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BRITISH REFORMERS

# WRITINGS

OF

THE REVEREND AND LEARNED

**JOHN WICKLIFF, D.D.**

Professor of Divinity in Oxford, and Rector of Lutterworth, in the  
Fourteenth Century;

THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATOR OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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## CONTENTS.

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	Page
Some Account of the Life of John Wickliff, D.D.....	5
Specimens of Wickliff's Translation of the Bible.....	45
His Confession respecting the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper...	46
His Letter of Excuse to pope Urban VI.....	48
The POOR CAITIFF.....	49
On the Belief.....	51
On the Ten Commandments .....	60
On the Lord's Prayer.....	86
Of Perfect Life; or, The Counsel of Christ .....	97
Of Temptation; or, Of Virtuous Patience.....	99
The Charter of our Heavenly Heritage.....	101
The Armour of Heaven; or, Of Ghostly Battle.....	106
To love Jesus.....	112
Of the Love of Jesus .....	114
Of Meekness .....	117
Of Man's will.....	119
Of Active Life and Contemplative Life.....	120
How the Office of Curates is ordained of God .....	123
Of Feigned Contemplative Life.....	139
On Prayer.—How prayer of good men helpeth much, and how prayer of sinful men displeaseth God, and harmeth them- selves and other men.....	142
A short Rule of Life for each man in general, and for Priests, and Lords, and Labourers in particular; how each shall be saved in his degree.....	149
Wickliff's Wicket—A very brief definition of these words, Hoc est corpus meum, (This is my Body).....	153
Is on the Doctrine of Transubstantiation .....	167
Five Lettings of Prayer .....	169

	Page
Antichrist's Labour to destroy Holy Writ. ....	172
Wickliff's Trialogus.—Extract on the Incarnation and Death of Christ. ....	179
Wickliff's Opinions of the Papacy. ....	184
<b>SERMONS OR POSTILLS.</b>	
I. On the Nativity of Christ. ....	186
II. John the Baptist's Testimony of Christ. ....	188
III. The Gospel Light. ....	189
IV. The Leper and the Centurion. ....	191
V. Christ stilling the Tempest.—On Faith. ....	195
VI. Charity. ....	197
VII. The Followers of Christ. ....	201
VIII. The Priesthood of Christ. ....	204
IX. The Victory over the World. ....	206
X. The Holy Spirit. ....	209
XI. Love to Christ. ....	212
XII. Of Spiritual Gifts. ....	215
XIII. Paul's preaching the Gospel. ....	218
XIV. The Ministration of the Gospel. ....	220
XV. The Promises made to Abraham. ....	223
XVI. Christ preaching at Nazareth. ....	225
XVII. Christ one with the Father. ....	227
XVIII. The Gospel revealed to Babes. ....	229
XIX. Hatred of the World to Christ. ....	231
XX. All things known to God. ....	234
XXI. Watchfulness enforced. ....	236



SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE  
OF  
JOHN WICKLIFF, D.D.

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THE state of England during the latter part of the fourteenth century presents many causes for painful reflection. Luxury and pride characterised the higher classes, while the lower orders were involved in misery, and vice abounded among all ranks. Contemporary historians ascribe much of this dissoluteness of morals to the civil wars of preceding reigns, whereby the land was desolated, and the bonds of society relaxed. The internal peace of the country, it is true, had become more settled, but many causes united to prevent moral improvement. A long course of foreign victory inflated the national pride; the wealth that accrued to individuals from successful warfare, with the habits acquired thereby, promoted luxury and dissipation among the higher ranks, further stimulated by the introduction of new articles of expense through an increasing commerce.\* Meanwhile, the people in general were exhausted by calls for pecuniary supplies and personal aid to carry on foreign hostilities; and the feuds and oppressions of powerful barons, with the constant plundering of bands of robbers for many years suffered to exist with impunity, caused much misery among the lower orders, whose sufferings led to the insurrections in the early part of the reign of Richard II. Such in reality was the state of England in the days of Wickliff, as depicted by the annalists who lived near his time, although general historians, engrossed by military

\* The ransom of the prisoners taken by sir Walter Mauny in one campaign, A. D. 1340, was equal to 100,000*l.* of our present money.

Walsingham states that, "A. D. 1348, such quantities of furred garments, fine linen, jewels, gold and silver plate, rich furniture and utensils, the spoils of Caen, Calais, and other foreign cities, were brought into England, that every woman of rank obtained some of them, and they were seen in every mansion. Then the ladies of England became proud and vain in their attire, and were as much elated by the acquisition of that finery, as the ladies of France were dejected by the loss of it."

The value of the articles regularly imported into England A. D. 1354, was less than 40,000*l.* not an eighth part of the amount exported, which shows how little the mass of the community were able to indulge in the luxuries or conveniences of life. The imports were of that description, while the exports were chiefly articles of produce. By this difference between the imports and exports, the vast sums drained from England by the court of Rome and foreign ecclesiastics were supplied.

details and political events, dwell but slightly upon these painful circumstances.\*

Another cause tended much to produce and to perpetuate an unhappy state of society. For the soul to be without knowledge is not good, and those were days of ignorance and mental darkness. Some symptoms of a revival of learning appeared, but as yet little progress had been made in science. The subtilities of the schools retarded all advances in useful knowledge, while the improvements in fine arts were made subservient to luxury, rather than beneficial to the general character of the age. But ignorance as to spiritual truth was the greatest and most serious evil. The main object of those who called themselves ministers of Christ, was to enslave the minds and to plunder the property of the people committed to their charge; they kept from them the truths of the gospel, and sought to be revered as beings superior to their fellow-men, while they indulged every debasing appetite. The corrupt and depraved state of the popedom at that period is admitted by every historian; it is described as literally "a hell upon earth." To the papal power every ecclesiastic in Europe was compelled to look for authority and direction to exercise the duties of his charge, and we may easily imagine what was the

\* One proof of the licentiousness of those days will suffice. In 1380, an expedition was fitted out to aid in the wars of Bretagne. The English troops lay for some time near Portsmouth, wind-bound and waiting for provisions. They ill treated the country round, forcibly carrying off men's wives and daughters. Among other outrages, sir John Arundell, the commander, went to a nunnery, and desired that his troops might be allowed to visit there! This being refused, they entered by violence, and on their departure compelled the nuns to go with them. A storm came on, when these unhappy females were thrown into the sea by the very persons who had forced them to embark! The greater part of the fleet was lost on the coast of Ireland; the leader with a thousand of his men perished.—See Walsingham. In Hollinshed will be found several other instances of the military licentiousness then prevalent. Froissart relates that the French troops, prepared for the invasion of England, were equally profligate in their conduct, and pilaged their own countrymen without mercy. Each "gentleman" was followed by a servant called "un pillard," a plunderer.

The state of the lower orders in England may be supposed from a record in the annals of Dunstable abbey, A. D. 1283, where the sale of William Pike, "our slave by birth, and all his family," is mentioned as a matter of course. The price was a mark, or thirteen shillings and fourpence! The prices of food varied much, owing to frequent famines. In one year, 1317, according to Stow, the price of wheat varied from 80s. to 6s. 8d. the quarter. In 1359, wheat was 14. 6s. 8d.; in 1361, at 2s.; and in 1363, at 15s.—See Fleetwood's Chron. Preciosum. The lower classes must have suffered very much from those sudden variations, and at the high prices they would be quite unable to purchase the necessaries of life. When the difference in the value of money and commodities is taken into calculation, a shilling in Wickliff's time was equal to a pound at the present day.

general character of those to whom the popes and their counselors delegated the exercise of that paramount authority they had assumed. Ignorance as to scriptural truth was of course considered by such priests as the best safeguard of their authority; but though the church of Rome has maintained that ignorance is the mother of devotion, we know that such a source will yield only blind superstitious feelings, strongly opposed to true religion. The instruction given to the lower classes at that period tended to harden them in ignorance and vice: they committed their spiritual concerns entirely to the priesthood, or if the conscience refused to be silenced in this manner, it was diverted to the practice of austerities and will-worship, equally destructive to the soul. The few virtues of that age were not christian virtues; they were founded on the romantic notions of chivalry—faint glimmerings of light which only served to make the surrounding darkness more visible; at best they were deceptive, leading the pilgrim from the way to real peace.\* Only a small number of persons had been preserved from the corruptions of the papacy, but they, even in the darkest times, had exercised some influence upon Europe, though subjected to the most bitter persecution. A few individuals also, who were distinguished for mental powers, as Grosseteste and Bradwardine, had borne testimony in England against the usurpations and crimes of the papacy, while others had begun to perceive that the conduct of the priesthood, when examined by the rule of scripture, was altogether anti-christian.

The circumstances already noticed should be kept in mind when we enter upon the history of Wickliff. The demoralized state of the land made it ripe for sufferings. In Israel of old, when luxury and wickedness abounded, prophets were sent to warn the people of approaching judgments, and to point out the way of salvation; so in England, Wickliff and others were raised up to bear faithful testimony to the truth, and to denounce what must be the end of the practices which then prevailed.† When

\* Froissart's Chronicles show this. The mixture of generosity and courtesy with licentiousness and cruelty, depicted by the chivalrous historian, will strike the reader very forcibly.

† The monkish annalists, who were the English historians of those times, fully justify the sketch here given of the state of England during the fourteenth century. The English reader who may not have access to those sources of information, will find many particulars in the histories of Henry, Andrews, and Turner.

The height to which the luxury and excess of the times had arrived in the days of Richard II., is thus described by Hollinshed:—"There resorted daily to his court above ten thousand persons, who had meat and drink there allowed them. In his kitchen were three hundred servitors, and every other office was furnished after the like rate. Of ladies, chamberers, and landers, there were above three hundred at the least. And in gorgeous and costly apparel they exceeded all measure; not one of them kept within the bounds of his degree. Yeomen and

we recollect the state of England, and the crying evils which called for exposure and reproof, we shall be satisfied that Wickliff was not an ambitious, or a revolutionary spirit, as some have described him, but rather a prophet, as Jeremiah, "weeping day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people," hearing the voice of the Lord, "Shall I not visit for these things? Shall

grooms were clothed in silks, with cloth of grain and scarlet, over sumptuous, ye may be sure, for their estates. And this vanity was not only used in the court in those days, but also other people abroad in the towns and countries, had their garments cut far otherwise than had been accustomed before his days, with embroideries, rich furs, and goldsmiths' work, and every day there was devisings of new fashions, to the great hinderance and decay of the commonwealth. Moreover, such were preferred to bishoprics and other ecclesiastical livings, as neither could teach nor preach, nor knew any thing of the scripture of God, but only to call for their tithes and dues; so that they were most unworthy the name of bishops, being lewd and most vain persons disguised in bishop's apparel. Furthermore, there reigned abundantly the filthy sin of lechery and fornication, with abominable adultery, especially in the king, but most chiefly in the prelacy, whereby the whole realm, by such their evil example, was so infected, that the wrath of God was daily provoked to vengeance for the sins of the prince and his people." The receipts in the work, entitled "*The Forme of Cury*," prove the luxury of the table in which the court then indulged.

The depraved state of the popedom is described by almost every writer, civil as well as ecclesiastical. One extract may be given from the epistles of Petrarch, who cannot be objected to as an authority on this subject. At that time there was a schism in the papacy, which it might be supposed would oblige the pretenders to the popedom to more than usual care, that they might not disgust their adherents. But the state of the papal court at Avignon, about A. D. 1350, is thus described by Petrarch, and Rome was, if possible, more depraved. He says, the former city had become "a terrestrial hell, a residence of fiends and devils, a receptacle of all that is most wicked and abominable. There is no piety, no reverence or fear of God, no faith or charity, nothing that is holy, just, equitable, or humane." He adds, "Why should I speak of truth, where not only the houses, palaces, courts, churches, and the thrones of popes and cardinals, but the very earth and air, appear to teem with lies? A future state, heaven, hell, and judgment, are openly turned into ridicule as childish fables. Good men have of late been treated with so much contempt and scorn, that there is not one left among them to be an object of derision." This delineation Petrarch confirms by several facts. In another place he says, "Whatever perfidy and treachery, whatever barbarity and pride, whatever immodesty and unbridled lust you have ever heard or read of;—in a word, whatever impiety and immorality either now is, or ever was scattered over all the world, you may find here, amassed in one heap." The language of Baronius, the Romish annalist, is scarcely less strong. The depraved state of ecclesiastics in England, particularly the emissaries of Rome and the monastic orders, is delineated by Chaucer in his *Canterbury tales* in appalling colours. It is also described by the author of the *Vision of Piers Plowman*, and others; but the various decrees issued by the higher ecclesiastical authorities

not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" One deeply impressed by such feelings could not be indifferent to the sacred office, nor should he be judged by estimates of what appear to be the duties of a minister of the gospel at the present period. We may consider England at that period, as in many respects resembling Judah in the days of the son of Hilkiah. Like him, Wickliff was called from the priesthood of the land, to bear testimony as a prophet before kings and rulers, and like him, was unavoidably implicated in the political events of the times. And though visitations were not sent upon England to the same extent as those inflicted upon Judah, yet the painful scenes exhibited in the civil wars of the succeeding century, show that famine and the sword came upon the land, and that the people were punished for the fruit of their doings. National crimes will bring down national judgments. Warnings are sent previously to desolations, but when the voice of the Lord, speaking by his faithful ministers, is disregarded, execution will assuredly follow. It was so in the period referred to. The wickedness and profligacy of England in the fourteenth century were extreme, the awful and certain consequences were plainly exhibited by Wickliff and his associates; many, there is good reason to believe, sought the things which concerned their peace, but the nation at large persisted in evil courses, and persecuted to death the witnesses of the truth. The calamities which followed have been but feebly depicted in the pages of history; the particulars of individual suffering are forgotten amidst details of martial enterprise. May England not forget the innumerable mercies she has since then received! may the warnings of faithful ministers of Christ not again be despised! and may our national sins never again arise to such a height as to bring national judgments upon our country!

**JOHN WICKLIFF** \* was born about the year 1324, at a village of the same name, a few miles from the town of Richmond in Yorkshire, where his ancestors had resided from the time of the Conquest. The family were respectable, and possessed considerable property, but continued the advocates of those super-

respecting the life and manners of the clergy, are sufficient and indisputable evidence. Many of these may be found in the third volume of Wilkins's *Concilia*. They seem wholly to have failed in effecting any moral improvement, which is not surprising when we consider the sources from which they emanated. The gross doctrinal errors inculcated by the church of Rome, even after the days of Wickliff, are explicitly asserted in the proceedings against his followers.

\* The name of the reformer has been spelled in sixteen different ways. *Wiclif* is adopted by Lewis and Baber, and is used in the oldest document in which the name appears—his appointment to the embassy to the pope in 1374. *Wycliffe* is adopted by Vaughan, and appears to be the most correct. *Wickliff* is used in the present work as the most popular form. In those times orthography was but little attended to; in proper names especially it was much neglected.

stitutions which their relative earnestly laboured to remove. It is probable, that in consequence of the change in his views he was estranged from his own family. Under feelings of this nature he would be led to use the language of one of his tracts, in which, speaking of the errors into which worldly minded parents often fall, he says, "With much travail and cost they get great riches, and estates, and benefices for their children, and often to their greater damnation; but they incline not to get for their children the goods of grace and virtuous life. Nor will they suffer them to retain these goods, as they are freely proffered to them of God; but hinder it as much as they may; saying, if a child yield himself to meekness and poverty, and flee covetousness and pride, from a dread of sin, and to please God,—that he shall never become a man, never cost them a penny, and they curse him because he liveth well, and will teach other men the will of God to save their souls! For by so doing, the child getteth many enemies to his elders, and they say that he slandereth all their noble kindred who were ever held to be true men and worshipful."\* In those days, next to the danger and reproach of being a heretic, and nearly as great, was the being accounted a friend or relative of one suspected of heresy.

All the memorial which remains of the history of Wickliff's youth is, that his parents designed their son for the church, and his mind was early directed to the requisite studies. He was entered at Queen's college, Oxford, an institution then recently founded, from whence he soon removed to Merton college, the most distinguished in the university at that period, when the number of scholars had recently been estimated to amount to thirty thousand. Wickliff's attention appears rather to have been directed to the studies suitable for his profession, than to general literature. As Fuller observes, "The fruitful soil of his natural abilities he industriously improved by acquired learning. He was not only skilled in the fashionable arts of that age, and in that abstruse, crabbed divinity, all whose fruit is thorns, but he was also well versed in the scriptures, a rare accomplishment in those

\* MS. On Wedded Men, their Wives and Children.—See "The Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe, illustrated principally from his unpublished manuscripts, by Robert Vaughan," Vol. I. p. 223; a work which supplies a more complete personal history of the reformer and his writings than any which preceded it. By the author's permission considerable use of his valuable selections has been made in compiling the present brief sketch. The life of Wiclif by Lewis is well known, and deservedly esteemed for the patient industry of the writer, and the valuable materials he has collected. It is, however, to be regretted that he did not give a more full account of Wickliff's doctrinal pieces. Vaughan has done much to supply this deficiency. Considerable assistance has also been derived from Baber's valuable sketch of Wickliff's life prefixed to his edition of the reformer's new testament. Knyghton, Fox, Hollinshed, and other early chroniclers also have been referred to.

days." Dr. James enumerates various writers, by whom he considers Wickliff to have been grounded in the truth. He doubtless learned much from the fathers, and was considerably indebted to Grosseteste and Bradwardine; but his writings show that his religious principles were mainly derived from the bible.\*

His perusal of the scriptures and the fathers rendered him dissatisfied with the scholastic divinity of that age, while the knowledge of canon and civil law then requisite for a divine, enabled him to discern many of the errors of popery. His writings also show him to have been well acquainted with the laws of his own country. The four fathers of the Latin church, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory, are continually quoted by him, so as to show his intimate acquaintance with their writings. Augustine, in particular, he seems to have valued next to the scriptures. It will not be forgotten that Luther derived much instruction from the writings of that father. The acknowledged ability of Wickliff as a scholar, led his adversaries to accuse him of evil designs rather than of ignorance, while his friends gave him the title of the Evangelic Doctor. Even Knighton states that he was second to none in philosophy.

Wickliff's mind must have received deep impressions from an awful visitation of Providence which occurred in the middle of the fourteenth century. Europe was shaken by a succession of earthquakes; shortly after, it was ravaged by a pestilence, the effects of which were more rapid and extensive than at this day we can easily conceive. More than half the people of this and other lands were swept away; the alarmed survivors reckoned the mortality far higher.† That Wickliff was deeply impressed by this awful event, appears by his frequent references thereto, when he is sounding an alarm to a careless and profane generation. Under a strong feeling that the end of the world approached, he wrote his first publication, a small treatise, entitled "The last Age of the Church," in which he describes the corruptions which then pervaded the whole ecclesiastical state, as the main cause of that chastisement which Europe had so lately felt. Early and deep impressions of this nature, evidently tended much to strengthen and to prepare the reformer for the arduous course he was shortly called to pursue. That his mind had been led to look to the only true ground of support is evident from a passage in this tract, wherein he speaks of Christ Jesus as having "entered into holy things, that is into holy church, by holy living and holy teaching;

\* See *The History of the Church of Christ*, Vol. III., for some account of Grosseteste and Bradwardine.

† Knighton says, that before this plague a curate might have been hired for four or five marks a year, or for two marks and his board; but after it, scarcely any could be found who would accept of a living of twenty marks a year. Archbishop Islip interfered, and forbade any curate to claim an advance of more than one mark yearly. Stow observes upon this limitation, that it induced many priests to turn robbers!

and with his blood he delivered man's nature; as Zechariah writeth in his ninth chapter, Thou verily, with the blood of witness, or of thy testament, hast led out from the pit them that were bound. So, when we were sinful, and the children of wrath, God's Son came out of heaven, and praying his Father for his enemies, he died for us. Then, much rather shall we be saved, now we are made righteous through his blood."

Thus we find Wickliff in his thirty-second year, respected for his scholastic acquirements, deeply impressed with the importance of divine truth, awakened to a sense of the divine judgments, enabled already to break through the bands of superstition, and in possession of that hope which alone can afford refuge for a guilty sinner. We shall now see how these preparations fitted him for the contest, and led him to the encounter in which he was called to engage.

The first circumstance which summoned Wickliff to this conflict was a controversy with the mendicant friars. Some of them had settled at Oxford in 1221, where they attracted much notice by their professed freedom from the avarice of the monastic fraternities in general, and by their activity as preachers. They introduced many of the opinions afterwards adopted by the reformers, for a time saying much in opposition to the papal authority, and in support of the authority of the bible. But their errors and encroaching spirit soon appeared, so that Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, who for some years had favoured the friars, at length deeply censured their conduct. Their zeal to proselyte youths at the universities to their orders, called forth vigorous opposition from Fitzraf, archbishop of Armagh, who, in a petition to the pope in 1357, affirmed that the students of Oxford were reduced on this account to six thousand, not more than a fifth of their former number.\* In 1366, a parliamentary enactment ordered that none of the orders should receive any youth under the age of eighteen; also that no bull should be procured by the friars against the universities. Similar disputes then prevailed in the university of Paris. The objections alleged against the mendicants, as stated by Wickliff, may be thus summed up:—they represented a life inertly contemplative, as preferable to one spent in active attention to christian duties; they were defective in morals when discharging their office of confessors; while itinerating in the offices they assumed, they persecuted all such as they detected really "travelling to sow God's word among the people;" to these may be added a full proportion of every error

\* In his tract of *Clerks Possessioners*, Wickliff complains that "Friars draw children from Christ's religion into their private order, by hypocrisy, lyings, and stealing." He charges them with stealing children from their parents through inducing them to enter their orders, by representing that men of their order would never come to hell, and would have higher degree of bliss in heaven than any other. For an account of Fitzraf, or Armachanus, as he was usually called, see Fox, who gives a summary of his arguments against the friars.



and vice which has been charged on the corrupt clergy of Rome. Nor did Wickliff merely expose and seek to correct these fruits of error; he showed that they proceeded from the unscriptural nature of the institutions, which evidently were opposed to those precepts of the bible, which they professed to regard.

Against these mendicants, Wickliff wrote several tracts, entitled, *Of the property of Christ, Against able Beggary, and of Idleness in Beggary.*\* The vices of the friars led him to consider more fully the vices of the Romish priesthood.

The approval which the conduct of Wickliff, in opposing the mendicants, received from the university, appears from his being chosen warden of Baliol college in 1361. In the same year he was presented by his college to the living of Fillingham, in Lincolnshire, which he afterwards exchanged for Ludgershall, in Wiltshire. In 1365 he was appointed warden of Canterbury hall, by Simon de Islip, the founder, then primate of England.

In the instrument appointing Wickliff to this office, Islip states him to be a person on whose fidelity, circumspection, and industry he confided, one on whom he had fixed for that place for the honesty of his life, his laudable conversation, and knowledge of letters. Islip dying shortly after, Wickliff was displaced by Langham, his successor, who had been a monk, from whose decision he appealed to the pope.

The integrity and courage of Wickliff are manifest from the boldness with which he continued to oppose the mendicants, both personally and by his writings, during the time his appeal was under consideration.

Another circumstance assisted to call Wickliff into public notice. This was the decision of the English parliament in 1365, to resist the claim of pope Urban V., who attempted the revival of an annual payment of a thousand marks,† as a tribute, or feudal acknowledgment, that the kingdoms of England and Ireland were held at the pleasure of the popes. His claim was founded upon the surrender of the crown by king John to pope Innocent III. The payment had been discontinued for thirty-three years, and the recent victories of Cressy and Poitiers, with their results, had so far strengthened the power of England, that the demand by the pontiff, of the arrears, with the continuance of the tribute, upon pain of the papal censure, were unanimously rejected by the king and parliament. The reader must recollect that this was not a question bearing only upon the immediate point in dispute; the grand subject of papal supremacy was involved therein, and the refusal to listen to the mandate of the

\* In his writings Wickliff sometimes speaks of the houses of the friars as Caim's castles, (Cain was then so spelt,) alluding to the initial letters of the four mendicant orders, the Carmelites, Augustines, Jacobites, and Minorites. They were commonly called the White, Black, Austin, and Grey friars.

† A mark is 13s. 4d.

pope necessarily tended to abridge the general influence of the clergy. A measure of this description was almost unknown in the history of Europe at that day. Such claims were not lightly relinquished by the papacy, and shortly after this decision of the parliament, a monk wrote in defence of the papal usurpations, asserting that the sovereignty of England was forfeited by withholding the tribute, and that the clergy, whether as individuals or as a general body, were exempted from all jurisdiction of the civil power, a claim which had already excited considerable discussions in the preceding reigns. Wickliff was personally called upon by this writer to prove, if he were able, the fallacy of these opinions; nor should it be forgotten that this work did not proceed from any of the mendicant orders, but from one of those monks who were directly opposed to them. Thus it is evident that Wickliff's former conduct was rightly estimated to proceed, not from one who merely opposed the mendicants, as such, but from one who would oppose the leading errors of the church of Rome, under whatever guise they might appear.

In Wickliff's reply, wherein he has preserved the arguments of the monk, he styles himself one of the royal chaplains. He combats the assumptions of the church of Rome, confirming his sentiments by giving the substance of several speeches delivered by certain of the lay nobility in the recent debate relative to the claims of the pontiff. We need not enter into the contents of this tract further than to quote the following declaration attributed to one of the speakers, that, "Christ is the supreme Lord, while the pope is a man, and liable to mortal sin, and who while in mortal sin, according to divines, is unfitted for dominion." The extent to which such a principle might be applied, is evident from the well-known wicked lives of the pontiffs, which had led to the monstrous assertion of Romish divines, that the pope, though guilty of the most heinous sins, still was to be obeyed and respected in his mandates; even those which concerned religion!\*

The treatise concludes with a view of the future, taken by Wickliff, which has long since been fulfilled. "If I mistake not, the day will come in which all exactions shall cease, before the pope will prove such a condition to be reasonable and honest." Who now in England ventures to assert that the temporal autho-

\* Bellarmine goes further he says: "Though the pope should err in enjoining vices, and prohibiting virtues, yet would the church be bound to believe the vices to be virtues, and the virtues vices, if it would avoid sinning against its own conscience." *De Pontif.* iv. 5.

One of the popes says, "The pope, who represents on earth not mere man, but true God, has a heavenly power; and therefore changes the nature of things.—Nor is there any one that can say unto him, Why dost thou so? For he can dispense laws; he can make justice injustice by altering and amending laws, and he has a fulness of power." *Innocent III. Glos.* A contemporary of Wickliff openly maintained that the pope was incapable of mortal sin!

ity of the pope is supreme? or that his ecclesiastics are exempted from the laws of God and their country? yet such doctrines were openly maintained in those ages, and still are asserted in some parts of Europe! The parliament in 1366 also directed regulations to be observed, by which the power and influence of the mendicants were limited. In the part taken by the university of Oxford, during these proceedings, Wickliff doubtless was concerned, and the attention given to his arguments on these subjects, which then so deeply agitated the public mind, must have brought his opinions concerning the scriptures, and other points more immediately connected with divine truths, into general notice. Thus attention was called to those doctrines which he now began publicly to advocate. One circumstance which promoted this opposition to the papal claims, was the national animosity then existing between England and France. Many of the popes being natives of France, evinced their partiality for their own country, in which they then resided, on all occasions. All these concurring circumstances led Edward III. to pursue a line of conduct, which certainly characterises him as a promoter of the reformation, at least as to its outward concerns.

John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, claims notice as conspicuous among the court and family of the British monarch, for the countenance and support he afforded to Wickliff. Under his influence an attempt appears to have been made in 1371, by authority of parliament, to exclude ecclesiastics from all offices of state.\* Wickliff, in his writings, has so fully shown his deep sense of the necessity for the clergy being exclusively devoted to the duties of their spiritual functions, that we cannot doubt of his intimate connexion with the prince from whom such a proposition originated. The views of Wickliff as to the proper method of discharging the office of minister to the church, will appear by the following extract from one of his early pieces, entitled, "A short rule of life." He says, "If thou art a priest, and by name a curate, live thou a holy life. Pass other men in holy prayer, holy desire, and holy speaking; in counselling and teaching the truth. Ever keep the commandments of God, and let his gospel and his praises be ever in thy mouth. Ever despise sin, that men may be drawn therefrom, and that thy deeds may be so far right, that no man shall blame them with reason. Let thy open life be thus a true book, in which the soldier and the layman may learn how to serve God, and keep his commandments. For the example of a good life, if it be open and continued, striketh rude men much more than open preaching with the word alone. And waste not thy goods in great feasts for rich men, but live a

\* Almost every office of importance or profit was filled by ecclesiastics, from that of lord chancellor, to the surveyor of the king's buildings and the superintendent of his wardrobe. About this time the chancellor was bishop of Ely; the two latter offices were filled by the parsons of Oundle and Harwich.

frugal life on poor men's alms and goods. Have both meat, and drink, and clothing, but the remnant give truly to the poor; to those who have freely wrought, but who now may not labour from feebleness and sickness; and thus shalt thou be a true priest both to God and to man." These are sentiments which remind us of the early ages of the church, and Wickliff was not one who set forth precepts for others, which he did not practise himself. Similar passages will be found in the following pages. Nor was he less earnest to enforce due respect for the ministers of religion, as will appear from the following extract. "Thy second father is thy spiritual father, who has special care of thy soul, and thus shalt thou worship (reverence) him. Thou shalt love him especially before other men, and obey his teaching as far as he teaches God's will. And help according to thy power, that he have a reasonable sustenance when he doeth well his office. And if he fail in his office, by giving evil example, and in ceasing from teaching God's law, thou art bound to have great sorrow on that account, and to tell meekly and charitably his default to him, between thee and him alone."\*

In 1370, the papal court decided against the continuance of Wickliff in the wardenship of Canterbury-hall. It was decreed that the inmates should all be monks, notwithstanding the express declarations of the founder, and the terms of the royal license to the contrary. The royal sanction to this sentence was obtained two years afterwards. Among the means employed by his opponents, bribery appears to have been the principal. Wickliff was neither surprised nor troubled by this decision; he does not refer to it in any part of his writings, nor was any imputation cast upon him thereby.


In 1373, Wickliff was admitted to the degree of doctor in divinity. As this rank was at that time unfrequent, and conferred a considerable degree of influence, it must have facilitated the diffusion of the doctrines he advocated throughout the kingdom. Many of his scholastic pieces doubtless were lectures delivered by him as professor of divinity, to which office he was appointed in 1372. His early English writings also show both the doctrinal views, and the religious feelings with which he proceeded in his new office. He was skilful in the use of the artificial logic then in vogue, and by accustoming his hearers to enter into logical and metaphysical distinctions, he taught them to exercise their minds upon inquiries, which he gradually directed to more important subjects than those usually introduced into such lectures.

Among these early pieces, the Exposition of the Decalogue,

\* Vaughan observes upon this extract: "If Wycliffe ever sanctioned any less mild or scriptural methods of reform, it was because the state of the malady was found to require a severer treatment." In his tracts, *For the Order of Priesthood*, and the *Office of Curates*, Wickliff enters very fully into this subject.

now in the Cotton library, may be included.\* As that exposition differs from the one in the present volume, a brief extract or two may be given. Urging that love to God be shown by keeping his commands, Wickliff says, "Have a remembrance of the goodness of God, how he made thee in his own likeness, and how Jesus Christ, both God and man, died so painful a death upon the cross, to buy man's soul out of hell, even with his own heart's blood, and to bring it to the bliss of heaven." He admonishes that the sabbath not only commemorates the work of creation, but also the resurrection of Christ, and the gift of the Spirit, adding, "Bethink thee heartily of the wonderful kindness of God, who was so high and so worshipful in heaven, that he should come down so low and be born of the maiden, and become our brother, to buy us again by his hard passion, from our thralldom to Satan." After describing the sufferings of Christ, he adds, "All this he did and suffered of his own kindness, without any sin of himself, that he might deliver us from sin and pain, and bring us to everlasting bliss. Thou shouldest also think constantly, how, when he had made thee of nought, thou hadst forsaken him, and all his kindness, through sin, and hadst taken thee to Satan and his service, world without end, had not Christ, God and man, suffered this hard death to save us. And thus, see the great kindness, and all other goodness, which God hath shown for thee, and thereby learn thy own great unkindness; and thus thou shalt see that man is the most fallen of creatures, and the unkindest of all creatures that ever God made! It should be full, sweet, and delightful to us to think thus on this great kindness, and this great love of Jesus Christ!" Vaughan observes of this exposition, "We find Wycliffe zealously inculcating the lessons of inspiration, on the fall of man and the consequent depravity of human nature; on the excellence and perpetual obligation of the moral law; on the exclusive dependence of every child of Adam on the atonement of Christ for the remission of his sins; and for victory over temptation, and the possession of holiness, on the aids of divine grace. It appears also that these momentous tenets were very far from being regarded by Wycliffe with the coldness of mere speculation."

The aid which the labours of Wickliff received from the disputes then existing between the popes and the English government, has been already noticed; these differences were again renewed in 1373, on the subject of "provisors." The papal see had been accustomed to grant anticipated vacancies in the English church among its foreign dependents, by which ministers were appointed who were neither able nor willing to discharge the duties of their office. Various legal enactments had been previously made to meet these encroachments, and a law was passed whereby the election of bishops was rendered entirely independent of the papal sanction.

\* See Vaughan's *Life of Wickliff*, vol. i. p. 303. 

In the year 1360, during the pestilence, seven English bishoprics had become vacant, all of which were filled by aliens, under papal provisions, and the result of inquiry in 1376, showed that a very large number of the English benefices were in the hands of foreigners. An embassy was despatched to the continent in 1374, to remonstrate with the papal see on this subject; Wickliff was one of the delegates. Bruges was the place appointed for meeting the commissioners of the papal see: the proceedings, as usual in all matters of a similar nature, were protracted by every species of evasion; they continued nearly two years, while the concessions obtained were few and unsatisfactory. Wickliff saw enough during his visit to the continent, to satisfy him fully of the anti-christian character of the papacy. He returned from this treaty, like Cranmer and Luther from Rome, more than ever convinced of the necessity of a thorough reformation in ecclesiastical affairs. He now styled the pope, "antichrist, the proud, worldly priest of Rome, the most cursed of clippers and purse kervers." We find strong expressions in his subsequent writings, but when we refer to the corruptions of the church of Rome, and to the treatment Wickliff received from the Romish ecclesiastics, it may truly be said, "Was there not a cause?"

The public attention was now awakened to the intolerable exactions of the popedom. A parliamentary remonstrance in 1376 states, that the taxes paid to the pope yearly out of England, were five times the amount paid to the king; also that the richest prince in Christendom had not the fourth part of the income received by the pope out of England. These calculations might well call forth the emphatic expression contained in the same document, "that God had committed his sheep to the pope to be pastured, and not to be shorn or shaven."

In November 1375, Wickliff was presented by the king to a prebend in the collegiate church of Westbury, and shortly after to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, at that time in the royal gift by the minority of lord de Ferrars, the patron. He was speedily called to take a still more prominent part in public affairs.

At that period a severe political struggle existed between the duke of Lancaster and the leading ecclesiastics, among whom Courtney, bishop of London, and Wykeham of Winchester, were most distinguished. The particulars need not be detailed; it is sufficient to say that the transactions were of a complicated nature. It is only to the unbounded influence of the Romish priesthood over the consciences of men, that we can attribute the popular excitement against the reformer and his friends, which the prelates succeeded in raising. Perhaps it is less easy to explain how the parliament, which assembled in 1376 and 1377, should have been opposed both to the encroachments of the papacy and to the administration of the duke of Lancaster.

The clergy were highly displeased at proceedings against some of their number, and at this period, for the first time, we

find them adverting to the doctrines of Wickliff, as calling for official interference. This doubtless was intended as an attack both upon the doctrines of the reformer, and the power of his patron.

In the convocation which met in February 1377,\* Wickliff was cited to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, to answer certain charges brought against him for holding and publishing erroneous and heretical doctrines. A day was appointed for hearing his defence; the scene which ensued is thus described by Fox from the chronicle of St. Albans.

“When the day assigned to the said Wickliff to appear was come, which day was Thursday, the 19th of February,† John Wickliff went, accompanied with the duke of Lancaster, also four friars appointed by the duke, the better to ensure Wickliff’s safety, and lord Henry Percy, lord marshal of England; lord Percy going before to make room and way where Wickliff should come.

“Thus Wickliff, through the providence of God, being sufficiently guarded, was coming to the place where the bishops sat. By the way they animated and exhorted him not to fear nor shrink a whit at the company of the bishops there present, who were all unlearned, said they, in respect of him—for so proceed the words of my author, whom I follow in this narration; neither should he dread the concourse of the people, whom they would themselves assist and defend, in such sort that he should take no harm. With these words, and with the assistance of the nobles, Wickliff, encouraged in heart, approached the church of St. Paul, where a main press of people was gathered to hear what should be said and done. Such was the throng of the multitude, that the lords, for all the puissance of the high marshal, scarcely, with great difficulty, could get way through. Insomuch that Courtney, bishop of London, seeing the stir which the lord marshal kept in the church among the people, speaking to the lord Percy, said, That if he had known before what masteries he would have kept in the church, he would have stopped him out from coming there. At which words of the bishop the duke disdaining not a little, answered the bishop again, That he would keep such mastery there, though he said, Nay.

“At last, after much wrangling, they pierced through, and came to our lady’s chapel, where the dukes and barons were sitting together with the archbishops and bishops, before whom John Wickliff stood, to know what should be laid unto him. To whom first spake the lord Percy, bidding him to sit down, saying, that he had many things to answer to, and therefore had need of some softer seat. But the bishop of London, cast eftsoons into a furnish chafe with those words, said, He should not sit there. Neither was it, said he, according to law or reason, that he, who

\* Lewis, by mistake, assigns this transaction to the year following.

† A. D. 1377.

was cited there to appear to answer before his ordinary, should sit down during the time of his answer, but he should stand. Upon these words a fire began to heat and kindle between them. Insomuch that they began so to rate and revile one the other, that the whole multitude, therewith disquieted, began to be set on a hurry.

“Then the duke, taking the lord Percy’s part, with hasty words began also to take up the bishop. To whom the bishop again, nothing inferior in reproachful checks and rebukes, did render and requite, not only to him as good as he brought, but also did so far excel him in this railing art of scolding, that, to use the words of mine author, the duke blushed and was ashamed, because he could not overpass the bishop in brawling and railing. He therefore fell to plain threatening, menacing the bishop, that he would bring down the pride not only of him, but also of all the prelacy of England. Speaking moreover unto him; Thou, said he, bearest thyself so brag upon thy parents, which shall not be able to help thee; they shall have enough to do to help themselves. His parents were the earl and countess of Devonshire. To whom the bishop again answered, that to be bold to tell truth, his confidence was not in his parents, nor in any man else, but only in God in whom he trusted. Then the duke softly whispering in the ear of him next by him, said, that he would rather pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of the church, than he would take this at his hand. This was not spoken so secretly, but that the Londoners overheard him. Whereupon, being set in rage, they cried out, saying, that they would not suffer their bishop so contemptuously to be abused, but rather they would lose their lives, than that he should be so drawn out by the hair. Thus the council being broken with scolding and brawling for that day, was dissolved before nine of the clock.”

Some proceedings having been taken by the duke and lord Percy, which affected the liberties of the citizens, a tumult ensued on the day following. Information was brought to the duke at the Savoy, of the approach of the infuriated Londoners. The duke “being then at his oysters, without any further tarrying, and also breaking both his shins at a form for haste,” took boat with the lord Percy, and by water went to Richmond, where the princess regent was, with Richard, the young king. By her interference the Londoners were compelled to humble themselves, and to make a great taper of wax with the duke’s arms upon it, at the charge of the city, which was carried in procession, and placed in the chapel of our Lady, in St. Paul’s, to burn before the image of the virgin!

From February to October, 1377, Wickliff seems to have been occupied in discharging his duties as rector and professor. During this interval Edward III. died. The accession of Richard II. was followed by a diminution of the influence of John of Gaunt, but the opposition to the papal claims was not less decided. Amongst other subjects, the next parliament seriously



discussed whether it would not be lawful for the kingdom, in case of necessity, and as a means of its defence, to detain its treasure, that it be not conveyed to foreign nations, though the pope himself should demand the same under pain of his censures, and by virtue of obedience said to be due to him. An answer to this question would not now be considered any matter of doubt or difficulty, but at that time it was a perplexing subject. In fact it involved most important questions, both of a civil and a religious nature. Under this dilemma the opinion of Wickliff was requested. In his reply he discarded the opinions and decisions of civilians, or other human authorities. He considered the proper reference to be "to the principles of the law of Christ." The nature of the pope's demands sufficiently indicate the result of such an appeal!

The doctrines of Wickliff were now publicly known. The ecclesiastics had not remained indifferent to the consequences, as affecting their interests and their power. A number of his opinions were censured by the pope, and in June 1377, bulls were issued, addressed to the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of London, the king, and the university of Oxford, in which the pope required that Wickliff should be seized and imprisoned under the papal authority, that his confession should be received, distinct information of his tenets obtained, and that he should be detained in custody until further instructions were sent concerning him. If he were not apprehended, citations were to be issued, commanding his attendance before the pope within three months; the utmost care was to be taken to prevent the king and the nobility from being defiled with his errors. The bulls, however, were not made public till after the parliamentary proceeding just mentioned.

These harsh mandates, it will be observed, treat Wickliff as a criminal already condemned; the prelates were merely to inform themselves privately whether Wickliff had taught the doctrines imputed to him. Such was the inquisitorial policy of the Romish ecclesiastics! The university of Oxford did not receive this bull without considerable hesitation, though accompanied by an especial letter from the pope, lamenting that tares were suffered to grow up among the pure wheat in that seat of learning, and even to grow ripe, without any care being applied to root them up. Not the smallest intention of placing Wickliff in the power of his enemies was manifested by the heads of the university. Archbishop Sudbury, however, wrote to the chancellor, enjoining him to cite Wickliff to appear before his superiors, and early in 1378, the reformer attended a synod at Lambeth. The duke of Lancaster no longer retained his political power, but the deep impression Wickliff's doctrines had made upon the people was now apparent. Considerable crowds surrounded the place; many forced an entrance, openly declaring their attachment to the reformer; and sir Lewis Clifford, in the name of the queen

mother, forbad the bishops from proceeding to any definitive sentence.

On this occasion Wickliff delivered a written statement of his opinions, which has been unfairly represented as an artful attempt to evade the consequences of his doctrines by apologies and explanations. This is not correct:—many things had been laid to his charge which he knew not; some were utterly false, while other opinions he had not yet maintained. To attempt an explanation of his real views was, therefore, a proof of ingenuousness rather than of artifice; and it is by no means certain that this document has come down to us without mutilation from his enemies. Yet, if the whole be attended to, and allowance be made for the scholastic forms of argument, from which Wickliff had not been emancipated, his statements will not be considered as evasive. These articles are given at length by Lewis, from Walsingham, and are fully abstracted by Vaughan. If the reader finds less distinct reference than he expected to the great truths of the christian faith, he must not be surprised. In controversy, the Romish church has usually kept these all important subjects out of sight; or rather they are admitted in form, while in effect they are denied. The points controverted with Wickliff chiefly related to the authority of the pope and the powers of the priesthood; the doctrine of transubstantiation was the great subject of inquiry in the sixteenth century. Few, excepting Luther and Fox, succeeded in bringing their opponents into direct discussion upon the point which in fact was the main subject at issue, namely, whether salvation was to be obtained only by faith in Christ, or whether other mediators and means of remission of sin were to be looked to. Of Wickliff's explanations it will suffice to say, that so far from having made decided statements, and retracted them by subsequent explanations, he repeated in his subsequent treatises the sentiments deemed most obnoxious, while he ever professed his readiness to retract, if his conclusions were proved to be opposed to the faith.\*

The papal authority at this time suffered from other causes in addition to the attacks of the advocates of reformation. On the death of pope Gregory XI. in March 1378, a schism took place which exhibited the church of Rome with two, and sometimes with three different heads at the same time; each pretending to infallibility, and all denouncing curses against their opponents, in most awful terms.† To the death of Gregory XI. and these

\* Vaughan has shown that the writings in which Wickliff used more decided expressions against the papacy, were not written till *after* this period. This is important, as proving that Wickliff did not resort to equivocation or evasion, but that, like Luther, his views became clearer as his opinions were called in question. "Rome was not denounced as antichrist till Rome had become his prosecutor."

† Platina, the Romish historian, says, "In the time of Urban VI. arose the 22d (or 26th) schism, of all schisms the worst, and the most

distractions, the escape of Wickliff from the vengeance of the clergy, may partly be attributed. The general feeling of the necessity for reformation was also promoted, and Wickliff was not wanting in exertions to expose the vain and wicked pretensions of these unchristian pretenders to infallibility. In a tract entitled, "On the schism of the popes," he made a direct attack upon the papal usurpations.

Amidst these labours and persecutions Wickliff was assailed by sickness. While at Oxford he was confined to his chamber, and reports of his approaching dissolution were circulated. The mendicants considered this to be a favourable opportunity for obtaining a recantation of his declarations against them. Perhaps they concluded that the sick-bed of Wickliff would resemble many others they had witnessed, and that their power would be there felt and acknowledged. A doctor from each of the privileged orders of beggars, attended by some of the civil authorities of the city, entered the chamber of Wickliff. They at first expressed sympathy for his sufferings, with hopes for his recovery. They then suggested that he must be aware of the wrongs the mendicants had experienced from him, especially by his sermons, and other writings; as death now appeared at hand, they concluded that he must have feelings of compunction on this account; therefore they expressed their hope that he would not conceal his penitence, but distinctly recall whatever he had hitherto said against them.

The suffering reformer listened to this address unmoved. When it was concluded, he made signs for his attendants to raise him in his bed, then fixing his eyes on the mendicants, he summoned all his remaining strength, and loudly exclaimed, "I shall not die, but live, and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars." The appalled doctors, with their attendants, hurried from the room, and they speedily found the prediction fulfilled. The scene would afford a striking subject for an able artist.

While Wickliff strongly censured the fabulous legends and crafty delusions practised by these orders, he by no means neglected the means of usefulness they so much misapplied. He was not less distinguished as a preacher, than as a theologian or a controversialist. Milton well speaks of Wickliff's preaching, as a saving light at which succeeding reformers effectually lighted their tapers.

Nearly three hundred of his sermons have escaped the destruction to which his writings were subjected. The plain simplicity of their language and style show that he was not less fitted for the humble, yet important station, of a village pastor, than for the office of ambassador to the pope, or to consider matters of

puzzling. For it was so intricate that not even the most learned and conscientious were able to decide to which of the pretenders they were to adhere, and it continued to the time of Martin V." (more than forty years.)

state referred to him by the highest authorities of the land. That he was an active preacher is evident, and there can be no doubt but that he discharged the other duties of his function according to what he has himself pointed out to be the duty of the christian man, "to visit those who are sick, or who are in trouble, especially those whom God hath made needy by age, or by other sickness, as the feeble, the blind, and the lame, who are in poverty. These thou shalt relieve with thy goods after thy power, and after their need, for thus biddeth the gospel." Upon the importance of preaching, in all ages of the church, it is unnecessary to enlarge, but certainly it was peculiarly important in those times, when little but oral instruction could be imparted, and the invention of printing was unknown.

Wickliff's sermons are seldom to be considered as essays upon particular subjects; frequently they are only sketches, or heads of his discourses, but they are almost invariably what were then called postills—discourses founded upon passages of scripture, the various parts of which are considered in succession. This method was most usual, both in the primitive church and among the reformers who followed Wickliff. In general, the discourses are founded upon the gospel, the epistle, or the lesson for the day, and are supposed to have been delivered at Lutterworth, during the eight years he was rector of that place. They are strictly of a popular character, as will be seen by the specimens in the present volume. In one of these discourses he speaks of the labours of Christ and his apostles as teachers. They are touched upon in a manner which shows that he recommended similar proceedings in the times in which he lived, and the testimonies of historians inform us that the teachers among the Lollards went about in this manner, testifying of the things of the kingdom of heaven. He says, "The gospel telleth us the duty which falls to all the disciples of Christ, and also telleth us how priests, both high and low, should occupy themselves in the church of God and in serving him. And first, Jesus himself did indeed the lessons which he taught. The gospel relates how Jesus went about in the places of the country, both great and small, as in cities and castles, or small towns, and this to teach us to profit generally unto men, and not to forbear to preach to a people because they are few, and our name may not, in consequence, be great. For we should labour for God, and from him hope for our reward. There is no doubt that Christ went into small uplandish towns, as to Bethphage, and Cana in Galilee; for Christ went to all those places where he wished to do good. And he laboured not thus for gain, for he was not smitten either with pride or with covetousness." In another discourse he says, "It was ever the manner of Jesus to speak the words of God, wherever he knew that they would be profitable to others who heard them: and hence Christ often preached, now at meat, and now at supper, and indeed at whatever time it was convenient for others to hear him."

Another still more important labour of Wickliff claims our attention—his translation of the scriptures into the English tongue, which occupied him for many years. It was completed in 1383. The first honour of this great undertaking clearly belongs to Wickliff, and no event recorded in the annals of our land can be compared with it for importance. The attempts made by others had neither been numerous nor extensive. They were only versions of the psalms and some other portions of sacred writ, and detract not from the labour or merit of Wickliff's performance.\* A well-known passage from the historical work of Knighton, a canon of Leicester, the contemporary of Wickliff, contains evidence upon this subject too decisive not to be repeated here. He says, "Christ delivered his gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times, and the wants of man. But this master John Wickliff translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to women who can read, than it formerly had been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine, and that which was before precious both to clergy and laity, is rendered as it were the common jest of both! The jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the people, and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever common to the laity."

The cautious English historian of modern Romanists expresses the same opinion as Knighton, though in more guarded language. He says, "Wickliff made a new translation, (of the scriptures,) multiplied the copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his 'poor priests,' recommended it to the perusal of their hearers. In their hands it became an engine of wonderful power. Men were flattered by the appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrines insensibly acquired partisans and protectors in the higher classes, who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of inquiry was generated, and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution, which in little more than a century astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe."

In conformity to these apprehensions, the advocates of the church of Rome have ever denounced, in terms more or less measured, all attempts to communicate to the people in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God for the salvation of a guilty world. The diffusion of this light and knowledge, they well know, will certainly bring the fabric of ecclesiastical domination to the dust, and therefore the church of Rome has EVER objected to allow free perusal of the scriptures to the laity.

But a spirit of inquiry had been awakened, and Wickliff well

\* The Rev. H. Baber's account of the English and Saxon versions of the scriptures, contains much valuable information upon this subject.

knew that no method could be devised so effectual for making men wise unto salvation, as to supply them with the scriptures. What assistance he had in this work is not known, but it is evident that copies were multiplied with a rapidity which we can hardly appreciate at the present day.

From the register of Alnwick, bishop of Norwich, in 1429, it appears that the cost of a testament of Wickliff's version, was 2*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.* (equal to more than 20*l.* of our present money.) At that time five pounds were considered a sufficient allowance for the annual maintenance of a tradesman, yeoman, or a curate. In the persecution under bishop Longland, in 1521, when severe penalties, perhaps death, followed the merely possessing such a work, the accusation against one man was his having paid twenty shillings for a bible in English, probably only some detached books.

This translation was made from the Latin vulgate. Scarcely any persons then were acquainted with the original languages of the scriptures. Wickliff took considerable pains to collect copies, and procured as correct a text as possible for his version.

The circulation of the English scriptures was so offensive to the clergy, that in 1390 the prelates brought forward a bill in the house of lords, for suppressing Wickliff's translations. The duke of Lancaster is said to have interfered on this occasion, boldly declaring, "We will not be the dregs of all, seeing that other nations have the law of God, which is the law of our faith, written in their own language." He added that he would maintain our having the divine law in our own tongue, against those, whoever they should be, who first brought in the bill. The duke being seconded by others, the bill was thrown out. Three years previously, in 1387, a severe statute had been revived at Oxford, which is thus described in a prologue for the English bible, written by one of Wickliff's followers: "Alas, the greatest abomination that ever was heard among christian clerks is now purposed in England by worldly clerks and feigned religious, and in the chief university of our realm, as many true men tell with great wailing. This horrible and devilish cursedness is purposed of Christ's enemies, and traitors of all christian people, that no man shall learn divinity, or holy writ, but he that hath done his form in art, that is, who hath commenced in arts, and hath been regent two years after. Thus it would be nine or ten years before he might learn holy writ."

The subsequent and more successful endeavours of the Romish clergy to prevent the circulation of the English scriptures will be noticed in the account of the followers of Wickliff.

In 1381, the troubles broke out among the commons, known as the insurrections of Wat Tyler and others. A very slight acquaintance with the history of England sufficiently explains the causes of these tumultuary proceedings, which were wholly unconnected with the doctrines or labours of Wickliff, who in his writings strongly urged the due subordination of different ranks

of men. Nor should it be forgotten that tumults of a far more sanguinary description, and marked by deeper atrocities, had about this period raged in France and Flanders, where the doctrines of our reformer were unknown. Froissart, a contemporary historian, attributes the proceedings of the English insurgents to the example set them on the continent. Other atrocious deeds, perpetrated as national acts in neighbouring countries, within our own recollection, might be referred to, were it at all needful to show that tumults and rebellions are not the results of opposition to popery ;\* but it ever has been a favourite plan of that church, to endeavour dexterously to fasten upon its adversaries the blame which properly appertains to itself.

Wickliff's opposition to the dogma of transubstantiation is now to be noticed. This doctrine was first openly maintained in the west, by Radbert, a French monk in the ninth century, but it was not fully sanctioned by the church of Rome till the third Lateran council, under Innocent III. in 1215. So doubtful had the popes been at first respecting this doctrine, that one of them feigned a revelation from the virgin in opposition to it.

One of the Saxon homilies thus states the doctrine held by the early English church upon this subject: "Much (difference) is between the body Christ suffered in, and the body hallowed to housell, (the sacrament;) this latter being only his spiritual body gathered of many corns, without blood or bone, without limb, without soul; and therefore nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but all is to be spiritually understood."

Transubstantiation was not held by the Anglo-Saxon church, but had been introduced after the Norman conquest, by Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury. Wickliff had touched upon this subject in some of his treatises, the most popular of which, his "Wicket," forms a part of the present volume, but he brought his views forward with increased activity in his divinity lectures during the spring of 1381, when he published a series of conclusions in which he called the attention of the members of the university to the subject. In these he stated that "the consecrated host, which we

\* Vaughan has examined this subject very fully. He relates several instances of tumultuary insurrections evidently proceeding from the fanaticism of popery. The real cause of the tumults in England, probably, was rightly stated by the parliament; "These injuries, lately done to the poorer commons, more than they ever suffered before, caused them to rise and to commit the mischief done in the late riot."

The Romish ecclesiastics also were guilty of considerable oppression. Wickliff in one of his tracts complains that, "Where in many abbeyes should be, and sometimes were, great houses to harbour poor men therein, now they are fallen down, or made swine cotes, stables, or bark houses; and the abbots make costly feasts, waste many goods on lords and rich men, suffering poor men to starve, and perish for hunger and other mischiefs." Lewis adds, "So far were the religious at that time from relieving all the poor of the nation at their gates."

see upon the altar, is neither Christ nor any part of him, but an effectual sign of him." On these conclusions Wickliff offered to dispute publicly.

In his *Trialogus*, (lib. iv. ch. 7.) Wickliff represents Satan as reasoning thus respecting transubstantiation. "Should I once so far beguile the faithful of the church, by the aid of antichrist my vicegerent, as to persuade them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and to induce them to regard it merely as an accident; there will be nothing then which I may not bring them to receive, since there can be nothing more opposite to the scriptures or to common discernment. Let the life of a prelate then be what it may, let him be guilty of luxury, simony, or murder, the people may be led to believe that really he is no such man; nay, they may then be persuaded to admit, that the pope is infallible, at least with respect to the matters of christian faith, and that, inasmuch as he is known by the name of Most Holy Father, he is of course free from sin." How completely had the powerful mind of Wickliff discerned the dreadful consequences of this monstrous doctrine, which represents a piece of bread as containing the flesh and blood, and even the soul and divine nature of our blessed Lord!

A convention of Romish doctors speedily assembled; the doctrines of Wickliff were condemned, as may easily be supposed. Sentences of excommunication and imprisonment were fulminated against all members of the university who should teach his tenets, or even be convicted of listening to arguments in defence of them.

This assembly was held in private; its determination was communicated to Wickliff while engaged in lecturing his pupils. He paused for a moment, and then again challenged his opponents to a fair discussion of the subject; declaring that if attempts were made to silence him by force, he would appeal to the king for protection.

Courtney, who had been recently appointed archbishop of Canterbury, in May, 1382, called a synod to consider respecting certain strange and dangerous opinions then widely diffused, among both the nobility and the commons of England. His well-known hatred to Wickliff sufficiently indicated the objects in view. The synod was held at the Grey Friars, in London. It had scarcely assembled when the city was shaken by an earthquake, which the members interpreted as evidence of the divine displeasure at the objects for which they were then collected. But Courtney was not a slave to superstitious fears; "he comforted them by putting them in mind that they should not be slothful in the cause of the church, that the earthquake in reality portended a cleansing of the kingdom from heresies. For as air and noxious spirits are shut up in the bowels of the earth, which are expelled in an earthquake, and so the earth is cleansed, but not without great violence, so there were many heresies shut up



in the hearts of reprobate men, but by the condemnation of them; the kingdom has been cleared, but not without irksomeness and great commotion."

The assembled divines were thus reassured, and the conclusions imputed to Wickliff were condemned as erroneous and heretical. The sentence denounced against all who should hold, preach, or defend his tenets, was promulgated with the usual solemnities, and addressed to all places subject to the see of Canterbury. These fulminations were communicated to the university of Oxford, but the chancellor and many of its leading members were attached to the reformer, and the public discourses before the university highly commended the character and doctrines of Wickliff.

The state of public affairs strengthened the efforts of the clergy; a few months before, they had procured the enactment of a law by the parliament, which provided for the punishment of those who preached what the ecclesiastics denominated heresy. The preamble of the statute evidently refers to the labours of the followers of Wickliff, and to the promulgation of such doctrines as he advanced. They were extensively diffused: a contemporary historian represents every second person in the kingdom as infected with his heresies, and in Wickliff's confession respecting the sacrament, he implies that a third part of the clergy held similar opinions.

The statute sets forth, that divers evil persons went from county to county, and town to town, in certain habits, under dissimulation of great holiness, without license of the ordinaries or other authorities, preaching daily, not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and other open places, where great congregations were assembled, divers sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, &c. &c. It was therefore enacted, that all such preachers, and also their favourers, maintainers, and abettors, should be "arrested, and held in strong prison," till they "justify themselves according to the law and reason of holy church," before the prelates.

This law was passed by the lords, but never had the assent of the commons, so that in reality it was both informal and invalid. In the following October it was revoked and laid aside; but the archbishop procured letters patent from the king, whereby he and his suffragans were authorized to detain all such offenders in their own prisons, and by the artifices of the prelate, the act of repeal was suppressed. This was the commencement of a series of bloody enactments, whereby the consciences of Englishmen were enthralled, and the best and holiest characters of the land were subjected to the severest persecution and most horrible cruelties. No traces of such laws appear previously on our statute book, and these notoriously emanated from the Romish priesthood, on feeling their craft to be in danger. It is evident that they proceeded not from the peculiar opinions of that day, or the maxims of state policy then prevalent, but entirely from the fiend

like desire of the popish ecclesiastics to persecute for conscience sake.

Courtney having arranged his machinery for persecution, summoned Rigge, the chancellor of Oxford, and Brightwell, one of his doctors, to answer for their late conduct respecting Hereford and Rippington, who had advocated the cause of Wickliff. After some hesitation, they were induced to assent to the articles lately sanctioned by the synod. The chancellor was enjoined to search for Wickliff, Hereford, Rippington, Ashton, and Redman, and by ecclesiastical censures, and canonical penalties to compel them to abjure. Meanwhile, the archbishop proceeded in his prosecution of Hereford and Ashton; the former had assisted Wickliff in his translation of the scriptures, the latter was well-known throughout the kingdom as a laborious and successful preacher of the gospel.

Wickliff then resided at Lutterworth. In one of his sermons he refers to these persecutions. Speaking of Courtney as "the great bishop of England, who is incensed because God's law is written in English to unlearned men," he adds, "He pursueth a certain priest because he writeth to men this English, and summoneth him, and travaileth him, so that it is hard for him to bear it. And thus he pursueth another priest, by the help of pharisees, because he preacheth Christ's gospel freely, without fables." Hereford appears to have escaped from the "bitterness of death," probably through the influence of the duke of Lancaster, but he, outwardly at least, reconciled himself to his opponents, as he was among the clergy who, in 1391, sat in judgment upon one of the Lollards, named Walter Brute, though he still retained an attachment to the doctrines of Wickliff. Rippington acted in a similar manner, but Ashton died as he had lived, a follower of the truth, before the clergy had proceeded so far as openly to bring the Lollards to the stake. The accounts respecting these men, however, are contradictory, and their enemies appear to have attributed to them greater concessions than they really made, a practice not unfrequent with the church of Rome. Some further particulars respecting them will be found in another part of this work.

The conduct of the clergy, and the means they had recourse to, are thus described by Wickliff in one of his discourses at this period. "Our high priests and our religious fear them, lest God's law, after all they have done, should be quickened. Therefore make they statutes stable as a rock, and they obtain grace (favour) of knights to confirm them, and this they mark well with the witness of lords, and all lest the truth of God's law should break out to the knowing of the common people. Well I know, that knights have taken gold in this case, to help that thy law may be thus hid, and thine ordinances consumed."

Wickliff saw the storm gathering fast, while increasing age and infirmities rendered him less able to counteract the proceedings of his adversaries. He knew not how soon the blow might

be struck. Thus situated, he resolved to appeal to the king and parliament, in the form of a petition. This document contains opinions for which some protestant writers have too hastily been inclined to censure the reformer, without considering the situation in which matters then stood, or the characters whom Wickliff denounced as worldly priests and of the congregation of Satan.

The proceedings against Wickliff are not very clearly stated ; but it appears that in 1382, a council of prelates and clergy was held in the church of the preaching friars at London as already mentioned, and a similar council was afterwards assembled at Oxford, to take measures for remedying certain disorders which were extending rapidly through the whole community. Courtney having made the requisite preparations, Wickliff was summoned to appear, that he might answer for his opinions. The Romish prelate laid his plans, so as to deprive Wickliff of the support and countenance he had hitherto received. While the nobility opposed the church on points of worldly interest, they gladly encouraged Wickliff in his opposition, though it originated from higher sources than those of a secular nature ; but at this critical period, the duke of Lancaster felt that it was his interest to avoid further hostilities with the clergy, and as Courtney had placed the matters at issue on points of doctrine, the duke advised Wickliff to submit to the prelates in all points of that nature. Here human aid failed the reformer, as might be expected. The world may contend upon subjects of a religious nature, when interest is concerned, but not when there is reason to expect only trouble and loss for so doing.

Had Wickliff then shrunk from the contest—had he sacrificed the truth to avoid the risk of encountering his adversaries, there might have been some ground for characterising him as a political reformer, even though the hesitation had proceeded from age and infirmity rather than from any other source. But he shrunk not. The Romish historian Walsingham, who is ever desirous to cast any disgrace he can upon the reformer, represents him as equally withstanding the commands of the duke, and the threats of the primate. He says, that Wickliff in publicly defending his doctrines on the sacrament of the altar, “ like an obstinate heretic, refuted all the doctors of the second millenary.”\* Wickliff did not consider the doctrine of transubstantiation to be a mere dogma of the schools, he viewed it as a worshipping of the creature more than the Creator, and perceived all its attendant consequences, of setting up will-worship, and other mediators than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The assembly convoked at Oxford, by whom Wickliff's doctrines were condemned, was numerous and eminent for rank and authority. He stood alone in the place where he once had delivered the doctrines of truth to approving auditories, but now he was forsaken. With the apostle Paul he might have said, “ At

\* The writers subsequent to the first thousand years after Christ.

mine answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." With that apostle he experienced that the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him, and he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. His defence, as we have seen, was such as to demand praise from his adversaries, and his written confessions recapitulated his former views upon the subject. There were two—one in Latin, in which he argued the subject after the scholastic method, the other in English, which he drew up so as to be intelligible to the people.\*

Courtney and his associates probably felt at a loss how to act towards the reformer. As yet they had not found any who resisted unto blood, nor had they arrived at the decision with which their successors put the summary requisition, "Turn or burn." They appear at that time to have contented themselves with terminating Wickliff's connexion with the university of Oxford. A mandate from the king was addressed to the vice-chancellor, dated July, 1382, ordering the expulsion of Wickliff and his adherents from the university, within seven days. Probably the increasing age and infirmities of the reformer indicated his speedy removal from this world, and inclined his enemies to suspend more violent and unpopular measures.

The next proceeding was a summons from the pope ordering Wickliff to appear before him at Rome. He was too much afflicted with paralysis to undertake such a journey, even had it been a desirable plan for him to adopt. He addressed a letter to the pope, professing his faith, expressing his willingness to retract any opinions which might be proved to be erroneous, and his hope that personal appearance before the pontiff would not be insisted upon.

Although Wickliff was excluded from Oxford, and age advanced rapidly upon him, he did not cease to labour for the welfare of the souls of men. His translation of the scriptures was completed about this period. The greater part also of his tracts and sermons appear to have been composed during the latter years of his life. They were written out, and circulated with avidity—the numerous copies of his writings yet remaining, show the extent to which they must have been transcribed, especially when we consider that the Romish clergy destroyed not a few.

Among these pieces is an address written against the friars, in which, commenting on the text, "Beware of the leaven of the pharisees which is hypocrisy," Wickliff directs against the followers of St. Francis and St. Dominic of that day, the censures addressed to the pharisees of Judea of old. The reformer's feelings of abhorrence at the proceedings of the mendicants, had been renewed by their activity in behalf of pope Urban against his opponent pope Clement. Each of the popes endeavoured to stimulate his adherents to take up arms against his rival, by the same promises of spiritual blessings, and the same denunciations of divine wrath, as had been used to obtain supporters to the

\* For this confession, see p. 46.

crusades, or military expeditions for the recovery of the holy land from the infidels. These military expeditions were represented as equally meritorious, and were designated by the same title, while all the nefarious practices employed in support of the crusades were employed on the present occasion. The bishop of Norwich raised a considerable army by the bulls of pope Urban, promising full remission of sins, and a place in paradise to all who assisted his cause by money or in person! This military prelate headed his troops, and invaded France, by which kingdom pope Clement was supported. But his campaign was unsuccessful: he returned to England in a few months with the scanty remains of his army, and was the subject of general derision.

Against such proceedings Wickliff spoke boldly. He says, "Christ is a good shepherd, for he puts his own life for the saving of the sheep. But antichrist is a ravening wolf, for he ever does the reverse, putting many thousand lives for his own wretched life. By forsaking things which Christ has bid his priests forsake, he might end all this strife. Why is he not a fiend stained foul with homicide, who, though a priest, fights in such a cause? If man-slaying in others be odious to God, much more in priests who should be the vicars of Christ. And I am certain that neither the pope, nor all the men of his council, can produce a spark of reason to prove that he should do this." Wickliff speaks of the two popes, as fighting, one against the other, with the most blasphemous leasings (or falsehoods) that ever sprang out of hell. But "they were occupied," he adds, "many years before in blasphemy, and in sinning against God and his church. And this made them to sin more, as an ambling blind horse, when he beginneth to stumble, continues to stumble until he casts himself down." Several passages written by Wickliff at this time, express his condemnation of all warfare unless in self-defence, and as sanctioned by the new testament. The scenes of slaughter, cruelty, and profligacy, occasioned by this papal schism, are related by historians.

The danger incurred by Wickliff in his proceedings, now was greater than ever, but he pursued his course with steadfastness to the last. "The language of his conduct" has been well described, as being to this effect; "To live, and to be silent is with me impossible—the guilt of such treason against the Lord of heaven is more to be dreaded than many deaths. Let the blow therefore fall. Enough I know of the men whom I oppose, of the times on which I am thrown, and of the mysterious providence which relates to our sinful race, to expect that the stroke will ere long descend. But my purpose is unalterable; I wait its coming."\*

The stroke, however, was stayed; the duke of Lancaster still acted as the patron of Wickliff, the popes were occupied by their mutual contests, the political distractions of England absorbed

\* Vaughan ii. p. 257.

the attention of all the leading characters, and Wickliff was permitted to pass the short remainder of his days without interruption from the hand of violence. He had also a constant patroness in Anne of Bohemia, queen of Richard II., who was eminent for her piety and blameless conduct. For two years previously to his decease, Wickliff was paralytic, and had the assistance of a curate named Purvey, who partook of his master's sentiments, but he continued himself to officiate. It is said that he was engaged in distributing the bread of the Lord's supper, when seized with the last and fatal attack of paralysis. He was at once deprived of consciousness and the power of speech. After a brief struggle, his spirit left the earth, and found a joyful refuge in another and a better world. He was taken ill on the 29th, and died on the 31st of December, 1384.

Wickliff was buried in peace, but in the year 1415 the council of Constance ordered his remains to be disinterred, and cast forth from consecrated ground. This was not enforced till 1428, when by command of the pope, forty-four years after his interment, his bones were digged up, and burnt to ashes, which were then cast into the brook hard by. Fox observes, "And so was he resolved into three elements, earth, fire, and water; they thinking thereby to abolish both the name and doctrine of Wickliff for ever. Not much unlike to the example of the old pharisees and sepulchre knights, who when they had brought the Lord to the grave, thought to make him sure never to rise again. But these and all others must know, that as there is no council against the Lord; so there is no keeping down of verity, but it will spring and come out of dust and ashes, as appeared right well in this man. For though they digged up his body, burned his bones, and drowned his ashes, yet the word of God and truth of his doctrine, with the fruit and success thereof they could not burn, which yet TO THIS DAY, for the most part of his articles, do remain, notwithstanding the transitory body and bones of the man was thus consumed and dispersed."

Some further observations on this treatment of the remains of this illustrious reformer, with a brief account of his principal disciples, and a sketch of the measures progressively adopted for the suppression of the truths he had advocated, will be found in another part of the present volume. His writings and the doctrines he taught now claim our attention.

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### *Writings of Wickliff.*

Soon after the decease of Wickliff, an English prelate stated that the writings of the reformer were as voluminous as those of Augustine. Those which are still extant, would make several large volumes, and embrace a great variety of subjects. Bale,

who wrote a century and a half subsequent to Wickliff's death, states that he had seen more than a hundred and fifty of his works, partly in Latin and partly in English, and that he had ascertained the titles of more than a hundred others. Many of the latter, however, most probably, were only different names for pieces which Bale had seen; for amongst the manuscripts yet existing, the same piece is sometimes designated by more than one title. Lewis has transcribed Bale's catalogue, noticing the pieces he was acquainted with, and adding others which increased the list to nearly three hundred. The catalogue given by Baber is more correct; it is drawn up with much care from a personal examination of many of the works of Wickliff, and contains about one hundred and eighty articles.

But the list of Wickliff's writings most useful to the general reader, has been compiled by Vaughan, who with much personal labour examined the writings of the reformer yet in existence, and made himself better acquainted with their contents than any other person appears to have done during the last four centuries. It is not difficult to ascertain that the principal works attributed to Wickliff are his genuine productions. Many are expressly mentioned in the public documents intended to suppress his opinions, while others possess sufficient internal evidence.

Printing had not then been discovered, copies could only be increased by the slow process of writing, while his enemies were indefatigable in their endeavours to destroy them, yet the copies were so numerous, and so much valued, that nearly the whole of his writings are still extant—a sufficient proof, if any were wanting, that the doctrines he taught were widely diffused and highly esteemed. Nor was this confined to England; copies are also found in public libraries on the continent. Subinco Lepus, bishop of Prague, burned more than two hundred volumes, many of which were richly adorned, the property of persons of the higher classes in Bohemia. It also appears that the greater part of the writings of Wickliff that have not come down to us, treated of philosophical or scholastic subjects, which would be little prized except by the students of that period, while the copies of Wickliff's writings which remain, seem to have been preserved by the laity. Many of these are large volumes which could not have been written without much labour and cost. We may suppose they were prepared under the direction of some of his powerful supporters, while their plain appearance, contrasted with that of many of the highly adorned volumes written at that period, shows that the contents formed the chief value in the estimation of their possessors, nor do they seem to have been the workmanship of the religious establishments of that day. In one of Wickliff's homilies, he complains of the endeavours of the clergy to prevent the circulation of the English scriptures, and adds, "But one comfort is of knights, that they savour (esteem) much the gospel, and have will to read in English the gospel of Christ's life." Another, and even more interesting class of the

Wickliff manuscripts, are the little books written with much less elegance, but which evidently were designed for the solace and instruction of souls, thirsting in secret for the waters of life. The tattered and well used appearance of many of these small volumes, is an indisputable testimony to the correctness of the allegations in the bishop's registers of the next two centuries, as to the manner in which these "pestilent books" were read by the followers of the truth, till, by the invention of printing, copious supplies of other religious tracts were brought forward.

Wickliff's principal work, the translation of the scriptures, has been already noticed. Copies of the whole or of detached portions are found in several public, and in some private libraries. A very beautiful and perfect specimen is preserved in the royal library in the British Museum, (Bib. Reg. I. c. viii.) The new testament has been printed, in 1731 and 1810, but being a literal reprint, in the original orthography, it is only calculated for libraries. Specimens of his version will be found at p. 45. As a work for popular use, Wickliff's bible now is of course wholly superseded by later translations.\*

The *Triologus* is the work next in importance. It contains a series of dialogues between three persons, characterised as *Alethia*, or Truth, *Pseudis*, or Falsehood, and *Phronesis*, or Wisdom. Truth represents a sound divine, and states questions; Falsehood urges the objections of an unbeliever; Wisdom decides as a subtle theologian. This work probably contains the substance of Wickliff's divinity lectures, with considerable additions. It embraces almost every doctrine connected with the theology of that day, treated however in the scholastic form then universal. Although very unattractive to modern readers, it was doubtless a useful and important work. As Turner observes, "It was the respected academician, reasoning with the ideas of the reformer." It is evident that Wickliff wrote this work under a decided impression that his efforts for the truth were likely to be crowned with martyrdom. It was printed in 1524. Copies are rare, for this work was actively sought for by the Romanists, and destroyed. A specimen will be found in a subsequent page. The following remark of Baber is but too applicable to the method in which this work is written. "The scholastic theology which was taught at this period, was a species of divinity which obscured the excellence and perverted the utility of that sacred science. By the introduction of this jargon of the schoolmen, philosophical abstraction and subtilty had superseded that unaffected simplicity and engaging plainness, with which the primitive teachers of christianity explained the doctrines of salvation." Thus, although Wickliff in the *Triologus* vanquished the opponents of the truth with their own weapons, it was not calculated to be a work of general utility like his more popular tracts in the English lan-

\* A prospectus for the printing of Wickliff's version of the old testament has been issued. (1830.)



guage. A good summary of the contents of the *Triologus* is given by Vaughan.

Only one other of Wickliff's writings appears to have been printed at the period of the reformation—his *Wicket*, a small treatise on the Lord's supper, which will be found in the present collection. This was among the most influential of his works, as appears from the frequent mention of it in those records of persecution, the bishops' registers.

His treatise, *Of the Truth of Scripture*, is a very valuable performance. It is in Latin: only two manuscript copies are known to exist; one in the Bodleian library at Oxford, the other at Trinity College, Dublin. The latter is the preferable copy, and is described as containing two hundred and forty-four large double columned pages, of nearly a thousand words in a page. It would therefore be equal in contents to a common octavo of more than seven hundred pages. It abounds in contractions, but is fairly and legibly written. Fox the martyrologist possessed a copy which he intended to translate and print. Vaughan describes this work as embodying almost every sentiment peculiar to the reformer. James made considerable use of its contents in his apology for Wickliff, but it was neglected by Lewis. An accurate reprint, with a correct translation, would be exceedingly valuable. The extent of this piece wholly precluded insertion in the present collection, even in an abridged form.

Another useful and popular work in its day, was the *Poor Caitiff*. This is a collection of English tracts, which were widely circulated. Several copies of the whole, or of detached portions are in existence, but only a few sentences from its pages have hitherto been printed. This neglect has probably arisen from the little reference it contains to the controversies in which Wickliff was constantly engaged, and to which perhaps an undue prominence has been given by Lewis, and other early biographers. This valuable memorial of the reformation will be found in the present volume.

Many of Wickliff's homilies or postills have been preserved; they appear rather to have been written down by his hearers, than to be finished copies prepared by himself. (See p. 24.)

Wickliff's other writings need not here be mentioned minutely. His *Memorial to the King and Parliament*, and *Objections of Friars*, were printed by James. Some of his small tracts have been printed by Lewis and Vaughan, to whose lists of the reformer's writings, particularly the latter, the reader may be referred.\*

Most of these smaller pieces are in the British Museum, in the libraries of Trinity college, Dublin, and Trinity college, Cambridge. In the library of Corpus Christi college in the latter university, among the valuable collection of manuscripts the gift of archbishop Parker, is a volume containing many of the con-

\* One of Wickliff's tracts, *Why poor priests have no benefices*, is printed in the *History of the Church of Christ*, vol. iv. Google

troversial pieces. The following note is prefixed: "In this book are gathered together all the sharp treatises concerning the errors and defaults which John Wickliff did find in his time, specially in the clergy and religious, and in other estates of the world."\*

At the period when Wickliff wrote, the English language had begun to recover from the disuse into which it had fallen. From the time of the Conquest many French and other foreign words and phrases were introduced by the higher ranks, who chiefly used the French language, but the lower orders adhered more closely to the Saxon phraseology. Mr. Baber observes, "Those of the works of Wickliff, written by him in his vernacular tongue, will be perused with interest and admiration by every one curious in the history of the English language, for Wickliff's English will, I apprehend, be found upon strict examination to be more pure than that of contemporary writers. Wickliff, when he wrote in his native tongue, did it not for the benefit of courtiers and scholars, but for the instruction of the less learned portion of the people. He therefore, as much as possible, rejected all 'strange English,' and was studious to express himself in a diction simple and unadorned; at the same time avoiding the charge of a barbarous and familiar phraseology." The use of English instead of barbarous Latin, in so large a portion of his writings, gave much efficacy to his exertions for the spiritual welfare of his countrymen.

A specimen of Wickliff's writings in their original orthography, will be found in two extracts from his version of the old testament in the following pages. At first they will appear hardly intelligible to the reader unaccustomed to the writings of that day. But on closer examination, it will be found that if the Saxon terminations, expletives, and a few peculiar words are removed, the language is, as it has been well characterised, "undefiled English;" in fact, very similar to the language of our rural districts at the present day. To have printed Wickliff's tracts exactly in the form in which they were written, would have rendered them useless for the purposes of the present collection. It was necessary to remove some of the peculiarities just adverted to, but further the editor had no wish to proceed; and he felt the necessity of retaining the precise words of the original, wherever they would convey the meaning of the reformer to the general reader. How far the attempt has been successful, it is for those to say who may compare the present edition with the original manuscripts; he will only add that it was not an easy task, from the labour and the responsibility incurred.

The pieces included in this volume, which have not hitherto been printed, were copied from the originals expressly for the

\* Dr. Lamb, the master of Corpus Christi college, Cambridge, very kindly permitted several of these pieces to be transcribed for the present edition.

present collection. Many others were selected for the same purpose, but the limits of the work prevented their insertion.\*

It is deeply to be regretted, that a complete edition of Wickliff's writings never has been printed. Such a monument is due to the illustrious individual to whom we perhaps are indebted more than to any other, for the gospel light and religious liberty we enjoy. Milton says, "A good book is the precious life blood of a master spirit, imbalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Surely the writings of Wickliff ought not to be suffered to perish. A much smaller sum than in many instances has been vainly expended in monumental attempts to preserve the remembrance of persons whose names in a few short years have been almost entirely forgotten, would suffice to complete a national memorial record of our great reformer, "more lasting than brass." But, blessed be the Most High, when we look around, in every circumstance which endears to us the protestant faith of our land, we are reminded of JOHN WICKLIFF.

To use the words of Henry Wharton, "Wickliff was a man than whom the christian world in these last ages has not produced a greater; and who seems to have been placed as much above praise as he is above envy."

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### *Doctrines taught by Wickliff.*

The doctrines taught by Wickliff have been continually misrepresented by papists, and often misunderstood by protestants. They may be stated as follows:—

Wickliff's FAITH was derived from the scriptures. He considered them as a divine revelation, containing a sufficient and perfect rule of christian belief and practice. The authority of scripture he esteemed to be superior to any other writing, or to any tradition. He considered the canonical books alone as inspired. He urged that all truth is contained in scripture, and that no conclusion was to be allowed unless sanctioned by the sacred records.

The pope's authority, or right to interfere in temporal concerns, he wholly rejected, and considered that it was only to be admitted in other respects, when conformable to scripture. He maintained that the pope might err in doctrine as well as in life.

The church of Christ he considered to be the universal congregation of those predestinated to life eternal. The church of Rome he considered not to be superior in authority to any other. He did not allow that the pope was head of the church, and

\* The result of this examination enables the writer of these remarks to bear testimony to the value of Vaughan's account of the writings of Wickliff. He would again acknowledge that the present compilation has been much facilitated by the work of Mr. V. as well as by his pointing out some of the pieces which proved most suitable for insertion.

opposed the extravagant authority claimed by the hierarchy, considering it as antichrist, whether usurped by the pope or the clergy at large, while he strongly urged the respect due to consistent and holy ministers of the word. He urged that the clergy ought not to be accounted lords over God's heritage, but as ministers and stewards of their heavenly Master.

He supported the king's supremacy over all persons, even ecclesiastics, in temporal matters. He never taught any doctrine contrary to the legal rights of property.

He sometimes mentions the sacraments as seven, but only lays stress upon two, baptism and the Lord's supper. Of the others he spoke so lightly, as to be accused by his enemies of rejecting them. His opinion of the Lord's supper is stated in his Wicket and his Confession. The doctrine of transubstantiation he wholly rejected.

He approved ~~outward~~ worship, and public assembling for that purpose, but condemned the superstitious rites of the Romish church. He disapproved the church music then esteemed, which was elaborate, often trifling, and opposed to devotional feeling.

He admitted the doctrine of purgatory—that early error, but rejected the most corrupt and profitable part of the fable, that the sufferings of purgatory may be shortened by the prayers of men or the intercessions of saints. According to his statements, it was rather the doctrine of an intermediate state, than the popish purgatory, which he condemns as "pious falsehood." As he advanced in life, his views on this subject became more clear and scriptural. (See extract from Dr. James, p. 109). In Wickliff's tract, *Of the church of Christ, her members, and her governance*, he says, "The second part of the church are saints in purgatory, and these sin not anew, but purge their old sins; and many errors are fallen in praying for these saints. And since they are all dead in body, Christ's words may be taken of them, Let us follow Christ in our life, and let the dead bury the dead." This widely differs from the doctrine of the church of Rome, thus determined by the council of Trent; "The souls detained in purgatory are assisted by the suffrages (prayers) of the faithful, and most especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar."

He allowed the memory of the saints to be honoured, but only that men might be excited to imitate their example, not as objects of worship. He denied the efficacy of their mediation, asserting that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Mediator. Pilgrimages he wholly disapproved, and the worship of images he frequently condemns.

The doctrines of papal indulgences and pardons he condemned in the strongest terms, as encouragements to sin. He also objected to sanctuaries, as affording impunity to crime. He held that absolution or forgiveness of sins belonged to God only. He condemned the celibacy imposed by the church of Rome upon

its clergy. His opinions respecting the papacy are stated at p. 184.

Wickliff is accused of wishing to deprive the church of its property, by what he has said upon the subject of tythes. His views were simply these. It is reasonable that the priest should have a suitable provision, besides the mere necessities of food and raiment. He allowed that dymes (or tythes) and offerings are God's part, and that priests should live on them, but he urges "that the principal cause for which tythes and offerings should be paid, was curates teaching their parishioners in word and examples." When, however, the curates were wicked and neglected their duty, he considered that the tythes might be withheld from them, though they ought to be devoted to the service of God. It should not be forgotten, that the priesthood then taught that men should have the divine blessing in this life, and heaven hereafter, if they duly paid their tythes and offerings. The reader who wishes a fuller account of Wickliff's opinions upon this subject may refer to his biographers.\*

He condemned the blasphemous adjurations then so common: this has occasioned his being misrepresented as asserting that judicial oaths were unlawful, whereas he expressly declares that it is lawful to make oath by God Almighty in a needful case.

Of the election of grace he thus speaks in his *Dialogus*: "We are predestinated, that we may obtain divine acceptance, and become holy; having received that grace through Christ's taking human nature, whereby we are rendered finally pleasing to God. And it appears that this grace, which is called the grace of predestination, or the charity of final perseverance, cannot by any means fail."

On the great doctrines of Justification and Merit, Dr. James quotes passages, which prove Wickliff to have taught "That faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient for salvation, and that without faith it is impossible to please God; that the merit of Christ is able, by itself, to redeem all mankind from hell, and that this sufficiency is to be understood without any other cause concurring; he persuaded men therefore to trust wholly to Christ, to rely altogether upon his sufferings, not to seek to be justified but by his righteousness; and that by participation in his righteousness, all men are righteous." Dr. James adds, "In the doctrine of merits, Wickliff was neither pelagian nor papist; he beateth down all these proud pharisees, who say that God did not all for them but think that their merits help. Wickliff says, 'Heal us, Lord, for nought; that is, no merit of ours; but for

\* The reader would also do well to examine the disputations of Huss upon this subject, in the university of Prague. (See Fox.) What was said of Luther by Erasmus, may also be applied to Wickliff as the great cause of the vehement opposition he experienced; "He touched the pope on the crown, and the monks on the belly." The English reformer perhaps went further than the German in the latter respect.

thy mercy, Lord, not to our merits, but to thy mercy, give thy joy. Give us grace to know that all thy gifts are of thy goodness. Our flesh, though it seem holy, yet it is not holy. We all are originally sinners, as Adam, and in Adam; his leprosy cleaveth faster to us than Naaman's did to Gehazi. For according to his teaching, we all are sinners, not only from our birth, but before, so that we cannot so much as think a good thought unless Jesus the Angel of great counsel send it; nor perform a good work unless it be properly his good work. His mercy comes before us that we receive grace, and followeth us, helping us, and keeping us in grace. So then it is not good for us to trust in our merits, in our virtues, in our righteousness, but to conclude this point, good it is only to trust in God."

The foregoing summary of doctrines taught by Wickliff, is taken from the statements of Baber, Vaughan, James, and Lewis, who quote passages confirmatory of every point. In their works the reader will find those references; the limits of these pages do not allow them to be inserted here in any form which could be useful. The reader should also again be reminded that he must not expect to find all these opinions clearly set forth in every part of Wickliff's writings. Dr. James, speaking of the countenance some passages give to prayer to saints and the virgin, observes, "I am persuaded that he retracted these opinions in his latter and more learned works. If ever it be God's pleasure that his works, which were cut and mangled, and scattered worse than Absyrtus' limbs were in the poet, may be brought forth and set together again, that we may have the whole body of his learned and religious works, and be able to distinguish the time and order wherein he wrote, then, I say, we should receive due satisfaction on this point." Vaughan has done much to settle the dates of Wickliff's writings, and has thereby shown his gradual and satisfactory progress on several points.

We must not expect to find in Wickliff's writings a finished system of doctrine. Many of his statements taken separately perhaps will appear incorrect, but take them as a *whole*, and we shall be convinced that he well merited his glorious title, "The gospel doctor." For the variations which exist, as Dr. James observes, "considering the times wherein, and the persons with whom he lived, he may easily obtain pardon of any impartial reader. H. Wharton justly observes, these variations do not detract from him; they show that his opposition to Romish errors was directed by a matured judgment; and that he should not detect them all at once cannot be matter of surprise.

Vaughan also has ably cleared the reformer from the charge of inconsistency, or wavering; he has "fairly vindicated Wycliffe from the long reiterated accusation of having concealed his opinions to escape the terrors of power."

Upon the great and leading doctrine of the christian faith, Vaughan well observes, that Melancthon could have known but little of Wickliff's theological productions when he described

him as "ignorant of the righteousness of faith." He adds, "If by that doctrine Melancthon meant a reliance on the atonement of Christ, as the only, and the certain medium for the guilty, it is unquestionable that this truth was the favourite, and the most efficient article in the faith of the English, as well as in that of the German reformer. It must be acknowledged that this tenet is more frequently adverted to in the writings of Luther, than in those of Wycliffe; and his notices respecting it, are also frequently more definite, because distinguishing more commonly between the acceptance of offenders in virtue of the Saviour's death, and the growth of devout affections in the heart, under the influence of the divine Spirit. But that such was the design of the Redeemer's sacrifice, was not more distinctly apprehended by the professor of Wittemberg, than by the rector of Lutterworth; nor was this truth the source of a more permanent confidence with the one than with the other."

In the history of the reformation, there are perhaps no two characters more nearly allied than Wickliff and Luther. Both looked to the holy scriptures as the standard of truth: for human instruction each learned much from the writings of Augustine. The boldness of the German professor was perhaps manifested at an earlier period of life, and the situation in which he was placed more favourable to the permanency of the work wherein he was called to labour; but Wickliff's sun shone brightest when setting, and the decided manner in which he rejected the errors of popery respecting the sacrament, while Luther never was wholly freed from their fatal influence, directed the efforts of his followers with undivided attention against the church of Rome. Thus, when the doctrines of the gospel, as taught by the German reformers, were made known in England, the soil was found well prepared. Many among the lower and middle classes were informed on these points, and already had received the truth. The bishops' registers prove how extensive were the results of Wickliff's labours. The records of bishop Longland's persecutions in 1521, (see Fox) show their effect was not evanescent.

This sketch of the life of Wickliff may be closed with "The public testimony given by the university of Oxford, touching the commendation of his great learning and good life."

"Unto all and singular the children of our holy mother the church, to whom this present letter shall come, the vice-chancellor of the university of Oxford, with the whole congregation of the masters, wish perpetual health in the Lord. Forsomuch as it is not commonly seen, that the acts and monuments of valiant men, nor the praise and merits of good men should be passed over and hidden with perpetual silence, but that true report and fame should continually spread abroad the same in strange and far distant places, both for the witness of the same, and example of others—forsomuch also as the provident discretion of man's nature being recompensed with cruelty, hath devised and"

ordained this buckler and defence against such as do blaspheme and slander other men's doings, that whensoever witness by word of mouth cannot be present, the pen by writing may supply the same.—

“Hereupon it followeth, that the special good will and care which we bare unto John Wickliff, sometime child of this our university, and professor of divinity, moving and stirring our minds, as his manners and conditions required no less, with one mind, voice, and testimony, we do witness, all his conditions and doings throughout his whole life to have been most sincere and commendable; whose honest manners and conditions, profoundness of learning, and most redolent renown and fame, we desire the more earnestly to be notified and known unto all faithful, for that we understand the maturity and ripeness of his conversation, his diligent labours and travels to tend to the praise of God, the help and safeguard of others, and the profit of the church.

“Wherefore, we signify unto you by these presents, that his conversation, even from his youth upward, unto the time of his death, was so praiseworthy and honest, that never at any time was there any note or spot of suspicion noised of him. But in his answering, reading, preaching, and determining, he behaved himself laudably, and as a stout and valiant champion of the faith; vanquishing, by the force of the scriptures, all such, who by their wilful beggary blasphemed and slandered Christ's religion. Neither was this doctor convict of any heresy, either burned of our prelates after his burial. God forbid that our prelates should have condemned a man of such honesty, for a heretic; who, amongst all the rest of the university, hath written in logic, philosophy, divinity, morality, and the speculative art, without equal. The knowledge of all which and singular things we do desire to testify and deliver forth; to the intent that the fame and renown of the said doctor may be the more evident, and had in reputation, amongst them unto whose hands these present letters testimonial shall come.

“In witness whereof, we have caused these our letters testimonial to be sealed with our common seal. Dated at Oxford, in our congregation-house, October 1st, 1406.”\*

\* The Romanists, according to their usual practice, have endeavoured to represent this testimony as a forgery. Lewis has fully examined the subject, and has shown there is no reason to doubt that it was the recorded opinion of a considerable part, at least, of the members of the university. The public brand of heresy was not affixed to Wickliff's character till his bones were burned in 1428.



# SPECIMENS OF WICKLIFF'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

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WICKLIFF's translation of the holy scriptures has been noticed in the preceding pages. The reader is here presented with three specimens, strictly conformable to the original words and spelling, which will sufficiently manifest the impossibility of presenting a literal transcript of the reformer's writings so as to be useful, or even intelligible to general English readers of the present day.

The twenty-third Psalm (called the twenty-second, according to the numeration of the Septuagint and Vulgate versions) and the fourth chapter of Malachi are copied from the beautiful MS. of Wickliff's Bible in the British Museum, already mentioned. 1 John i. is transcribed from the Rev. H. Baber's reprint of Lewis's edition of Wickliff's New Testament.

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## PSALM XXII.

*'þe title of þe xxii. salm, þe salm ef þe song of dauid.*

The lord gouerneþ me. ⁊ no þing schal fail to me: in þe place of pasture ye he haþ set me. He nursehide me on þe watir of refreischýng: he conuertide my soule. He ledde me forþ on þe þapis of riztfulnesse: for his name. For whit þouz y schal go in þe myddis of schadewe of deef: y schal not drede yuels. for þou art wiþ me. þi zerde and þi staf: þo han coufortid me. þou hast maad redi aboard in my sirt: azens hem þat troben me. þou hast maad fat myn heed wiþ oyle: and my cuppe þat filleþ me is ful cleer. Aud þi merci schal sue me: in alle þe daies of my lyf. And þt y dwelle in þe hows of þe lord: in to þe lengþe of daies.

## MALACHI IV.

*The last chapter of the old testament.*

For lo a dai schal come: brēnyng as a chymenei, ⁊ alle proude men. and alle doynges unpitee: schulen be stobul, and þe dai comýnge schal enflaume hem seiþ þe lord of oostis: which schal not leue to hæ rote ⁊ buriownýng, ⁊ to zou dredýnge my name. þe sūne of riztwisnesse schal rise: and heelpē in pēnys of hým, ⁊ ze schulen go out: ⁊ schulen skippe as a calf of þe droue, and ze schulē to trede unpitouse men: whāne þei schulen be aische undur þe soole of zoure feet. in þe dai i which y do seiþ þe lord of oostis, biþenke ze on þe lawe of my seruāūt moises: which y comāūlide to hým in oreb. to al isrl' comaūdemētis ⁊ domes, lo y schal seude to zou elie þe pfete: bifore þt þe greet dai ⁊ orible of ye lord come, ⁊ he schal conu'te þe herte of fad's to sones: ⁊ þe herte of sones to fad's of hem. lest pauēture y come ⁊ smýte þe erþe wiþ curs

## 1 JON.—CAP. I.

That thing that was fro the bigynnyng, which we herden, which we sigen with oure igen, which we biheelden and oure hondis touchiden of the word of liif. and the liif is schewid, and we saigen, and we witennessen and tellen to you euerlesting liif that was anentis the fadir and apperide to us. therefore we tellen to you that thing that we sigen and herden, that also ye haue felowschip with us and oure felowschip be with the fadir and with his sone iesu crist. and we writen this thing to you, that ye haue ioie, and that youre ioie be ful. and this is the tellyng that we herden of him and tellen to you, that god is ligt and ther bea no derknessis in hym. if we seien that we hau felowschip with him, and we wandren in derknessis, we lien and doen not treuthe. but if we walken in ligt as also he is in ligt we hau felowschip togidre, and the blood of iesu crist his sone clenseth us fro al synne, if we seien that we hau no synne we disseyuen ussilff, and treuthe is not in us. if we knowlechen oure synnes, he is feithful and iust that he forgyve to us oure synnes, and clense us fro al wickidnesse. and if we seien that we hau not synned, we maken him a lier, and his word is not in us.

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WICKLIFF'S CONFESSION RESPECTING THE SACRAMENT  
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. See p. 32.

WE believe, as Christ and his apostles have taught us, that the sacrament of the altar, white and round, and like to our bread or host unsacred, is very God's body in form of bread, and if it be broken in three parts as the church uses, or else in a thousand, every one of these parts is the same God's body. And right so as the person of Christ is very God and very man, very Godhead, and very manhead, right so as holy church many hundred winters has trowed,\* the same sacrament is very God's body, and very bread; as it is form of God's body and form of bread, as Christ and his apostles teach. And therefore St. Paul never nameth it, but when he calls it bread, and he, by our belief, took his knowledge of God in this: and the argument of heretics against this sentence, it is easy for a christian man to assolve.† And right as it is heresy to believe that Christ is a spirit, and no body; so it is heresy to trow that this sacrament is God's body, and no bread; for it is both together. But the most heresy that God suffered to come to his church, is to trow that this sacrament is an accident without a substance, and may on no wise be God's body; for Christ said, by witness of John, that "this bread is my body." And if they say, that by this skill ‡ holy church hath been in heresy many hundred winters, sooth § it is, specially since the fiend was loosed, that was by witness of angel to John evangelist, after a thousand winters that Christ

\* Believed.

† Refute.

‡ Interpretation.

§ Truth.

was stenenye\* to heaven. But it is to be supposed that many saints that died in the mean time, before their death were purged of this error. How great diversity is between us that trow that this sacrament is very bread in its kind, and between heretics that tell us it is an accident without a subject. For before that the fiend, the father of leasing,† was loosed, this gabbing‡ was never contrived. And how great diversity is between us that trow that this sacrament is very bread in its kind, and sacramentally God's body, and between heretics that trow and tell us that this sacrament may on no wise be God's body. For I dare surely say, that if this were sooth, Christ and his saints died heretics, and the more part of holy church now believeth heresy, and before devout men suppose that this council of friars in London, was with the herydene.§ For they put a heresy upon Christ and saints in heaven, wherefore the earth trembled. Fay|| land man's voice answered for God, also it did in time of his passion, when he was condemned to bodily death. Christ and his mother, that in ground hath destroyed all heresies, keep his church in right belief of this sacrament, and move the king and his realm to ask sharply of his clerks this office, that all his possessioners,¶ on pain of losing all their temporalities, tell the king and his realm, with sufficient grounding, what is this sacrament. And all the orders of friars, on pain of their allegiance, tell the king and his realm, with good grounding, what is the sacrament. For I am certain of the third part of the clergy that defend these doubts\*\* that is here said, that they will defend it on pain of their lives.

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Lewis observes on this confession, "One would wonder that this paper should ever be reckoned a retraction of Dr. Wiclif's, by any that had seen and read it, since he so openly maintains in it his opinion of the sacrament, declares his resolution to defend it with his blood, and censures the contrary as heresy. It seems that it was not so understood by Dr. Wiclif's judges; for very soon after, by the king's authority, he was expelled the university." Walsingham admits that it was rather a reassertion than a retraction of Wickliff's doctrines relative to the sacrament.

\* Ascended. From various passages in Wickliff's writings, it appears that he and others supposed that Satan had been bound during the first thousand years of the christian era, but that he was loosed afterwards. This presents a painful idea of the extent to which the profligacy and persecutions of the Romish church had then proceeded.

† Lies. ‡ Idle prating. § Earthquake, see p 29.  
|| In truth. ¶ Ecclesiastics allowed to hold lands. \*\* Disputes.

**DR. WICKLIFF'S LETTER OF EXCUSE TO POPE URBAN VI.**  
(See p. 32.)

I have joyfully to tell all true men the belief that I hold, and always to the pope. For I suppose that if my faith be rightful and given of God, the pope will gladly conserve it, and if my faith be error, the pope will wisely amend it. I suppose over this, that the gospel of Christ be part of the body of God's law. For I believe that Jesu Christ, that gave in his own person this gospel, is very God and very Man, and by this it passes all other laws. I suppose over this, that the pope be most obliged to the keeping of the gospel among all men that live here. For the pope is the highest vicar that Christ has here in earth. For greatness of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly greatness, but by this, that this vicar follows more Christ by virtuous living; for thus teaches the gospel. That this is the sentence of Christ and of his gospel I take as belief, that Christ for time that he walked here was most poor man of all, both in spirit and in possessions, for Christ says that he had nought for to rest his head on. And over this, I take as belief that no man should follow the pope, nor no saint that is now in heaven, but inasmuch as he followed Christ, for James and John erred, and Peter and Paul sinned. Of this I take as wholesome counsel, that the pope / leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ gave him, and move speedily all his clerks to do so, for thus did Christ, and taught thus his disciples, till the fiend had blinded this world. And if I err in this sentence, I will meekly be amended, if by the death, if it be skilful for that I hope were good to me. And if I might travel in my own person, I would with God's will go to the pope. But Christ has needed me to the contrary, and taught me more obedience to God than to man. And I suppose of our pope, that he will not be antichrist and reverse Christ in this working to the contrary of Christ's will. For if he summons against reason, by him or any of his, and pursue this unskilful summoning, he is an open antichrist. And merciful intent excused not Peter, that Christ called him Satan; so blind intent and wicked counsel excuses not the pope here, if he ask of true priests that they travel more than they may, it is not excused by reason of God that he is not antichrist. For our belief teaches us, that our blessed God suffers us not to be tempted more than we may, how should a man ask such service? And therefore pray we to God for our pope Urban VI., that his holy intent be not quenched by his enemies. And Christ that may not lie, says, that the enemies of a man are especially his own family, and this is truth of men and fiends.

THE  
POOR CAITIFF.\*

BY

JOHN WICKLIFF, D.D.

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\* The word caitiff signifies a captive, or a man in a wretched state. The Rev. H. Baber says, "*Pauper Rusticus; Confessio derelicti Pauperis* ; and the *Pore Caitif*, are various titles of the same book, which may with propriety be called, *The Poor Man's Library*. It is a volume of small tracts, written in English, for the purpose of instructing the lower orders of the community in the most useful precepts of the christian religion."

There are several copies of this work in existence in the British Museum and other public libraries. It appears to have been widely circulated, although the invention of printing was not then known. The present attempt is the first that has been made to give any portion of it to the public, excepting a few detached sentences. The whole is here given except that the object and limits of the present work rendered some compression necessary. Several quotations from the fathers, occasional repetitions, and some other passages, have therefore been omitted.

The tracts contained in this collection are, *Of the Belief* ;—*On the Ten Commandments* ;—*On the Lord's Prayer* ;—*Of Perfect Life, or the Counsel of Christ* ;—*Of Temptation, or, of Virtuous Patience* ;—*The Charter of our Heavenly Heritage* ;—*The Armour of Heaven, or, Of Ghostly Battle* ;—*To Love Jesus* ;—*Of the Love of Jesus* ;—*Of Meekness* ;—*Of Man's Will* ;—*Of Active Life and Contemplative Life*. There is another piece, *On Chastity*, which is omitted ; it contains several Romish legends, and is not suitable for the present collection.

## THE PROLOGUE.

THIS treatise, compiled of a poor caitiff needing the spiritual help of all christian people, by the great mercy and help of God, shall teach simple men and women of good will, the right way to heaven, without multiplication of many books, if they will busy themselves to have it in mind, and work thereafter. And as a child desiring to be a learned man, begins first at the ground, that is, at his A, B, C; so he thus desiring to speed, begins at the ground of health,\* that is, christian man's belief; for without belief,† it is impossible, as St. Paul saith, that any man please God. But as belief by itself is not sufficient to men's salvation, without good works, as Christ saith by his apostle St. James,‡ he proposes with God's help, to speak upon each of the commandments of God, in which are contained charitable works,§ that belong to belief. And since it is hard to obtain aught of God in prayer till the man truly believes, and lives after his commands, as he saith in the gospel, Whereto say ye to me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? Therefore after going through the commandments, he thinks, with the help and mercy of God, to show forth the prayer that Christ Jesus taught his disciples, that is, the paternoster; and after these, some short sentences exciting men to heavenly desire; for thus it behoves to climb, as by a ladder of divers steps, from the ground of belief, into the keeping of God's commands; and so up from virtue to virtue till he see the God of Zion, reigning in everlasting bliss. Which may he grant to us, who liveth and reigneth, without end, merciful God. Amen.

\* Salvation.

† Faith.

‡ James ii. 17—20. From the pages that follow, the reader will find that Wickliff had no intention to teach that justification cometh by works, but to show the inseparable connection of faith and works, the latter being the fruits and evidences of the former, and a proof that it is not mere empty credence like that of devils, James ii. 19.

§ The works of charity or love.

THE  
POOR CAITIFF.

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ON THE BELIEF.

THE ground of all goodness is stedfast faith, or belief. This, through grace and mercy, is obtained of God. Faith was the principal ground that enabled the woman of Canaan to obtain health of soul and of body of Christ, for her daughter, who was evil treated of a devil, as the gospel witnesseth. And the centurion was much praised of Christ for the stedfast belief that he had in the power of his Godhead. Faith is likened to the loadstar,\* for it showeth the haven of grace to men rowing in the sea of this world. Faith is the eastern star that leads spiritual kings† to worship Jesus Christ, through withstanding of sin, as the east star led three kings when Christ was born. Faith or belief is as a stone lying in the foundation of a strong building, that beareth up all the work. For as the building standeth stiffly that is well grounded upon a stone, so each virtuous deed is strong when it is grounded upon the solidity of belief. For upon this stone, that is, solid faith, Christ said that he would build his church, that is, man's soul. A man that hath lost his right eye is unable to defend himself in battle, for his shield hides his left eye, and so he has no sight to defend himself from his enemy; even so he that has lost the right eye of true faith, is unable to withstand or fight against his spiritual enemy, the devil. Saints, as St. Paul saith, through stedfastness and true faith, overcame kingdoms, Heb. xi. They overcame the kingdom of their flesh through holiness of soul and body; and the kingdom of the world by setting at nought riches; and the kingdom of the fiend through patience and meekness.

The want of stedfast faith is the chief cause why men

\* The pole star, by which mariners used to steer their course at night before the invention of the compass.

† Rev. i. 6. v. 10.

fall into deadly sin. For if a man truly believed that soon after he committed a sin, he should lose one of his limbs, he would through that belief keep himself, and flee from that sin. How much more if he believed that God would punish him in body and soul for evermore, if he died in that sin? If man's belief and trust were firmly set in God, all fear of man, fantasies, and fear of this world, would grieve him but little, or not at all. Christ said to his disciples, that if their faith were as great as the seed of mustard, and they should say to this hill, Pass hence, it should pass; and nothing should be impossible to them. St. Jerome saith that faith is likened to the corn of seed. If the corn of seed be not broken, the virtue thereof is not known; but the more it is pounded, even the stronger it smelleth; even so a man who is firmly grounded in the faith, the more he is pounded by persecution, the greater and the more fervent is his belief. Thus if man's faith were as great as the mustard seed, he should remove from himself the hill of pride, and all other false deceits of the fiend.

This faith maketh our souls so able to receive heavenly gifts, that we may get whatever we desire of the faithful Lord. Oh, blessed is the soul that believeth right and liveth well, and in well living keepeth true faith. While Peter had true faith, he went upon the sea as upon dry land; but when the firmness of his faith failed, he began to sink, and therefore Christ reproved him as of little faith. Thus it fares with us, who are staggering and unstedfast with the wind of each temptation or fear. Therefore, brethren, let us set all our belief and full trust on Him who is almighty, and not in any vain thing that may fail in any time. Trust we stedfastly that nothing may grieve us farther than He will suffer it, and all things which he sendeth come for the best. And let no wealth of this failing world, neither tribulation, draw our hearts from firm belief in God. Let us not put our belief or trust in charms, or in dreams, or any other fantasies; but only in Almighty God. For it is full perilous, as holy doctors say, to scatter man's belief about any such. And let each man and woman take heed to themselves, for good living makes man to have firm belief and trust in God, and evil works draw him into despair, as John Chrysostom saith.

After the ascension of Christ, the Holy Ghost taught his apostles all truth needful to the soul; and by his teaching they twelve settled together twelve articles, which all that



will be saved must believe.\* The first article of belief St. Peter put into the creed, saying, *I believe in God, Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.* To believe to God, is one thing; to believe in God, is another. The first both evil men and good men have; but the second none but good men have. The fiends believe to God, that is, that he is true, and that his words are truth: and yet some men and women fail of this point! For if they truly believed that the words of God are true, which he speaketh in holy writ, against their sinful living, they would amend their defaults, either for dread or for love. To believe in God, as St. Augustine saith, is, in belief to cleave to God through love, and to seek busily to fulfil his will; for no man truly believeth in God, but he that loveth God, and by his good living believeth to have bliss of God, as a great doctor saith. And no man sinneth against God but he fails in belief, which is the ground of all good works. As the same doctor saith, In that he is Father, he will mildly do mercy to men forsaking sin; and in that he is almighty, he is ready and of power to punish all those who will not leave their sin. We should believe that God the Father, being almighty, without beginning and ending, made heaven, earth, and all creatures, of nought, through his word.

St. Andrew said, *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.* This article pertains to the Godhead of the Son, the second person in the Holy Trinity. We should believe that Jesus Christ the Son, is equal with the Father, without beginning and ending, equal in might, and all one in might, equal in goodness, and all one in goodness; and that the Son doeth nothing without the Father; and these two persons are one almighty God, without beginning and ending. Jesus Christ, God's Son, and in like manner mighty with God the Father, is said plainly to be our Lord by double right; for he bought us with his precious blood, and because he shall be our Judge, and pronounce our sentence.

\* This account of the twelve apostles having united to compose the creed which goes by their name, is given by Ambrose, also by Rufinus, and other ancient ecclesiastical historians. The ascribing of each article to a particular apostle, is mentioned in a sermon attributed to Augustine. The tradition has been justly questioned, and although this symbol of christian doctrine was of high antiquity in the primitive church, it received additions and alterations at different periods. See lord King's history of the Apostle's Creed, and bishop Pearson on the Creed. This legend, however, does not involve any erroneous doctrine.

St. James, the son of Zebedee, said, *I believe that he is conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin Mary.* This is the first article belonging to the manhood of Christ. We should believe that Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, took flesh and blood truly of the virgin by the Holy Ghost, and came into this world. very God and man together.

St. John the evangelist said, *I believe that he suffered pain under Pontius Pilate, upon the cross, died and was buried.* Here we should believe that the same Jesus Christ, very God and man, in the same flesh that he took of the virgin Mary, endured hard pain and sufferings, and even bodily death, by the doom of Pilate, judge of that province, without impairing of his Godhead. Christ bodily suffered hard pain, for we should have sufferance or patience in our adversities and tribulations. He suffered meekly and never trespassed, for we should suffer willingly, who have much trespassed. Christ was crucified, for we should chastise our flesh by penance,\* withstanding sins and unlawful lusts; Christ died on the cross bodily, that we should endure the cross of penance, withstanding sin to our lives' end.

The cross of penance hath four parts. The first is sorrow for losing the love of God; the second is sorrow for losing the joy of heaven; the third is sorrow for deserving the pain of hell; and the fourth is sorrow for serving to the fiend and sin. Christ was buried; let this remind us that we hide our good deeds from the favour and estimation of the world, and remember that the earth is naturally the inheritor of our mortal flesh, that our thoughts may be closed from the lusts of this world, stedfastly having in mind the dreadful pains and death of Christ.

St. Thomas of India said, *I believe that he went down to hell, and the third day he rose from death to life.* Here we should believe that Christ's body lay dead in the sepulchre, without the soul, till the third day; that he rose from death to life; but the Godhead departed not from the body, neither from the soul, and after that the soul was departed from the body, it went down to hell;† and delivered the holy

\* Penance is often used to express repentance. It is evident the reformer here means true repentance, and not the bodily penances of the church of Rome, as he refers to mental operations.

† This interpretation of the words of the creed was held by Luther, Melancthon, and most of the reformers, British as well as foreign. It is hardly needful to add that a more general sense is now usually held in the protestant churches, considering it to refer to the

souls that were there, through virtue of the Godhead. Christ went down into hell, giving us an example that we go thither by inward thought while we live; having mind upon the bitter pains which are there, that we come not thither after this life. Also he rose the third day, in body and soul together, very God and very man, everlasting. He would not rise before the third day, to show the time that he was verily dead in body. For if he had risen quickly, it had not been believed that he was verily dead. And as each word of true witnessing is confirmed by the mouth of two or three, so that Christ was verily dead in the body, may be known by his lying in the tomb till the third day. On the third day he rose from death, in token that the light of his death had destroyed our double death, both of Adam and of ourselves; and that we should rise from spiritual death by three manner of medicines; by contrition or sorrow of heart, by confession, and satisfaction.

St. James, the son of Alpheus, said, *I believe that he ascended to heaven, and there sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father almighty.* Here we should believe that Jesus Christ, very God and very man, everlasting, appeared to his disciples after his rising from the dead, teaching them of the kingdom of heaven, and eating with them to show that he was very man as before his death, ascending into heaven raised mankind above all orders of angels. He ascended to open the gate of heaven, he ascended to show the way to men, and to lead man with him, he ascended to pray the Father for mankind.

St. Philip said, *I believe that he is to come, to doom the quick and dead.* Here we should believe that the same Jesus Christ, very God and very man, shall come to the judgment in the same manner, and with the same wounds that he suffered and bare with him to heaven, and shall doom all mankind, both good and evil, according to their deeds.

That shall be a dreadful doom, and a fearful doomsman. For Christ, who shall be Judge there, is now meek as a lamb, and ready to bow to mercy; but there he will be stern as a lion to all that are damnable, and doom according to righteousness. Before the stern Doomsman, beholding

unseen world, according to the correct derivation of the word used. The deliverance of the souls departed is founded on an erroneous interpretation of the text, 1 Peter iii. 19. one of the supports of the doctrine of purgatory, resorted to by the church of Rome.

all saints, angels, and fiends, as John Chrysostom saith, all men and women shall yield reckoning of all their living in earth; of all the deeds that they have done; for what intent and to whose worship they wrought them; and not only of great trespasses, but also of those that seem but small. For of each idle word man shall account there, as Christ saith himself. For as Isidore saith, "Each word that edifies not the hearer turns into peril to the speaker." That is an idle word, as Jerome saith, which profits not the speaker, neither the hearer. And since reckoning shall be holden of such, much more and without comparison, harder reckoning shall be of sinful speech, as of backbiting, slandering, scorning, false accusing, lying, swearing, cursing, and licentious speech. Also man shall yield reckoning of all the thoughts of his heart that inclined to any sin, as God saith by his prophet. And not only we shall account for deeds done, which we should not have done, but also of deeds left undone, that we should have done. As those that have not done works of mercy to poor needy folk, nor given to them, nor lent to them, nor helped them in their suffering, as Christ shall rehearse at the doom, as he himself saith.

Also of all the time that man hath in earth, he shall yield reckoning, how he has spent it, as it is written in the book of mourning.\* And therefore saith Bernard, "All the time given to man, God shall seek how he hath spent it." And of mispending time, Anselm speaks, saying to man, "O thou unprofitable and dry tree, worthy everlasting fire, what shalt thou answer in that day when all the time given to thee shall be asked how thou hast spent it?" Also man shall account there of all his worldly goods, how he has gotten them, kept, spent, and lent them. As Christ meaneth by the spiritual understanding of the ten pieces of money and the five talents. Also of all powers of body, as strength, comeliness, swiftness, skill of body—in whose service these have been spent.

Also each man shall yield reckoning of the keeping of his own soul. For if a king had a daughter like to himself, to whom he thought to give great dignity and worship, and took her to any of his realm to keep; the more negligent that man were about her keeping, the stricter reckoning the king would ask of him for her. What then shall the King of heaven do to him to whom he hath committed a daughter most like to himself, that is to say, man's soul;

\* Lamentations.

the much loved daughter of this King, and ordained to great honour in the bliss of heaven, if this man keep her recklessly? Therefore God commandeth in the book of his law, that each man carefully keep his own soul. The father and mother also shall account for their children whom they chastise not; as is expressed in holy writ, how Eli was punished for his sons, because he chastised them not, as he should have done. Also the prelate or the curate shall account for his subjects, how he taught them by living and by word; as God saith by his prophet, a great dread shall be at his doom.

Of the multitude of accusers, man's own conscience, which is defiled with sin and not amended, shall accuse him, not privily but openly. Also a man's own sins, which he would not leave, shall accuse him. As a stolen thing tied to a thief's neck, accuses him, so shall sins not amended in this life accuse sinful wretches. Also holy writ shall accuse them that knew it, and heard it, and lived not thereafter. Such shall bear with them the sentence of condemnation, as Uriah bare with him the sentence of his own death.\* And in example hereof Christ said, that Moses' law shall accuse the Jews. Also God's creatures which a man has used out of measure and in sin, shall accuse him there, and be as ready to take vengeance upon him as they were before to serve him. The fiends also shall be ready there, accusing sinful men and women, for they, as traitors, enticed to the sin, and when the sin is done they will accuse man thereof. And therefore in the book of Revelation the fiend is called accuser of christian men. And as Augustine saith, then shall the adversary say, "Thou righteous Judge, doom these to be mine for sin which they have wrought, who would not be thine by grace. Thine they were by nature, for thou madest them of nought, but mine they are now, through sin and wretchedness, which they have wrought. Thine they were, for by thy passion thou hast bought them; mine they are now, for they did the sin that I put into their thought. To thee they were disobedient, to me they were obedient, and to my enticing. Of thee they took the garment of holiness, of me have they taken this coat of sin and filth. Thy garment they have lost, and with mine they have come hither. Righteous Judge, doom these to be mine, and to be damned with me." Alas! where shall that wretch abide who is so hard beset?

\* 2 Sam. xi. 14.

Also the benefits which men have received of God, who did not worship him with due service for them, shall accuse them, and be alleged against them. And it is shown in holy writ where the angel came to the place of weeping,\* (by which place is understood the doom, for there shall be weeping and wailing, as John saith in the book of Revelation.) And there he rehearsed the benefits which God hath done to the people, and reprovèd the people, for they had not them in mind, and worshipped him not for them. And the torment which Christ suffered in time of his passion, both wounds, cross, nails, and spear, shall accuse sinful men, as Bernard saith.

Therefore all christian people have stedfast minds upon this sentence, and flee the unlawful lusts of your flesh, and covetings, and deceits of this deceivable world; and believe ye and have ye stedfastly in mind, that Christ shall appear in the judgment, stern as a lion to wicked men's sight, and doom both quick and dead. Of the great dread of that day God speaks by the prophet Joel. The day of the Lord shall be a great day of deliverance, a day of wrath, and of vengeance, of misery, of bitterness; the day of complaining and of accusing, the day of dread and of trembling, the day of crying and of sorrow, the day of darkness and of mourning, the day of calamity and of bitterness; a dreadful day of parting from God for ever, as Anselm rehearses.

St. Bartholomew said, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*. Here we should believe that the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Holy Trinity, is very God, without beginning and ending, and equal in wisdom, might, and goodness, with the Father and the Son, and that these three persons of the Holy Trinity are one almighty God; and each one mighty, and all one might; and endless good, and all one goodness; and endless truth, and endless wisdom, and endless love, and endless righteous, and endless merciful; all are one truth, one wisdom, one beauty, one love, one righteousness, and one mercy.

St. Matthew said, *I believe in the holy church, and communing of saints.*† We should believe the communion

\* Or Bochim, Judges ii.

† Wickliff then states that the holy church is divided into three parts. One, the church militant here on earth; another, the purgatory of souls abiding the great mercy of God; the third part is in heaven, Christ that is Head of all holy church, with his saints. It has been already observed that Wickliff had not fully renounced the error of purgatory, one of the earliest that crept into the church, and

of saints, that is, that each of the three parts of holy church takes part of the other's goodness, and helps the other. The part that is in heaven helps the other two parts, praying for them, as Bernard saith; and the other two parts are said to help them that are in heaven, when their bliss and joy is increased by the fellowship of the others. For the more there are, the more is their bliss, and thus each of these three parties communes with the other.

St. Simon said, *I believe forgiveness of sins.* Here we should believe that they who amend their life, doing true penance,\* with leaving off sin and keeping God's commandments, and ending in love, shall have forgiveness of all their sins. And Christ, through his passion and death, got for us of his Father forgiveness of our sins.

St. Jude said, *I believe the rising of the body.* Here we should believe that all mankind shall rise at the day of doom, from death to life, in body and soul together, each in his own kind, and in his own body, incorruptible and immortal. And though the body were burned with fire, and the powder thereof thrown into the four seas that go about the world, yet the soul and it shall come together again, and rise from death to life, at the dreadful doom, and from that day forward never after depart. And they that have evil lived, and ended in deadly sin, shall go in body and soul to pain for evermore, and they that have lived well and kept the commands of God, and fulfilled the deeds of mercy after their power, and ended in charity to God and man, shall go, body and soul together, to bliss for evermore.

Of which bliss and life St. Matthias spake in the last article, where he saith, *And I believe in everlasting life.* In that everlasting life of joy and bliss, good men and women that ended well, shall dwell in body and soul, world without end.

THAT LIFE MAY HE TO US GRANT WHO BOUGHT US WITH HIS LIFE BLOOD. AMEN.

one of the most difficult to cast off. It is however sufficient to notice, that Wickliff admits this erroneous doctrine without the particulars by which the church of Rome made it the great support of its power. His own views also gradually advanced to more perfect knowledge of the truth, thus we find in this treatise the sacrament of the altar is mentioned in terms more accordant with the doctrines of the Romish church, than in Wickliff's Wicket, and other tracts upon that subject. See also the remarks on Wickliff's opinions in a preceding page.

\* Repentance.

## ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

## THE PROLOGUE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

A MAN asked Christ what he should do for to have the life that shall last for ever, and Christ said to him, If thou wilt enter into everlasting life, keep the commandments. By this answer of Christ, each man may understand that there is no other way to heaven, without keeping these commands, and therefore each man and woman who desires speedily to come to that life, which shall last for ever, let him do his business with all strength of body and soul to keep these commandments, and despise all sophistries and arguments of false flatterers and heretics, who both in work and word despise these commandments, and with false feigned arguments reply against simple men, saying that it is not lawful to be busy about the keeping of them; yea, and saying that it is needful sometimes to break them.\* But as Jannes and Jambres, the philosophers of Pharaoh, withstood Moses, through their witchcraft, when he was about to deliver God's people out of the thralldom of Pharaoh, so these men, confused in understanding, withstand true teaching, through which God's people should be delivered out of the thralldom of the devil. But all their sophistries shall not serve them at the last; if they be not found keeping, and in full will keep, these commandments of God; for all other ceremonies, without keeping these commandments, are nothing worth, as St. Paul witnesses.†

Almighty God wrote ten commands in two tables of stone, in token that the hearts of his people were full hard to love

\* The doctrines sanctioned by the church of Rome went to this extent. Aquinas taught that venial sins do not cause any stain in the soul. Cajetan asserted that to commit venial sin, even out of contempt, is not mortal sin. It is hardly necessary to add, that the holy scripture draws no such lines of distinction between sins as the church of Rome has done, refining until the breach of each commandment is treated as venial. For a variety of authorities from Romish writers on this subject, see a work entitled, *The Picture of Popery*. Lond. 1716. It may be added that Aquinas and others assert that the smallness of a thing in all cases excuses from mortal sin.

† This description of the Romish casuists whose authority was much regarded in that day is very just. The straight forward statements of Wickliff presented a striking contrast to their sophistries.



him, and gave them to Moses, his servant, to teach them to his people. And he promised that those who would be obedient and keep them, should have his blessing, and prosperity, and wealth, and they that would not, should have his curse, and great sorrow, and mischief, as it is expressed in the fifth book of holy writ.

Three,[four] commandments were written in the first table, and seven [six] in the other.\* The three [four] first teach how men should love God, and the other seven [six] teach what man should do to his fellow christian, and what he shall not do. And these commandments are so hard knitted together, that he who loves God fully, loves his fellow-christians, and whosoever loves not them, he loves not God. For whoso loves not his neighbour whom he may see with his eyes, how may he love God whom he seeth not? as St. John saith.

#### THE FIRST (AND SECOND) COMMANDMENT

The FIRST command, God commandeth in these words; saying, "I am thy Lord God, that led thee out of Egypt, out of the house of thralldom, and bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thee a graven image, neither any likeness which is in heaven above, and which is in earth beneath, nor of those things that are in waters under the earth. Thou shalt not pray to them, nor worship them in soul. I am thy Lord God, a strong jealous lover; visiting the wickedness of fathers on the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hated me; and doing mercy unto a thousand of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Our Lord God said all these words, and they are charged with more wisdom than we can tell. As for the first clause, we shall understand that almighty God chose the children of Israel, who came of Isaac, Abraham's son, and of Jacob his son, before other nations, and said that they should be his people, and he would be their God. For to their forefather Abraham, and to his lineage, God promised to give the land of promise, by which is understood the land of bliss, that is, heaven.

\* Wickliff follows the division of the commandments used by the church of Rome, and still retained in the Lutheran church; but he does not suppress the second commandment, as is often done in Romish catechisms and books of devotion.

And God suffered his people, for their sins, to be in great thralldom in the land of Egypt under king Pharaoh, and they cried to God oft, to bring them out of that mischief; and so he did at the last, for he had compassion upon them, and sent his servant Moses, and Aaron his brother, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he should deliver God's people, and he would not. But Moses, by teaching of God, wrought such wonders before Pharaoh, that at the last, by the might of God, he delivered God's people. And Moses led them over the Red Sea, as a dry way, the water standing upright on either side of them, in manner of two walls, and they went over dry. And soon after, Pharaoh, fervent in envy, gathered together his host, and pursued God's people into the Red Sea. And when they were entered, he and all his host, by the same way that the people went, God made the water to pass forth in its usual course, and drenched\* Pharaoh and all his host; and God brought his people over, safe, into the desert. And for this wonderful work, and many more, they were commanded to worship him for their God, and no other.

And as God brought this people out of bodily thralldom, and the bondage of Pharaoh, so he brought us out of the spiritual thralldom, and bondage of the fiend. For before the time that Christ became man, all mankind were spiritually in Egypt, that is in the darkness of sin, and under the thralldom of Pharaoh, that is, under the power of the fiend. But Christ came down from heaven and became man, and did many wonders and marvels in the Egypt of this world, before the Pharaoh, that is, the fiend, king of this Egypt. And through his bloody passion† delivered his people out of thralldom, and drenched the fiend with all his host. For Christ, through his painful passion, overcame the power of the fiend, and left him bound in hell for a thousand years after, as St. John saith in the book of Revelation.‡ And thus God, through his great might and mercy, delivered his people out of the Egypt of hell, and out of the thralldom of the fiend.

Though a man had no more causes than this, methinks it should singularly move him to set all his trust, his worship, and his love, in God, who is thus full of might and

\* Drowned.

† Sufferings.

‡ It is hardly necessary to observe, that the views of Wickliff respecting the fulfilment of the prophecies, in many respects differ from those which are now generally entertained.

mercy. For there was no creature that could deliver man out of the thralldom of the fiend, but only He that had perfectly double nature in himself, and was both God and man, and would make himself as much after the will of God, as Adam by pride did against the will of God.

Furthermore, in this commandment God commandeth his people to have no strange gods. Here God commandeth that all men's belief, trust, and love, be set only in God, and in no other thing against his will. And here he forbiddeth all belief and trust in all manner of witchcraft, dreams, charms, and conjurations. For those that put their belief or trust in any such, withdraw some of their belief and trust from God, and so break his command, and make themselves false gods. And also men break this commandment in other manners; for look, whatever thou lovest most, and fastest goest about to get it, and art most loth to lose, thou showest by thy will and by thy deeds, that this thing is thy god. Therefore each man look in his own conscience, upon what he most sets his liking and thought, and what he is most busy about to please, and that thing he loveth most, whatsoever it be; and what thing a man loveth most, that thing he maketh his god.

Thus each man wilfully using deadly sin, makes himself a false god, by turning away his love from God, to the lust of the sin that he useth. And thus when man or woman forsakes meekness, the meekness that Jesus Christ commandeth, and gives himself to highness and pride, he makes the fiend his god; for he is king over all proud folk, as it is written in the book of Job. And so the envious man or woman have revenge and vengeance for their god. And the indolent man hath idleness, sloth, and sleep, for his god. The covetous man and woman make worldly goods their god; for covetousness is the root of all evils, and service to idols as to false gods, as St. Paul saith. Gluttonous and drunken folk make their belly their god, for the love and care that they have for it, as St. Paul witnesses. And so lecherous folk make them a false god for the foul delight and lust that reigns in them. Thus every man and woman, using deadly sin, breaks this first commandment, worshipping false gods. Therefore saith the great clerk, Grossthead, that each man who doeth deadly sin, runneth from, or forsaketh the true God, and worshippeth a false god—all such are false gods to rest upon, that cannot deliver themselves, nor their worshippers, from the vengeance.

of almighty God, at the dreadful doom, as God saith by his prophets.

Furthermore, in this commandment God forbiddeth to make any graven image or other similitude, with intent to trust on them, or to do worship to them. And this was utterly forbidden to the Jews to whom those commandments were given. First, for the unstedfastness of their faith; for they were so false in their belief, that some of them worshipped things made of God for their gods. Some worshipped the sun, and some the moon, and some other likenesses of creatures for their god. And so the worship that was only due to God, they gave to other creatures made by God, and to similitudes and likenesses which they had made themselves, against God's will, and therefore it was utterly forbidden to them to make any similitude or likeness, for the great idolatry which they did to them, as is found in many places in the old law.

All such similitudes or images should be as kalendars to ignorant folk; and as clerks say in their books what they should do, so ignorant folks, when they lack teaching, should learn by images whom they should worship and follow in living. Each man is forbidden to do God's worship to images, but it is good to each man to learn by the sight of them to follow saints living.\*

[Wickliff then proceeds to show how the sight of the sacrament hanging over the altar, and crucifixes or images, ought to induce men to lift up their souls to heaven, but "not believing or trusting that the image or likeness may bring any man out of spiritual or bodily mischief or give help or riches, or take away." He proceeds thus]—

It is written in God's law that they may neither yield to any man evil or good; neither give riches nor take away. And though any make a vow to them, and yield it not, they should not seek it. They should not deliver any man from death, nor restore a blind man to his sight, thus saith holy writ.

\* The church of Rome uses this excuse for allowing images to be placed in their churches, calling them "laymen's books." But it never has been found practicable to restrain "ignorant folk" from identifying the image with the person represented, and rendering to the wood or stone the homage of respect due to the person represented, and in the case of saints, what is infinitely worse, rendering to man the homage due to God alone. It is clear that Wickliff did not advocate image worship as sanctioned by the church of Rome, although he was not fully awakened to the necessity of wholly putting away such symbols.

Moreover, God saith in this commandment that he is a jealous lover. For he willeth that all man's heart, strength, and understanding, be occupied in his law, that thou neither understand, nor will, nor think any thing contrary to God, as St. Augustine saith. St. Gregory saith, that the proving of love is the giving of work. We love God truly if we keep his commandments, and refrain us from our lusts. He that fleeteth\* abroad by unlawful desires, loves not God, for he withstands his will. St. Augustine saith, "Love separates holy men from the world, and maketh men of one will to dwell together." He that has not real love is evil, and no skill, nor belief, nor giving cattle to poor men, nor penance of body profits any thing to him that has not love. The tongue, soul, and life, are inquired of respecting the love of God. The tongue, that it speak not foul, idle, or wicked words, but such as are clean, chaste, and as God's words. The soul, that it think no unclean, foul, or idle thoughts, but clean, chaste, and sweet heavenly thoughts. The life, that it work pleasingly to God's worship. For the love of God, as St. Gregory saith, is never idle; if it be love it worketh great things pleasingly to God. Christ commandeth in the gospel, that each man love him with all his heart. This that Christ saith of all the heart, and of all the soul, admits not parting with other things. For how much a man's heart is set on other things, so much it is departed from God.

God seeketh threefold love of man, of all his heart, soul, and strength, to withdraw man from the threefold lust of the world, that is, from the love of possessions and riches, from the love of highness and vain worship, and from fleshly lusts. For in these three was Christ tempted, and therefore to teach man to withstand these, he saith, Thou shalt love thy Lord God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. By what God saith in this commandment, that he visiteth the wickedness of fathers on the children, and so forth, he showeth both love and dread; but that man should be kindly led by love, he dwelleth more on love than dread. When he saith that he doeth vengeance, it is but to the third or fourth generation of them that hated him, but he doeth mercy unto a thousand kindreds of them that love him, and keep his commandments.

For by these two, that is, by love and dread, God

\* Floats, wanders.

chastiseth his children as by rod or staff. Therefore he saith by his prophet, If I be thy God, where is my love ; and if I be thy Lord, where is my dread ? For by love and dread each man should serve God. And therefore St. Augustine saith, Holy dread of God bringeth men love. But understand not that God doeth vengeance, or punisheth the child for the father or mother that hath sinned. For the child shall not bear the wickedness of the father, as God saith by his prophet. But understand that if the father be sinful and wicked, and if the child follows and uses the sinful living of the father, then God will punish the child justly, for his own guilt ; and this is what God saith in the text, that he will punish the children of them that hated him. God punisheth not the children for the father's and mother's guilt, but for that the children were like them in manner, and in like sins hated God.

#### THE SECOND (THIRD) COMMANDMENT.

In the second commandment, God saith thus to each man, "Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord God in vain ; for God shall not have him without guilt that taketh his name idly, or without a cause."

In two manners man may take God's name in vain ; both in manner of living, and also in swearing. When man is baptized, and taketh christendom,\* then is the name of Christ put in his soul, who is both God and man, and name above all names ; as St. Paul saith, Therefore he forsakes the devil and his works, that is, sin ; and makes covenant to be Christ's true servant and to keep his bid-dings. But when man breaks this covenant, and becomes the fiend's servant, doing deadly sin, then he takes Christ's name in vain while he serves the fiend, doing his works, as St. Peter saith. And therefore saith St. Augustine, Let no man deem himself to be a true christian man, unless he live according to the lore or teaching of Christ.

In another manner man takes God's name in vain, as by swearing, or forswearing, and cares not how. For from a young child that scarcely can speak, to an old bearded man whom God hath almost deprived of speech, this command of God is broken. For many have brought themselves into such a perilous custom, that they can scarcely speak a word but they swear by God in vain, or by some

\* Professes to be a follower of Christ.

of his creatures. St. Augustine saith, that to swear by God, or by any saint, is to call them to bear witness of what thou swearest. Bethink thee well; if thou calledst a poor man to bear witness of every word thou speakest, in a little time he would have indignation, and say that thou didst scorn him—much more almighty God, who forbids such vain swearing and calling to bear witness. The cause should be both true and right needful, if men should call such a Lord as God is, to bear witness thereof, and therefore God forbids this vain swearing by his name, in this commandment, and in many other places in his law. And Christ forbids swearing by creatures, in the gospel of Matthew, where he commandeth to swear not, neither by heaven nor by earth. In that he forbids to swear by heaven, he forbids to swear by the saints that are in heaven, and in that he forbids to swear by earth, he forbids to swear by any creature in earth. And herewith accords St. James, saying, Dear brethren, before all things swear ye not, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath, lest you fall under the doom of God. And St. John Chrysostom saith that it is idolatry, or worshipping of false gods, to swear by a creature. Yea, as he saith, This is sovereign blasphemy, since this swearing, as much as is in the swearer, makes the creature by which he sweareth, to be God; since it is reserved to God only, that men swear by him, with three conditions which God rehearses by Jeremiah the prophet; which are—he that shall swear be compelled by doom\*—that he verily know his cause be true—and also needful to help his fellow-christian in his right. Else should each man keep him from swearing. For if any of these three conditions fail, there is a premunire.†

And since Almighty God in his law saith, that he shall not be unpunished who taketh God's name thus in vain, what punishment suppose we shall they have, who not only take his name in vain, but also dismember him, and crucify him by swearing by his heart, and by his wounds, and other members? Such do more despite to Christ than the Jews did who nailed him to the cross, as St. Augustine and St. Gregory say. For this manner of swearing is called blasphemy, and one of the greatest despites that man may do to God—to swear by his limbs, and to upbraid him with his painful passion.‡

\* By lawful authority.

† A penalty.

‡ These oaths were very common in Wickliff's time, and some of

The fiend hath found three false excuses for swearing, and hath taught them his servants, to withstand and excuse their sin. Some say in scorn, as the fiend teaches them, Is it not good to have God often in mind? And some say, I may swear, for I swear truth. And some say, But if I swear not, no man will believe me. With these three false excuses men suppose to excuse themselves for such sinful vain swearing, but they accuse themselves before God, and make their sin more grievous. For as to the first, I pray thee, if thy servant did what thou hadst forbidden him, even the oftener he did it, the worse thou wouldst be pleased, and more yet if he scorned thee, and said he did so from love, to have thee in mind! To the second false and feigned excuse may be answered thus; A man should not swear always when he saith truth, for each man ought to say truth when he speaks any thing. For God forbiddeth any man to lie, and thus by his false excuse, man should swear at every word, if it were lawful to swear even when he saith truth. But this is openly false, as holy writ witnesses. It is written in the book of Ecclesiasticus, that a man who sweareth much shall be full filled with wickedness, and vengeance shall not depart from that house in which many oaths are used. And to those who say that no man will believe them unless they swear, this methinks is a foul excusation; since a false man may swear as much as a true man, and thus should men believe by oaths a false man as well as a true man. For commonly the more false a man is, the more oaths he will swear; and commonly he that will readiest swear, will gladly forswear and beguile. For he that dreadeth not to break God's command, will not be afraid to be false. But Christ bids not belief to oaths that are sworn, but he fully teaches to believe the deeds. For if men knew that thou wert true in thy words, and in thy deeds, they would ask no oath of thee, for it should not avail. But since thou art varying and untrusty in word and in deed, therefore men believe thee not, unless thou wilt swear.

Therefore if thou wilt be believed without swearing, be true of thy tongue, and discreet of thy words; and take heed to Christ's word where he forbids thee to swear by

the blasphemous expressions which are heard in the present day, are derived from them. The writings of Chaucer, and other contemporaries of Wickliff, show the awful prevalence of profane oaths at that period.



heaven or by earth, or by thine own head, for thou mayest not make a hair thereof either white or black. But let thy words be yea, yea, nay, nay, without any oath, for what thou swearest more than thus it is of evil. For all manner of truth standeth either in yea or in nay; and the heart and mouth should accord in speech, and not say one thing and think another; therefore Christ doubleth this yea, and this nay, and thus they should be christian men's word, without vain swearing, either by God or his creatures.

#### THE THIRD (FOURTH) COMMANDMENT.

The third command of God is commanded by him thus, "Have mind that thou hallow the holy day; in six days thou shalt work thine own works; the seventh day is the rest of thy Lord God. That day thou shalt do no servile work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy servant, nor thy work-beast, nor the stranger that dwelleth in thine house. For in six days God made heaven and earth, sea, and all things that are within them, and rested the seventh day; and therefore he blessed that day, and made it holy." Instead of the seventh day, which was hallowed in the Old Testament by God's commandment, christian men, of their devotion, hallow the eighth day,\* that is, the Sunday, wherein Christ rose again from the dead. The Sunday, as ignorant people call it, in holy writ is called the Lord's day. This was the first day of the world, wherein light was made. On this day, Christ rose again from death to life immortal. On this day, the Holy Ghost came down to the apostles, and gave to them understanding, wisdom, charity, and hardiness to preach God's truth, and die therefore.

But since sin is the worst work of bondage, for it makes men bound to the fiend of hell—and he is the worst lord that any man may serve, for he rewards his servants with nothing but with pain—therefore men should busy themselves on the holy day to learn God's law, which might teach them to flee sin, and to rest in their God; and they should flee fleshly lusts, taverns, and chafferings,† that hinder this end; and bewail their before-done sins, beseeching grace and might, to withstand others to come. This lesson God teacheth in a book of his law. And therefore

\* The first day of the week, John xx. 1–26.

† Bargainings.

saith St. Augustine, If it need us christian men to have delight and mirth in holy days, let us delight in God's word, and seek our delights in declaring God's law. Let us not ordain precious feasts for the belly and the throat, but so hallow the holy days, that we follow them in living, of whom these feasts are. For a devout follower pleases God more than an idle praiser, or a praiser by mouth only. True praising of heart is following of work. For to worship with mouth, and not to follow in living, is nothing else but falsely to flatter. Truly to this end are holy days ordained, that by them the congregation of christian men be stirred to follow the saints of God.

In three manners men break this commandment of God. First, we see that all things kindly,\* after travail seek rest. God in six days made heaven and earth, and all things within them, and rested on the seventh day. Apostles, and martyrs, and other saints, travailed on this world, withstanding sin, and suffered much for God's love and his truth, and now they rest in heaven. But many men and women of this world, travail busily all the week, and yet they will not rest on the Sunday. If there be either fair, or market, or any other place where they may win any money, then they, and their servant, and their work-beast, shall busily labour therefore. And it seems that all such folk have lost their spiritual mind, and are like to none but them that are in hell; for they never rest, but evermore travail in pain, and shall do so, world without end, as the prophet saith. Would God that all such folk would have mind how a man was stoned to death by the commandment of God, because he gathered sticks on the holy day, as it is written in a book of God's law, and did no greater trespass. For such folk gather many brands of covetousness, and other great sins, to burn their souls in pain, unless they amend before death.

In the second manner many men break this commandment, for many cease on the holy day from great bodily travails, but they occupy themselves in great spiritual sins; for such folk cleanse out the gnat, and swallow the camel, holding that there is more peril in a little bodily work, than in a great spiritual sin; although every other should be left on the holy day! Nevertheless, St. Augustine saith, that it is less trespass to go to the plough, to dig, or delve, and for women to spin on the holy day, than to lead dances and

\* Naturally.

frequent taverns. For such folk in a manner hallow the work days, doing good and lawful works, and in the holy days spend their life in drunkenness and gluttony, lechery and pride, and such great deadly sins. In the work day they are busy to travail for livelihood for their body, but in the holy day they give their souls to the fiend, for lust and liking of divers sins. To such folk God speaketh by his prophet, saying that he will throw in their faces the filth of their sins, which they do in the holy day. And in another place he saith, that he hateth their solemnities, that is, for the sins that are done in them. And it is written in the book of mourning (Lamentations) that our enemies, that is fiends, have seen our occupations, and they have scorned our holy days.

In the third manner this command is broken by them that spend their time in idle and vain plays, and have great liking to behold and see vanities, and to hear and to tell idle tales, and to speak of filth and of sin, and to backbite their fellow christians when they sit together. And thereby they destroy the virtue and grace that should be in their souls, as St. Bernard saith. For as good speech and chaste words increase virtue and grace in the souls of speakers and hearers, so foul words of lechery and of other sins, defoul the souls, both of them that speak, and of them that hear, if they consent thereto, as St. Paul saith.

Therefore, whosoever will hallow his holy day to God's worship, learn he another lesson, and understand how God commandeth in his commandment to have regard to the holy day. For man should on the holy day put out of his heart all worldly thoughts, and occupy his mind in heavenly desires, and think on the great goodness and mercy that God hath done for him, how He made him of nought, and like to himself in soul. What greater token of love might he show, than to make the servant like to the Lord? Also, have mind that when thou wert a child of wrath, and of hell, for the sin of Adam, Christ laid his life to pledge, to bring thee out of that prison; and he gave not as ransom for thee either gold or silver, or any other jewel, but his own precious blood that ran out of his heart. And this principally should move all christian men to have mind of God, and to worship him in thought, word, and deed.

Have mind also, how thou hast often, since thou wert christened, broken his commands, and done many great sins, and yet of his own goodness he abideth thee, without

taking vengeance, where he might justly, for one deadly sin, put thee in pain for ever, and do thee no wrong.

Also have mind how he of his goodness, governeth thee in thy right senses, and keepeth thee by night and by day, where he suffereth others for their sin to fall into great mischief both of body and soul. And from all such mischiefs by his mercy he hath kept thee. Think also how unkind\* thou hast been against him, and all these great goodnesses which he hath willingly done to thee; and how thou, as an unkind wretch, against all these mercies, and many more, hast given him gall to drink, of bitter and foul sins; and often wittingly and wilfully hast broken his commandments, both in thought, word, and deed.

That thou shouldest have mind of all these goodnesses, and many more which he hath done to thee, and of the manifold trespasses which thou hast done against him—and since the having of such mind, demands to have rest of body and of soul, and such rest should be had on the holy day—therefore God commandeth each man to have mind to hallow his holy day. For each man's mind or thought should be kept from vanities, and occupied thereabout, and therefore God called the holy day, the day of rest. For each man should be busy to purchase rest of soul and body, and to avoid all things for the time that hinder this. For resting on the Sunday betokens the resting in bliss after this life, and they that will not keep rest of soul this day, and avoid sin, it is to be dreaded, that unless they amend, they will lose the rest of bliss to come.

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In these three (four) first commands, each man is taught how he shall love God; and in the seven (six) ensuing, he is taught how he shall love his fellow christian, what he shall do to them, and what he shall leave.

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#### THE FOURTH (FIFTH) COMMANDMENT.

The first command of these seven, God saith in this wise, "Worship† thou thy father and thy mother; that thou mayest be of long life upon earth." And both nature and reason will this. What man or woman shouldest thou worship,

\* Unnatural.

† Reverence.

if thou shouldest not worship them that brought thee forth, and loved and helped thee, when thou mightest not, neither couldest help thyself. And St. Augustine saith it is a brutish condition for a child to forget to worship and to love his father and his mother.

Three manner of fathers we should worship. The first is the Father who createth from nothing ; the second is him that is our father by nature ; the third is the father by age, and especially by virtues. The principal father that we should worship is Almighty God, who made us, body and soul, and nourisheth the body with food that cometh of the earth, and comforteth every good soul with heavenly desire. This Father defendeth every soul that is true to him, from the power of the fiend, who would overset it, and granteth it through his grace, to be an heir in heaven. And this may no father do, but only God almighty ; for he is Father of all, most rightful and mighty, whom no man may withstand. And therefore, we should worship him over all other, for he is our Father, our Lord, and our God, and he shall be our Judge at the last day, and for the endless reward that he keepeth for us if we keep his commands. For whoso loves his father or mother, or any other creature more than Him, he is not worthy to have him, as he saith himself. And St. Augustine saith, that as there may be no moment or time, in which man uses not God's goodness and his mercy, so ought there to be no moment or time, in which man hath him not in mind, for to worship him.

The second father that we should worship, is he that is our father by nature. To him we should be subject, and meek, and serviceable, as Christ teacheth by his own doing. For he was subject and serviceable to his mother and to Joseph. And since he is and was very God, and would be subject and serviceable to an earthly creature, how shall we mortal wretches escape from the wrath of him, if we be rebellious, out of reason, against our father and mother ? And therefore, let each child worship and reverence his father and his mother, and help them in their need, both bodily and spiritually. Give them of thy goods freely if they have need, and thou have more than they. And travail for them with the strength of thy body, and counsel and comfort them after thy ability, and reverence them with the words of thy mouth ; for he that missayeth his father or his mother shall die an evil death, as God's law saith. And if thou art wiser than they, counsel, and teach them in all meek manner, how

they should live justly, to please God almighty ; and help them out of old customs of sin and unreasonable manners. For he that is negligent in this, does great wrong to his father and mother, if he may, by any easy means, amend such defaults.

And look that no child consent to sin for any fleshly worship\* of father or mother ; for bowing to sin is not obedience, but the greatest rebellion that man can do against God, or any christian man. For man should not consent to sin to win all the world. Christ asketh, what it profiteth a man to win all the world and suffer loss to his own soul ?

The third fathers we should worship are men of age, and especially of virtue. For many old men and women there are who are full of vices, and so they are but children in understanding, although they are of great bodily age. Therefore worship thou in all such that which God made, which is body and soul, but beware that thou consent not to sin ; for it is a foul abuse, as St. Augustine saith, for a man or woman of great age to be without good living.

#### THE FIFTH (SIXTH) COMMANDMENT.

In the fifth command, God forbids all wrongful manslaughter, both of body and soul. For this is one of the sins that ever cry for vengeance before Almighty God. And therefore God said to Cain, Lo the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the earth. This sin of manslaughter† is so grievous in God's sight, that he commanded in the old testament, before Christ's coming, that if any man, by lying in wait, or any treachery, killed a man, and afterwards fled to God's altar for succour, yet should he be taken away from thence, and be slain for that deed. And therefore St. John saith, He that slayeth shall be slain. For the same measure that thou measurest to another shall be measured to thee, as Christ saith himself, and therefore he commanded Peter to put up his sword in the time of his suffering. But open trespassers that will not be amended in other manner, must by just doom be slain, by them that bear the sword of temporal punishing, without trespassing against this command of God, as St. Paul saith. Therefore let each

\* Earthly regard.

† By manslaughter the reformers usually mean wilful murder, not the unpremeditated slaying, now termed manslaughter by the law.

man beware of malicious bodily manslaying, that no man by deed, nor by will, nor by procuring others, for hate or for dread, assent to this sin. For God will take great vengeance on him, who for his own malicious will slayeth any man, or procureth thereto against God's law, unless he amend him\* before he die.

Of spiritual manslaying there are many manners. The first is manslaying of heart. For each man that hates his fellow christian in his heart is a manslayer, as St. John saith. The second is, when man wilfully assenting to wicked thoughts of his heart, turneth from goodness. The third manner is, by unlawful lusts and desires engendered in the heart, which will slay him that is slow to put them away. As it is written, Desires slay the slothful.

Also there is a spiritual manslaughter by mouth; and that is in three manners. The first is in lying, for the mouth that lieth slayeth the soul. The second is of backbiting, for that is the tongue of the adder, which stingeth in stillness, as is written in a book of God's law. The backbiter slayeth first himself through his own wickedness, and the malice of his heart; and also him that heareth and consenteth to his false telling, and after, peradventure, makes it worse. Also he slayeth him whom he backbiteth, as much as he is able, for he makes him lose his good praise and fame. And also when this comes to his ear who is spoken of, then he is out of charity, and thus the backbiter slayeth three at once. The third manner of manslaughter by mouth, is false flattering, or praising in sin and wickedness, or for a man to show glosing† words to another whom he hateth in his heart. Those that flatter men in sin by any false colouring, hide other men's spiritual death in their own error, not telling them their perils, nor reproving their defaults, either for dread or for covetousness. Thus some preachers are guilty of manslaughter. Other glossers and flatterers, who bear honey in their mouths by smooth words, and gall of death in their hearts by secret hate, are figured in holy writ by Joab, who met with Amasias, and spake fair with him, as though he would have kissed him, and under colour thereof killed him.

Also a man is said to slay himself spiritually, when he knowingly and wilfully doth deadly sin; for then he maketh God depart from him, who is the life of the soul, as St. Augustine saith. And therefore Christ saith that the

\* Repent.

† False, flattering.

devil hath been a manslayer from the beginning. For first he slew himself with sin, and all the angels that consented to him. Also he slew Adam and Eve through his false enticing; and so he doth those whom he may overcome with deadly sin. Therefore it is written, Flee thou sin, as thou wouldest flee from the biting of an adder; for it is as bitter as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men.

Also there is manslaughter in other manner, in which man is said to slay his fellow christian; as he or she that hath the goods of the world, and seeth man or woman in great default or mischief, and will not help them. I speak not of pardoners, nor of bold beggars,\* but of them that are poor, feeble, crooked, blind, and lame, or in some other mischief, by the sufferance of God; and others who have pain and default, who are ashamed to ask, and would rather suffer much mischief than beg. Of whom it is said in holy writ, Thou hast seen a man dying for hunger;† if thou hast not fed him thou hast slain him.

\* Sellers of the pope's pardons or indulgences, and begging friars. Chaucer thus describes one of the latter. After preaching on purgatory, and urging his hearers to pay for their friends' deliverance,

When folk in church had gave him what they list,

He went his way, no longer would he rest.

With scrip and tipped staff, y tucked high,

In every house he gan to pore and pry,

And begged meal and cheese, or else corn.

His fellow had a staff tipped with horn,

A pair of tables all of ivory,

A pointell y polished fetously,||

(|| Skillfully.)

And wrote always the names as he stood

Of all folks that gave them any good,

Askaunce that he would for them pray,

"Give us a bushel wheat, malt, or rye,

A God's kichell,‡ or a trippe of cheese,

(‡ A little cake.)

Or else what ye list, I may not choose,

A God's halfpenny, or a mass penny,

Or give us of your brawn, if ye have any,

A dagon§ of your blanket, dear dame,

(§ A piece.)

Our sister dear, lo here I write your name,

Bacon or beef, or such thing as ye find."

A sturdy harlot went him aye behind,

That was their host's man, and bare a sack,

And what men gave them, laid it on his back.

And when he was out at the door, anon,

He plained away the names every one,

That he before had written in his tables;

He served them with nifes and with fables."

Such were the days of popery in England! See note on the Supplication of Beggars. Frith, p. 59.

† This unhappily was not so uncommon at that period as in later days. The old chronicles relate numerous instances. Hollinshed thus



Also, if any man by fraud, or by sleight, or by any other false tricks, as by weight or measure; or by deceit in chaffer,\* or by withholding of labourer's hire, gets other men's goods to make himself rich, he is said to be a manslayer. Therefore, let all those beware that take any thing by wrong, or by false pretence, supposing to be free because they give to another under the colour of alms, but it is none. For all alms must be given of true gotten goods, and to those that Christ limiteth.†

Of such folk as by rapine and deceit slay their fellow christians, taking from them their livelihood, and so their life, God speaketh by his prophets, saying, Your hands are souled with blood, your fingers are full of wickedness. And he that wieldeth by violence, by theft, or by fraud, or deceit, that whereby poor men ought to be sustained, hath hands defouled with blood of poor, and he that eats and drinks of such possessions, and clothes himself, and builds houses, and walls of such possessions, eats and drinks the blood of poor men, is clothed in the blood of poor men, and lays the foundation of his buildings in the blood of poor men. Let such men hear the word of God, Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, his blood shall be shed.

Also there is a manslaying by giving evil example. Also there is manslaughter of negligence or carelessness, of which God speaketh by his prophet, to each curate or priest, If thou speakest not to the people, that a wicked man keep him from his evil way, he shall die in his wickedness, I shall seek his blood at thy hand.

#### THE SIXTH (SEVENTH) COMMANDMENT.

The sixth command of God forbids all manner of lechery, both bodily and spiritual. For of all sins this is

describes a famine in England, A.D. 1317. "In this season victuals were so scarce and dear, and wheat and other grain brought so high a price, that the poor people were constrained through famine to eat the flesh of horses, dogs, and other vile beasts, which is wonderful to believe, and yet for default there died a great multitude of people in divers places of the land." Grafton calculates the price of corn then to have been equal to what eight pounds a quarter would have been in queen Elizabeth's days, which may be estimated as not less than thirty pounds at the present day.

\* Bargaining.

† It was very common for those who had acquired wealth by force or fraud, to endow monasteries in order to pacify their consciences.

the foulest For why? Other sins defile only the soul, but this defiles both body and soul, as St. Paul saith. And among all other sins, this most pleases the fiend. In other sins, commonly he getteth only one at once, but in this at the least he getteth two. For the sin of lechery God hath taken great vengeance, as is shown in holy writ. See the history of Dinah, and of the daughters of Moab.

To this deed the devil tempteth in five manners, as St. Gregory saith. The first by foolish looking, after by dishonest words, and after that by foul touching, and in foul kissing, and so cometh to the deed. Thus craftily the devil bringeth from one to another. Therefore Job saith, I have made covenant with mine eyes that I shall not think upon a maid. And women that array themselves nicely, to be seen of fools, sin grievously, for by their nice array and countenance they cause the loss of many souls. It is a foul abuse to see a woman without chastity of soul. Two manners belong to the keeping of chastity—that the outward array be not to show, but to conceal and hide, and that the desire of the heart be set to God and heavenly things, destroying foul thoughts of the heart and idle words and vain.

It behoveth to flee occasion thereof, as company and place, and delicate and lustful meats and drinks, that excite thereto. And therefore saith a great clerk, that in this sin a man must especially be God's coward,\* and flee from occasion that moves to this sin, and trust not to strength, understanding, or to wisdom. For what man was stronger than Samson? Who was more able than David? Who was wiser than Solomon? And yet those three were burned with the fire of lechery. Therefore let him that will be God's clean child, as God's coward, flee all occasions and companies that move him to this sin.

The second medicine that helps against this sin, is to keep the body from lustful meats and drinks. The third is, to keep out of idleness, and to busy thy mind in clean thoughts, and thy body in clean occupations. For such lusts come not unless thoughts go before.

Spiritual lechery, is when man's soul turneth to the fiend by lust of deadly sin. For Christ and man's soul are wedded together through true belief, love, charity, and keeping of his commands, and leaving of sin, as God saith by his prophet. But when man, by his own devices, turns

\* In the fear of God.

to deadly sin, and leaveth the love of Christ, he sins in spiritual lechery with the fiend.

#### THE SEVENTH (EIGHTH) COMMANDMENT.

The seventh command, God saith in these words, "Thou shalt not do theft." Theft, as a learned man saith, is a taking away of goods without the leave and will of him that owns them. In this command, God forbids all manner of wrong taking and withholding of any man's goods—all privy stealing, robbing, and beguiling—all sleights and deceits in buying and selling. Therefore let each man beware, that he do no theft, lest God do vengeance on him, as he did on Achan. And if he have any thing of other men wrongfully, by theft, subtlety, or deceit, let him restore and make restitution or satisfaction therefore, by all his power, else the sin is not forgiven, as St. Augustine saith.

Since theft is taking of other men's goods against the will of them that own them, it seems hereby that all wrong getting of goods, by usury, by rapine, by false weights and measures, and secret guile, is theft done by covetousness to have other men's goods against God's will, and them that own them. Therefore, saith St. Paul, to make us beware, whoever desires thus to be rich, fall into temptation and snare of the devil, and into many grievous and unprofitable desires, which drown men in death and damnation. For covetousness is the root of all evils. And in another place he saith, Let no man beguile his brother in chaffering by any deceit, for God takes vengeance upon them that so do. Therefore, those that are great of power in this world, let them not rob nor beguile those that are smaller, neither by rapine, nor by extortion, nor by false claims; but let them be satisfied with the wages that are limited to them for their livelihood. For so John the Baptist commanded the soldiers, as the gospel witnesses.

Therefore, let not him that is a merchant, or a victualler, deceive his fellow christian, as St. Paul exhorts, neither with meat, nor measure, nor any other deceit, to make himself rich by goods gotten by rapine. For God punisheth all that do such things. And Christ saith, The same measure that ye mete to others shall be meted to you again. Therefore, let each man beware that he defraud not any man for his own covetousness, and be no swear

or liar, in selling or in buying. For it is written by the Holy Ghost's teaching, that whoso gathereth treasures with a lying tongue, he is vain and evil. And against him that sweareth and forsweareth himself in buying and selling, or in any other manner, Zechariah, the prophet of God, speaketh thus: He saith that he saw a book flying in the air, which was twenty cubits long and ten in breadth. And the angel said to him, It is the curse of God, that goeth to thieves' houses, and to all men's houses that forswear themselves by the name of God. And God speaketh by his prophet, against those who with evil gotten goods, buy lands and rents, and make great buildings, bitterly cursing them for their falseness. Wo be to you, saith he, who bind house to house, and field to field, and say right is wrong and wrong is right—and so say all men who by any falseness gather goods together. Therefore, saith God by another prophet, Wo be to them that multiply things that are not their own.

And let him that is a labourer, or a craftsman, do his craft or his labour truly, without sleight or other deceit, as St. Paul exhorts by the teaching of God. And let no man, with wrong, withhold the workman's hire. For that is one of the four sins that ever cry vengeance before God, as St. James saith. Also, in this command, God forbids the cursed sin of usury, in which men sin after divers manners.

#### THE EIGHTH (NINTH) COMMANDMENT.

In the eighth command, God forbiddeth every man and every woman to bear any false witness against their fellow christian. For through false witness many a right heir loses his heritage, and many a guiltless man is put to death. Thus Christ who was most innocent, and never did sin, was condemned to death by means of two false witnesses. Therefore, let each man and woman beware of their words, that they bear no witness by word or by swearing, for any thing, unless they know verily that it is right and true. And understand what peril he hath who knowingly bears false witness, and forswears himself on the holy book.

Also, in this command, God forbiddeth all leasings.\* For each leasing is a false witness against Christ, who is very truth, as he saith himself. Therefore Christ called the

\* Lies, falsehood. Digitized by Google

devil a liar, and the father of lies. For he found the first leasing, and made it himself, when he said to Eve in Paradise, that she should not die, though she ate of the fruit of the tree God had forbidden upon pain of death, but that Adam and she should be as gods, knowing good and evil. But this was a leasing, and that Adam and Eve knew soon after eating the fruit. And therefore the devil is said to be father of all false witness bearers and liars, and they are said to be his children, by following in manners and in their living. Therefore Christ said to the Jews, that they were of their father the devil, for they wrought his desires. Therefore, let each man beware, for it is written, The lips that lie are abominable to the Lord.

Therefore let each man beware that neither for dread, for hate, nor for gift, he use leasing; neither bear any false witness against his fellow christian. For Judas sold truth, when he sold Christ for money. And they who for gift or reward, bear false witness and deny truth, do the same sin spiritually that Judas did bodily. For while they for coveting any thing, deny truth, they sell Christ that is truth, therefore let each man keep himself from leasing, and all those by his might that he hath power over. For a great doctor saith, that though a man might by a private leasing save all this world, which else should perish, yet should he not lie to save it.

Leasing stands not only in false words, but also in feigned works, and in manner of living. And therefore let each man and woman who is called a christian, look that their living accord with the lore and teaching of Christ. And let him that is called a priest of Christ, know and teach by living and word, the law of his Lord; lest he be of those that St. Paul speaks of, who acknowledge by mouth and by word that they know God, but in their works and living they deny the knowing of him. Of which manner of folk, St. John speaks, saying, He that saith he knoweth God, and keepeth not his commands, he is a liar, and there is no truth in him. And in another place he saith, He that saith that he loveth God, and hateth his brother, is a liar. Of such manner of liars, St. Ambrose speaks, saying, Brethren, flee ye leasing, for all that love leasings are sons of the devil. Not only in false words, but in feigned works, is leasing, for it is leasing for a man to call himself a christian, and not to do the works of Christ. It is leasing for any man to acknowledge himself bishop, priest, or clerk, and to

work things contrary to those orders. Therefore let each man, in his degree, be busy to seek the truth of Christ's teaching, to live thereafter, and so to flee sin.

#### THE NINTH (TENTH, FIRST PART) COMMANDMENT.

The ninth command is this, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house," and in another place God saith, "Thou shalt not desire thy neighbour's field." Here God forbids all wrongful desire and coveting of other men's goods, both of house and land, gold and silver, clothes, corn, and all other things that cannot move themselves from one place to another. And as in the seventh command God forbids the deed of wrongfully taking any man's goods, so in this command he forbids all manner of wrongful desire, or coveting in heart to any man's goods. This command touches the ground of all evil—having such manner of goods. For no man wrongfully hath any such goods unless the ground of his having be false coveting in heart. And therefore, as a weed is well cleansed out of land when the root is drawn away, so these four commands are well kept when false coveting of the heart is fully quenched.

Of the great harm that cometh of false coveting in man's heart, a great clerk speaks, saying, Oh how many men has covetousness deceived and destroyed! As Balaam, Achan, Gehazi, Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, and others. Holy writ also speaks of the mischief that comes of false covetousness, and wrong desire of man's heart, by the example of Ahab who coveted the vineyard of Naboth, and Jezebel the queen, upon whom sentence was fulfilled as God had said. And therefore let each man and woman beware, that false desire or covetousness to have any man's goods with wrong, or against his will, reign not in their hearts; lest worse befall them than befell king Ahab and Jezebel his queen.

#### THE TENTH (SECOND PART) COMMANDMENT.

In the tenth commandment, God saith in this manner; "Thou shalt not desire the wife of thy neighbour; nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his." In this command, God forbids the will and consent of each unreasonable desiring, and wrong coveting of all things that are alive, and may move themselves from one place to another. Thus God forbids the sins of man's

will in all things, for oftentimes it befalls, that sin is more grounded in evil will than in deed. And as God in the sixth command forbids the sin of lechery, so he forbids in this command, the will and consent of the heart. For as the deed is deadly sin, so is the full consent and the desire of the heart deadly sin, as Christ saith himself.

Therefore, let each man and woman bethink busily what thought enters into their heart, and if any thought is about to draw the reason of their soul to consent to any sin, let him not muse on that thought, but without delay sternly put it away, moving his heart to think upon the bitter pains that Christ suffered, and upon the endless joys of heaven, which he loses if he consent to that sin; and upon the bitter and endless pains of hell that he shall have at his end, if he die in that desire or sin which this wicked thought will bring him to, if it abide in the heart till the reason of the soul consent.

And also let each woman beware, that neither by countenance, nor by array of body, nor of head, she stir any to covet her to sin. Not crooking\* her hair, neither laying it up on high, nor the head arrayed about with gold and precious stones, not seeking curious clothing, nor of nice shape, showing herself to be seemly to fools. For all such array of women, St. Peter and St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost's teaching, openly forbid. But let them be in clothing of shamefacedness and soberness; being subject to their husbands, after the rule of reason, as St. Peter and St. Paul teach; that they who believe not God's word be won to health, beholding in awe the holy and chaste conversation of women. Thus in old time good women and holy, believing in God, adorned themselves, as St. Peter saith.

#### CONCLUSION.

These are the ten commands of God, after which it behoves all men and women to rule their life, if they would be saved, and therefore Christ saith to each man, if he will enter into life that shall last for ever, keep these commands. These commands men should teach their children and their households. And therefore God commandeth to his people, that each man tell to his sons how God led his people out of Egypt, And it shall be as a token in thy hand, saith God, and as a thing to be minded, before thine eye, and let the law of the Lord be ever in thy mouth, *Exod. xiii.*

\* Curling.

And in another place, Deut. vi. God saith, These words which I command to thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy sons, and thou shalt think on them, sitting in thine house, and going in the way, and sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign in thine hand, and they shall be betwixt thine eyes, and thou shalt write them on the lintels and door-posts of thy house. That is, thou shalt rule all thy thoughts, words, and deeds, secret and open, within thy house and without, by the commandments of God. Keep thyself and thy soul carefully; nor forget thou the words which thine eyes have seen, and let them not fall from thine heart, in all the days of thy life. Thou shalt teach them to thy sons and to those that are near to thee. And St. Augustine saith to all christian men, Govern ye your houses, govern ye your sons, govern ye your household attendants. As it pertains to us to speak to you in the church, so it pertains to you to do in your houses; that ye yield good reason to God, of them that are subject to you. St. Paul saith, He that hath not care of his own, and most of his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than a heathen man. Therefore let each man first learn and do in deed himself, and after that excite and move others to keep these commandments.

[Wickliff then exhorts men, not “to be negligent to learn, for dread of the sentence that God saith in his law.” He quotes at length Deuteronomy xxviii., and adds,] That all men and women may have grace truly to keep the commands of God, and therethrough flee these curses, and have these blessings; and ever to be above in virtue, and never under in sin, and after that, to reign above in everlasting bliss, grant, Jesus Christ, that bought man with his heart’s blood, merciful God. Amen.

All these ten commands of God are contained in two words of love—that is, To love God above all things, and thy fellow christian as thyself. For he that loveth God above all things, will worship no God but one, and he will hallow his holy day, for every day he will live holily, and out of great sin. For certain, every day that a man liveth in deadly sin, is the devil’s work day, for the day man doeth the devil’s works, he serveth the devil and not God, though he sing, preach, or read holy words. And he will not take God’s name in vain; for he who loveth God above all things, will do nothing that God forbiddeth him. And he who loveth his fellow christian as himself, keepeth the other



commands; for he reverences his elders and all his fellow christians. And he will not slay his fellow christians in any manner, nor commit lechery, and he will not be a thief to rob his fellow christian, by any deceit or taking of his goods against his will. And he that loveth his fellow christian as himself, will not bear any false witness, and he will not covet his neighbour's house, nor land, nor wife, nor servant, nor any other goods that he owns. Thus the ten commands of God are kept in these two words of love. Therefore saith St. Paul, Whoso loveth, fulfilleth all the law. Whoso loveth God over all things, is ever dreading to offend him in thought, word, or deed. And to love thy fellow christian, is neither to covet, nor to suffer, nor counsel or procure, nor to consent to any thing to be done to him, other than thou shouldest desire were done to thee, if thou wert in his state. And therefore saith Christ himself, confirming this sentence, All things that ye desire men should do to you, do ye the same to them.

[Wickliff enforces these considerations at considerable length by quotations from the scripture and the fathers. He proceeds,]

Whoso loveth God over all other things, and his neighbour as himself, will not be proud. For pride is either an unskilful highness, through which a man is disobedient to God and his commands, or it is an unreasonable highness, through which a man exalts himself above his fellow-christians, and despises them. Also, he that hath this love leaveth covetousness. For he that loveth God above all other things, and his fellow christian as he should, will desire nothing that is against the will of God, or harming to his fellow christian.

And he that hath this love will not live in sloth, for he will endeavour with all his might to serve his God in keeping his commands. And after the grace that he hath received of God, he will forsake his own ease, and put himself to travail and pain for the welfare of his brother. And he that hath this love will have no deadly wrath to any man, nor desire vengeance on him, though he have trespassed greatly against him. And he that hath this love, hath no envy to his fellow christian. For neither will he be glad of their harm, nor sorry for their welfare. And he that hath this love, will not for his filthy lust bring his sister into sorrow. And he that hath this love, will not take his meat or his drink but in measure, as he needs. For whoso doeth

otherwise, doeth gluttony, and taketh his meat and his drink against the ordinances of God. And whoso hath this love, doeth the works of mercy to his brother.

[Wickliff enlarges upon love to our neighbours, recapitulating much that he had previously stated, and concludes:]

Thus in these ten commands of God, contained in two words of love, all good is fulfilled, and all evil eschewed.\* And that we may live and end in this love, and so come to everlasting bliss, grant us, Jesus Christ, that liveth and reigneth, without end, merciful God. Amen. Amen.

## ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

### PROLOGUE.

CHRIST saith, whoso loveth him, will keep his commandments; and they that keep them are his friends, as he saith in another place. And he will hear his friends, and grant them all reasonable things that they ask of him, needful to health of soul and body. And all things needful to man, either for soul or body, are contained in the Lord's prayer. It is the prayer full of wisdom and health which Christ taught his disciples.

This holy prayer contains seven askings. And in these short askings is contained more wisdom than any tongue of man can fully tell here on earth. When a child is first set to school, men teach him his paternoster, (the Lord's prayer,) therefore, let him that will learn, be meek as a child, and without malice. God careth not for long tarrying, nor for smooth words, either rhymed or in prayer. For St. Gregory saith, True praying is not to speak fine words with the mouth, but to make great complaint and sorrow for sin, with sore sighing of heart, and great desire of forgiveness. What is it to patter with lips when the heart prayeth not by desire? What difference there is betwixt the bran and the flour of the wheat, such there is between the sound of the lips and the devotion of heart. When the mouth prayeth God for one thing, and the heart is busy about another, such worship God with lips, but the heart of them is far from him, as he complaineth by the prophet.†

\* Avoided, put out.

† Wickliff then states eight things needful to man when praying to God.

## ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

The first asking is, *Our Father that art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.* In that thou callest him Father, thou acknowledgest that he is Maker and Lord of heaven, earth, and hell, and Governor of all creatures, of whom all goodness cometh, and thus thou acknowledgest his might. And since he is Lord and Father, each man owes him dread and love. Therefore he asketh each man by his prophet, saying, The son worships the father, and the servant the lord. Therefore if I am Father, where is my worship; and if I be Lord, where is my dread? This word, Father, shows to each good christian man, great worthiness, fairness, and riches. For there can be no greater worthiness than to be the son of so great a Lord as almighty God is. Therefore Bede saith, No reward may be greater than for the sons of earthly men to be made the sons of the highest Lord—greater riches may no man have, than to be heir of the realm of heaven; which riches each man shall have, that liveth and endeth in the lore and teaching of this noble Father, as St. Paul witnesses. Greater fairness can no man have, than to be like to this Father. The more man loveth this Father, the more like he is to him; and ever the less man loveth him, the less he hath of his likeness. This likeness is likeness of soul, through virtuous life.

If thou wilt be son of this blessed Father, thou must hate all sin and filth, as he doth; and love all goodness and virtue, as he doth. Now when thou callest him Father, bethink thee that thou be obedient to his commands, and yield to him love, worship, reverence, service, and dread. And if thou desirest to find him a mild Father, be thou to him an obedient son. No man shall say, Father mine, but only he that is son by nature, without beginning and ending, as Christ, God's Son is. We are not his sons, save as we are made to his likeness. But we are his sons through grace, and by adoption or purchase; as a lord having no son of his own to be his heir, may make a poor man's son his heir. Thus this Lord and Emperor, when we were poor, and children of wrath and hell, as St. Paul saith, made us through grace, heirs of the realm of heaven, if we are obedient children to him.

We exclude pride when we say, Our Father, and not mine. This word "our" saith that we are all brethren,

great and small, poor and rich, high and low, of one father, and of one mother, that is, God and holy church; and that none scorn or despise another, but love as his brother, and one should help another, as limbs of a man's body, as St. Paul saith.

Truth it is that God is every where, but most properly he is said to be in heaven, for there he is most known, loved, and worshipped. And next to that he is said to be in heaven in a spiritual sense; that is, in holy souls, which are the temple of God, as St. Paul saith, and are reared on high from sin and earthly love, and are bright and clean as the heavens. For in such souls he is seen, known, dreaded, worshipped, and loved.

Hallowed be thy name.—That is, in us. We hallow God in us, as St. John Chrysostom saith, when we, knowing him to be holy, dread him, and watch busily, lest we defile the holiness of his name in us, by our evil works. This, saith he, this desire we should evermore have, that this name which is blessed, be confirmed in us, making us blessed and holy. Thy name, that is, thy faith, thy acknowledging, and thy love, be confirmed in our hearts, that as we bear thy name, so thy acknowledging and thy love may be hallowed in us, that we be made by thy help, righteous, and abstaining from all evil.

The name of God in itself cannot be more holy than it is, but ever the more it is known, loved, and worshipped of man, the more it is said to be holy. Therefore, sweet Father that art in heavens, thy name be hallowed in the hearts of heathen men, that they may believe in thee; and in the hearts of Jews, that they may believe more perfectly, and also love thee. Hallowed be thy name in the hearts of false christian men, that as they believe in thee so they may have perfect love and good works, without which, belief may not save any man, as the apostle saith. Also, O Father that art in heaven, thy name be hallowed in the hearts of thy chosen men, by more increase of charity, and knowledge of thee, and by more sweetness of heavenly love.

In the first asking of this holy prayer, we pray for the first and principal gift of the Holy Ghost, that is, the gift of wisdom, which binds and holds together the heart in God. This Spirit of wisdom hallows the heart, cleansing it from earthly love and fleshly affections, drawing it from many things, and setting it to one alone, that is, to God. Therefore, sweet Father, thy name be hallowed in us; that is,

give thou to us the Spirit of wisdom, by whom we may be made clean from all filth; by whom we may be full filled with thy love, that all other loves, contrary to thine, may be bitter to us.

II. The second asking of this holy prayer, which in some measure pertains to the Son, is said in these words, *Thy kingdom come to thee*. Since Christ (who is that nobleman of whom the gospel speaketh, Luke xix.) came down from high heaven into this wretched world, to take us for his kingdom who before were lost through Adam's sin; and since he suffered bitter death upon a tree, and bought man again with his precious blood, and after that returned again to his Father, for the salvation of mankind—well may true christian people be called God's kingdom. And therefore, as St. Jerome saith, we here pray generally for the realm of all the world, that the devil may cease to reign therein, or that God reign in each man by grace, and that sin reign not in the mortal body of man. St. John Chrysostom saith, that holy men are called the kingdom of God, and wicked men are called the kingdom of the devil, for he reigneth in them, and they do his will. Therefore, a faithful christian man prayeth of God his Father, that sin, which is the realm of the fiend, may be destroyed, and Christ reign in souls through mercy and grace. And that, as he reigneth in souls of well living men, so also, by turning to good life, and putting away of sin, he would reign in them that still are evil.

Also Christ teacheth us in this prayer to ask the dreadful time of doom, in which the kingdom of God shall fully come; that men may know it behoves them not to live idly or negligently, that this time may not make ready flames and vengeance for them, but to live justly and soberly, that this time bring a crown to them. Here we ask of God, the second gift of the Holy Ghost, that is, the Spirit of understanding in our hearts. For as the sun doeth away the darkness, and wasteth away the clouds and the morning dews, so the Spirit of understanding wasteth all the darkness of the heart, and showeth him his sins and defaults. So that he who thought before that he had been all clean, then findeth many faults, and defilements without number, as the sun-beam showeth motes and dust to them that behold it.

This asking is said thus; Fair Father, if it be thy will

enlighten our hearts with the Holy Ghost, and cleanse them and make them fair, that we may be made worthy to see God, and that he deign to reign in us; so that all be his, and he King, and that we may evermore see him. For that it is for us to live without end, and to be the kingdom of God. And as we are taught in the first asking, to restrain the sin of pride by true meekness, when we say, "Our Father," and not "mine," even so we are taught in the second asking to restrain envy against our fellow christian by true charity,\* when we say, Thy kingdom come to thee. Merciful Father, vouchsafe to reign in our souls, as a king in his realm, governing us all our lives, that we may reign with thee in bliss without end.

III. The third asking of this holy prayer, which hath some respect to the Holy Ghost, the third person of the holy Trinity, follows in these words, *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* Here we pray to God, that his will be done and fulfilled here in earth, among sinful men, by amending their life, as it is done in just men, who spiritually are said to be heaven. For God dwelleth in just souls, as it is written, The soul of a just and well living man, is the seat of wisdom, that is of Christ, for he is the wisdom of the Father of heaven. Here we pray also, that our flesh withstand not our spirit, nor hinder it to do God's will. For the spirit desireth contrary to the flesh, and the flesh to the spirit, as St. Paul saith.

Here we pray that God's will be done, that is, as St. Augustine saith, that men obey God's commandments, as angels in heaven obey his commandments, so also that men in earth may obey the same; and as angels serve him in heaven without blame, so also may men serve him in earth. Here we pray God that he quicken our hearts with grace, that we may do his will on earth, as saints do in heaven. Let every man that sayeth this prayer, look that he do in his living; that as he sayeth in word, that God's will be done in him as it is in heaven, so also that his works accord therewith. For God looketh more to the deeds than to words of mouth. For if the words of thy mouth pray God that his will be fulfilled in thee, and thy works say, Nay, through sin contained in them, or through grudgings against him in sickness or in other diseases, thou obtainest nothing of God in thy prayer.

Here we ask of our Father of heaven the third gift of the Holy Ghost, that is, the gift of counsel—that our wretched will, through counsel of the Holy Ghost, be set fully to do God's will, so that in us, our own understanding or will be not master, but his only. As we are taught in the first and second askings to restrain pride and envy through meekness and charity, so we are taught in this third asking, to restrain wrath with true love of heart. And therefore Christ saith, I give to you a new commandment, that ye love each other, as I have loved you.

IV. In the last four askings of this holy prayer, we pray our heavenly Father, to give us, forgive us, keep us, and deliver us. And unless we have these four, we are dead and ruined in this world. And therefore we say to our Father, *Our each day's bread, give thou us to day.* Christ saith, *Our each day's bread* ; to restrain lustful meats ; that a man eat so much as reason asks, not how much fleshly lust covets. Here we pray for no lordships or riches of this world, but only for needful sustenance, which is understood by bread. Thus prayed the wise man, who was inspired with the Holy Ghost, saying, Beggary and riches, Lord, give thou not to me, but only sustenance ; grant thou necessities. In this asking, covetousness is put under. For here a christian man prayeth by largeness of heart, that God would give these necessities which are understood by bread, to other men, as well as to him. And since each man, every day hath need of spiritual sustenance of soul, and also of body, therefore these necessities may well be called our each day's bread. And as man's body is strengthened by bodily sustenance, that it fail not in travail, so man's soul is strengthened by God's word when it is rooted therein, that it fail not from the love of God, in tribulations, or in any anguish.

And therefore, we here ask of our heavenly Father the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, the gift of strength, which armeth God's knight,\* and maketh his soul hardy and strong to suffer divers diseases for God's love. And as the soul passeth the body in worthiness, so this food of the soul passes bodily food. And if he were a cursed man that withheld bodily bread from his brother after the flesh, when he saw him about to perish, how much more are

they accursed, who should feed souls that are on the point of perishing with God's word, and do not. And since this, which is the true food for the soul, hath been withdrawn for many days, through pride, covetousness, ignorance, and lustful living of those who should be teachers, and through unwholesome lore, and leasings\* of covetous flatterers, therefore let us pray heartily to Jesus Christ, the true bishop of our souls, that he ordain true teachers for his people, to break to them the bread of God's word, and to warn them of their sins, telling them the very truth of God. And that He who inspired the holy prophets with knowledge and wisdom, and taught the apostles the way of all truth, may enlighten our hearts with understanding of his lore, and grant us grace to work thereafter. And as we each day need this food of body and of soul, therefore let us meekly pray our heavenly Father that he give us our each day's bread to day.

V. The fifth is said in these words, *And forgive thou us our debts, as we forgive to our debtors.* By this wise instruction of Jesus Christ, malicious and revengeful wretches may know that they are in the way to hell as long as they dwell in their accursed malice. For by these debts are understood sins which we do against God. And as we sin each day, therefore each day we need to pray to God for forgiveness of our sins. Therefore, St. Cyprian saith, He that is commanded to pray each day for sins, is taught that he sinneth each day. Our Father teacheth us to ask forgiveness of our sins which we have done against him; upon this condition he forgiveth all that we have trespassed against him, that we forgive all others that have trespassed against us. And therefore he that beareth wrath, or desireth vengeance against his fellow christian, in this prayer prayeth God to take vengeance upon himself, as he doth, or as it in his will to do upon his fellow christian. St. John Chrysostom saith, "He that keepeth enmity against any man, lieth when he saith this prayer; for he saith, I forgive, and he forgiveth not; and so he asks forgiveness of God, and it shall not be forgiven to him."

It is not need for thee to forgive debts to each debtor of money, only to him that cannot pay. To him that will not pay, but chides and makes open debate, if thou doest mildly and easily, that money due to thee may be yielded



to thee, proposing not so much the winning of money as the amending him that hath whereof to pay; then not only thou shalt do no sin, but thou shalt profit that man.

St. Augustine saith, "Each sinful man is in great debt to God, which debt he is not able to pay. For though a man should live ever so long, he might not do sufficient penance for one deadly sin, if God used him strait and not in merciful judgment."\*

But take good heed how thou sayest this prayer, when thou sayest, *Forgive us our misdeeds as we forgive them that have trespassed to us.* If one member of thy body chance to hurt another, he that is hurt revengeth not himself therefore. We are members of Jesus Christ, if we are true christian men, as the apostle saith. Therefore we should love each other, and those who do not so are man-slayers, and condemn themselves, as holy writ saith.

In this prayer we ask of God a gift of the Holy Ghost, that is called a gift of knowledge, and which maketh a man to bethink himself well, and to be wise in soul. The Spirit showeth to man what he is, and what peril he is in, and when so he came, and whither he goeth, and what he hath done, and what he hath lost, and what he should have done. And when he seeth that he hath not whereof to make good for his sins against God, then this Spirit maketh him weep and lament, and cry mercy of God; and to cast away ire and wrath, and all other such; and to hold himself the foulest and worst of all others. For this Spirit teacheth man what pain and sorrow Christ suffered for him, and in whom never was spot of sin; how he sweat blood and water, how he was bound to a pillar and wounded from the head to the feet; how he was crowned with thorns, how he was nailed hand and foot, and his heart opened with a spear. And yet in all these hideous pains, as a sheep under the hand of his shearer, he was still without murmuring, as the prophet said of him. And he meekly prayed to his Father for his enemies, saying, *Father forgive them their guilt, for they know not what they do.* This should move all christian men to forgive all trespasses, and to pray meekly, both for enemies and for friends, saying, *Fair Father, forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us.*

\* This plainly shows that by penance Wickliff meant scriptural repentance, not the bodily penances of the church of Rome.

VI. The sixth asking follows in these words, *And lead us not into temptation.* We pray not that we be not tempted, for no man can be proved without temptation; but we pray that God lead us not into temptation, that is, that he suffer us not to fall into such temptations as we may not suffer. For God, by himself, leadeth no man into temptation, but he suffereth him to be led whom he forsaketh from his help, as St. Augustine saith.

Temptation profits much to man that withstandeth; for a man that is not tempted is not known, either to himself, or to others, whether he is good or evil. But when he is assayed and tempted, then it shall be known what he is. And therefore, St. Gregory saith, that in time of ease, when man is not tempted, it is not known which is a good man, which is evil.

Also temptation that is withstood, increases man's merit in bliss, and therefore saith the Holy Ghost by St. James, That man is blessed that suffers temptation, for when he is proved true in withstanding sin, he shall receive a crown of life, which God hath promised to all those that love him. He is led into temptation, who, through his own unkindness and evil living, is left from the grace and help of God; for such a one shall fall with each blast of his enemy. And therefore, in this prayer we beseech our heavenly Father, since he is true and suffers no man to be tempted more than he may withstand, as the apostle saith, that he, through help and grace of the Spirit of pity, keep our hearts in temptation, that we consent not to any sin. And as we prayed him, in that other asking, that he forgive our before-done sins, so we pray him here, that he keep us from consenting to sins that are to come hereafter, that we fall not again.

Temptation makes a good man more meek and fearful, and makes him to know himself and his frailness; and it makes him to know the strength of his enemies, and their sleights; and how true God is at need, to help his servants. Here we are taught to subdue sloth, and to be busy to purchase help of God, by devout prayer; to withstand sin in time of temptation; and to keep from fleshly lusts that bring men to many great sins. For our fighting is as nought without his help. Each temptation that man hath, cometh to him by some thought and enticing of one of his spiritual enemies, either of the flesh, of the world, or of the fiend. Therefore let each man examine

the thoughts and enticings that come into his heart, and espy whether they will draw him into any sin, or unlawful lust or liking. And if they are thereabout, turn he his thought from them, and meditate upon the bitter pains, sufferings, and wounds, in hands, head, and body, feet and side, which Christ suffered to wash us from our sins. And cease he not to pray devoutly, having his heart and thought upon Christ, and upon his peculiar pains, till his temptation pass away. For temptation overcomes not the man that hath stedfast mind upon Christ and his pains. No man shall be crowned in bliss but he that overcometh, as St. Paul saith, and no man can overcome unless he have something against which he shall fight. Therefore whoso is tempted, be he true in fighting, so shall he overcome, and win a seat in bliss with Christ, and have a crown of life that never shall fade, which is promised of God to all them that truly fight, withstanding sin and unlawful likings, as it is written in the book of Revelation.

When we feel no temptation, let us humble ourselves the more to God, for he knoweth our frailness, and defends us. And if we are proud, or have vain glory thereof, he withdraweth his help, and therefore we perish. Also we should be afraid when we feel no temptation, lest the reason of our souls be dead through some secret deceit. For St. Gregory saith, that a man is most tempted when he least feels temptation. Therefore pray we heartily to God, that he suffer us not to be overcome in temptation.

VII. *But that he through his great mercy deliver us from all evil.* For this is the last prayer of the pater-noster. Here we pray God to deliver us from the evil of pain which we have deserved through sin before done, and from the evil of sin at the present time of our life, and from the evil of pain that shall come for sin after this life. Here also we seek deliverance of all evils of body, which either hinder, or will hinder, the soul from serving God. St. John Chrysostom saith, that Christ here calleth "evil" the fiend, for the abundance of his malice. This malice is not naturally, but of free choice, and because he hath enmity towards us which may not be appeased. Therefore Christ said, Deliver us from evil, that we be delivered from sin and from the fiend. No man is truly delivered from sin unless God deliver him.

But the worst sin of all, is sin against the Holy Ghost, for as Christ saith, that shall not be forgiven. Therefore especially let us pray to God, to deliver us from this evil. That man sinneth against the Holy Ghost, who to his life's end, is a rebel against God, and so dieth in despair, and goeth to pain for ever. And he is a rebel against God, who rebels against his commandments. And therefore Christ saith, He that is not with him is against him. And in another place he saith, He that loveth not me, keepeth not my words. And thus every man who is contrary to Christ's teaching is a rebel against God, and loveth him not. For he saith himself, that whoso loveth him shall keep his word. And the wise man saith, He that turneth away his ear, that he hear not God's word, his prayer shall be accursed, and St. Paul saith, He is cursed that loveth not Jesus Christ. Therefore pray we to God, that he deliver us from this evil will, and rebellion against his word, and from all other evils.

*Amen.*

Amen, that is, So be it. This word knitteth together all the prayers that went before, as if it were said, Sweet Father, that art in heaven, be all these things that we have asked, fulfilled in us and in all others. Here we ask for the Spirit of the holy fear of God, through which we may withstand all the evil of sin. And therefore saith the Holy Ghost, The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. And in another place it is written, that through the fear of God each man turneth from evil; that is, each man who truly feareth God, fleeth from sin.

There is much more understood in this holy prayer than is declared here. For St. Augustine saith, that whatever is found in all the words of holy prayers, is contained in this prayer of the Lord. And therefore, let each man that thinketh to be saved do his utmost to love God above all things, and his fellow christian as himself, and so he shall be made worthy to be heard of God in his prayer, and to be delivered from all evil, and to come to everlasting rest of bliss. Thither may He bring us, who bought man with his heart's blood. Amen.

## OF PERFECT LIFE ;

OR,

## THE COUNSEL OF CHRIST.

CHRIST, not compelling, but freely counselling each man to perfect life, saith thus, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take his cross and follow me, Luke ix. Then let us forsake ourselves, such as we have made us in doing sin, and dwell we such as we are made by grace. If a proud man be converted to Christ, and is made meek, he hath forsaken himself. If a covetous man ceaseth to covet, and giveth his own things, he hath denied himself. If an evil liver changeth his life, he hath denied himself. The cross of Christ is taken when despisings for the love of truth are not forsaken, but taken ;—when the flesh is punished by abstinence, and when compassion and pity towards our neighbour is truly kept ; when man is crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him, setting the joy thereof at nought. (Wickliff enforces these doctrines by further arguments very similar to those which he has used in other pieces, and proceeds,)—

But let us not make so sure of the Lord's mercy, that we heap sins upon sins ; neither say we while youth endureth, Let us follow our desires, and at the last, in age do penance for our sins, for the Lord is merciful, he shall not have mind of our sins.—Lord Jesus, turn us to thee, and then we shall be turned. Heal thou us, and we shall be truly whole. For without thy grace and help no man may be truly turned or healed. For they are but scorers who to-day turn to God, and to-morrow turn away. What is turning to God ? None but turning from the world, from sin, and from the fiend. What is turning from God ? None but turning to the changeable goods of this world, to pleasing likeness of creatures, to works of the fiend, and to lusts of the flesh. To be turned from the world, is to set at nought, and to put out of mind, all likings, joys, and mirths thereof, and to suffer meekly all bitterness, slanders, and troubles thereof, for the love of

Christ ; and to leave all occupations unlawful and unprofitable to the soul, so that man's will and thought be dead to seek any thing that the world seeketh and loveth.

Therefore the prophet speaketh in the person of souls perfectly turning to God, saying, Mine eyes, that is, my thought and intent, shall ever be to God. For he shall draw my feet, that is my soul and my affections, out of the snare, and the net of the love of this world. He that is truly turned to God, fleeth from vices, beholdeth not the solaces or comforts of this world ; but setteth his mind so stedfastly on God, that he well nigh forgetteth all outward things ; he gathereth himself all within ; he is reared up wholly into Christ.

Those that will turn truly to Christ must flee occasions, words, sights, and deeds, exciting to sin. For when the fiend seeth one among a hundred who withstandeth his enticings, and turneth to God, and followeth the steps of Christ, by virtues, despising the joys of this present life, and seeking to love everlasting heavenly things, he findeth a thousand frauds to beguile and trouble, and a thousand manner of temptations to cast him down from God's love to the love of the world. And he beginneth at the least, that by foul thoughts he make him to be foul towards God. He bringeth to man's mind the lusts which he hath used before, and telleth to his thought that he may not leave all his worldly and fleshly likings ; and saith, It is too hard for a man to put himself from all present mirth. He stirreth up fantasies, and vain thoughts innumerable, and unprofitable affections which before were asleep.

The fiend reareth against such a soul, slanders, back bitings, persecutions, tribulations, false challenges, false accusings of divers sins, and divers manner of hates. One time he tempteth by sharp outward diseases ; another time by false glosings and likings, and so forth. He calleth again to mind delight in things loved before. He enflameth the heart and the flesh with foul burnings. He beginneth by small enticings, and pursues to the greatest flame of wickedness. And he studieth thus busily to blow against us all manner of temptations and tribulations, by how much he seeth that by the mercy of God we are escaped out of his power. For he seeketh nothing so much as to separate a man from the holy and everlasting love of Jesus Christ, and to make him love failing things and uncleanness of this world.

OF TEMPTATION ;  
OR,  
OF VIRTUOUS PATIENCE.

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HE that is truly fed with the bread that came down from heaven, boweth not his love to those things to which the fiend enticeth. Temptations are overcome by patience and meek suffering. What is patience?—a glad and willing suffering of troubles. He that is patient, murmurs not at adversity, but rather, at all times, praises God with the prophet.

Evil men always grudge in adversities, and flee them as much as they may. For while they are unmeasurably given to visible things, they are deprived from true hope of everlasting things. They find solace or comfort only in earthly goods, for they have lost the savour of heavenly things. There is no soul of man in this world which cleaveth not either to the Creator or the creature. If he love the creature he loseth God, and goeth to death with that which he loveth. Such love in the beginning is travail and folly, in the middle it is languor and wretchedness, and in the end it is hate and pain. He that truly loveth his Maker, refuses in will and liking all things that are in the world. He hath sweetness to speak of him and with him ; to think upon his Maker is refreshing to him. He closes his outer senses lest death enter in by the windows, lest he be occupied unprofitably with any vanity. Sometimes there are reared against him despisings, reproofs, scorns, and slanders. Therefore it is needful that he take the shield of patience, and be ready to forget and to forgive all wrongs, and to pray for the turning to good of them that hate him and hurt him. No man is showed to himself whether he be strong or feeble, unless he be tempted when he is at peace. Many men seem to be patient when they are not impugned, but when a light blast, I say not of injustice, but of correction, touches them, their mind presently turns into bitterness and wrath, and if they hear one word against their will, they yield two more sternly again. Into their council come not, O my soul ! The darts of the enemy are to be quenched with the meekness and sweetness of the love of Christ. Give not way to

temptation, be it ever so grievous. For the greater the battle the more glorious the victory, and the higher the crown. Blessed is the man that suffereth temptation, for when he is proved to be true, he shall take a crown of life. Flee as much as thou canst the praising of men. Despise favour, worship, and all vain glory, and gladly sustain or suffer enmities, hates, backbitings, or reproofs. And so by evil fame, and by good praise; by tribulations and gladnesses, cease thou not to press forward to heavenly kingdoms.

When thou art tempted or troubled, think upon the remedy that our Saviour saith in his gospel, Watch ye and pray ye, that ye enter not into temptation. He saith not, Pray ye that ye be not tempted. For it is good and profitable to good men to be tempted and troubled, as is shown by what the prophet saith, To him that is tempted and troubled, God saith, I am with him in tribulation; I shall deliver him, and shall glorify him. Let no man think himself to be holy because he is not tempted, for the holiest and highest in life have the most temptations. How much the higher a hill is, so much is the wind there greater; so, how much higher the life is, so much stronger is the temptation of the enemy. God playeth with his child when he suffereth him to be tempted, as a mother rises from her much beloved child, and hides herself, and leaves him alone, and suffers him to cry, Mother, mother, so that he looks about, cries and weeps for a time, and at last when the child is ready to be upset with troubles and weeping, she comes again, clasps him in her arms, and kisses him, and wipes away the tears. So our Lord suffereth his loved child to be tempted and troubled for a time, and withdraweth some of his solace and full protection, to see what his child will do; and when he is about to be overcome by temptations, then he defendeth him, and comforteth him with his grace. And therefore, when we are tempted, let us cry for the help of our Father, as a child cries after the comfort of its mother. For whoso prayeth devoutly, shall have help oft to pray, and profits much to establish the heart in God, and suffers it not to bow about, now into this, and now into that. The fiend is overcome by busy and devout prayer, and becomes as feeble and without strength to them that are strong and persevering in devout prayers. Devout prayer of a holy soul, is as sweet incense which driveth away all evil savours, and enters up by odour of sweetness into the presence of God.



## THE

## CHARTER OF OUR HEAVENLY HERITAGE.

EVERY wise man that claims his heritage, asks great pardon, keeps busily, and oft has mind upon the charter of his challenge.\* Therefore, let each man learn to live virtuously, and keep, and have mind upon the charter of heaven's bliss, and study stedfastly the meaning of this decree, for the pardon thereof shall endure without end.

Understand well that the charter of this heritage, and the bull† of this everlasting pardon, is our LORD JESUS CHRIST, written with all the might and virtue of God.

The parchment of this heavenly charter is neither of sheep nor of calf, but it is of the body of our Lord Jesus, a lamb that never was spotted with spot of sin. And there never was skin of sheep or of calf so sorely and so hard strained upon the tenter or harrow of any parchment maker, as the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ, for our love, was strained and drawn upon the cross. No man ever heard from the beginning of the world until now, nor shall hear from hence to doomsday, that a writer ever wrote upon sheep skin or upon calf-skin, with such hard and hideous pens, so bitterly, so sorely, and so deeply, as the accursed Jews wrote upon the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ, with hard nails, sharp spear, and sore pricking thorns, instead of their pens. They wrote so sorely and so deep, that they pierced his hands and feet with hard nails. They opened his heart with a sharp spear. They pressed upon his head a crown of sharp thorns. The wounds upon that blessed body are the letters with which our charter was written, by which we may claim our heritage, if we live rightly, and keep the charter stedfastly in mind.

The sentence and understanding written within and without this blessed charter, and body of Jesus Christ, is our belief. For he is the coffer, in whom is inclosed and locked all this treasure of knowledge, and wisdom of God. Upon this blessed charter was written wailing, or mourning, and sorrow. Wailing or mourning for sorrow of our sins—for the

\* The title to what he claims.

† The infallible decree.

which to be healed and washed away, Christ, God and man, must suffer such hard and painful wounds. Upon Christ's body, that is our heavenly charter, was written joy and singing, to all those that perfectly forsake their sins. For they have full medicine and help, by virtue of the bitter wounds and precious blood of Jesus. And upon the wounds of Jesus, may be read sorrow to all them that for false liking, and lust which endureth but a while, bind themselves to sin and serving of the fiend, and lose the help of the heavenly charter, and so lose their heritage, and go blindly to sorrow that endureth for ever.

The laces\* of this heavenly charter are the promises of God; and that God may not lie, for he is sovereign truth. The first, is his promise, that what day or hour a sinful man or woman leave their sin, wholly, and heartily, with bitter sorrow, and turn them to him, he shall receive them to his mercy. But let each man beware that he tarry not too long, lest for his unkindness, grace be taken from him. The second, is the full trust we have that God may not lie, neither be false of his promise. And herein depends surely our trust of our heritage. By these two hang the seal of our charter, sealed with the blood of the Lamb, even Christ. That is Christ's flesh taken of the virgin Mary, more marvelously, than ever any bee engendered the wax of flowers of the field.

The print of this seal is the form of our Lord Jesus hanging for our sin on the cross. He hath his head bowed down, ready to kiss all those that truly turn to him. He hath his arms spread abroad, ready to embrace them. He is nailed fast, hand and foot, to the cross, for he will dwell with them, and never go away from man, but man forsook him first through sin. He hath all his body spread abroad, to give himself wholly to us, cleaving to him, and he hath his side opened, and his heart cloven for our sake, so that without hinderance we may creep into Christ's heart, and rest there by stedfast belief and hearty love.

This charter no fire can burn, nor water drown, nor thief rob, nor any creature destroy. For this scripture the Father of heaven hath hallowed or made stedfast, and sent it into the world, which scripture may not be undone, as the gospel witnesses. This scripture is our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the charter of our heritage of heaven. Lock not

\* The strings by which the seal is appended to a charter.

this charter in thy coffer, but set it, or write it in thine heart, and none of the creatures, either in heaven, or on earth, or in hell, can steal it, or bereave it from thee; but if thou govern thyself from assenting to sin, and keepest well this charter in the coffer of thine heart with good living and devout love, lasting to thine end—as trustily and truly as he is true God, by virtue of this charter, thou shalt have thine heritage of bliss, enduring without end.

Therefore, haste we to repentance, as Augustine bids, and let the last day be often before our eyes. Refrain we our bodies from vices and evil covetings, and ever let our heart think heavenly things, that when we shall come thither we may fully use heavenly goods. For why? We believe that when our soul shall be unknit from the bond of flesh, if we have lived well and rightly before God, the companies of angels shall bring us to worship the true Doomsman.\*

If we live, as I said, and do those things that are pleasing to God, then peace shall be our compass† and security. Then we shall not dread the fiery darts of the devil, nor any manner of enemy that desires to hurt our souls. The flesh shall no more be adversary to the spirit, nor shall we dread any perils. Then the Holy Ghost shall give to us a dwelling in heavenly things, and we, glad and joyful, shall abide the day of doom to come, in which the souls of all men shall receive for their deeds. Then sinners and unpi-teous men shall perish. Ravenous and greedy men, proud men and adulterers, wrathful and covetous men, cursers and forsworn men, in vain shall weep most bitterly, and shall not get forgiveness of their evils, who left not their sins with bitter sorrow in their life. In most wailing shall they behold, who serve unlawful lusts of their flesh. And they shall be in mourning and everlasting sorrow who served vices and unreasonable desires. And when all these shall deserve to be sentenced to the fire of hell for their sins and their great trespasses, so, if we please God while we are here in body, we shall have everlasting reward with saints. Therefore let us despise all things that are vain and failing, that we may receive great glory of Christ, doing mercy. Therefore turn we away from vices and go we to virtues, nor let superfluous words come out of our mouths, for we shall yield reckoning for idle words in the day of doom. Neither accustom we our tongues to curse any man; which tongues are formed to bless and praise

\* Judge.

† A circle around us

God in all things. Whatever is unmeasured,\* maketh dissolution of the soul, and negligence concerning the Lord's commands. Neither does he readily call his trespass to mind, and so, forgetting himself, he stirs not himself to penance, and so by little and little he goes from goodness, and he shall not have true compunction of heart where unlawful covetings dwell. But where sorrow shall truly be, the spiritual fire is kindled, which lighteth the inward parts of the soul and showeth to it heavenly things.

Therefore, use thou the fellowship of perfect men, and turn not away thine ears from their words. For the words of men that fear God, are words of life and holiness of soul to them that hear and perceive them. As the sun rising, driveth away the mist, so the teaching of holy men casteth away the darkness from our hearts.

I beseech you, shun proud men, envious men, backbiters, liars, forsworn men, and men despising their salvation, who are dead to virtues, and joy in their own lusts, and want God's joy. I speak not only of those that are in thy house, but wherever thou shalt hear such, shun them, and come thou not with such men if thou canst not dissuade them from their error. For by one sickly sheep all the flock is defiled, and a little portion of gall turns much sweetness into bitterness. For though a man seem to thee clean in clothing, and noble in bringing forth sweet words, nevertheless if he doeth the contrary works, his feignings hurt more than his figure or his words can please.

And every work that thou thinkest to do, first think thou in God, and examine diligently if that thou thinkest is of God; and if it be rightful before God, perform it, or else cut it away from thy soul. And likewise be aware of each wickedness and sin, in word and deed, in thought, in hands, in feet, in sight, and in hearing, and keep we our body and our soul.

For Jesus Christ our Lord God, the Son of God the Father, that came down from heaven to earth, he was lifted up on the cross, and died for us sinners, to deliver us from the tormenting of the devil. He suffered pain to deliver us from everlasting pain. He suffered death to deliver us from death. He again arose from death, that we should again rise in body and soul in the last day of the great doom. And therefore it is said of the first church, that one heart, one will, and one soul is in them to the Lord. For the charity and love of Christ hath

joined them in one ; and so must all christian men and women if they will be saved. But fleshly men and women, and lovers of this world, are parted against themselves and separated, moving slanders each to the other, strifes, wraths, chidings, dissensions, manslaughters, forswearings, thefts, rapines, licentiousness, drunkenness, and all things which the world and the flesh loveth ; according to what the apostle saith, He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption. In such flesh it is that the devil soweth his seed. Our flesh indeed would ever be mighty in malice, but in abstinence and fastings, watchings and prayers, and good works, it feigns itself to be sick. But the flesh coveteth, and it ever showeth evil enticing. The flesh stirreth venomous doings, the flesh calleth for wrath, the flesh stirreth murder, the flesh stirreth adultery, the flesh sitteth in drunkenness, the flesh coveteth all of this world, and the flesh desireth all evils.

Oh, thou wretched flesh ! not only thou slayest thyself, but also the soul. Thine own loss suffices thee not, but also thou desirest that thy soul be drowned in hell. Wo to thee, soul, which hast taken the flesh contrary to thee, which neither entereth nor suffereth thee to enter into the kingdom of God. Wherefore, as Christ saith, it behoveth to wake and to pray, Lord, make thou my soul to have glory in THEE ; that vain glory and boasting come not out of me ; but that the bitterness of sin be assuaged.

Also, Lord, give me grace to hold righteousness in all things ; spiritual hardiness and temperance, and make simpleness to be prudent within me, that I lead cleanly blessed life, and prudently flee evil. And that I may understand the treacherous and deceitful falseness of the devil, lest he beguile me under the likeness of goodness, make me mild, well-willing, peaceable, courteous, and temperate, and to accord goodness without feigning, unto all. And make me stedfast and strong, in wakings, in fastings, in prayers. And also, Lord, give thou to me, to act in mildness, that I be silent in words, that I speak what be- seemeth, and that I speak not that which it is not right to speak. Give me grace to keep the faith unspotted without any errors, and that my works henceforth be worthy. All this sentence saith Augustine.

## THE ARMOUR OF HEAVEN,

OR,

## OF GHOSTLY BATTLE.\*

ALMIGHTY God saith by holy Job, that all man's life upon earth is fighting, that is battle against spiritual enemies and sin. St. Paul saith, Clothe yourselves in the armour of God, that ye may stiffly stand against temptations and deceits of the fiend. Man's body is as a cloth with which his soul is hid ; and as a horse that bears his master through many perils. And to this horse, that is, man's body, belong many things, if he will bear his master aright out of perils. For no knight can securely fight against his enemy, unless his horse be obedient to him ; no more can the soul fight against the wiles of the fiend, if the flesh, which is his horse, live in lusts and likings at his own will.

For holy writ saith, He that nourisheth his servant, that is, his body, delicately or lustfully, shall find him rebel when he least expecteth. As soon as man begins to live wisely, and flees divers lusts and likings, and vanities, which he before used and loved, and bows himself under the yoke of God's holy doctrine, then his enemies begin to contrive by wiles, frauds, and temptations, to make him fall. And therefore it is needful that his horse be meek, and helping his master to overcome his enemies. For if the soul and the body be well agreed together, and either of them helps the other in this spiritual contest, the fiend shall soon flee and be overcome. For holy scripture saith, Withstand ye the fiend, and he shall flee from you.

But it were great folly for any man to fight upon an unbridled horse, and if the horse be wild and ill taught, the bridle must be heavy, and the bit sharp, to hold him again. And if the horse be easy and obedient to his master, his bridle shall be light and smooth also. This bridle is called abstinence, with which the flesh shall be restrained, that he have not all his will, for he is wild and wilful, and loth to bow to goodness. With this bridle his master shall restrain him, to be meek and bow to his will. For if he will fight without a bridle upon him, it is impossible but that he fall.

\* The spiritual contest.

But this bridle of abstinence should be led by wisdom, so that nature be holden by strength, and the wildness of the flesh be restrained by this bridle. For else his horse will fail at the greatest need, and harm his master, and make him lose his victory.

This bridle must have two strong reins, by which thou mayest direct thy horse at thy will ; also they must be even, and neither pass the other in length. For if thou drawest one faster than the other, thy horse will glide aside, and go out of his way. Therefore, if thy horse shall hold the even way, it behoves thee to draw the reins of thy bridle even. The one rein of thy bridle is too loose, when thou sufferest thy flesh to have his will too much, in eating and drinking, in speaking, in sleeping, in idle standing or sitting, and vain tale telling, and all other things that the flesh desires beyond measure and reason. The other rein of the bridle is held too strait when thou art too stern against thine own flesh, and withdrawest from it that which reason would that it should have. Whoso straineth either of these reins uneven, will make his horse glide aside and lose his right way. If thou sufferest thy flesh to have its full liking, he that should be thy friend becomes thy decided foe. If thou withholdest therefrom that which it ought to have to sustain its nature, as its need requires, then thou destroyest its strength and its might, so that to help thee as it should it may not. Therefore sustain thy horse, that he faint not, nor fail at thy need. And withdraw from him that which might turn thee to folly.

Yet thy horse needs to have a saddle, to sit upon him the more stedfastly, and seemly to other men's sight. This saddle is mansuetude\* or easiness. That is, whatsoever thou doest, be it done with good consideration ; wisely thinking of the beginning and the ending, and what may fall thereof ; and that it be done sweetly and meekly, and with mild semblance. That is, that thou mildly suffer slanders and scorns, and other harms that men do against thee, and neither grieve thyself in word nor in deed. And though thy flesh be aggrieved, keep mildness in heart, and let not any wicked words out of thy mouth or tongue, and then thou shalt be made glad. As the prophet saith, The mild and the meekly suffering shall joy for ever, who do mildly, with easiness and love, whatsoever they do ; that their outward and inward semblance and cheer, be so mild

\* Mildness or gentleness.

and lovely in word and deed, that others may be turned to good by their example. This virtue, which is called mansuetude—that is, mildness of heart and of appearance—makes man gracious to God, and seemly to man's sight, as a saddle makes a horse seemly and praiseable.

Two spurs it is needful that thou have to thy horse, and that they be sharp to prick thy horse if needful, that he loiter not in his way ; for many horses are slow if they be not spurred. These two spurs are love and dread ; which of all things most stir men to the way of heaven. The right spur is the love that God's dear children have for the lasting weal that shall never end. The left spur is dread of the pains of purgatory\* and of hell, which are without number, and never may be told out. With these two spurs prick thy horse if he be dull and unwilling to stir himself to good. And if the right spur of love be not sharp enough to make him go forward on his journey, prick him with the left spur of dread to rouse him.

Separate thy soul from thy body by inward thought, and send thy heart before, into that other land ; and do as a man would do that of two dwelling places must choose one, into which when he had once entered he must dwell world without end. Certainly, if he were wise, he would send before some of his near friends to see what these places were. Two places are ordained for man to dwell in after this life. While he is here, he may choose, by God's mercy, which he will ; but if he be once gone hence, he may not do so. For whithersoever he first cometh, whether he like it well or ill, there he must dwell for evermore. He shall never after change his dwelling, though he feel it ever so evil. Heaven and hell are these two places, and in one of them, each man must dwell. In heaven is more joy than may be told with tongue, or thought with heart ; and in hell is more pain than any man may suffer. With these two spurs awake thou thy horse, and send thy heart before, as a secret friend, to espy these dwelling places, what they are. In hell thou shalt find all that heart may hate, default of all good, plenty of all evil that may grieve any thing in body or in soul.—Hot fire burning, darkness, brimstone most offensive, foul storms and tempests, greedy devils, open mouthed as raging lions, hunger and thirst that never

\* It has been already stated that Wickliff's views were not clear on this point. Dr. James has however shown that they widely differed from the opinions of the church of Rome.



## *The Armour of Heaven.*

shall be quenched—there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and thick darkness. Each hateth other as the foul fiend, and ever curse the time that wrought sin. Above all things they desire to die, and they are ever dying, and fully die they never shall, but ever dying live in pain and wo. They hated death while they lived here, but now they had rather have it than all the world. Souls that are there shall be dark and dim, offensive and loathsome to see. The bodies shall be heavy and charged with sin, so that they shall move neither body nor limb, but have all manner of wo that shall grieve them. They shall think upon no good, and have no knowledge of their pains and sins that they have wrought. And of these pains, and many more sorrows than we can tell, more shall never come.

When thou understandest that the deadly sin which thou hast wrought, and which is not amended with better thinking\* ere he go hence, shall be bought so dearly with that everlasting pain, that thou wouldest desire rather let thy skin be torn from thy flesh, and thy body hewn in pieces, than that thou wouldest wilfully do a deadly sin, this spur of dread shall make our horse awake, and bid him in an even way, and speed him fast forward, and call him ever to flee deadly sin, which is thus dearly bought and maketh man to be thus bitterly pained for ever. When thy heart hath thoroughly sought all these fearful pains which the sinful shall suffer who will not leave their sins, then send him to purgatory, and look how they shall be who shall there be cleansed.

[Wickliff then describes the sufferings of purgatory, and the pains there to be endured for the doing away such sins as are not deadly,† cautioning however thus,] Of such

\* Repentance.

† Dr. James gives the following account of Wickliff's views respecting purgatory. "It cannot be denied but that in some places of his works he speaketh of the dreadful pains of purgatory, and prayeth for the dead.—It seemeth that he was not fully grounded in his opinion whereat some of the grave doctors of the church have stumbled; or rather, that howsoever he had maintained it, upon better advice he changed his opinion, which I gather by two circumstances. First, he writes, (*De veritate Scripturæ*, p. 267.) that all the sayings of purgatory were spoken by way of commination, as it was so many pious lies to scare the people. Secondly, he divides the church into three parts, the highest are the angels of heaven, the second are 'the saints sleeping or resting in purgatory.' The third folk that shall be saved, here fighting upon earth. Of these three he saith he, and of none other, is made holy church; and surely by this division popish purgatory is thrust clean out of doors. For the

some call small sins, it is full needful to beware. For St. Augustine saith, that many venial sins draw a man to perdition as one deadly sin doth. Many drops of rain make a great flood, and water entering little and little by the ship's bottom, and not cast out, sinketh the ship at the last, as a great wave drowns it suddenly. And since God is displeased and dishonoured by each sin, each sin is full great, though some sin is called little sin in comparison of greater sin, as St. Anselm saith. Wickliff proceeds thus:—

Heretofore some that have defiled their souls with many deadly sins, and also with innumerable that are venial, oftimes for dread to offend God more, and to get forgiveness of all their sins, and to flee the pains of hell and purgatory, have forsaken all this world, and the company thereof, and have fled into desert places, to learn to love Jesus, and bewail their own sins, and other men's also. Some souls are cleansed here, and have their purgatory with fire of tribulation and persecution, meekly suffering for the truth of God, and have much trouble because they would live well. Some also are cleansed through the fire of God's love. For the love of man's soul might so fully be set on God, that God of his great grace would cleanse him in this world, so clean from each spot of sin, that after this life he should feel little or none.

And this is the right spur that should quicken thy horse to speed in his way; that thou learn to love Jesus Christ, in all thy living. And therefore send thou thy thought into that land of life, where no disease is, of no kind; neither age nor sickness, nor any other grievance. Courtesy and wisdom there must men learn, for there all villainy is shut out. And whoso goeth thither shall there find a gracious fellowship; the orders of angels, and of all holy saints, and the Lord above them, who gladdeneth them all. There is plenty of all good, and want of all things that may grieve. There are fairness and riches, honour and joy that each man may feel; love and wisdom that ever shall last. There is no disease that men suffer here; as hypocrisy or flattery, nor falsehood, envy, and ire. Thence are banished thieves and tyrants, cruel and greedy men that pillage the poor, proud men and boasters, covetous and beguilers, slothful and licentious, all such are banished out of that pure land.

little rest and less sleeping there, if we believe them that have (feigned to) come from thence, and have told us so. And by this reason, if the fire of purgatory be clean put out, the smoke of it, that is prayers for the dead, must needs in a very short time vanish away."

For there is nothing that men may fear, but liking and joy and mirth at will, melody and song of angels, bright and lasting bliss that never shall cease. Man's body there shall be brighter than the sun ever was to man's sight.—As the light of the sun suddenly flees out of the east into the west, so shall the blissful, without any travail, be where they like. And though they were sick and feeble while they lived here, they shall be so strong there, that nothing shall move against their will. They shall have such great freedom that nothing shall be contrary to their liking. The saved bodies shall never have sickness, nor anger nor grievance. Also they shall be filled with joy in all their senses; for as a vessel that is dipped in water or other liquor, is wet within and without, above and beneath, and also all about, and no more liquor can be within it, even so shall those that are saved, be full filled with all joy and bliss. Also they shall have endless life in the sight of the Holy Trinity, and this joy shall pass all other. They shall be in full security, that they never fail of that joy, nor be put out thereof. They shall also be filled with wisdom; for they shall know all that is, and was, and shall be. They shall have full knowledge of the Holy Trinity; the might of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the goodness of the Holy Ghost. For in the sight of the blessed face of God, they shall know all things that may be seen of any creature. For as Augustine saith, They shall see him, both God and man, and they shall see themselves in him also. All things that are now hid from man, he shall then see and know. They shall also have perfect love to each other, for every one shall accord with the other's will. And these joys and many more than any tongue of man can fully tell, shall those have that shall be saved, both in body and soul, after the day of doom.

This is the right spur, which should stir men joyfully to love Jesus Christ, and to hasten in the heavenly way. For so sweet is the bliss there, and so great withal, that whoso might taste a single drop thereof, should be so rapt in liking of God, and of heavenly joy, and he should have such a languishing to go thither, that all the joy of the world should seem pain to him. This love should move such a man to live more virtuously, and to flee sin, a hundred fold more than any dread of the pain of purgatory or of hell. For perfect love putteth out all dread, and cleanseth the soul from filth, and maketh it to see God, and to flee oft to heaven by desire, hoping to dwell there, world without end.

## TO LOVE JESUS.

WHOSOEVER thou art that arrayest thyself to love God, if thou wilt neither be deceived nor deceive, if thou wilt be saved and not fail, if thou wilt stand and not fall, study to have this name Jesus constantly in mind. If thou doest so the enemy shall fall, and thou shalt stand, the enemy shall be enfeebled, and thou shalt be strengthened—therefore seek this name, Jesus, hold it and forget it not. Nothing so quenches flames, restrains evil thoughts, cuts away venomous affections, or alienates from us vain occupations.

This name, Jesus, truly held in mind, rooteth up vices, planteth virtues, bringeth charity or love to men, getteth men savour of heavenly things, wasteth discord, informeth peace, giveth everlasting rest, or doeth away heaviness of fleshly desires. All earthly desires, all earthly things, it turneth into heaviness. It filleth those that it loveth with spiritual joy; so that worthily it may be said, All shall be glorified in thee, that love thy name, for thou shalt bless the righteous. The righteous deserveth to be blessed, for he hath truly loved this name, Jesus. He is called righteous, because he seeks earnestly to love Jesus. What can fail to him who unceasingly covets to love Jesus? He loveth and he desireth to love, for thus we know the love of God to stand; for the more we love, the more we covet to love.

It is said, They that eat me shall not hunger, and they that drink me, shall not thirst. Therefore the love of Jesus by itself is delectable and desirable. Therefore no joy shall fail those that covet earnestly to love him whom angels desire to behold. Angels see him always, and ever desire to see him; for they are so full filled that their filling doeth not away their desire, and they desire so that their desire doeth not away their fullness. This is full joy, this is glorious joy. Therefore all men shall be glorified that love thy name.—If they loved not, they should not be glorified, and those that love most, shall joy most. For of love proceedeth joy, therefore he that loveth not shall for ever be without joy.

Therefore many caitiffs\* think to joy with Christ, but as they love not his name, Jesus, they shall sorrow without end, whatever they do. And if they give all things that they have to poor men, unless they love this name

\* Wretched beings.

Jesus, they shall labour in vain. For only such shall be gladdened in Jesus who have loved him in this present life. Those that defoul him with vices and foul thoughts, and turn not again, there is no doubt but they are put out from the glory of God. Therefore he shall not see the glory of God, that hath not joyfully loved this name Jesus.

Be the wicked man done away that he see not the glory of God—righteous men seek glory and life, and they find it in Jesus whom they loved. I went about by coveting and riches, and I found not Jesus. I went about by the swallow of lusts, and I found not Jesus. I ran by wantonness of my flesh, and I found not Jesus. I sat in company of worldly mirth, but there I found him not. I sought him in highness of myself,\* but there I found him not. In all these things I sought him, but I found him not. For he let me know by his grace that he is not found in the land of easy and soft living. Therefore I turned by another way and sought him by poverty; and I found Jesus—born into the world poor, laid in a craitch,† and wrapped in poor rags. I went by sharp sufferings, and I found Jesus weary in the way, tormented with hunger, and thirst, and cold; filled with slanders and reproofs. I sat by myself, fleeing the vanities of the world, and I found Jesus fasting in the desert, and praying by himself in the hill. I went about in penance and pain, and I found Jesus, bound fast, hand and foot, to a pillar of stone, and from the head to the feet all torn with scourges. I found Jesus hanging on the cross, fast nailed hand and foot, having gall given him to drink, and dying on the cross. Therefore Jesus is not found in riches, but in poverty; not in delicacies, but in penance; not in idle and wanton joying, but in bitter weeping and mourning; not among many, but in a lonely place; not in soft nourishing of body, but in pain of body.

In truth, an evil man findeth not Jesus; for he sees him not where he is. He enforces himself to seek Jesus in the joys of this world, where he shall never be found. O ye worldly and fleshly caitiffs,‡ ye are led away from the joy of God, and deceived with the devil's fraud, not abiding the blessed hope, nor desiring the coming of the glory of God. Worthily shall ye suffer everlasting death, for ye follow this life, which ye know shall not long be had here. Truly your eyes are blinded—the devil hath put them out;

\* Pride, high thoughts. † Crib, or manger. ‡ Wretched creatures.

for that which ye see, ye believe not. When ye behold a man dying, and yet dread not death, ye are confused or ruined, for the Lord hath despised you; ye are accursed and made abominable. All holy angels and lovers of Jesus Christ shall be full filled with great joy, when your reprobable company shall all be damned to everlasting fire. Wo be to you rich men! Wo to you proud folk! Wo to you lechers! Wo be to all willing to do sin. For your hire shall be yielded to you—torment of hell, ready for you from the beginning of the world. I know that ye must go down thither, for from your wicked customs neither joy of heaven nor torment of hell can call you. Whereto therefore say ye idly, “We shall be saved in Jesus; while ye cease not to hate him, without whom ye cannot have health?”\* Who, not loving Jesus, hopeth to be saved—truly, lacking faith, he accuses himself as under condemnation. Verily he loveth health who unweariedly keepeth the name of Jesus in himself.

I wonder not that a man, being tempted, falleth, who hath not the name of Jesus lasting in his mind. Securely hath he chosen to be in oneliness† for God, when he especially chooses this name JESUS. Truly this name cleanses the conscience, makes the heart clear and clean, and drives away fear. It gets a man warmth of love, lifts up the mind to heavenly melody, and chases away the watchful fiends.

Oh thou good name! Oh thou sweet name! Oh glorious name! Oh healthful name! Oh name to be desired! Wicked spirits may not abide thee, when they behold Jesus, either in mind, or hear him named in mouth. I sought to love Jesus, and ever the more I grew perfect in his love, so much the sweeter his name savoured to me. Therefore blessed be the name of JESUS for ever and ever, and so be it. Amen.

## OF THE LOVE OF JESUS.

ONLY Lord be tears to me as loves by day and by night. For unless a man be punished first by weepings and wailings, he may not come to the sweetness of God's love. O thou everlasting love, inflame my mind to love God, that it burn not but to his callings. O good Jesus! who shall give to me that I feel thee. Thou must now be felt and not seen. Enter into the inmost recesses of my soul; come

\* Salvation.

† Singleness of heart.

into mine heart and full fill it with thy most clear sweetness ; make my mind to drink deeply of the fervent wine of thy sweet love, that I, forgetting all evils, and all vain visions, and scornful imaginations, thee only embracing, joying I rejoice in my Lord Jesus.

Thou most sweet Lord, from henceforward pass not from me, dwell with me in thy sweetness ; for only thy presence is to me solace or comfort, and only thy absence leaves me sorrowful. O thou Holy Ghost, who inspirest where thou wilt, come into me, draw me to thee, that I despise and set at nought in my heart all things of this world. In flame my heart with thy love which shall without end burn upon thine altar. Come, I beseech thee, thou sweet and true joy ; come thou sweetness so to be desired ; come thou my beloved, who art all my comfort. True love suffers not a loving soul to dwell in itself, but draws it forth to its beloved.

There are three degrees of Christ's love, in which those that are chosen to God's love go from one to another. The first is called insuperable ; the second is inseparable ; the third is called singular. Love is insuperable when it cannot be overcome with any other affection or love, no trial or temptation—when it gladly casts down all other hindrances, and all temptations, and quenches fleshly desires. When man suffers gladly and meekly all anguish for Christ, and is not overcome with any delight or flattering, so that whether thou art in ease or in anguish, in sickness or in health, that thou wouldest not, to have all the world, anger God at any time. And blessed is the soul that is in this state ; every labour is light to him that loveth truly, neither can any man better overcome travail than by love.

Love is inseparable when man's mind is inflamed with great love, and cleaves to Christ by inseparable thought ; not suffering Christ to be any moment out of his mind, but as though he were bound in the heart, him he thinketh upon, to him with great earnestness he draweth his spirit. Therefore, when the love of Christ so groweth in the heart of the lover of God, and the despiser of the world, so that it may not be overcome of any other affection or love, then it is said to be high. When man cleaveth to Christ undepartingly, thinking upon him, forgetting him for no other occasion, then man's love is said to be inseparable and everlasting. And what love can be more or greater than this ?

The third degree of love is singular. If thou seekest or receivest any other comfort than of thy God, even though

thou lovest highly, then lovest not singularly. This degree is highest and most wonderful to attain ; for it hath no peer. Singular love is, when all solace and comfort is closed out of the heart. but the love of Jesus alone. Other delight or other joy pleases not ; for the sweetness of him is so comforting and lasting, his love is so burning and gladdening, that he who is in this degree may well feel the fire of love burning in his soul. That fire is so pleasant that no man can tell it but he that feeleth it, and not fully he. Then the soul is Jesus loving, on Jesus thinking, and Jesus desiring, only burning in coveting of him ; singing in him, resting on him. Then the thought turns to song and melody. The soul that is in this degree may boldly say, I mourn for love ! I languish to come to my loved Jesus. This degree of love cometh not of man's merit, but God giveth it freely, to whom he knoweth able thereto, and not without great grace coming before. Therefore, let no man presume farther of himself than God hath called him to. But he that most withdraws his love from the world, and from unreasonable lusts, shall be most able, and most speedily increase in these degrees of love. Those that have liking in any other things than in Jesus, and in the sweetness of his law, come not to this degree of love. In the first degree are some, in the second but few, in the third scarcely any. For the higher the living is, and the more it profits, the fewer lovers it hath ; and the fewer followers.

The apostle Paul saith, Other is the light of the sun, other of the moon, and other of the stars. And so it is of the lovers of Jesus Christ. He that is in this degree of love, desireth to be unbound of the bond of flesh, and to be in full joy with Jesus, whom he loveth. Therefore such a one in his mourning for his long abiding, may sing this song to his loved Jesus, " When wilt thou come, my Beloved, to comfort me and bring me out of care, and give thyself to me, that I may see thee and dwell with thee for evermore ? My Beloved, more than any other, when shall my heart break that I sorrow no more ? Thy love hath wounded my heart, and I am desirous to depart, I stand still mourning for one lovely to love. His love draweth me. The bond of His love holdeth me away from vain places and play, till I may get him—the sight of my Beloved who never shall go away."

In wealthe be our walkings, without noie\* or night ;  
My love is in thee lasting, and longeth to thy sight.

\* Hinderance.



Thus love moveth a soul in which it dwells, to sing of his Beloved, ever having the heart upward to the joys above. And this bringeth out love tears, languishing for joy. But this sentence savoureth not to a fleshly soul. Love is a burning desire to God, with a wonderful delight in soul. Love uniteth the lover and the beloved. Love is the desire of the heart, ever thinking on that which it loveth. Love is a stirring of the soul to love God for himself, and all other things for God. This love putteth out all other love that is against God's will. Love is a right will, turned from all earthly things, and joined to God without departing, accompanied with the fire of the Holy Ghost ; far from defouling, far from corruption, to no vice bowing, high above all fleshly lusts, ever ready to the contemplation of God ; the sun of all good affections, the health of good manners, and of the commandments of God, the death of sins, life of virtues, crown of overcomers, the arms of holy thoughts. Without love no man can please God, with it no man sinneth to death. True love clotheth the soul, and delivereth it from the pains of hell, and of foul service to sin, and from the fearful fellowship of devils. The child of the fiend it maketh the son of God, and partaker of the heritage of heaven. Therefore close thee in love as the iron closes in the redness of fire, as air doth in the sun, as the wool in the dye. The coal closes the iron so in the fire that it is all fire ; the air so in the sun that it is all light ; wool so takes the hue that it changes all to the colour.

In this manner shall a lover of Jesus Christ do. He shall so burn in love that he shall be wholly turned into the fire of love ; he shall so shine in virtues that no part of him be dark in vices.

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### OF MEEKNESS.

To any degree of true love to Jesus, no soul can attain unless he is truly meek. For a proud soul seeks to have his own will, and so shall he never come to any degree of God's love. Ever the lower that a soul sitteth in the valley of meekness, so many the more streams of grace and love come thereto. And if the soul be high in the hills of pride, the wind of the fiend bloweth away all manner of goodness therefrom. Therefore as St. Augustine biddeth, Whoso will attain to the bliss that is in heaven above, let him set

the ground of his foundation here low in meekness. Nothing more overcometh the fiend than meekness, and therefore he hateth it so much. For he may fast, he may wake, and suffer more pain than any other creature, but meekness and love he may not have, neither any of his disciples.

By two things principally, may a man know whether he is meek. If his heart be not moved, though his own will be contraried and gainsaid—and when he is despised, falsely accused, and slandered; if his will stand unmoved to desiring of revenge, and his mouth be shut from unmeek answer. For whoso is entered verily into God's love, it grieves him not, whatsoever slander, shame, or reproof he suffereth for the love of his Lord; but he coveteth and is glad that he is worthy to suffer pain for Christ's love.

Thus Christ's disciples went joying from the council of the Jews, that they were worthy to suffer despites and wrongs for the name of Jesus. For the apostle saith, All that will live meekly, and please Jesus Christ, shall suffer persecutions, and by many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. For it is given to such, not only that they believe in Christ, but also that they suffer for him. Therefore the meek lover of Christ is to be as a dead body, which, whatsoever I do or say thereto, answereth not. The prophet of God affirms that he did thus, saying, Those that sought to do me evil spake vanities and thought guiles all day; but I as deaf heard not, and was as a dumb man not opening his mouth.

By seven tokens a man may suppose that he hath the love of Christ. The first is, when all coveting of earthly things, and fleshly lusts, is slacked in him. For where coveting is, there is not the love of Christ. Then if a man have not coveting it is a sign that he hath love. The second is, burning desire of heaven. For when he hath felt aught of that savour, the more he feeleth the more he coveteth, and he that hath felt nought, desireth nought. The third token is, if his tongue be changed. That which was wont to speak of earth now speaketh of heaven. The fourth is, exercise or practising what is for spiritual good. As when a man, leaving all other things, hath good will and devotion to prayer, and findeth sweetness therein. The fifth is, when things which are hard in themselves, through love seem light to be done. The sixth is, hardiness of soul to suffer all anguishes and troubles that befall. All the other tokens suffice not without this; for he that is righteous

hateth nothing but sin; he loveth God alone, and for God; he hath no joy but in God; he feareth not, but to offend God. And all his hope is to come to God. The seventh is, joyfulness of soul when he is in tribulation, and that he love God, and thank him in all diseases that he suffers. It is the greatest token that he hath the love of God, when no wo, tribulation, or persecution, can bring him down from this love. Many love God, as it seemeth to them, while they are in ease, but in adversity, or in sickness, they grudge against God; thinking that they do not deserve so to be punished for any trespass they have done. And oftentimes some say that God doeth them wrong. All such are feigned lovers, and have not the true love of God. For the Holy Ghost saith, He that is a true friend loveth at all times.

Three principal goods come from meek suffering of sickness. It cleanseth the soul from sin before done; it keepeth from those into which it was likely to fall; it increaseth reward in bliss, and over gildeth the crown; and the longer it endureth the brighter waxeth the crown, and the soul cleaner. And in trust hereof St. Paul said that he would joy gladly in his sicknesses, that the virtue\* of Christ dwell in him.

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### OF MAN'S WILL.

EVERY deed that is praisable or reprovable of man's will, hath praising or reproving. Truly in the will is the root and beginning of all deeds which are in our power. And if we must not do the thing that we would do, each man is denied of God his own proper will. Therefore behold ye not only what ye do, but as much what ye would do. Not more what are your works than what is your will. Through just will, man is called just; and through unjust will, man is said to be unrighteous. And therefore if ye will live well, keep well your will. If ye would know whether your will be rightful, that will for certain is rightful which is undersought† to the will of God. Whosoever liveth holily and rightfully, let him not despise the worst sinners. They being tempted fall, for they have not grace to withstand, although by their own malice they turn from good to evil. No man can work well, and love God, or be chaste, unless God give it to him. Therefore thou that art blown up with pride because thou hast not done evil, because thou hast

\* Power.

† Submitted.

withdrawn thyself from fleshly lusts, and hast sustained or suffered sharp penance, and therefore hast taken praising of man's mouth; have mind that unless the goodness of Christ had kept thee in, thou shouldest have fallen into as many evils, or worse, as others have done. Not of thyself hast thou power to gainstand, but of Him of whom the prophet saith, Lord, I shall love thee for thou art my strength, my ground, my refuge, him that undertaketh for me, and my helper. Therefore, if thou hast nothing but what thou hast received, why hast thou vain joy in thyself as though thou hadst not received it?

But nevertheless, let no man be favourable to sin; for God, by his prophet, crieth to good men, and the same cry to you, Go ye away, and go ye out from thieves, and touch not unclean things. What is it to touch unclean things? It is, to consent to sins. What is it to go out thence? To do that which pertaineth to amendment of evil men. Act with meekness and peace as much as may be; as St. Augustine saith, This is to touch not the unclean thing, not to consent thereto in will. Ever be ye separated in heart from evil men. This is to commune not, to consent not; for we commune with an evil man when the fellowship of the will, or of approving, is joined to deeds.

Therefore consent ye not to evil men, that ye approve them; neither be ye negligent, that ye reprove them not; neither be ye proud, that ye reprove them not proudly. Therefore, my brethren, as many as ever ye have among you, that are yet grieved with the love of this world, avaricious men, forswearers, adulterers, beholders of jests, others that take counsel of false tellers of futurity, men given to drink and lechery, and whatever evil men ye know amongst you, reprove ye as much as ye are able, by meekness, that ye may go away unhurt; and that ye consent not to the touching unclean things. Beseech ye, and pray to God, that all such be amended and again called from their evils.

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## OF ACTIVE LIFE AND CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE.

CHRIST loved much Mary, and Martha her sister, as the gospel telleth. By Martha, who was busy to feed Christ, is understood active life; and by Mary who sat by meekness at Christ's feet, to hear his word, is understood contemplative life. Christ said not that Martha did evil in ministering,

but he blamed her that she would have drawn her sister from the more perfect life. For it is perilous for them that savour not the more perfect life, to withdraw others away, whom God calleth thereto. Christ said that Mary had chosen the better part, which should not be taken from her. For active life shall be taken away with death of body, but perfect contemplation never; for it is begun here, and it endureth more perfectly after this life.

St. Bede saith that active life is a studious servant of Christ, to be busy in just travails, and to keep the commandments of God and himself undefouled from the world, and to hold soul, hand, tongue, and all members of the body, from all filth of sin tempting them. Afterwards to help the need of neighbours, as much as he may, to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, to visit the sick, and such other, and to show the way of truth to him that erreth; to call again the proud neighbour to the way of meekness, and tell those who are with us how they must stand. And let no man enforce to pass into contemplative life, unless he have long time practised this life, for if he presume foolishly it speedeth not.

Contemplative life hath two parts, the lower consists in meditation, or thinking of holy scripture, and in other sweet thoughts of Jesus, and in sweetness of prayers. The higher part is in beholding of heavenly things, having the eye of the heart among the heavenly citizens, thinking on God, the beauty of angels, and holy souls. Contemplation is a wonderful joy in God's love, which joy is a loving of God that cannot be told. And that wonderful love is in the soul, and for abundance of joy and sweetness it ascends into the mouth; so that heart, tongue, body, and soul, joy together in God.

This gladness God sendeth into the soul that he chooseth to this life. When a man hath long practised good doing, and sweetness of prayer, and is wont to feel compunction, and to be free from occupations of this world, and hath learned to occupy the eye of the soul alone in the love of God, and hath begun in desiring earnestly a foretaste, yea, in this life the joy of everlasting bliss which he shall take in the life to come. Truly that soul which is called and chosen of God to this life, God first inspireth to forsake the world in will, and all the vanity and coveting and lusts thereof. After that, He leadeth him alone, all troubles and worldly company being forsaken, and speaketh to his heart; and as

the prophet saith, He giveth him to taste the sweetness of beginning of love, and turneth his will to holy prayers, and sweet meditations ; putting out of the heart idle thoughts and all vanities, setting it to think on him and heavenly things. Then He openeth to the eye of such a soul the gate of heaven, so that the same eye looketh into heaven, and then the fire of love enlighteneth his heart, and burning therein maketh it clean of all earthly filth ; and so, thenceforward, he is contemplative, and filled with love of a sight which he saw in heaven with the spiritual eye of his soul. But no man hath perfect sight of heaven while he liveth here, in the body ; but he that endeth in this love, as soon as he dieth, is brought before God with companies of angels, and seeth him face to face, and dwelleth with him without end.

All these sentences (opinions) foregoing, I have gathered of holy writ, and of divers saints, and doctors, and nothing of mine own head ; to show to my poor brethren and sisters what grace and love our Lord Jesus hath showed to souls in this life. For each man should ascend from one to another, as he is called of God, some in higher, some in lower, as he is enabled of God thereto. But for that, I, myself, caitiff and wretch, unworthy through divers sins before done, being beneath all these perfect points, which seem to me as far distant as from hence to heaven. Therefore I beseech all that read or hear this treatise, to pray for me to God, that he forgive my sins, and quicken my soul with grace of his heavenly treasure of love. And let us all, together, give thanks to the Holy Trinity, who thus graciously lighteneth the souls of mortal men with the beams of his heavenly grace. Blessed be the name of our Lord, into worlds of worlds. Amen.

*Here endeth the book called the Poor Caitiff.*

*At the end of one of the manuscripts of the Poor Caitiff, in the British Museum, MS. Harl. 2335, is the following note, which proves the value placed upon its contents in the days of darkness preceding the reformation, and shows one method of circulating the truth then adopted.*

"This book was made of the goods of John Gamalin, for a common profit, that the person that has this book committed to him of the person that hath power to commit it, have the use thereof for the time of his life, praying for the soul of the same John. And that he that hath this aforesaid use of commission, when he occupieth it not, leave he it for a time to some other person. Also that the person to whom it was committed for the term of life, under the foresaid conditions, deliver it to another the term of his life. And so be it delivered and committed from person to person, man or woman, as long as the book endureth."

## HOW THE OFFICE OF CURATES\* IS ORDAINED OF GOD.

*(From the MS. in the Library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge.)*

THE office of curates is ordained of God ; few do it well and many full evil, therefore test we their defaults, with God's help.†

I. They are more busy about worldly goods than virtues and good keeping of men's souls. For he that can best get riches of this world together, and have a great household, and worldly array, is held to be a worthy man of holy church, though he know not the best point of the gospel. Such a one is praised and borne up by the bishops and their officers. But the curate that gives himself to study holy writ and teach his parishioners to save their souls, and live in meekness, penance, and busy labour about spiritual things, and cares not about worldly respect and riches, is held to be a fool and destroyer of holy church. He is despised and persecuted by high priests and prelates and their officers, and is hated by other curates. This makes many to be negligent in their spiritual cures, and to give themselves to occupations and business about worldly goods. These negligent curates think but little, how dearly Christ bought man's soul with his precious blood and death, and how hard a reckoning he shall make at doomsday for those souls. They would seem to be out of christian faith—for they make not themselves ready to come thither, and to answer how they came into their benefices, and how they

\* By curate was meant any minister that has the care of souls.

† Wickliff composed three pieces, entitled, Of Prelates, For the order of Priesthood, and How the office of Curates is ordained of God. His design was to show from the authority of scripture the duties of the clergy, to expose the errors and wicked practices then so general, and to point out the evil consequences both to the people and themselves. His language in these pieces is bold and uncompromising, and exhibits a painful picture of the state of the romish priesthood at that day. The latter tract appears the most suitable for the present collection, but in copying it for the press it was not thought desirable to transcribe the whole. What is here given will be a sufficient testimony respecting many evils prevalent in the days of Wickliff, to which a large portion of his writings refer.

lived and taught, and spent poor men's goods. For if they had such a faith in their minds, they would begin a better life, and continue therein.

II. The second default is, that they run fast, by land and by water, in great peril of body and soul, to get rich benefices; but they will not knowingly go a mile to preach the gospel, though christened men are running to hell for want of knowing and keeping of God's law; and certainly here they show, indeed, that they are foully blind with covetousness, and worship false gods, as St. Paul saith.

Since they so much love worldly riches, and labour for them night and day, in thought and deed, and labour so little for God's worship and the saving of christian souls, who can excuse these covetous clerks from simony and heresy? Neither God's law, nor man's law, nor reason, nor good conscience. And let the king and his council inquire how much gold goes out of our land, for purchase of benefices, into alien's hands, and how much is given privately to men in the land. They shall find many thousand pounds.\*

III. The third default of evil curates is, that they are angels of Satan to lead men to hell; for, instead of truly teaching Christ's gospel, they are dumb, or else tell men's traditions. Instead of example of good life, they hurt their parishioners many ways—by example of pride, envy, covetousness, and unreasonable vengeance—cruelly cursing for tithes, and evil customs. And for example of holy devotion, devout prayer, and works of mercy, they teach idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, and maintaining of these sins, and many more. For since priests are called angels† in holy writ, and these curates bring not the message of God, but of the fiend, as their wicked life showeth, they are not angels of God, but of the fiend, as the true clerk Robert Grossthead‡ wrote to the pope. St. Peter was called Satan by Christ, as the gospel telleth, because he was contrary to God's will, and savoured not of heavenly things; well then are these evil curates so called, since they are

\* At that time the pope and the court of Rome exercised the chief ecclesiastical patronage in England. A large portion of the benefices were held by foreigners. In the reign of Henry III. the sums thus received by Italians were more than three times the amount of the king's revenues.

† Messengers.

‡ Grossthead, or Grosseteste, was Bishop of Lincoln in the preceding century. He strenuously opposed the corruptions of the papacy. See Hist. of the Church of Christ, cent. xiii.



more contrary to God's will, and savour less of spiritual things, and the saving of christian souls.

IV. The fourth error is, that they think more of statutes of sinful men than the most reasonable law of almighty God. For they dread the pope's law, and statutes made by bishops, and other officers, more than the noble law of the gospel. Therefore they have many great and costly books of man's law, and study them much, but few curates have the bible and expositions of the gospel, they study them but little and do them less. But would to God that every parish church in this land had a good bible and good expositions on the gospel, and that the priests studied them well, and taught truly the gospel and God's commands to the people. Then should good life prevail, and rest, and peace, and charity; sin and falseness should be put back—God bring this end to his people.

V. The fifth default is, that they practise strife and plea,\* and gather envy and hate from laymen for tythes.† They leave preaching of the gospel, and cry fast after tythes, and summon men to account, and by force take their goods, or else curse them seven foot above the earth, and seven foot under the earth, and seven foot on each side, and afterwards draw men to prison as though they were kings and emperors of men's bodies and goods; forgetting wholly the meekness and patience of Christ and his apostles, how they cursed not when men would neither give them meat, nor drink, nor harbour; but Christ blamed his apostles when they would have asked such vengeance, as the gospel of St. Luke teaches. And St. Peter biddeth to bless other men, even enemies, and not to have will to curse. Paul also teacheth that we should not do evil for evil, but overcome an evil deed by good doing.

VI. The sixth default is, that they teach their parishioners, by their deeds and life, which are as a book to them, to love and seek worldly glory, and to be careless of heavenly things. For they make themselves busy, night and

\* Law.

† Wickliff's views respecting tythes have already been noticed in his life, see p. 41.

William Russel, a Lollard, thus stated his opinions upon the subject of dymes or tythes. "Personal dymes fall not under the precepts of God's law, wherefore if custom were not to the contrary, it is lawful for Christ's people to dispose them to piteous use of poor men." Wilkins, iii. 438. See Fox's Acts and Monuments for the discussions on this subject among the Bohemian reformers.

day, to get worldly advancement, and their own worship and dignity in this world, by pleading and striving therefore. Considering it great righteousness to hold forth and maintain points of worldly privilege, and dignity; but about spiritual dignity, and high degree of heavenly bliss, they will not strive against spiritual enemies; for they strive not who shall be most meek and willingly poor, and most busy in open preaching and private counselling how men shall obtain heaven, as Christ and his apostles did. But they, like moles, remain rooting after worldly worship, and earthly goods, as though there were no life but only in this wretched world.

VII. The seventh error is, that they teach sinful men to buy hell full dear, and not to come to heaven which is proffered them for little cost. For they teach christian men to suffer much cold, hunger, and thirst, and much waking, and despising, to get worldly honour; and a little dirt by false warring, out of charity; if they bring them much gold they absolve them lightly and to think themselves secure by their prayers, and grant them a blessing.\* But they teach not how their parishioners should dispose themselves to receive gifts of the Holy Ghost, and keep conditions of charity, doing truth and good conscience to each man, both poor and rich. And if they are poor by the chances of the world, or willingly, by dread of sin, they set them at nought, and say they are cursed, because they have not much muck; and if they have much worldly goods, got with false oaths, false weights, and other deceits, they praise them, and bless them, and say that God is with them and blesseth them.

VIII. The eighth default. They shut the kingdom of heaven before men, and neither go in themselves, nor suffer other men to enter, for they shut up holy writ—as the gospel, and commandments, and conditions of charity, which are called the kingdom of heaven, by false new laws, and evil glossing, and evil teaching. For they will neither learn themselves, nor teach holy writ, nor suffer other men to do it, lest their own sin and hypocrisy be known, and their pleasurable life withdrawn. Thus they close Christ's life and his apostles' from the common people, by the keys of antichrist's judgment and censures; and they make them not so hardy as to say a truth of holy writ against their accursed

\* The great wealth acquired by some in the wars which then prevailed has been noticed in the life of Wickliff. The sufferings of the people at large, as may be supposed, were in proportion.

life, for that shall be held to be detraction and envy, and against charity ! Therefore they make the people follow their teaching, their statutes, and their customs, and to leave God's teaching ; and thereby lead them blindly to hell, and thus close the kingdom of heaven from them.

IX. The ninth error is, that they waste poor men's goods on rich furs and costly clothes, and worldly array, feasts of rich men, and in gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery. For they sometimes pass great men in their gay furs and precious clothes—they have fat horses with gay saddles and bridles. St. Bernard crieth, Whatever curates hold of the altar more than a simple livelihood and clothing, is not theirs, but other men's.\*

X. The tenth default is, that they haunt lords' courts, and are occupied in worldly offices, and do not take care of their parishes, although they take more worldly goods for them, than Christ and his apostles. Certainly it is great treachery ; for what man durst undertake to keep men who are besieged in a feeble castle by many strong enemies, and then flee into a swineherd's office, and let enemies take the castle and destroy it ? Were not this open treason ? and would not this keeper be guilty of the loss of the castle, and all men therein ? So it is of the curates and christian souls of which they take care, who are besieged by fiends, when they leave them unkept, and busy themselves in worldly offices and lords' courts. Are not these lords, who thus hold curates in their courts and worldly offices, traitors to God Almighty, since they draw away his chief knights from their spiritual battle, when and where they were most needful for this service.†

\* Chaucer, in his *Plowman's tale*, describes priests, as,

That high on horse willeth ride,  
In glitter and gold of great array,  
Y painted and portred† all in pride,  
No common knight may go so gay,  
Change of clothing every day,  
With golden girdles great and small.

(† *Set out.*)

† Chaucer thus describes the secular canons of that day.

They are curates of many towns,  
On earth they have great power,—  
And yet they serve the king also.—  
Some their churches never see,  
Nor ever a penny thither send,—  
Though that the poor for hunger die,  
A penny on them they will not spend,  
Have they receiving of the rent,  
They care not for the remanent.

XI. The eleventh error is, that they attend more to wrongful commandments of sinful men, than to the most rightful commandments of God. For if the pope or bishop send a letter to receive a pardoner to deceive the people, by grants of many thousand years of pardon, he shall be despatched;\* although if there come a true man, to preach the gospel freely and truly, he shall be hindered for wrongful command of a sinful man. And thus they put God's commandment and his rightful will behind, and put sinful man's will and wrong commandments before; and thus for their own worldly profit and bodily ease they stop their parishioners from hearing of God's law, which is food for the soul, and lead them blindly to hell. These are evil fathers who thus cruelly starve their subjects' souls, and drive them to damnation, for love of worldly muck, or bodily ease, or for dread of wretched antichrists, who are traitors to God and his people.

XII. The twelfth error is, that they despise the principal duty, which is commanded of God to curates, and busy themselves about novelties made by sinful men. For they know not to preach the gospel wisely, and they busily learn men's traditions for worldly gain, but not the gospel which Christ, God and man, taught and commanded curates to teach, as to life and death.

XIII. The thirteenth error is, that they curse their spiritual children more for the love of worldly good than for breaking God's commands. For though a man openly break God's commands, living in pride, in false ways, and in open breaking of the holy day, he shall not be summoned, nor punished, nor cursed by them; but if a man be behind of tythes and other offerings and customs made of sinful men, he shall be summoned, punished, and cursed, though he cannot live out of other men's debts, and find his wife and his children by God's commandments.

XIV. They take their worldly mirth, hawking, hunting,† and doing other vanities, and suffer wolves of hell to strangle men's souls by many cursed sins. They should

\* See § xix.

† Chaucer describes his monk,

He gave not of that text a pulled hen,  
That saith that hunters be not holy men.

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Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl of flight,  
Of riding, and of hunting of the hare,  
Was all his lust, for no cost would he spare.

draw men from worldly vanities, and teach them the perils of this life, and to think upon their death day, and be a mirror to them to mourn for their sins, and other men's, and for the long tarrying of heavenly bliss, and to continue in holy prayers, and true teaching of the gospel, and espying the fiend's deceits to warn christian men of them; but now the more a curate hath, the more he wasteth in costly feeding of hounds and hawks, suffering poor men to have great default of meat, and drink, and clothes.

XV. The fifteenth is, that they haunt taverns out of measure, and stir up laymen to drunkenness, idleness, and cursed swearing, chiding, and fighting. For they will not follow earnestly in their spiritual office, after Christ and his apostles, therefore they resort to plays at tables, chess, and hazard, and roar in the streets, and sit at the tavern till they have lost their wits, and then chide, and strive, and fight sometimes. And sometimes they have neither eye, nor tongue, nor hand, nor foot, to help themselves, for drunkenness. By this example the ignorant people suppose that drunkenness is no sin; but he that wasteth most of poor men's goods at taverns, making himself and other men drunken, is most praised, for nobleness, courtesy, goodness, freeness, and worthiness.

XVI. The sixteenth is, They will not give the sacraments of the altar, that is, Christ's body, to their parishioners, unless they pay tithes and offerings, and unless they have paid money to a worldly priest, to slay christian men. If men doubt of this, let them inquire the truth, how it was when the bishop of Norwich went into Flanders and killed them by many thousands, and made them our enemies.\* Little reckon the curates in what devotion and charity their parishioners receive Christ's body, when they openly take them up from God's board, and stir them to impatience, envy, and hate, for a little muck which they claim to themselves.

XVII. The seventeenth is, they are blind leaders, leading the people to sin, by their evil example and false deceit in teaching. For though they know not one point of the gospel, nor what they read, they will take a benefice, with

\* Wickliff here alludes to the crusade of the bishop of Norwich in behalf of pope Urban. See life, p. 33.

cure of men's souls, and neither know how to rule their own soul, nor other men's, nor will learn, nor suffer other men to teach their parishioners the gospel and God's commands truly and freely.

XVIII. The eighteenth is, They are false prophets, teaching false chronicles and fables to colour their worldly life thereby; and leave the true gospel of Jesus Christ. For they love well to tell how this or that saint lived in gay and costly clothes, and worldly array, although it is a great sin. But they leave to teach the great penance and sorrow which they did afterwards, which pleased God, and not their worldly life. And then they make the people think that worldly life of priests, and their vain costliness pleases God. And they make the people believe that a good christian man, keeping well God's law, shall be damned for a wrongful curse of a worldly priest, who is in a fiend's case. Thus they bring the people out of christian faith by their false chronicles and fables, for Christ saith, that men shall be blessed of God, when men shall curse them, and pursue them, and say all evil against them falsely for the love of Christ and his truth; and the people believe the contrary of this teaching of Christ, by the fables and saints' deeds, or lyings about saints.

XIX. The nineteenth. They assent to pardoners deceiving the people in faith, and charity, and of worldly goods, for to have part of their gathering, and they, hindering priests from preaching the gospel, for dread lest their sins and hypocrisy be known and stopped. For when there cometh a pardoner to rich places with stolen bulls, and false relics, granting more years of pardon than come before doomsday, for gaining worldly wealth, he shall be received of curates to have a part of that which he getteth. But a priest who will tell the truth to all men, without glosing, and freely, without begging of the poor people, shall be hindered by subtle cavils of man's law, for dread lest he touch the sore of their conscience and accursed life. This pardoner shall tell of more power than Christ ever granted to Peter or Paul, or any apostle, to draw the alms from poor bedridden neighbours, who are known to be feeble and poor, to get it himself, and waste it in idleness, gluttony, and lechery, and to send gold out of our land to rich lords of houses where there is no need, and make our land poor by many ways; hereby the people are more bold to live

in sin, and know not they have as much thank and reward of Christ if they do alms to poor feeble men, as he biddeth.\*

XX. The twentieth is, that a priest of good life and devout and true preaching of God's law, is despised, hated, and pursued by worldly curates; and a false priest, of worldly life and array, who suffers men to rot in their accursed sins, is loved, praised, and cherished among them; for they say that such a good priest is a hypocrite, and slandereth men of holy church, and hindereth men from doing their devotion to holy church.

XXI. The one and twentieth. They hide and maintain their sins and other men's by the protection and help of lords, that their sovereigns may not correct them, nor compel them to residence. For when there is a vicious curate, he will have letters of kings and lords to dwell in their courts, in worldly offices, and be absent from his cure, that his sovereign dare not correct him. Thus lords are made shields of sin, for a little money, or worldly service of wicked curates.

XXII. The two and twentieth is, that many of them, under colour of learning the gospel, learn statutes made by sinful men and worldly priests. When they have great benefices, peradventure by simony, and cannot teach their

\* Chaucer well describes such a pardoner :

His wallet before him on his lap,  
Brimful of pardons come from Rome all hot :—

In his mail he had a pillowbeer,  
Which, as he said, was our lady's veil ;

He said he had a gobbet of the sail  
That St. Peter had, when that he went

Upon the sea, till Jesu Christ him hent.†

(† Caught.)

He had a cross of latten full of stones,

And in a glass he had pigs' bones.

But with these relics, when he found

A poor parson dwelling in upland,

Upon a day he got him more money,

Than that parson got in months tway,

And thus, with feigned flattering and japes,‡

(‡ Tricks.)

He made the parson and people his apes.

But truly to tell at the last,

He was in church a noble ecclesiast.

Well could he read a lesson or a story

But always best he sung an offertory,

Full well he wist when that song was sung

He must preach, and well afile his tongue,

To win silver, as he well could,

Therefore he sung so merrily and loud.

The privilege of selling pardons in a district or country was usually granted to some monastic body, or for raising some ecclesiastical structure, or not unfrequently it was given to some relation or favourite of the pope; and the persons receiving these grants, disposed of them to travelling agents who retailed the pardons among the people.

subjects to save their souls, and dare not hold their lemans at home for the clamour of men, they go to the schools and fare well of meat, and drink, and rest, and study with cups and strumpets. Where good priests labour to learn God's law, they go, after a manner, to civil or canon law, but do little good thereat.

XXIII. The three and twentieth. The wisest among them mispend their skill and understanding in maintaining of sins; as pride, and covetousness of clerks, and oppressing their poor parishioners by wrong customs, for dread of plea\* and censure, and maintaining false causes and consistories, for gold; and take pensions of licentious men and women to help them to bathe in their sin as swine in the mire. Thereby, he that can crack a little latin, repeat stories of heathen men's law, and worldly priests' law, and can help to annoy a poor man by contrivances and their chapters, is held to be a noble clerk, and ready and wise, though he know not well how to read a verse in his psalter, nor understand a common authority of holy writ.† Such men despise God's law as though it were no law, and commend their own law and themselves, more than holy writ and Christ and his apostles. This maketh sin and falseness reign, and faith, truth, and charity are defouled and quenched.

XXIV. The four and twentieth is, that they put the holy law of God under the feet of antichrist and his clerks, and the truth of the gospel is condemned for error and ignorance by worldly clerks, who presume by their pride to be doomsmen of subtle and high mysteries, proving articles of holy writ, and blindly condemn truths of Christ's gospel, for they are against their worldly life and fleshly lusts, and condemn for heretics true men who teach holy writ, truly and freely, against their sins.

XXV. The five and twentieth error is, they choose laws made of sinful men, and worldly and covetous priests, to rule the people by them, as most needful and best laws; and forsake the most perfect law of the gospel and epistles, of Christ and his apostles, as not perfect, nor full enough, nor true. For now heathen men's laws and worldly clerks' statutes are read in universities, and curates learn them

\* Law proceedings.

† Nicholas de Clemangis speaks of many clergy of that day, as unable to read. He says, "What signifies it to speak of letters and learning, when we see almost all priests without any knowledge, either of things or words, nay scarce able to read even by spelling."



fast with great desire, study, and cost, but the law of God is little studied or cared about; and less kept and taught. And in this antichrist's clerks say that Christ gave not a sufficient law, or the best, for the ruling of his people, and that worldly clerks and antichrist are truer, and in more charity than Jesus Christ, since their laws are better and more needful for christian men, than the laws which Christ made! But all christian men should cry out upon this blasphemous heresy, and fully take the gospel to be their rule, and not set by these new laws but as they are expressly grounded in holy writ, or good reason, true conscience, and charity. For, as St. Paul teaches, Whoever teaches other laws is accursed of God, yea, though he were an angel of heaven.

XXVI. The six and twentieth. They magnify themselves above Christ, God and man; for they command their subjects that they judge not clerks, nor their open works, nor their teaching, but do according to their teaching, be it true or false. But our Lord Jesus Christ commanded his enemies to judge of him a rightful doom. Also he bade his enemies to believe his works though they would not believe him, and bade men not believe him if he did not the works of his Father. Also Christ bade his enemies bear witness of evil, if he had spoken evil.

XXVII. The seven and twentieth. They are antichrists, hindering christian men from knowing their belief of holy writ; for they cry openly that secular men should not intermeddle with the gospel to read it in modern tongue, but listen to their spiritual father's preaching, and do after him in all things. But this is expressly against God's teaching. For God commandeth generally, to each layman, that he have God's commands before him, and teach them to his children. And the wise man biddeth every christian man, that all his telling be in the precepts of God Almighty, and that he have his commandments ever in mind. And St. Peter biddeth christians to be ready to give reason of their faith, and to teach each man that asketh it. And God commandeth his priests to preach the gospel to each man; and the wisdom is, that all men should know it, and rule their lives thereafter. Why should worldly priests forbid secular men to speak of the gospel and God's commands? since God giveth them naturally great understanding and great desire to know God, and to love him. For the more goodness they know of God, the more they shall

love God, while worldly priests, for their own ignorance, sloth, idleness, and pride, stop christian men from knowing God, and shut up from him the gifts that God giveth him. None, from the making of the world heard higher craft of antichrist to destroy christian man's belief and charity, than is this blasphemous heresy that laymen should not intermeddle with the gospel.

XXVIII. The eight and twentieth. They deceive men in doing of penance. For they do not tell the truth how they needs must forsake all falseness or craft in oaths, and all sin, to their knowledge and power. And not wittingly or willingly to do against God's commands, either for lucre, dread, or bodily death ; else it is not real contrition, and God will not absolve them for any confession of mouth, or absolution of priests, bulls of pardons, or letters of fraternities,\* or masses, or prayers of any intercessor in earth or in heaven. They speak much of tythes and offerings in their confession ; but little of restitution, and doing of alms to poor men, but of mass-pence and church gains ; and thereby the people are brought out of belief, trusting that their sin is foregone for their priests' absolution, though they do not true penance as God himself teacheth. And hereby they magnify their own absolution more than God's forgiveness, for true contrition. When God himself declares that in the hour a sinner hath sorrow for his sin he shall be safe, they would make this word false, saying that he shall not be safe, be he ever so contrite, without absolution money is paid to them.

XXIX. The nine and twentieth. They rob christian people of the goods of fortune, the goods of nature, and the goods of grace,† by feigned censures of their own laws. For they curse so despitely if men pay not money at their liking, which they claim by sinful men's laws, new customs,

\* It was common for wealthy persons to pay considerable sums to some monastic order that they might be admitted into the fraternity, believing that they should thereby obtain salvation. Margaret, countess of Richmond, was admitted to the fraternity of five religious houses, namely, Westminster, Croyland, Durham, Wimbourn, and the Charterhouse at London. Chaucer's Jack Upland asks the friars, Why be ye so hardy to grant by letters of fraternity to men and women, that they shall have part and merit of all your good deeds, and ye know not whether God be satisfied with your deeds for your sins ? Also ye know not whether that man or woman be in a state to be saved or damned, then shall he have no merit in heaven for his own deeds, nor for any other man's.

† They deprive christian people of their property, natural abilities, and the gifts of grace.

and devotions, and not by God's law, that no man dare gainsay them in their wrong doing for fear of their curse, imprisonment, and loss of patience and charity.\* And hereby they make christian men to hold forth their wrong customs, and man's law, and not to know God's law, and the right way to heaven. Certainly, it were less cruelty to keep men from bodily meat and drink, and make them to die bodily, than to keep them from hearing the gospel and God's commands, which are life to the soul. What accursed antichrists are these worldly prelates and curates, who curse men for preaching and hearing of holy scriptures !

XXX. The thirtieth. They take not dymest† and offerings by form of the old testament, and apportion their income to all priests and ministers needful in the church. Nor according to the form of the gospel, do they take a simple livelihood, given by free devotion of the people, without constraint or curses, as Christ and his apostles did. But by the new law of sinful men, a priest claims to himself all the tythes of a great country, by worldly law, and new censures. And he neither liveth as a good priest, nor teacheth as a curate, nor giveth the residue to poor men as a good christian man ; but he wasteth it in pomp and gluttony and other sins, and hindereth true priests from doing the office enjoined to them by God Almighty. Surely it seemeth that these are not priests after God's law, but after the ordinances of sinful men, to be masters of God, and lords of christian people, since they never hold the law of God. And as to dymes taking, they take them by violence, and strong curses against men's good will, and make the people out of patience and charity by their pleading, and do not well their spiritual office.

XXXI. The one and thirtieth. That like serpents they serve busily to lords in secular offices for naught ; but in the end poison their lords by the venom of simony, which is worse than any bodily poison. And when they have a benefice with cure of souls, they still dwell in worldly offices of lords, and spend poor men's livelihood in riot and gluttony,

\* Chaucer's plowman says,  
Christ's people they proudly curse,  
With broad book, and braying bell.  
To put pennies in their purse,  
They will sell both heaven and hell—  
If thou the truth of them will tell,  
In great cursing shalt thou fall.

† Tythes.

and suffer christian men to perish in body and soul, for want of teaching and works of mercy.

**XXXII.** The two and thirtieth. They make lords and commons, by blind devotion and hypocrisy, to maintain worldly clerks, in pride, covetousness, and idleness, and false teaching of antichrist's errors ; under colour of freedom, and worshipping of holy church and God's laws. For they care much that lords and commons shall maintain God's servants in (what they say is) his service, and the laws and liberties of holy church ; and make new service pleasing to worldly men's ears, and new laws and customs for their own gain, and pride, and leave the holy law which God made for priests. Thus when lords and commons think they maintain God's priests and his law, they maintain antichrist's priests by their laws and wrong customs, and pride and other sins, instead of meekness and other virtues, and to the magnifying of men's laws and the despising of God's laws.

**XXXIII.** The three and thirtieth. They teach christian men to blaspheme God, and boldly to war against him. For they teach christian men to maintain men's laws and ordinances, as better and more needful than the holy law of Christ and his ordinances. And they declare that if christian men maintain the multitude of worldly clerks in their new laws, and customs, and liberties, they shall have God's blessing and prosperity, peace, and rest, by so many devout priests, secular and religious, praying, reading, and singing, night and day. And if they will bring priests out of this glorious life and new song, by meekness and spiritual poverty, with busy travail in learning and preaching of the gospel, as Christ and his apostles did, they shall be cursed, and have war and mischief, both in this world and the other. This makes the blind people to war against God and his ordinances, and to pursue his teachers as heretics.

Ye curates, see these heresies and blasphemies, and many more, which follow from your wicked life and wayward teachings. Forsake them for dread of hell, and turn to good life and true teaching of the gospel and ordinances of God, as Christ and his apostles did, for reward of heavenly bliss. And in confessions, and in other speeches, reprove more the breaking of God's commands, than the breaking of commands of new pilgrimages and offerings ; and teach christian men to turn such vows already made, into better alms, as Christ teaches in the gospel.

O almighty God, bring curates into holy life, and true teaching after Christ and his apostles. Amen.

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There were however clergy, even in that day, more faithful to the duties of their office, than those of whom Wickliff speaks in the preceding tract. Such a one is beautifully described by Chaucer. Some writers have supposed that he had Wickliff in his mind when delineating this minister of Christ.

A good man there was of religion,  
He was a poor parson of a town,  
But rich he was of holy thought and work,  
He was a learned man, also a clerk,  
That Christ's gospel truly would preach,  
His parishioners devoutly would he teach.  
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,  
And in adversity full patient,  
And such a one he was proved oft sithes,  
Full loth were he to curse for his tithes,  
But rather would he give, out of doubt,  
Unto his poor parishioners all about,  
Both of his offering and his substance,  
He could in little have a suffisance.  
Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,  
But he ne'er left, neither for rain nor thunder,  
In sickness, nor in mischief, for to visit  
The furthest in his parish, great or light,  
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.  
This noble example to his sheep he gave,  
That first he wrought, and afterward taught  
Out of the gospel he the words caught.  
And this figure he added thereunto,  
That if gold rust, what shall iron do?  
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,  
No wonder 'tis that a layman should rust.  
And shame it is, if a priest take keep,  
To see a foul shepherd, and a clean sheep.  
Well ought a priest, example for to give  
By his cleanness, how his sheep should live.  
He set not his benefice to hire,  
Nor left his sheep encumbered in the mire,  
And ran to London, to St. Paul's,  
'To seek himself a chantry for souls.\*

\* Thus Langland, in *Piers Plowman's* vision, describes a priest.

Plained he to the bishop,  
That his parishes were poor, since the pestilence time;  
To have a licence, and leave at London to dwell,  
To sing there for simony, for silver is sweet.

Nor with a brotherhood to be withhold,  
 But dwelt at home, and kept well his fold,  
 So that the wolf made them not miscarry ;  
 He was a shepherd, and not a mercenary.  
 And though he holy were and virtuous,  
 He was not to sinful men despiteous,  
 Nor of his speech dangerous nor dign.  
 But in his teaching discreet and benign.  
 To draw folk to heaven with fairness,  
 By good example, this was his business.  
 But if he knew any person obstinate,  
 Whether he were of high or low estate,  
 Him would he reprove sharply for the nonce.  
 A better priest I trow, no where there is,  
 He waited after no pomp nor reverence,  
 He made himself no spiced conscience,  
 But Christ's lore, and his apostles twelve  
 He taught, but first he followed it himself.

Chaucer's picture of the Plowman or farmer, the brother of this faithful minister, is also a pleasing relief to the many painful delineations in the preceding pages.

A true and good labourer was he,  
 Living in peace and perfect charity.  
 God loved he best with all his heart,  
 At all times, though him gamed or smart ;  
 And then his neighbours right as himself.  
 He would thresh, and thereto dike and delve  
 For Christ's sake, for every poor wight,  
 Without hire, if it lay in his might,  
 His tithes paid he full fair and well  
 Both of his labour and his cattle.

These delineations no doubt were from the life. In another place Chaucer describes this parson stigmatized as a Lollard, because he reproved the profaneness of some of the company, while the other ecclesiastics then present encouraged their loose conduct. The tale he puts into the mouth of the plowman is a complaint of the dissolute, corrupt, and unscriptural lives of the romish clergy, in stronger terms than any in Wickliff's writings.

OF

## FEIGNED CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE.

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*(From the MS. in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)*

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WHEN true men teach by God's law, understanding, and reason, that each priest ought to do his might, his understanding, and his will, to preach Christ's gospel, the fiend blindeth hypocrites to excuse themselves by feigned contemplative life; and to say that since it is the best, and they may not do both together, they need for the charity\* of God, to leave the preaching of the gospel, and to live in contemplation! See now the hypocrisy of this false saying. Christ taught and did† the best life for priests, as our faith teaches, since he was God, and might not err. Christ preached the gospel, and charged all his apostles and disciples to go and preach the gospel to all men; then it is the best life for priests in this world, to preach the gospel.

Also God teacheth in the old law, that the office of a prophet is to show to the people their foul sins, and each priest is a prophet, as Gregory saith upon the gospels. Then it is the office of each priest to preach and tell the sins of the people, and in this manner shall each priest be an angel‡ of God, as holy writ saith.

Also Christ and John Baptist left the desert, and preached the gospel till their death, therefore this was the greatest charity, for else they were out of charity, or feigned charity; which could not be in either of them, since the one was God, and no man, after Christ, was holier than the Baptist, and he sinned not by preaching thus. Also the holy prophet Jeremiah might not be excused from preaching by his contemplation, but was charged of God to preach the sins of the people, and to suffer pain therefore, and so were all the prophets of God.

Since Christ and John Baptist, and all the prophets of God, were compelled by charity to come out of the desert to preach to the people, and to leave their solitary prayer, how dare we foolish heretics say that it is better to be still, and to pray our own foolish ordinance, than to preach Christ's

\* Love.

† Showed by his example.

‡ Messenger.

gospel? What accursed spirit of lies stirreth priests to close themselves in stones or walls for all their lives? Since Christ commanded all his apostles and priests to go into all the world and preach the gospel, certainly they are open fools, and plainly act against Christ's gospel. And if they maintain this error, they are cursed of him, and are perilous hypocrites and heretics.

Men are accounted heretics who act against the pope's law, and it saith plainly that each who cometh to the priesthood, takes the office of a beadle or crier, to go before doomsday, to proclaim to the people their sins and the vengeance of God. Why then are not the priests heretics who leave to preach Christ's gospel, and compel true men to leave preaching the gospel? since this law is St. Gregory's law, grounded openly on God's law, and reason, and charity; and the other law is contrary to holy writ, and reason and charity, for to maintain pride and covetousness of antichrist's worldly clerks.

But hypocrites allege from the gospel, that Mary chose to herself the best part when she sat beside Christ's feet, and heard his word. Truth it is that meek sitting, and devout hearing of Christ's word was best for Mary; for she had not the duty of preaching as priests have, since she was a woman that had not authority of God's law to teach and preach openly. But what is this to priests who have the express commandment of God and men to preach the gospel? whereas they would all be women in idleness, and follow not Jesus Christ in life and preaching of the gospel, which he himself commandeth both in the old law and the new.

Also, this peaceable hearing of Christ's word, and the burning love that Mary had, was the best part, for it shall end in living in godly life in this world. But in this life, the best life for priests is holy life, in keeping God's commands, and true preaching of the gospel, as Christ did, and charged all his priests to do. And these hypocrites suppose that their dreams and fantasies are contemplation, and that preaching of the gospel is active life, and so they mean that Christ took the worst life for this world, and required all his priests to leave the better, and take the worst life! Thus these foolish hypocrites put error upon Jesus Christ, but who are greater heretics?

Also these blind hypocrites allege that Christ bids us pray evermore, and that Paul bids that we pray without ceasing, and then, as they falsely feign, we priests may not



preach. But these hypocrites should know that Christ and Paul understood by this, prayer of holy life, which each man does as long as he dwells in charity; and not babbling of lips, which no man can ever do without ceasing; for else no man in this world might fulfil the commandment of Christ. Augustine and other saints teach this; and men that fulfil not God's law, and are out of charity, are not accepted in their lip preaching; for their prayer in lips is abominable, as holy writ saith by Solomon. These priests who preach not the gospel, as Christ biddeth, are not able to pray for mercy, but deceive themselves and the people, and despise God, and stir him to wrath and vengeance, as Augustine, Gregory, and other saints teach. And principally these hypocrites that have rents and worldly lordships, and parish churches appropriated to them by simony and falsities, against holy writ both old and new, and against Christ and his apostles, for pretended holiness, destroying of God's ordinance, and for profession made to fools, and perchance to fiends of hell.

These should learn what is active life and contemplative life, according to God's law, and then they might know that they have neither the one nor the other, since they consider more vain statutes of sinful men, and perchance of devils, than the commands of God, works of mercy, and points of charity. And the fiend blinds them so much, that they say in fact that they must never pray to please God, since they disable themselves to do the office of priests by God's law, and propose to end in their feigned devotion, which is blasphemy to God.\*

\* The following definitions of active and contemplative life, are given by Walter Hilton, a pious monk who lived soon after the death of Wickliff.

"The active life consists in love and charity exercised outwardly, by good corporeal works, in fulfilling of God's commandments, and of the seven works of mercy, bodily and spiritual, towards our christian brethren. This life pertains to all, be they learned or unlearned, laymen or spiritual persons, that are in office or state to govern, or have care of others; and generally all worldly men are bound to the practice of this kind of life, according to their best knowledge or ability, and as reason and discretion shall require.—Contemplative life consists in perfect love and charity, felt inwardly by spiritual virtues, and in a true and certain sight and knowledge of God, and spiritual matters. This life belongs to those especially, who for the love of God forsake all worldly riches, honours, worships, and outward businesses, and wholly give themselves, soul and body, according to all the knowledge and ability that is in them, to the service of God by exercises of the soul."

This mistaken, though well designed preference of the contemplative to the active life, led to the abuses prevalent among the monastic orders, which are so strongly depicted by Wickliff and others.

# ON PRAYER.

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HOW PRAYER OF GOOD MEN HELPETH MUCH, AND HOW  
PRAYER OF SINFUL MEN DISPLEASETH GOD, AND  
HARMS THEMSELVES AND OTHER MEN.

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*(From the MS. in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)*

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## CHAPTER I.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ teacheth us to pray evermore for all needful things, both for body and soul; for in the gospel of St. Luke Christ saith it is needful to pray evermore, and St. Paul bids christian men pray without ceasing or hinderance. (And this is understood of prayer of charity,\* and not of men's vows, as Augustine well declares, for else no man could fulfil this command to pray evermore.) For as long as a man lives a just life, keeping God's commands and charity, so long he prayeth well, whatever he do; and whoever liveth best, he prayeth best. Also St. James saith, that the fervent and lasting prayer of a just man is of much worth. And while Moses was in the mount, and held up his hands, and prayed for his people, his people had victory over their enemies; and when he ceased to pray thus, his people were overcome, as the second book of holy writ teaches. So if priests dwell in the mount of high spiritual life, and espy deceits of the devil, and show them to the people by true preaching, and hold up their hands, that is open good works, and continue in them; and pray by fervent desire to perform righteousness of God's law and ordinance—then christian people shall have victory over the devil and cursed sin, then shall rest, and peace, and charity, dwell among them. And if priests cease this holy life and good example, and this desire of righteousness, then christian people shall be much overcome by sin, and have pestilence and wars, and wo enough; and unless God help, more endless wo in hell.

King Hezekiah, by holy prayer and weeping and sorrow, got forgiveness of his sin, and fifteen years of his life ; and the sun went back, or returned again ten lines on the dial, as Isaiah's book witnesses. Also by the prayer of the holy leader Joshua, the sun and moon stood still all day, to give light to pursue God's enemies, who desired to quench God's name, his law, and his people.

Therefore Christ saith to his disciples, If ye ask my Father any thing in my name, he shall give it to you ; but we ask in the name of Jesus, when we ask any thing needful or profitable for the saving of men's souls, so that we ask this devoutly, of great desire, and wisely or humbly and lastingly,\* by firm faith, true hope, and lasting charity, and whatever we ask thus, we shall have of the Father of heaven.

Also Christ saith thus in the gospel, evil men have wisdom. If ye give good things to your children, which good things are given you, how much more shall your Father, of heaven, give a good Spirit to men that ask him. Then, since kind† teaches sinful men to give goods to their children, how much more will God, author of goodness and charity, give spiritual goods, profitable to the soul, to his children whom he loves so much ! Therefore ask of God heavenly things, as grace, will, wisdom, and power to serve God, to please him ; and not for worldly goods, except as much as is needful to sustain thy life in truth and service of thy God.

Therefore, Christ teaches us that whatever we pray and ask for, we should believe and trust without any doubt, to have it, and it shall be given us ; and if two or three of you consent together of any thing on earth that they should ask, it shall be given to them. (Therefore, Christ taught and commanded us to pray the Lord's prayer, which is the best and plainest, and most sure prayer of all ; for it contains all things needful and profitable for body and soul, and no error or singularity against God's will. And Jesus Christ made it, and commanded it in short words, that men should not be weary or heavy to say it, nor cumbered to learn it. And hereof a holy man blames men that leave the Lord's prayer which is taught and commanded of God, and choose singular prayers made of sinful men.) And hereby it is plain that holy men, dwelling in love to God, and all men living on earth, both friends and enemies, christians and

\* Perseveringly.

† Nature, natural affection.

heathens, profit much by devout prayers, but most by holy life and fervent desire of righteousness.

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## CHAPTER II.

SEE now how wicked men's prayers displease God, and harm themselves and the people. God himself saith in this manner to evil men that pray to him in need ; I have called, and ye have forsaken and have despised all my blamings, and I shall despise in your perishing, and shall scorn you. When that which ye have dreaded shall come to you, then ye shall call and I shall not hear, they shall raise heresies and they shall not find me, for they hated discipline, that is learning, and chastising. They retained not the fear of the Lord, and they assented not to my counsel, and they depraved and misdeemed\* all my correction—that is reproving, warning, and chastising of sin. And by the prophet Isaiah, God saith thus to wicked men ; Ye princes of Sodom, hear the Lord's word ; people of Gomorrah, perceive with ears the law of our Lord God. Your incense is abomination to me. I shall not suffer your new moon, which is a principal feast and sabbath, and other feasts. Your companies are evil, my soul hath hated your feasts of months, and solemnities. They are made to me heavy and troublous, and when ye shall hold forth your hands I will turn mine eyes away from you. And when ye shall make many prayers I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood ; that is of wrong, slaying of men, and foul sins.

Also, God saith that the prayer of that man who turneth away his ear that he hear not the law, is abominable and cursed. Also God saith by the prophet Malachi, and now to you priests, in this commandment, If ye will not hear, if ye will not put on your heart to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I shall send unto you neediness, and shall curse your blessings, and I shall curse them, for ye have not set this commandment on your heart. Lo, I shall cast toward you the arm, and spread abroad upon your face the filth of your solemnities. By the same prophet, God also saith to priests and ministers of the temple, Who is among you that will sit and incense mine altar willingly and without reward ? The Lord of hosts saith, There is

\* Misrepresented and misconceived.

no will to me among you, and I shall receive no gifts of sacrifice of your hand. And God saith to priests by the same prophet, Ye have covered the altar of the Lord with tears, and weeping, and mourning of widows and poor men whom ye oppress and deceive ; so that I shall no more be holden to the sacrifice, and I shall not receive any pleasant thing of your hand. Therefore David saith, If I have beholden wickedness in my heart, the Lord shall not hear by grace ; that is, if I wilfully and gladly do wickedness. God saith to the sinful man, Why tellest thou my righteousness, and takest my testament in thy mouth ? And the Holy Ghost saith of Judas Iscariot, His prayer was made into sin ; and our Lord Jesus saith, This people worship me with lips, but their heart is far from me, but they teach learning and commandments of men, worshipping me without cause—that is such men as teach and charge men's laws and traditions and commandments, more than holy writ and God's commandments ; vainly and falsely worship God. Also Jesus saith to wicked men, Why say ye to me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I commanded ; for Jesus saith, Wo to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, that devour widows' houses, praying long prayers, therefore ye shall receive greater judgment. And in the gospel of St. John is written thus, Ye know that God heareth not sinful men, but if any man worship God, and doeth his will, God heareth him. And when a priest, void of good life and charity, sayeth his service, and maketh the sacrament, he eateth and drinketh his own condemnation ; not considering wisely the body of our Lord, as St. Paul teaches, and holy writ. Therefore Chrysostom, on the gospel of St. Matthew, saith, "As a thing may be without odour or savour, but there may not be odour without some thing, so a good deed without prayer is somewhat, but prayer without good deed is nought." St. Augustine, on the Psalter, saith, "If you pass measure in meat and drink, and live in gluttony and drunkenness, whatever the tongue speak, the life blasphemeth God." Therefore St. Paul saith, Many men acknowledge that they know God, but by their deeds they deny God.

St. Gregory writes thus in many books, A man that is in grievous sins, while he is overcharged with his own, he doth not put away other men's sins ; for it is known to all men, that when he that despiseth is sent forth to pray, the heart of him that is worthy is stirred to more displeasure

Truly it is written, The sacrifices of wicked men are abominable to the Lord, the vows of sacrifices of just men are pleasant. For in the doom of God Almighty it is not sought, *what* is given, but of whom. Therefore it is written in holy writ, The Lord looked to Abel and his gifts. When Moses would say that the Lord took reward to gifts, he carefully set before, that God beheld Abel; whence it is shown plainly that the offerer pleased not of gifts, but gifts pleased of the offerer or giver.

The mighty God approveth not the gifts of wicked men, nor looketh on their offerings, nor shall have mercy on sinners for the multitude of their sacrifices; also the Lord is far from wicked men, and he shall graciously hear the prayers of just men. All this saith St. Gregory.

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### CHAPTER III.

[WICKLIFF here shows "how strict is man's law against sinful man's prayer," and refers at considerable length to the various laws and ordinances made against unchaste, and even against married priests, commanding the people not to listen to their prayers or saying of divine service. He then proceeds]—

Much more should these penalties be for greater sins, for the more grievous sin deserves more punishment. For pride makes men forsake God, the King of meekness, and take Lucifer for their false king, as God saith in holy writ. And envy and wrath make men forsake the God of charity, mercy, and patience, and become children of Belial, as God's law, reason, and saints, teach. Covetousness and usury make men forsake God of truth and righteousness, and worship false gods, as St. Paul saith. Gluttony and drunkenness make men to worship false gods, and forsake Almighty God in Trinity, who is God of measure\* and reason; for Paul saith that gluttony makes the belly its god. And evil example to christian men is worse than bodily sin, as God's law witnesses, and as is said by Grost-head, as God's word and man's soul are better than man's body.

Manslaying is not only by deed of hand but also by consent and counsel and authority, and since priests thus

\* Moderation.

consent to false wars\* and many thousand deaths, they are cursed mankillers and irregular, both by God's law and man's.

[Wickliff then condemns simony, and says, in strong terms]—

Whoever cometh to this order or benefice (of the christian ministry) must by meekness seek God's worship, and help of christian souls, and for devotion to live in holiness and give good example. But he that comes to this order to live in pride and lusts of the flesh, as idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, comes not in by Christ but by the fiend, and is a traitor to God, and a heretic, till he amend this intent, and do well this spiritual office, as Christ taught. And full few are holy to pray for the people, for the greatness of their own sins enter here, and evil countenance and maintenance, and excusing of their sin, and other men's sin, for money and worldly praise, against God in his righteous judgment, and for hard enduring in their sins.

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## CHAPTER IV

BUT against these laws, both God's and man's, and reason and saints, the fiend teaches his disciples a new gloss;† to say that though men are not worthy to be heard in praying, for their own good life, yet their prayer is heard for the merit of holy church, for they are procurators‡ of the church. Certainly this is a foul and subtle deceit of antichrist's clerks, to colour their sin.

[Wickliff then notices again the subject of the last chapter, and "the sophistries of antichrist," which make the efficacy of the sacrament to depend upon the intention and the holiness of the priest; he then notices the Latin and choral services of the Romish church at that period.]

Wonder it is why men praise so much this new praying by great crying and high song, and leave the still manner of praying as Christ and his apostles did. It seems that we seek our own liking and pride in this song, more than the devotion and understanding of that which we sing. This is great sin, for Augustine saith in his confessions, "As oft as the song delights me more than that which is sung, so oft I acknowledge that I trespass grievously." Therefore

\* The wars excited by the popes.

† Interpretation.

‡ Proctors, agents.

saith Paul, I had rather five words in understanding than ten thousand in tongue. Paul's will is for devotion and true understanding. In tongue, is what a man understands not, and has no devotion. The Lord's prayer, once said with devotion and good understanding, is better than many thousand without devotion and understanding.\* And this new praying occupiēs men so much that they have no space to study holy writ, and teach it. But Augustine asks who may and shall excuse himself from preaching and seeking the saving of souls for love of contemplation;† since Jesus Christ came from heaven into this wretched world, to seek souls, and save them by open example of holy life and true preaching. And Gregory saith in his pastorals, They that have plenty of virtues and knowledge of God's law, and go into a desert for sake of contemplation, are guilty of as many souls as they might profit by instructing men living in this world. Where shall this new song excuse us from learning and preaching the gospel that Christ taught and commanded? Therefore ye that are priests live well, pray devoutly, and teach the gospel truly and freely, as Christ and his apostles did. Amen.

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In his tract On the Song of the Ordinal of Salisbury, Wickliff much reproves the light singing then newly introduced in public worship, which he says, "hinders much the preaching of the gospel;" and adds, "If all the study and labour that men have now, about Salisbury use, with multitudes of new costly portesses, and all other such books, were turned into making of bibles, and in studying and teaching thereof, how much should God's law be furthered, and known, and kept! And now it is so much hindered, unstudied, and unkept. How should rich men be excused that spend so much in great chapelries, and costly books of men's ordinance, for fame of the world, and will not spend so much about books of God's law, and to study them, and teach them, since this were without comparison better, easier, and safer?"

\* The people were taught to repeat the Lord's prayer in Latin many times over, without understanding the meaning of the words they uttered.

† Because he prefers a monastic life.



# A SHORT RULE OF LIFE.

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FOR EACH MAN IN GENERAL, AND FOR PRIESTS, AND  
LORDS, AND LABOURERS, IN PARTICULAR,  
HOW EACH SHALL BE SAVED IN  
HIS DEGREE.

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*(From the MS. in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)*

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FIRST, When thou risest, or fully wakest, think upon the goodness of thy God ; how for his own goodness, and not for any need, he made all things out of nothing, both angels and men, and all other creatures, good in their kind.

The second time, think on the great sufferings, and willing death that Christ suffered for mankind. When no man might make satisfaction for the guilt of Adam and Eve, and others more, neither any angel might make satisfaction therefore, then Christ, of his endless charity, suffered such great passion and painful death, that no creature could suffer so much.

Think the third time, how God hath saved thee from death and other mischief, and suffered many thousands to be lost that night, some in water, some in fire, and some by sudden death ; and some to be damned without end. And for this goodness and mercy thank thy God with all thine heart. And pray him to give thee grace to spend in that day, and evermore, all the powers of thy soul, as mind, understanding, reason, and will ; and all the powers of thy body, as strength, beauty, and thy five senses, in his service and worship, and in nothing against his commandments ; but in ready performance of his works of mercy, and to give good example of holy life, both in word and deed, to all men about thee.

Look afterward that thou be well occupied, and no time idle, for the danger of temptation. Take meat and drink in measure,\* not too costly nor too lickerous, and be not too curious thereabout. But such as God sendeth thee

\* Moderation.

with health, take it in such measure that thou be fresher in mind and understanding to serve God. And always thank him for such gifts. Besides this, look thou do right and equity to all men, thy superiors, equals, and subjects or servants; and stir all to love truth, and mercy, and true peace, and charity; and suffer no men to be at dissension, but accord them if thou canst in any good manner.

Also, most of all fear God and his wrath; and most of all love God and his law, and his worship; and ask not principally for worldly reward, but in all thine heart desire the bliss of heaven in mercy of God, and thine own good life; and think much of the dreadful doom of pains of hell, to keep thee out of sin; and on the endless great joys of heaven, to keep thee in virtuous life; and according to thy skill teach others the same doing.

In the end of the day think wherein thou hast offended God, and how much and how oft, and therefore have entire sorrow, and amend it while thou mayest. And think how many God hath suffered to perish that day, many ways, and to be damned everlastingly, and how graciously he hath saved thee; not for thy desert, but for his own mercy and goodness, and therefore thank him with all thine heart. And pray him for grace that thou mayest dwell and end in his true and holy service and real love, and to teach other men the same doing

If thou art A PRIEST, and especially a curate,\* live thou holily, surpassing other men in holy prayer, desire, and thinking, in holy speaking, counselling, and true teaching. And that God's commands, his gospel, and virtues, be ever in thy mouth; and ever despise sin to draw men therefrom; and that thy deeds be so rightful that no man shall blame them with reason, but that thy open deeds be a true book to all subjects and unlearned men, to serve God and do his commands thereby. For example of good life, open and lasting, more stirreth rude men than true preaching by word only. And waste not thy goods in great feasts of rich men, but live a humble life, of poor men's alms and goods, both in meat, and drink, and clothes, and the remainder give truly to poor men that have not of their own, and may not labour for feebleness or sickness, and thus thou shalt be a true priest both to God and man.

If thou art A LORD,† look that thou live a rightful life in

\* One having the charge of souls.

† Or master, one having authority over others.

thine own person, both in respect to God and man, keeping the commands of God, doing the works of mercy, ruling well thy five senses, and doing reason, and equity, and good conscience to all men. In the second place, govern well thy wife, thy children, and thy household attendants, in God's law, and suffer no sin among them, neither in word nor in deed, that they may be examples of holiness and righteousness to all others; for thou shalt be condemned for their evil life and their evil example, unless thou amend it according to thy might. In the third place, govern well thy tenants, and maintain them in right and reason, and be merciful to them in their rents and worldly mercements,\* and suffer not thine officers to do them wrong nor be extortionate to them. And chastise in good manner them that are rebels against God's commands and virtuous life, more than for rebellion against thine own cause; or else for that thou lovest more thine own cause than God's, and thyself more than God Almighty, thou wert then a false traitor to God. And love, reward, praise, and cherish the true and virtuous of life more than if thou sought only thine own profit. And reverence and maintain truly, according to thy skill and might, God's law and true preachers thereof, and God's servants, in rest and peace. For thereby thou holdest the lordship of God,† and if thou failest of this thou misdoest against God, and all thy lordship, in body and in soul. And principally if thou maintainest antichrist's disciples in their errors against Christ's life and his teaching, for blindness, covetousness, and worldly friendship; and helpest to slander and pursue true men that teach Christ's gospel and his life, and warn the people of their great sins, and of false prophets and hypocrites that deceive christian men in faith, virtuous life, and worldly goods.

If thou art A LABOURER, live in meekness, and truly and willingly do thy labour, that thy lord or thy master if he be a heathen man, by thy meekness, willing and true service, may not have to grudge against thee, nor slander thy God, nor thy christian profession; but rather be stirred to come to christianity. And serve not christian lords with grudgings; not only in their presence, but truly and willingly, and in absence. Not only for worldly dread, or worldly reward, but for dread of God and conscience, and for reward in heaven. For God that putteth thee in such service knoweth what state is best for thee, and will reward

\* Payments.

† Thou dost reverence the power of God.

thee more than all earthly lords may, if thou dost it truly and willingly for his ordinance. And in all things beware of grudging against God and his visitation, in great labour, and long or great sickness, and other adversities. And beware of wrath, of cursing, of speaking evil, of banning\* man or beast; and ever keep patience, meekness, and charity, both to God and man.

And thus each man in the three states ought to live, to save himself, and to help others; and thus should good life, rest, peace, and love, be among christian men, and they be saved, and heathen men soon converted, and God magnified greatly in all nations and sects that now despise him and his law, for the false living of wicked christian men.

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The writings of Wickliff and his disciples fully show they had no desire to interrupt the mutual dependance, due subordination of ranks, and attention of every one to his vocation, taught in scripture. The following extract is from a sermon preached by R. Wimbleton, A. D. 1388, which has by some been ascribed to Wickliff. After showing that "every estate should love other," he proceeds thus: "And men of one craft should neither hate nor despise men of any other craft. For one is so needfull to another, that oftentimes those crafts that seem least desirable might worst be forborne. And thus I dare say, that he who is not labouring in this world, either in praying or preaching, as behoves priests, for the health of the people; or in defending the causes of the needy against tyrants and enemies, which is the office of knights; or in labouring on the earth, which pertains to the commons; when the day of reckoning shall come, that is at the end of this life, right as he lived here without labour or travail, so shall he want there the reward of his penny Matt. xx. 2. that is the endless joys of heaven. Wherefore let every man see to what state God hath called him, and live therein by labour, according to his degree. They that are labouring men, or craftsmen, let them do it truly. If thou art a servant, or a bondman, be subject, and live in dread to displease thy master or lord, for Christ's sake. If thou art a merchant, deceive not thy brother in chaffering. If thou art a knight or a lord, defend the poor and needy man from such as would harm him."

# WICKLIFF'S WICKET:

WHICH HE

MADE IN KING RICHARD THE SECOND'S DAYS.\*

Ihon the VI. Chapter.

I am the lyuyng brede whych came downe  
from heauen: who so etethe of this brede shall  
lyue for euer. And the brede that I wyll  
gyue is my flesche, whyche I wyll  
gyue for the lyfe of the  
worlde.

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\* The Wicket is here reprinted from the edition of Norenberch, (Nuremberg) 1546, compared with the edition of Oxford, 1612. Some of the readings of the latter are adopted to render the meaning more clear. The frequent notices of this tract in the articles exhibited against the Lollards, and in the proclamations against heretical books, show that its circulation must have been extensive, and its influence considerable.

# WICKLIFF'S WICKET.

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A VERY BRIEF DEFINITION OF THESE WORDS,

HOC EST CORPUS MEUM.

(THIS IS MY BODY.)

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*I beseech ye brethren in the Lord Christ Jesus, and for the love of his Spirit, to pray with me, that we may be vessels to his laud and praise what time soever it pleaseth him to call upon us, Rom. xv.*

FORASMUCH as our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he walked here on earth with the prophets which were before him, and the apostles which were present with him, whom also he left after him, whose hearts were mollified with the Holy Ghost, warned us, and gave us knowledge that there were two manner of ways—the one to life, the other to death, as Christ saith in the gospels, How strait and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and there be but few that find it. But how large and broad is the way that leadeth to damnation, and there are many that go in thereat, Matt. vii. Luke xiii. Therefore pray we heartily to God, that he, of his mere mercy, will so strengthen us with the grace and stedfastness of his Holy Spirit, to make us strong in spiritual living, after the evangelical gospel—so that the world—no not the very infidels, papists, and apostates—can gather occasion to speak evil of us, but that we may enter into that strait gate,\* as Christ our Saviour and all that follow him have done. That is, not in idle living, but in diligent labouring, yea, in great sufferance of persecution even to the death, and that we find the way of everlasting life, as he hath promised, where he saith, He that seeketh findeth, and he that asketh receiveth, and to him that knocketh it shall be

\* Or wicket, hence the title of this tract.

opened, Matt. vii. Also Christ saith, If thy son ask thee for bread, wilt thou give him a stone? or if he ask thee fish, wilt thou give him a serpent? If ye which are evil can give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give a good spirit to them that ask it of him, Luke xi. Saint James saith, If any man lack wisdom let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men if they ask it in faith, and upbraideth none; for he that doubteth is like to the waves of the sea, that are borne about with every blast of wind. Think not that such shall receive anything of the Lord. For a man double in soul is unstable in all his ways, as it is written.

Wherefore let us pray to God that he keep us in the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, Rev. iii. For as our Saviour Christ saith, When ye see that abomination of desolation which is spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, as Christ saith, He that readeth let him understand, Matt. xxiv. But because that every man cannot have the book of Daniel to know what his prophecy is, here are his words, Toward the last days the king of the north shall come, and the arms of him shall stand, and shall defile the sanctuary, and he shall take away the continual sacrifice, and he shall give abomination unto desolation, and wicked men shall find a testament guilefully, but they that know their God shall hold and do; and learned men in the people shall teach full many men, and they shall fall on the sword, and into flame, and into captivity many days, and when they fall down they shall be raised by a little help, and full many shall be joined to them deceitfully, and some learned men shall fall to them so that they build together, and the chosen shall be together, and shall be made white till a time determined. For yet another time shall be, and the king shall do by his will, and then he shall be raised, and magnified against each god. And against the God of gods shall he speak great things, and he shall be raised till the wrathfulness before determined is perfectly made, and he shall not inherit the God of his fathers, and he shall be in the company of women, and he shall not regard any thing of God's, for he shall raise against all things. Forsooth he shall honour the god of Mason\* in his place, and he shall worship a god whom his fathers knew not, with gold, silver, precious

\* The god of forces, Mauzim. This quotation is from Daniel xi. 31—39.

stones, and with precious things. But he shall do to make strong the god of Mason with the alien, or strange god, which he knew, and he shall multiply his glory, and he shall give to them power in many things, and he shall depart the land at his will. Hitherto are the words of Daniel. Who may see a greater abomination than to see the people led away from God, and taught to worship for God, that which is not God nor Saviour of the world? For though it be their god, as it is written by a prophet, saying,\* The Lord's going shall make low the gods of the earth, for their gods that they believe in may not make them safe; and as it is written by St. Paul, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things I see you as vain worshippers of idols; for I passed by and saw your mawmetes,† and found an altar in the which was written, To the unknown God. Therefore the thing which you know not ye worship as God. This thing show I unto you: God which made the world and all things that are in it. This forsooth, he is Lord of heaven and of earth, and he dwelleth not in the temple made with hands, neither hath he need of any thing, for he giveth life to all men, and breath everywhere, and he made of one all kinds of men, to inhabit on all the face of the earth. Determining times ordained and terms of the dwelling of them to seek out God, if peradventure they might find him, although he be not far from each of you. And again he saith, Ye shall not think that the living God is like to gold, silver, either any thing graven or painted by craft, either taught of man; for God despiseth the time of the unknown things.

And he showeth every where that all men should do penance,‡ and hereof the clerks of the law have great need, which have been ever against God the Lord, both in the old law and in the new, to slay the prophets that speak to them the word of God. Ye see that they spared not the Son of God, when the temporal judge would have delivered him, Matt. xxvii. and so forth of the apostles and martyrs that have spoken truly the word of God to them. And they say it is heresy to speak of the holy scripture in English, and so they would condemn the Holy Ghost who gave it in tongues to the apostles of Christ, to speak the word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven, as it is written, Acts xi. And the Holy Ghost descended upon the heathen, as he did upon the apostles in

\* Zeph. ii. 11.

† Images.

‡ Repent.



Jerusalem, as it is written, Joel ii. and Christ was so merciful as to send the Holy Ghost to the heathen men, Acts viii. x. and he made them partakers of his blessed word; why then should it be taken away from us in this land that are christian men?

Consider you whether it is not all one to deny Christ's words for heresy, and Christ for an heretic; for if my word be a lie, then am I a liar that speak the word. Therefore, if my words be heresy, then am I an heretic that speak the word; therefore it is all one to condemn the word of God in any language for heresy, and God for an heretic, who spake the word. For he and his word are all one, and they may not be separated; and if the word of him be the life of the world, as it is written, Not only by bread liveth man, but in every word that cometh out of the mouth of God, Matt. iv. and every word of God is the life of the soul of man, as saith St. John, thou hast anointing of the Holy Ghost, and thou hast no need of any man to teach you in all things which is his blessed word, in which is all wisdom and knowledge, and yet ye are always to learn as well as we. How may any antichrist, for dread of God, take it away from us that are christian men, and thus suffer the people to die for hunger in heresy and blasphemy of man's law, that corrupteth and slayeth the soul, as pestilence slayeth the body, as David beareth witness, where he speaketh of the chair of pestilence.

And most of all they make us believe a false law that they have made upon the sacred host,\* for the most false belief is taught in it. For where find ye that ever Christ, or any of his disciples or apostles, taught any man to worship it? For in the mass creed† it is said, I believe in one God only, our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, only begotten and born of the Father before all the world; he is God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, begotten and not made, and of substance even with the Father, by whom all things are made. And in the psalm Quicunque vult,‡ it is said, The Father is God, The Son is God, The Holy Ghost is God. The Father is unmade,§ The Son is unmade, and The Holy Ghost is unmade. And thou then that art an earthly man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou makest thy Maker? Whether may the thing that is made say to the maker, Why hast thou made

\* The wafer, or consecrated bread, given at the sacrament.

† The Nicene creed. ‡ The Athanasian creed. § Uncreated

me thus? Or may it turn again and make him that made it? Surely not. Now answerest thou that sayest that every day thou makest of bread, the body of the Lord, flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, God and man. Forsooth thou answerest greatly against reason, by those words that Christ spake at his supper on Serethursday\* at night, Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. that Christ took bread and blessed it and brake it, and gave it to his disciples and apostles, and said, Take ye, and eat ye, this is my body which shall be given for you. And also he, taking the cup, gave thanks, and gave to them, and said, Drink ye all hereof, this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed out for many to the remission of sins; as saith Luke, When Jesus had taken bread, he gave thanks and brake it to them and said, Take ye, eat ye, this my body that shall be given for you, do ye this in remembrance of me.

Now understand ye the words of our Saviour Christ, as he spake them one after another—as Christ spake them. For he took bread and blessed, and yet what blessed he? The scripture saith not that Christ took bread and blessed it, or that he blessed the bread which he had taken. Therefore it seemeth more that he blessed his disciples and apostles, whom he had ordained witnesses of his passion; and in them he left his blessed word which is the bread of life, as it is written, Not only in bread liveth man, but in every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, Matt. iv. Also Christ saith, I am the bread of life that came down from heaven, John vi. And Christ saith also in John, The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Therefore it seemeth more that he blessed his disciples, and also his apostles, in whom the bread of life was left more than in material bread, for the material bread hath an end. As it is written in the gospel of Matthew xv. that Christ said, All things that a man eateth go down into the belly, and are sent down into the draught; but the blessing of Christ kept his disciples and apostles, both bodily and ghostly. As it is written, that none of them perished but the son of perdition, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, John xvii. and often the scripture saith that Jesus took bread and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take ye, eat ye, this is my body that shall be given for you. But he said not this bread is my body, or that the bread should be given for the life of the world.

\* The Thursday before Easter.

For Christ saith, What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, John vi. Also Christ saith in the gospel, Verily, verily I say unto you, except the wheat corn fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.

Here men may see by the words of Christ, that it behoved that he died in the flesh, and that in his death was made the fruit of everlasting life for all them that believe on him, as it is written. For as by Adam all die, even so by Christ shall all live, and every man in his own order; for as one clearness is in the sun, another in the moon, and a star in clearness is nothing in comparison to the sun. Even so is the again rising of the dead, for we are sown in corruption and shall rise again incorruptible, we are sown in infirmity, and shall rise again in strength; we are sown in natural bodies, and shall rise again spiritual bodies. Then if Christ shall change thus our deadly\* bodies by death, and God the Father spared not his own Son, as it is written, but that death should reign in him as in us, and that he should be translated into a spiritual body, as the first again rising of dead men. Then how say the hypocrites that take on them to make our Lord's body? Make they the glorified body? Either make they again the spiritual body which is risen from death to life? or make they the fleshly body as it was before he suffered death? And if they say also that they make the spiritual body of Christ, it may not be so, for what Christ said and did, he did as he was at supper before he suffered his passion; as it is written that the spiritual body of Christ rose again from death to life, Matt. xxviii. Also that he ascended up to heaven, and that he will abide there till he come to judge the quick and the dead. And if they say that they make Christ's body as it was before he had suffered his passion, then must they needs grant that Christ is to die yet. For by all holy scriptures he was promised to die, and that he should give lordship of everlasting life.

Furthermore, if they say that Christ made his body of bread, I ask, With what words made he it? Not with these words, "*Hoc est corpus meum*;" that is to say in English, "This is my body," for they are the words of giving, and not of making, which he said after that he brake the bread; then parting it among his disciples and

apostles. Therefore if Christ had made of that bread his body, [he] had made it in his blessing, or else in giving of thanks, and not in the words of giving; for if Christ had spoken of the material bread that he had in his hands when he said, "*Hoc est corpus meum*," "This is my body;" it was made before, or else the word had been a lie. For if I say, This is my hand, and if it be not a hand, then am I a liar, therefore seek carefully if ye can find two words of blessing, or of giving of thanks, wherewith Christ made his body and blood of the bread and wine. And that all the clerks of the earth know not, for if ye might find or know those words, then should ye wax great masters above Christ, and then ye might be givers of his substance, and as fathers and makers of him, and that he should worship you, as it is written, Thou shalt worship thy father and mother, Exod. xx. Of such as desire such worship against God's law, speaketh St. Paul of the man of sin that enhanceth\* himself as if he were God. And he is worshipped over all things as God, and showeth himself, as he were God. Where our clergy are guilty in this, judge ye or they that know most, for they say that when ye have said, "*Hoc est corpus meum*," that is to say, "This is my body;" which ye call the words of consecration, or else of making; and when they are said over the bread, ye say, that there is left no bread, but it is the body of the Lord. But truly there is† nothing but a heap of accidents, as witness ruggedness, roundness, savour, touching and tasting, and such other accidents. Then, if thou sayest that the flesh and blood of Christ, that is to say, his manhood, is made more, or increased by so much as the ministration of bread and wine is, the which ye minister—if ye say it is so—then thou must needs consent that the thing which is not God to-day shall be God to-morrow; yea, and that thing which is without spirit of life, but groweth in the field by kind, shall be God at another time. And we all ought to believe that he was without beginning, and without ending; and not made, for if the manhood of Christ were increased every day by so much as the bread and wine draweth to that ye minister, he should increase more in one day by cart loads than he did in thirty-two years when he was here in earth.‡

\* Advanceth.

† So that in the bread there remaineth. Ed. 1612.

‡ A plain artificer, John Badby, a tailor, burned in Smithfield in 1409, in the presence of the prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V.,

And if thou makest the body of the Lord in those words, "*Hoc est corpus meum*;" that is to say, "This is my body." And if thou mayest make the body of the Lord in those words, "This is *my* body," thou thyself must be the person of Christ, or else there is a false God; for if it be thy body as thou sayest, then is it the body of a false knave or of a drunken man, or of a thief, or of a lecherer or full of other sins, and then there is an unclean body for any man to worship for God! For even if Christ had made there his body of material bread in the said words, as I know they are not the words of making, what earthly man had power to do as he did? For in all holy scripture, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Apocalypse, there are no words written of the making of Christ's body; but there are written that Christ was the Son of the Father, and that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and that he took flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, and that he was dead, and that he rose again from death on the third day, and that he ascended to heaven very God and man, and that we should believe in all scriptures that are written of him, and that he is to come to judge the quick and the dead, and that the same Christ Jesus, King and Saviour, was at the beginning with the Father and the Holy Ghost, making all things of nought, both heaven and earth, and all things that are therein; working by word of his virtue,\* for he said, Be it done, and it was done, Gen. i. whose works never earthly man might comprehend, either make. And yet the words of the making of these things are written in the beginning of Genesis, even as God spake them; and if ye cannot make the work that he made, and have the word by which he made it, how shall ye make him that made the works? You have no words of authority or power left you on earth by which ye should do this, but ye have feigned this craft of your false errors, which some of you understand not; for it is prophesied, Isaiah vi. xlii. Matt. xiii. Luke viii. and Mark iv. They shall have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not; and shall see prophecies, and shall not understand, lest they be converted; for I hide them from the hearts of those people; their hearts are argued with his judges that John the baker of Bristol had as much power to make *such* a body of Christ, as any priest whatever. Also that if every wafer consecrated at the altar were the Lord's body, there were at that time twenty thousand gods in England. But he believed, he said, in one Lord God omnipotent, in Trinity.

\* Power.

greatly fatted. And this thing is done to you for the wickedness of your errors in unbelief; therefore be ye converted from the worst sin, as it is written, When Moses was in the hill with God, Exod. xxxii. the people made a calf and worshipped it as God. And God spake to Moses, Go, for the people have done the worst sin to make and worship alien gods.

But now I shall ask you a word; answer ye me, Whether is the body of the Lord made at once or at twice? Is both the flesh and the blood in the host of the bread? or else is the flesh made at one time, and the blood made at other time; that is to say the wine in the chalice? If thou wilt say it is full and wholly the manhood of Christ in the host of bread, both flesh and blood, skin, hair, and bones, then makest thou us to worship a false god in the chalice, which is unconjured when ye worship the bread; and if ye say the flesh is in the bread, and the blood in the wine, then thou must grant, if thy craft be true, as it is not indeed, that the manhood of Christ is parted, and that he is made at two times. For first thou takest the host of bread, or a piece of bread, and makest it as ye say, and the innocent people\* worship it. And then thou takest to thee the chalice, and likewise marrest, makest, I would have said, the blood in it, and then they worship it also, and if it be so as I am sure that the flesh and blood of Christ ascended, then are ye false harlots† to God and to us; for when we shall be houselled‡ ye bring to us the dry flesh, and let the blood be away; for ye give us after the bread, wine and water, and sometimes clean water unblest, or rather conjured, by the virtue of your craft; and yet ye say, under the host of bread is the full manhood of Christ. Then by your own confession must it needs be that we worship a false god in the chalice, which is unconjured when we worship the bread, and worship the one as the other; but where find ye that ever Christ or any of his disciples taught any man to worship this bread or wine?

Therefore, what shall we say of the apostles that were so much with Christ, and were called by the Holy Ghost; had they forgotten to set it in the creed when they made it, which is christian men's belief? Or else we might say that they knew no such God, for they believe in no more gods but in Him that was at the beginning, and made of

\* Simple, ignorant people.

† False servants, cheats.

‡ Receive the sacrament.

nought all things visible and invisible, Heb. i. Ps. cii. which Lord took flesh and blood, being in the virgin, the same God. But ye have many false ways, to beguile the innocent people with sleights of the fiend.

For ye say that in every host each piece is the whole manhood of Christ, or full substance of him. For ye say as a man may take a glass, and break the glass into many pieces, and in every piece properly thou mayest see thy face, and yet thy face is not parted. So ye say the Lord's body is in each host or piece, and his body is not parted. And this is a full subtle question to beguile an innocent fool, but will ye take heed of this subtle question, how a man may take a glass and behold the very likeness of his own face, and yet it is not his face, but the likeness of his face? for if it were his very face, then he must needs have two faces, one on his body and another in the glass! And if the glass were broken in many places, so there should be many faces more by the glass than by the body, and each man shall make as many faces to them as they would; but as ye may see the mind or likeness of your face, which is not the very face, but the figure thereof, so the bread is the figure or mind of Christ's body in earth, and therefore Christ said, As oft as ye do this thing do it in mind of me, Luke xxii.

Also ye say this, As a man may light many candles at one candle, and yet the light of that candle is never the more nor ever the less. So ye say that the manhood of Christ descendeth into each part of every host, and the manhood of Christ is never the more nor less. Where then becometh your ministrations? For if a man light many candles at one candle, as long as they burn there will be many candles lighted, and as well the last candle as the first; and so by this reason, if ye shall fetch your word at God, and make God, there must needs be many gods, and that is forbidden in the first commandment, Exod. xx. And as for making more, either making less, of Christ's manhood, it lieth not in your power to come there nigh, neither to touch it, for it is ascended into heaven in a spiritual body, Matt. xxviii. which he suffered not Mary Magdalen to touch, when her sins were forgiven to her.

Therefore all the sacraments that are left here in earth are but minds of the body of Christ, for a sacrament is no more to say but a sign or mind of a thing passed, or a thing to come; for when Jesus spake of the bread, and said to his disciples, Luke xxii. As ye do this thing, do it in

mind of me, it was set for a mind of good things passed of Christ's body; but when the angel showed to John, Apocalypse xvii. the sacraments of the woman and of the beast that bare her, it was set for a mind of evil things to come on the face of the earth, and great destroying of the people of God. And in the old law there were many figures or minds of things to come. For before Christ, circumcision was commanded by a law; and he that kept not the law was slain. And yet St. Paul saith, Rom. ii. And neither is it circumcision that is openly in the flesh, but he that is circumcised of heart in spirit, not the letter whose praising is not of men, but of God. Peter saith in the third chapter of his epistle, And so baptism of like form maketh not us safe, but the putting away of the filthiness of the flesh, and the having of good conscience in God by the again rising of our Lord Jesus Christ from death, that we should be made heirs of everlasting life, he went up into heaven, and angels, and powers, and virtues, are made subjects to him.

And also the scripture saith of John Baptist, Matt. iii. that he preached in the wilderness and said, A stronger than I shall come after me, and I am not worthy to kneel down and unlace his shoe; and yet Christ said that he was more than a prophet. See also Isaiah xl. Matt. xi. How may ye then say that ye are worthy to make his body, and yet your works bear witness that ye are less than the prophets, for if ye were not, ye should not teach the people to worship the sacraments or minds\* of Christ for Christ himself; which sacraments or figures are lawful as God taught them and left them unto us, as the sacrifices or minds of the old law were full good. As it is written, They that kept them should live in them, Paul, Rom. x. And so the bread that Christ brake was left to us for mind of things passed for the body of Christ, that we should believe he was a very man in kind as we are, but as God in power, and that his manhood was sustained by food as ours. For St. Paul saith he was very man, and in form he was found as man. And so we must believe that he was very God and very man together, and that he ascended up very God and very man to heaven, and that he shall be there till he come to doom the world. And we may not see him bodily, being in this life, as it is written Peter i. For he sayeth, Whom ye have not ye love, into whom ye now not seeing believe. And John



saith in the first chapter of his gospel, No man saw God ; none but the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath told it out. And John saith in his first epistle, the third chapter, Every man that sinneth seeth not him, neither knoweth him. By what reason then say ye that are sinners, that ye make God ? truly this must needs be the worst sin, to say that ye make God, and it is the abomination of discomfort, that is said in Daniel the prophet to be standing in the holy place ; he that readeth let him understand.

Also Luke saith, chap. xxii. that Christ took the cup after that he had supped, and gave thanks and said, This cup is the new testament in my blood that shall be shed into the remission of sins for man. Now, what say ye ; the cup which he said was the new testament in his blood, was it a material cup in which the wine was that he gave his disciples wine of, or was it his most blessed body in which the blessed blood was kept till it was shed out for the sins of them that should be made safe by his passion. Needs must we say that he spake of his holy body, as he did when he called his passion or suffering in body a cup, when he prayed to his Father, before he went to his passion, Matt. xxvi. and said, If it be possible that this cup pass from me, but if thou wilt that I drink it, thy will be done. He spake not here of the material cup in which he had given his disciples drink ; for it troubled not him, but he prayed for his great sufferance and bitter death, the which he suffered for our sins and not for his own. And if he spake of his holy body and passion when he said, This cup is the new testament in my blood, so he spake of his holy body, when he said, This is my body which shall be given for you, and not of the material bread which he had in his hand. Also in another place he calleth his passion a cup, Matt. xx. where the mother of Zebedee's sons came to him, and asked of him that her two sons, when he came to his kingdom, might sit one on his right side, and one at his left side. And he answered and said, Woman, thou wottest not what thou asketh ; then he said to them, May ye drink of the cup that I shall drink ? and they said, Yea, Lord. And he said, Ye shall drink of my cup, but to sit on my right hand or left hand it is not mine to give, but to the Father it is proper. But in that he said, Ye shall drink of my cup, he promised them to suffer tribulation of this world as he did, by the which they should enter into life everlasting, and to be both

on his right hand. And thus ye may see that Christ spake not of the material cup, neither of himself, nor of his apostles, neither of material bread, neither of material wine. Therefore let every man wisely, with meek prayers, and great study, and also charity, read the words of God and holy scriptures; but many of you are like the mother of Zebedee's sons to whom Christ said, Thou knowest not what thou askest. So, many of you know not what ye ask, nor what you do; for if ye did, ye would not blaspheme God as ye do, to set an alien god instead of the living God. Also Christ saith, John xv. I am a very\* vine; wherefore then worship ye not the vine for God, as ye do the bread? Wherein was Christ a very vine, or wherein was the bread Christ's body, in figurative speech, which is hidden to the understanding of sinners? Then if Christ became not a material, or an earthly vine, neither did a material vine become the body of Christ. So neither the bread, material bread, was changed from its substance to the flesh and blood of Christ.

Have ye not read in John the second, when Christ came into the temple, they asked of him what token he would show, that they might believe him. And he answered them, Cast down this temple, and in three days I shall raise it again; which words were fulfilled in his rising again from death; but when he said, Undo this temple, in that that he said this, they were in error, for they understood it fleshly, and had supposed that he had spoken of the temple of Jerusalem, because he stood in it. And thereof they accused him at his passion full falsely, Matt. xxvi. For he spake of the temple of his blessed body, which rose again in the third day. And right so Christ spake of his holy body when he said, This is my body which shall be given for you, Luke xxii. which was given to death, and to rising again to bliss, for all that shall be saved by him. But like as they accused him falsely of the temple of Jerusalem, so now-a-days they accuse falsely against Christ, and say that Christ spake of the bread that he brake amongst his apostles; for in that Christ said this, they are deceived, take it fleshly, and turn it to the material bread, as the Jews did to the temple; and on this false understanding they make abomination of discomfort, as is said by Daniel the prophet, and in Matthew xxiv. to be standing in the holy place; he that readeth let him understand.

Now therefore pray we heartily to God, that this evil time may be made short for the chosen men, as he hath promised in his blessed gospel, Matt. xxiv. And the large and broad way that leadeth to perdition may be stopped, and the strait and narrow way that leadeth to bliss may be made open by holy scriptures, that we may know which is the will of God, to serve him in truth and holiness in the dread of God, that we may find by him a way of bliss everlasting. So be it.

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#### NOTE ON THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

As Wickliff lived before the council of Trent, it may be desirable to state the doctrine of transubstantiation as set forth by the church of Rome in his days. This may best be done by inserting the decree of the fourth council of Lateran, A. D. 1215, wherein that doctrine was commanded to be believed as an article of faith. It is as follows:—  
 “There is one universal (catholic) church of the faithful, out of which no one whatever can be saved. In which Christ Jesus himself is the priest and the sacrifice, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar, under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being *transubstantiated* into the body, and the wine into the blood, by the divine power, so that for the accomplishing the mystery of unity, we may receive of his nature that which he received of ours.” The term “transubstantiation” was then first introduced.

This change or transubstantiation was declared to take place when the priest pronounces “the words of consecration,” *Hoc est enim corpus meum*, or, For this is my body. Then the whole *substance* of bread is supposed to depart, and the whole *substance* of Christ (or, according to the council of Trent, “the true body and the true blood, with his soul and divine nature,”) takes its place, while the *form* and *appearance* (or *accidents*, as they are termed) of bread still remain! The absurdity of this doctrine was carried still farther shortly after, and it was, and is still asserted by the church of Rome, that the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord, “the entire Christ,” exist equally under each species, (the bread and the wine,) and in each particle of each species. And that the articles thus consecrated, are to be worshipped “with the same adoration that is paid to the Deity.”

This doctrine necessarily implies a rejection of the *one* sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, Heb. ix. it maintains that a continual repetition of this sacrifice is necessary for the salvation of the faithful, which sacrifice cannot be offered without the intervention of an order of men, who are consecrated to the priesthood by the pope or his immediate instruments, who are allowed to require payment for making this sacrifice, and who, by having the power of thus making Christ vested in them, become an order of beings superior to mankind, and therefore are themselves actually to be considered as objects of worship!

Without entering into argument to show that the doctrine of transubstantiation is opposed to reason, to scripture, and to the history of the primitive church, we may observe that the brief notice just given, shows that it is an **IDOLATROUS** doctrine. As such it was viewed by every reformer from **WICKLIFF** to **JEWELL**, and from their writings it will abundantly be seen, that in the discussion of this question in reality **ALL** the scriptural doctrines of salvation were involved.

Wickliff was one of the first who opposed this error ; with scholars he treated it as a scholastic question, and refuted them on their own grounds ; the unlearned he supplied with plain arguments, as in the preceding treatise, showing that this tenet was opposed both to the words of scripture, and to common sense. The papists, on the other hand, were fully aware of the importance of this novel doctrine to the false and usurped authority of their church. They endeavoured to prevent the progress of the truth by every means in their power. To *convince* the unlearned they had recourse to barefaced impostures, as appears from the following story, in which one instance is thus recorded by Knighton, their own annalist of that period.

John Kilingham, or Cunningham, was provincial of the Carmelite friars in England and Ireland. He was a warm opponent of Wickliff, and preached at the church of the preaching friars in 1382, at the close of the procession which archbishop Courtney ordered to be made after the condemnation of the Reformer's conclusions. At this sermon was present a knight named Cornelius Cloune, who was said to be a great favourer of Wickliff's opinions respecting the sacrament of the altar, that it remained true material bread.

The next day, the knight went to the same church to hear mass, which was celebrated by one of the friars. When the friar broke the host, or consecrated wafer, into three parts as usual, the knight saw in the hands of the friar, real flesh, raw and bloody, divided into three parts. The knight, full of wonder and amazement, as well he might be, called his squire, that he might see it also, *but he saw nothing more than usual*. But the knight, in the third piece, which ought likewise to be put into the chalice, in the middle of it saw this name, **IHESUS**, written in letters of flesh, all raw and bloody, which, as the writer properly observes, was very wonderful to behold ! The next day was the festival of the Holy Trinity, when the friar preached at Paul's cross, and told this story to all the people. After the sermon was done, the knight attested the truth of it, promising that he would fight and die in that cause, for that in the sacrament of the altar there was the very body of Christ, and not bread only, as he himself had before believed.

Upon such a figment it is unnecessary to make any comment, or to try the miracle by the rules deduced from scripture. The Romish legends contain many other stories somewhat similar, of nuns beholding the wafer changed into the appearance of infants, the wafers bleeding when stabbed by jews and infidels, of adoration paid to them by bees, asses, dogs, and other animals, &c. &c.

# TWELVE LETTINGS\* OF PRAYER.

(From a MS. in the British Museum.)

HERE follow twelve lettings\* of prayer, whereby men may know better why men are not heard in their prayer of God, alway, when they pray.

## THE TWELVE LETTINGS OF PRAYER.

The first letting of prayer, is the sin of him that prayeth. In Isaiah i. God saith thus, When ye make many prayers I shall not hear, for your hands are full of blood. That is, your works are full of sin. And in Isaiah lix. Your wickednesses have made departing betwixt you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that he should not hear. And in Jeremiah v. Our sins have forbode† God from us. And in Lamentations iii. We have done wickedly, and have deserved vengeance; therefore thou mayest not be prayed, that is, pleased by our prayer. And oft thou hast set a cloud against thee, that a prayer pass not. And in John ix. the blind man saith thus, We know that God heareth not sinners; that is, who travail not to amend them. And David saith in the Psalter, If I beheld wickedness in my heart, that is to say, If I loved wickedness, God shall not hear. And St. Gregory saith, When he that displeaseth is sent for to pray, the soul of him that is wroth, is sore stirred to worse things, that is, to more vengeance.

The second letting is, the doubt of him that prayeth. In James i. it is said, Let a man ask in faith, nothing doubting, for he that doubteth is like to the wave of the sea which is driven of the wind, and borne about. Let that man guess not that he shall get any thing of the Lord. And Bernard saith, He is proved unworthy to have heavenly blessings, that asketh of God with doubtful desire.

The third letting is this, that a man asketh not that which ought to be asked. For why? That which is asked is vile, or it is not speedful‡ to him that asketh. In John xvi.

\* Hinderances. † Forbidden, separated. ‡ Serviceable, useful

Christ saith to his disciples, Till now ye asked not any thing in my name. In Matthew xx. it is said, Ye know not what ye ask. Oft the church is not heard, when it asketh that tribulations be put away. In Isaiah xxvi. God saith thus, Have we mercy of the unpiteous man, and he shall not learn to do rightfulness. This is said in scorn ; as if God said to his angels, Suffer we the unpiteous man have lust in this life, and to perish in evil death ; for he will not learn to do rightfulness, but grudgeth and blasphemeth God. Also in James iv. it is said, Ye ask and take not, for ye ask evil. Isidore saith, Many that pray, are not heard at their will, for God purveyeth better things for them than they ask. As it is wont to fall to little children, who in schools pray God that they be not beaten ; but the effect of their prayer is not given unto them.

The fourth letting is, unworthiness of him for whom we pray. For God, in Jeremiah vii. xi. saith, Pray not thou for this people, and take thou not praising ; that is, sacrifice of praising and prayer for them ; neither against and thou me, for I shall not hear thee. And in Jeremiah xv. God saith thus, Though Moses and Samuel stand before me, my will is not to this people ; cast them out from my face and go they out.

The fifth letting is, the multitude of evil thoughts. In Genesis xv., Abraham drove away the birds ; that is, he that prayeth shall drive away evil thoughts.

The sixth letting is, despising of God's law. In Proverbs xxviii. God saith, The prayer of him that boweth away his ear, that he hear not the law of God, shall be abominable, or cursed. And in Proverbs i. They shall call me to help, saith God, and I shall not hear them ; for they hated teaching and chastising.

The seventh letting is, hardness of soul ; and this is on two manners. Some is hardness against poor men, of which it is said in Proverbs xxi. If a man stoppeth his ear at the cry of a poor man, he shall cry and he shall not be heard. Another hardness is to them that have trespassed, when a man will not forgive to them. In Mark xi. Christ saith, When ye stand to pray, forgive ye, if ye have any thing against any man ; that also your Father which is in heaven, forgive to you your sins. That if ye forgive not to men, neither shall your Father forgive to you your sins. And the same sentence is told in Matthew vi.

The eighth letting is, increasing of sin. David saith to

God, They that draw themselves far from thee, shall perish. In James iv. he saith, Nigh ye to God, and he shall nigh to you. He nigheth to God, that ceaseth of evil work. Of this letting, and of that which goeth before, Isidore touches, and saith thus, "In two manners a prayer is letted, that a man may not get the things that are asked; one is, if a man do yet evils, that is, wilfully continueth in sin; and the other is, if he forgive not sin to man that trespasseth to him."

The ninth letting is, suggestions of the devil; that withdraw many men from prayer.

The tenth letting is, littleness of desire. Augustine saith, "God keepeth that thing from thee, which he will not give soon to thee, that thou learn to desire great things." Gregory saith, in his *Moralis*, "If we by mouth ask everlasting life, and desire not in heart, we that cry are still and dumb." David saith, I was still the while I cried all day.

The eleventh letting is, the impatience of him that asketh. In 1 Sam. xxviii. Saul asked counsel of the Lord, and he answered not Saul. And Saul said, Seek ye to me a woman that hath an unclean spirit.

The twelfth letting is, the default of perseverance in prayer. In Luke xi. Christ saith, If a man continueth knocking at the gate, the friend, that is, God, shall rise and give him as many loaves as he needeth. Augustine saith, "If prayer is not removed, be thou secure that mercy is not removed." But here take heed that prayer stand most in good living; that the prayer with mouth accord with the deed, and so continue, and thou shalt take. Therefore Christ saith, in Luke xviii. It behoveth to pray ever and cease not. Augustine saith, "As long as thou hast holy desire, and livest after God's law in charity, thou prayest ever well. And if thou livest in gluttony, or in other great sins, how many prayings soever thy tongue soundeth, thy life blasphemeth, that is scorneth and despiseth God.

Now hast thou here twelve lettings of prayer, well grounded in holy scripture; by which it is good before thy prayer to search thy conscience, that thy prayer be not hindered by any of these, and so by grace to have the effect of thy prayer, and after to come to bliss without end.

# ANTICHRIST'S LABOUR TO DESTROY HOLY WRIT.

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*From the MS. in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.*

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HOW ANTICHRIST AND HIS CLERKS LABOUR TO DESTROY  
HOLY WRIT, AND TO MAKE CHRISTIAN MEN UNSTABLE IN  
THE FAITH, AND TO SET THEIR GROUND IN DEVILS OF  
HELL.

I. As our Lord Jesus Christ ordained by the writing of the four evangelists, to make his gospel surely known, and maintained against heretics, and men out of the faith; so the devil, even Satan, devises by antichrist and his worldly false clerks, to destroy holy writ and christian men's belief, by four accursed ways, or false reasons. 1. The church is of more authority, and more to be believed than any gospel. 2. That Augustine said he would not believe the gospel if the church had not taught him so. 3. That no man alive knows which is the gospel, but by the approving of the church. 4. If men say that they believe this is the gospel of Matthew or John, they ask, Why believest thou that this is the gospel? as though they would say, There is no cause but that the church confirmeth and teacheth it.

These four evidences, and many more, the fiend makes, to blind men in their belief, that they should not know what is sin, or what is virtue; which is truth, which is falsehood; which is good, which is evil; which are God's commands, and which are the fiend's lies; thus to bring all men blindly to hell and their new religion. And principally friars preach these evidences, and sow them among ignorant men in the country, to stop poor priests and ignorant men, that they be not hardy to speak of the gospel, holy writ, God's commandments, joys of heaven, of sins, and of the pains of hell, lest they stir men to rise out of their sins for dread of pains, and to live in virtuous life, to have the bliss of heaven. And this error in belief is made and committed by these accursed pharisees to magnify their new feigned



orders, founded by sinful men, not with Christ's holy religion, but more than it or any point of holy writ,\* and therefore they will not be convinced of their pride and hypocrisy, and forsake their covetousness and lusts, and their own will. Therefore they will rather run to hell, and draw all men after them, advisedly, by destroying of christian faith, than come to Christ's holy religion with freedom of the gospel, which is ordained of God, of endless wisdom, without error of any sinful man. For then they must acknowledge their falseness and hypocrisy, by which they deceive christian men, from the beginning of their novelties to this time. But Lucifer's pride, and the coveting of worldly muck, and of high estates of worldly worship, cannot suffer this meekness, as men dread full sorely through the old envy of Satan, and firm rooting in sin.

II. Let us now see this bringing in the first accursed ground, that the church is of more authority and credence than the gospel. They say that Nicodemus and many more, wrote the gospels of Christ's life and his teaching, but the church put them away, and approved the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—then the church might as well have put out the four, and approved the other gospels;† since it was in full power of the church to reprove and condemn which they would, and to approve, and to accept, which they liked, and therefore men, say they, should believe the church more than any gospel.

First, These crafty heretics understand by the church, the pope of Rome and his cardinals, and the multitude of worldly clerks assenting to his simony, and worldly lordship, above all kings and emperors of this world. For else it were not to their purpose to magnify the church as they now do. True men say that the clergy who first were wise, and holy of life, were stirred up by the Holy Ghost, to take these four gospels, and they charge not christian people with more, since these are enough and profitable at the full,

\* Thus Chaucer describes,

— Instead of preaching and of prayers,  
Men may give pence to poor friars.

† Respecting the fabulous narratives here referred to, called The Gospel of Nicodemus, Of the infancy of Christ, and other similar legends, it is sufficient to remark that their contents fully prove their want of authenticity. This is apparent to the most cursory reader, yet modern infidels have urged the very same argument as the popish opponents of Wickliff! See Jones on the Sacred Canon, and Horne on the Scriptures, for an account of the apocryphal evangelists.

and are figured in many prophecies of God's law. And these four witnesses were accepted of the Holy Ghost, to write these things for man's instruction, which we may not stay to tell now. But certainly the church might not have put away the gospels, and have accepted the others; for then it had done against the will of God, and against the truth of Jesus Christ, and against charity of the Holy Ghost, to put away these witnesses that knew more of God's purity, and were holier of life, and to take witnesses not so skilled in God's will, nor so holy of life, nor so meek, nor so stable in faith and love of Jesus Christ.

But these subtle heretics travail night and day, to the example of the multitude of worldly clerks, who are full of simony, pride, covetousness, gluttony, lechery, and other sins, above Jesus Christ and his gospel, to have their worldly life, pride, and lusts maintained; that no man should hinder them in their worldly glory, nor deprive them of their lusts, though they lie against God, and slander his people. For they would make their life and teachings to be the gospel and belief of christian men; but where are greater traitors to God and his law, and more perilous and false prophets to christian people? For God commandeth, on pain of his great curse and deep condemnation, that no man withdraw any point of truth from his law, nor add thereto any novelty that is not approved of the Trinity. And Jesus Christ saith, that his gospel is an everlasting testament; but they will undo it with the vile breath of antichrist's mouth. How dare christian men maintain such heretics against God's teaching, and the peace of christian people? Such wayward heretics are unable to rule prelates, lords, and commons, in confession, preaching, and praying, and other points of their souls' health. For they deceive them in faith and good life, to have their own pride and covetousness and lusts borne up, and so draw all men to hell, that are ruled by such false confessors.

III. See now the second wheel in this devil's wain.\* They bear upon Augustine that he saith thus; That he would not believe the gospel unless the church said it. True men being answered thus, suppose that Augustine said this word. But he said to this intent, That unless Christ, heard of holy church and saints in heaven, and the apostles of

\* Waggon, the cars or chariots, and waggons were then of very rude construction, and much alike.

Christ that are holy church, said and approved this gospel, he would not believe thereto. And this understanding is full true, and reasonable, and according to the words of Augustine ; but they understand them, that unless the multitude of accursed worldly clerks approve this for the gospel, Augustine would not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ ; and since Augustine was and is, so great a doctor of holy church, no man should believe the gospel, unless the church of these prelates confirm that this is the gospel of Christ ; and unless the multitude of antichrist's clerks approve the gospel or truth of holy writ, no man should hold the gospel, or any command of God, or maintain any truth against antichrist, and his worldly prelates. But what heresy might sooner destroy christian man's belief ? and God forbid that Augustine were in perilous heresy, or any christian man, therefore it is leasing\* to slander St. Augustine with this accursed error, to colour their own false understanding and heresy by this holy doctor.

For by this accursed wheel, antichrist's clerks condemn christian men's faith, the commands of God, and points of charity, and bring in their own crooked laws, to hold up their pride and covetousness, and to curse men for doing works of charity. Men must upon pain of damnation receive their wicked deeds as belief, and forsake the gospel of Christ, and take fiends' leasings instead of God's lore ! And more cursedness to destroy christian men's faith, than will ensue from this understanding, no man or fiend can imagine till the day of doom. Therefore, christians should stand to the death for maintaining Christ's gospel and true understanding thereof, gotten by holy life and great study, and not set their faith or trust in sinful prelates and their clerks, nor in their understanding of holy writ. For with their worldly life, full of pride, covetousness, gluttony, idleness, and hawking and hunting, and playing at the chess, and tables ; riot and dancing, feast making, drunkenness and lechery, they are unable to perceive the truth of holy writ, and high pureness of God. For Christ saith in the gospel, that the Father of heaven hideth these truths from worldly wise men, and queint†, and showeth them to meek men, as were Christ's disciples. And the wise man saith, that wisdom shall not enter into an evil-willed man, for the fear of God is the beginning and plenty of wisdom. If they have not this fear, then they have not this wisdom ; therefore, it is Lucifer's

\* Falsehood, lies.

† Conceited.

pride, and surpasses it, to constrain men to take understanding of holy writ, according to the knowledge and wisdom of such worldly clerks, who are enemies of Christ, and his law and his servants. For they are blind in God's law and good life, and lead blind men to hell, as Christ saith in the gospel. For instead of keys of heaven, that is, knowledge of holy writ, and power to destroy sin, and to save christian souls by true teaching and good example, they have ignorance of God's law, and no will to study and live thereafter; but skill and practice in their own wicked laws, for pride and covetousness, and feign power of tyranny to stop true men from preaching the gospel, and to curse them if they preach against their will, and pursue them, and burn them, and certainly these are the keys of hell.

IV. See now the third wheel of Satan's car; these deceitful clerks and religious of Lucifer say, that no man knows which is the gospel, but by the approving and confirming of the church; but true men say that to their understanding this is full of falsehood. For christian men are certain of belief by the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, and that this truth, taught by Christ and his apostles, is the gospel, though all antichrist's clerks cry ever so fast the contrary, upon pain of curse, imprisonment, and burning. And this belief is not grounded on the pope and his cardinals, for then it must fail and be undone, as they fail and some time are destroyed; but it is grounded on Jesus Christ, God and man, and on the Holy Trinity. So it may never fail but in default of him that should love God and serve him, and faileth on these two points. For almighty God, and his truths, are the foundation of christian men's faith. And as Paul saith, other foundation may no man set besides that which is set, that is, Jesus Christ. Therefore, though antichrist and all his worldly clerks are buried deep in hell, for their simony, pride, and covetousness, and other sins, yet christian faith faileth not, for they are not grounded thereof. But Jesus Christ is the ground thereof, for he is our God and our best Master, ever ready to teach true men all things that are profitable, and needful to their souls, and this teaching may not fail, but for inability of him that should receive this teaching.

V. The fourth wheel of Belial's cart is this; when christian men say they know by belief that this is Christ's gospel,

these malicious heretics ask, Why they believe that this is gospel? But true men ask of them again, Why they believe that God is God? And if they tell a good sufficient cause, we tell the same cause why we believe that this is Christ's gospel. But these heretics would have this cause to be, that it is for that their prelates teach that theirs is Christ's gospel; and they would have all their false purposes as of this cause; that whatever the prelates teach openly, and maintain stedfastly, were of as great authority or more than Christ's gospel. And so they would destroy holy writ and christian faith, and maintain that whatever they do were no sin! But christian men take their faith of God, by his gracious gift, when he giveth it to them; knowing and understanding truths needful to save men's souls, by grace to assent in their hearts to such truths. This men call faith, and of this faith christian men are more certain than any man is of worldly things, by any bodily knowledge.

Therefore, Christ reprov'd most the default of belief, both in the Jews, and in his disciples; and therefore, Christ's apostles prayed most to have stableness in faith, for it is impossible that any man please God without faith; and so Christ prayed principally that the faith of Peter and other disciples should not fail. And God's law tells how by faith saints wrought all their great wonders and marvels that they did; and if antichrist say here, that each man may feign that he hath right faith, and good understanding of holy writ given of God, when he is in error, let a man seek in all things truly the honour of God, and live justly to God and man, and God will not fail to him in any thing that is needful to him, neither in faith, nor understanding, nor in answer against his enemies. And as faith is the shield of christian men against all temptations of the fiend, and the ground of all virtues, therefore Satan ordained these new sects to be so many, and to have a name of wisdom and holiness before all others; and he grounded them in pride, envy, covetousness, gluttony, lechery, and hypocrisy, to walk among the people, and to stir them by word and example to be unstable in this faith; and he stirreth high worldly prelates to be favourable to them, and to maintain them in this hypocrisy, to colour their own sin thereby, and to hinder true men to preach plainly and freely Christ's gospel and the commands of God, for saving of man's soul.

Hereby, and by many more deceits, christian men should know how the new religionists are false prophets, and

accursed sects, of which Christ and his apostles prophesied before, and taught men to know them by their works, which are hypocrisy, covetousness, and maintaining of sin, by false preaching, flattering, false counselling, and slandering of true men; and making men secure of spiritual help by false letters of fraternity,\* and many other novelties brought up by hypocrisy and covetousness.

And as John the evangelist commandeth, christian men should not receive them into their houses, nor salute them, and Paul biddeth that men should not commune with them, that they be confounded and shamed of their false heresy, and turn to Christ's holy religion, without error of sinful men's traditions. And may God almighty strengthen his little flock against these four wheels of Satan's car, against antichrist's clerks and helpers, and make them strong in rightful faith, hope, and charity, to seek truly the worship of Jesus Christ, and the saving of men's souls, to despise antichrist's boast and feigned power, and willingly and joyfully to suffer pain and reproof in the world; for the name of Jesus and his gospel, to give firm example to others, to follow and attain the high bliss of heaven by glorious martyrdom as other saints did before. May Jesus of his endless might, endless wisdom, endless goodness, and charity, grant to us sinful wretches this boon. Amen.†

\* See note, p. 134. These letters of fraternity were written on parchment, and very beautifully ornamented.

† Dr. James, in his *Apology for Wickliff*, states his opinions relative to Holy Scripture at considerable length. He says, that Wickliff, in his book, *De veritate scripturæ*, affirms positively that God's will is plainly revealed in the two testaments. That a christian man well understanding Christ's law, may thence gather sufficient knowledge during his pilgrimage here upon earth. That we ought to admit of no science or law, which is not subordinate to this law, or helpful to bring us to this law. That if the pope should attempt to dispense with holy scripture, as some feign that he may, he should no longer be accounted a christian. And this was not a bare opinion which might grow upon dislike, discontent, or be uttered by way of contradiction, but a settled and constant persuasion out of the word of God. Dr. James adds, that he could enlarge this point with infinite quotations, so earnest is Wickliff every where in his writings to establish this doctrine which is the ground of all our protestant opinions. And that Wickliff was thus earnest on account of the ignorance of those times, when the few sermons preached were absurdities and falsehoods, God's law and gospel being laid aside.

## WICKLIFF'S TRIALOGUS.\*

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### EXTRACT FROM BOOK III. CHAPTER XXV.

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#### ON THE INCARNATION AND DEATH OF CHRIST.

*Aletheia.* I PERCEIVE, brother Phronesis, that connected with these doctrines are many other things which require explanation. I might instance the inquiry whether it was absolutely necessary that Christ should be made flesh, that his sacrifice might be a satisfaction for the sins of men. And whether afterwards it was also necessary that he himself should die. Again, Why is not the sin of the devil done away, as well as that of man?—

*Phronesis.* I am glad, sister, that these questions are so accurately stated. Many remarks may be made upon the first proposition. In the first place, the history of the fall of Adam intimates that he sinned through ignorance, since the woman was beguiled, and the man deceived and stupified by the sin. In the next place, we are led to suppose that both the man and the woman, considering the dreadful severity of their punishment, repented profitably unto salvation, before the change of death. And, in the third place, we conclude that the righteousness of God must be preserved inviolate, notwithstanding the transgression of the first man, as has been frequently declared before. These positions being granted, it is argued from thence, that it was necessary the WORD of the Lord should be made flesh, because it was necessary that the human race should be saved in their first progenitor, according to the second supposition (that Adam and Eve repented). And this salvation was impossible unless Christ was made flesh, which must therefore certainly take place. For it behoved that man should be saved, since he repented so profitably, and God could not refuse his mercy to any one who so repented. And

\* For an account of the Trialogus, see the life of Wickliff. This extract has been translated for the present work as a specimen was considered necessary for the reasons stated, p. 156. In many places the original is very obscure, and the latinity very barbarous, which, with the logical terms frequently introduced, make a literal rendering impracticable. Some of the arguments brought forward in this chapter will be found in the Postilla, expressed in more simple terms.

as, according to the third proposition, it behoved that satisfaction should be made for sin, so it behoved that the same nature of man should make a satisfaction, equal to the guilt which that nature had incurred in the first formed man. This no one could possibly do, unless he united in himself the nature of God and man. For other men cannot, of themselves, even make satisfaction individually for their own sins; how then shall any of them make satisfaction for the whole race of mankind? And who, I ask, could be humbled so low, that his humility could compensate the pride with which Adam exalted himself? For since Adam so exalted himself, as to imply that he had attained an equality with the Deity, inasmuch as he consented to the temptation that he needed not to obey the divine command, it is plain that it behoved the person who would make satisfaction, to descend from as high a degree of exaltation as would be equivalent to the proud elevating of himself which Adam had attempted.

But how was this to be obtained, unless that, as a man who was *not* God had presumed to arrogate to himself equality with God, so a man who *was* God should descend from his equality with God to the low estate of man. Therefore, the apostle in the second chapter to the Philippians, says, that Christ emptied himself. I must however remark to you, that the presumption of the first man, by the nature of his crime, was false; but the assumption of man's nature, and the humiliation of the second man, was real and true. And it is also to be remarked, that this second man did not lose the form of the Godhead, which indeed was not possible. For Deity could not possibly become a mere accident (or part) of any one. But still retaining his proper Godhead, Christ assumed the human nature; which human nature, although it was in itself a substance, yet still it was extraneous to the Deity.\*

And if any one captiously should inquire, Why should the second, or middle person of the blessed Trinity, be incarnate rather than the first or third; my answer is, That as the offence was committed through ignorance, therefore it must be done away by wisdom embodied in the person who undertook the redemption—which wisdom is no other than the word of God.

\* That is, the human and divine nature were entirely distinct substances. Not that one was a substance, and the other but an accident or appearance:



Therefore, since it behoves that one person in the Godhead should send another person to make satisfaction for sin, and as it is plain that the Father could not be sent, since he was the first Person of the Trinity, the Originator ; it evidently was necessary, that he should send another to be made incarnate for sin, which, for very many reasons, it was most fitting should be the Word of God. And even if he had not been thus fitting, yet it is plain that the Saviour should be chosen according to this arrangement, since in the economy of the Godhead it could not have been planned in any other way.

It is also equally plain, that since the sin of man must be done away by a Mediator who could render due satisfaction, it behoved Christ to be made flesh, and it was necessary that his death should follow, that his suffering might bear a proportion to the immense presumption of Adam, else satisfaction could not be made for the crime committed. Therefore, as Adam indulged pride so as to bring death upon himself voluntarily ; so it behoved that the second Adam should be humbled unto the death of his body, which death was voluntarily accepted and undergone by him. And therefore the apostle says, that Christ was made obedient even unto death for us ; and it was requisite that his death should be accepted on the tree, that like as man was ruined by the forbidden fruit of a tree, so he should be saved by death suffered as the fruit of a tree. And there are in every part of these transactions, other coincidences which might be stated.

And indeed a clear answer may be given to the second difficulty you have proposed, from these very reasons. The question was, Why is not the sin of the devil remitted ?— Now, as it is absolutely necessary to the performance of the actions of beings, that there must be agents, and there must be suitable recipiency of nature in those who are acted upon, so in order to put away sin, there must be a competent power of action in the agent, and some suitable disposition of contrition in the sinner ; but as this is altogether wanting in the devils, so their sin cannot be done away. Nor can there be a doubt but had they been profitably contrite, God could not have refused to grant them the remission of their sins. So that all the fault must attach to the devil himself, being impenitent.\* For indeed the sin of the devil is

\* The original is very obscure, but the sense appears to be, That God is not to be blamed for not forgiving the wicked spirits, which he would have done, had they repented. But as they did not, and would

the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is called the sin of final impenitence. Therefore, as Adam sinned against the WISDOM of God the Father, and on that account it was necessary this Wisdom should become incarnate, so in order to accomplish the salvation of devils, it would have been requisite that the third Person of the Trinity should have been incarnate. And as this was impossible, so was the salvation of the devil. Nevertheless his punishment is not in itself so severe, but that while his pride and presumption remain the same, he is less pained by the infliction of the punishment, than by the anguish of his feelings, since he does not possess a human bodily nature. Therefore, since an act cannot take place where equal powers are in opposition, and still less from the smaller power, when they are unequal, it appears that the punishment of the devil cannot expel his obstinate pride. He is therefore hardened for ever. And as he can derive no advantage from the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, because He took not on him his nature, it is evident that unless the Holy Spirit should become incarnate, (which is impossible,) the devil cannot be saved. Hence some have refined upon this doctrine,\* asserting that as the devil sinned against clear knowledge, and from mere wickedness of intention, so no one will be damned by sin properly against the Holy Ghost, unless a little before his death, having attained to clear and full knowledge, he should, of his own pure malice, sin to desperation, and so in a certain sense, become a devil.

Wickliff then proceeds to solve other difficulties; but he treats them altogether in such an unprofitable scholastic form, that it is not desirable to weary the reader any farther with the discussion. Objections which proceed from scholastic divinity, may well be left to that system to solve. The preceding extract is presented to the reader to give some idea of the hinderances to the reformation, by the prejudices that arose from the training to which the human mind was subjected in the dark ages. A comparison of the *Dialogus* with the more simple tracts of Wickliff, written by him in English, for the common people, shows the great difficulties interposed in the way of the learned of that period—it may

not repent, it is entirely their own fault, and they have only to blame themselves that they are excluded from mercy. Such questions, it is evident, are at best unprofitable, but the scholastic divinity abounded with them. This one specimen will be sufficient to satisfy the reader.

\* The serious reader will probably consider the whole to be unnecessary refinement.

truly be said, that "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." We also see more clearly the striking interference of divine power, in leading Wickliff to lay aside the vain janglings then so popular, and to set forth gospel truth in simplicity. There is, however, a deep and heartfelt seriousness manifest in many parts of the *Dialogus*. Concern for the salvation of souls actuated Wickliff amidst all the mazes of scholastic divinity, and not the mere love of argument and victory evinced by the frivolous, blasphemous, and even indecent discussions of Aquinas and his followers.\* Wickliff deeply felt the awful situation of his country, to which he doubtless applied the words spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, (v. 30, 31.) "A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" In all his writings he desired to impress upon the minds of his readers the solemn personal inquiry, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Vaughan, in his remarks upon the *Dialogus*, says, "The third book relates more immediately to moral and theological opinions. The power to act virtuously and devoutly, wherever possessed, is said to be derived from the grace of God; and hence it is inferred, that no excellence of mind or conduct can be justly regarded as meriting eternal life. Faith is defined as an assent of the reason, referring exclusively to the truth, and to things unseen; as forming the basis of all christian enjoyment; and as that principle, the declension of which must necessarily precede each gradation in apostasy. The love of God is beautifully inculcated as the only secure foundation of morals and of social happiness.—The portions of this book which relate to the evil of sin; to the Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice, as necessary to procure its remission; to the excellences of the Redeemer's character; and to the doctrines of grace, are only distinguished from passages in his other writings referring to the same matters, as being more strongly marked by the scholastic method of treating them; a peculiarity which cannot add to their attraction with a modern reader."

\* Two specimens from the *Quodlibets* of Thomas Aquinas will suffice—*Utrum angelus transeat ab extremo ad extremum per medium?* *Utrum hæc sit falsa, Deus potest peccare si vult?* These are taken almost without selection from the above work of "the angelical doctor," who at one time was idolized by the whole western world.

## WICKLIFF'S OPINIONS OF THE PAPACY.

*From Dr. James's Apology or Defence of Wickliff.*

This controversy about the supremacy or primacy of the pope, being the very soul and life of popery, may be resolved into sundry questions : 1. Whether the pope be supreme judge upon earth, in all causes and over all persons ? 2. Admit he were so, whether he may intermeddle with the affairs of kings and princes ? 3. Supposing that also, whether he be of that temper and making that he cannot err in his final conclusions ? 4. And lastly, whether he be antichrist or no ?

I. Wickliff, supposing the donation of Constantine (which afterwards was proved a counterfeit), for a while held that the pope was to be consulted in the greatest points of religion ; that he had " a plenary and full power of himself ;" and that " he did incur the crime of paganism," who did not obey his mandates. But what of all this ? Was Wickliff a papist ? No, verily. For, first, this plenary power was built upon a rotten foundation, which afterwards fell to the ground of itself. 2. It was given to the pope only " for to edify, not to destroy or demolish the church." 3. It was so limited, that he could do nothing " against the law of God, or against the law of reason." Lastly, if his laws did " go contrary to Christ's laws," an " interior might, and in conscience ought, not only to disobey him, but to reprove, correct, and contradict him, as Paul did withstand Peter unto the face." Further, he grants the pope no greater authority or superiority over his brethren, " than Peter and Apollos had over their new converts," whom he excludes flatly from any such sovereignty, taking away all honour from them, and giving it to Christ Jesus, " to whom all knowledge, all love, all duty, from all christians is to be ascribed, so far that no creature is to be acknowledged, loved, or honoured, but Christ, or in respect of Christ," neither is it possible, as he thinks, " for any catholic to be so unadvised or inconsiderate as to follow the pope's fiat, let it be done, when He that spake, and it was done, shall say, No.—For this verse can be true of no earthly man, but of our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus ; This is my will, this I command—My will for reason good shall stand."

Finally, he was " condemned as an heretic for denying the pope's supremacy," therefore he cannot well be accounted of the Romish church.

II. The pope's civil dominion or right in temporal estates,—this question Wickliff doth every where determine against the pope, for the king and his regality ; and that of set purpose, in an especial treatise, *Of Civil Dominion*, strengthening his opinion plainly out of the fundamental laws of this land, with great judgment and knowledge.

III. That the pope may err, is showed plainly throughout all Wickliff's works, where he proves that the pope is " of that nature that he may err." " That one whom men call pope may err, not only in manner and conversation of life, but also in doctrine and articles of the Creed." " He may sin, and no man in the world easier or more grievously, and indeed they have erred, and been infected with foul heresies." Yea, he thinketh it to be " likely that all bishops of Rome for three hundred years and more, before his time, were fully heretics."

IV. Whether the pope be antichrist ?—This Wickliff proves by comparing his doctrine and manners with Christ's, chiefly in his book of the *Seven Deadly Sins* : telling us that " forasmuch as through his decrees God's commands, by his commandments Christ's commandments, by his decretals Paul's epistles, by his canon law the canonical scripture, was villified, nullified, utterly defaced and debased," a fault for which he is bold to tax him in sundry passages of his works, he pronounces of him absolutely that he is " *Potissimus antichristus*, Most especially antichrist."

*The quotations are from Wickliff's Writings* Google

# WICKLIFF'S POSTILLS,

OR

## SERMONS.

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More than three hundred of Wickliff's discourses from the pulpit have been preserved. In many instances they are only brief notes, in others they extend to several folio pages closely written. It is very probable that they are only the heads or portions of his discourses, and most likely were taken down by some of his hearers. From the character of Purvey, his curate at Lutterworth, we may suppose that he would endeavour to preserve such memorials of the Reformer, but no certain information has come down to us respecting their first publication or preservation. One passage, however, p. 226, makes it probable that he sometimes wrote his discourses.

They are nearly all what were denominated postills, which now are called lectures or expositions, and they are founded upon the portions of scripture appointed for the public services of the Sundays and festivals. Wickliff felt the peculiar importance of this method of instruction from scripture, in preference to the plan of "declaring," or delivering what may be called essays, or orations, on some given subject. Several volumes of these sermons exist in the different public libraries where Wickliff's manuscripts are found, and also some separate copies of single discourses. The discourses, or extracts, in the following pages are from two copies in the British Museum. The phraseology has been varied from the originals as little as possible.

"There is scarcely a peculiarity of opinion adopted by Wycliffe, the nature or the progress of which might not be illustrated from these voluminous remains. It should also be stated that these compositions are strictly of a popular character. References to abstruse or speculative questions frequently arise, either from the import of the text, or from the reasonings suggested by it; but these are invariably dismissed, that 'things more profiting,' might become the matter of attention." This extract is from the second volume of Vaughan's life of Wycliffe, in which will be found a valuable account of the Reformer's preaching, with some extracts from his discourses.

# WICKLIFF'S POSTILLS.

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## I.

### ON THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

*Unto us a child is born, &c.\** Isaiah ix.

ACCORDING to the joy that Paul telleth, we may say on Christmas day, that a child is born to us; for Jesus Christ, by our belief, is this day born. And to this intent spake God, both in figure and in letter, that a child is born to us, in whom we should have this joy. And three short words are to be spoken from Isaiah's speech, so that men may after joy in the service of this child. First, we believe, that since our first elders had sinned, there must satisfaction be made therefor, by the righteousness of God. For as God is merciful, so he is full of righteousness. But how should he judge all the world unless he kept righteousness therein? For the Lord against whom this sin was done, is God almighty, and allrightful; and no sin may be done but it is done against God. And ever the greater the lord is, against whom sin is done, ever the more is the sin to be rewarded of this lord. It were a great sin to do against the king's bidding; but the sin is more without measure, to do against God's bidding. According to our belief, God bade Adam not to eat of the apple; but he brake God's command; and he was not excused therein, neither by his own folly, (or weakness,) nor by Eve, nor by the serpent. And thus by the righteousness of God, this sin must always be punished. And it is a light word, to say that God might of his power forgive this sin without the satisfaction that was made for this trespass. For God might do this if he would; but his justice will not suffer but that each trespass be punished, either in earth or in hell. And God may not accept a person to forgive his sin without satisfaction; else he must give free leave to men and to angels for to sin. And then sin were no sin, and our God were no God. And this is the first lesson that we take from our faith.

\* In the original a few words of each passage of scripture are prefixed to the sermons in Latin. They are printed here according to the present authorized English version.

The second teaching that we take is, that he who should make satisfaction for the sin of our first father, must needs be God and man. For as mankind trespassed, so must mankind make satisfaction. And therefore it could not be that an angel should make satisfaction for man; for neither has he the might, nor was his the person (or nature) that sinned here. But since all men are one person, that person maketh satisfaction for man, if any member of this person make satisfaction for all this person. And by this may we see that if God made a man of nought, or anew, to be of the kind of Adam, yet he were holden to God, as much as he might for himself, and so he might not make satisfaction for himself, and for Adam's sin. And thus since satisfaction must be made for Adam's sin, as it is said, such a person must make this satisfaction as was both God and man; for the worthiness of this person's deeds were even with\* the unworthiness of the sin.

The third teaching that needs must follow of these two, is, that a Child is born to man, to make satisfaction for man's sin. And this Child must needs be God and man given to man. And he must needs bear his empire upon his shoulder, and suffer for man. And this Child is Jesus Christ, who we suppose was born to day. And we suppose that this Child is only born to those men that follow him in manner of living, for he was born against others. Those men that are unjust and proud, and rebel against God, have their judgment in Christ, that they must needs be condemned by him; and always, if they are unkind against his Spirit, to their death.

And thus, if we truly desire that this Child be born to us, have we joy of this Child, and we follow him in three virtues; in righteousness, and meekness, and patience for our God. For whoever contemneth Christ unto his death, against the Spirit, must needs be condemned of this Child, as all others shall be saved. And thus the joy of this Child, that was thus meek and full of virtues, should make men be little in malice, and then they hold well the feast. To them that will fight and chide, I say, that this Child who is born, is Prince of peace, and loveth peace; and condemneth men contrary who are contrary to peace. Study we how Christ came in the fulness of time when he should; and how he came in meekness, as his birth teacheth us; and how he came in patience from his birth to his death;

\* Or equal to, see the preceding extract from the *Triologus*.

and follow we him in these three, for joy that we have of him. For this joy, in this patience, (of Christ,) bringeth to joy that shall last for ever.

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## II.

### JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST.

*The next day John seeth Jesus coming to him, John i.*

This gospel telleth how John the Baptist witnessed of Christ, both of his Godhead, and somewhat of his manhood. The history saith, that John saw Jesus coming to him, and said thus of our Lord, Lo, the Lamb of God; lo, him that doeth away the sins of the world. For he is both God and man. Christ is called God's lamb, for many reasons. In the old law they were wont to offer a lamb without blemish, which should be a year old, for the sin of the people. And thus Christ was without blemish, and was offered on the cross for the sin of all this world. Such lambs as were offered fell sometimes to the share of the priest. This Lamb that made end of the other, fell fully to God's hand. Other lambs in a manner put away the sin of one country; but this Lamb properly put away the sin of all this world. And thus he was the end and figure of the lambs of the old law. And thus showeth Baptist, by his speaking, both of the manhood of Christ and his Godhead. For only God might thus put away sin. Since all other lambs had blemishes which they might not themselves put away. And so if priests have power to release sin, as Christ's vicars, nevertheless they have this power only in as much as they accord with Christ. So that if their keys and Christ's will are discording and twain, they feign falsely to absolve, and then they neither loose nor bind. So that in each such working the Godhead of Christ must first work. And therefore saith Baptist of Christ, This is he that I said of, after me is come a man which is made before me; for he was my prior. For as Christ was a man, so God made him then the prior of all his religion; and he was abbot, as Paul saith, of the best order that may be.\* And first I knew him not; I knew in soul that he was born, but I could not with bodily eyes know him from another man. And this befell commonly. But for to show him in



Israel, therefore I baptize thus in water. And John bare witness and said, that he saw the Spirit come down as a dove from heaven, and dwell on him. But God that sent me to wash in water, he taught me and said thus, On whom thou seest the Spirit come down, and dwelling upon him, that is he that baptizeth men in the Holy Ghost. And I say and bear witness that this is God's own Son.

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## III.

## THE GOSPEL LIGHT.

*Arise, shine, for thy light is come ; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, &c. Isaiah lx.*

Men expound commonly this prophecy of Jesus, that Isaiah saw in spirit how Christ should be worshipped of the three kings of the east soon after that he was born ; and what Matthew telleth teacheth well of this text, to what purport it was spoken of the prophet Isaiah.

First he beginneth thus, " Rise, and be thou lightened, Jerusalem, for thy light is come ; and the glory of thy Lord is sprung up on thee." Here true men understand of Jerusalem, that was the head city in the land of Judea, the holy church that wandereth here on earth. For Jerusalem, in divers places, betokeneth in divers manners ; now the city of that country, now the church that wandereth here, and now the church that is above. And all are figured by this city. Jerusalem also, by interpretation, betokeneth a sight of peace. But here men see afar and in bliss, true peace.

This Jerusalem should rise from sin, and be lightened with knowledge and grace ; since Christ, who is the first Light, is made man for this end, and Christ who is the Father's Wisdom ; and so the glory of the Lord is sprung of this kindred, and is in it, since he is Mary's son.

And thus it is a great sin not to rise and to open our windows. For this spiritual light is ready to shine to all men that will open. That man receiveth in vain the grace of God, as Paul saith, who taketh of God many gifts, both of fortune and of nature, and will not thank God thereof. He is an unkind man, upon whom the sun shineth and yet will not open his window to take light that should save him. And here men say commonly, that first man's folly is unkind, and because of this unkindness, God giveth man no more his gifts ; since God approveth not that unkind

man should ever sin thus. But yet God maketh sinful man and unkind man, a good man ; and all the goodness of this cometh of the goodness of God. And let us not busy us about further cause, for God is the first cause.

But the prophet saith, “ For lo, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick mist shall hide the peoples.” Here we may know two manner of men by these words of Isaiah. Some men are evermore dark, and want grace to come to bliss ; as the earth is ever dark, and taketh not light by clearness of its own. And God’s word saith that these men shall be damned. But some have mists for a time, but yet they are a people, as the men of holy church, for the time that they are in sin. And these men, by grace of God, take light that pierceth them, and disposeth them to heaven, and putteth away their sin from them. And such two manner of men were in Judea before Christ came. And thus darkness of sin covered the earth till Christ came ; and thick mists covered the peoples that should be saved. But this Light that came to men pierced the mist, and made it clear : and so this Light, that was made man, cleared those men that he would save.

And of this Light speaketh this prophet, and of these men that shall be saved ; “ But upon thee shall the Lord spring, and upon thee his glory be seen.” For of the kindred of Jacob, and in that kindred, was Christ born. And many of them were saved by Christ ; and many others of heathen men. “ And folk wander in thy light ; and kings in springing of thy birth.” For about the time of Christ’s birth three kings came out of the east ; and they and many others saw the light of this star. And muse we not when this star appeared first in the east ; and how long time these three kings were in coming to Bethlehem ; for soon after Christ was born they came, and thus worshipped Christ. For as the gospel witnesseth, they found the child with his mother ; and it is likely in the same stable wherein Christ was born in Bethlehem. And so it must needs be soon after the time that Christ was born.

And afterward this prophet speaketh to the glory and joy of Christ ; “ Lift up all about thine eyes, and see ; all these are gathered and are come to thee, to do worship as they should. And all these are figures to thee, that thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall rise from aside ; and many countries shall believe in thee. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thine heart shall wonder

and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be turned to believe of thee, and the strength of heathen men shall come to thee, and believe in thee. The flowing of camels shall be unto thee ; men that shall ride upon dromedaries ; men of Midiân, and of Ephah. All they of Saba shall come, whom God hath ordained for this journey, bringing gold and incense, and telling of hearing to God." This letter seemeth somewhat misty, and therefore men tell divers senses of it.

Some understand these words to the spiritual understanding of them. And so men doubt here oft of what country these three kings were. And it is enough here to know that they were of the east ; whether they were of Arabia, or of Saba, or of other place, such knowledge is not needful for us to know now ; but do we worship to this Child with gold, incense, and with myrrh. For we should know that his Godhead, as gold, is more than other metals ; and his wisdom, as gold, shineth before other. We should acknowledge that Christ is the first Priest of all, and offer to him devotion, since he is both God and man. We should also acknowledge that Christ was dead, for our sake, and rose again, as he ordained. And so shall we all do at the last resurrection, either to bliss or to pain. And live we all just life ; and love this Lord up to our power ; and then he will reward us in bliss after these three gifts. And here many men think that men should lightly pass over this, and speak of things that are certain, which profit to men that hear them.

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#### IV.

##### THE LEPER AND THE CENTURION.

*And behold there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, &c.—And there came unto him a centurion beseeching him, &c. Matt. viii.*

This gospel telleth of two miracles that Jesus did, and containeth much instruction about these two miracles. The history telleth how Jesus came down of the hill, when he had given his law to his disciples ; and much people followed him, for the devotion that they had to his law and his words. And, lo, there came a leper man and bowed to him, and said, Lord, if thou wilt, thou mayest heal me. And Christ said he would, and bade him be whole. It is

commonly supposed that this leprous man knew that Christ was both God and man, and so that Christ might heal him, but in his own worthiness trusted he nought. And therefore he said that if Christ would, he might heal him of his leprosy. And then was Christ God; and God would that proud men and leprous heretics would well confess the faith, and then should they be whole. And Christ stretched out his hand and touched him; and said, "I will make thee whole, and able thee thereto." And thus doeth God to whom he giveth his grace. And straightway the leprosy of this man was cleansed. And this speedy healing betokens this miracle. And that Christ touched this leprous man, teaches us now that the manhood of Christ was instrument to his Godhead, for to do miracles that he would were done; and that touching of leprous men was lawful to men that thus would help them. But Christ might not be blemished with touching of this leprous man. And so taught Christ his everlasting good will, and taught us to perform the good will that we have. And afterwards Christ bade him, See that thou tell no man; but go and show thee to the priest, and offer that gift which Moses bade in witness of such health.

Men say this word may be understood on three manners. First, that this man should tell no man hereof before he had offered what Christ bade him. The second cause and the better is, that Christ bade this to teach us to flee boasting and thanks of men to whom we do good. And thus we should not tell this to obtain man's thanks. The third saith, that Christ bade this to flee slandering God's law among men, and to flee boasting of himself, and the conceiving evil of God. And as the old law was then ceased, Christ bade fulfil this law, as author thereof. And thus, when a man showeth by his holy life, active life, (as by two dove-birds,) or contemplative life, (that is, a pair of turtles;) by these signs he showeth that his sins be forgiven, and that unto priests who well understand this.\* And thus sinful men should counsel with priests, and take of them medicine to flee more sin.

The second miracle teaches how Christ healed a heathen man, for love of the centurion that kept Capernaum, which was the head town of the country of Galilee. This centurion told Christ that his child† lay in his house, sick of the

\* Leviticus xiv.

† Or servant. The term child was often applied generally to young persons.

palsy, and was evil tormented. But Luke telleth how this knight did this by old men of the Jews, who much praised this knight; and said that he was a friend to them, and had built them a synagogue. And Christ came with them nigh to this knight's house; and this knight said thus unto Jesus Christ, Lord, I am not worthy that thou enter under my roof, but say only with word, and my servant shall be whole. For I am a man put in this place by power of the emperor, having under me knights for to do mine office. And I say to one, Go, and he goeth; and I say to another, Come, and he cometh; and I say to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And by this the knight would mean that Christ had no need to enter into his house to heal his sick man, since Christ is God almighty, under no power. And Jesus, hearing these words, wondered, although he knew and ordained before that this knight should be thus true. And therefore Christ said to the folk that followed him, Truly I say to you, I found not so much faith in all the folk of Israel, neither priests nor commons. Christ meant not of his apostles, nor of his mother, nor of his attendants, for they were taken from Israel, as Christ was there a strange Lord. And therefore Christ telleth of his church that shall be of heathen men—that many of the east and the west shall come and rest with the patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven, where the children of this realm shall be put out, and cast into hell; there shall be weeping, that is, sensible sorrow; and gnashing of teeth, which is more, for it is pain of the loss of bliss, which passeth all sensible pain. And Jesus said to this knight, Go, thy servant shall be whole; for as thou believedst, by my grace, be it done unto thee. And the child was made whole in the same hour that Christ spake thus.

We shall know that faith is a gift of God; and so God gives it not to man, unless he gives it graciously. And thus all good things that men have are gifts of God. And thus, when God rewardeth a good work of man, he crowneth his own gift. And this is of grace; for all things are of grace, that men have of the will of God. And God's goodness is the first cause which giveth men these good things. And so it may not be that God do good to men, unless he do these good things freely by his grace. And with this we shall grant that men deserved of God, for in grace they make them worthy to have this good of God. But we shall not understand that each grace of God may not be by himself.

but grace is a manner in man, by which he is gracious to God. And other grace on God's side is good will of God ; and for which grace in God, men receive grace in them. And the chiding of idiots, such as was Pelagius, and others who conceive not that a thing may be, unless it may be by itself, as substances are, is to be scorned, and to be left to fools.—But leave we this, and learn we of this knight to be meek in heart, in word, and deed ; for he granted first that he was under man's power ; and yet by power of man he might do many things. Much more should we know that we are under God's power, and that we may do nothing but with power of God. And if we disuse this power, we shall be to us therefore. So this root of meekness shall get other virtues to us, and grace of God to deserve reward of heaven and good things of glory, as it was in this gentle knight.

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V.

## CHRIST STILLING THE TEMPEST.—ON FAITH.

*And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, &c.*  
Matthew viii.

This gospel teacheth a miracle that Christ did on the water. And such miracles confirm the faith of holy church full much in rude (ignorant) men, if they are heard ; and so doing of miracles in water and in land, betokeneth that Christ showed his wonders to divers men. Some men received him not to the health of their soul, for they were unstable as water, and soon did away Christ's knowledge. But other men were stable as land, who held the knowledge that Christ put in them. And by the ground of such faith, they went fully the way to heaven. The story telleth of Jesus that he entered into a boat, and his disciples followed him. And, lo, the water moved fast, so that the boat was hid with the waves ; for the wind and the waves were contrary unto them. Christ slept at this time, as he had ordained. The disciples came and waked him, and said thus to Christ, Lord, save us, for we perish ; and Christ said to them, What dread ye, little of faith ? And Christ rose up, and commanded to the winds and the water, and speedily they were rested. And all the people wondered hereof, and said among themselves, What is he, that the winds and the sea obey to him ?

Since all the deeds that Christ did, teach men how they should do, this resting of Christ in the boat betokens lore to be marked. We should at times rest and pray to God in silence, and hear of him healthful lore, which we should afterwards teach the people. Thus also should teachers flee praising of the people, as Christ did. And this is a common sin among men that preach to the people, and certainly it is a great sin, since God should wholly have all the thanks. And thus the sleeping of Christ betokens his very manhood, and maketh his miracle the more. Also to pray him in time of need, and thus we dread only for default of faith in us. And Christ sleepeth not to us, but for default of faith. For the Godhead may not sleep, and yet we speak to him, Rise, why sleepest thou, Lord, and help us in this need.

Thus in two manners faileth belief in men. First, when men want belief, as these who knew not that Christ was God. For if they had known this wholly, they should have known that Christ, while sleeping, might have done this miracle, and much more. On the second manner faileth belief, when it worketh not well in deed, but is idle as in a sleeping man. And then clerks say it is in habit. And thus may no man do sin unless his belief fail, either on one manner or another. For even if he had fleshly belief how foul his sin is, and how much it harmeth him, he would not for all this world do sin, but flee it. And therefore prayed the disciples to Christ to enlarge their belief. And Christ said to Peter, Why doubtest thou, O thou of little belief? And Christ said to a man, that he should believe, for all things are possible to men that believe.

And shortly; no kind of virtue was praised more of Christ, than was right belief, for it is the ground of all other. Nor doubt we that belief may be now less, and now be more; since then parts of belief might go away and come anew, and then there were divers belief for diversity of parties. Such doubts we should send to the schools of Oxford; and we should know well, from God, that divers faiths in a man, now one, and now another, make one faith in him; yea, if the time be divers that this faith thus cometh or goeth. And may God thus increase our faith! We by sin enfeeble our faith. And Christ sleepeth oft to us, for such sleeping of our sin. For when winds of man's boast maketh us to dread worldly harms; and floods of tribulation come to us, they make us dread and cry on

Christ, for to have help for failing in our belief. For we should know that no such case might annoy us but for sin. And if it come for our sin, it is just and God's will. Why should we be thus distempered for what is needful to come? Love we God, and do we his will, and dread we no kind of thing but him; for default in our belief maketh us to dread for such things.

For these four manners of affections, dread, sorrow, hope, and joy, change a man's will after that he hath virtues; and if he be reared in sins, they change much in a man. For he dreads things of nought, and seeks joy of worldly things; and also sorrows for loss of things that were better for him to want, and for hope of things far from his health, as is welfare of this world. And all these teach that his will is not set on heavenly things, nor his belief grounded in God, for default of good love. For each man should dread more the loss of God's love by sin, than he should dread loss of any worldly things; for as faith teacheth us, loss of God's love were worse; why should we not dread this more since it brings more harm to us; and hope for more help by charity than by any man's help. And thus the prophet declares a curse on him who thus trusteth in man.

And here may men have a mirror to judge whether they love God, and whether they are in charity, according to the order that they should have. If they love God well, they should have more joy of him than of any earthly thing; and so of loss, if it come. If they lose the love of God by their sin, they should know they should have more sorrow thereof, than of loss of worldly things. And so this joy, with this loss, would make men to flee sin. Since many men, with diligence flee loss of worldly goods, and keep them, that they be not condemned in such loss by man's law; and dread not so much to lose goods of grace that are better; it is plain that charity is not established in them. And thus of goods of nature, for men dread much to lose them, as the rule of nature teaches us, and common experience; and if they come to us, we joy full much, as we know full well; but goods of grace we put behind, and that does away our charity. And if we feign falsehood in these two things, both God and our business shall be judges against us. About which travail we most? about goods of nature and of this world, or about goods of grace? Our own travail shall judge us. What priest bestirreth him more now for to follow Christ in virtues, than to get a benefice; or



to get worldly goods? And this teacheth that he joyeth more of worldly goods than of goods of grace. However we strive now, our Judge shall condemn us at last. And by this same reason hope and sorrow shall judge us; for we contrive our business more in hope of a worldly profit than we do in hope of heaven, or heavenly bliss that we should have. And thus we dread loss of worldly goods more than we do of goods of bliss; and this reverseth all our life.

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## VI.

## CHARITY

*Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. &c. 1 Cor. xiii.*

Paul telleth in this chapter how men should know charity, and how men should keep charity; and this lore is full needful to each member of holy church. First, Paul telleth how needful is charity before other things; and he begins at the highest work that man hath in holy church. Paul saith, if he speak with men's tongues, and angels' tongues, and have not charity, he is but as brass sounding, and a cymbal tinkling. It is known by belief, that preaching and other speech is the highest deed of man, when it is done well. But however a man speak in divers tongues of men, either English, French, Latin, or other language, his voice is like a sound of brass, that destroyeth himself, unless he have charity by which he deserveth the bliss. For such men waste themselves and enlarge their pain. And on the same manner, if a man speak in angel's tongue, with clear voice, or flowery words, if he want charity with this, he is a tinkling cymbal; for he profits not to deserve this bliss, but wastes himself to his condemning.

Afterwards saith Paul, that if he have prophecy, and know all that is secret, and have all manner of science, and if he have belief, so much that he remove hills, and he have not charity, he is nought to holy church. These four things which are called virtues by the understanding of man, may be out of charity, and then they prove nought to bliss. Many men may know much, and live evil. A man may work wonders by the working of a fiend; and so it is nothing worth to praise men for such working. And thus

men may have belief unformed by charity, and such belief profiteth not, since the fiend hath such belief. And thus men may have prophecy, and all this knowledge in their souls, and be wicked workers with evil will of their souls. And thus saith Christ in the gospel; they will say, Lord, prophesied we not in thy name, and cast fiends out from men, and yet he knoweth them not to bliss.

The third time saith God in Paul, If he deal all his goods into meats for poor men, and give his body so that he burn, as some men do for heresy, and he have not charity with this, it profiteth him nought to bliss.

Since this work and these grounds seem to make holy men, and each man would naturally desire to be blessed, it is well to learn how men should know charity; since it is so needful to men to come to bliss of heaven. And therefore, in this second part of this epistle, Paul telleth sixteen couditions by which men may know this love. The first is, that charity is patient, and so meek that he conformeth his will meekly to God's will, and thus he gnaweth not himself to death for any thing that befalleth in the world, but for good things that befall he hath a burning love to God. The second is benignity by speech, that Paul speaketh here. The third Paul telleth that charity hath no envy; and he speaketh of charity in the name of the man that holdeth it. And thus, men may not envy, and yet reprove men in Christ's name, for love that they have to God, and for profit to his church. For thus did Christ full sharply, and he could not be without this love. The fourth condition of this love is, that it doth nought amiss. For what thing he doeth, his last intent is to God's will, and so to the profit of his church, according to the law that he hath given. And thus all these four sects\* seem to fail in charity; for they leave God's law, and work by their feigned findings, and so they leave God's worship, and travail most for their own winning. The fifth condition of this love is, that it swelleth not to pride. For he thinks meekly how he is a low servant of God. And so hypocrisy makes not that he lift up himself over reason. The sixth manner of charity is, that it is not covetous. Each man should covet bliss, and to do virtuous deeds. But Paul speaketh of covetousness which is contrary to this end. As many men languish for pride, to have a state that God wills not. And thus all the four sects seem to fail in this point; for they covet that man's will go forth, and God's will be

\* The four orders of friars. *Google*

put back ; and so they have always envy, and do amiss as proud men ; for they covet their own worship, and leave the worship of God. The seventh condition of love is, that it seeketh not his own things ; but to the worship of God, and to the profit of his church, he intendeth to do his deeds, according to the law that God hath given. And here it seems that the four sects fail in this point. For each seeks that his rule and his order be maintained, more than the common order of Christ, or the law that he hath given. The eighth condition of this love is, that it is not stirred unto wrath. For since he is patient, and knows that God must have his will, he holds himself paid with what befalls, in that it is God's will. And this fails in these four sects, for they take their own vengeance, beside the law that God hath given, as if they were higher than antichrist. The ninth condition of this love is, that it contriveth not evil. For it contrives all to the worship of God, and the means that lead thereto ; whereas these four sects cast to have their own will more busily than the will of God, and then they are all evil. The tenth condition of this love is, that it joyeth not of wickedness, but it hath sorrow that any man doeth against God's will. But yet of the same thing hath he both sorrow and joy. He hath sorrow of the sin, by reason that it displeaseth God ; and he hath joy of the same by reason God punisheth it well. And here it seems that these four sects have joy of their own things, and say that God forbad that Christ's ordinance should be fulfilled. And thus they reverse in deed the will of God in many manners. The eleventh condition of this love is, that he joyeth in the truth. Truth is God and his law. And when this law is well kept, then this charity hath joy. And here these four orders seem to grudge much against this truth ; for they magnify their laws, and execute them busily ; but that God's law be broken, they reckon too little, so that their state stand. The twelfth condition of this love is, that it suffereth all things ; for it joyeth of all truth, inasmuch as it pleaseth God. Why will not these four sects suffer that God's word reign, and that Christ's ordinance stand whole, since it were best, as they grant ? But certainly then all these four sects should leave their patrons and their rules, and come to Christ's sect. And who should grudge against this ? The thirteenth condition of this love is, that it believeth all things. For thing and

truth here is all one. And thus it believeth and assenteth to all manner of truth and reason. But faileth he not here that hindereth Christ's ordinance, and doth harm to many, both to their body and to their soul? The fourteenth condition of this love is, that it hopeth all things. For it hopeth that ordained truth helpeth all good men. And this charity hopeth to have part of this help. Here fail these new sects, which dread that they should fail of worldly favour, and worldly winning, and that God's law shall be kept holy. And thus they despair in life of the fruit of God's law. The fifteenth condition of this love is, that it sustaineth all things. For it helpeth to hold all truth, and abideth the end thereof. For after the day of doom shall be the fruit of all truth; and these who are impatient that God's law should right them, fail in this condition, since they trust in men's law. The sixteenth condition, and the last that followeth this charity is, that it never falleth away; neither in this world, nor in the other. For God's love may not fail, since God may not cease to ordain these men to come to bliss, whom he will ever have in bliss. And this love that is in God must have such charity in man.

Look thou at these conditions, whether thou have them all in thee; and if thou have them not, bestir to have them all whole. And then without doubt thou hast this love that must bring thee to bliss. And of this Paul teaches the excellence of charity. And this is the third part of this epistle, and makes end of this glorious lore. Charity is wonderful good, as men may see of words here before. And charity must ever last, either in life, either in half life, for it is not fully clean before we come to bliss.

But whether prophecies should be voided, or that tongues should cease, or that science should be destroyed, and all these three must needs fail, this charity shall never fail. For somewhat we know in certain, as the being of one God; and somewhat we prophesy, as things of the last day; but when that shall come which is perfect, this which is imperfect shall be put away. And so, since at the day of doom men shall have full knowledge and bliss, the degrees of knowledge and joys here must needs pass, and the ending must needs come. And thus saith Paul of himself, and so it is of all this church, When I was little, I spake as young; but when I was made man, I avoided the works

of a young child. And so it is of all men that shall come after to bliss. We see now by a mirror in far sight, and imperfect, but we shall see after in bliss the First Truth, face to face. Paul saith he knoweth now by a part, and not fully ; and then he shall know in bliss as he is known fully of God.

And of these words may men gather, that these three virtues, belief, and hope, and charity now dwell ; but the greatest of these is charity. And so if this epistle of Paul were fully executed, as it should be, the realm of England should be cleared of these four sects that are spoken of. And then might the realm dispend many hundred thousand marks more than it dispendeth now, if all these sects were avoided.\* Mark what all these sects dispend in our realm for a year, and give all this to men in charity. For if these four fail in charity, our realm should draw from them this part. But reckon how much this cometh to ; and begin thou to learn of them what thing is the sacred command, by reason of God's belief ; and that they tell here to the king only things that they will stand by, to suffer martyrdom of men, and loss of all that they have of our realm. And then might the king know how he should put out all these four. And he might dispend more by many a hundred thousand marks, and the realm were more plenteous to bring forth men to the bliss of heaven. And thus it is for kings to do, by the office that God hath given them.

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## VII.

### THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, &c.*  
Ephesians v.

Paul biddeth in this epistle that men should be God's children, and follow Christ in manner of life, as his dear children. And here men should take as belief, that each man is required to follow Christ upon pain of damning in hell.

For if a man will be saved, he must needs be God's child ; and if a man be God's child, then he followeth God in manners. And this childhood is the dearest that may fall here to man. Some men are called a man's children

\* See note respecting the Supplication of the Beggars, Frith, p. 59, for a calculation of the sums collected by the friars.

whom they love for his qualities; and this childhood is dear if it be grounded in virtues. Some men are men's children, for they came of them; and this childhood is better if virtues be joined thereto. But some men are children of God, for they live in virtues, and love God's law to their end; and these are the dearest children; and therefore Paul here biddeth that we should be followers of God, as most dear children. And blind men withstand here again, when men allege Christ's deeds, and his life, and his words, and say, Lo, this heretic would be even (equal) with Christ. But no man may be so. Here, these fools should know that it is different to follow Christ in manner of living, and to be equal with him. Each man should desire the first, but no christian man can be the second; and so each christian man should learn of the life, work, and words of Christ, and thereafter follow him, either near or farther off. For if he depart from Christ in this, he goeth straight to hell. And men may see that this is excusing in sin. And therefore saith Paul after, That we should walk in love, but as Christ hath loved us. And by ensample of this love each man should love his brother. And therefore saith Christ by John, A new commandment I give you, that ye love together, as I have loved you. Christ gave himself for us, both offering and sacrifice to God, that is his Father, into smelling of sweetness.

It is known, by belief, how mankind trespassed to God, and how by God's righteousness that trespass must needs be punished; and how it might not be punished, and yet mankind be saved, unless Christ, both God and man, had offered himself upon the tree. This offering was sacrifice made to God for our good. And here saith Christ, by John, that no man hath more love than this, to put his life for brethren, and thus Christ is of most love. We should follow Christ afar in this love, according to our power, and offer our body to the Father of heaven, for love and profit of our neighbour. And since each man should follow God both by body and by soul, each man should here follow Christ by true service to God. And since this martyrdom of Christ was so sweet before God, Paul well calls it an offering to God into smelling of sweetness. For deeds that please to God must smell well before him. And here many men say, that men slain in worldly cause are but stinking martyrs, and offerings to the fiend.

Hereof Paul concludes that five sins should be fled,

as is fornication, and all uncleanness ; or avarice, sin of the world, not to be named in you as beseemeth holy men ; or filthy or foolish speech ; or ribaldry, that pertains not to things of bliss. But use ye your speech more cleanly in thinking of God ; for know this, and understand as the belief of christian men, that each lecher, or unclean man, ravenous man, or that worshippeth images, hath no heritage in the realm of Christ, who is both God and man. Since each man maketh that his God which he loveth most of all ; and a covetous man loveth worldly goods more than he loveth God. Since he leaveth righteousness for love of such worldly goods, it is known that it is false, and out of right belief of God ; for he maketh such goods his idols which must needs be false gods.

And thus it is of other sins which men oft fall into. In the first fleshly sin are many sorts ; and Paul understandeth them all by uncleanness, as some men say. Other men say well enough, that Paul telleth of these three sins, fleshly sin, and sin of the fiend, and the sin of the world, as all sins. For though all sins are unclean, yet these three sins of the fiend, pride, envy, and ire, three sisters, make more like to the fiend, and by this print of the fiend, they are more foul before God.

Paul bids true men, that no man beguile them in belief by vain words which they speak, that these are not sins, or only light ones. As they say that licentiousness is natural ; and that man should have love of his own excellence, since that God hath given it him ; and that God hath given this world to man, to serve him by help thereof. Such vain words that excuse sin, do much harm among men. As Adam and Eve were beguiled by vain speech of the serpent, and so were many others by disbelieving the truth of God's law. For if we take heed to God's ire, either in the old law or in the new, it came by sin, that was brought in by such false and beguiling words. And therefore should ye not be perceivers of them, neither speaking thus, nor believing, nor darkening by such false speech. For ye were sometime in darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord. Men that are encumbered in sin are made dark and blind with sin ; but men that are in the light of grace know sins, as we see motes in sunbeams. Therefore walk ye, as children of light, in holiness. The fruit of light standeth in these three, in all manner of goodness, and in all manner of righteousness, and in truth.

## VIII.

## THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

*Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come, &c.*  
*Heb. ix.*

This epistle telleth the excellency that Christ had over the bishops\* of the old law, although they all figured Christ. And this is pertinent to speak to Jews, that knew the old law. And Christ surpassed bishops of the old law in three points. First, he was Bishop of the goods of bliss, the which goods are hoped for to come. And thus saith Peter, that Christ is Bishop of souls, for he is Lord of them. Bishops of the old law had sacrifices, and did some good, in that they figured Christ and his passion that bought mankind. The other excellence of Christ is, that his tabernacle is better than were all the tabernacles that were in the old law. For Christ's tabernacle is the world. And Paul saith, that this tabernacle is more large, and more perfect than the tabernacle of Moses. For this was not made by man, but made of nought, by God almighty; but Moses's tabernacle was made by great travail of priests. The third excellence of Christ is, that his sacrifice was better, and made more perfectly than the sacrifices of the old bishops. Bishops of the old law sacrificed lamb's blood, or blood of goats, or of calves; but Christ surpassed all these figures. For Christ, by his own blood, entered once into heaven, and there he found everlasting blessing, that none other bishop might come to. And so Jesus entered once for ever to heaven, the inner part of this temple; but bishops of the old law needed to enter year by year; and yet they entered not into heaven, but into a little place that was in the west part of the tabernacle. And although this figured heaven, yet man's bliss was not herein. But the entering of Christ to heaven, into a place more holy and more large, was into the place where there is bliss without end. And thus since Christ is God of heaven, and his manhood is so nigh God, our Bishop, Christ, in all these things must needs pass all other bishops. For as this Lord may reach far, so he is nearer and more gracious; and except by virtue of this Bishop, might never bishop do good to man. And thus dignities and privileges, that are now granted by the pope, unless Christ confirm them first, are not worth a

\* Priests.



flea's foot. And so it seems to some men that bishops of the old law were better, and more worthy than these emperor's bishops; for they served and figured Christ by authority of God; but these emperor's bishops now serve and figure antichrist; and their authority is taken of the fiend against Christ, and thus they say that the pope is the head vicar of this fiend. But all the bishops, and all the fiends, must have their being of Christ, and serve him, either well or evil against their will. For either they are damned in hell with the highest antichrist; or else they are blessed in heaven by our Bishop, Jesus Christ.

And afterward Paul proves, by a principle of belief, the sufficiency of Christ, beginning that he is both God and man; for if Christ be very man, he is a part of all mankind. And so, by this grace, man is made sufficient by Christ, although he sinned in Adam. And thus saith Paul to his brethren, that if blood of kids or bulls and the ashes of a calf that is scattered maketh men holy that were fouled as to fleshly cleansing, how much more Christ's blood, that offered himself by the Holy Ghost, without spot to God the Father, shall cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. This reason that Paul makes is the belief that men must have.

There are three cleansings; bodily and spiritual, and one cleansing which partakes of the two; as was cleansing of the old law. For this bodily cleansing of these figures of the old law, cleansed not spiritually, but in figure; for other cleansing were better by water. And so it figured Christ's blood, and his heart that was burnt by love; and this hallowing that last was figured, must needs be better than its figure, as the fire is better than smoke, and man is better than his image. And so, since Christ is God and man, satisfaction for this sin that he made thus freely, is better than any other that man or angel might make. The same man in number that sinned by Adam, our first father; the same man in number made satisfaction by the second Adam, Christ. And since he is of more virtue than the first Adam might be, and his pain was much more than the sinful lust of the first Adam, who should have conscience here that this sin is not all cleansed out?

And since our Jesus is very God, who never may forget this meed, he is sufficient medicine for all sinners that are contrite. For Christ is ever and everywhere, and in all such souls by grace, and so he cleanseth more cleanly than

any body or figure may cleanse. And therefore, as Paul saith, Christ is Mediator of the new law; for Christ hath of both these two; for he is God, author of these both, and knitteth the one with the other, and that by his death, in atoning for the first trespasses that were done in the old law. These men take the promise again that are called to a lasting heritage. All this purchase was done in Christ Jesue our Lord.

We take here as belief, that Jesus Christ who purchased thus, is every good that may be; and so the same God that made man, and after bought man to the bliss which he ordained before to man. And let men take as belief that all things which God hath ordained must needs come, in his time, after the form that God hath shapen.

## IX.

## THE VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

*Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world, &c.*  
1 John v.

John stirreth christian men to flee sin that cometh of the world. And this sin is full common in all three parts of the church. First, christian men should know that all men who should have bliss of heaven, are spiritually born of God, and made men of his order; since Christ must be their Father, and holy church their mother. And John setteth these conditions that must needs be fulfilled. Each that is born of God, overcometh the world in all his time; for if he be overcome of the world for a little time, so that he sinneth, nevertheless, he must overcome the world at last. For else he was never born of Christ, nor followeth his Father in this fight. And Christ will have no children but those that follow him. Therefore John telleth to men a mean to overcome the world. And this, he saith, is the victory that overcometh the world—our belief, (or faith.) So that none overcome the world nor the fiend, nor his flesh, unless belief or faith is the armour by which he thus overcometh.

And therefore Paul declareth to the Hebrews, that saints overcame realms by the belief that they had, and made many other victories. And shortly, there is no man overcome of his spiritual enemy unless he is out of belief, either in one manner or in another. And thus, by some manner of

speech, belief is both the shield and sword by which man fighteth, and the victory that he maketh. John asks for example, Who is he, brethren, that overcometh the world, but that man who believeth that Jesus is God's Son? If thou have full belief of Christ, how he lived here in earth, and how he overcame the world, thou overcomest it as a kind son; for if thou take heed how Christ despised it, and follow him here as thou shouldest, thou must needs overcome it by belief of thy Father. And here may men know plainly that many are in this world who are not born of God, nor believe here in Christ; for if this belief were in them, they should follow Christ in manner of life. But they are out of belief, as many men are as to the day of doom. What man that should believe fully that the day of doom is at hand, and that God judgeth men after they have fought in his cause, would not busily enforce himself to follow Christ therefore? Either the belief of these men sleepeth, or they want right belief; as men that love this world and rest therein, live as if God saw not this, and should not judge for this deed. Thus our belief of Christ's life, is needful to all christian men. And therefore men should know the gospel, for it telleth the belief of Christ.

And thus it seems that the new orders\* overcome not this world by belief that they have in Christ; for Christ lived not as they live now. Christ purchased not for his apostles cities, nor houses, nor worldly goods; but taught them, both openly and in private, to flee such having of the world. And thus the falsehood hidden of the fiend deceiveth men of such orders. They say that they have the world in common, but none of them to himself. When they have the world thus in common, each of them assenteth to the world, and they are altogether more strong to hinder men that do against the same, either in word or in deed; and thus the fiend's champion is strong. Such sophisms serve of nought before Christ, the last Judge. And thus these sophisters prate that they have nought, neither separate nor in common, and yet men see all day that they have both places and houses, and other goods, more plenteously than the poor men that they rob.† These false men must needs be damned of Christ, who is the Truth. For they differ nought from thieves, but that they rob more sinfully, even to the greatest man of them who is more strong in his malice.

• The friars.

† See note, p. 76.

This is he that came by water and by blood—Jesus Christ. He came not to the bliss of heaven by hypocrisy or falsehood, but by tribulation and by shedding of his blood. And thus he was also made Jesus, that is, Saviour of this world. And he was also made Christ, to anoint men by the will of his grace, by virtue of his passion, and not by worldly life here. For he was the head of martyrs, and suffered most pain. On this should his sons think, and follow their Father in this manner. For if they follow a new manner, and leave the manner that Christ taught, they leave Christ and follow antichrist, as false men do that shall be fiends. And thus Christ came, not only in water, but in water and in blood. For he suffered not tribulation as many men do ; but tribulation and suffering from great fervour of charity. And by this cause, saith Paul, God called Christ, and gave him a name that is over all other names, and most of worship in this world. And there is sufficient witness of this sentence both in heaven and in earth. The Holy Ghost is he that witnesseth in high heaven that Christ is truth. For there are three that give witness in heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are all one. And there are three that give witness in earth—the soul, water, and blood : and these three are all one ; for they make Christ's manhood. And so all this special substance, that is, the Godhead of Christ, is three persons and one God. So this common substance is one Person of Christ. And thus when Christ cried with a loud voice, he sent out his man's spirit, and he shed water and blood, from the time that he was dead. These three things betoken well that Christ was very man and God. And in the time that Christ was baptized, the Father witnessed in voice, the Son was showed in manhood, and the Holy Ghost as in a dove. And these three are sufficient witness to teach our belief of Christ. For if we take witness of men, witness of God that is three persons, is more to prove this belief, and this is more witness of God that he witnessed thus of his Son. And God is everywhere. Whoso believeth in the Son of God, he hath witness of God in him, since he hath the Trinity.

## X.

## OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

*Now I go my way to Him that sent me, &c. John xvi.*

This gospel of John telleth of things that are to come before the day of doom. And for that Christ's ascension was nigh, therefore Christ told a word of his ascension, that his apostles should believe. Christ, to whom all things that shall be are present, said upon the Thursday that he should die on the morrow, I go to Him that hath sent me to the earth. And that for a great office, to buy the church of men. And although my going is as open as it was hid before times, none of you asketh me whither I go. But yet, for that I have spoken these things unto you, ye believe not but lightly that they are truth; and so a hidden sorrow hath filled your hearts. For I have told you I shall suffer, how I shall be reprov'd, and how I shall die, and how I shall after be ascended from you; and how I shall dwell in heaven, till I come at the last day to judge the world to joy or to pain. And these words shall make friends to mourn among themselves. But I say truth to you, it profiteth to you that I go; for if I go not, the Holy Ghost shall not come to you: and if I shall go, I shall send him to you. And when he shall come, he shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, also of judgment.

But this shall be understood thus; God shall reprove this world of sin, of untruth, for they believed not in me. And this is the first sin and the most unkind that they might do to God. For since Christ came to this world, and became our brother, to buy us, and always to profit mankind; and he is so openly truth, showed thus unto man; it is a great sin to believe not here to Christ, for by sinning as to this faith, unkind men believe not to this Father, and to Christ, and also to the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Trinity witnesseth this. And as belief is the first virtue and ground of all other, so unbelief is the first sin of all other. And therefore, this sin, taken by itself, is taken for the most noted. Of this sin shall the Holy Ghost reprove men of this world.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost shall reprove men of righteousness, that they should have to Christ, and yet they unkindly want it. For such a messenger should be worshipped of all men, and praised for such a message, since it was so profitable. And so the world shall be condemned for

wanting of this righteousness; and especially that such a Person goeth again to his Father. And it shows that Christ is the second Person in the Trinity, and so by his Godhead equal with his Father; and by his manhood, less, but equal in nature with his brethren. And thus right would require that this Person were worshipped.

The third time, this Holy Ghost shall reprove men of this world, for that they judged foolishly, that Christ was led with a fiend; and yet the most high fiend, the prince of this world, is now judged to hell. For he tempted Christ, and did him worship.

Christ farther saith, I have many things to say to you, but ye may not bear them now. But the Spirit of truth shall come to you, and he shall teach you all truth, and make you strong to bear truth, even to the suffering of death therefor. This good Master shall here begin to teach the book of life, and he shall never end to teach till that his disciples come to heaven; and thus they shall clearly know each truth that man can tell. He shall not speak of himself without cause: but all things that he shall hear of the Father and of the Son shall he speak and tell you, and ye shall after teach his church. And things that thereafter are to come, shall this Holy Ghost tell you. For the apostles here know all that now there is need to know; for in this measure God led them, and moved them to do his deeds. For he charged them not with idle knowledge that they should be proud; but all they needed to know, they knew readily.

This Holy Ghost shall enlighten me; for he shall take of mine, and show you the truth that I am, and that I have. And so in knowing of this truth, the apostles shall well know Christ: how by his Godhead he is equal with the Father; and concerning his manhood, he is one in nature with his brethren. But in grace he passeth all men that may be; since no man may be God but he; and the well or source of grace as he is. And here Christ declareth himself, and saith that all that are his Father's are his; and therefore he said the Holy Ghost shall take of his and show to his disciples, as apostles and others after them. And in these high words of knowledge, Christ teacheth how he is with his Father, the same God in kind, and bringeth forth the Holy Ghost. For else the Father had his Spirit, and the Son had not the same Spirit: and so not all that the Father hath, had Christ as very God. But since this word Christ is truth, it showeth openly that Christ is God.

And of him, with his Father, cometh forth the Holy Ghost. This Holy Ghost may not be made, but ever cometh forth of these two; as of the shining of the sun ever cometh forth light and brightness. But for that this sentence is much hid from knowledge of the common people, therefore should priests shape of this gospel what might profit to his people for understanding of them. And we should mark these words of Christ, when he saith to his disciples, if he go not from them to heaven, he shall not send them the Holy Ghost. And many muse of these words, since Christ was everywhere almighty, and so he might as well on earth as in heaven send them the Holy Ghost. Then what needed Christ to ascend to heaven, and speak by mouth with his Spirit? Such words show men are full rude (ignorant) to conceive this matter. And therefore it were needful for them to know the intent of these words.

We shall believe that Christ's disciples loved him here too worldly; and they must be cleansed here of this love, by the Holy Ghost. And these things might best be done when the manhood of Christ was gone from them. And thus for the rudeness of the apostles, Christ saith that it speedeth that he go from them. But he dwelleth by his Godhead, and by his virtue, ever with them. And therefore he saith another time, that he is all days with them, unto the end of the world, by his Godhead, and the virtue of his manhood. And thus, when Christ was gone to heaven, his apostles were clean in love, and left the love of earthly things, and thought wholly on heavenly things.

And of this, men take knowledge somewhat, that it falleth not to Christ's vicar, nor to priests of holy church, to have rents in earth; but Jesus should be their rent, as he saith oft in the old law. And their bodily sustenance they should have of God's part, as of tythes and offerings, and other alms taken in measure, the which by their holy life they should enable them to take thus. Since the body of Christ being present, indisposed the apostles to take this Holy Ghost, much more should worldly lordship make men unable now to take this Holy Ghost. And since they have now a spirit, it is likely by their deeds that they have a wicked spirit that leads them an evil way. And in this world we may see how the religious that are to-day are more drawn to their habits and to their ordinances, than Christ would that his apostles should charge as to the presence of his body. And therefore Christ sent his apostles alone, scattering into the world. And certainly they

were more able now, than when he sent them two and two ; for now they were more ripe by the Holy Ghost, and more confirmed than they were before. But our friars that are sick, and closed now in cloisters, gather more than Christ's twelve apostles. And this seemeth by the fiend's contrivance, that if one black not his brother, another should defile them worse. And therefore some friars have sense to hold themselves far from such a lump, and go forth into the world, and then should they have a good spirit. For thus did Christ with his disciples, and him they should follow in life.

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## XI.

### LOVE TO CHRIST.

*If a man love me he will keep my words, &c. John xiv.*

In this gospel Christ moveth his children to love. For charity is the best robe that any man may have. And therefore saith God's law, that love is strong as death. For love moveth men to suffer death gladly in God's cause. As where death is that which man dreadeth most, this love passeth nature, and makes men to covet such death. And this will is not harmful, but glorious to men ; since by such love men are inflamed and become as angels of heaven. First, Christ saith thus, if any man love him, he shall keep his word ; for that is the same truth ; and since God is kind to men that love him thus, Christ saith that his Father shall love him again. And if his Father love a man, the two other persons of the blessed Trinity love him, and all such love of God must needs be evermore. And the manhood of Christ worketh thus by this love. It shall bring with Christ such members of him to heaven, and so to clear sight of the Holy Trinity. And so Christ with his members shall make their dwelling without end, by love of the Holy Ghost ; for saints in heaven may not pass this end ; for then they were fools choosing a worse end. For Christ will show himself united to those that love him and keep his words ; therefore he saith, He that loveth him not, he keepeth not his words. And therefore Christ, in describing a man that loveth him, saith thus afterwards in the same gospel, He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them in his life, he it is that loveth me well. Here we may know when a man loves God ; for if he love God, he loveth



his law, and words of the gospel, for they all come to one ; and if he loveth not God's law, he loveth not his God. And therefore each man who loveth not thus God's word, that he would die to defend it, he loveth not his God as he should love him. For it is all one to love God and love his word ; and as much as thou lovest God, shouldest thou love his word, but for love of thy God thou shouldest lose thy life, for defence of Christ's law. And in cowardice of this love\* be many men smitten. But knights by order† should be ready in this love.

But that Christ saith that men should keep his words, many men might muse what these words mean. But Christ saith that all these words are truths ; as ten truths of the commandments, and all without end. And so he that keepeth not the words of Christ, he keepeth not his one word, the which they have heard. And this one word which they have heard, is not Christ's, but his own Father's. For it is Christ's person, and Christ is not Christ's son, but the Son of the Father. And thus we may see the worth of God's word. The words of God are many by diversity of reason ; but they all run together to one middle point, and so they all are God's word, that is himself. And as these words are dark to the people, therefore Christ giveth them a comfort in this matter ; and saith, that he had spoken these things unto them, while dwelling with them, and they were yet misty : but the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghost, which the Father shall send in the name of Christ, shall teach them all things that now were hid to men.

And thus it befalls unto men to know rudely first, and generally, as philosophers speak, and after should they know more fully the same thing. And thus Christ in his manhood told first by misty words.† And God since by his power showed more fully of him : and as the Holy Ghost shall have order of this lore, so first he shall move men's ears and sensible voices ; and after he shall be slidden in, and have taught men's thoughts in all that Christ hath spoken before in general words, they shall not cease to learn more fully. But ever in this life they wax more ripe till they come to heaven, and there know all fully. And since peace of man's soul disposeth him to learn, therefore Christ promiseth his children this peace, and saith thus,

\* From fear to profess the love of Christ.

† The soldiers of Christ by their profession. Digitized by Google ¶ Parables.

Peace I leave to you, and my peace I give you. Christ knew that he himself should soon pass from his children ; for on the Thursday at night he said to them these words, and on the morrow at noon he died for their love. And therefore he promised them that he would leave them peace.

But Christ specifieth this general peace, when he saith that he giveth them his own peace. And this shall be first with pursuing of body, that it shall grow after to most full peace. And therefore saith Christ, that not as the world giveth he giveth them, but on a contrary manner. The world giveth things that now are pleasing ; but by process of time they wax more bitter, and so they come to pain and sorrow which at first were pleasing. And so peace of this world is evermore distressing ; but peace of God groweth unto full peace.

And in these words of knowledge Christ comforteth his children, and biddeth them that their hearts be not troubled nor dread. For whoever fully believes this sentence, and hopes fully that he were of the number of these children, he were an untrue man if he dread thus. Apostles dreaded perils that were nigh, but they failed not to believe this truth, that they should not have a good end. And that whatever befell them should fall to them for the better. And as the world is secure of things nigh to it, and in doubt of things afar off, so in a contrary manner, Christ's children are secure of their end, but of things nigh at hand they are sometimes in dread. And the ground of this sentence is christian men's belief. And therefore Christ saith, Ye heard how I said to you, I go, and I come to you. And he that believeth fully these words of Christ, he should not dread this sentence. For Christ saith, as God to whom all things are present, I go, and I come to you for certainty thereof. And as Christ was certain of his death, and his going up, and of his coming again at the day of doom, so should his children be certain of this aforesaid sentence. And yet Christ moveth his children to have joy of his going ; and this was a point for which they mourned most. And Christ saith thus to them to abate their mourning, If ye loved me, ye should have joy, for I go to my Father, since he is more than I. For thus by manhood I should increase in bliss. And he that joyeth not therefore, he loveth not Christ ; and it is told before how each man should love him. He said, And now I said to you before that it befall, that when it is done ye believe in my saying. And so

should they believe to all things that he had said. For thus he is God that can will all things.

And Christ, teaching his children to mark better his words, saith that he shall now speak but few things unto them, but they should have the most enmity here of the head fiend whom Christ hath overcome. Therefore he telleth them that the prince of this world is come to tempt Christ, and he hath nought in him. And thus in this overcoming should men not dread the fiend; but he saith, All this is done that the world know that I love the Father, and so should ye do. For all things that I do should be ensample to you; and therefore I do as my Father commanded me, for well I know in this I may not fail. And all this sentence of the gospel of John is fully pertaining to the coming of the Holy Ghost.

## XII.

### OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, &c. 1 Cor. xii.*

Paul moveth in this epistle, that for the former kindness of Christ men should be kind to him again. For clerks say, and truth it is, that both God and kind\* hate that a man dwell unkind, after great kindness that he hath taken. For truth it is, that all sin turneth to unkindness to God. And thus Paul brings to these men's mind how much kindness Christ hath done them. Ye know, saith he, when ye were heathen, ye were led to dumb mawmets,† going as beasts from one to another, as if ye had no soul of man.

And since a man's god should be a thing that were the fairest and the best; in which should be the health‡ of men, and make men's soul like to them; the foulest thing that falleth to man, and the most perilous to his soul, is to have a false god, as men have that worship mawmets. For they make their souls foul, to the great peril of their souls. And thus it is a foul thing to be led as a bear to a stake by the untruth of a fiend, to love aught as it were God, which is not God, for all such things are false gods. And thus saith Paul, that none that speaketh in God's Spirit, putteth

\* Nature.

† Idols.

‡ Salvation.

cursedness to Christ,\* since all the Trinity approved him, and both his deeds and his words were holy and full of reason and love.

And thus men say commonly, that false men in three manners put cursedness to Christ, and all these are damnable. First, when men by open sin, are not kindly to Christ, as all sinful men do for the time that their will is turned amiss. The second saying of cursedness that false men put against Christ, is to say with heart and word that Christ was a false prophet, and to curse him by unbelief, as the Jews did long time. The third cursing, and the worst that false men put unto Christ, is, that they feign the name of Christ, and his goodness with his law; and yet they make false this in deed, and say that other law is better; as men of these four sorts, that put behind Christ's law, and take them a new patron and new rule, without Christ.† These men are hypocrites whom Christ hateth most of all.

And thus saith Paul after, as a truth following of his words, That none may say Lord Jesus, but in the Holy Ghost. Paul speaketh here of saying, that is, saying fully formed, as is the saying of true men in heart, word, and in deed, that say rightly to God's worship, in the name of the Trinity. What man can believe we may say, Lord Jesus is our Lord, our Saviour from the fiend, unless the Holy Ghost teach him? for then he maketh no departing from Christ's Godhead and his manhood. But whatever Christ hath ordained or said was done to his church, he at point denies. And into this cursing fall these sects that despise Christ's law, as if his ordinance failed, but their ordinance is much better! For what man should choose another law, unless that law were better than Christ's; for he is a fool of all fools that thus chooseth a worse way, and leaveth the better way to heaven, which is more light and more ready. For he putteth to Jesus Christ both cursing and deceit, when he saith by his deed, that Christ hid the better way and the perfect way, till God had sent these sects. And these sects came not fully out till that Satan was unbound. Among all blasphemies that ever sprung, this is the most cursed. For they teach openly in deed, that thus it is, however men gloss.

But although the two natures of Christ are diverse in themselves, yet these two are one God, and there are no

\* No man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed,  
 † Cor. xii. 3.

† The four orders of friars.

more gods. And thus men should in their thoughts think how division of things cometh of this one God, the which God is a Spirit. And therefore saith Paul after, that there are divisions of grace, but it is the same Spirit, of whom come all these graces, as of one source come many streams. And thus of the same Spirit must come divisions of services. For this one God must have servants according to the grace that he giveth. For this Lord loveth degrees in his servants. And thus there are divisions of workings, and yet it is the same God that worketh all, in all things. For who should grudge for these divisions, since they are thus ordained of God; as each part of a man must have these three, diverse in order. As first he must have a hidden power; and of this power comes his will; and of this power and this will come workings to men's profit. And thus, as it is in man, so it is in holy church; and joy we of this ordinance of God, since it is both fair and good.

And thus Paul declareth nine degrees of men's workings that God hath ordained in the church. For each member of holy church hath some showing of this Spirit, both to his profit and to the profit of the church. As to some, by gift of God is given the word of wisdom. For some men have some knowledge here of truths of the high Trinity. And another hath word of knowledge after the same Spirit. For some have knowing of God, both of angels and of heavens; and how this word cometh of God, by fair order that he hath ordained. Other men have belief of hidden and of high things. And all these three come of God, who giveth these to his church. Some have grace of healths,\* both bodily and spiritual, both to have them in themselves, and to give them to other brethren. And God is that one Spirit of whom all these graces come. God giveth another to work virtues, and especially to know God's virtue, and how God of his gracious virtue hath given men power to work virtues; as in the parting of the sea, and in the standing up of the same; and in many other wonders that God hath done for man's sake. And yet the wisdom of God for profit of his church, giveth prophecy to some men, to follow good and flee evil; as John had in the Apocalypse, and some men after him have less. To others is given discretion to know spirits. And this is a great gift that cometh of the Holy Ghost. For such spirits move men to divers works. And it is a good gift of God, to know good spirits

\* Salvation.

from evil; for good spirits move men ever to virtuous deeds; and evil spirits move men to evil, and beguile men.

The same Spirit giveth to men divers manner of languages; as this Holy Ghost gave the apostles knowledge and tongues at Pentecost. And at the last this Spirit giveth men to understand knowledge of words; as the Spirit giveth many men to know what holy writ meaneth. And all these three gifts of God are especially from the Holy Ghost; but yet since all these three persons are one God and one Spirit, none of them giveth any of these, except they all three give them. For one God doth all good, and thus he parteth these things to men after his power, wisdom, and will. And thus he divideth nought amiss, although the reason be hid from us.

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### XIII.

#### PAUL'S PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, &c. 1 Cor. xv.*

In this epistle Paul teaches by many reasons how his gospel is to be praised of true men, for the fruit of bliss that cometh thereof; and the word evangele, or gospel, means good tidings of bliss. And thus not only the four gospels, but the epistles of Paul and of the other apostles are called gospel here and in many other places. And thus men are out of belief that deny that these are gospels. And therefore saith Paul, Here I make known to you the gospel that I have preached to you; the which ye have received, in which gospel ye stand yet, and by which, if God will, ye shall be saved.

And thus may true men see how this gospel is to be praised for many reasons, by the fruit that springeth to men by this gospel. First, by authority of God who spake this. For precious liquor and precious vessel, should be praised of them that take it. This liquor is wisdom of God. And this liquor should be thought more dear worth than oil of tombs;\* for it healeth men's souls more than such oil healeth men's bodies. And right taking of this knowledge is another reason to praise it. And since it

\* Consecrated oil, supposed to avail to the healing of the sick. See the *Rituale Romanum*.

raiseth up man's soul, and maketh it thus stand in belief, Paul tells as the third reason why men should praise this gospel.

The fourth reason that Paul giveth of the praising of this gospel is, that it is a nigh mean to save men in bliss of heaven. And Paul boasteth not here of this gospel for his person, but by reason of his God, of whom this gospel sprung by grace. And this should move true men to take this gospel and leave fables. And Paul telleth hereafter of this gospel how men should last therein. For else his travail thereabout were idle and without fruit. For the praising of God's word, and holding thereof in man's mind, should be to produce belief in men, and thereby bring forth good works. And Paul saith, Unless this follow, they have believed here in vain. As clerks say, that travail is vain of which cometh not the good end, that men should shape to come thereof by the grace and ordinance of God.

And thus saith Paul, For what reason should I have preached thus to you, and ye should have holden this lore, but for coming of this end? And if this end come not, ye have believed here in vain. I betook first to you lore that I have taken of God, that Christ was dead for our sins, after the witness of holy writ; and better witness may none be, for then must God witness it. Christ died not for his own sin, as thieves die for their sin; but Christ, our brother, that might not sin, died for sin that others have done. And both righteousness of God and grace, and saving of men, moved Christ to die thus. And not only sin of men, for then Christ had died for nought and idly without cause. I told you more of belief, how that Christ was after buried, and how he rose on the third day, by the witness of holy writ. And that this belief was written in the book of life, and men's souls, and also dead bodies.

Paul calls it many scriptures; and Paul tells of six degrees, by which Christ was seen to live after that he was dead. And this faith should be believed in. Paul telleth that Peter saw him, and after him all the apostles; and after when Christ went up to heaven, more than five hundred of men saw him together. For they were warned before hereof, and therefore more came to see this. And some of them lived to the time of Paul, and some of them were dead before. And after was Christ seen of James, and afterward of all the apostles. And at last of all

was Christ seen by Paul. And thus Paul, as a child that was born out of time, destroyed the sin of the synagogue; as some children when they are born are the death of the mother. So thus Paul destroyed the synagogue when he came to Christ's church.

Paul saith meekly of himself, that he is the least of apostles; that he is not worthy of himself for to be called an apostle, for he pursued God's church. Here we should understand that Paul saith truth as he should, since none should tell falsehood for any cause. Paul saith that he is least of apostles in his own counting; for Paul was wonderfully meek; and he tells how he came by grace after others. And the cause of this unworthiness is, that he pursued God's church. And therefore saith Paul after, By grace of God I am that I am. And thus he is not worthy even to be called a christian man. But nevertheless the grace of God was not idle in St. Paul. For it moved him to profit to the church, which he had harmed before. And thus men may praise God in the gifts that he hath given them. But think we how Paul travailed for to get worship to God, and let us follow him, inasmuch as Paul thus followed Christ.

#### XIV.

##### THE MINISTRATION OF THE GOSPEL.

*And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward; not that we are sufficient of ourselves, &c. 2 Cor. iii.*

Paul telleth of the excellency of the grace of the new law over the grace of the old law, to come lightlier to heaven. And Paul begins thus, We have such trust by Christ as the best mean to God, that we are not sufficient to think aught of ourselves, but our sufficiency is wholly of God. For since man's thinking seems most to be in his power among his works, and yet his thought must come of God, surely more each other work of man. It is known that no creature may do aright, but if God do it first, and help his creature to do it. And since we have a better procurator,\* in time of grace, to pray to God, than men had in the old law, no wonder if this time be better. And thus should we put off pride, and wholly trust in Jesus Christ. For he that may not think of himself, may do nought of himself; but all our

\* Intercessor. Digitized by Google



sufficiency is of God, by the means of Jesus Christ. And since Christ is both God and man, he is both Judge and Procurator. And these words are belief, since each power is of God. And so each sufficiency of man must necessarily be given of God. And if thou grudge here again, and say that man doth evil works, and God doth all that a man doth, and so God doth many evils; true men grant concerning God, that each creature of the world, whether it be good or evil, is made of God, Lord of all; but sin which is no creature, but default of man or angel, is not made of our God, since to do it is to fail towards God. But if sin were a creature that might be of itself, then sin must needs be made of God, and man might make that it were sin.

This mediator, Christ, made apostles and their vicars fit servants of the new law. And this advancement is great, for it is holden a great grace to be a pope or other prelate; but it is a thousand fold more grace to be a minister as Christ hath ordained, for the gain is more, and the service more holy. For since the new testament is the last law of God, and bringeth men next to heaven; these ministers bring men by grace that God himself giveth, and worketh thus with these ministers. And this is a fit and a high service that priests should have; but if they keep not well this office, none are fouler traitors than they. And great diversity is betwixt them, and priests of the old law; for priests of the old law did figure of the grace that now is done by Christ. And therefore saith Paul here, that priests of the new law work now, not by letter, but by the Spirit that God giveth. And this word men understand thus, that priests in the new law have pleasant service and light, and are not killers of beasts, as were the priests of the old law; but the grace that they figured, is now made of God by his priests. And therefore saith Paul, that priests work now, not by letter, but by spirit.

And here antichrist's tyrants speak against the new law, and say that literal knowledge of it should never be taken, but spiritual knowledge. And they feign this spiritual knowledge after the wicked will that they have. And thus these four sects are about to destroy literal knowledge of God's law, which should be the first and the most, by which the church should be ruled. And against this knowledge antichrist argues many ways that holy writ is false. And so they say there is another meaning than this literal

meaning that thou hast given. And this is a doubtful meaning which I will choose to give. And thus authority of holy writ fails by antichrist. But Paul saith to this intent, that if in the time of grace the letter of the old law is taken, and held that it should ever last, as it lasted for that time, it slayeth men in a spiritual manner ; for it hindereth men of the belief that they are now nearer to bliss than they were in the old law, by the coming of Christ in time of grace. But leave we these heresies, and believe we that many things were commanded the fathers of the old law, as types of things to come in time of grace. And these figures shall we understand spiritually, for else literal understanding will slay man's soul by unbelief.

But spiritual understanding quickens man's soul by right belief. And if thou wilt know the ground to judge of these understandings, begin at christian man's belief, and believe that Christ hath now lived here, as it was figured in the old law, and look not for it as yet to come. And so each word of the new law that speaketh of the virtues of Christ, and to charity of his church, should be taken according to the letter. And therefore, as Augustine tells, heretics are condemned, who denied the literal meaning for understanding God's law. And thus saith Paul after, that if the serving of death written by letters in stones was in glory of Moses, so that the children of Israel might not look into his face, for the glory of his shining, that was soon after done away, how much more the spiritual service of christian priests shall be in this time in glory ; since this glory is more, and increases unto bliss. And if men would understand the reason that Paul maketh here, it were needful to know how the face of Moses shined, when he came down out of Sinai, and gave the law written in stones, and so the people durst not look into Moses' face that was shining with light. And thus their spiritual eyes were hid when they looked to this Moses ; but he hid his shining face, and the people spake then to him. And since Christ in the new law printed it in his apostles' hearts, much more their spiritual service should be in glory, than was Moses. For printing in their souls was better than printing in the stones ; and the shining of grace of Christ passed bodily shining in Moses' face. And this service in Moses' law is called serving of death. For many had death of soul, and death of body always followed this serving. But serving

in the new law quickens some till they come to bliss. And thus this writing in letters was not equal to writing in men's souls.

Paul afterward makes mention of another knowledge ; that if the service of condemning of many was to the glory of Moses, much more the service of righteousness to Christ's children should be for glory. As though it were said, Since this hid figure that brought men but far from bliss, was of so much glory and worship to men that had but little belief, much more the law of Christ, and the service that his priests do, should be in more worship and joy, since it is near to the state of bliss.

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## XV.

## THE PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM.

*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, &c.*  
Gal. iii.

Paul tells, in this epistle, the excellency of Christ and the time of the gospel, over the time of the old law, even if men kept well that law. Paul notes first this word, that to Abraham were said promises, and to the seed of him. God saith not, "and to his seeds," as in many, but as in one ; and to his Seed, that is Christ. Paul notes, as true men should note each varying of God's word ; since no varying therein is without cause and reason. And thus, when God promised Abraham that he should give that land to him, and to his seed, he said not in the plural, that he should give it to his seeds ; but in the singular, to his seed, for the especialty that was in Christ. And that land was but a figure of the high land of bliss. And thus Abraham had but a figure to come after to the bliss of heaven. And also, when God promiseth that all folk should be blessed in Abraham's seed, he meaneth by this, Jesus Christ, who blesseth in joy all manner of folk. And by this true men understand that Christ, in giving of his law, did all things without default, both in working and resting. So that no resting or leaving was done of Christ without cause.

Paul saith, that this promise which God made to Abraham, was a testament confirmed of God, which promise was made law four hundred and thirty years after. Here must men know the story, and the wise manner of Paul's speech. It is known by God's law, how God promised to Abraham,

that four hundred years, and more, his seed should serve in Egypt, and they should after go to the land of promise ; and how, in the way, God gave Moses the law written in the mount. And all this law was in effect promise that God had made to Abraham ; since this law was but a lore to bring his seed to the bliss of heaven. And so saith Paul after, that the making of this into law makes not void the promise of God, but rather confirms it. And so the gracious promise of God was the ground of giving of this bliss, and not the law that God gave Moses, although after it helped thereto. And thus saith Paul truly, that if the heritage of bliss of heaven were grounded on the old law, then it were not grounded of God, by the gracious promise that he made. But this is known to be false belief, and so this first word is truth, that God gave this promise to Abraham.

And if thou say, What then served this law, since bliss was not grounded thereon ? The law was put for trespassers, that would have been too bold, unless the law had thus chastised them ; and so this law was profitable. But this law had three parts : the first part taught men virtues ; the second part taught men judgment ; and the third part taught men figures. The first part must ever last, both in the old law and in the new. Some of the second part may last, that teaches just judgments now. And if it be rigorous or impertinent to our trespass, it shall cease as Christ did mercy to the woman that was taken in adultery, as the gospel telleth. These figures, or ceremonies, that betokened the coming of Christ must needs cease in the time of grace, since Christ, the end of them, is now come. And else we should expect, as the Jews, a new coming of Christ hereafter.

And to this intent Paul speaks, that the law was put for trespassers till the time that Christ came, who was seed of Abraham, to which Seed God promised that it should fully buy mankind. For Christ was made a mediator betwixt God and mankind. And God put in Christ's hand a law that he had ordained before by angels. And thus Christ taught the old law, as Lord thereof over pharisees. And of this word, Mediator, Paul showeth wisely, that Christ is both God and man, for else he might not thus be a mean of reconciliation. A mediator must have two parties, and accord in reason with them both. And since the parties are God and man, Christ must needs be these two. And since there is but one God, Christ must needs be

almighty ; and so Christ may give the new law, and suspend somewhat of the old ; and since he may not be contrary to himself his law may not be contrary to his promises. And therefore, Paul saith after, that God forbid that the law be against God's promises, for then God would reverse himself.

Paul teaches after, how needful Christ was, as this mediator ; since the old law brought not man to be fully righteous, for then one doing of this law should justify man's nature. And therefore saith Paul thus, that if a law were given that might quicken of itself, then by law life were right grounded. As if Paul would say thus, beside the old law that was given, must come a man to make satisfaction ; and this must be both God and man. But this law concluded well that all mankind was under sin ; and by occasion evil taken, sin was aggravated by this law. And the blessed end of all this sorrow was contained in Jesus Christ, that the promise made to Abraham should be given by faith of him. So that if men believe in Christ, and make a point of this belief, then the promise that God hath made, to come into the land of life, shall be given by virtue of Christ, to all men that make this the chief matter. And here men may openly see how much antichrist is to blame, who after the free law of Christ giveth another contrary law. For it hindereth the keeping of Christ's law, and putteth men from the freedom of Christ.

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XVI.

## CHRIST PREACHING AT NAZARETH.

*And Jesus came to Nazareth, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, &c. Luke iv.*

This gospel tells how Christ preached. Jesus went out in power of the Spirit into Galilee. True men hold as belief, that the Holy Ghost led Jesus whithersoever he went, and in what deeds soever he did. And fame went out through all the land of him ; and Christ taught in their synagogues, and was magnified of them all. And Christ came to Nazareth, where he was nourished ; and he entered, according to his custom on Saturday, into a synagogue. And hereof christian men take custom to preach on Sunday ; for it comes to us for sabbath instead of Saturday, as Luke saith

here. And so should priests follow Christ's example, preaching on the sabbath, that is Sunday.

And Christ rose up to read ; and the book of Isaiah the prophet was given him to read. As Christ turned the book, he found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ; wherefore he anointed me to preach, he sent me to poor men. And so the Holy Ghost bade me preach to prisoners forgiveness, and to blind men sight ; to lead broken men into remission, to preach the year that the Lord accepteth. This preaching now is all disused and turned to pride and covetousness. For however men may please the people, and win them worship with money, that they preach, and put back the profit of the people's souls. This book was ordained of God to be read in this place ; for all things that befell to Christ were ordained to come thus. And so men say that Christ had the office of all ministers in the church.

And Christ praised Isaiah much, and these things read by Christ have better order than we can tell. For the Holy Ghost was on Christ, both in his body and in his soul, since Christ was both God and man, and by his manhood led of God. And therefore this Spirit anointed Christ with God's grace as fully as any man might be anointed. And thus Christ must needs preach to meek men that would take it. For this is the best deed that man doth here to his brethren. And so Christ preached to prisoners the forgiving of their sins ; and to men blind in knowledge, sight to know the will of God ; and to lead broken men in forgiveness of their travail. And Christ preached the year of our Lord that was acceptable by himself. For he made the year of jubilee ; and the day of giving of mercy and bliss was preached of Christ. And so all these words sound mercy and comfort of Christ, to men that are in prison here, for old sins that they have done.

And when Christ had folded this book he gave it to the minister, and he sat down ; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were looking to him. And Christ began to say to them, This day is this writing fulfilled in your eyes, on me ; for Isaiah said these words as a man that prophesied of Christ. And all men gave him witness, and all wondered at the words of grace that came forth of his mouth. Of this deed of Christ men take that it is lawful for to write and afterward to read a sermon, for thus did Christ our Lord and Master ; for if

men may thus turn the people, what should hinder them to have this manner. Surely travail of the preacher, or the name of having of good understanding should not be the end of preaching, but profit to the souls of the people. And however this end cometh best, is most pleasing to God. And curious preaching of Latin is full far from this end, for many preach themselves, and fail to preach Jesus Christ; and so sermons do less good than they did in meek\* times.

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## XVII.

### CHRIST ONE WITH THE FATHER.

*Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work, &c. John v.*

This gospel tells how the false Jews accused Christ of blasphemy, and so they charged him with heresy, for these two are joined together. John saith, how Christ told them, that his Father worketh till now, and Christ worketh also. It is said before that the works of the Trinity must be all together. And so as there is no changing in this Holy Trinity, therefore this gospel speaketh with words of present time. The Father worketh evermore, and the Holy Ghost with Christ. But as Christ was man, he worked by his double nature, by his Godhead and by his manhood. The second working is evident. And therefore saith Christ, that his Father worketh till now, and Christ worketh. By this he did not mean that the Father then ceased to work, but that Christ hath a new nature by which now he ruleth this world; and this vicar kind† came when Christ was made man. And therefore the Jews sought Jesus, to slay him as a blasphemer, not only for that he brake the sabbath, but said his Father was God, and made himself equal to God. But Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son may do nought of himself, but that he doth is the Father doing; for what things the Father doth, the same the Son doth also.

And Christ saith here openly, that he is the same God with the Father, and maketh all this world of nought, as the Father maketh it. And yet the Father bringeth forth

\* Humbler

† Vicarious Nature.

the Son, and the Son may not bring forth himself, but this bringing forth is neither making nor working, for it is without end. For if the sun were without end, his shining were without end. And so it is in the Trinity, of the bringing forth of two persons; and thus might the Jews know that Christ had both Godhead and manhood. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that he doth; and shall show him more works than these, that ye have wonder of them. And this was done in Christ's death and resurrection. For these were more than the miracles, although they show the same might. For each work of creature tells the almighty power of God. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but he gave all judgment to the Son, that all men worship the Son, as they worship the Father. And here Christ speaketh of judgment of another kind than the judgment of God within, since the judgment of this manhood shall be seen and ended at the day of doom. And by this judgment, as Christ saith here, the Father judgeth no man. He that worshippeth not the Son, worshippeth not the Father that sent him, and so he worshippeth not God, but breaketh all the ten commands. And since worshipping of Christ standeth in holding of the new law, and following of Christ in manner of life, how many now worship not God. And this worship of the Son is more than to worship a messenger; for this Son is the same God, two natures in one person.

Truly, truly, I say to you, that he that heareth my word, and believeth in him that sent me, hath life without end, and cometh not unto judgment, but passeth from death into life. And here the hearing is taken for obedience of the soul, and judgment for reproof of the world. Truly, truly, I say to you that the time cometh and now it is, when the dead shall hear the voice of God's Son, and whoso hear it they shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and gave him power to do judgment, for he thus is man's Son. And wonder not at this; for the time cometh in which all that are in graves shall hear the voice of God's Son; and those men that have done good shall go into the rising of life, and those men that have done evil shall rise to be condemned in hell. These words tell more knowledge than we can utter, or may tell. But it is known that there



are two manner of dead men, those in bodily and those in spiritual death. And at the day of doom all dead men shall rise bodily ; and by virtue of Christ's word some dead men rise spiritually, for they turn to good life, and hold the words of Christ.

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## XVIII.

## THE GOSPEL REVEALED TO BABES.

*Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, &c. Matt. xi.*

This gospel telleth how Christ answered to feigned words of the people, and told many high truths to the instruction of his church. Matthew tells how Jesus in that time answered to the people, and said on this manner, I confess to thee, Lord, Father of heaven and earth, that hideth these truths from worldly wise men and wary, and showedst them to meek men and the despised of the world. And the last cause hereof is told thus by Christ, Yea, Father, thou didst thus, for it was pleasing to thee. We shall understand hereby that each confession is not whispering in an ear a man's own sin, but the granting of truth with the granting of God. And thus speaketh Christ, who is of more authority than all these popes that ordained confession and rowning.\* And here may we see how God is Christ's Father, without end, before that he be Lord ; but he is ever Lord of this broad world. And this world is understood by heaven and by earth. This truth that Christ confessed, falling to the apostles, standeth in this word, that they knew many truths which were hidden to wise men and the wary of the world, as were the scribes and pharisees, and other worldly men. And the cause of this deed of God is open to true men ; for God will show to men how all wisdom is of him, and he will give it freely to meek men whom he loveth.

And that the disciples of Christ should believe his speech, he told what befalleth him by virtue of his Godhead. Christ saith that all things are given to him of his Father ; and no man knew fully God's Son, but his own Father ; and no man knew the Father but his Son, and other men to whom

\* Whispering, private confession to a priest.

he would show himself. The first of these three words teacheth that Christ is God. For else the Father might not give him all things. For if we understand by all things all creatures, yet the Son is before, that he have all creatures, and in that being before, he must needs be God. And if we understand all things to be within God, and that Christ hath all these given him of his Father; Christ must needs be God, if this gift be true; for then Christ hath the Holy Ghost, and the properties of the three Persons, and the Father of heaven in a manner; the which may only accord to God. And so, for the first word is truth, Christ must needs be God. And of this will it follow that Christ is almighty, all wise, and all willing, as the Trinity is. For Christ is the same God, as is the Trinity. And of this will follow the other word after, that no reasonable thing knoweth the Son, at the full, but the Father of heaven; for they always are equal. And according to this speech of the Trinity which is equal in himself, should Christ speak of this knowledge, which is the greatest that may be. The third word followeth of these, That no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and those men to whom this Son will show this knowledge. The people might see by their eyes that Christ was very man. And so Christ cometh down to man's speech of knowledge. The Son by his Godhead knoweth the Father, and by that he is man, he knoweth as much as man may know. And so his knowledge must be communicated to men after that they are able. The Holy Ghost is the same nature that is the Father and the Son; and therefore Christ supposing this, leaveth to speak of this Spirit; and of this may men gather how men should here believe Christ's words; since he is God that may not lie, nor fail to man in his love.

And for Christ is both God and man, and hath brethren of his lesser kind, (or his human nature,) therefore he turns unto his brethren, and comforteth them in their travail. Come ye all to me, saith Christ, that travail and are charged, and I shall refresh you. Take ye my yoke upon you, and learn ye of me this lesson, that I am mild and meek of heart, and follow ye your Father in these, and then shall ye find rest to your souls in your travail. For my yoke is sweet, and my charge is light. And these words of Christ to comfort religious men, are better than all these new rules that are clouted on to Christ's words. For in what state thou art in Christ's religion, learn well the lesson

of mildness and meekness of Christ, how he kept them all his life, in what trouble soever he was in ; and if thou art of God's people, thou shalt live meekly after Christ.

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## XIX.

## HATRED OF THE WORLD TO CHRIST.

*These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, it hated me, &c.* John xv.

This gospel tells, as Christ doth oft by John, how men should love together, and put away the hindrances. For the beginning and the ending of God's law is love. Christ begins thus, and commands his disciples, *These things I bid to you, that ye love together.* Nothing is more bidden of God than this love, and therefore, when man leaves it, he despiseth God. But all should know this love, since it is the same to love a thing and to will good to it. Each thing should be loved in that it is good, and so God should be most loved ; and better men rather than worse men. And we should, for God's love, love evil people, and for this love be busy to give them matter to be better ; and as much as in us is, do good to each man, to make some better, and to make some less evil. But the chief love should we have to ourselves, and to our father, and to our mother, saving the order of God's law.

The first hindrance of this love that Christ telleth here, is the hate of this world to men that keep this love. For the world is so blinded, that it calleth hate love, and love it calleth hate, for it errs in belief. All our love should stand in the love of God ; to keep his law, and to move others to keep it. But many, for default of faith, hold this a folly ; for goods of this world fall not to such men. And therefore saith Christ, if the world hate you, ye should well know that it hated me before. And this worthiness of Christ, who suffered thus for man, should move true and good men to suffer for Christ. If thou grudgest against poverty, and covetest worldly lordship, know thou that Christ before was poorer than thou, since he had not by his manhood a place to rest his head in. If thou grudgest that thy subjects will not give thee goods, think how Christ's subjects would neither give him meat nor harbour, and yet he cursed them not therefore, but did them much good. And if thou

grudgest that the world doth thee any injury, and thou profitest again to the world in love and meekness, think how Christ before thee profited thus more to the world ; and yet Christ suffered more wrong of his subjects than thou mayest do. And thus, if thou wouldest think on Christ, how he suffered for love of man, it were the best ensample that thou shouldest have to suffer, and to cease thy grudging. For as Augustine saith, " No man in this world may sin, but when leaving that which Christ taught, or grudging against that which he suffered." And for this saith Christ, If ye were of the world, the world would love that which is his.

In this law is found, both in good and evil, that men love others like to them. Yea, even if they shall be damned for this. As one sinful man loves another for the likeness of their sin, and yet they shall both in hell suffer harm for this likeness. And thus it is no wonder if the members of the fiend hate the members of Christ ; for they are so much contrary here, and after the day of doom.

And this moves many men to hate these new religious ;\* for this new diversity quenches love and makes hate ; yea, they have the fiend's manner so that they hate their own brethren, and torment them because they hold with God's law against heresy. And certainly they love others too little, but feign to spoil them of their goods. And thus saith Christ to his disciples, That as they are not of this world, but he hath chosen them out of this world, therefore the world hateth them. And if thou learnest of the world to hate thus, thy love is quenched ; but if thou withdrawest from the world, then thou lovest these men in God. For the world here is taken for men overcome by the world, who love worldly things more than God's law or good of virtues ; and of this world saith Christ, that it hateth his disciples. And for that this lore passes other in profit and in holiness, therefore Christ bids them to think on this word that he here said to them, for then they overcome this world. And therefore saith John the evangelist, Brethren, what man is he that overcometh the world ? Certainly none but if he believe that Jesus is God's Son.

If we hold this ground in faith, that Christ is very God and man, and beside this, believe well his life, and all his words that he saith, we shall overcome this world, and all the helpers of the fiend. For as Christ saith truly, There is no servant greater than his lord ; and so Christ is more,

\* The followers of the truth.

both in virtue and in worthiness than any other man may be. And since Christ suffered thus, and taught christian men this lore, what man should we believe or follow in our life but Christ? and neither the world nor the fiend may in this harm a man. And so Christ comforteth his members. If men of this world have pursued Christ, then they shall pursue his members; and if they have kept his words, they shall keep his disciples' words. For it is more hard for fiends to pursue the person of Christ, than to pursue his members; and thus will they do the easier.

But one comfort lieth here, that as Christ converted some that were men of the world, so shall his disciples do; and thus they shall not work in vain, to keep his law as he bids. For each man that shall work, must have a hope of some good end, for despairing of such an end would hinder a man to work. But the blindness of the world that tormenteth Christ with his members, is so ignorant in belief, that they know not Christ's Father. For if they knew well Christ's Father, then after, they should know his Son, and that these two are one God. But then who would strive against this God? and so the default of belief and ignorance that men have cause all evil deeds; and thus each sinner is a fool. And if men knew God's power, and his wisdom in these two persons; how he may not forget to punish sin when it is time, then should men dread to sin, for it is known of these two persons. But this faith is otherwise wanting, or sleeping. But Christ reproves unbelief, and saith, if he had not come and spoken thus with them, they should not have had this sin. For it was great unkindness in this manner to treat their brother, that always meekly did so great kindness again; and it was an open untruth in this manner to hate their God. But now these Jews have no excuse for this sin; and therefore Christ saith, that what man hateth him he hateth his Father also, for they are both one. And for in each kind of things there is one first, or chief, that measures all others which are in that kind, therefore in manner of sins must be one first of all others, and mark all the others. And that is the sin of priests against Jesus Christ. And therefore saith Christ, that if he had not done works in them that none other man did, they had not had this sin. But now they say, they have this faith, and yet they hated both Christ and his Father. And so was verified the writing in their own law, That the Jews wilfully had Christ in hate.

## XX.

## CHRIST TO BE CONFESSED.

*There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed ; nor hid that shall not be known, &c. Matt. x.*

This gospel comforts martyrs and destroys the hidden sin that is in these new orders contrary to the order of Christ.\* Christ saith, that nought is concealed that shall not be showed ; and nothing is so private that it shall not be known. These words are of belief, for all things are known of God ; and that mirror shows forth the most secret thing in this world ; and at the day of doom, when books shall be open, which books are men's souls and their consciences, then shall both good and evil know men's works and their thoughts. Therefore should all men boldly stand by truth, and especially by God's law, for therein lies no shame. And therefore Christ bids, that what he hath said in darkness, they should say in light, more commonly and more clearly, both in life and in word ; and this rule of Christ's order should men keep, but especially priests. And to this intent Christ biddeth, that what they have heard in their ear they should preach openly upon the flat roofs of the houses. For thus should the common men better understand, and thus wills Christ, that all things which God speaketh to the ears of the soul, these hearers should speak forth.

But since that such preaching asks hardness and martyrdom, therefore Christ comforteth his, to dread not the slaying of body. Dread not, saith Christ, those men that slay the body, and may not after slay the soul, nor can they hinder God to quicken that which they kill, and to make it better ; but rather dread ye him that hath power to cast both the body and the soul into hell for evermore, to dwell there in pain. Are not two sparrows sold for the least money in chaffering ? For as Luke tells, five were sold for two farthings, and yet God ordaineth for all these fowls ; and since these fowls are little of price, and uncertain in their moving, and yet God ordaineth for them whenever they light upon the earth ; much more God should ordain for each man that hath a soul to God's image, and especially for such men that serve truly to their God, more than any fowl may ; for they are not able to serve thus. And since God ordaineth thus for fowls, men either must grant God to be unwise,

\* The four orders of friars, Google

or he should ordain much more for men that are his true servants. And this reason that Christ maketh, moves true men that have wisdom to be hardy in God's cause, and to suffer martyrdom for him. And no man can avoid that other men should thus suffer, or else be untrue to God, as these heretics are. And thus saith Christ of God's wisdom, that all the hairs of his disciples are numbered to God's knowing, and none of them may perish without. And since the hairs of men's heads are the least worth of any part of man, and none of these may perish unknown, how should the better part perish? And thus martyrs are comforted to put their body for God's law. For no part of their body may thus perish to harm them, and much more the souls of such men, and all virtues of their soul may not perish from them; for the soul may not be quenched; and necessarily after the soul must follow the virtues thereof. And Christ saith truly to his apostles, that they should not dread, since they are better than many sparrows. And our belief teaches us that God keeps things according to their value: for if any thing be better, God makes it to be better. And so Christ speaketh here a word that should move men to stand with him. Each man that shall acknowledge me before men by both my natures, I shall acknowledge that man before my Father, to that man's honour. Here we shall understand that the confession Christ maketh here is not whispering in a priest's ear, to tell him the sins that we have done, but it is granting of truth, the which is openly said, with readiness to suffer therefore, whatever man denies it. And so that man confesses Christ who grants that he is God and man, and all things that will follow hereof. And there are full many truths; for all the gospel that Christ saith, such a man must confess, and all that followeth of the gospel. And this displeases sinful men.

And certainly a man confesses not Christ that he is both God and man, unless he confess of Christ, that he may no way sin; nor prates, or bears false witness of any word that Christ hath said. And so each word of God's law is true, since Christ witnesseth it and each truth that is therein. And so each priest confesses Christ before men, who tells them that Christ is both God and man; and thus Christ saith, who may not lie. And certainly if a man say thus, and fail not for cowardice to tell God's law to men that sin, he puts them well to martyrdom; and every such man, Christ saith, he will confess to his Father. And then

Christ will confess this man to be true in God's cause, and worthy to have recompense according to the worthiness of his travail, and to be crowned without end in heaven before this great Lord, who faileth not to give to such servants, but gives them bliss of heaven; for the greatness of such a Lord rewards not less his soldiers.

If a man travailed in war with a captain, and this captain wrote of him to his king, and said that he was a good warrior, and worthily and hardily travailed in the king's cause, and therefore this earthly king should have him and his commended—how much more were it worth that the follower of Jesus Christ be commended by his own word as a true servant unto God, and told that God should think on him and give him bliss without end. And as confession of truth is to be loved of God's knights, so confession of cowardice is to be dreaded of men in earth. And thus, default of belief hindereth men to travail in God's cause. But the words of this gospel are evil understood of many who by logic that they have, grant that all the hairs of saints are well known of God, but say that God knoweth not how many they are in number. And they argue that all these hairs be none, since they are without number, and each great thing in earth were made of parts indivisible!\* And such errors that men have in logic, and in natural science, bring men in as heretics, to grant many false things. Truth it is that God knoweth all the parts of a man, and how many these parts are; for they are few to God's knowledge. And so each thing that God continueth is made of indivisible parts, and the greater thing hath more such; this is hidden to men's knowing, but they shall know it well, when God shall show it them in heaven.

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## XXI.

### WATCHFULNESS ENFORCED.

*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, &c. Luke xii.*

This gospel teaches all men how they should live to Christ, but especially prelates that should be light to the

\* A specimen of the unintelligible logic of that day, then often applied to theological subjects.



people. First Christ biddeth his disciples, that their loins be girt, and lanterns burning in their hands, as they should meet their Lord when he cometh again from bridals. These loins that Christ speaketh of are the fleshly nature joined with the soul. This flesh serves to the soul, suffering as it should suffer, and doing as it should do, when it is taught well of the soul. And thus saith Paul that Christ was in Abraham's loins.

These loins are girt when man with discretion draws from his flesh the nourishment thereof, or chastises it on other manner before it fall into sin. Burning lanterns are needful works, that men have in their power, by which they should work. And, because these works came both of body and of soul, therefore they are called of Christ two lanterns; and they are in our hands when we work with them. For it is not enough to keep us from sins unless we work good works by these two lanterns.

For these bridals we shall know that they are taken in many manners; first, for the weddings wherein Christ is joined with the soul; and after, for the dwelling that Christ dwelleth in with the soul; and thirdly, for the spiritual food that souls are fed with Christ in bliss. And so there are three weddings that Christ is wedded here; first, when he took mankind and made it one person with him; after, when he taketh his church and maketh it one spouse with him; the third is when Christ taketh any soul in particular to him. And so Christ is said to return again from bridals on two manners. First, when a man is dead, whom Christ hath ordained to come to bliss, Christ turneth again to his soul. But then he must have there dwelt before, or else this soul had not come to this state. And so we should be like to men that abide the coming of Christ in time of death or day of doom. And this abiding should all manner of men mark; for this coming is uncertain, and this time is perilous. And to these comings of Christ should each man make him ready, since Christ shall come and knock at doors and enter to them that are waking, and ready to receive Christ, without sleeping in sin. And Christ knocketh at our doors when he teacheth us signs of death, or signs of the day of doom; but the last knocking is sudden. If man be ready before to dwell with Christ without end, then he opens to Christ, since this opening is readiness.

And thus saith Christ full truly, that those servants are blessed who when the Lord cometh he findeth thus waking

Truly I say to you that this Lord shall gird himself, and make them sit to meat, and pass and minister to them.

The sitting to meat of saints, is confirming them in bliss. The passing of this Lord by them, is his showing to one and to another. This service is light to Christ, for it is Christ's showing of his Godhead and his manhood, in which saints shall be fed.

And if this Lord come in this second vigil,\* and also in the third, and find such readiness in these servants, full blessed are these servants; since they quickly are blessed of God. The three vigils that Christ telleth of here are three wakings from sin, and always of the last sin, which is the worst evil that may be. And so we pray God in the paternoster to deliver us from this evil. And as the length of these three vigils is uncertain to man, therefore he should ever wake, and then he waketh these three vigils.

The ignorance of these times, and the knowing that we should ever wake, profits unto God's children; as do all things, as Paul saith. Since we know not the quantity of these three times, we should evermore be in dread, and ever wake out of sin. And this lore Christ teacheth in a parable to his children. This thing, he saith, know well, that if the master knew what time the thief would come and steal his goods, he would wake full busily, and not suffer this thief thus to break his house and spoil him. It is touched before, how this thief is the fiend, that doth all his diligence to tempt man when he shall die. And when the fiend hopeth to overcome; and when the night of sin blinds men to know themselves, then is time for the fiend to fight fastest. This thief ever worketh by deceits, and fighteth blithest in hour of darkness; and in time of man's death he strives most to overcome. For this victory shall ever last, on whatever side it fall.

This house is man's body, that his soul is kept in; and the undermining of this house may be done in two manners. First when the fiend supposes that a man shall die there, he gathers together man's spirits, and tempts him to many sins, as to wrath, to lechery, and especially to despair. But let us seek blessing with the Trinity, and think on God in this case; and against the first sin, think we meekly on God's power, how God is stronger than the fiend, and without him may we not do. And such thought of the Father of heaven should overcome the fiend in hour of

\* Watch, or portion of time in which a person keeps watch.

death. Against the second sin of the fiend, we should think on God the Son ; how kindly he is spouse to us, and bought us with his precious blood ; and how he may not part from us, if our unkindness be not in the cause. We should think how fair and good a spouse is Christ, and how foul is the fiend ; and by thoughts Christ would give virtue to men to overcome the fiend, when he tempteth man in the hour of death to think on evil. Against despair we should think of the goodness of the Holy Ghost ; how our good God may not leave us, if our folly be not in the cause. And if we have sinned ever so much, and ever so long have laid in sin, ask we God for mercy in our thoughts, and have we sorrow for this sin ; and God is ready to forgive it, however priests fail. For the fiend may be away from man's soul, but not God ; and the mercy of God is more than envy of the fiend ; and the goodness of God is more than the hate of the fiend. What should move men to despair, since they may so easily be saved ? And nothing is more in man's power, than the thought of his soul.

But we must have a love-dread of our God in this hour, since we know that old sin may be so hard then in our soul, that we shall not be then in power to againststand the tempting of the fiend. For as a staff may grow so great, and be so stiff in its strength, that men shall not writhe it, though they would be ever so fain, so sin may grow in man, and be so strong in time of death, that righteousness of God then will hinder man to obey thus to God, this dread of God we should have, and always in the hour of our death. And this is a good defence against the fiend and despair, but this must be a love-dread, and hope in love of God, how that God hath more love than the fiend hath envy ; for God's love is without end, but this envy is foul and feeble. And this envy may not overcome the virtue of God's love ; for the love that God loveth righteousness, maketh overcoming in this hour.

Since our good God giveth us strength to love him, and to hope in him ; and the fiend may not hinder us to think on this gift of God ; what man should despair of God in the hour that God departeth the soul ? God suffereth the fiend to hasten a man to his death, but God will never suffer that a man may not freely think on him. And if his power be so barred, the sin of man is the cause, and reasons of the fiend are blinded in this matter. The fiend puts to us the great sins that we have done in work and thought.

And for the greatness of these sins, God's righteousness hath strengthened us. We will answer here, We grant meekly that we have sinned in thought, in word, and in deed ; but we know that God's grace is much more than all our sin. And the fool knows not how God hath made us now. For we feel the grace of God, how we hope in his goodness, and sorrow for our sin ; and this the fiend knoweth not. But yet the fiend argueth thus, Some man must be damned, but who should be damned but thou, who thus hast been unkind to God ? Here we answer, that he saith the truth, but how can this fiend prove that God will have me damned, since I have hope in my soul which is hidden to the fiend ? And well I know, the fiend knoweth not this secret ordinance of God, as he knew not his own condemnation, how God made it to the bliss of saints ; but yet the fiend argues that all things which shall come, must needs come by the ordinance of God, and thus the fiend thinks he shall have of me a glorious victory.

But here we answer to this fiend, and grant him that which he taketh, and so he must needs be damned for the folly that he is in. He travaileth busily to have victory over us, but yet we hope that he shall fail, by sparkles of grace that we feel. And well we know as belief, if the fiend overcome us, it shall not be glorious to him, but more to his damnation. For ever the more harm that he doth, ever the worse shall he be punished, and so men that shall be damned with him shall ever be painful to him. For he shall grieve that he did so much evil. And so the fiends shut up in fast bonds for ever, shall ever grieve together. What man that knows these fools tastes should be overcome with this fiend, since our good God is so nigh, and his mercy is so great, and the folly of this proud fiend in boasting of things that he knoweth not is so offensive before God, and so known to God's children.

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