conclusion
For the medieval Christian reality was formulated by the theology of the Church, whose center was the liturgy. It was the liturgy which constantly brought sacred history to bear according to the "exigency of human capacity" on the life of the Christian soul. Generalizing from the lyrics we have studied, it is clear that medieval Christian theology informed the reality of the Middle English poet to such a profound extent that it determined his concept of a poem, the purpose of each of his poems, and the structure he used in formulating his poem.

There are several consequences of this for the reader of the Middle English lyrics. In the first place, the religious lyric cannot be fully understood or evaluated as a work of a purely "poetic imagination" which acts independently from the subject matter it considers, because, as we have seen, there is no discontinuity in the lyrics between subject matter and the form and structure of the poems. The purpose, the subject matter, the form and structure of the medieval religious lyric can be discovered only through a knowledge of medieval Christian theology which had a unique subject matter and a unique mode of knowing.

In the second place, theology is not a mode of knowledge which is necessarily opposed to poetry. The "dogma" used by the poets is not a static body of knowledge as it is conceived to have been by such modern critics as Spitzer and Kane. Dogma was formulated and perpetuated by the Church, not principally in the scholastic writings, but in the dynamic forms of the liturgy—the Mass, the sacraments, the Divine Office—which were the points of union between the soul and God during this life. Rather than giving a
static quality to the lyrics, theology provided the poet with innumerable forms and variations of form through which the poet and his audience sought to be united to God.²

We have seen, for example, that although one poem may be on the same subject of sacred history as another, the focus of each poem and the unifying principle of formal proportion of structure may vary widely from poem to poem. The contrast between the accounts of the annunciation in the Gospel, in the two poems on the “maiden makeles,” and in “Gabriel, fram evene-king” illustrates this point, as do the four very different poems discussed in Part II which focus on the same moment of the crucifixion, the moment just before Christ’s death, “Pe milde Lomb isprad o rode,” the two poems on Mary’s sorrow, and “Stond wel, moder, vnder rode.”

Not only is medieval theology not opposed to poetry, but it has provided the poets with new ways of formulating reality. Looking at the objective aspect of the Middle English lyric—that is, how the poet presented the actions of God in history—we see how the poet reformulated sacred history in his poem in a way analogous to its reformulation within the liturgy. Looking at the subjective aspect of the lyrics—that is, the response of the Christian soul to God—we see how the poet sought, united with his audience, through his poem to be reformed and joined to God. In the following two sections I will describe some of the forms theology provided for the Middle English lyric, first in their objective aspect of sacred history and then in their subjective aspect of the individual’s experience of God. In a final section I will suggest the direction future study might take in developing an aesthetic theory appropriate to the medieval religious lyric.
The Poem: The Sacred History

In each of the lyrics there has been a similar point of view in time. The past, present, and future are oriented to the present moment. The present moment is defined by the liturgy of the Church as the perspective from which the events of sacred history are reformulated again and again. The liturgy's orientation in the present is a reflection of the fundamental fact of Christian theology that the plan of redemption is centered on man, and that it is focused on each man as he lives in the present in relation to Christ as He manifests Himself in the present. None of the events of sacred history is told independently of its relationship to the present. In the poems which formulate a past event, the past is used in the present as a power by which to secure the promise of the future:

Reuful is þe meneginge
of þis deth and tis departinge,
þar-in is blis meind with wepinge,
    for þarþurw us kam alle bot.

There is no attempt to recreate the past for its own sake, because in sacred history no event has occurred only for its own sake. Each event is part of the total plan which has its beginning in creation by God, its end in union with God, and its center in Christ Who, coming into history, is the means of man's union with God:
"Suete sone," ðan seyde sche,
"No sorwe sulde me dere,
Miht i ðet ðat day se
A king ðat ðu were."

"Do wey, moder," seide ðat suete,
"Perfore kam i nouth,
But for to ben pore & bales bete,
Pat man was inne brouth.

Perfore wan to & ðretti ðer ben don
& a litel more,
Moder, ðu salt maken michil mon
& seen me deyge sore."

In the poems each event in sacred history is used both as a figure and a power. In the same way as the exegetes saw an event of the Old Testament to be fulfilled by an event of the New, the event the poem formulates is both fulfilled by a future event and prefigures the events yet to come. This relationship between events in sacred history is shown explicitly by the poems which end with a petition. The poet uses a figure formulated from his point of view in the present by which to organize the past and to secure for both himself and his audience the hope for the future. In "Gabriel, fram evene-king," it was the figure of Mary's virginal conception and painless childbearing as it delivers mankind in the present from pain to joy; in "Pe milde Lomb isprad o rode," the figure of the love that transforms suffering; in "Stond wel, moder, vnder rode," the intelligible cross; in "Glade us maiden, moder milde," the five aspects of Mary's joy as Queen of Heaven; and, finally, in "Leuedy, for ðare blisse," the figure of vision transforming blindness, as mankind on earth appeals to Mary in heaven.

The nature of these figures is one of the most important illustrations of how the forms in the Middle English religious lyric reflect a specifically Christian theology. Each of these figures which provide the basic proportion in the lyrics is taken from the subject matter of sacred history, the redemption of man by Christ, as theology formulated it. The figures are unique to Christian theology. "Gabriel, fram evene-king" uses the paradox of Mary's virgin motherhood. "Pe milde Lomb" is based upon the doctrine that God's
infinite love for man is expressed through the sacrifice of His Son and the affliction of His human mother. "Stond wel, moder" uses the power of the cross as it penetrates and reforms history. "Leuedy, for þare blisse" uses the moment between Christ's ascension and Mary's assumption to define the present position of man on earth in relation to his future joy in heaven.

In the poems which have no explicit prayer of petition at the end, such as "Als i lay vp-on a nith," "Wy haue þe no reuthe on my child?" and "Suete sone, reu on me & brest out of þi bondis," the application of the past event in the poem to the listener is implied by the listener's own context in sacred history. It is because the listener is himself living sacred history that he relates himself to the scene as the poet shapes it for his meditation. We saw that the listener's understanding of his context is used by the poet as he structures his poem. In "Als i lay vp-on a nith," for example, the poet used the discrepancy between the listener's present knowledge of the final outcome of sacred history and Mary's ignorance of it at the time of Christ's birth to create a dimension of irony in his poem, and in the last stanza it was by referring to the listener's present celebration of Christmas that the poet transformed the Child's tale into a testimony of truth. In "Lamentacio dolorosa" it was only by recognizing the use the poet made of the listener's part in sacred history that the full meaning of the poem became clear. Contrary to Kane's reading of Mary's appeal as a simple alternative offered to her Son to burst His bonds or to let her die, we came to see that the poem was a carefully developed ballad-like progression of Mary's inner awareness that her Son, Who was God, was dying.

It is the intensity of the meditation in the poems without a petition that determines its value as prayer. The intensity of joy or sorrow with which the listener contemplates the event directly affects the power of the meditation to secure the listener's final joy. The poet of "Pe milde Lomb" said this explicitly in his prayer to Christ:

\begin{verbatim}
He þat starf in hure kende,  
Leue us so ben þar-of mende
þat he giue us atten ende
þat he hauet us to ibout.
\end{verbatim}

We have found in the lyrics we have studied that medieval theology's perception of the symmetry and proportion of sacred history is what fundamentally determines how the poets conceive the theological figures by which
they establish the basic proportions of their poems. The redemption of man, the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, is a reformation of the events of the first creation—the creation, temptation and fall of man, and his expulsion from paradise. Christ is the second Adam; the cross the second tree; Mary is the second Eve.

This symmetry of sacred history is repeated in turn in the life of each man, who is related to the events of the first creation and to those of the second, since he is bound by nature to Adam and bound by nature and grace to Christ. Thus his life becomes an imitation of Christ and an overcoming of the sins of Adam. As Christ died and rose, so man crucifies the Adam in himself that he may rise, or from another view, in his baptism dies to sin and enters the life of grace. Through the liturgy of the Church and the sacraments, the correspondences within sacred history and within the life of a man are joined.

A knowledge of the concept of symmetry is fundamental to understanding the thirteenth and fourteenth century Christian’s way of ordering and associating events of sacred history. We have seen, for example, how it lies behind the development of the devotion to the joys of Mary and how it is present in the devotions of the Ancrene Riwle, where the five wounds of Christ are applied to the five senses of man and where Mary’s five corporal joys are organized by the five letters of her name. We have seen that it is the principle by which such poems as the Hours of the Cross and the corresponding Hours of Mary’s Compassion developed from the Hours of the Office. The concept of the symmetry of sacred history is strikingly present in the methods of illumination of the Psalters and the Horae, as the Psalter of Robert de Lisle illustrates (Figure 5). One of the most interesting examples is found in a thirteenth century York Psalter edited by Eric G. Millar, where, in the illuminations showing the relationship between the life of Christ and that of David, not only are moments of their life made to correspond, but the figures themselves are selected and placed in a mirror-like relationship to each other.

The most fully developed example of the symmetry of sacred history in the poems we have analyzed is that provided by Mary’s manner of giving birth. Mary, the second Eve, is the mother of Christ Who was born without pain. Mary’s painless giving birth to Christ corresponds by contrast to the law of “kende,” the pain womankind suffers in giving birth to her children as a penalty for the original sin of Eve. This painful giving birth of man corresponds in turn to the painful death of Christ which atoned for all sin
and by which man was loosed from pain. Mary's painless giving birth to Christ corresponds to and prefigures the spiritual rebirth of man. Mary's suffering at Christ's painful death makes her the mother of man for whom she suffers birth pangs. Finally, the painless birth of Christ was compared to Christ's rising from the tomb. Christ's rising is the sign and promise of man's final release from pain, for at the end of the world man, too, will be resurrected, and there will be a final dying and rising when he is judged. We have seen how, as well as being a principle of proportion between the events of sacred history, this method of applying one event to another is a principle of the structural organization of the lyrics.

For example, in "Gabriel, fram evene-king" when one stanza was juxtaposed to another, we found that the organization within each stanza corresponded: first the event was introduced, then its significance, and then its relationship to sacred history was made. We found that the order of each stanza also corresponded to the order of the development of the poem as a whole, as the first three stanzas told of the event of the annunciation, the fourth told of its fulfillment and made the transition to the fifth stanza, which set the whole poem in its context of the present moment. In "Als i lay vp-on a nith" we saw, when the poem was divided into three groupings of ten stanzas according to Mary's experience of sorrow or joy, that there was a double principle of correspondence, one determined by the alternation of joyful with sorrowful events and one determined by the prophecy of the events and their fulfillment. The symmetrical correspondence between events in sacred history was seen also in "Leuedy, for þare blisse," where Mary's joys were ordered to correspond to the present position of man in relationship to Mary: as man stands on earth below, looking up to Mary who is in heaven, and prays for heavenly joy. The correspondence between the relationship to Christ of Mary and John, the unfaithful disciples, and the listener in "Pe milde Lomb isprad o rode" and that between the three moments of suspended time in "Stond wel, moder, vnder rode" provided other examples.

A second aspect of the symmetrical relationships which medieval theology perceived between events of sacred history is that of the ladder of value, where things or events have more value the closer they are to Christ. The ladder of value arises from the principle in sacred history of the fulfillment of all things by Christ. We saw how the event of Christ's coming is prepared for in creation and how Christ's life, because it is the new creation, as well as having direct points of correspondence to the first creation and fall, fulfills the promises of His coming, so that the Old Testament events become
CONCLUSION

figures for and testimonies to the events of His life in the New. Thus the early events of sacred history are fulfilled by the last events, and all relationships are defined by man's present closeness to or distance from Christ. This hierarchy of value was shown above as it exists in the fixed order of parts in the Mass and Office. In the poems, the principle corresponds both to an increase of awareness of Christ and to the passage of time into Christ, the two central facts of the life of the Christian soul.

For example, in “Als i lay vp-on a nith” and the poems on the joys, we saw how the experience of the joy of Mary at her motherhood of Christ was only completed through time, by her assumption into heaven where she is now most closely united to Christ. In “Als i lay” the principle of the fulfillment of events by later events in sacred history as they draw closer to Christ was used by the poet as a dramatic device in the poem: Mary was constantly deceived, mistaking the incomplete joys in Christ's life for His full joy, which only events would define for her. And it could be seen also in the temporal series of prophecies and fulfillments upon which the poet constructed the poem. “Stond wel, moder, vnder rode,” with its series of dyings and risings centering in the death and resurrection of Christ, was another example of this, as the final implication of the figure, the second coming of Christ and the last judgment, was yet to be fulfilled.

This same concept of fulfillment of all things in Christ works analogously as a structural principle in the lyrics. The completion of the poet's purpose in the poem stands in the same relationship to the events or parts of his poem as Christ does to the events of sacred history. The significance of the beginning of a poem is only fulfilled at the end and in virtue of the end, just as in sacred history we have seen that the significance of events becomes clearer and clearer through the life of Christ as through His resurrection, the joyful implications of His birth are made clear. Just as in sacred history the end is yet to be fulfilled by Christ's second coming and the last judgment, so the poet uses his poem as a means to obtain the union with Christ which for himself and his audience is still incomplete.

This concept of fulfillment used as a structural principle of the lyrics is especially clear when we consider how the poet develops the meaning of his names for Mary. As we saw in the unpoetic fourteenth century poem on the five joys, theology gives Mary many names: Maiden and Mother, Queen of Heaven, Lady, Mother of Mercy. Each one of these descriptive titles is given to Mary by virtue of her relationship to Christ. Her relationship to Christ is established by the events of her life with Him in time: Maiden and Mother,
her motherhood of Christ; Queen of Heaven and Lady, her assumption by Christ into heaven; and Mother of Mercy, her compassion which has made her the mother of mankind. The poet uses these names, which, when applied to Mary now in her position closest to Christ and highest of creatures, define the source of power by which she intercedes for mankind.

The evolution of the significance of Mary's names within a single poem can be seen best in the poems which praise her or petition her. In these poems, at the same time as the events of sacred history are related, they become the way by which the meaning of her name is gradually revealed. We saw how the full meaning of Maiden and Mother was defined in “Gabriel, fram evene-king.” First, through the words exchanged by Mary and the angel at the annunciation, the poet presented the virginal conception and childbearing. Having made the concept clear, in stanza four by telling of the actual birth, death and resurrection of Christ, he showed its consequences for the redemption of man. Only with the meaning of Mary’s maiden motherhood fully defined by these events, did the poet then raise to Mary his petition using that name with its full power, “maiden, moder makeles.”

We saw this principle of defining a name of Mary by events was the purpose also of the poets of both “Nu jis fules singet” and “I syng of a myden jat is makeles,” who by telling of the event of her virgin motherhood defined Mary as the “maiden makeles.” “Glade us maiden, moder milde” is an example of a poem which defines Mary in terms of her queenship in heaven, as each event was related in order to describe an aspect of her joy, until finally in the last stanza, with the sum total of the aspects of her joy complete, the poet called her by her personal name “Mary.” It is as if the whole poem were for the purpose of defining what her name means.

But very seldom do these thirteenth and fourteenth century poems use her personal name. By identifying Mary through the events that mark her relationship to Christ, Who is the center of sacred history and the means and object of man’s redemption, Mary’s descriptive titles name her deeper or more literal identity and are an explicit recognition that Christ is the source of her value, glory, and power.