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THE VISION AND CREED

OF

PIERS PLOUGHMAN.

EDITED,
FROM A CONTEMPORARY MANUSCRIPT,
WITH A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION,
NOTES, AND A GLOSSARY,

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SECOND AND REVISED EDITION.

LONDON:
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1887.



PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IT is now thirteen years since the first edition of the following text of this important poem was published by the late Mr. Pickering, during which time the study of our old literature and history has undergone considerable development, and it is believed that a reprint at a more moderate price would be acceptable to the public. Holding still the same opinion which he has always held with regard to the superior character of the manuscript from which this text was taken, the editor has done no more than carefully reprint it, but, in order to make it as useful as he could, he has revised and made additions to both the Notes and the Glossary.

The remarkable poem of *The Vision of Piers Ploughman* is not only so interesting a monument of the English language and literature, but it is also so important an illustration of the political history of our country during the fourteenth century, that it deserves to be read far more generally than it has been, and the editor will rejoice sincerely if he should have contributed by this new edition to render it more popular, and place it within the reach of a greater number of readers. Independent of its historical and literary importance, it contains many beauties which will fully repay the slight labour required to master its partially obsolete language, and, as one of the purest works in the English tongue as it existed during the century in which it was composed, it is to be hoped that, when the time shall at length arrive when English antiquities and English philology and literary history are at length to be made a part of the studies in our universities and in the higher classes of our schools, the work of the Monk of Malvern, as a link between the poetry and language of the Anglo-Saxon and those of modern England, will be made a prominent text-book.

THOMAS WRIGHT.

14, SYDNEY STREET, BROMPTON,
Nov. 1855.



INTRODUCTION.

THE History of the Middle Ages in England, as in other countries, represents to us a series of great consecutive political movements, coexistent with a similar series of intellectual revolutions in the mass of the people. The vast mental development caused by the universities in the twelfth century led the way for the struggle to obtain religious and political liberty in the thirteenth. The numerous political songs of that period which have escaped the hand of time, and above all the mass of satirical ballads against the Church of Rome, which commonly go under the name of *Walter Mapes*, are remarkable monuments of the intellectual history of our forefathers. Those ballads are written in Latin; for it was the most learned class of

the community which made the first great stand against the encroachments and corruptions of the papacy and the increasing influence of the monks. We know that the struggle alluded to was historically unsuccessful. The baronial wars ended in the entire destruction of the popular leaders; but their cause did not expire at Evesham; they had laid foundations which no storm could overthrow, not placed hastily on the uncertain surface of popular favour, but fixed deeply in the public mind. The barons, who had fought so often and so staunchly for the great charter, had lost their power; even the learning of the universities had faded under the withering grasp of monachism; but the remembrance of the old contest remained, and what was more, its literature was left, the songs which had spread abroad the principles for which, or against which, Englishmen had fought, carried them down (a precious legacy) to their posterity. Society itself had undergone an important change; it was no longer a feudal aristocracy which held the destinies of the country in its iron hand. The plant which had been cut off took root again in another (a healthier) soil; and the intelligence which had lost its force in the higher ranks of society began to spread itself among the commons. Even in the thirteenth century, before the close of the baronial wars, the complaints so vigorously expressed in the Latin songs, had begun, both in England and France, to appear in the language of the people. Many of the satirical poems of Rutebeuf and other contemporary writers against the monks, are little more than translations of the Latin poems which go under the name of Walter Mapes.

During the successive reigns of the first three Edwards, the public mind in England was in a state of constant fermentation. On the one hand, the monks, supported by the popish church, had become an incubus upon the country. Their corruptness and immorality were notorious: the description of their vices given in the satirical writings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries exceeds even the bitterest calumnies of the age of Rabelais or the reports of the commissioners of Henry the Eighth.^[1] The populace, held in awe by the imposing appearance of the popish church, and by the religious belief which had been instilled into them from their infancy, were opposed to the monks and clergy by a multitude of personal griefs and jealousies: these frequently led to open hostility, and in the chronicles of those days we read of the slaughter of monks, and the burning of abbeys, by the insurgent towns-people or peasantry. At the same time, while the monks in revenge treated the commons with contempt, there were numerous people who, under the name of Lollards and other such appellations,—led sometimes by the love of mischief and disorder, but more frequently by religious enthusiasm,—whose doctrines were simple and reasonable (although the church would fain have branded them all with the title of heretics),—went abroad among the people preaching not only against the corruptions of the monks, but against the most vital doctrines of the church of Rome, and, as might be expected, they found abundance of listeners. On the other hand, a new political system, and the embarrassments of a continued series of foreign wars, were adding to the general ferment. Instead of merely calling together the great feudal barons to lead their retainers to battle, the king was now obliged to appeal more directly to the people; and at the same time the latter began to feel the weight of taxation, and consequently they began to talk of the defects and the corruptions of the government, and to raise the cries, which have since so often been heard, against the king's "evil advisers." These cries were justified by many real and great oppressions under which the commons, and more particularly the peasantry, suffered; and (as the king and aristocracy were too much interested in the continuance of the abuses complained of to be easily induced to agree to an effective remedy), the commons began to feel that their own interests were equally opposed to those of the church, of the aristocracy, and of the crown, and amidst the other popular doctrines none were more loudly or more violently espoused than those of levellers and democrats. These, though comparatively few, aggravated the evil, by affording a pretence for persecution. The history of England during the fourteenth century is a stirring picture; its dark side is the increasing corruption of the popish church; its bright side, the general spread of popular intelligence, and the firm stand made by the commons in the defence of their liberties, and in the determination to obtain a redress of grievances.

Under these circumstances appeared PIERS PLOUGHMAN. It is not to be supposed that all the other classes of society were hostile to the commons. The people, with the characteristic attachment of the Anglo-Saxons to the family of their princes, wished to believe that their king was always their friend, when not actuated by the counsels of his "evil advisers;"^[2] several of the most powerful barons stood forward as the champions of popular liberty; and many of the monks quitted their monasteries to advocate the cause of the reformation. It appears to be generally agreed that a monk was the author of the poem of Piers Ploughman; but the question, one perhaps but of secondary importance, as to its true writer, is involved in much obscurity.^[3] Several local allusions and other circumstances seem to prove that it was composed on the borders of Wales, where had originated most of the great political struggles, and we can hardly doubt that its author resided in the neighbourhood of "Malverne hilles." We have less difficulty in ascertaining its date. At ll. 1735-1782, we have, without doubt, an allusion to the treaty of Bretigny, in 1360, and to the events which preceded it: in the earlier part of this passage there is an allusion to the sufferings of the English army in the previous winter campaign, to the retreat which followed, and the want of provisions which accompanied it, and to the tempest which they encountered near Chartres (the "dym cloude" of the poem). The "pestilences" mentioned at l. 2497 were the great plague which happened in 1348-9 (and which had previously been alluded to in the opening of the poem, l. 168), and that of 1361-2,—the first two of the three great pestilences which devastated our island in the fourteenth century. The south-western wind, mentioned in l. 2500, occurred on the fifteenth day of January 1362. It is probable that the poem of Piers Ploughman was composed in the latter part of this year, when the effects of the great wind were fresh in

people's memory, and when the treaty of Bretigny had become a subject of popular discontent.^[4]

The poem was given to the world under a name which could not fail to draw the attention of the people. Amid the oppressive injustice of the great and the vices of their idle retainers, the corruptions of the clergy, and the dishonesty which too frequently characterised the dealings of merchants and traders, the simple unsophisticated heart of the ploughman is held forth as the dwelling of virtue and truth. It was the ploughman, and not the pope with his proud hierarchy, who represented on earth the Saviour who had descended into this world as the son of the carpenter, who had lived a life of humility, who had wandered on foot or ridden on an ass. "While God wandered on earth," says one of the political songs of the beginning of the fourteenth century,^[5] "what was the reason that he would not ride?" The answer expresses the whole force of the popular sentiment of the age: "because he would not have a retinue of greedy attendants by his side, in the shape of grooms and servants, to insult and oppress the peasantry."

At the period when this poem was first published, England, in common with the rest of Europe, had been struck with a succession of calamities. Little more than twelve years had passed since a terrible pestilence had swept away perhaps not less than one-half of the population.^[6] The lower classes, ill fed and neglected, perished by thousands, while the higher ranks—the proud and pampered nobility—escaped; "he who was ill nourished with unsubstantial food," says a contemporary writer, "fell before the slightest breath of the destroyer; to the poor, death was welcome, for life is to them more cruel than death. But death respected princes, nobles, knights, judges, gentlemen; of these few die, because their life is one of enjoyment."^[7] It was the general belief that this fearful visitation had been sent by God as a punishment for the sins which had more particularly characterised the higher orders of society; yet instead of profiting by the warning, they became, during the years which followed, prouder, more cruel and oppressive, and more licentious, than before. Another pestilence came, which visited the classes that had before escaped, and at the same time a tempest such as had seldom been witnessed seemed to announce the vengeance of heaven. The streets and roads were filled with zealots who preached and prophesied of other misfortunes, to people who had scarcely recovered from the terror of those which were past. At this moment the satirist stepped forth, and laid open with unsparing knife the sins and corruptions which provoked them.

From what has been said, it will be seen that the Latin poems attributed to Walter Mapes, and the Collection of Political Songs, form an introduction to the Vision of Piers Ploughman. It seems clear that the writer was well acquainted with the former, and that he not unfrequently imitates them. The Poem on the Evil Times of Edward II. already alluded to (in the Political Songs) contains within a small compass all his chief points of accusation against the different orders of society. But a new mode of composition had been brought into fashion since the appearance of the famous "Roman de la Rose," and the author makes his attacks less directly, under an allegorical clothing. The condition of society is revealed to the writer in a dream, as in the singular poem just mentioned, and as in the still older satire, the *Apocalypsis Goliæ*; but in Piers Ploughman the allegory follows no systematic plot, it is rather a succession of pictures in which the allegorical painting sometimes disappears altogether, than a whole like the Roman de la Rose, and it is on that account less tedious to the modern reader, while the vigorous descriptions, the picturesque ideas, and numerous other beauties of different kinds, cause us to lose sight of the general defects of this class of writings.

Piers Ploughman is, in fact, rather a succession of dreams, than one simple vision. The dreamer, weary of the world, falls asleep beside a stream amid the beautiful scenery of Malvern Hills. In his vision, the people of the world are represented to him by a vast multitude assembled in a fair meadow; on one side stands the tower of Truth, elevated on a mountain, the right aim of man's pilgrimage, while on the other side is the dungeon of Care, the dwelling place of Wrong. In the first sections (*passus*) of the poem are pictured the origin of society, the foundation and dignity of kingly power, and the separation into different classes and orders. In the midst of his astonishment at what he sees, a fair lady, the personification of "holy church," approaches, to instruct the dreamer. She explains to him the meaning of the different objects which had presented themselves to his view, and shows by exhortations and examples the merit of content and moderation, the danger of disobedience (exemplified in the story of Lucifer's fall), and the efficacy of love and charity. In the midst of his conversation with his instructor, a lady makes her appearance on the scene. This is lady Mede, the personification of that mistaken object at which so large a portion of mankind direct their aim—the origin of most of the corruptions and evil deeds in the world—not the just remuneration of our actions which we look forward to in a future life, but the reward which is sought by those who set all their hopes on the present. Holy Church now quits the dreamer, who is left to observe what is taking place amid the crowd in the field. (*Passus II.*) They all pay their court to lady Mede, who, by the intermediation of Cyvyle, or the law, is betrothed in marriage to Falsehood. The marriage is forbidden by Theology, and Cyvyle agrees to carry the cause to London for judgment, contrary to the desire of Simony. Falsehood and Flattery bribe the lawyers to aid the former in his suit, but their designs are baffled by Conscience, at whose suggestion the king takes the lady into his own custody, and drives away Falsehood and his greedy followers. Mede soon finds favour at court (*Passus III.*), and especially with the friars, who are ready to absolve her of all her sins for a proper consideration. The king proposes to marry her to Conscience; who, however, declines the match, and as a reason for his refusal gives a very unfavourable picture of the lady's previous life and private character. Mede defends herself, and accuses Conscience of thwarting and opposing the will and designs of kings

and great people. The dispute becoming hot, the king interferes and orders Mede and Conscience to be reconciled and kiss each other. (*Passus IV.*) This Conscience refuses to do, unless by the advice of Reason; on whose arrival, Peace comes into the parliament to make his complaint against the cruel oppressions of Wrong. Wrong is condemned, but Mede and the lawyers attempt to get him off with the payment of a sum of money. The king, however, allows himself to be guided by Reason and Conscience, expresses his dissatisfaction that law is influenced by Mede, and his determination to govern his realm by the counsel of Reason.

In a second vision (*Passus V.*), the dreamer is again carried to the "field full of folk," where Reason has taken upon himself the character of a preacher, and, fortified with the king's authority, induces the various classes of sinners to confess and repent. The personification of the different sins forms perhaps the most remarkable part of the whole poem. The multitude being thus converted from their evil courses, are persuaded by Repentance and Hope to set out on a pilgrimage in search of Truth. In their ignorance of the path which they must follow in this search, they apply to a palmer who had wandered over a large portion of the world in search of different saints; but they find him as little acquainted with the way as themselves. They are helped out of this dilemma by Piers the Ploughman, who, seeing them terrified by the difficulties of the road, offers to be their guide, if they will wait till he has sown his half acre. (*Passus VI.*) In the mean time all the pilgrims who have strength and skill, are employed on some useful works, except the knight, who undertakes, in return for the support which he is to derive from the ploughman's labours, to watch and protect him against plunderers and foreign enemies. The peace of the labourers is first disturbed by Waster, who refuses to perform the conditions by which the others are bound: the aid of the knight being found inefficient against this turbulent gentleman, the Ploughman is obliged to send for Hunger, who effectually humbles him. This section of the poem is a continued allusion to the effects of the famine and pestilence, and a satire upon the luxurious and extravagant life of our forefathers in the fourteenth century. (*Passus VII.*) Truth, hearing of the intentions of Piers the Ploughman to leave his labours in order to serve as a guide to the pilgrims in their journey, sends him a messenger, exhorting him to remain at home and continue his labours, and giving him a "pardon" which was to embrace all those who aided him honestly, by their works, and who should carry on their various avocations in purity of heart. The writer here takes occasion to sneer at the "pardons" of the pope, then so much in vogue; a priest questions the legitimacy of Piers' bull of pardon, and the altercation between them becomes so loud that the dreamer awakes. The pardon of Piers Ploughman is granted to those who do good works: the dreamer is lost in the speculation on the question as to what the good works are, and he becomes engaged in a new pilgrimage, in search of a person who has not appeared before,—Do-well.

(*Passus VIII.*) All his inquiries after Do-well are fruitless: even the friars, to whom he addresses himself, give but a confused account; and, weary with wandering about, the dreamer is again overtaken by slumber. Thought now appears to him, and recommends him to Wit, who describes to him the residence of Do-well, Do-better, and Do-best, and enumerates their companions and attendants. (*Passus IX.*) The Castle of Do-well is an allegorical representation of man (the individual), in which lady Anima (the soul) is placed for safety, and guarded by a keeper named Kynde (nature). With Do-well, the representative of those who live according to truth in honest wedlock, are contrasted the people who live in lust and wickedness, the descendants of the murderer Cain, who was begotten by Adam in an evil hour. (*Passus X.*) Wit has a wife named lady Study, who is angry that her spouse should lay open his high truths to those who are uninitiated—it is no better than "throwing pearls to swine, which would rather have hawes." Wit is daunted by his wife's long lecture, and leaves the dreamer to pursue his own suit. This he does with so much meekness and humility, that the wrath of dame Study is appeased, and she sends him to Clergy, with a token of recommendation from herself. Clergy receives the pilgrim, and entertains him with a long declamation on the character of Do-well, Do-better, and Do-best, and on the corruptions of the church and the monkish orders, in the course of which is uttered the remarkable prophecy of the king who was to "confess and beat" the monks, and give them an "incurable knock," which was after less than two centuries so exactly fulfilled in the dissolution of the monasteries. The wanderer confesses himself "little the wiser" for Clergy's lecture, and by his pertness of reply merits a reproof from Scripture. (*Passus XI.*) In another vision the dreamer is exposed to the seductions of Fortune, whose two fair damsels, Concupiscentia-carnis and Covetousness-of-the-Eyes, persuade him to enjoy the present moment, and lead him entirely from his previous pursuit. He is only recalled from his error by the approach of Old Age, and then he falls into the contemplation of a series of subjects, the covetousness of the friars who gave absolution from motives of personal interest, predestination, &c. Then Kynde, or Nature, came and carried him to a mountain, which represented the world, and there showed him how all other animals but man followed Reason; and Imaginative came after, and told him that all his present doubt and anxiety had been brought upon him for contending with Reason and suffering himself to be led astray by Fortune. (*Passus XII.*) The whole of the next section of the poem is occupied with a long exhortation by Imaginative, concerning God's chastisements, the merits of Charity and Mercy, the greater responsibility before God of those who are learned and cannot sin ignorantly, the difficulty for the rich man to enter heaven.

(*Passus XIII.*) In another vision, Conscience meets with the dreamer, and takes him to dine with Clergy. Patience comes to the feast in beggar's weeds, but is seated in the most honourable place at the table. A doctor of the church is of the party, and distinguishes himself by his gluttony; and by discussing theological questions after dinner. At length Conscience and Patience go on a pilgrimage. In their way they meet with a minstrel, named Activa Vita, or Haukyn the Active-man,

with a coat covered with spots of dirt, whom they question on his mode of life. (*Passus XIV.*) Haukyn the Active-man, the representative of that class of people who neglect their souls for their worldly affairs, excuses the dirtiness of his apparel on the ground that he has none to change, and that he has too many occupations to allow him time to have it cleaned. Conscience and Patience teach him a method to clean his coat, inform him where charity is to be found, and recommend patient poverty to him, showing him the advantage of poverty over riches. Haukyn's repentance and lamentation for the neglect of his duties awake the dreamer.

(*Passus XV.*) Amid his anxiety to know something more certain of Do-well, the dreamer has another vision, in which Soul appears to him, and enters into a long relation of the corruptions and negligence of the clergy. (*Passus XVI.*) Soul finally sends him to Piers the Ploughman, who possesses the garden in which the tree of Charity grows, and which is rented under him by Free-will. Piers explains to him the nature of the tree, and of the props which support it; and shakes down some of the fruit for him. The allegory then changes, and we are introduced to the birth and passion of the Saviour, as arising out of the fruit of Charity. At this moment the dreamer awakes, and therewith loses sight of Piers the Ploughman; in his anxiety to find Piers, he meets with Faith, in the garb of Abraham, who was in search of God, now incarnate, and who waited for his passion in order to be delivered from hell. (*Passus XVII.*) Then comes Spes, or Hope, who also was in search of the knight that was to vanquish the evil one. As they go along the way towards Jerusalem to the "justes," discoursing on the obligations of the old and new law and the abrogation of the former, they meet with a man who had been left helpless by thieves, wounded and naked: Faith and Hope passed by without helping him, but the Samaritan, who was also riding to the "justes," descended from his horse, bound his wounds, and deposited him in an inn at the grange named *Lex Christi*. The Samaritan gives the dreamer a singular explanation of the mysteries of the Trinity; and, after having represented to him the heinousness of sins against the different persons, and the necessity of making reparation, he pursues his way to Jerusalem.

(*Passus XVIII.*) The vision which forms the eighteenth section or *passus*, and in which the character of Piers the Ploughman is identified with that of the Saviour, is entirely occupied with an allegorical description of Christ's Passion, and his descent into Hell. (*Passus XIX.*) In the next section the history of Christ's passion and victory, and his figurative representative Piers the Ploughman, is continued. Grace, through Piers the Ploughman, descends upon the people, and lays the foundation of the Church, which is cultivated by Piers with his four oxen (the four Evangelists). Piers is attacked by Pride, who gathers a great host to assail the Church. Conscience advises the people who follow Piers (the Church), to take shelter in the stronghold of Unity, and make preparations for their defence. By the counsel of Kind-wit and Conscience they dig a great ditch around Unity. The measures of Surety are embarrassed by the unreasonable opposition of some members or parts of the community, who oppose Pier's doctrine of restitution—the brewer will not repent of the tricks which he puts on his customers, the vicar adheres to his simony, the lord will continue to oppress his tenants, and the king will not be restrained by his laws. (*Passus XX.*) In the last section of the poem, the dreamer, after having been accosted by Need, who preaches on the virtues of temperance, has a vision of Antichrist, who comes to attack the Castle of Unity. It must be remembered that at this period many people supposed that Antichrist was already on the earth, and that he was the cause of all the evils with which mankind was then visited, so that this last notion brought the allegory home to people's feelings. The standard-bearer of Antichrist was Pride. Conscience called Kynde, or Nature, to his aid, who brought an army of diseases and pestilences. Death, one of his chief soldiers, made terrible havoc. At length Kynde ceased his ravages; and a horde of enemies immediately arose against Conscience, such as Fortune, Lechery, Covetousness, Simony. Life, with his mistress Fortune, indulged in all kinds of excess, until he was visited by Age and Despair, who treated him very roughly. The dreamer, forsaken by Fortune, and participating in the misfortunes of Life, by the advice of Kynde takes shelter with Conscience in the castle of Unity, which is threatened by an army of priests and monks. At length this stronghold is endangered by the entrance of Flattery, who is admitted in the disguise of a Physician. Conscience, unable to retain possession, embarks upon another pilgrimage in search of Piers the Ploughman, and the dreamer awakes. This is the conclusion of the poem. Whitaker thought that it should have had a more consoling end; but it must be remembered that the writer of Piers Ploughman designed to paint the world as it was, and to describe the numerous obstacles which lay in the way of the improvement and amelioration of mankind when he wrote.

While one member of the monastic order was thus contributing by his satirical pen towards producing a reform among his countrymen, another monk was beginning to preach in a still bolder manner against the popish system. This was John Wycliffe, under whom the despised lollards became an important sect. This attempt at religious reformation only formed part of the great movement of the fourteenth century, which soon afterwards broke out in the popular commotions of the reign of Richard II. The writer of Piers Ploughman was neither a sower of sedition, nor one who would be characterised by his contemporaries as a heretic. The doctrines inculcated throughout the book are so far from democratic, that he constantly preaches the Christian doctrine of obedience to rulers. Yet its tendency to debase the great, and to raise the commons in public consideration, must have rendered it popular among the latter: and, although no single important doctrine of the popish religion is attacked, yet the unsparing manner in which the vices and corruptions of the church are laid open, must have helped in no small degree the cause of the Reformation. Of the ancient popularity of Piers Ploughman we have a proof in the great number of copies which still exist, most of them written in the latter part of the fourteenth century; and the circumstance that the manuscripts are seldom executed in a superior

style of writing, and scarcely ever ornamented with painted initial letters, may perhaps be taken as a proof that they were not written for the higher classes of society. From the time when it was published, the name of Piers Ploughman became a favourite among the popular reformers.^[8] The earliest instance of the adoption of that name for another satirical work is found in the Creed of Piers Ploughman, printed also in the present volume, and in which even the form of verse of the Vision is imitated.

In this latter poem, which was undoubtedly written by a Wycliffite, Piers Ploughman is no longer an allegorical personage—he is the simple representative of the peasant rising up to judge and act for himself—the English *sans-culotte* of the fourteenth century, if we may be allowed the comparison. When it was written, a period of great excitement had passed since the age of Langlande, the reputed author of the Vision—a period characterised by the turbulence of the peasantry—which had witnessed in France the fearful insurrection of the *Jacquerie*, and in England the rebellion of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw.^[9]

In Piers Ploughman's Creed it is the church simply, and not the state, which is the object of attack. The clergy—and more particularly the monks—are accused of having falsified religion, and of being actuated solely by worldly passions—pride, covetousness, self-love. The writer, placing himself in the position of one who has just learnt the first grounds of religious knowledge, is anxious to find a person capable of instructing him in his creed, and with this object he addresses himself to the different orders of friars. He applies first to the Minorites, who abuse the Carmelites, and pride themselves in their own holiness. Disgusted with their jealousies and self-sufficiency, the inquirer seeks the Preachers, or Dominicans; amid their stately buildings, and under their sleek and well filled skins, he finds the same want of Christian charity: their pride drives him to the order of St. Austin. The Austin Friars, as well as the Carmelites, will only instruct him for money, and, shocked at their covetousness, he continues his wanderings, until at last he meets with a poor Ploughman, in whom he finds the charity and knowledge after which he has been seeking. The Ploughman enters into a bitter attack on the vices of all the four orders of friars: he describes their spirit of persecution, exemplified in the case of Wycliffe and others, and their simony; speaks of Wycliffe and Walter Brute as preachers of the truth; and finishes by teaching the inquirer his simple creed.

The Creed of Piers Ploughman was written by one who approved the opinions of Wycliffe, and it seems to have been carefully proscribed. There does not appear to exist any manuscript older than the first printed edition.

The great popularity of the Vision of Piers Ploughman in the fourteenth century, and its political influence, are proved by another close imitation, which was composed immediately after the capture, and previous to the deposition, of king Richard II. This poem also appears to have been proscribed, and we have only a fragment left, which was printed from an unique manuscript for the Camden Society. It also is composed in alliterative verse, and its meaning is rendered obscure by a confused allegorical style. It was evidently written towards the Welsh Border, perhaps at Bristol, which is mentioned in the opening lines; and it appears to have been intended as a continuation of, or as a sequel to, Piers Ploughman, which it immediately follows in the only manuscript in which it is preserved.

Another early poem, of which the Ploughman is the hero, was inserted in the works of Chaucer under the title of the Ploughman's Tale. This, like the Creed, is free from allegory; and it differs from the others also in being written in rhyme, and not in alliterative verse. The Ploughman's Tale was probably written in the earlier half of the fifteenth century.^[10] It is a coarse attack on the different orders of the clergy, for their pride, covetousness, and other vices. Its versification has little merit; and there appears to be no good reason for inserting it among the Canterbury Tales.

The vision of Piers Ploughman appears to have continued to enjoy a wide popularity down to the middle of the fifteenth century. We hear nothing of it from that period to the middle of the sixteenth, when it was printed by the reformers, and received with so much favour, that no less than three editions, or rather three impressions, are said to have been sold in the course of one year. Another edition was printed at the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and it appears to have been much read in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and even at the beginning of the seventeenth. The name of Piers Ploughman is not uncommon in the political tracts of that period.^[11]

The Poem of Piers Ploughman is peculiarly a national work. It is the most remarkable monument of the public spirit of our forefathers in the middle, or, as they are often termed, dark ages. It is a pure specimen of the English language at a period when it had sustained few of the corruptions which have disfigured it since we have had writers of "Grammars;" and in it we may study with advantage many of the difficulties of the language which these writers have misunderstood. It is, moreover, the finest example left of the kind of versification which was purely English, inasmuch as it had been the only one in use among our Anglo-Saxon progenitors, in common with the other people of the North. To many readers it will be perhaps necessary to explain that rhyming verse was not in use among the Anglo-Saxons. In place of rhyme, they had a system of verse of which the characteristic was a very regular *alliteration*, so arranged that, in every couplet, there should be two principal words in the first line beginning with the same letter, which letter must also be the initial of the first word on which the stress of the voice falls in the second line. There has, as

yet, been discovered no system of foot-measure in Anglo-Saxon verse, but the common metre consists apparently in having two rises and two falls of the voice in each line. These characteristics are accurately preserved in the verse of *Piers Ploughman*; and the measure appears to be the same, if we make allowance for the change of the slow and impressive pronunciation of the Anglo-Saxon for the quicker pronunciation of Middle English, which therefore required a greater number of syllables to fill up the same space of time.

We can trace the history of alliterative verse in England with tolerable certainty. The Anglo-Normans first brought in rhymes, which they employed in their own poetry. The adoption of this new system into the English language was gradual, but it appears to have commenced in the first half of the twelfth century. It was, at first, mixed with alliterative couplets: that is, in the same poem were used sometimes rhyming couplets, which were suddenly changed for alliterative couplets, and then, after awhile, rhyme was again brought in, and so on. Of this kind of poetry we have four very remarkable examples, the *Proverbs of King Alfred*, a poem which was certainly in existence in the first half of the twelfth century;^[12] the *Early English Bestiary*;^[13] the Poem on the *Debate between the Body and the Soul*;^[14] and the grand work of Layamon.^[15] The following lines from the *Bestiary* may serve as a specimen of the manner in which the two systems are intermixed; they form part of the account of the spider:—

"ðanne renneð ge rapelike,
for ge is ai redi,
nimeð anon to ðe net,
and nimeð hem ðere,
bitterlike ge hem bit
and here bane wurðeð,
drepeð and drinkeð hire blod,
doð ge hire non oðer god,
bute fret hire fille,
and dareð siðen stille."

"Cethegrande is a fis
ðe moste ðat in water is;
ðat tu wuldes seien get,
gef ðu it soge wan it flet," etc.

This kind of poetry appears to have been common until the middle of the thirteenth century; after which period we only find alliteration in songs, not used in simple alliterative couplets, but mixed up in the same lines with rhyme in an irregular and playful manner.^[16] But there appears little room for doubting that during the whole of this time the pure alliterative poetry was in use among the lower classes of society; and its revival towards the middle of the fourteenth century appears to have been a part of the political movement which then took place. In this point of view, the poem of *Piers Ploughman* becomes still more worthy of attention as a document of contemporary literary history. The old alliterative verse came so much into fashion at this period that it was adopted for the composition of long romances, of which several still remain.^[17] The use of this kind of verse was continued in the fifteenth century, and was imitated in Scotland as late as the time of Dunbar, but the later writers were evidently unacquainted with the strict rules of this species of composition.

The Anglo-Saxons, who used this kind of verse only, wrote their poetry invariably as prose. But the scribe was in the habit of indicating the division of the lines by a dot. Among modern scholars a question has arisen as to the propriety of printing the alliterative couplet in two short lines, or in one long one. It appears to me that the mode in which the dot is used in the manuscripts decides the question in favour of the short lines. The manner in which the alliterative couplet is intermixed with the rhyming couplet in the poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (which also are written in the manuscripts in the same form as prose), seems to me a strong confirmation of this opinion; at least in these last-mentioned cases, the verse must have been considered as written in short lines. As the scribes quitted the custom of writing poetry in their manuscripts as prose, with the divisions of lines indicated by dots, to adopt that of arranging them in lines as we do at present, these short lines were found very inconvenient because they were obliged either to waste a great deal of parchment, or to write in several narrow columns. To remedy this, they fell perhaps gradually into the custom of writing the two parts of the alliterative couplet in one line, always, however, marking the division by a dot. They followed the same method with the shorter rhyming lines, as is the case with the old English Metrical Romance of Horn in a manuscript in the Harleian Collection.^[18] All the alliterative poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is found written in these long lines, with the dot of division in the middle. In the fifteenth century the meaning of this dot appears to have been forgotten, and the system of alliteration so far misunderstood, that the writers thought it only necessary to have *at least* three alliterative words in a long line, without any consideration of their position in the line. I say *at least*, because they not unfrequently inserted four or five alliterative words in the same line, which would certainly have been considered a defect in the earlier writers. It is my opinion, that a modern editor is wrong in printing the verses of *Piers Ploughman* in long lines, as they stand in the manuscripts, unless he profess to give them as a fac-simile of the manuscripts themselves, or he plead the same excuse of convenience from the shape of his book. In either case, he must carefully preserve the dots of separation in the middle of the lines, which are more

inconvenient than the length of the lines, because they interfere with the punctuation of the modern editor. If, as appears to be the case, these dots are merely marks to indicate the division of the couplet, their purpose is much better served by printing the lines in couplets. The construction of the earlier Anglo-Saxon verse, the analogy of the mixed rhyming and alliterative verses of the semi-Saxon poems, and the use of these dots in the middle of the lines in the manuscripts of Piers Ploughman, appear to me convincing proofs that it ought to be printed so. I think moreover that the alliterative verse reads much more harmoniously in the short couplets than in the long lines.

The manuscripts of the Vision of Piers Ploughman are extremely numerous both in public and in private collections. There are at least eight in the British Museum: there are ten or twelve in the Cambridge Libraries; and they are not less numerous at Oxford. As might be expected in a popular work like this, the manuscripts are in general full of variations; but there are two classes of manuscripts which give two texts that are widely different from each other, those variations commencing even with the first lines of the poem. One of these texts, which was adopted in the early printed editions, is given in the present volumes; the other text was selected for publication by Dr. Whitaker. The following extract, comprising the first lines of the poem,^[19] will show how each text begins, and will enable those who possess manuscripts of Piers Ploughman to ascertain at once to which text they belong:—

TEXT I.

In a somer seson
Whan softe was the sonne,
I shop me into shroudes
As I a sheep weere,
In habite as an heremite
Unholy of werkes,
Wente wide in this world
Wonders to here,
Ac on a May morwenyng
On Malverne hilles
Me bifel a ferly,
Of fairye me thoghte.
I was wery for-wandred,
And wente me to reste
Under a broode bank
By a bournes syde,
And as I lay and lenede,
And loked on the watres,
I slombred into a slepyng,
It sweyed so murye.
Thanne gan I meten
A merveillous swevene,
That I was in a wilderness
Wiste I nevere where;
And as I biheld in to the eest
An heigh to the sonne,
I seigh a tour on a toft, etc.

TEXT II.

In a somè seyson,
Whan softe was the sonne,
Y shop into shrobbis
As y shepherde were.
In abit az an ermite
Unholy of werkes,
That wente forthe in the worle
Wondres to hure,
And sawe meny cellis
And selcouthe thynges.
Ac on a May morwenyng
On Malverne hules
Me by-fel for to slepe,
For weyrynesse of wandryng,
And in a lande as ich lay
Lenede ich and slepte,
And merveylously me mette,
As ich may yow telle.
Al the welthe of this wordle,
And the woo bothe,
Wynkyng as it were
Wyterly ich saw hyt,
Of truyth and of tricherye,
Of tresoun and of gyle,
Al ich saw slepyng,
As ich shal yow telle.
Esteward ich behulde
After the sonne,
And sawe a tour as ich trowede, etc

Besides such variations as appear in the foregoing specimen, there are in the second text many considerable additions, omissions, and transpositions. It would not be easy to account for the existence of two texts differing so much; but it is my impression that the first was the one published by the author, and that the variations were made by some other person, who was perhaps induced by his own political sentiments to modify passages, and was gradually led on to publish a revision of the whole. It is certain that in some parts of Text II. the strong sentiments or expressions of the first text are softened down. We may give as an example of this, the statement of the popular opinion of the origin and purpose of kingly government:—

TEXT I.

Thanne kam ther a kyng,
Knyghthod hym ladde,
Might of the communes
Made hym to regne.
And thanne cam kynde wit,
And clerkes he made,
For to counseillen the kyng,
And the commune save.
The kyng and knyghthod,
And clergie bothe,
Casten that the commune
Sholde hem self fynde.
The commune contrevded
Of kynde wit craftes,

TEXT II.

Thanne cam ther a kyng,
Knyghtod hym ladde,
The meche myghte of the men
Made hym to regne.
And thanne cam a kynde witte,
And clerkus he made,
And concience and kynde wit,
And knyghthod to-gederes,
Caste that the comune
Sholde hure comunes fynde.
Kynde wit and the comune
Contrevede alle craftes,
And for most profitable to the puple,
A plouh thei gonne make,

And for profit of al the peple
Plowmen ordeyned,
To tilie and to travaille,
As trewe lif asketh.
The kyng and the commune,
And kynde wit the thridde,
Shopen lawe and leauté,
Ech man to knowe his owene.

Wit leil labour to lyve,
Wyl lyve and londe lasteth.

Nobody, I think, can deny that in this instance the doctrine is stated far more distinctly and far more boldly in the first text than in the second. In general the first text is the best, whether we look at the mode in which the sentiments are stated, or at the poetry and language.

As far as I have been able to examine the remaining manuscripts of Piers Ploughman, at London and in the Universities, I think that nearly two-thirds of those which remain are of the *fourteenth* century; and the greater number, particularly of those written in the fourteenth century, present what I have distinguished as the first text, that given in the present volumes. I am by no means inclined to coincide in the reasons which led Dr. Whitaker to prefer the second text; if I were disposed to admit, as barely possible (the supposition is quite a gratuitous one), "that the first edition of this work appeared when its author was a young man, and that he lived and continued in the habit of transcribing to extreme old age" (Pref.), I cannot agree with an editor in adopting a copy which he believes to be "a faithful representation of the work as it came first from the author," and which not only abounds in words and idioms which he afterwards altered, but which contains also "many original passages which the greater maturity of the author's judgment induced him to expunge."

I know only of two manuscripts of the Creed of Piers Ploughman, one in the British Museum (MS. Reg. 18, B. XVII.), the other in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, both on paper, and written long after the date of the printed editions, from which they appear to have been copied.

The first printed edition of the Vision was that of Robert Crowley, in 1550; and it was so favourably received, that there is reason for believing that no less than three editions (or rather three impressions^[20]) were sold in the course of the year. It is clear that Crowley had obtained an excellent manuscript; the printer has changed the orthography at will, and has evidently altered a word at times, but on the whole this printed text differs very little from the one we now publish.

Three years after the appearance of the Vision, another printer, Reynold Wolfe, published the first edition of the Creed, in the same form as Crowley's edition of the Vision.^[21]

After the stormy reign of Mary was past, in the beginning of that of Elizabeth, the call for a new edition, and perhaps the destruction of many copies of the old one, led the well-known printer Owen Rogers to reprint the Vision and the Creed together.^[22] The impression was probably large, for it is still by no means a rare book. It was evidently much read during the reign of Elizabeth, and is not unfrequently alluded to by the writers of that age.

No other edition of this popular poem appeared, until it was published by Dr. Whitaker, in 1813,^[23] from a manuscript then in the possession of Mr. Heber,^[24] which contained the second text, written in a rather broad provincial dialect. This edition was printed in black-letter, in a very large and expensive form. In 1814, a reprint of the old edition of the Creed was published in the same form, as a companion to the Vision. It is not generally known that Dr. Whitaker projected an edition of the same text and paraphrase which are given in his 4to edition, in 8vo, with Roman type instead of black-letter. After a few sheets had been composed, the design was abandoned, as it is said, in favour of the larger form. A copy of the proof sheets, formerly belonging to Mr. Haslewood, is now in the possession of Sir Frederick Madden. I am told that a rival edition was also begun, but not persevered in.

An attempt at a modernization, or rather a translation, of Piers Ploughman, was made in the earlier years of the present century, but only a few specimens appear to have been executed. The following lines, which possess some merit (though not very literal or correct), are the modern version the author proposed to give of ll. [2847-2870](#) of the poem. They were communicated to me by Sir Henry Ellis.

"Next AVARICE came: but how he look'd, to say,
Words do I want that rightly shall portray:
Like leathern purse his shrivell'd cheeks did shew,
Thick lipp'd, with two blear eyes and beetle brow:
In a torn threadbare tabard was he clad,
Which twelve whole winters now in wear he had;
French scarlet 'twas, its colour well it kept,
So smooth that louse upon its surface crept."

It will be necessary, in conclusion, to say a few words on the edition now offered to the public. Without taking into consideration the inaccuracies and imperfections of Whitaker's edition, its inconvenient size and high price made it altogether inaccessible to the general reader; and there appeared to be a wish for one in a more convenient and less expensive form. At the same time it

was desired that a good text of a work so important for the history of our language and literature should be selected. Dr. Whitaker was not well qualified for this undertaking; he also laboured under many disadvantages; he had access to only three manuscripts, and those not very good ones; and he has not chosen the best text even of those. Unless he had some reason to believe that the book was originally written in a particular dialect, he ought to have given a preference to that among the oldest manuscripts which presents the purest language; but we cannot allow that manuscript to be chosen on a ground so capricious as "that the orthography and dialect in which it is written approach very near to that semi-Saxon jargon in the midst of which the editor was brought up, and which he continues to hear daily spoken on the confines of Lancashire, and the West Riding of the county of York." (Pref.) This could not have been the language employed by a monk of Malvern.

The present editor has endeavoured, in the leisure moments which he has been able to snatch from other employments, to supply the deficiency as well, and in as unassuming manner, as he could. He has chosen for his text a manuscript belonging to the valuable library of Trinity College, Cambridge (where its shelf-mark is B. 15, 17), because it appears to him to be the best and oldest manuscript now in existence. It is a fine folio manuscript, on vellum, written in a large hand, undoubtedly contemporary with the author of the poem, and in remarkably pure English, with ornamented initial letters. His object has been to give the poem as popular a form as is consistent with philological correctness. He has added a few notes which occurred to him in the course of editing the text, and which he hopes may render the meaning and allusions sometimes clearer to the general reader, for whom more especially they are intended. They might have been enlarged and rendered more complete, if he had been master of sufficient leisure to enable him to undertake extensive researches. But there are allusions, as well as words, in both poems to which it would be difficult at present to give any certain explanation. It has been thought advisable to give in the notes the important variations of the second text, from Dr. Whitaker's edition; and a few readings are added from a second manuscript in Trinity College Library (R. 3, 14). The editor has hoped to add to the utility of the book by a copious glossary. He has been unwillingly obliged to leave a few words without explanation; all our early alliterative poetry abounds in difficult words. In this point he has to acknowledge the kind assistance of Sir Frederick Madden, whom no person equals in profound knowledge of English glossography, and than whom no one is more generous to advise and assist those who are in need of his aid. To Sir Henry Ellis, who kindly lent him his own manuscript notes on Piers Ploughman, the editor also owes his grateful acknowledgments; and he regrets that at the time he received them the notes were already so far printed as to hinder him from making as much use of them as he could have wished.

London, June 1, 1842.



THE VISION OF PIERS PLOUGHMAN



THE VISION OF PIERS PLOUGHMAN.



Whan softe was the sonne,
 I shoop me into shroudes
 As I a sheep weere,
 In habite as an heremite
 Unholy of werkes,
 Wente wide in this world
 Wondres to here;
 Ac on a May morwenyng
 On Malverne hilles
 Me bifel a ferly,
 Of fairye me thoghte.
 I was wery for-wandred,
 And wente me to reste
 Under a brood bank
 By a bournes syde;
 And as I lay and lenede,
 And loked on the watres,
 I slombred into a slepyng,
 It sweyed so murye.

10

20

{2}

Thanne gan I meten
 A merveillous swevene,
 That I was in a wilderness,
 Wiste I nevere where,
 And as I biheeld into the eest
 An heigh to the sonne,
 I seigh a tour on a toft
 Trieliche y-maked,
 A deep dale bynethe,
 A dongeon therinne,
 With depe diches and derke
 And dredfulle of sighte.
 A fair feeld ful of folk
 Fond I ther bitwene,
 Of alle manere of men,
 The meene and the riche,
 Werchyng and wandryng,
 As the world asketh.

30

Some putten hem to the plough,
 Pleiden ful selde,
 In settinge and sowyng
 Swonken ful harde,
 And wonnen that wastours
 With glotonye destroyeth.

40

And somme putten hem to pride,
 Apparailed hem thereafter,
 In contenance of clothyng
 Comen degised.

In preires and penaunces
 Putten hem manye,
 Al for the love of oure Lord
 Lyveden ful streyte,
 In hope to have after
 Hevene riche blisse;
 As ances and heremites
 That holden hem in hire selles,
 And coveiten nocht in contree
 To carien aboute,
 For no likerous liflode
 Hire likame to plese.

50

60

{3}

And somme chosen chaffare;
 Thei cheveden the bettre,
 As it semeth to our sight
 That swiche men thryveth.

And somme murthes to make,
 As mynstralles konne,
 And geten gold with hire glee,
 Giltles, I leeve.

Ac japeres and jangeleres,
 Judas children,

70

Feynen hem fantasies,
And fooles hem maketh,
And han hire wit at wille
To werken, if thei wolde.
That Poul precheth of hem
I wol nat preve it here;
But *Qui loquitur turpiloquium*
Is Luciferes hyne.

Bidderes and beggeres
Faste aboute yede, 80
With hire belies and hire bagges
Of breed ful y-crammed;
Faiteden for hire foode,
Foughten at the ale.
In glotonye, God woot,
Go thei to bedde,
And risen with ribaudie,
[Tho Roberdes knaves](#);
Sleep and sory sleuthe {4}
Seweth hem evere. 90

Pilgrymes and palmeres
Plighten hem togidere,
For to seken [seint Jame](#),
And seintes at Rome.
They wenten forth in hire wey,
With many wise tales,
And hadden leve to lyen
Al hire lif after.

I seigh somme that seiden
Thei hadde y-sought seintes; 100
To ech a tale that thei tolde
Hire tonge was tempred to lye,
Moore than to seye sooth,
It semed bi hire speche.

Heremytes on an heep
With hoked staves
Wenten to [Walsyngham](#),
And hire wenches after,
Grete lobies and longe
That lothe were to swynke; 110
Clothed hem in copes,
To ben knowen from othere;
And shopen hem heremytes,
Hire ese to have.

I fond there freres,
[Alle the foure ordres](#),
Prechyng the peple
For profit of hemselfe;
Glosed the gospel,
As hem good liked; 120
For coveitise of copes,
Construwed it as thei wolde.
Many of these maistre freres {5}
Now clothen hem at likyng,
For hire moneie and hire marchaundize
Marchen togideres.
For sith charité hath ben chapman,
And chief to shryve lordes,
Manye ferlies han fallen
In a fewe yeres; 130
[But holy chirche and hii](#)
Holde bettere togidres,
The mooste meschief on molde
Is mountyng wel faste.

Ther preched a pardonere,
As he a preest were;
Broughte forth a bulle
With many bisshopes seles,
And seide that hymself myghte
Assoillen hem alle, 140

Of falskede, of fastynge,
Of avowes y-broken.

Lewed men leved it wel,
And liked hise wordes;
Comen up knelynge
To kissen hise bulles.
He bouched hem with his brevet,
And blered hire eighen,
And raughte with his rageman
Rynges and broches. 150

Thus thei gyven hire gold
Glotons to kepe,
And leveth in swiche losels
As leccherie haunten.

Were the bisshope y-blessed,
And worth bothe hise eris,
His seel sholde noght be sent {6}
To deceyve the peple.
Ac it is noght by the bisshope
That the boy precheth; 160
For the parisshe preest and the pardoner
Parten the silver,
That the poraille of the parisshe
Sholde have, if thei ne were.

Parsons and parisshe preestes
Pleynd hem to the bisshope,
That hire parissches weren povere
Sith the pestilence tyme,
To have a licence and leve
At London to dwelle, 170
And syngen ther for symonie;
For silver is swete.

Bisshopes and bachelers,
Bothe maistres and doctours,
That han cure under Crist,
And crownynge in tokene
And signe that thei sholden
Shryven hire parisschens,
Prechen and praye for hem,
And the povere fede, 180
Liggen at Londone
In Lenten and ellis.

Somme serven the kyng,
And his silver tellen
In cheker and in chauncelrie,
Chalangen hise dettes
Of wardes and of wardemotes,
Weyves and streyves.

And somme serven as servauntz
Lordes and ladies, 190
And in stede of stywardes {7}
Sitten and demen;
Hire messe and hire matyns
And many of hire houres
Arn doon un-devoutliche;
Drede is at the laste,
Lest Crist in consistorie
A-corse ful manye.

I perceyved of the power
That Peter hadde to kepe, 200
To bynden and unbynden,
As the book telleth;
How he it lefte with love,
As oure Lord highte,
Amonges foure vertues,
The beste of alle vertues,
That cardinals ben called,
And closynge yates.

There is Crist in his kingdom
To close and to shette, 210
And to opene it to hem,
And hevene blisse shewe.

Ac of the cardinals at court
That kaughte of that name,
And power presumed in hem
A pope to make,
To han that power that Peter hadde,
Impugnen I nelle;
For in love and in lettrure
The election bilongeth, 220
For-thi I kan and kan naught
Of court speke moore.

Thanne kam ther a kyng,
Knyghthod hym ladde,
[Might of the communes](#) {8}
Made hym to regne.

And thanne cam kynde wit,
And clerkes he made,
For to counseillen the kyng,
And the commune save. 230

The kyng and knyghthod,
And clergie bothe,
Casten that the commune
Sholde hemself fynde.

The commune contrevded
Of kynde wit craftes,
And for profit of al the peple
Plowmen ordeyned,
To tilie and to travaille,
As trewe lif asketh. 240

The kyng and the commune,
And kynde wit the thridde,
Shopen lawe and leauté,
Ech man to knowe his owene.

Thanne loked up a lunatik,
A leene thyng with-alle,
And, knelynge to the kyng,
Clergially he seide:

"Crist kepe thee, sire kyng!
And thi kyng-ryche, 250
And lene thee lede thi lond,
So leauté thee lovye,
And for thi rightful rulyng
Be rewarded in hevene."

And sithen in the eyr an heigh
An aungel of hevene
Lowed to speke in Latyn,
For lewed men ne koude
Jangle ne jugge, {9}
That justifie hem sholde, 260
But suffren and serven;
For-thi seide the aungel:
Sum rex, sum princeps,
Neutrum fortasse deinceps;

O qui jura regis
Christi specialia regis,
Hoc quod agas melius,
Justus es, esto pius.
Nudum jus a te
Vestiri vult pietate; 270
Qualia vis metere,
Talia grana sere.
Si jus nudatur,
Nudo de jure metatur;
Si seritur pietas,

De pietate metas.

Thanne greved hym a goliardeis,
A gloton of wordes,
And to the aungel an heigh
Answerde after: 280
Dum rex a regere
Dicatur nomen habere;
Nomen habet sine re,
Nisi studet jura tenere.

Thanne gan al the commune
Crye in vers of Latyn,
To the kynges counseil;
Construe who so wolde:
Præcepta regis
Sunt nobis vincula legis. 290

With that ran ther a route
Of ratons at ones,
And smale mees myd hem {10}
Mo than a thousand,
And comen to a counseil
For the commune profit;
For a cat of a contree
Cam whan hym liked,
And overleep hem lightliche,
And laughte hem at his wille, 300
And pleide with hem perillousli,
And possed aboute.
"For doute of diverse dredes,
We dar noght wel loke;
And if we grucche of his gamen,
He wol greven us alle,
Cracchen us or clawen us,
And in hise clouches holde,
That us lotheth the lif
Er he late us passe. 310
Mighte we with any wit
His wille withstonde,
We mighte be lordes o-lofte,
And lyven at oure ese."

A raton of renoun,
Moost renable of tonge,
Seide for a sovereyn
Help to hymselfe:

"I have y-seyen segges," quod he
"In the cité of Londone, 320
Beren beighes ful brighte
Abouten hire nekkes,
And somme colers of crafty werk;
Uncoupled thei wenten
Bothe in wareyne and in waast
Where hemself liked.
And outhur while thei arn ellis-where, {11}
As I here telle;
Were ther a belle on hire beighe,
By Jhesu, as me thynketh, 330
Men myghte witen wher thei wente,
And away renne!"

"And right so," quod that raton,
"Reson me sheweth,
To bugge a belle of bras,
Or of bright silver,
And knytten it on a coler
For oure commune profit,
Wher he ryt or rest,
Or renneth to pleye; 340
And if hym list for to laike,
Thanne loke we mowen,
And peeren in his presence
The while him pleye liketh:
And, if hym wratheth, be war,

And his way shonye."

Al this route of ratons
To this reson thei assented.
Ac tho the belle was y-brought,
And on the beighe hanged, 350
Ther ne was raton in al the route,
For al the reaume of Fraunce,
That dorste have bounden the belle
About the cattes nekke,
Ne hangen it aboute the cattes hals,
Al Engelond to wynne.
Alle helden hem un-hardy,
And hir counseil feble;
And leten hire labour lost
And al hire longe studie. 360

A mous that mucche good
Kouthe, as me thoughte,
Strook forth sternely,
And stood bifore hem alle,
And to the route of ratons
Reherced these wordes:

"Though we killen the cat,
Yet sholde ther come another
To cacchen us and al oure kynde,
Though we copen under benches. 370
For-thi I counseille al the commune
To late the cat worthe;
And be we nevere bolde
The belle hym to shewe;
For I herde my sire seyn,
Is seven yeer y-passed,
Ther the cat is a kitone
The court is ful elenge;
That witnesseth holy writ,
Who so wole it rede: 380

Væ terræ ubi puer rex est! etc.
For may no renk ther reste have
For ratons by nyghte;
The while he caccheth conynges,
He coveiteth noght youre caroyne,
But fedeth hym al with venyson:
Defame we hym nevere.
For better is a litel los
Than a long sorwe,
The maze among us alle, 390
Theigh we mysse a sherewe;
For many mennes malt
We mees wolde destruye,
And also ye route of ratons
Rende mennes clothes, {13}
Nere the cat of that court
That can yow over-lepe;
For hadde ye rattes youre wille,
Ye kouthe noght rule yow selve."

"I seye for me," quod the mous, 400
"I se so muchel after,
Shal nevere the cat ne the kiton
By my counseil be greved,
Thorugh carpyng of this coler
That costed me nevere
And though it hadde costned me catel,
Bi-knowen it I nolde,
But suffren, as hymself wolde,
To doon as hym liketh,
Coupled and uncoupled 410
To cacche what thei mowe.
For-thi ech a wis wight I warne,
Wite wel his owene."

What this metels by-meneth,
Ye men that ben murye

Devyne ye, for I ne dar,
By deere God in hevене.

Yet hoved ther an hundred
In howves of selk,
Sergeantz it bi-semed 420
That serveden at the barre,
Pleteden for penyes
And poundes the lawe;
And nocht for love of our Lord
Unclose hire lippes ones.
Thow myghtest bettre meete myst
On Malverne hilles,
Than gete a mom of hire mouth,
Til moneie be shewed. {14}

Barons and burgeises, 430
And bonde-men als,
I seigh in this assemblee,
As ye shul here after:
Baksteres and brewesteres,
And bochiers manye;
Wollen webbesters,
And weveres of lynnenn,
Tailleurs and tynkers,
And tollers in markettes,
Masons and mynours, 440
And many othere craftes.
Of alle kynne lybbynge laborers
Lopen forth somme,
As dikeres and delveres,
That doon hire dedes ille,
And dryveth forth the longe day
With *Dieu save dame Emme*.

Cokes and hire knaves
Cryden, "Hote pies, hote!"
Goode gees and grys! 450
Gowe, dyne, gowe!"

Taverners until hem
Trewely tolden the same,
Whit wyn of Oseye,
And reed wyn of Gascoigne,
Of the Ryn and of the Rochel,
The roost to defie.
[Al this I saugh slepyng,
And seve sithes more.] 459



Passus Primus de Visione.

WHAT this mountaigne by-meneth 460
And the merke dale,
And the feld ful of folk,
I shal yow faire shewe.

A lovely lady of leere,
In lynnenn y-clothed,
Cam down from a castel
And called me faire,
And seide, "Sone, slepestow?
Sestow this peple,
How bisie thei ben 470
Alle aboute the maze?
The mooste partie of this peple

That passeth on this erthe,
Have thei worship in this world,
Thei wilne no better;
Of oother hevne than here
Holde thei no tale."

I was a-fered of hire face,
Theigh she fair weere,
And seide, "Mercy, madame,
What is this to meene?" 480

"The tour on the toft," quod she,
"Truthe is therinne;
And wolde that ye wroughte, {16}
As his word techeth!
For he is fader of feith,
And formed yow alle
Bothe with fel and with face,
And yaf yow fyve wittes,
For to worshiþe hym therwith, 490
While that ye ben here.
And therefore he highte the erthe
To helpe yow echone,
Of wollene, of lynnene,
Of liflode at nede,
In mesurable manere
To make yow at ese;
And comaunded of his curteisie
In commune three thynges,
Are none nedfulle but tho, 500
And nempne hem I thynke,
And rekene hem by reson;
Reherce thow hem after.

"That oon vesture,
From cold thee to save;
And mete at meel
For mysese of thiselwe;
And drynke whan thow driest;
Ac do nocht out of reson,
That thow worthe the wers 510
Whan thow werche sholdest.

"For Lot in hise lif-dayes,
For likyng of drynke,
Dide by hise doughtres
That the devel liked,
Delited hym in drynke
As the devel wolde,
And leccherie hym laughte, {17}
And lay by hem bothe,
And al he witte it the wyn 520
That wikked dede.
*Inebriamus eum vino, dormiamusque
cum eo, ut servare possimus de
patre nostro semen.*
Thorough wyn and thorough wommen
Ther was Loth acombred,
And there gat in glotonie
Gerles that were cherles.

"For-thi dred delitable drynke,
And thow shalt do the better. 530
Mesure is medicine,
Though thow muchel yerne.
It is nought al good to the goost
That the gut asketh,
Ne liflode to thi likame;
For a liere hym techeth,
That is the wrecched world
Wolde thee bitraye.
For the fend and thi flesshe
Folwen togidere. 540
This and that seeth thi soule,
And seith it in thin herte;

And for thow sholdest ben y-war,
I wisse thee the beste."

"Madame, mercy!" quod I,
"Me liketh wel youre wordes;
Ac the moneie of this molde
That men so faste holdeth,
Tel me to whom, madame,
That tresour appendeth." 550

"Go to the gospel," quod she,
"That God seide hymselfen; {18}
Tho the poeple hym apposed
With a peny in the temple,
Wheither thei sholde therwith
Worshipe the kyng Cesar.

"And God asked of hym,
Of whom spak the lettre,
And the ymage was lik
That therinne stondest." 560

"'Cesares,' thei seiden,
'We seen it wel echone.'

"'Reddite Cæsari,' quod God,
'That Cæsari bifalleth,
Et quæ sunt Dei Deo,'
Or ellis ye don ille;
For rightfully reson
Sholde rule yow alle,
And kynde wit be wardeyn
Youre welthe to kepe, 570
And tutour of youre tresor,
And take it yow at nede,
For housbondrie and hii
Holden togidres."

Thanne I frayned hire faire,
For hym that me made,
"That dongeon in the dale,
That dredful is of sighte,
What may it be to meene,
Madame, I yow biseche?" 580

"That is the castel of Care;
Who so comth therinne
May banne that he born was,
To bodi or to soule.
Therinne wonyeth a wight
That Wrong is y-hote, {19}
Fader of falskede,
And founded it hymselfe.

Adam and Eve
He egged to ille; 590
Counseilled Kaym
To killen his brother;
Judas he japed
With Jewen silver,
And sithen on an eller
Hanged hymselfe.

He is lettere of love,
And lieth hem alle
That trusten on his tresour;
Bitrayeth he hem sonnest." 600

Thanne hadde I wonder in my wit
What womman it weere,
That swiche wise wordes
Of holy writ shewed;
And asked hire on the heighe name,
Er she thennes yede,
What she were witterly
That wissed me so faire.

"Holi chirche I am," quod she,

"Thow oughtest me to knowe;
I underfeng thee first,
And the feith taughte;
And broughtest me borwes
My bidding to fulfille,
And to loven me leelly
The while thi lif dureth."
610

Thanne I courbed on my knees,
And cried hire of grace;
And preide hire pitously
Preye for my sinnes,
And also kenne me kyndely
On Crist to bi-leve,
That I myghte werchen his wille
That wroghte me to man.
"Teche me to no tresor,
But tel me this ilke,
How I may save my soule,
That seint art y-holden."
620 {20}

"Whan alle tresors arn tried," quod she,
"Treuthe is the beste;
I do it on *Deus caritas*,
To deme the sothe,
It is as dereworthe a drury
As deere God hymselfen.
630

"Who is trewe of his tonge,
And telleth noon oother,
And dooth the werkes therwith,
And wilneth no man ille,
He is a God by the gospel
A-grounde and o-lofte,
And y-lik to oure Lord,
By seint Lukes wordes.
The clerkes that knowen this,
Sholde kennen it aboute,
For cristen and un-cristen
Cleymeth it echone.
640

"Kynges and knyghtes
Sholde kepen it by reson,
Riden and rappen doun
In reaumes aboute,
And taken *transgressores*,
And tyen hem faste,
Til treuthe hadde y-termyned
Hire trespas to the ende.
And that is profession apertli
That apendeth to knyghtes;
And naught to fasten o friday
In fyve score wynter,
But holden with hym and with here
That wolden alle truthe,
And nevere leve hem for love
Ne for lacchyng of silver.
For David in hise dayes
Dubbed knyghtes,
And dide hem sweren on hir swerdes
To serven truthe evere;
And who so passed that point
Was apostata in the ordre.
650 {21}

"But Crist kyngene kyng
Knyghted ten,
Cherubyn and seraphyn,
Swiche sevene and othere
And yaf hem myght in his majestee,
The murier hem thoughte,
And over his meene meynee
Made hem archangeles;
Taughte hem by the Trinitee
Treuthe to knowe;
To be buxom at his bidding,
670

He bad hem nought ellis. 680

"Lucifer with legions

Lerned it in hevене;

But for he brak buxomnesse

His blisse gan he tyne,

And fel fro that felawshipe

In a fendes liknesse,

Into a deep derk helle,

To dwelle there for evere;

{22}

And mo thousandes myd hym

Than man kouthe nombre

690

Lopen out with Lucifer

In lothliche forme,

For thei leveden upon hym

That lyed in this manere:

Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero altissimo. =

"And alle that hoped it myghte be so,

Noon hevене myghte hem holde,

But fellen out in fendes liknesse

Nyne dayes togideres,

700

Til God of his goodnesse

Gan stablisse and stynte,

And garte the hevене to stekie

And stonden in quiete.

"Whan thise wikkede wenten out,

In wonder wise thei fellen;

Somme in the eyr, somme in erthe,

And somme in helle depe;

Ac Lucifer lowest lith

Yet of hem alle,

710

For pride that he putte out,

His peyne hath noon ende.

And alle that werchen with wrong,

Wende thei shulle,

After hir deth day

And dwelle with that sherewe.

"And tho that werche wel,

As holy writ telleth,

And enden as I er seide

In truthe, that is the beste,

720

Mowe be siker that hire soules

Shul wende to hevене,

Ther treuthe is in trinitee,

And troneth hem alle.

For-thi I seye, as I seyde er,

By sighte of thise textes,

Whan alle tresors arn tried,

Truthe is the beste;

Lereth it thise lewed men,

For lettred men it knoweth,

730

That treuthe is tresor

The trieste on erthe."

"Yet have I no kynde knowyng." quod I,

"Ye mote kenne me bettre,

By what craft in my cors

It comseth, and where."

"Thow doted daffe," quod she,

"Dulle are thi wittes;

To litel Latyn thow lernedest,

Leode, in thi youthe."

740

Heu michi! quia sterilem duxi vitam juvenilem. =

"It is a kynde knowyng," quod she,

"That kenneth in thyn herte,

For to loven thi Lord

Levere than thiselve,

No dedly synne to do,

Deye theigh thow sholdest;

This I trowe be truthe.

Who kan teche thee bettre,

750

Loke thow suffre hym to seye,
And sithen lere it after;
For truthe telleth that love
Is triacle of hevene.
May no synne be on hym seene,
That useth that spice, {24}
And alle hise werkes be wroughte
With love as hym liste;
And lered it Moyses for the leveste thyng,
And moost lik to hevene, 760
And al so the plentee of pees
Moost precious of vertues;
For hevene myghte nat holden it,
It was so hevy of hymself,
Til it hadde of the erthe
Eten his fille.

"And whan it hadde of this fold
Flesshe and blood taken,
Was nevere leef upon lynde
Lighter thereafter, 770
And portatif and persaunt
As the point of a nedle,
That myghte noon armure it lette,
Ne none heighe walles.

"For-thi is love ledere
Of the Lordes folk of hevene,
And a meene, as the mair is
Bitwene the kyng and the commune;
Right so is love a ledere,
And the law shapeth, 780
Upon man for hise mysdedes
The mercymment he taxeth.
And for to knowen it kyndely
It comseth by myght,
And in the herte there is the heed
And the heighe welle;
For in kynde knowynge in herte,
Ther a myght bigynneth;
And that falleth to the fader
That formed us alle, 790

Loked on us with love,
And leet his sone dye
Mekely for oure mysdedes,
To amenden us alle.
And yet wolde he hem no wo
That wroughte hym that peyne,
But mekely with mouthe
Mercy bisoughte,
To have pité of that peple
That peyned hym to dethe. 800 {25}

"There myghtow sen ensample
In hymself oone,
That he was myghtful and meke,
And mercy gan graunte
To hem that hengen hym on heigh
And his herte thirled.

"For-thi I rede yow, riche,
Haveth ruthe of the povere;
Though ye be myghtful to mote,
Beeth meke in youre werkes, 810
For the same mesures that ye mete,
Amys outhere ellis,
Ye shulle ben weyen therwith
Whan ye wenden hennes.
Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis. =

"For though ye be trewe of youre tonge
And troweliche wyne,
And as chaste as a child
That in chirche wepeth, 820
But if ye loven leelly

And lene the povere,
Swich good as God yow sent
Goodliche parteth,
Ye ne have namoore merite
In masse nor in houres,
Than Malkyn of hire maydenhede
That no man desireth.

{26}

"For James the gentile
Jugged in hise bokes, 830
That feith withouten the feet
Is right no thyng worthi,
And as deed as a dore-tree,
But if the dedes folwe.
Fides sine operibus mortua est, etc.

"For-thi chastité withouten charité
Worth cheyned in helle;
It is as lewed as a lampe
That no light is inne. 840
Manye chapeleyns arn chaste,
Ac charité is aweye;
Are no men avarouser than hii
Whan thei ben avaunced,
Unkynde to hire kyn,
And to alle cristene
Chewen hire charité,
And chiden after moore;
Swiche chastité withouten charité
Worth cheyned in helle.

"Manye curatours kepen hem 850
Clene of hire bodies;
Thei ben acombred with coveitise,
Thei konne noght doon it from hem,
So harde hath avarice
Y-hasped hem togideres;
And that is no truthe of the Trinité,
But tricherie of helle,
And lernynge to lewed men 860
The latter for to deele.
For-thi thise wordes 860
Ben writen in the gospel,
Date, et dabitur vobis,
For I deele yow alle,
And that is the lok of love,
And leteth out my grace,
To conforten the carefulle
A-combred with synne.

{27}

"Love is leche of lif,
And next oure Lord selve, 870
And also the graithe gate
That goth into hevене;
For-thi I seye, as I seide
Er by the textes,
Whan alle tresors ben tried,
Treathe is the beste.

"Now have I told thee what truthe is,
That no tresor is bettre;
I may no lenger lenge thee with,
Now loke thee oure Lorde." 879



{28}



Passus Secundus de Visione, ut supra.

YET I courbed on my knees,
And cried hire of grace,
And seide, "Mercy, madame,
For Marie love of hevене,
That bar that blisful barn
That boughte us on the rode,
Kenne me by som craft
To knowe the false." 880

"Loke up on thi left half,
And lo where he stondesth!
Bothe Fals and Favel,
And hire feeres manye." 890

I loked on my left half,
As the lady me taughte,
And was war of a womman
Worthiliche y-clothed,
Purfiled with pelure
The fyneste upon erthe,
Y-corouned with a coroune,
The kyng hath noon better;
Fetisliche hire fyngres 900
Were fretted with gold wyr,
And theron rede rubies
As rede as any gleede,
And diamauundes of derrest pris, {29}
And double manere saphires,
Orientals and ewages,
Envenymes to destroye.

Hire robe was ful riche,
Of reed scarlet engreyned,
With ribanes of reed gold 910
And of riche stones.
Hire array me ravysshed,
Swich richesse saugh I nevere;
I hadde wonder what she was,
And whos wif she were.

"What is this womman," quod I,
"So worthili atired?"

"That is Mede the mayde," quod she,
"Hath noyed me ful ofte,
And y-lakked my lemman 920
That Leautee is hoten,
And bi-lowen hire to lordes
That lawes han to kepe.

"In the popes paleis
She is pryvee as myselve;
But soothnesse wolde noght so,
For she is a bastarde;
For fals was hire fader
That hath a fikel tonge,
And nevere sooth seide 930
Sithen he com to erthe;
And Mede is manered after hym,
Right as kynde asketh
Qualis pater talis filius.
Bonus arbor bonum fructum facit.

"I oughte ben hyere than she,
I kam of a bettere;
My fader the grete God is {30}
And ground of alle graces,
So God withouten gynnyng,
And I his goode doughter, 940

And hath yeven me mercy
To marie with myselve,
And what man be merciful
And leelly me love,
Shal be my lord and I his leef
In the heighe hevене.

"And what man taketh Mede,
Myn heed dar I legge,
That he shal lese for hire love 950
A lappe of *caritatis*.

"How construeth David the king
Of men that taketh Mede,
And men of this moolde
That maynteneth truthe,
And how ye shul save yourself,
The sauter bereth witesse:
Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo, etc. =

"And now worth this Mede y-maried 960
Unto a mansed sherewe,
To oon fals fikel tonge,
A fendes biyete;
Favel thorough his faire speche
Hath this folk enchaunted,
And al is Lieres ledyng,
That she is thus y-wedded.

"To-morwe worth y-maked
The maydenes bridale,
And there myghtow witen, if thow wilt, 970
Whiche thei ben alle
That longen to that lordshipe, {31}
The lasse and the moore.
Knowe hem there, if thow kanst,
And kepe thow thi tonge,
And lakke hem noght, but lat hem worthe
Till leauté be justice,
And have power to punysshe hem,
Thanne put forth thi reson.
Now I bikenne thee Crist," quod she, 980
"And his clene moder,
And lat no conscience acombre thee
For coveitise of Mede."

Thus lefte me that lady
Liggyng a-slepe;
And how Mede was y-maried
In metels me thoughte,
That al the riche retenaunce
That regneth with the false,
Were boden to the bridale 990
On bothe two sides,
Of alle manere of men
The meene and the riche;
To marien this mayde
Were many men assembled,
As of knyghtes and of clerkes,
And oother commune peple,
As sisours and somonours,
Sherreves and hire clerkes,
Bedelles and baillifs, 1000
And brocours of chaffare,
Forgoers and vitailleurs,
And advokettes of the arches;
I kan noght rekene the route
That ran aboute Mede.

Ac Symonie and Cyvyllie,
And sisours of courtes,
Were moost pryvee with Mede
Of any men, me thoughte.
Ac Favel was the firste 1010
That fette hire out of boure,
And as a brocour broughte hire

{32}

To be with Fals enjoyned.

Whan Symonye and Cyvyll
Seighe hir bothe wille,
Thei assented, for silver,
To seye as bothe wolde.

Thanne leep Liere forth, and seide,
"Lo here a chartre!"
That Gile with hise grete othes 1020
Gaf hem togidere,
And preide Cyvyll to see,
And Symonye to rede it.

Thanne Symonye and Cyvyll
Stonden forth bothe,
And unfoldeth the feffement
That Fals hath y-maked,
And thus bigynnen these gomes
To greden ful heighe:
Sciunt præsentes et futuri, etc. 1030

Witeth and witnesseth,
That wonieth upon this erthe,
That Mede is y-mariéd
Moore for hire goodes
Than for any vertue or fairnesse,
Or any free kynde.
Falsnesse is fayn of hire,
For he woot hire riche;
And Favel with his felk speche 1040 {33}
Feffeth by this chartre,
To be princes in pride
And poverté to despise,
To bakbite and to bosten,
And bere fals witnessé,
To scorne and to scolde,
And sclaundre to make,
Unbuxome and bolde
To breke the ten hestes.

And the erldom of Envyé
And Wrathe togideres, 1050
With the chastilet of Chesté,
And Chaterynge out of reson.

The countee of Coveitise,
And alle the costes aboute,
That is Usure and Avarice,
Al I hem graunte,
In bargaynes and in brocages,
With al the burghe of Thefte,

And al the lordshipe of Leccherie
In lengthe and in brede, 1060
As in werkes and in wordes,
And in waitynges with eighes,
And in wedes and in wisshynges,
And with ydel thoughtes,
There as wil wolde
And werkmanshipe fayleth.

Glotonye he gaf hem ek,
And grete othes togidere,
And al day to drynken
At diverse tavernes, 1070
And there to jangle and jape,
And juggle hir even cristen;
And in fastynge dayes to frete
Er ful tyme were, {34}
And thanne to sitten and soupen
Til sleep hem assaille;
And bredden as burghe swyn,
And bedden hem esily,
Til sleuthe and sleep
Sliken hise sydes, 1080

And thanne wanhope to awaken hem so
With no wil to amende,
For he leveth be lost,
This is hir laste ende.

And thei to have and to holde,
And hire heires after,
A dwellynge with the devel,
And dampned be for evere,
With alle the appurtinaunces of purgatorie =
Into the pyne of helle. 1091

Yeldyngge for this thyng,
At one dayes tyme,
Hire soules to Sathan,
To suffre with hym peynes,
And with hym to wonye with wo
While God is in hevene.

In witesse of which thyng,
Wrong was the firste,
And Piers the pardoner 1100
Of Paulynes doctrine,
Bette the bedel
Of Bokyngham shire,
Reynald the reve
Of Rutland sokene,
Maude the millere,
And many mo othere.

In the date of the devel
This dede I ensele,
By sighte of Sire Symonie 1110
And Cyvyles leeve.

Thanne tened hym Theologie,
Whan he this tale herde;
And seide unto Cyvyle,
"Now sorwe mote thou have,
Swiche weddynges to werche,
To wrathe with truthe;
And er this weddyngge be wroght,
Wo thee bitide!

"For Mede is muliere 1120
Of Amendes engendred,
And God graunteth to gyve
Mede to Truthe;

And thou hast gyven hire to a gilour;
Now God gyve thee sorwe!
Thi text telleth thee noght so,
Truthe woot the sothe;
For *Dignus est operarius*
His hire to have,
And thou hast fest hire to Fals, 1130
Fy on thi lawe!
For al bi lesynges thou lyvest
And lecherouse werkes.

Symonye and thiself
Shenden holi chirche;
The notaries and ye
Noyen the peple;
Ye shul a-biggen it bothe,
By God that me made!

"Wel ye witen, wernardes, 1140
But if youre wit faille,
That Fals is feithlees
And fikel in hise werkes,
And was a bastarde y-bore
Of Belsabubbes kynne;
And Mede is muliere,
A maiden of goode,
And myghte kisse the kyng
For cosyn, and she wolde.

{35}

{36}

"For-thi wercheth by wisdom, 1150
And by wit also;
And ledeth hire to Londone,
There it is y-shewed,
If any lawe wol loke
Thei ligge togideres;
And though justices juggen hire
To be joyned to Fals,
Yet be war of weddyng;
For witty is Truthe,
And Conscience is of his counsel, 1160
And knoweth yow echone,
And if he fynde yow in defaute
And with the false holde,
It shal bi-sitte youre soules
Ful soure at the laste."

Herto assenteth Cyvyle,
Ac Symonye ne wolde,
Til he hadde silver for his service,
And also the notaries.

Thanne fette Favel forth 1170
Floryns ynowe,
And bad Gile to gyven
Gold al aboute,
And namely to the notaries
That hem noon ne faille,
And feffe false witnesses {37}
[With floryns ynowe,](#)
"For thei may Mede a-maistrye,
And maken at my wille."

Tho this gold was y-gyve, 1180
Gret was the thonkyng
To Fals and to Favel
For hire faire giftes,
And comen to conforten
From care the false,
And seiden, "Certes, sire,
Cessen shul we nevere,
Til Mede be thi wedded wif
Thorugh wittes of us alle;
For we have Mede a-maistried 1190
Withoure murie speche,
That she graunteth to goon,
With a good wille,
To London, to loken
If the lawe wolde
Juggen yow joyntly
In joie for evere."

Thanne was Falsnesse fayn,
And Favel as blithe,
And leten somone alle segges 1200
In shires aboute,
And bad hem alle be bown,
Beggars and othere,
To wenden with hem [to Westmynstre](#)
To witnesse this dede.

Ac thanne cared thei for caples
To carien hem thider,
And Favel fette forth thanne
Foles ynowe,
And sette Mede upon a sherreve 1210
Shoed al newe. {38}

And Fals sat on a sisour,
That softeli trotted;
And Favel on a flaterere
Fetisly atired.

Tho hadde notaries none,
Anoyed thei were,
For Symonye and Cyvyle

Sholde on hire feet gange.

Ac thanne swoor Symonye, 1220
And Cyvyll bothe,
That somonours sholde be sadeled
And serven hem echone,
And late apparaille these provisours
In palfreyes wise,
Sire Symonye hymself
Shal sitte upon hir bakkes.

"Denes and southdenes,
Drawe yow togideres,
Erchdekenes and officials, 1230
And alle youre registrers,
Lat sadle hem with silver
Oure synne to suffre,
As avoutrye and divorses,
And derne usurie,
To here bisshopes aboute
A-brood in visitynge.

"Paulynes pryvees
For pleintes in consistorie,
Shul serven myself 1240
That Cyvyle is nempned.

"And cart-sadle the commissarie,
Oure cart shal he lede,
And fecchen us vitailles. {39}
At Fornicators.
And maketh of Lyere a lang cart
To leden alle these othere,
As freres and faitours,
That on hire feet rennen."

And thus Fals and Favel 1250
Fareth forth togideres,
And Mede in the middes,
And alle these men after.

I have no tome to telle
The tail that hire folwed;
Ac Gyle was for-goer,
And gyed hem alle.

Sothnesse seigh hem wel,
And seide but litel,
And priked his palfrey, 1260
And passed hem alle,
And com to the kynges court,
And Conscience it tolde;
And Conscience to the kyng
Carped it after.

"Now, by Crist," quod the kyng,
"And I cacche myghte
Fals or Favel,
Or any of hise feeris,
I wolde be wroken of the wrecches 1270
That wercheth so ille,
And doon hem hange by the hals,
And alle that hem maynteneth;
Shal nevere man of this molde
Meynprise the leeste,
But right as the lawe wol loke,
Lat falle on hem alle."

And comaunded a constable {40}
That com at the firste,
To attachen tho tyrauntz, 1280
"For any thyng I hote,
And fettreth faste Falsnesse,
For any kynnes giftes,
And girdeth of Gyles heed,
And lat hym go no ferther;

And if ye lacche Lyere,
Lat hym noght ascapen
Er he be put on the pillory,
For any preyere, I hote;
And bryngeth Mede to me
Maugree hem alle." 1290

Drede at the dore stood,
And the doom herde,
And how the kyng comaunded
Constables and sergeantz
Falsnesse and his felawshipe
To fettren and to bynden.

Thanne Drede wente wyghtliche,
And warned the False,
And bad hym fle for fere,
And hise felawes alle. 1300

Falsnesse for fere thanne
Fleigh to the ffreres,
And Gyle dooth hym to go,
A-gast for to dye;
Ac marchauntz metten with hym
And made hym abide,
And bi-shetten hym in hire shoppes
To shewen hire ware,
Apparailed hym as apprentice
The peple to serve. 1310

Lightliche Lyere
Leep away thanne,
Lurkyng thorough lanes,
To-lugged of manye.
He was nowher welcome,
For his manye tales,
Over al y-honted,
And y-hote trusse,
Til pardoners hadde pité,
And pulled hym into house. 1320
They wesshen hym and wiped hym.
And wounden hym in cloutes,
And senten hym with seles
On Sondayes to chirches,
And yeven pardoun for pens
Pounde-mele aboute.

Thanne lourede leches,
And lettres thei sente,
That he sholde wonye with hem
Watres to loke. 1330

Spycers speken with hym,
To spien hire ware;
For he kouthe of hir craft,
And knewe manye gomes.

And mynstrales and messagers
Mette with hym ones,
And helden hym an half-yeer
And ellevene dayes.

Freres with fair speche
Fetten hym pennes,
And for knowynge of comeres
Coped hym as a frere;
Ac he hath leve to lepen out,
As ofte as hym liketh,
And is welcome whan he wile,
And woneth with hem ofte. 1340

Alle fledden for fere,
And flowen into hernes;
Save Mede the mayde,
Na-mo dorste abide. 1350
Ac trewely to telle,

{41}

{42}

She trembled for drede,
And ek wepte and wrong,
Whan she was attached.

1355



{43}

Passus Tertius de Visione, ut supra.

NOW is Mede the mayde,
And na-mo of hem alle,
With bedeles and with baillies
Brought bifore the kyng.

1356

The kyng called a clerk,
Kan I noght his name,
To take Mede the maide
And maken hire at ese.
"I shal assayen hire myself,
And soothliche appose,
What man of this moolde
That hire were levest.
And if she werche bi wit,
And my wil folwe,
I wol forgyven hire this gilt,
So me God helpe!"

1360

Curteisly the clerk thanne,
As the kyng highte,
Took Mede bi the myddel
And broghte hire into chambre;
And ther was murthe and mynstralcie,
Mede to plese.

They that wonyeth in Westmynstre
Worshipeth hire alle,
Gentilliche with joye;
The justices somme
Busked hem to the bour
Ther the burde dwellede,
To conforten hire kyndely,
By clergies leve;
And seiden, "Mourne noght, Mede,
Ne make thow no sorwe;
For we wol wisse the kyng,
And thi wey shape,
To be wedded at thi wille,
And wher thee leef liketh,
For al Consciencis cast
Or craft, as I trowe."

=
1380

{44}

Mildely Mede thanne
Merciede hem alle
Of hire grete goodnesse,
And gaf hem echone
Coupes of clene gold,
And coppes of silver,
Rynges with rubies,
And riches manye;
The leeste man of hire meynne
[A moton of golde.](#)
Than laughte thei leve
Thise lordes at Mede.

1400

With that comen clerkes

To conforten hire the same,
And beden hire be blithe;
"For we beth thyne owene, 1410
For to werche thi wille,
The while thow myght laste."

Hendiliche heo thanne
Bi-highte hem the same, {45}
To loven hem lelly,
And lordes to make,
And in the consistorie at the court
Do callen hire names;
"Shal no lewednesse lette
The leode that I lovye, 1420
That he ne worth first avaunced;
For I am bi-knowen,
There konnynges clerkes
Shul klokke bi-hynde."

Thanne cam ther a confessour,
Coped as a frere;
To Mede the mayde
He meved these wordes,
And seide ful softly, 1430
In shrift as it were,
"Theigh lewed men and lered men
Hadde leyen by thee bothe,
And Falsnesse hadde y-folwed thee
Alle these fifty wynter,
I shal assoille thee myself
For a seem of whete,
And also be thi bedeman,
And bere wel thi message
Amonges knyghtes and clerkes,
Conscience to torne." 1440

Thanne Mede for hire mysdedes
To that man kneled,
And shrof hire of hire shrewednesse,
Shamelees, I trowe;
Tolde hym a tale,
And took hym a noble,
For to ben hire bedeman
And hire brocour als.

Thanne he assoiled hire soone, {46}
And sithen he seide, 1450
"We have a wyndow in werchyng
Wole sitten us ful hye,
Woldestow glaze that gable
And grave therein thy name,
Syker sholde thi soule be
Hevene to have."

"Wiste I that," quod that womman,
"I wolde noght spare
For to be youre frend, frere,
And faile yow nevere, 1460
While ye love lordes
That lecherie haunten,
And lakketh noght ladies
That loven wel the same.
It is freletee of flesshe,
Ye fynden it in bokes,
And a cours of kynde
Wherof we comen alle.
Who may scape sclaundre,
The scathe is soone amended; 1470
It is synne of the sevene
Sonnest releessed.

"Have mercy," quod Mede,
"Of men that it haunteth,
And I shal covere youre kirk,
Your cloistre do maken,
Woves do whiten,

And wyndowes glazen,
Do peynten and portraye,
And paie for the makynge, 1480
That every segge shal seye
I am suster of youre house."

{47}

Ac God to alle good folk
Swich gravynge defendeth,
To writen in wyndowes
Of hir wel dedes,
An aventure pride be peynted there,
And pomp of the world;
For Crist knoweth thi conscience,
And thi kynde wille, 1490
And thi cost and thi coveitise,
And who the catel oughthe.

For-thi I lere yow, lordes,
Leveth swiche werkes;
To writen in wyndowes
Of youre wel dedes,
Or to greden after Goddes men
Whan ye dele doles,
On aventure ye have youre hire here,
And youre hevене als. 1500
Nesciat sinistra quid faciat dextra.

Lat noght thi left half
Late ne rathe
Wite what thow werchest
With thi right syde;
For thus by the gospel
Goode men doon hir almesse.

Maires and maceres,
That menes ben bitwene
The kyng and the comune 1510
To kepe the lawes,
To punyssh on pillories
And pynyng-stooles,
Brewesters and baksters,
Bochiers and cokes,
For these are men on this molde
That moost harm wercheth {48}
To the povere peple
That percel-mele buggen;
For thei enpoisone the peple 1520
Pryveliche and ofte,
Thei richen thorough regratrie,
And rentes hem biggen,
With that the povere peple
Sholde putte in hire wombe.
For toke thei on trewely,
Thei tymbred nought so heighe,
Ne boughte none burgages,
Be ye ful certeyne.

Ac Mede the mayde 1530
The mair hath bi-sought
Of alle swiche selleris
Silver to take,
Or presentz withouten pens,
As pieces of silver,
Rynges or oother richesse,
The regratiers to mayntene;
"For my love," quod that lady,
"Love hem echone,
And suffre hem to selle 1540
Som del ayeins reson."

Salomon the sage
A sermon he made,
For to amenden maires
And men that kepen lawes;
And tolde hem this teme,
That I telle thynke,

*Ignis devorabit tabernacula eorum
qui libenter accipiunt munera,
etc.*

1550

Among these lettered leodes
This Latin is to mine,
That first shall fall and burn
All to blood asks
The houses and homes
Of them that desire
Gifts or yearnings
By cause of hire offices.

{49}

The king from the counsel came,
And called after Medea,
And of sending hire as swifter
With sergeant many,
And brought hire to board
With bliss and with joy.

1560

Courteously the king thanked
Commanded to tell,
To Medea the maiden
He meant these words,
"Unwittingly, woman,
Wronged hasten often,
As worse wronged never
Than thou thou false took.
But I forgive thee that guilt,
And granted thee my grace;
Hence to thy death day
Do so na-moore.

1570

"I have a knight Conscience,
Came late from beyond;
If he will thee to wife,
Will you have him?"

1580

"Ye, lord," quoth that lady,
"Lord forbide it ellis!
But I be holly at your hest,
Let hang me soon."

And thanked was Conscience called
To come and appear
Before the king and his counsel,
As clerks and others.

{50}

Knelyng Conscience
To the king louted,
To wite what his will were,
And what he do wolde.

1590

"Will you wed this woman," quoth the king,
"If I would assente?
For she is fayne of thy fellowship,
For to be thy make."

Quoth Conscience to the king,
"Christ it me forbide!
Er I wedde swich a wife,
Who me bitide!
For she is free of hire feith,
Fickle of hire speche,
And maketh men mysdo
Many score tymes;
Trust of hire tresor
Betrayeth full manye.

1600

"Wives and widows
Wantonnes she teacheth,
And lecheth hem lecherie
That loveth hire gifts.
Youre fader she felled
Thorough false bihestes,
And hath enpoisoned popes,

1610

And peired holy chirche.
Is noght a bettre baude,
By hym that me made!
Bitwene hevene and helle,
In erthe though men soughte.
For she is tikel of hire tail, {51}
And tale-wis of hire tonge; 1620
As commune as a cartwey
To ech a knave that walketh,
To monkes, to mynstrales,
To meseles in hegges.

"Sisours and somonours,
Swiche men hire preiseth;
Sherreves of shires
Were shent if she ne were;
For she dooth men lese hire lond
And hire lif bothe; 1630
She leteth passe prisoners,
And paieth for hem ofte,
And gyveth the gailers gold
And grotes togidres,
To unfette the fals
Fle where hym liketh;
And taketh the trewe bi the top
And tieth hem faste,
And hangeth hem for hatrede
That harm dide nevere. 1640

"To be corsed in consistorie
She counteth noght a bene;
For she copeth the commissarie,
And coteth hise clerkes.
She is assoiled as soone
As hireself liketh;
And may neigh as muche do
In a monthe one,
As youre secret seel
In sixe score dayes. 1650
For she is pryvee with the pope,
[Provisours](#) it knoweth;
For sire Symonie and hirselve {52}
Seleth hire bulles.

"She blesseth these bisshopes,
Theigh thei be lewed;
Provendreth persones,
And preestes maynteneth,
To have lemmans and lotebies
Alle hire lif daies, 1660
And bryngeth forth barnes
Ayein forbode lawes.
Ther she is wel with the kyng,
Wo is the reaume;
For she is favourable to fals,
And de-fouleth truthe ofte.

"By Jhesus! with hire jeweles
Youre justices she shendeth,
And lith ayein the lawe,
And letteth hym the gate, 1670
That feith may noght have his forth,
Hire floryns go so thikke.
She ledeth the lawe as hire list,
[And love-daies maketh](#),
And doth men lese thorough hire love,
That lawe myghte wynne
The maze for a mene man,
Though he mote hire evere.
Lawe is so lordlich
And looth to maken ende, 1680
Withouten presentz or pens
She pleseth wel fewe.

"Barons and burgeises

She bryngeth in sorwe,
 And al the comune in care
 That coveiten lyve in truthe;
 For clergie and coveitise {53}
 She coupleth togidres.
 This is the lif of that lady;
 Now Lord gyve hire sorwe! 1690
 And alle that maynteneth hire men,
 Meschaunce hem bitide!
 For povere men may have no power
 To pleyne hem, though thei smerte.
 Swich a maister is Mede
 Among men of goode."

Thanne mournede Mede,
 And mened hire to the kyng
 To have space to speke,
 Spede if she myghte. 1700

The kyng graunted hire grace,
 With a good wille,
 "Excuse thee, if thow kanst;
 I kan na-moore seggen.
 For Conscience accuseth thee,
 To congeien thee for evere."

"Nay, lord," quod that lady,
 "Leveth hym the werse,
 Whan ye witen witterly
 Wher the wrong liggeth. 1710
 Ther that meschief is gret,
 Mede may helpe.
 And thow knowest, Conscience,
 I kam noght to chide
 Ne deprave thi persone,
 With a proud herte.
 Wel thow woost, wernarde,
 But if thow wolt gabbe,
 Thow hast hanged on myn half
 Ellevene tymes, 1720
 And also griped my gold, {54}
 Gyve it where thee liked;
 And whi thow wrathest thee now,
 Wonder me thynketh.
 Yet I may as I myghte
 Menske thee with giftes,
 And mayntene thi manhode
 Moore than thow knowest.

"Ac thow hast famed me foule
 Bifore the kyng here; 1730
 For killed I nevere no kyng
 Ne counseiled thereafter,
 Ne dide as thow demest
 I do it on the kyng.

"In Normandie was he noght
 Noyed for my sake;
 Ac thow thiself soothly
 Shamedest hym ofte,
 Croke into a cabane
 For cold of thi nayles, 1740
 Wendest that wynter
 Wolde han y-lasting evere,
 And dreddest to be ded
 For a dym cloude,
 And hyedest homward
 For hunger of thi wombe.

"Withouten pité, pilour,
 Povere men thow robbedest;
 And bere hire bras at thi bak
 To Caleis to selle, 1750
 Ther I lafte with my lord,
 His lif for to save.
 I made his men murye,

And mournynge lette;
I batred hem on the bak,
And boldede hire hertes,
And dide hem hoppe for hope
To have me at wille.
Hadde I ben marchal of his men,
By Marie of hevene!
I dorste have leyd my lif,
And no lasse wedde,
He sholde have be lord of that lond
In lengthe and in brede,
And also kyng of that kith
His kyn for to helpe,
The leeste brol of his blood
A barones piere.

1760

"Cowardly thow, Conscience,
Conseiledest hym thennes,
To leven his lordshipe
For a litel silver,
That is the richeste reaume
That reyn over-hoveth.

1770

"It bi-cometh to a kyng
That kepeth a reaume,
To yeve mede to men,
That mekely hym serveth,
To aliens and to alle men,
To honouren hem with giftes;
Mede maketh hym bi-loved
And for a man holden.

1780

"Emperours and erles,
And alle manere lordes,
For giftes han yonge men
To renne and to ryde.

"The pope and alle the prelates
Presentz underfongen,
And medeth men hemselven
To mayntene hir lawes.

1790

"Sergeauntz for hire servyce,
We seeth wel the sothe,
Taken mede of hir maistres,
As thei mowe acorde.

"Beggeres for hir biddyng,
Bidden men mede.

"Mynstrales for hir myrthe,
Mede thei aske.

"The kyng hath mede of his men,
To make pees in londe.

1800

"Men that teche children,
Craven after mede.

"Preestes that prechen the peple
To goode, asken mede,
And massepens and hire mete
At the meel-tymes.

"Alle kynne craftes men
Craven mede for hir prentices.

"Marchauntz and Mede
Mote nede go togideres.
No wight, as I wene,
Withouten mede may libbe."

1810

Quod the kyng to Conscience,
"By Crist! as me thynketh,
Mede is well worthi
The maistrie to have."

"Nay," quod Conscience to the kyng,
And kneled to the erthe,
"Ther are two manere of medes,
My lord, with youre leve. 1820

"That oon God of his grace
Graunteth in his blisse
To tho that wel werchen, {57}
While thei ben here;
The prophete precheth therof,
And putte it in the Sauter,
Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo? =

"Lord, who shal wonye in thi wones,
And with thyne holy seintes, 1830
Or resten in thyne holy hilles?
This asketh David;
And David assoileth it hymself,
As the Sauter telleth.
Qui ingreditur sine macula et operatur justitiam. =

"Tho that entren of o colour,
And of one wille,
And han y-wroght werkes
With right and with reson; 1840
And he that useth noght
The lyf of usurie,
And enformeth povere men,
And pursueth truthe.
*Qui pecuniam suam non dedit ad
usuram, et munera super innoc. etc.* =

"And alle that helpen the innocent,
And holden with the rightfulle,
Withouten mede doth hem good, 1850
And the truthe helpeth,
Swiche manere men, my lord,
Shul have this firste mede
Of God at a gret nede,
Whan thei gon hennes.

"Ther is another mede mesurelees,
That maistres desireth, {58}
To mayntene mysdoers
Mede thei take,
And therof seith the Sauter 1860
In a salmes ende,
*In quorum manibus iniquitates
sunt, dextra eorum repleta est
muneribus.*

"And he that gripeth hir gold,
So me God helpe!
Shal abien it bittre,
Or the book lieth.

"Preestes and persons
That plesynge desireth, 1870
That taken mede and moneie
For masses that thei syngeth,
Taken hire mede here,
As Mathew us techeth.
Amen, Amen, recipiebant mercede suam. =

"That laborers and lowe folk
Taken of hire maistres,
It is no manere mede,
But a mesurable hire. 1880

"In marchaundise is no mede,
I may it wel avowe,
It is a permutacion apertly,
A penyworth for another.

"Ac reddestow nevere *Regum?*
Thow recrayed Mede,

Whi the vengeaunce fel
On Saul and on his children?
God sente to Saul
By Samuel the prophete, 1890
That Agag of Amalec, {59}
And al his peple after,
Sholden deye for a dede
That doon hadde hire eldres.

"For-thi seide Samuel to Saul,
'God hymself hoteth
Thee be buxom at his biddyng,
His wil to fulfille;
Weend to Amalec with thyn oost,
And what thow fyndest there sle it, 1900
Burnes and beestes
Bren hem to dethe,
Widwes and wyves,
Wommen and children,
Moebles and un-moebles,
And al thow myght fynde,
Bren it, bere it noght away,
Be it never so riche,
For mede ne for monee, 1910
Loke thow destruye it,
Spille it and spare it noght,
Thow shalt spede the bettre.'

"And for he coveited hir catel,
And the kyng spared,
Forbar hym and his beestes bothe,
As the Bible witnesseth,
Oother wise than he was
Warned of the prophete,
God seide to Samuel
That Saul sholde deye, 1920
And al his seed for that synne
Shenfulliche ende.
Swich a meschief Mede made
Saul the kyng to have,
That God hated hym for evere, {60}
And alle hise heires after.

"The culorum of this cas
Kepe I noght to telle,
On aventure it noyed men,
Noon ende wol I make, 1930
For so is this world went
With hem that han power,
That who so seith hem sothest
Is sonnest y-blamed.

"Conscience knowe this,
For kynde wit it me taughte,
That Reson shal regne
And reaumes governe,
And right as Agag hadde, 1940
Happe shul somme,
Samuel shal sleen hym,
And Saul shal be blamed,
And David shal be diademed,
And daunten hem alle;
And oon cristene kyng
Kepen hem alle.
Shal na-moore Mede
Be maister, as she is nouthe;
Ac love and lowenesse
And leautee togideres, 1950
Thise shul ben maistres on moolde,
Truthe to save.

"And who so trespaseth ayein truthe,
Or taketh ayein his wille,
Leauté shal don hym lawe,
And no lif ellis;

Shall no sergeaunt for his service Were a silk howve, Ne no pelure in his cloke For pledynge at the barre. Mede of mysdoeres Maketh manye lordes, And over lordes lawes Ruleth the reaumes.	1960	{61}
"Ac kynde love shal come yit, And conscience togideres, And make of lawe a laborer; Swich love shal arise, And swich a pees among the peple, And a perfit truthe, That Jewes shul wene in hire wit, And wexen wonder glade, That Moyses or Messie Be come into this erthe, And have wonder in hire hertes That men beth so trewe.	1970	
"Alle that beren baselarde, Brood swerd or launce, Ax outhet hachet, Or any wepene ellis, Shal be demed to the deeth, But if he do it smythy Into sikel or to sithe, To shaar or to kultour; <i>Conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres, etc.</i>	1980 =	
"Ech man to pleye with a plow, Pykoise or spade, Spynne or sprede donge, Or spille hymself with sleuthe.	1990	
"Preestes and persons With <i>Placebo</i> to hunte, And dyngen upon David Eche day til eve. Huntynge or haukyng If any of hem use, His boost of his benefice Worth by-nomen hym after. Shal neither kyng ne knyght, Constable ne meire, Overlede the commune, Ne to the court sompne, Ne putte hem in panel To doon hem plighte hir truthe; But after the dede that is doon Oon doom shal rewarde, Mercy or no mercy, As truthe wole acorde.	2000	{62}
"Kynges court and commune court, Consistorie and chapitle, Al shal be but oon court, And oon baron be justice. Thanne worth Trewe-tonge a tidy man That tened me nevere; Batailles shul none be, Ne no man bere wepene; And what smyth that any smytheth, Be smyte therwith to dethe. <i>Non levabit gens contra gentem gladium, etc.</i>	2010 2020	
"And er this fortune falle, Fynde men shul the worste, By sixe sonnes and a shipe, And half a shef of arwes, And the myddel of a moone, Shal make the Jewes to torne, And Sarzynes for that sighte		{63}

Shul synge *Gloria in excelsis, etc.*
 For Makometh and Mede
 Mys-happe shul that tyme, 2030
 For *melius est bonum nomen quam divitiæ multæ.* =

Al so wroth as the wynd
 Weex Mede in a while,
 "I kan no Latyn," quod she,
 "Clerkes wite the sothe;
 Se what Salomon seith
 In Sapience bokes,
 That thei that gyven giftes
 The victorie wynneth, 2040
 And moost worshipe hadde therwith
 As holy writ telleth:
Honorem adquiret qui dat munera, etc. =

"Leve wel, lady," quod Conscience,
 "That thi Latyn be trewe;
 Ac thow art lik a lady
 That radde a lesson ones,
 Was *omnia probate,*
 And that plesed hire herte; 2050
 For that lyne was no lenger
 At the leves ende.
 Hadde she loked that oother half,
 And the leef torned,
 She sholde have founden fele wordes
 Folwyinge thereafter,
Quod bonum est tenete;
 Truthe that text made.

And so ferde ye, madame,
 Ye kouthe na-moore fynde, 2060
 Tho ye loked on Sapience
 Sittyng in youre studie.
 This text that ye han told
 Were good for lordes;
 Ac yow fayled a konnyng clerk
 That kouthe the leef han torned.
 And if ye seche Sapience eft,
 Fynde shul ye that folweth,
 A ful teneful text

To hem that taketh mede; 2070
 And that is *animam autem aufert accipientium, etc.,* =
 And that is the tail of the text;
 Of that that she shewed,
 That theigh we wynne worshipe,
 And with mede have victorie,
 The soule that the sonde taketh
 By so muche is bounde." 2078



Passus Quartus de Visione, ut supra.

"**C**ESSETH," seith the kyng, 2079
 "I suffre yow no lenger;
 Ye shul saughtne for sothe,
 And serve me bothe.
 Kis hire," quod the kyng,
 "Conscience, I hote."

{64}

{65}

"Nay, by Crist!" quod Conscience,
"Congeye me er for evere,
But Reson rede me therto,
Rather wol I deye."

"And I comaunde thee," quod the kyng,
To Conscience thanne, 2090
"Rape thee to ryde,
And Reson thow fecche;
Comaunde hym that he come
My counseil to here,
For he shal rule my reaume
And rede me the beste,
And acunte with thee, Conscience,
So me Crist helpe!
How thow [lernest](#) the peple,
The lered and the lewed." 2100

"I am fayn of that foreward,"
Seide the freke thanne,
And ryt right to Reson, {66}
And rouneth in his ere,
And seide as the kyng bad,
And sithen took his leve.

"I shal arraye me to ryde," quod Reson,
"Reste thee a while."
And called Caton his knave,
Curteis of speche, 2110
And also Tomme Trewe-tonge,—
"Tel me no tales,
Ne lesynge to laughen of,
For I loved hem nevere;
And set my sadel upon Suffre,
Til I se my tyme,
And lat warroke hym wel
With witty-words gerthes,
And hange on hym the hevy brydel
To holde his heed lowe, 2120
For he wol make 'wehee!'
Twies er he be there."

Thanne Conscience upon his capul
Carieth forth faste,
And Reson with hym ryt,
Rownynge togideres,
Whiche maistries Mede
Maketh on this erthe.

Oon Waryn Wisdom,
And Witty his feere, 2130
Folwed hym faste,
For thei hadde to doone
In th'escheker and in the chauncerye,
To ben discharged of thynges;
And riden faste, for Reson sholde
Rede hem the beste,
For to save hem for silver {67}
From shame and from harmes.
And Conscience knew hem wel,
Thei loved coveitise; 2140
And bad Reson ryde faste,
And recche of hir neither.
"Ther are wiles in hire wordes,
And with Mede thei dwelleth;
Ther as wrathe and wranglynge is,
Ther wynne thei silver;
Ac where is love and leautee,
Thei wol noght come there.
[Contritio et infelicitas in viis eorum,](#)
etc. 2150

"Thei ne yeveth noght of God
One goose wyng.
Non est timor Dei ante oculos eorum, etc. =

"For woot God thei wolde do moore
For a dozeyne chicknes,
Or as manye capons,
Or for a seem of otes,
Than for the love of oure Lord,
Or alle hise leeve seintes. 2160
For-thi Reson lat hem ride,
Tho riche by hemselve,
For Conscience knoweth hem noght,
Ne Crist, as I trowe."
And thanne Reson rood faste
The righte heighe gate,
As Conscience hym kenned,
Til thei come to the kynge.

Curteisly the kyng thanne
Com ayeins Reson, 2170
And bitwene hymself and [his sone](#) {68}
Sette hym on benche;
And wordeden wel wisely
A gret while togideres.

[And thanne com Pees into parlement,](#)
And putte forth a bille,
[How Wrong ayeins his wille](#)
Hadde his wif taken,
And how he ravysshede Rose
Reginaldes loove, 2180
And Margrete of hir maydenhede
Maugree hire chekes.
"Bothe my gees and my grys
Hise gadelynges feccheth,
I dar noght for fere of hem
Fighte ne chide.

He borwed of me Bayard,
He broughte hym hom nevere,
Ne no ferthyng therfore,
For ought I koude plede. 2190
He maynteneth hise men
To murthere myne hewen,
Forstalleth my feires,
And fighteth in my chepyng,
And breketh up my bernes dore,
And bereth away my whete,
And taketh me but a [taille](#)
For ten quarters of otes;
And yet he beteth me therto,
And lyth by my mayde. 2200
I am noght hardy for hym
Unnethe to loke."

The kyng knew he seide sooth,
For Conscience hym tolde
That Wrong was a wikked luft, {69}
And wroghte muche sorwe.

Wrong was afered thanne,
And Wisdom he soughte,
To maken pees with hise pens;
And profred hym manye, 2210
And seide, "Hadde I love of my lord the kyng,
Litel wolde I recche,
Theigh Pees and his power
Pleyned hym evere."

Tho wente Wisdom
And sire Waryn the Witty,
For that Wrong hadde y-wroght
So wikked a dede,
And warnede Wrong tho
With swich a wis tale, 2220
"Who so wercheth by wille,
Wrathe maketh ofte;
I sey it by myself,
Thow shalt it wel fynde;

But if Mede it make,
Thi meschief is uppe,
For bothe thi lif and thi lond
Lyth in his grace."

Thanne wowede Wrong
Wisdom ful yerne, 2230
To maken pees with his pens,
Handy dandy payed.

Wisdom and Wit thanne
Wenten togidres,
And token Mede myd hem
Mercy to wynne.

Pees putte forth his heed,
And his panne blody,
"Withouten gilt, God it woot, 2240
Gat I this scathe;
Conscience and the commune
Knowen the sothe."

Ac Wisdom and Wit
Were aboute faste,
To overcomen the kyng
With catel, if thei myghte.

The kyng swor by Crist,
And by his crowne bothe,
That Wrong for hise werkes 2250
Sholde wo tholie;
And comaundede a constable
To casten hym in irens,
And lete hym noght these seven yer
Seen his feet ones.

"God woot," quod Wisdom,
"That were noght the beste;
And he amendes nowe make,
Lat maynprise hym have,
And be borgh for his bale, 2260
And buggen hym boote,
And so amenden that is mys-do
And evere moore the bettere."

Wit acorded therwith,
And seide the same,
"Bettere is that boote
Bale a-doun brynge,
Than bale be y-bet,
And boote never the bettere."

And thanne gan Mede to mengen hire,
And mercy she bi-soughte, 2270
And profrede Pees a present
Al of pure golde:
"Have this, man, of me," quod she, 711
"To amenden thi scathe,
For I wol wage for Wrong
He wol do so na-moore."

Pitously Pees thanne
Preyde to the kyng,
To have mercy on that man
That mys-dide hym so ofte; 2280
"For he hath waged me wel,
As Wisdom hym taughte,
And I forgyve hym that gilt
With a good wille,
So that the kyng assente,
I kan seye no bettere;
For Mede hath me amendes maad,
I may na-moore axe."

"Nay," quod the kyng tho,
"So me Crist helpe! 2290

Wrong wendeth noght so a-wey,
Erst wole I wite moore.
For lope he so lightly,
Laughen he wolde;
And eft the boldere be
To bete myne hewen;
But Reson have ruthe on hym,
He shal reste [in my stokkes](#);
And that as longe as he lyveth,
But lownesse hym borwe." 2300

Som men radde Reson tho
To have ruthe on that shrewe,
And for to counseille the kyng,
And Conscience after;
That Mede moste be maynpernour
Reson thei bi-soughte.

{72}

"Reed me noght," quod Reson,
"No ruthe to have,
Til lordes and ladies
Loven alle truthe, 2310
And haten alle harlotrie,
To heren or to mouthen it.

"Til Parnelles purfille
Be put in hire hucche,
And childrene cherissyng
Be chastynge with yerdes,
And harlottes holynesse
Be holden for an hyne.

"Til clerkene coveitise be
To clothe the povere and fede, 2320
And religiouse romeris
Recordare in hir cloistres,
As seynt [Beneyt](#) hem bad,
Bernard and Fraunceis,
And til prechours prechyng
Be preved on hemselve.

"Til the kynges conseil
Be the commune profit,
Til bisshopes bayardes
Ben beggeris chaumbres, 2330
Hire haukes and hire houndes
Help to povere religious.

"And til seint James be sought
There I shal assigne,
That no man go to [Galis](#)
But if he go for evere;—
And alle Rome renneres,
For robberes biyonde,
Bere no silver over see
That signe of kyng sheweth, 2340
Neither grave ne ungrave,
Gold neither silver,
Upon forfeiture of that fee,
Who so fynt it at Dover,
But if he be marchaunt or his man,
Or messenger with lettres,
Provysour or preest,
Or penaunt for hise synnes.

{73}

"And yet," quod Reson, "by the Rode!
I shal no ruthe have, 2350
While Mede hath the maistrie
In this moot-halle.
Ac I may shewe ensamples,
As I se outhere while,
I seye it by myself," quod he,
"And it so were
That I were kyng with coroune
To kepen a reaume,
Sholde nevere Wrong in this world,

That I wite myghte, 2360
Ben unpunysshed in my power,
For peril of my soule,
Ne gete my grace for giftes,
So me God save!
Ne for no mede have mercy,
But mekenesse it make;
For *nullum malum* the man
Mette with *inpunitum*,
And bad *nullum bonum*
Be *irremuneratum*. 2370

"Lat youre confessour, sire kyng,
Construe this unglosed;
And if ye werchen it in werk,
I wedde myne eris,
That lawe shal ben a laborer {74}
And lede a-feld donge,
And love shal lede thi lond,
As the leef liketh."

Clerkes that were confessours
Coupled hem togideres, 2380
Al to construe this clause,
And for the kynges profit,
Ac noght for confort of the commune,
Ne for the kynges soule;
For I seigh Mede in the moot-halle
On men of lawe wynke,
And thei laughynge lope to hire,
And left Reson manye.
Waryn Wisdom
Wynked upon Mede, 2390
And seide, "Madame, I am youre man,
What so my mouth jangle;
I falle in floryns," quod that freke,
"And faile speche ofte."

Alle rightfulle recordede
That Reson truthe tolde;
And Wit acorded therwith,
And comendede hise wordes,
And the mooste peple in the halle,
And manye of the grete, 2400
And leten Mekenesse a maister,
And Mede a mansed sherewe.

Love leet of hire light,
And leauté yet lasse,
And seiden it so heighe
That al the halle it herde,
"Who so wilneth hire to wif,
For welthe of hire goodes,
But he be knowe for a cokewold,
Kut of my nose." {75} 2410

Mede mornede tho,
And made hevy chere,
For the mooste commune of that court
Called hire an hore.
Ac a sisour and a somonour
Sued hire faste,
And a sherreves clerk
Bisherewed at the route;
"For ofte have I," quod he,
"Holpen yow at the barre, 2420
And yet yeve ye me nevere
The worth of a risshe."

The kyng callede Conscience,
And afterward Reson,
And recordede that Reson
Hadde rightfully shewed;
And modiliche upon Mede
With myght the kyng loked;
And gan wexe wroth with lawe,

For Mede almost hadde shent it; 2430
And seide, "thorough lawe, as I leve!
I lese manye eschetes;
Mede overmaistreth lawe,
And muche Truthe letteth.
Ac Reson shal rekene with yow,
If I regne any while,
And deme yow bi this day,
As ye han deserved.
Mede shal noght maynprise yow,
By the Marie of hevене! 2440
I wole have leauté in lawe,
And lete be al youre janglyng;
And as moost folk witnesseth wel,
Wrong shal be demed."

{76}

Quod Conscience to the kyng,
"But the commune wole assente,
It is ful hard, by myn heed!
Hertoo to brynge it,
Alle youre lige leodes
To lede thus evene." 2450

"By hym that raughte on the rode!"
Quod Reson to the kynge,
"But if I rule thus youre reaume,
Rende out my guttes,
If ye bidden buxomnesse
Be of myn assent."

"And I assente," seith the kyng,
"By seinte Marie my lady!
By my counseil commune,
Of clerkes and of erles; 2460
Ac redily, Reson,
Thow shalt noght ride fro me,
For, as longe as I lyve,
Lete thee I nelle."

"I am al redy," quod Reson,
"To reste with yow evere;
So Conscience be of oure counseil,
I kepe no bettere."

"And I graunte," quod the kyng,
"Goddess forbode ellis!
Als longe as oure lyf lasteth,
Lyve we togideres." 2472



{77}

Passus Quintus de Visione, ut supra.

THE kyng and hise knyghtes 2473
To the kirke wente,
To here matyns of the day
And the masse after.
Thanne waked I of my wynkyng,
And wo was withalle,
That I ne hadde slept sadder,
And y-seighen moore. 2480
Ac er I hadde faren a furlong,
Feyntise me hente,
That I ne myghte ferther a foot
For defaute of slepyng,
And sat softly a-down,
And seide my bileve,

And so I bablede on my bedes,
Thei broughte me a-slepe.
And thanne saugh I mucche moore
Than I bifore of tolde, 2490
For I seigh the feld ful of folk,
That I bifore of seide,
And how Reson gan arayen hym
Al the reaume to preche,
And with a cros afore the kyng
Comsede thus to techen.

He preved that [thise pestilences](#)
Were for pure synne,
And the south-westrene wynd
[On Saterdag at even](#) 2500
Was pertliche for pure pride,
And for no point ellis;
Pyries and plum-trees
Were puffed to the erthe,
In ensauple that the segges
Sholden do the better;
Beches and brode okes
Were blowen to the grounde,
Turned upward hire tailles,
In tokenynge of drede 2510
That dedly synne er domes-day
Shal for-doon hem alle.

Of this matere I myghte
Mamelen ful longe;
Ac I shal seye as I saugh,
So me God helpe!
How pertly afore the peple
Reson bigan to preche.

He bad Wastour go werche,
What he best kouthe, 2520
And wynnen his wastyng
With som maner crafte.

He preide Pernele
Hir purfil to lete,
And kepe it in hire cofre
For catel at hire nede.

Tomme Stowne he taughte
To take two staves,
[And fecche Felice hom](#)
Fro the wynen pyne. 2530
He warnede Watte
His wif was to blame,
For hire heed was worth half marc,
And his hood noght worth a grote;
And bad Bette kutte
A bough outhere tweye,
And bete Beton therwith,
But if she wolde werche.

And thanne he chargede chapmen
To chastizen hir children, 2540
Late no wynnynge hem for-wanye
While thei be yonge,
Ne for no poustee of pestilence
Plese hem noght out of reson.
"My sire seide so to me,
And so dide my dame,
[That the levere child](#)
The moore loore bihoveth;
And Salomon seide the same,
That *Sapience* made, 2550
[Qui parcit virgæ, odit filium.](#)
The Englissh of this Latyn is,
Who so wole it knowe
Who so spareth the spring,
Spilleth hise children."

{78}

{79}

And sithen he prechede prelates
And preestes togideres,
"That ye prechen to the peple,
Preve it on yowselfe,
And dooth it in dede, 2560
It shal drawe yow to goode;
If ye leven as ye leren us,
We shul leve yow the bettre."

And sithen he radde Religion {80}
Hir rule to holde;
"Lest the kyng and his conseil
Youre comunes apeire,
And be stywardes of youre stedes,
Til ye be ruled bettre."

And sithen he counseiled the kyng 2570
His commune to lovye;
"It is thi trewe tresor,
And tryacle at thy nede."

And sithen he preide the pope
Have pité on holy chirche,
And er he gyve any grace,
Governe first hymselfe.

"And ye that han lawes to kepe,
Lat truthe be youre coveitise,
Moore than gold outhur giftes, 2580
If ye wol God plese;
For who so contrarieth Truthe,
He telleth in the gospel,
That God knoweth hym noght,
Ne no seynt of hevене.
Amen dico vobis, nescio vos.

"And ye that seke seynt James,
And seyntes of Rome,
Seketh seynt Truthe,
For he may save yow alle; 2590
Qui cum patre et filio,
That faire hem bi-falle
That seweth my sermon."
And thus seyde Reson.

Thanne ran Repentaunce,
And reherced his teme:
And garte Wille to wepe
Water with hise eighen.

Pernele Proud-herte {81}
Platte hire to the erthe, 2600
And lay longe er she loked,
And "Lord, mercy!" cryde,
And bi-highte to hym
That us alle made,
She sholde unsowen hir serk,
And sette there an heyre,
To affaiten hire flesshe
That fiers was to synne.
"Shal nevere heigh herte me hente,
But holde I wole me lowe 2610
And suffre to be mys-seyd,
And so dide I nevere;
And now I wole meke me,
And mercy biseche,
For al this I have
Hated in myn herte."

Thanne Lechour seide, "Allas!"
And on oure Lady he cryde,
To maken mercy for hise mys-dedes
Bitwene God and his soule; 2620
With that he sholde the Saterdag,
Seven yer thereafter,
Drynke but myd the doke,

And dyne but ones.

Envye with hevye herte

Asked after shrifte,
And carefully *mea culpa*
He comsed to shewe.
He was as pale as a pelet,
In the palsy he semed; 2630
And clothed in a kaurymaury,
I kouthe it nought discryve,
In kirtel and courtepy, {82}
And a knyf by his syde;
Of a freres frokke
Were the fore-sleves;
And as a leek that hadde y-leye
Longe in the sonne,
So loked he with lene chekes
Lourynghe foule. 2640

His body was to-bollen for wrathe,
That he boot hise lippes;
And wryngynghe he yede with the fust,
To wreke hymself he thoughte
With werkes or with wordes,
Whan he seyge his tyme.
Ech a word that he warpe
Was of a neddres tonge;
Of chidynghe and of chalangynghe
Was his chief liflode, 2650
With bakbitynghe and bismere,
And berynghe of fals witnesse.

"I wolde ben y-shryve," quod this sherewe,
"And I for shame dorste;
I wolde be gladder, by God!
That Gybbe hadde meschaunce,
Than though I hadde this wouke y-wonne
A weye of Essex chese.

"I have a neghebore by me,
I have anoyed hym ofte, 2660
And lowen on hym to lordes
To doon hym lese his silver,
And maad his frendes be his foon
Thorough my false tonge;
His grace and his goode happes
Greven me ful soore.

"Bitwene manye and manye
I make debate ofte,
That bothe lif and lyme
Is lost thorough my speche. 2670
And whan I mete hym in market
That I moost hate,
I hailse hym hendely,
As I his frend were;
For he is doughtier than I,
I dar do noon oother;
Ac hadde I maistrie and myght,
God woot my wille!

"And whan I come to the kirk,
And sholde knele to the roode, 2680
And preye for the peple
As the preest techeth,
For pilgrymes and for palmeres,
For al the peple after,
Thanne I crye on my knees
That Crist gyve hem sorwe,
That beren away my bolle
And my broke shete.

"Awey fro the auter thanne
Turne I myne eighen, 2690
And bi-holde Eleyne
Hath a newe cote;

I wisshe thanne it were myn,
And al the web after.

"And of mennes lesyng I laughe,
That liketh myn herte;
And for hir wynnynge I wepe,
And waille the tyme;
And deme that thei doon ille,
There I do wel werse. 2700
Who so under-nymeth me hero {84}
I hate hym dedly after;
I wolde that ech a wight
Were my knave,
For who so hath moore than I,
Than angreth me soore.
And thus I lyve love-lees,
Lik a luther dogge;
That al my body bolneth,
For bitter of my galle. 2710

"I myghte noght ete many yeres
As a man oughthe,
For envye and yvel wil
Is yvel to defie.
May no sugre ne swete thyng
Aswage my swellyng?
Ne no *diapenidion*
Dryve it fro myn herte?
Ne neither shrifte ne shame,
But who so shrape my mawe?" 2720

"Yis redily," quod Repentaunce,
And radde hym to the beste,
"Sorwe of synnes
Is savacion of soules."

"I am sorry," quod that segge,
"I am but selde oother,
And that maketh me thus megre,
For I ne may me venge.

"Amonges burgeises have I be
Dwellyng at Londone, 2730
And gart bakbityng be a brocour
To blame mennes ware;
Whan he solde and I nought,
Thanne was I redy
To lye and to loure on my neghebore, {85}
And to lakke his chaffare;
I wole amende this, if I may,
Thorugh myght of God almyghty."

Now awaketh Wrathe,
With two white eighen; 2740
And nevelyng with the nose,
And his nekke hangyng.

"I am Wrathe," quod he,
"I was som tyme a frere,
And the coventes gardyner
For to graffen impes;
On lymitous and listres
Lesynges I ymped,
Til thei beere leves of lowe speche,
Lordes to plese, 2750
And sithen thei blosmede a-brood
In boure to here shriftes;
And now is fallen therof a fruyt,
That folk han wel levere
Shewen hire shriftes to hem,
Than shryve hem to hir persons.

"And now persons han perceyved
That freres parte with hem,
Thise possessioners preche
And deprave freres. 2760

"And freres fyndeth hem in defaute,
 As folk bereth wisse,
 That whan thei preche the peple
 In many places aboute,
 I Wrathe walke with hem,
 And wisse hem of my bokes.
 Thus thei speken of my spiritualté,
 That either despiseth oother,
 Til thei be bothe beggers
 And by my spiritualté libben, 2770
 Or ellis al riche
 And ryden aboute.
 I Wrathe reste nevere,
 That I ne moste folwe
 This wikked folk,
 For swich is my grace.

"I have an aunte to nonne,
 And an abbesse bothe;
 Hir hadde levere swowe or swelte,
 Than suffre any peyne, 2780

"I have be cook in hir kichene,
 And the covent served
 Many monthes with hem,
 And with monkes bothe.
 I was the prioresse potager,
 And othere povere ladies,
 And maad hem joutes of janglyng,
 That dame Johane was a bastard,
 And dame Clarice a knyghtes doughter,
 Ac a cokewold was hir sire; 2790
 And dame Pernele a preestes fyle,
 Prioresse worth she nevere,
 For she hadde child in chirie-tyme,
 Al our chapitre it wiste.

"Of wikkede wordes
 I Wrathe hire wortes made,
 Til 'thow lixt' and 'thow lixt'
 Lopen out at ones,
 And either hite oother
 Under the cheke; 2800
 Hadde thei had knyves, by Crist
 Hir either hadde kild oother.

"Seint Gregory was a good pope,
 And hadde a good forwit,
 That no prioresse were preest,
 For that he ordeyned;
 They hadde thanne ben *infames* the firste day,
 Thei kan so yvele hele conseil.

"Among monkes I myghte be,
 Ac many tyme I shonye it; 2810
 For there ben manye felle frekes
 My feeris to asprie,
 Bothe priour and suppriour
 And oure *pater abbas*;
 And if I telle any tales,
 Thei taken hem togideres,
 And doon me faste frydayes
 To breed and to watre,
[And am chalanged in the chapitre hous](#)
 As I a child were, 2820
 And baleised on the bare ers,
 And no brech bitwene.
 For-thi have I no likyng
 With tho leodes to wonye.
 I ete there unthende fische,
 And feble ale drynke;
 Ac outhere while whan wyn cometh,
 Thanne I drynke wyn at eve,
 And have a flux of a foul mouth
 Wel fyve dayes after. 2830

{86}

{87}

Al the wikkednesse that I woot
By any of oure bretheren,
I couthe it in oure cloistre,
That al oure covent woot it."

"Now repente thee," quod Repentaunce,
"And reherce thow nevere
Counseil that thow knowest
By contenaunce ne by right;
And drynk nat over delicatly,
Ne to depe neither,
That thi wille by cause therof
To wrathe myghte turne.
Esto sobrius," he seide,
And assoiled me after,
And bad me wilne to wepe
[My wikkednesse to amende.](#)

2840

And thanne cam Coveitise,
Kan I hym naght discryve,
So hungrily and holwe
[Sire Hervy](#) hym loked.
He was bitel-browed,
And baber-lipped also,
With two blered eighen
As a blynd hagge;
And as a letheren purs
Lolled hise chekes,
Wel sidder than his chyn
Thei chyveled for elde;
And as a bonde-man of his bacon
His berd was bi-draveled,
With an hood on his heed,
A lousy hat above,
And in a tawny tabard
Of twelf wynter age,
Al so torn and baudy,
And ful of lys crepyng,
But if that a lous couthe
Han lopen the bettre,
She sholde noght han walked on that welthe,
So was it thred-bare.

2850

2860

2870

"I have ben coveitous," quod this caytif,
"I bi-knowe it here,
For som tyme I served
[Symme-atte-Style](#),
And was his prentice y-plight
His profit to wayte.

"First I lerned to lye,
A leef outhere tweyne;
Wikkedly to weye
Was my firste lesson;
[To Wy and to Wynchestre](#)
I wente to the feyre,
With many manere marchaundise,
As my maister me highte.
Ne hadde the grace of gyle y-go
Amonges my chaffare,
It hadde ben unsold this seven yer,
So me God helpe!

2880

"Thanne drough I me among drapiers,
My donet to lerne,
To drawe the liser along,
The lenger it semed;
Among the riche rayes
I rendred a lesson,
To broche hem with a pak-nedle,
And playte hem togideres,
And putte hem in a presse,
And pyne hem therinne,
Til ten yerdes or twelve
Hadde tolled out thrittene.

2890

2900

{88}

{89}

"My wif was a webbe,
And wollen cloth made;
She spak to spynnesteres
To spynnen it oute,
Ac the pound that she paied by
Peised a quatron moore
Than myn owene auncer,
Who so weyed truthe. {90}

"I boughte hire barly-malt,
She brew it to selle, 2910
Peny ale and puddyng ale
She poured togideres,
For laborers and for lowe folk
That lay by hymselfe.

"The beste ale lay in my bour,
Or in my bed-chambre;
And who so bummed therof,
Boughte it thereafter,
A galon for a grote, 2920
God woot, no lesse!
And yet it cam in cuppe-mele,
This craft my wif used.
Rose the Regrater
Was hire righte name;
She hath holden hukkerie
Al hire lif tyme.

Ac I swere now, so thee ik!
That synne wol I lete,
And nevere wikkedly weye, 2930
Ne wikke chaffare use;
But wenden to Walsyngham,
And my wif als,
And bidde [the Roode of Bromholm](#)
Brynge me out of dette."

"Repentedestow evere?" quod Repentaunce,
"Or restitution madest."

"Yis, ones I was y-herberwed," quod he, {91}
"With an heep of chapmen,
I roos whan thei were a-reste
And riflede hire males." 2940

"That was no restitution," quod Repentaunce,
"But a robberis theft;
Thow haddest be the bettre worthi
Ben hanged therefore,
Than for al that
That thow hast here shewed."

"I wende riflynge were restitution," quod he,
"For I lerned nevere rede on boke;
And I kan no [Frensshe](#), in feith,
But of the fertheste ende of [Northfolk](#)." 2950

"Usedestow evere usurie?" quod Repentaunce,
"In al thi lif tyme."

"Nay sothly," he seide,
"Save in my youthe
I lerned among Lumbardes
And Jewes a lesson,
To weye pens with a peis,
And pare the hevyste,
And lene it for love of the cros,
To legge a wed and lese it. 2960
Swiche dedes I dide write,
If he his day breke,
I have mo manoirs thorough rerages,
Than thorough *miseretur et commodat*.

"I have lent lordes
And ladies my chaffare,
And ben hire brocour after,

And bought it myselve;
 Eschaunges and chevysaunces
 With swich chaffare I dele, 2970
 And lene folk that lese wole
 A lippe at every noble,
 And with Lumbardes lettres
 I ladde gold to Rome,
 And took it by tale here,
 And tolde hem there lasse."

"Lentestow evere lordes,
 For love of hire mayntenaunce?"

"Ye, I have lent to lordes,
 Loved me nevere after, 2980
 And have y-maad many a knyght
 Bothe mercer and draper,
 That payed nevere for his prentishode
 Noght a peire gloves."

"Hastow pité on povere men,
 That mote nedes borwe?"

"I have as muche pité of povere men,
 As pedlere hath of cattes,
 That wolde kille hem, if he cacche hem myghte,
 For coveitise of hir skynnes." 2990

"Artow manlich among thi neghebores
 Of thi mete and drynke?"

"I am holden," quod he, "as hende
 As hound is in kichene,
 Amonges my neghebores, namely,
 Swiche a name ich have."

"Now God lene thee nevere," quod Repentaunce,
 "But thow repente the rather,
 The grace on this grounde
 Thi good wel to bi-sette, 3000
 Ne thyne heires after thee
 Have joie of that thow wynnest,
 Ne thyne executours wel bi-sette
 The silver that thow hem levest;
 And that was wonne with wrong
 With wikked men be despended.
 For were I frere of that hous
 Ther good feith and charité is,
 I nolde cope us with thi catel,
 Ne oure kirk amende, 3010
 Ne have a peny to my pitaunce,
 So God my soule save!
 For the beste book in oure hous,
 Theigh brent gold were the leves,
 And I wiste witterly
 Thow were swich as thow tellest.
Servus es alterius,
Dum fercula pinguia quæris;
Pane tuo potius
Vescere, liber eris. 3020

"Thow art an unkynde creature,
 I kan thee noght assoille,
 Til thow make restitucion
 And rekene with hem alle;
 And sithen that Reson rolle it
 In the registre of hevене,
 That thow hast maad ech man good,
 I may thee noght assoile.
Non dimittitur peccatum, donec restituatur
oblatum. 3030

"For alle that han of thi good,
 Have God my trouthe!
 Ben holden at the heighe doom
 To helpe thee to restitue;

And who so leveth noght this be sooth,
Loke in the Sauter glose,
In *Miserere mei, Deus*,
Wher I mene truthe;
Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti, etc.
Shal nevere werkman in this world 3040
Thryve with that thow wynnest.
Cum sancto sanctus eris;
Construwe me this on Englisshe."

Thanne weex that sherewe in wanhope,
And wolde han hanged hym;
Ne hadde Repentaunce the rather
Reconforted hym in this manere.

"Have mercy in thi mynde,
And with thi mouth biseche it;
For Goddes mercy is moore 3050
Than alle hise othere werkes.
And al the wikkednesse in this world
That man myghte werche or thynke,
Nis na-moore to the mercy of God,
Than in the see a gleede.
*Omnis iniquitas quantum ad misericordiam
Dei, est quasi scintilla
in medio maris.*

"For-thi have mercy in thy mynde,
And marchaundise leve it; 3060
For thow hast no good ground
To gete thee with a wastel,
But if it were with thi tonge,
Or ellis with thi two hondes.
For the good that thow hast geten
Bigan al with falthede,
And as longe as thow lyvest therwith,
Thow yeldest noght, but borwest. {95}

"And if thow wite nevere to whiche,
Ne whom to restitue, 3070
Ber it to the bisshope,
And bid hym of his grace
Bi-sette it hymself,
As best is for thi soule;
For he shal answeere for thee
At the heighe dome,
For thee and for many mo
That man shal yeve a rekenyng,
What he lerned yow in Lente,
Leve thow noon oother, 3080
And what he lente yow of oure Lordes good
To lette yow fro synne."

Now bi-gynneth Gloton
For to go to shrifte,
And karieth hym to kirke-warde
His coupe to shewe;
And Beton the brewestere
Bad hym good morwe,
And asked at hym with that,
Whider-ward he wolde. 3090

"To holy chirche," quod he,
"For to here masse,
And sithen I wole be shryven,
And synne na-moore."

"I have good ale, gossib," quod she,
"Gloton, woltow assaye?"

"Hastow ought in thi purs?" quod he,
"Any hote spices?"

"I have pepir and piones," quod she,
"And a pound of garleek, 3100
And a ferthyng-worth of fenel-seed

Thanne goth Glotin in,
 And grete othes after.
 Cesse the souteresse
 Sat on the benche;
 Watte the warner,
 And his wif bothe;
 Tymme the tynkere,
 And tweyne of his prentices; 3110
 Hikke the hakeney-man,
 And Hughe the nedlere;
 Clarice of Cokkeslane,
 And the clerk of the chirche;
 Dawe the dykere,
 And a dozeyne othere.

Sire Piers of Pridie,
 And Pernele of Flaundres;
 A ribibour, a ratoner,
 A rakiere of Chepe, 3120
 A ropere, a redyng-kyng,
 And Rose the dyssheres;
 Godefray of Garlekhithe,
 And Griffyn the Walshe;
 And upholderes an heep,
 Erly by the morwe,
 Geve Gloton with glad chere
 Good ale to hanselle.

Clement the Cobelere
 Caste of his cloke, 3130
 And at the newe feire
 He nempned it to selle,

Hikke the hakeney-man
 Hitte his hood after,
 And bad Bette the bocher
 Ben on his syde.

{97}

Ther were chapmen y-chose
 This chaffare to preise,
 That who so hadde the hood
 Sholde han amendes of the cloke. 3140

Two risen up in rape,
 And rounded togideres,
 And preised thise peny-worthes
 A-part by hemselve;
 Thei kouthe noght by hir conscience
 Acorden in truthe,
 Til Robyn the ropere
 Aroos by the southe,
 And nempned hym for a nounpere,
 That no debat nere. 3150

Hikke the hostiler
 Hadde the cloke,
 In covenaut that Clement
 Sholde the cuppe fille,
 And have Hikkes hood hostiler,
 And holden hym y-served.
 And who so repented rathest
 Sholde aryse after,
 And greten sire Gloton
 With a galon ale. 3160

There was laughynge and lourynge,
 And "lat go the cuppe;"
 And seten so till even-song,
 And songen umwhile,
 Til Gloton hadde y-glubbed
 A galon and a gille.
 Hise guttes bigonne to gothelen
 As two grede sowes;
 He pissed a potel

In a pater-noster while, 3170 {98}
And blew his rounde ruwet
At his rugge-bones ende,
That alle that herde that horn
Held hir noses after,
And wisshed it hadde been wexed
With a wispe of firses.

He myghte neither steppe ne stonde,
Er he his staf hadde;
And thanne gan he to go
Like a gle-mannes bicche, 3180
Som tyme aside,
And som tyme arere,
As who so leith lynes
For to lacche foweles.

And whan he drough to the dore,
Thanne dymmed his eighen;
He stumbled on the thressshfold,
And threw to the erthe.
Clement the cobelere
Kaughte hym by the myddel, 3190
For to liften hym o-lofte;
And leyde hym on his knowes.
Ac Gloton was a gret cherl,
And a grym in the lifyng,
And koughed up a cawdel
In Clementes lappe;
Is noon so hungry hound
In Hertford shire
Dorste lape of that levynge,
So un-lovely thei smaughte. 3200

With al the wo of this world,
His wif and his wenche
Baren hym hom to his bed,
And broughte hym therinne; {99}
And after al this excesse
He hadde an accidie,
That he sleep Saterdag and Sunday,
Til sonne yede to reste.

Thanne waked he of his wynkyng,
And wiped hise eighen; 3210
The firste word that he warpe
Was "where is the bolle?"
His wif gan edwyte hym tho,
How wikkedly he lyvede;
And Repentaunce right so
Rebuked hym that tyme,
"As thow with wordes and werkes
Has wroght yvele in thi lyve,
Shryve thee, and be shamed therof,
And shewe it with thi mouthe." 3220

"I Gloton," quod the grom,
"Gilty me yelde,
That I have trespassed with my tonge,
I kan noght telle how ofte;
Sworen Goddes soule,
And so me God helpe!
There no nede was,
Nyne hundred tymes.

"And over-seyen me at my soper,
And som tyme at nones, 3230
That I Gloton girte it up
Er I hadde gon a myle,
An y-spilt that myghte be spared
And spended on som hungry;
Over delicatly on fastyng-dayes
Dronken and eten bothe,
And sat som tyme so longe there,
That I sleep and eet at ones. {100}
For love of tales in tavernes

And for drynke, the moore I dyned; 3240
And hyed to the mete er noon,
Whan fastyng-days were."

"This shewynge shrift," quod Repentaunce,
"Shal be meryt to the."

And thanne gan Gloton greete,
And gret doel to make,
For his luther lif
That he lyved hadde;
And avowed to faste,
"For hunger or for thurste, 3250
Shal nevere fyssh on Fryday
Defyen in my wombe,
Til abstinence myn aunte
Have gyve me leeve;
And yet have I hated hire
Al my lif tyme."

Thanne cam Sleuthe al bi-slabeled,
With two slymy eighen;
"I moste sitte," seide the segge,
"Or ellis sholde I nappe. 3260
I may noght stonde ne stoupe,
Ne withoute a stool knele;
Were I brought a-bedde,
But if my tail-ende it made,
Sholde no ryngynge do me ryse
Er I were ripe to dyne."
He bigan Benedicite with a bolck,
And his brest knocked,
And raxed and rored,
And rutte at the laste. 3270

"What, awake, renk!" quod Repentaunce,
"And rape thee to shryfte."

"If I sholde deye bi this day,
Me list nought to loke;
I kan noght parfitly my pater-noster,
As the preest it syngeth;
But I kan [rymes of Robyn Hood](#),
[And Randolf erl of Chestre](#);
Ac neither of oure Lord ne of oure Lady
The leeste that evere was maked. 3280

"I have maad avowes fourty,
And foryete hem on the morwe;
I perfournede nevere penaunce
As the preest me highte;
Ne right sory for my synnes
Yet was I nevere.
And if I bidde any bedes,
But if it be in wrathe,
That I telle with my tonge
Is two myle fro myn herte. 3290
I am ocupied eche day,
Haly-day and oother,
With ydel tales at the ale,
And outhere while at chirche;
Goddess peyne and his passion
Ful selde thenke I on it.

"I visited nevere feble men,
Ne fettred folk in puttes;
I have levere here an harlotrye,
Or a somer game of souters, 3300
Or lesynge to laughen at
And bi-lye my neghebores,
Than al that evere Marc made,
Mathew, Johan, and Lucas.
And vigilies and fastyng-dayes,
Alle thise late I passe;
And ligge a-bedde in Lenten,
And my lemman in myne armes,

{101}

{102}

Til matyns and masse be do,
And thanne go to the freres. 3310
Come I to *Ite, missa est*,
I holde me y-served;
I nam noght shryven som tyme,
But if siknesse it make,
Nought twyes in two yer,
And thanne up gesse I shryve me.

"I have be preest and parson
Passynge thritty wynter,
And yet can I neyther solne ne synge,
Ne seintes lyves rede; 3320
But I kan fynden in a feld,
Or in a furlang, an hare,
Bettre than in *Beatus vir*,
Or in *Beati omnes*,
Construe oon clause wel
And kenne it to my parisshens.
I kan holde love-dayes,
And here a reves rekenyng;
Ac in canon nor in decretals
I kan noght rede a lyne. 3330

"If I bigge and borwe aught,
But if it be y-tailed,
I foryete it as yerne;
And if men me it axe
Sixe sithes or sevene,
I forsake it with othes;
And thus tene I trewe men
Ten hundred tymes. {103}

"And my servauntz som tyme
Hir salarie is bi-hynde; 3340
Ruthe it is to here the rekenyng,
Whan we shul rede acountes.
So with wikked wil and wrathe,
My werkmen I paye.

"If any man dooth me a bienfait,
Or helpeth me at nede,
I am unkynde ayeins curteisie,
And kan nought understonden it;
For I have and have had
Som del haukes maneres, 3350
I am noght lured with love,
But ther ligge aught under the thombe.

"The kyndenesse that myn even cristene
Kidde me fernyere,
Sixty sithes I Sleuthe
Have foryete it siththe.
In speche and in sparynge of speche
Y-spilt many a tyme
Bothe flessh and fissh, 3360
And manye othere vitailles,
Both bred and ale,
Buttre, melk, and chese,
For-sleuthed in my service
Til it myghte serve no man.

"I ran aboute in youthe,
And yaf me naught to lerne,
And evere siththe have I be beggere
For my foule sleuthe.
*Heu michi! quia sterilem vitam duxi
juvenilem.*" 3370

"Repentedestow noght?" quod Repentaunce;
And right with that he swowned, {104}
Til *Vigilate* the veille
Fette water at hise eighen,
And flatte it on his face,
And faste on hym cryde,
And seide, "Ware thee, for Wanhope

Wolde thee bi-traye,
'I am sorry for my synnes'
Seye to thiselwe, 3380
And beet thiself on the brest,
And bidde hym of grace;
For is ne gilt here so gret
That his goodnesse nys moore."

Thanne sat Sleuthe up,
And seyned hym swithe,
And made a vow to-fore God
For his foule sleuthe.
"Shal no Sondag be this seven yer,
But siknesse it lette, 3390
That I ne shal do me er day
To the deere chirche;
And here matyns and masse,
As I a monk were,
Shal noon ale after mete
Holde me thennes,
Til I have even-song herd,
I bi-hote to the roode!
And yet wole I yelde ayein,
If I so much have, 3400
Al that I wikkedly wan
Sithen I wit hadde.

"And though my liflode lakke,
Leten I nelle,
That ech man ne shal have his,
Er I hennes wende; {105}
And with the residue and the remenaunt,
[Bi the Rode of Chestre!](#)
I shal seken Truthe erst
[Er I se Rome.](#)" 3410

Roberd the robbere
On *Reddite* loked,
And for ther was nocht wherof,
He wepte swithe soore;
Ac yet the synfulle sherewe
Seide to hymselfe,
"Crist, that on Calvarie
Upon the cros deidest,
Tho [Dysmas](#) my brother 3420
Bi-soughte yow of grace,
And haddest mercy on that man
For *memento* sake,
So rewe on this robbere
That *reddere* ne have,
Ne nevere wene to wynne
With craft that I owe;
But for thi muchel mercy
Mitigacion I bi-seche,
Ne dampne me nocht at domes-day
For that I dide so ille." 3430

What bi-fel of this feloun
I kan nocht faire shewe;
Wel I woot he wepte faste
Water with bothe hise eighen,
And knoweliched his gilt
To Crist yet eft soones,
That *Pœnetentia* his pik
He sholde polshe newe,
And lepe with hym over lond
Al his lif tyme, 3440
For he hadde leyen by *Latro*
Luciferis aunte. {106}

[And thanne hadde Repentaunce ruthe,](#)
And redde hem alle to knele;
"For I shal bi-seche for alle synfulle
Our Saveour of grace,
To amenden us of oure mysdedes,

And do mercy to us alle."

"Now God," quod he, "that of thi goodnesse
Bi-gonne the world to make, 3450
And of naught madest aught, and man
Moost lik to thiselve,
And sithen suffredest for to synne,
A siknesse to us alle,
And al for the beste, as I bi-leve,
What evere the book telleth.
O felix culpa! O necessarium peccatum Adæ! etc. =

"For thorough that synne thi sone
Sent was to this erthe, 3460
And bicam man of a maide,
Mankynde to save:
And madest thiself with thi sone
And us synfulle y-liche
*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem
nostram. Et alibi. Qui manet
in caritate, in Deo manet, et
Deus in eo.*

"And siththe with thi selve sone
In oure secte deidest, 3470
On Good-Fryday, for mannes sake,
At ful tyme of the daye,
Ther thiself ne thi sone {107}
No sorwe in deeth feledest,
But in oure secte was the sorwe,
And thi sone it ladde.
Captivam duxit captivitatem.

"The sonne for sorwe therof
Lees light of a tyme,
Aboute mydday whan moost light is, 3480
And meel-tyme of seintes,
Feddest with thi fresshe blood
Oure fore-fadres in derknesse.
*Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris,
vidit lucem magnam.*

"And thorough the light that lepe out of thee
Lucifer was blent.
And blewe alle thi blessed
Into the blisse of paradys.

"The thridde day after 3490
Thow yedest in oure sute,
A synful Marie the seigh,
Er seynte Marie thi dame;
And al to solace synfulle
Thow suffredest it so were.
*Non veni vocare justos sed peccatores
ad pœnitentiam.*

"And al that Marc hath y-maad,
Mathew, Johan, and Lucas,
Of thyne doughty dedes 3500
Was doon in oure armes.
Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis. =

"And by so mucche me semeth
The sikerer we mowe
Bidde and bi-seche,
If it be thi wille, {108}
That art oure fader and oure brother,
Be merciabile to us,
And have ruthe on these ribaudes 3510
That repenten hem here soore,
That evere thei wrathed thee in this world,
In word, thought, or dedes."

Thanne hent Hope an horn
Of *Deus, tu conversus vivificabis,*
And blew it with *Beati quorum*

Remissæ sunt iniquitates,
That alle seintes in hevene
Songen at ones.
Homines et jumenta salvabis, quemadmodum 3520
multiplicasti misericordiam tuam. =

A thousand of men tho
Thrunge togideres,
Cride upward to Crist,
And to his clene moder,
To have grace to go with hem
Truthe to seke.

Ac there was wight noon so wys
The wey thider kouthe, 3530
But blustreden forth as beestes
Over bankes and hilles;
Til late was and longe
That thei a leode mette,
Apparailled as a paynym
In pilgrymes wise.

He bar a burdoun y-bounde
With a brood liste,
In a withwynde wise 3540
Y-wounden aboute;

A bolle and a bagge {109}
He bar by his syde,
And hundred of ampulles
On his hat seten,
Signes of Synay,
And shelles of Galice,
And many a crouche on his cloke,
And keyes of Rome,
And the vernycle bi-fore,
For men sholde knowe 3550
And se bi hise signes
Whom he sought hadde.

This folk frayned hym first,
Fro whennes he come.

"Fram Syny," he seide,
"And fram oure Lordes sepulcre;
In Bethlem and in Babiloyne,
I have ben in bothe;
In Armony and Alisaundre,
In manye othere places. 3560
Ye may se by my signes,
That sitten on myn hatte,
That I have walked ful wide
In weet and in drye,
And sought goode seintes
For my soules helthe."

"Knowestow aught a corsaint,
That men calle Truthe?
Koudestow aught wissen us the wey,
Wher that wey dwelleth?" 3570

"Nay, so me God helpe!"
Seide the gome thanne,
"I seigh nevere palmere,
With pyk ne with scrippe,
Asken after hym er {110}
Til now in this place."

"Peter!" quod a plowman,
And putte forth his hed,
"I knowe hym as kyndely 3580
As clerk doth hise bokes;
Conscience and kynde wit
Kenned me to his place,
And diden me suren hym sikerly
To serven hym for evere,
Bothe to sowe and to sette,
The while I swynke myghte.

I have ben his folwere
 Al this fifty wynter,
 Bothe y-sowen his seed,
 And suwed hise beestes, 3590
 Withinne and withouten
 Waited his profit.
 I dyke and I delve,
 I do that Truthe hoteth;
 Som tyme I sowe,
 And som tyme I thresshe;
 In taillours craft and tynkeris craft,
 What Truthe kan devyse,
 I weve and I wynde,
 And do what Truthe hoteth, 3600
 For though I seye it myselfe,
 I serve hym to paye;
 I have myn hire wel,
 And outhere whiles moore.
 He is the presteste paiere
 That povere men knoweth;
 He ne withhalt noon hewe his hire,
 That he ne hath it at even;
 He is as lowe as a lomb, {111}
 And lovelich of speche; 3610
 And if ye wilneth to wite
 Where that he dwelleth,
 I shal wisse you witterly
 The wey to his place."

"Ye, leve Piers," quod these pilgrimes,
 And profred hym huyre,
 For to wende with hem
 To Truthes dwellyng-place.

"Nay, by my soules helpe!" quod Piers,
 And gan for to swere, 3620
 "I nolde fange a ferthyng.
 For seint Thomas shryne;
 Truthe wolde love me the lasse
 A long tyme thereafter;
 Ac if yow wilneth to wende wel,
 This is the wey thider.

"Ye moten go thorough Mekenesse,
 Both men and wyves,
 Til ye come into Conscience,
 That Crist wite the sothe 3630
 That ye loven oure Lord God
 Levest of alle thynges,
 And thanne youre neghebores next
 In none wise apeire,
 Other wise than thow woldest
 He wroughte to thiselve.

"And so boweth forth by a brook,
 Beth-buxom-of-speche,
 Til he fynden a ford,
 Youre-fadres-honoureth, 3640
Honora patrem et matrem, etc.
 Wadeth in that water,
 And wasshe yow wel therinne, {112}
 And ye shul lepe the lightloker
 Al youre lif tyme;
 And so shaltow se Swere-noght,-
 But-if-it-be-for-nede,-
 And-nameliche-on-ydel-
 The-name-of-God-almighty.

"Thanne shaltow come by a croft,
 But come thow noght therinne; 3650
 That croft hatte Coveite-noght-
 Mennes-catel-ne-hire-wyves,-
 Ne-noon-of-hire-servauntz-
 That-noyen-hem-myghte;
 Loke ye breke no bowes there,

But if it be youre owene.

"Two stokkes ther stondeth,
Ac stynte ye noght there,
Thei highte Stele-noght and Sle-noght, 3660
Strik forth by bothe,
And leve hem on thi lift half,
And loke noght thereafter,
And hold wel thyn hali-day
Heighe til even.

"Thanne shaltow blenche at a bergh,
Bere-no-fals-witnesse,
He is frythed in with floryns
And othere fees manye;
Loke thow plukke no plaunte there, 3670
For peril of thi soule;
Thanne shul ye see Seye-sooth,-
So-it-be-to-doone,-
In-good-manere,-ellis-noght-
For-no-mannes-biddyng.

"Thanne shaltow come to a court
As cler as the sonne; {113}
The moot is of Mercy
The manoir aboute,
And alle the walles ben of Wit, 3680
To holden Wil oute,
And kerneled wit Cristendom,
Mankynde to save,
Botrased with Bileef-so,-
Or-thow-beest-noght-saved.

"And alle the houses ben hiled,
Halles and chambres,
With no leed but with love,
And lowe speche as bretheren;
The brugg is of Bidde-wel,- 3690
The-bet-may-thow-spede;
Ech piler is of penaunce,
Of preieres to seyntes;
Of almes-dedes are the hokes
That the gates hangen on.

"Grace hatte the gatewarde,
A good man for sothe;
His man hatte Amende-yow,
For many men hym knoweth;
Telleth hym this tokene, 3700
That Truthe wite the sothe;
'I perfourned the penaunce
That the preest me enjoyned,
And am ful sory for my synnes,
And so I shal evere,
Whan I thynke theron,
Theigh I were a pope.'

"Biddeth Amende-yow meke hym
Til his maister ones,
To wayven up the wicket 3710
That the womman shette,
Tho Adam and Eve {114}
[Eten apples un-rosted.](#)
*Per Evam cunctis clausa est, et per
Mariam virginem patefacta est.*

"For he hath the keye and the cliket,
Though the kyng slepe.
And if grace graunte thee
To go in this wise,
Thow shalt see in thiselve 3720
Truthe in thyn herte,
In a cheyne of charité
As thow a child were,
To suffren hym and segge noght
Ayein thi sires wille.

"And be war thanne of Wrathe-thee,
That is a wikked sherewe;
He hath envye to hym
That in thyn herte sitteth,
And poketh forth pride 3730
To preise thiselven.
The boldnesse of thi bienfetes
Maketh thee blynd thanne;
And thanne worstow dryven out as dew,
And the dore closed,
Keyed and cliketted,
To kepe thee withouten;
Happily an hundred wynter
Er thow eft entre.
Thus myghtestow lesen his love 3740
To lete wel by thiselve,
And nevere happily eft entre,
But grace thow have.

"And ther are seven sustren
That serven Truthe evere, {115}
And arn porters of the posternes
That to the place longeth.

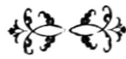
"That oon hatte Abstinence,
And Humilité another;
Charité and Chastité 3750
Ben hise chief maydenes;
Pacience and Pees
Muche peple thei helpeth;
Largenesse the lady,
She let in ful manye,
Heo hath holpe a thousand out
Of the develes punfolde;
And who is sib to thise sevene,
So me God helpe!
He is wonderly welcome, 3760
And faire underfongen.
And but if ye be sibbe
To some of thise sevene,
It is ful hard, by myn heed!" quod Piers,
"For any of yow alle
To geten in-going at any gate there,
But grace be the moore."

"Now by Crist!" quod a kutte-purs
"I have no kyn there."
"Nor I," quod an ape-ward, 3770
"By aught that I kan knowe."
"Wite God!" quod a wafrestere,
"Wiste I this for sothe,
Sholde I nevere ferther a foot,
For no freres prechyng."

"Yis," quod Piers the Plowman,
And poked hem alle to goode,
"Mercy is a maiden there
Hath myght over alle; {116}
And she is sib to alle synfulle, 3780
And hire sone also,
And thorough the help of hem two
Hope thow noon oother,
Thow myght gete grace there,
So thow go bi-tyme."

"Bi seint Poul!" quod a pardonor,
"Peraventure I be noght knowe there;
I wol go fecche my box with my brevettes,
And a bulle with bisshopes lettres."

"By Crist!" quod a commune womman,
"Thi compaignie wol I folwe;
Thow shalt seye I am thi suster,
I ne woot where thei bicomme." 3793

*Passus Sextus de Visione, ut supra.*

"**T**HIS were a wikkede wey,
But who so hadde a gyde,
That wolde folwen us ech a foot;"
Thus this folke hem mened. 3794

Quod Perkyn the Plowman,
"By seint Peter of Rome!
I have an half acre to erie
By the heighe weye;
Hadde I erylde this half acre,
And sowen it after,
I wolde wende with yow,
And the wey teche." 3800

"This were a long lettyng,"
Quod a lady in scleyre,
"What sholde we wommen
Werche the while?"

"Somme shul sowe the sak," quod Piers,
"For shedyng of the whete;
And ye, lovely ladies,
With youre longe fyngres,
That ye have silk and sandel
To sowe, whan tyme is;
Chesibles for chapeleyns,
Chirches to honoure." 3810

"Wyves and widewes,
Wolle and flex spynneth;
Maketh cloth, I counseille yow,
And kenneth so youre doughtres;
The nedy and the naked,
Nymeth hede how thei liggeth,
And casteth hem clothes,
For so comaundeth Truthe.
For I shal **leven** hem liflode,
But if the lond faille,
Flesshe and breed bothe
To riche and to poore,
As long as I lyve,
For the Lordes love of hevene;
And alle manere of men
That thorough mete and drynke libbeth,
Helpeth hym to werche wightliche,
That wynneth youre foode." 3820

"By Crist!" quod a knyght thoo,
"He kenneth us the beste;
Ac on the teme, trewely,
Taught was I nevere;
But kenne me," quod the knyght,
"And by Crist I wole assaye!" 3840

"By seint Poul!" quod Perkyn,
"Ye profre yow so faire,
That I shal swynke and swete,
And sowe for us bothe,
And othere labours do for thi love

Al my lif tyme,
 In covenant that thou kepe
 Holy kirke and myselve
 Fro wastours and fro wikked men 3850
 That this world destruyeth.
 And go hunte hardiliche {119}
 To hares and to foxes,
 To bores and to brokkes
 That breken doun myne hegges;
 And so affaite thi faucons
 Wilde foweles to kille;
 For swiche cometh to my croft,
 And croppeth my whete."

Curteisly the knyght thanne 3860
 Comsed these wordes;
 "By my power, Piers!" quod he,
 "I plighte thee my trouthe,
 To fulfille this forwarde,
 Though I fighte sholde;
 Als longe as I lyve
 I shal thee mayntene."

"Ye, and yet a point," quod Piers,
 "I preye yow of moore,
 Loke ye tene no tenaunt, 3870
 But Truthe wole assente;
 And though ye mowe amercy hem,
 Lat mercy be taxour,
 And mekenesse thi maister,
 Maugree Medes chekes.
 And though povere men profre yow
 Presentes and giftes,
 Nyme it noght, an aventure
 Ye mowe it noght deserve;
 For thou shalt yelde it ayein 3880
 At one yeres tyme,
 In a ful perilous place,
 Purgatorie it hatte.

"And mys-bede noght thi bonde-men,
 The better may thou spede;
 Though he be thyn underlying here, {120}
 Wel may happe in hevne
 That he worth worthier set,
 And with moore blisse.
Amice, ascende superius. 3890
 For in charnel at chirche
 Cherles ben yvel to knowe,
 Or a knyght from a knave there,
 Knowe this in thyn herte.
 And that thou be trewe of thi tonge,
 And tales that thou hatie,
 But if thei ben of wisdom or of wit
 Thi werkmen to chaste.
 Hold with none harlotes,
 Ne here noght hir tales, 3900
 And namely at the mete
 Swiche men eschuwe;
 For it ben the develes disours,
 I do the to understonde."

"I assente, by seint Jame!"
 Seide the knyght thanne,
 "For to werche by thi wordes
 The while my lif dureth."

"And I shal apparaille me," quod Perkyn,
 "In pilgrymes wise, 3910
 And wende with yow I wile,
 Til we fynde Truthe;
 And caste on my clothes
 Y-clouted and hole,
 My cokeres and my coffes,
 For cold of my nailes;

And hange myn hoper at myn hals
 In stede of a scryppe.
 A busshel of bred corn
 Brynge me therinne; 3920 {121}
 For I wol sowe it myself,
 And sithenes wol I wende
 To pilgrimage, as palmeres doon,
 Pardon for to have.
 And who so helpeth me to erie
 And sowen here er I wende,
 Shal have leve, by oure Lorde!
 To lese here in hervest,
 And make hem murie thermyd,
 Maugree who so bi-gruccheth it. 3930
 And alle kynne crafty-men,
 That konne lyven in truthe,
 I shal fynden hem fode,
 That feithfulliche libbeth.

"Save Jagge the jogelour,
 And Jonette of the stuwes,
 And Danyel the dees-pleyere,
 And Denote the baude,
 And frere the faitour,
 And folk of hire ordre, 3940
 And Robyn the ribaudour
 For hise rusty wordes.
 Truthe tolde me ones,
And bad me telle it after,
Deleantur de libro viventium,
 I sholde noght dele with hem,
 For holy chirche is hote of hem
No tithe to take;
Qui cum justis non scribantur,
 They ben ascaped good aventure, 3950
 God hem amende!"

Dame Werch-whan-tyme-is
 Piers wif highte;
 His doughter highte Do-right-so,- {122}
 Or-thi-dame-shal-thee-bete;
 His sone highte Suffre-thi-sovereyns-
 To-haven-hir-wille,-
 Deme-hem-noght,-for-if-thow-doost,-
 Thow-shalt-it-deere-abugge.
 Lat God y-worthe with al, 3960
 For so his word techeth;
 For now I am old and hoor,
 And have of myn owene,
 To penaunce and to pilgrimage
 I wol passe with thise othere.

"For-thi I wole er I wende
 Do write my biqueste,
In Dei nomine, Amen,
 I make it myselve;
 He shal have my soule, 3970
 That best hath deserved it;
 And fro the fend it defende,
 For so I bileve,
 Til I come to hise acountes,
 As my Credo me telleth,
 To have a relees and a remission,
 On that rental I leve.

"The kirke shal have my caroyne,
 And kepe my bones;
 For of my corn and catel 3980
 She craved the tithe;
 I paide it ful prestly,
 For peril of my soule.
 For-thi is he holden I hope
 To have me in his masse,
 And mengen in his memorie
 Amonges alle cristene.

"My wif shal have of that I wan
With truthe, and na-moore,
And dele among my doughtres, 3990
And my deere children;
For though I deye to day,
My dettes are quyte;
I bar hom that I borwed,
Er I to bedde yede.

"And with the residue and the remenaunt,
[By the Rode of Lukes!](#)
I wol worshipe therwith
Truthe by my lyve,
And ben his pilgrym atte plow, 4000
For povere mennes sake.
My plow-foot shall be my pikstaf,
And picche a-two the rotes,
And helpe my cultour to kerve
And clense the furwes."

Now is Perkyn and hise pilgrimes
To the plow faren;
To erie his half acre
Holpen hym manye;
Dikeres and delveres 4010
Diggered up the balkes.
Therwith was Perkyn a-payed,
And preised hem faste.

Othere werkmen ther were
That wroghten ful yerne;
Ech man in his manere
Made hymself to doone,
And somme to plese Perkyn
Piked up the wedes.

At heigh prime Piers 4020
Leet the plowgh stonde,
To over-sen hem hymself,
And who so best wroghte
He sholde be hired thereafter,
Whan hervest tyme come.

And thanne seten somme,
[And songen atte nale,](#)
And holpen ere this half acre
With "How, trolly lolly."

"Now, by the peril of my soule!" quod Piers, 4030
All in pure tene,
"But ye arise the rather
And rape yow to werche,
Shal no greyn that groweth
Glade yow at nede,
And though ye deye for doel,
The devel have that reccheth."

Tho were faitours a-fered,
And feyned hem blynde;
Somme leide hir legges a-liry, 4040
As swiche losels konneth,
And made hir mone to Piers,
And preide hym of grace;
"For we have no lymes to laboure with,
Lord, y-graced be the;
Ac we preie for yow, Piers,
And for youre plowgh bothe,
That God of his grace
Youre greyn multiplie,
And yelde yow for youre almesse 4050
That ye gyve us here;
For we may noght swynke ne swete,
Swich siknesse us eyleth."

"If it be sooth," quod Piers, "that ye seyn,
I shal it soone asprie.

Ye ben wastours, I woot wel,
 And Truthe woot the sothe;
 And I am his olde hyne,
 And highte hym to warne,
 Whiche thei were in this world 4060
 Hise werkmen apeired.
 Ye wasten that men wynnen
 With travaille and with tene;
 Ac Truthe shal teche yow
 His teme to dryve,
 Or ye shul eten barley breed,
 And of the broke drynke.

"But if he be blynd or broke-legged,
 Or bolted with irens,
 He shall ete whete breed, 4070
 And drynke with myselve,
 Til God of his goodnesse
 Amendement hym sende.
 Ac ye myghte travaille, as Truthe wolde,
 And take mete and hyre,
 To kepe kyen in the feld,
 The corn fro the beestes,
 Diken or delven,
 Or dyngen upon sheves,
 Or helpe make mortar, 4080
 Or bere muk a-feld.

"In lecherie and in losengerie
 Ye lyven, and in sleuthe;
 And al is thorough suffraunce,
 That vengeaunce yow ne taketh.

"Ac ancrs and heremites
 That eten noght but at nones,
 And na-moore er the morwe,
 Myn almesse shul thei have,
 And of catel to kepe hem with, 4090
 That han cloistres and chirches. {126}

"Ac Robert Renaboute
 Shal noght have of myne,
 Ne postles, but thei preche konne
 And have power of the bisshope;
 Thei shul have payn and potage,
 And make hemself at ese,
 For it is an unreasonable religion
 That hath right noght of certein."

And thanne gan Wastour to wrathen hym, 4100
 And wolde have y-foughte;
 And to Piers the Plowman
 He profrede his glove;
 A bretoner, a braggere,
 A-bosted Piers als,
 And bad hym go pissen with his plowgh,
 "For-pynede sherewe!
 Wiltow or neltow,
 We wol have oure wille 4110
 Of thi flour and of thi flesshe,
 Fecche whanne us liketh;
 And maken us murye thermyde,
 Maugree thi chekes."

Thanne Piers the Plowman
 Pleyned hym to the knyghte,
 To kepen hym as covebant was
 Fro cursede sherewes,
 And fro thise wastours wolves-kynnes
 That maketh the world deere;
 "For tho wasten and wynnen noght, 4120
 And that ilke while
 Worth nevere plentee among the peple,
 The while my plowgh liggeth." {127}

Curteisly the knyght thanne,

As his kynde wolde,
Warnede Wastour,
And wissed hym bettre,
"Or thow shalt abigge by the lawe,
By the ordre that I bere!"

"I was noght wont to werche," quod Wastour, 4130
"And now wol I noght bigynne;"
And leet light of the lawe,
And lasse of the knyghte;
And sette Piers at a pese,
And his plowgh bothe;
And manaced Piers and his men,
If thei mette eft soone.

"Now, by the peril of my soule!" quod Piers,
"I shal apeire yow alle;" 4140
And houped after Hunger,
That herde hym at the firste,
"A-wreke me of thise wastours," quod he,
"That this world shendeth."

Hunger in haste thoo
Hente Wastour by the wombe,
And wrong him so by the wombe,
That bothe hise eighen watrede.

He buffeted the bretoner
Aboute the chekes,
That he loked lik a lanterne 4150
Al his lif after.
He bette hem so bothe,
He brast ner hire guttes;
[Ne hadde Piers with a pese loof](#)
Preyed Hunger to cesse, {128}
They hadde be dolven,
Ne deme thow noon oother.

"Suffre hem lyve," he seide,
"And lat hem ete with hogges,
Or ellis benes or bren 4160
Y-baken togideres,
Or ellis melk and mene ale;"
Thus preied Piers for hem.

Faitours for fere herof
Flowen into bernes,
And flapten on with flailles
Fro morwe til even;
That Hunger was noght so hardy
On hem for to loke,
For a potful of peses 4170
That Piers hadde y-maked.

An heep of heremytes
Henten hem spades,
And kitten hir copes,
And courtepies hem maked,
And wente as werkmen
With spades and with shoveles
And dolven and dikeden,
To dryve away hunger.

Blynde and bed-reden 4180
Were bootned a thousande,
That seten to begge silver,
Soone were thei heeled;
For that was bake for bayarde,
Was boote for many hungry;
And many a beggere for benes
Buxum was to swynke;
And eche a povere man wel a-paied
To have pesen for his hyre, {129}
And what Piers preide hem to do, 4190
As prest as a sperhawk;
And therof was Piers proud,

And putte hem to werke,
And yaf hem mete as he myghte aforthe,
And mesurable hyre.

Thanne had Piers pité,
And preide Hunger to wende
Hoom unto his owene yerd,
And holden hym there;
"For I am wel a-wroke 4200
Of wastours, thorough thy myghte.
Ac I preie thee, er thou passe,"
Quod Piers to Hunger,
"Of beggeris and of bidderis
What best be to doone.
For I woot wel, be thou went,
Thei wol werche ful ille;
For meschief it maketh
Thei be so meke nouthe,
And for defaute of hire foode 4210
This folk is at my wille.

"Thei are my bloody bretheren," quod Piers,
"For God boughte us alle.
Truthe taughte me ones
To loven hem echone;
And to helpen hem of alle thyng
Ay as hem nedeth.
And now wolde I wite of thee
What were the beste;
And how I myghte a-maistren hem, 4220
And make hem to werche."

{130}

"Here now," quod Hunger,
"And hoold it for a wisdom;
Bolde beggeris and bigge
That mowe hir breed bi-swynke,
With houndes breed and horse breed
Hoold up hir hertes;
A-bate hem with benes,
For bollynge of hir wombes;
And if the gomes grucche, 4230
Bidde hem go swynke,
And he shal soupe swetter
Whan he it hath deserved.

"And if thou fynde any freke
That fortune hath apeired,
Or any manere false men,
Fonde thou swiche to knowe;
Conforte hym with thi catel,
For Cristes love of hevене;
Love hem and leve hem, 4240
So lawe of God techeth,
Alter alterius onera portare.

"And alle manere of men
That thou myght asprie,
That nedy ben and noughty,
Help hem with thi goodes;
Love hem and lakke hem noght,
Lat God take the vengeaunce;
Theigh thei doon yvele,
Lat God y-worthe. 4250
Mihi vindictam, et ego retribuam.

"And if thou wilt be gracious to God,
Do as the gospel techeth,
And bi-love thee amonges lewed men,
So shaltow lacche grace;
Facite vos amicos de Mammone iniquitatis." = {131}

"I wolde noght greve God," quod Piers,
"For al the good on grounde.
Mighte I synne-lees do as thou seist?" 4260
Seide Piers thanne.

"Ye, I bi-hote thee," quod Hunger,
 "Or ellis the Bible lieth;
 Go to Genesis the geaunt,
 The engendrour of us alle:
In sudore and swynk
 Thow shalt thi mete tilie,
 And laboure for thi liflode,
 And so oure Lorde highte.
 And Sapience seith the same, 4270
 I seigh it in the Bible,
Piger præ frigore
 No feeld nolde tilie,
 And therfore he shal begge and bidde,
 And no man bete his hunger.

"Mathew with mannes face
 Mouthed these wordes,
 That *servus nequam* hadde a mnam,
 And for he wolde noght chaffare,
 He hadde maugree of his maister 4280
 Evere moore after,
 And by-nam hym his mnam,
 For he ne wolde werche,
 And yaf that mnam to hym
 That ten mnames hadde;
 And with that he seide,
 That holy chirche it herde,
 He that hath shal have
 And helpe there it nedeth;
 And he that noght hath shal noght have, 4290 {132}
 And no man hym helpe,
 And that he weneth wel to have
 I wole it hym bi-reve.
 Kynde wit wolde

That ech a wight wroghte,
 Or in dikynge or in delvynge,
 Or travaillynge in preieres;
 Contemplatif lif or actif lif
 Crist wolde thei wroghte.
 The Sauter seith in the Psalme 4300
 Of *Beati omnes*,
 The freke that fedeth hymself
 With his feithful labour,
 He is blessed by the book
 In body and in soule."
Labores manuum tuarum, etc.

"Yet I preie yow," quod Piers,
 "*Par charité*, and ye konne
 Any leef of leche-craft,
 Lere it me, my deere; 4310
 For some of my servauntz,
 And myself bothe,
 Of al a wike werche noght,
 So oure wombe aketh."

"I woot wel," quod Hunger,
 "What siknesse yow eyleth;
 Ye han manged over muche,
 And that maketh yow grone.
 Ac I hote thee," quod Hunger,
 "As thow thyn hele wilnest, 4320
 That thow drynke no day
 Er thow dyne som what.
 Ete noght, I hote thee,
 Er hunger thee take, {133}
 And sende thee of his sauce
 To savore with thi lippes;
 And keep som til soper-tyme,
 And sitte noght to longe,
 And rys up er appetit
 Have eten his fille. 4330
 Lat noght sire Surfet
 Sitten at thi borde.
 Leve hym noght, for he is lecherous,

And likerous of tunge,
And after many maner metes
His mawe is a-fyngred.

"And if thow diete thee thus,
I dar legge myne eris,
That Phisik shal hise furred hodes
For his fode selle, 4340
And his cloke of Calabre,
With alle the knappes of golde,
And be fayn, by my feith!
His phisik to lete,
And lerne to labour with lond,
For liflode is swete.
For murthereris are manye leches,
Lord hem amende!
They do men deye thorough hir drynkes,
Er destyne it wolde." 4350
"By seint Poul!" quod Piers,
"Thise arn profitable wordes!
Wend now, Hunger, whan thow wolt,
That wel be thow evere!
For this is a lovely lesson,
Lord it thee for-yelde!"

"Bi-hote God!" quod Hunger,
"Hennes ne wole I wende, {134}
Til I have dyned bi this day,
And y-dronke bothe." 4360

"I have no peny," quod Piers,
"Pulettes to bugge,
Ne neither gees ne grys,
But two grene cheses,
A fewe cruddes and creme,
And an haver cake,
And two loves of benes and bran
Y-bake for my fauntes;
And yet I seye, by my soule!
I have no salt bacon, 4370
Ne no cokeneey, by Crist!
Coloppes for to maken.

"Ac I have percile and porettes,
And manye cole plauntes,
And ek a cow and a calf,
And a cart mare
To drawe a-feld my donge,
The while the droghte lasteth;
And by this liflode we mote lyve
Til Lammesse tyme. 4380
And by that, I hope to have
Hervest in my crofte,
And thanne may I dighte thi dyner,
As me deere liketh."

Al the povere peple tho
Pescoddes fetten,
Benes and baken apples
Thei broghte in hir lappes,
Chibolles and chervelles,
And ripe chiries manye, 4390
And profrede Piers this present
To plese with Hunger. {135}

Al Hunger eet in haste,
And axed after moore.
Thanne povere folk, for fere,
Fedden Hunger yerne,
With grene poret and pesen,
To poisone hym thei thoghte.
By that it neghed neer hervest,
And newe corn cam to chepyng; 4400
Thanne was folk fayn,
And fedde Hunger with the beste,
With goode ale, as Gloton taghte,

And garte Hunger go slepe.

And tho wolde Wastour noght werche,
But wandren aboute,
Ne no beggere ete breed
That benes inne were,
But of coket and cler-matyn,
Or ellis of clene whete; 4410
Ne noon halfpeny ale
In none wise drynke,
But of the beste and of the brunneste
That in burghe is to selle.

Laborers that have no land
To lyve on but hire handes,
Deyned noght to dyne a day
Nyght-olde wortes;
May no peny ale hem paye,
Ne no pece of bacone, 4420
But if it be fresshe flessch outhur fische,
Fryed outhur y-bake,
And that *chaud* and *plus chaud*,
For chillynge of hir mawe;
And but if he be heighliche hyred;
Ellis wole he chide, {136}
And that he was werkman wroght
Waille the tyme,
Ayeins Catons counseil
Comseth he to jangle. 4430
Paupertatis onus patienter ferre memento. =

He greveth hym ageyn God,
And gruccheth ageyn Reson,
And thanne corseth he the kyng,
And al his counseil after,
Swiche lawes to loke
Laborers to greve.
Ac whiles Hunger was hir maister,
Ther wolde noon of hem chide, 4440
Ne stryven ayeins his statut,
So sterneliche he loked.

Ac I warne yow, werkmen,
Wynneth whil ye mowe,
For Hunger hiderward
Hasteth hym faste.
He shal a-wake with water
Wastours to chaste;
Er fyve be fulfilled,
Swich famyn shal a-ryse, 4450
Thorough flodes and thorough foule wedres
Fruytes shul faille,
And so seide Saturne,
And sente yow to warne.

Whan ye se the sonne a-mys,
And two monkes heddes,
And a mayde have the maistrie,
And multiplie by eighte,
Thanne shal deeth with-drawe,
And derthe be justice, 4460 {137}
And Dawe the dykere
Deye for hunger;
But God of his goodnesse
Graunte us a trewe. 4464





Passus Septimus de Visione, ut supra.

HREUTHE herde telle her 4465
 And to Piers he sente,
 To maken his teme
 And tilien the erthe,
 And purchaced hym a pardone
A pœna et a culpa, 4470
 For hym and for hise heires,
 For evere moore after,
 And bad hym holde hym at home,
 And erien hise leyes.
 And alle that holpen hym to eryl,
 To sette or to sowe,
 Or any oother mestier
 That myghte Piers availle,
 Pardon with Piers Plowman
 Truthe hath y-graunted. 4480

Kynges and knyghtes,
 That kepen holy chirche,
 And rightfully in remes
 Rulen the peple,
 Han pardon thorough purgatorie
 To passen ful lightly,
 With patriarkes and prophetes
 In paradys to be felawe.

Bysshopes y-blessed, 4490
If thei ben as thei sholde,
 Legistres of bothe lawes,
 The lewed therwith to preche,
 And in as muche as thei mowe
 Amenden alle synfulle,
 Arn peres with the Apostles,
 This pardon Piers sheweth,
 And at the day of dome
 At the heighe deys sitte.

Marchauntz in the margyne 4500
 Hadde manye yeres,
Ac noon a pœna et a culpa
 The pope nolde hem graunte,
 For thei holde noght hir hali-dayes
 As holy chirche techeth,
 And for thei swere by hir soule,
 And so God moste hem helpe,
 Ayein clene Conscience,
 Hir catel to selle.

Ac under his secret seel 4510
 Truthe sente hem a lettre,
 That thei sholde buggen boldely
 That hem best liked,
 And sithenes selle it ayein,
 And save the wynnynng,
 And amende meson-dieux thermyd,
 And mys-eise folk helpe,
 And wikkede weyes
 Wightly amende,
 And do boote to brugges
 That to-broke were, 4520
 Marien maydenes,
 Or maken hem nonnes,
 Povere peple and prisons

Fynden hem hir foode,
And sette scolers to scole,
 Or to som othere craftes,
 Releve religion, 4530

And renten hem bettere; "And I shal sende yow myselve Seint Michel myn archangel, That no devel shal yow dere, Ne fere yow in youre deying, And witen yow fro wanhope, If ye wol thus werche, And sende youre soules in saufté To my seintes in joye."	4530	
Thanne were marchauntz murie, Manye wepten for joye, And preiseden Piers the Plowman, That purchaced this bulle.	4540	
Men of lawe leest pardon hadde, That pleteden for Mede; For the Sauter saveth hem noght, Swiche as take giftes, And nameliche of innocentz That noon yvel ne konneth. <i>Super innocentem munera non accipies.</i>	=	
Pledours sholde peynen hem To plede for swiche and helpe; Princes and prelates Sholde paie for hire travaille. <i>A regibus et principibus erit merces eorum.</i>	4550 =	
Ac many a justice and jurour Wolde for Johan do moore Than <i>pro Dei pietate</i> , Leve thow noon oother.		{141}
Ac he that spendeth his speche, And speketh for the povere That is innocent and nedy, And no man apeireth, Conforteth hym in that caas Withouten coveitise of giftes, And sheweth lawe for oure Lordes love, As he it hath y-lerned, Shal no devel at his deeth day Deren hym a myte, That he ne worth saaf and his soule, The Sauter bereth witesse: <i>Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?</i>	4560 4570 =	
Ac to bugge water, ne wynd, Ne wit, ne fir the ferthe, Thise foure the fader of hevене Made to this foold in commune. Thise ben Truthes tresores Trewe folk to helpe, That nevere shul wexe ne wanye, Withouten God hymselfe.	4580	
Whan thei drawen on to deye, And indulgences wolde have, Hir pardon is ful petit At hir partyng hennes, That any mede of mene men For hir motyng taketh. Ye legistres and lawieres, Holdeth this for truthe, That if that I lye, Mathew is to blame, For he bad me make yow this, And this proverbe me tolde, <i>Quodcunque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, facite eis.</i>	4590	{142}
Alle libbynge laborers That lyven with hir hondes, That troweliche taken, And troweliche wynnen,		

And lyven in love and in lawe,
For hir lowe hertes
Haveth the same absolucion
That sent was to Piers. 4600

Beggeres ne bidderes
Ne beth noght in the bulle,
But if the suggestion be sooth
That shapeth hem to begge.
For he that beggeth or bit,
But if he have nede,
He is fals with the feend,
And defraudeth the nedy; 4610
And also he bi-gileth the gyvere,
Ageynes his wille;
For if he wiste he were noght nedy,
He wolde gyve that another
That were moore nedy than he,
So the nedieste sholde be holpe.
Caton kenneth me thus,
And the clerck of stories;
Cui des videto,
Is Catons techyng. 4620

And in the stories he techeth
To bistowe thyn almesse.
Sit elemosina tua in manu tua,
donec studes cui des.

{143}

Ac Gregory was a good man,
And bad us gyven alle
That asketh for his love
That us al leneth.
Non eligas cui miserearis, ne forte
prætereas illum qui meretur
accipere. Quia incertum est
pro quo Deo magis placeas. 4630

For wite ye nevere who is worthi,
Ac God woot who hath nede;
In hym that taketh is the trecherie,
If any treson walke.
For he that yeveth, yeldeth,
And yarketh hym to reste;
And he that biddeth, borweth,
And bryngeth hymself in dette. 4640
For beggeres borwen evere mo,
And hir borgh is God almyghty,
To yelden hem that yeveth hem,
And yet usure moore.
Quare non dedisti pecuniam meam
ad mensam, ut ego veniam cum
usuris exigere?

For-thi biddeth noght, ye beggeres,
But if ye have gret nede;
For who so hath to buggen hym breed,
The book bereth witesse, 4650
He hath y-nough that hath breed y-nough,
Though he have noght ellis.
Satis dives est, qui non indiget pane.

Lat usage be youre solas,
Of seintes lyves redyng,
The book banneth beggerie,
And blameth hem in this manere: 4660
Junior fui, et jam senui, et non vidi
justum derelictum, nec semen
ejus, etc.

{144}

For ye lyve in no love,
Ne no lawe holde;
Manye of yow ne wedde noght
The womman that ye with deele,
But as wilde bestes with 'wehee!'
Worthen uppe and werchen,

And bryngen forth barnes,
 That bastardes men calleth;
 Or the bak or som boon 4670
 He breketh in his youthe,
 And siththe goon faiten with youre fauntes
 For evere moore after.
 Ther is moore mys-shapen peple
 Amonges these beggeres,
 Than of alle manere men
 That on this moolde walketh.
 And thei that lyve thus hir lif,
 Mowe lothe the tyme
 That evere thei were men wrought, 4680
 Whan thei shal hennes fare.
 Ac olde men and hore,
 Than help-les ben of strengthe,
 And wommen with childe
 That werche ne mowe,
 Blynde and bed-reden,
 And broken hire membres,
 That taken these myschiefs mekeliche,
 As mesels and othere,
 Han as pleyn pardon 4690
 As the plowman hymselfe.
 For love of hir lowe hertes, {145}
 Oure Lord hath hem graunted
 Hir penaunce and hir purgatorie
[Here on this erthe.](#)

"Piers," quod a preest thoo,
 "Thi pardon moste I rede;
 For I wol construe ech clause,
 And kenne it thee on Englysshe."

And Piers at his preiere 4700
 The pardon unfoldeth;
 And I by-hynde hem bothe
 Biheld al the bulle,
 And in two lynes it lay,
 And noght a leef more,
 And was writen right thus,
 In witnesse of Truthe:
[Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam.](#) =
[Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.](#) 4710

"Peter," quod the preest thoo,
 "I kan no pardon fynde,
 But do wel and have wel,
 And God shal have thi soule,
 And do yvel and have yvel,
 Hope thow noon oother,
 But after thi deeth-day
 The devel shal have thi soule."
 And Piers for pure tene
 Pulled it a-tweyne, 4720
 And seide [Si ambulavero in medio](#)
[umbræ mortis, non timebo mala,](#)
[quoniam tu mecum es.](#)

"I shal cessen of my sowyng," quod Piers, =
 "And swynke noght so harde, {146}
 Ne aboute my bely joye
 So bisy be na-moore;
 Of preieres and of penaunce
 My plough shal ben hereafter, 4730
 And wepen whan I sholde slepe,
 Though whete-breed me faille.

"The prophete his payn eet
 In penaunce and in sorwe,
 By that the Sauter seith,
 So dide othere manye;
 That loveth God lelly,
 His liflode is ful esy.
[Fuerunt mihi lacrimæ meæ panes](#)

"And but if Luc lye,
 He lereth us by foweles,
 We sholde noght be to bisy
 Aboute the worldes blisse;
Ne solliciti sitis,
 He seith in the Gospel,
 And sheweth us by ensamples
 Us selve to wisse.
 The foweles in the feld,
 Who fynt hem mete at wynter?
 Have thei no gerner to go to,
 But God fynt hem alle."

4750

"What!" quod the preest to Perkyn,
 "Peter! as me thynketh,
 Thow art lettred a litel:—
 Who lerned thee on boke?"

"Abstynence the abbesse," quod Piers,
 "Myn a.b.c. me taughte;
 And Conscience cam afterward,
 And kenned me muche moore."

4760

{147}

"Were thow a preest," quod he,
 "Thou myghtest preche where thou sholdest,
 As divinour in divinité,
 With *Dixit insipiens* to thi teme."

"Lewed lorel!" quod Piers,
 "Litel lokestow on the Bible;
 On Salomons sawes
 Selden thow biholdest:
*Ejice derisores et jurgia cum eis, ne
 crescant, etc.*"

4770

The preest and *Perkyn*
 Opposeden either oother.
 And I thorough hir wordes a-wook,
 And waited aboute,
 And seigh the sonne in the south
 Sitte that tyme,
 Mete-lees and monei-lees
 On Malverne hules,
 Musynge on this metels,
 And my wey ich yede.

4780

MANY tyme this metels
 Hath maked me to studie
 Of that I seigh slepynge,
 If it so be myghte,
 And also for Piers the Plowman
 Ful pencif in herte,
 And which a pardon Piers hadde
 Al the peple to conforte,
 And how the preest impugned it
 With two propre wordes.
 Ac I have no savour in songewarie,
 For I se it ofte faille;
 Caton and canonistres
 Counseillen us to leve
 To sette sadnesse in songewarie,
 For *sompnia ne cures*.

4790

{148}

Ac for the book Bible
 Bereth witnessse
 How Daniel divined
 The dreem of a kyng,
 That was Nabugodonosor
 Nempned of clerkes.

4800

Daniel seide, "Sire kyng,
 Thi dremels bitokneth
 That unkouthe knyghtes shul come
 Thi kyngdom to cleyme;

Amonges lower lordes
Thi lond shal be departed."
And as Daniel divined,
In dede it fel after; 4810
The kyng lees his lordshipe,
And lower men it hadde.

And Joseph mette merveillously
How the moone and the sonne
And the ellevene sterres
Hailsed hym alle.

Thanne Jacob jugged
Josephes swevene.
"Beau fitz," quod his fader,
"For defaute we shullen, 4820
I myself and my sones,
Seche thee for nede."

It bifel as his fader seide,
In Pharaoes tyme,
That Joseph was justice
Egpte to loke;
It bifel as his fader tolde,
Hise frendes there hym soughte,
And al this maketh me
On this metels to thynke. 4830 {149}
And how the preest preved
No pardon to Do-wel,
And demed that Do-wel
Indulgences passed,
Biennals and triennals,
And bisshopes lettres;
And how Do-wel at the day of dome
Is digneliche underfongen,
And passeth al the pardon
Of seint Petres cherche. 4840

Now hath the pope power
Pardon to graunte the peple,
Withouten any penaunce
To passen into hevене;
This is oure bileve,
As lettred men us techeth:
Quodcumque ligaveris super terram,
erit ligatum et in cœlis, etc. =

And so I leve leelly, 4850
Lordes forbode ellis!
That pardon and penaunce
And preieres doon save
Soules that have synned
Seven sithes dedly;
Ac to truste to thise triennals,
Trewely me thynketh,
Is noght so siker for the soule,
Certes, as is Do-wel.

For-thi I rede yow, renkes, 4860
That riche ben on this erthe,
Upon trust of youre tresor
Triennals to have,
Be ye never the bolder
To breake the .x. hestes; {150}
And namely ye maistres,
Meires and jugges,
That have the welthe of this world
And for wise men ben holden,

To purchace yow pardon 4870
And the popes bulles.
At the dredful dome,
Whan dede shulle rise,
And comen alle to-fore Crist
Acountes to yelde,
How thow laddest thi lif here,
And hise lawes keptest,

And how thow didest day by day,
The doom wole reherce.
A poke ful of pardon there, 4880
Ne provincials lettres,
Theigh ye be founde in the fraternité
Of alle the foure ordres,
And have indulgences double-fold,
But if Do-wel yow helpe,
I sette youre patentes and youre pardon
At one pies hele.

For-thi I counseille alle Cristene
To crie God mercy,
And Marie his moder 4890
Be oure meene bitwene,
That God gyve us grace here,
Er we go hennes,
Swiche werkes to werche
While we ben here,
That after oure deeth-day
Do-wel reherce
At the day of dome,
We dide as he highte. 4899



{151}

Passus Octavus de Visione, et incipit Do-wel.

THUS y-robed in russet 4900
I romed aboute
Al a somer seson
For to seke Do-wel;
And frayned ful ofte
Of folk that I mette,
If any wight wiste
Wher Do-wel was at inne;
And what man he myghte be
Of many man I asked.

Was nevere wight, as I wente, 4910
That me wisse kouthe
Where this leode lenged,
Lasse ne moore;
Til it bi-fel on a Friday
Two freres I mette,
Maistres of the menours,
Men of grete witte.

I hailed hem hendely,
As I hadde y-lerned,
And preide hem *par charité*, 4920
Er thei passed ferther,
If thei knewe any contree
Or costes, as thei wente,
"Where that Do-wel dwelleth
Dooth me to witene."

{152}

For thei be men of this moolde
That moost wide walken,
And knowen contrees and courtes,
And many kynnes places,
Bothe princes paleises 4930
And povere mennes cotes,
And Do-wel and Do-yvele
Wher thei dwelle bothe.

"Amonges us," quod the Menours,
"That man is dwellynge,
And evere hath, as I hope,
And evere shal herafter."

"*Contra*," quod I as a clerik,
 And comsed to disputen,
 And seide hem soothly, 4940
"Septies in die cadit justus.
 Sevene sithes, seith the book,
 Synneth the rightfulle;
 And who so synneth," I seide,
 "Dooth yvele, as me thynketh;
 And Do-wel and Do-yvele
 Mowe noght dwelle togideres.
Ergo he nys noght alwey
 Amonges yow freres;
 He is outhere while ellis where 4950
 To wisse the peple."

"I shal seye thee, my sone,"
 Seide the frere thanne,
 "How seven sithes the sadde man
 On a day synneth;
 By a forbisne," quod the frere,
 "I shal thee faire shewe.
 Lat brynge a man in a boot {153}
 Amydde the brode watre,
 The wynd and the water 4960
 And the boot waggyng
 Maketh the man many a tyme
To falle and to stonde;
 For stonde he never so stif,
 He stumbleth if he meve,
 Ac yet is he saaf and sound,
 And so hym bihoveth.
 For if he ne arise the rather,
 And raughte to the steere,
 The wynd wolde with the water 4970
 The boot over throwe;
 And thanne were his lif lost,
 Through lachesse of hymselfe.

"And thus it falleth," quod the frere,
 "By folk here on erthe;
 The water is likned to the world
 That wanyeth and wexeth;
 The goodes of this grounde arn lik
 To the grete wawes,
 That as wyndes and wedres 4980
 Walketh aboute;
 The boot is likned to oure body
 That brotel is of kynde,
 That thorough the fend and the flesshe
 And the frele worlde
 Synneth the sadde man
 A day seven sithes.

"Ac dedly synne doth he noght,
 For Do-wel hym kepeth;
 And that is charité the champion, 4990
 Chief help ayein synne;
 For he strengtheth men to stonde, {154}
 And steereth mannes soule,
 And though the body bowe
 As boot dooth in the watre,
 Ay is thi soule saaf,
 But if thow wole thiselve
 Do a deedly synne,
 And drenche so thi soule,
 God wole suffre wel thi sleuthe, 5000
 If thiself liketh.
 For he yaf thee a yeres-gyve,
 To yeme wel thiselve,
 And that is wit and free-wil,
 To every wight a porcion,
 To fleyng foweles,
 To fisshes and to beestes;
 Ac man hath moost therof,
 And moost is to blame,

But if he werche wel therwith, 5010
As Do-wel hym teacheth."

"I have no kynde knowyng," quod I,
"To conceyven alle youre wordes;
[Ac if I may lyve and loke,](#)
I shal go lerne bettere."

"I bikenne thee Crist," quod he,
"That on cros deyde!"
And I seide, "The same
Save yow fro myschaunce,
And gyve yow grace on this grounde 5020
Goode men to worthe!"

AND thus I wente wide wher
Walkyng myn one,
By a wilde wildernesse, {155}
And by a wodes side;
Blisse of the briddes
Broughte me a-slepe,
And under a lynde upon a launde
Lened I a stounde,
To lythe the layes 5030
Tho lovely foweles made.
Murthe of hire mouthes
Made me ther to slepe;
The marveillouseste metels
Mette me thanne
That ever dremed wight
In world, as I wene.

A mucche man, as me thoughte,
And lik to myselve,
Cam and called me 5040
By my kynde name.

"What artow?" quod I tho,
"That thow my name knowest."

"That thou woost wel," quod he,
"And no wight bettere."

"Woot I what thow art?"
"Thought," seide he thanne;
"I have sued thee this seven yeer,
Seye thow me no rather."

"Artow Thought," quod I thoo, 5050
"Thow koudest me wisse,
Where that Do-wel dwelleth,
And do me that to knowe."

"Do-wel and Do-bet,
And Do-best the thridde," quod he,
"Arn thre fair vertues,
And ben noght fer to fynde.
Who so is trewe of his tunge,
And of his two handes, {156}
And thorough his labour, or thorough his land, 5060
His liflode wynneth,
And is trusty of his tailende,
Taketh but his owene,
And his noght dronklewe ne dedeynous,
Do-wel hym folweth.

"Do-bet dooth right thus:
Ac he dooth mucche moore;
He is as lowe as a lomb,
And lovelich of speche,
And helpeth alle men 5070
After that hem nedeth.
The bagges and the bigirdles,
He hath to-broke hem alle,
That the erl Avarous
Heeld and hise heires.

And thus with Mammonaes moneie
He hath maad hym frendes,
And is ronne to religion,
And hath rendred the Bible,
And precheth to the peple 5080
Seint Poules wordes:
*Libenter suffertis insipientes, cum
sitis ipsi sapientes.*

"And suffreth the unwise
With yow for to libbe;
And with glad wille dooth hem good,
For so God yow hoteth.

"Do-best is above bothe,
And bereth a bisshopes crosse,
Is hoked on that oon ende 5090
To halie men fro helle;
A pik is on that potente,
To putte a-down the wikked {157}
That waiten any wikkednesse
Do-wel to tene.
And Do-wel and Do-bet
Amonges hem han ordeyned,
To crowne oon to be kyng
To rulen hem bothe;
That if Do-wel or Do-bet 5100
Dide ayein Do-best,
Thanne shal the kyng come
And casten hem in irens,
And but if Do-best bede for hem,
Thei to be ther for evere.

"Thus Do-wel and Do-bet,
And Do-best the thridde,
Crouned oon to the kyng
To kepen hem alle,
And to rule the reme 5110
By hire thre wittes,
And noon oother wise
But as thei thre assented."

I thonked Thought tho,
That he me thus taughte.
"Ac yet savoreth me noght thi seying;
I coveite to lerne
How Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best
Doon among the peple."

"But Wit konne wisse thee," quod Thought, 5120
"Wher tho thre dwelle,
Ellis woot I noon that kan
That now is alyve."

Thought and I thus
Thre daies we yeden,
Disputyng upon Do-wel
Day after oother; {158}
And ere we were war,
With Wit gonne we mete.
He was long and lene, 5130
Lik to noon other;
Was no pride on his apparaille,
Ne poverte neither;
Sad of his semblaunt,
And of softe chere.
I dorste meve no matere
To maken hym to jangle,
But as I bad Thought thoo
Be mene bitwene,
And pute forth som purpos 5140
To preven hise wittes,
What was Do-wel fro Do-bet,
And Do-best from hem bothe.

Thanne Thought in that tyme

Seide this wordes:
"Where Do-wel, Do-bet,
And Do-best ben in londe,
Here is Wil wolde wite,
If Wit koude teche hym;
And wheither he be man or womman
This man fayn wolde asprie,
And werchen as thei thre wolde,
Thus is his entente."

5153



{159}

*Passus Nonus de Visione, ut supra, et Primus de Do-
wel*

"SIRRE Do-wel dwelleth," quod Wit, 5154
"Noght a day hennes,
In a castel that Kynde made
Of four kynnes thynges;
Of erthe and of eyr it is maad,
Medled togideres,
With wynd and with water 5160
Witterly enjoyned.
Kynde hath closed therinne
Craftily withalle
A lemman that he loveth
Lik to hymselfe;
Anima she hatte.
Ac envye hir hateth,
A proud prikere of Fraunce,
Princeps hujus mundi,
And wolde wynne hire away 5170
With wiles, and he myghte.

"Ac Kynde knoweth this wel,
And kepeth hire the better,
And dooth hire with sire Do-wel,
Is duc of this marches.

"Do-bet is hire damyselle,
Sire Do-weles doughter,
To serven this lady leelly 5180
Bothe late and rathe.

{160}

"Do-best is above bothe, 5180
A bisshopes peere;
That he bit moot be do,
He ruleth hem alle.
Anima, that lady,
Is lad by his leryng.
Ac the constable of that castel,
That kepeth al the wacche,
Is a wis knyght withalle,
Sire Inwit he hatte,
And hathe fyve faire sones 5190
Bi his firste wyve;
Sire Se-wel, and Sey-wel,
And Here-wel the hende,
Sire Werch-wel-with-thyn-hand,
A wight man of strengthe,
And sire Godefray Go-wel;
Grete lordes, for sothe.
These fyve ben set
To kepe this lady *Anima*,
Til Kynde come or sende 5200
To saven hire for evere."

"What kynnes thyng is Kynde?" quod I,
"Kanstow me telle?"

"Kynde," quod Wit, "is a creatour
Of alle kynnes thynges,
Fader and formour
Of al that evere was maked;
And that is the grete God
That gynnyng hadde nevere,
Lord of lif and of light, 5210
Of lisse and of peyne.
Aungeles and alle thyng {161}
Arn at his wille;
Ac man is hym moost lik
Of marc and of shafte;
For thorough the word that he spak
Woxen forth beestes.
Dixit et facta sunt.

"And made man likkest
To hymself one, 5220
And Eve of his ryb-bon,
Withouten any mene,
For he was synguler hymself;
And seide *faciamus*,
As who seith moore moot herto
Than my word oone,
My myght moot helpe
Forth with my speche.
Right as a lord sholde make lettres,
And hym lakked parchemyn, 5230
Though he koude write never so wel,
If he hadde no penne,
The lettre, for al the lordshipe,
I leve were nevere y-maked.

"And so it semeth by hym,
As the Bible telleth,
There he seide *Dixit et facta sunt*,
He moste werche with his word,
And his wit shewe. 5240
And in this manere was man maad,
Thorough myght of God almighty,
With his word and werkmanshipe,
And with lif to laste.
And thus God gaf hym a goost,
Thorough the godhede of hevene,
And of his grete grace {162}
Graunted hym blisse,
And that is lif that ay shal laste
To al his lynage after.
And that is the castel that Kynde made, 5250
Caro it hatte,
And is as muche to mene
As man with a soule;
And that he wroghte with werk,
And with word bothe,
Thorgh myght of the magesté
Man was y-maked.

"Inwit and alle wittes
Closed ben therinne,
For love of the lady *Anima*, 5260
That lif is y-nempned;
Over al in mannes body
He walketh and wandreth.
And in the herte is hir hoom
And hir mooste reste.

"Ac Inwit is in the heed,
And to the herte he loketh;
What *Anima* is leef or looth,
He lat hire at his wille;
For after the grace of God, 5270
The grettteste is Inwit.

"Muche wo worth that man
That mys-ruleth his Inwit;
And that ben glotons glubberes,
Hir God is hire wombe.
Quorum deus venter est.

"For thei serven Sathan,
Hir soules shal he have.
That lyven synful lif here,
Hir soule is lich the devil; 5280 {163}
And alle that lyven good lif
Are lik to God almyghty,
Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, etc. =

"Alas! that drynke shal for-do
That God deere boughte,
And dooth God forsaken hem
That he shoop to his liknesse.
*Amen dico vobis, nescio vos. Et alibi:
Et dimisi eos secundum desideria
eorum.* 5290

"Fools that fauten Inwit,
I fynde that holy chirche
Sholde fynden hem that hem fauted,
And fader-lese children,
And widewes that han noght wherwith
To wynnem hem hir foode,
Madde men, and maydenes
That help-lese were,
Alle thise lakken Inwit, 5300
And loore bihoveth.

"Of this matere I myghte
Make a long tale,
And fynde fele witnesses
Among *the foure doctours*;
And that I lye noght of that I lere thee,
Luc bereth witsesse.

"God-fadres and god-modres,
That seen hire god-children
At mys-eise and at myschief, 5310
And mowe hem amende,
Shul have penaunce in purgatorie
But thei hem helpe.
For moore bilongeth to the litel barn, {164}
Er he the lawe knowe,
Than nempnyng of a name,
And he never the wiser.
Sholde no cristene creature
Cryen at the yate,
Ne faille payn ne potage, 5320
And prelates dide as thei sholden.
A Jew wolde noght se a Jew
Go janglyng for defaute,
For alle the mebles on this moolde,
And he amende it myghte.

"Alas! that a cristene creature
Shal be unkynde til another;
Syn Jewes, that we jugge
Judas felawes,
Eyther of hem helpeth oother 5330
Of that that hem nedeth.
Whi nel we cristene
Of Cristes good be as kynde
As Jewes, that benoure lores-men?
Shame to us alle!
The commune for hir unkyndenesse,
I drede me, shul abyde.

"Bisshopes shul be blamed
For beggeres sake.
He is wors than Judas, 5340
That gyveth a japer silver,

And biddeth the beggere go,
For his broke clothes.
*Proditor est praelatus cum Juda,
qui patrimonium Christi mimis
distribuit. Et alibi: Perniciosus
dispensator est, qui res
pauperum Christi inutiliter
consumit.*

{165}

"He dooth nocht wel that dooth thus, 5350
Ne drat nocht God almyghty;
He loveth nocht Salomons sawes,
That sapience taughte.
Initium sapientiæ, timor Domini.

"That dredeth God, he dooth wel;
That dredeth him for love,
And nocht for drede of vengeaunce,
Dooth therfore the bettre.

"He dooth best that with-draweth hym 5360
By daye and by nyghte,
To spille any speche
Or any space of tyme. =
Qui offendit in uno, in omnibus est reus.

"Lesynge of tyme,
Truthe woot the sothe,
Is moost y-hated upon erthe
Of hem that ben in hevене;
And siththe to spille speche,
That spicerie is of grace, 5370
And Goddes gle-man,
And a game of hevене.
Wolde nevere the feithful fader
This fithle were un-tempred,
Ne his gle-man a gedelyng,
A goere to tavernes.

"To alle trewe tidy men
That travaille desiren,
Oure Lord loveth hem and lent
Loude outhir stille 5380
Grace to go to hem,
And of-gon hir liflode.
*Inquirentes autem Dominum non
minuentur omni bono.*

{166}

"Trewe wedded libbynge folk
In this world is Do-wel,
For thei mote werche and wyne,
And the world sustene.
For of hir kynde thei come
That confessours ben nempned, 5390
Kynges and knyghtes,
Kaysers and cherles,
Maidenes and martires,
Out of o man come.
The wif was maad the weye
For to helpe werche;
And thus was wedlok y-wroght
With a mene persone,
First, by the fadres wille,
And the frendes conseilte; 5400
And sithenes by assent of hemself,
As thei two myghte acorde.
And thus was wedlok y-wroght,
And God hymself it made
In erthe and in hevене,
Hymself bereth witsesse.

"Ac fals folk feyth-lees,
Theves and lyeres,
Wastours and wrecches,
Out of wedlok, I trowe, 5410
Conceyved ben in yvel tyme,

As Caym was on Eve;
Of swiche synfulle sherewes
The Sauter maketh mynde:
Concepit in dolore, et peperit iniquitatem, etc. = {167}

"And alle that come of that Caym,
Come to yvel ende.
And God sente to Seem,
And seide by an aungel, 5420
'Thyn issue in thyn issue
I wol that thei be wedded,
And noght thi kynde with Caymes
Y-coupled nor y-spoused.'

"Yet some, ayein the sonde
Of oure Saveour of hevene,
Caymes kynde and his kynde
Coupled togideres,
Til God wrathed for hir werkes,
And swich a word seide, 5430
'That I makede man
It me for-thynketh.'
Pœnitet me fecisse hominem.

"And com to Noe anon,
And bad hym noght lette:
'Swith go shape a ship
Of shides and of bordes;
Thyself and thi sones,
And sithen youre wyves, 5440
Busketh yow to that boot,
And bideth ye therinne,
Til fourty daies be fulfild,
That the flood have y-wasshen
Clene away the corsed blood
That Caym hath y-maked.

"Beestes that now ben
Shul banne the tyme
That evere that cursed Caym
Coom on this erthe; 5450 {168}
Alle shul deye for hise dedes,
By dales and by hulles,
And the foweles that fleen
Forth with othere beestes,
Excepte oonliche
Of ech kynde a couple,
That in thi shyngled ship
Shul ben y-saved.'
Here a-boughte the barn
The bel-sires giltes,
And alle for hir fadres 5460
Thei ferden the werse;
The Gospel is her ayein,
In o degré, I fynde:
*Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris,
et pater non portabit iniquitatem
filii, etc.*

"Ac I fynde if the fader
Be fals and a sherewe,
That som del the sone
Shal have the sires tacches. 5470

"Impe on an ellere,
And if thyn appul be swete,
Muchel merveille me thynketh;
And moore of a sherewe
That bryngeth forth any barn,
But if he be the same,
And have a savour after the sire;
Selde sestow oother.
*Nunquam colligitur de spinis uva,
nec de tribulis ficus.* 5480

"And thus thorough cursed Caym

Cam care upon erthe;
 And al for thei wroghte wedlokes {169}
 Ayein Goddes wille.
 For-thi have thei maugré of hir mariages
 That marie so hir children.
 For some, as I se now,
 Sooth for to telle,
 For coveitise of catel
 Un-kyndely ben wedded; 5490
 As careful concepcion
 Cometh of swiche mariages,
 As bi-fel of the folk
 That I bifore of tolde,
 Therefore goode sholde wedde goode,
 Though thei no good hadde;
 'I am *via et veritas*,' seith Crist,
 'I may avaunce yow alle.'

"It is an uncomly couple,
 By Crist! as me thynketh, 5500
 To yeven a yong wenche
 To an old feble,
 Or wedden any wodewe
 For welthe of hir goodes,
 That nevere shal barn bere
 But if it be in hir armes.
 Many a peire, sithen the pestilence,
 Han plight hem togideres,
 The fruyt that brynge forth
 Arn foule wordes, 5510
 In jalousie joye-lees,
 And janglynge on bedde,
 Have thei no children but cheeste,
 And clappyng hem bitwene.
 And though thei do hem to Dunmowe,
 But if the devel helpe,
 To folwen after the flicche, {170}
 Fecche thei it nevere;
 And but thi bothe be for-swore,
 That bacon thei tyne. 5520

"For-thei I counseille alle cristene
 Coveite noght be wedded
 For coveitise of catel,
 Ne of kyn-rede riche;
 Ac maidenes and maydenes
 Macche yow togideres,
 Wodewes and wideweres
 Wercheth the same;
 For no londes, but for love,
 Loke ye be wedded, 5530
 And thanne gete ye the grace of God,
 And good y-nough to lyve with.

"And every maner secular
 That may noght continue,
 Wisely goo wedde,
 And ware hym fro synne;
 For lecherie in likyng
 Is lyme-yerd of helle.
 Whiles thow art yong,
 And thi wepene kene, 5540
 Wreke thee with wyvyng,
 If thow wolt ben excused.
Dum sis vir fortis,
Ne des tua robora scortis;
Scribitur in portis,
Meretrix est janua mortis.

"Whan ye han wyved, beth war
 And wercheth in tyme;
 Noght as Adam and Eve,
 Whan Caym was engendred. 5550
 For in un-tyme, trewely, {171}
 Bitwene man and womman,

Ne sholde no bourde or bedde be;
 But if thei bothe were clene
 Bothe of lif and of soule,
 And in perfit charité,
 That ilke derne dede do
 No man ne sholde.
 And if thei leden thus hir lif,
 It liketh God almyghty; 5560
 For he made wedlok first,
 And hymself it seide:
*Bonum est ut unusquisque uxorem
 suam habeat, propter
 fornicationem.*

"And thei that other gates ben geten
 For gedelynges arn holden,
 As fals folk fondlynges,
 Faitours and lieres,
 Ungracious to gete good 5570
 Or love of the peple,
 Wandren and wasten
 What thei cacche mowe,
 Ayeins Do-wel thei doon yvel,
 And the devel serve;
 And after hir deeth day
 Shul dwelle with the same,
 But God gyve hem grace here
 Hemsself to amende.

"Do-wel my frend is, 5580
 To doon as lawe techeth;
 To love thi frend and thi foo,
 Leve me, that is Do-bet;
 To gyven and to yemen
 Bothe yonge and olde, {172}
 To helen and to helpen,
 Is Do-best of alle.

"And Do-wel is to drede God,
 And Do-bet to suffre,
 And so cometh Do-best of bothe, 5590
 And bryngeth adoun the mody,
 And that is wikked wille
 That many a werk shendeth,
 And dryveth away Do-wel
 Thorough dedliche synnes." 5595



Passus Decimus de Visione, et Secundus de Do-wel.

THANNE hadde Wit a wif, 5596
 Was hote dame Studie,
 That lene was of lere,
 And of liche bothe;
 She was wonderly wroth 5600
 That Wit me thus taughte;
 And al starynge dame Studie
 Sterneliche loked.

"Wel artow wis," quod she to Wit,
 "Any wisdomes to telle

{173}

To flatereres or to fooles,
 That frenetike ben of wittes."
 And blamed hym and banned hym,
 And bad hym be stille,
 With swiche wise wordes 5610
 To wissen any sottes.
 And seide, "*Noli mittere*, man,
[Margery perles](#)
 Among hogges, that han
 Hawes at wille;
 Thei doon but dryvele theron,
 Draf were hem levere
 Than al the precious perree
 That in paradys wexeth.
 I seye it by swiche," quod she, 5620 {174}
 "That sheweth by hir werkis,
 That hem were levere lond
 And lordshipe on erthe,
 Or richesse, or rentes,
 And reste at hir wille,
 Than alle the sooth sawes
 That Salomon seide evere.

"Wisdom and wit now
 Is noght worth a kerse,
 But if it be carded with coveitise, 5630
 As clotheres kemben hir wolle.
 Who so can contreve deceites
 And conspire wronges,
 And lede forth [a love-day](#)
[To lette with truthe](#),
 He that swiche craftes can
 To counseil is cleped.
 Thei lede lordes with lesynges,
 And bi-lieth Truthe.

"Job the gentile 5640
 In his gestes witnesseth,
 That wikked men thei welden
 The welthe of this worlde;
 And that thei ben lordes of ech a lond
 That out of lawe libbeth.
*Quare impii vivunt, bene est omnibus
 qui prævaricantur et inique
 agunt.*

"The Sauter seith the same
 By swiche that doon ille: 5650
*Ecce ipsi peccatores abundantes in
 sæculo obtinuerunt divitias.*

"Lo! seith holy lettrure,
 Whiche beth thise sherewes? {175}
 Thilke that God gyveth moost,
 Leest good thei deleth;
 And moost un-kynde to the commune
 That moost catel weldeth.
*Quæ perfecisti destruxerunt, justus
 autem, etc.* 5660

"Harlotes for hir harlotrie
 May have of hir goodes,
 And japeris and jogelours,
 And jangleris of gestes.

"Ac he that hath holy writ
 Ay in his mouthe,
 And kan telle of Tobbye,
 And of twelve apostles,
 Or prechen of the penaunce
 That Pilat wikkedly wroghte 5670
 To Jhesu the gentile,
 That Jewes to-drowe;
 Litel is he loved
 That swich a lesson sheweth,
 Or daunted or drawe forth,

I do it on God hymselfe.

"But thoo that feynen hem foolis,
And with faityng libbeth,
Ayein the lawe of oure Lord,
And lyen on hemselfe, 5680
Spitten and spuen,
And speke foule wordes,
Drynken and drevelen,
And do men fer to gape,
Likne men, and lye on hem,
That leneth hem no giftes;
Thei konne na-moore mynstralcie
Ne musik men to glade, {176}
Than Munde the millere
Of *Multa fecit Deus*. 5690
Ne were hir vile harlotrye,
Have God my trouthe!
Sholde nevere kyng ne knyght,
Ne chanon of seint Poules,
Gyve hem to hir yeres-gyve
The gifte of a grote.

"Ac murthe and mynstralcie
Amonges men is nouthe
Lecherie, losengerye,
And losels tales, 5700
Glotonye and grete othes,
This murthe thei lovyeth.

"Ac if thei carpen of Crist,
Thise clerkes and thise lewed
At mete in hir murthe,
Whan mynstrals beth stille,
Thanne telleth thei of the Trinité
A tale outhere tweye,
And bryngen forth a balled reson,
And taken Bernard to witnesse, 5710
And putten forth a presumpcion
To preve the sothe.
Thus thei dryvele at hir deys
The Deitee to knowe,
And gnawen God with the gorge,
Whanne hir guttes fullen.

"Ac the carefulle may crie
And carpen at the yate,
Bothe a-fyngred and a-furst,
And for chele quake; 5720
Is ther noon to nyne hym neer,
His anoy to amende, {177}
But huntten hym as an hound,
And hoten hym go thennes.
Litel loveth he that Lord
That lent hym al that blisse,
That thus parteth with the povere
A percell whan hym nedeth.
Ne were mercy in meene men
Moore than in riche, 5730
Mendinauntz mete-lees
Myghte go to bedde.
God is mucche in the gorge
Of thise grete maistres,
Ac amonges meene men
His mercy and hise werkes.
And so seith the Sauter,
I have seighen it ofte:
Ecce audivimus eam in Efrata, invenimus
eam in campis silvæ. 5740

"Clerkes and othere kynnes men
Carpen of God faste,
And have hym mucche in the mouth;
Ac meene men in herte.

"Freres and faitours

Han founde swiche questions,
 To plese with proude men,
 Syn the pestilence tyme;
 And prechen at seint Poules
 For pure envye of clerkes; 5750
 That folk is noght fermed in the feith,
 Ne free of hire goodes,
 Ne sory for hire synnes;
 So is pride woxen,
 In religion and in al the reme,
 Amonges riche and povere, {178}
 That preieres have no power
 The pestilence to lette.
 And yet the wrecches of this world
 Is noon y-war by oother; 5760
 Ne for drede of the deeth
 With-drawe noght hir pride;
 Ne beth plentevouse to the povere,
 As pure charité wolde;
 But in gaynesse and in glotonye
 For-glutten hir good hemselve,
 And breketh noght to the beggere
 As the Book techeth:
Frangere esurienti panem tuum, etc.
 And the moore he wynneth and welt 5770
 Welthes and richesse,
 And lordeth in londes,
 The lasse good he deleth.

"Tobye telleth yow noght so,
 Taketh hede, ye riche,
 How the book Bible
 Of hym bereth witnessse.
Si tibi sit copia, abundanter tribue.
Si autem exiguum, illud impertiri
stude libenter. 5780

"Who so hath mucche, spende manliche,
 So seith Tobye;
 And who so litel weldeth,
 Rule hym thereafter.
 For we have no lettre of oure lif,
 How longe it shal dure,
 Swiche lessons lordes sholde
 Lovye to here,
 And how he myghte moost meynee
 Manliche fynde. 5790 {179}

"Nought to fare as a fithelere or a frere,
 For to seke festes
 Homliche at othere mennes houses,
 And hatien hir owene.
 Elenge is the halle
 Ech day in the wike,
 Ther the lord ne the lady
 Liketh noght to sitte.
 Now hath ech riche a rule
 To eten by hymselfe 5800
In a pryvee parlour,
 For povere mennes sake,
Or in a chambre with a chymenee,
 And leve the chief halle
 That was maad for meles,
 Men to eten inne,
 And al to spare to spende
 That spille shal another.

"I have y-herd heighe men,
 Etynge at the table, 5810
 Carpen, as thei clerkes were,
 Of Crist, and of hise myghtes;
 And leyden fautes upon the fader
 That formede us alle,
 And carpen ayein clerkes
 Crabbede wordes,

Why woldeoure Saviour suffre
Swich a worm in his blisse,
That bigiled the womman,
And the man after, 5820
Thorugh whiche wiles and wordes
Thei wente to helle,
And al hir seed for hir synne
The same deeth suffrede. {180}

"Here lyeth youre lore,
Thise lordes gynneth dispute,
Of that the clerkes us kenneth
Of Crist by the Gospel:
Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris,
etc. 5830

"Why sholde we that now ben,
For the werkes of Adam,
Roten and to-rende?
Reson wolde it nevere.
Unusquisque portabit onus suum, etc.

"Swiche motyves thei mene,
Thise maistres in hir glorie,
And maken men in mys-bileve
That muse muche on hire wordes,
Ymaginatif herafterwarde 5840
Shal answere to hir purpos.

"Austyn to swiche argueres
Telleth this teme:
Non plus sapere quam oportet.

"Wilneth nevere to wite
Why that God wolde
Suffre Sathan
His seed to bigile;
Ac bileveth lelly 5850
In the loore of holy chirche,
And preie hym of pardon
And penaunce in thi lyve,
And for his muche mercy
To amende yow here.

For alle that wilneth to wite
The weyes of God almyghty,
I wolde his eighe were in his ers,
And his fynger after, {181}

That evere wilneth to wite
Why that God wolde 5860
Suffre Sathan
His seed to bigile,
Or Judas to the Jewes
Jhesu bitraye.
Al was as thow woldest,
Lord, y-worshiped be the!
And al worth as thow wolt,
What so we dispute.

"And tho that useth these hanylons
To blende mennes wittes, 5870
What is Do-wel fro Do-bet,
That deaf mote he worthe,
Siththe he wilneth to wite
Whiche thei ben bothe,
But if he lyve in the lif
That longeth to Do-wel.

For I dar ben his bolde borgh,
That do-bet wole he nevere,
Theigh Do-best drawe on hym
Day after oother." 5880

And whan that Wit was y-war
What dame Studie tolde,
He bicom so confus,
He kouthe noght loke,
And as doumb as deeth,

And drough hym arere;
And for no carpyng I kouthe after,
Ne knelyng to the grounde,
I myghte gete no greyn
Of his grete wittes. 5890
But al laughynge he louted,
And loked upon Studie {182}
In signe that I sholde
Bi-sechen hire of grace.

And whan I was war of his wille,
To his wif gan I loute,
And seide, "Mercy, madame,
Youre man shal I worthe
As longe as I lyve,
Bothe late and rathe, 5900
For to werche youre wille
The while my lif dureth,
With that ye kenne me kyndely
To knowe what is Do-wel."

"For thi mekenesse, man," quod she,
"And for thi mylde speche,
I shal kenne thee to my cosyn
That Clergie is hoten.
He hath wedded a wif
Withinne thise sixe monthes, 5910
Is sib to [seven artz](#),
Scripture is hir name.
They two, as I hope,
After my techyng,
Shullen wissen thee to Do-wel,
I dar it undertake."

Thanne was I al so fayn,
As fowel of fair morwe,
And gladder than the gle-man
That gold hath to gifte; 5920
And asked hire the heighe wey
Where that Clergie dwelte,
"And tel me som tokene," quod I,
"For tyme is that I wende."

"Aske the heighe wey," quod she,
"Hennes to Suffre- {183}
Both-wele-and-wo,
If that thow wolt lerne,
And ryd forth by Richesse,
Ac rest thow noght therinne; 5930
For if thow couplest thee therwith,
To Clergie comestow nevere.

"And also the likerouse launde
That Lecherie hatte,
Leve it on thi left half
A large myle or moore,
Til thow come to a court,
Kepe-wel-thi-tunge-
Fro-lesynges-and-lither-speche-
And-likerouse-drynkes. 5940

"Thanne shaltow se Sobretee,
And Sympletee-of-speche,
That ech wight be in wille
His wit thee to shewe;
And thus shaltow come to Clergie,
That kan manye thynges.

"Seye hym this signe,
I sette hym to scole,
And that I grete wel his wif,
For I wroot hire manye bokes, 5950
And sette hire to Sapience,
And to the Sauter glose;
Logyk I lerned hire,
And manye othere lawes,

And alle musons in musik
I made hire to knowe.

"Plato the poete
I putte first to boke,
Aristotle and othere mo
To argue I taughte.

5960

{184}

"Grammer for girles
I garte first to write,
And bette hem with a baleys,
But if thei wolde lerne,

"Of alle kynne craftes
I contrevd tooles,
Of carpentrie, of kerveres,
And compased masons,
And lerned hem level and lyne,
Though I loke dymme.

5970

"Ac Theologie hath tened me
Ten score tymes;
The moore I muse therinne
The mystier it seemeth,
And the depper I devyne
The derker me it thynketh.
It is no science, for sothe,
For to sotle inne;
A ful lethi thyng it were,
If that love nere;
Ac for it leteth best bi-love,
I love it the bettre.
For there that love is ledere,
Ther lakked nevere grace.
Loke thow love lelly,
If thee liketh Do-wel;
For Do-bet and Do-best
Ben of Loves kynne.

5980

"In oother science it seith,
I seigh it in Caton:
*Qui simulat verbis, nec corde est fidus amicus,
Tu quoque fac simile, sic ars deluditur arte.*

5990

{185}

"Who so gloseth as gylours doon,
Go me to the same;
And so shaltow fals folk
And feith-lees bigile.
This is Catons kennyng
To clerkes that he lereth.

"Ac Theologie techeth noght so,
Who so taketh yeme;
He kenneth us the contrarie,
Ayein Catons wordes.
For he biddeth us be as bretheren,
And bidde for our enemys.
And loven hem that lyen on us,
And lene hem whan hem nedeth,
And do good ayein yvel,
God hymself it hoteth.

6000

*Dum tempus habemus, operemur
bonum ad omnes, maxime autem
ad domesticos fidei.*

6010

Poul preched the peple
That perfitnesse lovede,
To do good for Goddes love,
And gyven men that asked,
And namely to swiche
As suwen oure bileve,
And alle that lakketh us, or lyeth,
Oure Lord techeth us to love.
And noght to greven hem that greveth us,
God hymself forbad it,
Mihi vindictam, et ego retribuam.

6020

"For-thi loke thow lovye,
As longe as thow durest;
For is no science under sonne
So sovereyn for the soule.

{186}

"Ac astronomye is an hard thyng,
And yvel for to knowe;
Geometrie and geomesie,
So gynful of speche,
Who so thynketh werche with tho two
Thryveth ful late,
For sorcerie is the sovereyn book
That to tho sciences bilongeth.

6030

"Yet ar ther fibicches in forceres
Of fele mennes makyng,
[Experimentz of alkenamy](#)
The peple to deceyve;
If thow thynke to do-wel,
Deel therwith nevere.

6040

"Alle these sciences I myself
Sotileded and ordeynede,
And founded hem formest
Folk to deceyve.
Tel Clergie this tokene,
And Scripture after,
To counseille thee kyndely
To knowe what is Do-wel."

I seide, "Graunt mercy, madame,"
And mekely hir grette;
And wente wightly away
Withoute moore lettyng,
And til I com to Clergie
I koude nevere stynte;
And grette the goode man,
As Studie me taughte,
And afterwardes the wif,
And worshiped hem bothe,
And tolde hem the tokenes
That me taught were.
Was nevere come upon this ground,
Sith God made the worlde,
Fairer under-fongen,
Ne frendlier at ese,
Than myself, soothly,
Soone so he wiste
Than I was of Wittes hous,
And with his wif, dame Studie.

6050

6060

{187}

I seide to hem soothly
That sent was I thider,
Do-wel and Do-bet
And Do-best to lerne.

6070

"It is a commune lyf," quod Clergie,
"On holy chirche to bileve,
With alle the articles of the feith
That falleth to be knowe;
And that is to bileve lelly,
Bothe lered and lewed,
On the grete God
That gynnyng hadde nevere,
And on the soothfast Sone
That saved mankynde
Fro the dedly deeth
And devel's power,
Thorough the help of the Holy Goost,
The which goost is of bothe,
Thre persones, ac nocht
In plurel nombre;
For al is but oon God,
And ech is God hymselfe.
Deus pater, Deus filius, Deus spiritus sanctus.
God the fader, God the sone,

6080

6090

=

God holy goost of bothe,
Makere of mankynde,
And of beestes bothe.

{188}

"Austyn the olde
Herof made bokes,
And hymself ordeyned
To sadde us in bileve. 6100
Who was his auctour?
Alle the foure euvangelistes,
And Crist cleped hymself so,
The euvangelistes bereth witsesse.

"Alle the clerkes under Crist
Ne koude this assoille;
But thus it bi-longeth to bileve
To lewed that willen do-wel.
For hadde nevere freke fyn wit
The feith to dispute, 6110
Ne man hadde no merite,
Myghte it ben y-preved.
*Fides non habet meritum, ubi humana
ratio præbet
experimentum.*

"Thanne is Do-bet to suffre
For the soules helthe,
Al that the book bit
Bi holi cherches techyng;
And that is, man, bi thy myght, 6120
For mercies sake.
Loke thow werche it in werk,
That thi word sheweth,
Swich as thow semest in sighte
Be in assay y-founde.
Appare quod es, vel esto quod appares. =

"And lat no body be
By thi beryng bigiled,
But be swich in thi soule
As thow semest withoute. 6130

{189}

"Thanne is Do-best to be boold
To blame the gilty,
Sythenes thow seest thiself
As in soule clene;
Ac blame thow nevere body,
And thow be blame worthy.
*Si culpate velis,
Culpabilis esse cavebis;
Dogma tuum sordet,
Cum te tua culpa remordet.* 6140

"God in the Gospel
Grevously repreveth
Alle that lakketh any lif,
And lakkes han hemselve.
*Qui consideras festucam in oculo
fratris tui, trabem in oculo tuo, etc.* =

"Why menestow thi mood for a mote
In thi brotheres eighe, 6150
Sithen a beem in thyn owene
A-blyndeth thiselve.
Ejice primo trabem in oculo tuo, etc. =
Which letteth thee to loke
Lasse outhere more.

"I rede ech a blynd bosarde
Do boote to hyselve,
For abbotes and for priours,
And for alle manere prelates, 6160
As persons and parisshe preestes
That preche sholde and teche
Alle maner men to amenden
Bi hire myghtes.

{190}

"This text was told yow,
To ben y-war, er ye taughte,
That ye were swiche as ye seye,
So salve with othere;
For Goddes word wolde noght be lost,
For that wercheth evere; 6170
If it availed noght the commune,
It myghte availle yowselve.

"Ac it semeth now soothly
To the worldes sighte,
That Goddes word wercheth noght
On lered ne on lewed,
But in swich a manere
As Marc meneth in the gospel:
*Dum cæcus ducit cæcum, ambo in
foveam cadunt.* 6180

"Lewed men may likne yow thus,
That the beam lith in youre eighen;
And the festu is fallen
For youre defaute,
In alle maner men,
Thorugh mansede preestes.
The Bible bereth witnessse
That the folk of Israel
Bittre a-boughte the giltes
Of two badde preestes, 6190
Offyn and Fynes,
For hir coveitise,
Archa Dei mys-happed,
And Ely brak his nekke.

"For-thi ye corectours claweth heron.
And corecteth first yowselve
And thanne mowe ye safly seye, {191}
As David made in the Sauter,
*Existimasti inique quod ero tui
similis, arguam te, et statuam
contra faciem tuam.* 6200

"And thanne shul burel clerkes ben abashed
To blame yow or to greve,
And carpen noght as thei carpe now,
Ne calle yow doumbe houndes.
Canes non valentes latrare.
And drede to wrathe yow in any word,
Youre werkmanshippe to lette,
And be prester at youre preiere,
Than for a pound of nobles. 6210
And al for youre holynesse,
Have ye this in herte.

"In scole there is scorn,
But if a clerk wol lerne,
And gret love and likyng,
For ech of hem loveth oother.

"Ac now is Religion a rydere,
A romere aboute,
A ledere of love-dayes,
And a lond-buggere, 6220
A prikere on a palfrey
Fro manere to manere,
An heepe of houndes at his ers
As he a lord were.
And but if his knave knele
That shal his coppe brynge,
He loureth on hym, and asketh hym
Who taughte hym curteisie.

"Litel hadde lordes to doon,
To gyve lond from hire heires 6230
To religieuse, that han no routhe, {192}
Though it reyne on hir auters.

"In many places ther thei ben persons,
By hemself at ese
Of the povere have thei no pité;
And that is hir charité.
Ac thei leten hem as lordes
Hire londes lyen so brode.

"Ac ther shal come a kyng,
And confesse yow religiouses, 6240
And bete yow as the Bible telleth
For brekyng of youre rule;
And amende monyals,
Monkes and chanons,
And puten to hir penaunce
Ad pristinum statum ire;
And barons with erles beten hem,
Thorugh *Beatus-virres* techyng,
That hir barnes claymen
And blame yow foule. 6250
*Hi in curribus et hi in equis ipsi
obligati sunt, etc.*

"And thanne freres in hir fraytour
Shul fynden a keye
Of Costantyns cofres,
In which is the catel
That Gregories god-children
Han yvele despended.

"And thanne shal [the abbot of Abyngdone](#) =
And al his issue for evere, 6261
Have a knok of a kyng,
And incurable the wounde.

"That this worth sooth, seke ye
That ofte over-se the Bible:
*Quomodo cessavit exactor, quievit
tributum, contrivit Dominus
baculum impiorum et virgam
dominantium cædentium plaga
insanabili.* 6270

"Ac er that kyng come,
Caym shal awake.
But Do-wel shal dyngen hym adoun,
And destruye his myghte."

"Thanne is Do-wel and Do-bet," quod I,
"*Dominus* and knyghthode."

"I nel noght scorne," quod Scripture,
"But if scryveynes lye;
Kynghod ne knyghthod,
By noght I kan a-wayte, 6280
Helpeth noght to hevене-ward
Oone heris ende;
Ne richesse right noght,
Ne reautee of lordes.
Poul preveth it impossible
Riche men to have hevене.
Salomon seith also
That silver is worst to lovye:
*Nihil iniquius quam amare
pecuniam.* 6290

And [Caton](#) kenneth us to coveiten it
Naught but as nede techeth,
Dilige denarium, sed parce dilige formam. =
And patriarkes and prophetes,
And poetes bothe,
Writen to wissen us
To wilne no richesse, {194}
And preiseden poverté with pacience;
The apostles bereth witnessé
That thei han eritage in hevене,
And by trewe righte;
Ther riche men no right may cleyme,

6300

{193}

{194}

But of ruthe and grace."

"*Contra*," quod I, "by Crist!
That kan I repreve,
And preven it by Peter,
And by Poul bothe,
That is baptized beth saaf,
Be he riche or povere." 6310

"That is *in extremis*," quod Scripture,
"Amonges Sarzens and Jewes,
They mowen be saved so,
And that is oure bileve,
That an un-cristene in that caas
May cristen an hethen;
And for his lele bileve,
Whan he the lif tyneth,
Have the heritage of hevene
As any man cristene." 6320

"Ac cristene men withoute moore
Maye nocht come to hevene;
For that Crist for cristene men
Deide and confermed the lawe,
That who so wolde and wilneth
With Crist to arise,
Si cum Christo surexistis, etc.
He sholde love and leve,
And the lawe fulfille." 6330

That is, love thi lord God
Levest aboven alle;
And after, alle cristene creatures {195}
In commune, ech man oother;
And thus bi-longeth to love,
That leveth be saved.

And but we do thus in dede,
At the day of dome
It shal bi-sitten us ful soure
The silver that we kepen;
And oure bakkes that mothe-eten be, 6340
And seen beggeris go naked;
Or delit in wyn and wilde fowel,
And wite any in defaute.
For every cristene creature
Sholde be kynde til oother,
And sithen hethen to helpe,
In hope of amendement.

"God hoteth heighe and lowe
That no man hurte oother;
And seith, 'Slee nocht that semblable is 6350
To myn owene liknesse,
But if I sende thee som tokene;'
And seith '*Non mæchaberis*.
Is slee nocht, but suffre,
And al for the beste;
For I shal punysshe hem in purgatorie
Or in the put of helle,
Ech man for hise mysdedes,
But mercy it lette.'"

"**T**HIS is a long lesson," quod I, 6360
"And litel am I the wiser;
Where Do-wel is or Do-bet,
Derkliche ye shewen.
Manye tales ye tellen
That Theologie lerneth; {196}
And that I man maad was,
And my name y-entred
In the legende of lif
Longe er I were,

Or ellis un-writen for som wikkednesse, 6370
As Holy Writ witnesseth:
*Nemo ascendit ad cœlum, nisi qui
de cœlo descendit.*

"I leve it wel," quod I, "by oure Lord!
 And on no lettrure bettre.
 For Salomon the sage,
 That Sapience taughte,
 God gat hym grace of wit,
 And alle hise goodes after;
 He demed wel and wisely, 6380
 As Holy Writ telleth.
 Aristotle and he,
 Who wissed men bettre?
 Maistres that of Goddes mercy
 Techen men and prechen,
 Of hir wordes thei wissen us
 For wisest as in hir tyme,
 And al holy chirche
 Holdeth hem bothe y-dampned.

"And if I sholde werche by hir werkes 6390
 To wynne me hevене,
 That for hir werkes and wit
 Now wonyeth in pyne,
 Thanne wroughe I un-wisly,
 What so evere ye preche.

"Ac of fele witty, in feith,
 Litel ferly I have,
 Though hir goost be un-gracious {197}
 God for to plese. 6400
 For many men on this moolde
 Moore setten hir hertes
 In good than in God;
 For-thi hem grace failleth
 At hir mooste meschief,
 Whan thei shal lif lete.
 As Salomon dide, and swiche othere
 That shewed grete wittes;
 Ac hir werkes, as holy writ seith,
 Were evere the contrarie.
 For-thi wise witted men, 6410
 And wel y-lettrede clerkes,
 As thei seyen hemself,
 Selde doon thereafter.
Super cathedra Moysi, etc.

"Ac I wene it worth of manye,
 As was in Noes tyme,
 Tho he shoop that shipe
 Of shides and of bordes;
 Was nevere wrighte saved that wroghte theron, =
 Ne oothir werkman ellis, 6421
 But briddes, and beestes,
 And the blissed Noe,
 And his wif with hise sones,
 And also hire wyves;
 Of wightes that it wroghte
 Was noon of hem y-saved.

"God leve it fare noght so bi folk
 That the feith techeth
 Of holi chirche, that herberwe is, 6430
 And Goddes hous to save,
 And shilden us from shame therinne,
 As Noes ship dide beestes; {198}
 And men that maden it
 A-mydde the flood a-dreynten.
 The culorum of this clause
 Curatours is to mene,
 That ben carpenters holy kirk to make
 For Cristes owene beestes:
Homines et jumenta salvabis, Domine, etc. =

"On Good Friday I fynde 6442
 A felon was y-saved,
 That hadde lyved al his lif
 With lesynges and with theft;

And for he bekne to the cros,
And to Crist shrof him,
He was sonner y-saved
Than seint Johan the Baptist;
And or Adam or Ysaye, 6450
Or any of the prophetes,
That hadde y-leyen with Lucifer
Many longe yeres,
A robbere was y-raunsoned
Rather than thei alle,
Withouten any penaunce of purgatorie,
To perpetuel blisse.

"Than Marie Maudeleyne
What womman dide werse?
Or who worse than David, 6460
That Uries deeth conspired?
Or Poul the apostle,
That no pité hadde
Muche cristene kynde
To kille to dethe?

And now ben thise as sovereyns
With seintes in hevене,
Tho that wroughte wikkedlokest {199}
In world tho thei were.
And tho that wisely wordeden, 6470
And writen manye bokes
Of wit and of wisdom,
With dampned soules wonye.
That Salomon seith, I trowe be sooth
And certain of us alle:
*Sunt justi atque sapientes et opera
eorum in manu Dei sunt, etc.*

"Ther are witty and wel libbynge,
Ac hire werkes ben y-hudde
In the hondes of almyghty God, 6480
And he woot the sothe,
Wherfore a man worth allowed there,
And hise lele werkes,
Or ellis for his yvel wille,
And for envye of herte,
And be allowed as he lyved so;
For by the luthere men knoweth the goode.

"And wherby wiste men which were whit,
If alle thyng blak were?
And who were a good man, 6490
But if ther were som sherewe?
For-thi lyve we forth with othere men,
I leve fewe ben goode;
For *quant oportet vient en place,*
Il n'y ad que pati.
And he that may al amende,
Have mercy on us alle!
For sothest word that ever God seide
Was tho he seide *Nemo bonus.*

"Clergie tho of Cristes mouth 6500
Comended was it litel;
For he seide to seint Peter, {200}
And to swiche as he lovede,
Cum steteritis ante reges et præsides, etc. =

Though ye come bifore kynges
And clerkes of the lawe,
Beth noght abashed,
For I shal be in youre mouthes,
And gyve yow wit and wille, 6510
And konnyng to conclude
Hem alle that ayeins yow
Of Cristendom disputen.

"David maketh mencion,
He spak amonges kynges,
And myghte no kyng over-comen hym

As by konnyng of speche,
But wit and wisdom
Wan nevere the maistrie,
Whan man was at meschief, 6520
Withoute the moore grace.

"The doughtieste doctour
And devinour of the Trinitee
Was Austyn the olde,
And heighest of the foure,
Seide thus in a sermon,
I seigh it writen ones:
*Ecce ipsi idiotæ vi rapiunt cœlum, ubi
nos sapientes in inferno
mergimur.* 6530

"And is to mene to men,
Moore ne lesse,
Arn none rather y-ravysshed
Fro the righte bileve,
Than are thise konnyng clerkes
That konne manye bokes.

{201}

"Ne none sonner saved,
Ne sadder of bileve,
Than plowmen and pastours,
And othere commune laborers; 6540
Souteres and shepherdes,
And othere lewed juttres,
Percen with a pater-noster
The paleys of hevене,
And passen purgatorie penaunce-lees
At her hennes partyng
Into the blisse of paradis,
For hir pure bileve,
That imparfitly here knewe,
And ek lyvede. 6550

"Ye men knowe clerkes,
That han corsed the tyme
That evere thei kouthe or knewe moore
Than *Credo in Deum patrem*;
And principally hir pater-noster
Many a persone hath wissed.

"I se ensamples myself,
And so may manye othere,
That servauntz that serven lordes
Selde fallen in arerage, 6560
And tho that kepen the lordes catel,
Clerkes and reves.

"Right so lewed men,
And of litel knowyng,
Selden falle thei so foule
And so fer in synne,
As clerkes of holy chirche
That kepen Cristes tresor,
The which is mannes soule to save,
As God seith in the Gospel:
Ite vos in vineam meam." 6571



{202}

Passus Undecimus.

HANNE Scripture scorned me 6572
And a skile tolde,

TAnd lakked me in Latyn,
And light by me she sette,
And seide "*Multi multa sciunt*
Et seipsos nesciunt."

Tho wepte I for wo
And wrathe of hir speche;
And in a wynkyng wrethe
Weex I a-slepe. 6580

A merveillous metels
Mette me thanne,
That I was ravysshed right there,
And Fortune me fette,
And into the lond of longynge
Allone she me broughte,
And in a mirour that highte middel-erthe
She made me to biholde.
"Sone," she seide to me, 6590
"Here myghtow se wondres,
And knowe that thow coveitest,
And come therto, peraunter."

Thanne hadde Fortune folwynge hire
Two faire damyseles;
Concupiscentia-carnis {203}
Men called the elder mayde,
And Coveitise-of-eighes
Y-called was that oother.
Pride-of-parfit-lyvyng 6600
Pursued hem bothe,
And bad me for my contenaunce
Acounten Clergie lighte.

Concupiscentia-carnis
Colled me aboute the nekke,
And seide, "Thow art yong and yeepe,
And hast yeres y-nowe
For to lyve longe,
And ladies to lovye;
And in this mirour thow myght se 6610
Myghtes ful manye,
That leden thee wole to likyng
Al thi lif tyme."

The secounde seide the same,
"I shal sewe thi wille;
Til thow be a lord and have lond,
Leten thee I nelle,
That I ne shal folwe thi felawshipe,
If Fortune it like."
"He shal fynde me his frend," 6620
Quod Fortune thereafter;
"The freke that folwede my wille
Failed nevere blisse."

Thanne was ther oon that highte Elde,
That hevye was of chere;
"Man," quod he, "if I mete with thee,
By Marie of hevене!
Thow shalt fynde Fortune thee faille
At thi mooste nede,
And *Concupiscentia-carnis* 6630 {204}
Clene thee forsake.
Bittrely shaltow banne thanne
Bothe dayes and nyghtes
Coveitise-of-eighe,
That evere thow hir knewe,
And Pride-of-parfit-lyvyng
To muche peril thee bryng."

"Ye, recche thee nevere," quod Rechelesnesse,
Stood forthe in raggede clothes,
"Folwe forth that Fortune wole, 6640
Thow hast wel fer til Elde;
A man may stoupe tyme y-nogh,
Whan he shal tyne the crowne.

"*Homo proponit* quod a poete,
And Plato he highte,
And *Deus disponit* quod he,
Lat God doon his wille.
If Truthe wol witnesse it be wel do
Fortune to folwe,
Concupiscentia-carnis, 6650
Ne Coveitise-of-eighes,
Ne shal nocht greve thee gretly,
Ne bigile, but if thow wolt thiselve."

"Ye, fare wel Phippe and Faunteltee,"
And forth gan me drawe,
Til *Concupiscentia-carnis*
Acorded alle my werkes.

"Alas! eighe," quod Elde
And Holynesse bothe,
"That wit shal torne to wrecchednesse,
For wil to have his likyng." 6660

Coveitise-of-eighes
Conforted me anoon after, {205}
And folwed me fourty wynter
And a fifte moore,
That of Do-wel ne Do-bet
Ne deyntee me thoughte.
I hadde no likyng, leve me if thee list,
Of hem ought to knowe.
Coveitise-of-eighes 6670
Com ofter in mynde
Than Do-wel or Do-bet,
Among my dedes alle.

Coveitise-of-eighes
Conforted me ofte,
And seide, "Have no conscience
How thow come to goode.
Go confesse thee to som frere,
And shewe hym thi synnes;
For whiles Fortune is thi frend 6680
Freres wol thee lovye,
And fecche thee to hir fraternitee,
And for the biseke
To hir priour provincial
A pardon for to have,
And preien for thee pol by pol,
If thow be *pecuniosus*."
*Sed pœna pecuniaria non sufficit pro
spiritualibus delictis.*

By wissyng of this wenche I wroughte, 6690
Hir wordes were so swete,
Til I for-yat youthe,
And yarn into elde.

And thanne was Fortune my foo,
For al hir faire speche;
And poverte pursued me, {206}
And putte me lowe.

And tho fond I the frere a-fered,
And flittyng bothe
Ayeins oure firste for-warde; 6700
For I seide I nolde
Be buried at hire hous,
But at my parisshe chirche.
For I herde ones
How Conscience it tolde,
That there a man were cristned
Be kynde he sholde be buryed;
Or where he were parisshe,
Right there he sholde be graven.
And for I seide thus to freres, 6710
A fool thei me helden,

And loved me the lasse
For my lele speche.

Ac yet I cryde on my confessour,
That heeld hymself so konnyng;
"By my feith! frere," quod I,
"Ye faren lik thise woweris
That wedde none widwes
But for to welden hir goodes.
Right so, by the roode! 6720
Roughte ye nevere
Where my body were buried,
By so ye hadde my silver.

"Ich have muche merveille of yow,
And so hath many another,
Whi youre covent coveiteth
To confesse and to burye,
Rather than to baptize barnes
That ben catecumelynges.
Baptizynge and buryinge 6730 {207}
Bothe beth ful nedefulle;
Ac muche moore meritorie,
Me thynketh it is to baptize.
For a baptized man may,
As thise maistres telleth,
Thorugh contricion come
To the heighe hevene.
Sola contritio, etc.

Ac barn withouten bapteme
May noght so be saved. 6740
Nisi quis renatus fuerit.
Loke ye, lettred men,
Wheither I lye or do noght."
And Lewté loked on me,
And I loured after.

"Wherfore lourestow?" quod Lewtee,
And loked on me harde.

"If I dorste," quod I, "amonges men
This metels avowe!"

"Yis, by Peter and by Poul!" quod he, 6750
And took hem bothe to witesse.
*"Non oderis fratres secrete in corde
tuo, sed publice argue illos."*

"They wole aleggen also," quod I,
"And by the Gospel preven:
Nolite judicare quemquam."

"And wherof serveth lawe?" quod Lewtee,
"If no lif undertoke it,
Falsnesse ne faiterie,
For som what the apostle seide, 6760
Non oderis fratrem.
And in the Sauter also {208}
Seith David the prophete,
Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis, etc. =

"It is *licitum* for lewed men
To sigge the sothe,
If hem liketh and lest,
Ech a lawe it graunteth;
Excepte persons and preestes, 6770
And prelates of holy chirche,
It falleth noght for that folk
No tales to telle,
Though the tale be trewe,
And it touche synne.

"Thyng that al the world woot,
Wherfore sholdestow spare
To reden it in retorik
To a-rate dedly synne?"

Ac be nevere moore the firste 6780
Defaute to blame;
Though thow se yvel, seye it noght first,
Be sory it nere amended.
No thyng that is pryvé,
Publice thow it nevere;
Neither for love preise it noght,
Ne lakke it for envye.
Parum lauda, vitupera parcius."

"He seith sooth," quod Scripture tho,
And skipte an heigh, and preched. 6790
Ac the matere that she meved,
If lewed men it knewe,
The lasse, as I leve,
Lovyen it thei wolde.

This was hir teme and hir text,
I took ful good hede;
Multi to a mangerie
And to the mete were sompned;
And whan the peple was plener comen,
The porter unpynned the yate, 6800
And plukked in *Pauci* pryveliche,
And leet the remenaunt go rome.

Al for tene of hir text
Trembled myn herte;
And in a weer gan I wexe,
And with myself to dispute
Wheither I were chosen or noght chosen.
On holi chirche I thoughte,
That under-fonged me atte font
For oon of Goddes chosene. 6810
For Crist cleped us alle,
Come if we wolde,
Sarzens and scismatikes,
And so he dide the Jewes.
O vos omnes sitientes, venite, etc.
And bad hem souke for synne
Safly at his breste,
And drynke boote for bale,
Brouke it who so myghte.

"Thanne may alle cristene come, quod I," =
"And cleyme there entree 6822
By the blood that he boughte us with
And thorough bapteme after.

Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, etc. =
For though a cristen man coveited {210}
His cristendom to reneye,
Rightfully to reneye
No reson it wolde. 6830

"For may no cherl chartre make,
Ne his catel selle,
Withouten leve of his lord;
No lawe wol it graunte.
Ac he may renne in arerage,
And rome so fro home,
And as a reneyed caytif
Recchelesly rennen aboute.
And Reson shal rekene with hym,
And casten hym in arerage, 6840
And putten hym after in a prison
In purgatorie to brenne,
For hise arerages rewarden hym there
To the day of dome;
But if Contricion wol come,
And crye, by his lyve,
Mercy for hise mysdedes,
With mouthe and with herte,"

"That is sooth," seide Scripture;
"May no synne lette 6850
Mercy al to amende,

And mekenesse hir folwe.
For thei beth, as oure bokes telleth,
Above Goddes werkes."
Misericordia ejus super omnia opera ejus. =

"Ye, baw for bokes," quod oon
Was broken out of helle,
Highte [Trojanus](#), hadde ben a trewe knyght,
Took witesse at a pope, 6860 {211}
How he was ded and dampned
To dwellen in pyne,
For an uncristene creature;
"Clerkes wite the sothe,
That al the clergie under Crist
Ne myghte me cracche fro helle,
But oonliche love and leautee,
And my laweful domes.

"[Gregorie](#) wiste this wel,
And wilned to my soule 6870
Savacion for soothnesse
That he seigh in my werkes;
And after that he wepte,
And wilned me were graunted
Grace; withouten any bene biddynge
His boone was under-fongen,
And I saved, as ye see,
Withouten syngynge of masses.
By love and by lernynge
Of my lyvyng, in truthe, 6880
Broughte me fro bitter peyne
Ther no biddynge myghte."

Lo! ye lordes, what leautee dide
By an emperour of Rome,
That was an uncristene creature,
As clerkes fyndeth in bokes.
Nought thorough preiere of a pope,
But for his pure truthe,
Was that Sarsen saved.
As seint Gregorie bereth witesse. 6890

Wel oughte ye, lordes, that lawes kepe,
This lesson to have in mynde,
And on Trojanus truthe to thenke,
And do truthe to the peple. {212}
"Lawe, withouten love," quod Trojanus,
"Ley ther a bene,
Or any science under sonne,
The sevene artz and alle,
But thei ben lerned for oure Lordes love,
Lost is al the tyme;" 6900
For no cause to cacche silver therby,
Ne to be called a maister,
But al for love of oure Lord,
And the bet to love the peple,
For seint Johan seide it,
And sothe arn hise wordes.
Qui non diligit, manet in morte.

Who so loveth noght, leve me,
He lyveth in deep deyinge;
And that alle manere men, 6910
Enemyes and frendes,
Love hir eyther oother,
And leve hem, as hemselve,
Who so leveth noght, he loveth noght,
God woot the sothe!
Crist comaundeth ech a creature
To conformen hym to love,
And sovereynly the povere peple,
And hir enemyes after.
For hem that haten us 6920
Is oure merite to love,
And povere peple to plese,

Hir preieres maye us helpe.
 And oure joye and oure heele
 Jhesu Crist of hevene
 In a povere mannes apparaille
 Pursued us evere;
 And loketh on us in hir liknesse, {213}
 And that with lovely chere,
 To knowen us by oure kynde herte 6930
 And castynge of oure eighen,
 Wheither we love the lordes here
 Bifore the Lord of blisse;
 And exciteth us by the Euvangelie
 That whan we maken festes,
 We sholde noght clepe oure kyn therto,
 Ne none kynnes riche.
Cum facitis convivias, nolite invitare amicos. =
 "Ac calleth the carefulle therto, 6940
 The croked and the povere.
 For youre frendes wol feden yow,
 And fonde yow to quyte
 Youre festynge and youre faire gifte;
 Ech frend quyte so oother.

"Ac for the povere I shal paie,
 And pure wel quyte hir travaille,
 That gyveth hem mete or moneie,
 Or loveth hem for my sake."
 For the beste ben som riche, 6950
 And some beggeres and povere.
 For alle are we Cristes creatures,
 And of his cofres riche,
 And bretheren as of oo blood,
 As wel beggeres as erles.
 For on Calvarie of Cristes blood
 Cristendom gan sprynge,
 And blody bretheren we bicomen there
 Of o body y-wonne,
 As *quasi modo geniti*, 6960
 And gentil-men echone;
 No beggere ne boye amonges us, {214}
 But if it synne made.
Qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati.

"In the olde lawe,
 As holy lettre telleth,
 Mennes sones
 Men callen us echone,
 Of Adames issue and Eve,
 Ay til God man deide; 6970
 And after his resurexcion
Redemptor was his name,
 And we hise bretheren thorough hym y-brought,
 Bothe riche and povere.

"For-thi love we as leve bretheren,
 And ech man laughe of oother;
 And of that ech man may forbere
 Amende there it nedeth;
 And every man helpe oother,
 For hennes shul we alle. 6980
Alter alterius onera portate.

"And be we noght un-kynde of oure catel, =
 Ne of oure konnyng neither.
 For woot no man how neigh it is
 To ben y-nome fro bothe.
 For-thi lakke no lif oother,
 Though he moore Latyn knowe;
 Ne under-nyme noght foule;
 For is noon withoute defaute. 6990
 For what evere clerkes carpe
 Of cristendom or ellis,
 Crist to a commune womman seide,
 In commune at a feste,
 That *fides sua* sholde saven hire, {215}

And salven hire of synnes.

"Thanne is bileve a lele help,
Above logyk or lawe.
Of logyk or of lawe
In *Legenda Sanctorum* 7000
Is litel alowaunce maad,
But if bileve hem helpe.
For it is over longe er logyk
Any lesson assoille;
And lawe is looth to lovye,
But if he lacche silver.
Bothe logyk and lawe,
That loveth noght to lye,
I conseilte alle cristene
Clyve noght theron to soore; 7010
For some wordes I fynde writen,
That were of feithes techyng,
That saved synful men,
As seint Johan bereth witnessse.
*Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis,
remetietur vobis.*

"For-thi lerne we the lawe of love,
As oure Lord taughte,
And as seint Gregorie seide
For mannes soule helthe: 7020
*Melius est scrutari scelera nostra,
quam naturas rerum.*

"Why I meve this matere,
Is moost for the povere;
For in hir liknesse oure Lord
Ofte hath ben y-knowe.
Witnessse in the Pask wyke
Whan he yede to Emaüs;
Cleophas ne knew hym noght 7030 {216}
That he Crist were,
For his povere apparaille,
And pilgrymes wedes,
Til he blessedde and brak
The breed that thei eten;
So bi hise werkes thei wisten
That he was Jhesus,
Ac by clothyng thei knewe hym noght,
Ne by carpyng of tunge.
And al was in ensample
To us synfulle here, 7040
That we sholde be lowe
And loveliche of speche,
And apparaille us noght over proudly,
For pilgrymes are we alle.

"And in the apparaille of a povere man,
And pilgrymes liknesse,
Many tyme God hath ben met
Among nedy peple,
Ther nevere segge hym seigh
In secte of the riche. 7050

"Seint Johan and othere seintes
Were seyen in poore clothyng,
And as povere pilgrymes
Preyed mennes goodes.

"Jhesu Crist on a Jewes doghter lighte,
Gentil womman though she were,
Was a pure povere maide,
And to a povere man y-wedded.

"Martha on Marie Maudeleyne
An huge pleynt made, 7060
And to oure Saveour self
Seide thisse wordes:
*Domine, non est tibi curæ quod
soror mea reliquit me solam* {217}

ministrare.

"And hastily God answerde,
And eitheres wille folwed,
Bothe Marthaes and Maries,
As Mathew bereth witnessse;
Ac poverté God putte bifore, 7070
And preised that the bettre.
Maria optimam partem elegit, quæ non, etc. =

"And alle the wise that evere were,
By aught I kan aspye,
Preiseden poverté for best lif,
If pacience it folwed,
And bothe bettre and blesseder
By many fold than richesse. 7080
For though it be sour to suffre,
Therafter cometh swete;
As on a walnote withoute
Is a bitter barke,
And after that bitter bark,
Be the shelle awaye,
Is a kernel of confort
Kynde to restore.

"So is after poverté or penaunce
Paciently y-take;
For it maketh a man to have mynde 7090
In God, and a gret wille
To wepe and to wel bidde,
Wherof wexeth mercy,
Of which Crist is a kernelle
To conforte the soule.
And wel sikerer he slepeth,
The man that is povere, {218}
And lasse he dredeth deeth,
And in derke to ben y-robbed,
Than he that is right riche, 7100
Reson bereth witnessse.
Pauper ego ludo, dum tu dives meditaris. =

"Al though Salomon seide,
As folk seeth in the Bible,
Divitias nec paupertates, etc.
Wiser than Salomon was
Bereth witnessse and taughte
That parfit poverté was 7110
No possession to have,
And lif moost likynge to God,
As Luc bereth witnessse:
Si vis perfectus esse, vade et vende.

"And is to mene to men
That on this moolde lyven,
Who so wole be pure parfit
Moot possession forsake,
Or selle it, as seith the Book,
And the silver dele 7120
To beggeris that goon and begge
And bidden good for Goddes love.
For failed nevere man mete
That myghtful God serveth,
As David seith in the Sauter
To swiche that ben in wille
To serve God goodliche,
Ne greveth hym no penaunce:
Nihil impossibile volenti.
Ne lakketh nevere liflode,
Lynnen ne wollen. 7130
*Inquirentes autem Dominum non
minuentur omni bono.* {219}

"If preestes weren parifite,
Thei wolde ne silver take
For masses ne for matyns,
Noght hir mete of usureres,

Ne neither kirtel ne cote,
Theigh thei for cold sholde deye,
And thei hir devoir dide,
As David seith in the Sauter: 7140
Judica me, Deus, et decerne causam meam. =

"*Spera-in-Deo* speketh of preestes
That have no spendyng silver,
That if thei travaille truweliche
And truste in God almyghty,
Hem sholde lakke no liflode,
Neyther lynnene ne wollen.
And the title that ye take ordres by
Telleth ye ben avaunced; 7150
Thanne nedeth yow noght to take silver
For masses that ye syngen.
For he that took yow youre title,
Sholde take yow youre wages,
Or the bisshop that blessed yow,
If that ye ben worthi.

"For made nevere kyng no knyght,
But he hadde catel to spende
As bifel for a knyght,
Or foond hym for his strengthe. 7160
It is a careful knyght,
And of a caytif kynges makyng,
That hath no lond ne lynage riche,
Ne good loos of hise handes.

"The same I segge, for sothe,
By alle swiche preestes
That han neither konnyng ne kyn,
But a crowne one,
And a title, a tale of noght,
To his liflode at his meschief. 7170
He hath moore bileve, as I leve,
To lacche through his croune
Cure, than for konnyng,
Or knowen for clene berynge.
I have wonder for why
And wherefore the bisshope
Maketh swiche preestes,
That lewed men bitrayen.

"A chartre is chalangeable
Bifore a chief justice; 7180
If fals Latyn be in the lettre,
The lawe it impugneth,
Or peynted parentrelynarie,
Or percelles over-skipped;
The gome that gloseth so chartres
For a goky is holden.

"So is it a goky, by God!
That in his gospel failleth,
Or in masse or in matyns
Maketh any default. 7190
Qui offendit in uno, in omnibus est reus. =

"And also in the Sauter
Seith David to *over-skipperis*,
Psallite Deo nostro, psallite, quoniam
rex terræ Deus Israel,
psallite sapienter.

"The bisshop shal be blamed
Bifore God, as I leve, 7200
That crouneth swiche Goddes knyghtes
That konneth noght *sapienter*
Synge, ne psalmes rede,
Ne seye a masse of the day.
And never neither is blame-lees
The bisshope ne the chapeleyn;
For hir either is endited,
And that is, *ignorantia* {221}

*Non excusat episcopos
Nec idiotas preestes.*

"This lokynge on lewed preestes 7210
Hath doon me lepe from poverte,
The which I preise ther pacience is
Moore perfit than richesse."

AC mucche moore in metynge thus
With me gan oon dispute;
And slepyng I seigh al this.
And sithen cam Kynde,
And nempned me by my name,
And bad me nymen hede,
And thourgh the wondres of this world 7220
Wit for to take.
And on a mountaigne that myddel-erthe
Highte, as me thoughte,
I was fet forth
By ensamples to knowe
Thorough ech a creature and kynde
My creatour to lovye.

I seigh the sonne and the see,
And the sond after;
And where that briddes and beestes 7230
By hir makes yeden; {222}
Wilde wormes in wodes,
And wonderful foweles
With fleckede fetheres
And of fele colours.

Man and his make
I myghte bothe biholde;
Poverte and plentee;
Bothe pees and werre;
Blisse and bale bothe 7240
I seigh al at ones;
And how men token mede,
And mercy refused.

Reson I seigh soothly
Sewen alle beestes,
In etynge, in drynkyng,
And in engendryng of kynde;
And after cours of concepcion,
Noon took kepe of oother 7250
As whan thei hadde ryde in rotey tyme,
Anoon right thereafter
Males drowen hem to males
A-morwenynges by hemselve,
And in evenynges also
The males ben fro femelles.
Ther ne was cow ne cow-kynde
That conceyved hadde,
That wolde belwe after boles,
Ne boor after sowe;
Bothe hors and houndes, 7260
And alle othere beestes,
Medled noght with hir makes
That with fole were.

Briddes I biheld {223}
That in buskes made nestes,
Hadde nevere wye wit
To werche the leeste.
I hadde wonder at whom
And wher the pye lerned
To legge the stikkes 7270
In whiche she leyeth and bredeth.
Ther nys wrighte, as I wene,
Sholde werche hir nestes to paye;
If any mason made a molde therto,
Mucche wonder it were.

Ac yet me merveilled moore,

How many othere briddes
Hidden and hileden
Hir egges ful derne
In mareys and moores, 7280
For men sholde hem noght fynde;
And hidden hir egges,
Whan thei therfro wente,
For fere of othere foweles,
And for wilde beestes.

And some troden hir makes,
And on trees bredden,
And broughten forth hir briddes so
Al above the grounde;
And some briddes at the bile 7290
Thorough brethyng conceyved;
And some caukede; and took kepe
How pecokkes bredden.
Muche merveilled me
What maister hem made,
And who taughte hem on trees
To tymbre so heighe,
Ther neither burn ne beest
May hir briddes rechen. {224}

And sithen I loked upon the see, 7300
And so forth upon the sterres;
Manye selkouthes I seigh,
Ben noght to seye nouthe.

I seigh floures in the fryth,
And hir faire colours;
And how among the grene gras
Growed so manye hewes,
And some soure and some swete,
Selkouth me thoughte;
Of hir kynde and hir colour 7310
To carpe it were to longe.

Ac that moost meved me
And my mood chaunged,
That Reson rewarded
And ruled alle beestes,
Save man and his make;
Many tyme and ofte
No reson hem folwede.
And thanne I rebukede
Reson, and right 7320
Til hymselfen I seyde:
"I have wonder of thee," quod I,
"That witty art holden,
Why thow ne sewest man and his make,
That no mysfeet hem folwe."

And Reson a-rated me,
And seide, "Recche thee nevere;
Why I suffre or noght suffre,
Thiself hast noght to doone.
Amende thow it, if thow myght, 7330
For my tyme is to abide.
Suffraunce is a soverayn vertue,
And a swift vengeance. {225}
Who suffrede moore than God?" quod he;
"No gome, as I leeve.

He myghte amende in a minute while
Al that mys-standeth;
Ac he suffreth for som mannes goode,
And so it is oure bettre,
The wise and the witty 7340
Wroot thus in the Bible:
De re quæ te non molestat, noli certare.

"For be a man fair or foul, =
It falleth noght for to lakke
The shap ne the shaft
That God shoop hymselfe;

For al that he dide was wel y-do,
As holy writ witnesseth:
*Et vidit Deus cuncta quæ fecerat, et
erant valde bona.* 7350

"And bad every creature
In his kynde encrease;
Al to murthe with man,
That moste wo tholie
In fondyng of the flessch,
And of the fend bothe.
For man was maad of swich a matere,
He may noght wel a-sterter
That ne som tyme hym bitit 7360
To folwen his kynde.
Caton a-cordeth therwith,
Nemo sine crimine vivit."

Tho caughte I colour anoon,
And comsed to ben ashamed,
And awaked therwith. {226}
Wo was me thanne,
That I in metels ne myghte
Moore have y-knowen.
And thanne seide I to myself, 7370
And chidde that tyme,
"Now I woot what Do-wel is," quod I,
"By deere God! as me thynketh."

And as I caste up myne eighen,
Oon loked on me and asked
Of me, what thyng it were:
"Y-wis, sire," I seide,
"To se muche and suffre moore,
Certes," quod I, "is Do-wel."

"Haddestow suffred," he seide, 7380
"Slepyng tho thou were,
Thou sholdest have knowen that Clergie kan,
And contrevd moore thorough reson.
For Reson wolde have reherced thee
Right as Clergie seide.
Ac for thyn entre-metyng,
Here artow forsake.
Philosophus esses, si tacuisses.

"Adam, whiles he spak noght,
Hadde paradys at wille; 7390
Ac whan he mamelede aboute mete,
And entre-metede to knowe
The wisdom and the wit of God,
He was put fram blisse.

"And right so ferde Reson bi thee;
Thou with thi rude speche
Lakkedest and losedest thyng
That longed the noght to doone.
Tho hadde he no likyng
For to lere the moore. 7400

"Pryde now and presumpcion {227}
Peraventure wol thee appele,
That Clergie thi compaignye
Kepeth noght to suwe.
Shal nevere chalangyng ne chidyng
Chaste a man so soone,
As shal shame, and shenden hym,
And shape hym to amende.
For lat a dronken daffe
In a dyk falle, 7410
Lat hym ligge, loke noght on hym,
Til hym liste aryse.
For though Reson rebuked hym thanne,
It were but pure synne.
Ac whan nede nymeth hym up
For doute lest he sterve,

And shame shrapeth hise clothes,
And hise shynes wassheth.
Thanne woot the dronken daffe
Wherfore he is to blame." 7420

"Ye siggen sooth," quod I;
"Ich have y-seyen it ofte,
Ther smyt no thyng so smerte,
Ne smelleth so soure,
As shame, there he sheweth hym;
For every man hym shonyeth.
Why ye wisse me thus," quod I,
"Was for I rebuked Reson."

"Certes," quod he, "that is sooth;"
And shoop hym for to walken. 7430
And I aroos up right with that,
And folwed hym after,
And preyde hym of his curteisie
To telle me his name. 7434



{228}

Passus Duodecimus, etc.

"**I**AM Ymaginatif," quod he, 7435
"Ydel was I nevere,
Though I sitte by myself,
In siknesse nor in helthe.
I have folwed thee, in feith!
Thise fyve and fourty wynter, 7440
And manye tymes have meved thee
To thynke on thyn ende,
And how fele fernyeres are faren,
And so fewe to come;
And of thi wilde wantownesse
Tho thou yong were,
To amende it in thi middel age,
Lest myght the failled
In thyn olde elde,
That yvele kan suffre 7450
Poverté or penaunce,
Or preyeres to bidde.
Si non in prima vigilia, nec in secunda, etc. =

"Amende thee, while thou myght;
Thou hast ben warned ofte
With poustees of pestilences,
With poverté and with angres;
And with thise bittre baleises
God beteth his deere children. 7460
Quem diligo, castigo.

{229}

"And David in the Sauter seith
Of swiche that loveth Jhesus:
Virga tua et baculus tuus ipsa me consolati sunt. =

"Al though thou strike me with thi staf,
With stikke or with yerde,
It is but murthe as for me,
To amende my soule.
And thou medlest thee with *makynges,* 7470
And myghtest go seye thi Sauter,
And bidde for hem that gyveth thee breed,
For ther are bokes y-knowe
To telle men what Do-wel is,
Do-bet and Do-best bothe,

And prechours to preven what it is
Of many a peire freres."

I seigh wel he seide me sooth;
And som what me to excuse,
Seide Caton conforted me his sone, 7480
That clerk though he were,
To solacen hym som tyme,
As I do whan I [make](#):
Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis.

"And of holy men I herde, quod I," =
"How thei outhur while
Pleyden the parfiter,
To ben in manye places,
Ac if ther were any wight 7490
That wolde me telle
What were Do-wel and Do-bet
And Do-best at the laste, {230}
Wolde I nevere do werk,
But wende to holi chirche,
And ther bidde my bedes,
But whan ich ete or slepe."

"Poul in his pistle," quod he,
"Preveth what is Do-wel:
Fides, spes, caritas, et major horum, etc. =
Feith, hope, and charité; 7502
And alle ben goode,
And saven men sondry tymes;
Ac noon so soone as charité.
For he dooth wel withouten doute,
That dooth as lewté techeth;
That is, if thow be man maryed,
Thi make thow lovyne,
And lyve forth as lawe wole, 7510
While ye lyven bothe.

"Right so if thow be religious,
Ren thow nevere ferther
To Rome ne to Rochemador,
But as thi rule techeth;
And hold thee under obedience,
That heigh wey is to hevене.

"And if thow be maiden to marye,
And myght wel continue,
Seke thow nevere seint ferther 7520
For no soule helthe.
For what made Lucifer
To lese the heighe hevене?
Or Salomon his sapience,
Or Sampson his strengthe?
Job the Jew his joye
Ful deere a-boughte; {231}
[Aristotle](#) and othere mo,
[Ypocras and Virgile](#);
Alisaundre, that al wan, 7530
Elengliche ended.
Catel and kynde wit
Was combraunce to hem alle.

"[Felice](#) hir fairnesse
Fel hire al to sclaundre;
And [Rosamounde](#) right so,
Reufulliche to bileve,
The beauté of hir body
In baddenesse she despended.
Of manye swiche I may rede, 7540
Of men and of wommen,
That wise wordes wolde shewe,
And werche the contrarie.
Sunt homines nequam bene de virtute loquentes. =

"And riche renkes right so
Gaderen and sparen,

And tho men that thei moost haten
Mynistren it at the laste.
And for thei suffren and see 7550
So many nedy folkes,
And love hem noght as oure Lord bit,
Thei lesen hir soules.
Date et dabitur vobis.

"And richesse right so,
But if the roote be trewe.
Ac grace is a gras therof
Tho grevaunces to abate.
Ac grace ne groweth noght 7560
But amonges lowe;
Pacience and poverte {232}
The place highte ther it groweth,
And in lele lyvyng men,
And in lif holy,
And thorough the gifte of the Holy Goost,
As the Gospel telleth.
Spiritus ubi vult spirat.

"Clergie and kynde wit
Cometh of sighte and techyng;
As the book bereth witness 7570
To burnes that kan rede.
Quod scimus loquimur, quod vidimus testamur. =

"Of *quod scimus* cometh clergie
And konnyng of hevене;
And of *quod vidimus* cometh kynde wit,
Of sighte of diverse peple.
Ac grace is a gifte of God,
And of greet love spryngeth;
Knew nevere clerk how it cometh forth, 7580
Ne kynde wit the weyes.
Nescit aliquis unde venit, aut quo vadit, etc. =

"Ac yet is clergie to comende,
And kynde wit bothe;
And namely clergie, for Cristes love
That of clergie is roote.
For Moyses witnesseth that God wroot
For to wisse the peple
In the olde lawe, as the lettre telleth, 7590
That was the lawe of Jewes,
That what womman were in avoutrye taken,
Were she riche or poore,
With stones men sholde hir strike,
And stone hire to dethe. {233}

"A womman, as I fynde,
Was guilty of that dede.
Ac Crist of his curteisie
Thorough clergie hir saved;
And thorough caractes that Crist wroot, 7600
The Jewes knewe hemselve
Giltier as a-fore God,
And gretter in synne,
Than the womman that there was,
And wenten away for shame.

"The clergie that there was,
Conforted the womman.
Holy kirke knoweth this,
That Cristes wrytyng saved hire.
So clergie is confort 7610
To creatures that repenten,
And to mansede men
Meschief at hire ende.

"For Goddes body myghte noght ben
Of breed, withouten clergie;
The which body is bothe
Boote to the rightfulle,
And deeth and dampnacion

To hem that deyeth yvele,
As Cristes caracte confortede, 7620
And bothe coupable shewed,
The womman that the Jewes broughte,
That Jhesus thoughte to save.
Nolite iudicare, et non iudicabimini.
Right so Goddes body, bretheren,
But if it be worthili taken,
Dampneth us at the day of dome,
As the caractes dide the Jewes. {234}

"For-thi I counseille thee, for Cristes sake,
Clergie that thow lovye. 7630
For kynde wit is of his kyn,
And neighe cosynes bothe
To oure Lord, leve me;
For-thi love hem, I rede.
For bothe ben as mirours
To amenden oure defautes,
And lederes for lewed men
And for lettred bothe.

"For-thi lakke thow nevere logik,
Lawe ne hise custumes; 7640
Ne countreplede clerkes,
I counseille thee for evere.
For as a man may noght see,
That mysseth hise eighen;
Na-moore kan no clerk,
But if he caughte it first thorough bokes.
Al though men made bokes,
God was the maister,
And seint spirit the samplarie,
And seide what men sholde write. 7650

"Right so ledeth lettrure
Lewed men to reson;
And as a blynd man in bataille
Bereth wepne to fighte,
And hath noon hap with his ax
His enemy to hitte,
Na-moore kan a kynde witted man,
But clerkes hym teche,
Come for al his kynde wit
To cristendom, and be saved. 7660
Which is the cofre of Cristes tresor,
And clerkes kepe the keyes {235}
To unloken it at hir likyng,
And to the lewed peple
Gyve mercy for hire mysdedes,
If men it wolde aske
Buxomliche and benigneliche,
And bidden it of Grace.

"*Archa Dei* in the olde lawe
Levytes it kepten; 7670
Hadde nevere lewed man leve
To leggen hond on that cheste,
But he were preest or preestes sone,
Patriark or prophete.
For clergie is kepere
Under Crist of hevene.
Was ther nevere no knyght,
But clergie hym made.
Ac kynde wit cometh
Of alle kynnes syghtes, 7680
Of briddes and of beestes,
Of tastes of truthe and of deceites.

"Lyveris to-forn us
Useden to marke
For selkouthes that thei seighen,
Hir sones for to teche;
And helden it an heigh science
Hir wittes to knowe.

Ac thorough hir science soothly
Was nevere no soule y-saved, 7690
Ne broght by hir bokes
To blisse ne to joye;
For alle hir kynde knowynges
Come but of diverse sightes.

{236}

"Patriarkes and prophetes
Repreveden hir science,
And seiden hir wordes and hir wisdomes
Nas but a folye;
And to the clergie of Crist
Counted it but a trufle. 7700
Sapientia hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum. =

"For the heighe Holy Goost
Hevene shal to-cleve,
And love shall lepen out after
Into the lowe erthe;
And clennesses shal cacchen it,
And clerkes shullen it fynde.
Pastores loquebantur ad invicem.

"He speketh there of riche men right noght, 7710
Ne of right witty,
Ne of lordes that were lewed men,
But of the hyste lettred oute.
Ibant magi ab oriente.

"If any frere were founde there,
I gyve thee fyve shillynges;
Ne in none burgeises cote
Was that barn born;
But in a burgeises place
Of Bethlem the beste. 7720
*Sed non erat ei locus in diversorio, et
pauper non habet diversorium.*

"To pastours and to poetes
Appered the aungel,
And bad hem go to Bethlem
Goddes burthe to honoure;
And songe a song of solas,
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

{237}

"Clerkes knewen it wel,
And comen with hir presentz, 7730
And diden homage honourably
To hym that was almyghty.

"Why I have tolde al this,
I took ful good hede
How thow contrariedest Clergie
With crabbede wordes,
How that lewde men lightloker
Than lettrede were saved,
Than clerkes or kynde witted men
Of cristene peple; 7740
And thow seidest sooth of somme,
Ac se in what manere.

"Tak two stronge men,
And in Themese cast hem,
And bothe naked as a nedle,
Her noon sikerer than oother;
That oon hath konnynges and kan
Swymmen and dyven;
That oother is lewed of that labour,
That lerned nevere swymme; 7750
Which trowestow of tho two
That is in moost drede?
He that nevere ne dyved,
Ne noght kan of swymmyng?
Or the swymmere that is saaf
By so hymself like,
Ther his felawe fleteth forth

As the flood liketh,
And is in drede to drenche,
That nevere dide swymme?" 7760

"That swymme kan noght," I seide,
"It semeth to my wittes."

{238}

"Right so," quod the renk.
"Reson it sheweth,
That he that knoweth clergie
Kan sonner arise
Out of synne, and be saaf,
Though he synne ofte,
If hym liketh and lest,
Than any lewed leelly. 7770

For if the clerk be konnyng,
He knoweth what is synne,
And how contricion withoute confession
Conforteth the soule;
As thow seest in the Sauter,
In Salmes oon or tweyne,
How contricion is comended,
For it cacheth away synne.
*Beati quorum remissæ sunt iniquitates,
et quorum tecta sunt, etc.* 7780

"And this conforteth ech a clerk,
And covereth hym fro wanhope.
In which flood the fend
Fondeth a man hardest.
Ther the lewed lith stille,
And loketh after lente,
And hath no contricion er he come to shrifte,
And thanne kan he litel telle,
But as his lores-man lere hym
Bileveth and troweth; 7790
And that is after person or parissch preest,
The whiche ben peraventure
Unkonnyng to lere lewed men,
As Luc bereth wittesse:
Dum cæcus ducit cæcum, etc.

"Wo was hym marked
That wade moot with the lewed! 7800
Wel may the barn blesse that man
That hym to book sette,
That lyvyng after lettrure
Saveth hym lif and soule.

{239}

Dominus pars hereditatis meæ,
Is a murye verset,
That hath take fro Tybourne
Twenty stronge theves;
Ther lewed theves ben lollid up,
Loke how thei be saved.

"The thef that hadde grace of God
On Good-friday, as thow spekest,
Was for he yald hym creaunt to Crist on the cros, 7810
And knewliched hym guilty,
And grace asked of God,
That to graunten it is redy
To hem that buxomliche biddeth it,
And ben in wille to amenden.
Ac though that theef hadde hevene,
He hadde noon heigh blisse,
As seint Johan and othere seintes
That deserved hadde bettere.

"Right as som man yeve me mete, 7820
And a-mydde the floor sette me,
And hadde mete moore than y-nough,
Ac noght so muche worshipe
As tho that seten at the syde table,
Or with the sovereynes of the halle;
But sete as a beggere bord-lees
By myself on the grounde.

So it fareth by that felon
 That a Good-friday was saved. {240}
 He sit neither with seint Johan, 7830
 Symond ne Jude,
 Ne with maydenes ne with martires,
 Confessours ne wydewes;
 But by hymself as a soleyne,
 And served on erthe.
 For he that is ones a thef
 Is evere moore in daunger,
 And, as lawe liketh,
 To lyve or to deye.
De peccato propitiato, noli esse sine metu. =
 And for to serven a seint 7842
 And swich a thef togideres,
 It were neither reson ne right
 To rewarde hem bothe y-liche.

"And right as *Trojanus* the trewe knyght
 Dwelte noght depe in helle,
 That oure Lord ne hadde hym lightly out,
 So leve I the thef be in hevene.
 For he is in the loweste of hevene, 7850
 If oure bileve be trewe;
 And wel loselly he lolleth there,
 By the lawe of holy chirche.
Qui reddit unicuique juxta opera sua, etc. =

"And why that oon thief on the cros
 Creaunt hym yald
 Rather than that oother thief,
 Though thow woldest appose,
 Alle the clerkes under Crist 7860
 Ne kouthe the skile assoille.
Quare placuit, quia voluit. {241}

"And so I seye by thee
 That sekest after the whyes,
 And a-resonedest Reson
 A rebukyng as it were;
 And of the floures in the fryth,
 And of hire faire hewes,
 Wherof thei cacche hir colours
 So clere and so brighte; 7870
 And willest of briddes and of beestes,
 And of hir bredyng, to knowe,
 Why some be a-lough and some a-loft,
 Thi likyng it were;
 And of the stones and of the sterres
 Thow studieth, as I leve;
 How evere beest outhur brid
 Hath so breme wittes.

"Clergie ne kynde wit
 Ne knew nevere the cause; 7880
 Ac kynde knoweth the cause hymself,
 And no creature ellis.
 He is the pies patron,
 And putteth it in hir ere
 There the thorn is thikkest
 To buylden and brede.
 And kynde kenned the pecok
 To cauken in swich a kynde;
 And kenned Adam 7890
 To knowe his pryvé membres,
 And taughte hym and Eve
 To helien hem with leves.

"Lewed men many tymes
 Maistres thei apposen,
 Why Adam ne hiled noght first
 His mouth that eet the appul,
 Rather than his likame a-logh; {242}
 Lewed asken thus clerkes.

"Kynde knoweth whi he dide so,

Ac no clerk ellis, 7900
Ac of briddes and of beestes
Men by olde tyme
Ensamplis token and termes,
As telleth the poetes;
And that the faireste fowel
Foulest engendreth,
And feblest fowel of flight is
That fleeth or swymmeth;
And that the pecok and the pehen
Proude riche men bitokneth; 7910
For the pecok, and men pursue hym,
May noight flee heighe,
For the trailynge of his tail
Overtaken is he soone,
[And his flessch is foul flessch](#),
And his feet bothe,
And un-lovelich of ledene,
And looth for to here.

"Right so the riche,
If he his richesse kepe, 7920
And deleth it noight til his deeth-day,
The tail of alle sorwe
Right so as the pennes of the pecok
Peyneth hym in his flight.
So is possession peyne
Of pens and of nobles,
To alle hem that it holdeth,
Til hir tail be plukked.

"And though the riche repente thanne
And bi-rewe the tyme 7930
That evere he gadered so grete,
And gaf therof so litel;
Though he crye to Crist thanne
With kene wil, I leve,
His ledene be in oure Lordes ere
Like a pies chiteryng.
And whan his caroyne shal come
In cave to be buryed,
I leve it flawme ful foule
The fold al aboute, 7940
And alle the othere ther it lith
Envenymeth thorough his attre.

"By the po feet is understande,
As I have lerned in [Avynet](#),
Executours false frendes
That fulfille noight his wille
That was writen and thei witnesse
To werche right as it wolde.
Thus the poete preveth that the pecok
For hise fetheres is reverenced, 7950
Right so is the riche
By reson of hise goodes.

"The larke, that is a lasse fowel,
Is moore lovelich of ledene,
And wel a wey of wynges
Swifter than the pecok,
And of flessch by fele fold
Fatter and swetter;
To lowe libbynge men
The larke is resembled. 7960

["Aristotle the grete clerk](#)
Swiche tales he telleth.
Thus he likneth in his logik
The leeste fowel oute,
And wheither he be saaf or noight saaf {244}
The sothe woot no clergie,
Ne of [Sortes](#) ne of Salomon
No scripture kan telle.
Ac God is so good, I hope,

That siththe he gaf hem wittes 7970
To wissen us weyes therwith
That wissen us to be saved,
And the bettre for hir bokes
To bidden we ben holden,
That God for his grace
Gyve hir soules reste.
For lettred men were lewed men yet,
Ne were loore of hir bokes."

"Alle thise clerkes," quod I tho, 7980
"That in Crist leven,
Seyen in hir sermons
That neither Sarsens ne Jewes
Ne no creature of Cristes liknesse
Withouten cristendom worth saved."

"*Contra*," quod Ymaginatif thoo,
And comsed for to loure;
And seide "*Salvabitur*
Vix justus in die judicii.
Ergo salvabitur," quod he, 7990
And seide na-moore Latyn.

"Trojanus was a trewe knyght,
And took nevere Cristendom,
And he is saaf, so seith the book,
And his soule in hevene.
For ther is fullynge of font,
And fullynge in blood shedyng,
And thorough fir is fullyng,
And that is ferme bileve.
Advenit ignis divinus non comburens, {245}
sed illuminans, etc. 8000

"Ac Truthe that trespassed nevere,
Ne traversed ayeins his lawe,
But lyveth as his lawe techeth,
And leveth ther be no bettre;
And if ther were, he wolde amende,
And in swich wille deieth,
Ne wolde nevere trewe god,
But truthe were allowed,
And wheither it be worth or noght worth, 8010
The bileve is gret of truthe,
And an hope hangyng therinne
To have a mede for his truthe.
For *Deus dicitur quasi dans vitam*
æternam suis, hoc est fidelibus.
Et alibi: Si ambulavero in
medio umbræ mortis.

"The glose graunteth upon that vers
A greet mede to Truthe,
And wit and wisdom," quod that wye,
"Was som tyme tresor 8020
To kepe with a commune,
No catel was holde bettre,
And mucche murthe and manhod;"
And right with that he varysshed. 8024



{246}

Passus Decimus Tertius, etc.

ND I awaked therwith 8025
Wit-lees ner-hande,
And as a freke that fre were



Forth gan I walke
In manere of a mendinaunt
Many a yer after, 8030
And of this metyng many tyme
Muche thought I hadde.

First how Fortune me failed
At my mooste nede;
And how that Elde manaced me,
Myghte we evere mete;
And how that freres folwede
Folk that was riche,
And folk that was povere 8040
At litel pris thei sette;
And no corps in hir kirk-yerde
Nor in his kirk was buryed,
But quik he biquethe aught
To quyte with hir dettes;
And how this Coveitise over-com
Clerkes and preestes;
And how that lewed men ben lad,
But oure Lord hem helpe,
Thorough un-konnyng curatours, {247}
To incurable peynes. 8050

And how that Ymaginatif
In dremels me tolde
Of Kynde and of his konnyng,
And how curteis he is to bestes,
And how lovyng he is to briddes
On londe and on watre.
Leneth he no lif
Lasse ne moore.
The creatures that crepen
Of kynde ben engendred. 8060
And sithen how Ymaginatif seide,
Vix salvabitur;
And whan he hadde seid so,
How sodeynliche he passed.

I lay doun longe in this thocht,
And at the laste I slepte.
And as Crist wolde, ther com Conscience
To conforte me that tyme,
And bad me come to his court,
With Clergie sholde I dyne; 8070
And for Conscience of Clergie spak,
I com wel the rather.
And there I seigh a maister,
What man he was I nyste,
That lowe louted
And loveliche to Scripture.

Conscience knew hym wel,
And welcomed hym faire.
Thei wesshen and wipeden,
And wenten to the dyner. 8080
And Pacience in the paleis stood
In pilgrymes clothes,
And preyde mete *par charité* {248}
For a povere heremyte.

Conscience called hym in,
And curteisliche seide,
"Welcome! wye; go and wasshe;
Thow shalt sitte soone."

This maister was maad sitte,
As for the mooste worthi. 8090
And thanne Clergie and Conscience
And Pacience cam after.

Pacience and I
Were put to be macches,
And seten bi oureselve
At the side borde.

Conscience called after mete;
 And thanne cam Scripture,
 And served hem thus soone
 Of sondry metes manye, 8100
 Of Austyn, of Ambrose,
 And of the foure Euvangelistes,
Edentis et bibentis quæ apud eos sunt. =

Ac this maister nor his man
 No maner flesshe eten;
 Ac thei eten mete of moore cost,
 Mortrews and potages
 Of that men mys-wonne
 Thei made hem wel at ese. 8110
 Ac hir sauce was over sour,
 And unsavourly grounde
 In a mortar *post mortem*
 Of many a bitter peyne,
 But if thei synge for tho soules,
 And wepe salte teris.

Vos qui peccata hominum comeditis, {249}
nisi pro eis lacrimas et orationes
effunderitis, ea quæ in
deliciis comeditis, in tormentis
evometis. 8120

Conscience ful curteisly tho
 Comaunded Scripture
 Bifore Pacience breed to bryng
 And me that was his macche.
 He sette a sour loof to-forn us,
 And seide, "*agite pænitentiam.*"
 "As longe," quod I, "as I lyve,
 And lycame may dure."
 "Here is propre service," quod Pacience, 8130
 "Ther fareth no prince bettre,"

And thanne he broughte us forth a mees of oother mete,
 Of *Miserere mei, Deus,*
 And he broughte us of *Beati quorum,*
 Of *Beatus-virres* makyng.
Et quorum tecta sunt peccata in a disshe,
 Of derne shrifte *Dixi et confitebor tibi.*
 "Bryng Pacience som pitaunce,"
 Pryveliche quod Conscience.

And thanne hadde Pacience a pitaunce. 8140
Pro hac orabit ad te omnis sanctus
in tempore oportuno.
 And Conscience conforted us,
 And carped us murye tales.
Cor contritum et humiliatum Deus non despicias. =

Pacience was proud
 Of that propre service,
 And made hym murthe with his mete;
 Ac I mornede evere, 8150
 For this doctour on the heighe dees
 Drank wyn so faste.
Væ vobis qui potentes estis ad bibendum vinum! =
 He eet manye sondry metes,
 Mortrews and puddynges,
 Wombe-cloutes and wilde brawen,
 And egges y-fryed with grece.

Thanne seide I to myself so
 Pacience it herde, 8160
 "It is noght foure dayes that this freke
 Bifore the deen of Poules
 Preched of penaunces
 That Poul the apostle suffrede,
In fame et frigore
 And flappes of scourges."
Ter cæsus sum, et a Judeis quinquies
quadragenas, etc.

{250}

Ac o word thei over-huppen
At ech a tyme that thei preche,
That Poul in his Pistle
To al the peple tolde:
Periculum est in falsis fratribus.

8170

Holi writ bit men be war,
I wol noght write it here
In Englisthe, on aventure
It sholde be reherced to ofte,
And greve therwith goode men,
Ac gramariens shul redde.
*Unusquisque a fratre se custodiat,
quia, ut dicitur, periculum est
in falsis fratribus.*

8180

{251}

Ac I wiste nevere freke that as a frere yede
Bifore men on Englisthe
Taken it for his teme,
And telle it withouten glosyng.
They prechen that penaunce is
Profitable to the soule,
And what meschief and *male ese*
Crist for man tholede.

8190

"Ac this Goddes gloton," quod I,
"With hise grete chekes,
Hath no pité on us povere,
He perfourneth yvele;
That he precheth he preveth noght,"
To Pacience I tolde,
And wissed ful witterly,
With wille ful egre,
That disshes and doublers
Bifore this ilke doctour
Were molten leed in his mawe,
And *Mahoun* amyddes.
"I shal jangle to this jurdan
With his *juste wombe*,
To telle me what penaunce is,
Of which he preched rather."

8200

Pacience perceyved what I thoughte,
And wynked on me to be stille,
And seide, "Thow shalt see thus soone,
Whan he may na-moore,
He shal have a penaunce in his paunche,
And puffe at ech a worde;
And thanne shullen his guttes gothele,
And he shal galpen after.
For now he hath dronken so depe,
He wole devyne soone,
And preven it by hir Pocalips
And passion of seint Avereys,
That neither bacon ne braun,
Blancmanger ne mortrews,
Is neither fissh nor flesshe,
But fode for a penaunt
And thanne shal he testifie of the Trinité,
And take his felawe to witnessse,
What he fond *in a frayel*,
After a freres lyvyng;
And but he first lyve be lesyng,
Leve me nevere after.
And thanne is tyme to take,
And to appose this doctour
Of Do-wel and Do-bet,
And if Do-wel be any penaunce."

8210

{252}

8220

8230

And I sat stille, as Pacience seide,
And thus soone this doctour,
As rody as a rose,
Rubbede hise chekes,
Coughed and carped;
And Conscience hym herde,

And tolde hym of a Trinité,
And toward us he loked. 8240

"What is Do-wel, sire doctour?" quod I,
"Is it any penaunce?"

"Do-wel," quod this doctour,
And took the cuppe and drank,
"Is do noon yvel to thyn even-cristen
Nought by thi power." {253}

"By this day! sire doctour," quod I,
"Thanne be ye noght in Do-wel;
For ye han harmed us two,
In that ye eten the puddyng, 8250
Mortrews and oother mete,
And we no morsel hadde.
And if ye fare so in youre fermerye,
Ferly me thynketh,
But cheeste be ther charité sholde be.
And yonge children dorste pleyne,
I wolde permute my penaunce with youre,
For I am in point to Do-wel."

Thanne Conscience curteisly
A contenaunce made, 8260
And preynte upon Pacience
To preie me to be stille;
And seide hymself, "Sire doctour,
And it be youre wille,
What is Do-wel and Do-bet,
Ye dyvynours knoweth."

"Do-wel," quod this doctour,
"Do as clerkes techeth;
And Do-bet is he that techeth,
And travailleth to teche othere; 8270
And Do-best doth hymself so,
As he seith and precheth."
*Qui facit et docuerit, magnus vocabitur
in regno cœlorum.*

"Now thow, Clergie," quod Conscience,
"Carpest what is Do-wel.
I have sevene sones," he seide,
"Serven in a castel, 8280
Ther the lord of lif wonyeth, {254}
To leren what is Do-wel;
Til I se tho sevene
And myself acorde,
I am un-hardy," quod he,
"To any wight to preven it.
For oon Piers the Plowman
Hath impugned us alle,
And set alle sciences at a sope,
Save love one;
And no text ne taketh
To mayntene his cause, 8290
But *Dilige Deum*,
And *Domine quis habitabit*.
And seith that Do-wel and Do-bet
Arn two infinités,
Whiche infinités, with a feith!
Fynden out Do-best,
Which shal save mannes soule;
Thus seith Piers the Plowman."

"I kan noght heron," quod Conscience,
"Ac I knowe wel Piers; 8300
He wol noght ayein holy writ speken,
I dar wel undertake.
Thanne passe we over til Piers come,
And preve this in dede.
Pacience hath be in many place,
And peraunter mouthed
That no clerk ne kan,

As Crist bereth witness:
Patientes vincunt, etc."

"Ac youre preiere," quod Pacience tho, 8310
"So no man displese hym.
Disce," quo he, "*Doce,*
Dilige inimicos. {255}
Disce, and Do-wel;
Doce, and Do-bet;
Dilige, and Do-best;
Thus taughte me ones
A lemman that I lovede,
Love was hir name:

"With wordes and with werkes," quod she, 8320
"And wil of thyn herte,
Thow love leelly thi soule
Al thi lif tyme,
And so thow lere the to lovye,
For oure Lordes love of hevene,
Thyn enemy in alle wise
Evene forth with thiselve.
Cast coles on his heed
Of alle kynde speche,
Bothe with werkes and with wordes 8330
Fonde his love to wynne;
And leye on him thus with love,
Til he laughe on the.
And but he bowe for this betyng,
Blynd mote he worthe.

"Ac for to fare thus with thi frend,
Folie it were.
For he that loveth thee leelly,
Litel of thyne coveiteth.
Kynde love coveiteth noght 8340
No catel but speche.
With halfe a laumpe lyne,
In Latyn, *Ex vi transitionis,*
I bere therinne aboute
Faste y-bounde Do-wel,
In a signe of the Saterdag
That sette first the kalender, {256}
And al the wit of the Wodnesday
Of the nexte wike after,
The myddel of the moone, 8350
As the nyght of bothe,
And herwith am I welcome
Ther I have it with me,

"Undo it, lat this doctour deme
If Do-wel be therinne.
For, by hym that me made!
Myghte nevere poverte
Misese ne meschief,
Ne no man with his tonge,
Coold ne care, 8360
Ne compaignye of theves,
Ne neither hete ne hayl,
Ne noon helle pouke,
Ne fuyr ne flood,
Ne feere of thyn enemy,
Tene thee any tyme,
And thow take it with the.
Caritas nihil timet, etc."

"It is but a dido," quod this doctour,
"A disours tale; 8370
Al the wit of this world,
And wight mennes strengthe,
Kan noght conformen a pees
Bitwene and hise enemys,
Ne bitwene two cristene kynges
Kan no wight pees make
Profitable to either peple;"

And putte the table fro hym,
And took Clergie and Conscience
To conseil, as it were, 8380
That Pacience thow most passe,
For pilgrymes konne wel lye. {257}

Ac Conscience carped loude,
And curteisliche seide,
"Frendes, fareth wel;"
And faire spak to Clergie,
"For I wol go with this gome,
If God wol yeve me grace,
And be pilgrym with Pacience,
Til I have preved moore." 8390

"What!" quod Clergie to Conscience,
"Ar ye coveitous nouthe
After yeres-geves, or giftes,
Or yernen to rede redels?
I shal brynge yow a Bible,
A book of the olde lawe,
And lere yow, if yow like,
The leeste point to knowe,
That Pacience the pilgrym
Parfitly knew nevere." 8400

"Nay, by Crist!" quod Conscience
To Clergie, "God thee for-yelde;
For al that Pacience me profreth
Proud am I litel.
Ac the wil of the wye,
And the wil of folk here,
Hath meved my mood
To moorne for my synnes.
The goode wil of a wight
Was nevere bought to the fulle. 8410
For ther nys no tresour, for sothe,
To a trewe wille.

"Hadde nocht Maudeleyne moore
For a box of salve,
Than Zacheus for he seide
Dimidium bonorum meorum do pauperibus? = {258}
And the poore widewe
For a peire of mytes,
Than alle tho that offrede
Into *gazophilacium?*" 8420

Thus curteisliche Conscience
Congeyed first the frere,
And sithen softeliche he seide
In Clergies ere,
"Me were levere, by oure Lord!
And I lyve sholde,
Have pacience perfitliche,
Than half thi pak of bokes." 8430

Clergie of Conscience
No congie wolde take,
But seide ful sobreliche,
"Thow shalt se the tyme
Whan thow art wery of-walked,
Wille me to counseille." 8430

"That is sooth," quod Conscience,
"So me God helpe!
If Pacience be oure partyng felawe,
And pryvé with us bothe,
Ther nys wo in this world 8440
That we ne sholde amende,
And conformen kynges to pees,
And alle kynnes londes;
Sarsens and Surré,
And so forth alle the Jewes,
Turne into the trewe feith,
And intil oon bileve."

"That is sooth," quod Clergie,
"I se what thow menest;
I shal dwelle as I do, 8450 {259}
My devoir to shewe,
And confermen fauntekyns,
And oother folk y-lered,
Til Pacience have preved thee,
And parfit thee maked."

Conscience tho with Pacience passed,
Pilgrymes as it were.
Thanne hadde Pacience, as pilgrymes han,
In his poke vitailles,
Sobretee and symple speche, 8460
And soothfast bileve,
To conforte hym and Conscience,
If thei come in place
There un-kyndenesse and coveitise is,
Hungry contrees bothe.

And as the wente by the weye,
Of Do-wel thei carped;
Thei mette with a mynstral,
As me tho thoughte.
Pacience apposed hym first. 8470
And preyde he sholde hem telle
To Conscience what craft he kouthe,
And to what contree he wolde.

"I am a [mynstrall](#)," quod that man,
"My name is *Activa-vita*;
Al ydelnesse ich hatie,
For of actif is my name;
A wafrer, wol ye wite,
And serve manye lordes,
And fewe robes I fonge, 8480
Or furrede gownes.
Couthe I lye to do men laughe,
Thanne lacchen I sholde {260}
Outher mantel or moneie
Amonges lordes or mynstrals.
Ac for I kan neither taboure ne trompe,
Ne telle no gestes,
Farten ne fithelen
At festes, ne harpen,
Jape ne jogle, 8490
Ne gentilliche pipe,
Ne neither saille ne saute,
Ne synge with the gyterne,
I have no goode giftes
Of thise grete lordes.
For no breed that I brynge forth,
Save a benyson on the Sondag
Whan the preest preieth the peple
Hir pater-noster to bidde
For Piers the Plowman, 8500
And that hym profit waiten;
And that am I actif,
That ydelnesse hatie;
For alle trewe travaillours
And tiliers of the erthe,
Fro Mighelmesse to Mighelmesse
I fynde hem with my wafres.

"Beggeris and bidderis
Of my breed craven,
Faitours and freres, 8510
And folk with brode crounes.
I fynde payn for the pope,
And provendre for his palfrey;
And I hadde nevere of hym,
Have God my trouthe!
Neither provendre ne personage
Yet of popes gifte, {261}
Save a [pardon with a peis of leed](#)

And two polles amyddes.
Hadde ich a clerck that couthe write, 8520
I wolde caste hym a bille,
That he sente me under his seel
A salve for the pestilence,
And that his blessynge and hise bulles
Bocches myghte destruye.
*In nomine meo dæmonia ejicient, et
super ægros manus imponent, et
bene habebunt.*

"And thanne wolde I be prest to the peple 8530
Paast for to make,
And buxom and busy
Aboute breed and drynke
For hym and for alle hise,
Founde I that his pardon
Mighte lechen a man,
As I bileve it sholde.
For sith he hath the power
That Peter hymself hadde,
He hath the pot with the salve,
Soothly as me thynketh. 8540
*Argentum et aurum non est mihi;
quod autem habeo tibi do: in
nomine Domini surge et
ambula.*

"Ac if myght of myracle hym faille,
It is for men ben noght worthi
To have the grace of God,
And no gilt of pope.
For may no blessynge doon us boote,
But if we wile amende, 8550
Ne mannes masse make pees {262}
Among cristene peple,
Til pride be pureliche for-do,
And thorough payn defaute.
For er I have breed of mele,
Oft moot I swete;
And er the commune have corn y-nough,
Many a cold morwenyng.
So er my wafres be y-wroght,
Muche wo I tholye. 8560

"At Londone, I leve,
Liketh wel my wafres;
And louren whan thei lakken hem.
It is noght long y-passed,
There was a careful commune,
Whan no cart com to towne
With breed fro Stratforde;
Tho gonnen beggeris wepe,
And werkmen were agast a lite;
This wole be thought longe. 8570
In the date of oure Drighte,
In a drye Aprille,
A thousand and thre hundred
Twies twenty and ten,
My wafres there were gesene
Whan Chichestre was maire."

I took good kepe, by Crist!
And Conscience bothe,
Of Haukyn the actif man,
And how he was y-clothed. 8580
He hadde a cote of Cristendom,
As holy kirke bileveth;
Ac it was moled in many places
With manye sondry plottes;
Of pride here a plot, {263}
And there a plot of unbuxome speche,
Of scornynge and of scoffyng,
And of unskilful berynge,
As in apparail and in porte

Proud amonges the peple, 8590
 Oother wise than he hym hath
 With herte or sighte shewynge,
 Hym willyng that alle men wende
 He were that he is noght.
 For-why he bosteth and braggeth
 With manye bolde othes,
 And inobedient to ben undernome
 Of any lif lyvyng;
 And noon so singuler by hymself,
 Ne so pomp holy, 8600
 Y-habited as an heremyte,
 An ordre by hymselfe,
 Religion saunz rule
 Or resonable obedience,
 Lakkyng lettred men
 And lewed men bothe
 In likyng of lele lif,
 And a liere in soule,
 With inwit and with outwit
 Ymagynen and studie, 8610
 As best for his body be
 To have a badde name,
 And entremetten hym over al
 Ther he hath noght to doone,
 Willyng that men wende
 His wit were the beste.
 And if he gyveth ought to povere gomes,
 Telle what he deleth,
 Povere of possession in purs {264}
 And in cofre bothe. 8620
 And as a lyoun on to loke,
 And lordlich of speche,
 Boldest of beggeris,
 A bostere that noght hath,
 In towne and in tavernes
 Tales to telle,
 And segge thyng that he nevere seigh,
 And for sothe sweren it,
 Of dedes that he nevere dide
 Demen and bosten 8630
 And of werkes that he wel dide
 Witnesse, and siggen—
 "Lo! if ye leve me noght,
 Or that I lye wenen,
 Asketh at hym or at hym,
 And he yow kan telle
 What I suffrede and seigh
 And som tymes hadde,
 And what I kouthe and knew,
 And what kyn I com of." 8640
 Al he wolde that men wiste
 Of werkes and of wordes
 Which myghte plese the peple,
 And preisen hymselfe.
*Si hominibus placerem, Christi
 servus non essem. Et alibi:
 Nemo potest duobus dominis
 servire.*

"By Crist!" quod Conscience tho,
 "Thi beste cote, Haukyn,
 Hath manye moles and spottes,
 It moste ben y-wasshe." 8650

"Ye, who so toke hede," quod Haukyn,
 "Bihynde and bifore,
 What on bak and what on body half,
 And by the two sydes,
 Men sholde fynde manye frounces,
 And manye foule plottes." {265}

And he tordned hym as tyd,
 And thanne took I hede, 8660
 It was fouler bi fele fold

Than it first semed.
It was bi-dropped with wrathe
And wikkede wille,
With envye and yvel speche,
Entisyng to fighte,
Liyng and laughyng,
And leve tonge to chide,
Al that he wiste wikked
By any wight tellen it, 8670
And blame men bihynde hir bak,
And bidden hem meschaunce,
And that he wiste by Wille

Tellen it Watte,
And that Watte wiste
Wille wiste it after,
And make of frendes foes
Thorough a fals tonge,
Or with myght or with mouth,
Or thorough mennes strengthe 8680
Avenge me fele tymes,
Other frete myselve
Withinne as a shepsteres shere,
Y-sherewed man and cursed.

*Cujus maledictione os plenum est
et amaritudine, sub lingua ejus
labor et dolor. Et alibi: Filii
hominum, dentes eorum arma
et sagittæ, et lingua eorum
gladius acutus.* 8690 {266}

"Ther is no lif that me loveth
Lastyng any while;
For tales that I telle,
No man trusteth to me.
And whan I may noght have the maistrie,
Swich malencolie I take,
That I cacche the crampe,
And the cardiaque som tyme,
Or an ague in swich an angre,
And som tyme a fevere 8700
That taketh me al a twelve monthe,
Til that I despise
Lechecraft of oure Lord,
And leve on a wicche,
And seye that no clerc ne kan,
Ne Crist, as I leve,
*To the soutere of Southwerk,
Or of Shordyche dame Emme;*
And seye that no Goddes word
Gaf me nevere boote, 8710
But thorough a charme hadde I chaunce
And my chief heele."

I waitede wisloker,
And thanne was it soilled
With likyng of lecherie,
As by lokyng of his eighe.
For ech a maide that he mette
He made hire a signe
Semyng to synne-warde,
And some tyme he gan taste 8720
Aboute the mouth, or bynethe {267}
Bigynneth to grope,
Til eitheres wille wexeth kene,
And to the werke yeden,
As wel in fastyng dayes and Fridaies
As forboden nyghtes,
And as wel in Lente as out of Lente,
Alle tymes y-liche.

Swiche werkes with hem
Were nevere out of seson, 8730
Til thei myghte na-moore;
And thanne murye tales,
And how that lecchours lovye
Laughen and japen,

And of hir harlotrye and horedom
In hir elde tellen.

Thanne Pacience perceyved
Of pointes of this cote,
That were colomy thorough coveitise
And unkynde desiryng; 8740
Moore to good than to God
The gome his love caste,
And ymagynede how

He it myghte have
With false mesures and met,
And with fals witnessse;
Lened for love of the wed,
And looth to do truthe;
And awaited thorough which
Wey to bigile, 8750
And menged his marchaundise,
And made a good moustre;
"The worste withinne was,

A greet wit I let it,
And if my neghebore hadde any hyne, {268}
Or any beest ellis,
Moore profitable than myn,
Manye sleightes I made
How I myghte have it,
Al my wit I caste. 8760

And but I it hadde by oother wey,
At the laste I stale it;
Or priveliche his purs shook,
And unpikede hise lokes;
Or by nyghte or by daye
Aboute was ich evere,
Thorough gile to gaderen
The good that ich have.

"If I yede to the plowgh,
I pynched so narwe, 8770
That a foot lond or a forow
Fecchen I wolde
Of my nexte neghebore,
And nymen of his erthe.
And if I repe, over-reche,
Of yaf hem reed that ropen
To seise to me with hir sikel
That I ne sew nevere.

"And who so borwed of me,
A-boughte the tyme 8780
With presentes prively,
Or paide som certeyn;
So he wolde or noght wolde,
Wynnen I wolde,
And bothe to kith and to kyn
Unkynde of that ich hadde.

"And who so cheped my chaffare,
Chiden I wolde,
But he profrede to paie {269}
A peny or tweyne 8790
Moore than it was worth;
And yet wolde I swere
That it coste me mucche moore,
And swoor manye othes.

"On holy daies at holy chirche
Whan ich herde masse,
Hadde I nevere wille, woot God,
Witterly to biseche
Mercy for my mysdedes,
That I ne moorned moore 8800
Nor losse of good, leve me,
Than for my likames giltes.
As if I hadde dedly synne doon,
I dredde noght that so soore,

As when I lened, and leved it lost,
Or longe er it were paied.
So if I kidde any kyndenesse
Myn even cristen to helpe,
Upon a cruwel coveitise
Myn herte gan hange. 8810

"And if I sente over see
My servauntz to [Brugges](#),
Or into [Pruce-lond](#) my prentis,
My profit to waiten,
To marchaunden with moneie,
And maken hire eschaunges,
Mighte nevere me conforte.
In the mene while
Neither masse ne matynes,
No none maner sightes; 8820
Ne nevere penaunce perfournede,
Ne pater-noster seide,
That my mynde ne was moore {270}
On my good in a doute,
Than in the grace of God,
And hise grete helpes.
Ubi thesaurus tuus, ibi et cor tuum.

"Whiche ben the braunches
That bryngen a man to sleuthe?
He that moorneth noght for hise mysdedes, 8830
Ne maketh no sorwe,
And penaunce that the preest enjoyneth
Perfourneth yvele,
Dooth noon almesse,
Dred hym of no synne,
Lyveth ayein the bileve,
And no lawe holdeth,
Ech day is holy day with hym,
Or an heigh ferye;
And, if he aught wole here, 8840
It is an harlotes tonge.
Whan men carpen of Crist,
Or of clenness of soules,
He wexeth wroth and wol noght here
But wordes of murthe;
Penaunce of povere men,
And the passion of seintes,
He hateth to here therof,
And alle that it telleth.
Thise ben the braunches, beth war, 8850
That bryngen a man to wanhope.

"Ye lordes and ladies,
And legates of holy chirche,
That fedeth fooles sages,
Flatereris and lieris,
And han likyng to lithen hem
To do yow to laughe, {271}
Væ vobis qui ridetis, etc.
And gyveth hem mete and mede,
And povere men refuse; 8860
In youre deeth deyinge,
I drede me ful soore
Lest tho thre manner men
To muche sorwe yow brynge.
Consentientes et agentes pari pœna punientur. =

"Patriarkes and prophetes,
And prechours of Goddes wordes,
Saven thorough hir sermons
Mannes soule fro helle. 8870
Right so flatereris and fooles
Arn the fendes disciples
To entice men thorough hir tales
To synne and to harlotrie.
Ac clerkes, that knowen holy writ,
Sholde kenne lordes

What David seith of swiche men,
As the Sauter telleth.
*Non habitabit in medio domus meæ,
qui facit superbiam, et qui
loquitur iniqua.* 8880

"Sholde noon harlot have audience
In halle nor in chambre,
Ther wise men were,
Witnesseth Goddes wordes,
Ne no mys-proud man
Amonges lordes ben allowed.

"Ac flaterers and fooles
Thorough hir foule wordes
Leden tho that loven hem 8890

To Luciferis feste,
With *Turpiloquio*, a lady of sorwe,
And Luciferis fithete."
Thus Haukyn the actif man
Hadde y-soiled his cote,
Til Conscience acouped hym therof
In a curteis manere,
Why he ne hadde whasshen it,
Or wiped it with a brusshe. 8899

{272}



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Notes

[1] See the "Apocalypsis Goliæ" and other pieces in the poems of Walter Mapes; the Order of Fair Ease in the Political Songs, and the Poems of Rutebeuf; and, in English, the remarkable "Poem on the Evil Times of Edward II." in the appendix to the Political Songs. The Poem entitled the Order of Fair Ease bears some resemblance to the *Abbaye de Theleme* of Rabelais.

[2] This sentiment was perpetuated in a numerous class of ballads, in which the monarch is represented as thrown incognito among the lower classes, as listening to their expressions of loyalty and to the tale of their sufferings. See the "Tale of King Edward and the Shepherd" in Hartshorne's *Ancient Metrical Tales*; "The King and the Barker," in Ritson's *Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry*; "The King and the Miller," and "King Edward IV. and the Tanner of Tamworth," in *Percy's Reliques*; &c. The earliest known form of this tale is the story of "Henry II. and the Cistercian Abbot," printed from Giraldus Cambrensis in the *Reliquiæ Antiquiæ*, vol. ii. p. 147.

[3] It was at least a tradition early in the sixteenth century (for we have no means now of ascertaining whether there were any substantial grounds for the statement), that the author was named Robert Longlande (or Langlande), that he was born at Clebury Mortimer in Shropshire, and that (after receiving his education at Oxford) he became a monk of Malvern. I do not think, with Tyrwhitt and Price, that the name *Wil*, given in the poem to the dreamer, necessarily shows that the writer's name was *William*; and still less that the mention of "Kytte my wif" and "Calote my doghter" (p. 395 of the present volume), and of the dreamer's having resided at Cornhill, refer to the family and residence of the author of the poem. If he were a monk (as appears probable by his intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures and the Fathers), he would not be married. Sir Frederick Madden discovered a very important entry in a hand of the fifteenth century on the fly-leaf of a manuscript of *Piers Ploughman* in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, to the following effect—"Memorandum, quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond, qui Stacius fuit generosus, et morabatur in Schiptone under Whicwode, tenens domini Le Spenser in comitatu Oxon., qui prædictus *Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman*."—It would perhaps be not impossible to trace the name and history of this Stacy de Rokayle; but till that be done, I do not think this memorandum ought to be

considered as overthrowing the old tradition relating to Robert Longlande. It may be mentioned as a remarkable specimen of the patriotism of David Buchanan, that he lays claim to the author of *Piers Ploughman* as a Scotchman:—"Robertus Langland, natione Scotus, professione sacerdos, vir ex obscuris ortus parentibus, pius admodum et ingeniosus et zelo divinæ gloriæ plenus; inter monachos Benedictinos educatus in civitate Aberdonensi, vir æque erat in omni humaniore literatura insigniter doctus, et in medicina admodum clarus, pium opus sermone vulgare scripsit cui imposuit, || Visionem Petri Aratoris, lib. 1. || Pro conjugio sacerdotum. lib. 1. || Claruit anno Christi Redemptoria, 1369. Regnante Davide Secundo in Scotia."—Dav. Buchanan, *de Scriptoribus Scotis. MS. Bibl. Univ. Edin.*

[4] We may mention another historical allusion in *Piers Ploughman*, which seems to involve a chronological difficulty; the dry April in the mayoralty of John Chichester, 1. 8567. It appears clear that this is an allusion to a remarkable drought in the year 1351, which answers precisely to a calculation of the date given in the text, in which all the manuscripts that I have consulted agree. But the only year in which Chichester is said to have been mayor was 1368-9 according to some, or 1369-70 according to others. Stowe (as quoted in the note on this passage) has altered the text of *Piers Ploughman* to suit the year in which Chichester is known to have been mayor: yet there can be little doubt (even from the allusion to the treaty of Bretigny) that the poem itself was composed before that date, and therefore the same or another Chichester had probably been mayor before.

[5] *Political Songs*, p. 240.

[6] This terrible calamity was said by the astrologers to have been brought about by an extraordinary conjunction of Saturn with the other planets, which happened scarcely once in a thousand years. An astrologer and physician, who witnessed its effects, Symon de Covino, has left a Latin poem on the subject under the title *De Judicio Solis in Conviviis Saturni*, in which he describes Saturn as indulging his malevolence towards the human race by obtaining a judgment against men for their sins. This opinion is alluded to in *Piers Ploughman*, l. 4453,

"And so seide Saturne,
And sente yow to warne."

The influence of this planet was represented by astrologers as being peculiarly noxious, as is expressed in the following old distich:—

"Jupiter atque Venus boni, Saturnusque malignus,
Sol et Mercurius cum Luna sunt mediocres."

[7] "Qui male pastus erat fragili virtute ciborum,
Labitur exiguo percussus flamine cladis:
Indeque Saturni vulgus, pauperrima turba,
Grata morte cadunt, quia vivere talibus est mors.
Post quos lunares pereunt et mercuriales.
Et sic debilior succumbit in ordine primo:
Post alii tandem pestem secuntur eamdem.
Sed dea principibus et nobilibus, generosis,
Militibus, seu iudicibus fera Parca pepercit.
Raro cadunt tales, quia talibus est data vita
Dulcis in hoc mundo, quam gloria laudat inanis."

*Symon de Covino, in the Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des
Chartes, tom. ii. p 236.*

[8] We have a very remarkable proof of the popularity of *Piers Ploughman* with the lower orders (among whom probably parts of it were repeated by memory), and of its influence on the insurrections of the peasantry in the reign of Richard II., in the seditious letter of John Ball to the commons of Essex, preserved by Thomas Walsingham (*Hist. Angl.* p. 275). I am not sure if "*John Schep*" may not contain an allusion to the opening of the poem; but the second passage, here printed in Italics, refers evidently to Passus VI. and VII., and the third is an allusion to the characters of Do-well and Do-best.

"John *Schep* sometime Seint Mary priest of Yorke, and now of Colchester, graeteth well John Namelesse, and John the Miller, and John Carter, and biddeth them that they beware of guyle in borough, and stand together in Gods name, and biddeth *Piers Plowman goe to his werke*, and chastise well Hob the robber, and take with you John Trewman, and all his fellows, and no moe. John the Miller hath y-ground, smal, small, small. The kings sonne of heaven shal pay for all. Beware or ye be woe, know your frende fro your foe. Have ynough, and say hoe: *And do well and better*, and flee sinne, and seeke peace and holde you therin, and so biddeth John Trewman and all his fellowes."

[9] The mention of Wycliffe and of Walter Brute and other circumstances, fix the date of *Piers Ploughman's Creed* with tolerable certainty in the latter years of the reign of Richard II. It was probably written very soon after the year 1393, the date of the persecution of Walter Brute at Hereford; and from the particular allusion to that person

we may perhaps suppose that like the Vision it was written on the Borders of Wales.

[10] Different circumstances connected with this poem (which also appears to have been proscribed, for we have no early manuscript of it) lead me to suppose that it was written in the reign of Henry IV., when the *burning* of heretics came into fashion, which is alluded to in the following stanza:—

"Were Christ on earth here, eftsoone
These would damne him to die:
All his hestes they han for-done,
And saine his sawes ben heresie:
And ayenst his commaundements they crie,
And *damne all his to be brende*;
For it liketh not hem such losengerie,
God almighty hem amend!"

In another passage, the writer of this poem alludes to the Creed of Piers Ploughman as though he were the author of it, and as a piece then known to everybody.

"And all such other counterfaitours,
Chanons, canons, and such disguised,
Been Gods enemies and traitours,
His true religion han foule despised.
Of *freres* I have told before,
In a *making of a Crede*;
And yet I could tell worse and more,
But men would werien it to rede."

Perhaps, however, the writer only claims the authorship of the Creed in his allegorical character, as the representative of that class of satirical writers who were then attacking the monastic orders.

[11] We may enumerate the following as specimens of such works published in the sixteenth century. Several similar publications appeared in the century following.

"Pyers Plowmans Exortation vnto the lordes, knights, and burgoyssees of the parlyament house." 8vo. printed by Anthony Scholoker, in the reign of Edward VI.

"Newes from the North, Otherwise called the Conference between Simon Certain, and Pierce Plowman, faithfully collected and gathered by T. F. Student." 4to. London, John Alde, 1579.

"The Plowmans complaint of sundry wicked livers, and especially of the bad bringing vp of children; written in verse by R. B. printed for Hugh Corne, 1580." 8vo.

"A goodlye Dialogue and dysputacion between Pyers Ploweman and a Popish Preest, cōcernynge the Supper of the Lorde." 8vo, without date.

[12] Printed in the *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, vol i. pp. 170-188. On the date of this poem, see the *Biographia Britannica Literaria* (by the editor of the present work), Anglo-Saxon period, pp. 395, 396.

[13] Printed in the *Altdeutsche Blätter* von Moriz Haupt und Heinrich Hoffmann, vol. ii. pp. 99-120, and in the *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. pp. 208-227.

[14] Discovered in a MS. at Worcester by Sir Thomas Phillipps, who published a small edition of it, in folio.

[15] Edited by Sir Frederick Madden, for the Society of Antiquaries.

[16] Many instances of this will be found in my *Specimens of Lyric Poetry*, composed in England in the reign of Edward the First (Percy Society Publication).

[17] Such as *William and the Werwolf*, edited by Sir Frederick Madden; the *Romance of Jerusalem*; that of *Alexander*; &c.

[18] MS. Harl. 2253. In this manuscript, and in several others which I have seen the rhyming poems in short lines, whether in English, Latin, or French, are arranged in this manner; and I have met with instances in which part of a poem has been arranged in this way, and other parts of the same poem have been arranged in short lines, to suit the scribe's convenience. I have a strong impression of having met with an early English manuscript in which a fragment of alliterative verse was written in short couplets.

[19] *Text I.* is from the edition now offered to the public: *Text II.* from that edited by Dr. Whitaker.

[20] The title of the second impression is, "The Vision of Pierce Ploughman, nowe the seconde time imprinted by Roberte Crowley, dwellynge in Elye rentes in Holburne.

Whereunto are added certayne notes and cotations in the mergyne gevyng light to the Reader, &c. Imprinted at London by Roberte Crowley, dwellyng in Elye rentes in Holburne. The yere of our Lord M.D.L. Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum." 4to, 125 leaves.

[21] The title consists merely of the words "Pierce the Ploughman's Crede," upon a tablet in the midst of a wood-cut which had evidently been brought from the continent. A facsimile of the most important part of the cut is given in Mr. Payne Collier's Bibliographical Catalogue of the Library of Lord Francis Egerton, p. 235. The colophon, on a separate leaf, is "Imprinted at London. By Reynold Wolfe. Anno Domini M.D.L.III." It consists of 16 leaves in 4to.

[22] The title of this edition is, "The Vision of Pierce Plowman, newlye imprynted after the authours olde copy, with a brefe summary of the principall matters set before every part called Passus. Wherevnto is also annexed the Crede of Pierce Plowman, neuer imprinted with the booke before. ¶ Imprynted at London, by Owen Rogers, dwellyng neare vnto great Saint Bartelmewes gate, at the sygne of the spred Egle. ¶ The yere of our Lord God, a thousand, fyve hundred, thre score and one. The xxi. daye of the Moneth of Februarye. Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum." 4to. This edition is not foliated, or paged; and it is remarkable that it is as frequently found without the Creed, as with it. This edition of the Creed is also sometimes found separate.

[23] Whitaker's edition bears the following title,—"Visio Willielmi de Petro Plouhman, Item Visiones ejusdem de Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest. Or, The Vision of William concerning Piers Plouhman, and The Visions of the same concerning the Origin, Progress, and Perfection of Christian Life, &c. By Thomas Dunham Whitaker, LL.D., &c." 4to. London. Murray, 1813.

[24] This manuscript was bought at Heber's sale for the British Museum, where it is classed as Additional MS. No. 10,574.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE VISION AND CREED OF PIERS
PLOUGHMAN, VOLUME 1 ***

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