

“FORE DÆRE MÆRDE MOD ASTIGE”:  
TWO NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE OLD ENGLISH *GIFTS OF MEN*

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A Thesis  
presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
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DECEMBER 2008

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

“FORE DÆRE MÆRDE MOD ASTIGE”:  
TWO NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE OLD ENGLISH *GIFTS OF MEN*

presented by Derek Updegraff,

a candidate for the degree of master of arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer tremendous thanks to Professor Johanna Kramer, who commented on numerous drafts of this thesis, each time with exemplary knowledge of the Old English language and Anglo-Saxon culture. I would also like to thank Professor Emma Lipton and Professor Rabia Gregory, both of whom provided insightful comments that helped strengthen the shape and scope of this thesis. In addition to offering careful readings of this work, each committee member provided support and encouragement throughout the writing process. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude for the excellent courses and advice offered by Professor Kramer and Professor Lipton since my arrival at the University of Missouri.

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## ABSTRACT

The Old English poem *The Gifts of Men* has received little attention in contemporary scholarship, and when it has been referenced in recent decades, the primary trend has been to comment on its unique structure and position within the discourse of catalogue poems. As a gnomic and Christian religious text, the poem is most likely a composition that found influences in both Germanic and patristic traditions, and source study tended to drive the earliest scholarship on the poem. This thesis seeks to expand the scholarship on *The Gifts of Men* by offering a linguistic study of the poem's terms of cognition, thereby situating it within the discourse focused on the concept of the mind in Anglo-Saxon England. This thesis also complicates the poem's position as a religious text by offering a new interpretation of its opening and closing lines through a comparative reading with the Old English poems *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. The semantic study of the Old English word *mod* ("mind") and other cognitive terms demonstrates the poet's conception of the mind-space as the receptacle for God's gifts, and the comparative reading with the *Genesis* poems contends that the poet alludes to the narrative of the fall of the chief angel as a means of warning against pride. The two new perspectives argued for within this thesis seek not only to renew interest in the poem, but also to recuperate the poet, whose complex use of language and intricately framed

allusion to the creation narrative both work to show that he was a more accomplished author than earlier critics have recognized.

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

The Old English *Gifts of Men* is seldom examined outside its position within the slim corpus of Anglo-Saxon catalogue poetry. Its unique listing structure has caused previous critics to focus on the successes and failures of the list convention's employment, as well as on source and analogue studies. As a result, criticism on the poem is narrow in scope and limited in number. In this thesis I present a two-part argument in which I examine the poem in two new areas of discourse. Chapter 2 is a linguistic analysis of the poem's use of the Old English word *mod* ("mind") and a select number of additional cognitive terms. By considering the poet's word choices, I show his intentions for using "mind" terminology—the most significant of which are his use of the mind as the space of deposit for mankind's gifts and his insistence that God's mind is merciful because he has intentionally designed the mind-space to be unable to store each of God's numerous gifts. At the same time, my focus on terms of cognition places my analysis of the poem into the larger critical context of the ongoing discussion devoted to the mind in Anglo-Saxon literature and the understanding and reception of cognitive processes in early medieval England more generally. Chapter 3 is a comparative study that examines *The Gifts of Men* beside the Old English *Genesis* poems. *The Gifts of Men* is a religious poem, yet it has not been sufficiently studied in the criticism on Anglo-

Saxon religious poetry. By reading the opening and closing lines of the poem alongside selected lines of *Genesis A* and *B*, I argue that the poet of *The Gifts of Men* alludes to the creation and fall of the chief angel as a warning against pride and as an advocacy for community cooperation. Both of my lines of argumentation seek to place *The Gifts of Men* in larger critical contexts by presenting new approaches to studying the poem that move away from its narrow reading as a catalogue poem. My discussion also complicates previous critics' limited perceptions of the poet, whose utilization of intricate word placement and selection and embedding of narrative allusion illustrate not only his skill as a poet, but also his active working within his own contemporary literary contexts of Anglo-Saxon England. Preceding the chapters that present my two-part argument, this introduction gives the reader background information on the poem, the manuscript in which it is collected, and previous scholarship. Because the arguments set forth in Chapters 2 and 3 rely heavily on linguistic analysis, I have found it appropriate to supply an interlinear translation of the poem in the appendix. Much of the conceit captured within verse, however, is dependent on its prosody, so I have also placed a modern verse translation in the appendix. The aim of my verse translation is to bridge the gap of Anglo-Saxon and contemporary sensibilities with regard to versification.<sup>1</sup>

*The Gifts of Men* has borne three different titles in Modern English editions due to the decisions made by its various editors. The poem is collected in *The Exeter Book*, which is the manuscript containing the greatest number of poems in today's corpus of surviving Anglo-Saxon literature; its most recent editor is Bernard J. Muir, who in 2000

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<sup>1</sup> My choices with regard to prosody, syntax, and other translation issues are discussed briefly in Appendix 1.



published a revised edition of his 1994 two-volume *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*.<sup>2</sup> Muir's edition has recently become the standard text of reference in academic writing, due in large part to his thoroughness of research and access to advanced technologies in paleographic study. Along with his reediting of the text, Muir elected to make changes to some of the titles standardized by previous editors of *The Exeter Book*; among his changes was the decision to drop the title *The Gifts of Men* and replace it with *God's Gifts to Humankind*. With this switch Muir has created an emphasis on the divine source of the gifts listed in the poem and has taken into account the poem's use of Old English nouns like *mann*, which does not possess a solely masculine charge in Old English and which is usually best translated in the singular as *person* rather than *man* and in the plural as *people* or *humankind* rather than *men*. Because Muir's editorial title is still relatively new and because *The Gifts of Men* is not a poem heavily written about, it is impossible to say if his title will eventually become the most accepted in academic discourse. In this thesis I reference Muir's text, yet in order to align myself more clearly with previous scholarship, I maintain the standard title *The Gifts of Men*—the title used in George Philip Krapp and Elliot van Kirk Dobbie's 1936 *The Exeter Book*.<sup>3</sup> Krapp and Dobbie's 6-volume collective edition of Old English poetry—The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (1931-1942)—is still the most accepted and most recent text of reference for many Old English poems.<sup>4</sup> Between the publications of Krapp and Dobbie's *Exeter Book*

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard J. Muir, ed., *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> George P. Krapp and Elliott V. K. Dobbie, eds., *The Exeter Book*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

<sup>4</sup> Though I have chosen to cite Muir's newer edition of *The Gifts of Men*, I do make use of Krapp and Dobbie's texts at various points in this thesis.

and Muir's *Exeter Anthology*, Douglas D. Short produced a critical edition of the poem in an unpublished dissertation of 1973 and maintained the title *The Gifts of Men*.<sup>5</sup> The earliest Modern English editor of the poem was Israel Gollancz, who in his 1895 edition of Part 1 of *The Exeter Book* titled the poem *The Endowments of Men*.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the rest of this thesis the poem will be referred to simply as *Gifts*.

The manuscript known as *The Exeter Book* is often regarded as the most important of the four great codices of Old English poetry, not only because it collects the greatest amount of poems, but also because its content is far more thematically varied.<sup>7</sup> The other three important codices are British Library MS. Vitellius A. xv (the "Beowulf Manuscript"), the so-called Vercelli Book (at the Cathedral of Vercelli in Piedmont), and Bodley MS. Junius 11. The first two contain works of poetry and prose, but *The Junius Manuscript*—like *The Exeter Book* (Exeter Dean and Chapter Library MS 3501)—is comprised only of poetry. Unlike *The Exeter Book*, however, the poems in *The Junius Manuscript* are all religious in content.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the poems collected in *The Exeter Book* range from the religious, to the gnomic, to the elegiac, but more often cross these divisions of genre in which scholarship too frequently corrals them. The manuscript

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas Dean Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Israel Gollancz, ed., *The Exeter Book*, Part 1, Early English Text Society 104 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, 1895).

<sup>7</sup> See R. W. Chambers, "The Exeter Book and Its Donor Leofric," in *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, With Introductory Chapters by R. W. Chambers, Max Förster and Robin Flower (London: Humphries and Company, 1933), 1-9; and John C. Pope, "Paleography and poetry: some solved and unsolved problems of the Exeter Book," in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts & Libraries: Essays presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar Press, 1978), 25-65.

<sup>8</sup> The poems collected in this codex are *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*. George Philip Krapp, ed., *The Junius Manuscript*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931).

itself is noteworthy for having remained in its present place since the close of the Anglo-Saxon period, as

it was presented to the Chapter Library of Exeter Cathedral not later than A.D. 1072, as is to be seen from the list of donations which Bishop Leofric († 1072) made to his Cathedral about that time. In this list it appears under the name of *an mycel Englisc boc be gehwilcum þingum on leoð-wisan geworht*, ‘one large English book on various subjects composed in verse.’<sup>9</sup>

The manuscript, similar to most surviving Anglo-Saxon codices, spent a few centuries without being read or even valued. The library inventory of 1327 does not mention *The Exeter Book* specifically, though there is an entry identifying numerous books in French, English, and Latin that were considered worthless because of their worn-out condition.<sup>10</sup>

The damage accrued by the manuscript pages is limited when one considers the collective surface area of the sheets. Certain leaves are stained or possess holes from burning embers, making some poems or passages completely illegible, and scholars regularly agree that a significant number of leaves is absent from the current assemblage, affecting the readings of longer poems with apparent gaps.<sup>11</sup> *Gifts* is recorded on five manuscript pages (folios 78r, 78v, 79r, 79v, and 80r), sharing space with the closing and opening lines of the two poems that frame it. Muir’s electronic facsimile of the codex reveals the scribe’s neat and steady hand, and the text of *Gifts* has remained entirely without

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<sup>9</sup> Max Förster, “The Donations of Leofric to Exeter,” in *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, 10-32, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, vol. 1, 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> For theories centered on assemblage and missing leaves, see Förster, “The Donations of Leofric to Exeter”; Pope, “Paleography and poetry: some solved and unsolved problems of the Exeter Book”; and Patrick W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-century Cultural History* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993).

damage.<sup>12</sup> As was customary for the writing down of Old English verse, the poems are copied not according to line breaks but with the intention of filling each page to its fullest; thus, the appearance of the manuscript reflects more closely the look of contemporary prose than poetry, and the divisions of lines (much like syntactical sense) are defined by aural rather than visual constrictions.<sup>13</sup> A codex undergoes significant changes on its route to becoming edited text, and paleographic and linguistic analyses are just as critical to the process of interpretation as is a historical and cultural grounding of environment.<sup>14</sup>

The dating of the composition of *Gifts* is a difficult task to say the least. *The Exeter Book* itself is generally thought to have been compiled in the mid- to late-tenth century (circa 965-975) and is often regarded as the oldest surviving collection of poetry composed in the vernacular, but each of the codices containing Old English verse was copied within a few decades of the others (circa 965-1015), so there does remain a degree of controversy and uncertainty regarding the date and place of compilation for each of the major codices.<sup>15</sup> And, of course, the dates of manuscript compilation are independent

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<sup>12</sup> See Bernard J. Muir, ed., *The Electronic Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry* (The Exeter DVD) (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Meter and syntax are discussed in Appendix 1.

<sup>14</sup> The manuscript page on which *Gifts* begins is 78r. The concluding lines of *The Wanderer* fill the top half of the page, and then after a space the text of *Gifts* begins. Below I have given a transcription of the Old English text as it appears on 78r. On the actual manuscript page the *F* in *Fela* is quite large, extending to the bottom of the page and dominating much of the left-hand space of the other lines. The text below comprises lines 1-7 and the first two words of line 8:

F E L A      B I Ð      O N F O L D an  
 forð gesynra geongra geofona þapagæst  
 berend wegað ingewitte swa her weoruda  
 god meotud meahtum swið monnum dæleð sy  
 leð sundor giefe sendeð wide agne spede þara  
 æghwylc mot dryht wuniendra dæl onfon nebið

Muir's edited text of these lines appears on page 61 of Appendix 2.

<sup>15</sup> Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, vol. 1, 1.

from the dates of verse composition. Short has argued that *Gifts* was composed just before the compilation of *The Exeter Book*, suggesting that features of diction, meter, and literary style make it a later poem.<sup>16</sup> He employs a method of text dating devised by Robert J. Menner in which the percentage of a poem's "prose words" is calculated<sup>17</sup>; Short's calculation shows that *Gifts* does use a relatively high number of words more common to prose than poetry, aligning it with a later poetic tradition; he then draws attention to the fact that count-words (e.g., *Fela*, "Many," in line 1) are given metrical stress—a feature which is much more common in later poems—and he aligns the poem's structure and content with the later homiletic tradition instead of the early heroic period, noting that the opening and closing sections of *Gifts* "show a tendency toward rhetorical parallelism and complex hypotactical relationships that has more in common with tenth-century homiletic traditions than with early poetry."<sup>18</sup> Short's assertions are sound, and he bases his dating of the poem partly on Robin Flower's conclusion that *The Exeter Book* was copied and assembled between 970 and 990; Flower himself thought the date to be earlier than later within those decades.<sup>19</sup> Applying his assertions about the poem's content and style, Short conservatively estimates *Gifts* to have been written in "the late ninth or early tenth century."<sup>20</sup> As noted above, recent scholarship—which relied heavily on Flower's work—has more precisely determined the compilation of *The Exeter Book* to have taken place between 965 and 975, but this adjustment does not alter the general

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<sup>16</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition," 186-190.

<sup>17</sup> See Robert J. Menner, "The Date and Dialect of *Genesis A* 852-2936," *Anglia* 70 (1951): 285-294.

<sup>18</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition," 189.

<sup>19</sup> Robin Flower, "The Script of the Exeter Book," in *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, 83-94.

<sup>20</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition," 190.

timeframe of Short's contention that *Gifts* was composed not too long before the assemblage of the manuscript.

*Gifts* is a poem noted for its unique structure and its classification as both a gnomic and religious text. The poem is thematically divided into three main sections: the introduction (ll. 1-29) begins with the poet pointing out how numerous the gifts are that God gives to humankind, how no one is denied at least one gift, and how no one is allowed to possess all gifts; the middle section (ll. 30-96)—referred to later as the *sum* catalogue—lists the various gifts, alternating between abilities of the mind and skills of the body; and the conclusion (ll. 97-113) reiterates the fact that God does not prepare all of the gifts for one person but, instead, wisely distributes them in a diverse fashion. The poem's compact length makes it ideal for reading or reciting as a lone piece or as part of a larger program. That is, one can imagine the poem being read during a meal in a refectory or during one of the monastery's services. Though the audience was most likely a monastic one, audience members could have included secular people who interacted with nearby monks. The content and style is homiletic, and the poem does not have an explicit message of conversion but instead seems to be directed toward a community that is already Christian. The poet's didactic purpose for its listeners is twofold: for people to be content with their individual skills, and for people to recognize the benefit and necessity for working together within a shared community. The specific skills highlighted in *Gifts* give modern readers a clear insight into the abilities that were culturally valued, and because a principal message is one of cooperation and the avoidance of haughtiness, an obvious inference of the text is that the author thought this a

worthwhile message to convey to his community members—whether those sharing his monastic quarters or those living in nearby areas.

Scholars do generally agree that *The Exeter Book* was produced in monastic surroundings. Patrick W. Conner suggests that the codex is comprised of three booklets, and that the second booklet—which *Gifts* is in—“may represent a collection derived from Continental models and composed within a monastic environment before the Benedictine revolution.”<sup>21</sup> As I will discuss shortly, other non-Frankish Continental sources for *Gifts* have been suggested by different critics—and Conner, of course, recognizes that poetic conventions (such as cataloguing) practiced by the Carolingian poets are dependent upon Classical practices—but what can be collectively inferred is that the poet of *Gifts* was a well-educated member of a religious community and had regular access to a variety of vernacular and Latin texts.

The poem’s didacticism grounds it within an ongoing tradition of texts intended for religious instruction, and yet its very form of list-making also positions it within an older tradition of gnomic literature. The poem is no doubt a Christian text, but as Carolyne Larrington warns in her study of wisdom poetry, “although there may be outcrops of archaic wisdom in the [Christian] poems [which bear gnomic structures], it is fruitless to attempt to analyze the poetry into ‘old pagan’ and ‘later interpolated’ material.”<sup>22</sup> In a way, the task of separating tradition from invention in poetic texts undermines the poet’s goal of preserving the older values that are deemed worth incorporating into the new and which thereby become a reflection of past and current

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<sup>21</sup> Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-century Cultural History*, 148.

<sup>22</sup> Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnostic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 120.

concerns. The source and analogous materials of *Gifts* have been a chief focus of its study, but I find myself more intrigued by the content of the wisdom itself—that which the poet intended to impart, the poet who “is not just the adroit manipulator of traditional literary genres . . . [but] is in some way held to be the conservator and dispenser of wisdom.”<sup>23</sup> *Gifts* has its position in the corpora of wisdom and religious poetry, but it is its homiletic tone that insists it should be studied more closely within its place in the latter camp. Of course, not all Old English didactic poems are homiletic, and the poet’s blending of received genres is not the result of his desire to write within this or that style but is the product of his intention to impart wisdom within the forms available to him.

Scholarship on *Gifts* is limited when compared with other poems collected in *The Exeter Book*. What follows is a review of the poem’s most influential criticism, which in turn precedes a more detailed summary of my own argument and position within the critical discourse. James E. Cross in his 1962 article “The Old English Poetic Theme of ‘The Gifts of Men’” discovers an interesting analogue to the Old English “gifts of men” theme in Gregory’s *Homilia IX in Evangelia*.<sup>24</sup> Prior scholarship had not revealed any close Christian analogue, and Cross regarded the Anglo-Saxon Christian poets as unlikely innovators in even the smallest areas of theology. It is the patristic allegorical interpretation of the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) that Cross suggests is parallel to the theme of *Gifts*, claiming that Gregory

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<sup>23</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield and Charles W. Dunn, *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 105.

<sup>24</sup> James E. Cross, “The Old English Poetic Theme of ‘The Gifts of Men,’” *Neophilologus* 46.1 (1962): 66-70. Cross is referring to “the gifts of men” theme also found in *Christ II* (titled *The Ascension* in Muir) and *The Fortunes of Men* (titled *The Fates of Mortals* in Muir).



did not originate the interpretation, but . . . is a likely transmitter to O.E. poets because of his central position for Anglo-Saxon Christianity. His homilies on the gospels were generally known, especially to Ælfric who used his *Homilia IX* for a sermon *In Natale Unius Confessoris*, and to Cynewulf whose *Christ II* is based on another homily, (XXIX), from the same collection.

Gregory explains that the man who went into a far country was Christ as Man returning to heaven. “Se mennisca Crist” . . . then distributed his goods, or spiritual gifts, to his servants. To one he gave five *talenta*, or the five bodily senses; to another, two *talenta*, or “intellectus et operatio”, which Ælfric renders: “yttre andgit ge þæt inre”<sup>25</sup>. The one *talentum* given to the third servant signifies *intellectus* or *andgit*. . . . [T]he moral teaching is pointed through the third servant, who wickedly buried his one talent in the earth, and who will be condemned at the second coming for not using the divine gift of *intellectus* in the service of the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

Whether or not the *Gifts* poet referenced Gregory’s Latin text, this interpretation of the parable of the talents would itself have been widespread, and thus the apparent prioritizing of mental endowments above the physical—a point which Cross admitted was not a concern of his own article—would have been a commonly held position by listeners of *Gifts* exposed to Gregory’s interpretation.<sup>27</sup> This latter point will prove to be

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<sup>25</sup> “the outer and inner knowledge (or intellect),” my translation.

<sup>26</sup> Cross, “The Old English Poetic Theme of ‘The Gifts of Men,’” 66.

<sup>27</sup> Cross cites another analogue common to the three “gifts of men” themed texts as being a ninth-century sermon by Bishop Haymo of Halberstadt, who “echoed Gregory in a sermon for the common of saints on confessors”:

\* \* \*

*Nec solum in ecclesiasticis ministeriis, sed  
etiam sunt tales in hoc populo, qui diversas artes  
habent quibus victitant, alii cæmentarii, alii  
lignarii, alii fabri, alii sectores, et  
unicuique ars qua pascitur, pro talenti  
commendatione reputabitur; et si in hoc quod  
scit alios instruit, mercedem in futuro  
recipiet.* (qtd. in Cross, “The Old English Poetic Theme of ‘The Gifts of Men,’” 68.)

Michael J. B. Allen and Daniel G. Calder, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1976), 154, point out that the homily is more likely the work of Haymo of Auxerre. They translate the above passage thus:

Such [talents] exist not only in ecclesiastical occupations, but also among the people, who have various skills by which they support themselves: some are masons, others carpenters, others smiths, others workmen; and for each man the skill by which he earns

of interest to my own argument, as the poet of *Gifts* does seem to prioritize the concept of the mind over the body in numerous places in the poem.

Douglas D. Short's 1976 article "The Old English *Gifts of Men* and the Pedagogic Theory of the *Pastoral Care*" is a follow-up to Cross's piece.<sup>28</sup> Short agrees with Cross's general contention but argues that lines 8-26 of *Gifts* are more indebted to Gregory's *Pastoral Care* than to his "Gospel Homily IX" or any other analogous materials. Short notes that the function of those lines is to try and make each of the audience members "more amenable to the doctrine of the spiritual gifts by addressing first the less capable in the audience with words of encouragement and then the more successful with admonishments against the sin of pride,"<sup>29</sup> and he sees a similar pedagogical approach in chapter 32 of the *Pastoral Care*:

Gregory uses syntactic parallelism and antithesis to emphasize the need for different methods of teaching the *fortruwudan* as opposed to the *lytelmodan*. The former are susceptible to the sin of pride; they *forsioð oðre men, & eac forcweðað*,<sup>30</sup> as does the *mon mode swið* in *The Gifts of Men* . . . In contrast the *lytelmodan* . . . *weorðað oft ormode*,<sup>31</sup> as does the *lytelhydig* and *læthydig* wretch in *The Gifts of Men* . . .<sup>32</sup>

Some critics—like Nicholas Howe, who will be discussed shortly in this chapter—have argued that the influence of rhetorical devices that are common among multiple texts is difficult to assign as having been adapted only from interacting with any one particular

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his living will be considered worth a talent. If he instructs others in what he knows, he will receive a reward in the future (155).

<sup>28</sup> Douglas D. Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men* and the Pedagogic Theory of the *Pastoral Care*," *English Studies* 57.6 (1976): 497-501. In the same decade Short published two other articles on *Gifts* which deal primarily with linguistic and grammatical issues: Douglas D. Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*, Line 13," *Modern Philology* 71.4 (1974): 388-389; and Douglas D. Short, "*Leopocraeftas* and the Pauline Analogy of the Body in the Old English *Gifts of Men*," *Neophilologus* 59.3 (1975): 463-465.

<sup>29</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men* and the Pedagogic Theory of the *Pastoral Care*," 498.

<sup>30</sup> "[the presumptuous ones] despise other men and also speak ill [of them]," my translation.

<sup>31</sup> "the small-minded (or faint-hearted) ones often become despondent," my translation.

<sup>32</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men* and the Pedagogic Theory of the *Pastoral Care*," 500.

source. Though the similarity is evident, it is impossible to claim with much certainty in this case that *The Pastoral Care* was the only source responsible for the formation of lines 8-26 in *Gifts*, though it seems very likely—based on Cross’s and Short’s arguments—that the poet was aware of and had first-hand access to some of Gregory’s writings.<sup>33</sup>

Geoffrey R. Russom, in his 1978 article “A Germanic Concept of Nobility in *The Gifts of Men* and *Beowulf*,” disagrees with Cross and suggests that the poetic catalogue of *Gifts* is Germanic in form.<sup>34</sup> He finds Cross’s link to patristic commentary on the aforementioned parable to be a dubious one, pointing out that “Cross’s analogues all list ways of earning a living and emphasize the return owed to God for such ‘talents.’”<sup>35</sup> However, such gifts as swimming skill and patience, Russom says, do not create earnings for the recipient, and also there is never an indication that the gift-recipients owe a return to God. The *sum . . . sum* catalogue (*one [is] . . . another [is]*) was a structure available for borrowing from more than just Latin texts, and the “apparent diversity which has proved so puzzling in *Gifts* and so hard to find elsewhere” is not uncommon in Germanic texts and is, in this case and often in others, a cataloguing “of endowments regarded as marks of aristocratic distinction.”<sup>36</sup> Russom compellingly illustrates how the gifts that

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed look at the widespread influence of Gregory’s writings on Anglo-Saxon texts, see Rolf H. Bremmer, Kees Dekker, and David F. Johnson, eds., *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, Mediaevalia Groningana New Series 4 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001); Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 241 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001); Helmut Gneuss, “Addenda and corrigenda to the *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 32 (2003): 293-305; and Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey R. Russom, “A Germanic Concept of Nobility in *The Gifts of Men* and *Beowulf*,” *Speculum* 53.1 (1978): 1-15.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

might seem insignificant at first were actually all respectable accomplishments and abilities and that the ordering of the gifts is in no way nonsensical because each was equally valued and served as a mark of nobility. He cites numerous Germanic analogues that employ the convention of list-making,<sup>37</sup> but it is difficult to imagine a solely non-patristic influence on the *sum* catalogue in *Gifts* because of the poem's Christian message and the circumstances of its production. A more likely scenario is the poet's consultation of written texts or knowledge of aural strategies found within both the patristic and Germanic traditions.

Though the poem is mentioned briefly in more recent articles and book chapters,<sup>38</sup> the most recent major study of *Gifts* is found in Nicholas Howe's 1985 book *The Old*

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<sup>37</sup> Two compelling examples are stanza 3 of *Hyndlolióð* and stanza 69 of *Hávamál*:  
 Gefr hann sigr sumom, enn sumom aura,  
 mælsco mǫrgom oc manvit firom;  
 byri gefr hann brǫgnom, enn brag scáldom,  
 gefr hann mansemi mǫrgom recci.

He (Odin) gives victory to some, and to others, gold,  
 eloquence to many and wisdom to men;  
 he gives sailing winds to heroes and poetry to skalds,  
 he gives bravery to many champions.

Erat maðr allz vesall, þótt hann sé illa heill;  
 sumr era f sonom sæll,  
 sumr af frændom, sumr af fé ærno,  
 sumr af vercom vel.

No man is entirely wretched, though he be feeble;  
 one is blessed with sons,  
 one with friends, one with riches well supplied,  
 one happy in his accomplishments.

Ibid., 2-3. For a translation of the two stanzas preceding stanza 3 of *Hyndlolióð*, see Daniel G. Calder, Robert E. Bjork, Patrick K. Ford, and Daniel F. Mella, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry II: The Major Germanic and Celtic Texts in Translation* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 70.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Jackson, "'Not Simply Lists': An Eddic Perspective on Short-Item Lists in Old English Poems," *Speculum* 73.2 (1998): 338-371. Jackson seeks to recuperate the study of Old English listing poems, and—similar to Russom's argument on *Gifts*—she claims that Old English verse lists are "complex and highly patterned compositions employing techniques and devices that seem likely to have been inherited, along with the alliterative meter, from the poets' oral predecessors" (339). Jackson's

*English Catalogue Poems*.<sup>39</sup> In the chapter “The Catalogues of Order and Diversity: *The Gifts of Men* and *The Fortunes of Men*,” Howe gives an interesting comparison of the structures of *Gifts* and *Fortunes*.<sup>40</sup> His study is one of poetic conventions and their ordering and how that combination in turn serves the didactic purpose of each poet. As the title suggests, *Fortunes* catalogues certain situations concerning the lives and deaths of various members of humankind. Howe argues that *Gifts* is sloppily organized and is, as a result, “a flawed poem,” one which has a *sum* catalogue comprised of a “sequence of elements [that] does not form a meaningful pattern and [in which] certain of the elements are repeated for no discernable reason.”<sup>41</sup> Howe sees the poet of *Fortunes* as possessing the greater skill of the two, and he finds *Fortunes* to be a more influential didactic text because of the poet’s utilization of the experience of conversion, claiming that he ordered the material in the *sum* catalogue—which is divided by experiences of “sorrow” and then of “happiness”—as a reflection of his own personal experience of the process of conversion, of transitioning from sorrow to happiness.<sup>42</sup> It is true that the *sum* catalogues in *Gifts* and *Fortunes* are structured differently, but I do not think that one employs a better pattern than the other. *Gifts* mixes up the endowments of the mind and of the

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study examines poems that list more than just gifts but which list rules of conduct, a lamenting of past conditions, and other diverse items.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, Anglistica 23 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1985), 104-132.

<sup>40</sup> The two poems are worth comparing structurally, for they are both collected in *The Exeter Book*—though not successive in order—and they are both comprised of an introduction, a *sum* catalogue, and a conclusion. As noted earlier, the breakdown of the three-part structure for *Gifts* is ll. 1-29, 30-96, and 97-113; and for *Fortunes* it is ll. 1-9, 10-92, and 93-98. In each case, the introduction and conclusion are relatively brief, and the *sum* catalogue dominates the space of the poem.

<sup>41</sup> Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, 105 and 110. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-century Cultural Edition*, also finds fault in the organization in *Gifts* (as well as in *Precepts*, *Fortunes*, and *Maxims I*), claiming that “[e]ven when they are judged not by the content of their individual segments but by the slight degree of sophistication in their organising principles, the Old English catalogue-poems nevertheless betray the lack of a developed English tradition in such poetry” (154).

<sup>42</sup> Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, 130-132.

body, and *Fortunes* relays first the collective experiences of sorrow and then those of happiness. If each of these poets used the other's organizing tactics, then his poem would be significantly weakened: what Howe views as a random ordering in *Gifts*, I interpret as the poet's intentional use of a mixing pattern that is more capable of showcasing the diversity of God's gifts.

Mindful of previous scholarship on *Gifts*, Howe is not convinced that lines 8-26 were shaped by the *Pastoral Care*, as Short argues, because he recognizes such use of antithesis as a common rhetorical structure. Likewise, Howe does not find either Cross's or Russom's argument concerning the poem's analogues as wholly sound; he admits it to be of greater likelihood that the *Gifts* poet adopted the *sum* catalogue from the Latin tradition instead of the Germanic one, but he points out that the "poet . . . may well have been less predictable than either [Cross or Russom] believes."<sup>43</sup> I agree with Howe on this latter point, but I do not agree with Howe's assertion that the poet of *Gifts* has a significant number of repetitions within the conventions of his list. It seems to me that some of those repetitions would be better deemed as variations.<sup>44</sup>

The studies of source influence and related analogous materials discussed earlier in this chapter were concerned with writings contemporary to *Gifts*, as well as those which predated the poem's composition by a few centuries or so.<sup>45</sup> Of course, the actual

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Howe lists "the carpenter" as a convention appearing in ll. 44-48 and again in ll. 75b-76a. A close study of each passage, however, reveals that these are two different types of builders. The first is gifted with the ability to construct a large hall in which numerous people will gather, and the second is gifted with the ability of raising a domestic residence. Though they are both clearly builders, they are also clearly different types of builders.

<sup>45</sup> Gregory the Great lived in the late 6th century, and most patristic texts were written between the 4th and 7th centuries. Germanic influences are more difficult to date because they are often more general

Biblical passages on which the patristic analogues were modeled are critical to the conceit of the poem, and editors and critics of *Gifts* have not neglected to note the obvious Pauline influences on the poem's theme:

The gifts are distributed variously or diversely, *missenlice gedæled*—this derives from Paul's statements (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 7:6-7; 12:4-11 and Eph. 4:7-8) that all the gifts given by God to humankind are from the Spirit, who distributes them separately to each individual at will; the theme is further developed in Matt. 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27 (the Parable of the Talents); Eph. 2:1-4:7-16; 1 Cor. 12:8-10; and Rom. 12:1-8.<sup>46</sup>

However, as far as I am aware, no study has considered *Gifts* within the context of Old Testament influences.<sup>47</sup> As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are two themes in *Gifts* which I intend to examine: the first is the semantic qualities of *mod* ("mind"), which is a term distributed with high frequency throughout *Gifts*. A linguistic examination of the use of *mod* and other terms of cognition will reveal in greater detail the poet's idea of the mind as a physical place of reception and utilization of gifts. The poet also uses "mind" terminology to suggest that God's rationale behind the limited number of gifts allowed to humankind is part of his creation plan. The second theme appears in the poem's introduction (ll. 1-29) and conclusion (ll. 97-113), which emphasize God's decision not to allow any of humankind to become too prideful. It is my assertion that the hypothetical person referenced in lines 18-26 and lines 97-103 of

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cultural traditions instead of specific texts; thus, certain influences can be contemporary while also being part of a long-standing tradition.

<sup>46</sup> Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, vol. 2, 514.

<sup>47</sup> There are specific Old Testament passages that refer to the gifts given to humankind—for example, Psalm 67:19 (Vulgate), which is Paul's source for Ephesians 4:8. In contrast to such an immediate source relationship, when I mention the influence of the Old Testament, I am thinking in terms of narrative influence—specifically, the creation narrative of *Genesis* and the apocryphal narrative of the fallen angels. Thus, I do not treat specific Old Testament passages as direct sources for *Gifts*; instead, I am concerned with the transmitting of such passages into new poetic forms. This latter relationship is an analogous influence based on a shared cultural framework and circulation of narratives.

*Gifts*—the person who would undoubtedly become prideful if given an excess of abilities—acts as an allusion to the chief of God’s angels as depicted in the Old English poetic rendering of the creation narrative. To this end, I will examine the Old English poem *Genesis*, which is traditionally broken up into *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* and which is collected in *The Junius Manuscript*.<sup>48</sup> I will also briefly examine the introductory lines of *Fortunes*, for those lines also contain a clear creation narrative, as parents give birth to children and are given the responsibility of guidance; thus *Gifts* and *Fortunes* are united by more than just the structure of the *sum* catalogue, and each text has a place within the theme of humankind being born into the world with God’s plan at work. In *Gifts*, each person is created with a predisposition for certain abilities; indeed, it seems as if each person is created fully grown and then endowed with a particular talent (or talents). God’s own mindfulness to limit the gifts of humankind, I will argue, is the direct result of having granted too many of his gifts to the most prideful and powerful of the fallen angels, and this apocryphal Old Testament allusion seems to have been a substantial influence on the poet of *Gifts*.

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<sup>48</sup> I do not claim that the poet of *Gifts* had direct access to the poetic *Genesis* texts. What I intend to show are striking similarities between the texts which collectively reflect a common concern among the Anglo-Saxon religious communities.



CHAPTER 2  
THE USE OF *MOD* AND OTHER TERMS OF COGNITION  
IN *THE GIFTS OF MEN*

This chapter takes the shape of a linguistic investigation of the poet's use of the Old English noun *mod* and a select number of other terms of cognition in *The Gifts of Men*.<sup>49</sup> There exists a diverse body of criticism centered on the representations of cognition in Anglo-Saxon literature, but *Gifts* has never been the focus of a book chapter or article dealing with the poet's concept of the mind or his use of "mind" words. As a result, a goal of this chapter is to include *Gifts* within the larger discussion of studies dealing with the mind and the perception of cognitive faculties in Anglo-Saxon England. Other themes of investigation on the mind have dealt with the general reconstruction of the inner-self as depicted in numerous poetic texts. The most thorough contemporary

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 693, offer the following definitions for *mōd*: "I. *the inner man, the spiritual as opposed to the bodily part of man* . . . (a) with more especial reference to intellectual or mental qualities, *mind* . . . (b) with reference to the passions, emotions, etc., *soul, heart, spirit, mind, disposition, mood* . . . II. a special quality of the soul, (a) in a good sense, *Courage, high spirit* . . . (b) in a bad sense, *Pride, arrogance* . . . III. applied to inanimate things, *Greatness, magnificence, pride* . . ." Throughout chapters 2 and 3 I will make use of three dictionaries: Bosworth-Toller is currently the most complete dictionary, but it is becoming outdated; J. R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 4th ed., Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), is a useful but more limited source; Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, and Antonette diPaolo Healey, eds., *The Dictionary of Old English: A to G online*, <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca/> (Toronto: Centre for Medieval Studies, 2007), is the primary source I will reference for words beginning with letters from A to G.

study of this reconstruction is Antonina Harbus's *The Life of the Mind in Old English*

*Poetry*, in which she states that

The Old English poetic corpus contains many explicit references to the life of the mind, sufficiently numerous and prominently situated to suggest that psychology constitutes a definite thematic concern of these texts. This idea is supported by the frequency with which mental processes (perception, imagination, cognition, memory, intention), faculties (reason, intellect, belief, sensation), and experiences (meditation, reverie, dreams and visions) appear in vernacular verse.<sup>50</sup>

Harbus's multi-text investigation suggests that the modern model of the mind—one which has a strong divide from the body and a more significant association with reason and knowledge than with emotions or the spirit—is in many ways different from the Anglo-Saxon model. She also suggests that the Anglo-Saxon poets were aware of their broad model and used poetic conventions to express the mental reality of emotions and spirit in addition to knowledge and the thinking function.<sup>51</sup>

In the 113 lines of *Gifts* the word *mod* appears on thirteen occasions, occurring three times in the introduction (ll. 1-29), seven times in the *sum* catalogue (ll. 30-96), and three times in the conclusion (ll. 97-113). I do not wish to place any additional significance on these numerical values beyond the simple observation that the word is used frequently in such a short poem and is spread out evenly in its lines. The poem's theme of God distributing mental and physical abilities diversely to the earth's

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<sup>50</sup> Antonina Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry*, Costerus New Series 143 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 3. In her discussion of wisdom poetry, Harbus does make a few brief mentions of *Gifts*. One of her assertions is that the poets of wisdom literature often “urge their readers to be thankful for the knowledge they do have, incomplete as it may be. . . . That some degree of mental skill is universal, even though it is less than God's knowledge (*Gifts* 8-11), provides evidence of grace in the world and indicates the essential human quality of the mental faculty” (82).

<sup>51</sup> For recent studies on the mind's function as an enclosure, see Britt Mize, “The representation of the mind as an enclosure in Old English poetry,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 (2006): 57-90; and Britt Mize, “Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif in *Beowulf*, *Homiletic Fragment II*, and Alfred's *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 107.1 (2008): 25-56.

inhabitants makes the appearance of a significant number of mind-type words not too surprising. The relative singularity of meaning within *mod*'s repeated usages, however, is quite striking.

Used in isolation and as a compound element, *mod* carries within it a number of charges. I use the word “charge” to signify both the meaning and energy of words; that is to say, a word is charged (filled up) with a number of definitions, as is particularly true with *mod*, and it has a charge (energy or cultural significance) unique to each usage. Interestingly, many of the words used by the poet to express the space or process of cognition are shaped into compound adjectives that become hapax legomena once the two elements are combined, suggesting a certain ingenuity on the part of the poet as well as a desire to create a novel charge of meaning to be interpreted by his audience. One result of this study is my position that when the poet of *Gifts* uses *mod* in reference to people—and in one instance to God—his intention with each use is one that reflects the mind (not the heart or spirit) in more of a concrete than abstract state.<sup>52</sup> In *Gifts* the use of *mod* is tied to the physical body of its referent—either as the space in which the thinking function exists or as a sort of container in which God places one’s allotment of gifts<sup>53</sup>—and thus is not used to connote the *sawl*.

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<sup>52</sup> For an interesting study on the word choices for cognition that the Anglo-Saxon translator used in his version of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, see Rūta Šileikytė, “In Search of the Inner Mind: Old English *Gescead* and Other Lexemes for Human Cognition in King Alfred’s *Boethius*,” *Kalbotyra* 54.3 (2004): 94-102. Šileikytė states that Anglo-Saxon “cognitive powers receive a variety of terms—*andgi(e)t*, *gescead*, *gesceadwisnes*, *gewit*, *mod*, *inneward mod*, *rædels*, *(fore)þonc*, *(inge)þonc*, etc., whose meanings in modern dictionaries frequently overlap leaving the impression of the lexical field being exclusively fluctuant and complicated. A more reliable method to discern the differences between the terms, therefore, is to look at their contexts . . . and from the text itself to try and determine the meanings acquired there by the term in question” (96).

<sup>53</sup> The word “container” to describe the space of the mind is taken from Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry*, and from Mize, “The representation of the mind as an enclosure in Old English poetry,” in which Mize writes: “constructions of similar plainness to those in modern English

A common charge given to *mod* in Old English poetry, particularly in the heroic poems, is its signification of “pride” or “boldness”; this is a semantic shift in which the rational mind seems to be overtaken and replaced wholly with a new and singular purpose. M. R. Godden has written insightfully on this usage:

In so far as it refers to a power rather than a location or centre of consciousness, *mod* seems to convey to many Anglo-Saxon writers not so much the intellectual, rational faculty but something more like an inner passion or wilfulness, an intensification of the self that can be dangerous. Authors often in fact speak—especially in verse texts—of the need to control or restrain the *mod*.<sup>54</sup>

As will be illustrated shortly, the poet of *Gifts* uses *mod* twice to conjure up a charge of “boldness,” and he never uses the word to refer to “pride”—though other “pride” words are used in the poem. His most frequent utilizations of the word do avoid drawing attention to these and similar charges, but to his Anglo-Saxon audience the noun would have contained the energy to connote all levels of signification even when the most appropriate meaning for each usage was clear. The “pride” function of *mod* will be an issue further discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The gifts listed in the *sum* catalogue take up most of the space in *Gifts*, but the poem’s driving force is embedded in the lines comprising the surrounding framework. The poet’s intention to contrast gifts that are predominantly of the body or of the mind is undeniable, and scholars have tended to group the gifts into two such strict categories, but

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[‘having or keeping something in mind’] do occur frequently in Old English, as when a thought or emotion is stated to be *in breostum* or *in mode*. Still, while we may not always be able to locate the dividing line between deliberate metaphor and presumed physical or metaphysical fact for Anglo-Saxon writers, we can observe that they sometimes linger over or develop references to the immaterial mental enclosure, presenting the idea more elaborately and exploiting its associative possibilities for literary effect” (57).

<sup>54</sup> M. R. Godden, “Anglo-Saxons on the mind,” in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 271-298, at 287.

I am not convinced that the poet saw all of the gifts he describes as fitting into those categories as neatly as contemporary critics have presumed. The poet begins by stating that the gifts are readily visible:

Fela bið on foldan forðgesynra  
 geongra geofona, þa þa gæstberend  
 wegað in gewitte, swa her weoruda god,  
 meotud meahum swið, monnum dæleð,  
 syleð sundorgiefe, sendeð wide  
 agne spede, þara æghwylc mot  
 dryhtwuniendra dæl onfon.<sup>55</sup>

(ll. 1-7)

In this initial section of the poem's introduction, the poet establishes God as the dispenser of all gifts and reveals the space in which each gift is deposited; it is *in gewitte* ("in [their] consciousness" or "intellect") where all *gæstberend* ("bearers of breath" or "bearers of spirit") carry their gifts. The separation between body and spirit is already apparent. The poet calls mankind *gæstberend* not simply to indicate that all living beings receive gifts but to emphasize his belief that all humans are carriers of souls. The use of the body in *Gifts*, however, is not intended to highlight its function as the enclosure for the spirit but to reveal its role as the holder of God's many gifts. Though *gewitte* is more of an abstract term than *mod*—which more often refers to a physical space in the body, even in its most abstract uses—*gewitte* does in this instance act as a corporal space capable of holding the gifts God chooses to dispense. Since the members of humankind *wegað* ("bear") their gifts in their consciousness, that abstract space has been made into a tangible space, and thus the gifts do not seem to be linked to the soul as much as they are embedded in the physical body.

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<sup>55</sup> All quotes from *Gifts* are from Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, vol. 1, 220-224.

This embedding process is more than mere distribution but is itself a creation narrative. God is the only space in which every gift is ever present, and his act of fashioning mankind in his likeness is a corporal rendering not just of limbs and appearance or of breath but of the physical mind as well. He has made each person like him by depositing at least one of his gifts in the body's cognitive container:

Ne bið ænig þæs earfoðsælig  
 mon on moldan, ne þæs medspedig,  
 lytelhydig, ne þæs læthydig,  
 þæt hine se argifa ealles biscyrge  
 modes cræfta oþþe mægendæda,  
 wis on gewitte ond on wordcwidum,  
 þy læs ormod sy ealra þinga,  
 þara þe he geworhte in woruldlife,  
 geofona gehwylcre.

(ll. 8-16a)

No one is denied a portion of God's bounty, and again there is evidence that the gifts have a bodily seat in the mind. If one is *lytelhydig* ("small-minded") or *læthydig* ("slow-minded"), the space intended to house a certain gift or gifts is tainted. Like any storage place, the mind must have the proper dimensions to hold its intended deposit, and like any place of operation, the mind must be capable of employing its intended gift. Both *lytelhydig* and *læthydig* are hapax legomena,<sup>56</sup> and their uses to describe minds improperly prepared to house God's gifts would have had an impacting impression on the Anglo-Saxon audience. There is no doubt that *wis on gewitte*<sup>57</sup> ("wise in intellect")

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<sup>56</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition," 34. I also confirmed this with the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*.

<sup>57</sup> For line 13 Krapp and Dobbie have "wis on gewitte oþþe on wordcwidum." *Oþþe* ("or") is written in the original manuscript, but Muir has amended the word to *ond* ("and") based on an argument by Short. For a detailed analysis of the grammatical peculiarity of the line, see Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*, Line 13," 388-389. Scholars generally agree that 13a modifies *argifa*, but there is obvious confusion caused by *oþþe* when the manuscript line is considered as a unit. Other scholars have variously

modifies *argifa* (“the giver of benefits”; i.e., God), and it is interesting to note that the poet has employed the same word (*gewitte* in ll. 3 and 13) to describe the space in which all of mankind carry their gifts and the space in which God is wise. The word *mod* is first used in line 12, the constituents of which form the grammatical direct object for *biscyrge* (“would deprive”), so each word other than the conjunction *oþþe* appears as a genitive.<sup>58</sup> The line seems to create distinct sections between the mental and physical qualities of the gifts—that is, between the gifts that use brain power and the gifts that use bodily strength—and so a condensed translation that keeps the grammar of lines 11-12 could be rendered as “the Gift-Giver would [never] deprive anyone of all the skills of the mind or of mighty deeds.” The division is clear, and the translation is an accurate one, but if all gifts have origins in God’s intellect and are selectively deposited in mankind’s intellect, then every gift, regardless of how mental or physical the enactment, is of the mind. Thus, a logical and still grammatically acceptable translation could have both genitive plurals connected by the conjunction as dependant on the singular genitive *modes*: “the Gift-Giver would [never] deprive anyone of all the skills or mighty deeds of the mind”; or, more colloquially, “God wouldn’t deprive anyone’s mind from receiving skills or bodily deeds.” In anticipation of the objections to such a rendering, I have two further thoughts on the matter: the long-standing editorial practice of printing Old English poems by including an exaggerated space at each caesura can at times create a limited view of a

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suggested to break up the line, use *wis* as a substantive, or have *wis* modify *mon*. Short argues instead that the *oþþe* in line 13 is a scribal error and should be changed to *ond*.

<sup>58</sup> The verb *bescyrian* takes its objects in the genitive case.

line's possibilities<sup>59</sup>; also, with the use of *opþe* there is a stronger grammatical link connecting *cræfta* and *mægendæda* to each other than there is evidence to limit *modes* to *cræfta* alone.

The last item of interest to me in the second part of the poem's introduction is *ormod*. Bosworth-Toller defines this adjective as “without courage, hopeless, [or] despairing.”<sup>60</sup> But if the prefix (*or-*: “out of, without”) and noun (*mod*: “mind, heart, spirit,” etc.) are considered with their literal values, a more exact set of definitions would be “out of the mind or heart” and “without a spirit or soul.”<sup>61</sup> Each of Bosworth-Toller's definitions of *ormod* centers on a loss of courage or hope, and I do think that “despairing” provides for a successful translation in this case, but readers should be aware of the word's physical connection to the mind, especially in *Gifts*, which, as I will show in subsequent uses of the word, generally favors in its contexts the employ of *mod* as a term associated with the mind, less so with the heart, and even less so with the spirit or soul. Thus, the despair that the *mon* experiences in this hypothetical scenario should not occur because God never fails to fill each person's mind with at least one gift. At its literal level, no one is created *ormod*, without the mind-space to hold a gift.

The diversity of the gifts apportioned by God is as well-planned as the actual number and type each individual is allowed to receive:

Næfre god demed  
þæt ænig eft þæs earm geweorðe.

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<sup>59</sup> To me, printing the poems in this way for the sake of highlighting the alliterative meter's distribution of stress has pedagogic value for the classroom but is otherwise a nonproductive and peculiar practice. I have reproduced the OE text as it appears in Muir's edition and not as I would prefer to see it, without half-line fragmentation.

<sup>60</sup> Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 766.

<sup>61</sup> Prefix definition of *or-* as “out of” is from Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 268; “without” is from Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 763.



Nænig eft þæs swiþe þurh snyttrucræft  
 in þeode þrym þisses lifes  
 forð gestigeð, þæt him folca weard  
 þurh his halige giefe hider onsende  
 wise gēpohtas ond woruldcræftas,  
 under anes meaht ealle forlæte,  
 þy læs he for wlence wuldorgeofona ful,  
 mon mode swið of gemete hweorfe  
 ond þonne forhycge heanspedigran;  
 ac he gedæleð, se þe ah domes geweald,  
 missenlice geond þisne middangeard  
 leoda leoþocræftas londbuendum:

(ll. 16b-29)

God is careful not to embed all or too many of his gifts in one individual's mind, the poet tells us, because then that person would despise all others who did not receive such a bounty. In this passage it is evident that the poet wishes his listeners (or readers) to consider the well-planned community in which they live<sup>62</sup>; it is a community that thrives best when its participants share and utilize each person's skills. But again, the placement of all gifts is in the mind, for even though no one person will be given all *wise gēpohtas ond woruldcræftas* ("wise thoughts and worldly skills"), if someone were in possession of such a hoard, that person would be *mode swið* ("strong in mind"), which suggests that the idea of being strong in mind is not limited to the perception of one having mental cleverness but could also allude to a sort of strength measurement evaluating the number of gifts placed within one's mind-container. In this usage, it is clear that the poet intends *mod* to refer to the mind space and not the heart or soul.<sup>63</sup> The introductory section of the

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<sup>62</sup> Howe remarks that for the *Gifts* poet "the order of the world unfolded itself in the common occupations, pleasures, and fates of Anglo-Saxon culture [and that he] placed these common images in catalogue form because each image was the product of and thus embodied the same divine order." Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, 105.

<sup>63</sup> There are, of course, numerous examples of Old English poets using the breast or heart as a place to store thought and emotion, but I will continue to argue that *mod* in *Gifts* has a primary reference to

poem concludes by reiterating God's diverse distribution of his gifts and, somewhat problematically, uses the word *leopocraftas* ("skills of the body") to describe the sum of the gifts that follow in the next section. As Short points out, this word is troublesome because "it suggests that the poem addresses only the physical abilities of mankind."<sup>64</sup> S. A. J. Bradley avoids this inconsistency by translating the compound as "skills embodied in humans."<sup>65</sup> Short, however, argues that *leopocraftas* "does not mean 'bodily skills' or 'skills in the use of the limbs' but rather was created as a deliberate allusion to the Pauline analogy between the unity of divine gifts (*craftas*) and the members of the body (*leopu*). Thus the word is a metaphoric compound perhaps best translated as 'member-crafts'."<sup>66</sup> Short's suggestion is interesting, and I do not wish to discredit his thought that the poet had the body of the Church in his mind—the body of the Church which is Christ's figurative body comprised of multifaceted members. I do think, however, that a disservice is done to the compound if it is translated without a bodily reference. Since the gifts are received in the receptacle of the mind, Bradley's is a more apt translation because it recognizes the physical bodies of people as tools capable of containing all skills, for both gifts of wisdom and athleticism are equally bound to the body.

The *sum* catalogue comprises the majority of the poem, and when the listed gifts are sorted into either cognitive or physical groupings, then the two piles are relatively

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the mind container, which is a more suitable place for God to deposit talents that should be utilized rather than hidden away.

<sup>64</sup> Short, "*Leopocraftas* and the Pauline Analogy of the Body in the Old English *Gifts of Men*," 463.

<sup>65</sup> S. A. J. Bradley, trans. and ed., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: J. M. Dent, 1982), 326.

<sup>66</sup> Short, "*Leopocraftas* and the Pauline Analogy of the Body in the Old English *Gifts of Men*," 464.

even, both in number and in line length.<sup>67</sup> As dissectors of the catalogue, modern readers should be careful, however, not to be tempted to divide all of the gifts into two neat classifications without recognizing the overlap that many of the gifts demand. This overlap between the mental and bodily qualities of such gifts can be seen in their potential utilizations or enactments as well as in the linguistic characteristics of their descriptions. I will comment on each use of *mod* in the *sum* catalogue but spend more time discussing those instances when the separation of types becomes particularly unproductive.

The second hypothetical person described is *gleaw modes cræfta* (“keen in the skills of the mind”) (ll. 32-33). Certainly in this usage *mod* connotes intelligence and not merely the space of the mind, but it is significant to note that this quality of being intelligent is not gifted in the stead of having no bodily or physical prowess; it is, in fact, gifted in the absence of wealth. Unlike the poem’s first recipient, the second person is *wonspedig* and *heardsælig* (ll. 31-32). Unprosperous and unfortunate, he is endowed with intelligence in the stead of riches. Only a small number of the gifts are set up directly to contrast or reference an adjacently listed quality, but here, at the onset of the *sum* catalogue, the first comparison made is not at all between the mind and the body. Although the third gift-recipient receives great strength, there is no linguistic interplay suggesting that such bodily strength was given with the deprivation of something else. By pointing out this first comparison, I mean to remind the reader that a strict separation of gifts as either only mental or physical can lead to a narrower reading of the text.

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<sup>67</sup> See Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, 107.

Nearing the middle of the poem, *mod* is again employed as a space in which intelligence is stored: *sum in mæðle mæg modsnottera / folcrædenne forð gehycgan* (ll. 41-42). Best translated as a substantive, *modsnottera* (“people wise-in-mind”) is not a compound constructed for double emphasis; in this case, *snottera* describes the wisdom collected among those who deliberate about proper governance, and *mod* acts solely as a container for their wisdom.

More interesting and relevant to my argument is *mod*'s use in the compound adjective modifying the maker of weapons:

sum mæg wæpenþræce, wige to nytte,  
 modcræftig smið monige gefremman,  
 þonne he gewyrceð to wera hilde  
 helm oþþe hupseax oððe heaþubyrnan,  
 scirne mece oððe scyldes rond,  
 fæste gefeged wið flyge gares;  
 (ll. 61-66)

The battle gear's significance in Anglo-Saxon culture is reinforced by the number of lines devoted to the descriptions of the items, but what is particularly interesting is the brief yet highly charged description of the smith. If a separation between the gifts had to be delineated on the basis of those of a more cognitive nature and those of a more physical nature, then surely a common consensus would be that the smith was the recipient of what is best labeled a physical gift—not physical with respect to the obvious use of his creations but physical in the actual fashioning of the items. Such a classification, however, takes attention away from the cognitive aptness required of the smith; there is an undeniable blend of skills of hand and skills of mind that forms his talent. The poet is quite deliberate in his use of *modcræftig* (“mind-crafty”) to position the smith on a

different plane than someone who is merely *ryhtscytte* (“sure of aim”) (l. 51b).<sup>68</sup> Despite the familiarity of its two elements, *modcræftig* is a hapax.<sup>69</sup> There should be no doubt in the reader’s mind that the poet desired to use a linguistic tactic to emphasize the necessary mental and dexterous qualities a smith must have in order to properly enact his gift. Otherwise, the poet would have little reason to construct such an interesting compound. Bernard F. Huppé has noted in reference to hapax like *modcræftig* that

in the extant body of Old English verse the uniquely attested word is common, in part because the extant body represents but a fraction of the whole, but chiefly, it must be supposed, because the Old English poet had no theoretical objection to the hapax-legomenon, and because in writing a type of “formulaic” verse, whether oral or not, he would tend to form new words, particularly compounds, to fill the traditional frames.<sup>70</sup>

The poet’s choice to associate the smith with the mind is not accidental or the product of happenstance. *Modcræftig* should be translated and read by the modern reader with as much weight given to the *mod*-headed compound as its Anglo-Saxon audience no doubt

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<sup>68</sup> Russom argues that the poet’s “catalogue contains a coherent set of items which are unordered because from a poetic point of view they are all of comparable interest. The rapid transition from one talent to another of different character, typical of all such Germanic lists, adds in *Gifts* to the sense of diversity and amplitude, an effect quite consistent with the poet’s stated purpose of illustrating God’s bounty (vv. 1-7). Subordination of one gift to another would work contrary to other announced goals of the poet: he wishes to encourage anyone who possesses any talent (vv. 8-17) and to repress those whose powers may tempt them to dangerous pride (vv. 18-29).” Russom, “A Germanic Concept of Nobility in *The Gifts of Men* and *Beowulf*,” 14-15. Even if the actual ordering does not reveal the poet’s preferences or interests, the comparatively large number of lines and the descriptive details of certain gifts do seem to prioritize the poet’s appreciation of the gifts after all.

<sup>69</sup> Short, “The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition,” 34. I also confirmed this with the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*.

<sup>70</sup> Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words: Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems: Vainglory, the Wonder of Creation, the Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), 8. Short, “The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition,” also makes use of Huppé’s point in his commentary on vocabulary, 34-82, but especially 34-38, in which he notes that there are a total of thirty-five hapax legomena in *Gifts*, significantly more than in *The Fortunes of Men*, *The Order of the World*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and a handful of other poems of comparable length.

would have given it<sup>71</sup>—both with respect to the weight of the mind-word and the weight of the novel or seldom used adjectival construction.

Another hapax involving *mod* occurs in the description of self-restraint: *sum gewealdenmod / þafað in gepylde þæt he þonne sceal* (“One [who is] controlled-in-mind suffers in patience that which he must at that time”) (ll. 70b-71). As before, I think the best way to translate this compound is by keeping “mind” present. And again, I think the poet’s intentional use of a hapax should not go overlooked. Unlike the smith’s gift, it seems to me that the majority of contemporary readers would classify the patient sufferer as possessing a talent that is more mental than physical. There are, of course, numerous examples in Old English poetry that portray a suffering in the mind that is not endured in the body—that is, a suffering of mental anguish that does not show its marks on the physical body. It is difficult, however, to imagine any reader or listener—Anglo-Saxon or contemporary—who can encounter a word connoting suffering without reflecting on the physical body, if only for a moment. *Gewealdenmod* suggests that the mind is able to be wielded, and this rendering of *mod* seems to reflect the mind as a space or thing capable of handling, unlike the abstract nature of the mind as intellect. Further evidence suggesting that this talent for patient suffering could be a mixture of both mental and physical qualities is seen in its placement in the poem. Earlier, I commented on the fact that the poet does not alternate exactly between what have been regarded as either mental or physical talents; the gifts preceding and following the patient sufferer are of horse-

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<sup>71</sup> Though I think a more apt translation employs the word “mind,” Clark Hall accurately defines the compound as “intelligent,” *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 239. Equally accurate is Bradley’s rendering of “ingenious,” *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 327. Less faithful to the sense of the compound, however, is Short’s use of “skillful,” which emphasizes only the second element, “The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition,” 201 and 234.

skills (69b-70a) and of deliberating according to laws (72-73a), each of which favors a clearer association with either the physical or mental. Conversely, the patient sufferer's talent and the linguistic charges associated with his description support a reading of the sentence that is neither wholly of the mind or the body.

Near the end of the *sum* catalogue *mod* is employed in the first half of lines 85, 87, and 89. The first usage in this cluster likens *mod* to a manner of thinking—in this case, one that is agreeable to others and one that does not have a significant corporal connection. The progression then shows an instantaneous switch from *mod* as a representative of abstract thought to *mod* as a container:

sum bið leofwende,  
 hafað mod ond word monnum geþwære;  
 sum her geornlice gæstes þearfe  
 mode bewindeþ, ond him metudes est  
 ofer eorðwelan ealne geceoseð;  
 sum bið deormod deofles gewinnes,  
 bið a wið firenum in gefeoht gearo;  
 (ll. 84b-90)

*Gæstes* in line 86b calls to mind the *gæstberend* of line 2, and it is the spirit's *þearfe* ("need") that is kept inside the *mod*; in fact, the person in this episode *geornlice bewindeþ* ("zealously entwines") the need of the spirit in his mind. Both Short and Bradley translate this *mod* as "heart,"<sup>72</sup> but the poet's previous uses of the word along with his single use of *heortan*—which I will discuss in the poem's conclusion—lead me to believe that "mind" is still the best translation for the word. The last occurrence of *mod* in this cluster and in the *sum* catalogue is used in a compound adjective describing a Christian in the battle against sins. The person is *deormod* ("bold-minded") with the devil's struggle,

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<sup>72</sup> Short, "The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition," 202. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 328.

and the translation of the compound should capture the mental toughness needed to resist the devil. In this instance, Short successfully uses “brave of mind,” but Bradley chooses “brave-hearted,”<sup>73</sup> which fails to capture the most memorable mental struggle the Anglo-Saxon Christian would associate with this passage, for the use of *mod* here does more than simply connote a doubling up of the bravery associated with the Anglo-Saxon mind, but it also implores the reader or listener to recall another battle of the wits that involved the devil—the mental victory that Christ took against the devil when he was being tempted in the desert.<sup>74</sup>

The poem’s conclusion begins by reiterating the sentiment that God has wisely decided that no single person will ever be in possession of all the gifts. This time, however, the poet portrays an even more concrete image of the mind’s designation as the space in which God puts the various gifts:

Nis nu ofer eorþan ænig monna  
 mode þæs cræftig, ne þæs mægeneacen,  
 þæt hi æfre anum ealle weorþen  
 gegearwade, þy læs him gilp sceððe,  
 oþþe fore þære mærþe mod astige,  
 gif he hafað ana ofer ealle men  
 wlite ond wisdom ond weorca blæd;  
 (ll. 97-103)

Line 98 is quite similar to line 12, and like line 12 it gives the false impression that all the gifts are solely of mental or bodily qualities—and never a blend. The poet’s assertion that no one on earth is excessively skillful in mind or too great in strength has no bearing as to whether or not some of the gifts are apportioned in talents that utilize both bodily strength and wit. The penultimate use of *mod* is perhaps the most interesting in this

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 202 and 328.

<sup>74</sup> Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.



poem. The hypothetical person who did receive all the gifts God has to give would face a figurative and literal affliction that would be disastrous: *mod astige* (“[his] mind would climb upward” or “[his] mind would be puffed up”). The image is comical yet poignant. Of course, the poet is saying that a person overly endowed with talents would have a large ego, but there is no mistaking the poet’s multiple references to the mind as the holder of gifts, so too the poet is saying that a human’s mind simply doesn’t have enough room to hold all of God’s gifts, that if they were all shoved inside, the person’s mind would have to increase in size because his mind-space was simply not built with the proper dimensions to house each of those many gifts.

Not surprisingly, the final use of *mod* appears in the last line, but before it is considered, its preceding lines deserve a brief examination. The poem’s conclusion contains within it a short *sum* catalogue that lists more broadly arranged gifts; lines 108-109b are the most interesting because of the two possible renderings that the lines justify:

sumum he syleð monna milde heortan,  
 þeawfæstne gēpoht, sum biþ þeodne hold.  
 Swa weorðlice wide tosaewēð  
 dryhten his duguþe. A þes dom age,  
 leohtbære lof, se us þis lif giefewēð  
 ond his milde mod monnum cyþewēð.  
 (ll. 108-113)

The question is whether or not to read *þeawfæstne gēpoht* as an appositive of *milde heortan* or as a second direct object of *syleð*. Muir’s (as well as Krapp and Dobbie’s) insertion of a comma after *heortan* does little to suggest editorial intentions, as there are numerous examples in edited poetic texts when two objects are joined by a comma if a conjunction is absent in the manuscript. Of course, the possibility of apposition hinges on the mimetic qualities of the two nouns potentially being apposed. *Gēpoht* is more

often than not “thinking” in an intellectual sense and seldom has a visceral charge, and in this case “mind” does seem to be the most accurate translation. Even though *heortan* most readily means “heart,” it has a wide range of potential meanings, and many of them could be argued for in this instance.<sup>75</sup> If *heortan* was given a translation that emphasized its mind-like charge, then the nouns could be apposed in this manner: “to another person he gives a mild mind, / a virtuous intellect”; but, if *heortan* maintains its most frequent and primary meaning, the lines should be translated thus: “to another person he gives a mild heart / [and] a virtuous mind.” The latter seems the most appropriate representation to me because the poet has quite intentionally used *mod* and other terms of cognition to refer to the mind (both as space and as intellect) and not to the spirit, soul, or heart, so this singular use of *heortan* does seem to be intended to signify the visceral. In lines 108-109a, then, there seems to be a division between the functions of the heart and the mind. The poet chose his words deliberately, and his frequent use of mind terminology has avoided an overt representation of its emotional or spiritual association. The poet’s decision to introduce the term *heortan* at such a late moment has an influence on the listener’s or reader’s semantic interpretation of the poem’s final use of *mod*.

*His milde mod* is the most troubling usage of all the potentially cognitive expressions in the poem. There is the unmistakable link that the twice-repeated adjective *milde* creates between *heortan* and *mod*, but the aspect of *mod* in line 113 that makes it particularly difficult to interpret is the fact that it is the only time in this poem the word refers to God. Each of the other twelve instances of *mod* helped form some rendition of a

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<sup>75</sup> Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 179, for example, lists the following definitions for *heorte*: “heart, breast, soul, spirit, will, desire, courage, mind, intellect, affections.”

person, and each had clear linguistic or narrative justifications for favoring a mind-centered translation, but this use is more obscure. The link that the adjective *milde* creates between *heortan* and *mod* seems not to unite them but to separate them, so that the audience understands that *milde heortan* is something different than *milde mod*. Short chose to translate *his milde mod* as “His mild spirit,” and Bradley decided on “his merciful heart.”<sup>76</sup> In contrast, I read this usage as maintaining the primary charge of “mind,” specifically “his merciful mind,” because the poet is careful to tell his audience that God was very deliberate in planning the distribution of gifts in a way that would maintain order and unity among the people. It is the well-considered, well-thought-out design formed in God’s mind that is made known to the people in the concluding lines of *Gifts*. God is to be praised, in this context, because he is rational. Thus, *Gifts* seems to be a text well steeped in the tradition of the creation narrative because it pays homage to God’s choices in the planning and shaping of humankind. The poem’s relatively even use of *mod* to conjure the mental space and faculties rather than the emotional or spiritual charges it often evokes makes it a unique poem among texts that use *mod* and other mind words more widely.

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<sup>76</sup> Short, “The Old English *Gifts of Men*: A Critical Edition,” 204. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 328.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *OFERHYGDE* AND *OFERMOD* IN THE EARLY LINES OF *GENESIS* AND THE PREVENTATIVE TACTICS OF *THE GIFTS OF MEN*

When *The Gifts of Men* is allowed a comparative reading with another Old English poem, it is usually studied in conjunction with *The Fortunes of Men* because of the structural connections discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>77</sup> However, one thematic similarity has not been dealt with in the slim critical discourse devoted to these poems to this date: God's shaping and guiding of humankind are a central focus shared by each of these texts, and an examination of this theme of design led me to consider them within the discourse of the creation narrative. I have argued that *Gifts* uses the term *mod* to refer to the space in which God deposits his gifts to people, that the gifts were taken from his *gewitte* ("intellect"), and that the singular use of *mod* to refer to God reflects the mercy of God's mind (rather than his heart or spirit) because he was careful to create humans in a manner that would result in the greatest amount of cooperation and the least amount of individual pride and contempt for others. This chapter begins with a brief look at *Fortunes* as a creation narrative that complements *Gifts*; I then shift to the primary focus

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<sup>77</sup> *The Fortunes of Men*, the editorial title used by Krapp and Dobbie, is the title to which most modern criticism refers. From here on I will refer to the poem simply as *Fortunes*. In his recent edition, Muir retitled the poem *The Fates of Mortals*. W. S. Mackie, ed., *The Exeter Book*, Part 2., Early English Text Society 194 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), titled the poem *The Fates of Men*.

of examining *Gifts* as a text in dialogue with the Old English poem *Genesis*, which is collected in *The Junius Manuscript*.<sup>78</sup> The comparative reading with *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* allows *Gifts* to be examined outside of the limiting lens provided by its label as a “catalogue poem” and considers its function within the larger discourse of religious poetry and the literary scene of Anglo-Saxon England. Granting *Gifts* a place in the broader corpus of Old English poetry, I argue that the poet alludes to the fall of the chief angel in the framing lines that explain that an excess of gifts leads to an increase in pride.

The creation narrative of *Fortunes* is one in which humans reproduce through the power of God, and though the parents do their best to guide their child, God is the only one who knows the fortune that the progressing years will bring:

Ful oft þæt gegongeð, mid godes meatum,  
 þætte wer ond wif in woruld cennað  
 bearn mid gebyrdum ond mid bleom gyrwað,  
 tennaþ ond tætaþ, oþþæt seo tid cymeð,  
 gegæð gearrimum, þæt þa geongan leomu,  
 liffæstan leoþu, geloden weorþað.  
 Fergað swa ond feþað fæder ond modor,  
 giefað ond gierwaþ. God ana wat  
 hwæt him weaxendum winter bringað.<sup>79</sup>  
 (ll. 1-9)<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, this codex collects the religious poems titled *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, notes that “the manuscript as a whole may be dated . . . at about the year 1000” (x), placing the compilation of *The Junius Manuscript* at a slightly later date than that of *The Exeter Book* (circa 970-990). As discussed in the first chapter, the time of actual writing of individual poems collected in larger manuscripts is often impossible to pinpoint with any measure of certainty, but for the purposes of this study it is important that *Gifts* and *Genesis* were collected in their manuscripts at nearby dates. The comparative significances I read into the texts of *Gifts* and *Genesis* in no way depend on one poem having been written before the other, for it is the attitude of the religious Anglo-Saxon culture embedded in each text and their desire to preserve and collect the poems with which I have centered my dialogue.

<sup>79</sup> Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, vol. 1, 244.

<sup>80</sup> This and all subsequent translations in footnotes are from Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*: It very often happens through God’s powers that man and woman bring forth a child by birth into the world, and clothe him in colours and curb him and teach him until the time comes and it happens with the passing of the years that the young and lively limbs and

The above passage is the poem's introduction, which precedes its *sum* catalogue and conclusion. The poet of *Fortunes* at once establishes God as the only source of knowledge concerning future events. The parents' shaping efforts are primarily those of providing the necessities of life, and the parents themselves have no control over the events that will befall their children. Thus, a central focus of the poem seems to be an exhortation for its audience members to trust in God because of their inability to alter their own or their children's destinies. Design is at the center of *Fortunes* and *Gifts*, and while the message transmitted by each poem invokes a call of passive acceptance, there is a participatory implication in *Gifts* alone as read through the poet's insistence that a community is formed by people whose skills are collectively diverse yet individually limited. Stanley Greenfield reads *Fortunes* as a more "superior poem" than *Gifts*, claiming that *Fortunes* "is more graphic and detailed in its enumeration of the evil fates and the good fortunes which overtake and are allotted to men."<sup>81</sup> Howe shares Greenfield's impression of *Fortunes* as the better poem of the two, and while he is quite critical of the introduction and *sum* catalogue of *Gifts*, he does find a degree of formulaic success in the poem's conclusion:

The poet succeeds with his list [in the conclusion] as he does not entirely with his catalogue, for here structure and theme are fused. In these lines, the vision of order becomes entirely valid because it is celebrated by a poet with full knowledge of all that endangers it. One wishes only that he had succeeded as well in structuring the more specific forms of this order in his catalogue.<sup>82</sup>

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members are mature. Thus his father and mother lead him along and guide his footsteps and provide for him and clothe him—but only God knows what the years will bring him as he grows up (341).

<sup>81</sup> Stanley B. Greenfield, *A Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 200.

<sup>82</sup> Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, 115.

I am not as critical of the overall structure of *Gifts* as Howe is, and I am not convinced that the poet of *Gifts* was entirely unskilled in his construction of the first two sections. The habit of discussing *Gifts* and *Fortunes* in isolation (or alongside *Christ II*) has provided a very limiting lens with which to read the text. By positioning *Gifts* in a new area of discourse, I intend to show an alternative reading of the poem's framing sections.

Due to their structure and content, *Gifts* and *Fortunes* are two of the more closely related poems in *The Exeter Book*, and it is no accident that the book's arranger has *Gifts* preceding *Fortunes*, particularly if one considers the two sequences of humankind's creation as recorded in the book of Genesis: God created humankind first in the form of two fully developed adults, and then each subsequent being was created as a child.<sup>83</sup> My reading of *Gifts* as a creation narrative is one that demonstrates not just the process of humankind being equipped, so to speak, but one that demonstrates God's choices and motivations for limiting the endowments offered to humankind. I interpret this intentional limiting of gifts as an action in direct conversation with the partly

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<sup>83</sup> It should be noted that the poems were not placed directly next to each other in the manuscript. *Gifts* is the seventh poem and *Fortunes* is the twelfth poem in Gollancz and Mackie's and Krapp and Dobbie's editions. Muir has given divisions of the manuscript's opening poems unique titles, so the numbering in his edition has *Gifts* and *Fortunes* as the tenth and fifteenth poems. The order of the poems and not the distance between them is important to my argument. Though his intentions are not always lucid, the compiler of *The Exeter Book* did clearly have order on the mind when arranging certain sections of the manuscript. For example, the poems commonly referred to as the Old English *Physiologus* (*The Panther*, *The Whale*, and *The Partridge*) do follow each other in *The Exeter Book*, mimicking their placement in the middle sections of early Greek and Latin *Physiologi*, and *The Phoenix*, which is a lone "animal" poem in *The Exeter Book*, precedes the *Panther-Whale-Partridge* cluster by a similar amount of space as its common position in Greek and Latin *Physiologi*. For a typical ordering of the pre-medieval *Physiologi*, see Michael J. Curley, trans., *Physiologus* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979). Out of 51 animal- or mineral-based episodes, the phoenix appears as the ninth installment and the panther, whale, and partridge appear as the thirtieth to thirty-second installments. The similarity in placement of *The Exeter Book*'s animal poems strongly suggests that the manuscript's arranger had intentions behind many of the poems' orderings. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that a possibility for ordering *Gifts* before *Fortunes* is to reflect the creation sequence of humankind.

unsuccessful creation of the angels that is made the subject of the Old English *Genesis A* and *B*. This response is made evident when *Gifts* is read alongside the *Genesis* poems.<sup>84</sup>

The poet of *Genesis A* begins by identifying himself as being a part of the same community as his audience. The literal reading of the first clause is: “To us is the great duty.” In Modern English “To us” (*Us* in the Old English) is best translated as “ours,” and the constituents on either side of the linking verb sound more natural when swapped (“A great duty is ours”), and the duty—which is the duty to praise and love God—is at once presented as a collective participation between speaker and audience in the poem’s opening word:

Us is riht micel ðæt we rodera weard,  
wereda wuldorcining, wordum herigen,  
modum lufien! He is mæгна sped,  
heafod ealra heahgesceafta,  
frea ælmihtig.<sup>85</sup>

(ll. 1-5a)<sup>86</sup>

Clearly the poet of *Gifts* was concerned with maintaining harmony in his community, and this concern is also demonstrated here by the poet of *Genesis A* and, as will be presented later, by the poet of *Genesis B*. In this passage too, it is interesting to note the use of *mod*, which has a charge that seems to favor equally the positive readings of *mind*, *heart*, and *spirit*. The poet exhorts the audience and himself “to praise with words” and “to love *modum*”—which, for the Anglo-Saxon, I imagine sounded or read as “to love with our minds, hearts, and spirits” (in the context of Modern English) since there is no textual

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<sup>84</sup> Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, notes that *Genesis* “is a composite of the work of at least two different poets” (xxv); the poem is commonly divided into two sections that show a clear division of authorship: *Genesis A* (ll. 1-234 and ll. 852-2936) and *Genesis B* (ll. 235-851).

<sup>85</sup> All quotes from *Genesis* are from Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, 3-87.

<sup>86</sup> A great duty is ours: that we should praise with our words and love with our hearts the Guardian of the heavens, the glorious King of hosts. He is plenitude of powers, sovereign of all his sublime creations, the Lord almighty (12).



support or pattern to favor a mind-, heart-, or spirit-based reading of the word but only one that encompasses the positive (non-prideful) charges of the exhortation. In line 4 of *Gifts* the poet describes God as *meahtum swið* (“strong in might”) in order to establish him as the source from which all the gifts derive; likewise, in line 3 above the poet of *Genesis A* describes God as *mæгна sped* (“the abundance of powers”) to establish him as the source from which the sequences of creation derive. The phrases themselves are not especially noteworthy or unique to creation texts, as similar descriptions of God can be found in numerous other Old English religious poems, but the setup deserves analysis, for—as in *Gifts*—God-the-Creator in *Genesis A* has endowed his angels with benefits:

Hæfdon gleam and dream,  
and heora ordfruman, engla þreatas,  
beorhte blisse. Wæs heora blæd micel!  
þegnas þrymfæste þeoden heredon,  
sægdon lustum lof, heora liffrean  
demdon, drihtenes dugeþum wæron  
swiðe gesælige.

(ll. 12b-18a)<sup>87</sup>

The angels had joy and delight because they were allowed *blæd micel* (“great prosperity”),<sup>88</sup> and they were exceedingly happy *drihtenes dugeþum* (“with the Lord’s benefits”).<sup>89</sup> One could easily construct a Modern English rendering of this passage

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<sup>87</sup> Joyfulness and happiness they had, those angel hosts, and sheer bliss in their begetter; great bounty was theirs. Majestic servants, they lauded their Prince and willingly spoke his praise and glorified their Lord of life; greatly were they blessed with the benefits of the Lord God (13).

<sup>88</sup> “Prosperity” seems to be the primary meaning of *blæd* here, though one of its most frequent meanings is “breath,” which could imply that the angels should be happy simply for being created and given life rather than given abilities, but its adjectival modifier makes this reading less likely. When signifying a charge of “glory” or “prosperity,” *blæd*, as defined in the *Dictionary of Old English*, distinguishes between its heavenly and earthly contexts: “3.a.i. the glory or splendour of the heavenly kingdom as opposed to the earthly”; “3.b.ii. glory or blessings enjoyed on earth: fame, success, happiness, prosperity, glory in battle, material wealth.”

<sup>89</sup> “With benefits” is an apt translation of *dugeþum*, but it is not the only possible reading. The *Dictionary of Old English* defines *dugub* as: “1. virtue, excellence”; “2. strength, power”; “3. benefit,

devoid of any gift-type language, selecting definitions of words that are contextually accurate and which do not suggest God as fulfilling the role of gift-giver. Regardless of which scenario is deemed to have the better claim, though, the charges of such nouns as *blæd* and *dugub*, particularly in close proximity, would carry a degree of a gift-type signification to the Anglo-Saxon audience, whether as the overt meaning or as a mere impression generated by other uses of the nouns.

Following the recognition of the widespread prosperity and endowments among the angels, the poet of *Genesis A* is careful to tell his audience that no wrongdoing existed in heaven until the emergence of pride:

Elles ne ongunnon  
 ræran on roderum nymþe riht and soþ,  
 ærðon engla weard for oferhygde  
 dwæl on gedwilde. Noldan dreogan leng  
 heora selfra ræd, ac hie of siblufan  
 godes ahwurfon. Hæfdon gielp micel  
 þæt hie wið drihtne dælan meahton  
 wuldorfæstan wic werodes þrymme,  
 sid and swegltorht. Him þær sar gelamp,  
 æfst and oferhygd, and þæs engles mod  
 þe þone unræd ongan ærest fremman,  
 wefan and weccan, þa he worde cwæð,  
 niþes ofþyrsted, þæt he on norðdæle  
 ham and heahsetl heofena rices  
 agan wolde.

(ll. 20b-34a)<sup>90</sup>

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good, blessing”; “3.a. wealth, riches”; and “3.b. salvation.” Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, also lists “gift” (90).

<sup>90</sup> In the heavens they exalted nothing else but right and truth—until the chief of the angels strayed through pride into perversity. No longer were they willing to pursue their own best interest, but they turned aside from God’s loving friendship. They had the great arrogance to boast that they could partition with God that mansion, glorious in the majesty of the multitude, broad and ethereally bright: thereupon the wound took effect in them, the envy and the presumption and the pride of that angel who first forwarded, contrived and encouraged that folly when, thirsting for trouble, he outspokenly declared

The passage is wrought with words and compounds synonymous with “pride”; indeed, the poet took great care to drive into the minds of his audience the exact cause for the fall of the chief angel and his followers. The first sin was a result of *oferhygde* (“pride, conceit, arrogance,” but literally “over-mindedness”).<sup>91</sup> This compound is the linguistic antithesis of the *lytelhydig* and *læthydig* (“little-minded,” “slow-minded”) compounds in line 10 of *Gifts*. A result of the introductory and concluding passages of *Gifts* is the assertion that no person is created with the mind-capacity for all of God’s gifts, and this design is intended for the purpose of avoiding pride—of avoiding over-mindedness. Early on, therefore, the poet of *Gifts* offers his audience the consolation that not one of them has been created with an excessively limited mind-space. After the use of *oferhygde*, the poet of *Genesis A* employs a different word for over-mindedness, claiming that the rebellious angels had great *gielp* (“pride, arrogance”); the same word is utilized by the poet of *Gifts* in lines 100 and 105, at which point he lets the audience know that the gifts are not ever prepared entirely for one person alone because the outcome would result in excessive pride; that outcome, as presented similarly in lines 18-26 of *Gifts*, would then lead to the individual’s break from community.<sup>92</sup> The poet of *Genesis A* brings the above discussion of pride to a close through an impressive string of “pride” words equated with a sickness or affliction of the body (*sar*); the angels were infected because of *æfst and oferhygd, and þæs engles mod* (“envy and arrogance, and the pride of the [chief] angel”). The repetition of *oferhygd*—used in lines 22 and 29—seems to

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that he meant to have a home and a throne in the northern part of the kingdom of heaven (13).

<sup>91</sup> The first three definitions are from Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 257. “Over-mindedness” is my attempt to capture the compound’s left-sided association with movement and direction.

<sup>92</sup> The “pride” word used in line 24 of *Gifts* is *wlence*.

function as a mnemonic strategy for the poet to instill in his audience the exact location of pride in the physical body, particularly when one considers the word-hoard of pride words available to the Anglo-Saxon poet. The intentional repetition of *oferhygd* as a reference to space and process (the space of the *hygd* and the process of expanding out of it, of going *ofer*) is then further enforced by *mod*, and in this instance there is no misreading *mod* for any other signification except the negative charges of pride. In this usage, the mind-space is filled entirely with and is symbolic of arrogance.

The pride of the rebel angels is their desire to divide up God's kingdom, and between the above passage detailing the source of their pride and its subsequent passage detailing their banishment into hell (ll. 36b-77) there are two lines that do significant work in explaining one of the more curious endowments in *Gifts*; the poet of *Genesis A* writes:

þa wearð yrre god  
and þam werode wrað þe he ær wurðode  
wlite and wuldre.  
(ll. 34b-36a)<sup>93</sup>

God's anger is, of course, directed toward the rebel angels, who, the poet tells us, were fashioned in beauty and splendor. In *Gifts* the modern reader might think that the quality of beauty is a peculiar endowment, yet beauty is mentioned three times in the poem: at line 34b-35a in the *sum* catalogue one person is described as being *wlitig on wæstmum* ("beautiful in figure"); and at lines 103 and 107 in the conclusion the poet uses and reuses the term *wlite* ("beauty") as a sort of classification of many types of gifts; the other two types of classifications in line 103 are the gifts of wisdom and the gifts of works. The

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<sup>93</sup> Then God grew angry and irate against the multitude whom he had previously dignified with beauty and splendour (13).

importance of beauty as both a category and a type of gift in the final lines of *Gifts* is striking when one considers the minor role it plays in the actual *sum* catalogue. The fact that the poet of *Genesis A* uses *wlite* as a noun that refers to the physical state of all angels is not surprising, and it is not odd to associate this quality as an endowment given to them. The coupling of pride and beauty evident in *Genesis A* is also present in *Gifts* and serves as a warning to the audience of the latter poem.

Shortly after the manuscript pages break from the first half of *Genesis A* into the short section of *Genesis B*, the new poet offers a similar and detailed focus on the manner in which God shaped the angels:

Hæfde se alwalda engelcynna  
 þurh handmægen, halig drihten,  
 tene getrimede, þæm he getruwode wel  
 þæt hie his giongorscipe fyligan wolden,  
 wyrcean his willan, forþon he him gewit forgeaf  
 and mid his handum gesceop, halig drihten.  
 Gesett hæfde he hie swa gesæliglice, ænne hæfde he swa swiðne  
 geworhtne,  
 swa mihtigne on his modgeþohte, he let hine swa micles wealdan,  
 hehstne to him on heofona rice, hæfde he hine swa hwitne geworhtne,  
 swa wynlic wæs his wæstm on heofonum þæt him com from weroda  
 drihtne,  
 gelic wæs he þam leohtum steorrum.

(ll. 246-256a)<sup>94</sup>

God trusted that the angels would perform his will because he had endowed them so generously. The sense of these first few lines is that God, quite deliberately, did not hold

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<sup>94</sup> The Ruler of all, the holy Lord, by the might of his hand had ordained ten orders of angels in whom he firmly trusted that they would follow in his fealty and work his will since he, the holy Lord, had given them intelligence and shaped them with his hands. So blessedly had he established them, and a certain one he had made so strong and so powerful in his intellect, so much he allowed him to command, the highest after himself in the realm of the heavens, so dazzling had he made him, so winsome was his person in the heavens which came to him from the Lord of the angel multitudes—he was comparable to the incandescent stars (19).

back when he distributed his gifts to the angels and that he assumed such generosity on his part would result in a natural desire to cooperate. Conversely, *Gifts* is a text that shows how God is deliberate in his plan to limit the endowments of humankind. The latter half of the above passage is incredibly detailed in its recounting of just how thoroughly gifted the chief angel was. The repetition of the adverb *swa* (“so”) creates a listing of qualities that fall slightly short of the superlative. God is the superlative, the space in which every gift or quality is unmatched, but the chief angel is the second highest and was created *swa swiðne* and *swa mihtigne on his modgeþohte* (“so strong [and] so mighty in his mind”). The poet of *Gifts* uses the opening and closing lines of his poem to address the very situation described in the above passage from *Genesis B*. In *Gifts* no one person is allotted an excess of privileges, but if a person were created with each of God’s gifts available to him, that person would be *mode swið* (“strong in mind”) (l. 25), as described in the first scenario in the poem’s introduction, and *mode þæs cræftig* and *þæs mægeneacen* (“so crafty in mind [and] so strong in power”) (l. 98), as described in the second scenario in the poem’s conclusion. The poet of *Gifts* expresses excessive endowment as a situation that is not desirous because of its tendency to lead the recipient into a prideful state. There is no clearer example of this disastrous situation unfolding in Anglo-Saxon religious literature than in the *Genesis* texts, and the poet of *Gifts* does seem to be alluding to the chief angel’s fall when he frames the *sum* catalogue with an explanation of why people were not allowed a measureless reception of skills.

The poet of *Genesis B* is quite emphatic in his telling of how the chief angel should have responded to receiving such an influx of gifts:

Lof sceolde he drihtnes wyrcean,  
 dyran sceolde he his dreamas on heofonum, and sceolde his drihtne  
 þæs leanes þe he him on þam leohte gescerede— þancian  
 þonne læte he his hine  
 lange wealdan.  
 (ll. 256b-258)<sup>95</sup>

The verb *sceolde* (“[he] ought to”) appears three times to express the various attitudes of appreciation the chief angel should have exhibited, and the gifts themselves are signified by the word *leanes* (“loans”). The first item in the *sum* catalogue of *Gifts* has proved to be troublesome to previous critics<sup>96</sup>: *Sumum her ofer eorþan æhta onlihð, / woruldgestreona* (ll. 30-31a) (“To one he gives [or lends] lands here across the earth, / [and] worldly riches”). I have used a conjunction to connect the two objects and make them unique, but one could construct an argument for reading the second as an appositive of the first. In either case, this initial item bears a stronger resemblance to a *lean* (“gift” or “loan”)<sup>97</sup> than it does to a *cræft* (“skill”), and if the poet of *Gifts* did have the fall of the chief angel in mind when he wrote the two framing sections of his poem, then it would make sense that he thought to begin with the distribution of lands and riches as an item passed out in a limited fashion since both *Genesis* texts are explicit in stating that the chief angel desired more of God’s kingdom for himself. The poet of *Gifts* deals with the issue of pride (ll. 18-29) and then in the subsequent line and a half moves to the item initially coveted by the chief angel—the item which brought about the first sin.

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<sup>95</sup> [H]e ought to have done homage to the Lord, he ought to have prized his pleasures in the heavens and he ought to have thanked his Lord for the bounty he had allotted him in that existence: then he would have let him rule it in perpetuity (19).

<sup>96</sup> See Short, “*Leopocræftas* and the Pauline Analogy of the Body in the Old English *Gifts of Men*.” Short notes that P. J. Cosijn “was troubled . . . by the particularly inappropriate characterization of the first gift, the receiving of wealth in lines 30-31a, as a *leopocræft*” (463).

<sup>97</sup> Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, defines *lean* as a “reward, gift, loan, compensation, remuneration, [or] retribution” (213).

Perhaps the strongest connection seen between *Gifts* and *Genesis B* is the growing of the mind from a space into a condition of pride:

Deore wæs he drihtne urum; ne mihte him bedyrned weorðan  
 þæt his engyl ongan ofermod wesan,  
 ahof hine wið his hearran, sohte hetespræce,  
 gylpword ongean, nolde gode þeowian,  
 cwæð þæt his lic wære leoht and scene,  
 hwit and hiowbeorht. Ne meahte he æt his hige findan  
 þæt he gode wolde geongerdome,  
 þeodne þeowian.

(ll. 261-268a)<sup>98</sup>

God is aware that his angel is in the process of becoming *ofermod* (“proud,” used here as an adjective; the word is synonymous with *oferhygde*, “pride, over-mindedness”). The passage above and the compound itself suggest that being in a state of pride is an attitude that one grows into—that it is a process. The mind of the chief angel has grown into a condition of arrogance because he was overwhelmed by God’s numerous gifts, unable to handle them properly; he has been given more skills and strength than any other angel, and here again he recognizes his body as being exceptionally beautiful. The poet of *Genesis B* has told his audience how the chief angel should have been eternally grateful after receiving so many endowments, but in his process of growing prideful there is no longer space in his mind for humility. *Ne meahte he æt his hige findan* (“He was not able to find in his mind . . .”) the condition of servitude. Similar to the hypothetical person in lines 18-26 and lines 97-103 of *Gifts*, the chief angel has had his mind-space altered to the point where it is no longer a suitable container to house God’s gifts.

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<sup>98</sup> He was dear to our Lord; it could not be concealed from him that his angel began to grow presumptuous, set himself up against his Master, resorted to malicious talk and boasting against him. He would not wait upon God. He declared that his body was radiant and shining, bright and dazzlingly beautiful. He could not find it in his self-esteem to be willing to wait upon God, his Prince, in a status of fealty (19).



The poet of *Genesis B* then employs *ofermod* a second time, in this case to refer to words of presumption spoken by the angel, and the theme of pride as a barrier to one's place in the community is made evident:

Feala worda gespæc  
 se engel ofermodes. þohte þurh his anes cræft  
 hu he him strenglicran stol geworhte,  
 heahran on heofonum; cwæð þæt hine his hige speone  
 þæt he west and norð wyrcean ongunne,  
 trymede getimbro; cwæð him tweo þuhte  
 þæt he gode wolde geongra weorðan.

(ll. 271b-277)<sup>99</sup>

Highlighted in both *Genesis* texts is the chief angel's desire to do things on his own and break away from an established community. In the above passage his pride has transitioned into an animate persona. The angel says that his *hige* ("mind," but here clearly "pride," as it has taken over the mind-space) persuaded him to start constructing his own kingdom, and again it is this arrogance that keeps the angel from being a servant to God. The chief angel is the first entity to break away from a community,<sup>100</sup> and, as the poet of *Gifts* makes clear, the strongest communities are those which are comprised of people who rely on others for skills and strengths that they themselves do not possess.

That the poet of *Gifts* embedded an allusion to the fall of the chief angel in the poem's framework is, of course, not an assertion that can be proven in absolute terms. But the reader who carefully examines the shared language and themes of *Gifts* and *Genesis* will recognize both poems' concerns with identifying the mind-space as the

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<sup>99</sup> Many words of presumption this angel spoke. He contemplated how, through his sole strength, he might create for himself a more powerful throne, more exalted in the heavens. He declared that his self-esteem persuaded him that he should start building in the west and in the north and fortify the construction. He declared that it seemed to him doubtful that he would remain subordinate to God (20).

<sup>100</sup> The community model in *Genesis B* is, of course, the *comitatus*. The chief angel has abandoned his lord and refused to be his retainer.

source of pride and with emphasizing the ability of pride to act as a disrupter of established communities. When *Gifts* is considered within its larger cultural framework, it is evident that the poet was likely aware of and influenced by religious narratives that were popular and current in Anglo-Saxon England.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

*The Gifts of Men* has not enjoyed the extensive scholarship devoted to numerous poems in *The Exeter Book* and other major codices of Old English poetry, yet it is an exquisitely unique poem that deserves to be studied in greater depths and certainly in wider contexts. More often than not *Gifts* is written about in conjunction with *The Fortunes of Men*,<sup>101</sup> and even though *Gifts* belongs to the genres of religious and gnomic texts, it is overshadowed by its status as a “catalogue poem.” It seems to me that this structural label has greatly hindered the frequency of *Gifts* receiving critical attention outside of identifying its obvious use of the listing convention. The absence of scholarship on *Gifts* within the past few decades is an indication, sadly, of a lack of interest in the poem itself or of the striking consensus that there is not much more to say about it.

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<sup>101</sup> In Chapter 1 I discussed how most of the scholarship on the poem in English appeared in the 60s-80s. Cross, Short, and Russom have written on *Gifts* without comparing it to *Fortunes*, but their primary aims were source studies. Howe’s study was structural and examined *Gifts* alongside *Fortunes*, and a similar structural comparison has been given to the two poems for many years when they have been referenced in broader studies; see, for example, Greenfield, *A Critical History of Old English Literature*: “Similar to the gnomes and proverbs in their exposition of wisdom through formulaic repetition are two more pointedly Christian poems of the Exeter Book, *The Gifts of Men* and *The Fortunes of Men*” (199); George K. Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) (rpt. of 1949 ed.): “Closely allied to the *Gnomic Verses* is the little pair of poems in *The Exeter Book* known as *The Arts* (or *Gifts*) of *Men* and *The Fates* (or *Fortunes*) of *Men*” (171); and Blanche Colton Williams, ed., *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon* (New York: AMS Press, 1966) (rpt. of 1914 ed.): “it may be objected that too many of these *sum* gnomes both here [in *Gifts*] and in the *Fates of Men* and in the passage from *Christ* deflect the current of ideas away from Christianity” (53).

As a reader of the Old English poem, I was struck by the multiple uses of the noun *mod* and the evenness of its distribution throughout the lines. Through a linguistic study I have argued that the poet employed the word to refer most readily to the mind-space (rather than the space of the heart, the notion of the spirit, or the condition of pride) and that the mind-space was where God deposited his various gifts to humankind. The ultimate use of *mod* is its singular reference to God, and this usage shows that God possesses a merciful mind because of his decision not to allow any one person to receive an excess of abilities.

The process of God determining the spread of his gifts allows the reader a glimpse into the conception of the creation of humankind. The visual image conjured by God placing his gifts into the mind-space is that of him shaping an already grown being, and I have argued that the poet of *Gifts* had the creation narrative in Genesis on his mind when he composed the introduction (ll. 1-29) and conclusion (ll. 97-113) of his poem. The scenarios in lines 18-26 and 97-103, in which a hypothetical person is given too many gifts and then becomes prideful, are allusions to the chief angel, who—as is reported vividly in the poetic texts of *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*—was given more gifts than each of the other angels and who had his mind-space become filled entirely with pride on account of not handling his great bounty properly. By comparing the likenesses seen in *Gifts* and the opening lines of the *Genesis* poems, I hope to have shown the benefits of reading *Gifts* and other “catalogue poems” outside of their predictable contexts.

## APPENDIX 1

### A BRIEF STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

As far as I am aware, *The Gifts of Men* has never been published in the form of a verse translation in Modern English. In many ways the verse translation attempts to achieve the impossible, and it is the drive toward this impossibility that I wish to explore in this appended section. Every translation attempts to communicate ideas between at least two differing languages and cultures, whether they are separated by many centuries or are contemporaries. The translation results in a representation of the source text, but it also becomes its own original work independent from its source. All translators must recognize the bridgeable and unbridgeable cultural charges within the source language and make choices to represent the conceits of the work as they deem best. In this way, translators prioritize the substances of the source text, choosing a hierarchical system reflecting what they consider the most important ideas, allusions, syntactical structures, and so forth to embed into a different language for the reception of a different culture. The translator who shapes a poetic text into a prose representation does encounter numerous structural hurdles, but they are far fewer than those encountered by the translator who shapes the same poetic text into a verse representation. Each of these translation types has its benefits and drawbacks. In the case of translating poetry, though, I do think that a significant portion of the source poem's substance is lost if a reader

interacts with the work only through a prose translation. My insistence that readers should experience poetic translations of poetic source texts applies to both the lay and student reader.

Before I relate my own priorities in composing my verse translation of *Gifts*, it will be useful to look at two differing verse translations of the introduction (ll. 1-9) of *The Fortunes of Men*<sup>102</sup>:

Full oft by the grace of God it happens  
 To man and woman in wedlock joined,  
 3 A child is born. They cherish it fondly,  
 Tend and teach it, till the time is come,  
 When the little one's limbs, in the lapse of years,  
 6 Have sturdy grown, and gained their strength.  
 So father and mother fondly rear it,  
 Nourish and guard it. But God alone knows  
 9 The gift of the years to the growing child.<sup>103</sup>

\* \* \*

How often it happens, given God's powers,  
 That husband and wife beget a child,  
 3 And bring him into the world, and clothe him  
 Brightly, and encourage and teach him, till the time  
 Comes, as the years pass, that he's grown,  
 6 Quickened with life, become a man.  
 Father and mother lead and guide him,  
 Feed and prepare him. But God alone knows  
 9 What the turning cycle of seasons will bring!<sup>104</sup>

Each of these translations was composed with the intention of being read in the high school or undergraduate classroom as well as in the home of the lay reader. The more

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<sup>102</sup> The Old English text of these lines and Bradley's prose translation of them can be reread on pages 39-40 of Chapter 3.

<sup>103</sup> J. Duncan Spaeth, trans., *Old English Poetry: Translations into Alliterative Verse with Introductions and Notes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921), 159.

<sup>104</sup> Burton Raffel, trans. and ed., and Alexandra H. Olsen, ed., *Poems and Prose from the Old English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 128.

than seven decades separating these translations accounts for the clear differences in diction and style of their Modern English. Each translator has chosen to omit or change certain aspects of the original poem according to the priorities he devised when considering the reception of his own audience. It is interesting to see that their line 8b is identical and that little else bears sentence-level similarity. Among other choices, J. Duncan Spaeth decided to end line 3a on a period, to employ the pronoun “it” in places where the Old English did not supply an object, to represent two Old English verbs with the use of a single verb and an added modifier in line 7, and to supply the word “child” in place of the Old English “him” in line 9. Conversely, Burton Raffel decided to employ the pronoun “him” in places where the Old English did not supply an object, to move around certain Old English grammatical units more freely and place them in different lines, to eliminate the Old English “him” in line 9 and not supply a new indirect object, and to end that same line on an exclamation mark.

One could elaborate on the differences in much greater detail and form opinions about the successes of these representations. What I wish to suggest instead is that the readers of these two translations would have felt that they were in fact reading a poetic text and not just a translation of a poetic text. Spaeth has recreated a similar alliterative meter to that of the Old English poem, and Raffel has replaced the alliterative meter with other poetic conventions, such as his use of a more radical style of enjambment. I am certain that, unlike most Old English poems, the above translations have been read silently more often than they have been read aloud. For this reason, in a contemporary translation the visual qualities of a poetic line are just as crucial as the aural ones.

The Old English alliterative pattern has three usual line types. Each line contains four primary or heavy stresses, and the last stress (except in rare cases) does not alliterate. In the examples below, the syllables that alliterate are represented by *a* and those that do not by *x* and *y*:

- (1) a a : a x    metodes meahta    and his mōd-ġeþanc  
 (2) a x : a y    hē ǣrest scōp    ielda bearnum  
 (3) x a : a y    nū sculon herian    heofon-rīces weard<sup>105</sup>

Spaeth refers to his Old English translations as having been composed in “alliterative verse” because he follows the above model closely. In contemporary prosody the term alliteration is not constricted to the Old English model. It is not uncommon for contemporary poets to employ the use of a consonant cluster in other spaces in the line, and when alliteration is used, it is seldom the governing meter and seldom appears in all the poem’s lines. Though I do use alliteration in my poetic translation of *Gifts*, I have chosen to label it a “verse translation” and not an “alliterative translation” because I do not want to imply that I have adhered to the metric guidelines of Old English prosody. I do, for example, often alliterate on the final stress of a line.

Stress distribution in Old English and contemporary prosodies is quite different. The natural iambic cadence of Modern English makes it difficult to limit the number of stresses heard in a given line of poetry. Thus, if one reads aloud a line of any poem in Modern English, whether it is measured or unmeasured (e.g., trochaic or free verse), the reader will hear a relatively even distribution of stressed and unstressed syllables.

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<sup>105</sup> John C. Pope and R. D. Fulk, eds., *Eight Old English Poems*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 134. For more thorough studies on Old English meter, see Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Early English Metre* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); H. Momma, *The Composition of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Geoffrey R. Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).



Whereas Old English tends to stress nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (though not all of them) and to leave articles and prepositions unstressed, Modern English tends to stress words by position instead of function. The monosyllable “be,” for example, could be stressed or unstressed in Modern English depending on the weight of the words surrounding it. Similarly, the disyllabic preposition “around” will always be scanned as an iamb (˘ ˉ) regardless of its placement in a measured or unmeasured poem. Though Spaeth’s translation closely adheres to the distribution of Old English alliterative stresses, as a contemporary reader it is difficult for me to limit each line’s stress count to four when I read his version of *Fortunes* aloud.

My verse translation of *Gifts* is not measured—that is, there is no single metrical pattern governing the lines—but each line is structured with my own concern for an even stress distribution. In the writing and revising processes I read each cluster of lines aloud and worked and reworked them until each contained a rhythm that seemed pleasant to my ear. Some lines and half-lines are heavily iambic, and most are alliterative.

Other Anglo-Saxonists might disagree, but I have kept very close to the meanings and linguistic charges of the Old English text. The only substantial change I elected to make can be seen in the first line of my verse translation: “Plentiful and plain-to-see are the newly poured-out gifts.” The first two modifiers are accurate, but the construction “newly poured-out” is my own reading of the adjective *geongra* in line 2 of the original text. This adjective is the Modern English “young” (“fresh” and “new” are also accurate translations), and I interpret it as having less to say about the gifts themselves and more to say about the newness of their reception. That is, the gifts have been distributed to

other people in different times and places and are not “new,” but in each instance a gift is newly given.

Punctuation and the syntactical rearrangement of clauses and phrases also constitute a number of the translator’s choices. To illustrate these changes in my verse translation, I have offered an interlinear translation in Appendix 2. The reader will note that I have underlined certain words and phrases that needed to be translated outside of their respective half-lines. The Old English text in Appendix 2 is from Muir. One of the key differences between Muir’s and Krapp and Dobbie’s editions is the use of semicolons in the former and the use of periods in the latter to separate clauses in the *sum* catalogue. To generate smoothness in my verse translation, I have variously divided and connected the clauses in that section with periods, semicolons, and the combination of commas and coordinating conjunctions.

APPENDIX 2

INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

*THE GIFTS OF MEN*

- 1            Fela bið on foldan      forðgesynra  
*In the world there are many    easy-to-see*
- 2            geongra geofona,      þa þa gæstberend  
*fresh    gifts,      which bearers-of-breath*      (or “bearers-of-spirit”)
- 3            wegað in gewitte,      swa her weoruda god,  
*carry in [their] consciousness, as here the God of the multitudes,*
- 4            meotud meahtum swið,      monnum dæleð,  
*the Creator strong in might,    dispenses to people,*
- 5            syleð sundorgiefe,      sendeð wide  
*gives [his] special-gift,    sends widely*
- 6            agne spede,      þara æghwylc mot  
*[his] own prosperity, of which each*
- 7            dryhtwuniendra      dæl onfon.  
*[one] living-among-people can    receive a portion.*
- 8            Ne bið ænig þæs      earfoðsælig  
*There is not any man so    troubled-in-fortune*      (or “blessed-with-troubles”)
- 9            mon on moldan,      ne þæs medspedig,  
*on earth,      nor so un-prosperous,*
- 10          lytelhydig,      ne þæs læthydig,  
*little-minded,    nor so slow-minded,*

- 11         þæt hine se argifa     ealles biscyrge  
*that the Benefit-Giver separates him from all*
- 12         modes cræfta         opþe mægendæda,  
*the mind's skills         or mighty-deeds,*
- 13         wis on gewitte         ond on wordcwidum,  
*wise in intellect         and in spoken-words,*         (Line 13 modifies the  
“Benefit-Giver” in line 11)
- 14         þy læs ormod sy         ealra þinga,  
*lest he should be despairing     of all things,*
- 15         þara þe he geworhte         in woruldlife,  
*which he did         in [his] worldly-life,*
- 16         geofona gehwylcre.         Næfre god demeð  
*of each of [his] gifts.         God never decrees*
- 17         þæt ænig eft         þæs earm geweorðe.  
*that anyone then     should become so wretched.*
- 18         Nænig eft þæs swiþe         þurh snyttrucræft  
*No one then, so exceedingly,     through wise-skill,*
- 19         in þeode þrym         þisses lifes  
*among the people         in this life*
- 20         forð gestigeð,         þæt him folca weard  
*will reach glory,     that to him the Guardian of humankind*
- 21         þurh his halige giefe         hider onsende  
*through his holy gift     would send to this place*
- 22         wise geþohtas         ond woruldcræftas,  
*wise thoughts         and worldly-skills,*
- 23         under anes meajt         ealle forlæte,  
*would leave behind all [gifts] under one's might,*
- 24         þy læs he for wlence         wuldorgeofona ful,  
*lest he because of pride,     full of glorious-gifts,*
- 25         mon mode swið         of gemete hweorfe  
*a man strong in mind,     should turn from moderation*

- 26            ond þonne forhycge        heanspedigran;  
                  *and then despise        the poorly-endowed;*
- 27            ac he gedæleð,        se þe ah domes geweald,  
                  *Instead he distributes,    he who has the power of judgment,*
- 28            missenlice        geond þisne middangeard  
                  *variously        throughout this middle-earth*
- 29            leoda leopocræftas        londbuendum:  
                  *the bodily-skills of humankind    to inhabitants-of-the-land:*
- 30            sumum her ofer eorþan        æhta onlihð,  
                  *to one here across the earth    he gives lands,*
- 31            woruldgestreona;        sum bið wonspedig,  
                  *worldly-riches;        one is un-prosperous,*
- 32            hearsælig hæle,        biþ hwæpre gleaw  
                  *a hard-fortuned man,        yet he is wise*
- 33            modes cræfta;        sum mægenstrengo  
                  *in the skills of the mind;    one receives vigorous-strength*
- 34            furþor onfehð;        sum freolic bið  
                  *more [greatly];        one is noble,*
- 35            wlitig on wæstmum;        sum biþ woðbora,  
                  *beautiful in figure;        one is a poem-bearer,*
- 36            giedda giffæst;        sum biþ gearuwyrdig;  
                  *gifted in songs;        one is ready-of-speech;*
- 37            sum bið on huntoþe        hreðeadigra  
                  *in hunting one is        more victory-rich,*
- 38            deora dræfend;        sum dyre bið  
                  *a chaser of animals;        one is dear*
- 39            woruldricum men;        sum bið wiges heard  
                  *to a worldly-powerful man;    one is vigorous of battle,*
- 40            beadocræftig beorn,        þær bord stunað;  
                  *a war-skilled man,        where the shield crashes;*

- 41           sum in mæðle mæg      modsnottora  
*one is able, in an assembly of wise-minded-ones,*
- 42           folcrædenne      forð gehycgan,  
*to decide forth the-rule-of-the-people*
- 43           þær witena biþ      worn ætsomne;  
*where there is a crowd of wise men together*
- 44           sum mæg wrætlice      weorc ahyggan  
*one can artistically devise the construction*
- 45           heahtimbra gehwæs —      hond bið gelæred,  
*of each of the lofty-buildings [his] hand is taught,*
- 46           wis ond gewealden,      swa bið wyrhtan ryht,  
*wise and controlled, as is appropriate for a worker,*
- 47           sele asettan,      con he sidne ræced  
*to erect a hall, he knows how to join the wide building*
- 48           fæste gefegan      wiþ færdryrum;  
*securely against sudden-collapses;*
- 49           sum mid hondum mæg      hearpan gretan,  
*one, with [his] hands, can take hold of the harp,*
- 50           ah he gleobeames      gearobrygda list;  
*he has the skill of the glee-beam's quick-sounds;*
- 51           sum bið rynig,      sum ryhtscytte,  
*one is [good at] running, one a sure-shot,*
- 52           sum leoða gleaw,      sum on londe snel,  
*one skilled of songs, one rapid on land,*
- 53           feþespedig;      sum [on] fealone wæg  
*speedy-of-foot; one on the fallow wave*
- 54           stefnan steoreð,      streamrade con,  
*steers the prow, he knows the water-road,*
- 55           weorudes wisa,      ofer widne holm,  
*the captain of the troop, across the wide ocean,*

- 56            þonne særofe        snelle mægne  
*when sea-strong [ones] with brisk might*
- 57            arum bregdað        yðborde neah;                    (yðborde: lit. trans. is “wave-  
*pull [their] oars        near the ship’s side                    board”; i.e., “ship’s side”)*
- 58            sum bið syndig,        sum searocræftig  
*one is skilled-in-swimming,    one artfully-skilled*
- 59            goldes ond gimma,        þonne him gumena weard  
*in gold and gems,            when a guardian of men*
- 60            hateð him to mærpum        maþpum renian;  
*as a fame for himself    orders him    to arrange a treasure;*
- 61            sum mæg wæpenþræce,        wige to nytte,  
*one can make,                    for use in battle,*
- 62            modcræftig smið        monige gefremman,  
*a mind-crafty smith,        many forceful-weapons,*
- 63            þonne he gewyrceð        to wera hilde  
*when he produces        for the combat of men*
- 64            helm oþþe hupseax        oððe heaþubyrnan,  
*a helmet or hip-sword        or a war-corslet,*
- 65            scirne mece        oððe scyldes rond,  
*a shining blade        or a shield’s boss,*
- 66            fæste gefeged        wið flyge gares;  
*firmly joined        against the flight of the spear;*
- 67            sum bið arfæst        ond ælmesgeorn,  
*one is firm-in-faith        and eager-for-almsgiving,*
- 68            þeawum geþyde;        sum bið þegn gehweorf  
*good in morals;        one is a servant appointed*
- 69            on meoduhealle;        sum bið meares gleaw,  
*in the meadhall;        one is expert with the horse,*
- 70            wiccræfta wis;        sum gewealdenmod  
*wise in steed-skills;        one, controlled-in-mind,*

- 71            þafað in geþylde      þæt he þonne sceal;  
                 *suffers in patience*      *that which he must then;*
- 72            sum domas con,      þær dryhtguman  
                 *one knows judgments,*      *when men-of-the-multitude*
- 73            ræd eahtiað;      sum bið hrædtæfle;  
                 *deliberate a resolution;*      *one is quick-at-dice-throwing;*
- 74            sum bið gewittig      æt winþege,  
                 *one is sagacious*      *at wine-taking,*
- 75            beorhyrde god;      sum bið bylda til  
                 *a good beer-keeper;*      *one is a builder apt*
- 76            ham to hebbanne;      sum bið heretoga,  
                 *at raising a home;*      *one is an army-commander,*
- 77            fyrdwisa from;      sum biþ folcwita;  
                 *a bold campaign-leader;*      *one is a public-counselor;*
- 78            sum biþ æt þearfe      þristhydigra  
                 *one is at need*      *a more-bold-minded*
- 79            þegn mid his þeodne;      sum geþyld hafað  
                 *thane with his prince;*      *one has patience,*
- 80            fæstgongel ferð;      sum bið fugelbona,  
                 *a faithful spirit;*      *one is a fowler,*
- 81            hafeces cræftig;      sum bið to horse hwæt;  
                 *skilled with the hawk;*      *one is brisk on a horse;*
- 82            sum bið swiðsnel;      hafað searolic gomen,  
                 *one is very-quick;*      *he has clever sports,*
- 83            gleodæda gife      for gumþegnum,  
                 *the gift of mirthful-actions*      *in front of noblemen,*
- 84            leoht ond leoþuwac;      sum bið leofwende,  
                 *light and supply-limbed;*      *one is dearly-esteemed,*
- 85            hafað mod ond word      monnum geþwære;  
                 *he has a mind and speech*      *pleasant to people;*



- 86           sum her geornlice       gæstes þearfe  
              *one earnestly here       the spirit's need*                   (“need” is object of “clasps”)
- 87           mode bewindeþ,       ond him metudes est  
              *clasps in [his] mind,   and for himself the Creator's grace*
- 88           ofer eorðwelan       ealne geceoseð;                   (“grace” is object of “chooses”)  
              *chooses over all earthly-prosperity;*
- 89           sum bið deormod       deofles gewinnes,  
              *one is bold-minded       with the devil's struggle,*
- 90           bið a wið firenum       in gefeoht gearo;  
              *he is always               prepared in the battle against sins;*
- 91           sum cræft hafað       circnytta fela,  
              *one has skill           in many church-duties,*
- 92           mæg on lofsongum       lifes waldend  
              *he can in praise-songs   the Ruler of life*                   (“Ruler” is object of “extol”)
- 93           hlude hergan,       hafað healice  
              *extol loudly,       he has a lofty*
- 94           beorhte stefne;       sum bið boca gleaw,  
              *brilliant voice;       one is learned in books,*
- 95           larum leoþufæst;       sum biþ listhendig  
              *capable in [his] teachings;   one is craft-handy*
- 96           to awritanne       wordgeryno.  
              *at writing down   word-mysteries.*
- 97           Nis nu ofer eorþan       ænig monna  
              *There is not now across the earth   any person*
- 98           mode þæs cræftig,       ne þæs mægeneacen,  
              *so skillful in mind,       nor so increased-in-strength,*
- 99           þæt hi æfre anum       ealle weorþen  
              *that for one alone they       all are ever*                   (“they” = the gifts)
- 100          gegearwade,       þy læs him gilp sceððe,  
              *prepared,       lest pride should injure him,*

- 101            oþþe fore þære mærpæ        mod astige,  
                  *or because of the glory [his] mind be-puffed-up*
- 102            gif he hafap ana            ofer ealle men  
                  *if he alone has            over all men*
- 103            wlite ond wisdom        ond weorca blæd;  
                  *beauty and wisdom        and prosperity of works;*
- 104            ac he missenlice        monna cynne  
                  *but he variously steers        the race of mankind*
- 105            gielpes styreð            ond his giefe bryttað,  
                  *away from pride            and divides his gifts,*
- 106            sumum on cystum,        sumum on cræftum,  
                  *to one in virtues,            to one in skills,*
- 107            sumum on wlite,        sumum on wige,  
                  *to one in beauty,            to one in warfare,*
- 108            sumum he syleð monna        milde heortan,  
                  *to one among people he gives        a merciful heart,*
- 109            þeawfæstne gēpoht,        sum biþ þeodne hold.  
                  *a morally-fixed way-of-thinking,        one is loyal to God.*
- 110            Swa weorðlice        wide tosaweð  
                  *Thus honorably the Lord scatters widely*
- 111            dryhten his duguþe.        A þes dom age,  
                  *his majesty.        May he always have glory for this,*
- 112            leohtbære lof,        se us þis lif giefeð  
                  *lightsome praise,        he who gives us this life*
- 113            ond his milde mod        monnum cyþeð.  
                  *and shows his merciful mind        to people.*

APPENDIX 3

VERSE TRANSLATION

*THE GIFTS OF MEN*

Plentiful and plain-to-see are the newly poured-out gifts  
on earth which bearers-of-breath sustain in their  
consciousness, in accordance as the God of companies—  
the Creator strong in powers—dispenses to people here,  
5 giving away each special gift, sending  
far and wide his own wealth, of which every  
living person can receive a portion.  
There's no one in the world so  
badly-fortuned nor so brutally unsuccessful,  
10 so slim in mind nor so sluggish in mind,  
that the Giver of graces, wise in intellect  
and speech, splits him from all  
the mind's abilities or mighty deeds—  
concerned that such a person should be despairing of  
15 whatever works he did in his worldly life  
or of every gift. God never decrees then  
that any of mankind be made so miserable;  
likewise, no one in this life through his own wise skill  
will gain glory so greatly in the land  
20 that the Protector of people, by his perfect favor,  
will send down to him in this space  
all brilliant thoughts and worldly abilities,  
permitting one person to possess the whole lot—  
afraid that he, filled with fantastic gifts—  
25 a man powerful in mind—would swerve from moderation  
on account of pride and then despise all those less-privileged.  
Instead, he who keeps the command of decree  
diversely distributes the different skills of mankind  
to inhabitants widespread throughout this world.  
30 To one he lends out lands here on earth,  
as well as worldly possessions. Another is not prosperous—

a hard-fortuned fellow—but he is proficient  
 in the skills of the mind. One receives a greater share  
 of physical strength, and another is fair in figure  
 35 and well-poised. One is a poet with  
 an ear for songs, and another is smooth in speech.  
 One is more victory-blessed in hunting beasts—  
 a pursuer of game. Another is valued greatly  
 by a person with worldly power. One is vigorous in wartime—  
 40 a fighter crafty and cunning amid the crash of shields.  
 Another is capable of considering the decree of the people,  
 determining law among the wise-minded  
 where a crowd of cunning leaders meet in council.  
 One can creatively think up the construction of  
 45 any imposing structure, and then assemble such a hall,  
 because his hand is trained with technique and under control,  
 as is appropriate for a builder, and because he can piece together  
 the spacious structure securely against sudden collapses.  
 Another uses his hands to handle the harp,  
 50 possessing the skill of quick movements on the music-wood.  
 One is a strong runner, and another has a steady shot;  
 one's specialty is song-making; another's is sprinting with speedy  
 strides across the ground. One steers the stern of a ship  
 on the dusky wave and knows the water-road  
 55 across the wide ocean—a captain of crewmen—  
 as sea-sturdy men use their stalwart strength  
 to pull the oars beside the outer planks.  
 One is a terrific swimmer; another is talented at setting  
 gold and ornamental gems when ordered by his lord  
 60 to make a jeweled arrangement that reflects his reputation.  
 One can make a multitude of menacing weapons  
 for use in battle—a brilliant smith—  
 manufacturing for the fights of men  
 a helmet or a hip-sheathed dagger, close-worn armor,  
 65 a shining sword, or a shield's center  
 fixed firmly against the flight of a spear.  
 One is grounded in faith and eager to give alms,  
 virtuous in principles; another is a servant experienced  
 in the mead-hall. One is magnificent with a horse,  
 70 astute in the art of steeds; another has restraint of mind  
 and suffers his current situation in patience.  
 One comprehends judgments when convening men  
 discuss a resolution. Another is quick with dice games,  
 and one is wise in the drinking of wine

75 and a good keeper of beer; another is a builder excellent  
 at lifting a house. One is a leader of troops—  
 a bold commander of campaigns; another is a counselor of the people.  
 One is a thane whose inner thoughts turn brave  
 at his prince's time of need, and another has patience  
 80 and a faithful spirit. One is a fowler  
 skilled with the hawk, and another is quick on a horse.  
 One is quite agile with his loose limbs and light feet;  
 he has a talent for tricks and mirthful movements  
 that please onlookers. Another is pleasant,  
 85 possessing a mind and speech agreeable to people.  
 One eagerly entwines within his mind each need  
 his soul has here and selects for himself  
 the Creator's kindness over collecting earthly riches.  
 Another is brave in mind when battling the devil;  
 90 he is constantly prepared in his struggle against sins.  
 One has diligence in many duties of the church;  
 he can loudly praise the Lord of life  
 with songs of adoration, since his voice  
 is high and clear. One is clever because of books  
 95 and talented in his teachings; another is technically skilled  
 at writing words with mysterious meanings.  
 There's not at present a single person on earth  
 so clever in mind nor so mighty in strength  
 that all these privileges are ever prepared  
 100 for him alone, in the likelihood that arrogance would harm him  
 or his mind would become puffed up because of reputation  
 if he above all people had sole possession  
 of good looks, wisdom, and the glory of accomplishments.  
 But in different ways the Giver directs mankind  
 105 away from pride and dispenses his gifts:  
 to one in principles, to another in proficiencies,  
 to one in beauty, and to another in battle-deeds;  
 to one among many he gives a merciful heart  
 and a morally-firm mindset; another is faithful to God.  
 110 In this splendid way the Lord spreads his magnificence  
 to near and distant places; may he always have power because of this,  
 as well as luminous glory—he who gives us this life  
 and makes his merciful mind known to people.

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