THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUXILIARY OUGHT

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I

The auxiliary ought developed from the subjunctive use of ðhte, the past form of OE (Old English) ðgan.¹ ðgan 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 ðgan, 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 From the seventeenth century owe in the sense of 'to possess' has been superseded by own. 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 ðgan, is now practically a distinct verb from the newly developed weak verb owe. Such functional specialization of the past form is paralleled by must (<møste, past form of OE møtan),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 ðgan (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. ðh, ðg, pl. ðgon, subj. ðge, past ðhte, inf. ðgan... 2nd sg. pres. indic. is ðhst 1W–S, ðhti Li, and does not elsewhere occur. Pres. part. ðgente is frequent in compounds, the pass. part. ðgen, ðgen own occurs in adjectival use.' A. Campbell, Old English Grammar. §767.

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

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**

1. 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 æsan willap.*

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

2. 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. *debère* (where the Rushw., like the later Ags. Gosp., uses *sculan*) by the phrase *æsan to ȝeldanne* ‘to have to pay’. Examples are wanting during the following two centuries to show the stages by which this was shortened to the simple *æsan*, 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 *æsan*, *aȝen*, *oȝen*, *owen*, *owe*, in taking *debère* 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 *Swilce lauerd we aȝen to dreen.*

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.
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E.Q.  c 1200 Trin. Coll. Hom. 53 Nu aȝe we allè...nime forbisne.
28 They shuld & owe, not onelyn 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.

E.Q.  c 1220 Bestiary 350 An0~er kinde, {)at us 03 alle to ben minde.
L.Q.  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.

a. E.Q.  a 1000 Beowulf 31 Leof land-fruma longe ahte.
L.Q.  a 1670 SPALDING Troub. Chas. I. (1850) I. 205. The poor men that aucht
thame follouit in.

β. E.Q.  a 1225 Ancr. R. 390 He...bead for to makien hire cwene of al ðet he
ouhte.
L.Q.  1632 Lithgow Trav. v. 204 The Turke who ought my Mule.

γ. (only one example) 13. Cursor M. 6719 (Cott.) Pe lord pat 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 ȝeldanne '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.

Ibid. 28 Enne of efnedeʒnum his seðe ahte to ȝeldenna [other vv. as in 24]
hundraȝ scillinga. Ibid. Luke vii. 41 An ahte to ȝeldanne [Vulg. debebat,
Ags. Gosp. sceolde] penningas ðif hund.]

a 1300 Cursor M. 21422 Pour he
was...And til a jou he mikel aght.
L.Q.  a 1825 Forby Voc. E. Anglia s.v. Aught, He aught me ten pounds.

β. E.Q.  a 1225 Ancr. R. 124 A mon ðet leie ine prisune, & ouhte muche rausun.
L.Q.  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: a=ahte, aȝt(e aȝt(e, aught(e, aucht, etc.;
β=óhte, ðȝt(e, ouȝt(e, ought(e, ouȝt, etc.; γ=įȝt(e, iȝt(e, iht, eȝt.)
ceding past tense in principal clause: *he said you ought* = he said it was your duty.

a. E.Q. c 1200 Ormin 19108 Annd tohh swa þehh ne cnew himm nohht þe werelld alls itt ahhhte.
L.Q. c 1425 Wyntoun Cron. viii. ii. 52 Robert þe Brwys, Erle of Karryk Aucht to succeed to þe Kynryke.

b. E.Q. c 1305 St. Lucy 4 in E. E. P. (1862) 101 Of such a child wel glad heo was: as heo wel ouȝte.
L.Q. 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. E.Q. c 1175 Lamb. Hom. v 129 we ahtene to beon pe edprlodde.
L.Q. 1658 Hattoet Corr. (Camden) 15 Therefore I aught to begg your pardon.

b. E.Q. c 1374 Chaucer Troylus v. 545 O paleys empty and disconsolat...Wel oughtestow to falle...and I to dye.
L.Q. 1886 Ld. Eshe 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. E.Q. a 1200 Moral Ode 2 Mi wit ahte bon mare.
L.Q. 1578-1600 Sc. Poems 16th C. (1801) II. 271 Than acht he be of all puissance denude.

b. E.Q. a 1225 Ancr. R. 326 Nie þinges beoð þet ouhten hien toward schrifte.
L.Q. 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.)
E.Q. 1551 Bible 2 Kings v. 13 Yf þe prophet had byd the done some great thinge oughtest thou not then to have done it?
L.Q. 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. E.Q. 1297 R. Glouc. (Rolls) 7348 Watloker it aȝte her.
L.Q. c 1420 Sir Amadace (Camden) Iviii. That ladi gente...did wele that hur aghete to do.

β. (two examples) c 1366 Chaucer A. B. C 119 But oonly þer we diden not as us ouhte Do. 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 early development of the auxiliary ought

α. EQ. c 1340 Cursor M. 12988 (Fairf.) Pe ne hast haue na doute.
LQ. c 1450 Mirour Saluacioun 1185 Than aght vs ofre to crist golde of
dilectionne.

β. EQ. a 1225 Ancr. R. 2 Pis nis nowt ibet ȝet al se wel hit oughte.
LQ. c 1500 Lancelot 2995 For well it ought o prince or o king Til honore
and til cherish in al thing O worthi man.

γ. (two examples) 13 Min. P. Vernon MS. xxxvii. 126 I oughte loute Jesu,
ful of mȝte, And worschipe him... as me well ȝste. c 1450 Mirour Saluacioun 3755 The forsaide stedes eght vs to visit.

The diagram below with the dates of the earliest and the latest quotations in OED
will give an idea of how various uses came and went.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>I. 1 ‘to possess’</th>
<th>II. 2 ‘to have to pay’</th>
<th>III. 5 ‘to have as a duty (to do)’</th>
<th>III. 6 Impersonal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>owe</td>
<td>ought</td>
<td>owe</td>
<td>ought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>c 888</td>
<td>e 950</td>
<td>c 1175</td>
<td>1175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a 1000</td>
<td>c 950</td>
<td>a 1175</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a 1225</td>
<td>a 1225</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>1524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a 1825</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Dates for EQ and LQ of ought are given irrespective of forms.
** Abbreviations: c = circa (about); a = ante (before); obs. = obsolete; dial. = dialectal; arch. = archaic; cur. = current; exc. = except.

III

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>Text</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>I “to possess”</th>
<th>II “to have to pay”</th>
<th>III. 5 “to have as a duty (to do)”</th>
<th>III. 6 absolute</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a1000</td>
<td>Beowulf</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>c1200</td>
<td>Trin. Hom.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a1225</td>
<td>Ancre. R.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1300</td>
<td>Havelok</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1386</td>
<td>Cant. T.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1390</td>
<td>Gawain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c1390</td>
<td>Pearl</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1470-85</td>
<td>Malory</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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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 *āgan*, all of which can be taken as meaning ‘to have, to possess’.

- **present (3):** 1088 *þæt hie healfre geweald wið Eotena bearn 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, hwa sword wege* (I have no one to bear sword)
- **past (5):** 31 *leof landfruma lange ahte* (dear prince of the land long reigned)/487 *ahte ic holdra þy les, deorre duguðe, þe þa deað fornam* (I had the fewer trusty followers, dear warriors, because death had taken them away)/522 *þær he folc ahte, burh ond beagas* (where he had subjects, a stronghold and treasures)/533 *Soð ic talge, þæt ic merestrengo maran ahte, earfeþo on þypum, ðonne ænig ðær 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 *āgan* 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 *āgan* with the infinitive was by no means very rare. Callaway gives 32 examples with *to*-infinitive (Chron. [A]: 1; [E]: 2; Laws.: 14; Wælferth.: 1; A. S. Hom. and L. S. II: 1; Wulfstan: 13), and one example with simple infinitive from Wulfstan. Six examples with *to*-infinitive are quoted in Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, Supplement, s.v. *āgan* (Charters: 3; Laws: 1; Lindisf. Gosp.: 2). Wülfing quotes only one example with the infinitive: *Legas Alfredi Regis 58, 12 nage he hie ut on elpeodig folc to bebyegganne* (he ought not to sell her to foreign people). 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.*  

- **675** *Ðas landes ic gife Sê Peter eal swa freolice swa ic self hit ahte./833 þa Deniscan ahton wælstowe geweald./837 þa Deniscan ahton wælstowe geweald./840 þa Deniscan ahton wælstowe geweald./860...*  

- **871** *þa Deniscan ahton wælstowe geweald./871 þa Deniscan ahton wælstowe geweald./871 þa Deniscan ahton wælstowe geweald./885 þa Deniscan ahton sige./998 æfre hi æt ende sige ahton./999 þa ahton þa Deniscan wælstowe geweald./1010 (twice) Þ þa Dæniscan ahton wælstowe geweald. Þ þær wurdon gehorsode. Þ þyðmon ahton East Englæ geweald./1042 (twice) Þ raðe þæs se cing let geridan ealle þa land þe his modor ahte him to handa.*

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8 M. Callaway, Jr., *The Infinitive in Anglo-Saxon.* p. 80 f.
nam of hire eall pe he moste wurde [beon] ælc þera þinga þe he âr ahte./1046 eall þe heo ær ahte./1048 eall þe harold ær ahte./1052 eall þet he âr ahte./1052 se cyng geaf þære hælfdan eall þe heo ær ahte./1053 þe feng harold eorl his sunu to ðam eorlodome. þe to eallum þam þe his fæder ær æfeæal ær ælfgar eorl to ðam eorlodome þe harold ær ahte./1055 se cyng geaf þone eorlodom Tostige Godwines sunu eorles. þe Siward eorl ær æfeæal.1066 se Norræna cyng ær æfeæal siges geweald./1085 forðig he æfgæor ge Englaland ge Normandige./1102 þone eorlodom her on lande on Scrobbes byring þe his fæder Roger ær æfeæal.10

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 sculan. The earliest and the latest quotations in OED of sculan with these meanings are as follows:

†1. trans.
†a. To owe (money). Obs.
LQ. c 1425 Hoccleve Min. Poems xxiii. 695 The leeste ferthyng pat y men shal.
†b. To owe (allegiance). Obs.
EQ. 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.)
EQ. Beowulf 20 (Gr.) Swa scéal zeong gumæ gode þewyrcean...pæt [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.

EQ. Beowulf 2708 (Gr.) Swylic sceolde secg wesæn, þe þon æt ðearle./c 897 Ælfric Gregory's Past. C. iv. 36 ðonne mon forlet ðone ege...þe 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 Sweon hearðon weallstowe geweald./1025 þa Bryttas him wið gefuhton. 797 heafdon sige./1025 þa Sweon hearðon weallstowe geweald./1057 þe Ælfgar his sunu to ðam eorlodome þe se fæder ær hæfde.

11 It is worth noting that sculan is used in Anglo-Saxon, Rushworth and Hattole Gospels to translate dæbbere, while in Lindisfarne Gospels ðegan is used. Lindisf. glosses are written in Northumbrian dialect. Therefore the use of ðegan may possibly be characteristic of the dialect.
V

The diagram in II suggests that almost all of the chief uses of \textit{āgan} (ME South. \textit{ōcen}, \textit{ōwen}, etc.; North. \textit{āen}, \textit{āwen}, etc.) existed in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The data drawn from the \textit{Trinity Homilies} (c1200) and the \textit{Acrene Risle} (a1225) to a considerable extent corroborate this. The meaning ‘to possess’ was on the wane,\textsuperscript{12} while \textit{ōwen} 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 \textit{Trinity Homilies} (25)

I. ‘to have, to possess’ (1)
105. 25 \textit{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 elch man beð on fulcninge of alle synnen. and \textit{ōgh to cummyen} his bileue ar he fulcninge underfo./21. 6 we habeð bigunnen to sege ou on englis hwat bitocneð pe crede. \textit{pat} elch cristenenman \textit{oh to cummyen.}/27. 24 \textit{pe pridde is for mete} pat ilch man \textit{agh} mid him to leden. \textit{pan} he sal of pesse liue faren./40. 4 \textit{Du s agen} alle gode herdes to \textit{wakugen} gostliche./41. 28 Swo we \textit{aged to don} ure lichames wille to forlenen./47. 21 and we \textit{ogen ec to folgen} hire faire forbisne/47. 23 alse we \textit{ogen to heren} ure houerd ihesu crist on ure heorte./47. 31 and \textit{forpi} ech cristene \textit{oh to habben} on honden to-dai in chirche: lege bernende./57. 4 alse we \textit{ogen to don.}/57. 6 and \textit{forpi} we \textit{agen to cummyen} to ure preste er \textit{panne} we biginnen to festen./59. 4 and \textit{perfo} we \textit{agen} alle to \textit{ben} shrifene of ure synnes her we biginnen to fasten./65. 15 and is \textit{pat} we \textit{agen to gabben} us seluen for \textit{pat} we synegeden./65. 19 \textit{ofer} is \textit{pat} we \textit{agen} ure synnes menende \textit{to shewen} hem pe preste./71. 12 and awich \textit{ofer} stede \textit{age} we hem \textit{to shewen}. vre drihten us \textit{seid} on \textit{pe godspelle}. \textit{pe} sein lucas makede./153. 4 Swo we \textit{agen} alle to \textit{don.}/189. 2 pat ilke \textit{ogh} al mankin to \textit{holden} \textit{pe pencheð} to cumene to gode./\textit{Moral Ode} 2 Ich weilde more \textit{pan idude} mi wit \textit{oh to be more.}\textsuperscript{13}
with simple infin. (6): 17. 25 Ne noman \textit{agh werner.}/53. 11 Nu \textit{age} we alle and al cristene folc \textit{nime} forbisne after \textit{pat} isrealisste folc./65. 19 and we \textit{agen to dai unterstonden} \textit{pese pine.}/189. 14 hereð nu to wiche fihte we \textit{ogen pis strengeðe notien.}/189. 17 An[\textit{d}] to-genes hwuch fo man \textit{agh furbien} seid pе holi apostle./217. 6 \textit{Panne} heh \textit{dai cumeð} man \textit{hoh herien} god mid rihte leue. and mid so̅e luue.

b. past in present sense (2)

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

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Lambeth MS. Ich welde mare jene ich dede mi wit \textit{ahte bon} mare. / Jesus MS. Ich welde more \textit{pan} ich dude. my wyt \textit{auhte beo} more..
with to-infin. (2): 157. 33, 35 On pe feorde wise man silleð his almes penne he zifeð swiche men pe he azhte, mid rihte to helpe: to feden. and to shruden. alse ðe man doð. pe zifeð his almes fader. ðær moder. suster ðær broðer. ðær ðær swo sibbe: þat he azhte 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 ðet he ouhte:

II. ‘to have to pay’ (8)
a. present (6): 55. 8 al riht o þisse 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 þauh wel ipaied. we owen him blod: for blode./185. 11 Sire 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 þe owen to beon nomeliche i beoden & i bonen./22. 28 & te wise ouh to uole-wen wisdom:/25. 21 þe bestliche mon þe ne pencheð nout of god. ne ne noteð nout his wit ase mon ouh te donne./28. 12...þe ouh to siggen,/29. 30 uor ði owen þe gode euer to hab-ben witnesses./30. 17 ancre & huselsleði: ouh muche to beon bit-weenen./36. 8, 9 þif heo owen to beon ueor urom alle world-liche men: hwat. hu ancren owen to hatien ham. & schunien./44.'2 þif þu ertz me treowe. ase spuse ouh to beonne./56. 1 ancre ouh ðus to siggen./62. 20 auh ancre ase ðich habbe iseid ouh to beon al gostlich/62. 32 heo under stonden ðet heo owen to beon of so holi liue:/72. 20 hwui þe owen onlich lif swuðe to luuien./153. 6 Schrift ouh to beon willes./176. 35 nimed gode ðeme mine leoue sustren. uor hwui me ouh him to luuien./183. 14 pencheð þif þe ne owen eade to luuien þene king of blisse./190. 25 ancre ne ouh nout to habben no þing þet pawte utward hire heorte./195. 18 uor swuch ouh wummon lore to beon.

with for to-infin. (22): 47. 12 er heo ouh forto deien martir in hidr meseise./63. 17 binuhte ouh ancre vorte beon waker & bisi abuten gostliche biȝete./69. 14 hwo se wule bi weopen hire owene & ðere monnes sunnen ase ancre ouh forto don./72. 22 i hereð nu reisuns hwui me ouh for to fleon þene world./115. 5 heo ...nouh non vorte nimen godes flesch & his blod:/121. 21 þe þetward: ðet is wittes ski-le. ðet ouh forto winden hweate./137. 6 ahu me ouh forto siggen./140. 29 peonne owustu vorte beon anhundred siȝe soireî/me.148. 24 hiw schrift ouh forto beon i makeð euer on hihðe./149. 21 Schrift ouh forto beon scheomefu/l/152. 16 Schrift ouh forto beon soð./154. 4 Schrift ouh forto beon owune./154. 26 Schrift ouh forto beon bipouth biuoren longe./157. 26 þis word nomeliche: limpeð to an-cren. hwas blisse ouh forto beon allunge ine godes rode./158. 18 ahu [heo] habbeð hore heorte. euer toward heounene. & owen wel vorte haben./172. 37 ahu þe owen vorte unnen þet.../181. 17 þus alle ðe reisuns. hwui me
outh forte ziven luue: pu meiht i vinden in me./181. 23 Me sulde wel luue uor luue. and so me outh forte sullen luue./187. 20 me ham outh forte luuien./189. 19 Marie ne outh uorte entremeten hire herof:/189. 22 An oser half non ancre ne outh forte nimen bute gnede-liche pet hire to neode./192. 12 auh ancre outh forte 3emen 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 holden one riwle. nene puruen. nene owen holden on one wise: ðe vtture riwle./6. 4 hwi me outh & hwi me schal crist luuien.14/20. 29 pauh ze owen þenchen of god euerichone: /30. 8 spaken buten uor neode ne ouwe ze buten et pëos two þurles./33. 21 Ure dorewurðe lefdi seinte mariæ pet outh to alle wummen beon uorbusne./68. 3 vor so outh ancre hire one in onliche stude ase heo is. chîrmen & cheateren euer hire hire bonen./101. 32 Nu an ðer elee outh muchel wroren ou:/120. 51 þu nouhst nout sturien ne trublen ði neheorte./172. 35 ze owen nout unnen. ðet.../195. 9 ze ancre owen pis lutle laste stuchchen reden to our wummen eueriche wike enes uort ðet heo hit kunnæ.

absolute (4): 30. 11 Silence euere et te mete. vor 3if opre religiuse don hit. ase ze wel wuteð: ze owen biuoren alle./93. 8 zif me 3emeð wurse ei ping ileasned ðer bieteih to witene. ðen he wene ðet hit outh./166. 35 vre god is zif we doð ðet we owen./195. 4 þe meidenes wîd uten zif 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 i wedde. ameiden. awummo 3et me ileueð so wel. and ðet habbe er ibeon iberned mid swuche þinæg. & outhæ ðe betere uorte beon iwærned./143. 36 Sire ich was of swuche ælde: ðet ich outhæ vel uorte habben i wust me wißluker,15

c. past in present sense (7)

with to-infin. (1): 155. 26 ibroken nep oser disch: ðer biseon 3emælasliche eni ping: þet me mide uareð. ðer outhæ to 3emen.

with for to-infin. (1): 194. 34 non ancre servant ne owhte mid rihte uerto asken i sette huire:

with simple infin. (4): 56. 6 Iudit bi-tund inne bitocneð ancre bitund. þet owhte leden herd lif æse dude ðe lefdi ijud: efter hire efne./114. 18 and sent mon oþer wummon ðet telleð to ðe & biðe. ðer sum swinde sawe. þet te suster ne owhtæ noute siggen bible suster./140. 9 ðenc euerich of his owu-ne stat ðet he is. oser was inne. and he mei i seon. hwareuore he owhte siken sore./147. 19 nie þinges beoð ðet owhten hien touward særhte.

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

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 awy thy newe panne For dette, whom *owe*st me of old
D 2106 By god, we *owen* fourty pound for stones
I 25216 (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 therefore, certes, the lord *oweth* to his man that the man *oweth* to his lord.

As these examples show the present form of *owe*en 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 enclylee and bowe your herte to take the pacience of our lord Jesu Crist.

b. past in past sense (2)
with *for* to-infin. (1): B 2488 And seyden also, that in this caas ye *oughten* for to *werken* ful avysely with greet deliberacioun.
with simple infin. (1): G 926 It was nat tempred as it *ought be*.

c. past in present sense (58)
with *to* infin. (10): A 3089 For gentil mercy *oughte to passen* right!/B 2173 And al were it so that she right now were deed, ye ne *oughte* nat as for his deeth your-self to destroye./B 2279 and eek how wel that I can hyde and hele thinges that men *oughte* secreely to hyde./B 2283 certes, your wyf *oughte* rather to be

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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), *o3ep* (c1205); pl. *awe3* (c1200), *o3ed* (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 tormentes of lawefull peynes ben rather *owed* to felonous citezeins,...
18 *LGW* 589: So fil hit, as Fortune him *oughte* a shame... */LGW* 1609 And, as fortune her *oughte* 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 wikkede wordes as well 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 clennessse, 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 assoieling saveth/A 1249 Wel oughte I sterve 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 suffyse 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 guerdon hem and shewe hem your largesse./B 2696 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 guerdon hem and shewe hem your largesse./B 2696 Also the grete pacience, which the seintes that been in paradys han had in triublacions that they han y-suffred, with-outen hir desert of gilt, 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, to ze 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 suffyse./B 3567 Wel oughten men thay pitous deeth complaylee!//B 3648 Of this Tragedie it oghte y-nough suffyse./C 434 Of this matter it oughte y-nogh suffyse./ 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 oghte 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 muchel more I oghte avyse be To whom I yeve my body/E 1540 But natheelees, it oghte y-nough suffyse With any wyf, if so were that she hadde Mo gode thewes than hir vyses 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 desdeyn 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 thriddle 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 fitthie thing that oghte moeve a man to contricion, is remembrance of the passion that oure lord Jesu 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 anguels desyren to looke, vileynsly bispet./I 282 muchel oghte sinful man wopen and biwayle/I 283 The sixtene thing that oghte moeve a man to contricion, is the hope of three thynges/I 317 Now 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 unmesurable, men oghten escheue fool-largesse, that men clepen wast./I 910 The fitthie 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.

VII

Chaucer's usage shows a marked contrast to Modern English 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 *ownen* (*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 *ownen*, 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... trifft 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 mere pät sacred òh tô dönne (Legg. Cnut. I. A. 4.)*/And sæde pät he hit năhte tô dönne (*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 strangling examples of the inflected infinitive are clearly the exceptions that prove the rule. With *agan*, however, the predicative infinitive is frequently

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21 Callaway, op. cit., p. 82f. Cf. '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 *agan* (*agan*)...' *Op. cit.*, p. 237f.
inflected; why? Because of the strong datival sense of the verb,—its signification of propriety or fitness, I think. Thus Callaway thinks that there is a functional basis that distinguishes āgan from other auxiliaries. It may be that āgan, because of its ‘datival’ sense, governed the inflected infinitive (originally the dative case of a neuter verbal noun), while other auxiliaries governed the uninfl ected infinitive (originally the accusative case of a neuter verbal noun). At the same time it must be considered that OE āgan 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 āgan 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 āgan.

In early ME for to-infinitive began to be used, and it ‘originally expressed purpose, but was used extensively in ME as a simple equivalent of to with the infinitive.’ It was used as frequently as to-infinitive in the Ancreine Riwle, in which I have found 25 cases of ēwen with for to-infinitive, 20 with to-infinitive, and 15 with simple infinitive. For to-infinitive became ‘ein scharfer Konkurrent’ 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 ēwen as against 46 cases with to-infinitive.

In early ME texts Sanders found 107 cases of ēwen with prepositional infinitive, 36 with simple infinitive. In Layamon’s Brut the two constructions are found in much the same proportion as this. According to Wandschneider ēwen with simple infinitive was rare in Piers the Plowman. 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.’ 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>Prose %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to-infin.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for to-infin.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple infin.</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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19 The first instance of for to-infinitive appears in Chron. [E] 1127 (Cf. Boogholt, English Speech from an Historical Point of View, p. 252) The earliest quotation in OED dates from a1175. (s. v. For I1)
22 Sanders, op. cit., p. 52.
25 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 *owe*), *him ought*, are dated 1220 (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 iniurie and wrong that they hdden
doone 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 ferforth 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 conseillours, as *you oughte*.B 2458 I sey yow, that the surgians
and phisiciens han seyd yow in your conseil discreetly, as *him 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 neighe-
bore, that is to seyn, of his evenecristene, or hath despyt to doon that *him
oughte to do*.I 403 Irreverence, is whan men do nat honour thereas *him oughte
to doon*, and waiten to be reverenced./I 676 Obedience generally, is to per-
fourne the doctrine of god and of his soveryns, to which *him oughte to ben
obeisaunt in alle rightwynsesse.

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 conseillours
seyden, that *yow ne oughte nat* sodeynly ne hastily *proceden* in this nede, but
that *yow oughte purveyen* and *apparaillen* yow in this caas with greet diligence
and greet deliberacion/C 512 O glotonye, on thee wel *oughte us plyne*/E 1150
For, sith a womman was so pacient 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 Presumption, is whan a man undertaketh an empyre 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 oghte nat been ashamed to do faire thinges, and that
is confessiouns.

absolute (3): B 2403 For certes, resoun wol nat that any man sholde biginne
a thing, but-if he mighte parfourne it as him oghte./1 358 And venial synne is
it, if man love Jesu Crist lasse than him oghte./1 376 Eke if he flatere or
blandishe more than him oghte for any necessitee.

The imperonsal construction occurred only when oghte 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 significication, that it adopted the A construction [i.e. impersonal construc-
tion with the verb governing a dative or an accusative]. Duty, obligation was also denoted
by me bird, me behove, me sem, 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 o~'eth, 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 nothining done but that me ought for to 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 con-
struction 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 recche 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 (awe, owe, a3i, ou3t etc.), dey'ee,e, repente'e and par (parf.)' Op. cit., § 174.

80 Out of some 30 examples quoted by van der Gaaf there are only 3 cases of the present form.

Therefore thou shalt have thy mede throw Mychael that owyth this mounte./VII. 228 ‘Lo,’ seyde the damesell, ‘yondir is a lorde that owyth yondir cite.’

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

II. ‘to have to pay’ (10)

a. present (9): I. 38 I owghe the Emperour no trewage/I. 43 But telle thou thy kynge thus, that I owghe 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 owghe all women the bettir wylle and servyse all the dayes of my lyff./IV. 117 And all good ladyes and jantyllwomen, I owghe them my servyse as a knyght ought to do./VI. 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, ‘tyll ye commande us, by the fayth we owe to Jesu./VII. 244 Therefore we avyse you, ryde nat aftir sir Grynagamour but yf ye owne good wylle./VII. 245 by the fayth that I owghe 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 outh 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 outh to do with my lord/I. 11 Also them he made alle lordes that helde of the croune to come in and to do servyce as they outhte 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 outh to do...’/II. 53 and I woll ryde with you and put my body in adventure with you, as a brothir outh to do./III. 74 ‘Yee, hardly, sir, he outhte to be a good man for he ys com of good kynrede as ony on lyve, and of kynges bloode.’/III. 90 ‘Truly ye outhte sore to repente hit,’ seyde Merlion, ‘for that lady was youre owne doughtir,...’/IV. 117 And all good ladyes and jantyllwomen, I owghe them my servyse as a knyght outh to do./IV. 126 ‘Loo,’ seyde the Damsell of the Lake, ‘ye outhte to be ashamed for to murther suche a knyght,’/V. 137 Sir, thou outhte to be aboven all othir Crysten kynge/I. 192 ‘Sir my name is sir Launcelot du Lake that outhth to helpe you of ryght for kynge Arturs sake,...’/VII. 237 Mesemyth thou outhyste of reson to beware by yondir knyghtes thai thou sawyste hange on yondir tresi./VII. 267 ‘Alas! my fayre brother,’ seyde Sir Gawayne, ‘I outhte of ryght to worship you, and ye were nat my brother, for ye have worshipte kynge Arthure and all his courte,...’
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 obsolescent 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 ye 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 owed] to be beleieuied of them in euery thynge...they might haue sayd...34 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 *to*-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'lt 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 owned 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.

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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.) Wherper owed to love him better po. To this can be added: a 1415 Lanterne of Litz (EETS) 109, 10, po jongis of po whiche po pore ovid to be noriasched.'
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'.

X

In the foregoing sections I have tried to trace the development of OE ágan 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 ágan, 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 ágan 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)

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43 Own derives from OE ägnian. '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 deuel 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 [Hwat] pis barete [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 auhte quen to be.
   b. past in present sense (3)
      with to-infin. (1) 2173 Man-red, louver bede y pe, Pi man auht i ful wel to be.
      with for to-infin. (1) 2800 For Englond auhte 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 a5te/843 & pu3t hit a bolde burne pat pe bur3 a5te/1775 3if he schulde make synne & be traytor to pat tolke pat telde a5te/1941 As is pertly payed pe [pray] pat I a5te.

II. ‘to have as a duty (to do)’ (1): 1526 & 3e, pat ar so cortays & coynt of your hetes, Oghe to a zonke pynk zern to scheue & 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 o5e to take more.
   b. past in present sense (1): 341 Pe o3te better pyseluen blesse.