

ESSAYS ON CHAUCER,

His Words and Works.



PART III.

- VII. CHAUCER'S PRIORESS, HER CHAPLAIN AND THREE PRIESTS, illustrated by the Survey of the Abbey or Monastery of St Mary, Winchester, 14 May, 1537 A.D. (*From the Paper Surveys of Monasteries in the Record Office, "Augmentation Office Miscell. Books," vol. 400, pp. 24—32.*) By FREDERICK J. FURNIVALL (written in 1878).
- VIII. THE ALLITERATION IN CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES. By FELIX LINDNER, Ph.D., Rostock, Mecklenburg.
- IX. CHAUCER A WICLIFFITE. An Essay on Chaucer's Parson and *Parson's Tale*. By H. SIMON, Schmalkalden.
- X. a. THE SOURCES OF THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE :
b. CHAUCER NOT A BORROWER FROM JOHN OF SALISBURY.
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- (Dr Weymouth's Paper on *Here and There* in Chaucer is nearly ready for Press.)

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IX.

CHAUCER A WICLIFFITE.

AN ESSAY ON CHAUCER'S PARSON AND
PARSON'S TALE.

BY

H. SIMON,

SCHMALKALDEN.

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CHAUCER A WICLIFFITE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the immense amount of work done, from the days of Caxton down to our own time, for the study of the second greatest English poet, and in spite of the meritorious publications of *Tyrwhitt*, *Warton*, *Sir Harris Nicolas*, *Bradshaw*, *Furnivall*, *Ten-Brink*, and others, many a problem concerning him remains still unsolved, and—considering the want of sure information about his life, and the fragmentary state in which we possess his principal work—this is not to be wondered at.

One of the questions to which no satisfactory answer has yet been given is : *What was Chaucer's relation to the Church?*

In commenting on 'Speght's Life of Chaucer' Tyrwhitt (*Introd. Disc.*¹) speaking of the preface to the *Plowman's Tale*, makes the following remark: "Though he (Chaucer) and Boccace have laughed at some of the abuses of religion and the disorders of Ecclesiastical persons, it is quite incredible that either of them, or even Wicliff himself, would have railed at the whole government of the Church, in the style of the *Plowman's Tale*. If they had been disposed to such an attempt, their times would not have borne it; but it is probable that Chaucer, though he has been pressed into the service of Protestantism by some zealous writers, was as good a Catholic as men of his understanding and rank in life have generally been. The necessity of auricular Confession, one of the great scandals of Popery, cannot be more strongly inculcated than it is in the following *Persones Tale*." Professor *Seeley*² believes

¹ Morris's edition, I. 249, Note 42.

² Chaucer Soc. Rep. 1873.

that the *Plowman of the Prologue* is, or is founded on, the ideal *Piers Plowman*; but with regard to Chaucer's relation to the Church, all the principal English Chaucerians seem to share Tyrwhitt's opinion. Of course, nobody can help perceiving the strong contrast between the *Parson's Tale* and Chaucer's well-known enmity against the clergy, as shown in many parts of the *Canterbury Tales*, but it has not, as yet, given rise to any suspicion, the generally accepted opinion being that Chaucer, bowed down by poverty, age, and infirmity, made his peace with the Church; and Mr Furnivall suggests that he got the lease of the little house in the garden of St Mary's chapel, Westminster, as a reward for his penitence and the *Parson's Tale*. I cannot help doubting this. An engraving of the lease has been published by the Society of Antiquaries. The monk Robert Hermodsworth, who was keeper of St Mary's, and made the contract with the consent of the abbot and convent, reserved a rent of £2 13s. 4d.,—but this was, I imagine, a high rent for a little house, at that time, when money had ten times more value than now¹,—and he expressly reserved for himself, or the monastery, the ordinary power in leases, to distrain, if Chaucer should be in arrear with any part of the payment of rent for the space of 15 days². Does that look like a reward?

A prominent German scholar, Professor *Pauli*, seems to hold an opinion opposed to that stated above. In his '*Bilder aus Altengland*' (VII. 209) he says that the great political and religious questions of his time didn't puzzle Chaucer like his friend Gower, or drive him to the opposite extreme; that, on the contrary, he saw perfectly clearly, and endeavoured to treat these questions objectively, according to his nature. The American Reed³ says that Chaucer

¹ "In 1350 the average price of a horse was 18s. 4d.; of an ox, 11. 4s. 6d.; of a cow, 17s. 2d.; of a sheep, 2s. 6d.; of a goose, 9d.; of a hen, 2d.; of a day's labour in husbandry, 3d."—(Morris, *Introductio* to Ch., *Clar. Press Series* ed., p. vii.)

² Sir H. Nicolas, *Life of Ch.*, in Morris, I. 41.

³ *Engl. Lit.*, p. 69.

greeted Wicliffe's work of reform with joy; Gütchenberger¹ unconditionally calls him Wicliffe's intimate friend;—I don't know his reasons; to my direct inquiry I received no answer. Ebert, Kisaner, and Hertzberg have, to my knowledge, not examined this point; Ten-Brink has not yet given his opinion; of his excellent '*Chaucerstudien*' only one volume is out.

To get at the truth, we must first recollect what was the public opinion in England, in the second half of the 14th century, with regard to the Pope and the Church. The reign of Edward III., in which Chaucer's youth and early manhood fell, is one of the grandest and most glorious periods in English history. During the preceding 300 years the gifted Normans had been completely amalgamated with the morally noble and bodily powerful Anglo-Saxons, and the nation thus grown into existence offered a rare image of health and strength². A lively consciousness of their belonging to one another—which expressed itself in the common use of a rich and powerful, though still somewhat unwieldy, language,—had taken the place of the former hatred between the conqueror and the conquered, and, in consequence of the exercise of constitutional rights for above a hundred years, the brilliant victories in France, Spain, and Italy, the fast growing culture, the development of arts, and the increase of wealth produced by commerce, had intensified itself into a strong national feeling, into a high, but justified, self-esteem. In such times of spiritual and material progress, new ideas irresistibly make their way, overthrowing everything opposed to the general tendency—however venerable may be the traditions upon which it is founded. It was a time like that we have now in Germany; and even as the conflict with Popery has now broken out with us, so did it then rage in England; only

¹ History of Engl. Lit., I. 157.

² See Macaulay's brilliant paragraphs on this subject in his Introduction to his *Hist. of England*, i. 16—20, ed. 1849.

much more furiously, because the bull *Unam sanctam* had soon been followed by the "Babylonian Exile"; the immoderate pretension of the popes, depending, as they did, on England's deadly foe, could not but be doubly felt, and the awful moral depravity of ~~all~~ the clergy, as well as the great Schism, must at last have filled the whole nation with contempt.

The general abhorrence vented itself in poems like the *Vision of Piers Plowman*, in the writings of Wicliffe, in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. When, in this immortal work, we see Chaucer pour the biting acid of his satire on the representatives of Rome, and especially the friars, he most decidedly appears as the second and avenger of him who in his pamphlet *De otio et mendacitate*¹ had mercilessly exposed the foulest sore of the Roman Church. All the clerical and semi-clerical pilgrims are made to feel his weighty scourge; the only² exception—a brilliant one—is

THE PARSON.

By the side of the repulsive characters of the friars and clergy and their officials, the Parson of the Prologue appears like a bright figure of sublime beauty. Nobody, perhaps, has read this delicate yet pithy picture without emotion; hundreds of times the Parson has been quoted as the ideal of Christian charity and humility, evangelical piety, unselfish resignation to the high calling of a pastor.

It cannot be that Chaucer unintentionally produced this bright image with so dark a background. Involuntarily it occurs to us, as to former critics, that a Wicliffite, perhaps the great reformer himself, sat for the picture; and the more we look at it, the more striking becomes the likeness. This observation is not new; to say nothing of

¹ Wycliffe.

² The companions of the Prioress seem to make an exception also; this semblance is, however, completely destroyed by what Tyrwhitt says in his *Introd. Disc.* (Morris, I. 209 ff., with the notes).

English critics, *Pauli* (Bilder, VII. 202) says that the likeness of the Parson has decidedly Lollardish traces, and *Lechler* (Iohann von Wiclif, I. 408 ff.) expressly declares it to be Wicliffe's portrait, though he says, at the same time, that it is not only doubtful, but improbable, that Chaucer should have sympathized with, or really appreciated, Wicliffe's great ideas of and efforts for reform. Both scholars, however, principally refer to the description in the General Prologue; but the Parson is mentioned also in the *Shipman's* prologue and in that to the Parson's Tale; and it is exactly in the latter two that we find the most striking proofs of his unquestionably Wicliffite character.

THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

as a whole, and its description of the Parson, are the best-known parts of the *Canterbury Tales*. I can, therefore, be brief about it.

In three passages it is stated with great emphasis that the Parson took his doctrine from the gospel :

- v. 481. That Cristes gospel gladly¹ wolde preche.
- v. 498. Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte.
- v. 527. But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.

This was a pointedly distinguishing characteristic of a Wicliffite; for the gospel was the foundation-stone of their doctrine and sermons. Wicliffe himself was indefatigable in drawing general attention to it²; he and his associates translated the Bible; with this sword and shield the great "Dr Evangelicus" attacked the Roman dogmas and

¹ Tyrwhitt and the Six-Text edition have "trewely," which is, perhaps, still more convenient for a Wicliffite.

² *Wicliffe's Festpredigten*, No. 22, fol. 42: Idem est spiritualiter pascere auditorium sine sententia evangelica, ac si quis faceret convivium sine pane . . . and: Quando praedilectum est ab apostolis evangelium, crevit ecclesia in virtute; sed modo ex defectu spiritualis seminis, continue decrescit.—*Vermischte Predigten*, No. 9, fol. 207: sacerdos Domini missus ad gignendum et nutriendum populum verbo vitae.—(In *Lechler*, I. v. Wiclif, I. 401.) See also p. 422.

statutes, and refuted the accusation of heresy ; while the orthodox Catholic clergy never allowed the Scripture to be looked upon as the only source of Christian truth, and, especially in Chaucer's time, mostly moved on the barren sands of subtle scholastic theology. In their sermons, instead of preaching the gospel, they frequently amused their hearers by telling fables, romances, and jests.

Moreover, the Parson was a holy man ; he made the gospel, as we know from v. 528, his rule of thought and life. The whole prologue proves it ; I only quote two more passages :

v. 479. But riche he was of holy thought and werk.

v. 505. And though he holy were, and vertuous, . .

Wicliffe and his disciples distinguished themselves by an irreproachable life ; even their worst enemies were obliged to acknowledge that. How very different were the orthodox clergy in this point ! The secular clergy, indeed, were better than the monks, but it was exactly among them that Wicliffe found many most zealous followers, and out of their number he recruited his itinerant preachers¹.

v. 480 brings a new characteristic :

He was also a lerned man, a clerk.

Wicliffe and his school did not indulge in the illusion that learning was unnecessary for holy purposes ; they loved and cherished it ; in the ranks of their antagonists reigned incapacity and ignorance.

Finally we have a peculiar outward mark :

v. 495. Upon his feet, and in his hond a staf.

A chronicler of those times, KNIGHTON, a prebendary of Leicester, says that the Wicliffite Aston "*vehiculum equorum non requisivit, sed pedestris effectus cum baculo incedens* ubique ecclesias regni—indefesse cursitando visitavit, ubique in ecclesiis regni praedicans."—*Hist. angl. Scriptores*, X. London, 1652, vol. III. col. 2658 f. (in Lechler, I. 421, Note). TH. WALSHINGHAM describes the

¹ *Pauli, Bilder*, VII. 202. *Lechler*, I. 417 f. and 421.

associates of Wicliffe, "talaribus indutos vestibus de russeto, insignum perfectionis amplioris, *incedens nudis pedibus*, qui suos errores in populo ventilarent et palam ac publice in suis sermonibus prædicarent."—*Hist. angl.*, ed. Riley, 1863, I. 324 (*ibid.*). And Pauli says (*Bilder*, VII. 243) that Archbishop *Courtenay* in 1382, after Wat Tyler's insurrection, when trying to pass the bill against heretics, expressly stated in his speech in parliament, that the Wicliffite itinerant clergy walked about in plain apparel of coarse reddish cloth, *barefoot* and *stuff in hand*.

This contradicts at the same time the assumption that Wicliffe himself had been the Parson's prototype; for it was no peculiarity of his to walk about on foot and with a staff; in fact, he never was "a pore Persoun" (v. 478), for the King's favour amply provided for his wants.

THE SHIPMAN'S PROLOGUE

proves plainly that the Parson was a Wicliffite. When he earnestly, and yet mildly, rebukes the host for taking the Lord's name in vain, Henry Bailey exclaims derisively,

v. 10. . . . O Iankyn be ye there?
Now, goode men, . . . herkneþ me;
I amel a *loller* in the wind, . . .

and as the Parson makes no reply, he repeats the invective with a new oath, as if to try if he would put up with it:

v. 13. Abideth for Goddes digne passion,
For we schul have a predicacion;
This loller heer wol[de] prechen us somewhat.

He does not "smell a loller" only, he sees him now, points him out! Even now the Parson remains silent. This silence speaks very plainly. For the nickname applied to him was in those times as generally used for "Wicliffite," as now, for instance, "quaker" is for a member of the Society of Friends¹. The heaviest charge imaginable that

¹ From Harl. Cat. 1666: "And to absteyne fro othes nedeles and unalful and repreve sinne by way of charite, is cause now why Prelates and sum Lordes sclauderen men, and clepen hem *Loller*."

could be brought against any priest had been thrown in the Parson's face: He was branded as a heretic!

For an orthodox clergyman it would have been impossible to put up with this epithet; even the most peaceful and longsuffering must have resented it, if only for the sake of the laymen who witnessed the scene, and who would, in consequence of it, and if need were, have been able to cite the example of an heretical priest as an excuse for their own heresy. But the Parson remained silent. Here we may alter the proverb: *Qui tacet consentire videtur*, and say: *Qui tacet consentit*, or in ordinary English phrase, "Silence gives consent."

There can be no doubt, I think, that the Shipman was of the same opinion, as we may see by

- v. 16. 'Nay by my father soule! that schal he nat,'
 Sayde the Schipman¹; 'heer schal he naught preche,
 He schal no gospel glosen heer ne teche.
 We levyn al in the gret God,' quod he.
 'He wolde sowen som difficulte,
 Or springen cockkil² in our clene corn.'

Three times he protests energetically against the Lollard's expected sermon³, against his 'gospel glosing,' that would only disturb the peaceful harmony of the pilgrims (or the conformity of their faith). With the skilful remark "We levyn al in the gret God," and the decided declaration that he himself is going to tell a tale now, he prevents the pending quarrel.

Who used to 'glose' on the gospel in those times?

lurdes, *Eretikes*, etc." Tyrwhitt concludes (p. 349, note 1) that '*Lollard*' was a common invective. Common enough it was, no doubt; but to denote a *Woliffite*! All the historical works on that time prove it. Thus Knighton says: "sicque a vulgo Wyclyf discipuli et Woliviani sive *Lollardi* vocati sunt." (Lechler, II. 5, where some more passages to this effect are to be found, among which is one from an official document. See also p. 55!)

¹ Only Arch. Seld. B. 14 has "Schipman"; 18 of the 22 MSS. of the Six-Text print have Squire, 3 Sompnour, 2 of them in opposition to the headings. It is, however, not material who spoke.

² Lollum, in allusion to the then general derivation of "*Lollard*."

³ Some Protestants hate evangelical sermons as much as Papists do.

Who grounded on it a doctrine differing from that of the Church, and which was sure to produce the most violent disputes, as soon as it was pronounced before orthodox ears! Who else but the Wicliffites?

THE PARSON'S PROLOGUE

at last removes all doubt. The host, who only a short time before used very passionate language against the Monk, and spoke "with rude speech and bold" to the Nonne-priest, behaves very respectfully to the Parson. Not till all the other pilgrims have told their tales, and then in a conciliatory manner, does he ask him:

v. 20. I pray to God to yeve him right good chaunce,
That tellith us his tale lustily.

Had the quiet dignity of the Lollard made an impression upon him, or had he been struck by the idea that a religious persuasion enabling to suffer insults so quietly, could not be quite objectionable? 'Sir prest,' he says, perhaps still somewhat in doubt, owing to the Parson's peculiar dress,

v. 22. artow a vicory?
Or artow a persoun¹? say soth, by thy fay.

Perhaps he thought he might yet have done the Parson wrong, and was anxious to give him an opportunity to clear himself of the suspicion of heresy by explaining his real station. But the Parson did not avail himself of the opportunity. What could he have said? Tell an untruth he would not; and to declare himself a Wicliffite in this society would have been neither safe nor advisable. The host, however, instead of growing impatient, as was his wont, passes over this painful silence, saying: "Be what thou be, ne breke thou nought oure play" (v. 24); he even flatters him:

¹ The Vicar took only the small tithes of his pariah, while the great ones went to a Monastery or Cathedral, &c. The Parson or Rector took both the great and small tithes.

- v. 27. For trewely me thinketh by thy chier,
Thou scholdist wel knyt up a gret matier.

Chaucer couldn't have paid more delicate homage to the Lollard, nor shown more forcibly the powerful influence of the Wicliffite preachers over the minds of others, than by the effect which the dignified bearing of the Parson had upon this unlicked cub of an innkeeper who had clumsily trodden on the corns of all the other tale-tellers, and even now could not quite renounce his innate coarseness. The Host asks for a fable. Now, at last, the Parson bursts out :

- v. 31. Thou getist fable noon i-told for me,
For Poul, that writeth unto Timothé,
Repreveþ hem that weyveth soþfastnesse,
And tellen fables, and such wrechednesse.
35. Why schuld I sowen draf out of my fest,
Whan I may sowé whete, if that me lest?
For which I say, if that yow lust to hieie
Moralité and vertuouſ matiere,
And thanne that ye wil yeve me audience,
40. I wot ful fayn at Cristis reverence
Do yow plesauncé leful, as I can.
But trusteth wel, I am a suthern man,
I can not gesté, rum, ram, ruf, by letter,
Ne, God wot, ryȝ hold I but litel better.
45. And therfor, if yow lust, I wol not glose,
I wol yow telle a mery tale in proee,
To knyt up al this fest, and make an ende;
And Ihesu, for his gracé, wit me sende
To schewé yow the way, in this viage,
50. Of thilké parfyt glorious pilgrimage
That hatte Ierusalem celestial.

To understand the whole weight of these words, we must read what Lechler (I. von W., I. 395 ff.) says about the Wicliffites' manner of preaching, as opposed to that of the Romish priests. Instead of preaching the word of God, the latter used to tell episodes from universal, or pieces of natural, history, the *Gesta Romanorum*, all sorts of legends, romances, and fables, from profane sources, as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, sometimes even jokes, for the amusement, if not for the edification, of their hearers. The form of these sermons was as worldly as their contents, verses in alliteration and in rhyme alternating with each

other. This sort of preaching Wicliffe denounced with all the fervour of his pious, evangelical heart, with all the power of his mighty word. I only cite a few passages from Lechler's excellent work. In 61, *Evangelia de sanctis*, No. 56, Wicliffe speaks of "tragoediae vel comoediae et *fabulae* vel sententiae apogryphae, quae sunt hodie populo praedicatae." In his *De officio pastorali*, II. ch. 5, Leipzig, 1863, p. 37, he says of the friars: "Et tota sollicitudo est eorum, non verba evangelica et saluti subditorum utilia seminare, sed fraudes joco mendacia, per quae possunt populum facilius spoliare." In the book *De veritate s. scripturae*, ch. 14: "Theologus debet seminare *veritatem scripturae, non gesta vel cronicas mundiales.*" In his sermon on the Parable of the Sower: "Unde manifestum est, quod praecipua causa mortificationis spiritualis in populo, et per consequens totius nequitiae regnantis in seculo, est defectus vel mortificatio seminis verbi. Sed unde quaeso tam pernicioosa radix peccati? Revera 'inimicus homo' surrepens in animas sacerdotum, superseminavit zizania! Nunc enim si quis loquitur, non quasi sermones Dei, sed gratia extraneandi praedicabit *gesta, poemata vel fabulas* extra corpus scripturae, vel praedicando scripturam dividet ipsam ultra minuta naturalia et allegabit moralizando per *colores rithmicos*, quousque non appareat textus scripturae sed sermo praedicantis, tanquam auctoris et inventoris primarii. Et ex illa affectione dyabolica, qua quilibet appetit a se ipso, et non ab alio, habere talia, insurgit tota vitiosa novitas hujus mundi;" and further: "Sed quod pejus est, dum declamatorie sic loquuntur sapientiam quae ex solo Deo est, *formam metricam* induunt" (II. App. B, III.). In *De officio pastorali*, II. ch. 3, p. 34: "Debet evangelisator praedicare *plane evangelicam veritatem.*"

Condemning thus strictly the "fables and such wretchedness" told by the clerical pilgrims; choosing for his "meditacioun" the same subject that Wicliffe treated in his "Wicket"; following, as to form and contents, the

rules given by Wicliffe in a hundred passages of his works ; and doing all this not only in the spirit and manner, but partly with the very words, of the great reformer¹, the Parson, in my opinion, *declares himself as unequivocally to be à Wicliffite, as it was possible to do without using the name.*

One essential point, however, is still to be mentioned : the Parson's citing the epistles of St Paul to Timothy in vindication of his refusal to tell a fable. In this condemnation, seemingly directed only against the tales of the clerical pilgrims, he, by this allusion, strikes the whole Roman Church a blow as with a club. For in no other part of the Bible do we find such emphatic, nay, imploring exhortations to cling to the gospel ; nowhere is the necessity of the clergy's leading a holy life so forcibly urged ; nowhere are the false doctrines and ecclesiastical statutes, as they were afterwards smuggled into Christianity from Rome, more decidedly condemned !

In three passages in the Epistles to Timothy occurs the expression "*fables*" : 1 Timothy i. 3 and 4 ; iv. 1—8 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1—5. All of them are directed against false doctrines ; the 2nd condemns *celibacy* and *fasting* (abstinence from certain food) ; the 3rd contains *an exhortation to faithfully discharge the duties of a minister*. It is well known that the latter was a favourite theme with Wicliffe ; he treated of it at large in his pamphlet *De officio pastorali*, touched it in many of his sermons, and has shown by his example, in his quality as parish priest, what value he laid upon a faithful administration of the holy office.

1 *Tim.* i. 3 and 4. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine ;

Neither give heed to *fables*, and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith ; so do.

¹ Concerning the expression "leful" (v. 41) see *Lechler*, II. 17 f., and especially *Knighton*, col. 2664.

1 *Tim.* iv. 1—8. Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils ;

Speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ;

*Forbidding to marry*¹, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving :

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

For bodily exercise profiteth little ; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

2 *Tim.* iv. 1—5. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom ;

Preach THE WORD ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come *when they will not endure sound doctrine* ; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears ;

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, *do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*

Another point is the great precaution shown by the Parson before he delivers his "meditacioun." Twice he asks the other pilgrims' consent ; twice he declares his willingness to be corrected, if wrong.

¹ That the Wicliffites rejected celibacy, we may see from the petition they presented to Parliament in 1395. *Conclusiones Lollardorum* : III. Quod *lex continentiae* injuncta sacerdotio, quae in praesudicium mulierum prius fuit ordinata, inducit sodomiam in totam sanctam ecclesiam . . . XI. Quod *rotum continentiae* factum in nostra ecclesia per mulieres, . . . est causa inductionis maximorum horribilium peccatorum. (*Shirley*, Fasc. xix. 360 ff., in *Lechler*, II, 24 f.)

Wicliffe's opinion on fasting is too well known to require evidence.

37. If that yow lust to hiere
 Moralité and vertuons matiere,
 And thanne that ye wil give me audiance, . . .
52. And if ye vouchésauf, anon I schal
 Bygynne my talé, for which I yow praye
 Telle your avis, I can no better saye.
55. But natheles this meditacloun
 I put it ay under correcccloun
 Of clerkés, for I am not textuel ;
 I také but the sentens, trustith wel.
 Therfor I maké protestacioun,
60. That I wol stondé to correccioun.

What could be the use of all this, if he intended to follow the beaten paths of church-doctrine? There is no sense in it, except it be said to introduce some new doctrine; and it is perfectly in character with a Wicliffite whose master also, at the beginning of 1378, before the inquisition in Lambeth Hall, declared his readiness to retract as soon as they should convince him of the fallacy of his religious belief¹.

Not till the pilgrims consent to hear his meditacloun does the host invite him to begin, but to be brief².

I have now to discuss the seeming inconsistency in the Parson's taking part in the pilgrimage.

Canterbury had, besides the tomb of the "martyr," many attractions, even for a Wicliffite. Beda tells us that at the time of the Romans, one of the first, if not the first, Christian church in Britain had been erected in Canterbury and dedicated to St Martin; there Augustin with his 40 monks had first preached the gospel, and the first Christian King of England had there received holy baptism; there lay, besides Becket's, the remains of Augustin, Æthelbert, Stephen Langton (to whom England chiefly owes her Magna Charta), and the Black Prince, the idol of the nation, which only a short time before had been plunged in the deepest grief by his untimely death³. And must

¹ Pauli, Bilder, VII. 227 ff.

² The variations in the Six-Text print of the Parson's Prologue (Blank-Parson Link) are immaterial as to the sense; they all spring from mistakes of the copyists or their different orthography.

³ Pauli, Bilder, VII. "Canterbury."

not Canterbury, as a far-famed place of pilgrimage, powerfully attract a Wicliffite preacher, whether he wished to see with his own eyes how the "miracles" were wrought, or hoped to find a particularly rich field of labour in a city so much frequented from religious reasons?

One thing more. All the historians of English literature agree in maintaining that the *Canterbury Tales* were intended to be a great picture of the morals and customs of those times, and by this they excuse many things that would otherwise throw a bad light on our poet. But what should we think of this picture, if, by the side of so many persons from all classes of society, and of such different intellectual standing, it wanted a representative of that prodigious world-known movement, which the great Wicliffe, according to directions from the King and parliament, first raised on a question of politics, but which, with internal necessity, soon reached the department of religion, and almost overthrew the government and doctrine of the Established Church? Even if Chaucer himself was no Wicliffite, such a character would have been indispensable in his immortal picture of his times.

But we can scarcely suppose that our poet was not heartily attached to Wicliffe's tenets. If such were the case, how could he depict the "Lollard"¹ so ideally, and, at the same time, display, as we have seen, such knowledge of the reformer's writings and way of thinking? His near connection with Wicliffe's protector, John of Gaunt, who took the learned professor as his assistant with him to Bruges, and, in 1377, delivered him, with peril to himself, from the hands of the court of inquisition at St Paul's; the interest he took in the political struggles of his nation; his journeys to Italy, in which he, perhaps, passed Avignon and closely saw the hierarchical Babel, but which, at any rate, made him acquainted with the more enlightened

¹ I assume that the reader admits the validity of my evidence and argument.

religious views of prominent Italians¹; his high sense of right and truth; lastly, the beginning of the great Schism which deprived Popery of the last remnant of esteem;—all these tended to alienate him from the Pope and the Church, and make him join the great reformer with whom he was very probably personally acquainted².

All that his works seem to contain to the contrary, vanishes upon closer examination. Thus his *A B C* and the *Legende of Seint Cerile* are earlier productions³; his *Mother of God* and the *Story of Custance* are most likely so too; and it is doubtful whether the latter was meant to form part of the *Canterbury Tales*⁴. After the pathetic, though 'bait-the-Jews,' legend of the Prioress, Chaucer lets fly his fantastic *Sir Topas*, as if to show that it deserves to be thrown into the same pot with the *Fabliaux*; he has not a single word of praise for this nor for the rest of the "fables and such wrecchednesse" told by the other Romists, and the Monk's water-fall of tragedies is roughly interrupted, while even the *Miller's* and *Reve's* tales are applauded. But the *friars* are treated more despicably than all the others. We have only to remember the place of abode assigned to them in hell,

¹ *Kissner*, Ch. in seinen Beziehungen zur italienischen Literatur, p. 78.

² What Wicliffe thought of the Schism we see in his work *De quatuor sectis novellis*, MS. 3929, fol. 225, col. 3: "Benedictus Deus, qui—divisit caput serpentis, movens unam partem ad aliam conterendam. . . Consilium ergo sanum videtur permittere has duas partes Antichristi semet ipsas destruere."—(In Lechler, I. 650.) That he dared to write thus, shows plainly what was the public opinion about Popery in England.

³ *Furnivall*, Recent Work at Chaucer (in *Mac Millan's Magazine*, 1873), p. 6; *B. ten-Brink*, Chaucerstudien, p. 130, and Tyrwhitt (Morris, I. 240).

⁴ I only mention one reason: Man of Law's Prolog., v. 90, "I speke in *prose* and let him rymes make;" the Story of Custance being in *rhyme*. To solve the difficulty by supposing v. 90 to mean "I make no rhymes myself, but I will tell you a rhymed story of his," is impossible, for he *does* make rhymes in his Prologue; and, besides, if he was going to tell one of Chaucer's rhymed stories, he could not have said: "Though I come after him *with hawebake*" (v. 95).

and the punishment they incur by their greediness (Somponour's Prol. and Tale). A hatred so furious, a contempt passing so far beyond all bounds, are not to be explained by the Somponour's irritation, nor by Chaucer's dislike of the clergy in general. They must have their peculiar cause. We need not look long for it: the synod held at Blackfriars, which, in May 1382, condemned Wicliffe's doctrines, consisted for the greatest part of friars; they preached against heresy, after the Whitsuntide procession; they published the resolutions of that synod at Oxford; they were the beadles who executed them; they helped to obtain Wicliffe's excommunication, and to condemn him to lose his place as professor¹.

That Chaucer himself takes part in the pilgrimage may be accounted for by what was said about Canterbury.

The words in the General Prologue :

v. 17. The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke ;

are certainly the repetition of a current phrase rather than his own sincere opinion. He knew better what to think of a pilgrimage: he makes the Parson simply call it a 'viage' (v. 49, P. Prol.), and in the Wife's Prologue he has preserved for us a proverb still applicable in our own time :

v. 655. Who that buyldith his hous al of salwes,
And pricketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
And suffrieth his wyf go seken halwes,
Is worthy to ben honged on the galwes.

Nay, it is not impossible that the *Canterbury Tales* were intended to hold pilgrimage up to ridicule and contempt, by showing what loose and sinful people took part in it, and what unholy conversation used to shorten the way.

THE PARSON'S TALE.

The strictly orthodox contents of the Parson's Tale are consequently the only remaining proof that Chaucer either

¹ *Pawl*, Bilder, VII. 242 ff.

remained always true to the Roman creed, or at least died an orthodox Catholic. A man who could write a sermon on Penitence in which the necessity of auricular confession is so emphatically enjoined, cannot have been of Wicliffe's persuasion. True. But is it so sure that Chaucer did write it? That he wrote it as it now lies before us¹? If it can be shown that there is a great dissimilarity between the parts, that some of them are dry, poor of thought, clumsy, yet full of paltry subtlety and hairsplitting, full of inconsistencies with the Parson's way of thinking, the Bible, common sense, and the scheme of the treatise, full of grammatical and stylistic mistakes; if the remainder can be shown to form a genuine, evangelical *De Poenitentia*—short, powerful, coming from, and going to, the heart, with a completely exhaustive and well worked-out scheme, containing nothing of auricular confession; if the probability of a falsification, and the fact that it was easy to perpetrate it, can alike be proved—will it then still be possible to adduce the Parson's Tale as a proof of Chaucer's orthodox catholicism?

This gives us the strongest inducement to examine the Tale minutely. Owing to the narrow limits of this Essay, I cannot take into consideration all the questions concerning it; I shall content myself with proving that the different parts cannot, from their contents, all belong to one another, nor be considered as Chaucer's. The grammatical and stylistic-differences I shall only touch incidentally, leaving it to professional scholars to enter into particulars. I'm sorry to say, that even for this limited investigation I have not all the means desirable at my disposal. A comparison of the MSS. is impossible, owing to the distance; the Six-Text print is only advanced to the end of the Parson's Prologue, and I can, therefore, only

¹ The title it bears according to Tyrwhitt (Morris's ed., I. 251) in some MSS.: "Tractatus de Poenitentia pro fabula, ut dicitur, Rectoria," may possibly be meant to convey a doubt.

refer to the texts given by Tyrwhitt and Morris. Fortunately they agree almost literally, and thus form a firm base upon which operations are possible. Restricting my criticism to pointing out the defects that remain in the best possible sense of the passages, after the mistakes which may possibly be ascribed to the copyists are subtracted; laying stress on blunders as to style and grammar only where they appear united with others of a different nature, I hope to satisfy all reasonable demands for caution.

The quotations are from the revised Aldine Edition of Chaucer's Poetical Works, by Dr R. Morris (G. Bell and Sons, London), for which the excellent MS. Harl. 7334 has been used and carefully compared with MS. Lansdowne 851. The few deviations in Tyrwhitt's text are given in the notes. They have not much weight, for Tyrwhitt had not the best MSS., and he has corrected the text in many instances.

A full analysis of the whole Parson's Tale would suit my purpose best; but it is not practicable, owing to the great length of 106 pages. I must, therefore, content myself with fragments.

"THE PERSONES TALE.

Jer. 6°. "State super vias, et videte et interrogate de semitis antiquis quae sit via bona, et ambulate in ea, et inuenietis refrigerium animabus vestris, etc.

"Owre swete Lord God of heven, that no man wil perische, but wol that we comen alle to the knowleche of him, and to the blisful lif that is perdurable, ammonestith us by the prophet Jeremye, that saith in this wise: Stondeth upon the weyes, and seeth and axeth of olde pathes, that is to sayn, of old sentence, which is the goode way, and walketh in that weie, and ye schul fynde refresshyng for youre soules, etc. Many ben the wayes espirituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Christ, and to the regne of glorie; of whiche weyes, ther is a ful noble way, and ful covenantable, which may not faile to man ne to womman, that thorough synne hath mysgon fro the righte way of Jerusalem celestial; and this

wey is cleped penitence. Of which men schulden gladly herken and enquire with al here herte, to wyte what is penitence, and whens it is cleped penitence, and in what maner, and in how many maneres been the acciones or workynges of penaunce, and how many spieces ben of penitences, and whiche thinges apperteynen and byhoven to penitence, and whiche thinges destourben penitence¹.”—p. 263, l. 16, to p. 264, l. 17.

Leaving aside the spurious ‘wil’ and ‘wol’ (p. 263, ll. 21 and 22), this passage, up to p. 264, l. 12, contains nothing that Chaucer could not have written, or the Parson not have said.

The scheme given here is the following :

(Subject :) PENITENCE.

- I. What is penitence, and whens it is cleped penitence.
- II. In how many maneres ben the acciones or workynges of penaunce.
- III. How many spices ben of penitences.
- IV. Whiche thinges apperteynen and byhoven to penitence.
- V. Whiche thinges destourben penitence.

I. WHAT IS PENITENCE, AND WHENS IT IS CLEPED PENITENCE.

“Seint Ambrose saith, that penitence is the pleynyng of man for the gult that he hath doon, and no more to do any thing for which him oughte to pleigne. And som doctour saith, penitence is the waymentynge of man that sorweth for his synne, and peyneth himself for he hath mysdoon. Penitence, with certeyn circumstaunces, is verray repentaunce of man that holt himself in sorwe and in woo for his giltes ; and for he schal be verray penitent, he schal first bywaile the synnes that he hath do, and stedfastly purposen in his hert to haven schrifte of mouth, and to doon satisfaccioun, and never to do thing for which him oughte more to bywaile or to complayne, and to continue in goode werkes, or elles his repentaunce may nought avayle.”—p. 264, ll. 18—33.

¹ The passage from the Vulgate is not in Tyrwhitt ; instead of ‘penitence’ he always has ‘penance’ ; p. 264, l. 12, he leaves out ‘and in what maner.’

The definition of penitence given here by the Parson offers difficulties. Coming after the two others, and being more ample, it must have been intended to be better. But it is obviously inferior, both in contents and in form. It consists of two parts: the first essentially repeats that given by 'som doctour¹,' only in other words, and with the addition, 'with certeyn circumstaunces,' which expresses a reservation; the second part corrects or completes the first, adding the bewailing of sin, the purpose to confess, to do satisfaction (i. e. to suffer the punishments inflicted by the Church, or the exercise of penance), to avoid sin and to continue in good works (negative and positive reform of life). The whole may be rendered thus: Penitence may be defined as true repentance, with this reservation, that true penitence also includes auricular confession, satisfaction and reforming. Compared with that of St Ambrose, this definition would consequently add confession, satisfaction, and positive virtue, as principal requisites; compared with that of *som doctour*, confession, satisfaction, and virtue, both negative and positive.

This conception is contradicted by '*verray repentaunce*' (l. 25). By what is true repentance to be distinguished, if not by its being followed by a new life? What, then, can '*verray penitent*' mean, since real, not sham penitence, was the subject under consideration from the outset? It obviously served to introduce and emphasize confession and satisfaction. But these two requisites are not so much as mentioned in the remainder of Part I., only the necessity of leading a holy life is urged; in the last sentence but one, redemption is said to depend merely on repentance and '*forletting of synne*'; the last sentence expresses the hope that repentance on the deathbed will alone suffice for salvation:

¹ Wicliffe? The fifth of his tenets, condemned by the so-called earthquake-council, says: "If a man be as contrite as he ought, all outward confession is superfluous or useless for him."—*Lechler*, I. 669.

“ And therefore repentaunt folk that stinte for to synne, and forlete synne er that synne forlete hem, holy chirche holt hem siker of her savacioun. And he that synneth, and verraily repentith him in his last ende, holy chirche yit hopeth his savacioun, by the grete mercy of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentaunce; but take ye the siker way.”—p. 265, ll. 11—18.

That these lines are genuine, we may infer from the expression, ‘forlete synne’, etc., l. 12, which almost literally occurs at the end of the Doctor’s Tale¹, and by the cordial advice (ll. 17 and 18), which seems peculiarly proper in the Parson’s mouth. The third definition (p. 264), as we have seen, is not so unobjectionable. Its form is strange too. From the general and abstract way of speaking—the only appropriate one to define an abstract idea like that of penitence—it suddenly passes over to the injunction “and for he schal be verray penitent, he schal first bywaile the synnes that he hath do” (ll. 27 and 28). This injunction cannot well be allowed to form a proper part of an abstract definition. It would be less objectionable, if separated from the definition by a full stop; but then the words ‘with certeyn circumstaunces’ would be quite uncalled for. Besides, there are two awkward and unnecessary repetitions: “verray repentaunce—verray penitent” (p. 264, ll. 25 and 27), and “he schal first bywaile the synnes that he hath do,” for this sentence contains the same idea as “holt himself in sorwe and woo for his giltes” (l. 26); and a pleonastic and ungrammatical ‘bywayle’ comes hobbling after in line 31. In no other passage of the *Persones Tale* is ‘bywaile’ constructed with the preposition ‘for’; it only occurs with the simple accusative (p. 264, l. 27; 272, 17 and 23), or without any object (p. 282, l. 8), and these two passages are exactly in those parts which I consider genuine. It is scarcely to be supposed that Chaucer, who, in his *Melibe*, proves himself perfectly equal to the nicest requirements of dialectics, should have shown himself such a bungler in a

¹ v. 286. Forsakith synne, er synne yow forsake.

definition intended to correct those of two authorities quoted by him; and considering the weighty objections to which the second half of the third definition is open besides, we are justified in doubting the genuineness of it and of the corresponding restriction 'with certeyn circumstaunce.'

If we suppose for a moment that some churchman, finding that Shrift and Satisfaction, which he considered absolutely necessary, were wanting in all Chaucer's three definitions, inserted the suspicious lines, in order to correct the third definition, and, with it, the others, but was not sufficiently master of the language to do so without blundering; if we suppose this, and, by way of experiment, leave out all that is doubtful, we get, with a single trifling alteration:

"Penitence . . . is verry repentaunce of man, that holt himself in sorwe and woo for his giltes, . . . and steadfastly purposer^H in his hert . . . never to do thing for which him oughte more . . . to complayne, and to continue in goode werkes, or elles his repentaunce may nought awayle."

Now, everything is clear, there is not one word too much, no grammatical mistake. This definition corresponds with the two by St Ambrose and 'som doctour,' and yet it is better, since it adds something wanting in each. At the same time the words 'or elles,' now, in harmony with the remainder of Part I, lay stress only upon the reformation of heart and life. Of course, the definition no longer sounds quite orthodox, on the contrary, rather strongly Lollardish¹;—but would that make it less suitable for the Parson?

This is a mere conjecture; still it may, perhaps, prove correct. That something is wrong in I. follows also from the want of an answer to 'whens it is cleped penitence.' It is nowhere to be found in the Tale.

¹ XXIV *Predigten Wicliffe's*, No. VI. MS. 3928, fol. 143, col. 4. "Verum concluditur, quod pro nullo peccato suo posset homo satisfacere nisi esset immensitas misericordiae Salvatoris. *Poenitet ergo homo DEO fructuose*, et deserat peccata praeterita, et virtute meriti Christi et suae gratiae sunt deleta."—(In *Lechler*, I. 528.)

II. IN HOW MANY MANERES BEN THE ACCIONES OR WORKYNGES OF PENAUNCE.

“ And now sith that I have declared yow, what thing is penitence, now schul ye understonde, that ther ben three acciouns of penitence. The first is, that if a man be baptized after that he hath synned. Seint Augustyn saith, but-if he be penitent for his olde synful lif, he may not by-gynne the newe clene lif. For certes, if he be baptized withoute penitence of his olde gilt, he receyveth the mark of baptisme, but nought the grace, ne the remissioun of his synnes, til he have repentaunce verray. Another defaute is this, that men doon deedly synne after that thay have receyved baptisme. The thridde defaute is, that men fallen into venial synne after here baptisme fro day to day. Ther-of saith seint Austyn, that penitence of goode men, and of humble folk, is the penitens of every day.”—p. 265, l. 19, to p. 266, l. 2.

There are three cases to be enumerated in which an act of penitence is needed. The first, “if a man be baptized after that he hath synned,” is correct; but what are we to think of ‘defaute’? Is a ‘defaute’ an act of penitence? If we take ‘acciones’ to be equivalent to ‘workynges’—as we very well may, in fact, *must*, on account of ‘acciones or workynges’ in the heading—the nonsense becomes still worse, since ‘workynges of penaunce’ may signify *practice* as well as *effect* of penitence (the German *Wirkung*). Or are we to suppose that the author intended to say: Baptism without penitence is ineffective, faulty, a ‘defaute’; other ‘defautes’ are the commission of deadly and venial sins after receiving baptism? No; for he meant to speak of “acciones or workynges of penaunce,” not of defaults or defects! It is no mistake of the copyist’s; is it a bungle? Has he been misled by the passage from St Augustine to presume that the question is about things that make baptism ineffectual? Or has he been absurd enough to fancy ‘acciones of penitence’ to mean ‘actions for which penitence is due?’ We place the comma (l. 21) behind the following ‘that,’ and read (ll. 30 and 31): “Another . . .

is this, *if*. The thridde . . . is that, *if*," supplying: "case in which an act of penitence is required." But even then the passage is not unobjectionable, Chaucer-like. How poor are the definitions! they remind us of the soldier's: "Pumice-stone is, if we have none, we take sand." There is no escape, we must come to the conclusion that this passage is spurious too. When we see piety and genius throw up such bubbles, I suppose we may be allowed to suspect.

III. HOW MANY SPICES BEN OF PENITENCES.

"The spices of penitence ben thre. That oon of hem is solempne, another is comune, and the thridde is pryvé. Thilke penaunce that is solempne, is in tuo maners; as is to be put out of holy chirche in lente, for slaugthre of childre, and such maner thing. Another is, whan a man hath synned openly, of whiche synne the fame is openly spoken in the contré; and thanne holy chirche by juggedment streyneth him to doon open penaunce. Comune penaunce is, that prestes enjoynen men comunly in certeyn caas, as for to goon, peradventure, naked in pilgrimage, or barfot. Privé penaunce is thilk that men doon alday for privé synnes, of whiche we schryve us prively, and receyven privé penaunce."—p. 266, l. 3—17.

The penitence spoken of here is very different from that defined in I.; it is *penance*, or punishment imposed by the Church or one's self, and from l. 5 this (Romance) form of the word is continually used in consequence. 'Penaunce,' a contraction of *poenitentia*, *penitence*, had come to signify only the punishment inflicted by the Church, because clerics and laymen used to consider this punishment as the principal part of penitence. 'Penitence' remained still in use with the educated who knew its origin and near relation to 'repentance,' and it conveyed to them an idea differing strongly from 'penaunce,' while the uncultured simply replaced 'penitence' by 'penance,'—the word as well as the idea. In Harl. MS. 7334 we have always found, till now, the form 'penitence'—with the single exception (p. 264, l. 14) already men-

tioned. It is, therefore, to be presumed (and the third definition confirms it even in its doubtful form) that Chaucer did *not* confound the two ideas; for down to this Part III. repentance has always been considered the first requisite of penitence. If we notice, besides, the clumsy exemplification, "for slaughtre of childre and such maner thing," and the definitions which here also are awkward in the highest degree, especially the last of them, in which, by the repetition of 'penaunce' we get complete nonsense, we cannot but doubt this part too.

IV. WHICHE THINGES APPERTYNNEN AND BYHOVEN TO
PENITENCE.

"Now schalt thou understonde what bihoveth and is necessarie to verray parfyt penitence; and this stonddith in thre thinges, contricioun of hert, confessioun of mouth and satisfaccioun. For whiche saith seint Johan Crisostom, penitence distreyneth a man to accepte benignely every peyne that him is enjoyned with contricioun of herte, and schrift of mouth, with satisfaccioun, and in werking of alle maner humbledé. And this is fruytful penitence agayn tho thre thinges, in whiche we wratthe oure Lord Jhesu Crist; this is to sayn, by delit in thinking, by rechelesnes in speking, and by wicked synful werkynge."—p. 266, ll. 18—30.

Of the four parts of penitence enumerated in the third definition (p. 264, ll. 24—32) only three are mentioned here; the fourth, correction of life, so emphatically enjoined in I., is completely passed over. It cannot be meant by "werking of alle maner humbledé" (l. 25); that would be a singular way of introducing so important a point; the words are, most probably, a mere circumlocution for exercises of penance. Does 'satisfaccioun,' perhaps, comprise reform of life? We look for the chapter 'satisfaccioun.' Good works are mentioned there, it is true. But if a new life be part of 'satisfaccioun,' why make detailed mention of it, by the side of 'satisfaccion' in I.? Of course, he who didn't make the third definition himself, but only smuggled

'schrifte and satisfaccioun' into it, he, and he alone, could consider the new life demanded in I. to be only a part of satisfaction, and—overlook it here.

In turning over the leaves, when looking for 'satisfaccioun' (*De tertia parte penitentiae*) we also perceive that the first part of penitence, 'contricioun of hert,' fills 17 pages; the second, 'confessioun of mouth,' 77 (!); the third, 'satisfaccioun,' 5 pages. More than 99 pages for the three subdivisions of IV., while I, II, III, and V. together only require six! What? Chaucer, who according to the unanimous opinion of all judges, distinguishes himself by a rare symmetry in his productions, is supposed to have made such a striking exception in the *Parson's Tale*, only to make this Wicliffite parson (as I assume) deliver a copious and detailed sermon on auricular confession, which, as we all know, Wicliffe rejected? Our suspicion increases in spite of ourselves!

After an artificial parallel between penitence and a tree, which, with the exception of a few disorderly and illogical passages (in one of which sin is compared with the milk of a nurse), is tolerably well worked out, we arrive at the details of the three points, 'contricioun, confession, satisfaccioun.'

I. CONTRICIOUN.

"In this penitence or contricioun men schal understonde foure thinges, that is to sayn, what is contricioun, and whiche ben the causes that moeven men to contricioun, and how he schulde be contrit, and what contricioun availleth to the soule. Thanne is it thus, that contricioun is the verray sorwe that a man receyveth in his herte for his synnes, with sad purpos to schryve him, and to doo penaunce, and never more to don synne."—p. 268, l. 7—15.

Penitence OR *contricioun* (l. 7) seems to be a mistake in copying, but is not! For, l. 12 ff., we find for *contricioun* the third definition of penitence (I.) again, with this difference, that, instead of satisfaction, and a new life, we have here 'penaunce' only, perhaps because the author

considered submission to ecclesiastical punishments the principal thing. In IV. 18—21, however, it was distinctly said that penitence consisted in three things: 1. contrition, 2. confession, 3. satisfaction. Repeating, therefore, here, for contrition alone, the definition of penitence, the author *makes a part equal to the whole!*

Was Chaucer such a blockhead? Or the Parson? The third definition was of itself suspicious; it does not become less so by recurring here in the wrong place. Besides, the introductory words "Thanne is it thus, that contricioun" (l. 12) sound just like: "Now, after I've made the necessary alterations, it is thus."

The three passages coming into collision here: I. 24—32; IV. 18—21; IV. i. 12—15, cannot, by any means, be all genuine. They all look suspicious; the question is only: Are they all spurious, or only one, or two; and if so, which? To proceed safely, we must examine them again side by side.

I begin with the third (IV. i. 12—15). It is directly opposed, as we have seen, to the enumeration of the three things belonging to penitence: 'contricioun,' 'confessioun,' 'satisfaccioun' (IV. 18—21). This definition, besides, is but the misplaced repetition of the third definition of penitence (I. 24—32) which I have already called in question; and it is clear that whoever interpolated 'schrifte and satisfaccioun' there, could, by the words '*penitence* or contricioun,' easily be induced to do the same here, the more so because the repetition would lay the desired stress on the two requisites that appeared to him absolutely necessary. The third definition of penitence in I. becoming thus entangled in the downfall of the definition of 'contricioun' (IV. 1, a), my conjecture concerning it is confirmed. But if 'schrifte and satisfaccioun' were interpolated in I., the passage IV. 18—21, already suspicious on account of its passing over the necessity of beginning a new life, must needs lose its semblance of genuineness,

seeing that it enumerates these very things as the second and third parts of penitence.

There is, consequently, hardly any doubt that these passages are all three spurious. A sad result! Reluctantly we turn to the examination of the other parts of 'contricioun' (IV. 1, *b*, *c*, *d*). What is our surprise! No more inconsistencies, no confusion, no merely outward conception of penitence, no idle words, no grammatical and stylistic blunders;—logic, brevity, vigour, genuine feeling, enthusiasm; Chaucer's style and language! Even a passage from his favourite Seneca, whom he quotes 15 times in "Melibee," and the first verse of a French song! In short, all desirable proofs of genuineness, so that the part 'contricioun'—with the exception of the impossible definition (IV. 1, *a*) and the end (IV. 1, *d*) of which I shall speak presently—appears to be imbedded in the nonsense of the other parts like a lump of gold in worthless sand.

We now recollect the Wicliffite character of the Parson. A Wicliffite could very well say "penitence *or* contricioun," for he did not define penitence in the mere outward sense of the Romish Church; to him, repentance or contrition was the great thing, the necessary preliminary condition of a new life, and its beginning; since on it depends conversion of heart. We compare the lump of gold with the purified third definition; it exhausts it completely! Should this part 'contricioun' be the pith of the Tale? I think so. But to avoid saying the same thing twice, I reserve further reasons till I try to reconstruct the *Parson's Tale* in its original form. I only remark here that *this* Tale has also the advantage of being short enough to correspond with the host's request (Pers. Prol., v. 72 and 73); while the *Parson's Tale* in its present form is of an enormous length.

Not the whole of Part IV. 1, however, appears to me to be genuine: besides the definition I must also challenge the last subdivision:

IV. 1, *d.* WHEREOF AVAILETH CONTRICIOUN?

"The laste thing that a man schuld understonde in contricioun is this, wherof availith contricioun? I say, that som tyme contricioun delivereth man fro synne; of which that David saith, I say, quod David, that is to saye, I purposid fermely to schryve me, and thou, Lord, relesedist my synne. And right so as contricioun availith nat withoute sad purpos of schrift if man have oportunité, right so litil worth is schrifte or satisfaccioun withoute contricioun¹. And, moreover, contricioun destruyeth the prisoun of helle, and makith wayk and feble the strengthes of the develes, and restorith the yift of the holy gost, and of alle vertues, and it clensth the soule of synnes, and delivereth the soule fro the peynes of helle, and fro the companye of the devel, and fro the servage of synne, and restorith it to alle goodes espritueles, into the companye and communioun of holy chirche. And fortherover, it makith him that somtyme was sone of ire, to be the sone of grace; and alle these thinges he provith by holy writte. And therefore he that wil sette his herte to these thinges, he were ful wys. For sothe he scholde not thanne in al his lyf have corrage to synne, but yiven his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, and therof do him homage. For certis oure swete Lord Jhesu Crist hath sparid us so debonerly in oure folyes, that if he ne hadde pité of mannes soule, sory songe mighte we alle synge."—p. 284, l. 30, to p. 285, l. 25.

The words 'som tyme' (p. 284, l. 32) for one thing, mince the originally correct idea; the passage (Psalm 32, 5) is not applicable here, for it speaks of confession of sin, and consequently belongs to IV. 2, 'confessioun,' not to IV. 1, *d.* The sentence 'And right so' (p. 285, l. 2—5) is hardly possible, because the first part of it has not yet been mentioned, much less proved, these things being only treated of in IV. 2 and 3. The interpolator has evidently lost his way, owing to the wrongly applied Bible-passage. Secondly we have (ll. 6—14) twice nearly the

¹ Tyrwhitt: . . . "I say that contrition som time delivereth man fro sinne: of which David saith; I say (quod David), I purposed fermely to shrive me, and thou Lord relesedest my sinne. And right so as contrition availith not without sad purpos of schrift and satisfaction, right so litel worth is schrift or satisfactioun withouten contrition."

same fourfold fruit of contrition: Deliverance from hell, devil, and sin, re-entering into the state of grace; and in ll. 14 and 15 the latter is even mentioned for the third time; 'he provith' (l. 16) would, quite perversely, refer either to 'sone of grace,' or 'sone of ire,' or—'the devil' (but, perhaps, the original had 'be proved,' and it is merely a mistake in copying); finally, the last sentence (ll. 21—25) is again quite illogical. The accumulation of "I say, . . . David saith, I say, quod David, that is to saye" (p. 284, l. 31 ff.), shows plainly what a hard piece of work this was for the interpolator. In Tyrwhitt's text the passage is a little more tolerable, but we know that Tyrwhitt improved the text in many instances; and even with his alteration we cannot believe Chaucer to have written it.

The gap made by rejecting this part (IV. 1, *d*) will be filled up with the section at the end of the Tale, in which 'the fruyt of penitence' is expounded.

Now follows a new chapter with the heading: "Explicit prima pars Penitentiae; et incipit secunda pars ejusdem," with which, 77 pages further on, corresponds a similar one: "De tertia parte Penitentiae¹."

IV. 2. CONFESSION.

"The secounde partye of penitence is confessioun, that is, signe of contricioun. Now schul ye understonde what is confessioun; and whethir it oughte needes be doon or noon; and whiche thinges ben convenable to verray confessioun. First schalt thou understonde, that confessioun is verrey schewyng of synnes to the prest; this is to sayn verray, for he moot schewe him of alle the condicions that ben longynge to his synne, as ferforth as he can; al mot be sayd, and nought excused, ne hyd, ne forwrappid; and nought avaunte him of his goode werkis. And forthmore it is necessary to understonde, whens that synnes springe, and how thay encreesen, and whiche thay ben."—p. 286, l. 3—17.

From here, then, the arrangement followed till now is given up, and is replaced by that of Part IV. ("Contricioun,

¹ In Tyrwhitt they are somewhat different.

confessioun, satisfaccioun"). This results not only from the superscription—that would be of little importance, since any copyist could insert it—but from the dimensions, the contents and the handling of the parts "confessioun and satisfaccioun."

IV. 2, a. WHAT IS CONFESSIOUN?

In the "secunde" part of penitence (confessioun) three questions are to be considered: a. "What is confessioun"? b. "Whethir it oughte needes be doon or noon." c. "Whiche thinges ben convenable to verray confessioun." The first is answered exactly in the spirit which caused the interpolation of 'schrifte and satisfaccioun' in I. (p. 264, l. 24—32), and the repetition of them in IV. 1 (p. 268, l. 12—16), where they had nothing to do. The answer to the second (IV. 2, b: "Whethir, etc.") is nowhere to be found; the third (IV. 2, c: "Whiche thinges, etc.") is discussed 71 pages later!

The style is in perfect harmony with this conscientious and classically clear exposition. With truly sovereign contempt the manufacturer of this passage defies all grammatical and stylistic rules, by awkward turns, arbitrary change of the agents *ye, thou, he*, of the active and passive voice, and of the abstract and concrete way of speaking. I'll not urge the circumstance, that the coarse energy with which an extensive and submissive confession of sins is demanded, does not at all agree with the mild character of the Parson (General Prol., v. 516: "He was to senful man nought dispitous"); I only ask: Did Chaucer ever write thus?

TRACT ON SIN.

We get a notion, what has become of the answer to IV. 2, b ("Whethir it oughte needes be doon or noon"), and why the question, IV. 2, c ("Whiche thinges ben convenable to verray confessioun"), is discussed so very late, when we find that from the words "And furthermore"

(p. 268, l. 14), seven pages are taken up by a detailed explanation of the origin of sin, and the difference between venial and deadly sins; and that, after this, 61 pages are filled with a tract on the seven deadly sins. In a wholesale business, little bits of goods are easily misplaced and lost. The new subject does not begin with a new break, probably to cover the forgery the more effectively; and for the same reason, most likely, the real beginning of the tract was left out. It almost seems as if, for the purpose of interpolating the *Parson's Tale*, an old stored-up Sermon on Penitence was used, and that the Treatise on Sin was afterwards inserted to make the whole more complete.

The origin of sin is shown in the fall of Adam; then an explanation is given of sinful desires in general; after this, there is a proposal to treat of each single lust. Only carnal desire, however, is explained, as the first; that's all. Then the author shows how sin increases. In doing so, he, by mistake, mentions the devil as the *second* cause of the growing of sin (p. 289, l. 30), though only two pages before he had been No. 1 (p. 287, l. 20—21: "Here may ye see, that dedly synne hath *first* suggestioun of the feend"). But this unmerited slight is repaired by allowing Beelzebub to enter twice: first, armed with a pair of bellows, then with a sword.

After a monstrously long passage, in which 14 successive sentences begin with 'eek whan,' or 'eek if' (p. 292), the venial sins are detailed; then the interpolator goes on:

"Now schal men understonde, that al be it so that noon erthely man may eschiewe alle venial synnes, yit may he refreyne hem by the brennyng love that he hath to oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and by prayeres, and by confessioun, and other goode werkes, so that it schal but litil greve. For, as saith seint Austyn, yif a man love God in such a maner that al that ever he doth is in the love of God, or for the love of God verraily, for he brenneth in the love of God, loke how moche that a drope of watir, that fallith in a furneyn ful of fuyr, annoyeth or greveth the brenninge of the fyre, so moche in like manere annoyeth or greveth a venial synne unto a man that is perfynt in the love of Jhesu

Christ. *Men may also refreyne venial synne, by the reseeyving of the precious body of Jhesu Crist; by receyving eek of holy water; by almes dede; by general confessioun of Confiteor at masse, and at pryme, and at complyn; and by blessing of bischops and of prestes, and by other goode werkis.*"—p. 293, l. 11—30.

Read this passage again, leaving out the words in italics, and placing a full stop before 'loke' (l. 21). We then have a great and truly scriptural idea of one cast, with a striking figure, in language good enough for any pulpit orator. How lame is the twofold mention of 'goode werkes' compared with it! A person full of burning love to Jesus Christ will practise prayer and good works as a matter of course; consequently it is not necessary to mention them. And what good works are enjoined? Prayers, confession, partaking of the Lord's supper, sprinkling with holy water, almsgiving, general confession at mass, at morning and evening prayers, blessing of bishops and priests—all of them ritual observances, among which alms, perhaps, are only mentioned, because monks and friars received them also. Last of all, 'other goode werkis' make their appearance, as it were, like an insignificant appendix. By the first passage in italics, statement and argument are needlessly torn asunder, for the same points recur afterwards in detail. Why, then, was it inserted? Obviously to prepare the way for the second, because otherwise the interpolation would have been easily found out. I only quoted the whole passage to show how the mania to correct did not even spare the Tract on Sin¹, because it did not seem ecclesiastical enough.

Now follows the tract on the Seven Deadly Sins. In the introduction of it occurs the following sentence:

... "The roote of these seven synnes thanne is pride, the general synne and roote of alle harmes. For of this roote springen general branches: as ire, envye, accidie or

¹ . . . "a translation or rather adaptation of some chapters of a work, entitled, 'Li libres roiaux de vices et de vertus' by Frère Lorena."—Tyrwhitt (M., I. 251).

aleuthe, avarice or coveitise (to commune understandynge), glotonye, and leccherie: and everich of these synnes hath his braunches and his twigges, as schal be declarid in here chapitres folwinge."—p. 294, l. 3—10.

Are we to suppose that Chaucer was inconsistent enough to denounce here pride as the root of all sins, in opposition to 1 *Tim.* 6, 10, and afterwards (p. 330, l. 10) to quote this very passage of the New Testament? And should not so thorough a judge of the human heart and of all its weaknesses have known that pride is more likely to keep men from sloth, avarice, gluttony, and unchastity, than to produce them?

But if the Tract on Sin was by Chaucer, he would have committed still another inconsistency. The expression 'chapitres' in the introduction (p. 294, l. 10) and p. 308, l. 13, as well as the corresponding one, 'this litel tretys,' at the end of the tract (p. 354, l. 32), prove that the author conceived the whole Treatise on Sin as something written and not delivered by word of mouth.

Without any further consideration, however, these expressions cannot be used as proofs of spuriousness, since other passages of the *Canterbury Tales* seem to offer analogies to them. One of these is in the Prologue to Melibee, the other in the Life of St Cecile.

This makes a little digression necessary. The passage in the Prologue to Melibee runs thus:

- v. 37. . . . "though that I telle som what more
Of proverbes, than ye have herd before
Comprehended in this litel tretys here,
40. To enforчен with theeffect of my matiere,
And though I not the same wordes say
As ye have herd, yit to yow alle I pray,
Blameth me nought; for, in my sentence,
Schul ye no wher fynde difference
45. Fro the sentence of this tretys lite,
After the which this lital tale I write."

If we suppose that Chaucer represents himself *with the then well-known Livre de Melibee et de dame Prudence, or a compilation from it, in his hand, and pointing to it;* declaring that he is going to relate exactly according to the

contents, if not in the very words of the "tretys," the story which some of his hearers, perhaps, had heard before (v. 23 and 24: "Al be it told som tyme in sondry wise of sondry folk"), the seeming contradiction of 'tretys' is done away with. As to 'write' I believe it to be an interpolation, and that the original reading was:

v. 45. "Fro the sentence of this tretys *smale*,
After the which I telle this *litel* tale."

It is very likely that the copyist, either because his hand itched to correct the poet, or, more probably, because he had, by mistake, written the synonyme 'lite,' instead of 'smale,' altered the following line to avoid an erasure.

Of course, this is again a mere conjecture; but it does not affect the sense of the verses, it removes the tasteless threefold repetition of the adjective 'litel,' it re-establishes the disturbed harmony with the beginning of the Prologue in which Chaucer is *speaking*, and it dissolves the glaring contradiction to the verses immediately following:

v. 47. "And therfor *herkeneth* what I schal *saye*,
And let me *tellen* al my *tale*, I praye."

The expressions 'reden' and 'write' in the Legend of St Cecile¹ are pointed out by Tyrwhitt and *Ten-Brink*² to prove that the *Legend* was originally composed as something written. Since two such competent judges authorize my opinion, I need not add another word. Still, I'll do so. There are two real analogies: the very words 'chapitre' and 'tretys'—the latter as object to 'reden'; but they are in that part of the *Parson's Tale* following the tract on Sin (p. 355, l. 3) and in the Retraction!

If³, therefore, my conjecture concerning the Prologue to Melibee be admitted, we have to choose, whether we are

¹ "Yet pray I you that reden that I write."—Morris, III. p. 30, v. 78.

² M., I. 240; *Ten-Brink*, Chaucerstudien, 130.

³ "Your *If* is the only peace-maker; much virtue in *If*" (*As you like it*, V. iv. 108). I can't conceive any English Chaucerian admitting Mr Simon's conjectural emendation, except as one that Chaucer might have made if his attention had been called to the inconsistency of his lines as they stand.—F.

to suppose that the *Parson's Tale* was, like the *Legend*, written before, or not originally for, the *Canterbury Tales*; or that Chaucer, by a slip of the pen, twice made use of these expressions; or that the Tract on Sin, and what immediately follows it, are not by Chaucer. Nobody has as yet ventured to declare himself for the first possibility; the second I oppose in spite of the *Merchant's Tale*, v. 441—3¹, for I believe with Mr Furnivall, "that Chaucer was not such a muddler or goose as the scribes, editors, and critics have made him for five hundred years." Thus we have only the third possibility left, which, I hope, I have made plausible already, and which will become more probable still as we advance.

For brevity's sake I'll not examine critically each separate Deadly Sin and its "*Remedium*," though it would be easy to expose, on almost every one of the 61 pages, inconsistencies, digressions, poorness of thought, clumsiness of style, and peculiarities of language that seem to point to another author than Chaucer². One single instance will show how the compiler of the tract on this popular and much-treated theme is mastered by his subject, instead of mastering it. After having discussed, on five consecutive pages in the chapter, "De Ira," the different kinds of this sin, he begins to speak of cursing and swearing (2 pp.), then of witchcraft and soothsaying (24 ll.), then of lying, and at last of flattery!

¹ The wif of Batha, if ye han understonde,
Of mariage, which ye han now in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space;
Fareth now wel, God have yow in his grace.

² The following words I've not found in any other works of Chaucer: bynymen (p. 288, l. 6; 310, 31 and 33; 311, 20; 823, 25 and 30), evenoristen (294, 30; 814, 29; 316, 15; 337, 16 and 23), anslet and slop (297, 14), eschawfen (308, 26; 309, 24; 350, 6), hokerly (313, 16), wrawe and wrawnes (323, 23 and 33), forslowthen and forsluggen (324, 20), thurrok (291, 13), ayeinstonde (329, 18), mawmet (= idol, probably a corruption of Mahomet, 331, 7; 343, 26), contubernially (332, 12), underling (332, 25; 333, 31), malisoun (338, 28), holour (318, 4; 343, 14), bygripe (343, 32), putour and putrie (346, 15, 16, 19), houselen (362, 23), &c.

"Let us now touche the vice of flaterie, which cometh not gladly, but for drede, or for covetise. Flaterie is generally wrongful preysing. Flaterers ben the develes norices, that norisshen his childrén with mylk of losingerie. For sothe Salamon saith, that flaterie is worse than detraccioun; for som tyme detraccioun makith a hawteyn man be the more humble, for he dredith detraccioun, but certes flaterie makith an man to enhaunsen his hert and his countenance. Flaterers ben the develes enchauntours, for thay make man to wene of himself that he is like to that he is nought like. Thay ben like Judas, that bitraised God; and thise flaterers bitrayen a man to selle him to his enemy, that is the devel. Flaterers ben the develes chapelens, that singen ay '*Placebo*.' I rekene flaterie in the vices of ire; for ofte tyme if oon man be wroth with another, thanne wol he flatere som man to mayntene him in his querel."—p. 316, l. 26 to p. 317, l. 1—10.

That flattery is counted among the kinds of ire is astonishing enough, but the reason given for it is downright dumbfounding! At the end of the chapter "*De Ira*" (!) seven more sins of the tongue are discussed, among which are "idele wordes, jangling and japery"! And that nobody may fancy the author himself had made a bad joke, he says in conclusion (p. 321, ll. 4 and 5): "These are the sinnes *that cometh of ire*, and of other sinnes many mo."—This may be enough!

The Deadly Sins are: Pride, envy, ire, sloth, avarice, gluttony, lechery. The end of the whole Tract on Sin runs thus:

"Now after that I have declared yow the seven dedly synnes as I can, and some of here braunches, and here remedyes, sothely, if I couthe, I wolde telle yow the ten commaundments; but so heigh a doctrine I leve to divines. But natheles, I hope to God thay ben touchid in this lital tretys everich of hem alle."—p. 354, ll. 27—32.

We don't see how the Parson, who was "a lerned man, a clerk" (Gen. Prol., v. 480), can mention the divines in opposition to himself¹. Coming from an ignorant monk

¹ Tyrwhitt long ago saw this inconsistency, but tried to explain it by supposing that Chaucer forgot that he himself was not the Parson. Great indeed is my admiration for the sagacity and learn-

who, with great difficulty, had just done patching up a poor treatise on sin, these words would be more in character; nor would it be very unnatural if such a one declared that nothing but the difficulty of the subject had prevented his adding to this tract of 68 pages, another, perhaps just as long, on the 10 commandments. But what are we to think of the Parson's making this remark, after having just interrupted his sermon on penitence by a digression beyond all measure?

With the following words the author—at last! returns to his subject according to the scheme in IV., but only to put it aside again directly.

“Now for as moche as the secoude part of penitence start in confessioun of mouth, as I bigan in the firste chapitre.” . .—p. 355, 1.

By the ‘firste chapitre’ only that beginning “The secoude partye of penitence is confession” (286) can be meant, since no other contains that idea. This “firste chapitre,” however, is headed: “*Explicit prima pars penitentiae; et incipit secunda pars ejusdem.*” How, then, can the author refer to it with the words, “as I bigan in the firste chapitre,” after having put down the preceding 22 pages (p. 263—285) as *prima pars*? Are there two first parts? Yes! Is the second the first? To be sure! Is it possible to begin the second part of a sermon with the first part? Of course!! All this, and much more, is possible, if we insert a whole Tract (on Sin) into this second part, and then forget that the first chapter of this Tract cannot now be the first of the whole performance too¹.

I distinguish, then, three different pieces of writing in the *Parson's Tale*: 1. Chaucer's “*De Penitentia*,” 2. an orthodox Sermon on Penitence which served to adulterate the former, 3. the Tract on Sin which was inserted to

ing of this eminent scholar, but I don't think that his solution at the expense of the poet is peculiarly happy.

¹The Tract on Sin being alone divided in “chapitres” pointedly suggests this assumption.

make the whole more complete. This at once explains the pompous headings: "Explicit prima pars," and "De tertia parte Penitentiae," and those of the deadly Seven, the quotations from the *Vulgata* and similar things in the Tract on Sin (while the *prima pars* in Morris has only *Jer.* vi. 16, and in Tyrwhitt no Latin at all); the want of a break at the beginning of the Tract on Sin (this trick was probably intended to cover the transition to a new subject); the possibility of so long a digression in which the original subject is only just mentioned by the way¹; the conspicuousness of the seams, i. e. the peculiar confusion where the contrasting patches meet; Tyrwhitt's remark (*M.*, I. 251) that the *Parson's Tale* was "a translation, or rather adaptation of a work, entitled *Li livres roiaux de vices et de vertus*, by Frère Lorens"; finally the difference in grammar and phraseology, to show which the space at my command is too limited.

But to proceed with the Tale!

Instead of taking advantage of the opportunity afforded here by the return to IV. 2, to bring in, at last, the wanting answer to the question "Whethir it (confession) oughte needes be don or noon" (IV. 2, *b*), the definition of sin, and an enumeration of the kinds of it, are given for the second time, and two pages are filled with an explanation of the circumstances that ought to be noticed in confessing the sins against the seventh Commandment. These sins have already been treated of with disgusting prolixity in the fourteen pages of the chapters "*De Luxuria*" and "*Remedium contra Luxuriam*." Had the author imperceptibly returned to his favourite theme? No; for the Tract does not mention auricular confession; and this is a

¹ In the passage quoted above to show the corrupt form of the interpolations (p. 293, l. 11—30), Confession is mentioned as a means to avoid venial sins. It is doubtful whether confession (l. 15) means *auricular* confession; l. 28 it is the "*general* confession of Confiteor at masse," but in all the other (spurious) parts of the *Parson's Tale* auricular confession is spoken of.

piece of an instruction to confess. Whence, then, comes this rag of different colour? I can find but one explanation; it is a mere conjecture, and I give it as such. This new interlude fills exactly a leaf. Did the interpolator, when arranging the leaves of the Tract for insertion, by mistake catch hold of a leaf of some Instruction to confess which thus got into the place of IV. 2, *b*? Without this supposition, I am at a loss to account for the appearance of this heterogeneous shred instead of IV. 2, *b*; *with* it, my opinion that another already extant orthodox sermon on Penitence was used to interpolate Chaucer's "*De Penitentia*" appears to be confirmed. For it is not likely that the author of the orthodox work should have committed such a blunder in composing it, and still less probable that Chaucer himself should have done so. I'm aware that the absence of the answer to the question: "Whethir it (confession) oughte needes be don or noon," seems to argue against a falsification of the Tale. *Seems!* For I don't say that it was left out intentionally; and an accidental omission was the more possible, considering the large amount of material used, and the fact that in the other parts, IV. 2, *a* and *c*, the necessity of confession is repeatedly urged. This occasional injunction, however, does not get rid of the question which was to form a separate Part IV. 2, *b*; on the contrary, it is, and remains, passed over.

IV. 2, *c*. WHICHE THINGES BEN CONVENABLE TO VERRAY
CONFESSION!

"Thanne schal men loke it and considre, that if he wol make a trewe and a profitable confessioun, ther moste be foure condiciouns."—p. 362, l. 24.

It will be well to remember that there are *four conditions* to a true confession. The first of them is

α. *Bitternesse of herte.*

This has again five "signes": shamefastness (p. 357, ll. 26 and 27), humility (358, 5 f.), tears (358, 27 f.), publicity (358, 33—359, 5), obedience "to resceyve the penaunce" (359, 5 ff.).

In the second "signe," humility, occurs the following passage :

. . . "thanne schulde nought the confessour sitte as lowe as the synnere, but the synnere schulde knele bifore him, or at his feet," . . .—p. 358, l. 17—20.

How does this agree with the General Prologue

v. 516. "He was to sinful man nought dispitous"
and

v. 525. "He waytud after no pompe ne reverence" ?

β. *Haste.*

"The other condicioun of verray confessioun is that it hastily be doon; . . .

. . . "Haste has four 'things': (1.) First thy schrifte moste ben purveyed byforn, and avysed, for wikked haste doth no profyt; and that a man can schryve him of his synnes, be it of pride or of envye, and so forth alle the spices and the circumstaunces; (2.) and that he have comprehendid in his mynde the nombre and the gretnes of his synne, and how longe that he hath leyn in synne; (3.) and eek that he be contrit of his sinnes, and in stedefast purpos (by the grace of God) never eft to falle in synne; (4.) and eek that he drede and countrewayte himself, and that he flee the occasiouns of synne, to whiche he is enclyned. (5.) Also that thou schalt schrive the of alle thin synnes to oon man, and nat a parcel to oon man, and a parcel to another¹ man; that is understonde, in entent to parte thy confessioun as for schame or drede for it nys but strangelyng of thy soule. For certes, Jhesu Crist is enterely al good, in him is noon imperfeccioun, and therefore outhere he forgiveth al parfytely, or elles never a del. I say nought, if thou be assigned to thy penitencere for certein synne, that thou art bounde to schewe him al the remenaunt of thy synnes, of whiche thou hast ben schryven of thy curate, but-if it like the of thin humilité; this is no departyng of schrifte. Ne I ne say not, there as I speke of divisoun of confessioun, that if thou have licence to schryve

¹ Tyrwhitt: "and not parcelmele to o man, and parcelmele to another."

the to a discret and to an honest prest, wher the likith, and eek by the licence of thy curate, that thou ne maist wel schrive the to him of alle thyn synnes; but let no synne be behinde untold as fer as thou hast remembraunce. And whan thou schalt the schrive to thi curate, telle him eeke al thy synne that thou hast doo sith thou were last i-schryve. This is no wikkid entent of divisioun of schrifte."—p. 359, l. 10, to p. 360, l. 1—32.

After having removed the mistakes that may be ascribed to the copyist, and rendered the construction supportable, we have the fundamental idea: 'True confession must be done in time, but not in a hurry and inconsiderately; with a repenting heart, a firm purpose henceforth to avoid sin, and before one priest, unless a dispensation be obtained to confess to several.' But how awkwardly and confusedly is it expressed! The momentary idea, suggested by the hint at reforming, that what was concluded above from the neglect of this point might yet be erroneous, must be dismissed immediately. How in the world could the Parson have treated the most important points (repentance and reforming) so superficially, if he intended to mention them here at all; how could he have thrown them into one heap with such an unseemly long discussion of a purely outward and, as it were, technical question ('division of schrifte')? How could the fact that "Crist is enterely al good, . . . and therefore outhur foryiveth al parfitely, or elles never a del" be made the reason why all must be confessed to one priest? If we notice, besides, that instead of four "thinges" there are at least five, that here again the author suddenly leaves the abstract way of speaking, and unjustifiably starts from the second to the third person, and from the third to the second again, we may well say that the mere flash of a thought that Chaucer could have written in this manner, would be high treason against genius.

γ.

"Also thy verrey schrifte askith certeyn condiciouns. First, that thou schrive the by thy fre wille, nought con-

streyned, ne for schame of folk, ne for maladye, or such thing; for it is resoun, that he that trespassith with his fre wille, that by his fre wille he confesse his trespas; and that noon other man schal telle his synne but himself; ne he schal wol naye it or denye his synne, ne wratthe him with the prest for his amonestynge to lete synne. The secounde condicioun is, that thy schrifte be laweful, that is to sayn, that thou that schriuest the, and eek the prest that herith thy confessioun, ben verrayly in the feith of holy chirche, and that a man be nought despaired of the mercy of Jhesu Crist, as Caym or Judas."—p. 360, l. 33, to p. 361, l. 1—13.

We are not told what "condicioun" this is. It ought to be the third; but the author being puzzled by the great number of artificial divisions and subdivisions, now calls "condicioun" what, corresponding with α and β , should be called "signe" or "thing," and merrily begins to count from one again, as if such a category had never been mentioned before. Here also he jumps, without any reason, from the second person into the definite third, then into the second again, and at last into the indefinite third. Finally, the admonitions not to be angry with the priest (l. 17), and not to despair of mercy (ll. 13 and 14) are quite heterogeneous to what precedes and follows them.

The rest of the part contains a very prolix and awkward caution against unnecessarily exposing others by one's own confession.

δ.

In this part also the number of the "condicioun" in question is forgotten. It begins with an admonition not to confess sins that one has not committed (the confessor does not wish to be made a fool of!), not to confess by letter, nor to excuse anything. It then runs on:

. . . "thou moste telle it platly, be it never so foul ne so horrible. Thou schalt eek schrive the to a prest that is discrete to counsaile the; and thou schalt nought schryve the for veinneglorie, ne for ypocrisie, ne for no cause but only for the doute of Jhesu Crist and the hele of thy soule. Thou schalt not eek¹ renne to the prest sodeinly, to telle

¹ Why not "neither", which is very frequently used by Chaucer?

him lightly thy synne, as who tellith a tale or a jape, but avysily and with gret devocioun; and generally schrive the ofte;" . . . —p. 362, ll. 6—15.

There is no harm in confessing the same sin twice; confess at least once a year!

Again a mere disorderly stringing together of tediously culled and incoherent directions to confess, most of which have been given before. The wretched diction of this passage is in perfect harmony with its pitiful contents, and the whole is a true miniature likeness of the 77 pages-long so-called "second part," confessioun, which ends here.

IV. 3. SATISFACCIOUN.

The next part is headed "*De tertia parte Penitentiae.*" It begins (p. 362, l. 26):

"Now have I told of verray confessioun, that is the secunde partye of penitence. The thridde partye of penitence is satisfaccioun, and that stonddith generally in almesdede and bodily peyne. Now ben ther thre maner of almesdede; contricioun of herte, where a man offereth himself to God; the secunde is, to have pité of the defaute of his neighebor; the thridde is, in yeving of good counseil and comfort, gostly and bodily, where men han neede, and namely in sustenaunce of mennes foode."—361, l. 1.

There can be no doubt that this is really the third subdivision of IV. (IV. 3, 'satisfaccioun'), but, true to the substitution of the scheme of IV. for that of the whole, it is called the third part. From the very outset of this part confusion reigns supreme. Not only do we find (p. 362, l. 31 f.) 'contricioun of herte' (IV. 1) here under 'satisfaccioun' (IV. 3), but the compass of our knowledge is also enlarged by two unexpected discoveries; for the assertion that contrition and compassion are two species of "almesdede" is, no doubt, as new as the other, that we can vouchsafe alms to God by offering ourselves to him.

But perhaps the copyist is responsible for this confusion, and not the author. Harl. 7334 does not say "thre naner" (p. 30), Morris has made up the deficiency from

another MS. If we read "thre *condiciouns*," part of the nonsense is done away with. This, however, by no means makes Part IV. 3 correct. Thus in

IV. 3, a. ALMESEDEDE

the caution not to leave off giving alms, if it cannot be done in secret, is supported quite thoughtlessly by *Matth.* v. 14. If the passage really referred to almsgiving, it would, in opposition to *Matth.* iv. 3 and 4, strictly enjoin publicity; but it refers, together with the expression 'works,' to the propagation of the gospel and a Christian life in general, as we may infer, plainly enough, from the preceding "You are the light of the world." He who quoted the passage ought to have known that. But, of course, the interpolator was *not* well versed in the Bible, like the Parson.

IV. 3, b. BODILY PEYNE.

"Now as to speke of bodily peyne, it is in prayere, in wakinges, in fastynges, in vertuous teachinges."—p. 363, l. 28.

The beginning of this part, though extremely dry, is tolerable, except that prayer and a virtuous life cannot well be called a 'bodily peyne.' In the argument of the fourth point we find the usual confusion again:

"Thanne schal thou understonde, that bodily peyne stant in discipline, or teching, by word, or by writyng, or by ensample. Also in weryng of heires or of stamyn or of haberjeouns on her naked fleisch for Cristes sake, and suche maner penaunce; but ware the wel that such maner penaunce of thyn fleisch make nought thin herte bitter or angry, or anoyed of thiself; for better is to cast away thin hayre than for to caste away the swetnes of oure Lord Jhesu Crist. And therefore seith seint Poule, clothe yow, as thay that ben chosen of God in herte, of misericorde, debonaireté, sufferaunce, and such maner of clothing, of the which Jhesu Crist is more appayed than of haire or of hauberkis.

"Than is discipline eek in knockyng on the brest in scourgyng with yerdes, in knelynges, in tribulaciouns, in

suffring paciently wronges that ben doon to him and eek in pacient sufferance of maledies, or lesyng of worldly catel, or of wif, or of child, or of othir frendes."—p. 365, l. 18—p. 366, l. 5.

'Discipline' is understood here to mean penance. Though in this signification it has nothing whatever to do with teaching, it is thrown together with it (l. 19), owing to its lingual affinity with *discere*, *discipulus*, etc. The result is a succession of ideas quite incompatible with logical thinking. The passage *Coloss.* iii. 12, too, does not at all speak of penance; it cannot, therefore, prove what it is quoted for.

V. WHICHE THINGES DESTOURBEN PENITENCE.

"Thanne schalt thou understonde whiche thinges destourben penaunce, and this is in foure thinges; that is drede, schame, hope, and wanhope, that is, desperacioun."—p. 366, l. 6—9.

1. *Drede.*

"And for to speke first of drede, for which he weneth that he may suffre no penaunce, ther agayns is remedye for to thinke that bodily penaunce is but schort and lital at the regard of the peyne of helle, that is so cruel and so long, that it lastith withouten ende."—p. 366, l. 9—14.

This is the beginning of the last part according to the scheme given on p. 264, ll. 11—17. Penitence, as we have seen in the third definition (p. 264, ll. 24—32), comprises repentance, schrift, satisfaction (i. e. penance), and reforming; here, however, it is confounded, as often before, with penance (= punishment), and ll. 7, 10 and 11 this term is used accordingly. With this confusion of ideas correspond "whiche thinges destourben penaunce, and *this is* in foure thinges" (p. 366, l. 6 f.), and the repeatedly employed 'he' (ll. 9 and 10) which comes like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, as nobody has been mentioned to whom it could refer.

2. *Schame.*

“Now agains the schame that a man hath to schryve him,—and namely these ypocrites, that wolde be holde so parfyt that they have no neede to schryve hem,—agains that schame schulde a man thinke, that by way of resoun he that hath not ben aschamed to do foule thinges, certis him oughthe not be aschamed to doon faire thinges and goode thinges, and that is confessioun. A man scholde eek thinke, that ‘God seeth and knoweth alle thy thoughtes and thy werkes; to him may no thing be hyd ne covered.’ Men schulde eek remembre hem of the schame that is to come at the day of doom, to hem that ben nought penitent and schripen in this present lif; for alle the creatures in heven, and in erthe, and in helle, schuln seen apertly al that they hydith in this world.”—p. 366, l. 15—30.

In V. we were to learn “whiche thinges destourben penaunce,” and Shame is numbered as the second of them. Having just witnessed (in V. l, Drede) that the author took ‘penaunce’ in the sense of punishment, we are at a loss to conceive how he can mention Shame here as a hindrance to shrift only; since it most certainly also deters men from suffering punishment, which in many cases would be more exposed to the eyes of the world than auricular confession, and excite more mockery too.

Here the incongruence of ‘thinges’ and ‘confessioun’ (21) may be removed by reading ‘swich’ instead of ‘that.’

After *c. hope* and *d. wanhope* have been treated of, the *Persones Tale* ends with a short meditation on the fruit of penitence.

“Thanne schal men with his precious blode. Amen.”—p. 368, l. 6—26.

I’ve already remarked that I consider this part the genuine finale of Chaucer’s *Persones Tale*. Here are my reasons:

Nobody, I suppose, will deny that it is a genuine part, for it is certainly one of the best: short, pithy, full of conviction and enthusiasm, without any inconsistencies in itself or with the Parson’s character, and, with the exception

of some trifles, faultless. These trifles are: 'penaunce' for 'penitence' (l. 7), four superfluous 'as' (11, 12, 13, 15), 'of' for 'and' (20). After having set down to the charge of the copyist so many, and more important things in the spurious parts, we may also be allowed to put these trifles to his account in favour of a genuine one. Secondly, I hope I have proved the impossibility of Part IV. 1, *d* being genuine; and there is no other piece, save this one, that could take its place. Thirdly, the present ending is neither foreseen in the original scheme (p. 264, l. 11—17) nor in that of IV. (p. 266, ll. 20 and 21), since neither of them says a word about fruit of penitence; on the other hand, it is very proper as IV. 1, *d*; for it makes little difference, whether it is introduced by "Wherof availith contricioun," or, as it is here, by: "What is the fruyt of penitence"—penitence and contrition having been equalized in IV. 1 by "penitence *or* contricioun." Finally, the motive to displace the genuine IV. 1, *d* is not wanting: The genuine introduction of the Tale had been preserved, and it was now provided with a genuine end part also, in order the more easily to cover the falsification.

The so-called "Retractation" does not belong to the *Persones Tale*, but, according to Tyrwhitt,¹ is to be found in all complete MSS. In Morris it is headed "Preces de Chauceres," and in Askew MS. I. it begins: "Here taketh the maker his leve," and ends: "Here endeth the Persones Tale" (!); in Caxton's second edition it is separated from the Tale, and superscribed "The Prayer"; in other MSS. it is also separated, but without a heading. It is so well known, that I need not copy it. The name of Retractation was given it by Urry.

Tyrwhitt says (p. 584):

"Mr Hearne, whose greatest weakness was not his incredulity, has declared his suspicion, 'that the Revocation . . . is not genuine, but that it was made by the Monks.'

¹ C. T., 583, Note 2.

App. to Rob. Gloster, p. 603. . . . I think, if the Monks had set about making a Revocation for Chaucer . . . , they would have made one more in form ;” but he immediately adds : “The same objection lies to the supposal, that it was made by himself.”

He continues :

“The most probable hypothesis which has occurred to me for the solution of these difficulties, is to suppose that the beginning of this passage, except the words ‘or reden it’ in p. 582, l. 28, and the end, make the genuine conclusion of the *Persones Tale*, and that the middle part . . . is an interpolation. . . . The doubt expressed in l. 30, ‘if there be anything that displeaseth,’ is very agreeable to the manner in which the *Persones* speaks in his Prologue, ver. 17366. The mention of ‘verray penance, confession and satisfaction’ in p. 583, l. 12, seems to refer pointedly to the subject of the speaker’s preceding discourse, and the title given to Christ in p. 583, l. 15, ‘Preste of all Prestes’ seems peculiarly proper in the mouth of a priest. . . . With respect to the middle part, I think it not improbable that Chaucer might be persuaded by the Religious who attended him in his last illness, to revoke, or retract, certain of his works ; or at least that they might give out, that he had made such Retractions as they thought proper . . . , and that the same zeal might think it expedient to join the substance of these Retractions to the C. T., the antidote to the poison.” Further proofs adduced by him for the correctness of his hypothesis are that in the enumeration of his works the ‘Legende of Good Women’ is erroneously called ‘The Boke of the five and twenty Ladies,’ that the *Canterbury Tales* are only mentioned in a general manner, and that the ‘Roman de la Rose’ is omitted entirely.¹

I perfectly agree with his argument for supposing an interpolation ; I take it for granted, however, that Tyrwhitt supposed the *Canterbury Tales* to have been published piece by piece, for otherwise it would have been more reasonable to destroy the ‘poison’ than to add an antidote. The rest appears to me to stand on a weak foundation ; for his reasons for the spuriousness of a part of the Retraction will serve as well to prove the spuriousness of the

¹ In opposition to this he says (M., I. 251, § XLI.) : “The recital, which is made in one part of it of several compositions of Chaucer, could properly be made by nobody but himself.”

whole; and his belief that part of the Retraction is genuine is founded on the supposition that the whole *Persones Tale* is genuine—a supposition the improbability of which I venture to hope I have made evident, showing, at the same time, that exactly those parts in which “verray penaunce, confessioun and satisfaccioun” are demanded, bear very strong marks of spuriousness. In my opinion, then, these terms afford but a hint that he who adulterated the *Persones Tale* crowned his ignoble work by adding the Retraction.

For better survey of the whole question, I here give the skeleton of the *Persones Tale* in its present form. Those parts which I consider genuine are in black letter; the numbers in the margin refer to Morris's edition; my remarks are in brackets.

263 Introduction.

264 (Subject:) Penitence.

- I. What is penitence, and whens it is cleped penitence.
- II. And in what maner, and in how many maneres been the acciones or workynges of penaunce.
- III. And how many spices ben of penitences.
- IV. And whiche thinges apperteinen and byhoven to penitence.
- V. And whiche thinges destourben penitence.

Definition according to St. Ambrosius.

"	"	sum Doctour.
"	"	the Person (partly spurious).

(The answer to “whens it is cleped penitence” is wanting.¹)

¹ The answer may possibly have been: “Penitence is called so from *poena*, punishment, because we deserve punishment for our sins; but since Christ has suffered the punishment for us, God demands only contrition of us. Hence penitence now means contrition.” This would at once account for the singular expression “penitence OR contricioun” (p. 268, l. 7), as well as for the omission of this Wicliffite answer to the question “Whens it is cleped penitence.” (Compare Note, p. 249.)

265 II. Ther ben thre acciouns of penitence.

- (No argu-
ment.)
1. If a man be baptized after that he hath synned.
 2. Another defeaute is this, that men doon deedly synne after that thay have receyved baptisme.
 3. The thridde defeaute is, that men fallen into venial synne after here baptisme.

266 III. The spices of penitence ben thre.

1. Oon of them is solempne.
 - a. To be put out of holy chirche in lente.
 - b. Open penaunce for open synnes.
2. Comune penaunce.
3. Privé penaunce.

IV. What bihoveth and is necessary to verray parfyt penitence :

1. Contricioun of herte,
2. Confession of mouth,
3. Satisfaccioun.

(Comparison between penitence and a tree.)

268. 1. In this penitence or contricioun men schal understonde foure¹ thinges.

- a. What is contricioun. (= Parson's definition of penitence.)
- b. Welche ben the causes that moeven men to contricioun.
 - a. I man schal remembre him of his synnes.
 - 269 (Quotation from Seneca.) β. Who so doth synne, is thral of synne.
 - 270 γ. Brede of the day of doome and the horrible pyenes of helle.
 - 277 δ. The sorrowful remembraunce of the good that he hath left to doon heer in earth, and eek the good that he hath lorn.
 - 279 ("Frenshe song.") ε. The remembraunce of the passiou that oure Lord J. Chr. suffered for us and for oure synnes.

¹ Contrition being = penitence ("penitence or contricioun"), and the definition of penitence having been given before, the question "What is contricioun," or, at least, the answer to it, appears to be superfluous.

- 282 ζ. The hope of forgyebenes of synne,
(Reform of life.) the gifte of grace bot for to do,
and the glorie of heben.
- 283 ("some doctours.") c. In what maner schal be his contri-
cionn.
- 284 d. Wherof availith contricioun. (In-
stead of it: The frupt of pen-
nunce.)

"*Explicit prima pars penitentiae; et incipit secunda pars ejusdem.*"

286

2. Confessioun.

a. What is confessioun. (Illogical and un-
grammatical definition.)

- 286 (New theme:
Tract on *8vs*;
but no break.) . . . "And forthermore it is necessary to
understonde, whens that synnes springe,
and how thay encresen, and whiche thay
ben" (venial and dedly).
- 293 Whiche ben dedly synnes.
(. . . "shal be declarid in here *chapi-
tres* (!) folwinge.")
- 294 a. De Superbia. Remedium contra Superbiam.
- 303 β. De Invidia. " " Invidiam.
- 308 γ. De Ira. " " Iram.
- 323 δ. De Accidia. " " Accidiam.
- 330 ε. De Avaritia. " " Avaritiam.
- 338 ζ. De Gula. " " Gulam.
- 341—354 η. De Luxuria. " " Luxuriam.
(. . . "they ben touchid in this litel *tretys* (!)
everich of hem alle.")
- 355 (Confused transition: "Now for as moche as the
seconde part of penitence stant in confessioun of mouth,
as I bigan in the *first chapitre* . . .")
- b. Whethir it oughte needes be doon or noon.
(This second part of Confession is wanting entire-
ly; instead of it: Rules for the confession of sins
against the seventh commandment—"Now it is good
to understonden—parforme it."—p. 357.)
- 357 c. Whiche thinges ben convenable to verray
confessioun. ("four *condicionns*.")
- a. Bitternesse of herte. (With "fyve
signes.")
- aa. Schame.
- bb. Humilité.
- cc. Teeris.
- dd. "That he lette nought for schame
to schewen his confessioun."

(Together 863 pages.)

- ee. "That a man or womman be obeis-
saunt to reseeyve the penaunce, etc."
359 β. Haste. (With "foure thinges.")
aa. "Thy schrifte moste ben purveyed
byforn, etc."
360 bb. "That he have comprehendid the
nombre and gretnes of hys synne."
cc. "That he be contrit of his synnes." (!)
dd. "That he drede and countrewayte
himself, etc."

(Appendix: Confess to one priest. 22 lines.)

- 360 γ. "Also thy verray schrifte askith certeyn
condiciouns." (!)
361 aa. fre wille.
bb. "that thy schrifte be laweful (2de
condicioun)."
δ. "Make no lesyng in thy confessioun."

(Other rules follow without order. Part IV. 2, Con-
fession, fills nearly 77 pages.)

- 362 "De tertia parte Penitentiae."

3. Satisfaccioun.

- a. Almesdede.
363 b. Bodily peyne.
α. Prayer.
β. Wakyng (3 lines and 1 word).
365 γ. Fastynge.
δ. ("Discipline, or teching" (!) 2½ lines.
teching without argument.)
aa. weryng of heires, or of stamin, or of
haberjeouns.
bb. knockyng on the brest.
cc. scourgyng with yerdes.
dd. knelynges.
366 (mere enumeration.) { ee. tribulaciouns.
ff. suffring paciently wronges.
gg. pacient sufferaunce of maledies.
hh. lesyng of wordly catel, or of wif, or
of child, or of othir frende.

(The whole Part IV. fills more than 99 pages.)

V. Whiche thinges destourben penaunce.

1. Drede.
2. Schame.
3. Hope.

367

4. Wanhope.

a. In the mercy of Crist.

b. "that he schulde not longe persevere
in goodnesse."

368

The fruyt of penance.

(This part, which is not mentioned in the scheme, I take to be the genuine IV. 1, *d.*)

RETRACTATION.

This skeleton, in spite of its ichthiosaurus-like aspect, enables us to see at a glance that it wanted very little skill to perpetrate the fraud. The interpolator took an orthodox sermon on penitence, inserted the scheme of it after Chaucer's introduction, made the Parson's definition of penitence orthodox, by adding 'schrifte' and 'satisfacioun'; employed the substance of the original Tale as Part IV. 1, "Contricioun." The part beginning "In this penitence or contricioun" being thus separated from the definition of penitence (p. 264, l. 24—33) by an interpolation of 2½ pages, he repeated here (in the wrong place) the Parson's definition of penitence with his own additions. In order to have a genuine conclusion, he placed the part "Fruyt of penitence" at the end of his Tale, and filled the gap as well as he could (IV. 1, *d.*); finally, to remove all doubt about Chaucer's conversion, he added the Retraction. The Tract on Sin (most likely a translation from *Li livres roiaux*) was afterwards inserted to make the whole more complete and exhaustive.

I now give what I consider the original Tale. The interpolations are in italics and between parentheses; the few alterations I propose are in large type and, when necessary, supported by notes.

The Persones Tale.

(Jer. 6°. *State super vias, et videte et interrogate de semitis antiquis quas sit via bona, et ambulate in ea, et in venietis refrigerium animabus vestris, etc.*)

Owre swete Lord God of heven, that no man (*wil*) perische, but (*wol*) that we comen alle to the knowleche of him, and to the blisful lif that is perdurable, ammonestith us by the prophet Jeremye, that saith in this wise: Stondeth upon the weyes, and seeth and axeth of olde pathes, that is to sayn, of old sentence, which is the goode way, and walketh in that weie, and ye schul fynde refresshyng for youre soules (*, etc.*). Many ben the weyes esprituels that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and to the regne of glorie; of whiche weyes, ther is a ful noble way, and ful covenable, which may not faile to man ne to womman, that thorough synne hath mysyon fro the righte way to Jerusalem celestial; and this wey is cleped penitence. Of which men schulden gladly herken and enquere with al here herte, to wyte what is penitence, and whens it is cleped penitence (*, and in what maner, and in how many maneres been the acciones or workynges of penaunce, and how many spieces ben of penitences, and whiche thinges apperteynen and byhoven to penitence, and whiche thinges destourben penitence*).

Seint Ambrose saith, that penitence is the pleynnyng of man for the gult that he hath doon, and no more to do any thing for which him oughte to pleyne. And som doctour saith, penitence is the waymentynge of man that sorweth for his synne, and peyneth himself for he hath mysdoon. Penitence (*, with certeyn circumstaunces,*) is verray repentaunce of man, that holt himself in sorwe and in woo for his giltes; (*and for he schal be verray penitent, he schal first bywaile the synnes that he hath do*) and stedfastly purposeth in his hert (*to haven schrifte of mouth, and to doon satisfaccioun, and*) never to do thing for which him oughte more (*to bywaile or*) to complayne, and to continue in goode werkes, or elles his repentaunce may nought avayle. (*For, as saith seint Isidre, he is a japere and a gabberre, and no verray repentaunt, that eftsoone doth thing for which him oughte to repente. Wepyng, and nought for to stymte to doon synne, may nought avayle. But natheles, men schal hope that at every tyme that man fallith, be it never so ofte, that he may arise thorough penitence, if he have grace; but certeyn it is a gret doute. For as saith seint Gregory, unne the arist he out of his synne that is charged with the charge of yvel usage.*) And therefore repentaunt folke that stinte for to synne, and forlete synne er that synne forlete hem¹ holy chirche holt hem siker of her savacioun. And he that synneth, and verrailly repentith him in his last ende, holy chirche yit hopeth his savacioun, by the grete

¹ Doctour's T., v. 286.

mercy of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentaunce; but take ye the siker way.—p. 263, l. 16, to p. 265, l. 17.

(*And now sith . . . to p. 268, l. 6: Salomon*¹).

In this penitence or contricioun men schal understonde **thre**² thinges, that is to sayn, (*what is contricioun, and*) whiche ben the causes that moeven men to contricioun, and how he schulde be contrit, and what contricioun availeth to the soule. (*Thanne is it thus, that . . . to p. 268, l. 25, helle.*)

The causes that oughten to moeve a man to contricioun ben vj. First a man schal remembre him of his synnes; but loke that thilke remembraunce be to no delyt of him by no way, but gret schame and sorwe for his gilt. For Job saith that synful men doon werkes worthy of **contricioun**³. And therfor saith Ezechiel, I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lyf, in bitternesse of myn herte . . . p. 269, l. 9, for ye trespassen so ofte tyme, as (*doth*) the hound (*that*)⁴ torneth to ete his spewyng; line 33. Ne a fouler thral may

270, l. no man . . .	„	33. remembre me of the day
271, l. of doom . . .	„	33. the world al breunnyng.
272, l. Whider . . .	„	33. develes that
273, l. him tormenten . . .	„	33. hondes of al
274, l. her tresor. . .	„	33. he hateth his
275, l. soule . . .	„	33. here deth schal
276, l. alway lyven. . .	„	33. delivere hem
277, l. fro peyne . . .	„	33. wrought,
278, l. ne schuln . . .	„	33. that no
279, l. goode werkes . . .	„	20. rekenyng.
279, 21. The fite thing that moeveth a man to contricioun ⁵ , is the remembraunce . . .	line 33.	of the foule mowes
280, l. and of . . .	„	27. rebel to God,

28. therefore is man worthy to have sorwe (*and to be deed*⁶).

29. This suffred oure Lord . . . line 33. as mochil as resoun

281, l. of man . . .	„	33. viley-
282 l. nously byspit ⁷ . . .	„	33. of synne; I

¹ In the place of this interpolation there was perhaps some explanation of the word 'penitence,' to the effect that penitence is equivalent to contrition. See note, p. 279.

² The text has 'four'; see, however, note, p. 280.

³ The interpolator has replaced it by 'confessioun,' which is obviously wrong.

⁴ The interpolations make the sense ridiculous.

⁵ The reading of the text (ll. 21 and 22) is: "The fite *maner* of contricioun, *that moeveth a man therto*"—an awkward correction of what seems to have been a slip of the copyist's pen.

⁶ Death is not treated of till p. 281, l. 6.

⁷ In this 'sixte thing' reform of life, which was mentioned in

- 283, 1. wol entre line 4. schal yive him.
 5. Thus schal man hope that for his werkis of pen-
 itence¹ line 21. dede, yit
 22. sayn some doctours,² „ 33. grete synnes out-
 284, 1. ward „ 20. him.
 284, 20. . . . And fortherover, contricioun moste ben con-
 tinuel (*ly, and that a man have stedfast purpos to*
schryve him, and for to amende him of his lyf),
 for sothly, whil contricioun lastith, man may ever
 hope of foryevenes³ line 29. hateth.
 368, 6. Thanne schal men . „ 26. Amen.

This Tale has the following plan :

INTRODUCTION.

(Subject :) **P**enitence.

What is penitence, and whens it is cleped penitence ?

Definition after St. Ambrosius.

„ „ .som doctour.
 „ „ the Persone.

Explanation of the word.

(Wanting. It perhaps put penitence = contricioun.⁴)

In this penitence or contricioun men schal understonde
 thre thinges :

- a. Whiche ben the causes that oughten moeve a man
 to contricioun ?
 - a. A man schal remember him of his synnes.
 - β. Who so doth synne is thral of synne.
 - γ. Drede of the day of doome and the peynes of
 helle.
 - δ. The sorwful remembraunce of the good that he
 hath left to do(on) heer in eorthe, and eek the
 good that he hath lorn.
 - ε. The remembraunce of the passoun that oure Lord
 J. Chr. suffred for us and for oure synnes.

the thrid definition, is repeatedly spoken of ; it has, besides, been
 discussed at large in the "fourthe poynt" (277 f.).

¹ The text has 'penaunce.'

² This reminds us of the second definition.

³ The interpolation is to be recognized by the uncalled-for ad-
 monition to confess, and the characteristic change from the abstract
 to the concrete way of speaking, which occasions a bad grammati-
 cal mistake ; also by the impertinent separation of the argument
 from the thesis.

⁴ See note, p. 279.

7. The hope of foryevenes of synne, the yifte of grace wel for to do, and the glorie of heven.

b. In what maner schal be his contricioun?

c. Wharof availith contricioun? (Fruyt of penitence.)

My reasons for believing this to be the original *Parsons Tale* are the following:

1. Every part of it is excellent as to contents and form.
2. It corresponds perfectly with the Wicliffite character of the Parson.
3. The scheme is plain, yet complete.
4. The execution of the parts contains nothing that is not foreshadowed in the scheme, and only one void (the answer to "Whence it is cleped penitence?"), which is easily accounted for.
5. It completely exhausts the subject—according to Wicliffe's ideas.
6. Notwithstanding this fact, it is short, agreeably to the host's wish and admonition.
7. It alone, of all the parts of the *Parson's Tale*, contains reminiscences of other works of Chaucer¹ and evident peculiarities of his.

In the parts designated as spurious the very reverse is the case, as I hope to have shown. I only regret that the limited space at my command prevents my pointing out more copiously than I have done the difference in language and phraseology between the genuine and spurious parts; for the interpolations, with the exception of the Tract on Sin (which, from its language, seems to be the oldest) all appear to be of later date. I mention only one thing more in this respect: In the genuine parts 'clepen,' so frequently used by Chaucer, occurs eight times (p. 264, l. 9; 273, 13, 19, 21; 282, 17, 22, 32; 283, 14), in the spurious ones not at all².

¹ There is one exception: the beginning of II. (p. 265. l. 19—21) strongly resembles *Melibe*, p. 155, l. 23—25.

² In the Tract on Sin 'clepen' occurs several times, but I think that does not weaken my argument; for I don't deny that Chaucer may possibly have translated the Tract, with all its confusions, at some earlier period; I only dispute the possibility of his having intended it to form part of the *Parson's Tale*.

TIME AND PLACE OF THE FALSIFICATION.

I venture to think I have made it probable that Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* has been interpolated on a large scale, and that the opinion of Professor Ten-Brink (*Chaucerstudien*, 153), "that Chaucer left no works betraying a diminution of his powers" will now hold good with respect to the *Parson's Tale* also, which it could scarcely be said to do, if we suppose the Tale to have been written as the MSS. give it.

The question is now, when and where was the falsification perpetrated?

Since Wat Tyler's revolt (1381), a change of public opinion had taken place with regard to Wicliffe. His enemies charged him with being the intellectual author of the movement,¹ and though the people attached little credit to this accusation, the great lords had become hesitating on account of the danger, and would no longer support him so decidedly as they had done. The Church immediately took advantage of this circumstance to annihilate the heretic. His doctrine was condemned by the synod in 1382, and he was deprived of his professorship. The protest of the queen and the London citizens protected him against a worse fate, and his death soon after put an end to all further persecution. To break up his party was now considered easy. The change of government in 1386, in consequence of which John of Gaunt lost his influence, and Chaucer his lucrative office, may chiefly be attributed to political motives, but partly, at least, it was caused by the enmity of the hierarchial party against the Wicliffites; for already in the following year parliament demanded proceedings against the Lollards, and in 1388, the young king, being then under the guidance of the Duke of Gloucester, sent an ordinance to the authorities of the town

¹ *Walsingham*, Hist. angl., ed. Riley, III. 32; *Fasciculi Zic.*, ed. Shirley, 275 f.

and county of Nottingham, in which he expressed his intention to defend orthodoxy and to eradicate Wicliffe's errors.¹ The authorities of Nottingham were ordered to track and seize the Reformer's writings, to deliver them to the Privy Council, and to arrest all persons concerned in buying or selling such writings or in *preaching such doctrines*.² The strength of the Wicliffite party, and the king's dislike of violent measures, prevented for some time the strict execution of this ordinance, but when, in 1396, the relentless Archbishop Arundel had taken the place of the late Courtnay, the persecution of the Lollards again became more violent. In the provincial synod in 1397, Arundel caused 18 of Wicliffe's articles to be again condemned; and when, in 1399, he brought about the revolution that cost Richard his throne and life, he did so not only to revenge the injuries he had suffered from the king, but also to have a more manageable instrument against the Wicliffites. He made the usurper Henry IV. pay for his assistance with bloody measures against the Lollards.³ A few days after his accession to the throne, Henry declared his resolution to destroy heretics and heresies.⁴

It is very likely that Chaucer, who in those days was getting old and infirm, and, after the loss of his office, had to look to the Court for his subsistence, was induced by this antilollardite current to keep his Wicliffite Sermon on Penitence to himself, till death would shield him from the bad consequences the publication would have had for him. It is very probable, too, that he died in the little house in the garden of St Mary's, Westminster, and that the monks of that convent were about him in his last hours; and nothing is more natural than that they should have been

¹ *Wilkins*, Conc. III. 204: . . . "nos zelo fidei catholicae, cujus sumus et esse volumus defensores, moti . . ."

² *Lechler*, I. von W., II. 55.

³ *Ibid.* II. 56 ff. *Ranke*, Englische Geschichte, I. 106 ff.

⁴ *Wilkins*, Conc. III. 238 and 254. Convocatio 6 die Oct. 1399 . . . "modus procedendi contra hæreticos."

curious to know whether he had not left a continuation of his famous but incomplete *Canterbury Tales*, and should have looked for it among his papers. On the other hand, they, and the clergy in general, were deeply interested that a Wicliffite sermon on penitence by Chaucer should not be published in its original shape;—and how great a triumph must it have been for the Church to be able to prove, by producing an orthodox *De Penitentia* said to be written by him, that the great poet, whatever might have been his leaning towards the heretic Wicliffe and his doctrine, at least died an orthodox Catholic, nay, a zealous defender of auricular confession and the penance inflicted by the priests! Are we not justified in believing that the fanaticism which erected the stakes in Smithfield and elsewhere, would also be capable of stealing and interpolating, *in majorem Dei gloriam*, an heretical MS.?

We can hardly be mistaken, then, in assuming that the *Persones Tale* was interpolated (there are too many reasons for this assumption to believe that it has *not* been meddled with), at St Mary's, Westminster, in the first decennium of the fifteenth century, that is to say, at the time of the most furious persecution of the Wicliffites. It was probably not published till about 1410-20, the date of our earliest MSS., when little Lewis, his son, was no doubt dead, and there was perhaps no one who cared to inquire for Chaucer's handwriting, or had perhaps read the genuine *Parson's Tale*. The interpolator, who was obviously a cleric, would thus have had plenty of time to leisurely execute his work which, in spite of its want of art, evidently caused him immense trouble.

It is well known that none of the numerous MSS. can be proved to have existed in Chaucer's life-time; they can, therefore, not disprove the hypothesis put forward by me. If it is accepted, we are no longer at a loss to explain, how it was possible that Lydgate, strange to say, after mentioning in his *Fall of Princes* the *Tale of Melibe* as a

prose part of the *Canterbury Tales*, does not say a word about the *Parson's Tale*, which to him—the monk—would naturally have appeared so much more important, if he had known of it: his translation of Boccaccio's poem was written before the publication of the *Persones Tale*. I am well aware that some Chaucerians, Mr Bradshaw for instance, attribute little value to Lydgate's list; but there are others—I only mention Professor Ten-Brink—who are of a different opinion.

CONCLUSION.

With the orthodox *Parson's Tale* falls the last and principal argument that can be adduced in favour of Chaucer's orthodoxy at his death. For the probability of his having been a Wicliffite I have given many reasons, but not all. I have yet to mention the great number and influence of the Wicliffites, according to the certainly unexceptionable testimony of *Walsingham* and *Knighton*¹; further, the estrangement between Chaucer and his once intimate friend Gower, which has not as yet been sufficiently accounted for, but appears very natural, if we suppose Chaucer to have adopted Wicliffe's doctrines. For Gower, though a zealous advocate for the reformation of the clergy, was no friend to Wicliffe's tenets; we may see this in the second book of his *Vox Clamantis*, and in the Prologue to his *Confessio Amantis*, where he speaks contemptuously of "this new secte of Lollardie²." Finally, there is the beautiful poem "Fle fro the pres, and duelle with sothfastnesse," with the burden "And trouthe the schal de-

¹ *Walsingham*, Hist. angl., II. 188 (ed. Riley), "1389: . . . Lollardi—in errorem suum plurimos seduxerunt."

Knighton, V. col. 2644: "Mediam partem populi, aut majorem partem, sectae suae adquisiverunt." Ibid., col. 2666: "Secta illa in maximo honore illis diebus habebatur, et in tantum multiplicata fuit, quod vix duos videres in via, quin alter eorum discipulus Wicliffe fuerit."

² Pauli's Introd. Essay to his edition of Gower's works. He also touches the altered relation between the two poets, but says that it was the consequence of political differences.

lyver, hit ys no drede." This poem, apparently containing the gist of Chaucer's philosophy, agrees perfectly with Wicliffe's way of thinking, and does not show a trace of orthodox catholicism. That Henry IV., the persecutor of the Lollards, let fall a ray of his favour on the poet who was then on the brink of the grave, does not contradict my assumption ; for Henry was the son of the Duchess Blanche, whose death-song Chaucer sang ; he was, too, the son of Chaucer's protector, John of Gaunt ; and, besides, it is not necessary to suppose that the poet openly displayed his religious persuasion.

I'm perfectly aware that my solution of the problem : *What was Chaucer's relation to the Church ?* is neither exhaustive nor undoubtedly correct. I did not intend it to be so ; for in the present state of our knowledge of Chaucer, a thorough investigation of the question is not yet possible, since a great many other questions must first be answered, before we can be positively sure on this point. But so long as they are not answered in a sense contrary to my expectation, I think I may, without presumption, maintain, that in his heart at least

Chaucer was a Wicliffite.

My best thanks are due to Mr Furnivall and Professor Ten-Brink, who, though their opinions on the subject differ from mine in many points, have kindly encouraged and assisted me in my investigation. Mr Furnivall has had the kindness, besides, to revise and correct the English version of this *Essay* for me.—S.