

# THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUXILIARY *OUGHT*

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## I

The auxiliary *ought* developed from the subjunctive use of *āhte*, the past form of OE (Old English) *āgan*.<sup>1</sup> *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 From the seventeenth century *owe* in the sense of 'to possess' has been superseded by *own*. Already before 1200 the past form *āhte*, which developed into *ought*, began to be used in the present sense expressing duty or obligation, and it has become an uninflected modal auxiliary,<sup>2</sup> 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*),<sup>3</sup> 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 *āhte* (*ought*) as an auxiliary verb expressing present duty or obligation, and the establishment of the syntactical group *āhte* (*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*

<sup>1</sup> 'Pres. indic. 1st, 3rd sg. *āh*, *āg*, pl. *āgon*, subj. *āge*, past *āhte*, 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*, *āēgen* own occurs in adjectival use.' A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*. § 767.

<sup>2</sup> *Ought* in the past sense is now found usually in dependent clauses.

<sup>3</sup> For the early development of *must* see my article 'Some Notes on the Auxiliary *mōtan*'. *Anglica*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1958). pp. 64-80.

*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.<sup>4</sup>

### 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 Þa micles beþurfon þe micel aþan willaþ.

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*, *skulda*, *skulan*), mod. Eng. SHALL, SHOULD. The first traces of the mod. use appear in the Lindisf. Gloss, which renders L. *dēbere* (where the Rushw., like the later Ags. Gosp., uses *sculan*) by the phrase *áþan 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 *áþan*, 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 *áþan*, *aþen*, *oþen*, *owen*, *owe*, in taking *dēbere* as its main sense, has in Standard Eng. lost that of *habēre*, 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.)

EQ. [c 950 *Lindisf. Gosp.* Matt. xviii. 28 zeld þæt þu aht to zeldanne [*Vulg.* debes, *Rushw.* and *Ags. G.* scealt, *Hatt.* scelt].—Luke xvi. 5 Huu micel aht þu to zeldanne hlaferde minum? [*Vulg.* debes domino meo, *Ags. G.* scealt þu minum hlaforde]. *Ibid.* 7 Huu feolo aht þu to? [*Vulg.* debes, *Ags. G.* scealt þu.] a 1175 *Cott. Hom.* 235 Ure king we oþeð unrþmint [*text* wrhmint], hur sceappend al þat we bieð.

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 lauwerd we aþen 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.

<sup>4</sup> The part of OED containing *Ought* was published in 1903, that containing *Owe* in 1904.

EQ. c 1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 53 Nu aȝe we allē . . . nime forbisne.

LQ. 1524 HEN. VIII *Let. to Pace in Strype Eccl. Mem.* (1724) I. II. App. xiii. 28 They shuld & owe, not oonely 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 Anoðer kinde, Ðat us oȝ alle to ben minde.

LQ. c 1450 *Mirour Saluacioun* 4486 Hym awe serue and luf godde with his hert alle & some.

### Ought<sup>5</sup>

- 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 follouit in.

β. EQ. a 1225 *Ancr. R.* 390 He . . . bead for to makien 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.) Þe lord þat þat 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.

α. EQ. [c 950 *Lindisf. Gosp.* Matt. xviii. 24 Enne seðe ahte to zeldanne [*Vulg.* *debebat*, *Rushw.* *sculde*, *Ags. G.* *sceolde*, *Hatt.* *scolde*] tea ðusendo cræftas. *Ibid.* 28 Enne of efneðeznum his seðe ahte to zeldenna [*other vv.* as in 24] hundrað scillinga. *Ibid.* Luke vii. 41 An ahte to zeldanne [*Vulg.* *debebat*, *Ags. Gosp.* *sceolde*] penningas fif hund.] a 1300 *Cursor M.* 21422 Pour he was . . . And til a juu he mikel aght.

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 mucche 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-

<sup>5</sup> Quotations are classified according to the forms of *ought*: α=*ahte*, *aȝt(e auȝt(e, aught(e, aucht*, etc.; β=*ohite*, *oȝte*, *ouhte*, *oghite*, *ought(e, oucht*, etc.; γ=*iȝte*, *ighi(e, iht*, *eght*.

ceding past tense in principal clause: *he said you ought*=he said it was your duty.

- α. EQ. c 1200 ORMIN 19108 Annd tohh swa þehh ne cnew himm nohht þe werelld alls itt ahhte.

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 ouzte.

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.

- α. EQ. c 1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 5 Þes we ahte[n] to beon þe edmoddre.

LQ. 1658 *Hatton Corr.* (Camden) 15 Therefore I aught to begg your pardon.

- β. EQ. c 1374 CHAUCER *Troilus* v. 545 O paleys empty and disconsolat...Wel oughtestow to falle and I to dye.

LQ. 1886 LD. 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.*

- α. 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.

- β. EQ. a 1225 *Ancr. R.* 326 Nie þinges beoð þet ouhten hien touward schrifte.

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<sup>e</sup> prophet had byd the done some great thinge oughtest thou not then to haue 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.*

- α. EQ. 1297 R. GLOUC. (Rolls) 7348 Watloker it azte her.

LQ. c 1420 *Sir Amadace* (Camden) lviii. That ladi gente... did wele that hur aghte to do.

- β. (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 thyng done but that me ought for to doo.

†b. In present sense: Behoves, befits, is due (to). *Obs.*

- α. EQ. c 1340 *Cursor M.* 12988 (Fairf.) Þe ne haȝt haue na doute.  
 LQ. c 1450 *Mirour Saluacioun* 1185 Than aȝt vs offre to crist golde of dilectionne.
- β. EQ. a 1225 *Ancr. R.* 2 Þis 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 ouȝte loue Iesu, ful of miȝte, And worschipe him... as me well iȝte. c 1450 *Mirour Saluacioun* 3755 The forsaide stedes eȝt 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.

Meaning	I. 1 'to possess'		II. 2 'to have to pay'		III. 5 'to have as a duty (to do)'				III. 6 Impersonal		
Form	owe	ought	owe	ought	owe to simple	ought pt.	ought prs. to simple	ought with perf. inf.	owe	ought pt.	ought prs.
Date											
900	c 888		c 950	c 950							
1000		a 1000	⋮	⋮							
1100											
1200			a 1175	a 1225	c 1175	c 1200	c 1200	c 1175	a 1220		
1300										c 1220	1297
1400											a 1225
1500					1537	1524				c 1450	1470-85
1600											c 1500
1700		a 1670								1551	
1800	a 1825		1871	a 1825			1892	1886	1868		
1900								1895			
Present status (OED)	Obs. exc. dial.	Obs.	Cur.	Obs. or dial.	Obs.	Obs.	Cur.	Cur.	Obs. or arch.	Cur.	Obs.

\* 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

Date	Meaning	I 'to possess'		II 'to have to pay'		III. 5 'to have as a duty (to do)'							III. 6 Im- pers.	Total
	Form Text	owe	ought	owe	ought	to for sim- to ple	ought pt. to for sim- to ple	ought prs. to for sim- to ple	absol- ute					
a1000	<i>Beowulf</i>	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	<i>Chron.</i> [E]	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	28
c1200	<i>Trin. Hom.</i>	0	1	0	0	17	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	26
a1225	<i>Ancr. R.</i>	0	2	6	2	19	22	11	0	2	0	1	1	75
c1300	<i>Havelok</i>	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	11
c1386	<i>Cant. T.</i>	1	0	9	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	10	2	95
c1390	<i>Gawain</i>	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
c1390	<i>Pearl</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
1470-85	Malory	3	4	9	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	10	0	31
Present status	(OED)	Obs. Obs. exc. dial.	Cur. Obs. or dial.	Obs.		Cur.	Obs.		Cur.Obs.Obs. or arch.	Cur.	Obs.			

<sup>6</sup> The editions of the texts used are as follows:

1. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*. ed. by F. Klaeber. 1950.<sup>8</sup>
2. *Chronicle* [E] in *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*. ed. by C. Plummer on the basis of an edition by J. Earle. 2 vols. 1952 (1892).
3. *Old English Homilies*. Second Series. (*Trinity Homilies*). ed. by R. Morris. E.E.T.S. O.S. 53. 1873.
4. *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle*. ed. from Cotton MS. Nero A. XIV. by M. Day. E.E.T.S. O.S. 225. 1952.
5. *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*. ed. by W.W. Skeat, revised by K. Sisam. 1956.
6. *The Canterbury Tales in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. vol. 4. ed. by W.W. Skeat. 1900.
7. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. ed. by Sir Israel Gollancz. E.E.T.S. O.S. 210. 1940.
8. *Pearl*. ed. by E. V. Gordon. 1953.
9. First seven books in *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. (one-volume edition in Oxford Standard Authors) ed. by E. Vinaver. 1954.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

## IV

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 āgan 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 sweord 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 læs, 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 talige, þæt ic merestrenge maran ahte, earfeþo on yþum, 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 *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; *Wælfersþ*: 1; *A. S. Hom.* and *L. S. II*: 1; *Wulfstan*: 13), and one example with simple infinitive from *Wulfstan*.<sup>8</sup> 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: *Leges Alfredi Regis* 58, 12 *nage he hie ut on elpeodig folc to bebycgganne* (he ought not to sell her to foreign people).<sup>9</sup> Three instances with the infinitive are found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, one in A (the Parker MS.) two in E (the Laud MS.): A 1070 *þa forsoc he. ȝ sæde ƿ he hit nahte to donne* (then he refused and said that he was under no obligation to give it)/E 1085 *hwilce gerihtæ he ahte to habbanne* to xii monþum of ðære scire (what dues he ought to have in twelve months from each shire)/E 1140 *þe eorl heold Lincol agænes þe king. ȝ benam him al ð he ahte to hauen.* (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 *āgan* in the sense 'to have, to possess' in *Chronicle* [E].

675 *Ðas landes ic gife Sçe 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...*ȝ wælstowe geweald ahton.*/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 Dæniscan wælstowe geweald.*/1010 (twice) *ȝ þa Dæniscan ahton wælstowe geweald.* *ȝ þær wurdon gehorsode. ȝ syððon ahton East Engle géweald.*/1042 (twice) *ȝ raðe þæs se cing let geridan ealle þa land þe his modor ahte him to handa.*

<sup>8</sup> M. Callaway, Jr., *The Infinitive in Anglo-Saxon*. p. 80 f.

<sup>9</sup> A. J. Wülfing, *Die Syntax in den Werken Alfreds des Grossen*. § 97.

nam of hire eall þ heo *ahte*/1046 7 behet man him ƿ he moste wurðe [beon] ælc ƿæra ƿinga ƿe he ær *ahte*./1048 eall ƿ heo *ahte*./1048 mann sette Ælfgar Leofrices sunu eorles ðane eorldom on handa ƿe Harold ær *ahte*./1052 eall ƿet he ær *ahte*./1052 se cyng geaf ƿære hlæfdian eall ƿ heo ær *ahte*./1053 7 feng Harold eorl his sunu to ðam eorldome. 7 to eallum ƿam ƿe his fæder *ahte*./1053 7 feng Ælfgar eorl to ðam eorldom ƿe Harold ær *ahte*./1055 se cyng geaf pone eorldom Tostige Godwines sunu eorles. ðe Siward eorl ær *ahte*./1066 se Norrena cyng *ahte* siges geweald./1085 forðig he *ahte* ægðer ge Englaland ge Normandige./1102 pone eorldom her on lande on Scrobbs byring ƿe his fæder Roger ær *ahte*.<sup>10</sup>

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*.<sup>11</sup> The earliest and the latest quotations in OED of *sculan* with these meanings are as follows:

†1. *trans.*

†a. To owe (money). *Obs.*

EQ. c 975 *Rushw. Gosp.* Matt. xviii. 28 Seþe *sculde* him hundred denera.

LQ. c 1425 *Hoccleve Min. Poems* xxiii. 695 The leeste ferthyng ƿat y men *shal*.

†b. To owe (allegiance). *Obs.*

EQ. c 1325 *Poem temp. Edw. II* (Percy Soc.) xxxiv, Be the fayth ic *shal* 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 *sceal* zeong guma gode zewyrcean...ƿæt [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.) Swylc *sceolde* secg wesan, ƿe 3n æt ðearfe./c 897 ÆLFRED Gregory's *Past. C.* iv. 36 Ðonne mon forlet ðone ege...ƿe 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.

<sup>10</sup> Compare the following examples with *habban*: 890 7 Bryttas him wið gefuhton. 7 *hafdon* sige./1025 ƿa Sweon *heafdon* weallstowe geweald./1057 7 feng Ælfgar his sunu to ƿam eorldome ƿe se fæder ær *haefde*.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that *sculan* is used in *Anglo-Saxon, Rushworth and Hatton Gospels* to translate *dēbere*, while in *Lindisfarne Gospels* *āgan* is used. Lindisf. glosses are written in Northumbrian dialect. Therefore the use of *āgan* may possibly be characteristic of the dialect.



## V

The diagram in II suggests that almost all of the chief uses of *āgan* (ME South. *ozen*, *owen*, etc; North. *azen*, *awen*, etc.) existed in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The data drawn from the *Trinity Homilies* (c1200) and the *Ancrene Riwe* (a1225) to a considerable extent corroborate this. The meaning 'to possess' was on the wane,<sup>12</sup> 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 þat elch man beð on fulcninge of alle synnen. and *ogh to cunnen* his bileue ar he fulcninge underfo./21. 6 we habbeð bigunnen to sege ou on englis hwat bitocneð þe crede. þat elch cristeneman *oh to cunnen*./27. 24 þe pridde is for mete þat ilch man *agh* mid him *to leden*. þan he sal of þesse liue faren./40. 4 Ðus *agen* alle gode herdes *to wakegen* gostliche./41. 28 Swo we *ageð to don* ure lichames wille to forleten./47. 21 and we *ogen* ec *to folgen* hire faire forbisne/47. 23 also we *ogen to heren* ure hlouerd ihesu crist on ure heorte./47. 31 and forþi ech cristene *oh to habben* on hondon to-dai in chirche! lege bernende./57. 4 also we *ogen to don*./57. 6 and forþi we *agen to cumen* to ure preste er þanne we biginnen to festen./59. 4 and perfore 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 synegeden./65. 19 oðer is þat we *agen* ure synnes menende *to shewen* hem þe preste./71. 12 and awich oðer stede *age* we hem *to shewen*. vre drihten us seið on þe godspelle. þe sein lucas makede./153. 4 Swo we *agen* alle *to don*./189. 2 þat ilke wei *ogh* al mankin *to holden* þe pencheð to cumene to gode./*Moral Ode* 2 Ich wealde more þan idude mi wit *oh to be* more.<sup>13</sup>

with simple infin. (6): 17. 25 Ne noman *agh werne*./53. 11 Nu *age* we alle and al cristene folc *nime* forbisne after þat isrealisshe folc./65. 19 and we *agen* to dai *understonden* pese pine./189. 14 hereð nu to wiche fihte we *ozen* pis strengðe *notien*./189. 17 An[d] to-genes hwuch fo man *agh furdien* 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)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. "agen' 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.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Lambeth MS. Ich welde mare þene ich dede mi wit *ahte bon* mare. / Jesus MS. Ich welde more þan ich dude. my wyt *ahte beo* more.

with *to-infin.* (2): 157. 33, 35 On þe feorðe wise man stilleð his almes þenne he  
 zifeð swiche men þe he *azhte*, mid rihte *to helpe*: to feden. and to shruden.  
 also þe man doð. þe zifeð his almes fader. oðer moder. suster oðer broðer.  
 oðer oðre swo sibbe: þat he *aghte* mid rihte *to helpen* to feden. and to shruden.

Examples from the *Ancrene Riwe* (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. ȝiuen al þet 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 þench ec hwat tu *owust* god: uor his goddeden./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: þeo luue he *ouh* þe.
  - b. past (2): 54. 38 amon þat leie ine prisune & *ougte* mucche raun-sun./185. 9 þu  
 ȝulde þet tu *ouhtest*.
- 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 helden*./10. 22 ȝe *owen to*  
*beon* nomeliche i beoden & i bonen./ 22. 28 & te wise *ouh to uole-wen* wisdom:  
 /25. 21 þe bestliche mon *þ* ne þencheð 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* witesse./30. 17 ancre & huselslefdi: *ouh* mucche *to beon* bit-  
 weonen./36. 8, 9 ȝif heo *owen to beon* ueor urom alle world-liche men: hwat.  
 hu ancren *owen to hatien* ham. & schunien./44. 2 ȝif þu ert me treowe. ase  
 spuse *ouh to beonne*./56. 1 ancre *ouh* ðus *to siggen*./62. 20 auh ancre ase ich  
 habbe iseid *ouh to beon* al gostlich/62. 32 heo under stonden ðet heo *owun to*  
*beon* of so holi luue: /72. 20 hwui ȝe *owen* onlich lif swuðe *to luuien*./153. 6  
 Schrift *ouh to beon* willes./176. 35 nimed gode ȝeme mine leoue sustren. uor  
 hwi me *ouh* him *to luuien*./183. 14 þencheð ȝif ȝe ne *owen* eaðe *to luuien* þene  
 king of blisse./190. 25 ancre ne *ouh* nout *to habben* no þing þet drawe utward  
 hire heorte./195. 18 uor swuch *ouh* wummone lore *to beon*.

with *for to-infin.* (22): 47. 12 er heo *ouh forto deien* martir in hir meseise./63.  
 17 binihte *ouh* ancre *uorte beon* waker & bisi abuten gostliche biȝete./69. 14  
 hwo se wule bi weopen hire owene & oðre 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 *uorte nimen* godes flesch & his blod: /121. 21 þe ȝeteward: ðet is  
 wittes ski-le. ðet *ouh forto winden* hweate./137. 6 auh me *ouh forto siggen*./140.  
 29 þeonne *owustu uorte beon* an hundred siðe soriure./148. 24 hwi schrift *ouh*  
*forte beon* i makeð euer on hihðe./149. 21 Schrift *ouh forto beon* scheomeful./  
 152. 16 Schrift *ouh forte beon* soð./154. 4 Schrift *ouh forte beon* owune./154. 26  
 Schrift *ouh forto beon* biȝouht biuoren longe./157. 26 þis word nomeliche: lim-  
 peð to an-cren. hwas blisse *ouh forto beon* allunge ine godes rode./158. 18 auh  
 [heo] habbeð hore heorte. euer touward heouene. & *owen* wel *uorte habben*./  
 172. 37 auh ȝe *owen uorte unnen* pet.../181. 17 þus alle ðe reisuns. hwui me

*ouh forto ziuen luue!* þu 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 luuien*./189. 19 Marie ne *ouh uorte entremeten* hire þerof!./189. 22 An oðer half non ancre ne *ouh forto nimen* bute gnede-liche þet hire to neodeð./192. 12 auh ancre *ouh forto zemen* 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 þuruen. nene *owen holden* on one wise! ðe vtture riwle./6. 4 hwi me *ouh* & hwi me schal crist *luuien*.<sup>14</sup>/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 wummen *beon* uorbisne./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* muchel *urouren* ou!./120. 51 þu *nouhst* nout *sturiem* ne *trublen* ðine heorte./172. 35 ze *nowen* nout *unnen*. þet.../195. 9 ze ancren *owen* þis lute laste stucchen *reden* to our wummen eueriche wike enes uort ðet heo hit kunnen.

absolute (4): 30. 11 Silence euere et te mete. vor zif oþre religiuse doð hit. ase ze wel wuteð! ze *owen* biuoren alle./93. 8 zif me zemeð wurse ei þing ileasned oþer biteih to witene. þen he wene þet hit *ouh*./166. 35 vre god is zif we doð þet ðet we *owen*./195. 4 þe meidenes wið 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 iwedde. ameiden. awummo ðet me ileueð so wel. and ðet hadde er ibeon iberned mid swuche þincge. & *ouhte* ðe betere *uorte beon* iwar-ned./143. 36 Sire ich was of swuche elde! ðet ich *ouhte* wel *uorte hebben* i wust me wisluket.<sup>15</sup>

c. past in present sense (7)

with *to*-infin. (1): 155. 26 ibroken nep oðer disch! oþer biseon zemeleasliche eni þing! þet me mide uareð. oþer *outhe to zemen*.

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 wummon ðet telleð to ðe & biðe. oðer sum suwinde sawe. þet te suster ne *ouhte* noute *siggen* biðe suster./140. 9 þenc euerich of his owu-ne stat ðet he is. oðer was inne. and he mei i seon. hwareuore he *ouhte siken* sore./147. 19 nie þinges beoð ðet *ouhten hien* toward schrifte.

absolute (1): 1. 15 þis nis nout ibet zet also wel also hit *ouhte*.

<sup>14</sup> In 2. 13, 2. 24 and 6.4 *owen* is juxtaposed with another auxiliary and is construed with the same infinitive.

<sup>15</sup> 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 away thy newe panne For dette, which thou *owest* me of old/D 2106 By god, we *owen* fourty pound for stones/I 252<sup>16</sup> (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 *owen* is conjugated as a weak verb. On the other hand, Chaucer never used the past form *owed*.<sup>17</sup> Throughout his whole work I have found only two instances of the past form *oghte* in the sense other than 'to have as a duty (to do)'.<sup>18</sup> 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 *enclayne* and bowe your herte to take the patience 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*

<sup>16</sup> Italicized numbers show that quotations are made from prose parts.

<sup>17</sup> The earliest instances of weak forms in OED are: pres. 3rd. sg. *ahð* (c1160), *ozeþ* (c1205); pl. *aweð* (c1200), *ozeð* (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 citezeins,...

<sup>18</sup> 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 eschewe*./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 hise wikkede wordes as wel as for hise 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 clenness, how that his sheep shold live./A 4333 Wel *oghte* a man avysed *for to be* Whom that he broghte in-to his privetee.

with simple infin. (46): A 660 Of cursing *oghte* ech gilty man him *drede*—For curs wol slee, right as assoilling 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 *oghten 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 *guerdone* hem and *shewe* hem your largesse./B 2686 we *oghte* patiently *taken* the tribulacions that comen to us/B 2696 Also the grete pacience, which the seintes that been in paradys han had in triublaciouns 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 knowe*, 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 *suffse*./B 3567 Wel *oughten* men thy pitous deeth *complayne*!/B 3648 Of this Tragedie it *oghte* y-nough *suffyse*./C 434 Of this matere 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 away fro me, Wel muchel more I *oghte* avysed *be* To whom I yeve my body/E 1540 But nathelees, 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 movee* 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 thralles to sinne/I 158 The trhidde cause that *oghte movee* 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 moeve* 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 aungels desyren to looke, vileynsly bispet./I 282 muchel *oghte* sinful man *wepen* and *biwayle*/I 283 The sixte 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 eschewe* 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 eschue* fool-largesse, that men clepen wast./I 910 The fifthe spece is thilke abhominable 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 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 *owen* (*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 *owen*, a partial count shows about 135 cases of simple infinitive, 40 with *to*, and 5 with *for to*.'<sup>19</sup> 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.'<sup>20</sup> He quotes only two OE examples, both with *to*-infinitive: *Micel is and mære pät sacred äh tō dōnne* (Legg. *Cnut*. I. A. 4.)/And *sæde pät he hit nāhte 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

<sup>19</sup> J. S. Kenyon, *The Syntax of the Infinitive in Chaucer*. p. 98, n. 2.

<sup>20</sup> E. Mätzner, *Englische Grammatik*. III. p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> 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 *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.’<sup>21</sup> 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 uninflected 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,<sup>22</sup> and it ‘originally expressed purpose, but was used extensively in ME as a simple equivalent of *to* with the infinitive.’<sup>23</sup> It was used as frequently as *to*-infinitive in the *Ancrene Riwe*, 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’<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> In Layamon’s *Brut* the two constructions are found in much the same proportion as this.<sup>26</sup> According to Wandschneider *owen* with simple infinitive was rare in *Piers the Plowman*.<sup>27</sup> 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.’<sup>28</sup> 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.

	Verse	%	Prose	%	Total	%
<i>to</i> -infin.	19	18	27	33	46	24
<i>for to</i> -infin.	5	4	1	1	6	3
simple infin.	84	78	55	66	139	73
Total	108		83		191	

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

<sup>22</sup> The first instance of *for to*-infinitive appears in *Chron.* [E] 1127 (Cf. Bøgholm, *English Speech from an Historical Point of View*, p. 252) The earliest quotation in OED dates from a1175. (s. v. *For* 11)

<sup>23</sup> O. Jespersen, *A Modern English Grammar*. V. 14. 120., cf. Mätzner, *op. cit.* III. p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> H. Sanders, *Der syntaktische Gebrauch des Infinitivs im Frühmittelenglischen*. p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>26</sup> P. Lichtsinn, *Der syntaktische Gebrauch des Infinitivs in Layamon's Brut*. p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> W. Wandschneider, *Zur Syntax des Verbs in Langleys Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> 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 repentaunce of the iniurie 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 oghte*, 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 conseilours, as *yow oghte*./B 2458 I sey yow, that the surgiens and phisiciens han seyde 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 oghte*.

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 oghte 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 oghte to do*./I 403 Irreverence, is whan men do nat honour thereas *hem oghte to doon*, and waiten to be revered./I 676 Obedience generally, is to perfourne the doctrine of god and of his sovereyns, to which *him oghte to ben obeisaunt* in alle rightwysnesse.

with simple infin. (10): B 2188 Wherefor *us oghte*, 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 *yow ne oghte* nat sodeynly ne hastily *proceden* in this nede, but that *yow oghte purveyen* and *apparaillen* yow in this caas with greet diligence and greet deliberacioun/C 512 O glotonye, on thee wel *oghte us pleyne*!/E 1150 For, sith a womman was so pacient Un-to a mortal man, wel more *us oghte Receyven* 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 Taper and a gabber, and no verray repentant, that eftsoone dooth thing, for which *him oghte repente*./I 403 Presumpcion, is whan a man undertaketh an emprise that *him oghte* nat *do*, or elles that he may nat do/I 712 he that dredeth god, he spareth nat to doon that *him oghte 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*./I 358 And venial synne is it, if man love Iesu Crist lasse than *him oghte*./I 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, '*Azen* was often used to express a duty, and it is only when it had this signification, 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 behoveþ*, *me semþ*, *me nedeþ*, all of them type A constructions, and it was on the analogy of these that *me aze*, *me a3t*, *me ou3t* was formed.'<sup>29</sup> In this construction Chaucer used the past form (in past or present sense) except in one case<sup>30</sup>: 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 aze* 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.'<sup>31</sup> 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 nothyng done but that *me ought for to do*.  
/VII. 242 for I consyder your grete laboure and your hardynesse, your bounté 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

<sup>29</sup> 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. *azen* (*awe*, *owe*, *a3t*, *ou3t* etc.), *deynen*, *repenten* and *þar* (*þarf*.)' *Op. cit.*, § 174.

<sup>30</sup> Out of some 30 examples quoted by van der Gaaf there are only 3 cases of the present form.

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.*, § 176.

shelde/V. 146 Therefore thou shalt have thy mede throw Mychael that *owyth* this mounte./VII. 228 'Lo,' seyde the damesell, 'yondir is a lorde that *owyth* youndir cité.'

- b. past (4): I. 11 wherfor kynge Arthur maade the londes to be yeven ageyne unto them that *oughte* hem./V. 163 yf youre tytil 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 pay' (10)

- a.  $\frac{1}{2}$  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 himself 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./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, 'tyll 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 *owghe* to God and to the hygh Ordre of Knyghthode./VII. 245 And therefore, brother, I *owe* hym my servyse afore all knyghtes lyvyng.
- 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*-inf. (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 seryvce as they *oughte to doo*.
- b. past in present sense (10)
  - with *to*-inf. (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, hardely, 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 *owghe* 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 kynges./VI. 192 'Sir my name is sir Launcelot du Lake that *ought to helpe* you of ryght for kynge Arthurs sake,...'/VII. 237 Mesemyth thou *oughtyste* of reson *to beware* by yondir knyghtes that thou sawyste hange on yondir treis./VII. 267 'Alas! my fayre brother,' seyde Sir Gawayne, 'I *ought* of ryght *to worshpy* you, and ye were nat my brother, for ye have worshippe 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 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.'<sup>32</sup> '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.'<sup>33</sup> There is one instance of the past form *owed*=*ought* in More: Conf. Tynd. 463 H 14, And then yf 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 belieued of them in euery thyng...they might haue sayd...<sup>34</sup> 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.'<sup>35</sup> '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.'<sup>36</sup> More does not seem to use *ought*+*for to*-infinitive. 'It may have become obsolete about his time.'<sup>37</sup> 'Neither are there instances in More of the type *me ought, us ought*'<sup>38</sup>

According to Franz, '*Owe* in der Bedeutung '*have, possess* ist Sh. noch sehr geläufig.'<sup>39</sup> 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 bredth 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':<sup>40</sup> *1H4* 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?<sup>41</sup> It is only in these respects that Shakespeare's usage differs from that of present-day standard English.

<sup>32</sup> F. Th. Visser, *A Syntax of the English Language of St Thomas More*. § 535 (p. 635).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 635).

<sup>34</sup> *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.*) Wheþer *owed to loue* him better þo. To this can be added: a 1415 *Lanterne of Lizt* (EETS) 109, 10, þo þingis of þe whiche þe pore owid to be norished.'

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* § 537 (p. 636).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 636).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 637f.).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 638).

<sup>39</sup> W. Franz, *Die Sprache Shakespeares*. § 180.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *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.*'<sup>42</sup> 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*,<sup>43</sup> 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 *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 *āhte*) 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)

<sup>42</sup> E. Dieth, 'Whose Lad Are You?' *English Studies*, Vol. XXXVIII. No. 6 (1957). p. 250.

<sup>43</sup> *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 *ownes* a Serpent I abhorre More then thy Fame and Enuy.

- I. 'to possess' (6)
  - a. present (4): 1188 þe deuēl him *awe!*/1292 I gan Denemark for to *awe*/1298  
And þanne y wolde mine armes drawe Til me, and [þouhte hem] for to [*awe*]/  
1932 'Deus!' quoth Ubbe, 'hwat may þis be? Betere is i nime miself and se  
[Hwat] þis baret [*oweth* on] wold, Þanne i sende yunge or old.
  - b. past (2): 207 And al the lond he euere *awhte*/743 And for þat Grim þat place  
*auhte*, þe stede of Grim þe name lauhte.
- II. 'to have to pay' (1): 1666 Bi þe fey ye *owe* to þe.
- III. 'to have as a duty (*to do*)' (4)
  - a. past in past sense (1): 2787 Þoru hem witen wolde he Yif þat she *auhte* quen  
*to be*.
  - b. past in present sense (3)
    - with *to*-infin. (1) 2173 Man-red, loue bede y þe, Pi man *auht* i ful wel *to be*.
    - with *for to*-infin. (1): 2800 For Englonð *auhte forto ben* Youres
    - with simple infin. (1): 801 þe man þat may wel eten and drinken [þar] *nout*  
*ne haue* but on swink long.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (5)

- I. 'to possess' (4): 767 A castel þe comlokest þat euer knyzt *a3te*/843 & þu3t  
hit a bolde burne þat þe bur3 *a3te*/1775 3if he schulde make synne & be  
traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde *a3t*/1941 As is pertly payed þe [pray] þat  
I *a3te*.
- III. 'to have as a duty (*to do*)' (1): 1526 & 3e, þat ar so cortays & coynt of your  
hetes, *Oghe* to a 3onke þynk 3ern *to schewe* & *teche* sum tokenez of trweluf  
craftes.

*Pearl* (4)

- II. 'to have to pay' (1): 543 Gyf hem þe hyre þat I hem *owe*.
- III. 5. 'to have as a duty (*to do*)' (1): 1139 Ani breste for bale *a3t haf forbrent* Er  
he þerto hade had delyt.
- III. 6. impersonal (2)
  - a. present (1): 552 Vus þynk *vus o3e to take* more.
  - b. past in present sense (1): 341 *þe o3te* better þyseluen *blesse*.