

Classic Poetry Series

**Thomas Hoccleve**  
**- poems -**

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## Thomas Hoccleve(1368 - 1426)

Thomas Hoccleve - sometimes spelled Occleve - was probably born in 1368-69 and died in London in 1426. Little is known of his life beyond what is mentioned in his poems. As was the better-known Lydgate, Hoccleve was certainly an admirer of Chaucer's work. Whether he was his disciple or his friend is not known for sure, though it is probable that he knew him personally. His *De Regime* is the only portrait of Chaucer left to posterity; he painted it 'to put other men in remembrance of his person.' He openly compared his skills to Chaucer's, as for example in this passage, referring to his prowess as a metrist :

Fader Chaucer fayn wolde han me taught,  
But I was dul and learned lite or naught;

Although many of Hoccleve's poems are clearly indebted to Chaucer, he is more than a mere imitator. The 1911 Edition Encyclopedia describes his poems as 'characteristic of his time... He does not affect what he does not feel'. A Londoner, his poems are sparse if not completely barren of references to nature. He also wrote no allegory.

Hoccleve is arguably most famous for his autobiographical writings, in which he describes his work as a clerk in the office of the Privy Seal, a position which he held for at least twenty-four years. He also describes London life, and his own mental 'breakdown'. In his *La Male Règle* he professes to have lived a 'misruly' life, but his marriage in 1411 seems to have caused a change in his career; *De Regimine Principum*, written soon afterwards, bears witness to his 'reform'.

Many of his poems are moralising and written in the form of a complaint. But it is difficult to decide whether this is his personal point of view, or the public role expected of a poet of his age.

Among Hoccleve's larger poems there are: *La Male Regle* de T. Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, which was addressed to Prince Henry (afterwards Henry V), *The Series Poems* (*Complaint*, *Dialogue with a Friend*, *Jereslaus' Wife*, *Learn to Die*, and *The Tale of Jonathas*). The *Series Poems* are partially linked by a dialogue with a fictitious friend who gives advice as to the compilation of the book and its future presentation to the patrons.

Hoccleve's earliest work, written in 1402, is *The Letter of Cupid*, an adaptation of Christine de Pisan's *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*.

Hoccleve found an admirer in the 17th century in William Browne. Browne included his "Jonathas" in the Shepherds Pipe (1614), and added a eulogy to the old poet, whose works he intended to publish in their entirety (Works, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, 1869, ii. f96-198).

In 1796 George Mason printed six Poems by Thomas Hoccleve never before printed. De Regimine Principum was printed for the Roxburghe Club in 1860, and by the Early English Text Society in 1897.

# Lament For Chaucer

ALLAS! my worthi maister honorable,  
This landes verray tresor and richesse!  
Deth by thy deth hath harme irreparable  
Unto us doon: hir vengeable duresse  
Despoiled hath this land of the swetnesse  
Of rethorik; for unto Tullius  
Was never man so lyk amonges us.

Also who was hier in philosophie  
To Aristotle in our tonge but thou?  
The steppes of Virgile in poesie  
Thou folwedist eeke, men wot wel ynow.  
Thou combre-worlde that the my maister slow--  
Wolde I slayn were!--Deth, was to hastyf  
To renne on thee and reve the thi lyf...

She myghte han taried hir vengeance a while  
Til that sum man had egal to the be;  
Nay, lat be that! sche knew wel that this y1e  
May never man forth brynge lyk to the,  
And hir office needes do mot she:  
God bad hir so, I truste as for the beste;  
O maister, maister, God thi soule reste!

Thomas Hoccleve

# The Letter Of Cupid

Cupido, unto whos commandement  
The gentil kinrede of goddes on hy  
And peple infernal been obedient,  
And the mortel folk seruen bisyly,  
Of goddesse Sitheree sone oonly,  
To alle tho that to our deitee  
Been sogettes greetinges senden we.

In general, we wole that yee knowe  
That ladies of honour and reverence  
And other gentil wommen han ysowe  
Swich seed of complainte in our audience  
Of men that doon hem outrage and offense  
That it our eres greeveth for to heere,  
So pitous is th' effect of hir mateere;  
And passing alle londes on this yle  
That clept is Albioun they moost complaine;  
They sayn that ther is croppe and roote of guile,  
So can tho men dissimulen and faine  
With standing dropes in hir eyen twaine,  
Whan that hir herte feeleth no distresse.  
To blinde wommen with hir doublenesse,

Hir wordes spoken been so sighingly  
And with so pitous cheere and contenance,  
That every wight that meeneth trewely  
Deemeth that they in herte han swich greuance.  
They sayn so importable is hir penance

That but hir lady list to shewe hem grace  
They right anoon moot sterven in the place.

"A, lady min," they sayn, "I yow ensure,  
Shewe me grace and I shal evere be,  
Whiles my lif may lasten and endure,  
To yow as humble in every degree  
As possible is, and keepe al thing secree  
As that yourselven liketh that I do;  
And elles moot min herte breste on two."

Ful hard is it to knowe a mannes herte,  
For outward may no man the truthe deeme  
Whan word out of his mouth may ther noon sterte,  
But it sholde any wight by reson queeme  
So is it seid of herte, it wolde seeme.  
O faithful womman, ful of Innocence,  
Thou art betrayed by fals apparence!

By procees wommen, meved of pitee,  
Weening al thing were as that tho men saye,  
Granten hem grace of hir benignitee,  
For they nat sholden for hir sake deye,  
And with good herte sette hem in the weye  
Of blisful love -- keepe it if they konne!  
Thus other while been the wommen wonne.

And whan the man the pot hath by the stele,  
And fully of her hath possessioun,  
With that womman he keepeth nat to dele  
After, if he may finden in the toun  
Any womman his blind affeccion  
On to bestowe -- foule moot he preeve!  
A man for al his ooth is hard to leeve.

And for that every fals man hath a make,  
As unto every wight is light to knowe,  
Whan this Traitour the womman hath forsake  
He faste him speedeth unto his felowe;  
Til he be ther his herte is on a lowe,  
His fals deceit ne may him nat suffise,  
But of his treson telleth al the wise.

Is this a fair avaunt? Is this honour  
A man himself to accuse and diffame?  
Now is it good confesse him a traitour,  
And bringe a womman to a sclaundrous name,  
And telle how he hir body hath doon shame;  
No worship may he thus to him conquere  
But ful greet reproof unto him and here.

To her nay yit was it no reproof,

For al for pitee was it that shee wroghte;  
But he that brewed hath al this mescheef,  
That spak so fair and falsly inward thoghte --  
His be the shame as it by reson oghte;  
And unto her thank perpetuel  
That in a neede helpe can so wel.

Although that men by sleighte and sotiltee  
A sely, simple, and ignorant womman  
Betraye is no wonder, syn the Citee  
Of Troie, as that the storie telle can,  
Betrayed was thurgh the deceit of man,  
And set afir and al doun overthrowe,  
And finally destroyed as men knowe.

Betrayen men nat Remes grete and kinges?  
What wight is, that can shape a remedie  
Againes false and hid purposed thinges?  
Who can the craft tho castes to espye,  
But man whos wil ay reedy is t' applye  
To thing that souneth into hy falshede?  
Wommen, be waar of mennes sleighte, I rede;

And ferthermore han the men in usage,  
That wheras they nat likly been to speede  
Swiche as they been with a double visage,  
They procuren for to pursue hir neede;  
He prayeth him in his cause proceede  
And largely him quiteth his travaille;  
Smal witen wommen how men hem assaille.

To his felawe another wreche sayth,  
"Thou fishest fair! Shee that hath thee fired  
Is fals and inconstant and hath no faith.  
Shee for the rode of folk is so desired  
And as an hors fro day to day is hired,  
That whan thou twindest from hir compaignie  
Another comth and blered is thin eye.

Now prike on faste and ride thy journeye;  
Whil thou art ther, shee behinde thy bak  
So liberal is shee can no wight withsaye,

But quikly of another take a snak,  
For so the wommen faren al the pak.  
Whoso hem trusteth hanged moot he be!  
Ay they desiren change and noveltee.

Wherof procedeth this but of envye?  
For he himself here ne winne may,  
Repreef of her he speketh and villenye  
As mannes labbing tonge is wont alway.  
Thus sundry men ful often make assay  
For to disturbe folk in sundry wise  
For they may nat acheven hir emprise.

Ful many a man eek wolde for no good  
That hath in love spent his time and used  
Men wiste his lady his axing withstood  
And that he were of his lady refused,  
Or waast and vain were al that he had mused  
Wherfore he can no bettre remedie  
But on his lady shapeth him to lie:

"Every womman," he sayth," is light to gete;  
Can noon sayn `nay' if shee be wel ysoght.  
Whoso may leiser han with hir to trete  
Of his purpos ne shal he faille noght."  
But on madding he be so deepe broght  
That he shende al with open hoomlynesse  
That loven wommen nat as that I gesse.

To sclaudre wommen thus what may profite  
To gentils namly that hem armen sholde  
And in deffense of wommen hem delite  
As that the ordre of gentillesse wolde  
If that a man list gentil to be holde  
Al moot he flee that is to it contrary  
A sclaudring tonge is therto Aduersary.

A foul vice is of tonge to be light  
For whoso mochil clappeth gabbeth ofte  
The tonge of man so swift is and so wight  
That whan it is araised up on lofte  
Reson it sueth so slowly and softe



That it him nevere overtake may.  
Lord, so the men been trusty at assay!

Al be it that men finde o womman nice,  
Inconstant, rechelees, or variable  
Deinous, or proud, fulfilled of malice,  
Withoute faith or love and deceivable,  
Sly, queinte and fals, in al unthrift coupable,  
Wikked and feers and ful of crueltee --  
It folweth nat swiche alle wommen be.

Whan that the hy god angels fourmed hadde  
Among hem alle whether ther was noon  
That founden was malicious and badde?  
Yis, men wel knowen ther was many oon  
That for hir pride fel from hevене anoon.  
Shal man therfore alle angels proude name?  
Nay, he that that susteneth is to blame.

Of twelue apostles oon a traitour was;  
The remanaunt yit goode were and true.  
Thanne, if it happe men finden par cas  
O womman fals, swich is good for t' eschewe  
And deeme nat that they been alle untrue.  
I see wel mennes owne falsenesse  
Hem causeth wommen for to truste lesse.

O, every man oghte han an herte tendre  
Unto womman and deeme her honourable,  
Whether his shap be either thikke or sclendre  
Or he be badde or good; this is no fable.  
Every man woot that wit hath resonable  
That of a womman he descended is.  
Than is it shame speke of hir amis.

A wikked tree good fruit may noon foorth bringe  
For swich the fruit is, as that is the tree.  
Take heede of whom thou took thy beginninge  
Lat thy moder be mirour unto thee;  
Honoure her if thou wilt honoured be.  
Dispise thou nat her in no maneere  
Lest that therthurgh thy wikkednesse appeere.

An old proverbe seid is in English  
Men sayn that brid or foul is dishonest,  
What so it be, and holden ful cherlish  
That wont is to deffoule his owne nest.  
Men to saye of wommen wel it is best  
And nat for to despise hem ne deprave  
If that hem list hir honour keepe and save.

Ladies eek complainen hem on clerkes  
That they han maad bookes of hir deffame  
In whiche they lakken wommennes werkes  
And speken of hem greet reproof and shame  
And causelees hem yeue a wikked name.  
Thus they dispised been on every side  
And sclaundred and belowen on ful wide.

Tho wikked bookes maken mencion  
How they betrayeden in special  
Adam, Daud, Sampson, and Salomon  
And many oon mo. Who may rehercen al  
The tresoun that they have doon and shal?  
Who may hir hy malice comprehende?  
Nat the world, clerkes sayn; it hath noon ende.

Ovide in his book called Remedie  
Of Love greet reproof of wommen writeth,  
Wherin I trowe he dide greet folie  
And every wight that in swich cas deliteth;  
A clerkes custume is whan he enditeth  
Of wommen, be it prose rym or vers,  
Sayn they be wikke, al knowe he the revers.

And that book scolers lerne in hir childhede  
For they of wommen be waar sholde in age,  
And for to love hem evere been in drede,  
Syn to deceive is set al hir corage.  
They sayn peril to caste is avantage;  
Namely swich as men han in be trapped,  
For many a man by wommen han mishapped

No charge what so that the Clerkes sayn

Of al hir wrong wryting do we no cure  
Al hir labour and travaille is in vain  
For betwixt us and my lady Nature  
Shal nat be suffred whil the world may dure  
Clerkes by hir outrageous tirannye  
Thus upon wommen kithen hir maistrye

Whilom ful many of hem were in our chaine  
Tied and -- lo! -- now what for unweeldy age  
And for unlust may nat to love attaine  
And sayn that love is but verray dotage;  
Thus for that they hemself lakken corage  
They folk exciten by hir wikked sawes  
For to rebelle again us and our lawes.

But maugree hem that blamen wommen moost  
Swich is the force of oure impressioun  
That sodeinly we felle can hir boost  
And al hir wrong imaginacioun  
It shal nat been in hir elleccioun  
The foulest slutte in al a town refuse  
If that us list, for al that they can muse.

But her in herte as brenningly desire  
As thogh shee were a duchesse or a queene  
So can we mennes hertes sette on fire  
And as us list hem sende joye and teene  
They that to wommen been ywhet so keene  
Our sharpe strokes how sore they smite  
Shul feele and knowe and how they kerve and bite.

Pardee, this greet clerk, this sotil Ovide  
And many another han deceived be  
Of wommen, as it knowen is ful wide.  
What no men more and that is greet daintee  
So excellent a clerk as that was he  
And other mo that koude so wel preche  
Betrapped wern for aght they koude teche.

And trusteth wel that it is no meruaille  
For wommen knewen plainly hir entente  
They wiste how sotilly they koude assaille

Hem and what falshode in herte they mente  
And tho Clerkes they in hir daunger hente  
With o venym another was destroyed  
And thus the Clerkes often were anoyed

Thise ladies ne gentils nathelees  
Weren nat they that wroghten in this wise  
But swiche filthes that wern vertulees  
They quitten thus thise olde Clerkes wise  
To clerkes forthy lesse may suffise  
Than to deprave wommen generally  
For honour shuln they gete noon therby.

If that tho men that lovers hem pretende  
To wommen weren faithful, goode, and true,  
And dredden hem to deceive and offende,  
Wommen to love hem wolde nat eschewe;  
But every day hath man an herte neewe  
It upon oon abide can no while.  
What force is it swich oon for to beguile?

Men beren eek the wommen up on honde  
That lightly and withouten any paine  
They wonne been; they can no wight withstonde  
That his disese list to hem complaine.  
They been so freel they mowe hem nat restraine.  
But whoso liketh may hem lightly have  
So been hir hertes esy in to grave.

To Maistir Iohn de Meun as I suppose  
Than it was a lewde occupacioun  
In makinge of the Romance of the Rose  
So many a sly imaginacioun  
And perils for to rollen up and doun --  
So long procees, so many a sly cautele,  
For to deceive a sely damoisele!

Nat can we seen, ne in our wit comprehende  
That art and paine and sotiltee may faille  
For to conquere and soone make an ende,  
Whan man a feeble place shal assaille,  
And soone also to venquishe a Bataille

Of which no wight dar make resistence,  
Ne herte hath noon to stonden at deffense.

Than moot it folwen of necessitee  
Syn art asketh so greet engin and paine  
A womman to deceive, what shee be,  
Of constance they been nat so bareine  
As that some of tho sotil clerkes feine,  
But they been as that wommen oghten be:  
Sad, constaunt, and fulfilled of pitee

How freendly was Medea to Jasoun  
In the conquering of the flees of gold!  
How falsly quitte he her affeccion,  
By whom victorie he gat as he hath wold.  
How may this man for shame be so bold  
To falsen her that from deeth and shame  
Him kepte and gat him so greet prys and name?

Of Troie also the traitour Eneas  
The feithlees man how hath he him forswore  
To Dido that Queene of Cartage was  
That him releved of his greeves sore.  
What gentillesse mighte shee do more  
Than shee with herte unfeined to him kidde?  
And what mescheef to her of it betidde!

In our Legende of Martyrs may men finde  
Whoso that liketh therin for to rede  
That ooth noon ne beheste may men binde;  
Of reproof ne of shame han they no drede;  
In herte of man conceites true arn dede;  
The soile is nught; ther may no trouthe growe.  
To womman is hir vice nat unknowe

Clerkes sayn also ther is no malice  
Unto wommannes crabbed wikkednesse.  
O womman, how shalt thou thyself chevice,  
Syn men of thee so mochil harm witnessse?  
Yee, strah! Do foorth! Take noon hevynesse!  
Keepe thin owne, what men clappe or crake  
And some of hem shuln smerte, I undertake.

Malice of wommen what is it to drede?  
They slee no men, destroyen no citees,  
They nat oppressen folk, ne overlede,  
Betraye Empires, Remes, ne Duchees,  
Ne men bereve hir landes ne hir mees,  
Folk enpoisone or houses sette on fire,  
Ne fals contractes maken for noon hire.

Trust parfit love and enteer charitee,  
Fervent wil and entalented corage.  
To thewes goode as it sit wel to be  
Han wommen ay of custume and usage;  
And wel they can a mannes ire assuage  
With softe wordes discret and benigne  
What they been inward sheweth owtward signe.

Wommannes herte to no crueltee  
Enclined is; but they been charitable  
Pitous, devout, ful of humilitee,  
Shamefast, debonair, and amiable,  
Dreedful, and of hir wordes mesurable;  
What womman thise hath nat par aventure  
Folweth nothing the way of hir nature.

Men sayn our firste moder nathelees  
Mede al mankinde leese his libertee  
And naked it of joye doutelees,  
For goddes heeste disobeyed shee  
Whan shee presumed to ete of the tree  
Which god forbad that shee nat ete of sholde,  
And nad the feend been, no more she wolde.

Th' envious swelling that the feend our fo  
Had unto man in herte for his welthe  
Sente a serpent and made her to go  
To deceive Eve; and thus was mannes welthe  
Bereft him by the feend right in a stelthe,  
The womman nat knowing of the deceit.  
God woot ful fer was it from hir conceit!

Wherfor we sayn this good womman Eve

Our fadir Adam ne deceived noght  
Ther may no man for a deceit it preeve  
Proprely, but if that shee in hir thoght  
Had it compassed first or it was wroght;  
And for swich was nat hir impressioun,  
Men calle it may no deceit by resoun

No wight deceiveth but he it purpose  
The feend this deceit caste and nothing shee.  
Than is it wrong for to deeme or suppose  
That shee sholde of that guilt the cause be.  
Witeth the feend and his be the maugree,  
And for excused have hir innocence,  
Sauf oonly that shee brak obedience.

Touchinge which, ful fewe men ther been --  
Unnethes any dar we saufly saye --  
Fro day to day as men mowe wel seen,  
But that the heeste of god they disobeye.  
This have in minde, sires, we yow preye  
If that yee be discreet and resonable  
Yee wole hir holde the more excusable

And wher men sayn in man is stedfastnesse  
And womman is of hir corage unstable,  
Who may of Adam bere swich witnessse?  
Telleth on this: was he nat changeable?  
They bothe weren in a cas semblable,  
Sauf willingly the feend deceived Eve.  
So dide shee nat Adam, by your leeve!

Yit was that sinne happy to mankinde:  
The feend deceived was for al his sleighte.  
For aght he koude him in his sleightes winde,  
God to discharge mankinde of the weighte  
Of his trespas cam doun from hevenes heighte,  
And flesh and blood he took of a virgine,  
And souffred deeth man to deliver of pine.

And god fro whom ther may nothing hid be,  
If he in womman knowe had swich malice,  
As men of hem recorde in generaltee

Of our lady of lif reparatrice  
Nolde han be born; but for that shee of vice  
Was voide and of al vertu wel he wiste  
Endowed of her be born him liste.

Her heped vertu hath swich excellence  
That al too weyk is mannes facultee  
To declare it; and therfore in suspense  
Her due laude put moot needes be.  
But this we witen verrailly: that shee,  
Next god, the best freend is that to man longeth.  
The keye of mercy by hir girdil hongeth.

And of mercy hath every wight swich neede  
That, cissing it, farwel the joye of man!  
Of hir power it is to taken heede;  
Shee mercy may, wole, and purchace can;  
Displese her nat! Honureth that womman  
And other wommen alle for hir sake;  
And but yee do, your sorwe shal awake.

Thou precious gemme, martyr margarete,  
Of thy blood dreddest noon effusioun;  
Thy martyrdom ne may we nat foryete.  
O constant womman, in thy passioun  
Overcam the feendes temptacioun,  
And many a wight converted thy doctrine  
Unto the feith of god, holy virgine.

But understondeth: we commende hir noght  
By encheson of hir virginitee  
Trusteth right wel it cam nat in our thoght  
For ay we werreie again chastitee  
And evere shal; but this leeveth wel yee:  
Her loving herte and constant to hir lay  
Drive out of remembrance we nat may.

In any book also wher can yee finde  
That of the wirkes or the deeth or lif  
Of Jhesu spekth or maketh any minde  
That wommen him forsook for wo or strif  
Wher was ther any wight so ententif



Abouten him as wommen pardee noon  
Th' apostles him forsooken everichoon

Wommen forsook him noght for al the feith  
Of holy chirche in womman lefte oonly  
This is no lees for thus holy writ sayth  
Looke and yee shuln so finde it hardily  
And therefore it may preeved be therby  
That in womman regneth al the constaunce  
And in man is al change and variaunce

Now holdeth this for ferme and for no lye  
That this treewe and just commendacioun  
Of wommen is nat told for flaterye  
Ne to cause hem pride or elacioun  
But oonly -- lo! -- for this entencioun  
To yeue hem corage of perseverance  
In vertu and hir honour to enhance

The more vertu, the lasse is the pride;  
Vertu so noble is and worthy in kinde  
That vice and shee may nat in feere abide  
Shee putteth vice cleene out of minde  
Shee fleeth from him shee leveth him behinde  
O womman that of vertu art hostesse,  
Greet is thin honour and thy worthynesse.

Than thus we wolen conclude and deffine:  
We yow commaunde our Ministres echoon  
That reedy been to our hestes encline  
That of tho men untrue, our rebel foon,  
Yee do punishment and that anoon  
Voide hem our Court and banishe hem for evere  
So that therinne they ne come nevere.

Fulfilled be it! Cessing al delay,  
Looke ther be noon excusacion.  
Writen in th' air the lusty monthe of May  
In our Paleys wher many a milion  
Of lovers true han habitacion  
The yeer of grace joyeful and jocounde  
One thousand four hundred and secounde.

Thomas Hoccleve

# The Regiment Of Princes

Musynge upon the restlees bysynesse  
Which that this trouby world hath ay on honde,  
That othir thyng than fruyt of bittirnesse  
Ne yildith naght, as I can undirstonde,  
At Chestres In, right faste by the Stronde,  
As I lay in my bed upon a nyght,  
Thought me byrefte of sleep the force and might. 1

And many a day and nyght that wikkid hyne  
Hadde befor vexed my poore goost  
So grevously that of angwissh and pyne  
No rycher man was nowhere in no coost.  
This dar I seyn, may no wight make his boost  
That he with thoght was bet than I aqweynted,  
For to the deeth he wel ny hath me feynted.

Bysyly in my mynde I gan revolve  
The welthe unseur of every creature,  
How lightly that Fortune it can dissolve  
Whan that hir list that it no lenger dure;  
And of the brotilnesse of hir nature  
My tremblynge herte so greet gastnesse hadde  
That my spirites were of my lyf sadde.

Me fil to mynde how that nat longe agoo  
Fortunes strook doun thraste estat rial  
Into mescheef, and I took heede also  
Of many anothir lord that hadde a fal.  
In mene estat eek sikirnesse at al  
Ne saw I noon, but I sy atte laste  
Wher seuretee for to abyde hir caste.

In poore estat shee pighte hir pavyloun  
To kevere hir fro the storm of descendyng 2  
For shee kneew no lower descencion  
Sauf oonly deeth, fro which no wight lyvyng  
Deffende him may; and thus in my musynge  
I destitut was of joie and good hope,  
And to myn ese nothyng cowde I grope.

For right as blyve ran it in my thoght,  
Thogh poore I be, yit sumwhat leese I may.  
Than deemed I that seurtee wolde nocht  
With me abyde; it is nat to hir pay  
Ther to sojourne as shee descende may.  
And thus unsikir of my smal lyflode,  
Thoght leide on me ful many an hevvy lode.

I thoghte eek, if I into povert creepe,  
Than am I entred into sikirnesse;  
But swich seurtee mighte I ay waille and weepe,  
For povert breedith naght but hevynesse.  
Allas, wher is this worldes stablenesse?  
Heer up, heer down; heer honour, heer reproof;  
Now hool, now seek; now bountee, now mescheef.

And whan I hadde rollid up and doun  
This worldes stormy wawes in my mynde,  
I sy wel povert was exclusioun  
Of al welfare regnyng in mankynde;  
And how in bookes thus writen I fynde,  
"The werste kynde of wrecchidnesse is  
A man to han be weleful or this."

Allas, thoghte I, what sikirnesse is that  
To lyve ay seur of greif and of nusance?  
What shal I do? Best is I stryve nat  
Ageyn the peys of Fortunes balance,  
For wel I woot that hir brotil constance  
A wight no whyle souffre can sojourne  
In o plyt; thus nat wiste I how to tourne.

For whan man weeneth stonde moost constant,  
Thanne is he nexte to his overthrowng;  
So flittyng is shee and so variant,  
Ther is no trust upon hir fair lawhyng;  
Aftir glad look, shee shapith hir to styng.  
I was adrad so of hir gerynesse  
That my lyf was but a deedly gladnesse.

This ilke nyght I walwid to and fro

Seekynge reste, but certeynly shee  
Appeered nat, for thoght, my cruel fo,  
Chaced had hir and sleep away fro me.  
And for I sholde nat allone be,  
Ageyn my lust wach proferred his servyse,  
And I admittid him in hevvy wyse.

So long a nyght ne felte I nevere noon  
As was that same, to my jugement.  
Whoso that thoghty is, is wo begoon;  
The thoghtful wight is vessel of torment;  
Ther nis no greef to him equipollent.  
He graveth deepest of seeknesses alle:  
Ful wo is him that in swich thoght is falle.

What wight that inly pensyf is, I trowe,  
His moost desir is to be solitarie.  
That this is sooth, in my persone I knowe,  
For evere whyl that fretynge adversarie  
Myn herte made to him tributarie  
In sowkyng of the fressheste of my blood;  
To sorwe soul me thoghte it dide me good.  
For the nature of hevynesse is this:  
If it habownde greetly in a wight,  
The place eschueth he whereas joie is,  
For joie and he nat mowe accorde aright.  
As discordant as day is unto nyght,  
And honour adversarie is unto shame,  
Is hevynesse so to joie and game.

Whan to the thoghtful wight is told a tale,  
He heerith it as thogh he thennes were;  
His hevvy thoghtes him so plukke and hale  
Hidir and thidir, and him greeve and dere,  
That his eres availle him nat a pere;  
He undirstandith nothyng what men seye,  
So been his wittes fer goon hem to pleye.

The smert of thoght I by experience  
Knowe as wel as any man dooth lyvyng.  
His frosty swoot and fyry hoot fervence,  
And troublly dremes drempt al in wakyng,

My mazid heed sleeplees han of konnyng  
And wit despoillid, and so me bejapid  
That aftir deeth ful often have I gapid.

Passe over; whan this stormy nyght was goon  
And day gan at my wyndowe in to pry,  
I roos me up, for boote fond I noon  
In myn unresty bed lenger to lye.  
Into the feeld I dressid me in hye,  
And in my wo I herte-deep gan wade,  
As he that was bareyne of thoghtes glade.

By that I walkid hadde a certeyn tyme,  
Were it an hour I not, or more or lesse,  
A poore old hoor man cam walkynge by me,  
And seide, "Good day, sire, and God yow blesse!"  
But I no word, for my seekly distresse  
Forbad myn eres usen hir office,  
For which this old man heeld me lewde and nyce,  
Til he took heede to my drery cheere,  
And to my deedly colour pale and wan.  
Than thoghte he thus: "This man that I see heere  
Al wrong is wrestid, by aght I see can."  
He stirte unto me and seide, "Sleepstow, man?  
Awake!" and gan me shake wondir faste,  
And with a sigh I answerde atte laste:

"A, who is there?" "I," quod this olde greye,  
"Am heer," and he me tolde the manere  
How he spak to me, as yee herde me seye.  
"O man," quod I, "for Crystes love deere,  
If that thow wilt aght doon at my prayeere,  
As go thy way, talke to me no more;  
Thy wordes alle annoyen me ful sore.

"Voide fro me, me list no conpaignie.  
Encresse nat my greef, I have ynow."  
"My sone, hast thow good lust thy sorwe drye  
And mayst releved be? What man art thow?  
Wirke aftir me: it shal be for thy prow.  
Thow nart but yong and hast but litil seen,  
And ful seelde is that yong folk wyse been.

"If that thee lyke to been esid wel,  
As suffre me with thee to talke a whyle.  
Art thow aght lettred?" "Yee," quod I, "sumdel."  
"Blessid be God, than hope I, by Seint Gyle,  
That God to thee thy wit shal reconsyle  
Which that me thynkith is fer fro thee went  
Thurgh the assaut of thy grevous torment.

"Lettred folk han gretter discrecion  
And bet conceyve konne a mannes sawe,  
And rather wole applie to reson,  
And from folie sonner hem withdrawe,  
Than he that neithir reson can ne lawe,  
Ne lerned hath no maner letterure.  
Plukke up thyn herte - I hope I shal thee cure."  
"Cure, good man? Yee, thow art a fair leeche!  
Cure thyself that tremblest as thow goost,  
For al thyn aart wole enden in thy speeche.  
It lyth nat in thy power, poore goost,  
To hele me; thow art as seek almoost  
As I! First on thyself kythe thyn aart,  
And if aght leve, let me thanne have paart.

"Go fourth thy way, I thee preye, or be stille;  
Thow doost me more annoy than that thow weenest.  
Thow art as ful of clap as is a mille;  
Thow doost naghtheer but greevest me and teenest.  
Good man, thow woost but litil what thow meenest.  
In thee lyth naghth redresse my nusance,  
And yit thow maist be wel-willid, par chance.

"It muste been a gretter man of might  
Than that thow art that sholde me releeve."  
"What, sone myn, thow feelist nat aright;  
To herkne me, what shal it harme or greeve?"  
"Petir, good man, thogh we talke heer til eeve,  
Al is in veyn; thy might may nat atteyne  
To hele me, swich is my woful peyne."

"What that I may or can ne woost thow noght.  
Hardily, sone, telle on how it is."

"Man, at a word, it is encombrous thoght  
That causith me thus sorwe and fare amis."  
"Now, sone, and if ther nothyng be but this,  
Do as I shal thee seye, and thyn estat  
Amende I shal but thow be obstinat,

"And wilfully rebelle and disobeye,  
And list nat to my lore thee conforme;  
For in swich cas, what sholde I speke or seye,  
Or in my beste wyse thee enforme?  
If thow it weyve and take anothir forme,  
Aftir thy childissh misreuled conceit,  
Thow doost unto thyself harm and deceit.  
"O thyng seye I, if thow go feerelees  
Al solitarie and conseil lakke and reed,  
As me thynkith thy gyse is, doutelees  
Thow likly art to bere a dotid heed.  
Whil thow art soul, thoght his wastyng seed  
Sowith in thee, and that in greet foyssoun,  
And thow reedlees nat canst voide his poisoun.

"The Book seith thus - I redde it yore agoon:  
'Wo be to him that list to been allone,  
For if he falle, help ne hath he noon  
To ryse.' This seye I by thy persone;  
I fond thee soul and thy wittes echone  
Fer fro thee fled and disparpled ful wyde,  
Wherfore it seemeth thee needith a gyde,

"Which that thee may unto thy wittes lede.  
Thow graspist heer and there as dooth the blynde,  
And ay misgoost, and yit, have I no drede,  
If thow receyve wilt into thy mynde  
My lore and execute it, thow shalt fynde  
Therin swich ese that thy maladie  
Abregge it shal and thy malencolie.

"Ful holsum were it stynten of thy wo  
And take unto thee spirit of gladnesse.  
What profyt fyndest thow to mourne so?  
Salomon seith that sorwe and hevynesse  
Bones of man drieth by his duresse,



And herte glad makith florisshyng age;  
Therefore I rede thow thy wo asswage.

"He seith: 'As motthes to a clooth annoyen  
And of his wolle maken it al bare,  
And also as wormes a tree destroien  
Thurgh hir Percyng, right so sorwe and care  
Byreven man his helthe and his welfare  
And his dayes abregge and shorte his lyf.'  
Lo, what profyt is for to be pensyf?

"Now, goode sone, telle on thy grevance:  
What is thy cause of thoght in special?  
Haast thow of worldly goodes habundance  
And carist how that it ykept be shal?  
Or art thow needy and hast nat but smal,  
And thristist sore a ryche man to be?  
Or lovest hire that nat loveth thee?

"I have herd seyn, in keepyng of richesse  
Is thoght and wo and bisy awayt alway. 3  
The poore and needy eek hath hevynesse,  
For to his purpos nat atteyne he may;  
The love-re also seen men day by day  
Prolle aftir that that he shal nevere fynde;  
Thus thoght tormentith folk in sundry kynde.

"If thow thee feele in any of thise ygreeved  
Or elles what, telle on, in Goddes name.  
Thow seest al day the begger is releevd  
That sit and beggith blynd, crookid, and lame,  
And why? For he ne lettith for no shame  
His harmes and his povert to bywreye  
To folk as they goon by him in the weye.

"For and he keepe him cloos and holde his pees,  
And nat out shewe how seek he inward is,  
He may al day so sitten helpelees;  
And, sone myn, althogh he fare amis  
That hydeth so, God woot, the wyt is his;  
But this begger his hurtes wole nat stele;  
He wole telle al and more - he can nought hele.

"Right so, if thee list have a remedie  
Of thyn annoy that prikkith thee so smerte,  
The verray cause of thyn hid maladie  
Thow moot deskevere and telle out al thyn herte.  
If thow it hyde, thow shalt nat asterte  
That thow ne falle shalt in sum meschance;  
Forthy amende thow thy governance.

"Be waar of thoght, for it is perillous;  
He the streight way to desconfort men ledith;  
His violence is ful outrageous;  
Unwys is he that bisy thoght ne dredith.  
In whom that he his mortel venym shedith,  
But if a vomyt aftir folwe blyve,  
At the port of despeir he may arryve.

"Sone, swich thoght lurkyng thee withynne,  
That huntith aftir thy confusioun,  
Hy tyme it is to voide and lat him twynne,  
And walke at large out of thy prisoun.  
Be waar the feendes sly conclusioun,  
For if he may thee unto despeir brynge,  
Thow mourne shalt, and lawhe he wole and synge.

"Sum man for lak of occupacioun  
Musith ferthere than his wit may strecche,  
And at the feendes instigacioun  
Dampnable errour holdith, and can nat flecche  
For no conseil ne reed, as dide a wrecche  
Nat fern ago, which that of heresie  
Convict and brent was unto asshen drie.

"The precious body of our Lord Jhesu  
In forme of brede he leaved nat at al;  
He was in nothyng abassht ne eschu  
To seye it was but brede material.  
He seide a preestes power was as smal  
As a rakers or swich anothir wight,  
And to make it hadde no gretter might.

"My lord the Prince - God him save and blesse -  
Was at his deedly castigacioun

And of his soule hadde greet tendrenesse,  
Thristynge sore his sauvacioun.  
Greet was his pitous lamentacioun  
Whan that this renegat nat wolde blynne  
Of the stynkyng error that he was ynne.

"This good lord highte him to be swich a mene  
To his fadir, our lige lord sovereyn,  
If he renounce wolde his error clene  
And come unto our good byleeve ageyn,  
He sholde of his lyf seur been and certain;  
And souffissant lyflode eek sholde he have  
Unto the day he clad were in his grave.

"Also this noble prynce and worthy knyght -  
God qwyte him his charitable labour -  
Or any stikke kyndlid were or light,  
The sacrament, our blessid Sauveour,  
With reverence greet and hy honour,  
He fecche leet, this wrecche to converte,  
And make our feith to synken in his herte.

"But al for naght, it wolde nat betyde;  
He heeld forth his oppinioun dampnable,  
And caste our holy Cristen feith asyde  
As he that was to the feend acceptable.  
By any outward tokne resonable,  
If he inward hadde any repentance,  
That woot He that of nothyng hath doutance.

"Lat the dyvynes of him speke and muse  
Where his soule is bycome or whidir goon;  
Myn unkonnyng of that me shal excuse;  
Of swich mateere knowleche have I noon.  
But wolde God tho Crystes foos echoon  
That holde as he heeld were yserved so,  
For I am seur that ther been many mo.

"The more routhe is! Allas, what men been they  
That hem delyten in swich surquidrye?  
For mannes reson may nat preeve our fey  
That they wole it dispreeven or denye.

To our lord God that sitte in hevenes hye,  
Shul they desyre for to been egal?  
Nay, that was nevere, certes, ne be shal.

"That our lord God seith in Holy Scripture  
May nat be fals, this knowith every wight  
But he be mad; and thogh a creature  
In his Goddes werk feele nat aright,  
Shal he rebelle ageyn his lordes might,  
Which that this wyde world hath maad of noght,  
For reson may nat knytte it in his thoght?

"Was it nat eek a moustre as in nature  
That God ybore was of a virgyne?  
Yit is it sooth, thogh man by conjecture  
Of reson or what he can ymagyne  
Nat savoure it ne can it determyne.  
He that almighty is dooth as him list;  
He wole his konnyng hid be and nat wist.

"Our feith nat were unto us meritorie  
If that we mighten by reson it preeve.  
Lat us nat fro God twynnen and His glorie;  
As Holy Chirche us bit, lat us byleeve.  
But we therto obeye, it shal us greeve  
Importably; lat us do as shee bit;  
Oure goode fadres olde han folwed it.

"Presumpcion, a benedicitee!  
Why vexest thow folk with thy franesie,  
Thogh nothyng elles were, I seye for me?  
But see how that the worthy prelacie,  
And undir hem the souffissant clergie,  
Endowid of profounde intelligence,  
Of al this land werreyen thy sentence.

"That selve same to me were a brydil  
By which wolde I governed been and gyed,  
And elles al my labour were in ydil.  
By Holy Chirche I wole be justified;  
To that al hoolly is myn herte applied,  
And evere shal. I truste in Goddes grace;

Swich surquidrie in me shal have no place.

"Sone, if God wole, thow art noon of tho  
That wrappid been in this dampnacioun?"  
"I? Cryst forbeede it, sire," seide I tho.  
"I thanke it God, noon inclinacioun  
Have I to laboure in probacioun  
Of His hy knowleche and His mighty werkis,  
For swich mateere unto my wit to derk is.

"Of our feith wole I nat despute at al,  
But at o word, I in the sacrament  
Of the auter fully byleeve and shal,  
With Goddes help, whil lyf is to me lent,  
And in despit of the feendes talent,  
In alle othir articles of the feith  
Byleeve as fer as that Holy Writ seith."

"Now good thrift come unto thee, sone deere;  
Thy goost is now awakid wel, I see,  
And sumwhat eek amendid is thy cheere.  
And first I was ful sore agast of thee,  
Lest that thow thurgh thoghtful adversitee  
Nat haddest standen in thy feith aright;  
Now is myn herte woxen glad and light.

"Hast thow in me any gretter savour  
Than that thow haddest first whan thow me sy,  
Whan I opposid thee of thy langour?  
Seye on the soothe." "Yee, sumdel," quod I.  
"My sone, in feith that is seid ful feyntly;  
Thy savour yit ful smal is, as I trowe,  
But or aght longe I shal the soothe knowe.  
"I woot wel, sone, of me thus wilt thow thynke:  
This olde dotid grisel halt him wys; 4  
He weeneth maken in myn heed to synke  
His lewde clap, of which sette I no prys.  
He is a noble prechour at devys;  
Greet noyse hath thurgh his chynned lippes drye  
This day out past, the devel in his ye.

"But thogh I old and hoor be, sone myn,

And poore be my clothyng and array,  
And nat so wyde a gowne have as is thyn -  
So smal ypyndid ne so fressh and gay -  
My reed in hap yit thee profyte may,  
And likly that thow deemest for folie  
Is gretter wysdam than thow canst espie.

"Undir an old poore habyt regneth ofte  
Greet vertu, thogh it moustre poorely;  
And whereas greet array is up on lofte,  
Vice is but seelden hid - that wel woot I.  
But nat reporte, I preye thee, inwardly,  
That fressh array I generally deprave;  
Thise worthy men mowe it wel use and have.

"But this me thynkith an abusioun,  
To see oon walke in gownes of scarlet  
Twelve yerdes wyde, with pendaunt sleeves down  
On the ground, and the furrou therin set,  
Amountyng unto twenti pound or bet.  
And if he for it paied have, he no good  
Hath left him wherwith for to bye an hood.

"For thogh he gette foorth among the prees  
And overlooke every poore wight,  
His cofre and eek his purs been penylees;  
He hath no more than he gooth in right.  
For land, rente, or catel he may go light;  
The weighte of hem shal nat so moche peise  
As dooth his gowne. Is swich array to preise?

"Nay, soothly, sone, it is al mis, me thynkith,  
So poore a wight his lord to countrefete  
In his array; in my conceit it stynkith.  
Certes to blame been the lordes grete,  
If that I durste seyn, that hir men lete  
Usurpe swich a lordly apparaille;  
It is nat worth, my chyld, withouten faille.

"Sumtyme afer men mighten lordes knowe  
By hir array from othir folk, but now  
A man shal studie and musen a long throwe

Which is which. O lordes, it sit to yow  
Amende this, for it is for your prow;  
If twixt yow and your men no difference  
Be in array, lesse is your reverence.

"Also ther is anothis neewe get:  
A foul waast of clooth and an excessyf  
Ther gooth, no lesse in a mannes typet  
Than of brood clooth a yerde, by my lyf;  
Me thynkith this a verray inductyf  
Unto stelthe. Waar hem of hempen lane,  
For stelthe is medid with a chekelewe bane.

"Let every lord his owne men deffende  
Swich greet array, and thanne, on my peril,  
This land withynne a whyle shal amende.  
In Goddes name, putte it in exyl;  
It is a synne outrageous and vyl;  
Lordes, if yee your estat and honour  
Loven, fleemeth this vicious errour.

"What is a lord withouten his meynee?  
I putte cas that his foos him assaille  
Sodeynly in the street: what help shal he  
Whos sleeves encombrous so syde traile  
Do to his lord? He may him nat availle;  
In swich a cas he nis but a womman;  
He may nat stande him in stide of a man.

"His armes two han right ynow to doone,  
And sumwhat more, his sleeves up to holde.  
The taillours, trowe I, moot heeraftir soone  
Shape in the feeld; they shul nat sprede and folde  
On hir bord, thogh they nevere so fayn wolde,  
The clooth that shal been in a gowne wroght;  
Take an hool clooth is best, for lesse is noght.

"The skynner unto the feeld moot also -  
His hous in Londoun is to streit and scars  
To doon his craft; sumtyme it was nat so.  
O lordes, geve unto your men hir pars  
That so doon, and aqweynte hem bet with Mars,

God of bataille; he loveth noon array  
That hurtith manhode at preef or assay.

"Who now moost may bere on his bak at ones  
Of clooth and furroure hath a fressh renoun;  
He is a lusty man clept, for the nones.  
But drapers and eek skynners in the toun  
For swich folk han a special orisoun,  
That droppid is with curses heer and there,  
And ay shal til they paied be for hir gere.

"In dayes olde, whan smal apparaille  
Souffysid unto hy estat or mene,  
Was greet houshold wel stuffid of vitaille;  
But now housholdes been ful sclendre and lene,  
For al the good that men may repe or glene  
Waastid is in outrageous array,  
So that housholdes men nat holde may.

"Pryde hath wel lever bere an hungry mawe  
To bedde than lak of array outrage.  
He no prys settith by mesures lawe,  
Ne takith of him clooth, mete, ne wage;  
Measure is out of land on pilgrimage;  
But I suppose he shal resorte as blyve,  
For verray neede wole us therto dryve.

"Ther may no lord take up no neewe gyse  
But that a knave shal the same up take.  
If lordes wolden wirken in this wyse  
For to do swiche gownes to hem make  
As men dide in old tyme, I undirtake,  
The same get sholde up be take and usid,  
And al this costlewe outrage refusid.

"Of Lancastre Duk John, whos soule in hevne  
I fully deeme and truste sit ful hye -  
A noble prince, I may allegge and nevene -  
Othir may no man of him testifie;  
I nevere sy a lord that cowde him gye  
Bet lyk his estat; al knyghtly prowesse  
Was to him girt - o God, his soule blesse!



"His garnementes weren nat ful wyde,  
And yit they him becam wondirly wel.  
Now wolde God the waast of clooth and pryde  
Yput were in exyl perpetuel  
For the good and profyt universel;  
And lordes mighte helpe al this, if they wolde  
The old get take, and it foorth use and holde.

"Than mighte silver walke more thikke  
Among the peple than that it dooth now.  
Ther wolde I fayn that were yset the prikke -  
Nat for myself, I shal do wel ynow -  
But, sone, for that swiche men as thow,  
That with the world wrastlen, mighte han plentee  
Of coyn, whereas yee han now scarsetee.

"Now hath this land but litil neede of bromes  
To sweepe away the filthe out of the street,  
Syn syde sleeves of penylees gromes  
Wole it up likke, be it drie or weet.  
O Engeland, stande upright on thy feet!  
So foul a waast in so symple degree  
Banisshe, or sore it shal repente thee.

"If a wight vertuous but narwe clothid  
To lordes courtes now adayes go,  
His conpaignie is unto folkes lothid;  
Men passen by him bothe to and fro,  
And scorne him for he is arraied so.  
To hir conceit is no wight vertuous  
But he that of array is outrageous.

"But he that flatere can or be a baude,  
And by tho tweyne fressh array him gete,  
It holden is to him honour and laude.  
Trouthe and clennessen musten men forgete  
In lordes courtes, for they hertes frete;  
They hyndren folk. Fy upon tonges treewe!  
They displesance in lordes courtes breewe.

"Lo, sone myn, that tale is at an eende.

Now, goode sone, have of me no desdeyn,  
Thogh I be old and myn array untheende,  
For many a yong man, woot I wel certeyn,  
Of corage is so prowde and so hauteyn  
That to the poore and old mannes doctryne  
Ful seelde him deyneth bowen or enclyne.

"Senek seith, age is an infirmittee  
That leche noon can cure ne it hele,  
For to the deeth next neigheburgh is he.  
Ther may no wight the chartre of lyf ensele;  
The ende is deeth of male and of femele;  
Nothyng is more certeyn than deeth is,  
Ne more uncerteyn than the tyme, ywis.  
"As touchynge age, God in Holy Writ  
Right thus seith: 'Fadir and modir honure,  
That thow maist be long-lyved' - thus he bit.  
Than moot it folwen upon this scripture,  
Age is a guerdoun to a creature,  
And long-lyved is noon withouten age,  
Wherfore I seye, in elde is avauntage;

"And the reward of God may nat be smal;  
His giftes been ful noble and profitable;  
Forthy ne lakke thow nat age at al.  
Whan youthe is past is age sesonable;  
Age hath insighte how unseur and unstable  
This worldes cours is by lengthe of his yeeres,  
And can deffende him from his sharpe breres.

"Lord, whethir it be maistrie to knowe  
Whan a man ofte hath sundry weyes ride,  
Which is the beste? Nay, for soothe, I trowe,  
Right so he that hath many a world abide  
There he in youthe wroghte mis or dide,  
His age it seeth and bit him it eschue  
And seekith weyes covenable and due.

"Whan that thow hast assayed bothe two,  
Sad age, I seye, aftir thy skittissh yowthe,  
As thow moot needes atteyne therto  
Or sterve yong, than trowe I thow wilt bowe thee

To swiche conceites as I have nowthe,  
And thanke God devoutly in thyn herte  
That He hath suffrid thee thy yowthe astate.

"Youthe ful smal reward hath to goodnesse,  
And peril dredith he noon, woot I wel;  
Al his devocion and holynesse  
At the taverne is, as for the moost del;  
To Bachus signe and to the levesel  
His youthe him halith, and whan it him happith  
To chirche goon, of nycetee he clappith.  
"The cause why men oghten thidir goon,  
Nat cause can his wilde steerissh heed  
To folwen it. Also, boote is it noon  
To telle it him, for thogh men sowen seed  
Of vertu, in a yong man it is deed;  
As blyve his rebel goost it mortifieth.  
Al thyng sauf folie in a yong man dieth.

"Whan I was yong, I was ful rechelees,  
Prowd, nyce, and riotous for the maistrie,  
And among othir, consciencelees.  
By that sette I nat the worth of a flie;  
And of hem hauntid I the conpaignie  
That wente on pilgrimage to taverne,  
Which before unthrift berith the lanterne.

"There offred I wel more than my tythe,  
And withdrow Holy Chirche his duetee.  
My freendes me conseillid often sythe  
That I with lownesse and humilitee  
To my curat go sholde and make his gree,  
But straw, unto hir reed wolde I nat bowe  
For aght they cowden preyen alle or wowe!

"Whan folk wel reuled dressid hem to bedde  
In tyme due by reed of nature,  
To the taverne qwikly I me spedde  
And pleide at dees whil the nyght wolde endure.  
There the former of every creature  
Dismembred I with oothes grete, and rente  
Lym fro lym or that I thennes wente.

"And ofte it fals was that I swoor or spak,  
For the desir fervent of covetyse  
Fond in perjurie no deffaute or lak,  
But evere entyced me that in al wyse  
Myne oothes grete I sholde excercyse,  
And specially for lucre, in al maneere,  
Swere and forswere with bold face and cheere.

"But this condicioun, lo, hadde I evere:  
Thogh I prowde were in wordes or in speche,  
Whan strokes cam, a place I gan dissevere;  
Fro my felawes soghte I nevere leech  
For hurt which that I took; what sholde I seeche  
A salve whan I therof had no neede?  
I hurtlees was ay thurgh impressid dreede.

"Tho mighte I spende an hundred mark by yeer,  
Al thyng deduct, my sone, I gabbe noght.  
I was so proud, I heeld no man my peere;  
In pryde and leccherie was al my thoght.  
No more I hadde set therby or roght  
A wyf or mayde or nonne to deffoule  
Than sheete or pleyen at the bal or boule.

"Right nyce girles at my retenue  
Had I an heep, wyves and othir mo -  
What so they were, I wolde noon eschue;  
And yeeres fele I continued so.  
Allas, I nothyng was waar of the wo  
That folwed me; I lookid nat behynde;  
Conceites yonge been ful dirk and blynde.

"An office also hadde I lucratyf,  
And wan ynow, God woot, and mochil more,  
But nevere thoghte I in al my yong lyf  
What I unjustly gat for to restore,  
Wherefore I now repente wondir sore;  
As it misgoten was, mis was despendid,  
Of which our lord God greetly was offendid.

"He sy I nolde absteene for no good  
Of myn outrageous iniquitee,

And whan that His lust was, withdraw the flood  
Of welthe, and at ground ebbe sette He me;  
With povert for my gilt me feffid He.  
Swich wreche took He for my cursid synne;  
No more good have I than I stonde ynne.  
"Gold, silver, jewel, clooth, beddyng, array -  
Ne have I noon othir than thow maist see;  
Pardee, this bare old russet is nat gay,  
And in my purs so grete sommes be  
That ther nis contour in al Cristientee  
Which that hem can at any noumbre sette.  
That shalt thow see, my purs I wole unshette.

"Come hidir to me, sone, and looke whethir  
In this purs ther be any crois or crouche  
Sauf nedel and threde and themel of lethir;  
Heer seestow nacht that man may handele or touche.  
The feend, men seyn, may hoppen in a pouche  
Whan that no crois therynne may appeere,  
And by my purs the same I may seye heere.

"O, where is now al the wantoun moneye  
That I was maistir of and governour,  
Whan I kneew nat what povert was to seye?  
Now is povert the glas and the mirour  
In which I see my God, my sauveour.  
Or povert cam, wiste I nat what God was,  
But now I knowe and see Him in this glas.

"And where be my gownes of scarlet,  
Sangwyn, murray, and blewes sadde and lighte;  
Greenes also, and the fair violet;  
Hors and harneys, fressh and lusty in sighte -  
My wikkid lyf hath put al this to flighte.  
But, certes, yit me greeveth moost of alle,  
My frendshipe is al clene fro me falle.

"O whyle I stood in wele, I was honurid  
And many oon of my conpaignie glad,  
And now I am mislookid on and lourid;  
Ther rekkith noon how wo I be bystad.  
O Lord, this world unstable is and unsad;

This world honureth nat mannes persone  
For himself, sone, but for good allone.  
"Ful sooth fynde I the word of Salomon,  
That to moneie obeien alle thynges;  
For that my coyn and coynworth is agoon,  
Contrarien they my wil and my biddynges,  
That in my welthe with hir flaterynges  
Heelden with me what that I wroghte or seide;  
Now disobeyen they that thanne obeide.

"Now seyn they thus: 'I wiste wel alway  
That him destroie wolde his fool largesse;  
I tolde him so and evere he seide nay.'  
And yit they lien, also God me blesse;  
They me confortd ay in myn excesse,  
And seide I was a manly man withalle;  
Hir hony wordes tornen me to galle.

"God, which of His benigne courtesie,  
And of His cheere lovyng tendrenesse,  
He of the synful hath nat wole he die,  
But lyve for to amende his wikkidnesse;  
Him thanke I and His infynyt goodnesse;  
His grace lykith that thurgh worldly peyne  
My soule eschape may the feendes cheyne.

"Job hadde an hevyer fal than I, pardee,  
For he was clumben hyer in richesse,  
And patiently he his adversitee  
Took, as the Byble bere can witnessse.  
And aftirward, God al his hevynesse  
Torned to joie, and so may He do myn  
Whan that it lykith to His myght devyn.

"Lord, as Thee list, right so Thow to me do;  
But evere I hope seur been of that place  
Which that Thy mercy boght us hath unto,  
If that us list for to sue Thy grace.  
A! Lord almighty, in my lyves space,  
Of my gilt graunte Thow me repentance,  
And Thy strook take in greable souffrance.  
"I cowde of youthe han talkid more and told

Than I have doon, but the day passith swythe,  
And eek me lever is by many fold  
Thy greef to knowe which that sit so ny thee.  
Telle on anoon, my goode sone, and hye thee,  
And I shal herknen as thow hast doon me,  
And, as I can, wole I conseille thee."

"Grant mercy, deere fadir, of your speeche.  
Yee han right wel me confortid and esid;  
And hertily I preye yow and byseeche,  
What I first to yow spak, be nat displesid;  
It reewith me if I yow have disesid,  
And meekly yow byseeche I of pardoun,  
Me submittynge unto correccioun.

"I woot wel first, whan that I with yow mette,  
I was ful mad and spak ful rudely.  
Thogh I nat slepte, yit my spirit mette  
Ful angry dremes; thoght ful bysyly  
Vexid my goost so that nothyng wiste I  
What that I to yow spak or what I thoghte,  
But heer and there I myselven soghte.

"I preye yow, deemeth nat that in despyt  
I hadde yow for age or povertie;  
I mente it nat, but I stood in swich plyt  
That it was nothyng likly unto me,  
Thogh yee had knowen al my privetee,  
That yee mighten my greef thus han abregged  
As yee han doon, so sore I was agregged.

"Fadir, as wysly God me save and speede,  
Yee been nat he whom that I wende han fownde;  
Yee been to me ful welcome in this neede.  
I woot wel yee in hy vertu habownde;  
Your wys reed hope I hele shal my wownde;  
My day of helthe is present, as me thynkith;  
Your confort deepe into myn herte synkith.  
"Myn herte seith that your benevolence,  
Of routhe meeved and verray pitee  
Of my wo, dooth his peyne and diligence  
Me to releeve of myn infirmittee.

O, goode fadir, blessid moot yee be,  
That han swich routhe of my woful estat,  
Which wel ny was of helthe desperat.

"But, fadir, thogh ther be dyversitee  
Ful greet betwixt your excellent prudence  
And the folie that regneth in me,  
Yit, God it woot, ful litil difference  
Is ther betwixt the hete and the fervence  
Of love which to agid folk yee have  
And myn, althogh yee deeme I hem deprave.

"For if that I the soothe shal confesse,  
The lak of olde mennes cherisshynge  
Is cause and ground of al myn hevynesse  
And encheson of my woful mournynge.  
That shal yee knowe, if it be your lykyng  
The cause wite of myn adversitee."  
"Yis, telle on in the name of Cryst," seide he.

"Sauf first, or thow any ferther proceede,  
O thyng of thee wite wolde I, my sone:  
Wher dwellist thou?" "Fadir, withouten dreede,  
In the office of the Privee Seel I wone  
And wryte - there is my custume and wone  
Unto the Seel, and have twenti yeer  
And foure come Estren, and that is neer."

"Now sikir, sone, that is a fair tyme;  
The tokne is good of thy continuance.  
Come hidir, goode, and sitte adoun heer by me,  
For I moot reste a whyle; it is penance  
To me thus longe walke - it dooth nusance  
Unto my crookid, feeble lymes olde,  
That been so stif, unnethe I may hem folde."  
Whan I was set adoun as he me preide,  
"Telle on," seide he, "how is it with thee, how?"  
And I began my tale and thus I seide:  
"My lige lord, the kyng which that is now,  
I fynde to me gracious ynow;  
God yilde him, he hath for my long servyse  
Guerdouned me in covenable wyse.



"In th'eschequeer, he of his special grace  
Hath to me grauntid an annuitee  
Of twenti mark whyle I have lyves space.  
Mighte I ay payd been of that duetee,  
It sholde stonde wel ynow with me;  
But paiement is hard to gete adayes,  
And that me putte in many foule affrayes.

"It gooth ful streite and sharpe or I it have.  
If I seur were of it be satisfied  
Fro yeer to yeer, thanne, so God me save,  
My deepe-rootid greef were remedied  
Souffissantly. But how I shal be gyed  
Heeraftir, whan that I no lenger serve -  
This hevyyeth me so that I wel ny sterve.

"For syn that I now in myn age greene,  
And beynge in court, with greet peyne unnethe  
Am paid, in elde and out of court, I weene,  
My purs for that may be a ferthyng shethe;  
Lo, fadir myn, this dullith me to dethe.  
Now God helpe al, for but he me socoure,  
My future yeeres lyk been to be soure."

"Service, I woot wel, is noon heritage;  
Whan I am out of court anothir day,  
As I moot whan upon me hastith age  
And that no lenger I laboure may,  
Unto my poore cote, it is no nay,  
I moot me drawe and my fortune abyde,  
And suffre storm aftir the mery tyde.  
"Ther preeve I shal the mutabilitee  
Of this wrecchid worldes affeccion,  
Which, whan that youthe is past, begynneth flee.  
Frendshipe, adieu! Farwel, dileccion!  
Age is put out of your proteccion;  
His look unlusty and his inpotence  
Qwenchith your love and your benevolence.

"That aftirclap in my mynde so deepe  
Yficchid is, and hath swich roote ycaught,

That al my joie and mirthe is leid to sleepe;  
My ship is wel ny with despeir yfraght.  
They that nat konne lerned be ne taght  
By swiche ensamples smerte as they han seen,  
Me thynkith certes over blynde been.

"Allas! I see routhe and pitee exylid  
Out of this land. Allas, compassioun!  
Whan shul yee thre to us be reconsyld?  
Your absence is my grevous passioun;  
Resorte, I preye yow, to this regioun;  
O, come ageyn! The lak of your presence  
Manaceth me to sterve in indigence.

"O fikil world, allas thy variance!  
How many a gentil man may men now see  
That whilom in the werres olde of France  
Honored were and holde in greet cheertee  
For hir prowesse in armes, and plentee  
Of freendes hadde in youthe, and now, for shame,  
Allas, hir frendshipe is crookid and lame!

"Now age unourne away puttith favour  
That flourey youthe in his seson conquerde;  
Now al forgote is the manly labour  
Thurgh which ful ofte they hir foos aferde.  
Now been tho worthy men bet with the yerde  
Of neede, allas, and noon hath of hem routhe;  
Pitee I trowe is biried, by my trouthe.

"If shee be deed, God have hir soule, I preye,  
And so shal mo heeraftir preye, I trowe.  
He that pretendith him of moost nobleye,  
If he hir lakke, shal wel wite and knowe  
That crueltee hir fo may but a throwe  
Him suffre for to lyve in any welthe;  
Herte pitous to body and soule is helthe.

"Yee olde men of armes, that han knowe  
By sight and by report hir worthynesse,  
Lat nat mescheef tho men thus overthrowe;  
Kythe upon hem your manly gentillesse.  
Yee yonge men that entre into prowesse

Of armes eek, youre fadres olde honourith;  
Helpe hem yourself, or sum good hem procurith.

"Knyghthode, awake! Thow sleepist to longe;  
Thy brothir, see, ny dieth for mescheef;  
Awake and reewe upon his peynes stronge.  
If thow heeraftir come unto swich preef,  
Thow wilt ful sore thriste aftir releef;  
Thow art nat seur what that thee shal befalle.  
Welthe is ful slipir; be waar lest thow falle.

"Thow that yclomben art in hy honoures,  
And hast this worldes welthe at thy devys,  
And bathist now in youthes lusty floures;  
Be waar, rede I, thow standist on the ys.  
It hath been seen, as weleful and as wys  
As thow han slide; and thow that no pitee  
On othir folk hast, who shal reewe on thee?

"Leeve me wel, ther is noon eerthely man  
That hath so stable a welthe but that it  
May faille, do he what that he do can.  
God as him list visitith folk and smit;  
Wherfore I deeme and holde it grace and wit  
In hy estat, man God and himself knowe,  
And releeve hem that mescheef hath doun throwe.  
"God wole that the needy be releved;  
It is oon of the werkis of mercy.  
And syn tho men that been in armes preeved  
Been into povert falle, treewely  
Yee men of armes oghten specially  
Helpe hem. Allas! han yee no pitous blood  
That may yow stire for to doon hem good?

"O now in earnest, deere fadir myn,  
Thise worthy men to me the mirour shewe  
Of slipir frendshipe, and unto what fyn  
I drawe shal withyn a yeeres fewe.  
Upon this woful thoght I hakke and hewe  
And muse so that unto lyte I madde,  
And lever die than lyven I hadde.

"In feith, fadir, my lyflode, besyde  
Th'annuite of which above I tolde,  
May nat exceede yeerly in no tyde  
Six marc. That sit to myn herte so colde,  
Whan that I looke abouten and beholde  
How scars it is, if that that othir faille,  
That I nat glade can but mourne and waille.

"And as ferfoorth as I can deeme or gesse,  
Whan I at hoom dwelle in my poore cote,  
I fynde shal as freendly slipirnesse  
As tho men now doon, whos frendshipe is rote.  
Nat wolde I rekke as mochil as a mote,  
Thogh I no more hadde of yeerly encrees,  
So that I mighte ay payed be doutlees.

"Two parties of my lyf and mochil more  
I seur am past been - I ne doute it noght;  
And if that I sholde in my yeeres hore  
Forgo my duetee that I have boght  
With my flessch and my blood, that hevy thoght,  
Which I drede ay shal falle as I it thynke,  
Me hastith blyve unto my pittes brynke.  
Faylynge, fadir, myn annuitee,  
Foot-hoot in me creepith disese and wo,  
For they that han byfore knowen me,  
Faylynge good, me faille wole also.  
Who no good hath is fer his freendes fro.  
In muk is al this worldes freendlyhede;  
My goost is wrappid in an hevy drede.

"If that I hadde of custume or this tyme  
Lyved in indigences wrecchidnesse,  
The lesse heeraftir sholde it sit by me;  
But in myn age wrastle with hardnesse,  
That with him stroglid nevere in the grennesse  
Of youthe - that mutacion and change  
Anothir day me seeme sholde al straunge.

"He that nevere kneew the swetnesse of wele,  
Thogh he it lakke ay, lesse him greeve it shal  
Than him that hath been welthy yeeres fele,

And in effect hath felt no greef at al.  
O povert, God me sheelde fro thy fal!  
O deeth! Thy strook yit is more agreable  
To me than lyve a lyf so miserable.

"Six marc yeerly and no more than that,  
Fadir, to me me thynkith is ful lyte,  
Considerynge how that I am nat  
In housbondrye lerned worth a myte;  
Scarsely kowde I charre away the kyte  
That me byreve wolde my pullaille,  
And more axith housbondly governaille.

"With plow can I nat medlen ne with harwe,  
Ne woot nat what lond good is for what corn,  
And for to lade a cart or fille a barwe,  
To which I nevere usid was toforn;  
My bak unbuxum hath swich thyng forsworn,  
At instaunce of wrytynge, his werreyour,  
That stowpynge hath him spilt with his labour.

"Many men, fadir, weenen that wrytynge  
No travaille is; they holde it but a game;  
Aart hath no fo but swich folk unkonnynge.  
But whoso list desporte him in that same,  
Let him continue and he shal fynde it game;  
It is wel gretter labour than it seemeth;  
The blynde man of colours al wrong deemeth.

"A wryter moot thre thynges to him knytte,  
And in tho may be no disseverance:  
Mynde, ye, and hand - noon may from othir flitte,  
But in hem moot be joynt continuance;  
The mynde al hool, withouten variance,  
On ye and hand awayte moot alway,  
And they two eek on him, it is no nay.

"Whoso shal wryte, may nat holde a tale  
With him and him, ne synge this ne that;  
But al his wittes hoole, grete and smale,  
Ther muste appeere and holden hem therat;  
And syn he speke may ne synge nat,  
But bothe two he needes moot forbere,

His labour to him is the elengere.

"Thise artificers see I day by day,  
In the hootteste of al hir bysynesse,  
Talken and synge and make game and play,  
And foorth hir labour passith with gladnesse;  
But we laboure in travaillous stilnesse;  
We stowpe and stare upon the sheepes skyn,  
And keepe moot our song and wordes yn.

"Wrytyng also dooth grete annoyes thre,  
Of which ful fewe folkes taken heede  
Sauf we ourself, and thise, lo, they be:  
Stommak is oon, whom stowpynge out of dreede  
Annoyeth sore; and to our bakkes neede  
Moot it be grevous; and the thridde oure yen  
Upon the whyte mochil sorwe dryen.

"What man that three and twenti yeer and more  
In wrytynge hath continued, as have I,  
I dar wel seyn, it smertith him ful sore  
In every veyne and place of his body;  
And yen moost it greeveth, treewely,  
Of any craft that man can ymagyne.  
Fadir, in feith, it spilt hath wel ny myne.

"Lo, fadir, told have I yow the substance  
Of al my greef, so as that I can telle.  
But wel I woot it hath been greet penance  
To yow with me so longe for to dwelle;  
I am right sikir it hath been an helle  
Yow for to herkne me thus jangle and clappe,  
So lewdly in my termes I me wrappe.

"But, nathelees, truste I your pacience  
Receyve wole in gree my wordes alle,  
And what misseid I have of negligence,  
Yee wole it lete asyde slippe and falle.  
My fadir deere, unto your grace I calle;  
Yee woot my greef; now redith me the beste,  
Withouten whom my goost can have no reste."

"Now, sone myn, hastow al seid and spoke

That thee good lykith?" "Yee, fadir, as now."  
"Sone, if aght in thyn herte elles be loke,  
Unloke it blyve. Come of, what seistow?"  
"Fadir, I can no more telle yow  
Than I before spoken have and said."  
"A Goddes half, sone, I am wel apaid.

"Conceyved have I that thow greet fere haast  
Of povert for to fallen in the snare;  
Thow haast therynne caght so deep a taast  
That of al joie thow art voide and bare.  
Thow ny despeired art of al welfare,  
And the strook of povert art thow fer fro;  
For shame, why makist thow al this wo?  
"I putte cas, as God therfro thee keepe,  
Thow were yfalle in indigent povert.  
Sholdest thow grucche and thyn annoy byweepe?  
Nay, be thow ryche or poore, or seek or qwert,  
God thanke alway of thyn ese and thy smert;  
Pryde thee nat for no prosperitee,  
Ne hevye thee for noon adversitee.

"Povert hath in himself ynow grevance  
Withouten that that man him more purchase;  
Whoso it takth in pacient souffrance,  
It is ful plesant befor Crystes face;  
And whoso grucchith, forfeitth that grace  
That he sholde han if that his pacience  
Withstood the greef and made it resistance.

"My sone, as witnessith Holy Scripture,  
Discreet and honest povert many fold  
Commendid is. Cryst Himself, I thee ensure,  
To love and teche and prechen it hath wold;  
He dide al this. Be thow nevere so bold  
Ageyn povert heeraftir grucche, I rede;  
For ferthermore, in Holy Writ I rede:

"Beholde the lyf of our Sauveour,  
Right fro the tyme of His nativitee  
Unto His deeth, as that seith myn auctour,  
And tokne in it shalt thow noon fynde or se

But of povert with which content was He.  
Is man bettre than God? Shal man eschue  
Swich lyf, syn God that same wolde ay sue?

"Fy! It is to greet an abusioun  
To seen a man that is but wormes mete  
Desire ryche and greet possessioun,  
Wheras our lord God wolde Him entremete  
Of no richesse - He deyned it nat gete;  
He lyved poorely and povert chees,  
That mighte han been ful ryche, it is no lees.  
"The poore man sleepith ful sikirly  
On nyghtes, thogh his dore be nat shit,  
Whereas the riche abedde bysyly  
Castith and ymagyneth in his wit  
That necessarie unto him is it  
Barres and lokkes stronge for to have,  
His good from theeves for to keepe and save.

"And whan the deed sleep fallith atte laste  
On him, he dremeth theeves comen yn  
And on his cofres knokke and leye on faste;  
And some hem pyke with a sotil gyn,  
And up is broken lok, hasp, barre, and pyn,  
And in the hand gooth, and the bagge out takith,  
For sorwe of which, out of his sleep he wakith;

"And up he rysith, foot and hand tremblynge,  
As that assaillid him the palesie,  
And at a stirt, withouten tarynge,  
Unto his cofre he dressith him in hye;  
Or he ther come, he is in poynt to dye;  
He it undooth and opneth for to se  
If that his false goddes therin be.

"He dredith fynde it as that he hath drempt.  
This worldes power and ryche habundance  
Of drede of peril nevere been exempt,  
But in povert is ay sikir constance;  
Who holdith him content hath souffissance.  
And, sone, by my reed thow shalt do so,  
And by desir of good nat sette a slo.



"Wilful povert in princes ancien  
So ferfoorth was that they desired more  
Good loos than good, but now adayes men  
Yerne and desyren aftir muk so sore  
That they good fame han leid a watir yore,  
And rekken nevere how longe it ther stepe  
Or thogh it drenche, so they good may grepe.

"Of Sysile whilom ther was a kyng  
With eerthen vessel served at his table,  
And men wondrynge faste upon this thyng  
Seide unto him, it was nat honorable  
To his estat, ne nothyng commendable,  
Axyng him why him list be served so;  
To which demande he answerde tho:

"He seide, 'Thogh I kyng be of Sysile,  
A potter was my fadir, it is no nay.  
How longe I shal enduren or what while  
In my prosperitee, nat knowe I may.  
Fortunes variaunce I drede alway;  
Right as shee made me to clymbe on highte,  
Sodeynly so shee may me make alighte.

"I thynke alway of my nativitee,  
And of my poore lenage and my blood;  
Eerthen vessel to swich a man as me  
Ful sitting is and acceptable and good.'  
O fewe been ther now left of the brood  
That he cam of - he loved bet profyt  
Commun than his avantage or delyt.

"How seistow by Affrican Scipion -  
Affrican clept for that he Affrik wan?  
To povert hadde he swich affecion  
Of his owne free wil and lust, that whan  
He dyde, no good had this worthy man  
Wherwith his body upon eerthe brynge,  
But the commun cost made his enterynge.

"Beforn the senat was he bore on honde,  
Ones aftir he Affrik wonnen hadde,

That he was ryche, as they cowde undirstonde,  
Of gold, to which with wordes sobre and sadde  
Answerde he thus: 'Thogh I be feeble and badde,  
The soothe is, unto your subjeccioun  
I gat Affrik, of that have I renoun.  
"My name was al that I there gat;  
To wyne honour was oonly the purpoos  
Which that I took or that I cam therat.  
Othir good had I noon than ryche loos;  
For al the good ther was open or cloos,  
Myn herte mighte nat so wel contente  
As the renoun oonly that I ther hente.

"Of covetyse he was nothyng coupable;  
He sette nat therby, thow maist wel se.  
Fy on the greedynesse insaciabie  
Of many a man that can nat content be  
Of muk, althogh nevere so moche have he!  
The kynde is evere of wrecchid covetyse  
To coveite ay and have and nat souffyse.

"I wolde every knyght dide now the same,  
And were of good no more coveitous  
Than he was. What! To gete a noble fame  
To knyghthode is tresor moost precious;  
But I was nevere so adventurous  
Renoun to wyne by swerdes conquest,  
For I was bred in a peisible nest.

"Upon my bak cam nevere haburgeon,  
Ne my knyf drow I nevere in violence.  
I may nat countrefete Scipion  
In armes, ne his worthy excellence  
Of wilful povert, but of indigence  
I am as ryche as was evere any man;  
Suffre it in pacience if that I can.

"No rycher man am I than thow maist see.  
Of myne have I nothyng to take to;  
I lyve of almesse. If it stood with thee  
So streite and lyvedest as that I do,  
I see thow woldest sorwe swiche two

As I; but thow hast for to lyven oon  
A poore lyf, and swich ne have I noon.  
"Salomon gaf conseil men sholden preye  
Two thynges unto God in soothfastnesse.  
Now herkne, sone, he bad men thus to seye:  
'Enhance thow me, Lord, to no richesse,  
Ne by miserie me so sore oppresse  
That neede for to begge me compelle' -  
In his proverbes thus, lo, can he telle.

"But this povert mene conseillid he  
Men to desire that was necessarie  
To foode and clothe, dredynge lest plentee  
Of good hem mighte make to miscarie  
And fro the knowlechyng of God to varie,  
And lest smert neede made hem God reneye.  
Now be waar, sone, lest that thow foleye.

"Sone, in this mene povert holde I thee,  
Sauf that thow canst nat taken it ful weel.  
What thogh thow leese thyn annuitee?  
Yit maistow lyven on that othir deel,  
Thogh nat ful delicat shal be thy meel.  
Of six marc yeerly, mete and drynke and clooth  
Thow gete maist, my chyld, withouten ooth."

"Yee, fadir myn, I am nat so parfyt  
To take it so; I have had habundance  
Of welfare ay, and now stonde in the plyt  
Of scarsetee. It were a greet penance  
For me - God sheelde me fro that streit chance.  
Six marc yeerly to scars is to susteene  
The charges that I have, as that I weene.

"Tow on my distaf have I for to spynne  
More, my fadir, than yee woot of yit,  
Which yee shul knowe or that I fro yow twynne,  
If your good lust be for to heeren it.  
But for as moche as it nat to me sit  
Your tale for to interrupte or breke,  
Heeraftir to yow wole I therof speke.  
"Yit o word, fadir. I have herd men seyn,

Whoso no good hath, that he can no good;  
And that fynde I a plat soothe and a pleyn.  
For althogh that myn heed undir myn hood  
Was nevere wys, yit whyl it with me stood  
So that I hadde silver resonable,  
My lytil wit was sumwhat covenable.

"But now, for that I have a large lyte,  
And likly am heeraftir to han lesse,  
My dul wit can to me nothyng profyte;  
I am so drad of moneyes scantnesse  
That myn herte is al nakid of lightnesse.  
Wisseth me how to gete a golden salve  
And what I have I wole it with yow halve."

"Sone, as for me, neithir avaunte ne rere  
But if disese algates shal betyde,  
For to be pacient rede I thow lere;  
For anythyng, withholde hir on thy syde.  
My reed wole it nat, sone, fro thee hyde.  
Make of necessitee, rede I, vertu,  
For better reed can I noon, by Jhesu.

"My sone, they that swymmen in richesse  
Continuelly, and han prosperitee,  
And nevere han felt but weleful swetnesse,  
Unscourgid ay of any adversitee,  
Lest God forgete hem, oghten ferdful be,  
Syn God in Holy Writ seith in this wyse:  
'Whomso I love, him wole I chastyse.'

"Seint Ambroses legende seith how he  
Ones to Romeward took his viage;  
And in Tuscie toward that contree  
With a ryche oost he took his herbergage.  
Of whom, as blyve faire in his langage,  
Of his estat enqueren he bygan,  
And unto that answerde anoon this man:  
"Right at my lust have I al worldly welthe;  
Myn estat hath been ay good, and yit is;  
Richesse have I, frendshipe, and bodyes helthe;  
Was nevere thyng me happid yit amis.'

And Seint Ambrose, astoned sore of this,  
Anoon right rownded to his conpaignie,  
'Sires, it is tyme that we hens hie.

"I am adrad God is nat in this place;  
Ga we faste hennes, lest that His vengeance  
Falle on us.' And withynne a litil space,  
Aftir they were agoon, shoop this meschance:  
The ground claf and made disseverance,  
And in sank man, womman, chyld, hous, and al  
That to him appartened, grete and smal.

"Whan this cam to Ambroses audience,  
He seide to his felawshipe thus:  
'Lo, brethren, seeth heere in experience  
How merciably our lord Jhesus,  
Of His benigne grace, hath sparid us.  
He sparith hem that unwelthy heere been,  
And to the welthy dooth as that yee seen.'

"This lyf, my sone, is but a chirie feire;  
Worldly richesse, have ay in thy memorie,  
Shal passe, al looke it nevere on men so feire.  
Whyl thow art heere in this world transitorie,  
Enable thee to wynne eternal glorie,  
Wher no povert is but parfyt richesse  
Of joie and blisse and vertuouse gladnesse.

"O thyng telle I thee, sone, that is sooth:  
Thogh o man hadde as moche as men han alle,  
But vertu that good gye, al he misdooth;  
Al that swetnesse torne shal to galle.  
Whan that richesse is on a man yfalle,  
If it be wrong despendid or miskept,  
Anothir day ful sore it shal be wept.  
"Sum ryche is large and his good misdespendith  
In maintenance of synne and harlotrie -  
To swiche despenses his lust him accendith;  
And on that othir part, his nygardrie  
Suffrith his neighbour by him sterve and die,  
Rather than with a ferthyng him releeve.  
Tho two condicions been to repreeve.

"Whoso moost hath, he moost of shal answere;  
O day shal come, sum men shal par chance  
Desire he nevere hadde been rychere  
Than heer han hadde his bare sustenance.  
Whan the day comth of ire and of vengeance,  
Than shal men seeme how in this world, I gesse,  
Richesse is povert and povert richesse.

"Whyler, my sone, tolde I nat to thee  
What habundance in yowthe I hadde of good?  
And how me blente so prosperitee  
That what God was I nothyng undirstood?  
But ay whil that I in my welthe stood,  
Aftir my fleshly lust my lyf I ledde,  
And of His wreche nothyng I me dredde.

"And as I seide, He smoot me with the strook  
Of povert, in which I continue yit,  
Whos smert my good blood first so sore sook,  
Or that I was aqweyntid wel with it,  
That ny it hadde reft fro me my wit.  
But sythen, thanke I God, in pacience  
I have it take and shal for myn offense.

"If thee list flee that may povert engendre,  
First synne eschue and God honure and drede.  
Also, for thy lyflode is scars and sclendre,  
Despende nat to largely, I rede.  
Mesure is good, let hir thee gye and lede;  
Be waar of outrage, and be sobre and wys;  
Thus thow exclude him shalt, by myn avys.  
"Nathelees, thow maist ageyn me replie:  
'To sum folk, thogh they doon al as I seye,  
Ageyn povert it is no remedie;  
They mowe it nat eschue by no weye.'  
I graunte wel, but than take heede, I preye.  
The jugementz of God been to us hid;  
Take alle in gree, so is thy vertu kid.

"To the plesaunce of God thow thee conforme;  
Aboute that be bisy and ententyf.

That thow misdoon hast, thow blyve it reforme;  
Swich laborer thee kythe heere in this lyf  
That God thy soule, which that is His wyf,  
Rejoise may for it is to Him due,  
And His shal be but thow the devors sue.

"O thow Fortune, fals and deceyvable,  
Ful sooth is it, if thow do a good deede,  
Thow nat purposist it shal be durable;  
Of good entente shal it nat procede.  
Wel oghte us thy promesses blynde dreede.  
He slipirly stant whom that thow enhauncest,  
For sodeynliche thow him disavauncest.

"Hadde I doon, sone, as I thee consaille  
Whan that Fortunes deceyvable cheere  
Lawhid on me, than hadde I nat, sanz faille,  
Been in this wrecchid plyt as thow seest heere.  
Nat kneew my youthe hir changeable maneere,  
For whan I sat on hy upon hir wheel,  
Hir gladsum look me made truste hir weel.

"I cowde for nothyng han wend or deemed  
That shee aboute baar double visage;  
I wende shee had been swich as shee seemed.  
But nathelees yit is it avantage  
To him that woful is, that hir usage  
Is for to flitte fro place to place;  
Hir variaunce is unto sum folk grace.

"Whomso that neede greeveth and travaillith,  
Hir chaunge is unto him no greef or wo;  
But the contrarie of that nothyng availlith,  
As whan a man is wel put him therfro.  
What shal man calle hir? Freend or elles fo?  
I not, but calle hir freend whan that shee esith,  
And calle hir fo whan that shee man displesith.

"But whoso calle hir shal a sikir name,  
Men moot hir clepe my lady changeable,  
For hardily shee is that selve same.  
A, nay, I gabbe! I am unresonable.  
Shee is my lady stidefast and stable,

For I endure in povertes distresse  
And shee nat list remue my duresse.

"I ymagyne why that nat hir list  
With me now dele; age is cold and drie,  
And whan tho two been to a lady wist,  
And that I poore am eek for the maistrie,  
Swich a man is unlusty to hir ye,  
And wers to grope - straw for inpotence!  
Shee loveth yong folk and large of despense.

"Al this that I have of Fortune seid  
Is but a jape, as who seith, or a knak.  
Now I a whyle bourded have and pleid,  
Resorte I wole to that I first spak.  
Beholde and caste thow thyn ye abak;  
What thow God hast agilt in tyme past,  
Correcte it and to do so eft be gast.

"Of Holy Chirche, my sone, I conceyve  
As yit ne hast thow noon advancement.  
Yee courteours, ful often yee deceyve  
Youre soules for the desirous talent  
Yee han to good; and for that thow art brent  
With covetyse now, par aventure,  
Only for muk thow yernest soules cure.  
"Ful many men knowe I that gane and gape  
Aftir sum fat and ryche benefice;  
Chirche or provendre unnethe hem may eschape  
But they as blyve it henten up and tryce.  
God graunte they accepte hem for the office  
And nat for the profyt that by hem hongith,  
For that conceit nat to presthode longith.

"A dayes now, my sone, as men may see,  
O chirche unto o man may nat souffyse;  
But algate he moot han pluralitee,  
Elles he can nat lyven in no wyse.  
Ententyfly he keepith his service  
In court; his labour there shal nat moule;  
But to his cure looketh he ful foule.



"Thogh that his chauncel roof be al totorn  
And on the hy auter it reyne or sneewe,  
He rekkith nat, the cost may be forborn  
Crystes hous to repeire or make neewe;  
And thogh ther be ful many a vicious heewe  
Undir his cure, he takth of it no keep;  
He rekkith nevere how rusty been his sheep.

"The oynement of holy sermonyng  
Him looth is upon hem for to despende.  
Sum person is so thredbare of konnyng  
That he can nagh, thogh he him wys pretende;  
And he that can may nat his herte bende  
Therto, but from his cure he him absentith,  
And what therof comth, greedyliche he hentith.

"How he despendith it, be as be may,  
For unto that am I nothyng pryvee;  
But wel I woot, as nyce, fressh, and gay  
Some of hem been as borel folkes be,  
And that unsittyng is to hir degree;  
Hem owith to be mirours of sadnesse,  
And weyve jolitee and wantonnesse.  
"But nathelees, I woot wel therageyn,  
That many of hem gye hem as hem oghte,  
And elles were it greet pitee, certeyn.  
But what man wilt thow be, for Him thee boghte?"  
"Fadir, I may nat cheese. I whilom thoghte  
Han been a preest; now past am I the raas."  
"Than art thow, sone, a weddid man, par kaas?"

"Yee soothly, fadir myn, right so I am;  
I gazid longe first and waytid faste  
Aftir sum benefice, and whan noon cam,  
By procees I me weddid atte laste.  
And God it woot, it sore me agaste  
To bynde me, where I was at my large;  
But doon it was, I took on me that charge."

"A sone, I have espyed and now see  
This is the tow that thow speak of right now!"  
"Now by the Rood, fadir, sooth seyn yee."

"Yee, sone myn, thow shalt do wel ynow.  
Whan endid is my tale, than shalt thow  
Be put in swich a way as shal thee plese,  
And to thyn herte do confort and ese.

"So longe as thow, sone, in the Privee Seel  
Dwelt hast and woldest fayn han been avanced  
Unto sum chirche or this, I deeme weel  
That God nat wolde have thee enhanced  
In no swich plyt; I holde thee wel chanced;  
God woot and knowith every hid entente;  
He for thy beste a wyf unto thee sente.

"If that thow haddest par cas been a preest,  
Thow woldest han as wantounly thee gyed  
As dooth the nyceste of hem that thow seest;  
And God forbeede thow thee haddest tyed  
Therto but if thyn herte might han plyed  
For to observe it wel. Be glad and merie;  
That thow art as thow art, God thanke and herie.

"The ordres of preesthode and of wedlok  
Been bothe vertuouse, withouten fable;  
But undirstonde wel, the holy yok  
Of preesthode is, as it is resonable  
That it so be, the more commendable;  
The lesse of hem of meede hath habundance;  
Men han meryt aftir hir governance.

"But how been thy felawes lookid to  
At hoom? Been they nat wel ybeneficed?"  
"Yis, fadir, yis. Ther is oon clept Nemo:  
He helpith hem, by him been they chericed;  
Nere he, they weren poorely chevyced;  
He hem avanceth, he fully hir freend is;  
Sauf oonly him, they han but fewe freendes.

"So many a man as they this many a yeer  
Han writen fore, fynde can they noon  
So gentil or of hir estat so cheer  
That ones list for hem to ryde or goon,  
Ne for hem speke a word, but doumb as stoon  
They standen where hir speeche hem mighte availle,

For swich folk is unlusty to travaille.

"But if a wight have a cause to sue  
To us, sum lordes man shal undirtake  
To sue it out, and that that is us due  
For our labour, him deyneth us nat take;  
He seith his lord to thanke us wole he make;  
It touchith him, it is a man of his,  
Wher the revers of that, God woot, sooth is.

"His lettre he takith and foorth gooth his way,  
And biddith us to douten us nothyng;  
His lord shal thanken us anothis day;  
And if we han to sue to the kyng,  
His lord may there have al his axyng.  
We shul be sped as fer as that our bille  
Wole specifie th'effect of oure wille.

"What shul we do? We dar noon argument  
Make ageyn him, but faire and wel him trete,  
Lest he reporte amis and make us shent;  
To have his wil we suffren him and lete.  
Hard is be holden suspect with the grete;  
His tale shal be leeved but nat ouris,  
And that conclusioun to us ful soure is.

"And whan the mateere is to ende ybrought  
Of the straunger for whom the suyte hath be,  
Than is he to the lord knowen right noght;  
He is to him as unknowen as we;  
The lord nat woot of al this sotiltee,  
Ne we nat dar lete him of it to knowe,  
Lest our conpleynte ourselven overthrowe.

"And wher this bribour hath no peny payed  
In our office, he seith behynde our bak,  
'He payde I not what.' Thus been we betrayed  
And desclaundred, and put in wyt and lak  
Ful giltelees; and eek by swich a knak  
The man for whom the suyte is, is deceyved;  
He weeneth we han of his gold receyved.

"Ful many swiche pursuours ther been

That for us take, and geve us nat a myte;  
This makith us that we may nevere theen.  
Eek whereas lordes bidde hir men us qwyte  
Whan that we for hemself laboure and wryte,  
And been allowed for our paiement,  
Oure handes therof been ful innocent.

"Nat seye I alle lordes men thus do  
That sue unto our court, but many I seye  
Han thus doon ofte. Lo, my fadir, lo!  
Thus bothe our thanke and lucre goon aweye.  
God geve hem sorwe that so with us pleye,  
For we it fynden earnest at the fulle;  
This makith us of our labour to dulle.

"Now, fadir myn, how thynkith yow heerby?  
Suppose yee nat that this sit us sore?"

"Yis, certes, sone; that ful wel woot I.  
Hastow seid, sone? Wilt thow aght seye more?"

"Nay, sire, as now, but ay upon your lore  
I herkne as bisyly as I best can."

"Sone, than lat us speke as we bygan.

"Seye on the soothe, I preye thee hertily,  
What was thy cause why thow took a wyf?  
Was it to gete children lawfully,  
And in clenness to lede thy lyf,  
Or for lust or muk - what was thy motyf?"

"Fadir, nothyng wole I it qweynte make;  
Oonly for love I chees hir to my make."

"Sone, what holdist thow love, I thee preye?  
Thow deemest lust and love convertible,  
Par cas, as whan thee list with thy wyf pleye,  
Thy conceit holdith it good and lisible  
To doon? Artow aght, sone myn, sensible  
In which cas that thow oghtest thee forbere  
And in which nat - canst thow to this answere?"

"Fadir, me thynkith al is good ynow.  
Shee is my wyf - who may therof me lette?"

"Nay, sone, abyde and I shal tellen how,  
If that thow aght by Goddes drede sette.

Three causes been whiche I thee wole unshette  
And opne anoon why thow shalt with hir dele.  
Now herkne, sone, for thy soules hele.

"The firste cause, procreacioun  
Of children, is unto Goddes honour;  
To keepe eek thee fro fornicacioun  
The next is; and the thridde of that labour,  
Yilde thy dette in which thow art dettour  
Unto thy wyf, and othre ententes alle  
Leye hem apart for aght that may befalle.  
"For these causes thow here use must  
And for noon othir, on peyne of deedly synne."  
"Fadir, right now me thoghte how ageyn lust  
Yee heeld and children begoten therynne,  
Where is no lust." "O sone, or that we twynne,  
Thow shalt wel undirstonde how that I  
Nat holde ageynes lust al uttirly.

"I woot wel, leefful lust is necessarie;  
Withouten that may be noon engendrure;  
But use lust for lust oonly, contrarie  
To Goddes heestes is; for I th'ensure,  
Thogh thow take of it litil heede or cure,  
A man may with his wyf do leccherie;  
Th'entente is al; be waar ay of folie.

"Weddid folk many leden holy lyf,  
For thogh hir flesshly lustes hem assaille  
And stire hem often, the man to the wyf  
And shee to him, they maken swich bataille  
And stryf ageyn hir flessh that he shal faille  
Of his purpos. But some folk as beestes  
Hir lust ay folwen - in hem noon areest is.

"Adayes now there is swich governance  
Among hem that han paramours and wyves  
That, for lust of hir wommen and plesance,  
Nat souffyse hem metes restauratives,  
But they receyven eek provocatives  
To engendre hem lust, feyntynge hir nature,  
And swich thyng causith hastyf sepulture.

"This knowe I sooth is, and kneew fern agoon;  
And they that so doon hyly God offende.  
Swich folk holde I homicydes echoon;  
They sleen hemself or God deeth to hem sende.  
My sone, on Goddes half, I thee deffende  
Swiche medecynes that thou nat receyve,  
Syn they God wratthe and soule of man deceyve.  
"Passe over this. Thou seidest th'enchousoun  
Why that thou took upon thee mariage  
Was unto noon othir entencioun  
But love oonly thee sente that corage.  
Now, sone myn, I am a man of age,  
And many weddid couples have I knowe -  
Noon of myn age, many mo, I trowe -

"But I ne saw ne I ne espyde nevere,  
As longe as that I have lyved yit,  
The love of hem departen or dissevere  
That for good love bownden were and knyght;  
God loveth love and He wole forthere it.  
At long rennyng love best shal preeve;  
Thus hath it been and ay shal, I byleeve.

"But they that marien hem for muk and good  
Oonly, and nat for love of the persone,  
Nat have I wist they any whyle stood  
In reste, but of stryf is ther swich wone,  
As for the more part, twixt hem echone,  
That al hir lyf they lede in hevynesse;  
Swich is the fruyt to wedde for richesse.

"Among the ryche also is an usage:  
Eche of hem his chyld unto othres wedde,  
Thogh they be al to yong and tendre of age,  
Nowher ny rype ynow to go to bedde;  
And hir conceit in love is leid to wedde -  
Men wite it wel, it is no questioun -  
Til yeeres come of hir discrecioun.

"And whan they han the knowleche of resoun,  
Than may they neithir fynden in hir herte

To loven othir; al out of sesoun  
They knyht been that into wedlok so sterte;  
This makith many a couple for to smerte.  
O covetyse, thyn is al the gilt  
Of this, and mo deceyve yit thow wilt!  
"Also they that for lust cheesen hir make  
Oonly, as othirwhyle it is usage,  
Wayte wel whan hir lust is overshake,  
And therwith wole hir loves hete asswage.  
Thanne is to hem an helle hir mariage;  
Than they desyren for to been unknyt,  
And to that ende studie in al hir wit.

"Styntyng cause, th'effect styntith eek;  
No lenger forster, no lenger lemman;  
Love on lust growndid is nat worth a leek.  
But who for vertu weddith a womman,  
And neithir for muk ne for lust, that man  
The forme due of matrymoyne sueth,  
And soules hurt and bodyes grief eschueth.

"I dar nat medle of lordes mariages -  
How they hem knyhten, hir makes unseen.  
But as to me, it seemeth swiche usage is  
Nat worth a straw, for also moot I theen,  
Reportes nat so sikir juges been  
As man to see the wommannes persone.  
In swich a choys let man himself allone.

"Weddyng at hoom in this land holsum were,  
So that a man him wedde duely.  
To see the flessch first it may nothyng dere,  
And him avyse how him lykith therby  
Or he be knyht - lo! this conceit have I.  
In this mateere depper cowde I go,  
But passe I wole and slippe away therfro.

"Now sythen thow hast, to my jugement,  
Thee married unto Goddes plesance,  
Be a treewe housbonde as by myn assent;  
Keepe thy bond, be waar of th'encombrance  
Of the feend which, with many a circumstance

Ful sly, him castith thee wrappe in and wrie  
To stire thee for to doon advourie.  
"Advourie and perjurie and wilful slaghtre,  
The book seith, lyk been and o peys they weye. 5  
Waar advourie, it is no play or laghtre  
To doon it. Flee also thise othir tweye,  
For thus woot I wel Seint Jerom can seye:  
'In peyne advourie hath the second place.'  
Tho thre to eschue, God thee graunte grace.

"I in the Bible rede how that Abram  
To Egypt wente with his wyf Saray,  
And whan that they ny unto Egypt cam,  
Thus seide he unto his wyf by the way:  
'I woot wel thow art fair, it is no nay;  
Whan they of Egypt see thee, they wole seye,  
"Thow art his wyf," and for thee do me deye.

"They wolen kille me and thee reserve;  
Forthy unto hem seye, I thee byseeche,  
Thow art my suster, lest I for thee sterve;  
Thus may I wel been esid by thy speeche;  
And thus thow mayst lengthe my lyf and eeche.'  
And whan they into Egypt entred were,  
Th'Egipcians faste byheelden here,

"And of hir beautee maden they report  
To Pharao, and shee as blyve is take  
Into his hous, and doon is greet confort  
Unto Abram for this wommannes sake,  
And greet desport and cheere men hem make.  
But for Saray grevously Pharao  
Punysshid was and eek his hous therto.

"Pharao clepte Abram and him abreide:  
'What is it that thow hast doon unto me?  
Why naddist thow told unto me,' he seide,  
'How that this womman wyf was unto thee?  
For what encheson seidist thow,' quod he,  
'Shee was thy suster? Take thy wyf heere'  
Quod he, 'and bothe go your way in feere.'



"The Bible makith no manere of mynde  
Whethir that Pharao lay by hir aght,  
But looke in Lyre and there shalt thow fynde  
For to han doon it was he in ful thoght;  
But God preserved hir; he mighte noght.  
And syn for wil God him punysshid so,  
How shal the dede unpunysshid go?

"Also nat kneew he that a wyf shee was.  
Now thanne, they that wyves wityngly  
Taken and holde and with hem doon trespas  
Stonde in hard plyt. Sone, be waar, rede I,  
If thow therynne agilte, eternelly  
Thow smerte shalt, and in this lyf present  
Han sharp adversitee and greet torment.

"And to Abymalech God bad he sholde  
Yilde Sara also to hir housbonde,  
For he and his echone, if he ne wolde,  
Sholden be deed, he dide him undirstonde.  
Take heede, o sone, that thow cleere ay stonde,  
For God stoppid eek the concepcioun  
Of every womman of his mansioun.

"Ne that shee was a wyf wiste he nothyng  
Ne nat here kneew in no fleshly folie.  
My goode sone, rede of David kyng,  
How he took Bersabee, wyf of Urie,  
Into his hous and dide advoutrie;  
And how he made Urie slayn to be,  
And how therefore punysshid was he.

"How was the tribe also of Benjamyn  
Punysshid and put to destruccion  
For advoutrie which they lyved yn,  
In the abhominable oppression  
Of the Levytes wyf? Lo, mencion  
Therof is maad, if thow looke Holy Writ:  
In Judicum ful redily it sit.

"Whoso lyth with his neigheburghes wyf  
Is cursid, and who is an advoutour

The kyngdam faille shal of endles lyf;  
Of that ne shal he be no possessour.  
Allas, this likerous, dampnable errour  
In this lond hath so large a threde ysponne  
That werse peple is noon undir the sonne.

"Of swiche stories cowde I telle an heep,  
But I suppose thise shul souffyse,  
And forthy, sone, wole I make a leep  
From hem and go wole I to the empryse  
That I first took. If thow thee wel avyse,  
Whanne I thee mette and sy thyn hevynesse,  
Of confort, sone, made I thee promesse.

"And of a treewe man, byheeste is dette."  
"Fadir, God yilde it yow, and so yee diden;  
Yee highten me in ese me to sette."  
"Now, sone, and thogh I longe have abiden,  
Thy greef is nat out of my mynde sliden;  
To thy grevance wole I now resorte,  
And shewe thee how thow thee shalt conforte.

"In short, this is of thy greef enchesoun:  
Of thyn annuitee the paiement,  
Which for thy long service is thy guerdoun,  
Thow dreddist, whan thow art from court absent,  
Shal be restreyned, syn thow now present  
Unnethes maist it gete, it is so streit -  
Thus undirstood I, sone, thy conceit.

"For of thy lyflode is it the substance -  
Is it nat thus?" "Yis soothly, fadir, it."  
"Now, sone, to remedie this grevance,  
Canstow no weyes fynden in thy wit?"  
"No certes, fadir, nevere kowde I yit."  
"May no lordshipe, sone, thee availle  
For al thy long service and thy travaille?"

"What, fadir, what? Lordes han for to doone  
So moche for hemself that my mateere  
Out of hir mynde slippith away soone.  
The world is nat swich now, my fadir deere,

As yee han seen. Farwel, freendly maneere!  
So God me amende, I am al destitut  
Of my lyflode. God be my refut.

"I am unto so streit a poynt ydryve,  
Of thre conclusions moot I cheese oon:  
Or begge, or stele, or sterve; I am yshryve  
So ny that othir way ne see I noon;  
Myn herte is also deed as is a stoon;  
Nay, there I faille; a stoon nothyng ne feelith,  
But thoght me brenneth and freesyngly keelith.

"To begge, shame is myn impediment;  
I woot wel rather sholde I dye and sterve;  
And stelthes guerdoun is swich paiement  
That nevere thynke I his wages disserve.  
Wolde honest deeth come and me overterve  
And of my grave me putte in seisyne,  
To al my greef that were a medecyne."

"What, sone! How now? I see wel smal effect  
Or elles noon my wordes in thee take;  
Outhir ful symple is thyn intellect,  
Or hokirly thow hast hem overshake,  
Or thy goost slept hath. What, my sone, awake!  
Whileer thow seidist thow were of me glad,  
And now it seemeth thow art of me sad.

"I deeme so syn that my long sermoun  
Profitith nagh - it sore me repentith."  
"Fadir, beeth nat of that oppinioun;  
For as yee wole, I do; myn herte assentith.  
But ay among, fadir, thoght me tormentith  
So sharply, and so troublith and despeirith,  
That it my wit foule hyndreth and apeirith."

"O, my good sone, wilt thow yit algate  
Despeired be? Nay, sone, let be that!  
Thow shalt as blyve entre into the gate  
Of thy confort. Now telle on pleyn and plat:  
My lord the Prince, knowith he thee nat?  
If that thow stonde in his benevolence,

He may be salve unto thyn indigence,

"No man bet next his fadir, our lord lige."

"Yis, fadir, he is my good gracious lord."

"Wel, sone, thanne wole I me oblige,  
And God of hevene vouche I to record,  
That if thow wilt be ful of myn accord,  
Thow shalt no cause have more thus to muse,  
But hevynesse voide and it refuse.

"Syn he thy good lord is, I am ful seur  
His grace to thee shal nat be denied.  
Thow woost wel he benigne is and demeur  
To sue unto; nat is his goost maistried  
With daunger, but his herte is ful applied  
To graunte, and nat the needy werne his grace.  
To him pursue and thy releef purchase.

"Conpleyne unto his excellent noblesse,  
As I have herd thee unto me conpleyne,  
And but he qwenche thy greet hevynesse,  
My tonge take and slitte in peces tweyne!  
What, sone myn, for Goddes deere peyne,  
Endite in Frenssh or Latyn thy greef cleer,  
And for to wryte it wel do thy poweer.

"Of alle thre thow oghtest be wel leerid,  
Syn thow so longe in hem laboured haast -  
Thow of the Pryvee Seel art old iyeerid."  
"Yit, fadir, of hem ful smal is my taast."  
"Now, sone, thanne foule hastow in waast  
Despent thy tyme; and nathelees I trowe  
Thow canst do bet than thow wilt do me knowe.

"What shal I calle thee, what is thy name?"  
"Hoccleve, fadir myn, men clepen me."  
"Hoccleve, sone?" "Ywis, fadir, that same."  
"Sone, I have herd or this men speke of thee;  
Thow were aqweyntid with Chaucer, pardee -  
God have his soule, best of any wight!  
Sone, I wole holde thee that I have hight.

"Although thow seye that thow in Latyn

Ne in Frensshe neithir canst but smal endyte,  
In Englissh tonge canstow wel afyn."  
"Fadir, therof can I eek but a lyte."  
"Yee, straw! Let be! Thy penne take and wryte  
As thow canst, and thy sorwe torne shal  
Into gladnesse - I doute it nat at al.

"Syn thow maist nat be payed in th'eschequer,  
Unto my lord the Prince make instance  
That thy patente into the hanaper  
May chaunged be." "Fadir, by your souffrance,  
It may nat so by cause of th'ordenance:  
Longe aftir this shal no graunt chargeable  
Out passe - fadir myn, this is no fable.

"An egal change, my sone, is in soothe  
No charge, I woot it wel ynow in dede.  
What, sone myn, good herte take unto the!  
Men seyn, whoso of every gras hath drede,  
Let him be waar to walke in any mede.  
Assaye, assaye, thow symple hertid goost!  
What grace is shapen thee thow nat ne woost."  
"Fadir, as sikir as that I stande heere,  
Whethir that I be symple or argh or bold,  
Swich an eschange gete I noon to yeere;  
Do as I can with that I have in hold;  
For as for that, my confort is but cold.  
But wel I fynde your good wil alway  
Redy to me in what yee can and may."

"That is sooth, sone. Now syn thow me toldist  
My lord, the Prince, is good lord thee to,  
No maistrie is it for thee if thow woldist  
To be releved. Woost thow what to do?  
Wryte to him a goodly tale or two,  
On which he may desporten him by nyght,  
And his free grace shal upon thee lyght.

"Sharpe thy penne and wryte on lustyly.  
Let see, my sone, make it fressh and gay;  
Owte thyn aart if thow canst craftily;  
His hy prudence hath insighte verray

To jage if it be wel ymaad or nay.  
Wherfore, sone, it is unto thee neede  
Unto thy werk take the gretter heede.

"But of o thyng be wel waar in al wyse,  
On flaterie that thow thee nat fownde,  
For therof, sone, Salomon the wyse,  
As that I have in his proverbes fownde,  
Seith thus: 'They that in feyned speeche habownde,  
And glosyngly unto hir freendes talke,  
Spreden a net byforn hem wher they walke.'

"If a deceyvour geve a man to sowke  
Wordes plesant in hony al bewrappid,  
Good is a man eschue swich a powke.  
Thurgh Favel hath ful many a man mishappid,  
For whan that he hath janglid al and clappid  
With his freend trefyng of pees openly,  
He in awayt lyth of him covertly.

"The moost lak that han the lordes grete  
Is of him that hir soothes sholde hem telle.  
Al in the glose folk laboure and swete;  
They stryven who best rynges shal the belle  
Of fals plesaunce; in that hir hertes swelle,  
If that oon can bet than othir deceyve,  
And swich deceit lordes blyndly receyve.

"The worldly ryche men han no knowleche  
What that they been of hir condicioun;  
They been so blent with Faveles gay speeche  
Which reportith to hem, that hir renoun  
Is everywhere halwid in the toun;  
That in hemself they deemen greet vertu,  
Whereas there is but smal or nat a gru;

"For unnethe a good word men speke of hem.  
This false treson comun is and ryf;  
Bet were it thee been at Jerusalem,  
Sone, than thow were in it deffectyf.  
Syn my lord the Prince is, God holde his lyf,  
To thee good lord, good servant thow thee qwyte  
To him, and trewe, and it shal thee profyte.

"Wryte him nothyng that sowneth into vice.  
Kythe thy love in mateere of sadnesse.  
Looke if thow fynde canst any tretice  
Growndid on his estates holsumnesse.  
Swich thyng translate and unto his hynesse,  
As humbly as that thow canst, presente.  
Do thus, my sone." "Fadir, I assente."

"With herte as tremblyng as the leef of asp,  
Fadir, syn yee me rede to do so,  
Of my symple conceit wole I the clasp  
Undo and lat it at his large go.  
But, weleaway, so is myn herte wo  
That the honour of Englissh tonge is deed,  
Of which I wont was han conseil and reed.  
"O maistir deere and fadir reverent,  
My maistir Chaucer, flour of eloquence,  
Mirour of fructuous entendement,  
O universel fadir in science!  
Allas that thow thyn excellent prudence  
In thy bed mortel mightest nat byqwethe!  
What eiled deeth? Allas, why wolde he sle the?"

"O deeth, thow didest nat harm singuler  
In slaghtre of him, but al this land it smertith.  
But nathelees yit hastow no power  
His name slee; his hy vertu astertith  
Unslayn fro thee, which ay us lyfly hertith  
With bookes of his ornat endytyng  
That is to al this land enlumynyng.

"Hastow nat eek my maistir Gower slayn,  
Whos vertu I am insufficient  
For to descryve? I woot wel in certayn,  
For to sleen al this world thow hast yment.  
But syn our lord Cryst was obedient  
To thee, in feith I can no ferther seye;  
His creatures musten thee obeye.

"Fadir, yee may lawhe at my lewde speche,  
If that yow list - I am nothyng fourmeel;

My yong konnyngge may no hyer reeche;  
My wit is also slipir as an eel.  
But how I speke, algate I meene weel."  
"Sone, thow seist wel ynow, as me seemeth;  
Noon othir feele I, so my conceit deemeth.

"Now farwel, sone, go hoom to thy mete;  
It is hy tyme, and go wole I to myn.  
And what I have seid thee, nat forgete.  
And swich as that I am, sone, I am thyn.  
Thow seest wel age hath put me to declyn,  
And povert hath me maad of good al bare;  
I may nat but preye for thy welfare."  
"What, fadir, wolden yee thus sodeynly  
Departe fro me? Petir, Cryst forbeede!  
Yee shal go dyne with me, treewely."  
"Sone, at o word, I moot go fro thee neede."  
"Nay, fadir, nay!" "Yis, sone, as God me speede."  
"Now, fadir, syn it may noon othir tyde,  
Almighty God yow save and be your gyde;

"And graunte grace me that day to see  
That I sumwhat may qwyte your goodnesse.  
But, goode fadir, whan and wher shul yee  
And I eft meete?" "Sone, in soothfastnesse,  
I every day heere at the Carmes messe,  
It faillith nat, aboute the hour of sevene."  
"Wel, fadir, God bytake I yow of hevене."

Recordyng in my mynde the lessoun  
That he me yaf, I hoom to mete wente.  
And on the morwe sette I me adoun,  
And penne and ynke and parchemeyn I hente,  
And to parfourme his wil and his entente  
I took corage, and whyles it was hoot,  
Unto my lord the Prince thus I wroot:

[Words of the Compiler to the Prince] 6

Hy noble and mighty Prince excellent,  
My lord the Prince, o my lord gracious,



I, humble servant and obedient  
Unto your estat hy and glorious,  
Of which I am ful tendre and ful gelous,  
Me recommande unto your worthynesse,  
With herte enteer and spirit of meeknesse;

Right humblely axyng of yow licence  
That with my penne I may to yow declare  
(So as that can my wittes innocence)  
Myn inward wil that thristith the welfare  
Of your persone, and elles be I bare  
Of blisse whan that the cold strook of deeth  
My lyf hath qweynt and me byreft my breeth.

Thogh that my lyflode and possessioun  
Be scant, I ryche am of benevolence;  
To yow therof can I be no nygoun.  
Good have I noon by which your excellence  
May plesid be, and for myn inpotence  
Stoppith the way to do as I were holde,  
I wryte as he that your good lyf fayn wolde.

Aristotle, moost famous philosophre,  
His epistles to Alisaundre sente,  
Whos sentence is wel bet than gold in cofre,  
And more holsum growndid on treewe entente.  
For al that evere tho epistles mente,  
To sette was this worthy conquerour  
In reule how to susteene his honour.

The tendre love and the fervent cheertee  
That this worthy clerk ay to this kyng beer,  
Thristyng his welthe durable to be,  
Unto his herte stak and sat so neer,  
That by wrytyng his conseil gaf he cleer  
Unto his lord to keepe him fro nuisance,  
As witnessith his book of governance;

Of which, and of Gyles of Regiment  
Of Princes, plotmeel thynke I to translate.  
And thogh that symple be my sentement,  
O worthy Prince, I yow byseeche algate,

Considereth how endytyngge hath in hate  
My dul conceit, and nat accorde may  
With my childhede - I am so childissh ay.  
Also byseeche I that the altitude  
Of your estat, thogh that this pamfilet  
Noon ordre holde ne in him include,  
Nat greeved be, for I can do no bet.  
Anothir day, whan wit and I be met  
Which longe is to, and han us freendly kist, 7  
Deskevere I wole that now is nat wist.

Nathelees, swich as is my smal konnyngge,  
With also treewe an herte, I wole it oute  
As tho two dide or evere clerk lyvyngge.  
But tremblyngge is my spirit, out of doute,  
That to parfourme that I am aboute.  
Allas, the stuf of sad intelligence  
Me faillith to speke in so hy presence.

Symple is my goost and scars my letterure  
Unto your excellence for to wryte  
Myn inward love, and yit in aventure  
Wole I me putte, thogh I can but lyte.  
My deere maistir, God his soule qwYTE,  
And fadir, Chaucer, fayn wolde han me taght,  
But I was dul and lerned lyte or naght.

Allas, my worthy maistir honorable,  
This landes verray tresor and richesse,  
Deeth by thy deeth hath harm irreparable  
Unto us doon; hir vengeable duresse  
Despoillid hath this land of the swetnesse  
Of rethorik, for unto Tullius  
Was nevere man so lyk amonges us.

Also who was heir in philosophie  
To Aristotle in our tonge but thow?  
The steppes of Virgile in poesie  
Thow folwedist eek. Men woot wel ynow  
That combrewold that thee, my maistir, slow.  
Wolde I slayn were! Deeth was to hastyf  
To renne on thee and reve thee thy lyf.

Deeth hath but smal consideracioun  
Unto the vertuous, I have espyed;  
No more, as shewith the probacioun,  
Than to a vicious maistir losel tryed  
Among an heep. Every man is maistried  
With here, as wel the poore as is the ryche;  
Leered and lewde eek standen alle ylyche.

Shee mighte han taried hir vengeance a whyle  
Til that sum man had egal to thee be -  
Nay, let be that! Shee kneew wel that this yle  
May nevere man fourth brynge lyk to thee;  
And hir office needes do moot shee.  
God bad hir so, I truste, as for thy beste;  
O maistir, maistir, God thy soule reste!

Now to my mateere as that I began.  
There is a book Jacob de Cessolis  
Of the ordre of prechours maad, a worthy man,  
That the Ches Moralysed clepid is,  
In which purpos I eek laboure ywis;  
And heere and there, as that my litil wit  
Affoorthe may, I thynke translate it.

And al be it that in that place squaar  
Of the listes - I meene th'eschequeer -  
A man may lerne to be wys and waar,  
I that have aventured many a yeer  
My wit therin, but lyte am I the neer,  
Sauf that I sumwhat knowe a kynges draght;  
Of othir draghtes lerned have I naght.

And for that among the draghtes echone  
That unto the ches appartene may,  
Is noon so needful unto your persone  
To knowe as that of the cheertee verray  
That I have had unto your noblesse ay,  
And shal, if your plesaunce it be to heere,  
A kynges draght reporte I shal now heere.

I am seur that tho bookes alle three

Red hath and seen your innat sapience;  
And as I hope, hir vertu folwen yee.  
But unto yow compyle I this sentence  
That, at the good lust of your excellence,  
In short yee mowen beholde heer and rede  
That in hem thre is scatered fer in brede.

And although it be no maneere of neede  
Yow to consaille what to doon or leeve,  
Yit if yow list of stories taken heede,  
Sumwhat it may profyte, by your leeve;  
At hardest, whan yee been in chambre at eeve,  
They been good for to dryve foorth the nyght;  
They shal nat harme if they be herd aright.

To your hynesse thynke it nat to longe,  
Thogh in that draght I sumwhat wade deepe,  
The thewes vertuous that to it longe  
Wacchen my goost and letten him to sleepe.  
Now God in vertu yow maynteene and keepe,  
And I byseeche your magnificence  
Geve unto me benigne audience.

For thogh I to the steppes clerghial  
Of these clerkes thre nat may atteyne,  
Yit for to putte in prees my conceit smal,  
Good wil me artith take on me the peyne.  
But sore in me ther qwappith every veyne,  
So dreedful am I of myn ignorance;  
The Crois of Cryst my werk speede and avance.

Explicit prologus, de principum regimine; incipiendo de fide observanda

Now gracious Prince, ageyn that the corone  
Honure yow with rial dignitee,  
Byseechith Him that sit on hy in trone,  
That whan that charge receyved han yee,  
Swich governance men may feele and see  
In yow as may been unto His plesance  
Profyt to us and your good loos avance.

First and forward, the dignitee of kyng  
Impressith in the botme of your mynde,  
Consideryng how chargeable a thyng  
That office is, for so yee shul it fynde.  
Unto good reule yee yow knytte and bynde;  
Of Goddes wreche have ay drede and awe;  
Do right to grete and smale, and keepe lawe.

Ones ther was a kyng, as I have rad,  
Whan his corone was unto him broght,  
Or he it took, in thocht he stood al sad,  
And thus he seide, aftir he had thocht:  
"O thow corone, noble and faire ywroght!  
What man that thee receyveth or admittith,  
More ese than he weeneth from him flittith.

"Whoso the peril kneew, and charge and fere  
That is in thee, thogh thow at eerthe lay,  
He wolde nat thee up areise or rere,  
But let thee lye stille and go his way.  
For sooth is this, and hath, and shal been ay:  
This worldes hook, envye hath to his bayt,  
And ay hath hy degree sore in awayt."

Now, noble Prince, thogh I be nat wys,  
Wel willid am I as I first yow tolde.  
In name of Jhesu, wirke aftir the avys  
That I comyle out of thise auctours olde.  
And if I nat the way of reson holde,  
Folwe me nat; and if that I do, thenne  
Do as I shal reporte with my penne.

Tho oothes that at your creacioun  
Shul thurgh your tonge passe, hem wel observe.  
Lat no coloured excusacioun  
Yow make from hem slippe asyde or swerve.  
Holde up hir lyf, lat hem nat in yow sterve.  
It is nat kyngly from an ooth to varie;  
A kyng of trouthe owith been exemplarie.

Lo, thus this Aristotle in his book seith

To Alisaundre, and to be waar him bit  
That he ne breke his bondes ne his feith,  
For unto folk untreewe longith it.  
He seith that grace nat in him abit,  
But wikkid ende and cursid aventure  
Him folwith, that forswere him hath no cure.

By feith is maad the congregacioun  
Of peple and of citees enhabitynge;  
By feith han kynges dominacioun;  
Feith causith eek of men the communyng;  
Castels by feith dreden noon assailyng;  
By feith the citees standen unwerreied,  
And kynges of hir sogettes been obeied.

Who leesith feith, gretter thyng may noon leese.  
Or a man speke, or bynde him by his seel,  
And hath his ful libertee, and may cheese  
What he do shal, him oghte avyse him weel  
Or he promette. Heete nat a deel  
By word ne bond but if he wole it laste;  
For whoso dooth, shal smerten at the laste.

Litol enchesoun hath he for to speke,  
To whos wordes is geven no credence.  
Perillous is a man his feith to breke.  
Feith by necessitee ne indigence  
Nat artid is deceyve, and apparence  
Of trouthe outward and inward fikilnesse  
Bultith out shame and causith greet smertnesse.

What was the cause of the destruccioun  
Of the peple of Scites and Arabee,  
But for hir kynges in decepcioun  
Of men and citees ny to hir contree,  
Hir oothes useden, by sotiltee,  
Brekyng bondes that stablisshid were  
Mankynde to profyte and nat to dere.

And for that synne, Goddes rightwisnesse,  
That punysshith falshode and treccherie,  
Nat mighte hem suffre endure in that woodnesse,

But they destroyed were, it is no lye.  
Untrouthe, allas! The ordre of chivalrie  
Dampneth it; thogh that the persone it use,  
Knyghthode itself moot algate it refuse.

To God truste I, no lord in al this lond  
Is gilty of that inconvenience.  
Fy! What, a lord breke his byheeste or bond?  
Nay, God forbeede that that pestilence  
In a lord dwelle or holde residence;  
For if that he that wikkid gest recette,  
By swich a lord wole honour nothyng sette.

Whan Marcus Regulus was, as I rede,  
Venquissid in a bataille of the see  
By hem of Cartage, hoom with hem they lede  
This prisoner; and aftir sent was he  
By hem to Rome, his owne contree,  
Sworn to retourne to Cartage ageyn,  
As Tullius and eek Seint Austyn seyn.

The cause why they him to Rome sente  
Was for to do to Romains hir message,  
Witynge of hem if that they wolde assente  
That, syn ther were Romains in Cartage  
In prison, and Romains hadde eek in cage  
Cartagiens, suffre hem at large go  
And the Romains go sholde at large also.

Whan Marcus doon hadde as that he was bode,  
The senat axid him what was his reed,  
And he answerde and seide thus: "For Gode,  
Al this rede I lat sleepen and be deed.  
It may by no way synke into myn heed  
That to us Romains were it covenable  
Swich an eschaunge, but unprofitable.

"We Romains that they han in prison loke  
Been but yong froth, unlerned in bataille,  
And othir feeble folk with age ybroke,  
Of which I am oon; we may nat availle.  
Of us no los is but, withouten faille,

Your prisoners been myghty men and wyse,  
And folk in armes preeved at devyse."

His freendes wolde han holde him stille there,  
But they nat mighte - he wolde alway retourne;  
To breke his ooth, his goost was ay in fere.  
He thoghte nat in his contree sojourne,  
Do what hem list, whethir they glade or mourne.  
Unto his foos as blyve he him dressith,  
And kneew wel to be deed, the book witnessith.

He heeld it bet his ooth for to observe  
And dye in honor as that a knyght oghte,  
Than by perjurie his lyf for to preserve;  
Of swiche unknyghtly tukkes he nat roghte.  
I trowe now adayes, thogh men soghte,  
His heir ful hard were in this land to fynde.  
Men list nat so ferfoorth to trouthe hem bynde.

Yit nat oonly to preise is this Marcus  
For trouthe, but eek, as it seemeth me,  
His renoun oghte doublid been, as thus:  
Whereas th'eschange mighte han maad him free,  
Qwit of his foos prison, gretter cheertee  
He hadde of the profyt universel  
Than of himself - his deeth it preeved wel.

Amonges alle thynges in a knyght,  
Trouthe is a thyng that he ne lakke may  
If his honor shal bere his heed upright.  
Valerie tellith how with greet array  
Kyng Alisandre and his oost on a day,  
Meeved of ire and of malencolie,  
Unto a citee dressid him in hye,

Which that yclept and callid was Lapsat,  
Purposynge him bete it to the eerthe adoun.  
And or that this kyng fully cam therat,  
Ther was a philosophre in the toun,  
A man of excellent discrecioun,  
That to this kyng sumtyme had maistir be,  
Ful sore abasht of him and his meynee.



Out of the town he spedde him on his weye,  
As hastily as that he cowde or mighte,  
Toward the kyng, of grace him for to preye.  
And as swythe as the kyng hadde of him sighte,  
He kneew him and his meenyng, and on highte  
He seide him thus: "By the goddes I swere,  
Al thy labour shal nat be worth a pere.

"At thy prayere do wole I nothyng."  
This philosophre of his ooth took good heede  
And seide, "O worthy conquerour and kyng,  
Than preye I thee unto the toun thee speede  
And it destroye, bothe in lengthe and brede;  
Have on it no pitee, but al doun caste;  
This preye I thee that may be doon as faste."

And whan the kyng his preyere undirstood,  
Al his angire and his irous talent  
Refreynd he; he wolde for no good  
On the toun venge him as he hadde ment.  
He rather chees be disobedient  
To his vengeable wil and his ooth keepe  
Than be forsworn of that he swoor so deepe.

Or a kyng swere, it is ful necessarie  
Avyse him wel, for whan that it is past,  
He may his ooth in no wyse contrarie  
If he of shame or reproof be agast.  
A kyng owith of word be stidefast;  
Nothyng byheete but he it parfourme  
If he wole him to his estat confourme.

A greet clerk which clept is Crisostomus,  
Where he of matire of swerynge tretith,  
Thise arn the wordes that he writ to us:  
"What man the custume of oothes nat lettith  
In sweryng ofte, what he seith forgetith.  
Usage of oothes of perjurie is cause."  
And more he seith eek in the same clause.

He seith, "Perjurie engendrid is of oothes,

For right as he that custumably  
Clappith and janglith and to stynte looth is,  
Moot othirwhyle speke unsittyngly,  
Right so usage of sweryng enemy  
To trouthe is, and makith men hem forswere."  
Ful necessarie is oothes to forbere.

Sweryng hath thise thre condicions  
Folwyng, as trouthe, doom, and rightwisnesse.  
Ooth axith trouthe and no decepcions,  
But swere in his entente soothfastnesse;  
Doom moot discreetly, lest al hastynesse,  
Swere, and nat needles; and justice also,  
Leeffully swere, and justly everemo.

Quintilian seith that unto hy degree  
Unsittyng is to swere in any wyse  
But it be causid of necessitee;  
For as he seith, and othir clerkes wyse,  
A kyng or princes word oghte souffyse  
Wel more than oghte a marchantes ooth,  
And to go therageyn be more looth.

And syn a princes ooth or his promesse,  
Whan they nat holden been, him deshonure,  
His lettre and seel, which more open witnessse  
Beren than they, good is take heede and cure  
That they be kept; wrytyng wole endure.  
What a man is, it prest is for to preeve;  
Outhir honure it shal him or repreeve.

Now if it happe, as it hath happid ofte,  
A kyng in neede borwe of his marchantes,  
Greet wysdam were it trete faire and softe,  
And holde hem treewely hir covenantes;  
For truste it wel, whan hir covenant is  
Nat to hem kept, as that hir bond requerith,  
The kyng hath shame, and eek it hem mischerith.

Looth wole hem been eftsones for to lene;  
He that is brent, men seyn, dredith the fyre;  
Be his day kept, he rekkith nat a bene,

But elles, sikir, dun is in the myre.  
Withouten doute, a marchantes desyr  
Is with good herte his kyng honure and plese,  
And to his might refresshe and doon him ese.

In hem is the substance of every lone.  
What folk chevyce as mochil as doon they?  
Excellent Prince, I deeme your persone  
To hem and to al othir in good fay  
Wole holde that yee heeten hem alway,  
And so to do God, the auctour of trouthe,  
Yow graunte, and elles certes were it routhe.  
If that a poore man breke his byheeste  
Or do ageyn his ooth or seel or lettre,  
Men hente him by the heed and him areeste,  
And to prison he gooth; he gete no bettre  
Til his maynpernour his areest unfette; o  
And yit he moot the cours of lawe abyde,  
Or his maynpernour moot deffende his syde.

Among the poore peple thus it gooth:  
They for untrouthe han smert and open shame.  
And if a lord his bond breke or his ooth,  
For soothe, it is a foul spot in his name.  
Thogh men dar nat openly him diffame,  
They thynke, al be it that they nothyng speke,  
In swiche lordes is untrouthe, I rekke.

And syn a kyng by way of his office  
To God ylikned is, as in maneere,  
And God is trouthe itself, than may the vice  
Of untrouthe nat in a kyng appeere,  
If his office shal to God refeere.  
A bisy tonge bryngith in swich wyt,  
He that by word nat giltith is parfyt.

A! lord, what it is fair and honorable  
A kyng from mochil speche him refreyne.  
It sit him been of wordes mesurable,  
For mochil clap wole his estat desteyne.  
If he his tonge with mesures reyne  
Governe, thanne his honour it conserveth;

And by the revers, dieth it and sterveth.

Bet is the peples eres thriste and yerne  
Hir kyng or princes wordes for to heere,  
Than that his tonge go so faste and yerne  
That mennes eres dulle of his mateere;  
For dullyng hem, dullith the herte in feere  
Of hem that geven to him audience.  
In mochil speeche wantith nat offense.  
Whoso that hatith mochil clap or speeche  
Qwenchith malice, and he that his mowth keepith,  
Keepith his soule, as that the bookes teche.  
Unbrydlid wordes ofte man byweepith;  
Prudence wakith whan the tonge sleepith,  
And sleepith ofte whan the tonge wakith.  
Moderat speeche engendrith reste and makith.

Alle natures of beestes and briddes  
And of serpentes been ymakid tame,  
But tonge of man, as it wel knowe and kid is,  
Nat may be tamed. O fy, man, for shame!  
Silence of tonge is wardeyn of good fame,  
And aftir repreef, fisshith clap and foulith.  
The tonge of man al the body deffoulith.

And that out of the tonge of kyng procedith,  
The peple specially beren away;  
Wherfore unto a kyng the more it needith  
Avyse him what he speke shal alway.  
In mochil speeche sum byheeste may  
Lightly astarte that may nat be holde,  
And thanne trouthe begynneth to colde.

O worthy Prince, this, lo, meeveth me  
Of trouthe for to touche thus sadly,  
For that I wolde that the hy degree  
Of chivalrie universelly  
Baar up his heed and bente it nat awry.  
Of his honour untrouthe a knyght unlaceth  
And his renoun al uttirly defaceth.

Honour appropred is to chivalrie,

And faylynge it, the cheef flour of his style  
Fadith and faillith and begynneth die.  
But now passe over; touche I wole a whyle  
Of rightwisnesse, which out of this yle  
Purposith fully for to fare and weende,  
So is our reule unthrifty and untheende.

### De justitia

Seint Anselm seith, justice is libertee  
Of wil, gevyng unto every wight  
That longith to his propre dignitee:  
To God obedience, as it is right;  
And he that poore is of degree and might,  
Unto his bettre, honour and reverence;  
The grete eek to the smal, lore and science;

To thyn egal, concord; unto thy fo,  
Souffrance; and to thyselven, holynesse;  
To the needy, greeved with wrecchid wo,  
Mercy in dede and releeve his distresse;  
Aftir thy power, do thow thyn almesse,  
And reewe upon him if that thy might faille,  
For that wil shal thy dede contrevaille.

Whoso it be that justice verray  
Desirith folwe, first moot he God dreede  
And love as hertly as he can or may.  
It nat souffisith do no noyous deede,  
But who annoye wolde, him it forbeede;  
For nat annoye is no rightwisnesse,  
But it is abstinence of wikkidnesse.

Of conseil and of help been we dettours,  
Eche to othir, by right of brethirhede;  
For whan a man yfalle into errour is,  
His brothir owith him conseil and rede  
To correcte and amende his wikkid dede;  
And if he be vexid with maladie,  
Ministre him help his greef to remedie.

Every man owith studien and muse  
To teche his brothir what thyng is to do  
And what behovely is to refuse;  
That that is good, provokynge him therto.  
And thus he moot conseille his brothir, lo,  
Do that right is and good to Goddes pay,  
In word nat oonly but in werk alway.

Lawful justice is, as in maneere,  
Al vertu, and who wole han this justice,  
The lawe of Cryst to keepe moot he leere.  
Now if that lawe forbeede every vice,  
And commande al good thyng and it cherice,  
Fulfille lawe is vertu parfyt  
And injustice is of al vertu qwyt.

Justice is of the kynde and the nature  
Of God, and he hath maad it and ordeyned  
On remes and on every creature.  
By justice is shedyng of blood restreyned,  
And gilt punysshid whan it is conpleyned.  
Justice deffendith possessions,  
And peple keepith from oppressions.

A kyng is maad to keepen and maynteene  
Justice, for shee makith obeissant  
The misdoers that prowde been and keene,  
And hem that been in vertu habundant,  
Chericeth. A kyng is by covenant  
Of ooth maad in his coronacioun  
Bownde to justices sauvacioun.

And a kyng in fulfillyng of that is  
To God lyk, which is verry rightwisnesse.  
And men of Ynde seyn and holden this:  
"A kynges justice is as greet richesse  
Unto his peple as plentee or largesse  
Of eerthely good, and bettre than reyn  
Fallyng at eeve from hevене," they seyn.

Ful often sythe it is wist and seen  
That for the wrong and the unrightwisnesse

Of kynges ministres, that kynges been  
Holden gilty; whereas, in soothfastnesse,  
They knowen nothyng of the wikkidnesse;  
Unjust ministres ofte hir kyng accusen,  
And they that just been, of wrong hem excusen.

If the ministres do naight but justice  
To poore peple in contree as they go,  
Thogh the kyng be unjust, yit is his vice  
Hid to the peple; they weene everemo  
The kyng be just for his men gye hem so.  
But ministres to seelde hem wel governe;  
Oppressioun regneth in every herne.

A kyng, me thynkith, for the seuretee  
Of his good loos, byhoveth it enquere  
Of hem that han his estat in cheertee,  
What fame that his poore peple him bere.  
He of justice is bownden hem to were  
And to deffende; and if that they be greeved,  
By him they moot be holpen and releevd.

Excuse shal him nat his ignorance;  
He moot enquere of wrong and it redresse.  
For that he peple hath in governance,  
He clept is kyng. If his men peple oppresse,  
Witynge him, and nat rekke of the duresse,  
He may by right be clept no governour,  
But of his peple a wilful destroyour.

O worthy Kyng benigne, Edward the laste,  
Thow haddist ofte in herte a drede impressid,  
Which that thyn humble goost ful sore agaste;  
And to knowe if thow cursid were or blessid,  
Among the peple ofte hastow thee dressid  
Into contree in symple array allone  
To heere what men seide of thy persone.

Although a kyng have habundance of might  
In his land at his lust, knyt and unknyt,  
Good is that he his power use aright,  
That fro the way of justice he nat flitte,

Lest our lord God him from His grace shitte,  
Of whom al rightwys power is deryved;  
For if he do, of blisse he shal be pryved.

I fynde how that Theodorus Sireene,  
For that he to the kyng of Lysemak  
Tolde his deffautes, the kyng leet for teene  
Crucifie him, and as he heeng and stak  
Upon the Crois, thus to the kyng he spak:  
"This peyne, or othir lyk therto, moot falle  
Upon thy false conseilloures alle.

"Nat rekke I thogh I rote on hy or lowe,  
As he that of the deeth hath no gastnesse;  
I dye an innocent, I do thee knowe;  
I dye to deffende rightwisnesse.  
Thy flaterers enhaunced in richesse  
Dreden to suffre for right swich a peyne,  
But I therby nat sette rissches tweyne."

Ther was a duc Romayn clept Camilus,  
Leide ones seege unto a citee,  
Falisk named, as seith Valerius,  
Of which the men of moost auctoritee,  
And gretteste of power and of degree,  
To a maistir in the citee dwellynge  
Bytook hir children by wey of lernynge.

What dooth me this maistir but on a day  
Some of tho children out of the toun ledde,  
The moost expert in science, and the way  
Streight to the Romayn tentes he him spedde,  
And the duc thus conseillid he and redde:  
"Haveth these children in possessioun,  
And keepith hem in hold and in prisoun;

"The fadres of hem han in governance  
Falisk the citee at hir owne list.  
In hy and lowe, aftir hir ordenance  
Is al thyng doon. Whan it is to hem wist  
That yee hir children han undir your fist,  
Yee shul wel seen, hir children lyf to save,



Hem and the citee shul yee wynne and have."

The duke answerde anoon to this traitour:  
"Thogh thow be fals unto thyn owne toun,  
And rekkist nat of shame or deshonour,  
But par cas for to gete of me guerdoun,  
Desirest Faliskes destruccioun,  
Nat were it knyghtly me to thee consente  
That taken hast so traiterous entente.

"We Romains keepen rightes of bataille  
As trewely as the rightes of pees;  
Our custume is no children to assaille.  
Thogh we the town had wonne, doutelees  
Ther sholde no chyld among al the prees  
For us han greeved be. We armes bere  
Ageyn the armed men, hem for to dere,

"And nat ageyn children undeffensable.  
In that in thee is, thy might hastow do,  
Thurgh wikkid treson fals and deceyvable,  
Thy citee to destroyen and fordo;  
But I, Romayn, agree me nat therto.  
By vertu of armes wole I it wynne,  
For al the might of men that been thereynne."

The duke commandith, shortly for to seyn,  
His handes him behynde to be bownde,  
And bad the children lede him hoom ageyn  
To hir fadres; which, whan that they han fownde  
So greet justice in this duke habownde,  
The senat clepte and this unto hem tolde;  
The hertes gan to change of yonge and olde.

Alle, they seiden, of hy gentillesse,  
Growndid upon justice dide he this,  
And also of a chivalrous prowesse.  
They seiden, "It to us moost sittyng is  
Oure gates opne and offre us to been his.  
Is noon so good as lat us mollifie  
Oure hertes stoute to his genterie;

"And of his pees, requeren him and preye."  
They didn't do so, but what was folewyng,  
Nathave I red, wherfore I can nat seye.  
But this just duke, as by my supposyng,  
Was to hem swich in wil and in wirkyng  
That he hem qwitte so as mighte hem qweeme.  
What sholde I elles of swich a lord deeme?

Of Lancastre good Duke Henri also,  
Whos justice is writen and auctorysid -  
Why sholde I nat thee rekne amonges tho  
That in hir tyme han justice excercysid?  
Yit that vertu oonly nat hath souffysid  
To thee, but al that longith to knyghthode  
Was inned in thyn excellent manhode.

I rede also how that, hangyng a stryf  
Twixt Kyng Porrus and a lord clept Fabrice,  
The leche of this kyng, a cursid caytyf  
Involved and ywrappid in the vice  
Of covetyse, shoop him for to tryce  
His owne lord the kyng and him to kille  
If that it hadde been Fabrices wille.

This leche unto Fabrices hous by nyght,  
As pryvely as that he cowde, wente,  
And unto him ensured and behighte  
If that him list to the dede consente,  
He was so glad to plese him and contente,  
His lord the kyng with venym wolde he feede  
So that therthurch he sterve sholde neede.  
This lord with that bad men his handes teye,  
And lede unto the kyng this traiterous wight,  
And al this treson unto him bywreie.  
Whan this was doon, the kyng seide anoon right:  
"See heere a trouthe and manhode of a knyght.  
Men may the sonne as lightly his cours reve  
As this Fabrice make his trouthe leve."

In Perse ones ther was by jugement  
A man to deeth dampned in wronge wyse  
For wratthe and hate and the irous talent

That to this ilke man baar the justice.  
And whan the knowleche of this fals jewyse  
Was come unto the kynges audience,  
This doom he gaf as blyve and this sentence.

He bad men fleen him qwik out of his skyn,  
And therwith kevere the judicial see,  
And made his sone to be set theryn,  
That juge aftir his fadir sholde be,  
To this ende and entencioun, that he  
Sholde be waar how he his doomes gaf,  
And lene alway to rightwisnesse staf.

Nat oghte a juge for hate or for love  
Othir way deeme than trouthe requerith,  
But, at the reverence of God above,  
Right ay favoure whan that it appeerith.  
Dede of justice a conscience cleerith,  
Chacyng away thoghtes on wrong ygrowndid.  
Who jugeth wrongfully is feendly wowndid.

What juge in doom eek geveth just sentence  
Awaytyng upon a golden dragee,  
To God he dooth displesance and offense;  
For the justice which of duetee  
He sholde do, cursidly sellith he,  
For love of meede him provokith therto,  
And rightwisnesse nothyng so to do.  
To swich a juge, withdrawe the hope  
Of moneye, and he fro justice flittith.  
Where he supposith moneye to grope,  
Just jugement he in his herte admittith;  
But whoso that his hand fro giftes shittith,  
As unto us witnessith Isaye,  
He shal in hevене dwelle and sitten hye.

Cristen men yilde oghten just jugement  
Freely, for unleefful is it to selle,  
Thogh it be leefful and convenient  
A wys man for reward his reed to telle.  
A juges purs with gold nat sholde swelle.  
If on justice he shape his doom to bilde,

His jugementz he giftlees muste yilde.

And he that dooth of justice rigour,  
Let him be waar he have no delyt  
In punysshynge of the offendour  
That hath ydoon the trespas or the wyt,  
Ne him rejoise of his annoyous plyt,  
Ne the manere excede in swiche cas,  
Or quantitee of the gilt or trespas,

Evene as a soule is bodyes lyflynesse,  
And whan that it is twynned from a wight  
The herte is deed, so farith rightwisnesse;  
For whan a reme is reuled by hir might,  
Than may the peple be ful glad and light;  
The land may bathen in prosperitee;  
And lost is al if that absent be shee.

Ther was a lawe ymaad upon a tyme  
At Rome, by the consules assent,  
That whoso were guilty of the cryme  
Of advoutrie and were therin hent,  
His yen bothe sholden out be brent.  
Now fil it so, a man that sone was  
To a consul was take in this trespas.  
And whan that the mishap of this persone  
Was to the peple knowen of the toun,  
They loveden his fadir so echone,  
And had him in so cheer affeccioun,  
They seiden that noon execucioun  
Sholde on this sone for this dede falle,  
And the consules so they preyden alle.

To which the fadir gan replie tho,  
And thus allegged he for him and leide:  
"Considereth, sires, I am oon of tho  
That to this lawe assentid and obeide;  
And sholde I now the same breke?" he seide,  
"For favour of myself or any of myne?  
Nay, sires, to that may I nat enclyne.

"Maffeith, that were wrong and vilenye.

The lawe shal foorth, thogh it fil on me."  
The peple gan to rumble and clappe and crye,  
And the consules preide of the citee  
The revers; thus overcome was he.  
So at the laste, he sy noon othir weye  
But in partie he muste hir lust obeye.

"Now," quod he, "syn that it may be no bet,  
Sumwhat to yow me confourme wole I,  
So that the lawe shal nat al be let,  
Thogh that it mighte observed be fully.  
Thus wole I and noon othir, trewely:  
Oon of myn yen wole I now forgo,  
My sone anothis - it shal be right so.

"We two wole have but o mannes sighte."  
Thus was doon, but nat al at the plesance  
Of the peple; but they noon othir mighte.  
Now if tomorwe fil ther swich a chance,  
Sholde men fynde so just governance?  
Nay, nay, this lond is al to scars and lyte  
To fynde oon that so justly wolde him qwyte.  
Prince excellent, have your lawes cheer;  
Observe hem and offende hem by no weye.  
By ooth to keepe hem, bownde is the poweer  
Of kyng, and by it is kynges nobleye  
Sustened. Lawe is bothe lok and keye  
Of seuretee; whyl lawe is kept in londe,  
A prince in his estat may sikir stonde.

And doutelees, if that fordoon be lawe,  
A princes power may go pleye him thenne;  
For they that naight ne han, with knyf ydrawe  
Wole on hem that of good be mighty renne,  
And hurte hem and hir houses fyre and brenne,  
And robbe and slee and do al swich folie,  
Whan ther no lawe is hem to justifie.

Now in good feith, I preye God it amende,  
Lawe is ny fleemed out of this contree,  
For fewe been that dreden it offende.  
Correccioun and al is longe on thee:

Why suffrest thou so many an assemblee  
Of armed folk? Wel ny in every shire  
Partie is maad to venge hir cruel ire.

They with hir hand wrong to hem doon redresse.  
Hem deyneth nat an accioun attame  
At commun lawe; swich unbuxumnesse  
Suffred us make wole of seurtee lame.  
Whoso may this correcte, is worthy blame  
That he ne dooth naght. Allas, this souffrance  
Wole us destroye by continuance.

Is ther no lawe this to remedie?  
I can no more, but and this fourth growe,  
This land shal it repente and sore aby,  
And al swich maintenance, as men wel knowe,  
Susteened is nat by persones lowe,  
But cobbes grete this riot susteene.  
Correcte it good is whil that it is greene;  
For and it hoore, this land is but lost.  
He that our heed is, sore it shal repente;  
And this t'amende axith no gretter cost  
But to do lawe in no vengeable entente,  
Seye I; but for the bettre, hem take and hente,  
And punysshe hem by lawful rightwisesse,  
And suffre nat eche othir thus oppresse.

Smal tendrenesse is had now of oure lawes,  
For if so be that oon of the grete wattis  
A dede do which that ageyn the lawe is,  
Nothyng at al he punysshid for that is.  
Right as lopwebbes, flyes smale and gnattis  
Taken and suffre grete flyes go,  
For al this world, lawe is now reuled so.

The ryche and mighty man, thogh he trespace,  
No man seith ones that blak is his ye;  
But to the poore is denyed al grace;  
He snybbid is and put to tormentrie.  
He nat asterte may, he shal aby;  
He caght is in the webbe and may nat twynne.  
Mochil good reule is sowe and spryngith thynne.

Of this growith stryf, bataille, and discord;  
And by the grete, poore folk been greeved;  
For he that noble is of blood and a lord  
In style, and naghthath, stired is and meeved  
Unto rapyne; this is often preeved;  
The poore it feelith. Thus of lawe lak  
Norissheth wrong and castith right abak.

Whan a kyng dooth his peyne and diligence  
His reme by lawe and reson to gye,  
He standith more in the benevolence  
Of God, and more his werk shal fructifie,  
And shal han gretter meede, it is no lye,  
Than they that swich a cure han noon on honde.  
Thus fynde I writen, as I undirstonde.  
Whoso that in hy dignitee is set  
And may do grevous wrong and crueltee,  
If he forbere hem, to commende is bet,  
And gretter shal his meede and meryt be,  
Than they that nat may kythe iniquitee,  
Ne naghth doon; for if sum man were of might,  
Often wolde he do greet harm and unright.

Hy dignitee, the Philosophre writith,  
Preeveth a man what he is in his dede.  
Whan that a prince in vertu him delitith,  
Than is his peple warisshid of drede;  
Than may they seye and synge alowde and grede:  
"Honur, long lyf, joie, and Crystes blessing  
Moot have our sustenour, our prince and kyng!"

Whan that an emperour in dayes olde  
Coroned was, aftir as blyve anoon  
Makers of toubes come unto him sholde  
And axe him of what metal or what stoon  
His tounge sholde been, and fourth they goon  
With swich devys as the lord list devyse,  
And up they make it in hir beste wyse.

This was doon for to brynge unto memorie  
That he was nat but a man corruptible,

And that this worldes joie is transitorie,  
And the trust on it slipir and fallible.  
Al this considered, oghte him be penible  
His reme wel for to governe and gye,  
For whoso lyveth wel, wel shal he dye.

Lyk a brydil is dethes remembrance,  
That mannes herte restreyneth fro vice.  
That kyng that kyngly is of governance,  
That is to seyn, dooth justly his office,  
Of love and pees and reste he is norice.  
And whan that he is out of this world went,  
Thus seyn men that goon by his monument:  
"In hevене moot this kynges soule reste.  
This was a worthy kyng, greet was the pees  
That men hadde in his tyme. He was the beste  
That mighte be; he kepte his peple harmlees;  
In his comynge, glad was al the prees,  
And sory weren of his departynge."  
O gracious Prince, swich be your wirkyng!

Thus, my good Lord, wynneth your peples vois,  
For peples vois is Goddes vois, men seyn.  
And He that for us starf upon the Crois  
Shal qwyte it yow, I doute it nat certeyn;  
Your labour shal nat ydil be ne veyn.  
"No good dede unrewarded is or qwit,  
Ne evel unpunysshid," seith Holy Writ.

In your prosperitee and in your welthe,  
Remembrith evere among that yee shul dye  
And woot nat whan; it cometh in a stelthe.  
Have often Him befor your myndes ye  
Fro whom noon herte hyde may ne wrye  
His secree thoghtes. God al woot and weyeth;  
Him love and drede, and His lawes obeyeth.

Now syn a kyng is to his lawes swore,  
And lawe biddith free eleccioun  
In chirches passe, my good Lord, therefore;  
Let no favour ne noon affeccioun  
So meeve your wys circumspeccioun



To lette hem of hir lawful libertee;  
Lat hem rejoise hir propre duetee.

The chapitre of a chirche cathedral,  
Whan they han chosen hir heed and pastour,  
Which as hem thynkith souffissant at al  
Hem for to reule and been hir governour,  
Writith unto the Pope in hir favour,  
Byseekyng humblely his fadirhede  
It to conferme, and that is a just dede.  
And if the lawe suffre yow to wryte  
For any man apart, herkneth now me:  
Let vertu thanne therto yow excyte.  
Lookith that the man have habilitee  
That shal receyve that hy dignitee -  
That is to seyn, he be clene of lyvyng,  
Discreet, just, and of souffissant konnyng.

If the Pope to that estat provyde  
A persone at your preyere and instance,  
Your soonde he takith to the bettre syde;  
He holdith the persone of souffissance  
To have swich a cure in governance,  
For so witnessith the suggestioun  
That to him maad is for provisioun.

To kynges lettres geven is credence;  
Beeth waar how that yee wryte in swich mateere,  
Lest that yee hurte and mayme conscience.  
For if that execut be your preyeere,  
The persone unworthy, yee shul ful deere  
Reewe it; no smal charge is the soules cure  
Of al a diocise, I yow ensure.

If swich wrytynge be of right souffrable,  
And the man able swich charge receyve  
For whom yee wryte, that is commendable,  
And elles wole it your soule deceyve.  
Helpe him that able is, and th'unable weyve.  
Weyve Favel with his polisshid speeche,  
And helpe him that wel dooth and wel can teche.

But certes Favel hath caght so sad foot  
In lordes court, he may nat thennes slyde;  
Who come or go, algate abyde he moot.  
His craft is to susteene ay the wrong syde,  
And from vertu his lord for to dyvyde.  
And, for sooth sawes been to lordes looth,  
Nat wole he sooth seyn, he hath maad his ooth.  
Let Favel passe, foule moot he falle!  
Foorth in justice wole I now proceede.  
Ther was a knyght, I not what men him calle,  
A just man and a treewe in al his deede;  
Which on a tyme, as thoghte him it was neede,  
The froward peple by sharp lawes bynde;  
Lawes ful juste he made and in streit kynde.

And whan they weren byfore hem yrad,  
They made hem wondir wrooth, and seiden alle,  
They weren nat so nyce ne so mad  
To hem assente for aght may befalle;  
They wolden nat hem to tho lawes thralle;  
And wolde han artid this knyght hem repele,  
Makyng ageyn him an haynous querele.

Whan he sy this, he blyve to hem seide  
He made hem nat, it was god Apollo.  
"And on my bak," quod he, "the charge he leide  
To keepe hem. Sires, what seyn yee heerto?  
As he me charged hath, right so I do."  
And unto that answerde anoon the prees:  
"We wole hem nat admitten, doutelees!"

"Wel," quod he, "thanne is good, or yee hem breke,  
That unto god Apollo I me dresse  
To trete of this mateere and with him speke;  
Withouten him I may it nat redresse.  
Byseeche him wole I of his gentillesse  
Repele hem, syn that they to streite been,  
And do my dever right wel, yee shul seen.

"But or I go, yee shul unto me swere  
Tho lawes keepe til I ageyn come,  
And breke hem nat," to which they gan answer:

"Yee, yee, man, yee! We graunte it al and some!"  
They made hir ooth, and he his way hath nome;  
He nat to Apollo but to Grece wente,  
And there abood til that the deeth him hente.  
And whan his laste day gan to appeere,  
He bad men throwe his body in the see  
Lest, if upon the lond maad were his beere,  
The peple mighten unto hir citee  
His bones carie, and at hir large be,  
Qwyt of hir ooth, as to hir jugement.  
Thus he devysed in his testament.

Syn I spoke have of justice, as yee knowe,  
Unto pitee - which moot been had algates,  
And namely in princes oghte it growe -  
Wole I me dresse. Shee opneth the gates  
Of helthe to him that in seek estat is;  
Shee esith many a wight that is distressid  
That, nere hir help, sholde be sore oppressid.

[De] pietate

Pitee nat elles is to undirstonde  
But good wil inward of debonaire herte  
And outward speeche, and werk of man to fonde  
To helpe him that men seen in mescheef smerte.  
Men seelde him seen into wikkid deeth sterte  
That pitous is, but they han cruel deeth  
Often, whos crueltee cruelly sleeth.

Whilom ther was a tirant despitous,  
That so delytid him in crueltee  
That of nothyng was he so desyrous.  
Now shoop it so, a man that to pitee  
Fo was and freend unto iniquitee,  
A sotil werkman in craft of metal,  
Wroghte in this wyse, as I yow telle shal.

His lord the kyng he thoghte plese and glade,  
And craftily he made a bole of bras,  
And in the syde of it he slyly made

A litil wyket that ordeyned was  
To receyve hem that stood in dethes cas,  
Undir the which men sholden sharp fyr make  
Tho folk to deeth for to brennen and bake.

And yit, moreover, the kyng for to meeve  
The lesse unto pitee, it maad was so  
By sotil aart the dampned folk to greeve,  
That whan to crye hem compellid hir wo,  
Hir vois was lyk a boles everemo,  
And nothyng lyk a mannes vois in soun,  
As the scripture makith menciouun.

But our lord God, of pitee the auctour,  
Displesid with this cruel ordenance,  
Swich reward shoop unto this losengeour  
That it abatid al his contenance;  
And for to preeve his feendly purveance,  
How sharp it was and cowde folk distreyne,  
The first he was that entred in that peyne.

For whan the kyng this cruel werk had seyn,  
The craft of it commendid he ful wel,  
But the entente he fully heeld ageyn,  
And seide: "Thow that art more cruel  
Than I, the maydenhede of this jewel  
Shalt preeve anoon; this is my jugement."  
And so as blyve he was therin ybrent.

Men may seen heere how Favel him enclyneth  
Ay to his lordes lust what so it be;  
Unto that ende he bysyeth him and pyneth,  
And no consideracion hath he  
Thogh it be harm to his lordes degree,  
Or ageyn feith, honour, or conscience;  
In fals plesaunce is al his diligence.

To what thyng it be, if it his lord lyke,  
He him conformeth. He nevere denyeth  
His lordes resons, but a thank to pyke,  
His lordes wil and wit he justifieth.  
Whyl Favel lyveth, no fals conseil dieth.

Favel is weddid to plesant deceit  
And in that wedlok treewe is his conceit.

Ground of treson, o thow cursid Favel!  
How longe shalt thow been a potestat?  
In lordes court thow pleyest thy parcel  
So that it strecchith to thy lordes maat;  
For thow hast nevere thy lordes estaat  
To herte cheer, but al thy bysynesse  
Is for thy lucre and thy cofres warmnesse.

Favel was nevere freendly man unto.  
Lordes, beeth waar it needith, trewely.  
Senek by hem that folweden Nero  
Seith thus: "A flie folwith the hony,  
The wolf, careyne," he seith. So wel woot I  
That conpaignie folweden hir pray,  
And nat the man, and so do men this day.

Whil that the swetnesse of richesse endureth,  
Unto the ryche is many a man plesant;  
Only the richesse therto hem lurith;  
What he commandith, they been obeissant  
To do whil he of good is habundant.  
But whan the pray, the richesse, is ago,  
The man forsaken they for everemo.

O Favel, a blynd marchant artow oon,  
That for worldly good and grace and favour  
Which faille shal and passe and overgoon,  
Swich diligence doost and swich labour  
That thow thy soule from our Sauveour  
Twynnest and sleest thy lordes soule also,  
And causist hem to peyne eternal go.

Ther is a long and large difference  
Twixt vertuouse plesaunce and flaterie.  
Good plesaunce is of swich benevolence  
That what good dede he may in man espie,  
He preisith it and rebukith folie.  
But Favel takith al anothir paart;  
In wrong preysynge is al his craft and aart.

A gloser also keepith his silence  
Often where he his lord seeth him mistake.  
Lest that his answer mighte doon offense  
Unto his lord and him displesid make,  
He halt his pees - nat o word dar he crake;  
And for he nught ne seith, he his assent  
Geveth therto by mannes jugement.

Whoso that woot the purpos of a wight  
That is ygrowndid upon wikkidnesse  
And nat ne lettith it unto his might,  
Favourith it, as the book can expresse.  
Whoso it lookith, fynde it shal no lesse.  
But of al this now make I heere an eende  
And to my tale of pitee wole I weende.

A prince moot been of condicioun  
Pitous, and his angyr refreyne and ire,  
Lest an unavysid commocioun  
Him chaufe so and sette his herte on fyre,  
That him to venge as blyve he desyre,  
And fulfille it in dede. Him owith knowe  
His errour, and qwenche that fyry lowe.

Aristotle amonestith wondir faste,  
In his book which to Alisaundre he wroot,  
If he wolde have his regne endure and laste,  
That for noon ire he nevere be so hoot  
Blood of man shede. And God seith, wel I woot,  
That unto him reserved is vengeance;  
Whoso that sleeth shal have the same chance.

But this nat ment is by the cours of lawe  
That putte a man to deeth for cryme horrible.  
Whan he a man ymurdred hath and slawe,  
A man to slee by lawe it is lisible -  
That slaghtre beforn God is admittible;  
And if a kyng do swiche murdrers grace  
Of lyf, he boldith hem eft to trespace.

A kyng of this lond, whilom herde I seyn,

For mannes deeth a pardoun hadde grauntid  
Unto a man, which aftirward ageyn  
The same gilt hadde in anothir hauntid;  
Aftir whos deeth, he hoomly hath avauntid,  
He nas nat so frendlees he wolde do  
Wel ynow, thogh he had slayn othir two.

"Of freendes," quod he, "have I large wone,  
That for that they have had and shul of myne,  
Beforn the kyng for me shal knele echone.  
They at the fulle konne his herte myne.  
Thidir wole I go, streight as any lyne;  
And they that now annoyen me or greeve,  
I shal hem qwyte heereaftir, as I leeve."

He cam unto the kyng and axid grace  
Of that he wroght hadde so synfully.  
The kyng avysed him wel on his face,  
And seide, "Freend, me thynkith how that I  
Have unto thee doon grace or this, soothly.  
I grauntid ones a chartre to thee  
Of mannes deeth, as it remembrith me.

"Hastow now slayn anothir man also?"  
Now stood a fool sage the kyng besyde,  
And or the kyng spak any wordes mo,  
He to him seide thus: "For God that dyde,  
Why deemen yee this man an homicyde?  
He slow him nat, for yee yourself him slow;  
And by your leeve, I shal tellen how.  
"If that the lawe mighte his cours han had,  
This man heere had been for the first man deed;  
Forgeve him eft now and, if he be drad  
To slee the thridde, than girde of myn heed.  
Now be avysid wel, it is my reed,  
How yee your pardoun graunte, lest errour  
Of nyce pitee be your accusour."

This kyng wel thoghte that he seide him trouthe,  
And chartrelees gooth this man ful of dreede.  
And aftirward, of whos dissert was routhe,  
The lawe him gaf that longid to his meede.

My tale is doon. Now soothly, it is neede  
Tho grauntes to withstonde that procure  
Meschevous deeth to many a creature.

Pitee avallith mochil, but nat there,  
For bet it is to slee the murdreman  
Than suffre him regne, for he hath no fere  
His hand to use foorth as he bygan;  
And in my conceit feele wel I can  
That of swich pitee is the abstinence  
Of gretter pitee for the consequence.

If rightful deeth of o man keepe and save  
Two innocentes lyves, thynkith me  
By reson, more merit oghte him have  
That commandith this gilty man deed be  
Than he that lyf him grauntith. Why? Lat se!  
The gilty man is no wrong doon unto,  
But wrong is doon unto thise othir two.

Every man woot wel, for to save tweyne  
Is gretter grace than save but oon.  
Of murdre is cause greet for to compleyne;  
Tho pardons al to lightly passe and goon;  
Avyse hem that favoure hem, by Seint John.  
Whoso it be that therto the kyng meeveth,  
Wel more than he woot his soule greeveth.  
Avyse a kyng eek for any requeste  
Unto him maad by greet estat or mene,  
That he favoure it nat; it is the beste  
Tho requestes to werne and voide clene -  
Of swiche, in soothe, as murdrers been, I mene.  
But and oon be by malice of his foos  
Endited, pardoun be to him nat cloos.

If that be sooth, lat pitee walke at large,  
For shee and mercy therto wole assente;  
It is a parcel of hir eithir charge.  
Routhe were it the giltelees tormente.  
Pitee shal soule of man to God presente,  
And God, that gaf us ensample of pitee,  
To pitous folk sauvacion shal be.



The pitous herte of Marcus Marcellus  
Wel worthy is be drawn in memorie.  
He may ensample and mirour be to us;  
For, as Valerie writith in a storie,  
Whan this Marc obteened had the victorie  
By seege leid to men of Siracuse,  
As I shal seyn, he hevlyly gan muse.

He wente him up on hy upon a tour  
Where he beholde mighte al the citee,  
And how Fortune had shape him that honour.  
With herte tendre than considered he  
And hadde of folkes dethes swich pitee  
That from wepyng he mighte him nat restreyne;  
Al his triumphe was to him but peyne.

Who hadde stonden by him in that tyde  
And him avysid on his contenance  
Wolde han supposid that that othir syde  
Rathere hadde put him to the outrance  
Than he hadde had of hem so fair a chance.  
O worthy knyght, who shal thy steppes sue?  
Thy successour halt him to longe in mue.  
O citee, syn Fortune was contrarie  
To thee in o part, yit hir gentillesse  
Purveied thee a benigne adversarie!  
Thanke hire of that, for thy disese is lesse  
Falle in the daunger of lambes humblesse  
Than be with cruel wolves al tofrete;  
A lamb is nat so greedy on hir mete.

Ther nis nothyng, as witnessith a storie,  
Makith a knyght so shynyng in renoun,  
Whan that he of his foos hath the victorie,  
As reewe on him that throwen is adoun,  
And of his blood eschue effusioun.  
A beestes kynde is, that is wylde and wood,  
Victorie nat desyre but the blood.

Also, whan that the kyng of Hermenye  
Venquissht was in bataille by Pompeye,

This kyng fil doun unto his foot in hye  
And from him caste his diadeeme awaye.  
But Pompeyus as blyve of his nobleye  
Stirte unto him and up him lifte and hente  
And many a word benigne on him despente.

He dide his might him to conforte and qweeme;  
And right anoon, withoute any delay,  
Upon his heed bad sette his diadeeme  
Ageyn; and so was doon, it is no nay.  
Whan Cesar Emperour eek on a day  
Pompeye saw byforn him led and bownde,  
Cesar in teeres salte gan habownde.

Whan Alisaundre, as Valerie hath told,  
Was in a tyme in the feeld with his hoost,  
An aged knyght of his, for verray cold,  
His lyfly might yloren hadde almoost,  
So grevous tempest tho fil in that coost.  
And whan this worthy kyng this had espyed,  
Out of his see he roos and to him hyed;  
And by the hand this olde knyght he took,  
Confortynge him in his beste maneere,  
And ledde him to his tente, as seith the book,  
And in his real seege and his chayeere  
As blyve him sette. Thus may kynges leere  
Distressid knyghtes to helpe and releeve;  
To take ensauple of this it shal naght greeve.

What wondir was it thogh that knyghtes tho  
Desyreden so noble a prince serve,  
Syn that him lever was for to forgo  
His dignitee and hir helthe conserve,  
Than his estat keepe and hem suffre sterve?  
Yit hope y seen his heir in this province;  
And that shal yee be, my good lord the Prince.

Before a juge eek in poynt to be deed,  
Of Julius Cesar ther was a knyght  
Which, with an hy vois, for to save his heed,  
To his lord Cesar cryde alowde right,  
Byseechyng him that, of his gracious might,

He wolde him helpe and reewe on his estat;  
And Cesar sente him a good advocat.

And unto that this knyght as blyve thus,  
On heichte wel that al the peple it herde,  
With manly cheere spak to Julius,  
His lord, and in this wyse he him answerde:  
"Han yee forgote how sharpe it with yow ferde  
Whan yee were in the werres of Asie?  
Maffeith, your lyf stood there in jupartie;

And advocat ne sente I noon to yow,  
But myself putte in prees and for yow faght;  
My wowndes beren good wittenesse ynow  
That I sooth seye, and lest yee leeve it naght,  
I shal yow shewe what harm have I caght,  
The doute out of your herte for to dryve."  
He nakid him and shewid him as blyve.  
Of which Cesar ful sore was ashamed,  
And in his herte sorwe made and mone;  
He heeld himselven worthy to be blamed.  
"My freend," he seide, "let me now allone;  
Advocat wole I be in my persone  
For thee; I am wel holden to do so."  
And thus this knyght his deeth he saved fro.

He dredde him, if he nadde thus ywroght,  
The peple him wolde han for a prowde man deemed,  
And ungentil, and that he cowde noght,  
As that it sholde eek have unto hem seemed,  
Thanke hem that worthy were to be qweemed.  
"What prince," quod he, "peyneth him nat wynne  
His knyghtes love, his love is to hem thynne."

Out of pitee growith mercy and spryngith,  
For piteeles man can do no mercy;  
What prince hem lakkith, nat aright he kyngith.  
And for that they been neigheburghs so ny,  
To pitee mercy joyne now wole I.  
Excellent Prince, have in hem good savour,  
And elles al in waast is your labour.

## De misericordia

Mercy, aftir the word of Seint Austyn,  
Of herte is a verray compassioun  
Of othir mennes harm, and that comth yn  
By gifte of God and by remissioun;  
As, if injurie or oppressioun  
Be doon to us, that gilt forgeve us oghte,  
For love of Cryst that by deeth our lyf boghte.

Whoso wrong to him doon wole forgeve,  
His synne shal to him forgiven be;  
Thogh that he nothyng of his goodes geve,  
The better part yit of mercy halt he;  
Thus fynde I writen of auctoritee;  
But fully may ther no man do mercy  
But if that he releeve the needy.

Thogh that a man be sobre, chaast, and treewe,  
And be with many an hy vertu endowed,  
And geve, and nat forgeve, it shal him reewe.  
Whereas oure werkes muste been avowed,  
The unmerciable shal be disallowed.  
Who nat forgeveth, mercy dooth he noon,  
And mercilees man mercy shal forgoon.

Mercy Cryst causid to been incarnat,  
And humbled Him to take our brethirhede.  
God inmortel, reewynge our seek estat,  
Mortel becam to purge our synful dede.  
Him lothid nat His precious body sprede  
Upon the Crois, this lord benigne and good;  
He wroot our chartre of mercy with His blood.

Of Him, His handwerk and His creature,  
For to be merciable, aright may lerne.  
This lyf present shul but a whyle dure,  
And, lastyng it, your mercy nat ne werne,  
O worthy Prince, for to God eterne  
It ful plesant is; dooth your mercy heere,  
For to late is aftir yee go to beere.

Take heede, excellent Prince, of your grauntsyre,  
How in his werkes he was merciablen.  
He that for mercy dyde qwyte his hyre.  
He nevere was in al his lyf vengeable,  
But ay forgaf the gilty and coupable.  
Our lige lord your fadir dooth the same;  
Now folwe hem two, my Lord, in Goddes name!

They often hadde greet cause hem to venge,  
But hir spirites benigne and peisible  
Thoghten that craft unlusty and alenge  
And forbaar it; they kneew it unlisible.  
To mercy were hir hertes ay flexible;  
Forwhy with mercy God shal qwyte hem wel,  
Aftir the wordes write in the Gospel.

It is to leeve and deeme, if a kyng shyne  
In vertu, that his sone sholde sue  
And to his fadres maneeres enclyne  
And wikkid tecches and vices eschue.  
Thus oghte it be, this to nature is due.  
He moot considere of whom he took his kynde,  
And folwe his vertu, as men writen fynde.

He moost is lyk to God, as seith Bernard,  
That holdith nothyng more precious  
Than to be mercyful. It is ful hard  
To lakke mercy and been unpitous.  
"Mercy wole I," seith our Lord glorious.  
He that denyeth God that he wolde have,  
God nayte him shal that he wole axe or crave.

Senek seith how the kyng and the ledere  
Of bees is prikkelees; he hath right noon  
Wherwith to styngen or annoye or dere;  
But othir bees prikkes han everichoon.  
Nature wolde shee sholde it forgoon  
And do no crueltee unto the swarm,  
But meekly hem governe and do noon harm.

Of this ensample sholde kynges take,

And princes that han peple for to gye;  
For to hem longith it for Goddes sake  
To weyve crueltee and tirannye,  
And to pitee hir hertes bowe and wrye,  
And reule hir peple esyly and faire.  
It is kyngly be meek and debonaire.

I rede of a kyng that Pirus was named,  
Whan him was told how that men of Tarente  
Hadde at a feeste his estat diffamed,  
He for the same folkes blyve sente;  
And whan they cam, axid to what entente  
They of him spak so and so foule ferde;  
And oon of hem, as yee shul heere, answerde:

"My Lord, if that the wyn nat faillid hadde,  
Al that we spak nere but game and play,  
Havyng reward to the wordes badde  
That we thoghte have yspoken, in good fay."  
The kyng took up a lawghtre and wente his way  
And of al that he heeld hem ful excusid;  
He seide it was wyn that so hem accusid.

Vengeance in this good lord hadde no stide;  
Mercy and humble disposicioun  
Dispensid with tho men and grace hem dide,  
And thriste undir foot crueltee adoun.  
O mighty Prince, this condicioun  
To your hynesse is ful accordant,  
And unto God almighty right plesant.

Power withouten mercy a kyng torneth  
Into a tirant - waar that feendly chek;  
For in what man that crueltee sojourneth,  
Unto his soule it is an odious spek.  
Tho men of God han neithir look ne bek  
But if that it be bekkes of manace;  
Whereas is mercy, folwith moche grace.

Salomon in his Proverbes expressith,  
"Mercy and Trouthe wardeynes been of kynges,  
And with justice also," as he witnessith,

"His trone is strengthid." What man that a kyng is,  
But if that he amonges othir thynges  
Endowid be with alle thise three,  
Men seyn he haltith in his hy degree.

A noble and glorious kynde of vengeance is  
A knyght to spare whan that he slee may.  
Ther was a duc callid Pisistaris,  
That a yong doghtir hadde, a fair may,  
Which with hir modir walkid on a day,  
Nat seith the book whidir ne what to doone,  
But thus it shoop, as I shal telle soone.

A yong, fressh, lusty, wel byseyen man  
So brente in love, he wende for to deye,  
Ravyssht of the beautee of this womman,  
This tendre morsel, this doghtir, I seye.  
And as this yong man mette hire in the weye,  
He at a leep was at hire and hire kiste.  
The modir, angry wood whan shee it wiste,

Shee right anoon hir lord the duc besoghte  
To putte him to the deeth for his trespas.  
He seide, nay, to do that nevere he thoghte.  
"Shul we sleen hem that loven us? Allas!  
What shul we thanne in the contrarie cas -  
That is to seyn, do to oure enemys?"  
Thus seide this duc, merciabile and wys.

Allas, why was this womman so vengeable?  
Certes in that shee lakkid wommanhede.  
This love had been deed, it is no fable,  
If this duc had been lyk to hir in dede;  
But mercy him forbad any blood shede;  
Shee and pitee weren of oon accord,  
And senten pacience unto this lord.

And for as mochil as that pacience  
To mercy, as in lyne of blood, atteyneth,  
Now wole I do my peyne and diligence  
To telle how hir benignitee restreyneth  
The fervent hete that the herte peyneth

Wreche cruel to take, and sharp vengeance,  
Of that the herte of man feelith grevance.

### De Paciencia

Gregorie seith, pacience verray  
Is of harm doon to man softe souffrance,  
And nat be wrooth, by no manere of way,  
With him that hath ydoon a man nulance.  
Socrates seith, no mannes governance  
Is wys but it be by souffrance preeved;  
A good man souffreth wrong and is nat meeved.

The kynde of pacience is to susteene  
Mightily wronges and hem nevere wreke,  
But hem forgeve, and wratthe and irous teene  
Out of the herte for to spere and steke;  
Hir kynde is nat to lete a word out breke  
That harmful is, for herte voide of ire  
Hath naight wherwith to sette a tonge afyre.

O pacient, o humble kyng benigne,  
O Kyng David, thy pacient meeknesse  
Nat meeved was ageyn Semey maligne,  
Whos hy malice and crabbid wikkidnesse  
Gaf greet encheson to thy worthynesse  
To venge thee, but thy benignitee  
Forbad thyn hand to kythe crueltee.

As this kyng ones cam to Bahurim,  
Out cam this man, malicious Semey,  
Sone of Gera, and swich despyt dide him  
And to his men as by him wenten they,  
Castynge stones unto hem alwey,  
That wondir was; for which oon Abusay  
Wolde have him slayn, but the kyng seide, "Nay!

"Let him curse aftir the commandement  
Of God; whan he seeth myn affliccioun  
And my disese and my grevous torment,  
He wole for this dayes malicioun,



Par aventure, do me sum guerdoun."  
Thus undirstonde I write is in the Bible,  
Which is a book autentik and credible.

The pacience of Job men may nat hyde;  
The commun vois wole algate it bywreye.  
And Alisaundre, whos fame is sprad ful wyde,  
Ful pacient was, as the bookes seye.  
A sad, wys knyght of his, with lokkes greye,  
Grucchyng ageyn his fleshly lustes, seide  
Unto his lord and thus he him upbreide:

"O Alisaundre, it is uncovenable  
Thee for to have of peple regiment  
Syn thy lust bestial and miserable  
Hath qweynt thy reson and entendement  
So ferfoorth that the hete violent  
Of leccherie is in thee, Lord and Syre.  
Repreef, I drede, qwyte shal thyn hyre.

"Fy, shamelees, unworthy Governour!"  
And whan the knyghtes tale was al endid,  
The kyng answerde: "I knowe myn errour;"  
And paciently seide, "I have offendid,  
I woot it wel, and it shal been amendid."  
A man also to Julius Cesar ones  
Crabbidly seide and shrewdly for the nones,

And among othir wordes that he speak:  
"Julius," quod he, "make it nat so tow,  
For of thy birthe art thow nat worth a leek.  
Whens that thow cam men knowen wel ynow;  
Weenest thow nat that I can tellen how  
Thy fadir was a bakere? O let be,  
Ne make it nat so qweynte, I preye thee."

Smylynge unto him spak this emperour:  
"Whethir supposist thow bet that noblesse  
Begynne in me, or noblesse and honour  
Deffaille in thee?" This question, I gesse,  
Was in swich cas but answer of softnesse;  
For that was seid in repreef of his name,

His pacience, as who seith, took in game.

To the chivalrous, worthy Scipio  
Of Affrik also speak ones a wight  
And seide, in armes durste he but smal do;  
He faght but smal whan he cam to the fight.  
And patiently answerde he anoon right:  
"My modir me baar, a chyld feeble and smal,  
And foorth me broghte, and no fightere at al."

Senek seith how the kyng Antigone  
Herde ones folk speke of him wikkidly,  
For ther nas but a curtyn, as seith he,  
Twixt him and hem; and whan his tyme he sy,  
Asyde he drow the curtyn sodeynly  
And seide: "Gooth hens lest the kyng yow heere,  
For the curtyn hath herd al your mateere."

Of Duk Pisistaris eek wole I telle.  
He hadde a freend, Arispus was his name,  
Which ones hastily with wordes felle  
Rebukid so this duc that it was shame  
To heeren it; and yit with sorwe and grame  
He in despyt spette in this dukes face,  
And he therto no word spak in that place.

He hadde him so in port and word and cheere  
Right as him had be do no vilenye,  
But lookid foorth in a freendly maneere.  
Now ther were in this dukes conpaignie  
His sones two, that buskid hem in hye  
To this Arispus and wolden ful fayn,  
Nad hir fadir hem let, have him yslayn.

The nexte day aftir, this Arispus  
To take gan consideracioun  
How that he to the duc misbaar him thus,  
And made more waymentacioun  
Than I can make of nominacioun;  
He wolde han slayn himself, it is no lees,  
But that this duc broghte al to reste and pees.

Whan he kneew how it with Arispus stood,  
He dressid him to him, and that as swythe,  
And bad him to be glad of cheere and mood.  
He seide and swoor unto him ofte sythe:  
"As freendly wole I be and stande as ny the  
As I dide evere." And thus his pacience  
And meeknesse hath qwenchid al this offense.

Salomon seith, in him is sapience  
That is endowid with benigne humblesse.  
Grace of the Holy Goost no residence  
Holdith in that man that lakkith meeknesse.  
God took upon Him humble buxumnesse  
Whan He Him wrappid in our mortel rynde:  
That oghte a mirour be to al mankynde.

Plesant to God was the virginitee  
Of His modir, but verray God and man  
Conceyved was thurgh the humilitee  
Which He byheeld in that blessid womman.  
O humble maide, who is it that can  
The debonaire humblesse tellen al  
Restyng in thy clenness virginal?

Thogh that the humble were a foul habyt,  
Yit in vertues glorious is he;  
But the proud man stant in anothir plyt;  
Thogh his array be fair and fressh to se,  
His deedes and his werkis foule be.  
What hy estat that a man represente,  
Humble to be let him sette his entente.

Humilitee verray, as seith Cesarie,  
May nevere be withouten charitee,  
And shee is a vertu moost necessarie;  
Amonges alle vertues that be,  
Shee on hem alle obteeneth dignitee.  
They fro the regne of God hemself dyvyde  
That charitee weyven and caste asyde.

Right as a man ne may nat thidir go  
Where he purposith him but if a way

Be thidirward, Seint Anselm seith, right so  
Withouten charitee men go ne may  
Arigh unto Godward; men mowen ay  
Doon as hem list if they been charitable,  
But lakkyng it, is nothyng profitable.

Oonly keepyng of charitee us preeveth  
That we disciples been of God almighty.  
What thyng it be that harmeth man or greeveth,  
By goodnesse overcome it paciently.  
No seint to hevne cometh, as rede I,  
But by keepyng of pacience; and how  
Men may it leere wole I shewe yow.

Take heede how, whan that Cryst our Sauveour  
Was bobbid and His visage al byspet,  
And greet despyt doon Him and deshonour,  
Bownden and scourgid and grevously bet,  
Crowned with thorn, nayled to the gibet;  
Yit for al this torment, no word He speak,  
So was He pacient, benigne, and meek.

And syn our lord God was of swich souffrance,  
Thanne is it to his creature shame  
On greef to him doon take any vengeance.  
Man oghte rather sorwe for the blame  
That God shal konne him that hath doon the grame  
Than for the harm that the greeved hath hent;  
So dooth the charitable and pacient.

#### De castitate

To chastitee purpose y now to haaste,  
Which covenable is and convenient  
Unto a kyng for to savoure and taaste.  
What prince that with unclennesse is brent,  
And therin settith his lust and talent,  
No parfyt dede or werk him folwe may.  
Mochil is herte chaast to Goddes pay.

Right as the persone of a prince outward

Honored is with clothes precious,  
So oghte his herte clothid been inward  
With vertu, and him kythe vertuous.  
Fressh apparaille and herte leccherous  
Unsittyngly been in a prince joynt -  
Namely in a Cristen kyng enoynt.

In as mochil as dignitee of kyng  
Excedith othir folk in reverence,  
The more him oghte peyne him, lest al thyng  
Othir folk passe in vertuous excellence.  
Honour nat elles is in existence  
Than reverence geven in witesse  
Of vertu, as the scriptures expresse.

Honour which was goten vertuously  
Ne was nat first by dignitee purchaced,  
As that Boece tellith expressly,  
But dignitees honour was embraced  
With vertu; dignitee had been unlaced  
And ungirt of honour nad vertu be,  
For vertu hath hir propre dignitee.

Aristotle conseillid Alisaundre  
To leccherie he nat enclyne sholde,  
For it is hogges lyf, which were esclaundre  
To him if he tho weyes take wolde  
That beestes resonlees usen and holde;  
For of body it is destruccioun,  
And eek of al vertu corrupcioun.

Syn they that nat were of Cristen bapteeme  
Conseillid men eschue leccherie,  
Than oghte us Cristen men that vice fleeme  
And swiche lustes in us mortifie.  
Whoso entendith into blisse stye,  
That fyry sparcle algate he muste qwenche  
And lustes leve of lady and of wenche.

The Scripture seith, no fornicatour  
The regne of Cryst and God shal enherite;  
It seith eek that him and the advoutour

God deeme shal; He can hir labour qwyte  
Ful sharply that in tho tweyne delyte;  
And so He wole but correccioun  
Be mannes sheeld and his proteccioun.

Affrican Scipio, that noble knyght,  
Whan he was twenti yeer and four of age,  
And by prowess and by manhode and might  
Cartagiens put hadde into servage,  
Ther was a mayde sent him in hostage,  
Of yeeres rype ynow, and of beautee  
Moost excellent that men mighte owhere see.

And whan this worthy yong prince honorable  
This womman sy, of here he took good yeeme,  
Thynkyng that shee was of beautee able  
The worthyeste on lyve for to qweeme,  
And in him multiplied thoghtes breeme.  
But nathelees, for al his bysy thoght,  
Enquere he gan if shee wyf were or nocht.

Shee trouthis was to Judibal, men seide,  
A lord of that citee; and Scipio  
On a ministre of his the charge leide  
For hir fadir and modir blyve go.  
They at his heeste cam unto him tho,  
And in hir clene virginal estat  
Restored he this maide inviolat.

The gold eek that for hir redempcioun  
Purveied was, forgaf he uttirly,  
In help and encrees and promocioun  
Of hir wedlok; and whan Judibal sy  
And kneew how Scipio thus noblely  
Demened him, he was ful wel apayed  
Of that he grucchid first and was affrayed.

He wente unto th'estates of the toun  
And tolde hem al the cas as it befil;  
And they this lord gaf laude and hy renoun  
For that; and alle with oon herte and wil  
Submittid hem to this prince gentil.

Thus herte chaast and tendre gentillesse  
Conquereth hertes rather than duresse.

Or Marcus Marcellus had the citee  
Of Ciracuse taken or ynome,  
He leet do crye amonges his meynee  
That, whan the citee he had overcome  
And his folk therin entred were and come,  
Noon be so hardy the wommen oppresse,  
Ne touche hem by no way of unclennesse.

Ther was also a seemly, fressh yong man  
To whom nature swich favour had lent  
Of shap and beautee, that ther nas womman  
That ones had a look on him despent  
But that hir herte gaf fleshly consent;  
And nathelees, eschued he the taast  
Of unclennesse and kepte his body chaast.

By toknes kneew he hir unclene entente,  
And with his nayles cracchid he his face,  
And scocchid it with knyves and torente,  
And it so wondirfully gan difface  
That his beautee refusid hadde hir place.  
Al this dide he hir hertes to remue  
From him and make hem unclennesse eschue.

Jerom tellith ageyn Jovynyan,  
A fair womman, a mayde clept Ulie,  
Yweddid was unto an aged man,  
A Romayn smiten with the palesie;  
But shee in chastitee was set so hie  
That an ensauple verraily was shee  
To alle tho that loved chastitee.

Hir housbonde herde ones an enemy  
Which that he hadde, speke in his reproof,  
That his breeth stank as that he stood him by;  
Wherof he took greet hevynesse and greif.  
He gooth hoom to his wyf and this mescheef  
Ful hevily to hir he gan compleyne,  
And thus of hire he gan to axe and freyne:

"Why wyf," quod he, "han yee nat, or this tyme,  
Ywarned me how that it with me stood?"  
"Sire, it was nat," quod shee, "espied by me.  
I heeld your breath ay also soote and good  
As othir mennes been; I undirstood  
Noon othir ne yit do, in soothfastnesse."  
Ful fewe men had shee kist, as I gesse!

Shee hyly was to preise and to commende,  
That nat ne kneew by othir mennes mowthis  
Hir makes vice; it was al wel shee wende.  
To fynde many swiche ful unkouthis is:  
Lat us awayte wel whan the wynd south is  
And north at ones, blowynge on the sky,  
And fynde swich an heep than hardily.

Plato his patrimoyne and his contree  
Lefte and forsook and dwelte in wyldernesse  
For to restreyne fleshly nycetee;  
And his disciples loved so clennesses,  
And for to fallen hadden swich gastnesse,  
Hir yen they out of hir heedes brente  
Lest sighte of hem spotte mighte hir entente.

Demostenes his handes ones putte  
In a wommannes bosom japyngly,  
Of face fair but of hir body a slutte.  
"With yow to dele," seide he, "what shal I  
Yow geve?" "Fourty pens," quod shee, "soothly."  
He seide nay, so deere he bye nolde  
A thyng for which that him repente sholde.

I fynde how two doghtres of a duchesse,  
The fleshly touches of men for to flee  
Whan men of Ungarie hem wolde oppresse,  
In conservynge of hir virginitee,  
They hem purveied a good soutiltee:  
They chekenes flesh putte undirnethe hir pappes,  
Hem to deffende from unclenly happes.

Beholde of wommen heer a noble wyle.



In short avisament, who can do bet?  
By that this flessh thus hadde leyn a whyle  
And that it was ychaufed wel and het,  
It stank so foule that it hath ylet  
Tho men, that weery they were of hir pray  
And forsook the wommen and wente hir way.

O wommanhode! In thee regneth vertu  
So excellent that to feeble is my wit  
To expresse it, wherfore I am eschu  
To medle or make a long sermoun of it.  
Sum mannes mowth yit wolde I were yshit  
That vice of wommen sparith nat bywreye,  
For alle soothes been nat for to seye.

But for to talke fourth of continence  
Or chastitee: whoso chaast lyve shal  
Moot scourge his fleshly lust with abstinence;  
Thriste him adoun, geve him no place at al.  
Metes and drynkes make a soule thral  
If the body be reuled by excesse;  
Forthy it needith take of hem the lesse.

Excesse of mete and drynke is wombes freend,  
And wombe is next to our membres pryvee.  
Glotonye is ful plesant to the feend;  
To leccherie redy path is shee.  
The feend lyth in awayt of our freeltee  
And stireth man to drynkes delicat  
To make ageynes chastitee debat.

A man sholde ete and drynke in swich a wyse  
As may be to his helthes susteenynge,  
Aftir the doctrine of Senek the wyse.  
Sum man drynkith the wyn to his weenyng  
Whan he drynkith his wit. More is preysynge  
And honourable a man conpleyne on thrist  
Than dronken be whan he the cuppe hath kist.

Thus seide Jerom unto a virgyne:  
"O doghtir, syn th'apostle sore dredde  
Lust of his flessh and dide his body pyne

And heeld it lowe and symplely it fedde,  
Wherthurgh the vice of unclennesse he fledde,  
Of continence how maistow sikir be  
Of foode delicat that hast plentee,

"And specially now in thy youthes hete?"  
For whoso wilneth to be continent,  
Many a lust superflu moot he lete  
And likerous; by mesure his talent  
Mesure he moot. Whan reson is regent  
Of man, than regneth no delicacie;  
Reson a man deffendith fro folie.  
The wynes delicat and sweete and stronge  
Causen ful many an inconvenience;  
If that a man outrageously hem fonge,  
They birien wit and forbeeden silence  
Of conseil; they outrayen pacience;  
They kyndlen ire and fyren leccherie,  
And causen bothe body and soule die.

And trewely, it is ful perillous  
Unto a prince which that hath a land  
In governance, in that be vicious;  
It needith him take heede unto his hand  
That that vice him encombre nat; for and  
It do, he shal nat regne but a throwe.  
Ful many a man hath excesse overthrowe.

Of Babiloyne the kyng Baltasar  
Nat hadde been ypryved of his lyf  
If he of dronkenesse hadde be war;  
But for that he therin was deffectyf,  
It of his death was verray causatyf;  
By nyghtirtale he slayn was by Kyng Darie;  
Thus paith glotoun excesse hir salarie.

Thurgh dronkenesse how took his deeth Nabal  
And how slow Tholomé also Symoun?  
Allas, that drynke so man serve shal!  
How leide Lothes doghtres hem adoun  
By hir fadir? Whan his discrecioun  
Was dreynt with wyn, he with hem fleshly delte,

And therof nothyng ne wiste ne felte.

How was eek Oloferne by Judith  
The womman slayn but thurgh his dronkenesse?  
What prince it be that spottid is therwith,  
His welthe hath but a brotil stablenesse.  
Of swiche stories mo wolde I expresse,  
But for I nat ne can, I lete hem passe;  
I am as lewde and dul as is an asse.  
With litil foode content is nature,  
And bet the body farith with a lyte  
Than whan it charged is out of mesure.  
Looke what thyng may the body profyte  
And the soule in the same shal delyte;  
What thyng that it distemprith and disesith,  
The soule it hurtith, for it God displesith.

Wratthe the body of man inward fretith,  
And God therwith displesid is ful sore;  
Envye also of God and man hir getith  
Lyk thank and ese and shal do everemore;  
And leccherie, as techith smertes lore,  
The body waastith and the soule greeveth,  
And foode delicat therto man meeveth.

Beholde also, whan that the paunche is ful,  
A fume clymbith up into the heed  
And makith a man al lustlees and dul;  
He wexith hevy as a pece of leed.  
Whoso that thanne wolde geve him reed  
To looke in a book of devocioun,  
I trowe in ydil were his mocioun.

But consaille him to trotte unto the wyn  
And, for al his excesse and his outrage,  
He therto wole assente wel afyn,  
And there wole he outen his langage,  
And do to Bachus and Venus homage,  
For noon of hem two can be wel from othir;  
They love as wel as dooth suster and brothir.

And aftir moot he rowne with a pilwe

His lyflees resons there to despende.  
We beestes resonable, allas, why wole we  
Ageyn resoun werreye and hir offende?  
O goode God, Thy grace to us sende  
That we may flee swich superfluitee  
And al thyng that is fo to chastitee.

#### De regis magnanimitate

Of magnanimittee now wole I trete,  
That is to seyn, strong herte or greet corage  
Which in knyghthode hath stablisshid hir sete.  
Yee, gracious Prince, of blood and of lynage  
Descendid been to have it in usage.  
Mars hath been ay freend to your worthy lyne;  
Yee moot of kynde to manhode enclyne.

He that is strong of corage and of herte,  
If he lordshipes have or greet richesse,  
Or that Fortunes styng him overthwerte,  
Is alway oon in welthe and in distresse;  
He lucre and los weyeth in evennesse;  
He settith lital by good temporel;  
How the world shape, he takith it ay wel.

But for to speke of corage of a kyng,  
He of his peple owith be so cheer  
That hir profyt he moot for anythyng  
Promote with his might and his poweer;  
And for his reme and hem, take him so neer  
That unto the perilles of bataille  
He moot him putte, and in hem travaille,

And in deffense of Holy Chirche also,  
And for our feith putte him in jupartie;  
Othir causes been ther but fewe mo  
Why a kyng oghte to bataille him hye  
And in tho causes drede him nat to dye,  
But kythe him a good knyght among his foos -  
Thus wonne is magnanimittees loos.

Right as we seen by reson and nature  
Part of mannes body deffendith al,  
As an arm puttith him in aventure  
For the body that nat perisshe it shal,  
Right so a kynges cheertee special,  
If he God love and his peple and his land,  
Whan neede is, moot deffende hem with his hand.

Thurgh grete emprises wonne is hy renoun;  
Renoun is callid glorie and honour.  
Magnanimus hath this condicioun,  
That in bataille, how sharp that be the stour,  
Him lever is to suffre dethes shour  
Than cowardly and shamefully flee,  
So manly of corage and herte is he.

He medleth nevere but of thynges grete  
And hye and vertuous; he nevere is meeved  
With smale thynges, as the bookes trete;  
And swich a drede hath for to be repreeved  
That, unto thyng that may be knowe or preeved  
For villenous or foul or repreevable,  
He nevere obeyeth, this knyght honorable.

I have yred of oon clept Coadrus  
That was prince of the oost of Athenyens,  
How in the feeld a lawe maad was thus  
Twixt his oost and hem of Polipolens:  
With triumphe sholde that part go thens  
Whos duc or prince were unarmed slaw  
In habyt strange - lo! swich was the lawe.

Him lever was himselven for to dye  
And his men lyve, than see hem bystad  
So streite that by violent maistrie  
His foos hadde hem venquissht or overlad.  
Adayes now is noon swich cheertee had;  
Algates I ne can nat seen it usid;  
Knyghtes been looth therof to been accusid.

O worthy Prince, I truste in your manhode  
Medled with prudence and discrecioun,

That yee shul make many a knyghtly rode  
And the pryde of oure foos thristen adoun.  
Manhode and wit conqueren hy renoun,  
And whoso lakkith outhir of the tweyne  
Of armes wantith the brydil and reyne.

Or the ordre of knyghthode be receyved,  
Ful needful is a man to be prudent,  
Elles that oost may lightly be deceyved  
That is unto his governance ybent.  
Presumpcioun is disobedient  
Alday and by wysdam nat wole him gye;  
Al justifieth his obstinacie.

Ofte in batailles hath be seen or this  
A syde souffred hath disconfiture  
Which an unwys heed gyed hath amis.  
What knyght on him takith that charge or cure,  
If he in knyghtly honour shal endure,  
Him oghte endowid been of sapience,  
And have in armes greet experience.

Experience and art in a bataille,  
Of the prudent knyght, more may profyte  
Than hardynesse or force may availle  
Of him that therof knowith naght or lyte.  
Hardynesse in effect nat worth a myte  
Is to victorious conclusioun,  
But with him medle aart, wit, and resoun.

Whan reuled wit and manly hardynesse  
Been knyht togidere as yok of mariage,  
Ther folwith of victorie the swetnesse;  
For to sette on him whettith his corage,  
And wit restreyne his wil can and asswage  
In tyme due and in covenable;  
And thus tho two joynt been ful profitable.

But be a knyght wys or corageous,  
Or have hem bothe at ones at his lust,  
If that his herte of good be desyrus,  
On his manhode is ther but lytil trust.

God graunte knyghtes rubbe away the rust  
Of covetyse if it hir hertes cancre,  
And graunte hem picche in souffissance hir ancre.

Quod rex non [de]bet felicitatem suam ponere in divitiis

Now for as moche as magnanimitie  
May no foot holde if that the herte of man  
Greetly unto richesse enclyned be,  
Than is the beste reed that I see can,  
A kyng therein delyte him nat; for whan  
His herte is in that vice ficchid hye,  
Smal prowess in him wole it signifie.

And if a kynges honour shal be qweynt  
With a foul and a wrecchid covetyse,  
His peples trust in him shal be ful feynt;  
A kyng may nat governe him in that wyse.  
The coveitous may do no greet empryse,  
For whan his herte lurkith in his cofre,  
His body to bataille he dar nat profre.

If that a kyng sette his felicitee  
Principally on richesse and moneye,  
His peple it torneth to adversitee,  
For he ne rekkith in what wyse or weye  
He pile hem. Allas, that kynges nobleye  
Torne sholde into style of tirannye!  
Allas the peril, harm, and vilenye!

God I byseeche your herte enlumyne,  
Gracious Prince, that the feend our fo  
No power have so your herte myne,  
But of His grace keepe yow therfro,  
And graunte yow to governe yow so  
As moost holsum is for body and soule;  
That desyre I, by God and by Seint Poule.  
Whan that Marcus Curcius, a Romeyn,  
Unto the Beneventans seege leide,  
For he was poore, as that they herde seyn,  
They a greet somme of gold him sente and preide

Withdrawe his seege; and he answerde and seide:  
"To hem retorneth that yow hidir sente  
And thus to hem declarith myn entente:

"Seye hem, Marcus Curcius lever is  
Ryche men have at his commandement  
Than to be ryche himself - fortelle hem this;  
He may with gold nat be corrupt ne blent.  
Of force of men eek they been inpotent  
To venquisshe him, for there hir aart shal faille;  
Hir blynde profers shal hem nat availle."

To Alisaundre, as I shal tellen heere,  
A knyght which was unto him special  
Thus spak and blamed him in this maneere:  
He seide, "If oure goddes thy body smal  
To thy greedy desir had maad egal,  
Al the world hadde nat be souffissant  
To han receyved so large a geant;

"For with thy right hond thow the orient  
Sholdest han touchid - I am seur of that,  
And with thy lyft hond eek the occident.  
Now syn that thy body answerith nat  
Unto thy wil, what may I seye, what?  
Outhir thow art a man, or god, or noght;  
Mochil of thee mervaille I in my thoght.

"If thow be god, thow folwe muste his trace  
And nat men of hir good robbe or byreve,  
But hem releeve and do hem ese and grace;  
If thow be man, considere eek, by thy leeve,  
Thow art mortel - thow maist be deed or eeve.  
If thow be nothyng, thee putte out of mynde  
As he that is of no nature or kynde.

"Ther is noon hy estat so sad and stable,  
Remembre wel, let it nat be forgete,  
But he to falle in peril is ful able.  
By deeth a leon maad is briddes mete,  
And beestes also his flessch gnawe and frete."  
The answer of the kyng nat have I herd;  
My book nat tellith how he was answerd.



Senek seith, the poore Diogenes  
Kyng Alisaundre in richesse paste,  
For he ne mighte, as he seith doutelees,  
Geve him so mochil gold ne on him caste  
As he refuse wolde. O, at the laste  
Men thynke shuln they to mochil han had,  
And of this worldes muk be ful unglad.

Desyr of good a kyng moot leye apaart  
And peyne him to purchace him a good fame;  
Therin lat him laboure and doon his aart;  
Ther is nothyng unto a worthy name.  
And if a kyng it lakke, it were his shame,  
And shame is contrarie unto worthynesse;  
Good loos disserved is grettest richesse.

And for largesse wynneth good renoun,  
Thereof now thynke I trete a litil stownde.  
A prince and kyng of al a regioun  
Moot avarice thriste adoun to grownde.  
To him that lyth in helle deepe ybownde,  
Thee, avarice, bytake I to keepe.  
Thow pynepeny, there ay moot thow sleepe!

Gold wolde of fals enprisonyng a writ  
Sue ageyn thee if he at large were,  
But he so faste is in thy cofre shit  
He may nat out. O fals enprisonere!  
Largesse wolde be with sheeld and spere  
Evene in thy berd if he brak out tomorwe,  
And for his sake do thee care and sorwe.  
Thow to largesse doost ful mochil wrong  
That hast hir servant undir thy servage;  
On thee and nat on hire is it along  
That gold is let to goon on hir message.  
Shee hath him sent in many a viage  
Or this, and that was the commun profyt,  
The which to lette is evere thy delyt.

Largesse oonly nat list gold servant be  
Unto hirself, but the peple shee wolde

Hadde as good part of hir service as she.  
To hire is al the comun peple yholde,  
But thow makist the peples hertes colde;  
Thow sleest an heep which that shee wolde save;  
Thow no wight helpist thogh he thyn help crave.

Me list no more speke of thee this tyme,  
But of myn helply lady sovereyne,  
Largesse, my lady, now wole I ryme;  
And aftirward, of thy cursid careyne  
I speke shal; nat o word wole I feyne,  
But as scriptures treten of thee, wrecche,  
I touche shal - the feend thee hennes fecche!

#### De virtute largitatis et de vitio prodigalitatis

Aristotle of largesse tellith this:  
Who vertuously large list to be,  
Considerere first of what power he is  
And eek the tymes of necessitee,  
And as the men disserven, so be free;  
Geve in mesure unto the indigent  
And the worthy, and that is wel despent;

And who dooth othirwyse in his gevyng  
Largesses reule passith and excedith;  
He neithir worthy is thank ne preysynge  
That to him that no neede hath giftes bedith.  
Of verray folie also it procedith  
To geve the unworthy, for that cost  
Al misdespendid is, for it is lost.

And he that despendith out of mesure  
Shal taaste anoon povertes bittirnesse;  
Fool largesse is therto a verray lure.  
Of him also he berith the liknesse  
That on himself, as the book can witnesse,  
Victorie geveth to his enemys;  
And he that so despendith is nat wys.

Largesse stant nat in mochil gevyng,

But it is aftir the wil and the might  
Of him that geveth aftir his havynge;  
For it may sumtyme happe that a wight  
Which of richesse berith nat but light  
Geveth but smal and yit largere is he  
Than he that geveth gretter quantitee.

Aftir his good man may geve and despende  
Whereas neede is, but he that al despendith  
And waastith shal himselven first offende;  
Fool largesse alday wrecchidly endith.  
Many a man hir foul outrage shendith;  
But of largesse is good the governance;  
Bothe to God and man it is plesance.

Evene as a mannes blood is norisshynge  
To his body if it corrupt nat be,  
So been riches to soules feedyng  
Holsum if they, whereas necessitee  
Axith, despent been, and also if he  
Which that hem wan, gat hem with rightwisnesse;  
For hevne and helle is gote by richesse.

A crookid hors nevere is the bet entecchid  
Althogh his brydil glistre of gold and shyne;  
Right so a man that vicious is and wrecchid,  
And his riches gote hath of rapyne,  
And also evele as man can ymagyne,  
Despendith hem, nat for hem the bet is,  
But mochil wers; good is take heede of this.

He that his flesh despendith and his blood,  
My Lord, in your service, him giftes beede;  
There is largesse mesurable good.  
A kyng so bownde is, he moot do so neede.  
Service unqwit and murdre, it is no dreede,  
As clerkes writen, and desheritance,  
Byfore almighty God axen vengeance.

Of fool largesse wole I talke a space,  
How it befil, y not in what contree,  
But ther was oon named John of Canace,

A ryche man, and two doghtres had he,  
That to two worthy men of a citee  
He wedde leet, and there was gladnesse  
And revel more than I can expresse.

The fadir his doghtres and hir housbondes  
Loved ful wel and hadde hem leef and deere;  
Tyme to tyme he gaf hem with his hondes  
Of his good passyngly, and they swich cheere  
Him made and were of so plesant maneere  
That he ne wiste how be bettre at ese,  
They cowden him so wel cherice and plese;

For he as mochil hauntid in partie  
Hir hous as that he dide his owne hous.  
They heeld him up so with hir flaterie  
That of despenses he was outrageous,  
And of his good they were ay desirous.  
Al that they axid hadden they reedy;  
They evere weren upon him greedy.

This sely man continued his outrage  
Til al his goode was disshid and goon;  
And whan they felte his despenses asswage,  
They wax unkynde unto him anoon,  
For aftir had he cherisshynge noon.  
They weery weren of his conpaignie;  
And he was wys and shoop a remedie.

He to a marchant gooth of his notice  
Which that his trusty freend had been ful yore,  
Byseechyng him that he wolde him chevice  
Of ten thousand pound no lenger ne more  
Than dayes thre, and he wolde it restore  
At his day. This was doon; the somme he hente  
And to his owne hous therwith he wente.

And on the morwe preide he to souper  
His sones bothe and his doghtres also;  
They to him cam withoute any daungere.  
How that they ferden, lat I passe and go;  
They ferden wel, withouten wordes mo.

To his konnyng he greet desport hem made;  
He dide his might to cheere hem and to glade.

Aftir souper, whan they hir tyme sy,  
They took hir leeve and hoom they wolde algate;  
And he answerde and seide hem sikirly:  
"This nyght yee shul nat passe out of the gate;  
Your hous is fer and it is dirk and late;  
Nevene it nat for it shal nat betyde."  
And so al nyght he made hem for to abyde.

The fadir logged hem of sly purpoos  
In a chambre next unto his joynnyng,  
For betwixt hem nas ther but a parcloos  
Of bord nat but of an hoomly makynge,  
Thurghout the which at many a chynnyng  
In eche chambre they mighten beholde  
And see what othir diden if they wolde.

I can nat seyn how they slepten that nyght,  
Also it longith nat to my mateere;  
But on the morwe at the brood day light  
The fadir roos, and for they sholden heere  
What that he dide, in a boistous maneere  
Unto his chiste, which thre lokkes hadde,  
He wente, and thereat wrythed he ful sadde.

And whan it was yopned and unshit,  
The baggid gold by the marchant him lent  
He hath uncofred, and streight foorth with it  
Unto his beddes feet goon is and went.  
What dooth thanne this fel man and prudent  
But out this gold on a tapyt hath shot,  
That in the bagges leftre ther no grot.

And al this dide he nat but for a wyle,  
As that yee shul wel knowen aftirward;  
He shoop his sones and doghtres begyle.  
His noyse made hem dresen hem upward;  
They caste hir eres to his chambreward  
And herde of gold the russhynge and the soun  
As that he rudely threew hem adoun;

And to the parcloos they hem haaste and hye  
To wite and knowe what hir fadir wroghte.  
In at the chynes of the bord they pry  
And sy how he among the nobles soghte  
If deffectyf were any, as hem thoghte.  
And on his nayle he threew hem ofte and caste,  
And bagged hem and cofred at the laste;

And opneth his dore and doun gooth his wey.  
And aftir blyve out of hir bed they ryse  
And cam doun eek. Hir fadir thanken they  
Of his good cheere in hire beste wyse -  
And al was for the goldes covetyse;  
And to goon hoom they axen of him leve;  
They been departed and they there him leve.  
Walkynge homward, they janglid faste and speek  
Of the gold which they sy hir fadir have.  
Oon seide, "I wondre theron;" "And I eek,"  
Quod anothir, "for also God me save,  
Yistirday, thogh I sholde into my grave  
Han crept, I durste on it han leid my lyf  
That gold with him nat hadde be so ryf."

Now lat hem muse on that what so hem liste,  
And to hir fadir now wole I me dresse.  
He al this gold takith out of his chiste  
And to the marchant paide it more and lesse,  
Thankynge him often of his kyndenesse;  
And thennes gooth he hoom unto his mete,  
And to his sones hous whan he hadde ete.

Whan he cam thidir, they made of him more  
Than that they weren wont by many fold;  
So greet desport they made him nat ful yore.  
"Fadir," quod they, "this is your owne houshold;  
In feith ther is nothyng withynne oure hold  
But it shal be at your commandement.  
Wolde God that yee were of oure assent;

"Thanne we sholden ay togidere dwelle."  
Al what they menten wiste he wel ynow.

"Sones and doghtres," quod he, "sooth to telle,  
My wil is good also to be with yow -  
How sholde I meryer be nat woot I how  
Than with yow for to be continuel ?  
Your conpaignie lykith me ful wel."

Now shoop it so they heeld hous alle in feere  
Sauf the fadir, and as they lowgh and pleide,  
His doghtres bothe with lawhynghe cheere  
Unto hir fadir spak and thus they seide,  
And to assoille hir question, him preide:  
"Now, goode fadir, how mochil moneye  
In your strong bownden chiste is, we yow preye?"  
"Ten thousand ponde," he seide, and lyed lowde;  
"I tolde hem," quod he, "nat ful longe ago,  
And that as redily as that I cowde.  
If yee wole aftir this do to me so  
As yee han doon befor, thanne alle tho  
I in my testament dispose shal  
For your profyt - youres it shal been al."

Aftir this day they alle in oon hous were  
Til the day cam of the fadres dyynghe.  
Good mete and drynke and clothes for to were  
He hadde and paide naght to his endynghe.  
Whan he sy the tyme of his departynghe,  
His sones and his doghtres dide he calle  
And in this wyse he spak unto hem alle:

"Nat purpose I make othir testament  
But of that is in my strong chiste bownde;  
And right anoon, or I be hennes hent,  
An hundred ponde of nobles goode and rownde  
Takith to prechours - tarieth it no stownde;  
An hundred ponde eek to the freeres greye,  
And Carmes fifty - tarie it nat, I seye.

"And whan I biried am, of hem the keyes  
Of my chiste takith, for they hem keepe.  
By every keye writen been the weyes  
Of my wil." This gold was nat suffred sleepe.  
It was anoon dalt, for hir hertes deepe

Stak in his bownden cofre, and al hir hope  
Was goode bagges therin for to grope.

To every chirche and reclus of the toun  
Bad hem eek of gold geve a quantitee.  
Al as he bad they weren prest and boun  
And dide it blyve; but so moot I thee,  
Ful slyly he deceyved this meynee -  
His sones and his doghtres bothe, I meene;  
Hir berdes shaved he right smoothe and cleene.  
Whan he was deed and his exequies do,  
Solempnely they to the freres yide  
And bad tho keyes delivre hem unto;  
And as that they hem beden, so they dide.  
Tho joieful sones dresse hem to the stide  
Whereas this stronge bownden chiste stood,  
But or they twynned thens they pekkid mood.

They opned the chiste and fond right noght  
But a passyngly greet sergeantes mace  
In which ther gayly maad was and ywroght  
This same scripture: "I, John of Canace,  
Make swich testament heere in this place:  
Who berith charge of othir men and is  
Of hem despysid, slayn be he with this."

Amonges folies alle is noon, I leeve,  
More than man his good ful largely  
Despende in hope men wole him releeve  
Whan his good is despendid uttirly;  
The indigent men setten nothyng by.  
I, Hoccleve, in swich cas am gilty; this me touchith.  
So seith povert, which on fool large him vouchith.

For thogh I nevere were of hy degree,  
Ne hadde mochil good ne greet richesse,  
Yit hath the vice of prodigalitee  
Smerted me sore and doon me hevynesse.  
He that but lytil hath may doon excesse  
In his degree as wel as may the ryche,  
Thogh hir despenses weye nat ylyche.



So have I plukkid at my purses strynges  
And maad hem ofte for to gape and gane  
That his smal stuf hath take him to his wynges,  
And hath ysworn to be my welthes bane  
But if releef away my sorwe plane;  
And whens it come shal, can I nat gesse,  
My Lord, but it procede of your hynesse.  
I me repente of my misreuled lyf;  
Wherefore, in the way of sauvacioun  
I hope I be; my dotage excessyf  
Hath put me to swich castigacioun  
That indigence hath dominacioun  
On me. O, hadde I help now, wolde I thryve;  
And so ne dide I nevere yit my lyve.

My yeerly guerdoun, myn annuitee,  
That was me grauntid for my long labour,  
Is al behynde - I may nat payed be;  
Which causith me to lyven in langour.  
O, liberal Prince, ensample of honour,  
Unto your grace lyke it to promoote  
My poore estat, and to my wo beeth boote.

And worthy Prince, at Crystes reverence,  
Herkneth what I shal seyn and beeth nat greeved,  
But lat me stande in your benevolence;  
For if myn hertes wil wist were and preeved  
How yow to love it stired is and meeved,  
Yee sholden knowe I your honour and welthe  
Thriste and desyre, and eek your soules helthe.

In al my book yee shul nat see ne fynde  
That I youre deedes lakke or hem dispreise;  
But for I wolde that yee hadde in mynde  
Swich thyng as your renoun mighte up areise,  
I wryte as my symple conceit may peise.  
And trustith wel, al that my penne seith  
Procedith of good herte and treewe in feith.

What kyng that dooth more excessyf despenses  
Than his land may to souffyse or atteyne  
Shal be destroyed aftir the sentences

Of Aristotle; he shal nat flee the peyne.  
Fool largesse and avarice, tho tweyne,  
If that a kyng eschue and large be,  
Rejoise he shal his real dignitee.  
How fool largesse a kyng destroye may  
As blyve wole I unto yow declare:  
Fool largesse geveth so moche away  
That it the kynges cofres makith bare,  
And thanne awakith poore peples care,  
For al that shee despendid hath and waastid  
They moot releve - therto been they haastid.

The tylere with his poore cote and land  
That may unnethes gete his sustenance,  
And he that naghth hath but labour of hand,  
Been ofte put unto ful smert nuisance.  
Good is be waar of Goddes long souffrance;  
Thogh he to venge him tarie and be souffrable,  
Whan his strook cometh, it is importable.

Nat speke I ageyn eides uttirly -  
In sum cas they been good and necessarie;  
But whan they goon to custumablely,  
The peple it makith for to curse and warie;  
And if they been despendid in contrarie  
Of that they grauntid of the peple were,  
The more grucchen they the cost to bere.

The pot so longe to the watir gooth  
That hoom it cometh at the laste ybroke;  
Whan that the peple with a cheere looth  
Hir purs yemptid have and eek hir poke,  
Hem thynkith that they over ny been soke.  
What harm of that to kynges hath betid,  
Scriptures tellen - it may nat been hid.

But Favel nat reportith tho scriptures;  
His lordes soules salve he from him hydith;  
He bisyeth him so in sly portraytures  
That hoomly trouthe nat with him abydith;  
The sweete venym of his tonge gydith  
His lord unto the valeye of dirknesse

If he governe him by his fikilnesse.  
The treewe man, if he may apparceyve  
A deffaute in his lord, as othirwhyle  
It happith, he his lord it redith weyve  
And bit him to vertu him reconsyle.  
And yit Favel, the net of fraude and gyle,  
The thank hath, and that othir the maugree -  
O God, that verray trouthe art for to see!

Who that for drede of any lord or sire  
Hydeth the trouthe and nat wole it out seye,  
He upon him provokith Goddes ire  
For that he more of man than God hath ye.  
They that the trouthe of hir hertes bywreye  
To lordes and telle hem hir wikkid lyf,  
No grace in hem fynden for hir motyf.

But bet for trouthe is to suffre torment  
Than richely enhaunced be for glose.  
If this lyf heere be nat wel despent,  
I woot it wel, I wole it nat suppose,  
God wole his regne from us shitte and close.  
Heer is the weye to peyne or to blisse;  
Whoso wel dooth, of joie he may nat misse.

Eternal God, the blessid Trinitee,  
Which that every man of Cristen byleeve  
Knowith an undyvydid unitee,  
His mercy and his grace kythe and preeve  
In yow, my Lord, that so your deedes cheeve  
As that your soule, aftir this lyf present,  
To hevene blisse up may be take and hent.

#### De vitio avaritie

Now gawe to the avaricious,  
To whom noon habundance may souffyse;  
A chynche nevere can be plentevous  
Thogh al were his - swich is his covetyse;  
To thriste ay aftir more it is his gyse;  
He is the swolwe that is nevere ful.

At avarice now have heer a pul!

Shee may, as God forbeede, undo a kyng  
Thurgh hir insaciabie greedynesse;  
Hir herte is set upon noon othir thyng  
But how shee may gold hepe. Al in dirknesse  
Lurkith the purchas of hir egrenesse;  
In bagges undir lok hir gold shee thristith;  
Al to the cofre it gooth and al shee chistith.

There is it hid, no sonne it seeth ne moone;  
Thogh al the world sterve sholde on a day  
For lak of good, nat were it for to doone  
To borwe of here; evere is hir answe "Nay!"  
That shee naghth hath also shee swerith ay.  
Hir nature is to keepe and nat despende,  
And hir desyr of good ne hath noon ende.

Avarice is a love inmoderat  
Richesses temporel for to purchace;  
Shee bisyeth hire in everiche estat;  
Shee shapith hire, al the world embrace;  
Fro the more to the lesse hir trace  
To sue studien men, seith Isaye;  
And shee the thraldom is of maumetrie.

Shee is a covetyse excessyf  
Of othres good, and of hir owne shee  
So streit and hard is and so retentyf  
That it profyte may in no degree.  
O, avaricious, what eilith thee?  
The goodes whiche been unto thee lent  
Why hydest thou? Ywis, thou wilt be shent.

Weenest thou that thou doost nat wikkidly  
That so many a mannes sustenance  
Thyself withholdist soul? Yis, hardily,  
Thou that of richesse hast greet habundance  
And to the needy gevest no pitance,  
No lesse offendist thou than he that shakith  
Men out of hir good and from hem it takith.

Thus may thy style likned be to theft:  
As a thief in this world is hangid heere  
For good which that he of the peple refte,  
So shalt thou hange in helle and bye it deere,  
But if so be, or thou go to thy beere,  
Thou correcte thy greedy appetyt  
And of streit keepyng empte thy delyt.

The breed of hungry peple thou withholdist  
And shittist up the nakid mennes clooth  
That kevere hem sholde. If thou aght of God toldist,  
For to do so thou woldest be ful looth.  
Al that thou getist, to hid place it gooth;  
As many men hir good thou hem byrevest  
As thou releve mightist and it levest.

Whoso that fro the poore mannes cry  
Stoppith his eres thogh he lowde crye,  
Shal nat be herd; and moreover, rede y,  
His dayes shul encrece and multiplie  
That avarice hatith - this is no lye.  
Werse is nothyng than to love moneye,  
As that Ecclesiasticus can seye.

Ambrose seith, "Waar man that thou ne shitte  
Withyn thy purs the needy peples hele,  
And to the burielles nat committe  
The lyf of poore men. "Geve hem and dele  
Part of thy good. O, thy bagges unsele;  
Opne hem - hir knyttyng al to sore annoyeth;  
Thy pyned stuf many a man destroyeth.

Thou seist par cas, "If I no man byreve  
His good, what wrong myn owne is it to hyde  
And multiplie?" O chynche! By thy leve,  
What seist thou is thyn? What was thyn that tyde  
Thou cam into this world, thou homicyde?  
Thou broghest nagh; clayme no propretee  
Of thyng that oghte commune to bee.

Thy talkyng and thy clap is al of eerthe,  
And the grownd forthy shal answeere thee

For that the love of muk sittith so neer the.  
Of him that hath of goodes greet plentee,  
Of God and man mochil axid shal be;  
Thow shalt be rekned with heereaftir, chynche,  
Whereas thow shalt nat at the acountes pynche.

By what title that thow getist thy good,  
Thow countest nat the value of a myte;  
Thyn herte is everemore on gold so wood  
That in nothyng elles canst thow delyte;  
Of conscience rekkist thow so lyte,  
What goodes that thow getist of rapyne,  
Thow hem affermest by good title thyne.

Feith and prowesse leyst thow undir foote  
And techist folk to have in hemself pryde,  
And crueltee hath caght in thee swich roote  
That shee nat slippe may fro thee ne slyde,  
And every vertu throwist thow asyde.  
O, every prince or kyng moot been eschu,  
In al maneere, of thy lym and thy glu.

For elles it is light to undirstonde  
To every man that wit can and resoun,  
It is nat likly a kyng for to stonde  
In his welthe but a litil sesoun;  
For avarice may been enchesoun  
His peple to destroien and oppresse,  
And, as I seide, so may fool largesse.

Fool largesse is a seeknesse curable  
Outhir of indigence or elles age.  
He that fool large in youthe is, is ful able  
In elde to abate it and asswage;  
For agid folk been more in the servage  
Of avarice than been folk in yowthe,  
And what I shal eek seyn herkneth wel nowthe.

Of neede eek may it cured been and helid;  
A man may so large despenses make  
Til al his good be despendid and delid;  
And whan his purs yemptid is and shake,

Thanne begynneth indigence awake,  
By which he cured is of the seeknesse  
Of prodigalitee or fool largesse.

But avarice, he seith, incurable is;  
For ay the more a man therin procedith  
And wexith old, so mochil more ywis  
He avaricious is; in him naght breedith  
But thoght and wo, for ay his herte dreedith  
His good to leese; and more for to hepe,  
His thoghtes stirten heer and theer and lepe.

Now if the heed of al a regioun,  
By whom that al governed is and gyed,  
Be of so seekly a condicioun  
That it may by no cure be maistried,  
Thanne is he to the werse part applied,  
And, as the Philosophre seith us to,  
The lesse wikke is fool largesse of two.

The Philosophre preeveth avarice  
Wel werse than is prodigalitee.  
By thre causes he halt it gretter vice:  
First, he seith, it is bettre seek to be  
Of a seeknesse or an infirmitie  
Of which a man may have rekeverynge  
Than of swich oon as ther is noon helynge.  
The second cause is, prodigalitee  
Is more ny to vertu many del  
Than avarice, and why yee shul wel see.  
He that is liberal nat list so wel  
For to receyve any good or catel  
As geve, but what man that is fool large  
To take and geve, geveth he no charge.

Wherfore he seith, there is no difference  
Twixt fool largesse and liberalitee,  
Sauf the fool large, of his inprudence  
Of his despenses is to dislavee,  
And geveth theras oghte nat to be;  
And for what cause also and for what skile  
He geve shal, noon heede he take wile.

And syn fool large on gold settith his herte  
No more than the liberal, than may  
Fool large into liberalitee sterte  
Lightly now, for vertu is kynges pray;  
He avarice eschue moot alway  
By cause shee more is contrarious  
To vertu than the large outrageous.

The thridde skile is, for a kyng is set  
In his reme for his peples releef,  
For they sholden for him fare the bet;  
But the streit chynche qwenchith nevere greef;  
His gold is nevere salve to mescheef;  
Oonly to gadere and keepe he him delitith;  
But the fool large many a man profitith.

Yit vices been they grete, bothe tweyne.  
O worthy Prince, take on yow largesse;  
Dooth so, o gracious Lord, for Goddes peyne.  
Largesse yput is unto the liknesse  
Of vessels whos mowthes han greet wydnesse  
And hilde out hir licour habundantly;  
Thus seith the Philosophre treewely.  
And in as mochil as a welle also,  
At the which many folk hir watir fecche,  
Needith to han the larger mowth, right so  
The largesse of a kyng moot ferther strecche,  
If he of his estat anythyng recche,  
Than othir mennes, for hir inpotence  
Strecchith nat so fer as his influence.

Largesse is liberalitee ycallid,  
And likned is unto hem that been free;  
But he that avaricious is, is thrallid  
To moneie. A kyng moot algates flee  
A chynches herte for his honestee  
And for the profyt, as I seide above,  
Of his peple if he thynke wyne hir love.

Victorie and honour he shal him purchase  
That is of giftes free, but waar alway



That he nat tarie ne delaye his grace;  
Dryve it nat fourth unto anothis day,  
Whan, if him list, anoon he geve may;  
Geve it as blyve, his thank is wel the more:  
This vouche I on Holy Scriptures lore.

The vertu is of liberalitee  
Geve and despende in place and tyme due.  
Right as largesse dooth in swich degree,  
They bothe moot in hir conceites chue  
Where is good geve and where to eschue,  
The persone and the somme and cause why;  
What they geven, geve it vertuously.

But it nat longith to the liberal  
To geve him good that usith flaterie;  
His menyng and entencioun final  
On fals plesaunce is set for briberie;  
He is the verray cofre of treccherie;  
His doublenesse his lord doun overthrowith;  
The seed of his confusion he sowith.  
That man yborn is in a blessid hour  
Whom that pitee, dissert, or kyndenesse  
Stiren to geve or ministre him socour  
That infortunes strokes bittirnesse  
Ywoundid hath with povertes sharpnesse.  
Nat meene I hem that hyre and fees and wages  
Han at the dees lost and hir heritages,

But tho that welthy men han been byfore,  
And vertuous been, and han hir good lost,  
And can nat begge, to be deed therfore;  
On hem ful wel bestowid is the cost.  
But weleaway, as hard as is a post -  
A post? Nay, as a stoon been hertes now!  
Lordes, for shame! What thyng eilith yow?

A gentil herte for to begge hath shame;  
His rody shamefastnesse dar nat preye.  
Yee that of gentillesse han style and name,  
Lat nat your poore brethren by yow deye.  
See unto hem thogh they nat speke or seye.

Is pitee fro yow fled? Calle hir agayn,  
For hir absence hath many good man slayn.

Senek seith, he hath nat that thyng for noght  
That bieth it by speeche and by prayeere.  
There is nothyng that is in eerthe wroght,  
As that he seith, that is ybought so deere;  
It standith streite whan it shal appeere,  
For it is vois of wrecchidnesse and sorwe,  
Whan that a man shal preye or begge or borwe.

Allas, thogh that a man deskevere and pleyne  
To many a lord his meschevous miserie,  
The lord nat deyneth undirstonde his peyne;  
He settith nat therby a blakberie.  
Welthe in the lordes sail blowith ful merie,  
But the needy berith his sail so lowe  
That no wynd of confort may in it blowe.  
Of liberalitee yit forthermore  
I telle wole, as that I have herd seyn  
Amonges wyse folk goon is ful yore.  
What man a ledere is or a chiefteyn  
Of peple, his labour is al waast and veyn  
But he be free unto his sowdeours,  
If that he seeke conqueste of honours.

And specially, that he hir duetee  
Abregge nat, ne nat syncope hir wages  
That hem assigned been. In certeyntee  
Peril of shame folwen swiche usages;  
Whan al acounted is, tho advantages  
That fowndid been of wronges and reproof  
Been nught but advantages of mescheef.

This makith covetyse or avarice  
Roote of alle harmes, fo to conscience;  
Of wikkid purchas is shee emperice,  
And mochil hath, and ay hath indigence.  
Shee rather wole lyve in abstinence  
Of mete and drynke for hertes scantnesse  
Than for the soule or bodyes holsumnesse.

Prince excellent, so moot yee wirke and wilne  
As may your soules helthe edifie,  
And, among othir thynges, that your wil ne  
Be infect with no wrecchid chyncherie;  
Largesse mesurable unto yow tye  
And fool largesse voidith fro yow clene,  
For free largesse is a vertuous mene.

#### De regis prudentia

Now, gracious Prince, lyke it yow to wite  
That touche I thynke of a kynges prudence  
As that I thereof fynde in bookes write.  
Prudence is callid wit and sapience,  
And needes moot real magnificence  
Be prudent, as that the scripture us leerith,  
If he shal been as his estat requerith.

Prudence, attemperance, strengthe, and right,  
Tho foure been vertues principal;  
Prudence gooth byfore and geveth light  
Of conseil what tho othir thre do shal,  
That they may wirke, be it greet or smal,  
Aftir hir reed, withouten whom no man  
Wel unto God ne the world lyve can.

Prudence is vertu of entendement;  
Shee makith man by reson him governe.  
Whoso that list to be wys and prudent  
And the light folwe wole of hir lanterne,  
He muste caste his look in every herne  
Of thynges past and been and that shul be;  
The ende seeth and eek mesurith she.

Ther is no wight that shee shapith deceyve;  
And thogh man caste him hire to begyle,  
Nat wole it be; by wit shee wole it weyve.  
Eek shee observeth so wel trouthes style  
And therto can so wel hir tonge affyle,  
That, lest the favour of frendshipes corde,  
Othir than trouthe can shee nat recorde.

Shee byheetith by good avysament  
And geveth more than hir list promette;  
Shee geveth eek to men commandement  
Nat in Fortune truste or by hir sette;  
And al the trust out of hir herte shette  
Of might of worldly dominacioun.  
Vertu gyeth hir operacioun.

Prudence hath lever loved be than drad;  
Ther may no prince in his estat endure,  
Ne therin any whyle stande sad,  
But he be loved, for love is armure  
Of seuretee. O, take on yow the cure,  
Excellent Prince, love to embrace,  
And than your herte is set in sikir place.

Now if that yee graunten by your patente  
To your servantes a yeerly guerdoun,  
Cryst sheelde that your wil or your entente  
Be set to maken a restriccioun  
Of paiement; for that condicioun  
Exylith the peples benevolence  
And kyndlith hate undir pryvee silence.

Beeth wel avysid or your graunt out go  
How yee that charge may parfourme and bere.  
Whan it is past, observe it wel also,  
For elles wole it yow annoye and dere.  
For your honour, it mochil better were  
No graunt to graunte at al than that your graunt  
Yow preeve a brekere of a covaunant.

He that is loved, men drede him offende;  
But he that drad and nat beloved is,  
As Tullius seith, lightly may descende,  
And the lordshipe leese that was his.  
And Senek also seith touchyng this:  
"The soget hatith whom he hath in drede,  
And hate is hard if it his venym shede."

Was nevere drede yit a good wardeyn

To holde lordshipe in his sikirnesse,  
But oonly love is thyng moost sovereyn.  
Love is norice of welthe and of gladnesse;  
But out of love spryngith ferdfulnesse,  
And fere is good which that on love him growndith;  
But othir fere nat helith but wowndith.

Love withouten a good governaille  
A kyng hath noon, for thogh men no word seye,  
If he his peple oppresse, it is no faille,  
They love him nat in no manere of weye;  
They may his heestes outward wel obeye,  
But in hir hertes is smal obeissance,  
And unto God they conpleyne hir grevance.

And swich a kyng is nat prudent ne wys  
That of his peple purchaceth him hate,  
For love excedith al tresor in prys;  
So hath it been and so be wole algate.  
Whan that riches ebbs and abate,  
If love endure, it may hem restore,  
And love is gotten by prudences lore.

By wys conseil settith your hy estat  
In swich an ordre as yee lyve may  
Of your good propre in reule moderat.  
Is it knyghtly lyve on rapyne? Nay!  
For Crystes sake, so yow gyeth ay  
As that may strecche to your peples ese,  
And therwithal yee shul God hyly plese.

It apperteneth a kyng for to be  
A kyng in verray soothe and existence.  
A kyng of office and of dignitee  
The name is; he moot doon his diligence  
His peple for to gye by prudence;  
For that he rule hem sholde duely,  
The style of kyng he berith certeynly.

As an archer may nat his arwe sheete  
Evene at a mark but if he the mark see,  
No more may a kyng, I yow byheete,

Gouverne his peple in right and equitee  
But by prudence he reule his hy degree.  
If that be wel, his peple hath sikirnesse  
Of reste and pees, welthe, joie, and gladnesse.

Begynnyng of wysdam is God to drede;  
What kyng that dredith God, is good and just  
To his peple; beeth swich, my Lord, I rede;  
In love and awe of God ficchith your lust;  
Than be yee wys, and than yow needes must,  
Aftir your worldly sceptre transitorie,  
In hevене regne in perpetuel glorie.

De consilio habendo in omnibus factis

Now purpose I to trete how to a kyng  
It needful is to do by conseil ay,  
Withouten which good is he do nothyng;  
For a kyng is but a man soul, par fay,  
And be his wit nevere so good, he may  
Erre and mistake him othirwhyle among,  
Whereas good conseil may exclude a wrong.

Excellent Prince, in axynge of reed  
Deskevereth nat your wil in no maneere;  
What that yee thynke do, lat it be deed;  
As for the tyme, let no word appeere  
But what every man seith wel herkne and heere;  
And yit, whan good conseil is geven yow,  
What yee do wole, keepe it cloos ynow,

Til that yow lyke parfourme it in dede;  
And if it shal be doon, let it nat tarie,  
For that is perillous, withouten drede.  
Ther is nothyng may make a lond miscarie  
More than swich delay. Ful necessarie  
Is it, a good purpos parfourme as blyve,  
And if it nat be, out of mynde it dryve.

And if that a man of symple degree,  
Or poore of birthe, or yong, thee wel conseille,

Admitte his reson and take it in gree.  
Why nat, my goode Lord? What sholde yow eile?  
But men do nat so, whereof I merveille;  
The world favourith ay the ryches sawe  
Thogh that his conseil be nat worth an hawe.

What he seith, up is to the clowdes bore;  
But, and the poore speke worth the tweye,  
His seed nat sprynge may - it nis but lore.  
They seyn, "What is he this? Lat him go pleye!"  
O, worthy Prince, beeth wel waar, I preye,  
That your hy dignitee and sad prudence  
No desdeyn have of the poores sentence.

Thogh men contrarie eek your opinioun,  
They may par cas conseille yow the beste.  
Also yee been at your eleccioun  
To do or leve it as yourselven leste.  
If it be good, impresse it in the cheste  
Of your memorie and executith it;  
If it nat be, to leve it is a wit.

And if yow list your conseilour to preeve,  
Yee feyne moot yee han necessitee  
Of gold; and if he stire yow and meeve,  
Your jewelles leye in wedde, certeyn he  
Loveth your estat and prosperitee.  
But he that redith yow your peple oppresse,  
He hatith yow certeyn - it is no lesse.

And if a man in tyme of swich a neede  
Of his good geve yow a good substance,  
Swich oon cherice and elles God forbeede.  
Konneth him thanke of his good chevissance,  
For him is lever to suffre penance  
Himself than that your peple sholde smerte;  
There is a preef of treewe lovyng herte.

In axyng eek of reed, waar of Favel;  
Also waar of the avaricious,  
For noon of tho two can conseille wel;  
Hir reed and conseil is envenymous;

They bothe been of gold so desyrous  
They rekke nat what bryge hir lord be ynne,  
So that they mowen gold and silver wyne.

And if your conseil which that yee han take  
Unto the knowleche or the audience  
Of youre foos comen be, than let it slake  
And uttirly putte it in abstinence;  
For execute it were an inprudence.  
In swich a cas is wisdam it to change;  
Good is your conseil be to your foos straunge.

Conseil may wel be likned to a brydil  
Which that an hors up keepith fro fallyng,  
If man do by conseil; but al in ydil  
Is reed if man nat folwe it in wirkyng.  
Do nothyng reedlees; do by conseillynge  
Of heedes wyse, and no repentance  
Ther folwe yow shal in your governance.

Commendable is conseil take of the wyse  
And nat of fooles, for they may nat love  
But swich thyng as hem lykith. In al wyse,  
Your conseilour cheese, our lord God above;  
Cheesith eek good men, and away shove  
The wikkid whos conseil is deceyvable;  
Thus biddith Holy Writ, it is no fable.

Cheesith men eek of old experience -  
Hir wit and intellect is glorious;  
Of hir conseil holsum is the sentence.  
The olde mannes reed is fructuous;  
Waar of yong conseil, it is perillous.  
Roboas fond it so whan he forsook  
Old conseil and unto yong reed him took.

Th'entente woot I wel of the yong man  
As lovyng is and trewe as of the olde,  
Thogh that he nat so wel conseille can.  
Yonge men stronge been, hardy, and bolde,  
And more weldy to fighte if they sholde;  
But thogh the olde in tyme of pees or werre



Rede and conseil, it shal nat be the werre.

He that is fressh and lusty now this day  
By lengthe of yeeres shal nothyng be so;  
Fresshnesse and lust may nat endure alway;  
Whan age is comen, he commandith ho.  
But let see, who considerith this, who?  
Good is that age sette a governaille  
And youthe it sue - thus may bothe availle.

Excellent Prince, eek on the holy dayes  
Beeth waar that yee nat your conseiles holde;  
As for tho tymes, putte hem in delayes;  
Thynkith wel this: yee wel apaid be nolde  
If your soget nat by youre heestes tolde.  
Right so our lord God, kyng and commaundour  
Of kynges alle, is wrooth with that errour.

In the long yeer been werk-dayes ynowe,  
If they be wel despent for to entende  
To conseiles. To God your herte bowe  
If yee desyre men hir hertes bende  
To yow. What kyng nat dredith God offende  
Ne nat rekkith do him disobeissance,  
He shal be disobeied eek, par chance.

The firste fyndere of our fair langage  
Hath seid, in cas semblable, and othir mo,  
So hyly wel that it is my dotage  
For to expresse or touche any of tho.  
Allas, my fadir fro the world is go,  
My worthy maistir Chaucer - him I meene;  
Be thow advocat for him, hevenes queene.

As thow wel knowist, o blessid Virgyne,  
With lovyng herte and hy devocioun,  
In thyn honour he wroot ful many a lyne.  
O now thyn help and thy promocioun!  
To God thy sone make a mocioun,  
How he thy servant was, mayden Marie,  
And lat his love floure and fructifie.

Although his lyf be qweynt, the resemblance  
Of him hath in me so fressh lyflynesse  
That to putte othir men in remembrance  
Of his persone, I have heere his liknesse  
Do make, to this ende, in soothfastnesse,  
That they that han of him lost thoght and mynde  
By this peynture may ageyn him fynde.

The ymages that in the chirches been  
Maken folk thynke on God and on his seintes  
Whan the ymages they beholde and seen,  
Where ofte unsighte of hem causith restreyntes  
Of thoghtes goode. Whan a thyng depeynt is  
Or entaillid, if men take of it heede,  
Thoght of the liknesse it wole in hem breede.

Yit sum men holde oppinioun and seye  
That noon ymages sholde ymakid be.  
They erren foule and goon out of the weye;  
Of trouthe have they scant sensibilitee.  
Passe over that! Now, blessid Trinitee,  
Upon my maistres soule mercy have;  
For him, Lady, thy mercy eek I crave.

More othir thyng wolde I fayn speke and touche  
Heere in this book, but swich is my dulnesse,  
For that al voide and empty is my pouche,  
That al my lust is qweynt with hevynesse,  
And hevny spirit commandith stilnesse.  
And have I spoke of pees, I shal be stille.  
God sende us pees, if that it be His wille.

De pace

Touche I wole heere of pees a word or two  
As that scriptures maken mencion,  
And than my book is endid al and do.  
To Cryst ordeyneth He a mansioun  
Which in his hertes habitacioun  
Embraceth pees; wher pees is, Cryst is there,  
For Cryst nat list abyden elleswhere.

Amonges Cristen folk, wrecche is he noon  
That paciently suffrith a duresse;  
But sikirly, a wrecche is he oon  
That makith stryf; and him sueth gladnesse  
Which that of pees conseillith the swetnesse.  
Our pees also and concord brothirly  
Is sacrifice to God almighty.

Thynges that leden men to pees been three:  
Conformyng in God, in ourself humblesse,  
And with our neyghburghes tranquillitee.  
First seye I that we moot our willes dresse  
And hem conformen alle more and lesse  
To Goddes wil; al thyng is in His might,  
Sauf oonly that He may do noon unright.

Evene as a man is ay in werre and stryf  
That bysyleth him withstande a man which he  
Nat may, right so hath he peisible lyf  
Continuelly whos willes fully be  
To Goddes wil conformyng. O pardee,  
Ageyn God helpith ther no resistance,  
So strong and mighty is His excellence.

Humilitee to pees eek may men lede.  
Men seyn, two grete may nat in o sak;  
But symple humblesse is of swich goodlyhede  
That shee of troubylly hate hath no smak;  
Shee stryveth nat; of discord hath shee lak.  
Shee voide and empty is of crueltee;  
Humble spirit desirith unitee.

The thridde is eek tranquillitee of thoght,  
That gydith man to pees, for as a wight  
May in a bed of thornes reste noght,  
Right so who is with grevous thoghtes twight  
May with himself ne othir folk aright  
Have no pees; a man moot needes smerte  
Whan irous thoghtes occupie his herte.

And evene as that upon a pilwe softe

Man may him reste wel and take his ese,  
Right so that Lord that sitte in hevne alofte  
Herte peisible can so lyke and plese  
That He wole entre therin and it sese  
And occupie it as just possessour;  
In place of pees restith our Sauveour.

But al anothir pees ther is also  
Which is nat worth; it is envenymous,  
For it is unto verray pees a fo.  
Whan men in a purpos malicious  
Accorden, that pees is to God grevous;  
Swich pees was twixt Herodes and Pilat,  
And in swich cas, pees wers is than debat.

A feyned pees eek is to pees verray  
A fo; and swich was the pees of Judas  
Kyssynge Cryst. Lord, whethir that this day  
Any swich pees be usid as that was!  
Yee, so I drede me, by Seint Thomas,  
The kus of Judas is now wyde sprad;  
Toknes of pees been, but smal love is had.

Men countrefete in wordes Tullius  
And folwe in werk Judas or Genyloun;  
Many an hony word and many a kus  
Ther is; but wayte on the conclusioun  
And pryvee galle al torneth up so doun;  
Ther leveth nught of pees but contenance,  
For al the peynted cheere and daliance.

There is also a pees inordinat  
Whan the gretter obeieth to the lesse,  
As thus: whan to his soget a prelat  
Obeieth; and whan resoun the blyndnesse  
Sueth of sensualitees madnesse,  
Obeynge it - al swich pees is haynous,  
For it is to good pees contrarious.

Right swich a pees Adam hadde with Eeve  
Whan that he unto hir desir obeide;  
He was par cas adrad hir for to greeve,

Wherfore he dide as that shee him seide.  
In that obedience he foleide,  
For God hire him bytook him to obeye;  
But I adrad am that I thus fer seye.

If that this come unto the audience  
Of wommen, I am seur I shal be shent;  
For that I touche of swich obedience,  
Many a browe shal on me be bent;  
They wolen wayte been equipollent,  
And sumwhat more, unto hire housbondes;  
And sum men seyn swich usage in this lond is.

And it no wondir is, as seemeth me,  
Whan that I me bethoght have al aboute,  
Thogh that wommen desyre sovereyntee,  
And hire housbondes make to hem loute.  
They maad were of a ribbe, it is no doute,  
Which more strong is and substancial  
Than slyme of eerthe, and clenner therwithal.

Wherfore it seemeth that the worthynesse  
Of wommen passith mennes, in certeyn;  
And yit sum nyce men, of lewdenesse,  
In reproof of hem holden thereageyn;  
For crookid was that ribbe, and speke and seyn  
That also crookid is hir courtesie;  
But ageyn that, strongly wole I replie.

For in the wrytyng and in the scripture  
Of philosophres, men may see and rede,  
Cerclely shap is moost parfyt figure,  
Betokenyng in gemetrie onhede;  
And crookidnesse a part is that may lede  
Sumwhat unto a cercle or a compas.  
What so men seyn, wommen stonde in good cas.

For therby shewith it that crookidnesse  
Strecchith unto gretter perfeccioun  
Than dooth a thyng that is of evennesse.  
Of this helpith no contradiccioun,  
For it is sooth; it is no ficcioun.

Every parfyt body that man can nevene  
Is rownd and crookid and nat streight ne evene.

Begynne first at hevene and rownd it is;  
The sonne and moone and the sterres also;  
Heed of man, yen, mowth, and herte, ywis,  
Been al rownde; and othir been ther mo  
Than I expresse as now; but or I go,  
Yit shal I bet wommannes part susteene;  
So biddith pees, and that to folwe I meene.

Now for to speke or touchen of the place  
In which that man and womman formed were:  
Almighty God to womman shoop swich grace  
That shee was formed in the worthyere -  
In paradys men woot wel he made here;  
But man ymaad was out of paradys,  
In place of lesse worthynesse and prys.

And of the manere of formacioun  
Of bothe two, herkneth now wel I preye.  
The tokne or the significacioun  
Of makynge of Adam may by no weye  
Strecche to so parfyt a good, I seye,  
As dide the formacioun of Eeve;  
And that as swythe heere I shal it preeve,

For more have I for hir partie yit.  
Makynge of Eeve tokned the makynge  
Of Holy Chirche and sacramentz of it;  
As of the syde of Adam, him slepynge,  
Eeve was maad, so our lord Cryst dyyng  
Upon the Crois, Holy Chirche of His syde  
And the sacramentz maad were in that tyde.

Fro tyme eek Cryst was twelve yeer of age  
Unto thritti, He with His modir ay  
Was servynge hire with plesant corage;  
To teche humilitee, He took the way  
From hevene hidir, and meeknesse verray  
Taghte He the moost partie of His lyf  
Whil He was with His modir and His wyf;

For shee was bothe two, and syn shee had  
So longe of hir housbonde the maistrie,  
Wommen, I trowe, been nat now so mad  
That style to forgo; nay, swich folie,  
What man that can in a womman espie,  
Is worthy shryned be; God save hem alle,  
And graunte hir hy corage nat appalle.

Holy Writ seith, "If wommen sovereyntee  
Of hir housbondes have, how that they  
Unto hir housbondes contrarious be. . . ."  
The text, I woot wel, is swich, but what they?  
That text I undirstonde thus alwey:  
Whan that housbondes hem mistake and erre,  
Ageyn that vice wyves maken werre.

Thogh a womman hir housbonde contrarie  
In his opinioun erroneous,  
Shul man for that deeme hir his adversarie?  
Straw! Be he nevere so harrageous,  
If he and shee shul dwellen in oon hous,  
Good is he suffre; therby pees may sprynge;  
Housbondes pees is peisible suffrynge.

By concord smale thynges multiplien,  
And by discord, hate, ire, and rancour,  
Perisshen thynges grete, and waaste and dyen.  
Pees hath the fruyt of ese in his favour;  
To gete pees holsum is the labour,  
And keepe it wel whan that man hath it caght,  
That ire ne discord banisshe it naght.

How plesant to God is of pees the mirthe;  
What delyt eek in pees and unioun  
The Prince of pees hath shewid in His birthe  
By angels delitable song and soun.  
Also, aftir His resurreccioun  
He pees bad, and whan unto hevene He sty,  
He lefte pees in eerthe treewely.

That gifte of pees, that precious jewel,

If men it keepe and do it nat away,  
Sones of Cryst they may be clept ful wel;  
But stryf, which moche is to the feendes pay,  
Among us fervent is so, weleaway!  
We Cristen folk withynne us and withoute  
Han so greet stryf that ther may no pees route.

The riot that hath been withyn this land  
Among ourself many a wyntres space  
Hath to the swerd put many a thousand.  
The greedy herte that wolde al embrace  
With irous wil and crabbid, pale face,  
And swipir feendly hand, with strook vengeable  
Hath many a womman maad hem clothe in sable.  
This is no doute that ambicioun  
And covetyse fyre al this debat.  
Tho two been of wikkid condicioun;  
No wight halt him content of his estat.  
Every man wilneth to been exaltat;  
Thogh he be greet, yit hyer wolde he go;  
And thise arn causes of our stryf and wo.

Werre withyn ourself is moost harmful  
And perillous, and moost is ageyn kynde;  
Therwith this land hath wrastled many a pul;  
The smert is swich, it may nat out of mynde,  
For it hath cast our welthe fer behynde,  
And ferther wole but tho werres stynte;  
No good may come of werres wrathful dynte.

Whyles that Romains were in herte al oon  
And undyvydid al hool stood, they were  
Lordes of al the world; fo was ther noon  
Outward, as who seith, mighte hem greeve or dere;  
But al sauf welthe may men suffre and bere.  
Withyn hemself sprang swich division  
That it hem broghte to confusion.

What causid hir inward werre and rumour  
But avarice? Shee refte hem hir wele.  
Whyles they hadde in cheertee and favour  
Profyt commun, they hadden by the stele



Prosperitee; but it away gan stele  
Whan they hem drow to profyt singuler,  
And of profyt commun nat weren cheer.

Beholde how avarice creepith in  
And kyndlith werre and qwenchith unitee.  
O Favel, thow mightest been of hir kyn,  
For swich a brekepees as that is shee,  
Right swich anothir may I name thee;  
Thow rekkist nat ne dreddist nat to weende  
For muk to helle unto the fertheste eende.  
This Favel is of pees a destourbour;  
Twixt God and mannes soule he werre reisith.  
This world is blent by this dissimulour;  
Vertu he blameth and vices he preisith;  
Sore in the bowe of treccherie he teisith;  
His shot is gay but it is envenymed;  
His fikil aart may nat aright be ryved.

Vertuous trouthe, hyde thow thyn heed!  
Thow maist as wel, thyn aart may nat availle;  
Out of this worldes grace art thow as deed.  
But Favel, traitour, thy fals governaille  
Makith ful many shippes for to saille  
Into thy cofre; warm is thyn office;  
That trouthe leesith, wynne can thy vice.

Allas, so many a worthy clerk famous  
In Oxenforde and in Cambrigge also  
Stonde unadvanced, wher the vicious  
Favel hath chirches and provendres mo  
Than God is plesid with. Allas that tho  
That werreyen vertu so been promotid,  
And they helplees in whom vertu is rootid.

The knyght or squyer on that othir syde,  
Or yeman, that hath in pees and in werris  
Despent with his lord his blood, but he hyde  
The trouthe and can curreye, he nat the ner is  
His lordes grace; and untrouthe ful fer is  
From him that worthy corage hath honored;  
Grace of this world by Favel is devoured.

Now unto my mateere of werre inward  
Resorte I; but to seeke stories olde  
Noon neede is, syn this day sharp werre and hard  
Is at the dore heere, as men may beholde.  
France, no wondir thogh thyn herte colde  
And brenne also, swich is thyn agonye;  
Thyself manaceth thyself for to dye.  
Thyself destroie, and feeble is thy victorie;  
Thow hast in thyself stryven ofte or now  
And hast appesid al, have in memorie,  
Thurgh thy prudence. Woostow nat wel how  
Slaghtre is deffendid, and nat rekkist thow  
To rebelle ageyn God that it forbedith?  
For thee myn hevvy goost bysyly dredith.

What any part offendid hath to othir,  
Redresse it faire and charitablely;  
By lawe of God yee been eche othres brothir.  
O now adayes is noon enemy  
Lyk oon that is to othir of blood ny.  
Beeth waar, correcte it, lest men of yow seye,  
"Lo whilom this was France of hy nobleye!"

I am an Englissh man and am thy fo;  
For thow a fo art unto my ligeance;  
And yit myn herte stuffid is with wo  
To see thyn unkyndly disseverance.  
Accordith yow; girdith yow with souffrance!  
Yee greeven God and yourself harme and shame,  
And your foos therof han desport and game.

Allas also the greet dissencioun,  
The pitous harm, the hateful discord,  
That hath endured twixt this regioun  
And othir landes Cristen. He that Lord  
Of remes alle is, the auctour of concord  
And pees, sore is meeved therwith; but we  
Nat dreden for t'offende His magestee.

Of France and Engeland, o Cristen Princes,  
Syn that your style of worthynesse is ronge

Thurghout the world in al the provinces,  
If that of yow mighte be red or songe  
That yee were oon in herte, ther nis tonge  
That mighte expresse how profitable and good  
Unto al peple it were of Cristen blood.  
Yee hem ensamplen, yee been hir miroures;  
They folwen yow. What sorwe lamentable  
Is causid of your werres sharpe shoures  
Ther woot no wight; it is irreparable.  
O noble Cristen Princes honorable,  
For Him that for yow souffred passioun,  
Of Cristen blood haveth compassioun!

Allas, what peple hath your werre slayn!  
What cornes waastid and doun trode and shent!  
How many a wyf and mayde hath be bylayn,  
Castels doun bete, and tymbred howses brent  
And drawen doun and al totore and rent!  
The harm ne may nat rekned be ne told;  
This werre wexith al to hoor and old.

To wynne worldly tresor and richesse  
Is of your stryf the long continuance;  
Wherby it seemeth that yee han scantnesse  
Of good, or yee konne have no souffissance  
Of plentee; and if ther be habundance  
In your cofres, and in your hertes neede,  
Of lordly conceit may it nat proceede.

Whan Alisaundre deed was and ygrave,  
And his toumbe of gold wroght ful rychely  
As kynges dignitee wole axe and crave,  
Dyverse philosophres drow hem ny  
Therto, and as oon of hem stood therby,  
He seide thus among the folkes alle:  
"Seeth swich a change is neewe now befalle.

"This Alisaundre made yistirday  
Of gold his tresor, but gold makith now  
Tresor of him, as yee beholde may."  
Anothir philosophre seide eek how  
Al this world yistirday was nat ynow

To stoppen Alisaundres covetyse;  
And now three elnes of clooth him souffyse.  
O worthy Princes two, now takith heede,  
As hardy deeth is yow for to assaille  
As shee dide Alisaundre, whom in dreede  
Hadde al this world. What mighte his force availle  
Ageyn the deeth? Nothyng, nothyng, sanz faille;  
For thogh that he swerd were of chivalrie,  
Deeth threew him doun to ground and lete him lie.

With how greet labour or with how greet peyne  
Men wynne good, to the world leve it shal;  
Unto the pit gooth naght but the careyne;  
And thogh gold were graven therwithal,  
Nat mighte it helpe; beeth nat goldes thral.  
Souffysith to your good, Yee Princes bothe;  
With pees and reste, arme yow and clothe.

Whan yee have stryve and foughten al your fille,  
Pees folwe moot; but good were it or thanne  
That pees were had. What lust han yee to spille  
The blood that Cryst with His blood boghte whanne  
He on the Crois starf? O Lady Seint Anne,  
Thy doghtir preye to byseeche hir sone  
To stynte of werres the dampnable wone.

The book of Revelaciouns of Bryde  
Expressith how Cryst thus seide hir unto:  
"I am pees verray, there I wole abyde;  
Whereas pees is, noon othir wole I do;  
Of France and Engeland the kynges two,  
If they wole have pees, pees perpetuel  
They shul han." Thus hir book seith, woot I wel.

But verray pees may be had by no way  
But if trouthe and justice loved be;  
And for that o kyng hath right, forthy may  
By matrymoyne pees and unitee  
Been had - Crystes plesaunce is swich. Thus he  
That right heir is may the reme rejoise,  
Cessyng al stryf, debat, or werre, or noyse."  
Now syn the weye is open, as yee see,

How pees to gete in vertuous maneere,  
For love of Him that dyde upon the tree,  
And of Marie, His blisful modir deere,  
Folwith that way and your stryf leye on beere;  
Purchaceth pees by way of mariage,  
And yee therin shul fynden avantage.

Now pees approche and dryve out werre and stryf;  
Frendshipe appeere and banisshe thow hate;  
Tranquillitee, reve thow ire hir lyf  
That fervent is and leef for to debate.  
Yee three vertues now lat see abate  
The malice of the foule vices three  
That verray foos been to al Cristientee.

O Cristen Princes, for the love and awe  
Of Him that is the kyng of kynges alle,  
Nesshith your hertes and to pees yow drawe;  
Considereth what good may therof falle;  
The hony takith and leveth the galle.  
The steerne juge in His jugement  
May do but right; waar His punysshement.

What disobeissance and rebellioun,  
What wil unbuxum, what unkyndenesse,  
May He preeve in yow that destruccioun  
Doon of men, His handwerk soothly, I gesse;  
It muste needes stire His rightwisnesse  
Ageyn yow. Styntith at His reverence;  
Sueth His grace and His benevolence.

From hennes foorth let ther betwixt yow be  
So vertuous a stryf for Crystes sake  
That yee of pees and love and charitee  
May stryve. Lat your pitee now awake  
That longe hath slept, and pees betwixt yow make;  
And on the foos of Cryst, your redemptour,  
Werreieth; there kythith your vigour.  
Upon the mescreantz to make werre,  
And hem unto the feith of Cryst to brynge,  
Good were; therin may yee nothyng erre;  
That were a meritorie werreyng;

That is the way unto the conquering  
Of hevne blisse that is endeles,  
To which yow bringe the auctor of pees. Amen.

[Verba compilatoris ad librum]

O litil book, who gaf thee hardynesse  
Thy wordes to pronounce in the presence  
Of kynges ympe and princes worthynesse,  
Syn thou al nakid art of eloquence?  
And why approachist thou his excellence  
Unclothid sauf thy kirtil bare also?  
I am right seur his humble pacience  
Thee geveth hardynesse to do so.

But o thyng woot I wel, go wher thou go,  
I am so pryvee unto thy sentence,  
Thou haast and art and wilt been everemo  
To his hynesse of swich benevolence,  
Thogh thou nat do him due reverence  
In wordes, thy cheertee nat is the lesse.  
And if lust be, to his magnificence  
Do by thy reed; his welthe it shal witness.

Byseeche him of his gracious noblesse  
Thee holde excusid of thyn innocence  
Of endytyng, and with hertes meeknesse,  
If anythyng thee passe of negligence,  
Byseeche him of mercy and indulgence,  
And that for thy good herte he be nat fo  
To thee that al seist of loves fervence;  
That knowith He Whom nothyng is hid fro.

Thomas Hoccleve