises against their plan. In a speech, which Macaulay says is mostly original with Gower (Works, II, 499, n. 1757), Nestor recommends reasonable prudence. If the kings wish to win, they should consider the possible results of their action, lest they later have cause to repent. He points out that if they destroy the people, they will be kings without subjects. That, he says, would be "a wonder wierde / To sen a king become an hierde, / Wher no lif is bot only beste" (3.1819-21). Moreover, all Greece will suffer if they hold their purpose to slay the people. It is better to "winne be fair speche," he suggests, than to seek revenge, because "whanne a man is most above, / Him nedeth most to gete him love" (3.1835-36). This last statement could mean either "the ruler especially needs to show love," or "he especially needs the love of the people." In either case, the reasonable man will seek the advantage or profit for himself and the kingdom. Athemas and Demo- phon heed Nestor's advice. As a result, the subjects, hearing that their kings are equipped "Of such a pouer as thei ladde," out of "dradde" send representatives to plead for peace and protection. The kings are "appesed"; all is forgiven and nothing recorded against the people. Peace and accord are accomplished, wrath is turned aside "al thurgh conseil which was good / Of him that reson understod" (3.1842-56).

A further aspect of the nomism of the Confessio Amantis is the stress Gower places on achieved righteousness as a means of attaining the desired goal. One's efforts are important. For example, if a man wishes to gain the favor of God (or the ruler) or appease His wrath, he performs meritorious acts, such as offering gifts, prayers, or
sacrifices, or he assumes a proper attitude toward the authority in question. The king's brother before whose door the trump of death is sounded is counseled by his friends that he will die unless he is able to "pourochace . . . his liege lordes grace" (1.2157-58). The plan devised is for the brother, his wife, and their five children to humble themselves before the king, naked (save a smock or shirt), weeping, and hair uncombed. In this way they hope to "tendre" the king's heart and win pardon (1.2168-74; 2201-13). Brief mention has already been made in this chapter of Daniel's advice to Nebuchadnezzar to "amende" himself by giving alms, ruling justly, and beseeching God in order to "pourochace" peace and "stond in good acord" with God (1.2930-38). In the "Tale of the Three Questions" the knight's daughter Peronelle offers to answer the questions which the king has set before her father in hopes that she "may pourchace . . . the kinges grace" and save her father's life and property (1.3203-05). The king is "so wel paid / That al his wrath is overgo" (1.3324-25). Queen Yno, jealous of Phrixus and Helle, the children by her husband's first wife, has boiled wheat sown in the fields for two years, which results in the famine that ravishes the land. The king sacrifices to Ceres, goddess of grain, "To loke if it mai be foryive, / The meschief which was in his lond" (5.4290-91). Genius interrupts the story about Babio and Croceus to insist that man may attempt to satisfy God by way of gifts: "With yifte

23Humility is the cure for pride, and the king has set about to teach his brother the lesson of humility. But the lesson the brother learns is that humility is obeisance to authority. His humility has not the spontaneity of the king's as the latter bows before the pilgrims; nevertheless, the brother's humility achieves the desired result.
The story of Jason and Medea illustrates not only the concept of good deeds, prayers, sacrifices, etc., as expected of one who wishes to please God but also its concomitant that such acts are accepted as meritorious. The story itself is divided into two major divisions: Jason's winning of the golden fleece through the aid of Medea and Medea's transformation of the aged Eson into a youthful man again. Each of these accounts is accompanied by a lengthy "how-to" section: Medea's instructions that enable Jason to win the golden fleece and her actions that empower her to restore Eson. Gower devotes more than a hundred lines (5.3505-40 and 3559-3633) to the first description and over two hundred (5.3957-4174) to the second.

In his treatment of the tale, Russell Peck gives a fine summation of the changes Gower makes in his sources, all of which are calculated to focus the story on the personal commitment of Medea and the falseness of Jason. Peck's intention is to show that in contrast to Medea, Jason lacks the sense of or the desire for common profit. He concludes:

... The contrasting dispositions of the lovers accentuate Jason's avaricious desire to win both Medea and the fleece for the sake of personal rather than mutual gain. Because of his selfishness there is little sense of common profit in the marriage; thus there will be small hope for what Genius later calls "the fruit of rihtwisnesse" ... .24

Another critic, Masayoshi Ito, says that although Gower relates the story of Jason and Medea as an exemplum of perjury, "the connection of

24Peck, Kingship and Common Profit, p. 112.
the matter with the moral is only superficial, since his main interest lies in the beautiful love story of the hero and heroine."²⁵

These statements may be true, but it is also true that both Peck's and Itô's arguments can be proven without the elaborate detail of action that Gower has inserted. In a story of 975 lines, 327, or one-third, are taken up with accounts of actions which are necessary in order to obtain the favor of the gods and thus win the desired end. Scattered throughout these lines are nine references to prayers or sacrifices to be made in order to succeed. For example, when Medea concludes the initial account of the dangers Jason must face (Gower recounts them twice), she warns him that he must

\[
\begin{align*}
to the goddes preie, \\
And go so forth and take his preie. \\
Bot if he faile in eny wise \\
Of that ye hiere me devise, \\
Ther mai be set non other weie, \\
That he ne moste algates deie. (5.3535-40)
\end{align*}
\]

When she gives him the magic ring, she teaches him "What sacrifice he scholde make" (5.3577). Similarly, she accompanies the gift of the "hevenely figure, / Which al be charme and be conjure / Was wroght" (5.3579-81) with cautions that if

\[
\begin{align*}
he wolde spede, \\
Withoute reste of eny while, \\
Whan he were londed in that yle, \\
He scholde make his sacrifise \\
And rede his carecte in the wise
\end{align*}
\]

²⁴Peck, Kingship and Common Profit, p. 112.

When Jason has followed all the instructions and finished all that is required of him, he does not forget Medea's warnings: he prays, makes sacrifices, and gives thanks to the gods (5.3690-93, 3737-30).

Gower is capable of brevity (most of the stories in the Confessio Amantis are brief), and he sums up all of this story--931 lines--in 6:

```
Ferst sche made him the flees to winne,
And after that fro kiththe and kinne
With gret tresor with him sche stal,
And to his fader forth withal
His Elde hath torned into youthe,
Which thing non other womman couthe. (5.4179-84)
```

He concludes the tale with a mere 38 lines, the only ones which contain the account of Jason's treachery, the ostensible reason for the tale, and which has not been mentioned up to this point. In reality, then, a third of the lines presents information not essential to the purpose. Nor do these lines contain the manipulation of the sources which Peck sees as necessary for the sympathetic treatment of Medea. Moreover, concerning the rejuvenation of Eson, Peck states that "the lengthy description of the . . . ritual has little bearing on the moral function of Gower's tale."²⁶ Peck and Itô, who comes to the same conclusion about the restoration of Eson, may be correct, and Gower may tell all of it for "the novellerie" for that matter; the important point, however, is that he does tell it. Consciously or unconsciously, Gower, throughout

²⁶Peck, Kingship and Common Profit, p. 114.
the Confessio Amantis, brings in details, either through illustrative material as in this tale or through commentary, that seem to indicate a basic attitude in his own thinking: to be successful one must do certain things, perform certain rituals. The cumulative evidence suggests that one must earn his salvation. In this story Jason wins the golden fleece and Medea restores Eson, not because the gods are initially favorable, but because Jason and Medea perform those magic rites that open the door to success.

Other passages in the Confessio continue this emphasis on meritorious acts. In the digression on religion Genius assures Amans that Christ as a man ("with his fleissh and blod") paid the ransom for all mankind and thus made satisfaction for man's sin (5.1752-75). In addition, the merit of Christ's atonement earns merit for man. Because of Christ's sacrifice, man "Stant more worth, as I have told, / Than he stod erst be manyfold, / Thurgh baptesme of the newe lawe" (5.1777-79). Good deeds will be rewarded (5.1790-92); moreover, they are necessary for salvation: "For feith only sufficeth noght, / Bot if good dede also be wroght" (5.1801-02). The "Tale of Theseus and Ariadne" (5.5231-5467) is an example on the human level of the nomistic principle of good deeds as worthy of merit. Upon discovery of her abandonment by Theseus, Ariadne complains that she supposed she had "boght" Theseus's love and earned it when she helped him at the time of his great need (5.5448-50). The transgression by Theseus of "the law of loves riht" results in certain punishments. Theseus's act of ingratitude so weakens his "trouthe" that he can no longer any "good dede aquite" (5.5486-87). Furthermore, because he can no longer perform good deeds, he has "no
merite / Towards god" (5.5488-89), which, of course, will result in his damnation.

Although the purpose of the stories of Phyryns and Valentinian is to commend virginity because it best "acordeth" to Christ and is acceptable both in heaven and on earth, Genius implies in these tales another approach to achieved righteousness and that is that man can live a virtuous life through his own strength. Phyryns "bought" his virginity by thrusting out both his eyes to make himself unattractive to women. When men praised Valentinian for his "knythode of Armes," he held such deeds of no account in comparison with the fact that he had overcome the flesh; on that feat he based his reputation (5.6405-16). Macaulay, whose edition follows the third recension, also gives the story of Valentinian as it appears in the second recension. This account differs from the third in that twice God's grace is mentioned as necessary for living a chaste life:

Ther is no reson forto finde,
Bot only thurgh the grace above,
In flessh withoute flesshly love
A man to live chaste hiere (5.6400-03*);

and

The frele fleissh, whos nature is
Ai redy forto sporne and falle,
The ferste foman is of alle;
For thilke werre is redi ai,
It werreth nyht, it werreth dai,
So that a man hath nevere reste.
For thi is thilke knyht the beste,
Thurgh myht and grace of goddes sonde
Which that bataille mai withstonde. (5.6416-24*)
Moreover, Genius begins this second recension account of the story by a reference to an observation of Gregory's that Valentinian's life was more like that of an angel's than that of a man's since, Genius adds, "it is / A vertu which is sielde wonne" (5.6406-07*), although some have lived the chaste life and still do, presumably by God's grace (5.6400-03*). For some reason or other, these references to grace are omitted in the third recension, resulting in an implication of the ability of the self to perform deeds worthy of merit unaided by grace.27

Obedience is another method of achieving one's objective. Genius follows the story of "Saul and Agag," in which Saul displeases God and suffers for it by not obeying the latter's command regarding Agag (7.3824-45), with the account of "David and Joab." In this story Solomon obeys the deathbed command of his father David to slay Joab and thus satisfies God: "And god was eke wel paid therfore, / That he so wolde his herte plye / The lawes forto justefie" (7.3870-72). Good governance founded on pity "medled with justice" is the way to please God, Amans is told (7.4193-4202). "The Counsel of Balaam" makes clear that satisfying the commands of God is important. The men of the Israelitish army are excessive in their lust for the Saracen women, who have been sent as a deliberate snare for the Hebrews. As a result, the Israelites lose the favor of God and incur His wrath and vengeance. They are not

27 This may be an example of the theological position of ex puris naturalibus, that is, "acts performed by nature unaided by grace," without the denial, however, of the general influence of grace. See Heiko Augustinus Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1967), p. 468. But see also Book 7.4239-44, where Gower seems to recognize the need for grace to live a chaste life.
permitted to win any more battles (7.4425-31). Phineas takes action; he slays every couple he finds "which misferde so" and, as an example to others, leaves their corpses to rot upon the ground. For this act "god was paid" and He withdraws His punishment (7.4432-39). The rest of the army pray to God their "olde sennes to amende," whereupon He sends His mercy and restores them to grace (7.4440-45).

Another means to reach one's desired end is via labor, diligence, perseverance, etc., and Gower can and does devote one entire book, Book 4 on sloth, to this section of his theme of achieved righteousness. That such means as labor are important in Gower's scheme can be seen by the fact that Book 4 stands second in number of illustrations/discussions, if Book 7 is omitted. Book 5, on avarice, contains three more exempla (27) than Book 4 (24). (Book 7 has twice as many as Book 4, with 48.) Also, by line count Book 4 is second only to Book 5 (again omitting Book 7). Moreover, sloth is a sin in which Amans is vitally interested, for Book 4 presents some of his lengthiest statements of confession and/or frustration. There are more stories, too, in Book 4 that emphasize the positive nature of man than are to be found in the other books. In addition, Book 4 offers five different virtues as antidotes to the sin of sloth: diligence, perseverance, honor, prowess, and labor. In contrast, Books 1, 2, and 8 propose only one virtue each: humility, charity/pity, and marriage respectively. The concluding story of Book 3 presents mercy as wrath's remedy, and earlier in the book a story on the patience of Socrates hints at another virtue to counteract wrath. Book 5's concluding virtue is largess as defined by Aristotle's mean. (Chastity as an honorable way of life is included in Book 5 and
two stories are given to illustrate it, but this discussion arises out of the sin of robbery of a maiden's virginity and is not given as the cure for avarice.) Book 6 offers no one particular virtue to oppose the vice of gluttony. The concluding section, where Gower typically gives his solution for the sin under discussion, recommends the eschewing of magic and witchcraft. (The earlier story of Dives and Lazarus teaches one to be a proper "governour" of the world's goods; 6.1128-44.) Only Book 7, in its presentation of the five points of Policy--Truth, Liberality, Justice, Pity, and Chastity--recommends as many efficacious actions as Book 4. Therefore, since Book 4 is distinguished by these particularities, the advice presented must be important to Gower.

The first branch of sloth is procrastination, and Genius recounts the tale of "Eneas and Dido" (4.77-137) to illustrate the unexpected harm that procrastination brings. Eneas's sloth resulted in Dido's suicidal death. The stories about Grosteste (4.234-43) and the foolish virgins of biblical fame (4.250-60) prove that love demands the whole attention of the lover if he wishes to win the desired goal and keep it (4.263-69). The emphases of these two stories are upon the individual's industry and preparation in avoiding sloth in order to win love and/or make it stable. Genius counsels Amans to keep busy in love's cause, for sloth can confound the success of a man's work (4.298-301), and he tells the story of Ulysses and Penelope as an example of diligence in love (4.143-46).

"Pygmalion and the Statue" and the "Tale of Iphis" recount the miracles that can occur if one perseveres in love's cause. Pygmalion
made such continuance  
Fro dai to nyht, and preith so longe,  
That his preire is underfonge,  
Which Venus of hire grace herde (4.416-19)

and transformed the statue into a flesh-and-blood lady. Similarly, Cupid transforms Iphis into the boy he is disguised as because of his and Iante's love for each other. Thus, Genius assures Amans,

love is welwillende  
To hem that ben continuende  
With besy herte to poursuie  
Thing which that is to love due.  
Wherof, my Sone, in this matiere  
Thou miht ensample taken hiere,  
That with thi grete besinesse  
Thou miht atteigne the richesse  
Of love, if that ther be no Slowthe. (4.507-15)

"Demephon and Phillis" illustrates the danger of forgetfulness with regard to love. In the lines that precede the story Gower resorts to Christian theology to explain the seriousness of this fault. God will not send grace to that man who does not ask for it. He knows a man's desires, but His will is that man pray for grace. A man must take his chances if he does not, for God will let him fall if he does not remember to ask (4.712-22). Therefore, Genius advises Amans to "pull up a besi herte, / . . . and let nothing asterte / Of love fro thi besinesse" (4.723-25). The seriousness of this admonition is borne out in the sad tale of Phillis's tragic suicide because of Demephon's forgetfulness.

The tales of Phaeton and Icarus are warnings against negligence. The god Phoebus "ordeineth" that Phaeton drown when the latter sins through negligence of the instructions for driving the sun chariot and negligence of his "oghne asstat" (4.1025-27 and 1010-13). In similar
fashion, Icarus disregards his father's counsel and is destroyed by his own foolishness (4.1062-67).\textsuperscript{28}

The "Tale of Rosiphelee," referred to earlier with regard to reward and punishment, points out the danger of failing to love when the opportunity presents itself (4.1227-35). It exemplifies the vice of idleness and contrasts those who are slothful in love with those who are diligent. Similarly, the "Tale of Jephthah's Daughter" is another example of idleness. As in the Rosiphelee story, the emphasis is upon fulfilling one's duty and the results of not doing so. The lady to whom Rosiphelee speaks had failed to keep Venus's law of love and so was punished. Jephthah's daughter fails to keep another law, that of the scriptures to increase and multiply: ". . . sche no children hath forthdrawe / In Mariage after the lawe, / So that the poeple is noght encressed" (4.1569-71). The actual reference to this scripture is an addition Gower makes to the source, although it is implied in the daughter's request for two months to bewail her virginity. In Gower's story Jephthah's daughter laments her virgin state because by holding to it so long she now has no chance to fulfill the law (4.1565-67; 1572-73). The lady in the "Tale of Rosiphelee" is punished in the afterlife; Jephthah's daughter's punishment is linked to the future. Because she does not procreate, she loses her

\textsuperscript{28}Both Phaeton and Icarus are guilty of the sin of negligence in two ways: (1) they ignore the counsel of their fathers, and (2) in their exhilaration and "veine glorie" they forget their proper place. Phaeton "without lawe" drove the cart "wantounly" (4.1015-17) and "This Icharus began to monte" (4.1061). Although the concept of the mean--fly neither too high nor too low--is invoked in these two stories as well as one's place in the hierarchy--"In hih astat it is a vice / To go to owe, and in service / It grieveth forto go to hye" (4.1035-37)--it must not be forgotten that the general sin under discussion is sloth and the particular vice is negligence.
own youth, or the image of herself in her children (4.1585-89). This is annihilation, a far worse punishment than being a pack horse in hell.

The stories that illustrate the virtues of honor and prowess demonstrate also one's duty to make proper choices. For example, the purpose for the "Tale of Nauplus and Ulysses" is to assert that a good knight will prefer his military duties above his pleasure in love (4.1805-10). In fact, in the discussion that precedes the story Genius insists that a knight can only attain and keep his lady's love by plying all the duties of knighthood:

Forthi who secheth loves grace,
Wher that these worthi wommen are,
He mai noght thanne himselfe spare
Upon his travell forto serve,
Wherof that he mai thonk deserve,
There as these men of Armes be,
Somtime over the grete Se:
So that be londe and ek be Schipe
He mot travaile for worschipe
And make manye hastyf rodes,

And thanne he yifth hem gold and cloth,
So that his fame mihte springe,
And to his ladi Ere bringe
Som tidinge of his worthinesse;
So that sche mihte of his prouesce
Of that sche herde men recorde,
The better unto his love acorde
And danger pute out of hire mod,
Whanne alle men recordeth good,
And that sche wot wel, for hir sake
That he no travall wol forsake. (4.1620-44)

To counter Amans's complaint that Achilles left his arms and his men at Troy for love of Polixenen (4.1693-1701), so why labor in war if there is "a weie nerr?" Genius recounts the story of Nauplus and Ulysses, which glorifies arms and honor. In this exemplum honor becomes
more important than love for one's lady: "For betre it were honour to winne / Than love, which liking is inne" (4.1867-68). Love even for one's wife can be called foolishness (4.1882-89). Thus the demands of the chivalric code become more important than love for a desirable and legitimate earthly object.\textsuperscript{29} Actually, honor in arms becomes the path to love: "The bedd mot thanne be forsake / And Schield and spere on honde take, / Which thing schal make hem after glade" (4.1807-09), or, as in the application Genius makes to the story:

\begin{center}
\textit{Thus stant it, if a knyht refuse \\
The lust of armes to travaile, \\
Ther mai no worldes ese availe, \\
Bot if worschipe be with al.} (4.1892-95)
\end{center}

Prowess in arms, the ingredient of honor, becomes the way to attain "worldes ese" or the lady.

Genius follows this tale with three examples of prowess—"Protesilaus" (4.1900-34), "Saul" (4.1935-62),\textsuperscript{30} and the "Education of Achilles" (4.1963-2013)—and concludes that prowess is a most successful way to attain love:

\begin{center}
\textit{Lo, thus, my Sone, thou miht knowe \\
That the corage of hardiesce \\
Is of knyhthode the prouesce, \\
Which is to love sufficant}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{29}The demands of\ caritas, of course, forbid the preference of any earthly object to God.

\textsuperscript{30}Gower changes the biblical account of Saul in order to give another example of the valiant warrior. Rather than his prowess, the Bible records Saul's fear or his feeling of distress. At the time of the battle itself he and all his men flee. Jonathan is never singled out, as in Gower's account, with no mention of him and Saul being together on the battlefield (I Kings 31; I Paralipomenon 10).
Aboven al the remenant
That unto loves court poursuie.
Bot w ho that wol no Slowthe eschuie,
Upon kniithode and noght travaile,
I not what love him scholde availe. (4.2014-2022)

Since prowess is the virtue opposed to sloth in these stories, Genius emphasizes the necessity of persevering in bold undertakings in order to attain the goal. He remarks that if Amans would read the tales about Lancelot and other knights, he would see

hou it was tho
Of armes, for thei wolde atteigne
To love, which withoute peine
Mai noght be gete of ydelnesse. (4.2036-39)

The tales of Hercules and Achelons (4.2045-2134), Penthesilea and Philmenis (4.2135-82), and Eneas (4.2183-89) can be summarized by the following lines:

And thus with gret decerte of Armes
He wan him forto ligge in armes,
As he which hath it dere aboght,
For otherwise scholde he noght. (4.2131-34)

Genius's remark at the conclusion of the story of Eneas, that women love the "worthinesse / Of manhode" and desire most the "gentils" (4.2197-99), leads into the lengthy digression on "gentilesse," or virtuousness, and the uses of labor. Ostensibly intended to define "gentilesse," the digression actually shows the superiority of labor. Typically for the age, Genius does not find the ground for gentilesse in either riches or noble birth. The true "gentil" man is one who "the vice eschuieth, / Withoute Slowthe and vertu suieth" (4.2273-74). However, love seldom "alloweth / The gentil man withoute good" (4.2282-83). Therefore, if
one has both riches and virtue he is worth more (4.2285-87). But the final conclusion Genius makes is that neither wealth nor virtuousness will help the idle person; therefore, work is most important of all:

Bot if a man of bothe tuo
Be riche and vertuous also,
Thanne is he wel the more worth:
Bot yit to putte himselfe forth
He moste don his besinesse,
For nowther good ne gentilesse
Mai helpen hem whiche ydel be. (4.2285-91)

Because the effects of love (which Gower has been presenting here in courtly love terms) are profitable for both men and women (4.2296-2308), he who neglects to attain such love is guilty of idleness (4.2309-19). Gower strengthens this statement against sloth by referring to I John 3:14: "'Who loveth noght is hier as ded!'" (4.2325) and notes that love, which leads all the virtues, "... of ydelschipe / ... hateth all the felaschipe" (4.2329-30). Moreover, sloth holds in disdain all learning, but the man who has understanding and is able to reason knows that in order to reach his goal he must eschew sloth, for "It sit him wel that he travaile / Upon som thing which mihte availe" (4.2335-36). Every law, Genius concludes, forbids sloth (4.2338-39), and he has shown this to be true by referring to the laws of courtly love, scripture, and reason. He clinches the argument for labor by quoting from the Book of Job (although he mistakenly thinks he is citing the "noble wise Salomon"): "... 'As the briddes to the flihte / Ben made, so the man is bore / To labour' ..." (4.2342-43). God gave to man, he continues, "the forme and the matiere / Of that he wolde make hem wise" (4.2366-67), but man attains the goal of this wisdom through
labor:

Bot er the time that men siewe,
And that the labour forth it broghte,
Ther was no corn, thogh men it soghte,
In non of al the fieldes outhe;
And er the wisdom cam aboute
Of hem that ferst the bokes write,
This mai wel every wys man wite,
Ther was gret labour ek also.
Thus was non ydel of the tuo,
That on the plogh hath undertake
With labour which the hond hath take,
That other tok to studie and muse,
As he which wolde noght refuse
The labour of hise wittes alle.
And in this wise it is befalle,
Of labour which that thei begunne
We be now tawht of that we kunne:
Here besinesse is yit so seene,
That it stant evere alyche greene;
Al be it so the bodi deie,
The name of hem schal nevere aweie. (4.2374-94)

Here follows a lengthy list of people who labored and through labor attained a desired goal (4.2396-2672).

A mans cannot fail to get the drift of all these examples. He succinctly sums up this long discussion in two lines: "There is bot only to poursuie / Mi love, and ydelschipe eschuie" (4.2685-86). Genius tells him he has "seid the beste" and adds a few lines to conclude this section on idleness. In these lines the nomos emphasis is evident in that the way to fulfill desire or reach the goal is via labor:

For who that wolde have al his reste
And do no travail at the nede,
It is no resoun that he spede
In loves cause forto winne;
For he which dar nothing beginne,
I not what thing he scholde achieve. (4.2690-95)
In all the *Confessio Amantis* there is hardly a better section than this one on idleness and labor to show how *caritas* makes a haven for *nomos*. The *eros* element of *caritas* is desire for a particular object. For Amans that object is the lady. Repeatedly he asks Genius, who is his mentor as well as his confessor, what must he do to win the lady. The clear answer is *nomos*, that element of *caritas* that emphasizes achieved righteousness--here in the form of works or deeds. The laws of courtly love, of Scripture, and of reason all support this answer. Even moral goodness is a lesser virtue than works. By itself the former is no sure way to the desired object; it must be supported by works.

The stories of Ceix and Alceone (4.2927-3123), the Prayer of Cephalus (4.3187-3301), and Argus and Mercury (4.3317-61) deal with sleep and dreams, and yet also underline the nomism of the *Confessio*. The sweet, sad tale of Alceone is not only an illustration of the truth of dreams but the need to act upon that truth as well. Cephalus is exemplary of the lover who puts off sleep in order to attend to the affairs of love, while the unfortunate Argus loses both his head and the cow entrusted to his care because he slept when he should have been on guard.

The "Tale of Iphis and Araxarathen," the final story of Book 4, deals with despair, the most serious result of sloth. Both Iphis and Araxarathen fall into despondency, but it is Araxarathen who is guilty of the sin of despair. Iphis does all that he knows to do to win Araxarathen's love: "He yaf, he sende, he spake be mouthe, / Bot yit for oght that evere he couthe / Unto his sped he fond no weie" (4.3537-39). Forlorn, he casts all hope away and finally, weakened in mind and body, commits suicide. He is not guilty of any sin, however: "Hier schal a
kinges Sone dye / For love and for no felonie" (4.3579-80). The same cannot be said for Araxarathen; she not only despairs but persists in it. Iphis is a king's son and Araxarathen is a "Maide of lou astat." Because of this social difference, Araxarathen cannot believe that Iphis loves and accepts her. She cannot trust the goodness of his love; she fears for her virginity. Her sin lies in that despair that has no faith or trust in the ability and sincerity of the lover to truly love one such as she. Because of her distrust, she shows no pity to Iphis and makes no overtures to him (4.3527-36).

In his initial remarks on despair (the lines preceding the story), Genius describes the despondent man as one who doubts the power of God to come to his aid:

And thus he wol his sorwe make,
As god him mihte noght availe:
   . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Also whan he is falle in Sinne,
Him thenkth he is so ferr coupable,
That god wol noght be merciable
So gret a Sinne to foryive;
And thus he leeveth to be schrive. (4.3416-28)

The point of this discussion is the necessity of exercising all the means of grace available to man for salvation. Disbelief in the efficacy of grace is the sin of despair, that is, that God is not able or willing to help: "I wot wel god me wol noght helpe" (4.3409); "As god him mihte noght availe" (4.3417); "That god wol noght be merciable" (4.3426). Because the despondent man believes that God either cannot or will not aid him in his distress, he ceases to fulfill his part of the contract of salvation: "Bot yit ne wol he noght travaile / To helpe himself at such a nede, / But slowtheth under such a drede" (4.3418-20);
"And thus he leeveth to be schrive." He becomes hardened ("obstinat") in this view and "forsaketh alle trouthe" (4.3436). "Thus dwyneth he, til he be ded / In hindringe of his oghne astat" (4.3440-41). With the account of Araxarathen's suicide, Gower concludes his exhortation against sloth on one of the most somber notes in all the Confessio.

The necessity of man's efforts to attain his teleological goal is the message of Book 4, and the same lesson can be found in other books of the Confessio Amantis as well. For example, in the digression on religion of Book 5 one of the recurrent themes is that "faith without works is dead," a scripture referred to in the Latin sidenote opposite line 1300. A few lines later Gower refers to the example of Christ who "wroghte ferst and after tawhte, / So that the dede his word arawhte" (5.1825-26). One of the reasons for the corruption of the clergy is that "Thei wol no labour undertake / To kepe that hem is betake" (5.1857-58). The prelates "Forslowthen that thei scholden tile" (5.1887). If they would

werke
Upon the feith which thei ous teche,
Men scholden noght here weie seche
Withoute liht, as now is used:
Men se the charge aldaig refused,
Which holi cherche hath undertake. (5.1894-99)

This condemnation of the clergy for negligence, disobedience, and sloth covers a hundred lines or more and concludes the digression on religion.

To refer once more to the Constantine and Sylvester story, the nomistic emphasis on works is again evident in Sylvester's instruction to Constantine concerning salvation. In one line Sylvester mentions the Fall: "Ferst how mankinde was forlore" (2.3387). He refers to the
Incarnation, the Atonement, the Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection, and the Ascension in fifteen lines (2.3388-3402). But he takes twenty-eight lines—almost twice as many—to describe the judgment where every man must "stonde upon his oghne dedes" (2.3413) or "stonde upon his oghne werk" (2.3424). As he has stood, so shall he receive endless pain or endless joy (2.3425-30).

John Fisher places Gower "among the progressive thinkers of his day" because of his "emphasis upon legal justice and regal responsibility for all the estates, defined in terms of 'le bien commune,' 'bonus communi,' or 'the comun good'. . . ."\(^{31}\) In contrast, Janet Coleman considers Gower "more old-fashioned in his sources than Chaucer" and in the ideals of those sources, and though Gower "was, perhaps, more representative of his age and the second estate's attitudes . . . than any other poet one can name for the last quarter of the century," he is, nevertheless, a "mirror of contemporary legal theory, and therefore a conservative voice that spoke anachronistically . . . ." He represents an old order threatened by "men moving unnaturally out of their divinely ordained and allotted stations."\(^{32}\)

Whether Gower is conservative or progressive is beside the point for this study, but the emphasis on his legal ideas is not. Gower's insistence on obedience to law, both religious and civil, is a common denominator for his three major works. "What is a people without law, or what is law without a judge, or what is a judge, if without justice?"


\(^{32}\)Coleman, Medieval Readers, pp. 126 and 136.
he rhetorically asks in the *Vox Clamantis* (p. 245). "One who presumes to indulge in practices prohibited by law ought to go without the benefits conferred by the law" (p. 246). "... let the law cut down the harmful teasels of rabble lest they uproot the nobler grain with their stinging" (p. 247). Such statements are the true meat of the *Vox*. Similarly, in the *Mirour de l'Omm* Gower makes such statements as "the civil law of ancient scripture with regard to human creatures includes in a few words all the law that refers to reason and moderation. That is: 'Do to another the same measure that thou wouldst that he do to thee'" (11. 15217-222, et passim); "In my solitude I should love my God with all my heart, more than myself; and then I should love my neighbor as much as myself" (11. 13609-612, et passim). The special delineations of *eros* and *agape* that are to be found in the *Mirour* are purposeful inclusions which are set off from the rest of the surrounding text with such statements as "Now will be told of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1. 28609) or "Now will be told of the third daughter of Charity, named Compassion" (1. 12937). There is no such deliberate remark with regard to the nomistic characteristics in either the *Vox Clamantis* or the *Mirour de l'Omm* because *nomos* is not an intrusion into Gower's thought; rather, it is a pervasive dye that colors all his religious and ethical ideas.

The concept of law is fundamental to the *Confessio Amantis* as well, and its ramifications can be traced throughout the poem. For example, following the story of Orestes, Amans asks if there is any lawful way whereby a man may kill "Withoute Senne." Genius's reply is affirmative. Law and justice are higher than mercy that spares a man when there is
no valid reason to spare him; therefore, the judge, "of pure dette," must slay those whom the law considers deserving of execution, and sins. if he does not do so (3.2211-19). It is not true mercy that spares one "schrewe" and thereby grieves a thousand good men, and he who thinks to please God with such mercy deceives himself (3.2220-24). The king bears his sword as a sign that he will defend his "trewe poeple" and make an end of those who would devour them. This is a law that "stod er we were bore" (3.2225-29). In time of war a man is free to defend himself, his house, and his land and to slay, "if that he mai no bet," in accordance with the law (3.2235-40).

This is a common, practical view of the law, but Gower pushes it beyond legal theory into religious practice in his assertion that obedience to the law is a worthy act before God:

Lo thus, my Sone, to socoure The lawe and comun riht to winne, A man mai sle withoute Sinne, And do therof a gret almesse, So forto kepe rihtwisnesse. (3.2230-34)

This perception of the law as assent to God is continued in the ensuing discussion. Amans becomes more specific and wants to know if homicide is justified in the cause of "dedly werres" that are fought "In worldes cause" (wars for gain). Just wars are fought in accordance with law; wars for gain are unjust and break the law. First, they break the law which the "hihe god of his justice" gave to Moses (3.2251-54). Second, they break the "lawe of charite," for when Christ was born, the message the shepherds received from the angels was "Pes to the men of welwill- inge / In erthe be among ous here" (3.2256-62). Third, "dedly wars break
the law of nature, for peace "in hir lawe" is the "chief of mannes welthe, / Of mannes lif, of mannes helthe" (3.2263-66). After the stories of "Alexander and the Pirate" and the "Wars and Death of Alexander," Amans questions Genius regarding the lawfulness of religious wars (not the same as just wars). Religious wars are not in accord with the law of charity as evidenced in Christ's atonement, nor with His teaching, nor with the practice of the Apostles (3.2491-2503).

Gower again reveals the importance of law in his introductory remarks on Justice, the third point of Policy:

> What is a lond wher men ben none?  
> What ben the men whiche are al one  
> Withoute a kinges governance?  
> What is a king in his ligance,  
> Wher that ther is no lawe in londe?  
> What is to take lawe on honde,  
> Bot if the jugges weren trewe?  
> These olde wordes with the newe  
> Who that wol take in evidence,  
> Ther mai he se theexperience,  
> What thing it is to kepe lawe,  
> Thurgh which the wronges ben withdrawe  
> And rihtwisnesse stant commended,  
> Wherof the regnes ben amended. (7.2695-2708)

In the following lines Gower observes that all relationships between the king and God and between the king and the people are set by law (7.2709-21). To verify this position Gower presents brief sketches of three upholders of the law of whom he approves. The Emperor Maximin exemplifies one wise ruler's method of choosing a proper governor. As a result of his discernment, the law was not hindered by covetousness (7.2778-79). The tale of the Roman Consul Gaius Fabricius shows the incorruptibility of a man responsible for maintaining the law (7.2783-2817). Similarly,
the Emperor Conrad is a third example of the just ruler, but more importantly, he represents the lengths to which Gower will go to justify law as a God-appointed guide for behavior.

To keep the peace Conrad made such laws that no one dared oppose them in any way; nor could the laws be circumvented by avarice (7.2834-41). The end result was not only unity and peace but also fear and dread of the law (7.2842-44). Under Conrad's rule all relationships were limited by the rigor of law. There was no room for any other consideration. Unlike the stories of Maximin and Gaius, which exemplify, respectively, a wise method of choosing proper judges and the incorruptibility of a good judge, the story of Conrad involves a relationship between the people and the judge, which is based solely on law. All action and interaction are forced into a rigid legal framework that does not even allow for communication (7.2835-37). This is nomos at its worst. These examples, however, along with those of Carmidotirus and Cambyses (referred to earlier) which justify the rigor and harshness of law, culminate in the consummate story of Lycurgus, who sacrifices himself for the law.

What does caritas mean for Gower, then? This study has been an attempt to answer that question. The general definition of caritas as love of God in the sense of desire for Him (eros) is not a consideration in the Confessio Amantis, and agape (selfless love) carries little weight. The preponderant evidence is that the caritas of the Confessio is dominated by nomos. In short, law as ordained by God is the basis for all religious and ethical relationships, and the fulfillment of the law enables a man to attain his teleological goal--on one level, the
possession of the lady; on another, the possession of God.

One caution is appropriate, however, with regard to this nomistic emphasis of Gower's. Like error, which generally exists within the context of truth, nomos exists within the wholesome context of law. The law is valuable and must be obeyed, but it may be pushed into legalism. For example, the ideal human and divine-human relationships should be ordered by love, not by law, but nearly all relationships in the Confessio Amantis are bound by a legalistic observance of law rather than by a concern for the individual. The problem is compounded by the fact that Gower lived in a world, as we do now, where law and order were necessary for the commonwealth. What must be observed, then, in an analysis of the Confessio is whether action toward another is strictly bound by law (an expression of nomos) or whether it is ever mitigated or could be mitigated by mercy, pity, or love without destroying the law. When Gower accepts the common interpretation of government that the king, though standing above the law, will do nothing "excessif / Ayein the lawe" for neither love nor hate (7.2722-24), he does not leave much room for agape. Yet occasionally the veil lifts, and when it does we glimpse Alcestes, Trojan, Codrus, Constantine, and the resplendent Lycurgus. Moreover, we sense the sincerity and humility in the clarion call for alignment of the self with God and the choice of Christ's way. It is indeed a beautiful tune that Arion plays after all.
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