THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUXILIARY OUGHT

By SHIGERU ONO

Lecturer of English

I

The auxiliary ought developed from the subjunctive use of ðhte, the past form of OE (Old English) āgan.1 Āgan was a preterite-present verb and originally meant ‘to have, to possess’. This meaning gradually developed into that of ‘to have to pay’ and, accompanied by an infinitive, that of ‘to have as a duty (to do)’. In present-day standard English owe, developed from āgan, is not used in the sense of ‘to possess’ and that of ‘to have as a duty (to do)’, and its use is restricted to the meaning represented by ‘to have to pay’. From the seventeenth century owe in the sense of ‘to possess’ has been superseded by owe. Already before 1200 the past form ðhte, which developed into ought, began to be used in the present sense expressing duty or obligation, and it has become an uninflected modal auxiliary,2 while owe came to be a weak verb with the past form owed, which has been in use from the fifteenth century. Thus ought, which was formerly an inflected form of the preterite-present verb āgan, is now practically a distinct verb from the newly developed weak verb owe. Such functional specialization of the past form is paralleled by must (<mōste, past form of OE mōtan),3 and to some extent by such modal auxiliaries as should, would, might and could. For a satisfactory study of any one of the modal auxiliaries, ought among the number, it is essential to make clear its place in the system, as it were, not only of the modal auxiliaries but of various words implying modality. But at the same time it may be admitted that, as a preliminary to such a large-scale study, a tentative sketch of the development of each word is needed. In the following I shall describe the early development of the auxiliary ought in its outline. The evolution of the whole use of āgan (owe) is to be dealt with. But my chief concern will be to make clear the process of the functional specialization of the past form ðhte (ought) as an auxiliary verb expressing present duty or obligation, and the establishment of the syntactical group ðhte (ought) + to-infinitive.

II

Apart from monographs dealing with the language of a particular author or work, the most detailed diachronic account of the auxiliary ought is found in OED (The Oxford

---

1 Pres. indic. 1st, 3rd sg. āh, āg, pl. āgon; subj. āge, past ðhte, inf. āgan...2nd sg. pres. indic. is āhst 1W-S; āht Li., and does not elsewhere occur. Pres. part. āgende is frequent in compounds, the pass. part. āgen, tēgen own occurs in adjectival use.’ A. Campbell, Old English Grammar. § 767.

2 Ought in the past sense is now found usually in dependent clauses.

English Dictionary). Therefore it will be convenient for any further study of the word to refer to the chronological survey in OED. The earliest and the latest quotations (abbreviated as EQ and LQ respectively) in OED of the chief senses of owe and ought are as follows.¹

**Owe**

I. To have; to possess; to own.

†1. **trans.** To have; to have belonging to one, to possess; to be the owner of, to own. **Obs.** (since c 1680) exc. **dial.**

EQ. c 888 K. ÆLFRED Boeth. xiv. § 2 Pa micles beþurfon þe micel aþan willap.

LQ. a 1825 FORBY Voc. E. Anglia s.v., Mr. Brown owes that farm.

II. To have to pay.

This branch and the next were expressed in OE., as in the other Teutonic langs., by the vb. sceal, pa. t. sceolde, inf. sculan (Goth. skal, skuida, skulan), mod. Eng. SHALL, SHOULD. The first traces of the mod. use appear in the Lindisf. Gloss, which renders L. débère (where the Rushw., like the later Ags. Gosp., uses sculan) by the phrase ázan tó zeldanne ‘to have to pay’. Examples are wanting during the following two centuries to show the stages by which this was shortened to the simple ázan, which is found by 1175 in full use, both in the sense ‘to owe (money)’, and ‘to have it as a duty’, ‘to be under obligation (to do something)’, in both taking the place of OE. sculan. (See also OUGHT v. 2, 5.) The result was that shall gradually ceased to have the sense ‘owe’, retained that of obligation with a weaker force, and became mainly an auxiliary of the future tense; while ázan, azen, ozén, owen, owe, in taking débère as its main sense, has in Standard Eng. lost that of habère, or handed it over to the cognate own, which shares it with have and such Romanic synonyms as possess.

2. To be under obligation to pay or repay (money or the like); to be indebted in, or to the amount of; to be under obligation to render (obedience, honour, allegiance, etc.). Const. with simple dat. or to. (The chief current sense.)


LQ. 1871 FREEMAN Norm. Conq. IV. xviii. 140 On behalf of the land to which they owed a temporary allegiance.

III. To have it as a duty or obligation.

†5. To have as a duty; to be under obligation (to do something). (Followed by inf. with or without to.) **Obs.**

(a) with to and infin.

EQ. c 1175 Lamb. Hom. 21 Swilcne lauerd we azen to dreden.

LQ. 1537 Let. in Cranmer’s Misc. Writ. (Parker Soc.) II. 352 As obedient ... as a true Christian oweth to be.

(b) with simple infin.

¹ The part of OED containing Ought was published in 1903, that containing Owe in 1904.
The early development of the auxiliary ought

EQ. c 1200 Trin. Coll. Hom. 53 Nu aȝe we alle ... nime forbisne.
LQ. 1524 Hen. VIII Let. to Pace in Strype Eccl. Mem. (1724) I. ii. App. xiii. 28 They shuld & owe, not onely forbere to geve ayde.

†6. quasi-impers. (usually with inf. clause as subject): (It) behoves, is the duty of, befits, is due (to); e.g. him owe (or oweth)=it behoves him, he ought; as him owe =as befits him, as is due to him. Obs.

EQ. c 1220 Bestiary 350 Ano~er kinde, Þat us 03 alle to ben minde.
LQ. c 1450 Mirour Saluaciowa 4486 Hym awe serue and luf godde with his hert alle & some.

ought4

I. Pa. t. of OWE v. in sense ‘to have or possess’.
†1. Possessed, owned. Obs.

α. EQ. a 1000 Beowulf 31 Leof land-fruma longe ahte.
LQ. a 1670 Spalding Troub. Chas. I. (1850) I. 205. The poor men that aucht thame followit in.

β. EQ. a 1225 Ancr. R. 390 He ... bead for to makeyn hire cwene of al Þet he ouhte.
LQ. 1632 Lithgow Trav. v. 204 The Turke who ought my Mule.

γ. (only one example) 13 ... Cursor M. 6719 (Cott.) Pe lord pat Pat beist aght Sal þar-for ansuer at his maght [G. iht ... miht, Tr. ight ... myȝt].

II. Pa. t. of OWE v. in its existing sense.
†2. Had to pay, was under obligation to pay or render; owed. Obs. or dial.

The full phrase ahte to zeldanne ‘had to pay’ =debebat, owed, appears in the Lindisfarne Gospels; but, for the following two centuries and a half, examples are wanting to show the passing of this into the simple ahte: see OWE v. 2.

LQ. a 1825 Forby Voc. E. Anglia s.v. Aught, He aught me ten pounds.

β. EQ. a 1225 Ancr. R. 124 A mon þet leie ine prisune, & ouhte muche raunsun.
LQ. c 1685 Life A. Martindale 231 (E.D.D.) Burton ... said he ought him nothing.

III. As auxiliary of predication.
5. The general verb to express duty or obligation of any kind; strictly used of moral obligation, but also with various weaker shades of meaning, expressing what is befitting, proper, correct, advisable, or naturally expected. Only in pa. t. (indic. or subj.), which may be either past or present in meaning. (The only current use in standard Eng.)

a. In past sense:=Owed it to duty; was (were) bound or under obligation (to do something). Usually, now only, in dependent clause, corresponding to a pre-

4 Quotations are classified according to the forms of ought: α=ahте, aȝt(e aȝt(e, aught(e, aucht, etc.; β=ouhte, ouȝt(e, ouȝt(e, ouȝt(e, ouȝt(e, etc.; γ=ȝȝt(e, ȝȝt(e, iht, ought.
ceding past tense in principal clause: *he said you ought* = he said it was your duty.

a. EQ. c 1200 Ormin 19108 And toth swa þæhh ne cnew himm nohht þe werelld alls itt ahhhte.
   LQ. c 1425 WYNTOUN Cron. viii. ii. 52 Robert þe Brwys, Erle of Karryk Aucht to succeed to þe Kynryke.

β. EQ. c 1305 St. Lucy 4 in E. E. P. (1862) 101 Of such a child wel glad heo was: as heo wel ouȝte.
   LQ. 1892 Law Times XCIII. 414/2 He [the judge] did not think that the defendant ought to be kept in prison any longer.

b. In present sense: = Am (is, are) bound or under obligation; *you ought to do it* = it is your duty to do it; *it ought to be done* = it is right that it should be done, it is a duty (or some one's duty) to do it. (The most frequent use throughout. Formerly expressed by the pres. t., *owe* v. 5.)

(a) with to and infin.

a. EQ. c 1175 Lamb. Hom. 5 þæs we ahte[n] to beon þe edmoddrê.
   LQ. 1658 Hattoet Corr. (Camden) 15 Therefore I aught to begg your pardon.

b. EQ. c 1374 CHAUCER Troylus v. 545 O paleys empty and disconsolat...Wel oughtestow to falle, and I to dye.
   LQ. 1886 L.D. ESHER in Law Rep. 32 Chanc. Div. 26 There is nothing here to shew that the parties ought not to be bound by their contract.

(b) with simple infin. Obs. or arch.

a. EQ. a 1200 Moral Ode 2 Mi wit ahte bon mare.
   LQ. 1578-1600 Sc. Poems 16th C. (1801) II. 271 Than acht he be of all puissance denude.

b. EQ. a 1225 Ancr. R. 326 Nie þinges beoþ þet ouhten hien touward schriftê.
   LQ. 1868 BROWNING Agamemnon 796 How ought I address thee, how ought I revere thee?

c. With past sense indicated by the use of a following perf. infin. with have: *you ought to have known* = it was your duty to know, you should have known. (The usual modern idiom.)

EQ. 1551 Bible 2 Kings v. 13 Yf y*þ* prophet had byd the done some great thinge oughtest thou not then to have done it?
   LQ. 1895 Law Times XCIX. 465/1 Lord Londesborough knew, or ought to have known, that his bill of exchange was intended to circulate.

†6. quasi-impers., with dative object.

†a. In past sense: Behoved, befitted, was due (to). Obs.

a. EQ. 1297 R. GLOUC. (Rolls) 7348 Watloker it æghte her.
   LQ. c 1420 Sir Amadace (Camden) Iviii. That ladi gente . . . did wele that hur aghete to do.

b. (two examples) c 1366 CHAUCER A. B. C 119 But oonly þer we diden not as us ouhte Doo. 1470-85 MALORY Arthur vi. xii, I haue no thynge done but that me ought for to doo.

†b. In present sense: Behoves, befits, is due (to). Obs.
The above diagram tells us the fates of each use through centuries. Moreover it gives a rough idea of the various uses of *owe* and *ought* in a given period. We know, for instance, that only the meaning 'to possess' existed in Early OE, and that almost all the meanings and uses obtained in the fourteenth century. But OED gives no information
as to the relative frequency of each use in a certain period, nor does it tell us in what relations a certain use stands to other uses. No linguistic phenomenon stands alone. It has a status peculiar to itself in the linguistic system of a given dialect in a given period. Therefore any diachronic study must be based upon a synchronic description. Mere chronological description of a phenomenon cannot be regarded as a linguistic history in its adequate sense, unless due consideration is given to its status in successive linguistic systems. Bearing this in mind, I have examined a few texts, ranging from Beowulf to Malory's works. The results thus obtained, though far from satisfactory, will carry the study of the auxiliary ought at least a step further.

The table below is intended to show the relative frequency of the uses in the texts examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>I 'to possess'</th>
<th>II 'to have to pay'</th>
<th>III 'to have as a duty (to do)'</th>
<th>III. 6 Impers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>for simple</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>owe ought</td>
<td></td>
<td>ought pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a1000</td>
<td>Beowulf</td>
<td>3 5</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chron. [E]</td>
<td>0 26</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1200</td>
<td>Trin. Hom.</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>17 0 6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a1225</td>
<td>Ancre. R.</td>
<td>0 2 6 2</td>
<td>19 22 11</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>1 1 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1300</td>
<td>Havelok</td>
<td>4 2</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1386</td>
<td>Cant. T.</td>
<td>1 0 9 0</td>
<td>1 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 1</td>
<td>10 2 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1390</td>
<td>Gawain</td>
<td>0 4</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1390</td>
<td>Pearl</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1470–85</td>
<td>Malory</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>9 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Obs. exc.</td>
<td>Obs. obs.</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6 The editions of the texts used are as follows:

7 In the table the classification of meanings and uses is in accordance with that of OED. For to-infinitive is classified separately from to-infinitive. As for the impersonal use those instances only are considered in which the oblique case form of personal pronoun is clearly recognized.
In *Beowulf* we find 8 instances of *ægan*, all of which can be taken as meaning ‘to have, to possess’.

-present (3): 1088 *þæt hie healfræ geweald wið Eotena bærna agan* moston (that they might have power over half of it with the sons of the Jutes)/1727 *he ah ealra geweald* (he has control of all)/2252 *Nah, hwæ sword wege* (I have no one to bear sword)

-past (5): 31 *loef landfruma lange ahde* (dear prince of the land long reigned)/487 *ahde ic holdra þy læs, deorre duguþe, þe þa deað fornam* (I had the fewer trusty followers, dear warriors, because death had taken them away)/522 *þær he folc ahde, burh ond beagas* (where he had subjects, a stronghold and treasures)/533 *Soð ic talge, þæt ic merestrengo maran ahde, ear þe on þýnum, ðonne ænig oþer man.* (I claim it to be true that I had more strength in the sea, hardships in the waves, than any other man.)

According to OED ‘to have, to possess’ was almost the only meaning of *ægan* throughout the OE period, except a few examples of the meanings ‘to have to pay’ and ‘to have as a duty (to do)’ in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (*c* 950), which are quoted in II under *Owe 2 and Ought 2*. Examples are wanting during about two centuries (from *c* 950 to *a* 1175).

But we know from other sources that the use of *ægan* with the infinitive was by no means very rare. Callaway gives 32 examples with *to-infinitive* (*Chron.* [A]: 1; [E]: 2; *Laws*: 14; *Waelferth*: 1; *A. S. Hom.* and *L. S. II*: 1; *Wulfstan*: 13), and one example with *simple infinitive* from *Wulfstan*. 6 Six examples with *to-infinitive* are quoted in *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Supplement, s.v. *ægan* (*Charters*: 3; *Laws*: 1; *Lindisf. Gosp.*: 2). Wulfing quotes only one example with the infinitive: *Ledges Alfredi Regis* 58, 12 *nage he hie ut on elpeodig folc to bebyeggante* (he ought not to sell her to foreign people). 8 Three instances with the infinitive are found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, one in A (the Paker MS.) two in E (the Laud MS.): A 1070 *þa forsoc he. Æ sēde þe hit nahte to donne* (then he refused and said that he was under no obligation to give it)/E 1085 *hwilce gerihhte he ahde to habbanne to xii monþum of ðære scire* (what dues he ought to have in twelve months from each shire)/E 1140 *pe eorl heold Lincol aganes pe king. O benam him al þe ahde to hantele.* (The earl held Lincoln against the king, and deprived him of all that he ought to have.) Besides these examples with the infinitive there are 26 examples of *ægan* in the sense ‘to have, to possess’ in *Chronicle* [E].

675 *Das landes ic gife Sē Peter eal swa freolice swa ic self hit ahde./833* *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald./837* *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald./840* *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald.*

860 ..*J wælstowe geweald ahdon./871* *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald./871* *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald./871* *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald./885* *þa Deniscan ahdon sige./998* *aefre hi æt ende sige ahdon,/999* *þa ahdon* *þa Deniscan wælstowe geweald./1010* (twice) *þa Deniscan ahdon wælstowe geweald. Æ* *þær wurdon gehorsode.*

9 *J syðdon ahdon East Engle géweald./1042* (twice) *J raðe þæs se cing let geridan ealle þa land þe his modor ahde him to handa.*

---

8 M. Callaway, Jr., *The Infinitive in Anglo-Saxon*. p. 80 f.
It was towards the end of the eleventh century that the meanings 'to have to pay' and 'to have as a duty (to do)' became prevalent. In the earlier period these meanings were usually expressed by *sculcan*. The earliest and the latest quotations in *OED* of *sculcan* with these meanings are as follows:

**†1. trans.**

†a. To owe (money). Obs.

*Ex.* c 975 *Rushw. Gosp.* Matt. xviii. 28 Sepe *scealde* him hundred denera.

*Lq.* c 1425 *Hoccleve Min. Poems* xxiii. 695 The leeste fertyng pat y men *shal*.

†b. To owe (allegiance). Obs.

*Ex.* c 1325 *Poem temp. Edw. II* (Percy Soc.) xxxxiv, Be the fayth ic *schal* to God.

*Lq.* [c 1530 *Crt. of Love* 131 By the feith I *shall* to god.]

**†2. In general statements of what is right or becoming: = 'ought'. Obs. (Superseded by the pa. subjunctive *should*: see sense 18.)**

*Ex.* *Beowulf* 20 (Gr.) Swa *sceal* zeong guma gode zeowyrcean...*pat* [etc.].

*Lq.* 1562 *Legh Armory* 149 Whether are Roundells of all suche coloures, as ye haue spoken of here before? or *shall* they be named Roundelles of those coloures?

18. In statements of duty, obligation, or propriety (originally, as applicable to hypothetical conditions not regarded as real).

This conditional form of expression was from an early period substituted for the unconditional *shall* in sense 2, and in mod. Eng. the pres. tense in this use is obs., and *should* = ought to.

*Ex.* *Beowulf* 2708 (Gr.) Swylc *sceolde* secg wesan, *pe* *ægan* at *beart.* pc 897 *Ælfred* Gregory's *Past. C. iv.* 36 ðonne mon forlet ðone ege...pe he mid ryhte on him innan habban *sceolde*.

*Lq.* 1896 *Law Times Rep.* LXXIII. 616/2 He *should* have looked up and down the line before he ventured to cross it.

---

10 Compare the following examples with *habban*: 890 Þa Bryttas him wið gefuhton. Þa *hafdon* sige./1025 Þa Sweon *headdon* weallstowe geweald./1057 Þa feng *Ælfgar* his sunu to þam eorldome þe se fæder ær *haefde*.

11 It is worth noting that *sculcan* is used in *Anglo-Saxon, Rushworth and Hatton Gospels* to translate *debbere*, while in *Lindisfarne Gospels* *ægan* is used. Lindisf. glosses are written in Northumbrian dialect. Therefore the use of *ægan* may possibly be characteristic of the dialect.
The diagram in II suggests that almost all of the chief uses of *āgan* (ME South. *ō zen*, *owen*, etc.; North. *ā zen*, *awen*, etc.) existed in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The data drawn from the *Trinity Homilies* (c1200) and the *Ancreche Riwle* (a1225) to a considerable extent corroborate this. The meaning ‘to possess’ was on the wane,\(^{12}\) while *owen* became a usual verb to express ‘to have to pay’. The use of the past form in the present sense began to appear, of which the earliest quotations in OED are dated c1175 (with *to-infin.*) and a1200 (with simple infin.). But the prevalent form to express present obligation was the present form, compared with which the past form in the present sense did not count much. Thus we see a marked contrast to the usage in the earlier period.

Examples from the *Trinity Homilies* (25)

I. ‘to have, to possess’ (1)

105. 25 *nahte* ich no betere wate.

III. 5. ‘to have as a duty (to do)’ (25)

a. present (23)

with *to-infin.* (17): 17. 6 Ac for pat eich man beð on fulcninge of alle synnen. and *oghe to cumen* his bileue ar he fulcninge underfo. 21. 6 we habbeð bigunnen to sege ou on englis hwat bitocneð pe crede. pat eich cristemen *oh to cumen*./27. 24 pe pridde is for mete pat ilch man *agh* mid him to leden. þan he sal of pesse liue faren./40. 4 *Dus agen* alle gode herdes *to wakegen* gostliche./41. 28 Swo we *aged to don* ure lichames wille to forleten./47. 21 and we *oegen ec to folgen* hire faire forbisne./47. 23 also we *oegen to heren* ure hluord ihesu crist on ure heorte./47. 31 and *forpi* eich cristene *oh to habben* on honden to-dai in chirche: lege bernende./57. 4 also we *oegen to don*./57. 6 and *forpi* we *agen to cumen* to ure preste er þanne we biginnen to festen./59. 4 and þerfore we *agen alle to ben* shrifene of ure synnes her we biginnen to fasten./65. 15 and is þat we *agen to gabben* us seluen for þat we synegedenn./65. 19 òðer is þat we *agen ure synnes menende to shewen* hem þe preste./71. 12 and awich òðer stede *age* we hem *to shewen*. vre drihen us *seið* on þe godspelle. þe sein lucas makede./153. 4 Swo we *agen alle to don*./189. 2 pat ilke wei *ogh al mankan to holden* þe þemcheð to cumene to gode./Moral Ode 2 Ich wealde more þan idude mi wit *oh to be more*.\(^{13}\)

with simple infin. (6): 17. 25 Ne noman *agh werne*.53. 11 Nu *age* we alle and al cristene folc *nime forbisne* after þat isealiishe folc./65. 19 and we *agen to dai *understonden* þese pine./189. 14 hereð nu to wiche fihte we *ozen pis strengeÞe notien*.189. 17 An[d] *to-genes* hwuch fo man *agh furdbien* seið þe holi apostle./217. 6 Þanne heh dai *cumeð* man *hoh herien* god mid rihte leue. and mid soðe luue.

b. past in present sense (2)

\(^{12}\) Cf. ‘*āzen*’ as a full verb is largely supplanted by ‘hadde’ in B...or it may take on the inflection of an ordinary verb’ N. Bøgholm, *The Layamon Texts*. p. 75 f.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Lambeth MS. Ich welde mare jene ich dide mi wit *ahte bon* mare. / Jesus MS. Ich welde more þan ich dude. my wyt *auhte beo* more.
with *to-infin.* (2): 157. 33, 35 On *pe feorde* wise man silleð his almes penne *he zifed* swiche *men pe he aghte* mid rihte *to helpe*; to feden. and to shruden. alse *pe man doð. pe zifed his almes fader. oðer moder. suster oðer broðer. oðer oðre swo sibbe*; *pat he aghte mid rihte to helpen* to feden. and to shruden.

**Examples from the *Ancrene Riwle* (75)**

I. ‘to have, to possess’ (2)

177. 25 he...bead for to makien hire cwene. of al ðet he ouhte./182.8 nolde amon uor on of þeos. ðiuen al þet he ouhte:

II. ‘to have to pay’ (8)

a. present (6): 55. 8 *al riht o pisse wise we beoð alle ine prisune her & owen god greate dettes of sun-nen. 55. 21 ichulle nimen hit onward ðe dette ðet tu owest me. 107. 34 pench ec hwat tu owest god*: uor his goddened.141. 18 (twice) he nimeð lesse þen we owen him. & is ðauh wel ipeaid. we owen him blod: for blode.185. 11 Þire ich luuede ham uor þine luue: þe luue he ouh þe.

b. past (2): 54. 38 amon þat leie ine prisune & ougte muche raun-sun./185. 9 þu ȝulde þet tu ouhlest.

III. 5. ‘to have as a duty (to do)’ (65)

a. present (56)

with *to-infin.* (19): 2. 13 alle owen hire in on: euer to holden./10. 22 ze owen to beon nomeliche i beoden & i bonen./22. 28 & te wise ouh to uole-wen wisdom:/25. 21 þe bestliche mon þ ne pencheð nout of god: ne ne noteð nout his wit ase mon ouh te donne./28. 12...þ he ouh to siggen./29. 30 uor þi owen þe gode euer to hab-ben witnesse. 30. 17 ancre & huselsleði: ouh muche to beon bit-weonen./36. 8, 9 zif heo owen to beon ueror urom all world-liche men: hwat. hu ancren owen to hatien ham. & schunien./44. 2 zif þu ert me treowe. ase spuse ouh to beonane./56. 1 ancre ouh ðus to siggen./62. 20 auh ancre ase ih habb he iseid ouh to beon al gostlich/62. 32 heo under stonden ðet heo owen to beon of so holi liue:/72. 20 hwui ze owen onlich lif swise ðat luuien./153. 6 Schrift ouh to beon willes./176. 35 nimed gode ʒeme mine leoue sustren. uor hwi me ouh him to luuien./183. 14 pencheð zif þe ne owen eade to luuien þene king of blisse./190. 25 ancre ne ouh nout to habben no ʒing þet dewe utward hire heorte./195. 18 uor swuch ouh wummone lore to beon.

with *for to-infin.* (22): 47. 12 er heo ouh forte deien martir in hier meseise./63. 17 binihte ouh ancre vorte beon waker & bisi abuten gostliche ʒiȝte./69. 14 hwo se wule bi weopen hire owene & ʒore monnes sunnen ase ancre ouh forte don./72. 22 i hereð nu reisuns hwui me ouh for to fleon þene world./115. 5 heo ...nouh non vorte nimen godes fleesh & his blod:/121. 21 þe ʒeteward: ʒet is wittes ski-le. ʒet ouh forte winden hweate./137. 6 auh me ouh forte siggen./140. 29 peonne owuustu vorte beon anhundred siȝe sioriue./148. 24 hwi schrift ouh forte beon i makeð euer on hiȝe./149. 21 Schrift ouh forte beon scheomeful./152. 16 Schrift ouh forte beon soþ./154. 4 Schrift ouh forte beon owune./154. 26 Schrift ouh forte beon biouhtu bioure longe./157. 26 þis word nomeliche: lim-þe to an-cren. hwas blisse ouh forte beon allunge ine godes rode./158. 18 auh [heo] habbeð hore heorte. euer toward heouene. & owen wel vorte habben./172. 37 auh ze owen vorte unnen þet.../181. 17 þus alle ðe reisuns. hwui me
ouh forto ziven luue: pu meiht i vinden in me./181. 23 Me sulleð wel luue uor luue. and so me ouh forto sullen luue./187. 20 me ham ouh forto luien./189. 19 Marie ne ouh uorte entremeten hire þerof:/189. 22 An oðer half non ancre ne ouh forto nimen bute gnede-liche þet híre to neodeð./192. 12 auh ancre ouh forto þemen bute god one.

with simple infin. (11): 2. 13 alle mu-wen & owen holden one riwle:/2. 24 & alle owen hire in on. ever to holden. auh alle ne muwe nout holde one riwle. nene puruuen. nene owen holden on one wise: ðe vtture riwle./6. 4 hwi me ouh & hwi me schal crist luien.14/20. 29 þauh ze owen þenchen of god euerichone: /30. 8 speken buten uor neode ne ouwe ze buten et þeos two þurles./33. 21 Ure deorewurðe lefdi seinte marie þet ouh to alle wurmen beon uorbsne./68. 3 vor so ouh ancre hire one in onliche stude ase heo is. chirmen & cheateren euer hire bonen./101. 32 Nu an oþer elne ouh mucel wuruen ou:/120. 51 þu nouhst nout suruuen ne truuen ze heorte./172. 35 ze nouwen nout unnen. þet.../195. 9 ze ancren owen pis lutle laste stucchen reden to our wurmen eueriche wike enes uort ðet heo hit kúnnen.

absolute (4): 30. 11 Silence euere et te mete. vor þif oþre religiuse doð hit. ase ze wel wuteð ze owen biuoren alle./93. 8 þif me ze meðe ðe wuere eþelbe ðet hilfe to witen. þen he wene þet hit ouh./166. 35 vre god is þif we doð þet we owen./195. 4 þe meidenes wið uten þif heo serueð ðe ancre also ase heo owen:

b. past in past sense (2)

with for to-infin. (2): 143. 24 Ich am on ancre. a nunne. awif iwedde. ameiden. awummo ðet me ileueð so wel. and ðet habbe er ibeonne ibernede mid swuche þincge. & ouhte ðe betere uorte beon iwar-ned./143. 36 Sire ich was of swuche elde: ðet ich ouhte wel uorte habben i wust me wisiuwer.15

c. past in present sense (7)

with to-infin. (1): 155. 26 ibroken nep oþer disch: oþer biseon ȝemelasliche eni þing: þet me mide uareð. oþer outhe to ȝemen.

with for to-infin. (1): 194. 34 non ancre seruant ne ouhte mid rihte uorto asken i sette huire:

with simple infin. (4): 56. 6 Iudit bi-tund inne bitocneð ancre bitund. þet ouhte leden herd lif ase dude ðe lefdi iudit: efter hire efne./114. 18 and sent mon oþer wurmmer ðet teldeð to ðe & biðe. oþer sum suwinde sawe. þet te suster ne ouhte route siggen biðe suster./140. 9 þenc euerich of his owu-ne stat ðet he is. oþer was inne. and he mei i seon. hwareuere he ouhte siken sore./147. 19 nie þinges beoð ðet ouhten hien touward schrifte.

absolute (1): 1. 15 pis nis nout ibet ðet also wel also hit ouhte.

14 In 2. 13, 2. 24 and 6.4 owen is juxtaposed with another auxiliary and is construed with the same infinitive.
15 This is the earliest example of ought with the perfect infinitive in my collection. The earliest quotation in OED dates from 1551 (s.v. Ought III. 5. c.).
VI

In Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* there is only one instance of the meaning ‘to possess’: C 361 the good-man, that the bestes oweth

I have found 9 examples of the meaning ‘to have to pay’:

D 425 I ne owe hem nat a word that it nis quit/D 1615 As I wol bere awey thy newe panne For dette, thou owes me of old/D 2106 By god, we owe fourty pound for stones/I 252 (twice) Wel may he be sory thanne, that oweth al his lif to god as longe as he hath lived, and eek as longe as he shal live, that no goodnesse ne hath to paye with his dette to god, to whom he oweth al his lyf/I 369 For sooth is, that if a man yeve his love, the which that he oweth al to god with al his herte, un-to a creature/I 746 For it bireveth him the love that men to him owen/I 772 (twice) And therfore, certes, the lord oweth to his man that the man oweth to his lord.

As these examples show the present form of *owen* is conjugated as a weak verb. On the other hand, Chaucer never used the past form *owed*. Throughout his whole work I have found only two instances of the past form *ought* in the sense other than ‘to have as a duty (to do)’. As for the present form, out of 20 examples in Chaucer’s whole work 15 can be taken as meaning ‘to have to pay’ and only 5 express duty or obligation. Thus it may be said that in Chaucer the present form of *owen* was usually used as a main verb meaning either ‘to have to pay’ or, rather sparingly, ‘to possess’, and the past form was, almost without exception, used as a modal auxiliary expressing either present duty or obligation or, rather sparingly, past duty or obligation. In a general way the functional specialization of the past form *ought* may be said to a considerable extent to have been established by the end of the fourteenth century.

Examples of *owen* in the sense of ‘to have as a duty (to do)’ in the *Canterbury Tales* (Examples of impersonal use will be given in VII.)

a. present (1): B 2691 Also ye owen to enclyle and bowe your herte to take the pacience of our lord Iesu Crist.

b. past in past sense (2)

with for to-infin. (1): B 2488 And seyden also, that in this caas ye oghten for to werken ful avysely with greet deliberacioun.

with simple infin. (1): G 926 It was nat tempred as it oghte be.

c. past in present sense (58)

with to-infin. (10): A 3089 For gentil mercy oghte to passen right!/B 2173 And al were it so that she right now were deed, ye ne oghte nat as for his deeth your-self to destroye./B 2279 and eek how wel that I can hyde and hele thinges that men oghte secreely to hyde./B 2283 certes, your wyf oghte rather to be

---

16 Italicized numbers show that quotations are made from prose parts.

17 The earliest instances of weak forms in OED are: pres. 3rd. sg. ah5 (c1160), o5ep (c1205); pl. aue5 (c1200), o3e5 (a1175); past owed (a1425). The only example of *owed* in Chaucer is in the past participle: Bo 4. p. 5. 18 sin that, namely, prisoun, lawe, and thise othre torments of laweful peynes ben rather owed to felonous cizeins,...

18 LGW 589 So fil hit, as Fortune him oghte a shame... / LGW 1609 And, as fortune her oghte a foul meschaunce,
preised than y-blamed./B 2362 now wol I teche yow which conseil ye oghte to escheue./B 3033 And every man oghte to doon his diligence and his businesse to geten him a good name./G 6 Wel oghten we to doon al our entente/I 1762 O gode god, muchel oghte a man to drede swich a Iugement/I 300 More-over, man oghte to sorwe for his wikkedede wordes as wel as for his wikkede dedes/I 674 Of Pacience comth Obedience, thurgh which a man is obedient to Crist and to alle hem to whiche he oghte to been obedient in Crist.

with for to-infin. (2): A 505 Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive, By his clennesse, how that his sheep shold live./A 4333 Wel oghte a man avysed for to be Whom that he broghte in-to his privettee.

with simple infin. (46): A 660 Of cursing oghte ech gilty man him drede—For curs wol slee, right as assolling saveth/A 1249 Wel oughte I sterue in wanhope and distresse/A 3051 And gladder oghte his freend ben of his deeth/B 1038 I oghte deme, of skilful Iugement, That in the salte see my wyf is deed./B 1290 ‘Nece,’ quod he, ‘it oghte y-nough suffysse Fyve houres for to slepe up-on a night/B 1833 This abbot, which that was as holy man As monkes been, or elles oghtele be/B 2128 I wol telle a litel thing in prose, That oghte lyken yow, as I suppose /B 2465 but ye oghte the rather gardone hem and shewe hem your largesse./B 2686 we oghte paciently taken the tribulacions that comen to us/B 2696 Also the grete pacience, which the seintes been in paradyss han had in triublacions that they han y-suffred, with-outen hir desert of gult, oghte muchel stiren yow to pacience./B 2714 And therfore, me thinketh men oghten nat repreve me, though I putte me in a litel peril for to venge me./B 2806 and knoweth wel, or oghte k, toze‘e, that whan he is deed, he shal nothing bere with him out of this world? /B 2927 but we oghte requeren it with greet contricioun and humilitee/B 3029 which is a vicious thing, and oghte been eschewed of every good man./B 3172 Lo! this declaring oughte y-nough suffysse./B 3567 Wel oughten men thi tytus deeth complayne!//B 3648 Of this Tragedie it oghte y-nough suffysse./C 434 Of this materie it oghte y-nogh suffysse./E 132 so that it oghte seme Honour to god and yow/E 635 Wel oughte I of swich murmur taken hede/E 1351 every man that halt him worth a leek, Up-on his bare knees oghle al his lyf Thanken his god that him hath sent a wyf/E 1524, 1526, 1528 Senek among his othere wordes wyse Seith, that a man oghte him right wel avyse. To whom he yeveth his lond or his castel. And sin I oghte avyse me right wel To whom I yeve my good awey fro me, Wel muchul more I oghte avysed be To whom I yeve my body/E 1540 But natheles, it oghte y-nough suffse With any wyf, if so were that she hadde Mo gode thewes than hir vyces badde/F 1397 Wel oghte a wyf rather hir-selven slee Than be defouled, as it thinketh me./G 1182 This is nat couched as it oghte be/I 133 The causes that oghte moeve a man to Contricion been six./I 142 The seconde cause that oghte make a man to have desdayn of sinne is this /I 143 And certes, wel oghte a man have desdayn of sinne/I 149 O gode god, wel oghte man have desdayn of sinne/I 152 Allas! wel oghten they thanne have desdayn to been servauntz and thralle to sinne/I 158 The trhidd cause that oghte moeve a man to Contricion, is drede of the day of dome, and of
the horrible peynes of helle. [I 231 The fourthe point, that oghte maken a man to have contricion, is the sorweful remembrance of the good that he hath left to doon here in erthe [I 255 The fifthe thing that oghte moove a man to contricion, is remembrance of the passion that oure lord Iesu Crist suffred for oure sinnes. [I 279 Thanne was his visage, that oghte be desired to be seyn of al man-kinde, in which visage angels desyren to looke, vileynsly bispet. [I 282 muchel oghte sinful man wepen and biwayne [I 283 The sixte thing that oghte moove a man to contricion, is the hope of three thynges [I 317 Iow shul ye understonde what is Confession, and whether it oghte neded be doon or noon [I 621 And over alle thing men oghten escheue to cursen hir children [I 672 ye oghten first correcte youre-self [I 679 in-as-muche as it binimeth the service that men oghte doon to Crist [I 813 But for-as-muche as some folk been unmesur-able, men oghten escheue fool-largesse, that men clepen wast. [I 910 The fifthe spece is thilke abominable sinne, of which that no man unnethe oghte speke ne wryte [I 927 The experience of day by day oghte suffyse [I 1000 Certes, a man oghte hastily shewen hise sinnes for manye causes!

Chaucer's usage shows a marked contrast to ModE usage in two respects: (1) the form of the infinitive, and (2) the impersonal construction.

(1) The form of the infinitive.

In the Canterbury Tales I have found 15 cases of ozen (oughte) with to-infinitive, 3 with for to-infinitive, and 59 with simple infinitive. As regards Chaucer's whole work, Kenyon says, 'Though I have not made an exact count to find the proportion of simple and prepositional infinitives with ozen, a partial count shows about 135 cases of simple infinitive, 40 with to, and 5 with for to.' I have counted 139 cases of simple infinitive, 46 with to, and 6 with for to. These figures show the predominance of simple infinitive over prepositional infinitives. This is contrary to the general tendency of the usage both in earlier and in later periods.

Concerning the origin of the usage Mätzner says, 'ought..trift man hier und da im Neuenglischen vom reinen Infinitiv begleitet, obwohl ihm der Infinitiv mit to ursprünglich zukommt.' He quotes only two OE examples, both with to-infinitive: Micel is and mære þät sacred ðoh tō dōnne (Legg. Cnut. I. A. 4.)/And sæde þät he hit nāhete tō dōnne (Sax. Chr. 1070.). As to the reason why the infinitive with to was predominant in OE, the following remark of Callaway is suggestive: 'How shall we account for the instances in which we have an inflected [i.e. prepositional] infinitive as the complement of an auxiliary verb? With all the strict auxiliaries except agan, the predicative infinitive is normally uninflected [i.e. simple], and the straggling examples of the inflected infinitive are clearly the exceptions that prove the rule. With agan, however, the predicative infinitive is frequently

21 Callaway, op. cit., p. 82f. C1. 'That the predicative use of the uninflected infinitive active with auxiliary verbs is native to the Germanic languages, as to Anglo-Saxon, is indisputable; this use of the inflected infinitive is sporadic except with eigan (agan)...' Op. cit., p. 237f.
inflected; why? Because of the strong datival sense of the verb,—its signification of propriety or fitness, I think.21 Thus Callaway thinks that there is a functional basis that distinguishes ægan from other auxiliaries. It may be that ægan, because of its 'datival' sense, governed the inflected infinitive (originally the dative case of a neuter verbal noun), while other auxiliaries governed the uninflected infinitive (originally the accusative case of a neuter verbal noun). At the same time it must be considered that OE ægan was predominantly used as a main verb and its combination with the infinitive had not been established till early ME, while in the case of other auxiliaries such combination had already been established in early OE. Though from a historical point of view the 'datival' sense of ægan may have been the cause of the use of the inflected infinitive, from a descriptive point of view we can do nothing but accept the fact that the inflected infinitive was predominantly used with ægan.

In early ME for to-infinitive began to be used,22 and it 'originally expressed purpose, but was used extensively in ME as a simple equivalent of to with the infinitive.'23 It was used as frequently as to-infinitive in the Ancrene Riuile, in which I have found 25 cases of Owen with for to-infinitive, 20 with to-infinitive, and 15 with simple infinitive. For to-infinitive became 'ein scharfer Konkurrent'24 of to-infinitive in early ME, but it went out of fashion in early ModE. Already in Chaucer we find only 6 cases of it with Owen as against 46 cases with to-infinitive.

In early ME texts Sanders found 107 cases of Owen with prepositional infinitive, 36 with simple infinitive.25 In Layamon's Brut the two constructions are found in much the same proportion as this.26 According to Wandschneider Owen with simple infinitive was rare in Piers the Plowman.27 Thus Chaucer's usage was contrary to general tendency. Kenyon says, 'The large number of simple infinitives is no doubt due to analogy of other auxiliary verbs.'28 This may perhaps have been the cause, but I have not enough data to decide whether or not this phenomenon was peculiar to Chaucer. I have examined the difference of usage between verse and prose. The table below shows the frequency of the three forms of the infinitive in verse and prose of the whole work of Chaucer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Prose</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to-infinitive</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for to-infinitive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple infinitive</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We know from the table that to-infinitive shows a slightly higher percentage in prose than

21 The first instance of for to-infinitive appears in Chron. [E] 1127 (Cf. Bögholm, English Speech from an Historical Point of View, p. 252) The earliest quotation in OED dates from a1175. (s. v. For 11)
24 Sanders, op. cit., p. 52.
27 Kenyon, op. cit., p. 98, n. 2.
in verse. But in prose as well as in verse Chaucer's usage was far from general tendency.

About a century later Malory, in the first seven books, never used simple infinitive with *owe*. I have found 13 cases with *to*-infinitive and one with *for to*-infinitive. (Examples from Malory will be given in VIII.)

(2) Impersonal construction.

The earliest quotations in OED of impersonal construction such as *him owe* (or *oweth*), *him ought*, are dated c1220 (pres.), 1297 (past in past sense), a 1225 (past in pres. sense). This use had not a long life, the latest quotations in OED being dated 1450 (pres.), 1470-85 (past in past sense), c1500 (past in pres. sense). It is not always possible to decide whether an example is impersonal or personal, unless the oblique (dative) case form is discernible. I have found 24 discernible cases in the *Canterbury Tales*.

a. past in past sense (7)
   
   with simple infin. (2): B 2921 and seyde to hem in a goodly manere, how that
   
   *hem oughte have* greet repentance of the injuriu and wrong that they hadden
doon to Melibee hir lord, and to hir, and to hir doghter./G1340 mighte no
man sey nay, But that they weren as *hem oughte be*.

   absolute (5): B 1097 Alla goth to his in, and, as *him oughte*, Arrayed for this
feste in every wyse As forther as his conning may suffyse./B 2438 the whiche
three thinges ye han nat anientissed or destroyed hem, neither in your-self
ne in your conseilours, as *you oughte.*B 2458 I sey yow, that the surgians and
phisiciens han seyed yow in your conseil discreetly, as *hem oughte*B 2603 thou
ne hast nat doon to him swich honour and reverence as *thee oughte.*E 1120
And ther she was honoured as *hir oughte*.

b. past in pres. sense (17)
   
   with *to*-infin. (4): I 84 Seint Ambrose seith, that ‘Penitence is the pleyninge
of man for the gilt that he hath doon, and na-more to do any thing for which
*him oughte to pleyne.*[I 395 Despitous, is he that hath desdeyn of his neigh-
bore, that is to seyn, of his evenecristene, or hath despyn to doon that *him
oughte to do.*]I 403 Irreverence, is whan men do nat honour thereas *hem oughte
to doon*, and waiten to be reverenced./I 676 Obedience generally, is to per-
fourne the doctrine of god and of his sovereigns, to which *him oughte to ben
obeisaunt in alle rightwysnesse.

   with simple infin, (10): B 2188 Wherefor *us oughte*, as wel in the deeth of our
children as in the losse of our goodes temporels, *have* pacience./B 2531, 2532
Now sir, as to the thridde point; wher-as your olde and wise conseilours
seyden, that *you ne oughte nat* sodeynly ne hastily *proceden* in this nede, but
that *you oughte purveyen* and *apparaillen* yow in this caas with greet diligence
and greet deliberacion/C 512 O glotonye, on thee wel *oughte us pleyne!*E 1150
For, sith a womman was so pac ient Un-to a mortal man, wel more *us oughte
Receyuen* al in gree that god us sent/G 14 Wel *oughte us werche*, and ydelnes
withstonde./I 89 For as seith seint Isidre: ‘he is a Iaper and a gabber, and
no verray repentant, that eftsoone dooth thing, for which *him oughte repente.*’
I 403 Presumpcion, is whan a man undertaketh an empryse that *him oughte
nat do*, or elles that he may nat do/I 712 he that dredeth god, he spareth nat
to doon that *him oughte doon.*I 1061 he that hath nat been ashamed to doon
foule thinges, certes him oughte nat been ashamed to do faire thinges, and that is confessiouns.

absolute (3): B 2403 For certes, resoun wol nat that any man sholde beginne a thing, but-if he mighte parfourne it as him oughte./I 358 And venial synne is it, if man love Jesu Crist lasse than him oughte./I 376 Eke if he flatere or blandishe more than him oughte for any necessitee.

The imperonsal construction occurred only when oughte implied duty or obligation. This use was perhaps due to the analogy of other impersonal verbs expressing duty or obligation. Van der Gaaf says, 'A3en was often used to express a duty, and it is only when it had this significance, that it adopted the A construction [i.e. impersonal construction with the verb governing a dative or an accusative]. Duty, obligation was also denoted by me bird, me behovep, me semp, me nedep, all of them type A constructions, and it was on the analogy of these that me a3e, me a3t, me ou3t was formed.'29 In this construction Chaucer used the past form (in past or present sense) except in one case30: LGW 360 He moste thinke hit is his lige man, And that him oweth, of verray duette, Shewen his people pleyn benignitee, And wel to here hir excusaciouns.

Van der Gaaf says, 'At one time me a3e must have been very usual. Instances occur in almost every text dating from ab. 1300 to ab. 1490 I have examined, and my collection of examples is consequently pretty large, numbering about 100 in all.'31 This use seems to have become obsolescent towards the end of the fifteenth century. I have found only two clear instances in Malory's first seven books.

VI. 198 'Sir,' he seyde, 'I have nothiny done but that me ought for io do.
/VII. 242 for I consyder your grete laboure and your hardynesse, your bount6 and your goodnesse as me ought to do.

VIII

As was touched upon in VII Malory's usage shows a marked contrast to Chaucer's in two respects: (1) we find no instance of simple infinitive, and (2) impersonal construction occurred rather rarely. Thus apart from the high frequency of the meaning 'to possess' and the use of ought as the past form in contrast to owed, Malory's usage is near to Modern usage.

Examples from Malory (Bks. I–VII) (Examples of impersonal construction are quoted in VII)

I. 'to possess' (7)
a. present (3): IV. 114 Ther is a knyght in this contrey that owyth this whyght

29 W. van der Gaaf, The Transition from the Impersonal to the Personal Construction in Middle English. §175. Cf. Kenyon, op. cit., p. 98, n. 2. We find impersonal constructions with such auxiliaries as must and thar in Chaucer: G 946 Us moste putte our good in aventure / A 5320 Him thar nat wene wel that yvel dooth / D 329 Have thou y-nogh, what thar thee resche or care—? (also D 336, D 1365, H 352) van der Gaaf says, 'Remembren and must cannot be said ever to have been current as type A verbs; there are, however, four verbs, which, although 'personal' in O. E. and in early M. E., became so very usual in the type A construction that they have even erroneously been called 'impersonal'. These four verbs are M. E. a3en (owe, owe, a3t, ou3t etc.), drymen, repenten and jar (jarf).' Op. cit., §174.
30 Out of some 30 examples quoted by van der Gaaf there are only 3 cases of the present form.
sheld/V. 146 Therefore thou shalt have thy meed throw Mychael that *owe*th this mounte./VII. 228 'Lo,' seyde the damesell, 'yondir is a lorde that *owe*th yondir cite.'

b. past (4): I. 11 wherfor kyng Arthur maade the londes to be yeven ageyne unto them that *ought* hem./V. 163 yf youre tytill be the trewer than ever *ought* ony of your elders./VI. 185 Than within an owre there com that knyght that *ought* the pavylyon./VI. 196 'Fayre sir,' they seyde, 'the name of this castell is called Tyntagyll, and a deuke *ought* hit somtyme that had wedded fayre Igrayne.

II. 'to have to say' (10)
a.® present (9): I. 38 I *owe* the Emperour no trewage/I. 43 But telle thou thy kynge thus, that I *owe* hym [none homage] ne none of myne elders/II. 53 And this damesell slew hirself for his love, which repentith me. And for hir sake I shall *owe* all women the bettir wylle and servyse all the days of my lyff./IV. 117 And all good ladyes and jantyllwomen, I *owe* them my servyse as a knyght ought to do./V. 163 Now sey ye to the Potestate and all the lordys aftir that I sende hem trybet that I *owe* to Rome/VII. 233 'We woll nat discover you,' seyde they bothe, 'yll ye commaunde us, by the fayth we *owe* to Jesu./VII. 244 Therefore we avyse you, ryde nat aftir sir Grynagamour but yf ye *owe* hym good wylle./VII. 245 by the fayth that I *owe* to God and to the hygh Ordir of Knyghthode../VII. 245 And therefore, brother, I *owe* hym my servyse afore all knyghtes lyvynge.

b. past (1): I. 5 he asked hir by the feith she *ought* to hym whos was the child within her body.

III. 'to have as a duty (to do)'
a. past in past sense (2)
with to-infin. (2): I. 5 and soo I went unto bed with hym as I *ought to do* with my lord/I. 11 Also thenne he made alle lordes that helde of the croune to come in and to do servyce as they *oughte to doo.

b. past in present sense (10)
with to-infin. (10): I. 27 'A, sir Arthure,' seyde kynge Ban and kynge Bors, 'blame hem nat, for they do as good men *ought to do*...'/II. 53 and I woll ryde with you and put my body in adventure with you, as a brothir *ought to do./ III. 74 'Yee, hardly, sir, he *ought* to be a good man for he ys com of good kynrede as ony on lyve, and of kynges bloode.'/III. 90 'Truly, ye *ought* sore to repente hit,' seyde Merlion, 'for that lady was youre owne doughtir,...'/IV. 117 And all good ladyes and jantyllwomen, I *owe* them my servyse as a knyght *ought to do./IV. 126 'Loo,' seyde the Damsell of the Lake, 'ye *ought* to be ashamed for to murther suche a knyght,.'/V. 137 Sir, thou *oughte to be* aboven all othir Crysten kynes/VI. 192 'Sir my name is sir Launcelot du Lake that *ought to helpe* you of ryght for kyng Arthurs sake,...'/VII. 237 Mesemyth thou *oughtyste* of reson to beware by yondir knygnytes that thou sawyste hang on yondir treis./VII. 267 'Alas! my fayre brother,' seyde Sir Gawayne, 'I *ought of ryght to worship* you, and ye were nat my brother, for ye have worshipte kynge Arthure and all his courte,'
IX

From the foregoing survey it may be remarked that the auxiliary *ought* was nearly established towards the end of the fifteenth century. As for the subsequent history of the word such exhaustive studies as those of Visser and Franz give an idea.

On the present form *owe*+infinitive expressing moral obligation Visser says, *Owe* in this meaning and use died out soon after More; it may already have been obsolete in his time (latest quotation in OED is dated 1537), since instances with *owe* are rare and examples with *ought* in exactly the same meaning (and function) abound in his language.32 'The type him oweth (to flee) is not represented in More; it seems to have been already obsolete; the latest quotations in OED are dated c 1450 and 1470–1500.'33 There is one instance of the past form *owed* = *ought* in More: Conf. Tynd. 463 H 14, And then yt he hadde aunswered that himself being such as he was, and for suche testified by writying, and by the word of his father, and by his owne wonderous workes ought [1532 o~ed] to be belieued of them in euery thyng...they might haue sayd...4 On the form of the infinitive with *ought*, Visser says, 'In the majority of cases the verbal complement is preceded by to. Plain infinitives, however, are by no means rare.'35 'The time-sphere of the units in which *ought* occurs is usually the present or in the case of general statements no special time at all. Only rarely is the reference to past time-sphere.'36 More does not seem to use *ought*+*for*+infinitive. 'It may have become obsolete about his time.'37 'Neither are there instances in More of the type *me ought*, *us ought*38' According to Franz, *'Owe in der Bedeutung 'have, possess ist Sh. noch sehr geläufig.'39* A few examples are:

*Tp. I. ii. 454 Thou do'st vsurpe The name thou ow'st not.*
*John IV. ii. 99 That blood which ow'd the breth of all this Ile.*
*Mac. I. iii. 76 Say from whence You owe this strange Intelligence.*
*Oth. I. i. 66 What a full Fortune do's the Thick-lips owe If he can carry't thus?*

Franz says, *'Ought kommt neben der jetzigen Bedeutung '(ich) sollte' einmal im Sinne von *owed* vor':40* *IH4 III. iii. 151 (Mrs. Quickly) You ought him a thousand pound. There is one instance of *ought* with simple infinitive: *Caes. I. i. 3 What, know you not (Being Mechanicall) you ought not walke Vpon a labouring day, without the figure Of your Profession?*41* It is only in these respects that Shakespeare's usage differs from that of present-day standard English.*

---

33 Ibid. (p. 635).
34 Ibid. §536 (p. 635f.). *ought* is used in the 1557 edition. 'The only instance of owed+infinitive in OED is: a 1425 Cursor M., 14045 (Trin.) Wheesper owed to love him better po. To this can be added: a 1415 Lanterne of Lzxt (EETS) 109, 10, þo þingsis of þe whiche þe pore owid to be norisched.‘
35 Ibid. §537 (p. 636).
36 Ibid. (p. 636).
37 Ibid. (p. 637f.).
38 Ibid. (p. 638).
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.; on this example Franz makes this comment: 'der reine Inf. wegen des Metrums, sonst to nach ought bei Sh.' §700.
It may at first sight seem strange that the meaning ‘to possess’, which showed signs of decline already in ME, had a very long life. But, as Dieth says, the two meanings ‘to possess’ and ‘to have to pay’ ‘follow constructions of their own; e.g. Who owes this house? I don’t owe him a penny.’ In other words, owe in the sense ‘to possess’ is construed with one (direct) object, while owe in the sense ‘to have to pay’ is construed either with two objects (indirect and direct) or with one (direct) object and a to-phrase: e.g. I owe no thanks to her. Such syntactical contrast may have been one of the reasons for the coexistence of the two meanings. But the meaning ‘to possess’ was to become obsolete except in dialects. Owe in this sense was superseded by own, which expresses this sense more unambiguously than owe, whose main sense has been ‘to have to pay’.

In the foregoing sections I have tried to trace the development of OE āgan on the basis of the relative frequency of various uses in several texts ranging from Beowulf to Malory’s works. My chief concern has been to make clear the process of the functional specialization of the original past form ought (OE ōhte) as an auxiliary verb expressing duty or obligation, and the establishment of the syntactical group ought + to-infinitive. We have seen from the survey that the auxiliary ought, in form as well as in function, was nearly established in the day of Malory.

The elucidation of the problem has involved not only a comprehensive study of the development of āgan, but occasional glimpses at various related words. Various questions have arisen in the course of investigation, many of which remain to be considered further. It must be admitted that, as a basis of an extensive study, the material I have collected so far is far from sufficient. The insufficiency of data has forced me to leave several problems untouched, among which are counted questions of dialects, characters of texts examined, the relations of āgan to related words. In spite of such defects I hope my original purpose has to some extent been effected, which was to describe the early development of the auxiliary ought in its outline.

APPENDIX

No examples have been quoted from Havelok the Dane, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Pearl, because the number of awe, owe, etc. did not seem to be enough to consider the frequency. Examples from these texts are given below for reference.

Havelok the Dane (11)

---

43 Own derives from OE āgnian. ‘Used in OE. and early ME. in senses 1 [‘To make (a thing) one’s own, appropriate, take possession of; to seize, win, gain; to adopt as one’s own’] and 2 [‘To have or hold as one’s own, have belonging to one, be the proprietor of, possess’]; but after this scarcely found till the 17th c. It seems as if the verb itself went out of use before 1300, but was restored from the derivative owner, when owe in its original sense of ‘possess’ was becoming obsolescent.’ (OED s. v. Own) The earliest quotation of own thus ‘restored’ is from Shakespeare: Cor. I. viii. 3 Not Affricke ownses a Serpent I abhorre More then thy Fame and Enuy.
I. 'to possess' (6)
   a. present (4): 1188 pe deul him awel/1292 I gan Denemark for to awe/1298
      And panne y wolde mine armes drawe Til me, and [pouhte hem] for to [awe]/
      1932 'Deus!' quoth Ubbe, "hwat may pis be? Betere is i nime miself and se
      [Hwai] pis baret [oweth on] wold, Panne i sende yunge or old.
   b. past (2): 207 And al the lond he euere awhte/743 And for pat Grim pat place
      awhte, Pe stede of Grim pe name lauhte.
II. 'to have to pay' (1): 1666 Bi pe fey ye owe to pe.
III. 'to have as a duty (to do)' (4)
   a. past in past sense (1): 2787 Foru hem witen wolde he Yif pat she awhte quen
      to be.
   b. past in present sense (3)
      with to-infin. (1) 2173 Man-red, louver bede y pe, Pi man awht i ful wel to be.
      with for to-infin. (1): 2800 For Englond awhte forto ben Youres
      with simple infin. (1): 801 Pe man pat may wel eten and drinken [Par] nout
      ne haue but on swink long.

_Sir Gawain and the Green Knight_ (5)

I. 'to possess' (4): 767 A castel pe comlokest pat euer kny3t a3te/843 & pu3t
   hit a bolde burne pat pe bur3 a3te/1775 zif he schulde make synne & be
   traytor to pat tolke pat pat telde a3te/1941 As is pertly payed pe [pray] pat
   I a3te.
   III. 'to have as a duty (to do)' (1): 1526 & zte, pat ar so cortays & coynt of your
      hetes, Oghe to a zonke pynk zern to schewe & teche sum tokene3 of trweluf
      craftes.

_Pearl_ (4)

II. 'to have to pay' (1): 543 Gyf hem pe hyre pat I hem owe.
III. 5. 'to have as a duty (to do)' (1): 1139 Ani breste for bale a3t haf forbrent Er
   he perto hade had deilty.
III. 6. impersonal (2)
   a. present (1): 552 Vus pynk vus ozte to take more.
   b. past in present sense (1): 341 Pe ozte better pyseluen blesse.